

DEMOCRATIC POLITICS IN THE 8th DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA, 1886

By

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The National Democratic Party achieved some sort of fame when its 1924 Convention failed to select a presidential candidate until the 103rd ballot. The record for convention balloting, however, probably had been established in 1886 when the Democratic Party in the 8th Congressional District of Virginia failed to select a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives even on the 207th ballot.

The story of the 1886 exercise in political democracy tells much of the Virginia of that day. Shadows of the Civil War, Reconstruction, "Redemption," the "readjusters"—all cast their pall. This episode is of particular interest to Arlingtonians because two of the visible protagonists—indeed the leading two—had close connections with the County: General W. H. F. Lee, son of Robert E. Lee, and Frank Hume, prominent in County civic and political affairs.

THE BACKGROUND

The drama of 1886 can have little meaning without some picture of the background scenery against which it was played. A quick review of the preceding 20 years is in order.

The governments of the Confederate States recognized by President Andrew Johnson after the Civil War, represented in Virginia by Governor Francis Peirpont,¹ were repudiated by the Congress in 1867 when the Radical Republicans gained control of that body. The new plans for reconstructing the seceded States called for military administration until certain conditions were complied with. These included adoption of a constitution which met the approval of the Congress, and the ratification of the 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

In 1869, a Virginia convention approved a new basic charter known as the "Underwood" Constitution. It has been described both as an enlightened document and as one traducing all that was good in the Old Dominion. Undoubtedly it had defects but in the light of present-day concepts cannot be considered all bad. For example, for the first time in Virginia a secret ballot was stipulated. Contemporary criticism of this provision gives some idea of the repugnance with which old line Virginia leaders viewed the whole document.

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¹ Robert Nelson Anderson: "The City of Alexandria—One Time Capital of Virginia"; *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1968).

Governor James Lawson Kemper, urging revision in 1874, propounded that the "ancient, honest, and manly mode of voting by the living voice was far superior to the secret ballot introduced by the Underwood Constitution" and charged that those afraid to vote *vive voce* were "Unworthy of the elective franchise and ought not to vote at all."

The Conservative Party, made up of elements of old line Whigs, Confederate Democrats, moderate Republicans, and a few Negroes, was anxious to drive out the Radical Republicans, escape from the military rule imposed on Virginia, and bring the Commonwealth back into the Union. They considered that support of the new Constitution, however distasteful, would be the best means to this end. A compromise was engineered whereby the Constitution was adopted and a Governor and Legislature favorable to the arrangement elected. The upshot was that Virginia was readmitted to the Union on January 26, 1870; this is known as "Redemption." One of the forces that had a large hand in bringing about this result was General William Mahone (CSA) who had at his command a liberal supply of railroad money to influence votes.

A problem which was to plague Virginia for many years was the prewar State debt. In 1860, it had amounted to \$33 million; by 1870, the sum, including accrued interest, had grown to \$45 million. At the same time the State's revenues had decreased drastically. The economy was impoverished, and the new school program called for under the Underwood Constitution meant increased State expenditures. The traditions of Virginia required that the State's reputation for financial integrity not be tarnished; the realities of the situation dictated some compromise.

The Conservative-dominated General Assembly of 1871 adopted a Funding Act which recognized the obligation of Virginia to back the State bonds in full. One of the unfortunate features of this Act was that interest coupons on the bonds could be used for the payment of taxes, seriously depleting the State's revenue resources when expenditures of necessity were increasing. Those who supported this Act were known as "Funders."

The same Legislature allowed the consolidation of certain railroads in which William Mahone had a leading interest, to the distress of other railroad groups, notably the Baltimore & Ohio—Pennsylvania Central combination, represented in Virginia by its connection with the Orange & Alexandria headquartered in the City of Alexandria with John S. Barbour as its President.²

Not only was the program of free public schools short-changed by the consequences of the Funding Act but there were other disastrous results, not the least of which from the point of view of the Conservative Party was the creation of the Readjuster Party headed by William Mahone. Disenchanted with the leadership and policies of the Conservative Party, with a

² Corporate charters were issued by the General Assembly until 1902.

more pragmatic approach to the question of the debt settlement and social programs, and undoubtedly with a personal financial axe to grind, he turned his back on his old associates. In 1879, the Readjusters won control of the General Assembly on the crest of a genuinely popular movement, and in 1881 Mahone secured the election of William E. Cameron as Governor. One result was a new debt arrangement: refunding of a scaled-down total at lower interest rates, i.e., readjustment had carried the day. Another was the enactment of such liberal reforms as abolition of the whipping post as a punishment for minor infractions of the law.

In 1883, the Conservative Party realized that its only hope for survival let alone resumption of power, lay in a reorganization of the party structure and policies. The State Convention of the Party that year resulted in the formation of the Democratic Party of Virginia with John S. Barbour as State Chairman. A State Central Committee of the Democratic Party more widely representative of the entire Commonwealth, and a more representative Executive Committee were set up. Thus began a six-year battle to defeat Mahone.

