Politics in Flux: The Georgians Behind the Republicanization of the South

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the Republicanization of Georgia, 1948-1984, through the lens of three Georgian counties that exemplify the key social and economic divides that permeate the South. Pierce and Hancock are both rural, agricultural counties, with economies and, up until the last five years, populations in a steady decline, but while Pierce County’s citizens are primarily white, Hancock County’s are solidly African American. In comparison, DeKalb County, which contains a portion of the Atlanta metropolitan area, has steadily become more ethnically, racially, and economically diverse with Atlanta’s growth. In 1948, both Pierce and Hancock were part of the Democratic Solid South. Today, in state and national elections, Pierce votes solidly Republican and Hancock solidly Democratic, while for local offices Pierce, like Hancock County, continues to vote Democratic. In DeKalb, just as it was in 1948, neither party can claim a definitive hold on the electorate.

I argue that that race and class are so intertwined in the story of the South’s realignment that the role of each is key to understanding the local voters’ decision to change their political party. In keeping with the timeline of those who criticize the myth of southern exceptionalism, I show how the Republican party emerged in DeKalb County the 1940s as a class-based institution introduced by postwar transplants. Yet, its success was fleeting, especially as race grew more important for both liberals and conservatives as the civil rights movement grew more successful and increasingly
challenged the status quo. My study captures the intense confusion as the sands shifted beneath the feet of the Georgia traditional political structure. I examine the choices that the state parties made as they struggled to define their positions and, as importantly, how the electorate reacted to these decisions. And, I show how the conservatism first espoused by Barry Goldwater in 1964 evolved into a political platform acceptable to the economic conservatives in Georgia’s urban centers as well as the white rural areas that were once the most powerful part of the Solid South such as Pierce County. I also illustrate how the Republican party strained to find viable, strong candidates even in areas where voters were the most open to their ideas. In contrast, I show how issues of race, above all else, guided the decisions of Hancock, and I demonstrate how the confusion of the times undermined any hopes of party loyalty during this period of partisan realignment.
Dedication

For Mariah Hudson Dula who keeps me sane and Makayla Jo Keen who keeps me happy.
First and foremost I am grateful to Uncle Scott, Aunt Lisa and my cousins Les and Macie Farmer for allowing me to stay in their home in DeKalb over many months of research. In their honor and for all of my Atlanta friends, I would like to share my secret, no fail recipe for peach cobbler. First, melt one entire stick of butter in large casserole dish in a 350 degree oven. Meanwhile, combine one cup each of sugar, milk, and flour and, once the butter has completely melted carefully pour the batter into the dish. Immediately, and again very carefully, add two to three cups of sliced fresh peaches on top of the batter mixture. Cook at least 35 minutes or until it smells irresistible and looks delicious. If you have any problems, please call or, better yet, join me on the beach for a demonstration.

I must also thank the many helpful professionals I encountered at Emory University, the Atlanta Public Library, West Georgia University, the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, the Decatur Public Library, the Georgia State Archive, the Milledgeville Public Library, the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, the DeKalb County History Center, the Hancock Public Library, and, last but not least, the Pierce County Public Library. My experience at each institution irrefutable proved just how friendly, welcoming, and wonderful Georgians can be. These research trips were funded in part by a College of Humanities Small Research Award, the Robert Bremner...
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Introduction

This topic was born out of a personal mystery. I come from a family of proud conservatives, devout evangelicals, and rural farmers. At the voting booth, they consistently select Republicans for every national and state election. They are social conservatives, who are vocally pro-choice and pro-family; supporters of “True Love Waits,” a Southern Baptist organization that teaches abstinence before marriage; and regulars at “See You at the Pole,” an annual gathering of Christian teens who meet to pray before school around the campus flagpole to demonstrate their support for school prayer. As hardworking, small business owners, they resent paying taxes for programs that benefit “welfare moms,” illegal immigrants, and any social group they believe get a free ride at their expense. And, as they dutifully struggle to balance the books, they are deeply troubled by the federal government’s growing deficit. They are, in short, textbook modern conservatives, minus one significant caveat—they are registered Democrats. They have to be. In my small hometown of Franklin, Kentucky, like so many rural southern communities, most local races are decided in the Democratic primaries. As a historian, I wanted to know why this was the case, and, more importantly, what it meant for voters and political parties alike.

I quickly discovered that my family’s political history resembled in many ways that of multitudes of white, rural households across the South. After the Civil War, the power structure of the former Confederacy voted with a vengeance against the ideals of Abraham Lincoln and his Republican party. For a brief time during and shortly after
Reconstruction, the period between 1865 and 1877 when the nation worked to rebuild the South under the watchful eye of the U.S. Army, the Republican party maintained some influence among black and formerly pro-Union voters.\(^1\) However, following the Army’s arguably premature evacuation of the South after 1877 and the subsequent proliferation of a system of Jim Crow laws designed to limit the full citizenship rights of African Americans, the Republican party grew so weak that party officials struggled to find a single suitable candidate, much less a solid slate of contenders. Often decades passed without a Republican primary election. Today, in stark contrast, Republicans regularly win state and national elections and are truly a competitive force in much of the South. Understanding this realignment is critical to understanding the current political landscape.

Yet, there is a debate over Kentucky’s true “southerness.”\(^2\) It was, and in many ways remains, a border state, bridging the gap between the Midwest and the South and to some, though not my family, a place not fully at home in either region. For my study, therefore, I wanted to choose a state solidly and unquestionably southern. Influenced again by family ties, I turned to a state at the heart of the Deep South—Georgia. There, the signs of political change are remarkable and unquestionable. In 1948, only 18.3 percent of Georgia’s electorate favored the Republican presidential candidate, and

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\(^2\) For instance, esteemed historian Edward L. Ayers, though ultimately concluding that Kentucky is southern, admits, that “it seemed clear to most people that the South included the eleven states of the former Confederacy.” Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3.
Republicans controlled less than 1 percent of the Georgia General Assembly. In 1984, less than four decades later, Ronald Reagan carried the state with 60.2 percent of the vote and Republican politicians controlled 14 percent of the State House and 15 percent of the State Senate.

This sweeping shift at the Presidential level, the most significant political change in modern American history, has drawn the attention of some of the nation’s top political scientists and historians. Most often these studies focus on the region as a whole or, less frequently, examine politics at the state level. Influenced by the current trend in the historiography of the civil rights movement exemplified by scholars such as Charles M. Payne, Thomas Sugrue, and John Dittmer, and driven by the story of the people, like my family, whose individual experiences and collective votes are behind the change, I bring a unique perspective to this scholarship. Through the lens of three Georgian counties—DeKalb, Hancock, and Pierce—I examine how and when the Democratic party lost its footing in what was once its solid territory.

The three counties of my study exemplify the key social and economic divides that permeate the South. Pierce and Hancock are both rural, agricultural counties, with an economy and, up until the last five years, a population in steady decline. There is however a key difference between them: while Pierce County’s citizens are primarily white, Hancock County’s are solidly African American. In the 1950 census, there were 8,678 African Americans and 2,402 whites in Hancock county, in contrast to Pierce

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4 Ibid.
where there were 3,001 African Americans and 8,047 whites. In 2009, the last available census statistics, African Americans made up 75.6 percent of Hancock’s 9,219 citizens, compared to 10.4 percent of Pierce County’s population of 18,580. DeKalb County, which contains a portion of the Atlanta metropolitan area, has steadily become more ethnically, racially, and economically diverse with Atlanta’s growth. In 1950, there were only 14,361 African Americans to 120,499 whites in DeKalb County; now Africans Americans make up 53.7 percent of the 747,274 residents.\(^5\) Today, in state and national elections, Pierce votes solidly Republican and Hancock solidly Democratic, while for local offices Pierce, like Hancock County, continues to vote Democratic. In DeKalb, by comparison, both political parties are well represented. In the last presidential election, Senator John McCain carried Pierce with 5,500 votes compared to Barack Obama’s 1,253, while Obama carried both Hancock and DeKalb with 3,535 to 795 votes and 254,594 to 65,581 votes respectively.\(^6\)

In keeping with V.O. Key’s early observations, traditional southern scholars attribute this political transformation to the backlash among southern Democrats against the national Democratic party’s push for civil rights legislation. Race is at the heart of the storyline that most often begins with the Dixiecrat Revolt of 1948, when the southern delegation stormed out of the 1948 Democratic convention to form its own party focused

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on maintaining segregation and protecting the rights of states from federal intervention; continues as white southerners grew increasingly frustrated with the Democratic party’s support for civil rights in the 1960s; and ends when these disenchanted southern Democrats convincingly supported conservative Republican Ronald Reagan’s campaign in 1980 and overwhelmingly voted for his reelection in 1984.⁷ In describing the stark factionalism that emerged out of the frustration of the 1960s and 1970s, historian Dewey W. Graham writes, “In the North the Democrats were the party of liberals and intellectuals, of blacks and the newer ethnic groups, of urban dwellers and organized labor, of Catholics and Jews, as well as Protestants . . . In the South Democrats were the party of whites and old-stock Americans, many of whom still opposed the enfranchisement of blacks; of rural and small town people whose leaders continued to exercise great influence in southern politics even as the region was being transformed into an urban society; and of the most religious citizenry in the nation, most of whom were Protestant.”⁸ At the same time, according to political scientist Nicole C. Rae, “Republicans began to doubt the wisdom of the civil rights measures when those measures began to focus less on political liberties and more on economic demands that implied some cost for the GOP’s white, middle-class business constituency.”⁹ Further, she argues, these “ultra-conservative” Republicans were eager to solicit votes from the ranks of frustrated southern Democrats.¹⁰ And, while only half of white southerners

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¹⁰ Ibid.
considered themselves Democrats from 1968 until 1980, they did not leave the Democratic party en masse. For a brief time during this transformation, the southern Democratic party existed as a “biracial coalition” of white former segregationist southerners joined by an influx of newly franchised African American voters. Reagan’s reelection in 1984 was the tipping point of the Republican realignment. He was the first Republican candidate to win the support of both the social and economic conservatives and with that, the vote of the formerly solid Democrats.

However, my study is not informed solely by traditional scholarship. Much like the South itself, southern studies is in the midst of a restructuring. Indeed, the validity of southern history is under scrutiny by a new breed of political scientists and historians who challenge what they consider the harmful myth of southern exceptionalism. By separating the South from the greater narrative, they believe, southern scholars have failed to see the ways in which the South’s history resembles that of the nation as whole. Historians Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino argue that southern history was born out of the early Cold War years known as the “liberal consensus,” “when the myths of American exceptionalism were at their most powerful, and when the conflation of the ‘the North’ with the triumphant narrative of American history was more pronounced.” Ostracizing the South as a culture and region all to its own and otherwise out-of-step with the rest of the nation successfully mitigated the impact that some of the South’s most unsettling trends—such as lynching, segregation, and large scale disenfranchisement—

12 Ibid.
might have otherwise had on the nation’s history. It has, however, left a legacy of
misunderstanding.

By examining the South’s struggle within the national framework, these scholars
argue that class based economic change, not race, is the key force behind the South’s
partisan transformation. In this revised timeline, as explained by political scientists
Byron E. Schafer and Richard Johnston, “Economic development and a consequent
realignment of class relationship began to arrive in the 1950s” beginning first with the
presidency followed in the 1960s by the Congress. In their work, they show how class
transitions to become more important than race. In this narrative, race still plays a role in
understanding this partisan shift— especially among black rural southerners who remain
loyal Democrats— but class outweighs and predates the so called “backlash thesis.”

Simply put, the more economically stable the voter, the more likely they were to support
the Republican party. Following this narrative, in Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in
the Sunbelt South, Lassiter illustrates how partisan change emanated out of the city and
the suburbs into the rural areas. He writes, “The suburban politics of middle-class
warfare charted a middle course between the open racism of the extreme right and the
egalitarian agenda of the civil rights movement, based on color-blind individualism that
accepted the principal of equal opportunity under the law but refused to countenance
affirmative action policies designed to overcome metropolitan structures of inequality.”

The members of this post-war middle class were often southern transplants with no real

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14 Ibid.
party loyalty and little interest in the racial politics that defined the rural regions. With the power of their pocketbooks and with help from key “one man, one vote” Supreme Court rulings, they forced the southern political parties to adapt and move beyond the demagoguery and race baiting of the first half of century.\footnote{The “one man, one vote” rulings were a series of court decisions in the 1960s that effectively barred any state legislation or practices designed to give the rural areas more political power than the cities or the suburbs. For more these cases see Douglas Smith, “Into the Political Thicket: Reapportionment and the Rise of Suburban Power,” The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism ed. By Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 263-285.} Furthermore, as the political scientist powerhouse team of brothers Earl and Merle Black demonstrate, the few Republicans who tried to win the segregation vote failed to do so. To remain viable, the Republican party had to find its own platform, voting base, and campaign tactics.\footnote{See Merle Black and Earl Black, The Rise of Southern Republicans (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).}

Influencing both of these debates, but at the same time distinct from them, is the growing scholarship on the rise of the conservative movement and the corresponding fall of liberalism. The story of southern realignment is not just the study of voters switching political parties, it is also the story of how both the national Democratic and Republican party attempted to redefine themselves to deal with the realities of the new post-war and, later, integrated American landscape. These scholars show how the Republican Right moved from the periphery to the center in the midst of this dramatic period of change. As Donald T. Critchlow argues, this transformation was full of “ideological contradictions and political tensions,” as the once dominant New Deal political coalition of urban voters, African Americans, southern whites, and labor unions disintegrated.
before a cohesive conservative movement emerged as a legitimate replacement.\textsuperscript{18} Likewise, political scientist Joseph E. Lowndes writes that the Right is, “contingent, mobile, and highly adaptive, constantly responding to changes on the ground.”\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, he contends that, “as opposed to the Republican capture of the white South, we may better speak of a southern capture of the Republican party.”\textsuperscript{20} For Lowndes, race and the economy are so intermingled that scholars should not try to separate them. The Republicanization of the South is best understood as the “mobilization—and nationalization—of many different southern political elements.”\textsuperscript{21} It began when southern segregationists successfully used the “viable Republican party structure” built by Dwight D. Eisenhower and his followers to promote their preferred candidate in 1964, Barry Goldwater. These structures in turn were key to the success of Richard Nixon’s presidential campaign in 1968 and 1972 and indeed in every successful Republican election since that time.\textsuperscript{22}

Drawing upon all three schools of thought, but driven by the evidence from the counties of my study, I argue, like Lowndes, that race and class are so intertwined in the story of the South’s realignment that the role of each is key to understanding the local voters’ decisions to change their political party. However, I agree with the timeline of those who criticize the myth of southern exceptionalism. In DeKalb County, it is clear that the Republican party emerged in the 1940s as a class-based institution introduced by

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 6.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
postwar transplants. Yet, its success was fleeting, especially as race grew more important, for both liberals and conservatives, as the civil rights movement grew more successful and increasingly challenged the status quo. The years of my study, 1948-1984, are a period of intense confusion as the sand shifted beneath the feet of Georgia’s traditional political structure. I examine the choices that the state parties made as they struggled to define their position and, as importantly, how the electorate reacted to these decisions. And, in keeping with traditional southern scholarship, I show how the conservatism first espoused by Barry Goldwater in 1964 evolved into a political platform acceptable to both Georgia’s suburbs and cities, as evident in DeKalb County as well as the white rural areas that were once the most powerful part of the Solid South such as Pierce County. I also illustrate how the Republican party strained to find viable, strong candidates even in areas where voters were the most open to their ideas. In contrast, I show how issues of race, above all else, guided the decisions of Hancock and I demonstrate how the confusion of the times undermined any hopes of party loyalty during this period of partisan realignment.

By and large, my study of this transformation follows the traditional timeline. I begin chapter one with the watershed election of 1948. When the Democratic party nominated Harry S. Truman, whose support for civil rights made him an unpopular choice for southern Democrats, and added a civil rights plank to the Democratic platform, it was clear that the South had lost much of its power within the Democratic party. It was not, however, clear whether or not the Democrats could win a presidential election without the South. I also examine the two issues that made the 1948 election even more
critical for Georgia voters: the impact of the end of the “all white” primary system and the gubernatorial election where voters had to decide whether or not to continue the Talmadge era after the death of its founder and namesake Eugene Talmadge. The Talmadgites, who remained a force in Georgia politics until 1980, were known for their fierce support of the state’s rural, population, equally fervent fight for segregation, and their firm belief in state’s rights. They also tended to emulate Eugene Talmadge’s boisterous oratory style and his “everyman” appeal. In 1946, two years after the Supreme Court ruled in Smith v. Allright that an all white primary system was unconstitutional, Georgia officially ended the longstanding tradition of preventing African Americans from casting their ballot in the primary elections. Shortly after the decision, African American organizations launched statewide campaigns to mobilize register voters and test the law. By May 8, 1946, the number of African American voters in Georgia had grown from 10,000 in 1944 to 118,000.23 Although this was still a very small percentage of the overall electorate, it was a very big threat to the status quo and the traditional white power base.

This power base would face another major challenge in the 1948 Democratic primary. In the 1948 ballot Georgia voters faced two very significant decisions: stray from the party ticket and go with the Dixiecrats and vote in a new type of governor or stick with the Talmadge tradition. The results were mixed. Talmadge won in a landslide, while the Dixiecrats came in a distant third. Using editorials and articles from the major newspapers of each of the three counties of my study, I show how voters grappled with

the idea of a competitive South and with the realization that the power of the rural areas was shrinking while the chance that African Americans might achieve equality was growing.

In 1948, the few voters who voted a split ticket were not moving from the Democratic party to the Republican party, they were casting their vote for the Dixiecrats and the right to a segregated society. The Dixiecrat revolt was the traditional southern power structure’s first challenge to the Democrats’ commitment to civil rights. In the fifties, disenchanted Southern legislators launched their strongest challenge against their own party’s support for desegregation with a strategy known massive resistance. Historians call the supporters of massive resistance the Russell Democrats after their most influential leader, Senator Richard Russell of Georgia.

In chapter two, I analyze the impact of the southern Congressional block’s policy of massive resistance. I show how the urban-based Georgia “Eisenhower Republicans” struggled to find a voting base and how state and local Democrats struggled to distance themselves from the national party. I end by discussing the new conservatism represented by the Goldwater campaign and the effect it had on the fierce political battle between Republican Roscoe Pickett, Jr. and Democrat James A. MacKay in DeKalb County. Weaving the narrative together is the story of Congresswoman Iris F. Blitch from Pierce County. Like so many of her constituents, she supported massive resistance, opposed the civil rights movement, and in 1964, after years of service to the Democrats, very publically switched political parties.
After the conservative “Goldwater groundswell” of 1964 both political parties struggled to find their philosophical footing. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, which outlawed discrimination at the polls, made the challenge more difficult. The new African American voters were an unproven demographic. No one was certain who they would vote for, if they would vote, or if they could sway an election. The struggles of the Georgia Democrats and Georgia Republicans with this uncertainty was especially evident in the next critical election of my study: the 1966 gubernatorial contest.

In chapter three, I deviate from traditional timelines to focus on the 1966 gubernatorial election. I argue that no other single state election captured the confusion of this period of party transformation better than the contest between Democrat Lester Maddox and Republican Bo Calloway. For the voters who favored civil rights and integration, the similarities between these two candidates were all too apparent. In fact, as one political scientist acutely observed, the only distinguishable characteristic between the two was the hope that “the Republican would not take to the streets with an ax-handle to stave off integration in the way that Maddox famously had.” After the 1966 election, two other big personalities would mobilize in opposition to Maddox and the direction he was taking the Democratic party. Manual Maloof of DeKalb County would use his bar, Manual’s Tavern, as the center of a campaign to give a voice to moderate Democrats, while in Hancock County, John McCown would organize the overwhelmingly black populace to elect African Americans to local political office for the first time.

Though Maloof and McCown were unhappy with Maddox and the Georgia Democrats in 1966, they opted to fight for change from within their party, not outside of it. After Callaway failed to become governor, the fledgling Republican party struggled to maintain its momentum and recruit new members. Some in the party referred to the seventies as the “dark days.” However, that characterization fails to acknowledge the currents of change that would make them competitive. In the fourth and final chapter, I show how despite the their own early struggles, compounded by Richard Nixon’s resignation in 1974, and the successful presidential run of Jimmy Carter, Georgia’s own Democratic son, in 1976, by 1984 the Georgia Republicans had emerged as the party of choice for southern conservatives. I chart this evolution through the key elections of this period, including the DeKalb County Commissioner race in 1968, the 1970 gubernatorial contest and the county elections in Hancock, and Jimmy Carter’s campaign for President in 1976. I end the chapter by examining the Reagan revolution and its impact on DeKalb county’s Mack Mattingly’s successful campaign to become the first Republican Senator from Georgia since Reconstruction. In 1980, each of the three counties favored Jimmy Carter.  Just four years later, Ronald Reagan and the Republicans carried DeKalb and Pierce. Hancock, as is true today, favored the Democrats.

Today the ramifications of this political transformation are readily evident. In Georgia, just as in my hometown, Democrats still outnumber Republicans in the city and county elections, but the Republicans dominate state posts. The Governor is a

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25 Carter won 82,743-74,904 in DeKalb, 2,205-573 in Hancock, and 1,918-1,027 in Pierce.
Republican, as are ten of the fifteen members of the Congress. In the State Senate, Republicans outnumber Democrats 34 to 22 and the G.O.P. holds a 105 to 74 margin in the State House. In Georgia as in the rest of the South, Republicans are regularly competitive in most areas and downright dominant in others. This is a far cry and major change from the situation just a half century ago.
Chapter 1: The Day the Democratic Party Died: Georgians React to the Dixiecrat Revolt

“Wednesday, July 14, 1948 was a day long to be remembered in the political annuals of the United States. For that day witnessed the death of the Democratic Party,” decried the editors of the *DeKalb New Era*. On that day, incumbent President Harry Truman, who had angered many white southerners with his support of civil rights, anti-lynching laws, and a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission, officially accepted the Democratic party’s nomination for President. As to the cause of death, the editors explained, “It was because the rules of justice were ignored, the precepts of fairness were forgotten and the rights of the States trampled underfoot. It was because the Constitution of the people was flagrantly and brazenly violated.” 27 While Truman’s nomination in the face of the southern Democrats’ objection was a blow to the South, the party’s decision to add a civil rights plank to the official Democratic platform was a knockout punch. Furious, delegates from Mississippi and Alabama stormed out of the convention. They, along with 6,000 other southern Democrats, met in Birmingham, Alabama to form their own party, the States’ Rights party or more commonly the Dixiecrats. Their platform, officially adopted in Oklahoma City on August 14, 1948, defined southern discontent. They deemed the Constitution “the greatest human charter of liberty ever conceived of by man” and pledged to fight any attempt to take away the rights it guaranteed. They opposed big government, supported checks and balances, and

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opposed Harry Truman’s “totalitarianism” and any other politicians who would help create a “police nation.” Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they pledged support for segregation, opposed the civil rights platform, and declared, “Enforcement of such a program would be utterly destructive of the social, economic and political life of the Southern people and of other localities in which there may be differences in race, creed or national origin in appreciable numbers.” The 1948 Dixiecrat Revolt forced the South into a decision it had never before had to face. Voters had to decide where their allegiances lay—with the Democratic party, with whom they had allied since Reconstruction, or with the social structures and belief in states’ rights they had fought for in the Civil War. Having grown increasingly disgruntled with the national Democratic party, voters began to consider their options. Many openly considered the possibility of a two-party system.

For white Georgians, two issues made the situation even more complex. First, on April 1, 1946 the United States Supreme Court overturned Smith v. Allright, which effectively invalidated the South’s long standing practice of an all-white primary election. In the wake of this decision the NAACP and other organizations launched a statewide campaign to register African-American voters. By May 8, 1946, the number of African American voters in Georgia had grown from 10,000 in 1944 to 118,000. While still a very small percentage of the African-American population, and an even smaller percentage of the overall electorate, this was a threat to long-established traditions.

When Governor Ellis Arnall refused to challenge the Supreme Court’s ruling, he lost the governorship to segregationist Eugene Talmadge.

When Eugene Talmadge passed away, somewhat suddenly, just weeks after securing his fourth term as Governor in 1942, it led to a unparalleled governmental crisis known as the, “three governors controversy.” For months, there was debate over who would serve as Georgia’s governor. Some argued that the position rightfully belonged to M.E. Thompson, who opposed Talmadge on nearly every level, but had won the election for Lieutenant Governor. The pro-Talmadge faction argued that Herman Talmadge, Eugene’s son, should serve in his father’s stead. Yet, others argued that outgoing Governor Ellis Arnall should serve as interim Governor until the next election. After much fighting, both physically and politically, M. E. Thompson was declared the successor until 1948, when a special election would take place. In 1948, therefore, Georgians faced another critical decision: should they extend the Talmadge era or have it pass with the death of its patriarch? By casting their vote for either Herman Talmadge or M. E. Thompson, Georgians were deciding whether to allow the Talmadgites, and their breed of conservatism based on white supremacy and intent of farmers to continue their dominance or support reform of the long-standing political system.

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30 Gene Talmadge was first elected Governor in 1932 and again in 1934. State law prevented him from running for a third consecutive term, so he turned his attention to the Senate. In 1936 he lost to incumbent Senator Richard B. Russell and likewise in 1938 he was defeated by incumbent Senator Walter F. George. He returned as Governor in 1940, but lost his 1942 reelection bid to Ellis Arnall. Just prior to the 1942 election, Talmadge forced the resignation of two pro-integration faculty members on the University System Board of Regents. The move itself was popular, but the resulting loss of statewide college accreditation was decidedly not, and it cost “Uncle Gene” the election. In 1943, a pro-Arnall faction succeeded in extending the Governor’s term of office from two to four years, making the 1946 gubernatorial race Tallmadge’s last campaign.

31 For more information on the three governor’s controversy see Numan Bartley, *Modern Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990); Harold P. Henderson, *The Politics of Change in Georgia: A Political*
Further complicating the 1948 election was Herman Talmadge’s stiff opposition to Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal policies. Uncle Gene, as Herman’s father was commonly called, had long been one of Roosevelt’s staunchest foes, consistently refusing to tow the national Democratic party line. At the peak of his opposition, he criticized relief programs for undermining the efforts of religious organizations, opposed minimum wages as long as they applied equally to white and black workers and were higher than the average salary paid Georgia’s sharecroppers, and he called agricultural price supports, “the first move toward making peons of the farmers of America.” He even pledged to prevent Georgians from participating in any of the Roosevelt administration’s social programs as long as they aided African Americans and expanded the power of the federal government. Talmadge grew so unyielding in his wholesale antagonism to the New Deal that historian Numan Bartley writes, “There were, of course, legitimate criticisms that could have been and were leveled at much of the New Deal structure, but few emanated from Georgia.” In his campaign for Governor, Herman showed the same tendencies as his father. In the Democratic primary, Herman Talmadge handily carried Hancock and Pierce County, but lost the urban county of DeKalb to Thompson. In the general election Talmadge was virtually unchallenged, while President Truman won the majority of the votes in each county. Thus, in this single election voters demonstrated support for both the national Democratic party and for a Governor who pledged to fight

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33 Ibid, 174.
34 See Table 1.
that very platform. Rather than a contradiction, this vote marks the beginning of a significant trend. Although both Talmadge and Truman were Democrats, voting for them meant something completely different. On the most basic level, a vote for Talmadge meant a vote for rural conservatism and segregation, while a vote for Truman was a vote to support uprooting the social order through progressive civil rights legislation. Straight ticket voting, practiced by the white southern power structure since Reconstruction, would soon no longer be sufficient. Voters began to realize the disadvantages of a one-party system, and openly and honestly considered their alternatives. However, while the 1948 election was the first time they faced this decision, it was born out of a long period of dissatisfaction with the national Democratic Party.

