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by

Bethany Leigh Johnson

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ABSTRACT

Regionalism, Race, and the Meaning of the Southern Past:
Professional History in the American South, 1896–1961

by

Bethany Leigh Johnson

This dissertation is a study of organized, professional history in the American South centered on two formal associations: the Southern History Association (1896–1907) and the Southern Historical Association (1934–present), which sponsors the Journal of Southern History. The professional historians who led these associations emerged from the memorialization culture of the Lost Cause at the turn of the twentieth century and formed the historical wing of the resurgent intellectual commitment to regional identity that fostered the so-called Southern Renaissance. As participant intellectuals in sectional reconciliation, constitutional disfranchisement, the Great Depression, World War II, and the incipient civil rights movement, these historians often found themselves at the center of important debates about regional identity and social change in the South. This dissertation follows the protracted intellectual and political battle first to segregate and then to integrate the southern historical profession and indeed the idea of “southern history” itself.
Though largely white, these historians intended to be neither pro-Confederate, sectionally chauvinistic, nor nostalgic in motivation. Instead, they constantly negotiated between their regional devotion and their national ambition, and also between their sense of their own racial integrity and the counter-claims southern African Americans and reform-minded whites made over “the South” and the meaning of its past. These historical associations were not wholly reactionary but instead fostered both a real dedication to and substantive critiques of the South and its historical practice. This dissertation keeps in focus the subtleties of change in emphasis and in interpretation that enabled more radically activist historians to lay claim to the fractures in the South’s “past” and put it to use to justify change in the present. Few historians abandoned the discourse of “southern history” when its definitions became too restrictive or untrue. Instead, white and black American historians transformed the field.
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Introduction

"There Is Only The South":
The Invention of Professional Southern History

On October 22, 1935, Alabama journalist John Temple Graves greeted his Birmingham radio audience with news about a “historic event” taking place that week in their own city: the first annual meeting of the newly formed Southern Historical Association. “Who writes the history for the history writers when the history writers are out making history to be written?” he joked. Volunteering himself for the job, Graves sought to impress upon his listeners the vital cultural importance of the historians’ gathering. “There’s more history in the Southern States than in all the rest of the country put together,” he said. “Some of it has been fairly written, some of it hasn’t, and a great deal hasn’t been written at all.” More troubling was that “a still greater part of what has been written hasn’t been read—not by a hundredth part of the Southerners who ought to have read it.” The Southern Historical Association, he believed, was an important step in remedying these problems of historical collection and communication: “It ought to be able to do much towards making unfair history fair, towards making incomplete history complete, and towards making uninformed Southerners better informed.” Historical knowledge was not the dry recitation of a “few important dates and particularly great names,” but an animating spirit for a people. Southerners, he argued, “must live with our Southern history until it seeps into our hearts and gives its correct colors to our imaginations and instructs our minds for the future with warnings and examples from the past.”

¹
Graves's evident relief that an organization dedicated specifically to the history of the South had finally come into existence belies one of the most axiomatic and reflexively called-upon assumptions of American cultural history—the idea that white southerners have, and in fact define their very "southerness" by, a unique and popular preoccupation with their region's past. Historians frequently quote William Faulkner's description of the supposed truism that in the South, "the past isn't dead. It isn't even past." The historical literature on the South's regional distinctiveness is permeated by the recursive claim that white southerners are distinctive because they are steeped in their own past and that the southern past in its uniqueness produced a separate regional culture and identity. Southerners are marked by their determined promise to "remember" the past, by a sense of continuity between present and past, by a historical experience that is at once burdensome and instructive, and by a near-obsession with explaining "the South" and themselves as southerners. In his otherwise massive study of the American historical profession, Peter Novick like so many others fails to historicize white southern historians, claiming though "southern regional consciousness did not find institutional expression until 1934" when the Southern Historical Association was founded, "it was no less strong for that." "Indeed," he continues, "it could be said that it was so strong, so taken for granted, that it didn't need institutional expression." "Southern" identity was in fact made not born, worked out at the level of culture and intellect.

The literature of the so-called southern renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s is responsible for much of this dehistoricization of the region's relationship to its past. When immersed in Faulkner's tangled and timeless narratives, it is too easy to believe Quentin Compson that "the South" is fundamentally unknowable to the outsider and
frustratingly inexplicable for the native. "You can't understand it," Quentin asserts, "You would have to be born there." As Michael O'Brien and Richard Gray have pointed out, literary critics like poet Allen Tate were responsible for the now-orthodox view of the southern renaissance canon as a "literature conscious of the past in the present," the product of the "peculiarly historical consciousness of the southern writer." This is all "familiar eschatology," O'Brien has argued, which along with the quotations from Faulkner "should be sealed up in concrete and deposited in the Tombigee River."  

I have considerable sympathy with O'Brien's criticism. The thrust of much of his intellectual history of the South is a path-breaking and rigorous investigation into southern identity and its intellectual and historical context. He wants historians and critics alike to start "seeing the South itself as an idea, used to organize and comprehend disparate facts of social reality" and to stop "viewing the South as a solid and integrated social reality about which there have been disparate ideas." Like O'Brien, I, too, want to insist that we historians do our job—that is, that we investigate these supposed tenets of southern identity historically and root the changing definitions of and claims to "southern" identity in their specific and ever-shifting contexts. O'Brien also correctly argues that the institutions of regional identity, like the Southern Historical Association, were "not the shipwrecked remnants of the Old South, but the offsprings of economic and cultural modernization." He thinks that these were flawed communities of discourse, however, because their participants talked "about different things while imagining that they discussed the same entity," the South.  

Or, as he has more recently argued, these communities of intellectuals were deficient, because their participants had absorbed the prevailing anti-intellectual attitude of the white South. As a result, they did not act as
intellectuals should by discussing ideas preferentially with one another. They were instead likely to be “programmatic” in their thought with an interest in change or affirmation, petitioning the public (instead of each other) as the “final court of appeals.”

In his work, O'Brien positions himself as an outsider more idealist than positivist and tends to chuckle dismissively when irate white southerners have accused him of saying the South did not exist, or worse, that it did not matter. Yet it is his own insistence that “the South” was at best a palliative idea for white southern intellectuals to cling to in the midst of social and cultural change that has led to this misreading. He is surely right that it was an “optional, rather than an inevitable, classification” for discourse. What is not obvious is why these thinkers would embrace regionalism as the most satisfying collective in which to ground themselves. In the end, O'Brien underestimates the extent to which for most white southern intellectuals, at least for the vast majority of historians, “the South” was not only a “psychological reality”; it was also a shorthand for a political, social, economic, and cultural reality that could be investigated and understood. “There is only The South,” one president of the Southern Historical Association warned. “Fundamentally, as it was in the beginning it is now, and if God please, it shall be evermore.” Recognizing this assumption as their point of departure is indispensable to understanding how white historians of the South conceived of their having a particular purpose in the intellectual universe and how they located themselves as a group within that space. At the same time, this assumption that there was a place called the South whose history easily manifested itself in an intellectual discipline must not prevent us from seeing how this identity was also in some sense created by its adherents. As Drew Gilpin Faust has so rightly pointed out, “attempts at self-interpretation have become one
of the region's most characteristic cultural products." This interplay between reality and interpretation is the heart of the historical enterprise.\textsuperscript{12}