The Democratic Party had come to recognize the expediency of accepting most of the liberal positions taken by the Readjusters. The various factions submerged their antagonisms to unite on a "beat Mahone" campaign. The Negro question became a prime issue. Under John S. Barbour the system of detailed precinct work and close control over party operations in all areas of the State which served the Party so well for so long, was initiated.

This brief sketch of almost two decades of Virginia history necessarily omits most of the nuances and ramifications which invite endless debate over the significance of specific developments. Only those events of prime importance to the situation in the 8th District in 1886 have been touched on.³ Brief accounts of two off-stage members of the dramatis personae—John S. Barbour and William Mahone—may fill in a few gaps.

John S. Barbour

John Strode Barbour, Jr. was born in Culpeper County, Va. on December 29, 1820. He was elected to the House of Delegates from Culpeper over Whig opposition, and served there for the sessions of 1847-1851. When the Orange & Alexandria Railroad was organized in 1849, Barbour was appointed by the State to represent its interests on the Board of Directors.⁴ In 1851, he became President of the line, later known as Virginia Midland, a post he held for 33 years.

³ Interesting additional information on this period may be had by consulting three relatively recent publications:

Kenneth M. Stamp: *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877*; (N.Y., Knopf), 1965. Allen W. Moger: *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925*; (Charlottesville, University of Va.), 1968. Raymond H. Pulley: *Old Virginia Restored; An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930*; (Charlottesville, University of Va.), 1968.

⁴ The Commonwealth invested heavily in railroads and other public works projects prior to the Civil War, one of the reasons for the size of the State debt in that period.

Barbour was elected U.S. Representative from the 8th District of Virginia in 1880. He served from March 4, 1881, to March 3, 1887, refusing renomination in 1886. He was elected to the U.S. Senate by the Legislature in 1889, and served until his death on May 4, 1892. He also held the post of Chairman of the Democratic Party of Virginia from his selection in 1883 until his death.

William Mahone

Born in Southampton County, Va. on December 1, 1826, this Confederate Major-General (hero of the Petersburg "Crater") was a colorful and controversial opportunist. Although a graduate of Virginia Military Institute he seems never to have been quite socially acceptable. First a prime mover in the Conservative Party, he was ruined in the Panic of 1873, and his railroad interests passed into the hands of a syndicate of Northern capitalists. After the founding of the Readjuster Party of which he was a leader, he was viewed as an irresponsible demagogue by members of the Conservative Party.

In 1879, he was elected to the U.S. Senate where he used his political patronage as a means of influencing Virginia politics. The Readjuster Party formed a coalition with the Virginia Republican Party, and Mahone tried to draw it into the fold of the National Republican Party—a move which alienated some of his former supporters. It has been said that gradually he became more and more self-serving and less and less attuned to the needs of the people although he had sponsored notable social and political reforms in Virginia. His use of money, "booze," political patronage, and his support of the Readjuster cause and social reform with its appeal to poor white and Negro voters, came to be known as "Mahoneism." The stigma associated with this term branded anyone who, rightly or wrongly, was charged with contact with him or his party.

Mahone was eliminated as a political factor after the campaign of 1889. He died on October 8, 1895.

THE PROTAGONISTS

John S. Barbour, incumbent Representative in Congress from the 8th Virginia District, let it be known in the Spring of 1886 that he would not be available for renomination, possibly because he hoped to become a U.S. Senator, an ambition actually fulfilled in 1889, or possibly in the hope that he would be "drafted." During the summer of 1886 he traveled in Europe—a disengaging device resorted to by other politicians of more recent days.

Useful "friends" began to circulate names of various potential candidates to succeed Barbour. During the Convention more than a dozen names were balloted on at one time or another, but four men stood out as serious contenders.

Captain James A. Foster

Commonwealth's Attorney of Loudoun County where he had practiced law since 1867, Foster was also a successful dairy farmer. After three year's



GEN. W. H. F. LEE



JAMES A. FOSTER



FRANK HUME



E. E. MEREDITH

"The *Washington Post* of Sunday last contained pictures of Gen. Lee, Capt. Foster, Mr. Meredith and Mr. Hume. At least the *Post* said they were pictures of these gentlemen, though otherwise we should not have recognized them as such. If our candidates looked like these pictures, we would advise the convention to appoint a committee to go out and hang them."—*Fairfax Herald*, August 20, 1886.

service in the Confederate Army he had entered the University of Virginia, graduating with high honors. For a period he had been a law partner of Gen. Eppa Hunton. In 1886 he was 42 years of age.

Frank Hume

Frank Hume, born in Culpeper County, Va. on July 21, 1843,⁵ usually was styled in news items of the 1880's as a "well-known Washington merchant" although he resided at "Warwick" in Alexandria County. Enlisting in the Confederate Army at 18, he had seen active service throughout the war. Immediately thereafter he farmed in Orange County for three years before entering the "mercantile field" in Washington. Active in Alexandria politics, he was an anti-Barbour delegate to the Democratic Convention in Richmond in 1885.