Franklin D. Roosevelt: Georgia’s Adopted Son

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was as close to a Georgian as any privileged New Yorker could hope to be. In 1924, the manager of a forty-six room resort hotel in Warm Springs, Georgia, local newspaper editor Thomas W. Loyless wrote to Roosevelt extolling the medicinal values of the warm, natural mineral waters that flowed from Pine Mountain. It was more than a friendly invitation, because the resort was struggling and Loyless was fully aware of both Roosevelt’s struggle with polio and his growing celebrity. Roosevelt accepted the invitation.35 In a widely syndicated interview with the Atlanta Journal’s Cleburne Gregory, Roosevelt first publicly spoke of the benefits of Warm Springs, but as Gregory noted, “Mr. Roosevelt does not attribute any medicinal effects to the Warm Springs water, but he gave the water credit for his ability to remain it

for two hours or more, without tiring in the least, and the rest of the credit for his improvement is given to Georgia’s sunshine.” 36 For the remainder of his life, Roosevelt regularly visited Warm Springs to seek relief from his polio and refuge from his busy schedule. Georgians embraced Roosevelt and Roosevelt embraced Georgians—a relationship FDR carefully cultivated. Before becoming President, he bought a farm near Pine Mountain, served as a substitute columnist for the Macon *Daily Telegraph*, and was a consulting architect and landscape engineer for the Warm Springs Company. 37 With his endorsement and funds the once ill-repaired resort grew into national center for polio therapy. 38 When rumors began to surface that Roosevelt was considering a run for President, Georgians were elated. In 1930, at the annual Possum Hunt Dinner, the toastmaster read a prepared statement from *Atlanta Constitution* editor Clark Howell that declared, “Unless I am greatly mistaken, you are entertaining the next President of the United States.” 39 Howell was right and FDR and the Democratic party swept Georgia and the South, ending twelve years of national Republican control. The headline in the *Atlanta Constitution* proclaimed the “Solid South Reborn.” 40

Initially, the southern excitement over Roosevelt was well-founded. With a Democrat in the White House and the Democratic party in control of both houses, southerners wielded considerable power. Adding to this was southern seniority.

36 Quoted from Lippman, 36-37.  
37 For more information on Roosevelt’s columns see Donald Scott Carmichael, ed., *F.D.R Columnist: The Uncollected Columns of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Chicago: Pellegrini and Cudahy Press, 1947).  
38 According to Frank Freidel, Roosevelt invested as much as $200,000 in Warm Spring, representing nearly two-thirds of his financial resources. For more information see Frank Freidel, *F.D.R. and the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 7-8.  
40 “Solid South Reborn in Smashing Sweep for Party Ticket; Border States Join,” *Atlanta Constitution*, November 9, 1932.
Without any real opposition from the Republican party within their states, southern Congressmen controlled a disproportionate number of committees and, despite their absence in Roosevelt’s cabinet, held several important posts. Georgians, including prominent Atlantan Clark Foreman, Director of the Commission of Interracial Cooperation and Senator Walter George, counted themselves among the young minds of the New Dealers.  

However, this rosy outlook quickly soured. By dramatically increasing the federal government’s ability to intervene in state and local affairs, the New Deal pierced through the heart of the southern political philosophy.

Whereas in 1932, “the severity of the Depression and its seeming intractability overwhelmed the South’s long-held aversion to federal intervention,” by 1938 Senator George called Roosevelt’s second generation of reforms, dubbed the Second New Deal, a “second march through Georgia.” This change in support was due in part to the increasing power of the people on the periphery of the Old South power structure. In the Solid South the people with the most power, both economic and political, were the white planters in the Black Belt. Although the programs of the First New Deal, including most notably the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) which raised agricultural prices by limiting production and reducing surplus, were most beneficial to the Black Belt planters, the New Deal as a whole brought unwanted national attention to the issues of the South’s segregated society. Gradually, conservative southern legislatures found themselves on

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42 Ibid, 3.
43 Quoted in Sullivan, 5.
44 The Black Belt originally referred to an area stretching from Texas to Georgia containing the South’s best soil. After the Civil War, it took on an additional context as the population of the counties comprising the belt was typically over fifty percent African American.
the defensive as Roosevelt’s programs began to benefit African Americans, labor unions, and other political outsiders. When African American leaders, such as Walter White, appealed to the government for aid, Roosevelt responded, at least to a degree. For instance, in 1933 he established the Committee on Negro affairs, in 1935 he ordered that applicants for the Works Progress Administration shall not be discriminated against by “race, color, or creed,” and in 1940 he ruled that the Civil Service could no longer request photographs of applicants.45 Although, in the eyes of most of the African-American community these were small steps, they were large enough to draw the ire of Southern Democrats. Leading the charge was Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge.

Gene Talmadge: Georgia’s Most Influential Dirt Farmer

In retrospect, “Uncle Gene” seems more like a caricature of the Solid South demagogue than a true political player. He was openly corrupt and unabashedly racist yet nonetheless extremely powerful. He was nicknamed the “wool hat dictator” and the “wild man from Sugar Creek,” but he most often referred to himself as a “poor dirt farmer.” Georgia born and bred, Talmadge entered politics after earning his law degree from the University of Georgia in 1907 and moving to Telfair County. There he held several local positions until setting his sights on the state legislature in 1920. His first and second attempts for election were unsuccessful, but his fortune turned in 1928 when he was elected Commissioner of Agriculture. It was during his campaign for Commissioner that he established himself as one of the South’s best stump speakers. More than political events, his rallies were social gatherings filled with barbeque,

45 Leutchenberg, 62.
moonshine, and bluegrass. He often wore his trademark red suspenders and on special occasions would ride to the stage on top of a cotton bale in an oxen drawn trailer. As Commissioner, one of his primary duties was to publish the newspaper the Market Bulletin. While many Georgia homes lacked a radio or a telephone, they all received the post. The agriculture circular proved to be the best means for Gene to communicate with his political base. Amid advice for effective agricultural operation and analysis of market trends, he espoused the virtue of laissez-fare economics and advocated for farmers. The Market Bulletin cemented his popularity among the white rural population. Not surprisingly, a large majority reelected him in 1930.46

The Talmadge era was aided by Georgia’s unique Democratic primary procedures. In the Solid South, where Republicans were few and far between, all state and local elections were determined in the primary. Unlike general elections, primaries were funded and regulated by the state party. Therefore, they were the vehicle of the most insidious types of voter discrimination tactics. Every southern state created some means of preventing the participation of African American voters. This included grandfather clauses, literacy exams, poll taxes, and until 1946 the all-white primary. Georgia’s Democratic party was unusual in that it took additional steps to favor its rural population. Until 1962, primary elections were determined by the county unit system rather than popular vote. The county-unit system awarded each of the 159 counties an allotment of votes based on population. Urban counties were awarded six unit votes, towns received

four, while rural counties were given two. This system reduced the influence of large cities, namely Atlanta, and bolstered Georgia’s vast rural areas. 47 This system also kept Talmadge and his followers in power.

As Talmadge’s popularity grew in the countryside, he came increasingly under fire from state officials. A 1932 committee report in the state Senate implicated him in three separate incidents. They found that he had violated state laws by not depositing fertilizer fees into the state treasury, that he had illegally used department funds on a scheme to increase the price of hogs, and that he had used at least $40,000 in state funds to pay for family vacations to the Kentucky Derby. 48 For his part, Talmadge claimed that these charges were drummed up accusations. 49 Then Governor Richard B. Russell ignored calls to impeach Talmadge, recommending instead that the state sue to recoup the lost revenue. Russell’s Attorney General, however, refused to proceed with the suit. With his rural popularity unfazed, Talmadge succeeded Russell as Governor in 1932 when Russell opted to run for the U.S. Senate.

It was from the platform of Governor that Eugene Talmadge launched into his criticism of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. The first clash between the two

49 The hog sale was admittedly not quite as scandalous as his opponents suggested. Talmadge believed that the Chicago market was unfairly lowering the prices of Georgia hogs, so to little fanfare he purchased hogs just below the Chicago Market, which was significantly higher than the local prices, to sell in Chicago. The result was a net loss for the Agricultural Department, but a gain for the farmers. For more information see Sarah McCulloh Lemmon, “The Agricultural Policies of Eugene Talmadge,” Agricultural History, 28 (January 1954): 21-30, accessed June 2, 2007, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3741074.
men occurred over the issue of the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC), a popular relief program designed to train and employ young men in national conservation programs. On March 31, 1933, the CCC officially came into existence with the clause: “That in employing citizens for the purpose of this Act, no discrimination shall be made on the account of race, color, or creed.”50 In spite of federal law, Talmadge wanted the funding to go exclusively to his supporters, white families. To do so, he listed every eligible African American candidate as employed, regardless of their true standing. This policy quickly drew the attention of citizens, especially in areas, like Atlanta, where the African American population significantly outnumbered whites. On May 2, 1933 one of these complaints reached the desk of the Secretary of Labor’s Department of CCC Selection, W. Frank Persons. When Persons first contacted Georgia officials, they claimed that African Americans were included in the program. After more complaints, Georgia officials admitted that they were not selecting African Americans, but insisted the choice was economically not racially motivated. It was vital, officials claimed, for Georgia’s agriculture that African Americans work on the farms.51 After much back and forth debate, Talmadge finally relented when Roosevelt himself threatened to cancel all of Georgia’s CCC funding if African Americans were not enrolled. Consequently, African Americans were admitted, but never at the rate the federal government expected.

After the CCC incident, Talmadge continued to oppose Roosevelt and the New Deal privately, sending several critical telegrams to national departments, while publicly

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51 Ibid.
offering support. However, these overtures of cooperation ended abruptly in 1936 when Talmadge challenged incumbent Richard B. Russell for his Senate seat. Talmadge framed his campaign as a fight against Roosevelt, who was also up for reelection, and his allies, including Russell. As Talmadge famously declared, the issue was no longer “Talmadge and Roosevelt” but “Talmadge or Roosevelt.” This gave him new focus. As historian William Anderson writes:

Previously, his energies had been in (1) promoting himself; (2) maintaining a poor, but debt-free, status-quo government; (3) giving limited relief to the “little man”; and (4) preaching the positiveness of the Old Way as a solution to life’s problems. His was a politics of crisis and personality, characterized by an endless series of publicity-gaining confrontations that had polarized the voters—thereby narrowing the choice of candidates, stabilizing politics, diminishing the importance of party and issues…He was, however, forced to change his strategy. The Depression forced it. The New Deal forced it. Mass production, mass communication, mass education, alternative lifestyles, sophistication, the tractor—they all forced a redirection of his energies. And so did his overriding desire to be a United States Senator.

Despite failing to defeat President Roosevelt and Senator Russell, Talmadge succeeded in bringing to light an open national and state critique of the Democratic party. Although Talmadge does not deserve all of the credit, he was at least partially responsible for Roosevelt’s middle of the road stance towards southern racism. Talmadge’s very vocal opposition exposed the South’s underlying fear that the nation and especially the national Democratic party did not understand southern culture. Needing

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53 Ibid, 129.
54 There were several opponents of Roosevelt, including other southerners. Talmadge notwithstanding, the most vocal of these was Louisiana Senator Huey Long. Long’s complaint was completely different from Talmadge. Long believed that the New Deal did not go far enough to alleviate poverty and redistribute income. His “Share Our Wealth” program proposed to cap the amount of money any individual could keep, with the remaining funds used to finance government programs. He was assassinated in 1935.
southern votes in Congress to pass his legislation, Roosevelt resisted supporting a civil rights program that would attack the South’s social structure. He left the military segregated, did not challenge *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and offered little support to anti-lynching efforts. Only during World War II, after civil rights advocates threatened to March on Washington and launched the Double V campaign to achieve victory abroad as well as victory over racism at home, did Roosevelt act. Even then, his Fair Employment Practices Commission, created to gain access for blacks to defense industry jobs, was only designed to last through the war. In limiting his support of civil rights, Roosevelt kept the majority of the South loyal.\(^{55}\) This coupled with the end of the Depression and victory in World War II restored Democratic unity, at least in public.

**Truman and the South**

In July 29, 1948 the editors of the *DeKalb New Era* asked, “What Can Real Democrats Do?” They explained, “The line of division has been clearly drawn through the ranks of the Democratic party.” On one side were “millions of Americans who believe in the Constitution of the United States” on the other were “political bosses who have grown fat on political patronage” and “those who have been persuaded by pious propaganda, by preachments of social altruism and by false half-truths with an appealing twang who blindly follow these political bosses.”\(^{56}\) Southerners, they argued, were clearly on right side of that line. Truman was not.

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\(^{56}\) “What Can Real Democrats Do?” *DeKalb New Era*, July 29, 1948.
Truman’s relationship with the white South prior to the 1948 election was complicated at best. At the heart of southern dismay was the fact that the South had been instrumental in lofting Truman to the position of Vice-President. With his health obviously failing, the 1944 presidential election was widely understood as FDR’s last. Although southern opponents conceded the presidency to Roosevelt, they sought to guide the future of the Democratic party with a sympathetic Vice-President. Roosevelt’s previous Vice President, Henry Wallace, was a political lightening rod with a great deal of popular support, but little political sway. A plant geneticist by trade, Wallace was an intellectual eccentric. He eloquently defended civil rights, liberalism and true democracy, while at the same time reportedly, claimed to convene with the spirit of a long dead Indian chief. As historian David McCullough writes, “Those who loved him saw him as one of the rare men of ideas in politics and the prophet of a truly democratic America. But he was also an easy man to make fun of and to these tough party professionals, Wallace seemed to have his heads in the clouds.” In his stead, the southern delegation supported the young and relatively unknown Missouri Senator Harry S. Truman.

The source and timing of Truman’s determination to support civil rights is a matter of much scholarly debate. Some claim that Truman had always supported civil rights in principal, but political necessity often forced him into a less aggressive stance. These scholars often point to Truman’s 1945 message to Congress, in which he praised existing New Deal programs and pledged to expand his policies to include areas such as

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58 Ibid.
welfare and housing.59 Others argue that Truman’s move to the left was part of an attempt to galvanize ardent New Dealers and African-American voters, especially in light of the Democratic party’s disastrous loss of the House and Senate in the 1946 elections. These scholars often point to a memo from James Rowe, a Truman advisor, suggesting that Truman, “move to the left and focus on building a coalition of groups that centered on labor, liberals, and northern urban African Americans.”60 In either case, this much is clear: Truman’s Fair Deal built on New Deal philosophy, with one profound difference—he actively supported civil rights. In a complete reversal of Roosevelt’s positions, he desegregated the armed forces, supported anti-lynching laws, and pushed for a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). This greatly angered the southern delegation. “President Truman has failed to measure up to the caliber needed for his position. He is playing small-time politics in his effort to get votes by slapping the South concerning the FEPC and the anti-lynching law,” declared Pierce County’s newspaper, The Blackshear Times.61 For southerners, the Fair Deal did not contain even a hint of the reconciliation of Roosevelt’s New Deal. North Carolina’s beloved senator Sam Ervin famously declared Truman’s civil rights program a “civil wrong.”62

The push for a permanent FEPC in particular drew much indignation. Roosevelt designed the original FEPC, which he funded through the presidential emergency fund, to

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62 Leuchtenburg, 527.
give African Americans equal access to employment in wartime industries. Russell staunchly opposed the measure, arguing that it displaced white southern workers. As Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, he spearheaded the successful passage of a measure forcing Congress to pass specific funds to continue the operation the FEPC. In response, Truman proposed to create a permanent commission with the ability to enforce the legislation. Opponents fervently argued that it was an attempt by the federal government to dictate personal preference. DeKalb County resident Louise Haygood Trotti illustrated this position. Trotti described for readers a conversation she had with her former gardener when he asked, “Why don’t the white folks want us colored folks to have not rights. Will you tell me about the FEPC?” She responded:

If a white man owned his own business, which he started to place his sons, sons-in-law, nephews, in a position, and had over a certain number of people working for him and had the FEPC that the police force set up to enforce it could watch and see who worked for him, and the FEPC could say: “You’ve got too many whites; you’re discriminating against the Chinese, you’ve got to take so many Chinese.” He could say, “You’ve got too many Methodist, you’ve got to put on so many Baptist” (for it applies to race creed or color). He could say to the Chinese laundry man: “You’ve got to let some of your Chinese go and take so many Japs.” He could tell a negro who was running his business on Auburn Avenue that he had to let so many of his negro employees go and put on so many of any race he named and he would have to do it, and the FEPC and Police Force they sent out into every state to enforce their orders would all be paid out of the taxes of the people and they would have to do what they said.

Likewise, an editorial in Pierce County’s newspaper declared, “The FEPC, if enacted into law, would compel employers to hire and fire, promote and otherwise deal with labor without regard to race, color, religion, or ancestry. In other words, business

men would be forced to hire laborers without regard to their own preference as to race, religion or any other factor. . . It would be a long step toward ‘Communism and complete centralization and empowering the hands of the federal government.’”\textsuperscript{65} In 1955 Herman Talmadge himself penned a treatise in opposition to Supreme Court rulings in favor of desegregation. Entitled \textit{You and Segregation}, this short publication also warned that the FEPC had communist origins. Talmadge wrote, “The administrative and judicial provisions of the proposed FEPC laws introduced in the Congress and passed into law by several states faithfully follow Stalin’s ‘All Race Law.’”\textsuperscript{66} Additionally, he claimed that the law “would place into the hand of the administration a heinous weapon for use against any person who might dare offer opposition. In time it could become easily the germ for a power-mad dictatorship.”\textsuperscript{66}

For the FEPC’s opponents, and in the Georgia there were many, this bill was an intolerable extension of the federal government’s power. It not only superseded state power by providing for federal policing, it also was an invasion of personal preference. It only further proved that northern politicians did not understand the social structure of the South. It was the right of white southerners to chose whom they wanted to hire. The FEPC was an attempt to reform individual choice, and that was not the place of the federal government. In some minds, this intervention resembled communism, a threat not to be taken lightly as the Cold War between the United States and the U.S.S.R. intensified.

\textsuperscript{65} “Donald Richberg Opposes FEPC,” \textit{The Blackshear Times}, May 27 1948 (reprint from the \textit{Brantley Enterprise}).
As southern opposition became more vocal, there was hope that Truman would abandon his support of such an invasive and controversial program. This hope proved fleeting, however, as Truman slowly built national support for his civil rights program, including the FEPC. On the eve of the Democratic Convention, a *DeKalb New Era* editorial assessed the situation declaring, “It is seldom good to take a defeatist attitude in any fight, be it in war, morale or political . . . But it is extremely difficult to view the political status of the Democratic party in any other light.” It added, “The blame for this situation lies solely at Mr. Truman’s own door. He could easily have avoided it by foregoing his selfish inclinations to secure votes by betraying a great segment of his party.”

That segment was the southern delegation, and at the Democratic Convention they made their opposition towards both the President and the Democratic party apparent.

The 1948 Democratic Convention

The first signs of the impending trouble were visible at the Southern Governors Meeting on February 4, 1948. Two days before the convention, Truman went before Congress to call for a “Ten Point Program” to improve civil rights—a plan that included the notorious permanent FEPC, a permanent civil rights commission, federal protection of voting, federal laws against lynching, and the creation of a civil rights division within the Department of Justice. The governors’ attention quickly turned from the scheduled topic of regional graduate schools to the President’s plan. Mississippi Governor Fielding Wright proposed a split with the party, but the governors opted instead for the moderate plan from South Carolinian Strom Thurmond. Thurmond’s plan was to create a

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committee determined to reach a compromise with the President. They believed that the Democratic party would have to bend to their demands or risk losing the southern vote and the election.  

Although Georgia Governor M. E. Thompson disliked the President’s plan and supported the Thurmond proposal, he was one of the few southern governors vocally opposed to a split from the Democratic party. Thompson, however, was in the midst of a difficult tenure in office and perhaps an even more difficult campaign. Since beating Herman Talmadge in the “three governors controversy,” in 1946, Thompson faced an adverse legislature seemingly content to campaign for “their man Herman” rather than do the bidding of a one-year governor. The Talmadge faction succeeded in thwarting Thompson’s attempts at election reform and a state sales tax. Still, Thompson, due largely to an unexpected increase in state revenue, was able to meet some of his legislative goals. He raised teacher salaries, increased state funding for secondary education, improved infrastructure, and bought Jekyll Island, dubbed at the time “Thompson’s Folly,” but today accepted as one of Georgia’s most fiscally responsible real estate purchases—further evidence of the scrutiny he faced. To defeat Talmadge, he had to appeal to those voters on the periphery of traditional southern politics. Herman Talmadge was most popular among his father’s followers, the Old South. Thompson could do little to convince the Black Belt planters and the rural farmers to vote for his policies, but he could appeal to the same Democratic base as Truman, the liberal Democrats and new African American voters. He also held considerable appeal in

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68 Frederickson, 77-79.
Georgia’s urban areas and the growing constituency that saw the Talmadge era as corrupt and wasteful. In 1948, all of these voters were Democrats. Thompson had no choice but to oppose the split in the party. Herman Talmadge likewise relied on the party machinery, but with a strong and unhappy political base he might have had the power to run as a third-party candidate. Publicly he called for the systematic defeat of the President’s proposals. Privately he sent Georgia’s Democratic Executive Committee letters in support of increased states rights.\textsuperscript{70} He, however, like his opponent decided to stick with tradition and the Democratic party structure. With the gubernatorial election looming, Georgia was the only Deep South state not outwardly supportive of the Dixiecrat Revolt.

In the months between the February meeting of the southern governors and the Democratic Convention, many in the southern delegation held on to the hope that the Democratic party would abandon Truman in support of another, more favorable candidate. As the pressure grew from the southern fringes Truman attempted to temper his message without angering the liberal base. In fact, in the days leading up to the Convention he worked to draft a compromise plank on civil rights designed to appease the South. However, a successful push from liberal Democrats from the floor of the Convention forced Truman’s hand. In the end the Democratic party, with Truman’s support, voted to adopt a progressive civil rights plank.\textsuperscript{71} Resigned to the inevitable, southerners prepared to demonstrate their disgust with the party. Upon the official


\textsuperscript{71} Raymond H. Gesselbracht, \textit{The Civil Rights Legacy of President Truman}, (Kirkville, Truman State University Press, 2003), 56-59.
announcement that the party had adopted the civil rights platform, the entire Mississippi delegation and a majority of the Alabama delegates walked out of the convention. Not every southerner favored the walkout; in fact, most of the southern delegation, including the Georgia delegates, remained. In protest, the remaining delegates nominated Georgia Senator Russell for the Presidency. Russell accepted the nomination as the convention band played “Dixie.” Truman may have won the nomination, but southern disgust was evident.72

On July 17, 1948, the majority of the southern delegation met in Birmingham, Alabama to discuss the formation of an opposition party. They called themselves the States’ Rights party, also known as the Dixiecrats, and they nominated for President South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond.73 They were explicitly pro-segregation and anti-civil rights. They had two purposes: the first was to win the Presidency, but in the likely event that did not happen, they hoped to at least split the party and keep Truman out of the White House.74

The Republican Party Remerges

Sometimes the most influential political leaders are the ones who never seek office. This is certainly true for Georgia’s Republican party. Killean “Kil” Townsend arrived in Georgia as a Republican in the mid-1940s and he remained a force until his recent death. Having grown up in a prominent New York family, Townsend was

72 Frederickson, 130-131.
73 Senator Russell attended, but made it known that he did not want the States’ Rights nomination.
74 The Dixiecrats only succeeded in winning the state—Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina—where state Democratic party officials listed Strom Thurmond as the official Democratic Presidential candidate instead of Harry Truman. With Governor Thompson and Gubernatorial candidate Talamadge opposed to the split, Georgia’s party officials elected to list Thurmond as a third party candidate.
unaccustomed to Georgia’s one party system. After completing law school in Virginia, Townsend joined the military where he served in the Counter Intelligence Corps during World War II. After the war, Townsend moved to Atlanta where his father helped him get into the very exclusive Atlanta Lawyers Club. It was there that Townsend first met Elbert Tuttle. Tuttle, who like Townsend was a recent Georgia transplant, had already garnered some fame for defending African Americans in civil rights cases. Tuttle “cornered” Townsend at one of the Lawyer’s Club meetings to ask if, as a former New Yorker, Townsend would be willing to help start a Republican Party. Together Townsend and Tuttle hoped to make the Republican party a viable, stable, and competitive force in Georgia politics.

As Tommy Hills, the current State Treasurer of Georgia and an amateur political historian, observes, from its earliest days “the Republican party was largely a northern regional party in support of an anti-slavery political platform.” During Reconstruction, the name given to the period from 1865-1877 when the nation struggled to repair the damages – both physical and political – after the Civil War, the Republicans were briefly successful. In fact, in 1868, Republican candidate Rufus Brown Bulluck defeated Democrat General John B. Gordon for Governor. Election returns revealed that 75 percent of Bulluck’s votes came from the former “black belt counties” where the vast

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76 Elbert Parr Tuttle would go on to become one of the “Fifth Circuit Four,” the appellate judges of the 5th District known for their support of key civil rights cases.
number of Georgia’s African American population resided. That same year, twenty-nine African Americans won seats on the Georgia House and three African Americans won a seat in the Senate. Unfortunately, just weeks into their terms, all but four of these newly elected legislators were removed from office under the guise that their newly earned right to vote did not grant them the right to hold office. The four remaining officials were so fair skinned that officials questioned their race and allowed them to stay in office.

This sudden removal of Georgia’s first African American politicians was only the first of a series of setbacks for Georgia’s earliest Republicans. In 1870, three Republicans were elected to the U.S. House Representative, but complications stemming from Georgia’s petition to rejoin the Union prevented two of the candidates from serving their full term while an investigation into voter fraud delayed the third from taking his seat for well over year. Even more devastatingly, in 1871 Governor Bullock resigned his post amidst charges of corruption surrounding his plan to create a state-owned railroad, threats of impeachment, and facing an overwhelming Democratic Georgia State Assembly. The already faltering Republican party never recovered from these early struggles. For over half century, pockets of Republicans survived in Georgia’s middle mountain areas and the big cities, but there was no state party system to speak of. As Hill writes, “The primary role of the Republican party organization in Georgia was to dispense federal patronage jobs, like U.S. postmaster positions, when the Republicans

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78 Ibid., 15.
79 Ibid., 17.
80 Ibid., 18.
81 Ibid.
controlled the White House” and appoint a handful of delegates to the Republican convention.82 From 1871 until the early 1940s, the Georgia Republican party neither posed any real threat nor carried any real political weight.

In 1948, Townsend and Tuttle sought to get away from this “monkey business” in order to start a legitimate Republican party.83 They also recruited Bob Snodgrass, an automobile financier, and Harry Summers, one of Georgia’s most prominent businessmen. By the fall of 1948, these men were convinced that Tom Dewey would be the next President. According to Townsend, “We were a big deal then, because everybody figured that we were going to be leading people, in terms of politics in the Republican party, and there were practically none of us.”84 They were dedicated to helping “their man” win the election and eager to enjoy the patronage that might come with such a hard fought victory.

As the election wore on, the Republican party grew in numbers and in power. They even counted among their supporters the longtime Democratic Mayor of Atlanta, William B. Hartsfield. Hartsfield found himself in the peculiar dilemma. Though he was personally, as historian Kevin M. Kruse aptly describes, “as much a segregationist as most southern whites of his era,” in Atlanta’s changing political landscape he astutely aligned himself with the emerging “moderate coalition”—a coalition of middle and upper

82 Ibid., 20.
83 While there certainly were Republicans in Georgia, the importance of the Democratic primary severely limited the appeal of registering as a Republican. In fact, there were no Republican primary elections until the 1960s. In the general elections, voters could choose to vote for a Republican, but with so much of the election decided in the primary, most chose to vote a straight Democratic ticket. Prior to 1948, the only major Republican elected was Governor Rufus Bullock. He is generally portrayed as a scalawag who entered office in 1868 and fled in 1871 to avoid impeachment charges.
class suburbanites as well as influential African Americans who favored economic conservatism and opposed the race-baiting style of the Georgia Democrats.\textsuperscript{85} In an unprecedented, but pragmatically calculated move, he gave Townsend and his Republicans permission to hang a Dewey-Warren sign across Georgia’s most famous thoroughfare, Peachtree Street. To recruit members and establish legitimacy, the men helped create a Young Republicans Club and a women’s branch, and they published monthly newspapers. They decided to focus on the Presidency rather than put forth a slate of candidates in state elections. There were several reasons for this, some practical and at least one political. Practically, the new party simply did not have the funding to run a proper campaign, nor did they have the candidates. Politically, Townsend joked, “The theory is that there is nobody here for the administration to appoint. We figured that Elbert Tuttle would probably be Attorney General, I would probably be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and Harry Summers would be Secretary of the Treasurer, there is no telling where we would go.”\textsuperscript{86} There was at least some hope that the future President would reward their loyalty in such an adverse situation. After Truman’s victory, the Republican Party disappeared only to reemerge briefly during Eisenhower’s first campaign. It was not until 1964, during Barry Goldwater’s campaign for the presidency, that the Republican party finally became a force in state and local politics.

The struggle of the Townsend Republicans illustrates an interesting dilemma for Georgia’s African American community in 1948 – the Georgia Republicans posed no real

\textsuperscript{86} Townsend interview.
alternative to the Democratic party on the issue of race. They certainly were the lesser of
two evils when pitted against the pro-segregationist Talmadgites, but they were not
explicitly pro-civil rights. They were also not explicitly pro-segregation. At this earliest
juncture, the Townsend Republicans were primarily a party frustrated by the Georgia
Democrats’ loud race-baiting and rural favoritism. This was a very tough sell outside of
Atlanta and DeKalb County in 1948.