If history is to have any function in a region so seemingly dominated by heritage—this deep-seated if often incorrect understanding of the South's past that infiltrates its literature, its public landscape, its symbols, and its politics—then historians must continue to work out the knotty relationship between the past, regional identity, and the mythology and functionality of tradition.\textsuperscript{13} A central component of this project is coming to terms with past historians of the South and their role in the inheritance, promotion, and changing definitions of "southern" identity. Historians have generally been left out of cultural and intellectual studies of the South, because they have been seen as somehow less interesting than other regional writers, writing "not in passion" but "with something approaching calm and deliberate reflection." As a result, much of what has been written on the intellectual resurgence of regionalism in the 1930s focuses on the literary and sociological rediscovery of the South as a topic for creative and productive investigation.\textsuperscript{14} There has also been a copious amount of attention paid to the "history" promoted by the Lost Cause and popular memorial activities as an essential element of (white) southern identity.\textsuperscript{15} What has been missing is an extended examination of the regional historians who emerged from the culture of the Lost Cause to define a particularly "southern" past that needed study for its own sake.\textsuperscript{16} We need a better explanation for the emergence of professional regional history than being content to conclude "Southern history's time had come" and a "massive take-off was inevitable."\textsuperscript{17} These historians worked to create and support institutions to separate themselves from those whose work they deemed "amateur" and "unscientific." Their authority to interpret
the past was compounded by the validation of their peers, both regionally and nationally. Most importantly, they found themselves at the center of important debates about regional identity and social change in the South.

This dissertation is a study of organized, professional history in the South centered on two formal associations: the Southern History Association, in existence for barely a decade between 1896 and 1907; and its successor, the Southern Historical Association, founded in 1934 and still going strong.\textsuperscript{18} It is intended to be the kind of historiography that Carl Becker sought when he asked historians ‘to regard historiography more simply, more resolutely, as a phase of intellectual history; to forget entirely about the contributions of historians to present knowledge and to concentrate wholly upon their role in the cultural pattern of their own time.’\textsuperscript{19} It is not intended to be what C. Vann Woodward, a prominent historical figure in this study, called ‘‘gerontophagy,’ the primitive ritual of eating one’s elders,” or what Avery O. Craven, who also plays a role in these pages, deplored as the process whereby “once respected scholars” become “fit only for a term paper.” Instead it takes the approach that the historian was also an intellectual who had a purpose and effect in cultural life and whose articulated thought can illuminate the shifting functions of regional identity and of the southern thinker. If “our histories and accounts of American intellectual life seldom include consideration of historians,” Neil Jumonville has argued in his recent biography of Henry Steele Commager, “historians have no one to blame but themselves.”\textsuperscript{20}

White southern historians have actually been quite attentive to the biographies of their predecessors. In fact, Southern Historical Association founding member and first editor of the \textit{Journal of Southern History}, Wendell Holmes Stephenson, was the original
southern historian’s historian. Over a quarter of a century, Stephenson wrote biographical and historiographical essays of varying quality on what he called the “pioneer” generation in the field of southern history, including historians like Herbert Baxter Adams, William A. Dunning, John Spencer Bassett, William P. Trent, William E. Dodd, Walter L. Fleming, and his dissertation advisor Ulrich B. Phillips, among others. He traveled across the country pestering widows and claiming false ancestry to gain access to personal papers still under lock and key. Evidently, Stephenson hoped for similar treatment from a future historian: he was a diligent record keeper, and his correspondence is often littered with references to what the “scholar fifty years hence” will have to say about his generation and their organization. More recently, several biographical studies of some of the South’s leading historians have been written, and many of the historians who play an important role in this dissertation have compiled autobiographical reflections on their own careers and thought.

While the biographical approach offers many benefits, I have opted to study two historical organizations in the South, one short-lived and largely forgotten, the other persistent and still vital. Some historians have advised against the writing of historiography from an organizational point of view because history, ultimately, is the product of individuals. While this is undoubtedly true, the key to understanding academic professionalization, as many historians have pointed out, is to recognize the extent to which knowledge-production is a collective enterprise. The organizational approach, in my view, accomplishes two related goals. First, addressing the function of an organization of historians illustrates trends and themes in the professionalization and regionalization of history in the South that are larger than any one extraordinary historian.
It is difficult, for example, to come out from the shadow of C. Vann Woodward and the stories he has told about his own role in the formative years of the southern historical profession. In the context of a network of historians, however, Woodward's ideas seem both more ordinary, in that his peer group was largely ready to accept his interpretations, and exceptional, in that we still study his books, some now over fifty years old, for new insights and angles on the past. Most white southern historians, however, did not approach Woodward's power of thought, felicity of phrase, or national reputation.25 Their effect individually on the profession at large was small. As a group, however, they had the potential to maximize their authority in the eyes of the national profession. They laid claim to a specialized arena and substantiated that claim with cooperative, institutional work, including annual meetings, a journal devoted exclusively to the South’s history, and a multi-volume series sponsored by two major southern universities and authored by ten of the South’s most preeminent white historians, A History of the South.26 William P. Trent had offered a particular admonition on this subject to southern historical societies when speaking before a student group at Vanderbilt University in 1895: "Long may you flourish, and may you take warning by the fate of my own and many similar societies and not rely too much on the work of any one man. . . . A society such as yours can flourish only when all its members are laboring zealously in the prosecution of its purposes."27

As participants in a network talking among themselves, these historians also turn out to be a more open-minded group (within certain limits) than one might assume mostly middle-aged, white southern men in the first half of the twentieth century would be. Although their merits as great thinkers are debatable, these historians were thinking.
Moreover, they were intellectually engaged with ideas and institutions beyond those emanating from their own region and race. They constantly negotiated not only between their regional devotion and their national ambition, but also between their sense of their own racial integrity and the disputed claims southern African Americans and reform-minded whites made over “the South” and the meaning of its past. Some of these contentious claims even originated within the organizations themselves, further complicating any attempt to claim that professional southern historians spoke with a single, reactionary, “white” voice.

Second, considering the historiography of the South in the framework of an institutionalized organization keeps at the forefront the question of boundaries. Delimiting the boundaries of the association first required the designation of “historians” deserving of membership in a southern historical organization. Historical workers deemed outside this consensual definition, be they African American or “amateur” or Marxist, posed a challenge to white southern historians’ presumption that they alone could produce “objective” narratives of the South’s past. A successful institutional framework that they set up for themselves made it easier to exclude these others by definition and deprive them of authority over interpretation. Focusing on the association, then, facilitates comparisons to the two other organizational foils always in the minds of professional white southern historians: on the one hand, the Confederate and Lost Cause organizations and popular memorial societies, and on the other, the nascent official networks of African American intellectuals, first the American Negro Academy, and later, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. The success of organized professional institutions for regional history and the dominance they
maintained over the South's past also made it requisite that excluded historians struggle to attain an invitation to the discussion in order to make themselves heard.