News accounts of the times reveal that an important basis for his opposition to Barbour was the latter's failure as a Representative in Congress, to support a free bridge over the Potomac, partly, it was charged, because of his interest in the canal company which owned the Aqueduct Bridge between Georgetown in the District and Rosslyn in Virginia, and partly because of his railroad connection.

William Henry Fitzhugh Lee

General Lee, known as "Rooney" or "Runy" to distinguish him from his first cousin General Fitzhugh Lee (elected Governor of Virginia in 1885), was a son of General Robert E. Lee, born May 31, 1837. Spending much of his childhood at Arlington House, he was educated at Harvard and West Point. He fought in the Civil War until he was taken a prisoner; he was exchanged in 1864. From 1875 to 1879 he served in the State Senate but declined nomination for a second term. A resident of Fairfax County (at Ravensworth) he was identified with agricultural interests and had been President of the Virginia State Agricultural Society.

Elisha E. Meredith

E. E. Meredith, born in Prince William County, Va. in 1848, was a successful farmer and lawyer. In 1886, he was a State Senator after being Commonwealth's Attorney for a number of years.

Others

Others, most of whom survive only as names, put before the Convention at one time or another were: R. Taylor Scott (later Attorney General under Governor Tyler, elected in 1890), Judge C. H. Ashton of King George, Samuel G. Brent of Alexandria City, John H. Alexander of Loudoun, Capt. A. D. Payne of Fauquier, J. F. Rixey, A. G. Willis of Culpeper, T. H. Bevans, J. B. Smoot, Mayor of Alexandria, C. E. Nicol of Prince William, (later Circuit Court Judge), — — Triplett of Fauquier, Col. Thomas W.

⁵ David John Mays: "Frank Hume"; *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (1963).

Waller, Capt. Thomas K. Wallace of Orange, Frank Winston of Louisa, C. C. Buckner of Orange, and W. E. Bibb.

PROLOGUE

The composition of the 8th Congressional District in Virginia had been changed after the Democrats regained control of the General Assembly. The counties of King George, Louisa, and Stafford were moved in as substitutes for Clarke, Frederick, and Warren for the purpose, it is believed, of diluting Republican strength.

Delegate strength in the 8th District Convention called for August 5, 1886, was allotted on the basis of one Delegate to the Convention for each 100 votes or fraction over 50 cast in 1885 for Governor Fitzhugh Lee. Each Delegate was to cast the number of votes he represented, the sum totaling 16,300. Altogether there were 163 Delegates, as follows:

Alexandria City -----	17	King George County ----	5
Alexandria County ----	3	Loudoun County -----	28
Culpeper County -----	15	Louisa County -----	17
Fairfax County -----	20	Orange County -----	13
Fauquier County -----	26	Prince William County--	12
Stafford County -----	7		

The Delegates from Alexandria were elected in a primary held on July 20. Frank Hume entered a slate in each of the four Wards, Lee in three of them, and Meredith in one. The result was a clean sweep for Hume. His victory was characterized as entirely unexpected, and as signaling the "sudden collapse of the old machine."

The *Alexandria Gazette* was moved to comment that "the election passed off comparatively orderly although whiskey flowed quite freely, but no breaches of the peace occurred." A different point of view was reflected in a letter to the *Fredericksburg Free Lance* which began: "Great is the power of 'boodle', and great is the power of whiskey, and great is the power of 'boodle' and whiskey together." The writer went on to charge Mr. Hume with having taken no chances that Gen. Lee would capture the Alexandria delegation. The *Alexandria Daily City Item*, which reprinted the letter, commented that "the whole thing to the end was purely imaginary on the part of the writer of the letter. There may have been both 'whiskey and boodle' but Mr. Hume's friends did not have the use of them nor did he need it."

Charges and counter-charges alleging corruption and attempts to influence votes were not unusual at that time. Whatever the truth of the allegation in this instance, it cannot be said that politics were dull in those days!

PRIMARY ELECTION

JULY 20, 1886.

FIRST WRAD.

Hume Delegates.

F. M. HILL,
NOBLE LINDSAY,
PETER ATTCHESON.

PRIMARY ELECTION

JULY 20, 1886.

FOURTH WARD

Hume Delegates.

JOHN W. BROWNNEY
WESLEY MAKELY,
EDWARD H. HAWKINS,
THOMAS G. BRENT.

PRIMARY ELECTION

JULY 20, 1886.

THIRD WARD.

Hume Delegates.

SAMUEL H. LUNT,
GEORGE W. DIX,
E. E. DOWNHAM,
WILLIAM M. COLVIN,
SAMUEL G. BRENT,
JULIAN W. HOLT,
WILLIAM RODGERS.

Primary Election

JULY-20, 1886.

THIRD WARD.

SAMUEL H. LUNT,
GEORGE W. DIX,
E. E. DOWNHAM,
WILLIAM M. COLVIN,
C. J. V. SUMMERS,
JULIAN W. HOLT,
WILLIAM RODGERS.