The origin and nature of the Townsend Republican confirm the conclusions of
the growing number of historians and political scientist who oppose the field of southern
scholarship and what they believe is the myth of southern exceptionalism. These scholars,
such as Matthew Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, have successfully demonstrated how the
southern Republican party emerged from the cities through the dedication of southern
transplants like Townsend and Tuttle who favored conservative economic policies and
were frustrated by the race-bound conservatism of the southern Democrats and New Deal
policies of the national Democrats. This theory stands in contrast to the longstanding
argument made by traditional southern scholars that posits that the southern Republican
party emerged during the 1960s in response to the white backlash against the civil rights
movement. While the Townsend Republican party was short lived, it laid the foundation
for the “Eisenhower Republicans” that emerged less than a decade later. While certainly
influenced by racial issues, race was not at the heart of either the Townsend or the
Eisenhower Georgia Republican party. Race was, however, certainly on the minds of
the voters in Hancock county as the 1948 election approached.

The Election

41
In V.O. Key’s seminal 1949 work, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, he concluded, “Southern sectionalism and the special character of southern political institutions have to be attributed in main to the Negro.”87 Writing with race in the foreground, Key was the first scholar to identify the Dixiecrat Revolt as a revolt of the Black Belt planters. Key’s conclusions suggest that Dixiecrats would have the most appeal in Hancock County, an area located in the heart of the Black Belt with a population of approximately 8,000 Africans Americans to 3,000 whites. While it is true that the segregationists did extraordinarily well in Hancock, they did not carry the presidency. In the general election, Truman won the majority with 441 votes, the Dixiecrats came in second with 219, and the Republicans garnered 111. In Hancock, the ramifications of the Dixiecrat Revolt were the most significant, but the least immediate.88 The fact that a party built solely on segregation had little national appeal, gave hope to the African American population outside of the political power struggle. This hope, however, was diminished by the realization that at the time, neither party offered an alternative on the issues of race.

The county’s only newspaper *The Sparta Ishmaelite*, a long-time tool of the white establishment, regularly expressed its outrage with Truman and the Democratic party. In July the editors wrote, “Since the Republican Convention has unanimously elected Mr. Dewey again to lead their party we can now settle down until the Democrats meet and nominate their man. Truman seems to be the only man they have to put up so far, but we

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88 In comparison, in the 1944 General Presidential Election, Republicans only received 92 votes compared to 380 for the Democrats.
hope for better luck before the Convention.”89 A few weeks later they noted, “The Democratic party would have likely made a better showing this year if they had reversed their nomination and let Senator Barkley be in the race for the Presidency and let Truman remain in second place. We think he would do better at ‘Second Fiddle.’”90 These short statements are clear indications that the Hancock power structure was not pleased with the Truman administration, yet they were not willing to split with the party.

There is also another striking theme evident in the editorial page of the Sparta Ishmaelite. While the authors were quick to disapprove of Truman, they so did without acknowledging the segregation existent in Hancock. Instead, they blamed the northern Democrats for misunderstanding the South and the Republicans for using civil rights as an issue to divide the party. In August the editors wrote, “The Republicans will manage to make the present session of Congress a dud by throwing the racial issue in to the hopper so our Southern delegation can filibuster and scrap over it. That is just what they wanted—then Democrats will be blamed for the do-nothing session.”91 After the election they acknowledged, “The Republicans are still trying to find out ‘how Truman did it’ but they must admit he fooled them all and make the best of it. We admit he has made many mistakes, but still think a Democratic administration is best for the South.”92 In December they quipped, “President Truman is quoted as saying he will push his Civil Rights and FEPC legislation on the South, but we believe he used that move to get votes than anything else. He will have the Georgia delegation and those from other states to

89 The Sparta Ishmaelite, July 1, 1948.
90 The Sparta Ishmaelite, July 22, 1948.
91 The Sparta Ishmaelite, August 5, 1948.
92 The Sparta Ishmaelite, November 25, 1948.
contend with when he starts his foolishness.”93 At a time when many southern local newspapers were explicit about their racist viewpoints, this was a strangely cautious tone indicative of the peculiar position of the powerful, but small, white population.

The election results coupled with the newspaper editorials indicate the first rumblings of political change. Hancock’s white Democratic power structure was clearly but perhaps not quite confidently in charge. In the Sparta Ishmaelite, the editors took care to minimize the issue of race, but every single reader lived in the reality of Jim Crow. For the minority white population, Truman’s election was troubling, but Herman Talmadge’s victory was encouraging. The African American population did not mobilize until the mid-sixties, but once they did, it was permanent.

In Pierce County, a rural area with a population of approximately 2,500 African Americans to 8,000 whites, the results were very similar to Hancock. Like Hancock, Pierce voters elected a segregationist to every local and state position, but selected Truman as President. For the editor of the Blackshear Times, Carl Broome, the situation was unsolvable. Unlike the editors of the Sparta Ishmaelite, Broome openly acknowledged that the Republicans did not yet offer an alternative on the issue of race:

Dewey and the Republican Party have advocated the Civil Rights Bill and similar legislation aimed at the South. In fact, the Republican Party was born as a political party committed to a program of “Anti South.” Truman is impossible from a southern viewpoint. Dewey and the Republican Party are alike impossible. Dewey led the fight to enact a Civil Rights law for New York State, a law which is now in effect in that state.94

93 The Sparta Ishmaelite, December 12, 1948
According to Broome, the 1948 election did not offer the residents of Pierce County anything. The national Republican party was born out of a “anti-southern tradition,” the Dixiecrats were disloyal Democrats financed by oil interests, and the Democratic party supported civil rights. In desperation, he suggested that his reader vote for the straight ticket, but mark out the name of Truman in protest.

After the election, Broome outlined a plan for the Republican party to attract southern voters. He called for the Republicans to abandon their “reactionary leadership” and “advance in political thinking toward a middle-of-the-road program… In other words, the Republicans must liberalize their program.” A liberalized Republican party might, according to Broome, “appeal to the many voters who fear extreme left-wing measures, but who, in the current election, feared them less than they feared Republican reactionism.”  

95 He hoped that these “liberal Republicans” would continue to support the key southern programs of the New Deal—specifically including the Tennessee Valley Authority, farm prices support, and reciprocal tariffs—that despite Talmadge’s fierce opposition ultimately aided Georgia’s struggling farmers.  

96 Since these agricultural and relief programs were distributed by the existing local political structures, “rather than challenging or subverting local authorities, relief strengthened them,” by giving them, “new funds to disperse and favors to bestow.”  

97 Broome was willing to consider the Republican party, but not at the cost of the Democrats’ social programs that benefited Southern agriculture and, as importantly, did not upset the social order.

95 Carl Broome, “Sweeping the Country,” The Blackshear Times, November 18, 1948
97 Ibid.
In DeKalb County, the results were mixed. As residents of one of Georgia’s urban counties, DeKalb voters preferred Governor M.E. Thompson to Herman Talmadge. They also voted for Truman. This might be the result of the Republican party’s attempt to mobilize or the result of African American voters, it is impossible to know. What is clear is that the editors of the *DeKalb New Era* did not support Truman. Perhaps a reflection of their own difficult position as an urban county in the midst of a rural state, they heavily criticized Truman for not seeking a compromise and thereby splitting the Democratic party. As they wrote, “The real issue is this—Shall we be allowed to say how and by whom we shall be governed or shall we permit the Federal Government or anyone else to take away that right from the people of our cities and counties and states? Shall we allow others to fashion laws to govern our intimate problems?” The *DeKalb New Era* was clearly invoking the “lost cause” to provoke the pride of white Georgians. Though not explicitly racist, the ideology was unmistakably reminiscent of Civil War and post-Civil War rhetoric.

**Conclusion**

In announcing the election results, the South’s largest African American newspaper, the *Atlanta Daily News*, wrote, “President Truman has won a victory over the 80th Congress, over the Wallacites, and the States’ Righters. He is unquestionably the most powerful and the most popular man in our nation.” They were right, he was powerful, but in Georgia he was decidedly not popular. The southern branch of the Democratic Party had tested the political waters—they staked all of their power against

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the issue of civil rights and they lost. Rather than demonstrate the strength of the Southern block, the Dixiecrat revolt painfully revealed its weaknesses. The national Democratic structure no longer bowed to the will of the South. For the southern delegation, the implications were clear—negotiate, go elsewhere, or fight for principle. In the post-Dixiecrat years, they did all three.

Despite the national turmoil, in Georgia the power of the state Democrats remained largely intact. The political structure that kept the Solid South strong did not allow for party diversity. Voters could choose between liberal and conservatives, such as Truman and Talmadge, but they had to be Democrats. In 1948, conservative and liberal Georgians alike considered whether or not this was an effective system.
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Table 1: 1948 Election Results
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<th>PERCENT URBAN, 1950</th>
<th>NATIVE WHITE PERSONS</th>
<th>NEGROES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DE KALB</td>
<td>136,395</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>120,499</td>
<td>14,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIERCE</td>
<td>11,112</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8,687</td>
<td>2,402</td>
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<tr>
<td>HANCOCK</td>
<td>11,052</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,001</td>
<td>8,047</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: 1940 and 1950 Census
Chapter 2: “No Place to Go”: The Rise of the Georgia Republicans, 1948-1964

A friend of Iris Faircloth Blitch once remarked, “I told her in the beginning that the only reason she wouldn’t win was because God made her a woman. I reckon she just didn’t even let that stand in her way.”100 Although the Dixiecrat Revolt made the headlines, in Pierce County there was another significant election. There Blitch began what would be a lifetime commitment to public service to her state.101

A native of Vidalia, Georgia, Blitch attended the University of Georgia for only a few semesters before leaving her studies, like so many women in 1920s, to marry and start a family. Although domestic commitments kept her from finishing her degree, it did not keep her out of politics. She was an active party volunteer and organizer throughout the 1930s. And, in 1948 her own political career took off when she secured a seat in the Georgia House of Representatives. During her two years in the State Assembly she won fame, and perhaps notoriety, for her support of a bill allowing women to serve on juries and her intense commitment to the interests of her largely agricultural electoral base. One year into her term, exactly twenty years after she dropped out the University of Georgia, Blitch enrolled in South Georgia College to finish her bachelor’s degree. 102

100 “Biographical Note and Overview,” Iris F. Blitch Papers, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Study, University of Georgia, Athens.
101 Blitch served as a Georgia State Representative in 1948, and then after a 1950 defeat, was reelected to the same position in 1952.
In 1954, with the help of her husband, a pharmacist, as well as her adult son and daughter, Blitch became the first Georgia women elected to a full term in the United States House of Representatives. Even with all of the demands of a congresswoman’s schedule, she found time to serve as a national Democratic Committeewomen, a member of the National Democratic Committee, and the secretary of the State Democratic Committee. In 1962, mounting health problems forced her into retirement.

Although a Talmadgite in ideology, Blitch was far removed from the boisterous displays of the stereotypical Georgian politician of her era. As a legislator, Blitch was soft-spoken but determined. Congresswomen Blitch championed the rights of farmers, supported improvements in education, fought for conservation, and staunchly upheld segregation. The *Blackshear Times*, Pierce County’s only newspaper, often praised Blitch for her work and even Hancock County’s *Sparta Ishmaelite* observed, “Georgia’s only Congresswoman, Mrs. Iris Blitch, is letting them know she is up there. She is constantly working for her Eighth Congressional District.” She even drew praise from John F. Kennedy who rewarded her conservation work with an appointment to the Natural Resource Advisory Council.

In 1964, after her retirement from public service, Blitch shocked the Democratic party when she announced her support for Republican Barry Goldwater stating, “In my political lifetime only one leader has come forward to give the American people a choice between more and more centralized dictatorship and the complete dignity of the

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103 Two other Georgia women served in Congress before Blitch, but neither of them served for an entire term.
105 “Biographical Note”
individual." She explained that the decision to switch parties was long and difficult, “because of my political affection for the people with whom I had served and for the people whom[sic] had elected me,” but she felt that until the Goldwater nomination she did not have “any place to go.” Blitch was one of the most public faces of a surprising number of Democratic defectors. For the first time since the Dixiecrat Revolt, disgruntled Democrats found a viable alternative to the Democratic party. Goldwater carried the state, but failed to carry the nation. His campaign demonstrated that Republicans could win in the South, as Atlanta Republican Dan McIntyre observed, “people don’t think we are freaks anymore.” However, there was much more behind success of the Goldwater campaign than just a single election. Between the Dixiecrat Revolt and the Goldwater campaign, three key social and political changes took place to justify, in the minds of unhappy Georgia Democrats, a move away from the one-party Solid South: the civil rights movement, Goldwater’s unique conservatism and his campaign’s outright effort to win the South, and an increase in the power of urban and suburban areas following the death of the county unit vote. These three interrelated issues struck directly at the heart of the Solid South power structure. Segregation and county rule had negated the power of African Americans and urbanites. The end of both severely jeopardized the interests of the white rural voters previously in control of

107 Ibid.
108 Goldwater won a majority in both DeKalb and Pierce counties, but due the influence of the civil rights movement, and especially the Albany Movement, the turnout of African American voters was high enough to prevent Goldwater from winning Hancock.
109 “History of Georgia GOP,” VHS, produced by the Georgia Republican Party, [nd], Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Study, University of Georgia, Athens.
Georgia politics. As these voters grew more disassociated from the Democrats, they grew increasingly more willing to support the Republicans.

Like the Dixiecrat Revolt, the Goldwater election was unsuccessful, but pivotal. While the States’ Rights party opened the door to change, Georgia was slow to cross the threshold. Although Georgians never grew to love Truman, in the years between the Truman administration and the Goldwater Campaign, they came to accept the idea of a competitive two party system. Even Georgia’s beloved Democratic Senator Richard B. Russell saw the usefulness of a politically competitive South that could wrest power from the northerners then in control of the national Democratic party. The editors of the *DeKalb New Era* urged its residents to listen to Russell and consider the issues rather than blindly follow the Democratic name. They wrote, “Politicians are afraid to come forth and speak the truth because they think it will lose votes…But the Democratic party is not what it was and not what we believe in. It is the Party that has changed, not us.”¹¹⁰ At the national level, they were right.

Georgia’s Eisenhower Republicans

While Franklin Delano Roosevelt found rest in Georgia’s Warm Springs, Dwight D. Eisenhower was of fan of Georgia’s greens. After World War II, the retired General was a frequent visitor of the Augusta Golf Course. Georgia’s Republican leaders, still reeling from Dewey’s loss, saw Eisenhower’s regular retreats as an opportunity. In 1952, while Eisenhower was still wavering on whether to run for president and for which party, the Georgia Republican party formed a committee to draft Eisenhower with the hopes of

gaining some national publicity. Kil Townsend, the chair of the committee, elicited help from his friend, famous Georgian pro-golfer Bobby Jones. After thinking it over for two days, Jones called Townsend to ask “what do I do?” Townsend quickly arranged a private golf retreat for the two men. Shortly after the meeting, Eisenhower officially announced his intention to run for president as a Republican. Townsend and the burgeoning but powerful Republican party proudly claimed Eisenhower’s decision as a victory not only for their cause, but for all Georgians.

Despite the best efforts of the Georgia Republican party, Eisenhower failed to carry Georgia in the general election. However, he did win five counties and enough of the vote to prompt the Atlanta Constitution to devote an entire Sunday edition to the growth of Georgia Republicans asking, “Can GOP Party Become a Power in the State?” For the paper the answer was perhaps, but for the people the answer was not yet. As the nation’s first “modern Republican,” Eisenhower’s conservative foreign policy had some appeal. For instance, the editors of the DeKalb New Era declared Eisenhower’s second inaugural address, which extolled the virtue of combating international communism, “a privilege to read.” However, the Georgia Republican party was not able yet able to capitalize on Eisenhower’s popularity. Most notably, the Georgia Republicans simply lacked the party infrastructure

111 “History of Georgia GOP”
114 The term “modern Republican” was first given to Eisenhower by his speechwriter and confidant Arthur Larson in his 1968 biography. Since then, a number of historians and political scientists have adopted the idea, including most recently David Stebenne in his work, Modern Republican: Arthur Larson and the Eisenhower Years, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2006).
of the Democrats, especially after the party’s hard loss during Dixiecrat Revolt. More importantly, they struggled to sell their platform in Georgia’s vast countryside. The Georgia Republicans were the party of fiscal conservatives when Georgia’s struggling agricultural base relied on federal relief and agricultural programs. And, they opposed segregation when most of the state was still very much segregated. The Georgia Republicans strength lay in Georgia’s growing urban areas.

The struggle of the Republican party in Georgia during the Eisenhower era confirms the conclusions of the increasing scholarship on the importance of the suburbs and cities in the political transformation of the South and the nation. As Matthew Lassiter aptly explains, “The Republican surge during the 1950s revealed the substantial difference in political outlook between white-collar voters in the metropolitan regions and the Dixiecrat stalwarts in the rural countryside. . . [T]he fiscal conservatism and social moderation of the national Republicans appealed strongly to upwardly mobile white voters who placed economic priorities over ‘the primacy of strict racial segregation’ and rejected the single-party mantras of the Solid South.” This was certainly true in DeKalb County, where for most Republican voters, economic matters trumped social issues.

116 The first Republican primaries did not occur until 1966. Prior to the Republican primaries, a Republican candidate needed only to pay a fee and contact the local election board to be put on general election ballot. This caused two major difficulties. First, Republicans often fell victim to the practice of straight-ticket voting so prevalent in the South. Second, Republicans had to face Democrats who were quick to point out that they were elected by the people, rather than rich enough to buy there way into an election. With the advent of the Republican primary, Republican candidates greatly improved their chances of winning elections.

However, this does not negate the importance of race in the 1950s. In Pierce County, where whites were in the majority, and in Hancock County, where whites were in the minority but dominated the political and social structures, maintaining the South’s old social structure were key to their political and economic organizations. Simply put, no other single issue had the potential to upset the day-to-day life of Georgia’s rural citizens than race. Even though the Georgia Republican party was not interested in overtly supporting the civil rights movement, the national Republican party’s decision in 1952 to denounce bigotry greatly diminished the party’s allure.\textsuperscript{118} In Hancock and Pierce, being a Democrat meant supporting segregation, even if that put them at odds with the national Democratic platform. The national party could change its mind, but the Georgia Democrats were steadfast. This was true for voters as well as politicians. When national events, especially the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn \textit{Plessy v. Ferguson}, tested their resolve, the southern Democratic delegation stood their ground and refused to move. Historian Gilbert C. Fite astutely labels these southern holdouts the Russell Democrats, after their leader, Georgia’s elder statesman Senator Richard B. Russell, Jr.\textsuperscript{119}

Massive Resistance at the State Level

From his time in Georgia, both on the greens and the campaign trail, Eisenhower understood the southern position on civil rights. In spite of pressure from both national parties and increasing public support for equal voting rights, he was slow to respond to

\textsuperscript{118} The 1952 National Republican platform stated, “We condemn bigots who inject class, racial and religious prejudice into public and political matters. Bigotry is un-American and a danger to the Republic.” It also included promises to support federal anti-lynching laws, the abolition of poll tax, and to end segregation in the District of Columbia.

the civil rights movement. However, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision to overturn the precedent of “separate but equal,” changed the social and political landscape. Initially, Eisenhower went to great lengths to distance himself from the landmark decision, arguing that it was a matter for the courts to decide not politicians. The tide changed when a full year after its initial decision the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown II* that desegregation must occur with all deliberate speed.\(^{120}\)

Despite the ruling, Eisenhower still preferred moderation to gradually ease the “deep ruts of prejudice and emotionalism that have been built up over the years in this problem.”\(^{121}\) However, southern segregationists demanded immediate action. When Senator Robert Byrd of Virginia called for a policy of “massive resistance,” Georgia politicians quickly followed suit. Governor Marvin Griffin declared, “come hell or high-water, races will not be mixed in Georgia schools.” Marvin Moate, Georgia House Speaker and representative from Hancock County, vowed “to use all measures to put it off in Georgia.”\(^{122}\) Likewise, Herman Talmadge announced, “Georgia is going to resist mixing the races in the schools if it is the sole state in the nation to do so.”\(^{123}\) Putting their words into action, in 1955 the Georgia Assembly passed a law making it illegal to spend funds on mixed race schools. A year later, it went even further. In 1956, Georgia

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\(^{120}\) For more information see Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President, the Renowned One Volume Life*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 405-406.

\(^{121}\) Quoted in Ambrose, 406.


joined three other southern states in passing a state resolution declaring that the *Brown* decision would have no effect on the state.\(^{124}\)

Nationally, the Russell Democrats could do little to turn the tide of the civil rights movement, but they could certainly stand in its way. Senator Strom Thurmond, from South Carolina, and Senator Byrd urged likeminded Congressmen to declare a “Declaration of Constitutional Principles” against any and all federal legislation passed in support of desegregation. While they adopted the sentiment, the southern delegation rejected Thurmond’s and Byrd’s initial draft as too extremist. The final version, written by Senator Richard Russell and introduced by Senator Walter George, both from Georgia, was considered moderate by comparison.\(^{125}\) Eighty-two southern Representatives and nineteen southern Senators, including the entire Georgia delegation, affixed their names to the document.\(^{126}\) The Southern Manifesto, as it is commonly known, declared:

> We regard the decisions of the Supreme Court in the school cases as a clear abuse of judicial power. It climaxes a trend in the Federal Judiciary undertaking to legislate, in derogation of the authority of Congress, and to encroach upon the reserved rights of the States and the people . . . This unwarranted exercise of power by the Court, contrary to the Constitution, is creating chaos and confusion in the States principally affected. It is destroying the amicable relations between the white and Negro races that have been created through 90 years of patient effort by the good people of both races. It has planted hatred and suspicion where there has been heretofore friendship and understanding . . . Even though we constitute a minority in the present Congress, we have full faith that a majority of the American people believe in the dual system of government which has enabled us to achieve our greatness and will in time demand that the

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\(^{124}\) Ibid.

\(^{125}\) Russell wrote the Southern Manifesto with help from Spessard Howard of Florida, Price Howard of Texas, and Arkansas’ J. William Fulbright.

reserved rights of the States and of the people be made secure against judicial usurpation.\textsuperscript{127}

Even though the manifesto was modified by moderates, it was the move of extremists. A pledge to “use all lawful means to bring about a reversal of this decision,” left no room for negotiation. Their only choice was to completely oppose any action to support \textit{Brown}.\textsuperscript{128} In the days, weeks, and even years—as was the case of Representative Blitch—following the manifesto, a number the signers renounced their support.\textsuperscript{129} They felt pressured, they argued, into supporting the manifesto or risk losing the support of their state and local party, not to mention the electorate. Their fear is further evidence of how important southern leaders considered this last ditch fight against desegregating the southern school system.\textsuperscript{130}

Despite the Southern Manifesto, Eisenhower approved a civil rights bill developed by his Attorney General, Herbert Brownell, Jr. The Brownwell proposal called for the creation of a bipartisan commission to investigate civil rights violations, a new assistant Attorney General in charge of civil rights, new laws to enforce voting rights, and the strengthening of existing civil rights measures.\textsuperscript{131} Although the Brownwell proposal was designed to appeal to moderates—Eisenhower often reminded the public that the decades long system of segregation in the South had, before 1956, operated in accordance to the law—Russell vehemently opposed the bill on the grounds

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} In 1980, Blitch apologized for her actions in opposition to civil rights and leant her support to the Carter campaign.
\textsuperscript{130} Webb, 5.
\textsuperscript{131} Ambrose, 408.
that it empowered the Attorney General to “force the white people of the South at the point of a Federal bayonet to conform to almost any conceivable edict.” Russell’s fear that Eisenhower and the federal government could intervene to enforce desegregation proved true. In September 1957, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus refused Eisenhower’s orders to provide protection for the nine students attempting to integrate Little Rock High School. With few other options left, Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne to restore the peace.

The “Little Rock Crisis” exposed massive resistance’s biggest weakness. Following Eisenhower’s intervention, segregationists understood that the only way to oppose Brown was to close public schools and make them private. By the time Little Rock High School reopened its doors in 1959, with a handful of African American students in attendance, the state budget was taxed to its limit and the public-private institutions set up as an alternative were bankrupt.

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However, historian Stephen Tuck argues that in Georgia massive resistance to the Brown decision was an “increase in scale” of Southern hostility to changes in race relations, not necessarily an increase in ferocity. White segregationists were already vocal and active in Georgia before Brown, and they remained so after the decision.

Brown did, however, led to an increase of attacks against the National Association for the

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133 Klarman, 32.

134 Tuck, 101.
Advancement of Colored People, especially when they attempted to register voters. Atlanta was its only safe haven. In Georgia’s largest city, white and African America liberals worked to create a number of civil rights organizations, including Help Our Public Education (HOPE), designed to promote desegregation throughout the state, and the Georgia Council on Human Rights (GCHR) which would help mobilize the citizens of Hancock County. In 1958 the first school desegregation plans were instituted. “The City too Busy to Hate” was laying the foundation for a civil rights movement that would change the state’s social and political structure, but it would take a number more years before this change would take place. The complexity of the issues of civil rights is evident in the three Georgia counties of this study. For each of these counties, DeKalb, Pierce and Hancock, the period of massive resistance meant something very different.

Massive Resistance at the County Level

Regardless of her personal position, though everything—including her platform, public statements, and speeches—seems to indicate that she supported segregation, Blitch could not afford to be a moderate. In her district, which included Pierce County, whites greatly outnumbered African Americans. In the 1950s and early 1960s, with a population dominated by rural white southerners, Pierce County was the epitome of the Georgia political and social power structure. The Southern Manifesto represented their view. It would be years before the desegregation and later the civil rights movement had an impact on the educational system or voting behaviors.

The manifesto also represented the views of those in power in Hancock County, although in Hancock unlike Pierce, this ruling class was greatly outnumbered. In their
precarious position, the editors of the *Sparta Ishmaelite* wrote, “We are glad to note that President Eisenhower has called for ‘patience and understanding’ in the segregation dispute which is good horse sense and the only way it can be worked out.”\(^{135}\) The Hancock County elite had the most to lose with desegregation. Their only hope to maintain the power structure was to keep the majority of the population at bay. The whites in charged boasted that while the county was segregated, the African American students had the newest facilities.\(^{136}\) Nonetheless, the white elite were determined to maintain segregation even though white students were outnumbered seven to one.\(^{137}\) Well aware of the skewed numbers, in 1964 members of the Georgia Human Rights Council as well as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sent representatives to mobilize the African American population. Less than a year later, the first African American students attended a white school.\(^{138}\)

In 1956, DeKalb County was in a truly peculiar situation. Although still largely agricultural, with the growth of Atlanta DeKalb was becoming more suburban and more diverse.\(^{139}\) However, under Georgia’s unique county unit system the ensuing population growth did not result in an increase in DeKalb’s political influence. The disparity between the power of Georgia’s rural and urban areas was so great that in 1960 it only took three rural counties to equal the power of DeKalb in the most important election in

\(^{135}\) *Sparta Ishmaelite*, March 29, 1956.

\(^{136}\) In the early 1950’s, funding from the Talmadge administration helped build new high school in the most affluent African American area in Sparta, Hunts Hill. According to John Rozier, it cost more than any of the other schools, black or white, combined. John Rozier, *Black Boss: Political Revolution in a Georgia County*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), 39.

\(^{137}\) Ibid, 38.

\(^{138}\) For more on this struggle see Tuck, 223. School desegregation is discussed more fully in chapter three.

\(^{139}\) According to the U.S. Census, between 1950 and 1960, DeKalb grew from a population of 136,395 to 256,782.
the Solid South, the Democratic primary. Still, the majority of the white population appears to have supported segregation, but perhaps not at the cost of public schools. Although DeKalb would not begin the process of desegregation until 1966, in 1956 the editor of the *DeKalb New Era* wrote, “To jeopardize our public school system is unthinkable for any reason, more especially when it is done in a mad chase after rainbows. No matter the vainglorious propaganda, regardless of the goal we seek, this loss despite all fanciful gain would be irreparable and Georgia would rue the day she forsook her priceless asset of educational system for dust and ashes.”

DeKalb may not have been as racially progressive as Atlanta, but its increasingly urban population was at least responsive to calls for school integration, and like Atlanta, in 1962 DeKalb County saw its influence in state government increase.