The question of boundaries also points to the changing shape of what "southern" history looked like, whose stories were included and excluded, and how membership, defined loosely, altered the narratives of regional history over time. While the South had an ontological existence for these historians, its meaning and relationship to the nation as a whole shifted with changes and challenges in the practice and politics of southern history. At various and simultaneous points in time in the eyes of assorted southern historians, white and black, "the South" was defined as Confederate, a national exemplar, a national problem, oppressed, oppressive, backward, progressive, white supremacist, biracial, and American as apple pie, among many other shades of meaning. The organizational approach, then, should not be seen as an institutional one, though details on these institutions are an important and needed contribution that I hope this dissertation provides. In the main, however, I have made an attempt to write the history of southern historical networks using analytical, rather than descriptive, tools.

This study begins in the 1890s when two important and related elements of the institutionalization of the post-Confederate "South" occurred. States across the South legally and constitutionally sanctioned white supremacy through disfranchisement and the passage of regionally unique "Jim Crow" laws that restricted southern African Americans in public space, and white southern historians banded together for the first time in pursuit and protection of regional history. It ends with the protracted intellectual and political battle to integrate the Southern Historical Association and indeed, the idea of "southern" history itself. These bookends may seem to suggest that the central theme
of southern history was indeed the color line, as strange bedfellows U. B. Phillips and W. E. B. Du Bois both suggested.\textsuperscript{32} Yet this story probes the erection, maintenance, scaling, and meshing of all kinds of intellectual borders: regional, professional, disciplinary, racial, and gendered. The racism and the sexism of the first white historians of the South become interesting evidence that categories of "white" and "male" and "southern" required constant upkeep. Using the South's past was a seemingly natural—though truthfully unstable—way to justify those categories for the present.\textsuperscript{33}

We must be careful, however, to resist the idea that these historians were simply building a cultural fortress within which they could protect their own racial and gendered privilege. Fred Arthur Bailey, for example, has argued that an "intellectual paradigm" or "patrician ethic" consistently shaped the historical vision of early-twentieth-century southern historians so as to perpetuate that kind of organic, unchanging social order where every member had his proper, preordained, racialized place in the present.\textsuperscript{34} Thus Bailey puts these historians in an unbroken chain back to the orchestrators of the Lost Cause—offering important insights into the continual dominance of white patriarchy in the South but failing to provide any sense of how this "paradigm" was ultimately assaulted from within as well as from without.\textsuperscript{35} In contrast, I argue that we must not lose sight of the subtleties of change in emphasis and in interpretation that enabled later, more radically activist historians, to lay claim to the fractures in the South's "past" and put it to use to justify social change. These associations were not wholly reactionary but fostered both a real devotion to and substantive critiques of the South and its historical practice. Few historians abandoned the discourse of "southern history" when its
definitions became outdated or too restrictive or untrue. For good or for ill and certainly not without struggle, white and black American historians instead transformed the field.36

The “South” was arguably its most clear-cut during the period when it adopted the structures and languages of a nation. Historians have often debated the extent to which the Confederacy was a “real” nation and what elements made up southern nationalism.37 Nevertheless, it should not be surprising that the first regional historical organization, the Southern Historical Society (SHS), established in 1869, was misnamed: in purpose and function it commemorated the Confederacy alone as “the South.” Founded and dominated by Confederate veterans, “the Society was uninterested in academic history, with its emphasis on objective evaluation of facts, sources, and interpretations,” one historian has noted. Instead, SHS members “refought the war in their meetings, their speeches, and especially in the pages of the Southern Historical Society Papers” and “defended almost every aspect of Confederate behavior.” The Papers printed Confederate documents, addresses from veterans’ reunions and memorial dedications, and articles with titles like “Richard Kirkland, the Humane Hero of Fredericksburg,” “The Attempt to Fasten the Assassination of President Lincoln on President Davis and Other Innocent Parties,” “The Private Infantryman—the Typical Hero of the South,” and “The Confederate Cause and Its Defenders.” The society’s model for the Confederacy’s “history” was endorsed by former Confederate president Jefferson Davis, who distrusted any writer who had “served the Confederate cause and was capable of giving a disinterested account of it.” “I would not give twopence for a man whose heart was so cold that he could be quite impartial,” Davis said at an April 1882 fundraiser for the SHS.
The Southern Historical Society Papers issued a volume as late as 1959, but the society for all intents and purposes had faltered by the turn of the twentieth century.38

The Southern Historical Society, firmly rooted in the pro-Confederate camp, is important for this study, because it represented a competing popular historical tradition that the professionalizing generation used as a basis of comparison to themselves. There was not much academic history in the South until the late nineteenth century, but its emerging promise and difference were heralded with trumpets. "The contrast between the old and the new civilization cannot be better illustrated than by the change in the study and writing of history," Trinity College (now Duke University) professor William K. Boyd argued in 1902. Who were these new "professional" scholars?—"men who have the spirit and methods of the modern university" with a "new and saner interest in what the Southern people have achieved." "Yes, I repeat it, the modern historian and especially the Southern historian must assume a scientific attitude toward his subject," William P. Trent told a group of eager students at Vanderbilt University. Science, professionalism, and investigation in the university: these were seen as the ways to the truth of the past.39

The Southern History Association, the subject of the first chapter of this dissertation, was founded in Washington, D. C. in 1896 as part of this enthusiastic tide. Its historians, though most were not employed by colleges or universities, appropriated the idea of regional history from popular Confederate activities and claimed it for the new spirit of "science." They took an investigative rather than a memorial approach to the southern past. In the process, they transformed the scope of regional history from its focus on the Confederate tradition to a broader idea of a "southern" past important for its
contributions to national development and exemplary value for the present. This was a reconciliationist South, eager to claim its part of American greatness at the turn of the twentieth century. The multi-volume series *The South in the Building of the Nation* was the culmination of this redefinition of the purpose of southern history from the sectional defensiveness of the Lost Cause to an emphasis on shared values and national development.40 As this generation of white southern historians abandoned the older principle to correct northern interpretations of the Civil War that had governed the Southern Historical Society, they identified the growing number of African American intellectuals as the primary challenge to the white South's dominance over the meaning of its own past.

At the same time, these historians became increasingly disappointed with the "scientific" history disseminated from John Hopkins University via Herbert Baxter Adams's famous graduate study seminar that they had initially so eagerly embraced. Lacking a critical mass of trained historians and having alienated whatever reading public existed in the South with their monographic counternarratives of reconciliation, these historians developed an important, if largely forgotten, critique of scientific history and graduate training. Trent had recognized the potential for the failure of the southern scientific historian in his address to the Vanderbilt students. Though the scientific historian must not be either partisan or sentimental, the "average Southerner...is a born advocate and not a little of a sentimentalist. If this be true," he regretted to say, "we see at once what it is that the Southern historian has chiefly to contend against on beginning his labors." "The South is not yet ready for the scientific historian," the editor of the *Publications of the Southern History Association* lamented in 1902. "It still longs for the
Fourth of July orator, the spread eagle man who is famous for his ready speech, from whose lips in the mind of the populace flow words sweeter than honey.” “The three things needed in the south before she is ready for history are education, wealth, [and] leisure,” he concluded. “Men and brethren, we are ahead of our time; what shall we do to be saved?” There was no saving the Southern History Association and it faded out existence at the end of 1907, but not before leaving its imprimatur on the codification and development of regional professional history.41

Ironically, professional regional history finally got a successful organizational foothold in southern soil in the midst of the Great Depression, when most southerners may have had more education and more enforced leisure, but certainly little wealth. The establishment of the Southern Historical Association in 1934, the subject of Chapter Two, was nonetheless embraced by the growing number of Ph.D.-trained history professors who studied the South. Many of the founding members had been educated in the North, in William A. Dunning’s famous Reconstruction seminar at Columbia University, at University of Michigan or Yale University at the feet of slavery scholar Ulrich B. Phillips, at the University of Chicago under William E. Dodd, or at the University of Wisconsin or Harvard University with the famous historian of the sections Frederick Jackson Turner. A smaller number of founders received their training at southern institutions, usually the University of North Carolina or Vanderbilt University. Most agreed that the South needed a regional historical organization that was not just a microcosm of the American Historical Association but was specifically devoted to the study of the South. This chapter covers the institutional details of the establishment,
objectives, and growth of the Southern Historical Association and its cultural and intellectual context during its first fifteen years from its founding through World War II.