Official ballots were not printed at that time, each candidate supplying the voter with a "ticket" he hoped would be the one dropped into the box. This, of course, made it easy to "stuff" the ballot box. This tactic seems to have been used against Hume; note that one of the ballots shown above has "Bogess" written on it in Frank Hume's handwriting.

In contrast to Alexandria City's primary, Delegates elsewhere were chosen by county or district meetings. Such was the case in Alexandria County where L. W. Hatch was chosen from Jefferson Magisterial District, and Andrew Veitch from Arlington with T. J. Adams as Alternate; all were Hume men. In Washington District, Fairfax Minor and Robert Walker were selected as Delegate and Alternate respectively, and instructed to vote for Gen. Lee.

On the eve of the Convention, Delegates began to arrive in Alexandria where the leading contenders established headquarters at various hotels or restaurants: Gen. Lee at the Concordia, Capt. Foster at the Tontine, Mr. Hume at Braddock House, and Mr. Meredith at the Exchange.⁶ The *Gazette* reported: "So far as is known there will be no contested delegations, and it is thought that the business of the convention and the nomination of a candidate will be disposed of in a comparatively short time . . . The general impression prevails that the convention will be a harmonious one." What price a clouded crystal ball!

ACT I

March and Counter-March

The Convention met at the Opera House⁷ at noon on the 5th of August (with the galleries open to the public) and the business of organizing got underway promptly. P. T. Barbour of Orange was appointed temporary Chairman, and S. R. Donohue of Fairfax (both Lee men), temporary Secretary. The permanent officers, elected unanimously, were C. H. Ashton of King George as Chairman, and Moses Green of Fauquier and Donohue as Secretaries.

The harmony which had prevailed up to this point "went all to pieces," according to a contemporary account, when the question of rules came up. The committee report included a requirement that two-thirds would be needed for nomination. Long and acrimonious debate followed. The Lee Delegates favored a simple majority in the belief that the General could be nominated on the first ballot while the Hume men were opposed to it for the same reason. The two-thirds supporters won. This issue was to plague the Convention repeatedly.

Nominating and seconding speeches of great length and eloquence were made for Gen. Lee, Frank Hume, and Capt. Foster. A motion to adjourn until 8 o'clock was defeated by Lee supporters confident of early victory for their man.

⁶ The Concordia was at the corner of Prince and Royal Streets; the Tontine at Nos. 59 & 61 Cameron St. (between Fairfax and Royal); the Braddock House is more familiarly known as the Carlyle House (at the corner of Fairfax and Cameron); and the Exchange was at 28 N. Royal Street, just up from King St.

⁷ At the southwest corner of Pitt and King Streets. The building still stands (January 1970) but is marked for demolition.

The first ballot results were:

Lee -----	7,495	Foster -----	4,153
Hume -----	2,651	R. T. Scott -----	300
J. S. Barbour -----	1,255	C. H. Ashton -----	500

No candidate having the required 10,867, a second ballot was taken with Barbour and Ashton votes going to other candidates, resulting in no significant change. On the third ballot, E. E. Meredith's name appeared, drawing 2,756 votes. Fairfax, Louisa, Culpeper, and Stafford were voting solidly for Lee, Loudoun was for Foster, and Alexandria City and County for Hume.

Soon the first effort to shorten the process was made. A Lee Delegate moved that the lowest candidate should be dropped and not placed in nomination again more than twice thereafter. Action on the motion was deferred.

By this time (after the 17th ballot) it had become clear that the opposition to Lee was strong enough to prevent his nomination but not united enough to combine on any other single name. At length, at 12:30 A.M., the acting Chairman arbitrarily adjourned the Convention until 9 A.M. on the 6th. It was assumed that some sort of compromise on which all could unite would be worked out during what remained of the night.

When the Convention reconvened it became evident that no solution to the impasse had been reached. After 29 ballots the motion to drop the name with the lowest number of votes was reintroduced. The claim by Lee's friends that the rules of the House of Delegates under which the Convention had voted to operate made provision for such action was upheld by the Chair. This was protested on the interesting ground that Mr. Meredith's name never had been placed in nomination (although he had received votes on numerous ballots) and thus he could not be dropped under the operation of the rule.

The stratagem then was to put up a straw man to get the least votes and be the one to be dropped. It soon became clear that no purpose was being served, and a two-thirds vote brought about suspension of the rule. It was then proposed and carried that only candidates actually placed in nomination should be voted on, and the one with the lowest number of votes should not again be placed in nomination until after two succeeding ballots had been taken. Meredith's friends scattered their votes so that the tally for the 32nd ballot was: Lee, 8,522; Foster, 4,165; and Hume, 3,577 so that Hume was dropped for the time being.