**The End of County Rule**

Georgia’s county unit system traces its origin from one of the emerging nation’s first debates—should population or land ownership form the basis of a representative government. Georgia’s first Constitution, adopted in 1776, called for unicameral body with an equal number of delegates from each of Georgia’s eighteen legislative districts. Following the federal model, a new 1789 state constitution created a bicameral legislature, called the General Assembly, composed of a House of Representatives and a Senate. Each county received an equal number of Senators, and a fixed set of Representatives, ranging from two to five depending on the population. From 1789 until the civil war, Georgia experienced a dramatic shift in population from the

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141 These early districts were not counties, but parishes.
coast to the frontier. Soon, the coastal counties found themselves outnumbered and
overpowered by the newly developed inland counties. To keep up, the people simply
sub-divided their territory, thereby creating new counties without regard for actual
population. It would take over two centuries for Georgia to finally put a constitutional
cap on the number of counties. Today Georgia contains 159 counties, a number second
only to Texas.¹⁴²

This vast amount of counties created problems for the General Assembly. As the
number of counties swelled, so did the membership of the Assembly. However, voters
and politicians were slow to change the unwieldy system out of a fear that either their
county or their region would lose its political power. For decades any proposal to create
a plan for proportional representation was quickly defeated.¹⁴³ It was not until the
“carpet-bag” Constitution of 1868 that a scheme was finally adopted. While the
representation in the Senate remained the same, a “3-2-1” plan was applied to the number
of county delegates to the House of Representatives. It gave the six largest counties three
delegates, the next 31 got two delegates, and the remaining counties, the vast majority,
one delegate.¹⁴⁴ Although the 1868 Constitution, and the Republican carpet-bag
government, were short lived, the “3-2-1” plan remained as an effective means to deal
with Georgia’s counties.

In 1898, during the earliest years of the Solid South, the Democratic party
informally applied the “3-2-1” allotment plan to its Democratic primary. This informal

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¹⁴³ In the 1840s a representational plan was briefly adopted. It was overturned in 1851.
¹⁴⁴ Rigdon, 16-17.
plan became the official county unit system in 1917 with the passage of the Neill Primary Act. In the post-Reconstruction era, this county-unit vote was an obvious attempt to ensure the power of the rural counties, and thus the white ruling class, regardless of how urbanized, liberal, or racially diverse Atlanta became. This coupled with the white primary effectively nullified the African American vote in the one-party system.

As Georgia’s metropolitan areas grew in size and population, the gap between the power of the rural area verses the power of the cities widened. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s the county-unit vote grew in unpopularity, especially in urban areas such as DeKalb County. Several groups, including the League of Women Voters of Georgia and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), brought federal suites against the system. However, the federal courts refused the cases on the grounds that it was an issue for the states to decide, not federal authorities. The Georgia Republican party could do little to change the primary election procedures of the Democrats, but were nonetheless also vocal opponents of the county unit system.

In spite of their numerous campaigns, these opponents made little headway in changing the election procedures of the party in power. However, Georgia was not the only southern state with an electoral system that vastly favored the rural population. Tennessee voters faced a similar problem. Like Atlanta, despite a massive influx of new

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146 Ibid.
147 In 1956, Republican Randolph Thrower campaigned against incumbent Congressman James C. Davis with a pledge to change the unit vote system. Outraged by his claims, and biased toward Davis, the *DeKalb New Era* carried an editorial on the front page to inform readers of Thrower’s inability to influence Democratic procedures. See, “Thrower Can’t Change Unit Voting System,” *The DeKalb New Era*, November 1, 1956.
residents, Nashville’s residents were politically marginalized. For over fifty years, the
Tennessee legislature refused all calls to redistrict, with the knowledge that any new
districting map would have to account for this urbanization. Exasperated with their
attempts at state reform, Tennessee urban voters launched a federal suit. They argued
that the state election rules were in direct violation of their right to equal protection under
the Fourteenth Amendment. In 1961, the Supreme Court reversed its initial position and
agreed to hear the case of *Baker v. Carr*. On March 26, the Court judged 6-2 in favor of
the voters. The decision meant that under the 14th Amendment the federal justice system
had the power and responsibility to resolve issues of voter maldistribution.148 However,
it did not establish any frameworks by which to make these decisions.

While the Supreme Court was deciding the matter of *Baker v. Carr*, Atlanta
voters were pushing the case of *Gray v. Sanders* through the federal court system.149
Brought by Fulton county voter James Sanders, the suit alleged that the county unit
system gave residents of smaller counties significantly more voting power than those of
larger counties.150 Less than a year after the *Baker* decision, the Supreme Court agreed to
hear the Georgia case. The court sided with the Atlanta voters, and declared that all
statewide elections must have equal weight. The majority opinion wrote:

> How then can one person be given twice or 10 times the voting power of
> another person in a statewide election merely because he lives in a rural

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148 “Major Supreme Court Cases on Redistricting.” CQ Electronic Library, CQ Voting and Elections
Collection, g2c6e2-973-36492-1842738. Originally published in *Guide to Congress, 6th ed.*, vol. 2
state.edu/elections/g2c6e2-973-36492-1842738.
149 Since this was a challenge to state primary procedures, the defendant in this case was James H. Gray, the
chair of the Democratic Executive Committee.
150 “Gray v. Sanders (1963),” *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, accessed April 27, 2008,
area or because he lives in the smallest rural county? Once the geographical unit for which a representative is to be chosen is designated, all who participate in the election are to have an equal vote—whatever their race, whatever their sex, whatever their occupation, whatever their income, and wherever their home may be in that geographical unit. This is required by the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The concept of “we the people” under the Constitution visualizes no preferred class of voters but equality among those who meet the basic qualification. The idea that every voter is equal to every other voter in his State, when he casts his ballot in favor of one of several competing candidates, underlies many of our decisions…. The conception of political equality from the Declaration of Independence to Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, to the Fifteenth, Seventeenth, and Nineteenth Amendments can mean only one thing—one person, one vote.  

One year after Gray v. Sanders, the Supreme Court ruled in Reynolds v. Sims—a claim brought by urban voters in Birmingham, Alabama—that all state houses must establish legislative districts based on equal populations. Reynolds was the final decision in the so-called “one person, one vote” cases. These cases, in which Georgia voters played a pivotal role, forever changed the face of state and national politics. In their wake, forty-nine state legislatures were forced to reapportion their legislative districts.  

As historian Douglas Smith writes, “Prior to these decisions, widespread malapportionment across the United States ensured the overrepresentation of rural and small town areas while diluting the votes of metropolitan residents. In addressing this imbalance, according to [Supreme Court Justice Earl] Warren, the Court’s decision ushered in revolution that changed the face of representational democracy in the United

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151 Quoted in “Major Supreme Court Cases.”
States.” The political importance of urban voters across the nation, and especially the South, grew substantially.

For Georgia, there were immediate ramifications of the new federal regulation of state party procedures. Prior to the 1962 gubernatorial election, with the decision on *Baker v. Carr* final and the decision of *Gray v. Sanders* looming, the Democratic Party opted to preemptively end the county unit vote in both the primary and general election. This made the 1962 gubernatorial campaign a true watershed moment for the Democratic party and Georgia voters. Had tragedy not struck the Republican party, it would have been an even more significant election. For the first time since Reconstruction, the Republican party put forth a candidate for Governor. Ed Smith was a lifelong Republican, and by all accounts a very likeable character. However, following one of his earliest campaign events, Smith was tragically killed in an automobile accident. In his obituary, the *Atlanta Constitution* remarked, “Ed Smith gave up his life working for a two-party system in Georgia.”

Lacking another viable candidate, and out of respect for the Smith family, the Republicans opted to wait another four years before mounting their opposition. Without a Republican contender, the race was between two Democrats: Carl Sanders and Marvin Griffin.

In 1962 it was the campaign, not the issues—both men were segregationist, Sanders, however, insisted that some integration must take place while Griffin promised

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154 Interestingly, the 1962 election also marks Jimmy Carter’s entrance into politics. He ran for Quitam County State Senator. Initially reports indicated he lost, but a recount revealed that he had won.

to continue massive resistance regardless of the cost—that was unique. In his study of the
election, political scientist Scott Buchanan demonstrates the significance of the abolition
of the county unit system, especially among urban voters. In Georgia’s major cities,
there were notable increases in both voter turnout and in visits by candidates. For the first
time in the urban era, the voters of Atlanta and DeKalb County were prized political
assets. Their votes counted as much as rural voters in the rest of the state. Consequently,
there was a significant increase in their voting power.156

The county election results underscore Buchanan’s conclusions. Sanders, the
winning candidate, was the clear favorite among the urban voters. In the four most
populous counties, including DeKalb, he received approximately 75 percent of the vote.
Griffin’s support was centered in rural areas and especially in places such as Pierce
County, where African Americans were clearly outnumbered. Griffin also received a
majority in every Black Belt county except Hancock.157 In Hancock the vote was very
close—Griffin won 665 votes to Sanders 727—but Sanders won.158

Hancock notwithstanding, in the context of Georgia politics, it is unsurprising that
the cities went for the more moderate candidate in Sanders and the countryside for the
more segregationist candidate, Griffin. In 1962, the Supreme Court rulings did not
impact how people voted, just how their votes counted. However, Baker v. Carr and
Gray v. Sanders would have a much greater impact. Following the “one person, one

156 Scott E. Buchanon, “The Effects of the Abolition of the Georgia County-Unit System on the 1962
157 Ibid, 701-702.
158 The result, coupled with the increase in the amount of voters since the previous gubernatorial race, there
were total 1003 votes in 1958 verses 1405 in 1962, indicates that African Americans in Hancock were
voting earlier and in larger numbers than in the rest of the state. Although, without an exit survey, exact
percentages are impossible to determine.
vote” rulings, the interests of the areas with the most people were no longer second to the areas with the least. Politicians could no longer forsake the cities in favor of the farms. Further, the end of county rule was a blow to the Democratic party. The Solid South originated as a means to maintain the power of those people on the top of the southern social order, the Black Belt planters and white, rural farmers. With the end of county rule, the Democratic party lost a key component of its ability to maintain this structure. As a group, urban voters favored the social policies that the Solid South fought so vehemently to prevent. The increase in the power of Georgia’s cities was a very significant blow to the power of the rural areas.

The Civil Rights Movement Comes to Georgia

Complicating matters for the rural voters was the continued growth of the civil rights both nationally and statewide. Under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., the Southern Christian Leadership (SCLC) forced the nation and its government to consider the unequal plight of African-Americans living under Jim Crow. By 1963, the civil rights movement had spread to every state in the union. Georgia was no exception. Several Georgia cities were the site of direct action protests.

The first of these local insurrections were in Atlanta and Savannah. There, following the example of the Greensboro students, young urbanites organized the state’s first sit-ins. By September 1961, at least 7,000 Georgians had participated in demonstrations with over 292 arrests. Coupled with these protests was a new push to register voters. By far, Georgia’s most famous example of civil rights voter registration

159 Tuck, 108.
was the Albany Movement of 1961-1962. In the summer of 1961, three SNCC members—Charles Sherrod, Cordell Reagan, and Charles Jones—arrived in Albany with the aim of registering the area’s African American voters. They immediately experienced resistance from both outside and within the African American community. However, under the leadership of William G. Anderson, a young doctor, the Albany Movement coalesced. In November 1961, over 500 protesters were arrested. Anderson and SNCC invited Martin Luther King, Jr. and SCLC to keep the movement going.

Albany proved to be a very difficult city for King. Albany chief of police Laurie Prichett and the Albany city leaders effectively undermined King and his attempts to gain national attention. Prichett, for instance, ordered his men to avoid the use of force at all costs, thereby negating the violent displays common in the national civil rights movement. Similarly, city leaders worked to keep King out of jail. Although King was arrested twice, once for inciting a protest, and once for refusing to pay the related fine, town officials minimized the impact. In the first arrest, believing that he and the town leaders had come to a compromise, King accepted bail only to have Albany officials rescind the agreement. When King refused to pay the fine, someone secretly paid it for him ensuring his quick release. For King’s opponents, jail cells turned out to be their greatest asset. As historian Lee W. Formwalt observes, “In the end King ran out of willing marchers before Prichett ran out of jail space.”

continued to maintain a presence in the area, ultimately King left Albany, Georgia for a much more successful protest in Birmingham, Alabama.\textsuperscript{161}

Although Albany did not invoke the national sympathy that King had hoped it might, it had a significant impact on Georgia politics. In the rural areas, the Albany Movement renewed efforts to register voters. Despite King’s absence, Albany itself mobilized enough voters to elect the first African American to the city council.\textsuperscript{162} In Hancock, two frustrated African American civics teachers, E.R. Warren and James Mucullen, a hospital worker, Robert Ingram, Sr., and Sparta businessman Merilous Roberts, joined together to voice their own frustrations before the congregation at Macedonia Baptist Church. Inspired by King, and with the church’s backing, in the summer of 1964 the men founded the Hancock County Democratic Club (HCDC) to register voters. Although small and underfunded, the organization succeeded in getting enough votes for Robert Ingram to become the first black member of the board of education, E.R. Warren to become the first African American on the County Democratic executive committee, and James Smith to become the first African American county commissioner in 1966.\textsuperscript{163}

Unfortunately, however, the Albany Movement also was the inspiration for renewed resistance against civil rights. Massive resistance had failed, but as Martin Luther King, Jr knew and as the supporters of the Russell Democrats understood, African

\textsuperscript{161} Birmingham police chief of police Bull Conner favored a violent approach to end King’s protest. With the nation and even the world watching, Conner turned police dogs and fire hoses against the nonviolent protestors. These images were a turning point in the civil rights movement.

\textsuperscript{162} John McCown and SNCC are topics covered in chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{163} Lawrence Hanks, \textit{The Struggle for Black Empowerment in Three Georgia Counties}, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 57-58.
Americans were still unequal in the South. As King continued to push for national legislation, organizations such as HOPE and SNCC continued to push for state change, and remnants of the old political guard continued to fight their every move. This struggle culminated in the 1964 Civil Rights Act.\textsuperscript{164} First introduced by John F. Kennedy in 1963, the proposed legislation experienced a groundswell of national support following Kennedy’s assassination. As President, Lyndon B. Johnson, a Democratic from the South, pushed the bill through Congress. He further strained the loyalties of the Russell Democrats. In a last ditch effort Richard B. Russell organized the “Don’t Stand in My Way” plan and led the southern bloc in a filibuster. He was unsuccessful. When Russell himself relented and urged compliance, Georgia’s traditional Democrats, the former Talmadgites and proponents of massive resistance, considered leaving the party. Johnson knew there would be consequences. Upon signing the Civil Rights Act into law, he turned to his aide and remarked, “I think we may have delivered the South to the Republican party for a long time to come.”\textsuperscript{165} Clearly, Johnson and the national Democratic party were willing to sacrifice the South for what he believed, correctly, to be the good of the nation. The Democratic Solid South splintered in its reaction.

The Ripple Effects of the “Mr. Conservative” Groundswell

Even among Republicans, Goldwater was a polarizing force. Just as the national Democratic party was split between the interests of the North verses the South, the Republicans were divided between the more liberal East and the conservative Midwest.

\textsuperscript{164} The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed racial discrimination in school, public places, and employment. It effectively ended the system of Jim Crow. It did not, however, address voting rights. That would come with the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

and West. Goldwater represented the later. He is often referred to as the first presidential candidate drafted into the position. Persuaded to run by the conservative fringe of the Republican party, he won the nomination largely by winning the California primary at a time when the winner took all of the primary votes. In his acceptance speech before the Republican Convention he famously remarked, "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." He was a fiscal conservative and aggressively anti-communist. He opposed New Deal policy, including social security, and encouraged the use of nuclear weapons when needed. Furthermore, although he desegregated his family’s department stores and helped desegregate the Arizona National Guard, he was a firm believer in states’ rights.

In opening his campaign, he declared that at his core he believed:

That each man is responsible for his own actions. That each man is the best judge of his own well-being. That each man has an individual conscience to serve and a strong moral code to uphold. That each man is brother to every other man.  

Goldwater’s legacy is complex. While it is true that the conservatism he promoted was markedly different than the conservatism promoted by the Talmadgites, it contained an element of fiscal conservatism that was not yet popular with Georgia’s electorate. Instead, Goldwater’s complex views on race, his general opposition to

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168 The farmers in Pierce and Hancock County in particular benefited from relief and agricultural programs such as the Agricultural Adjustment Act and Tennessee Valley Authority and since they were distributed through the local power structures, they did not upset the social orders. See Michael Perman, In Pursuit of Unity: A Political History of the South, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 245.
federal intervention, and to a lesser degree his fervent anticommunism and continued support for the Vietnam War, drove Democrats’ decision to leave their party.

Goldwater’s views on the civil rights movement in particular were easy to misinterpret as pro-segregationist. However, as historian Timothy Thurber observes, “his views on race stemmed mostly from his conservative interpretation of the Constitution,” “[he] was not a bigot.”169 While he supported integration, he did not believe that it was the role of the federal government to intervene. And, while he voted for the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960, he voted against the 1964 Act on the grounds that it contained unconstitutional measures to limit the rights of property owners.170 He believed that the eastern wing of the Republican party had pushed too far on these issues. Voters, he believed, deserved a choice. When faced with a vote for President Lyndon B. Johnson or Barry Goldwater, it is easy to see why the former Russell Democrats favored Goldwater. And Goldwater actively pursued their votes. Goldwater’s supporters, “drove out black Republicans from state party leadership posts in the hunt for convention delegates. . . while at the convention itself they rebuffed efforts to have the GOP take a stronger pro-civil rights stand.”171 It was the first time in the modern era that a Republican presidential candidate openly and actively tried to win the South.

To capitalize on the Goldwater surge, the Georgia Republican party put forth several candidates in state and local elections. However, they faced several obstacles, including an incredibly cumbersome petition system. Without a nominating convention,

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170 Ibid.
171 Ibid, 351.
Republican candidates had to receive permission from the Republican Executive Committee and pay the associated fee before they began their campaigns. To get on the ballot they then had to compile a signature list, the number required varying by the office, and have it notarized.\textsuperscript{172} While this process was relatively easy for local elections, it was enormously difficult for candidates for statewide offices. Consequently, the urban-based Republican party put its weight behind only two statewide contenders—Howard “Bo” Callaway in Atlanta and Roscoe Pickett, Jr. in DeKalb. Though Pickett lost, Callaway became Georgia’s first Republican Representative since Reconstruction.

Although Bo was a political newcomer, the Callaway name was instantly recognizable among Georgians. In 1953, Bo Callaway inherited one of Georgia’s most successful tourist destinations, Callaway Gardens. The Callaways lived a lavish lifestyle. Bo Callaway, along with his wife, and their five children maintained residences in both Pine Mountains and in one of Atlanta’s posh suburbs.\textsuperscript{173}

In these elite circles, Callaway found support for one of his most passionate causes—national security. As a West Point graduate and a Korean War veteran, Callaway was the chief fundraiser for a small, national group named the League to Save Carthage. Founded by national security expert Frank Barnett, the League to Save Carthage opposed appeasement of any form and favored an aggressively anti-communist stance. The Carthage League was one of the many groups that supported the “Draft Goldwater” campaign. In 1962, when Goldwater was still undecided about a Presidential run, the League leadership asked Callaway to raise $50,000 for the Goldwater movement.

\textsuperscript{172} Bo Callaway, Georgia’s first modern Republican U.S. Senator, needed 80,000 signatures.
\textsuperscript{173} A more complete biographical sketch of Bo Callaway is presented in chapter 3.
Callaway succeeded in the task at a time when no one else in the country was able to raise such a substantial amount. At the 1964 Republican Convention Callaway was one of only eight delegates chosen to escort Goldwater to the platform for his acceptance speech. As the escort committee chairman explained, “Goldwater wouldn’t be here if it hadn’t been for that $50,000 you raised.”

With Goldwater’s personal endorsement, Callaway decided to run for the Third District congressional seat, a rather large district encompassing much of the Atlanta metro area. Initially, Callaway was reluctant. He supported the principals of incumbent E.L. “Tic” Forester, a Democrat, but a staunch conservative. When Forester announced his retirement, Callaway was happy to challenge the new Democratic candidate, the liberal Garland T. Byrd, a former lieutenant governor and state senator. Callaway immediately launched a slick, modern campaign. With his “Go Bo” Greyhound bus he visited every hamlet in the district.

Despite a groundswell of support for Goldwater, Callaway was the underdog. Byrd was an established politician who had already represented most of the Third District voters in the Georgia State Senate. However, Callaway expertly capitalized on the biggest challenge facing Democratic contenders in 1964. With his clear support for the civil rights movement, Lyndon B. Johnson was a polarizing figure in Georgia. At a public debate in a small school in Columbus, Callaway asked his opponent who he supported in the Presidential election. When Byrd hesitated, Callaway noted, “Garland, I

175 Ibid
don’t think you’ve answered the question. Who are you going to vote for, Goldwater or Johnson? If you go to Congress the people of the 3rd District have an interest in knowing whose positions you’ll be supporting.” Callaway then asked whether the audience agreed, and overwhelming they responded, “Yes.” From that point on, Byrd was consistently faced with a question he would never fully answer. With fifty-seven percent of the vote, Callaway became the first Republican to represent Georgia in the nation’s capital in ninety-seven years.

As the most recognized face of the party, Callaway quickly worked to end the petition system and establish a Republican base. However, Callaway raised concern among existing Republicans. A Democrat prior to the 1964 election, Callaway was one of the so-called “Goldwater Republicans.” With his election, he and his supporters wrested control of the Republican party from the so-called “Eisenhower moderates.” This was a major accomplishment for the fledging party and as a candidate, Callaway’s greatest achievement.

Before a national television audience on Meet the Press, John Herbers of the New York Times suggested that this shift was largely interpreted as a racist movement and asked, “Would you build a party that encompass a broad spectrum of opinion or one based on narrow grounds?” Callaway responded that he thought Goldwater was a good candidate, but taking a dig at the previous county unit vote, noted that the Republican party won the election, “in the Democratic way, from counties and the precincts.” Then, in admitting the need to establish a solid political platform, he remarked, “Our side won.

176 Ibid, as quoted on page 10.
But when our side won, the other side lost. . . There was no narrow ground for this.”

Underscoring Callaway’s statement was the difficulty of the other 1964 Republican campaigns. Perhaps none was more contentious, or more illustrative, than the one in DeKalb County.

Mackay v. Pickett

In terms of national representation, DeKalb County was the biggest benefactor of the “one person, one vote” redistricting laws. Finally out of the shadow of Atlanta, for the first time in the 1964 campaign DeKalb elected its own U.S. Representative from the newly created 4th District. With no clear incumbent, the Republican party saw the race as a potential victory. They choose Roscoe Pickett, Jr., an established lawyer, a lifetime Republican, and a former National Committeeman with two years in the Georgia House as Representative, as their candidate. He faced Democrat Jamie Mackay, a fellow lawyer, but one with extensive experience in the Georgia Assembly. On the surface, the campaign rhetoric revolved around the Civil Rights Act, but underneath the early currents of sweeping political realignment were apparent.

Despite his longtime affiliation with the Republican party, Pickett was ideologically aligned with the Goldwater Republicans, and despite his years of the experience in the Solid South, Mackay was a liberal Johnson Democrat. Pickett’s advertisements called him “a strong voice of the South,” and announced his intentions, to staunchly stand “for the return of our constitutional rights and our states’ rights.” He espoused that the “right government was the least government,” that the Civil Rights Act

177 Meet the Press, NBC, broadcast Sunday, July 31, 1966.
was unconstitutional, that “federal spending that buys people votes is a disgrace,” and he
strongly advocated prayer in public schools.178 Conversely, Mackay once remarked of
the race, “I was an unapologetic enthusiastic liberal. I wish I could live up to the
dictionary definition of what a liberal is.”179 Although these differences between
conservativism and liberalism were evident in DeKalb prior to 1964, this was the first
time the debate took place between the two parties rather than between two Democratic
contenders in the Democratic primary.

In a very real sense, the Mackay v. Pickett campaign was waged on two fronts—it
was a both a wider battle between two parties and a local conflict between two
candidates, and the two actions were not necessarily completely in sync with one another.
With Goldwater and the Republicans clearly gaining statewide steam, the DeKalb
Democrats and the DeKalb Republicans engaged in what the Atlanta Constitution
dubbed the “pamphlet war.” In an attempt to neutralize the Republican party’s position as the true
conservatives, DeKalb Democrats widely distributed a pamphlet entitled, “What about
Civil Rights and Barry Goldwater?” The pamphlet, which was created by the Goldwater
campaign itself in an attempt to solidify Republican gains in the North, was never meant
to reach the South. Using Goldwater quotes from sources such as the Congressional
Record—“I am unalterably opposed to discrimination on the basis of race, color, or
creed”—as well as Goldwater’s book the Conscience of a Conservative—“I believe it is
both wise and just for Negro children to attend the same schools as whites, and that to

179 James Mackay in an interview conducted by Josephine Bradley, November 10, 1988, Georgia
Government Documentation Project, Special Collections Department, Georgia State University Library,
Atlanta, Georgia.
deny them this opportunity carries with it strong implications of inferiority” — the text insinuated that Goldwater was an integrationist. The Democrats hoped to hold on to the conservative flanks of their party by insinuating that Goldwater was in fact an admitted liberal on the issue of race.

The Atlanta and DeKalb Republicans responded by distributing their own pamphlet created by the national Democrats, but “hidden” from Southerners. “All Americans Move Forward,” proudly listed all of the African Americans holding office in the Johnson administration and showed Lyndon B. Johnson shaking hands with Martin Luther King. As to the Republican criticism, Whitney O’Keefe, the Republican chairman for the 5th District, explained, “I hardly understand how ‘all Americans’ can be represented by members of a single race. The Republican party is the party of every race, color, and creed.” An anonymous local Republican official proudly declared, “It’s worse than ours.” By releasing “All Americans Move Forward,” Republicans hoped to prove that Johnson and the Democrats were more sympathetic to the cause of civil rights than Goldwater. Clearly, the Eisenhower moderates were losing their influence. In fact, the clear losers of the pamphlet war were the pro-civil rights liberals.

While local party officials fought over which party took the most traditional Southern position on race, the actual Republican and Democratic candidates engaged in a very different, but equally contentious debate. Mackay entered the race as an unapologetically pro-civil rights candidate. Pickett, meanwhile, was a long-time states

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righter. The issues of their campaign were actually much more closely aligned with the
debate that was taking place nationally than the local pamphlet war. The irony of the
pamphlet war was that both pamphlets were accurate. Johnson supported civil rights and,
likewise, Goldwater supported integration (albeit not integration compelled by the federal
government). However, for the state and local party officials for whom discrimination
had for so long been a prerequisite to candidacy, these positions were untenable. This
point was not lost on Mackay, who declared that race was in fact clouding the true issues.
It was also evident in Roscoe Pickett’s bumper sticker, “Elect a Goldwater
Congressman.”

While Mackay argued for more government programs for Georgia and DeKalb
County, Pickett fought for, “the great Republican principals of fiscal soundness, a more
definite foreign policy… [and the] stopping of unilateral disarmament.”184 In the end
Mackay won. He had the support of both his Democratic party, and, as additional
testament to divisions between Goldwater and Eisenhower Republicans, the support of an
influential group of “Republicans for Mackay” who were frustrated with their own
party’s opposition to civil rights.185 Furthermore, Mackay was the incumbent, and as a
longtime DeKalb resident noted, “I knew Jim Mackay before I ever heard of
Goldwater.”186 Mackay, however, understood that his election was far from a resounding
endorsement of the Democrats. In one of his first interviews following his victory he

183 Bob Willimon, “Picket, Georgia’s No. 2 Republican, Apparently No Pushover for Mackay,” The DeKalb New Era, August 20, 1964.
184 Ibid.
186 Willimon, “Picket, Georgia.”
observed, “Both parties here in Georgia are now in a race to see which one can come forward with the clearest definition of our problems and the clearest solution to those problems.”

Conclusion

Even though he lost in Hancock, the Sparta Ishmaelite wrote, “Senator Goldwater expresses our views when he asserts that every person on relief should be required to work for their daily bread in some form or another.” Though the Blackshear Times was silent on Goldwater, the residents spoke with their ballots. With the help of Congresswoman Blitch, Goldwater won Pierce County. DeKalb likewise voted for Goldwater, despite electing Mackay. The editors of the DeKalb New Era observed, “People have all of a sudden seemed to realize that their country is more to be adhered to than political parties.” They asked, “Is this the beginning of a shifting in American politics?”

From their 1964 viewpoint, the editors of the DeKalb New Era could not see that they were in the middle rather than the beginning of a political transformation. A vote for the States Rights party in 1948 may have been a vote against the national platform of the Democratic party; it was not, however, a vote for the Republicans. The Republican party simply lacked the infrastructure to put forth viable candidates with the name recognition and charisma to define the local party. Goldwater’s failed presidential run

187 Reg Murphy, “It’s Time to Unite, Johnson Asserts; Dixie Moving to GOP, Tribble Says,” The Atlanta Constitution, November 5, 1964.
188 Sparta Ishmaelite, February 13, 1964.
189 Goldwater received 1981 votes to Johnson’s 982.
190 Johnson won 37,142 votes while Goldwater won 49,448.
certainly helped establish the foundations for a real party organization, but it would take years before a full slate of Republican candidates regularly challenged the Democratic contenders.