Although the Southern Historical Association committed itself to the professional study of the South "defined broadly," this goal was not as easy to define as it seemed. The association had already inherited from the Southern History Association the idea that "southern" history was more than "Confederate" history, but beyond that, things were still muddled and contested. Chapter Three investigates the layers of meaning assigned to the three major objectives of the association: to be "historical," to be "professional," and to be "southern." It describes how and why purveyors of sectionally defensive, romantic, neo-Confederate, feminine, and family-oriented history were defined out of the Southern Historical Association and its journal. It then argues that while there was one predominant interpretation of the "South" as democratic, white, regionally distinctive, and culturally and economically vital that held sway for most white members of the Southern Historical Association before World War II, the seeds of debate, revision, and counternarrative had already been sown within the association’s own institutions. The chapter concludes by using the historiography of Reconstruction, written by both white and African American scholars, to illustrate the willingness of some association historians to reconsider inherited popular narratives about the horrors of Reconstruction.42

The following chapter takes a wider view to insert the Southern Historical Association into the context of other southern regionalist intellectual movements of the 1930s, namely Agrarianism and regional sociology. The Agrarians were an informally associated group of poets and critics once centered at Vanderbilt University who
launched a sectionally based critique of modern American capitalist-industrial culture with their 1930 manifesto I'll Take My Stand. The regional sociologists, mostly associated with the University of North Carolina and Howard W. Odum's Institute for Research in Social Science, applied sociological techniques to the critical study of southern society and argued that regional planning could eliminate the South's social and economic deficiencies. These two groups saw themselves as philosophical and political antagonists, and most work on white southern intellectuals replicates their diametrical opposition as one of tradition versus progress.\textsuperscript{43} White southern historians, I have found, were just as interested in public questions of the "Problem South"—the complex of social, economic, and racial troubles that critics disparaged and reformers sought to improve—as these other, more frequently studied regionalist thinkers. As a result of the Agrarians' historiographical ambitions and the sociologists' study of the recent southern past, the South's historians took it upon themselves to evaluate the strengths and limitations of both intellectual approaches to the South. They saw the fusion of tradition and progress as their contribution to this regionalist dialogue. The chapter ends with an examination of the Southern Review, a journal of literary, cultural, historical, and political criticism published contemporaneously with the Journal of Southern History. The coincidence of provenance brings into focus the similarities of these two journals as representative of the southern renaissance, balancing regional influence with national ambition.

Chapter Five takes a wider view still to locate the Southern Historical Association within debates that engaged historians across the United States regarding the possibilities and limitations of "objectivity," arguably a founding principle of the American historical
profession. When white professional historians organized in the South, they erected standards of research, documentation, impartiality, and source-based interpretation to separate themselves from a popular tradition of “filio-pietism,” by which they meant the prevailing tendency for ancestor worship and loyalty to tradition to dictate how stories of the past were told. Southern Historical Association historians therefore debated ideas about the point of a politically useful past and worried over what would become of their authority in the eyes of the historical profession at large if they became or even appeared to be advocates of a cause, ideology, or interpretation. Their devotion to “objectivity,” however, also became for some a defense mechanism against political challenge or controversial interpretation. When faced with this kind of opposition, the South’s white historians easily used these same standards to dismiss contributions that subverted the historiographical status quo.

The experience of World War II fundamentally challenged this facile reliance on historiographical isolation. From corners inside and outside the association came accusations that most white southern historians masked their own politics and advocacy in the guise of the “objective” truth. Debunking the idea that the prevailing “southern” interpretation of the past was “objective,” this surprisingly large group of white dissenters began to conceive of historical practice as African American historians had long defined it: a way to engage fundamental moral dilemmas about racism and democracy in the South and in the world. Although few if any white southern historians proclaimed themselves to be the kind of relativist where no standard remained to judge the quality or contribution of historical argument, together with African American allies they pried open the dialogue to include more voices in pursuit of contemporary relevance.
Revisionist arguments with broader political purpose gained hearing within the Southern Historical Association and the *Journal of Southern History*.

The debates between historians as objective interpreters of the historical record versus historians as moral and political critics came to a head in the growing questioning of the South’s racial politics at mid-century. They culminated in the specific issue of the integration of the Southern Historical Association, and by extension, the definition of “southern” history itself. Chapter Six analyzes the troubled, protracted, and imperfect path by which the Southern Historical Association attempted the incorporation of black southerners to their rightful place as human historical actors in and creators of regional historical narratives. This process was not, as has been so often described, a battle between reactionary insiders and radical outsiders. There was instead a faction of white southern historians, some of whom had important leadership positions, who cooperated with African American members and other white liberal activists and built on alternative narratives of the region’s history to put the Southern Historical Association on the road toward transformation. The claim by one reactionary white historian that the Southern Historical Association was the “white hope” of the South was simply not allowed to be true, though it took a long time to subvert that image. Despite all best efforts, that image of organized southern history may still persist today. Nevertheless, the meaning and uses of the southern past looked quite different at mid-century than they had at the beginning. At its very heart, then, this dissertation provides some better understanding of how thinking people changed their minds about what constituted good historical practice and how some historians came to believe that the pursuit of social justice was not only an acceptable, but also a necessary, part of their job.
Despite its regional focus, the study finally grapples with important issues about American historical practice in general. Much as Daniel Joseph Singh has analyzed southern thinkers’ reactions to modernism to learn something new about modernism itself, I have investigated the formative years of professional southern history to illuminate not only how historical professionalization came to the South, but also to show something new about the American historical profession. Historians now debate the future of history in a post-modern world beset by identity politics and the culture wars.47 The experience of these white “southern” historians in their own self-conceptualization as a minority with a special history worth preserving even as they struggled with stories of the South’s own African American minority proves thought provoking. Perceptive southern historians, white and black, recognized that an important aspect of their commonality was not just a sense of belonging to “the South,” but that their attachment to the past perpetuated a sense of distinctiveness that in some sense thwarted a genuine impulse toward integration.48

2 William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun (New York, 1951), 85.

3 As only a few examples of this truly voluminous literature, see Carl N. Degler, Place Over Time: The Continuity of Southern Distinctiveness (Baton Rouge, 1977); Charles Reagan Wilson, Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause (Athens, Ga., 1980); Fifteen Southerners, Why the South Will Survive (Athens, Ga., 1981); Fred Hobson, Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain (Baton Rouge, 1983); C. Vann Woodward, The Burden of Southern History (3d. ed.; Baton Rouge, 1993); and Tony Horwitz, Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War (New York, 1997).