A flood of eloquence then poured over the Convention. Meredith was nominated as "the loved son of Prince William who would not allow the banner of the party to trail in the dust." A member from Stafford rose to cry: "Give us Lee or give us death!" an exhortation which cooled rather than warmed the feeling of the Delegates for Lee. Poetry and plaudits then spewed forth in favor of Foster. All this bore some fruit on the 33rd ballot

when Lee's vote fell, Foster's rose, and Alexandria shifted from Hume to Foster. On the next ballot only two candidates were voted on: Lee, 8,975, and Foster, 7,200. The hall was crowded with spectators and the members were reported to be very excited.

A ten minute recess was moved at 12:20 P.M. and conferences on strategy resulted in Hume, who had been renominated, pulling ahead on the 37th ballot with 6,196 to 4,904 for Meredith, and 5,100 for A. G. Willis of Culpeper, a Lee stalking horse. After an adjournment for dinner until 3 o'clock, the Convention resumed balloting, the first count giving 9,100 to Meredith and 7,138 to Foster. The Lee men then suggested that since Meredith had a majority he should pull out in favor of Lee, a rather notable instance of contorted political thinking. The suggestion was declined.

After several more futile ballots, the Lee men once more without avail proposed abandonment of the two-thirds rule. An attempt by them to adjourn *sine die* also was rejected. On the 47th ballot the contest again was between Lee (8,895) and Hume (7,369). Finally, the Convention adjourned until 8 P.M.

The Washington *Post* reported:

By this time the feeling among the delegates was becoming intense. The Foster delegation, who, when the name of their nominee was before the convention, were invariably supported by the Hume adherents, showed considerable jealousy of Hume, and invariably divided in their vote when Hume's star was in the ascendancy, so as to throw the majority to Lee, while the Meredith men pursued the same tactics. Lee's friends throughout were faithful in their adherence, and when, by the rule of the convention, their candidate was dropped, they divided their votes so as to defeat the other candidates and then were prompt to place the name of their champion in nomination again.

After the 57th ballot a motion to put all the names on the ballot and not to renominate them was laid on the table. Balloting continued; at one point Lee's total ran up to 9,175 but by the 82nd ballot had dropped back to 8,159 against Meredith's 8,106. Another fruitless attempt to rescind the two-thirds rule was made. Finally, at 12:15 A.M., the Convention recessed until 11 A.M. on August 7.

The Washington *Post* commented:

The chances for Hume's nomination seem to have diminished, and the candidates who have any chance of making headway against Lee's stalwart supporters are Foster and Meredith. Lee has a good majority in the convention, but the opposition is so determined that his nomination seems very unlikely. How long the deadlock may continue is now but a question of the endurance of the Lee men. In the general breaking up of factions it is thought that the tide may be turned in favor of Hume and secure for him the nomination. It is openly claimed by many in the convention that Lee cannot carry the district for the Democratic party on account of his unpopularity, caused by his action several

years ago in support of the Moffet Punch⁸ bill in the State Legislature, and also on account of the opposition of the workingmen. All the Knights of Labor, and other labor organizations throughout the Eighth District are in favor of Hume, and it is generally conceded that if nominated he would make a very strong candidate.

COMPLIMENTS OF

1874 BALLOT

GEORGE R. HILL & CO.,

Steam Cracker and Cake Bakerse

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MANUFACTURING CONFECTIONERS
37 AND 39 N. LEX ST.,
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA.
Proprietors of that Celebrated Brand, "THE PURE STICK OF CANDY."

POCKET RECORD

For use at the Democratic Congressional Nominating Convention of the Eighth District of Virginia to be held at Alexandria, August 5, 1886.

COUNTING AND NO OF DELEGATES	CANDIDATES					
	Lee	Hume				
Alex City		1725				
Lees Co	95	190				
Chaffee Co	1521					
Stafford Co	2000					
Stafford Co	1900	700				
Stafford Co		500				
Stafford Co	100	2553				
Stafford Co	1687					
Stafford Co	731	524				
Stafford Co	187	1104				
Stafford Co	575	95				
Totals	5778	2387				

Necessary to a choice under the two-thirds rule, 2667 votes.
Necessary to a choice under the majority rule, 2151 votes.

⁸ State Senator Samuel H. Moffett from Rockingham County had sponsored legislation enacted in 1877 to place a tax on the privilege of selling wine, beer, and "ardent spirits" and requiring that a "bell-punch" register invented by him be used to carry out the provisions of the Act. The Act was repealed in 1880.

On August 7th, the first vote of the day showed Lee's strength waning. After the 100th ballot, a dispute arose, Foster's men claiming that the Fauquier County delegation was casting more votes than it was entitled to. A statement by the Secretary showed that each faction was slightly exceeding its legitimate strength. No action to rectify the error seems to have been taken.

One more effort to get rid of the two-thirds rule failed. A. D. Payne of Fauquier was entered by the Lee men and led on the 107th to 113th ballots. The Delegates began to despair of concluding their business, and though anxious to get home, were unwilling to make any concessions. The Convention subsided into a state of lethargy with the members curled up in their chairs, not bothering to rise when they voted. The only disturbance was when "one of the flimsy chairs with which the Opera House is supplied gave way and cast its occupant on the floor. As this occurred at intervals of five minutes, it served to keep the delegates awake."