The Goldwater election also supports the traditional argument about the top-down nature of the Republicanization of Georgia and the South more generally. Despite the best efforts of Kil Townsend and the Georgia Republican party, nothing pushed the decision to switch from Democratic to Republican more than the 1964 presidential campaign. With divisions within their party and without a national figure on which to anchor their slate until 1964, Georgia Republicans simply did not have the ability to elect officials in significant numbers. Once they did, it was still an uphill climb.

No election captures the confusion of Georgia’s political realignment more clearly than the race between Democrat Lester Maddox and Republican Bo Callaway in the 1966 gubernatorial campaign. In 1986, an interviewer asked former Governor Lester Maddox if his position as a segregationist meant that he was a racist. “No,” he explained, “I equate racism with the people that look at one race to be superior over the others. I exclude myself as being a racist because of that. As far as segregation is concerned, I’ve always believed in the right to segregate or the right to integrate, that you ought to have the freedom of choice, but if you are the denied the freedom of choice to do either, than none of us are totally free.”\(^{192}\) This statement, carefully crafted over the years, demonstrates the dilemma of Georgia’s Democratic politicians after failing to protect segregation from federal intervention. Massive resistance was by definition a non-negotiable, uncompromising tactic. Its proponents, including the majority of the Georgia Democratic party, correctly predicted strong support from their homogenously conservative, white constituency. Massive resistance was in fact an attempt to secure this traditional power base. When it failed, everything changed.

Goldwater’s campaign proved that conservative issues could take precedence over party loyalty. Formerly solid Democrats, including segregationists and state righters, would consider a Republican candidate—at least for president. The Civil Rights Act of

\(^{192}\) Interview with Lester Maddox conducted by Tom Steeley, Georgia Political Heritage Project, Irvine Sullivan Library Special Collections, West Georgia University, Carrollton, Georgia.
1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 proved that the national Democratic party was serious about civil rights and the inclusion of African American voters. Combined, these events confirmed that the Georgia Democrats were losing their firm hold on electoral politics. To remain viable, they needed to either secure their conservative base or appeal the new African American voters. They tried to do both. To justify their political past and appease the national Democratic party, they tempered their positions. The former white supremacists were still segregationists, but they now framed their argument in more positive terms. Segregation was the right to associate with whomever one pleased. Segregationists, therefore, claimed that they were not denying the rights of anyone, but protecting the rights of everyone, including the new African American voters.  

Unfortunately for these voters, the still fledgling Georgia Republican party was similarly conciliatory and contradictory. By 1965, on the heels of Goldwater’s unsuccessful but pivotal campaign as a new type of conservative, the Republican party itself was struggling to redefine its platform. At the same time, Georgia’s Republicans, headed by Bo Calloway, were riding the wave of Goldwater’s success and could not afford to lose the party switchers who favored Goldwater’s approach over Lyndon B. Johnson’s liberalism. When asked during his gubernatorial campaign if he was a segregationist, Bo Calloway responded, “I am not an integrationist.” To win, the Republicans needed the support of African American voters, but they would not court them outright. Republicans could not win the African American vote at the expense of

the new voters they gained as a result of the Goldwater’s candidacy and the success of the conservative movement. In 1966, it was unclear how African Americans would vote or if they could sway an election.

So, in breaking with traditional narratives of the South’s realignment, I argue that the 1966 gubernatorial election is a true turning point in Georgia’s Republicanization. First and foremost, it was the Republican party’s first significant showing in a major state election since Reconstruction. Callaway won the popular vote, but he fell short of a majority and lost to Maddox by a vote in the state legislature. Second, in refusing to support civil rights outright, both local and national Republicans moved toward a tactic that would dictate the Nixon’s administration approach to cautiously seek the support of the white South while not upsetting civil rights supporters-- the southern strategy. For Democrats, the 1966 election was the beginning of the end for the restrictive voting mechanisms of the Solid South. Maddox won, but barely. The 1966 election demonstrated that the Democrats of the Old South could lose in a state, not just a national, election. The laws, both political and social, had changed and the Democrats had to adapt.

Perhaps though, the biggest change was for the voters themselves. As the parties adapted, voters acted. In 1966, conservatives had their choice of candidates, leaving the majority of voters the unenviable task of deciding between a moderate or extreme segregationist. After 1966 these voters rebelled. In Hancock County, John McCown

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195 As will be discussed later, Georgia election laws stated that in the case of an election in which neither candidate received a majority, the outcome would be determined in the state legislature. In 1966, the majority of these legislators was Talmadge sympathizers and therefore voted for Maddox over Callaway.
organized an entire slate of African American candidates who ran simultaneously in the Republican and Democratic primaries. The same thing happened in DeKalb.

Furthermore, Manuel Maloof, the “Godfather” of the DeKalb Democratic party, offered his bar, Maloof’s Tavern, as a meeting place for local, urban Democrats who were not necessarily Talmadgites. However, for conservative Pierce County little changed. There, voters could do little more than throw their support behind conservatives, while waiting for the liberal wave to pass.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965: Ensuring the Gains of 1870

On March 17, 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson sent a bill before Congress that would test the last foundation of the Old South. While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended the decades long practice of Jim Crow, disenfranchisement remained. In no uncertain terms, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 strictly prohibited overt voter discrimination practices, including grandfather clauses and literacy tests. Furthermore, it established strict federal standards and oversight including a “pre-clearance” clause requiring any state with a history of disenfranchisement, including Georgia, to receive approval from the United States Department of Justice prior to any law change. The changes were sweeping and swift. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 finally gave African Americans the right to vote guaranteed in 1870 by the 15th Amendment.

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196 Maloof’s Tavern’s political highpoint came in 1970 when Carter used the bar to announce his intention to run for Governor. And, in 1992 Bill Clinton paid a visit.
In 1963 Senator Richard B. Russell opposed any federal intervention on behalf of civil rights, but by 1965 he urged compliance.\textsuperscript{198} In just two years, civil rights had moved from the outskirts to the mainstream of American politics. White southerners may have been vocal in their opposition, but much of the country favored the ideals of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his supporters. Russell recognized that compliance was pragmatic. He and the southern delegation faced not only pressure from state officials to promote the Democratic party’s pro-civil rights platform, but also growing pressure within the state of Georgia from both the moderate consensus growing in urban and suburban strongholds like DeKalb County and the “black belt” counties such as Hancock. As Historian Matthew Lassiter’s compelling study of Atlanta politics argues, by the 1960s this consensus that developed two decades earlier in the cities was increasingly important especially as the southern Democrats struggled against the national factions.\textsuperscript{199}

Goldwater’s defeat and Johnson’s landslide victory solidified the national Democrats’ party pro-civil rights stance. Johnson won the presidency in spite of the white South’s demand that the Democrats temper their position on race. The election proved that the national Democrats did not have to carry the South or secure the support of the Southern delegation to be successful. Massive resistance was an unquestionable failure, and with decreasing support and few alternatives left, Georgia’s Congressional delegation, led by Russell, opted to back their national party and urge their constituents to support the inevitable.

\textsuperscript{199} See Lassiter.
Despite the federal government’s best efforts to ensure compliance, on the local level there was still resistance to the Voting Rights Act. While the Act successfully ended overt, legal discrimination, it could do little to stem subversive attempts to block new voter registration. The process of registration was largely left up to local officials, who created complex procedures designed to place the onus of registration and maintaining that registration on individual voters. Anyone who wanted to register or wished to help register voters had to navigate through a series of regulations, including limitations on the number of registration sites available in each neighborhood and requirements that each registration day be advertised for weeks in advance.\textsuperscript{200} Once registered, voters were subjected to frequent and often unannounced “voter purges.” Ostensibly, these purges were designed to remove inactive or improperly registered voters from voting lists. Furthermore, purged voters did not receive election material which saved the local government money. In practice, however, the purges specifically targeted African American voters who were either newly registered or voted inconsistently due to the hazards of southern disenfranchisement. These purged voters were rarely, if ever, contacted about their status. If they showed up to vote, they were legally barred from completing their ballots.\textsuperscript{201} Still, these methods were far less effective than those instituted under Jim Crow. Local organizations such as the League of Women Voters and the NAACP worked hard to ban purges when possible, or, when impossible, inform the voters of their status. With their diligence, voter registrations persisted and

\textsuperscript{200} McDonald, 55-56.
\textsuperscript{201} For more on these purges, see Patrick Novotny, \textit{This Georgia Rising: Education, Civil Rights, and the Politics of Change in Georgia} (Athens: Mercer University Press, 2008), 280-286.
succeeded. In DeKalb County, there were 125,682 citizens registered to vote in 1966—
including 59,684 white men, 58,182 white women, 2115 African American men, and
4,781 African American women—an increase of over 8,262 from 1964.\textsuperscript{202} Even more
significantly, in Hancock County, where eligible African-Americans outnumbered white
voters by 3,297 to 1,668, the 1966 election marked the first time that enough African
Americans registered to offset the power of the 99.5\% of registered white voters, by a
thin margin of 46.\textsuperscript{203} African American were finally able to vote, but just what that
meant remained to be seen.

Bo “Mr. Republican” Callaway

Fellow Georgia Republican Newt Gingrich once said of Callaway, “Bo brought a
new generation of active leaders. He brought a sense of being part of the Georgia
establishment. He created a framework that really defined the Republican party from
there, I think, until the rise of Reagan.”\textsuperscript{204} Howard “Bo” Callaway was the youngest
child and second son of one of Georgia’s most recognizable and wealthy families. He
went to Georgia Tech for one year before completing his studies at West Point. In 1952,
after briefly serving as a platoon leader in the Korean War, he was honorably discharged
to take over operations, with his wife Elizabeth, of Callaway Gardens, a resort started by

\textsuperscript{202} Joseph H. Baird, “DeKalb Voters to Ballot in Primaries Wednesday,” \textit{The DeKalb New Era}, September
8, 1966.
\textsuperscript{203} In 1966 there were 1660 registered white voters and 1707 registered African American voters according
to figures cited in Lawerence J. Hanks, \textit{The Struggle for Black Political Empowerment in Three Georgia
Counties}, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 181.
\textsuperscript{204} “History of Georgia GOP,”[nd], Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Athens,
Georgia.

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his father in Pine Mountain, only miles from Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s favorite resort, Warm Springs.205

Given this proximity, it is not surprising that the Callaways and the Roosevelts were associates, if not friends. As a small child, Bo often dined with F.D.R. and his wife. However, while the dinners were friendly affairs, the Callaways and the Roosevelts were not always in political agreement. As Callaway explained, “My father’s evaluation of the President was this; he was a great leader, and he led us through perilous times. But some of his economic theories, in my father’s conservative view, were dangerous to the stability of the country in future generations.”206 Prior to 1964, Bo was a devoted Georgia Democrat. Like most Georgians in the 1950’s, he lent his support to the Talmadge faction, and in 1962 he was a firm supporter, and financier, of Democrat Marvin Griffin. However, in 1964 Callaway became the most visible and successful of Georgia’s “Goldwater Republicans.” Although still President of Callaway Gardens, Callaway and his family were residents of Atlanta’s Third Congressional District. Unsatisfied with the liberal Democratic leadership and spurred by the success of Goldwater, Callaway entered politics. Capitalizing on the Goldwater groundswell Callaway successfully defeated an established Democratic candidate to become Georgia’s first Republican Congressman since Reconstruction.207

While serving in the House of Representatives, Callaway established himself as a staunch conservative, so much so that nearly every political voting standard ranked

Callaway as the most conservative member of the Georgia delegation.\textsuperscript{208} In 1964 this was no small feat, and both state and national Republican leaders took note. Soon, Callaway had the ear of the national party leaders and was the public face of the Georgia Republicans.

As the state’s highest ranking Republican, Callaway faced the daunting task of mobilizing the party to retain the Goldwater gains. While there were volunteer Republican groups in most counties, Callaway worked to spread them to all. Even more importantly, he worked to recruit candidates to run for local and state offices. According to an official analysis by the Republican party itself, in 1960 there was only one Republican member of the State Senate and two members of the State House. In 1964 the party swelled to include nine State Senators and seven members of the House. There were also small gains at the county level. By 1964 there were at least five Republican mayors, including those in Savannah and Macon, and two Republican sheriffs.\textsuperscript{209}

Although there were pockets of Republicans across the state, these gains tended to come from the urban and suburban areas around Atlanta and Georgia’s most highly populated cities. Rather than continue in Washington, Callaway resigned to work full time on a campaign for governor.

In spite of these gains, the Republican party still faced two major problems: they lacked a clear platform to which voters could attach themselves and they had not yet developed a primary election system by which they could effectively challenge

\textsuperscript{208} Numan Bartley, \textit{From Thurmond to Wallace: Political Tendencies in Georgia, 1948-1968} (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1970), 76.
Democratic candidates. Bo Callaway sought to address the first of these problems at his nomination convention. In May, he along with other Republican party leaders, hosted a State Republican Convention in Macon. For the first time the attendants included delegates from the majority of the state—over 1,000 precincts.\textsuperscript{210} The convention’s most pressing matter was Callaway’s nomination for governor. Without a primary system, the meeting was a means by which to draw statewide attention to his candidacy. However, the long term goal was to establish a clear platform that differed from that of the Democrats. In his acceptance speech, Callaway made the Republican principles clear. They were foremost, he argued, a party of the fundamentals. These fundamentals were a belief in God, the rights of the individual, the principals of the American Constitution, and a government “close to the people,” ruled by local citizens rather than federal authorities. According to Callaway these principles were under attack – children could not pray in school, the federal government was involved in what should be individuals’ decisions, and the Constitution became more meaningless with each judicial decree—and he blamed the southern Democrats for not protecting these rights.\textsuperscript{211}

Using statistics from the conservative organization Americans for Constitutional Action, Callaway denounced Democrats, and specifically southern Democrats, for supporting the Administration’s “socialist programs,” and he argued that on this point the southern delegation was no better than the so-called Yankee Democrats. Only he, Georgia’s lone Republican, could boast a truly conservative record. Republicans offered


\textsuperscript{211} Ibid
a clear alternative to Democrats and only they could, bring about “an era of new life, new strength for Georgia.” Interestingly, Calloway’s platform did not mention race. While Calloway was, by his own admittance, not an integrationist, he understood that the Republican party could not afford to lose the votes of any group, including African Americans. Regardless of a Calloway’s personal views, officially the Republican party was careful not to take a stand on the issue of civil rights. Word of the Republican party’s position and Callaway’s candidacy was featured in newspapers across the state. For the very first time, the Republican party had a proven, recognizable candidate in a race they certainly believed they could win.

Also for the first time, the Georgia Republicans held primary elections. Although at first confined to the major urban areas, including DeKalb, the 1966 primaries were a key step in legitimizing candidates. The move invalidated the Democrats’ common accusation that Republican candidates were bought, not elected. Furthermore, it gave voters greater choice at the polls. In 1966 this choice was limited by location, but by 1970 Callaway and the Georgia Republicans worked to put at least one candidate in every single precinct.

While Bo Callaway was working to consolidate the Republican party, the Democrats were facing a significant division within their ranks. The Democratic gubernatorial primary pitted former liberal and progressive Governor Ellis Arnall against Atlanta entrepreneur and segregationist Lester Maddox. In the primary Arnall defeated

212 Ibid
213 In 1966, there were 15 Republican candidates for state and local offices. They received anywhere from 823 to 1917 votes. Statistics compiled by the author from the records of the Georgia Secretary of State Archives.
214 “A Prospectus”
Maddox, but not by the majority needed to win the nomination outright. Arnall and his followers did not campaign aggressively in the run-off, assuming he they would easily get the nomination. Maddox, meanwhile, undertook a breathtaking campaign—visiting every county while plastering Georgia with his famous “This is Maddox Country” signs. In the ensuing run-off Maddox won in a landslide. In many ways this curious rise to power was appropriate for Maddox, his popularity was largely a result of his inability to fit into the political mold.

Lester “Mr. Pickrick” Maddox

Well before he was known as a politician, Lester Maddox was known as a salesman. Never bashful, Lester Maddox granted many interviews over the years, and it was very rare for him not to mention his pride and joy, the Pickrick Cafeteria. After a series of unsuccessful business ventures, according to lore propagated by Maddox himself, he used the last of his life savings to create a small, country restaurant in downtown Atlanta near Georgia Technological College. The Pickrick—“If you picnic at the Pickrick and pick it out, we would rick it up,” Maddox explained—soon established itself as a neighborhood staple known for its fried chicken, pie, and good service. To his customers, Maddox was “Mr. Pickrick.” He often told the story of a customer who mistakenly complained to “Mr. Pickrick” about Governor Maddox without ever realizing that they were one and the same. In 1949, Maddox began running advertisements for the Pickrick in the Saturday editions of the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Atlanta* ...

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216 Rick is an uncommonly used term meaning to stack.
217 Steeley interview.
Journal. The Pickrick’s advertisements were unique. Rather than feature the restaurant or tout the food, Maddox used the space to promote himself, Mr. Pickrick, and his political ideals. In his weekly “column,” titled “Pickrick Says,” Maddox explained his positions on segregation, property rights, religion, government, communism, free speech, and any other topic that caught his attention.

By 1957 these advertisements garnered enough attention that Maddox felt confident enough in his appeal to run for office against the popular incumbent Atlanta Mayor, William B. Hartsfield. His campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, but Maddox was undeterred. Four years later he ran against and lost to Hartsfield’s successor, Ivan Allen, Jr. However, Maddox’s major complaint and chief obstacle was the city of Atlanta’s social liberalism. By far, Atlanta, “the city too busy to hate,” was the most politically liberal area of the state and therefore the least likely to support Maddox’s ideals. In 1962, Maddox decided to run once more, but this time for a state rather than city office. He challenged Lt. Governor Peter Zack Greer. For the first time in Maddox’s career, the race was not a runaway for his opponent. Maddox lost to Greer in a runoff election and thought his political career was over. However, two things compelled him to continue his fight: the end of the county vote and the civil rights movement. Ironically, while the county unit vote was designed and supported by conservatives such as Maddox, it often made it difficult for urban politicians to win statewide contests.

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218 This was prior to the merger of the two papers. Maddox chose to advertise in the Saturday edition because it was the cheapest option.
219 At one point the editors of the newspapers refused to print his advertisement. Maddox responded by printing the same ad in smaller, rival papers with the heading “The Atlanta Newspapers Refused to Run this Ad!” After several weeks, the newspapers relented.
Although Maddox likely would have had the support of the rural districts, he would first have to overcome the stigma of liberalism attached to Atlanta politicians in the primary elections. Under the county unit system, it would have likely been hard for Maddox to overcome this urban prejudice. However, by far the most visible reason for his reentry into politics was desegregation. The civil rights movement directly challenged Maddox’s segregationist principles, and like so many in Georgia he joined in the movement for massive resistance.

With Maddox’s position on segregation so well documented, it is not surprising that the Pickrick was one of the earliest targets of civil rights leaders seeking to enforce desegregation. Adding pressure to the situation was the fact that by 1964 much of Atlanta was proudly desegregated. The Pickrick, however, was decidedly not, nor would it ever be. In 1963, Maddox witnessed civil rights “agitators” take over and close a nearby restaurant. The police, he claimed, did nothing while the “gang” trampled on the rights of property owners. Intent on protecting his establishment, Maddox prepared for the inevitable showdown.

On July 3, 1964 that showdown finally occurred. The scene, captured in an infamous photograph, featured Lester Maddox and his friends wielding axe handles against African American protesters. When Maddox refused to relent, the NAACP filed suit. Maddox capitalized on the case and sold souvenir axe handles, or “pickrick drumsticks,” to his customers to help fund his defense. Inside the restaurant he

221 For more information see Numan Bartley, From Thurmond to Wallace: Political Tendencies in Georgia, 1948-1968.
222 Maddox, 50-60.
prominently displayed a mannequin with an axe through its chest to represent his lost rights. Outside, he erected a stone monument, reminiscent of a much smaller Washington Memorial, to private property rights.\textsuperscript{223} After a long legal battle, Maddox was found guilty and ordered to desegregate. Rather than comply, he closed the restaurant and turned his attention to politics.

“Mr. Republican” v. “Mr. Pickrick”

Luckily for Maddox, the 1966 Democratic primary was wide open. Incumbent Governor Carl Sanders was ineligible for another term and former Governor Samuel Ernest Vandiver withdrew from the race for health reasons. With these two forerunners out of the mix, several candidates opted to run, including former Governor Ellis Arnall, state senator James Earl Carter, James Gray Sr., Calloway’s 1964 congressional opponent Garland Tuck Byrd, Hoke O’Kelley, and Maddox. With such a large field, the voters were split. Although Arnall received the highest number of votes, without a majority the election rules called for a run-off election between the two top vote earners, Maddox and Arnall.\textsuperscript{224}

Arnall, whom historians correctly dubbed “Georgia’s quintessential liberal,” based his entire political career around his opposition to the Talmadge ideals.\textsuperscript{225} In his term as Governor he lowered the voting age to 18, worked to repeal the poll tax, created a state employee merit program, and, in what cost him the 1948 election, refused to fight the Supreme Court’s ruling against the all white primary. In 1966, he supported home

\textsuperscript{223} Ibid, 62.
\textsuperscript{224} Bartley, 68-80.
rule, promised more state aid to cities and counties, and pledged to expand and improve the state highway system.\textsuperscript{226} He also, in complete opposition to Maddox, opposed massive resistance and hoped to ease racial tensions throughout the state.

Unfortunately for his supporters, Arnall made two critical tactical errors. First, facing a Republican candidate for the very first time, Arnall chose to conserve his resources and funds for the campaign against Callaway rather than fight in the run-off. He and the Democratic party completely misjudged the appeal of Maddox. Although on an extraordinarily tight budget—Maddox still largely relied on the sale of souvenir “pickrick drumsticks”—Maddox managed an impressive statewide tour. He visited every single one of Georgia’s counties with his “This is Maddox Country” signs. In his many stump speeches he espoused honesty and “plain speak” over political jargon and he fervently emphasized the importance of voting in the run-off election. He and his supporters even organized fleets of vehicles to drive voters to the polls.\textsuperscript{227} It was an effective strategy, especially in rural counties such as Pierce where the number of votes for Maddox increased from 1,933 in the primary to 2,364 in the election.\textsuperscript{228} By appealing to the countryside and providing the means as well as the motivation to vote, the pro-Maddox faction effectively mobilized to defeat Arnall.

Arnall’s second critical error, as Kruse details, was his failure to “understand the depths of white anger over the national Democratic party’s embrace of civil rights. . . As other southern Democrats finessed the issue, Arnall simply announced that he was a

\textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{227} Maddox, 55-60.
\textsuperscript{228} Compiled by the author from the Georgia Secretary of State, Georgia Election Results, Official Results.
Georgia Democrat and a national Democrat—and anyone who didn’t like it ‘could go to Hell.’” Arnall failed to understand Georgia’s Democratic voting base in 1966. The Georgia Democrats who for most of the century had been the party of conservative white supremacy had not yet embraced the national Democratic platform. While stunned by Maddox’s success, the Democratic party had no choice but to move forward with their unlikely and controversial candidate.

With the candidates in place, the dilemma for voters was immediately apparent. Stylistically, Maddox and Callaway were worlds apart. Maddox had a populist, every man appeal that Callaway lacked, but he also had a flare and abruptness that many found off-putting. In contrast, a survey of DeKalb county residents described Callaway as sensible, but cold and unapproachable. Ideologically, however, the two were remarkably similar. They believed in states rights and wanted to curb government and especially the right of the federal government to enforce civil rights measures. In fact, as one scholar acutely observed, the only distinguishable characteristic between the two was the hope that, “the Republican would not take to the streets with an ax-handle to stave off integration in the way that Maddox famously had.” Spearheaded in large part by members of the League of Women Voters of DeKalb, a number of these moderate-to-liberal voters launched a write-in campaign for Ellis Arnall. As political scientists Charles Bullock and Ronald Keith Gaddie explain, “As loyal Democrats, they refused to vote for a Republican, especially a Republican who seemed to be as conservative as the

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229 Kruse, 230.
Democratic nominee. On the other hand, Maddox’s repeated displays of racism made him unacceptable.”

Even if it rendered their ballot futile, these voters could not in good conscious support either one of the two mainstream candidates.

Although popular in DeKalb, the write-in campaign never achieved statewide support. Many questioned the usefulness of voting for anyone other than the two candidates. As the editors of the DeKalb New Era explained, “It seems to us that this is merely a negative approach, a protest vote that does no good but has the result of taking away from Mr. Callaway and insuring the chances of Mr. Maddox.”

Tellingly, even Arnall himself opposed the write-in, urging his supporters to vote for Callaway lest Maddox, whom he considered a loose cannon, win. Both the editors and Arnall feared that moderate voters, whether Republican or Democrat, felt alienated by the gubernatorial candidates and if pushed, would write-in Arnall as a protest vote rather than settle for either Maddox or Callaway. However, in a race as close and unprecedented as the 1966 gubernatorial election, every vote was vital. Callaway was far from moderate, but his record was certainly not as colorful as Maddox’s. For moderates, it was of some comfort that at least Calloway and the Republicans did not take an official stand on racial and civil rights issues.

Despite its failure, the Write-In for Georgia (WIG) campaign had a lasting impact. First, it forged together a coalition of liberal voters that would continue to influence

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234 Tuck, 219-220.
Georgia politics. Second, and more importantly, the 60,000 write-in votes for Arnall would have been enough to give either candidate a majority. As it turns out, the fears of editors for the *DeKalb New Era* were well founded.

Rather than write-in a candidate, some disgruntled Democrats chose to actively campaign for Callaway. Originally, the group Democrats for Callaway (DFC) consisted of mostly moderate to conservative members of the Democratic party, including two of Georgia’s most fervent opponents of the strategy of massive resistance, former Governor Ernest Vandiver and the former head of Commission on Desegregation for the University of Georgia, John A. Sibley. The DFC grew to include an odd mix of both prominent African Americans, such as African American politician Rufus E. Clement, as well as fervent supporters of massive resistance such as Dixiecrat strategist Charles J. Bloch.

Uniting this seemingly odd configuration of suburban and urban voters was a shared concern for the economic consequences of a Maddox victory. They understood that even if they disagreed with the laws, maintaining law and order was good for business. As historian Tim Boyd argues, they feared “the racial unrest that could be caused by Maddox refusing to abide by civil rights laws.” While it is hard to judge the success of DFC, the idea was certainly popular. It is clear from the results that a number of Democrats opted to vote for Callaway over Maddox.

In the end, the vote was incredibly close, so close that neither party won a majority. In accordance with state election laws, in a race where no party received a majority.

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235 Boyd, 5.
236 Tuck, 220.
237 Boyd, 6-7.
238 Ibid.
majority, the election was decided by a vote in the Georgia Assembly between the two candidates with the most votes. Although Bo Callaway won the popular vote by more than 3,000 votes, he ultimately lost the election. The Georgia Assembly was still largely comprised of Talmadge-era Democrats who favored Maddox primarily for his party affiliation, but also for his hard-line segregationist approach. It would take over thirty years for another Republican Governor to win the popular vote, but the campaign had other, more immediate effects. Even though many voters felt marginalized by the Maddox-Callaway race, Callaway still represented a Republican candidate with a real chance at winning. Even more importantly, he helped create a Republican platform that was both different enough from the Democrats to appeal to new voters while at the same time benign enough to head off any defections from the still fledgling Republican base. In the wake of the election, it would be the Democrats, not the Republicans, who would adapt their position. With Callaway at the head, the Republicans were the party of conservatism. With the Maddox debacle, the moderate and liberal Democrats were pushing the party in a more liberal direction.

While an important year for the political parties, 1966 was an even more significant turning point for the state’s marginalized socially liberal, pro civil-rights voters. For them, the 1966 gubernatorial election demonstrated the danger of painting yourself into a partisan corner. While the Democrats and the Republicans fought to win over Georgia’s traditional political power base, the new and/or newly marginalized voters

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fought for agency within a broken system. Until a political party came to represent their votes, they would use the political structures to their advantage, especially in areas, including Hancock and DeKalb, where the numbers of disgruntled voters were the greatest.