5 William Faulkner, Absalom! Absalom! The Corrected Text (1986; New York, 1990), 289. This novel was first released in 1936.


Idea of the South, xxii (second quotation). In his more recent work, O’Brien has become clearer on this point of the relationship between the objective reality of a region and the sense of belonging or identity by arguing that the connection between the two is to “give perception a history.” See Michael O’Brien, “On Observing the Quicksand,” American Historical Review, 104 (October 1999), 1202–7 (quotation on 1204).


13 See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge, 1983); Gaines M. Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of a New South, 1865 to 1913 (New York, 1987); Michael Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture (New York, 1991); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity (Chapel Hill, 2000); and David W. Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory (Cambridge, Mass., 2001) for instructive examples of the history and changing functions behind something as apparently solid, inherited, and unchanging as “tradition.” It is important to note, as Brundage has also maintained in the introduction to Where These Memories Grow, that professional “historians alone cannot be the physicians of southern memory” (“No Deed But Memory,” 20).


16 One important exception has been John David Smith, An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865–1918 (Westport, Conn., 1985).


A note is necessary on my terminology. I use “southern historian” to mean historians associated with regional history or with a regional historical organization. These historians either studied the South or lived in the South; most did both. Not every historian who studied the South was born and raised there: William A. Dunning, who directed a number of graduate students into a pro-southern interpretation of Reconstruction, grew up in New Jersey and taught in New York at Columbia University. Most “southern historians” had some attachment to the South, however, through birth, residence, or topic of study. The majority of these historians in these years were white, but I try to make it clear when I make generalizations about white southern historians specifically to keep at the forefront the idea that black historians can be “southern historians” as well. “Southern history” is a shorthand for “history of the South” and is not intended to imply history from a “southern” viewpoint. Few of these professional southern historians would claim that they wrote history from a southern point of view.


Wendell Holmes Stephenson’s essays are published together in two collections: *The South Lives in History: Southern Historians and Their Legacy* (Baton Rouge, 1955); and *Southern History in the Making: Pioneer Historians of the South* (Baton Rouge, 1964). On his travels for this research, see William C. Binkley to Stephenson, June 16, 1945, and reply, June 22, 1945, Box 3, Wendell Holmes Stephenson Papers [hereafter WHS], Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University. On his historical consciousness, see Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green, January 8, 1940, Box 59, WHS (quotation). Biographical information can be found in Thomas D. Clark, “Wendell Holmes Stephenson, 1889–1970: Master Editor and Teacher,” *JSH*, 36 (August 1970), 335–49.

As only the most recent examples of biography, see Carol Bleser, “Tokens of Affection: The First Three Women Presidents of the Southern Historical Association,” in Michele Gillespie and Catherine Clinton, eds., *Taking Off the White Gloves: Southern Women and Women Historians* (Columbia, Mo., 1998), 145–57; John Herbert Roper, ed., *C. Vann Woodward: A Southern Historian and His Critics* (Athens, Ga., 1997); Fred Arthur Bailey, *William E. Dodd: The South’s Yeoman Scholar* (Charlottesville, 1997);


25 In their jealous moments, some felt their lack of recognition had to do with the provincial bias of the northeastern academic establishment. "As matter of fact," Wendell Stephenson wrote to his friend and colleague University of Georgia professor E. Merton Coulter, "I get pretty enthusiastic when I think of all you have done for southern historiography. If you were connected with one of the schools in the (Poison) Ivy League rather than a southern university, you would have been president of the American Historical Association long ago, though I am not sure just how much of an honor that distinction would be. Perhaps I am a bit provincial; anyway I am pretty proud of the work you and [Duke University professor Charles S.] Sydnor and [University of North Carolina professor Fletcher M.] Green and [University of Alabama professor Frank L.] Owsley and a dozen other Southerners have done" (Stephenson to Coulter, June 14, 1950, Box 7, WHS). For a sense of the central place Woodward still holds in the historiography of the South and the minds and hearts of its historians, see "C. Vann Woodward, 1908–1999: In Memoriam," *JSH*, 66 (May 2000), 207–20.

26 The *History of the South* series was sponsored by Louisiana State University Press and the Littlefield Fund at the University of Texas. While the series was not officially connected with the Southern Historical Association, its editors, Wendell H. Stephenson, Charles W. Ramsdell, and upon Ramsdell's death in 1942, E. Merton Coulter, were all presidents of the association. Five of the contributing authors were also presidents in the period 1935–1952. On the series, see Stephenson, "Charles W. Ramsdell: Historian of the Confederacy," *Southern History in the Making*, 191–93; and Dewey W. Grantham Jr., "Southern Historiography and A History of the South," *American Quarterly*, 5 (Autumn 1953), 252–68.


31 The authors of a history of the Southern Sociological Society suggested that an interesting project for the "regional scholar" might be to use "sociological interpretation and understanding... in explanation of the origin and development of this organization." This dissertation attempts this richer approach to southern historical networks. See Lee M. Brooks and Alvin L. Bertrand, *History of the Southern Sociological Society* (University, Ala., 1962), 11–12.


34 See these four representative articles by Fred A. Bailey: "The Textbooks of the 'Lost Cause': Censorship and the Creation of Southern State Histories," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 75 (Fall 1991), 507–33; "Thomas Nelson Page and the Patrician Cult of the


36 Paul M. Gaston is one of the few historians who points out the revisionist potential contained *within* this group of historians: *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (Baton Rouge, 1970), 228–29.


The entire title of the series gives some sense of its purpose: *The South in the Building of the Nation: A History of the Southern States Designed to Record the South’s Past in the Making of the American Nation; To Portray the Character and Genius, To Chronicle the Achievements and Progress, and To Illustrate the Life and Traditions of the Southern People* (13 vols.; Richmond, 1909–1913).


“Historical News and Notices,” *JSH*, 1 (February 1935), 107–8. As *Journal* reviewer Charles Anderson wrote, there was little sympathy for “Neo-Confederatism” within the Southern Historical Association (Anderson to Fred C. Cole, June 23, 1939, Box 50, WHS).


Frank L. Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, October 10, 1938, Correspondence, *Southern Review* Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

These questions are particular interesting in light of the recent movement to establish a new national historical organization for more purely “historical” motives. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, eds., *Reconstructing History: The Emergence of a New Historical Society* (New York, 1999).