All sorts of plans were discussed to get out of the difficulty in which the Convention found itself, but all motions, including one to adjourn *sine die*, were voted down. There was a recess to 8 P.M.

When the Convention reassembled, Hume showed increased strength with Culpeper, formerly solid for Lee, giving him 1,000 votes and Fairfax breaking for the first time to give him 100. A see-saw followed with first one delegation then another shifting its votes. On the 143rd ballot, with Hume and Payne opposed, the Lee men went for Hume. There was an uproar as the vote was announced by counties and it became apparent that Hume would receive a very large vote. The movement evidently had been planned but seems to have taken the Convention by surprise. As reported at the time:

A slight dispute concerning the vote of Fauquier County gave a Lee delegate time to approach the secretary recording the vote. The latter immediately handed him a note containing the vote Hume had recorded [sic. i.e., received] up to that time, and with this he succeeded in having the vote of Culpeper, which had been out for Hume, cut down 500 votes. The announcement of the vote gave Hume 10,650 to Payne's 5,885 and Hume's nomination was defeated by a trick.

It is not entirely clear what the "trick" was. The implication is that a member of the Culpeper delegation was induced to change his vote through some sort of chicanery. At any event, this incident caused great bitterness. Brent "permanently" withdrew Hume's name from the running. On the next ballot, Lee got 10,317 and Foster, 5,948. After 164 ballots, at midnight, it was clear that no nomination could be reached and the Convention was adjourned until August 25.

ACT II Stalemate

During the two-week interval between sessions, there was much speculation in the press on the probable outcome. The *Washington Herald* saw the Convention "turning reluctantly in utter fatigue" to Barbour in hopes that

he would run and whose strength against Mahone had been proven. The *National Republican* believed that Gen. Lee had no chance and also saw the possibility of a "stampede" to Barbour despite the dissatisfaction with him because all his appointments had gone to "Bourbons." The *Republican* urged the selection of Hume: "Republicans would not dare to take the field if Hume heads the Democratic ticket."

On the other hand, the Fairfax *Herald* stressed the large majorities won by Lee on the ballots on which he had appeared, and claimed this showed he was the people's choice. "If the members of the convention will nominate Gen. Lee, they will not only do what their constituents desire them to do, but they will rebuke the intermeddling with our local affairs, of Gen. Mahone's Washington organ, the *Republican*, and its neighbor of doubtful politics the *Post*." According to the *Washington Critic*, Mahone was watching the proceedings with intense interest and hoping to be able to slip in an independent candidate to take advantage of "our family division."

The *Alexandria Gazette* hoped for "a spirit of concession for the party good," believed Lee was out of the field, and that Hume would win.

When the Convention met at noon on the 25th, again at the Opera House, Charles L. Pollock of Loudoun was in the Chair as Judge Ashton had resigned that post. Lee and Meredith had been nominated just prior to adjournment so the 165th contest was between them with a result of Lee, 8,170; Meredith, 8,147.

An interesting interlude followed. Alexandria County had cast 331 votes instead of 285 which provoked extended discussion. Samuel Brent produced a certificate from the County Clerk to sustain his contention that 331 was correct. Eventually, a resolution was offered instructing the Committee on Credentials to inquire and report on just what representation each jurisdiction was entitled to, and how many votes each Delegate could cast. (It would seem to have been rather late in the day for such action!) A substitute motion calling on the chairman of each county delegation to report to the Convention the name of any unauthorized person occupying a seat carried 9,049 to 7,219.

There ensued further confused discussion on the proper number of votes to be cast by Alexandria, and whether the result on the last ballot was correct. After a recess, Brent backed down and a new count was announced giving Lee 8,170 as before but Meredith only 8,095.

The 170th ballot was not taken until after 4 P.M. After the 175th Ballot, Judge Ashton nominated John S. Barbour. R. Taylor Scott rose to eulogize Barbour and then read a letter in which he "absolutely and unqualifiedly" refused to have his name considered. Despite a move to have the nomination made unanimous, Barbour's name eventually was withdrawn.

After the 197th ballot there were further efforts to cut down on the number of candidates, and to eliminate the two-thirds rule. When the 201st ballot had been taken, and after a motion to adjourn to 10 A.M. on Aug-

ust 26th had been lost, a motion by C. E. Nicol seeking a way out of the impasse carried 8,976 to 7,291. Each of the four leading candidates—Lee, Foster, Meredith, and Hume—were requested to select a friend to form a committee, the four to confer with the candidates “and report a line of action for this convention, if any.” At 11:35 P.M. a recess was taken to 1 A.M.

Actually, the Convention did not reconvene until 3 A.M. when the Committee (the four candidates plus Messrs. Nicol, Scott, Alexander, and Brent) reported three proposals: Lee and Foster both would be selected as candidates and if a Republican announced, which of them actually would run would be determined by lot; Hume, Foster, and Meredith all would withdraw in favor of Barbour. Gen. Lee had refused to agree to either of these. Instead, as a third proposal, he put forth a minority report to the effect that he should be nominated as he had a majority of the Convention votes. The Committee was discharged.