John McCown in Hancock

By far, the most striking landmark in Hancock County’s largest city, Sparta, is the monument to the fallen Confederate soldiers. In the middle of the town square, at the intersection of two major highways, it is often a visitor’s first impression of Sparta. For residents, the sight long ago lost its shock, but for the newcomer it can be jarring. From the time when John McCown moved his family to Hancock in 1966, until his sudden death in 1972, McCown never grew numb to the symbolism. One of McCown’s first public photographs as mayor was taken in front of the monument—it was published in nearly every major Georgia newspaper. With this image, McCown was sending an explicit signal that he understood Hancock’s history of racial conflict, but he was not going to let Hancock’s past frighten or, more importantly, deter him. He was, from the very beginning, confrontational.

As this portrait suggests, McCown was and remains controversial. His biographer, former Sparta resident John Rozier, has appropriately dubbed him the “Black Boss.”241 Like the political bosses of turn-of-century America, he empowered a politically marginalized population, forced the election of favorable candidates, and became the area’s most powerful figure. And, like the bosses of America’s past, this

241 John Rozier, Black Boss: Political Revolution in a Georgia County (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982).
power came with a cost. When McCown arrived in Hancock, unemployment was high, poverty was rampant, few African Americans were registered to vote, and few African Americans had ever held a local office. By the time of his sudden death in a plane crash in January 1976, much had changed. McCown had the ear of Jimmy Carter, either the sympathy or disdain of most Georgians, a full slate of African American elected officials, millions of dollars in federal funds earmarked to stimulate Hancock’s economy, and at least one federal investigation into his affairs.

Although it was his work in Hancock that garnered him the most notoriety, McCown was already an established civil rights organizer prior to his arrival. Born in North Carolina in 1934, McCown was well aware of the dangers of Jim Crow and the hazards of southern political activism. While in his teens, he lived in Harlem and encountered new and different forms of both prejudice and activism. Upon joining the air force, he quickly volunteered to serve as the liaison officer for the local NAACP. Once discharged, he joined the civil rights movement, where he participated in demonstrations in Atlanta and, ultimately, the famous march in Selma, Alabama. It was in Alabama that McCown first met the like-minded Stokeley Carmichael.\textsuperscript{242} Although the march in Selma was instrumental in securing the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, it helped exposed a significant fracturing of the civil rights movement. Carmichael, and eventually McCown, sided with those who believed Martin Luther King’s focus on federal legislation and massive resistance was ultimately a slow and

\textsuperscript{242} Tuck, 221.
cumbersome process. They believed in direct action, and, in time, became leaders of the “black power” movement.243

When McCown first arrived in Hancock in the fall of 1966, African Americans already counted several political gains. For two years, the Hancock County Democratic Club (HCDC) had worked diligently to register and educate voters. The group was successful enough to give African-American voters their very first majority in 1966, although it was less than one percent at a time when African Americans outnumbered whites almost 4 to 1. The work of the HCDC did not go unnoticed by Hancock County’s white establishment. Reverend Robert E. Edwards, a teacher and preacher, was taken from his house and ordered to stop his work and, on the eve of the election, the KKK marched down the middle of town. These actions were meant to intimidate, and, fortunately, no one was physically harmed. More significantly, they were completely unsuccessful. In 1966, enough African Americans voted to elect black officials to three very important posts: a seat on the school board, a seat on the Democratic party executive committee, and a seat on the county commission.244

Despite these gains, McCown was far from satisfied. If African Americans comprised the majority of the population, he reasoned, they should completely control the county government. Further, if neither the Georgian Republicans nor Democrats were willing to represent the interests of Hancock County citizens, he would forge his own path. The fallout from the election cemented this belief. Of the three elected officials, only County Commissioner James Smith and school board member Robert Ingram, Jr.

243 Ibid, 222.
244 Hanks, 60-61.
were in positions active enough to for the two men to develop a measurable voting record. The HCDC and John McCown quickly discovered that Smith would vote with the white majority, even when the issue was of particular significance to the black community, while, Ingram frequently was the lone vote of dissent. Therefore, while Smith slid by without much controversy, the “radical” Ingram bore the brunt of the white opposition to his position.

The first attempt to force Ingram off the board was launched by the chairman, who challenged Ingram’s candidacy based on a 1945 liquor law violation. After a lengthy inquiry, the Attorney General ruled in Ingram’s favor. The second challenge, however, proved successful. Georgia law prevented state employees from holding public office. In an act of economic discrimination, Ingram was forced to either quit his job at the Milledgeville State Hospital or his position on the school board. HCDC and McCown convinced Ingram to keep his elected post, and for the three months it took Ingram to find employment they raised enough funds to pay his bills and feed his family.

In the end, the election of 1966 proved two very important things: neither intimidation nor economic discrimination would work against organized African American Hancock County citizens. For the time being the gains were only local, as the state of Georgia continued to marginalize the concerns of blacks. From 1966 until the next major election in 1968, McCown worked to gain the trust of Hancock’s citizens,

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245 The Democratic executive committee rarely met, and was therefore barely visible.
246 Hanks, 60.
247 Hanks, 62-63.
primarily by securing federal and state services. From the federal government, he secured
over twenty Federal Housing Authority loans and created a Headstart program. Within
the state, he petitioned and received support from the Georgia Council on Human
Relations (GCHR). In 1967, when he succeeded Francis Pauley, a prominent DeKalb
County civil rights organizer, as President of GCHR, amazingly, he convinced the
organization to focus all of its resources on Hancock.248

Thus, by 1968 McCown was a proven organizer and a formidable figure in
Hancock County politics. Yet, the 1968 election would be a true test of his influence
wider influence. As I will show in the next chapter, in this election, he would face other
local organizers, such as DeKalb County’s Manuel Maloof.

Manuel Maloof in DeKalb County

From the outside, few would guess that Maloof’s Tavern would serve as the
center for a local revolution. It is a non-discreet building on a non-discreet street corner,
which is technically not even located in DeKalb County. Yet, it was from this vantage
that Manuel Maloof witnessed the problems of the DeKalb’s growing minority
population. And, despite his mother’s objections that he run a “proper” establishment, he
made sure that his bar was a place for honest political talk and, when warranted, a staging
ground for action. Though mercurial and controlling, he was effective, as evident when
in 1988 Business Atlanta named Maloof one of the Georgians who could, “make you or
break you.”249

248 Tuck, 221.
As the son of Lebanese Catholic immigrants, Maloof was very sympathetic to the plot of minorities in Atlanta and later DeKalb. In 1907, his father, Gibran Maloof, left Beirut for American with the hope he would be successful enough to bring over the rest of his family so that they might all escape persecution by the Turks. Unfortunately, before Gibran was able to save his family, they fell victim to the Spanish flu. Though devastated, Gibran capitalized on a Tennessee law that forbade Tennesseans to sell ready-made cigarettes by setting up a homemade cigarette store in Georgia just across the state border. In 1919, Gibran bought the Tip Top Billiards Parlor and moved to Atlanta. In 1920 he married and two years later Manuel was born.250

The Maloof family’s success did not shield them from the prejudice that was a prevalent part of Atlanta’s culture. In one of his most vivid childhood memories, Maloof watched as another successful relative tried to buy a house in an upscale, posh neighborhood. His neighbors petitioned to force him to move out. Rather than endanger his young family, the relative heeded the neighbor’s warning and quickly moved. From this episode Maloof learned that:

Being of foreign extraction certainly meant that there were things that you could not participate in. You knew not to go into certain areas of town. You knew not to attempt to join certain clubs. You couldn’t work in certain places. And we grew up knowing that.251

After serving as an Air Corps mechanic and mess cook during World War II, briefly working in beer distribution, and operating an unsuccessful grocery store, Maloof finally found success of his own 1956. Using his entire life savings, Maloof transformed

250 Manuel Maloof in an interview conducted by David Nordan, 13 June, 1994, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Special Collections Department, Georgia State University Library, Atlanta, Georgia.
251 Ibid.
Harry’s Delicatessen into his Tavern. Like his father, Maloof capitalized on state laws. DeKalb was a dry county, Fulton was not. As the closest legal drinking establishment to Emory University, Maloof’s Tavern almost immediately prospered. It was also next door to the neighborhood where his relative faced such virulent discrimination, something Maloof never forgot. When a new brand of Democrats—those who hoped to give voice to DeKalb’s growing minority population—needed a venue, Maloof welcomed them. In the late sixties, Maloof’s Tavern was the birthplace of the “DeKalb Democratic Group.”

Despite its traditional moniker, the DeKalb Democratic Group was comprised of far from traditional Democrats. They were left-leaning, self-described mavericks, whose goal was to elect DeKalb’s first African American politician. To DeKalb’s long established predominantly conservative, white political base, Maloof was a troublemaker. When asked if he minded this title, he replied, “I just think it needed to be seen and shown that we were a different place from what they had projected it, that it had always been run by certain folks, and they didn’t want any interference, and it’s the same old story you see that happens any time change begins.”

Progressive Democratic politicians James Mackay and Charles Weltner, and later Governor Jimmy Carter all benefited from DDG’s support of their anti-establishment campaigns. The change was slow, but it was significant and real.

Richard Nixon and the Southern Strategy

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253 Maloof interview.
254 Ibid.
255 Ibid.
As the political sand shifted beneath their feet, Richard Nixon and the Republican party faced a dilemma: how do you keep the national base happy while courting displaced southern Democrats who had supported Goldwater? The answer was the southern strategy, a carefully designed plan to win the support of conservative white southern voters.256 While publically the administration denied the plan, privately they discussed it at length.257

Dean Kotlowski, one of the leading scholars on Nixon’s record on civil rights, argues that Nixon “steered towards the center” during the 1968 primaries, even going as far as to change the topic of conversation with key southern politicians, such as Senator Strom Thurmond, Republican of South Carolina, away from civil rights to mutually agreeable issues such as maintaining a strong national defense.258 While this maneuvering helped him secure the nomination in 1968, it left him vulnerable on the campaign trail. Unconvinced of Nixon’s commitment to the South and driven by his own political ambition, Alabama Governor George Wallace entered the race to represent the needs of white Southerners. Like Strom Thurmond before him, he ran as a third party candidate, and, again in Thurmond’s image, he pledged to maintain segregation.259 As he

256 Black and Black, 210-211.
257 In a confidential memo analyzing Clement Haynesworth’s failure to secure a seat on the Supreme Court, key aides admitted, “We flat out invited the kind of battle that ultimately erupted by naming a Democrat-turned Republican conservative from South Carolina. This confirmed the southern strategy just at a time when it was being nationally debated.” See “Memorandum for Mr. Harlow RE: Haynesworth [nd],” Folder Haynsworth; Box 10; Subject Files; White House Central Files: Staff Member and Office Files: Bryce N. Harlow; Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA. Richard Nixon himself can be heard discussing the southern strategy in several tapes, particularly from the winter of 1971.
had declared in his inaugural address as the Governor of Alabama, “Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!”\textsuperscript{260} After Lyndon B. Johnson surprise decision to not seek reelection followed by a contentious and violent Convention, the Democratic party voted to pit Hubert Humphrey against Wallace and Nixon.

In spite of the nationwide debate surrounding America’s involvement in Vietnam, historian Lewis Gould argues that, “The most significant electoral issue in 1968 was not the Vietnam War, which attracted most of the attention during the campaign. The most determining subject on the minds of voters was race.”\textsuperscript{261} Historian Jeremy D. Mayer agrees, adding, “Among the issues that contributed to the extraordinarily rapid downfall of Lyndon B. Johnson, the collapse of the New Deal coalition, and the resurrection of the New Deal coalition, and the resurrection of Richard M. Nixon, race was the most crucial.”\textsuperscript{262} For Georgia, this was certainly the case. Nationally, Nixon won 43.4 percent of the vote, Humphrey 42.7 percent and Wallace 13.5 percent. In Georgia, Nixon won only 30.4 percent of the vote, and Humphrey 26.7 percent. Wallace carried 42.8 percent of the electorate. Clearly the message of Governor Wallace, the man one observer described as “a stumpy little man with heavy black eyebrows and bright black darting eyes and a pug like bulb of a nose who looked as if he might have stepped out of an eighteenth-century London street scene by Hogarth,” resonated with white Georgia voters

\textsuperscript{261} Ibid, 6.
who were trying to hold on to a past that the nation no longer embraced. As John White, Chairman of the 4th District, later jokingly recalled, “Republicans were so rare in the early days, that I remember working a Nixon rally in Atlanta in 1960 and we were passing out leaflets to people exiting the bus, and they said help welcome Pat and Dick and all of the kids were going crazy because the thought it was Pat Boone and Dick Clark coming to town.” By 1968, no one would have mistaken Pat and Dick for anyone but the President and First Lady. And, as they grew in name recognition, so too did the Georgia Republicans. There were miles, however, left to go.

**Conclusion**

For Georgians, 1966-1968 was truly a tumultuous period. For the very first time, the traditional southern power base found themselves without a national party. Since Roosevelt’s administration southerners had been vital in keeping the Democrats in power. Now their power was diminished as the party of Roosevelt pushed the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, forever distancing themselves from the racial politics and state rights ideology of Georgia Democrats. At the same time, the Georgia Republicans grappled with how to appeal to urban voters like those in DeKalb County who were moderate on the issue of race while still pacifying the new, but significant, Goldwater Republicans converts. Both state parties struggled to win the vote of the new African American electorate. It was a tricky balance for everyone. And, in this period of transition sometimes large swaths of voters were left unhappy.

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The gubernatorial election of 1966 reflected the national struggle. Though of different parties, Maddox and Callaway shared a similar mindset. Both were segregationist and traditionalist, isolating those voters who had previously been prevented from exercising their citizenship. When Callaway won the popular vote, but ultimately lost the election when the Georgia State Assembly voted for Maddox, it was a major setback for the fledgling Republicans. Like the Democrats who had to contend with Maddox, the Republicans had to contend with their loss of momentum. As the state parties struggled to define themselves, some of the frustrated but undeterred progressive voters found power in local leaders. In both DeKalb and Hancock members of the large minority populations organized apart from the party structure. Under the leadership of local organizers Maloof and McCown, slowly and steadily these citizens found a way to shape the new political landscape.

Nationally, platforms were equally murky. Unlike Callaway, Nixon hoped to make both the new local activists and the uprooted Georgia Democrats happy with his southern strategy. To appease the white South, Nixon tried to appoint strict constructionist Supreme Court judges and, with a program called new federalism, strengthened the rights of the states. To appease those voters who favored civil rights, he created the Office of Minority Business Enterprises, strengthened voting protections, and oversaw the peaceful desegregation of the nation’s schools to ensure the African American vote. It was not an easy coalition to muster, but Nixon proved successful. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Nixon swept the state in 1972, even winning the
support of McCown. With momentum on their side, in 1972 the Georgia Republicans seemed poised to win over a significant number of former Democrats.

Luck, was not, however, on the side of Georgia Republicans. The decade that started with so much promise, turned out to be one of their most trying times. In the next chapter, I will explore the “dark days” of the seventies, the origins of the Reagan Revolution, and the rise of the competitive South.
Chapter 4: After the Dark Days, a Light at the End of the Tunnel: Georgia Republicans in the Seventies

In the fall of 1969, the Georgia Republican party undertook a brutally honest and entirely confidential self-assessment. The outlook was grim. The Republican State Chairman, Wiley Wasden, was, “young and energetic,” but, “inexperienced and politically naive.”  

The Executive Director, Alex Hodges, did not, “have the political respect of the party leaders.” The financial situation was bleak. According to the report, “The Georgia State party lives on a hand-to-mouth desperation situation and has not been solvent for several years.” The generosity of a few wealthy benefactors was the only thing keeping the Republicans out of the red. Worse yet, the examiners concluded, “The outlook, however, for any substantial increase of Republican seats is not encouraging unless an effective switchover program can be initiated.”

These were tough times for the fledgling Republican party, and they knew it. In 1966, they had lost the governorship by a small margin and had won only one Congressional election since Bo Calloway’s victory in 1964. On the state level, there were eight Republicans in the State Senate and twenty-two in the House of Representatives, an increase of twenty-

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266 Ibid.

267 Ibid.
seven since 1960, but they were still a significant minority. Locally, they could claim only five mayors and two sheriffs.268

If the report was not evidence enough, another key piece of data lies in the Richard B. Russell Archives at Georgia State University—an undated video donated by a Republican official cleverly subtitled, “A not very-official history of the Republican Party in Georgia or how to build a two-party state in 120 short years!” A self history, it provides a fascinating, one-sided look at Georgia’s Republicanization. In it the narrator, Theodore Thomas Jefferson Washington Robert E. Stonewall Merewether Manson, the oldest living Republican, describes the seventies as, “pretty dark days for Georgia Republicans,” but adds, “things started to happen within the party, things that would make a difference later.”269 He was right. From the outside, the seventies appeared to be a difficult time for the still emerging Republican party, but just below the surface, there were waves of the revolution that would make the Republicans competitive in local and statewide elections.

The first current of change came not as much from the Republicans themselves, but from elected Democrats who, frustrated with their own party, publically switched or openly debated changing their allegiance. Even in small numbers, these politicians did two important things: they drew attention to the growing differences between the two parties and they spurred debates among the populace that slowly cracked away at the strength of the Democrats. In the Solid South’s slow deterioration, these disgruntled


269 “History of Georgia GOP,” [nd], Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Athens, Georgia.
Democrats were key to bringing attention to the Republican party and, in turn, swaying some voters.

Party switching among voters, of course, was equally important. While the Republicans struggled to build what party stalwart Fred Cooper called, “the Republican farm team,” there were enough electable Republicans on the slate to regularly challenge the straight ticket vote.\textsuperscript{270} This was especially evident in the 1980 election when Georgia voters selected Jimmy Carter for President and, for the first time, a Republican, Matt Mattingly, for the Senate.\textsuperscript{271}

The state political parties listened as both voters and candidates openly reconsidered their positions. However, it was a slow, unsure, and nonlinear course for them to change, and in the case of the Republicans, solidly define their positions. This wavering is perhaps best evident in the political career of Jimmy Carter. In both his gubernatorial and presidential campaigns, he used his anonymity as an asset. This allowed him to court conservative and liberal voters alike, a remarkable feat for a state, and a region, where incumbents were king.

Carter also played an unwitting, but undeniable role in the Reagan Revolution. Frustrated after Carter’s four years in office, the white southern conservatives who were key to his victory in 1976, voted overwhelming for Reagan in 1980. In his bid for reelection, Carter lost every southern state except Georgia, and probably would have lost it as well had he not been its native son. Georgia Republicans, therefore, were not able to effectively capitalize on the Reagan landslide to the same degree as their southern

\textsuperscript{270} Ibid
\textsuperscript{271} Merle and Earl Black, \textit{The Rise of Southern Republicans} (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002), 123
neighbors. Despite this disadvantage, they did score one major victory. In 1980, longtime Democratic Senator Herman Talmadge lost to political newcomer Mack Mattingly. While Bo Calloway had won a seat in the House of Representatives in 1964, Mattingly became Georgia’s first Republican Senator since Reconstruction.

Thus, the decade that started with so much desperation ended with a great deal of hope. There were legitimate Republican contenders at the top and bottom of the political process, the Georgia electorate proved willing to vote outside their partisan political box, and candidates were willing to break with their party traditions. Most importantly, however, in 1980 Georgian broke with the Talmadge era. Talmadgities, in the tradition of iconic politician Eugene Talmadge, were social conservatives who vocally opposed integration and voraciously fought for the rights of white, rural Georgians. Since the 1930s they were a major, if not dominant, influence on the state Democratic party. When Mack Mattingly, a conservative Republican, defeated Democratic incumbent Herman Talmadge for a seat in the U.S. Senate, the signs of a political realignment were clear. The Georgia Democratic party had lost its monopoly on Georgia’s white, conservative base.

A Very Public Switch in DeKalb

Perhaps the most bitter of all of the 1968 elections in DeKalb County was the contest for County Commissioner. The race pitted two very outspoken, experienced, generally respected, and always opinionated candidates against one another. In the end, outside forces combined with internal frustration to force the onetime frontrunner, Brince
H. Manning, Jr. to make a heretofore unprecedented decision to leave the Democratic party in mid-stride.

By 1968, Manning was an influential, if sometimes controversial, community fixture. He was a hometown boy, and following his honorable service in the Navy during World War II, a hometown hero. After leaving the service, he returned to Atlanta where he completed a law degree from Woodrow Wilson College of Law. Capitalizing on his good community standing, he rose through the ranks to become a successful attorney and the owner of his own firm. In 1958, he won seat on the DeKalb County Commission. Only two years later, he was selected Chairman. During his four year tenure DeKalb experienced a period of tremendous growth, as evidenced by one of his most celebrated accomplishments: while Manning was in office DeKalb County allocated over $100 million worth of building permits for the very first time.272

From his perch as Chairman, Manning had an interesting view of the political upheaval of the 1960s. With each election he grew more frustrated with the local Democratic party, which he believed was run by liberal elites.273 In 1968, the straw that broke the camel’s back, so to speak, was the bloody violence at the 1968 Democratic convention, which Manning described as, “an insult to the South and an outrage to decent people everywhere.”274 After losing his bid for reelection as County Commissioner in the 1968 primary election, Manning officially resigned from the Democratic party and

274 Ibid.
declared himself a political Independent. However, the Republican National Committee rightly saw Manning’s political discontent as an opportunity to sway not only Manning, but the “strong bloc vote that will follow him into the Republican ranks in the coming 1970-1972 elections.”\textsuperscript{275} Without a Republican in the race, the Republican leadership actively supported Manning, and, as he slipped in the polls and faced an ugly smear campaign spearheaded by his Democratic opponent, worked secretly to salvage his campaign. Despite their best efforts, Manning lost. More importantly, with the urging of the Republican party officials who did not necessarily wish to be associated with the rumors of political corruption waged against Manning, he remained an Independent.\textsuperscript{276}

Six months later, with the wounds from the attack still fresh, Manning very publicly, and without the endorsement of the leading party officials, announced that he was officially joining the Republican party. Hurt by accusations that DeKalb’s economic troubles were due to the actions of his administration, Manning released a scathing statement to the press deeply criticizing the local Democratic party structure. He declared, “The local Republican party is a peoples[ic] party and is not controlled by the old power structure machine,” and explained that, “The leadership and grassroots workers of the Republican party more nearly reflect my own views and convictions, 1.) of responsible, enlightened conservatism, 2.) representative government based on constitutional principles, and conservative policies.”\textsuperscript{277} He went on to explosively charge

\textsuperscript{275} Tom Davison to Howard Callaway, April 18, 1969. H.H. Callaway Collection, Series II B, Box 5, Folder Political Correspondence, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Athens, Georgia.

\textsuperscript{276} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{277} “Statement of Brince Manning,” April 14, 1969. H.H. Callaway Collection, Series II B, Box 5, Folder Political Correspondence, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Athens, Georgia.
“I am convinced that the DeKalb Democrat Party is mostly a captive of big financiers in coalition with liberal left wingers.”278 Like Manual Maloof and his followers, he was frustrated by the Democrats. Unlike Maloof, however, these frustrations lay in the fact that the local DeKalb Democrats were not truly conservatives, not as Maloof believed, that they were not truly liberals.

Despite his harsh criticism of the Democrats and his kind overtures to the Republicans, Manning was not welcomed with open arms into his new party. Just ten days after Manning’s statement, the Toco Hills Federation of Republican Women wrote to the Republican party of DeKalb to officially, “oppose any endorsement of Brince Manning for any position.”279 Too many qualified people, they argued, were being overlooked. Republican party Chairman Homer A. Cronin’s response was thoughtful and telling. He argued that the Republican party was not a private club and would welcome any “disenchanted conservative” into its ranks. Candidly, he suggested that, in fact, the problem in DeKalb was in the attitude not of Democrats, but of Republicans themselves, as he said “Last year, when we had our own candidate for the position of County Commission Chairman, people within our Party supported Brince Manning and Clark Harrison. If all of us had worked together we would have elected George W. Smith to the County Chairman’s position and we would not have been faced with the situation

278 Ibid.
279 Toco Hills Federation of Republican Women to Homer Cronin, April 24, 1969, H.H. Callaway Collection, Series II B, Box 5, Folder Political Correspondence, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Athens, Georgia.
that exists in the county today.”280 In the months that followed, the problem brought up by the Toco Hills Federation of Republican Women would become even more apparent: party switchers or disgruntled Democrats were quickly becoming the face of the Georgia Republican party.

Brince Manning’s very public switch demonstrated two important and interconnected developments: the Republican party had become a tenable home for disgruntled local Democrats and that fact made it even more difficult for the Republican voters, if not the party leaders, to develop a clear platform. In all of his official statements regarding his switch, Manning spoke in platitudes. He found the local Democrats too liberal and elitist, in other words patrician, in contrast to the plebian Republicans. He did not say that he supported the Republicans stance on taxes, civil rights, city redistricting or any of other specific issue facing Georgia voters. The Republicans welcomed Manning, as any growing organization would, but while his switch was evidence that the Republican party was more viable than before, it did not show that the Republicans were really ideologically any different than the Democrats that Manning so opposed.

The 1970 Election: Maddox Waivers, Carter Confuses

In 1970 Governor Maddox found himself in a unique predicament. He desperately wanted to serve another term as Governor, but the Georgia state Constitution prevented him from running. Maddox tried to change the law, but he was unsuccessful.

280 Homer A. Cronin to the Toco Hills Federation of Republican Women, April 24, 1969, H.H. Callaway Collection, Series II B, Box 5, Folder Political Correspondence, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, Athens, Georgia.
Traditionally, a strong incumbent like Maddox would exit politics for a term before returning to his position, but he was never a traditional politician. Rather than wait, he chose to run for the lesser office of Lieutenant Governor. While this position would keep him in the political limelight, it made for a do or die election. If Maddox could not win the election for Lieutenant Governor, how could he possibly survive another gubernatorial election? Aware of Maddox’s precarious political positioning, Dillard Munford, president of the multimillion dollar Jackson-Atlantic company and an influential Georgia Republican, met with Maddox in his offices very early in the campaign. Maddox greeted him with an ironic joke, “Y’all better get me on your side if y’all want to win this year.” 281 In fact, as Maddox surely suspected, Munford’s aim was to convince Maddox to switch parties.

The watershed conversation began innocently enough with a money-making proposition. Munford hoped to use Maddox’s popularity, and his image, literally, to market a chain of fried chicken outlets. After a bit of water cooler chatter, Munford got to the point and made his true pitch— Munford promised Maddox his complete financial backing if Maddox decided to switch parties. Though no decision was made, five hours later, Willey Wasden, the chairman of the state Republican party, arrived at Maddox’s office to personally let him know that the Republicans were, “holding an open primary.”282 The suggestion was blunt. Wasden reinforced Munford’s message that Maddox, should he change sides, would be welcomed by the Georgia Republicans.

282 Ibid, 5.
Not one for subtlety, Maddox spent over a week debating his allegiance in the press. Maddox knew a handful of legislators, such as Ira Blitch, who had switched parties during the Goldwater campaign or after the violence at the 1968 Democratic convention, and he certainly was aware of the many more who threatened to follow suit. Ultimately, though, Maddox choose to stick with his own party. His explanation was less than enthusiastic: “The Democratic party has brought a little better way of life to our people. I shall remain in the Democratic party and will carry it to victory in the election of 1970.” In response, Maddox’s chief opponent in the Democratic primary, Lieutenant Governor George T. Smith, insinuated that the Republicans did not offer Maddox enough incentives, noting that “this rejected Republican will be a defeated Democrat. The voters of Georgia will not be taken in by a man whose main interest is himself—not them.” Smith misjudged the electorate Maddox prevailed.

Perhaps as powerful as the fact that Maddox entertained the idea of switching parties is the fact that it did not damage his political ambitions. Party switching was the most extreme aspect of a much more acceptable trend – party bashing. The story of Manning’s switch, and Maddox’s flirtation with his once political foes perfectly highlight the troubles of political parties in the brand new post-civil rights era. For most of the century, the Democratic party’s power came from its unity. It was the “Solid” South, not the disunited, the half-hearted, or the easily swayed South. In their heyday, southern politicos spoke with one political voice, and in the system, Georgian Democrats, as unquestioned members of the Deep South and the southern voting block, were especially

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283 Ibid, as quoted on 6.
284 Ibid.
well positioned. And, while the cracks were apparent in the 1960s, Maddox’s seemingly odd flirtation with Republican leaders exposed a hole in the system. The fact that he still won the election exposed nothing less than a breakdown.

Yet, for all the problems the Georgia Democrats faced, Manning’s loss and Maddox’s election also exposed a glimmer of hope. While it may have been politically acceptable for Maddox to attack his own party, it was not politically expedient for him to actually make the switch. Those who had success switching parties did so while they were in office, not during an election. As political scientists Timothy P. Nokken and Keith T. Poole explain, party switchers, even in the Solid South, usually received fewer votes in both the primary and general elections than in previous showings. The most effective way for politicians to mitigate this risk was to change party affiliation early in their terms, thus giving them more time to “brand” themselves with their new party.\textsuperscript{285} The disjointed Democrats still had the deep pockets and the political machinery that the Republicans lacked. After all, Mumford had to guarantee his financial backing, it was not a given.