Chapter One

"Gone With the Consent of All":
The Southern Past of the Southern History Association, 1896–1907

In the early months of 1896, college professors, civic leaders, Civil War veterans, and government bureaucrats across the South found in their morning mail an invitation from fourteen prominent Washington, D.C.-area gentlemen. "All persons interested in advancing the cause of Southern History," it read, "are cordially invited to unite with the undersigned for the purpose of organizing a Southern Historical Association." After nearly one hundred people from at least nine southern states responded to this call, the Southern History Association was incorporated on April 24.¹

Today, the Southern History Association is largely forgotten: sandwiched between the classic Lost Cause organization, the Southern Historical Society (est. 1869) and the current Southern Historical Association (est. 1934), the Southern History Association gets lost in the historiographical shuffle. Viewed either as evidence of a persistent Confederate tradition in southern historical work or as evidence of a false start on the road toward professionalization in the South, the Southern History Association has rarely been examined apart from these other historical trends. Thus, some historians argue that the Southern History Association was never "much more than a society of southern gentlemen residing in Washington" pursuing their historical hobby out of nostalgia for days gone by.² More recent historians suggest that the members of the Southern History Association were fledgling professionals but could not shake themselves free of the intellectual and cultural paradigm that the Lost Cause celebration of the Confederacy manacled to the writing of the southern past. Thus Gaines M. Foster
has argued that the first generation of professional southern historians, with a few notable and famous exceptions, "not only avoided controversy but paid homage to Confederate pieties." "In fact," Foster concludes, "only to the extent that [the association's journal] made the Civil War a less central concern by publishing articles on other aspects of the southern past did it dissent at all from prevailing views."³

This chapter, however, takes a different approach. The tendency to use the organization as an obstacle in a narrative of progress or as the tail end of a narrative of decline detracts from the extent to which the formation and duration of the Southern History Association, 1896–1907, was a discrete moment in the regionalization and professionalization of history in the United States South. Though it was never very big (it had an average of 240 members per year), the Southern History Association offered ample space for a narrowly defined group to stake claim to, establish parameters for, and to place great faith in a new field called "southern history."⁴ At the same time, the association provides an important framework for examining broader intellectual developments during this crucial period—the decade when the white South both reconciled with the North and constitutionally sanctioned its most important regional differences since slavery. The Southern History Association is important, I argue, precisely because its members attached to their pursuit of sectional reconciliation the erection of regional and racial intellectual borders.

At the association's first annual meeting in June 1896, Dr. Stephen B. Weeks, a recent graduate of Herbert Baxter Adams' famous history seminar at Johns Hopkins University, defined for the Southern History Association a unique role in southern historical work. Southern history had reached a conceptual and generational turning
point with the establishment of the association. "The new spirit of scientific investigation," Weeks proclaimed, "has already become a part of the younger generation of students of the Southern field." The association would inspire this "new generation of scholars who, free from many of the prejudices of their elders, will come to the subject of investigations with that passion for truth which characterizes the modern school." The resulting "monographs in turn will form the basis of that great synthetic history, resting on which the South can be neither misrepresented, misunderstood, or ignored." Though speaking for the professional historian, Weeks's conception of the Southern History Association was not much different from that of Colonel Richard Malcolm Johnston, a lawyer and educator best known for his local-color depictions of antebellum Georgia. "I was well pleased when I heard of the project to form this Association," Johnston told the assembled audience of Washington bureaucrats, Civil War veterans, journalists, college and university professors, and "a number of ladies." Admitting that he was an old man who was "perhaps over-fond praising the things of my youth, now long gone away," Johnston hoped the new association "would rescue from oblivion what is left of a civilization that has now forever gone, and gone with the consent of all." He concluded with the Rankean dictum that governed the historical profession in the United States: "The time has come to let all mankind understand the South as she was." Though participants like Johnston relied on the authenticity of their own memories and freshly minted Ph.D.'s like Weeks depended upon the authority of the historical record and their own training, both shared a belief in the inviolability of the "facts" and the self-evident power of "truth." While these historians shared a hopeful outlook for a New South, they would not tolerate the misrepresentation of the Old.
These historians, however, did not consider themselves to have embarked on an aggressive or pious sectional project. With this “true” history written without sectional prejudice or defensiveness, these southern historians hoped to pave the way for the South’s claims to a prominent place in the modern American nation. Members were not recruited to the association on behalf of a defensive effort to overturn “northern” interpretations of American history, but in an attempt to remedy a common feeling that “southern history has not received its due share of attention” in the history of the United States. The difference here is subtle, but crucial, because it clearly separates the Southern History Association from the Lost Cause tradition. The association redefined the scope of regional history beyond the confines of justifying the Confederacy—or defending why the South had broken up the nation—toward a broader conception of a “South” whose history justified a central role in the story of national development.

Though never critical of the Confederate focus of other historical organizations, the Southern History Association differed from these other groups in its plan to “go back of the Confederacy” for subject matter. Its members also kept an eye on the future by emphasizing the South “as she is capable to become under a civilization that has taken the place of the old.” As historian Thomas J. Pressly has demonstrated in his classic study of Civil War historiography, history was now predicated on the fact that both sections were satisfied with the war’s outcome.

To this end, the association defined the South as that region of the country which had best preserved the heart and soul of American traditions and offered up the South’s past as a source of redemption for a degenerating, modern age. “What a sweet and noble revenge it would be,” Southern History Association vice-president Woodrow Wilson
mused, if "we save the nation we have been thought to hate!". This twist demonstrates why these white southern intellectuals clung to a regional identity even as they preached reconciliation. The members of the Southern History Association argued that the history of the South was not only overlooked, it was useful, even redemptive, for both the region and the nation. Poverty, ignorance, regional exploitation, political manipulation: "These things will be righted when the historian's day comes," William P. Trent told a group of Vanderbilt University students in 1895. Association members considered themselves to be southerners "of a higher type, devoted to [their] section, proud of its history and confident of its future." They saw themselves as a new breed of nation builders whose protection of the "southern" historical experience had ramifications far beyond local feeling or personal reputation.

The Southern History Association also provides a window on the far-reaching process of professionalization in the American historical profession. While it is possible to use the South like a laboratory, where intellectual and cultural trends that affected the entire nation can be isolated and studied in a context where change happened both belatedly and more slowly, this approach would minimize the extent to which these historians considered themselves to have embarked on a unique project. After all, many of the professional historians in the Southern History Association were active members of the American Historical Association (AHA) and were intimately connected to a national network of professionally trained colleagues, often through Herbert Baxter Adams's goal of creating a Hopkins empire in institutions of higher education across the nation. Yet, the Southern History Association from the beginning embraced under its regional umbrella historians broadly defined. Thus, though the professionals were keen on
gaining national reputations and readerships, most were not willing to cut themselves off from the region and its popular historical consciousness, for good or ill, in order to do so. This presumed connection to a broader audience enabled graduate-school-trained historians to think critically about their own education and their own claims to authority over the interpretation of the past. Some even concluded that the professionalization of historical work was actually dangerous to "history" as they defined it: an intellectual project that sought not to recreate the past for a nostalgic sectional present but to bring it into relevant shape for a progressive national future.

The Establishment of the Southern History Association

For these purposes, it is important to explore the Southern History Association as a sort of imagined community, where the arguments and ideas of individuals were conveyed as if speaking to and for a like-minded group, even while recognizing that no one contributor or leader spoke for the group as a whole or even that the group had any real shared identity beyond having paid three dollars dues to an organization dedicated to southern history. A closer look at the membership, therefore, will coalesce the group in the minds of the reader and provide context for the claim that the Southern History Association was a new form of intellectual organization in the South. E. Merton Coulter, the first president of the later Southern Historical Association, attributed the failure of his organization's precursor to its unwieldy membership—an unviable hybrid of professor and professional southerner. Although the group's journal, the Publications of the Southern History Association, was admittedly the South's "first modern historical
magazine,” Coulter argued that it “never came under the domination of college professors and educational institutions, and perhaps, in that fact, its life was shortened.”