Barbour was again nominated and again peremptorily withdrawn. Nonetheless, he received 7,801 votes to Lee's 8,404 on the 203rd ballot. At 4:20 A.M. a motion to adjourn until 11 A.M. was defeated. The 207th ballot (Lee, 8,686; Foster, 7,579) was followed by a motion to adjourn *sine die* which carried 8,989 to 7,276.

At the last moment, before the vote on adjournment was announced, a resolution endorsing the administration of President Cleveland and offering “cordial support” was pushed through over considerable vocal opposition. Cleveland's popularity in Virginia (and it may be supposed particularly in the 8th District, the area closest to the District of Columbia) was less than lukewarm, largely because of his failure to turn out holders of Republican patronage.

The Convention finally adjourned *sine die* at 5 A.M.

ACT III Denouement

Scene I—Preliminaries

The eyes of the whole State were focussed on the 8th District which, it was said, had become a laughing stock because of the protracted convention proceedings. The Richmond *Whig* warned of the severe blow to the Democratic Party if the district were lost to Mahone and the Republicans as the result of dissent among the Democrats.

Lee's refusal to compromise was characterized as “selfish” in some quarters. The Leesburg *Mirror* printed a letter from a Snickersville voter: “All honor to the name of Lee! but to those who have come upon the stage of political action now twenty years after the smoke of battle has cleared away, there are qualifications far more suggestive than name and ancestry. The young democracy, with many of the battle-scarred veterans, have had trusty swords and spurs and cavalry saddles forced down their throats until they have sickened of the dose, and now ask for something more wholesome

in the recognition of honest worth and individual merit." On the other hand, Lee's opponents were called a stubborn minority which undemocratically refused to bow to the will of the majority.

There was much criticism of the two-thirds rule, and considerable debate as to whether or not its use was "traditional" in the Democratic Party. It was generally agreed that this would be the big issue at the next Convention.

The purpose of the adjournment ostensibly was to "take the question to the people." Accordingly, the 8th District Committee called for a new selection of Delegates, the method to be decided by local committees, on the same basis of representation as in the first Convention. It was decreed that the Convention would be held at Culpeper Court House on September 23. It was reported that the choice of meeting place had been decided upon because the Opera House there had been offered free. It also was said the expenses of the Delegates there would be less and that the influence of outsiders—including some from Washington—would be less than in Alexandria.

A Delegate election was held in Alexandria City on September 9 with Hume again carrying every Ward. Most of the Delegates were the same as before. Various pressures were reported to have been exerted by both sides—free flowing of whisky, votes going for \$3 apiece. The *Daily City Item* chortled that the "railroad racket" had not "panned out." This was in reference to a statement by the Division Superintendent of the Midland Railroad, a Col. Andrews, that it would be better for the road if Lee won, and his winning would prevent the removal of the shops from the City—no mean threat since they provided a large part of Alexandria's economic and employment base.

Fairfax held district meetings on September 9. There were reports of irregularities, notably at Potter's Hill in Mt. Vernon district where it was charged the Hume men had been systematically excluded and some fist fights had occurred. Other areas selected their Delegates on different dates. In Stafford it was alleged this was done to permit manipulation through packing one meeting after another with a corps of selected partisans. Orange did not hold its meeting until September 18.

Scene 2—Grand Finale

Delegates (accompanied by "statesmen, politicians, and wirepullers") began arriving by train on the night of the 22nd. The *Alexandria Gazette* was moved to comment: "The expenses of the delegates here are as high as they would be in Alexandria, and the conveniences are very much less. For instance, there are as many as four beds in a room—two men to each bed, and for this the rates are \$2 a day."

Despite the earlier prognostications that "Lee had no chance" the mood had now so shifted that bettors on his nomination by 2 P.M. found no takers.

In fact, the proceedings were thoroughly cut and dried. The Convention

met at 12, appointed the committees necessary for organizing, and recessed to 2. It was 3 o'clock by the time it actually reassembled. Hearty resolutions in favor of the Cleveland administration, in admiration of Barbour, and a pledge to support the nominee of the Convention, whoever he might be, were passed without debate.

The big issue, as had been foreseen, was whether the two-thirds majority should be required to elect. At 4:20 this was still being debated. It was not until 5:25 P.M. that the matter was settled. Comparison of the vote on this question in the two Conventions is interesting.

COMPARISON OF VOTES ON THE TWO-THIRDS RULE*

	<i>First Convention</i>		<i>Second Convention</i>	
	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>
Alexandria City -----	1,725	—	1,725	—
Alexandria County -----	190	95	190	95
Culpeper -----	714	800	—	1,541
Fairfax -----	900	1,100	—	1,986
Fauquier -----	900	1,700	—	2,554
King George -----	500	—	332	167
Loudoun -----	2,753	—	1,801	952
Louisa -----	—	1,687	—	1,687
Orange -----	1,255	—	192	1,063
Prince William -----	1,249	—	294	882
Stafford -----	—	670	95	515
Totals -----	10,186	6,052	4,629	11,502

* The sources for these figures are the *Alexandria Gazette* of Sept. 3, 1886, and Sept. 24, 1886. That the columns do not add exactly to the totals given must be ascribed to a typographical error in the newspaper. The "First Convention" vote shown relates to the first occasion on which this question came on the floor.