Beyond Maddox’s run for office, there was another important, though not immediately apparent, development in the 1970 election. While Maddox, as was so often the case, stole the headlines, Jimmy Carter quietly won the election for the state’s most important position. And, while ultimately his policies were progressive, his campaign was familiar. Just as it was not politically expedient for Maddox to switch parties, it was

not politically expedient for the Carter campaign to advertise its candidate’s sympathetic racial views. As would be true during his Presidential campaign, Carter’s relative anonymity in the gubernatorial race worked to his advantage. He was an unexpected candidate in an unsuspecting package, not so unlike Harry S. Truman in 1948, when he betrayed Southern Democrats’ expectations by supporting civil rights. And, as in 1948, this seeming duplicity signified a significant problem for the Democratic party. The Georgia Democratic party in 1970 was a party struggling to define its platform and to establish a solid electorate.

Jimmy Carter: Georgia’s Second Most Influential Dirt Farmer

Politics was Jimmy Carter’s third career. He was first, and perhaps foremost, a farmer. The Carter family first settled in Plains, Georgia near the turn-of-century when James Earl Carter, Sr., Jimmy Carter’s father, was a young boy. The young Carter bore witness to a town on the make, steeped in the social traditions of the Georgia. Main Street, the city’s major thoroughfare, was home to a general store, cotton warehouse, bank, hospital, department store, and a whites-only public school. During the economic boom of the twenties Plains grew to include two banks, two drugstores, a hotel, three churches, and an African-American school. Capitalizing on this boom, James Earl Carter, Sr. invested in a farm, timberland, and a series of successful business venture.\(^{286}\) It was as though, according to biographer Frye Galliard, “everything he touched turned to gold.”\(^{287}\) In the midst of this period of prosperity and good fortune, James Earl Carter,

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Sr. married, and on October 21, 1924 had his first son, James “Jimmy” Earl Carter, Jr. In an ironic twist of fate, only hours after the birth of the Governor who would declare an end to racism, the sitting Governor, Clifford Walker, gave the keynote address at the annual Ku Klux Klan rally.\textsuperscript{288} Georgia, like so many southern states, would undergo a significant transformation during Carter’s lifetime.

After a boyhood on the farm, Jimmy Carter left Georgia for his second career. In 1942, he left Plains to attend the Naval Academy in Annapolis. For the next eleven years, Carter rose in the ranks until he became an engineer in the Navy’s relatively new and controversial nuclear submarine program. While he was in a prestigious position, tragedy would force him to reconsider his life’s work. In 1953, Carter’s father passed away, leaving the family farm and family homestead to his oldest son. He quickly resigned from the Navy to take over the family business. For the first few years Carter was land rich, but cash poor and the burden of the family farm was a financial hardship. Eventually, with the help of his siblings and wife, and with a combination of odd jobs to make ends meet, Jimmy Carter followed in his father’s footsteps becoming one of the area’s most successful farmers.\textsuperscript{289}

Also, like his father, Carter took an interest in politics. Just weeks before his sudden death, James Earl Carter, Sr. won election to the state legislature. When Jimmy Carter’s mother was offered her husband’s position, she declined, choosing to leave the position vacant rather than fulfill her husband’s dream. In 1962, the oldest son launched

\textsuperscript{289} Ibid, 78-97.
a campaign to become the first member of the Carter family to win and then serve in the Georgia legislature.\textsuperscript{290} In his own words, the 1962 election, “marked a turning point—the first real defeat for the old system on its own turf—that helped to end the legalized system of white supremacy, rural domination of government, and deprivation of civil rights among our neighbors.”\textsuperscript{291} Carter was wrong, but his commentary is insightful. When he ran for Governor unsuccessfully in 1966 and successfully in 1970, which side he stood on in the racial divide was not as clear as it was in 1992.

Carter’s first run for Governor came as a surprise to many. At first, he planned to run for the Senate against Bo Callaway, but when Callaway decided to instead run for Governor, Carter followed his lead. Despite a respectable third-place finish, his relatively last minute campaign was overwhelmed by his far more boisterous opponent, Lester Maddox, and an unprecedented and complicated end. Undeterred and frustrated by the Georgia Legislature’s decision to favor Maddox over Callaway, the candidate with the most votes, Carter decided to run for Governor in the very next election the day after his first defeat.\textsuperscript{292}

While Carter himself admitted that he was, “ill-prepared or non-prepared,” for the 1966 campaign, by 1970, he was “very carefully prepared.” Fully four years before the next election, Carter and his wife toured the countryside shaking hands and giving

\textsuperscript{290} Glad, 88-89.
\textsuperscript{291} In 1992, thirty years after his very first political campaign and with the perfect vision of hindsight, former President Carter wrote about his motivation to first enter into the southern political. He credited the “one man, one vote” Supreme Court decisions with giving him the courage to believe that he could secure election. Jimmy Carter, \textit{Turning Point: A Candidate, a State, and a Nation Come of Age} (New York: Times Books, 1992), xxiv.
speeches. To reaffirm his everyman roots and community focus, he joined a number of local and state organizations, such as the Seedman’s Association, and was an active presence on his local school board. Furthermore, and in a major break with his past gubernatorial race, he recruited an experienced, professional team to lead his campaign and secure his victory, guaranteeing that his next campaign would be a polished, thoughtfully executed affair.

In 1970, Carter and his team faced a unique challenge and a unique challenger. It was clear from very early on that Carter’s toughest opponent would be former governor, Democrat Carl Sanders. Sanders was not always the most popular governor, but he projected a youthful, urban, energetic, image in stark contrast to the Talmadgities before him. While in office, he spearheaded significant improvements to Georgia’s education system, took steps to end corruption through the Governor’s Commission for Efficiency and Improvement in Government, and, perhaps most importantly, he left office with a $140 million surplus in the state treasury, the largest in Georgia’s history. On the issue of race, he was a moderate. While he promised to uphold Georgia’s social traditions, unlike Maddox he did not aggressively fight against segregation. Sanders was a tough opponent, in part because he and Carter held very similar positions.

Moreover, in 1970 it was difficult for any contemporary political observer to get a clear sense of Georgia’s political landscape. Sanders, a young, business savvy, moderate candidate was Governor for four years before Maddox, an outspoken, overt segregationist

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won the position in a close victory. At the same time, in a race Georgia politicians carefully watched, George Wallace, who carried Georgia in the 1968 Presidential election, won Alabama’s Democratic gubernatorial primary in an upset. As Carter’s biographer Peter Bourne observed, following Wallace’s win, “Overnight Sanders’ progressive credentials began to look like a liability … The big advantage Carter enjoyed was that, while Carl Sanders’s record on the issues was well known, Carter’s positions were not.”294 The Carter campaign was poised to capitalize on this disparity.

In the words of political scientist Betty Glad, the Carter campaign “hedged” his platform. Before crowds of conservatives, he presented himself as a hard line law and order candidate, while for progressives he promised better and more education programs, and when he discussed racial integration he was noncommittal.295 An analysis of two television spots provide some insight into Carter’s message, notable as much for what they said as for what they did not.

The setting for “Carter Does” is an idyllic rural Georgia scene: a small farm with tractors harvesting the flourishing crops. The music was nondescript and upbeat, and Carter was dressed to match the setting in jeans and simple button-down plaid shirts, the everyday outfit of an everyman. Over the music, the all-American narrator read the script:

Jimmy Carter knows what it’s like to work for a living. He still puts in twelve hours a day in his shirt sleeves on the farm in Plains during the peanut harvest. All the Carters work hard. . . Can you imagine any of the other candidates for Governor working in the hot August sun? No wonder Jimmy Carter has a special

294 Bourne, 184.
295 Glad, 130-135.
understanding of everyone who works for a living. Georgia needs a man like that for Governor. Vote for Jimmy Carter, isn’t it time somebody spoke up for you?296

In spite of its title, “Carter Does” failed to describe what candidate Carter planned to do as governor. The issues took a backseat to projecting an image. The same was true for another campaign spot, titled simply “Bio.” Unlike “Carter Does,” “Bio” switched through several scenes of rolling hills, fields of grain, heavy farm machinery and the Carter family at work. On top of this comfortably familiar background, Georgia voters heard the following narration:

Meet your next Governor, Jimmy Carter, and a Georgian by heritage and by choice. The Carters have lived and farmed in Sumter County since 1840. Jimmy Carter studied at Georgia Southwestern and Georgia Tech, graduating from Annapolis. Later he became a nuclear engineer and submarine officer. After the death of his father, a former state representative, the young lieutenant returned to his native Plains. There on a shoestring he started a successful peanut and cotton warehouse. During two terms in the State Senate, Jimmy Carter was voted one of the most effective legislators in Georgia history. Carter is a family man. He and his wife Rosalyn have three sons and a daughter, from Jack in the Navy to two year old Amy. Jimmy Carter, your kind of man, your kind of Governor. Vote for Jimmy Carter, isn’t it time somebody spoke up for you?297

Combined, these commercials provide a fascinating insight into the precarious position of the Georgia Democrats. To win the election, the Carter campaign had to stick to the past. In his both his biographical piece and in “Carter Does,” candidate Carter projects an image not a message. Like so many Georgia politicians, Carter was a noble southerner, who had known and overcome struggles, loved his family and his country and made an honest, hardworking living working the land. Longtime voters and political observers could easily find striking parallels to the Georgia Democrats’ longtime

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political dynasty, the Talamadges, and, more often than not, the Carter campaign did little to distance itself from this imagery. As historian E. Stanley Godbold observed, “Carter himself was not a segregationist in 1970. But he did say things that the segregationist wanted to hear.”298

The election results reflect this confusion. Carter lost in the increasingly suburban DeKalb county, but won in both Hancock county, where he received the albeit reluctant endorsement of John McCown, and Pierce county, where his rural, everyman message held its greatest appeal. To win the endorsement of both staunch conservatives and civil righters was quite an accomplishment. Although a bigger issue in his later political career, his very open identification as an evangelical Christian was a key component in bridging this gap.

Any confusion, however, over Carter’s stance toward integration was erased during his inaugural address. Before a large crowd, including Lt. Governor Maddox, Carter passionately proclaimed, “Georgians north and south, rural and urban, liberal and conservative, I say to you quite frankly that the time for racial discrimination is over. . . No poor, rural, weak, or black person should ever have to bear the additional burden of being deprived of the opportunity of an education, a job, or simple justice.”299 With this statement, Carter ensured that he resembled Gene Talmadge in image only. In spite of all appearances to the contrary, the peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia represented a new breed of southern politicians and a new type of Georgia Democrat. Not everyone was

pleased. As a contemporary biographer wrote, for at least some of his critics, he was the “Yankee from Georgia.”

Among these critics, Lt. Governor Maddox was often the loudest. From the start, Maddox and Carter fundamentally differed on the one key issue: the independence of the legislature. Maddox, according to the long-standing tradition in Georgia politics, believed that the Governor should play a little role in the day-to-day activities of the legislature. Very early on in his campaign, Carter made it clear that he intended to be more hands-on. More specifically, Carter planned to have a say in naming committee chairmen, a duty that had for decades been the sole decision of the Lieutenant Governor. “To me,” Maddox worried, “the effect of this, if he succeeded, would have been to set up a virtual dictatorship with the executive branch controlling the legislature, a clear violation of the intent of the state’s Constitution.”

To understand Maddox’s fear is to understand Georgia’s gubernatorial history. Even though technically the lieutenant governor is still part of the executive branch, Maddox, like most Georgians, knew that the lieutenant governor and the governor were frequently at philosophical and ideological odds. To keep the peace, it was customary for the two men to keep to a clearly defined set of jobs. Carter broke from this tradition. From Carter’s perspective, this departure was a necessary part of his plan to, “make [Georgia’s government] more streamlined, more efficient, more fiscally responsible.”

302 Interview with Carter, 249.
Democratic party, race was still a hot button topic, and very early on, Carter’s inaugural words would be put to the test.

Governor Carter Faces an Arms Race

Local civil rights organizer John McCown was particularly disappointed in Jimmy Carter’s campaign, but not necessarily for the typical reasons. McCown was upset that Carter ignored his persistent pleading that he visit Hancock County during his statewide campaign. As one of Georgia’s more notable, and controversial, African American leaders, McCown expected an audience with the race’s frontrunner. It would not take long, however, for McCown to get the Governor’s full attention. As County Commissioner, McCown began to focus on the two other major issues facing Hancock County: education and the economy. While seemingly benign, these two initiatives heightened racial tensions, culminating in 1971 with Hancock County’s arms race and Carter’s first cold war.

In 1966, when McCown first arrived in Hancock County, three African Americans were elected to local political offices. Two years later, McCown spearheaded a campaign that secured six additional offices, including two seats on the three person county commission. McCown himself held one of these positions. Yet, like so many rural counties with a heavily racially skewed population—in 1965, 75 percent of the citizens were African American—Hancock struggled to develop a plan to peacefully

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desegregate its public schools.  Hancock’s situation, however, was particularly
difficult because, as historian Lawrence J. Hanks observed, “If [the black leadership]
followed the desires of their constituents and fought for full desegregation, they would
run the risk of alienating the few whites who were willing to work with them to attract
industry; if they pragmatically tried to satisfy the desires of their white county boosters
and refused to tackle the desegregation issue, the blacks were certain to feel betrayed.”

Though a tough call to make, in the end they sided with their black constituents.

In 1969, there were only two schools in Hancock county, the overcrowded
African American Hancock Central and the comparatively sparsely attended all-white
Sparta High. When the white Superintendent and white school board denied a petition to
transfer at least one hundred African American students to Sparta High, John McCown
led a crowd of 200 students and their parents gathered in the auditorium and demanded to
enroll. The school board immediately shut down the schools for three days and filed an
injunction against McCown. Undeterred, African Americans boycotted the schools and
threatened to boycott white merchants if the school board continued to refuse their
requests. The school board acquiesced and allowed ninety-two African American
students to attend Sparta High. This was, however, only a temporary fix. There were
still no white students at Hancock Central. Less than a year after the first boycott,
McCown led another challenge. This time, the decision fell to the courts to decide. In
the end, the prolonged litigation was for naught. In the time it took the courts to decide

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305 Ibid, 59.
306 Ibid, 70.
In the case, Hancock county’s white establishment built a new private school, Hancock County Academy, where nearly all of the white students transferred.307

As he waged the fight to desegregate the schools, McCown told a reporter from the *New York Times*, “We hope to prove here in Hancock County that the basic problems here are economic. We must pool our strengths, techniques, and knowledge and bring talent back into the South and make it a viable and pleasant place to live.” Even more telling, he added, “We don’t need any more New Yorks,[sic] Chicagos,[sic] and Philadelphias[sic] where blacks are always ringing someone else’s cash register—we want blacks to own the cash registers.”308 Of his many plans to rebuild the local economy, the most ambitious and, by far, most controversial, was a catfish farm. Using charts, graphs, and data from successful farms across the nation, McCown toured the state and even the nation’s capital to secure funding. He was successful. With a half million dollar grant from the Ford Foundation, in the hot summer of 1970, as many as 2,500 residents celebrated the farm’s opening with an old-fashioned catfish fry.

Unfortunately, despite McCown’s rhetoric to the contrary, the catfish farm struggled financially.309

The school crisis, the catfish farm, which the white community viewed as another of McCown’s eccentric projects, and in particular McCown’s public comments about both, served to only heighten racial tensions in Hancock county. This culminated in the spring of 1971, when Hancock and the Sparta county police squared off in a very public

307 Hanks, 70–74.
309 According to Rozier, by September 30, 1970 the catfish farm had already lost $77,548. See Rozier, 83.
fashion. No other single event would garner as much national attention for McCown as what reporters dubbed the “arms race.”

For his supporters, McCown was a superb organizer, but for his opponents his was the ultimate antagonist. The majority of Sparta’s police believed the latter. In the spring of 1971, several residents reported hearing shots fired from an automatic in the dead of the night. The police assumed the worst and increased their patrols. When an officer was injured in a scuffle with an African American, the police petitioned the white Mayor, Buck Patterson, for more resources. In a paid notice in the Sparta Ishmealite, Patterson warned that his police would not be “intimidated, slapped, around or beaten.” 310 Shortly thereafter he announced his intention to purchase ten submachine guns to protect his six man police force.

McCown responded quickly and in an equally dramatic fashion. Following Patterson’s lead, McCown published a notice announcing the County Commission’s plan to order twenty machine guns from a dealer in Miami, Florida. With the aid of his friend and colleague, Judge Edith Ingram, McCown organized a hunting club, which they named the “Sporting Rangers,” and encouraged its membership to purchase one of the new weapons. After consulting with the credit union that managed the catfish farm, he also promised to secure financing for any club member who hoped to make a purchase.311

It is not surprising that McCown’s notice did not escape the eye of Governor Carter. His handwritten response, was curt and direct, “I consider your public notice concerning the arming of citizens with rifles, shotguns, and pistols to be dangerous and

310 As quoted in Rozier, 87.
311 For more on the arms race see Hanks, 79-81 and Rozier, 86-98.
inflammatory. A copy is being sent to the FBI, OEO, HEW, and our Game and Fish Commission.” Emphatically, he asked, “What are you trying to do?” McCown refused to back down. As the situation intensified, so did the rhetoric. Mayor Patterson explained, “It looks like they’re taking pot shots at our policeman, not just here but everywhere.” Local resident James Hunt retorted, “We figured that if they needed ten submachine guns to protect the city, we needed at least 30 to protect the community.” As this local conflict grew to capture the nation’s attention, Carter worked to find a resolution.

Over the next several months Carter, his negotiating team, and John McCown exchanged letters, held meetings, and placed blame. In a heated letter characteristic of this exchange McCown wrote, “My reply is delayed for fear that I would speak out in anger, or in some way fail to give you the courtesy or proper respect deserved by the chief executive officer of the State of Georgia,” before strongly criticizing Cater for his general lack of attentiveness to the citizens of Hancock and his failure to truly understand the danger facing local residents. Carter continued to push for compromise in spite of McCown’s complaints. On October 1, 1971, following a series of intense discussions, the police force agreed to surrender its guns to state officials and in return McCown and Ingram agreed to disband their hunting club.

While this put an end to the immediate crisis, it did little to improve the underlying tension. Embarrassed by the negative press, concerned about McCown’s

314 Rozier, 88-89.
315 Ibid.
accounting, and, worse, frustrated by his refusal to turn over the accounting books, the Georgia Council on Human Relations (GCHR) pressed McCown for answers. Following a particularly heated meeting on September 22, 1971, McCown resigned. Yet, while McCown moved on, the Georgia Council would not. The board’s worst fears about McCown’s accounting practices were justified. For the next several years, accountants worked to unravel a tangled mess of missing property titles, unclear transactions, missing tax returns, and problematic loans. GCHR never recovered.  

Frustrated with Governor Carter, disappointed with the Council, and in need of new sources for funding, as 1971 wound down, McCown contemplated his next move. With an ever-growing list of powerful Washington beltway contacts, and in the midst of the campaign season, McCown became a Republican. It was a calculated move, indicative of both Georgia’s Democratic and Republican parties’ failure to effectively win the support, and, more importantly, votes of the African American community.

Hancock Goes Republican

While McCown switched his party allegiance, he was hardly a traditional party switcher like Manning or a wavering Democrat like Maddox. He was, in actuality, an opportunist. In the Republicanization of South, as conservative white politicians and voters grew increasingly frustrated with the Democratic party, they left or switched their vote, leaving African Americans to form the base of the Democratic party. Unfortunately for African Americans, local and state Democrats were slow to embrace the liberalism of the national Democratic party. During his time, McCown was never truly satisfied with

316 Rozier, 95-97.
nor fully embraced by either the Republicans or the Democrats. His party allegiance was
more a matter of convenience and custom than party loyalty. By 1972, McCown, like so
many of Georgia’s African American voters, was disenchanted by the political parties
and the candidates they put forth. As the gubernatorial campaign so clearly illustrated,
even candidates like Carter, who supported equal rights, found it more politically
expedient to keep their leanings a secret than to openly admit them. For civil rights
organizers like McCown, this was hardly acceptable.

Yet, while McCown may have been unique, the situation Hancock county voters
found themselves in was not. Two major political trends help explain Hancock’s political
flip-flop: the top down nature of party affiliation and a phenomenon that political
scientists Black and Black label the “Democratic smother.” By combining these theories
and comparing Hancock’s experience to that of DeKalb and Pierce, it is easier to
understand why Hancock went Republican in 1970.

Though seemingly simple, the idea of top down political party advancement is
profound. As Seth C. McKee explained in his insightful work, *Republican Ascendency in
Southern U.S. House Elections*, “The stands taken by Democratic and Republican
politicians on salient issues are viewed by the electorate through an ideological lens. . .
And as the parties continue to diverge ideologically, the most politically aware voters are
the most likely to adjust their party to fit with their own ideology.” 317 Most often this
leads to split level realignment, meaning that an individual’s party preference would
differ by election. This was the case with Pierce County. While Nixon won the most

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votes for President in 1972, Democrats overwhelming won in every other local, state, and national election. A vote for Nixon, in this case, was most often not a vote for the Republican party. Hancock voters turned this process on its end, by voting for a Democratic presidential candidate and for local Republicans. And, while the results differ, in both counties, McKee’s principle held true. The split level realignment apparent in Pierce and Hancock reflected the voter’s confusion about the platforms and guiding ideology of the state and local political parties.

Black and Black add yet another level of understanding of the conflict facing Georgian politicians. In *The Rise of Southern Republicans*, they write extensively about the problem of Democratic smother, a term for the absolute domination the Democrats held in the deepest of the Deep South states. Among their arguments, they write that Democrats used their positions as incumbents, which the authors describe as “the most powerful resource in congressional elections,” to make their cake and eat it too. As the national Democrats became more liberal and thus alienated their traditional conservative political base, conservative Democratic politicians were able to simultaneously denounce the excesses of the national Democratic party while embracing the Democrats’ most popular programs, such as Medicare and Social Security. As the Blacks observe, “ideology and incumbency were mutually reinforcing.”318 In this environment, it was nearly impossible for a Republican challenger, or even a liberal Democrat, to make inroads. This was true for Pierce. However, in Hancock, the newly empowered African American voters and politicians did not have deep political ties or a long standing party

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318 Black and Black, 152.
history. Without a strong allegiance to either the Democrats or the Republicans, McCown used party affiliation as a tool to get grant funding and recognition for his residents.

However, in some areas, like DeKalb and Atlanta, the environment itself was gradually changing. Incumbency was not as insurmountable a challenge in areas with large pockets of white suburbanites, who were more likely than other voting groups to both support the Republican party and, as importantly, reject the rural farmer, everyman image embodied by so many Georgian politicians.319 As DeKalb grew more urban and suburban, the county grew more politically diverse. Perhaps the best illustration of this comes from Georgia’s Sixth District, DeKalb’s southern neighbor. In Congress at the Grassroots, political scientist Richard F. Fenno, Jr. beautifully captures the struggles of U.S. Representative Jack Flynt to meet the demands of his increasingly urban constituents in the 1970s.320 Flynt’s political trajectory was typical for a long standing Georgia Democrat. The grandson of a politician and the son of famous lawyer, he won his first election to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1947 at the age of thirty-one.321 From there he quickly ascended through the ranks as a social conservative and a Talmadge Democrat. He was a segregationist, a proud supporter of the Southern Manifesto, and in the years after Goldwater he began to favor a more fiscally conservative platform.322

319 Black and Black, 154.
In his 1970 reelection campaign, Flynt relied on the same tactics he had practiced throughout his political career. He went door-to-door meeting constituents, emphasizing his community ties and avoiding policy debates. It was what Fenno describes as a “person intensive strategy.” Just two years later, a combination of redistricting and increased urbanization completely changed the landscape of Flynt’s district. As Fenno writes, “He was used to representing stable communities with recognizable economic and political elites, with familiar social structures, with established lines of communication, and with small homogeneous, white electorates.”

Though he won reelection in 1972 without opposition, he struggled to modernize his talking points and his tactics. He, for instance, shunned a proposal that he visit a high volume shopping center. People, he explained, wanted to shop undisturbed. Likewise, he refused to advertise, even in the areas he had never before represented. After so many years in political office, he was adamant that people knew who he was. Like so many of Georgia’s older, traditional politicians, Flynt either failed to understand the political realignment underway or refused to cater to a new electorate they failed to understand and, very likely, held in disdain. As the Republican party grew stronger, politicians like Flynt in increasingly urban areas like DeKalb County grew more vulnerable.

While Hancock County may seem like the exception to these trends, a deeper examination reveals that its predicament was not unpredictable. While a vote for Nixon may not have symbolized a political shift, a vote for the Republican party did. Unlike the 1968 election, when McCown’s candidates ran as candidate in both parties, just four

323 Ibid, 55.
324 Ibid. 56-57.
years later they ran solely as Republicans. The black Republican voters in Hancock county were not just voting for a President, they were making a clear statement that Georgia’s majority party was not meeting their needs, and as voters, they were exercising their constitutional right and duty to send the Democrats this message. Recognizing McCown’s plan as opportunist, the county’s traditional white Republican base was infuriated. In a move of desperation, they sent a file of evidence against McCown directly to the Attorney General of the United States, John H. Mitchell. Mitchell, or more likely a member of his staff, promptly forwarded the file directly to McCown.325

At the same time, by staging such a unique revolution in such a Democratically dominated area, McCown was well positioned to take advantage of the progressive social programs of the Nixon administration. While Nixon’s own views on race were troublesome, and his rhetoric often complicated, he had, as historian Dean J. Kotlowski writes, “sanctioned some symbolic gestures to ‘knock down the idea that the President and his Administration are ‘anti Negro’ or that we ‘don’t care.’”326 Often these overtures were economic programs, such as the Minority Business Enterprise program, which McCown could certainly argue would benefit Hancock county voters. However, McCown, and his fellow newly converted Republicans, would have little time to bask in the glow of Nixon’s landslide. In 1972, Nixon carried Hancock 1,595 to 1,502. In DeKalb and Pierce the margins were much higher. He carried DeKalb 104,750 to 30,671 and Pierce County by 1,982 to 269.327

325 Rozier, 103.
327 Compiled by the author from the Georgia Secretary of State, Georgia Election Results, Official Results.
While things were dim in 1970, the truly “dark days” for the Georgia Republicans, and indeed doubts about the credibility of political parties in general, officially began in the summer of 1972. On June 17, a security guard at the Watergate hotel caught five men breaking into the headquarters of the Democratic convention. During their trial and through the simultaneous tenacious doggedness of two reporters writing for the *Washington Post*, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the link between the White House and the burglars grew strong enough to warrant a congressional investigation. Soon, these investigations uncovered a web of illegal behavior. Over the course of two years, the public learned about Nixon’s order to investigate the number of Jews in the Department of Labor, the illegal wiretapping of his opponents, the use of audits to make his enemies uncomfortable and other examples of abuse of government power.  

In response, Nixon asked for the resignation of his top aides, but it was not enough to stop the congressional investigation or improve his steadily decreasing poll numbers.

The final pressure to resign came from a beast of Nixon’s own creation. While Nixon’s takeover team was readying the White House for Nixon’s inauguration in 1969, H.R. Haldeman, one of Nixon’s most trusted aides, discovered the remnants of Lyndon B. Johnson’s taping system. At first Nixon rejected the idea of a taping system, but, perhaps persuaded by a conversation with Johnson in which the two men discussed the

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usefulness of having an exact record of key conversations, in early 1971 Nixon first ordered his staff to install a recording system that would grow to include microphones in his desk and telephones in the Oval Office; the desk in his office in the Executive Office Building across the street from the White House; the sconces in the Cabinet Room; the phone in the President’s favorite place to study, the Lincoln Sitting Room; and in one of the desks at Camp David, the Presidential retreat in Maryland. This was a far more expansive system than that of his predecessors. While every President since Franklin D. Roosevelt recorded some of their conversation, no other President taped outside of the Oval Office and no other President relied on a voice-activated system. Combined, all of the presidential recordings prior to Nixon amount to approximately 1,200 hours. Nixon alone accumulated more than 3,800 hours.

For much of the Watergate scandal, the taping system’s existence remained a secret. That changed on July 16, 1973. Before a televised session of the Senate Watergate committee investigation, Alexander Butterfield, the man tasked with turning on the microphones in the Cabinet Room, alerted the world to the evidence that would change the course of U.S. political history. For months, Nixon fought vigorously to keep these tapes from going public. He argued that like every other President before him, he owned his tapes, and while it was an argument rooted in centuries of precedent, the situation was without one. On July 24, 1974, the Supreme Court ruled against the

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329 The taping system in the Aspen Lodge was particularly complex. Since Camp David is an active Navy base, the Secret Service had to install and remove the system with each visit. The Navy was unaware of the recordings.