Coulter’s interpretations notwithstanding, the founding members of the Southern History Association were not so easily categorized into two camps of modern academic and wistful old-timer. The mastermind behind the association, Thomas McAdory Owen (1866–1920), personified these two components himself. Owen had no formal historical training, though he had graduated from the University of Alabama in 1887. Thanks to his father-in-law Alabama congressman John H. Bankhead, Owen obtained a position in Washington, D.C., with the federal government in 1894. As chief clerk of postal inspectors, he had access to the Library of Congress and there developed his interest in history and archival preservation. He spent his spare time, his friends noted, “ransacking all the South” for historical manuscripts and rare publications. In 1897 he returned to Alabama, hoping to get a professorial position at the state university. While he did not get the job, he began work on a catalogue of every public monument in the South, a project that combined a popular interest in memorialization with the bibliographer’s professional interest in categorization and documentation. He enlisted the assistance of the readers of the Publications for this project, asking them to send him descriptive and historical information about monuments in their towns. “The account,” he stressed, “cannot be made too full.” In 1898 Owen spearheaded a movement to reinstate the defunct Alabama Historical Society, and in the following few years, he successfully petitioned the Alabama state government for funds to establish the South’s first state department of archives and history. Owen also edited the Alabama Historical Society’s Transactions and served as an officer of the Southern History Association between 1896
and 1900. He contributed five articles to the *Publications*, including two genealogies, one set of documents, one bibliography, and one historical (though anecdotal) essay. He was an active member of the American Historical Association and its Historical Manuscripts Committee and an enthusiastic advocate of planning an AHA annual meeting in the South. His professional historical work merited additional attention when he was made president of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association in 1907.

Yet Owen never lost touch with the ex-Confederate public. In 1904 the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) appointed him their official historian; a year later, he became that organization's leader. The SCV "has amounted to very little in size and appearance and still less in genuine work," *Publications* editor Colyer Meriwether noted in 1905, "but if any one can make it serviceable, Mr. Owen can." Owen represented the ideal member of the Southern History Association, because he had the potential to turn the popular Confederate organization into a source for good history in the South. More leaders like Owen, Meriwether once argued, could transform the veterans' groups from "sentimental organizations" to ones that could contribute "to history" and "to present progress." Indeed, in the beginning, Southern History Association leaders hoped to yoke together the two "great currents that the stream of historiography is dividing into"—the popular and the professional.

Thus Owen and the thirteen others who originated the proposal to form the Southern History Association could speak of "advancing the cause of Southern History" in terms of a sectional crusade that ex-Confederates recognized while embracing decidedly different goals that included "the encouragement of original research, discussion and conference among members, the widening of personal acquaintance,
publication of work, and the collection of historical materials.”20 The founders represented a blend of professional and amateur, Civil War veteran and nonparticipant, native and non-Southerner. Stephen B. Weeks and Lee Davis Lodge, for example, both had earned doctorates, though only Lodge held a university position at the time of organization. Weeks had taught briefly at Trinity College (now Duke University), but he did not take to the college lifestyle. As he later explained to a friend, “I realize and know that I am not an administrator. I am not an educator. I am not a teacher. I am a scholar and an investigator and that is all.”21 Matthew Calbraith Butler had been a prominent Confederate military leader but was also a United States Senator from South Carolina, and later, a major-general in the Spanish-American War.22 Edward Ingle was editor of the Baltimore American but had also done graduate work at Johns Hopkins;23 three men worked for the Smithsonian Institution, including its secretary G. Brown Goode; and two others held positions in higher education. Two were Washington bureaucrats, though one of these, John Bell Brownlow, was known for his efforts in private manuscript collection as well as for his Unionist sympathies during the Civil War.24 Five of the founders were born and raised outside the South before coming to Washington.25 The final founding member, Daniel Reaves Goodloe, had been a vocal antislavery writer in North Carolina before the war, a Unionist during the war, and a federal marshal during Reconstruction.26 In the main, then, the Southern History Association founders were not Confederate apologists.

Ninety-five people answered the call sent out by the organizers in early 1896.27 A healthy percentage of these were Washington residents, including members of Congress, clerks in the Post Office department and the Bureau of Education, diplomats, and
employees of the Smithsonian Institution. More than two-thirds of the charter members, however, lived in other parts of the South. Almost half had some connection to institutions of higher education: thirty-three were professors at colleges or universities, with eight of these specifically identifying themselves as professors of history, while seven were administrators. At least twenty-five charter members had advanced degrees, and some had more than one. Thus the membership represented at least twelve Ph.D.'s (thirteen if both of Stephen Weeks's doctoral degrees are counted), ten LL.D.'s, and two advanced divinity degrees. In point of fact, having this many interested Ph.D.'s was quite a feat as only 96 doctorates in all branches of history had been awarded in American universities before 1896. In addition, nine charter members identified themselves by military rank over and above any other title, though it is difficult to know whether these titles represented real Confederate military service (as in the case of General Marcus J. Wright and General Wade Hampton) or a southern honorific (as in the case of Colonel Richard Malcolm Johnston).

Membership grew quickly. As the numbers increased, however, the percentage of members with connections to colleges or universities fell dramatically. By 1904, only twelve percent of the 257 members worked in institutions of higher education; a third of these professors worked outside the South. Yet overall, as a percentage of all persons who were paid members of the Southern History Association at one time or another, over one-fifth were either professors or university administrators. It is likely, therefore, that college- or university-affiliated members of the Southern History Association actually represented a substantial proportion of academic teachers of history in the South. In an 1897 survey of colleges for both white and black students that ran the gamut of
educational quality, Stephen B. Weeks counted only 114 people teaching history at southern institutions. Only 23 that he found taught history exclusively; he also added the caveat—included, it should be noted, to support his depiction of the dire situation for the discipline in the South—that “in a number of cases the professors are women.”

Similarly, in a memoir of his entry into the historical profession in 1906, University of North Carolina professor J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton remembered that academic historians in the South at that time were so few that he could list all 31 by name. Significantly, half of these had been members of the association or contributors to its *Publications*. Moreover, of the sixteen additional people Hamilton named as having been important to the writing of history in the South, but who were not of “the professional group” (meaning here not affiliated with a college or university), ten were members of the association.32

The majority of individual members were therefore not professional historians. At its founding, trained professional historians had dominated the proceedings, the membership, and the leadership.33 The association’s growth, however, came from previously untapped quadrants—a broadly educated class of businessmen, educators, editors, ministers, public historians, and women who were interested in the intellectual and civic opportunities that membership in a historical organization could provide [see Appendix A]. These men and women were leaders in the public arena of historical preservation and memorialization in their local towns and states and made up a large contingent of Southern History Association membership.34 It would have been impossible for college or university professors to dominate an organization of this type in these years. There simply were not enough of them with adequate institutional and
research support. E. Merton Coulter’s disappointment in the extent of professors’ contributions was therefore misguided.

What is more important, because it is one factor that makes the Southern History Association unique, Coulter’s lament underestimated the commonality of purpose and outlook among these men of the New South as intellectuals and as businessmen. The novelty of the Southern History Association is made more obvious when its membership strategies are compared to those of the American Historical Association. In 1900 a few AHA leaders wanted to widen their public appeal and membership base, but some vocally opposed the recruitment campaign. “I do not think the Association needs more members unless it be historians or those positively interested in it, and who will consider membership to be an honor and be an honor to the Association,” the assistant secretary wrote. “To appeal to the public to ‘join’ for what they may get in the shape of publications is the lowest of motives.” The Southern History Association, in contrast, wanted the public: as students, as readers, as participants. It is only if we understand the blurred distinctions among educated people in the turn-of-the-century South that we can learn something about the historical discipline as it came to the South in organized form and about the frustrations its practitioners felt regarding its ultimate unpopularity.