Everything was now over but the shouting. Only Lee and Hume were placed in nomination. The result was 12,844 for Lee and 3,290 for Hume, the latter getting votes only from Alexandria City and County, Loudoun, Orange, and Stafford. The selection of Lee was made unanimous. Many Delegates left by the 5:38 train; most were gone by 7:30.

* * * * *

The urge to speculate on Lee's ultimate victory is irresistible. To be sure, machine politics triumphed, but only because it had the candidate to suit the temper of the times. This victory was possible because of more than whiskey, "boodle", and railroad influence. In the light of the background against which this battle was fought, and reading between the lines of the press accounts, some conjectures may be ventured.

Lee and Hume both came of distinguished lineage but Lee's forebears had

had statewide and national prominence and Hume's had not. Each had served gallantly in the Confederate Army—but Lee had become a General and Hume never had been a commissioned officer. In a day when the old Virginia tradition that the only possible occupations for a true gentleman were agricultural pursuits or one of the professions, Hume had committed the, to some, unpardonable sin of "going into trade". What some saw as an advantage for Hume—that he was a sound business man not an eloquent soldier or politician—others (obviously more) considered a drawback.

Lee was accused of being a "Bourbon" with the implication that he was anti-labor. This did him no real harm since it had appeal for those who were becoming afraid of the growing populist movement. The press image of Hume as pro-labor and sympathetic to the Negro weakened him since these groups had not enough political power in the 8th District to offset the dislike such leanings aroused on the part of those who did.

Probably what counted most against Hume was the open support of Republicans and of Mahone. When all Democratic factions were trying to submerge their antagonisms—divisions on debt settlement, free suffrage, social programs—to overcome "Mahoneism", support from that quarter could be nothing other than the kiss of death.

Here we come to the crux of the situation. The rallying cry of the Democratic Party was "the people against Mahone". Consequently, Hume would have been a weak candidate in the general election. It seems obvious that Barbour and the intra-party organization which he headed supported Lee for that reason—and quite possibly the reason for Mahone's support of Hume as well. The fact that the battle to bring about Lee's nomination was so prolonged indicates that the three-year-old machinery had not yet been perfected. That eventually it was successful in achieving its end was an augury for the future of politics in Virginia for decades to come.

EPILOGUE

General W. H. F. Lee was elected Representative to the U.S. Congress from the 8th District of Virginia in November 1886. He was re-elected in 1888 having been nominated by acclamation and without opposition. In 1890, the Democratic Convention for the District was held in Leesburg. Frank Hume's friends were again urging him to seek the nomination.

Because of alleged irregularities in the selection of Delegates from Stafford County, Hume refused to allow his name to come before the Convention. General Lee received the nomination.

Subsequently, Mr. Hume became an Independent candidate for Representative from the 8th District. The Republicans failed to nominate a candidate, and gave some support to Hume. The result of the election in November was 13,500 votes for Lee, 10,274 for Hume. The latter carried his home territory of Alexandria City and County, and the countries of King George and Stafford.

NOTE ON SOURCES

The background information for the political situation in the State has been drawn largely from the three studies cited above. An interesting account of the Virginia debt settlement up to 1890 can be found in a pamphlet "History of the Bonds" issued by the Bondholders Committee of which G. S. Ellis was Secretary.

The account of the proceedings of the two Conventions has been distilled from contemporary newspaper stories preserved in a clipping book kept by Mrs. Birge's grandmother, Emma N. Hume. Newspapers represented are:

The Index, Warrenton, Va.

The Virginian, Warrenton, Va.

The Exponent, Culpeper, Va.

Daily City Item, Alexandria, Va.

The Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, Alexandria, Va.

The Free Lance, Fredericksburg, Va.

The Observer, Orange C.H., Va.

The Piedmont Virginian, Orange, Va.

The Mirror, Leesburg, Va.

The Washingtonian, Leesburg, Va.

The Fairfax Herald, Fairfax C.H., Va.

The Shenandoah Herald, Woodstock, Va.

The Free Press, Washington, D.C.

The Post, Washington, D.C.

The Star, Washington, D.C.

The National Republican, Washington, D.C.

Städtische Neuigkeiten, Washington, D.C.

The Herald, Washington, D.C.

The News, Washington, D.C.

The Critic, Washington, D.C.

The Sun, Baltimore, Md.

The Maryland Director (weekly), Baltimore, Md.

The Weekly Bulletin, Baltimore, Md.

The Laurel Review, Laurel, Md.

Anne Arundel Advertiser, Annapolis (?), Md.