President in *United States v. Richard Nixon*.\(^3\) He had to turn over all of the tapes. Within days of the ruling, the public first heard the famous “smoking gun” conversation, so named because it was a direct contradiction of Nixon’s emphatic claim that he had no knowledge of any attempts by his administration to cover-up the White House’s link to the Watergate burglars.\(^2\) At the urging of top Republican leaders, including Barry Goldwater and Bob Dole, on August 9, 1974 Nixon resigned.

The very public investigation, the unprecedented Supreme Court battle, and the resignation profoundly altered many Americans’ respect for the office of President and politicians in general. This coupled with the increasingly unpopular Vietnam War and the duplicity revealed in the leak of the “Pentagon Papers,” meant that the credibility gap between the public and the federal government was as wide as it had ever been.

Faced with a challenge without parallel, upon assuming the Presidency, Gerald Ford famously declared, “My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over.”\(^3\) Just one month after his inauguration, Ford made the decision that would shape his short Presidency. Fearing the potential national trauma derived from years of litigation, he declared, “My conscience tells me clearly and certainly that I cannot prolong the bad


dreams that continue to reopen a chapter that is closed,” and pardoned President Nixon for all of the crimes related to the Watergate scandal.\textsuperscript{334}

Much has been written about the impact of Watergate and Ford’s subsequent pardon on the Republican party, nearly all of which makes one conclusion clear – it was devastating. In the 1974 election the Democratic party won a 291-144 majority in the House and a equally unbalanced 60-38 majority in the Senate. Seven of these House seats were formally held by southern Republicans, though none from Georgia.\textsuperscript{335} These loses occurred in spite of the Republican party’s attempt to make the best of their bad situation with a national campaign that asked, with unusual honesty, “When has it ever been easy to be a Republican?”\textsuperscript{336}

McCown’s Troubled Final Years

By 1974, McCown could relate to Republican angst. While it is true that he was able to secure some federal funding as a Republican, his decision to so publically switch parties angered at least one major Democrat—Jimmy Carter—and as Governor he was in the perfect position to obstruct McCown’s plans. Simultaneously, McCown’s troublesome accounting during his years on the Georgica Council on Human Rights, his own financial woes, and reported problems at the polls took a toll on McCown personally and politically.

\textsuperscript{335} Mark D. Brewer and Jeffery M. Stonecash, \textit{Dynamics of American Political Parties} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 121.
During his campaign, Carter consistently refused McCown’s offer to visit Hancock County, creating tension between the two men. After all, McCown had publically criticized Carter’s campaign, questioned his commitment to African Americans, and as an act of open defiance, switched parties. Even so, Carter’s campaign promise to restore integrity to Georgia’s government would not allow him to ignore the growing cloud of suspicion surrounding McCown. What started as whispers of worry quickly grew into a chorus of concern. Complaints from community members, companies, and organizations alike forced Carter and his administration to keep a very close eye on McCown and his various organizations’ finances.\footnote{According to Bolden’s dissertation, Carter personally ordered an audit of approximately $300,000 granted to ECCO, see Bolden, 224.} Exactly how much money McCown ultimately procured is an enduring mystery. McCown’s own claims ranged from $8,000,000- 10,000,000. Others have estimated the number from $5,000,000 to $12,000,000.\footnote{Rozier 147-148.} What is clear, is that by 1974 much of it had disappeared or was unaccounted for.

Just as it was for Nixon, 1974 was a very bad year for John McCown. The troubles started with a springtime announcement that, amid complaints of voter intimidation and voter tampering in the 1970 election, the Carter administration planned to send observers from the State Elections Board to monitor the upcoming primary and general elections. Over the summer and into the fall, McCown was sued for not paying for his personal property purchases. These legal troubles worsened in November when he found himself the subject of a federal grand jury inquiry into whether or not he
received kickbacks on grant funding. While McCown steadfastly denied the charge, and even brazenly encouraged congressman to proceed with the investigation, a third civil suit over money owed on his property deals undermined his credibility. Worse yet, angry Hancock citizens staged a “tax strike” against McCown. The county’s major landowners, many of whom were black, refused to pay their taxes so long as McCown, the author of some of the county’s largest tax increases, had not paid his fair share.339

The downward spiral continued into the New Year. On April Fools Day, McCown, surrounded by twenty-five supporters, announced the that he was suing the Atlanta Journal and Constitution, two federal lawyers, and a number of his strongest opponents in Hancock for unfairly targeting and tarnishing his reputation. Just months after learning that he lost the case, another judge ruled that McCown had insufficient funds to provide collateral for two bonds totaling $100,000 for friends arrested on drug charges. Just weeks after that painful decision, McCown learned that the Ford Foundation would no longer fund projects in Hancock County.340

Without funding, facing personal financial troubles, and the subject of an increasingly intense grand jury investigation, McCown was the subject of reports that he was drinking heavily.341 After an evening at the Academy Bar, on Friday, January 30, 1976, McCown and three friends boarded McCown’s personal single-engine Cessna. Though legally intoxicated—an autopsy found that his blood/alcohol level was 0.198 percent—and in possession of only an expired student license, McCown was in the pilot

339 Rozier, 152-153.
340 Rozier, 153-155.
341 Rozier, 158.
seat when the plane crashed only fifteen minutes after takeoff. When authorities reached the wreckage, they quickly pronounced McCown and two of his three passengers, Allen Simmons and Leon Simmons, dead on the scene.\textsuperscript{342} Only one person, Grady Collier, survived the impact.\textsuperscript{343}

Unfortunately for his supporters, the controversy surrounding McCown did not end with his death. The federal grand jury continued their investigations into the misuse of funds. After two years, fifteen people were charged with felonies. Of those fifteen individuals, eight were acquitted or had their charges dropped, one person was convicted of perjury, and five pleaded guilty to various charges.\textsuperscript{344} As a result of the investigation and the corruption uncovered, the organizations and institutions that McCown once championed fell into disarray and, eventually, bankruptcy. In 1976, Hancock County overwhelmingly voted for Jimmy Carter, McCown’s longtime foe, as President of the United States.\textsuperscript{345}

Carter’s Election

Carter’s bid for the presidency was a temporary setback for the Georgia Republican party. On December 12, 1974, on the heels of Nixon’s resignation and Ford’s subsequent pardon, Carter announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination with the brave, and timely, exclamation “There is a simple and effective way for public officials to regain public trust - be trustworthy!”\textsuperscript{346} This statement set the tone

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{342} See Rozier, 158-160 and Bolden, 251
\item \textsuperscript{343} Bolden, 251.
\item \textsuperscript{344} Rozier, 179.
\item \textsuperscript{345} Voters in Hancock favored Carter 2117 to 651.
\item \textsuperscript{346} Jimmy Carter, “Address Announcing Candidacy for the Democratic Presidential Nomination at the National Press Club in Washington, DC,” December 12, 1974, from T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The
\end{itemize}
for Carter’s entire candidacy—he was a political newcomer, a virtual unknown, at exactly the time when the nation needed a new face, and, most importantly, he was a good and moral person. It was a familiar message from Carter to Georgians. In his examination of his presidential campaign, political scientist Michael G. Krukones concluded that Carter used several unprecedented tactics designed specifically set him apart from traditional politicians. He, for example, emphasized his lack of experience in Washington to remind voters that he was untainted, often compared himself to President Eisenhower who was also a political outsider, and highlighted the importance of honest and decent leadership in government over qualifications or time on the job.347 This was especially important, because what was true for Carter’s gubernatorial race, was true for his campaign for the presidency – as political scientist Stephen Skrowronek so aptly described, he ran an “autobiographical campaign.”348 Once again, where Carter fell on the issues was less important than understanding his roots.

There was, however, one major difference between the public biography of Governor Carter and President Carter—religion. At the time, it was unique for a national candidate to so openly discuss his religious faith. By running as an openly and deeply evangelical, born-again Christian, as scholars Andrew Flint and Joy Porter write, he successfully, “brought Christian conservatism back to the political center in 1976, retrieving evangelicalism from the political hinterland to which it had retreated at the end

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of the 1920s.” Carter’s emphasis on his personal religious beliefs played a large role in the 1976 election results. Just as he had when he won the election for Governor, Carter appealed to a large swath of voters. Without much of voting record on which to base their decision, both southern conservatives, with their strong Protestant values, and southern supporters of the civil rights movement, which drew so deeply from gospel traditions, believed Carter’s religious beliefs would translate into support for the issues they held dear. Carter, who straddled many of the major issues, did little to clarify his positions. Evidence of this misunderstanding became especially clear in the 1980 election. After four years of evidence, southern white conservatives overwhelmingly voted for Ronald Reagan and these swing voters were central to the “Reagan Revolution.”

As is often the case with presidential candidates, even in a landslide loss, Carter carried his home state. However, there were plenty of other signs that Georgia voters, and especially Georgia’s white conservative voters, were in line with the rest of the nation. In fact, the 1980 elections, both literally and figuratively, marked the end of the Talmadge era, the period marked by rural favoritism and social conservatism that began with Herman Talmadge’s father’s political success in the 1930s.

Herman Talmadge v. Mack Mattingly

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350 Black and Black, 211.
352 Black and Black, 211.
Party affiliation was one of the many things that Herman Talmadge and Jimmy Carter shared. Talmadge was a candidate with years of experience, a solid, consistent voting record, and a family name to uphold. The son of the “Wild Man of Sugar Creek,” Herman Talmadge got his first earnest taste of politics in 1946 when he ran his father’s campaign. When his father suddenly passed away following this election, Talmadge found himself in the middle of Georgia’s famous “Three Governors” controversy. In a special election in 1948, he easily won the Governor’s race outright.\(^{353}\)

As Governor, Talmadge was one of the loudest critics of desegregation. In 1955, he published a book, *Segregation and You*, extolling the virtues of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the doctrine of separate but equal. He continued to oppose civil rights legislation and desegregation during his four terms in the U.S. Senate. Civil rights, however, were only one of Senator Talmadge’s concerns. As a member of the Committee on Agriculture, he ensured that his primary consistency—rural farmers—were well represented. And, as a member of the Senate Finance Committee, he pushed for balanced budgets and measures to promote small government. He was a, or perhaps the, textbook southern conservative.\(^{354}\)

Talmadge, however, was not without his problems or his critics. Always a heavy drinker, after the tragic drowning death of his son in 1975, he became a self-professed, full blown alcoholic.\(^{355}\) His drinking in turn contributed to a very ugly and very public divorce. When the Senate charged Talmadge with accepting more than $43,000 for

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\(^{354}\) Ibid.

falsely filed expenses, his former wife sensationally testified against him.\textsuperscript{356} Ultimately, the Senate denounced him for “reprehensible conduct” in mishandling his official budget.\textsuperscript{357} Scorned by his colleagues, his wife, and the press, Talmadge entered the 1980 election season in the most vulnerable position of his career. It was no surprise that he faced a strong challenge in the primary, though few would have guessed how bloody that challenge would be.

Zell Miller had learned a lot about politics, and in particular campaigning, during his time as Lester Maddox’s Chief of Staff, 1968-1961, and then as Lt. Governor under George Busbee starting in 1975.\textsuperscript{358} While he lost to Talmadge, the bitter campaign he waged against his opponent effectively tainted Talmadge’s image as he entered in the general election. And, as importantly, as the two Democratic contenders voraciously attacked one another, underfunded Republican candidate Mack Mattingly sat back and conserved his money.\textsuperscript{359}

Mattingly was an unlikely candidate to be the first Republican elected to the Senate since Reconstruction. He was a southerner by choice, not by birth. In the economic boom of the 1950s, he moved from Indiana to Georgia where he rose through the ranks at IBM. He had never won an election prior to 1980, though he had served as Chairman of the Georgia Republican Party.\textsuperscript{360} While Black and Black write that, Mattingly’s election was, “mainly a referendum on Talmadge,” that only tells part of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Buchanon.
\item Black and Black, 123.
\item Black and Black, 123-124.
\item Talmadge, 351.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
story. Talmadge himself was correct in writing that Mattingly was, “obviously banking on the popularity of Ronald Reagan . . . and the negative feelings that voters had about me.” While incredibly close, Mattingly’s victory was a major milestone for the Georgia Republicans, and the voting results for this contest are incredibly telling. Mattingly won in DeKalb 115,684 to 50,883, but he lost by an equally wide margin in both Hancock and Pierce.363

The results in Pierce and Hancock County present a particularly interesting contrast. Without specific polls it is impossible to know the exact reason why people with sympathy for civil rights voted for a candidate with such a long record of opposition, but, in 1980, there were reasons why Talmadge was still an attractive candidate to Hancock blacks. As Pearl T. Robinson noted in her thoughtful postmortem analysis, despite Talmadge’s social conservatism, he supported food stamps, school lunch programs, and several programs specifically designed to aid Georgia’s rural farmers and, as McCown knew so well, these economic programs were vital to the citizens of Hancock.364 Also, as the Christian Science Monitor reported, the older generation of African Americans favored Talmadge. They saw him as “a former racist who has seen the light [and] the best friend in Washington for getting things done.”365 Some voters were willing to forgive the longtime Senator. Those who were not so forgetful voted for

361 Black and Black, 124.
362 Talmadge, 351.
363 Mattingly lost 546 to 1576 in Hancock County and 846 to 2173 in Pierce County.
Mattingly. The Talmadge era, which originated in the 1930s and was characterized by politicians who catered to Georgia’s agrarian base and openly opposed civil rights, ended in 1980 with a debate over its founder and namesake’s son’s segregationist history. Race has not played a significant role in any major election since Talmadge’s defeat, with the exception, perhaps, of Barack Obama’s victory in 2008. Even then, however, race was generally not, at least only, a determining issue.

Conclusion

While in 1980 the Republicans still lacked a “farm team,” at least they had a few solid players, some new team members, and some switch hitters. In this major political shift, state and local contests, such as the races between Manning and Harrison for DeKalb County Commissioner in 1968, Carter and Sanders for Governor in 1970, and Talmadge and Mack Mattingly for the Senate in 1980, were as significant as the Presidential campaigns in convincing voters of the viability of the two-party system. Before his untimely death, John McCown even used the new competitive atmosphere to his advantage in Hancock County by convincing the county to vote Republican in an effort to benefit from Nixon’s economic programs. While Hancock County’s switch proved temporary, and while at the end of the seventies, Democrats still held the major advantage in every county, for the first time it was an advantage that Republicans could overcome. They were true contenders.

While the resignation of President Nixon presented the Georgia Republicans with their toughest challenge it was President Reagan who would give them their greatest hope. While Carter’s presidential run delayed Georgia’s participation in the Reagan
Revolution, Republicans would make up for that post-election. Georgia would vote overwhelming for Reagan in the 1984, and for a Republican presidential candidate in every election since; and following the defeat of the last Talmadge, Republicans have been increasingly successful in state and local elections as well. Just as importantly, with Reagan’s victory in 1984 and the subsequent success of Republicans in all levels of government, both the Georgia state Republican and Democratic ideologies now align with national party platforms.

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Epilogue: 1984 and Beyond

In the history of American politics, the current period is often rightly labeled the Reagan era. Adored or abhorred, it is hard to overstate the importance of the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Building on the philosophies of his mentor Barry Goldwater, he succeeded in building a new political coalition out of the ruins of the old Solid South. As historian Sam Wilentz writes, “Reagan had the excellent fortune to emerge as a political contender just as Democratic liberalism fell into confusion and intellectual decay... Reaganism represented a New Deal in American conservatism, aligning as never before in the nation’s history, pro-business economics and regression on civil rights with democratic, even populist, forward-looking political appeals.”367 And, as a former Democrat himself, he was perfectly positioned to lead southern Republican party switchers. As he frequently told crowds of hesitant diehard southern Democrats, “I know what it’s like to pull that Republican lever for the first time because I used to be a Democrat myself. But I can tell you-it only hurts for a minute.”368

Much has been written about Reagan’s rise from an acting career to fierce Goldwater supporter to California Governor. While an unusual trajectory, Reagan’s career path enabled him to perfect the skill sets he needed to build, and as importantly, voice a new political consensus. He was aptly dubbed the Great Communicator for his unequalled ability to reach across the deep political divides to win allies on both sides of

the spectrum. With a poor economy and in the midst of the Cold War, Reagan’s ease with audiences served him well in his effort to define a new conservative philosophy.

Political scientist Joseph A. Aistrup argues that the conservatism developed by Ronald Reagan was the next evolution of the Republican party’s southern strategy first espoused by President Richard Nixon. Like Nixon, Reagan understood that the Republican party had to make major gains in the South to win the presidency against Georgia’s native son, President Jimmy Carter. Unlike Nixon, Reagan “melded into his conservative message several populist movements, many of which were rooted in the South, but which appealed to a larger audience.”369 For example, through careful political rhetoric highlighting the racial and socioeconomic stereotypes of welfare recipients, Ronald Reagan won support from southern conservatives to cut government spending on the “greedy recipients” of federal social programs.370 Likewise, Reagan’s promise to the restore the rights of the states harkened back to the political past favored by the South’s formerly solid Democrats. However, Aistrup maintains that it was Reagan’s commitment to the issues of the emerging New Right above all else that distinguished his campaign from that of Nixon’s, and even Barry Goldwater’s, efforts to carry the South.371 The voters of the the religious right, who were drawn to the Republican party’s support for the pro-life movement, school prayer, and traditional family values, were key to Reagan’s success in the 1980s and remain a lasting legacy of Reaganism. As political scientists Earl Black and Merle Black explain, through these

370 Ibid, 45-47.
strategies Reagan was able to win the support of the former segregationists as well as moderate religious white voters.\textsuperscript{372} By 1984, the Republican party won an astonishing 72 percent of the southern white vote.\textsuperscript{373}

In \textit{The Conservative Ascendency}, historian David T. Critchlow takes Aistrup’s conclusions a step further. He argues that Reagan’s success was due not only to his appeals to the South, but also to his efforts to solidly distinguish the national Republican party as a clear alternative to the Democrats. According to Critchlow, “What was crucial to the Reagan campaign was the message he brought to the voters and his obvious faith in it. The message was that of an ideological conservative: big government weakens the will and spirit of a free people, wreaks havoc on the free enterprise system, and replaces the power of families and local communities with distant bureaucrats.”\textsuperscript{374} The Republican party platform of 1980 reflected Reagan’s call for smaller government while the Democrats continued their firm belief in the need for an active government to protect the rights of citizens and the nation’s resources. For the first time since Barry Goldwater’s candidacy in 1964, the United States’ two most significant political parties were positioned on opposite sides of a critical philosophical and political debate.

In 1980, Georgia voters, predictably, favored President Jimmy Carter over Ronald Reagan. That changed, however, in 1984. In the general election, Reagan carried the state with 60.17 percent of the vote to Democratic candidate Walter Mondale’s 39.79 percent. He also won the support of the citizens of DeKalb and Pierce counties, though

\textsuperscript{372} Black and Black, 218-219.  
\textsuperscript{373} Ibid, 219.  
However, while Republicans regularly challenged Democrats in most state and local elections, the voters’ preference for the Republican party presidential candidate did not yet translate into victories for local Republican candidates. To improve their showing, the state party embarked on a series of measures to mobilize new supporters and maximize their still sparse resources. In the hopes to recruit a younger generation of voters, Guy Millner, who had twice run for Governor, and Paul Coverdall, then a state Senator, started a Young Republican organization. And, in the mid 1980s Coverdall, who was elected as Georgia Republican party chairman, in part because of his success in mobilizing college students, created a database known as ORVIS, for Optimal Republican Voting Strength, to target districts as well as individual races where Republicans would have the best chance of winning. ORVIS proved remarkably successful. The ten state Senate districts and twenty-seven state House districts first identified as site for potential growth in 1987 are now largely Republican strongholds. Under Coverdall’s leadership and with the help of ORVIS, between 1980 and 1990, the number of Republican state Senators doubled from five to eleven and number of Republicans in the state House grow from twenty to thirty-six, a record number. While these gains failed to translate into similar success with seats in

375 President Ronald Reagan carried DeKalb by a margin of 104,697 - 77,329 and Pierce by 1,978-1,501. Hancock County residents favored Walter Mondale by a convincing 2,109 to 644. Statistics compiled by the author from resources available at the Georgia State Archive of the Secretary of State at Morrow, Georgia.
376 Tommy Hills, Red State Rising: Triumph of the Republican Party in Georgia (Macon: Stroud and Hall Publishers, 2010), 47.
the U.S. House and Senate, in 1988, Republican presidential candidate George H. W. Bush handedly carried the state.378

Despite these gains, the Georgia Republican party still struggled to unseat Democratic incumbents and compete in traditionally Democratic strongholds. To combat this, in the early 1990s the Georgia Republican party formed an ambitious alliance with black Democrats to increase the number of majority black districts in Georgia through redistricting. Although Republican candidates did not fare well in African American dominated areas, they “realized that by aggregating African Americans into selected districts, the neighboring ones would become much whiter and, therefore, more likely to elect Republicans.”379 The plans approved by the Department of Justice in 1992, resulted in 22 state House and 13 state Senate districts with a black majority population. As a result, in 1992 Georgians elected their first African American Congresswoman, Cynthia McKinney, and added four African American to the Georgia State Assembly.380 The Republicans won four new Assembly seats and with Paul Coverdell’s victory, they secured the second Republican U.S. Senator elected since Reconstruction. By 1995, the number of Republicans in the state House had doubled from 35 in 1990 to 66.381

While critical, redistricting alone does not tell the whole story of the Georgia Republican resurgence in the early 1990s. Early into President William Jefferson Clinton’s first term, Newt Gingrich, a Republican Representative from Atlanta, took

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378 In Pierce County he carried the election 1,947 to 1,558, but lost Hancock by a large margin, 621 to 1,947, and DeKalb by a much smaller percentage, 90,179 to 92,521. Compiled by the author from resources available at the Georgia State Archive of the Secretary of State at Morrow, Georgia.
379 Charles S. Bullock and Ronald Keith Gaddie, Georgia Politics in a State of Change (Boston: Longman Publishing, 2010), 139.
380 Ibid.
381 Ibid, 140.
center stage in a movement to advance the cause of conservative Republicans. His goal was simple: to win Congress for the Republicans in order to stifle the liberal legislation of President Clinton’s administration.

Gingrich, a former history professor at West Georgia University, rose through the ranks due in large part to the success of the Conservative Opportunity Society (COS), which he founded in the 1980s. Although criticized by moderates for being too radical, the organization was openly supported by influential Congressmen such as Trent Lott and Jack Kemp and privately applauded by others such as Dick Cheney. As COS grew in stature, Gingrich grew in influence, until he won election to the House of Representatives ten successive times beginning 1978 and in 1989 secured the position of party whip. As whip, Gingrich, much like Coverdell before him, took advantage of emerging technology and media, including talk radio, CSPAN, and the twenty-four hours news networks to further his message. In 1994, Gingrich boldly unveiled his “Contract with America,” signed by 337 Republican candidates for the House of Representatives. The “Contract” listed ten specific pieces of legislation the Republican party would introduce if they won the majority in the House. It called for a balanced budget, a line item veto, welfare and child support reform, tax credits for middle class families, measures to increase jobs and defense spending, limits to litigation, and a promise to limit terms for legislators, but avoided sensitive social issues such as abortion, school prayer, and gay rights.

According to Critchlow, these issues were, “not included in the plan in order to avoid the

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382 Critchlow, 244-246.
charge that Republicans represented only the Religious Right.”384 Political scientist Seth C. McKee disagrees, arguing instead that “the overall theme was that the Democratic congressional majority was out of touch with rank-and-file Americans because of the party’s profligate behavior . . . The Republican party, under the leadership of Representative Newt Gingrich, promised to bring back responsible governance, and if they failed, then they expected and demanded the voters throw them out of office.”385 Regardless of the intention, the “Contract” resonated with the voters. Republicans won the House and with their victory, Gingrich became Speaker. Southern white voters who were frustrated with Clinton and the Democratic party’s moderate agenda were key to the Republicans success.386

The Republican party’s increased strength in the South had much more longevity than Gingrich’s promises. When the Republicans in the House failed to pass two components of their promised legislative package, public support began to dwindle. That support tanked after the Republican party took the majority of the blame for an unprecedented government shutdown in 1995. After Clinton unexpectedly vetoed the Republicans’ initial budget proposal, claiming that it unfairly cut popular social programs such as Medicaid and Medicare, Gingrich and the Republican party had to back down on their promise to balance the budget. Clinton and the Democrats won the media battle as the Republicans scrambled to develop a new plan.387 In late 1998, facing increasing

384 Critchlow, 247.
386 McKee, 88.
387 Critchlow, 250.
pressure from his party, Gingrich resigned as Speaker of the House and gave up his seat in Congress.\textsuperscript{388}

Despite Gingrich’s missteps, Georgia’s Republican realignment was evident in the 2000 presidential election. In Georgia, the George W. Bush and Richard Cheney ticket won fifty-five percent of the vote to Al Gore’s and Joe Lieberman’s forty-three percent.\textsuperscript{389} Like his father, Bush soundly carried Pierce county, but lost in both DeKalb and Hancock where his conservative principles did not carry as much appeal among their diverse electorate.\textsuperscript{390} However, once again, the Republican party struggled to elect local candidates. The lack of Republicans in key state offices combined with Georgia voters’ obvious move to the political right, made for another contentious battle over redistricting to reflect the millennial census.

As political scientists Charles S. Bullock, III and Ronald Keith Gaddie have shown, by 2001 it was clear that, “the fastest growing parts of the state tended to be Republican, while areas of slow or no growth favored Democrats.”\textsuperscript{391} Democrats also understood that they fared much better with African American voters than did the Republicans. To maximize their strengths, and in a complete reversal of their strategy just ten years earlier, Democrats and African American leaders devised a plan to shift, “some blacks from majority-black districts to shore up the electoral positions of

\textsuperscript{388} Hill, 84.
\textsuperscript{389} Hill, 85.
\textsuperscript{390} Bush carried Pierce 3348-1300, but lost DeKalb 58807-154509 and Hancock 662-2414. To give a sense of DeKalb’s diversity, in 2000 there were 64,888 registered black male voters and registered 65,970 white male voters. Statistics compiled by the author from resources available at the Georgia State Archive of the Secretary of State at Morrow, Georgia.
\textsuperscript{391} Bullock and Gaddie, 142.
endangered white Democrats."

The success of this last ditch effort was fleeting. The Democrats were unable to curb the growth of the Republicans. In 2002, Republican Sonny Perdue did what Bo Callaway could not, he won the gubernatorial election outright. Although the Democrats won both the state Senate and the House, after his victory Perdue succeeded in convincing enough state Senators to switch parties to tip the balance. For the first time in a century, the Georgia State Assembly was divided. After the Republicans took control of the House in 2004, the Georgia State Assembly worked to redraw the congressional maps. The Republican party has dominated the state ever since. Even though President Barack Obama fared very well in DeKalb and Hancock County, he failed to carry the state of Georgia and likewise the white, conservative voters in Pierce County.

Today, after decades of struggle, Georgia voters favor the Republican party but with nowhere near the vigor with which they supported the Democrats prior to 1948. Also diminished is the voters’ confusion that arose as the Georgia political parties fought against the principles adopted by their national leaders. The platforms of the Democrats and Republicans are now clearly defined and clearly different, and, just as importantly, they are completely in sync with the national party platforms. Georgia is still a conservative state, but at the state and presidential level these conservatives vote for Republicans, not Democrats. The counties of my study illustrate this point. Today,

392 Ibid, 143.
393 Ibid, 143-145.
394 In the last presidential election, Senator John McCain carried Pierce with 5,500 votes compared to Barack Obama’s 1,253, while Obama carried both Hancock and DeKalb with 3,535 to 795 votes and 254,594 to 65,581 votes respectively. Compiled from the Georgia Secretary of State, Georgia Election Results, Official Results from the November 04, 2008 General Election, retrieved February 9, 2011, http://www.sos.georgia.gov/elections/election_results/2008_1104/001.htm.
Hancock County is solidly Democratic just as it was in 1948, but now African American voters tip the balance, not the minority white power structure that dominated politics during the days of the Solid South. DeKalb County, in comparison, which continues to grow more urban and diverse, remains up for grabs. In Pierce County, much like my hometown of Franklin, Kentucky, the vestiges of the Solid South are particularly evident. Though citizens consistently vote for Republicans in state and presidential elections, nearly every local race is decided in the Democratic primary. Understanding why is key to understanding Georgia’s current partisan contours.
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