The objectives of the Southern History Association, then, must be considered in this context of hope for the modernizing South, where the call for history “done right” had less to do with the knee-jerk defensiveness of the Old South or the Confederate past, and more to do with the future of an American South. The Southern History Association can be seen as the historical arm of what historian Paul Gaston has called “the New South creed”—the complex of ideological and programmatic assumptions that “bespoke
harmonious reconciliation of sectional differences, racial peace, and a new economic and social order. . . which would lead, eventually, to the South’s dominance in the reunited nation.” The high percentage of members living and working in the nation’s capital should not, perhaps, be surprising.37

Defining “Scientific” Southern History

What, then, were the objectives of the Southern History Association? Certainly, the organization did not wander into an empty or unoccupied intellectual space, despite its members’ repeated assertions that the history of the South was a “virgin” or neglected field and that southerners had fallen dangerously behind New Englanders in historical production.38 In keeping with its hybrid membership plans, the Southern History Association insisted from the beginning that it was not trying to monopolize history in the South. To make this point, Colonel Robert Alonzo Brock, secretary of the Confederate-dominated Southern Historical Society, publicly sanctioned the new association and encouraged the support of its goals. “The [Southern History Association] is not organized in opposition to any other body now in existence,” Brock emphasized in a powerful endorsement to the Southern Historical Society’s hometown of Richmond. Similarly, association secretary and Publications editor Colyer Meriwether stressed in an open letter to the membership that he was exceptionally pleased that the organization had successfully and “carefully avoided antagonizing other Associations.”39

The Southern History Association in fact actively bolstered the aims of the popular Confederate groups by advertising their projects and meetings in its Publications. The veterans’ societies, the association asserted, had “plenty of work. . . to do, very
valuable too, that they alone are fitted to undertake.” In hopes of maintaining a wide readership and the participation of prominent Confederate veterans and historical workers in their own organization, the Southern History Association demanded that the work of Confederate, state, and local groups receive its full support.40

Yet the Southern History Association also kept up a consistent criticism of Confederate defensiveness paraded as history. Blatant partisanship, one Publications author argued, only maligned the southern past and “earn[ed] the contempt of honest men.” The “passionate demand for truth” was not met when the historian “confined himself to one side only.”41 Unlike the more popular strains of historical work in the South, the Southern History Association did not insist that its contributors be uniformly “pro-southern,” by which it meant committed to a defense of the Old South, its institutions, and its cause in the war. In contrast to Lost Cause advocates, the association did not seek to eradicate all anti-southern narratives from the educational systems and replace them with pro-southern works. The Publications made note of such efforts to rewrite textbooks but did not support the project directly.42 Southern History Association historians instead sought the endorsement of northern scholars for their interpretations, and they believed what vindication the South deserved would come from scientific methodology and time. “Unless [the southern historian] assume a scientific attitude,” William P. Trent argued, “his work will be old fashioned and make little appeal to the readers he most wishes to impress”—the American historical profession. More specifically, association historians looked forward to the future when they felt the “American civil war will be judged by the passionless standard of history,” when the history of the South would be “fairly and squarely” written.43
Defensiveness, however, was not the same thing to these thinkers as describing the South's historical point of view. In the "court of history," one author asked, "Shall we plead our own case or leave it to others?" No country could be truly great without producing "the greatest historians and poets to tell its deeds." This objective, for example, inspired one author to rewrite the history of secession from the southern point of view, not to replace other histories of the coming of the Civil War but to "supplement" the narrative of James Ford Rhodes and his attention to the "Northern view." This dedication to the South's point of view, however, was not incompatible with their simultaneous belief that the outcome of the war had been fortunate. As General Marcus J. Wright argued, no thinking southerners wanted to "reverse the arbitrament of the war, to repeal the late amendments to the Constitution, to revive African slavery, or secession as a right or remedy"; they simply wanted to describe the situation as it "existed in 1860." Their attention to regional history was thus quietly non-combative in its acceptance of the terms of American progress. As one Confederate veteran wrote, with approval by his reviewer, "It is surely not necessary to contrast what would have been our prospects as citizens of such states with our condition now as citizens of the strongest, richest, and—strange for us to say who once called ourselves 'conquered' and our cause 'lost'—the freest nation on earth."45

For their own part, the historians of the Southern History Association actively expanded their research focus beyond the Civil War. At the organizational meeting, in fact, the need to expand the scope of suitably "southern" topics assumed top priority. Participants stressed their desire to "go back of the Confederacy" for source material. "A mass of material of a very perishable nature lies all around us in the South," one
University of Virginia professor claimed, “which such a Society, elastic and liberal in its constitution and wide-awake in its methods, might save and utilize for authentic history in the future.” Determining a strategy to meet this obvious need, however, was a bit more controversial. Thomas M. Owen, for example, “urg[ed] that effort should be made to study all the Southern States from the beginning,” while president of Columbia College James Woodrow argued “that we should begin at the present and work toward the sources, because we can gather material of the last 35 or 40 years and save it for posterity.” Other members were even more insistent on distancing their project from the Civil War. Alabama attorney Peter J. Hamilton argued that important results would come from any “historical study which can forget that civil war, which for half a century has in anticipation, realization and retrospection absorbed the energies of our country.” The creation of a regional history worthy of a reconciled and nationalist—even imperialist—America was a far more important challenge.

All members agreed the achievement of this balanced history first required knowledge of the facts. To this end, the association supported government-funded document projects like the Official Records and created a lobby to petition Congress for further publication appropriations. More importantly, it embraced as one of its primary functions the collection and publication of documentary material. Indeed, the American Historical Review only praised the Publications for this type of contribution: “the other contents. . .call for no remark.” In practice, however, only half of the Publications article space during its entire run was given over to primary sources, though many of the “articles” were really little more than lengthy quotations from documents strung together with a minimum of analysis. Still, collection, preservation, and publication were
indispensable objectives of the association and served inspirational as well as informational purposes. In a study of a revolutionary war battle in the South, for example, one author apologized for the small amount of actual information he could share. "I have searched the official records and have given all I can find," he concluded. "I trust this article will stimulate the descendants of the men who fought at the battle of "Williamson's Plantation" to a further search of records, not only of this engagement, but of the many others fought in the South, of which so little is known." 51

No gathering passed, moreover, without the secretary reporting on the possibilities for new publication projects. At the 1899 annual meeting Meriwether praised the forthcoming American Historical Association edition of the letters of John C. Calhoun and urged the dedication of Southern History Association resources in similar directions. "All Revolutionary students would be deep in our debt if we could make available for them the Sumter collection in the Wisconsin Society," he reported. A "proposed bibliography of Southern bibliographies," he also thought, "would be of untold help to all toilers in Southern sources." "For these purposes and for strengthening ourselves," he concluded, "it would be wise to strive for more frequent issues [of the Publications]." The following year, Meriwether was "authorized and instructed to make special efforts towards getting the contributions of documents and other original material." 52 Consequently, the Publications changed formats from a quarterly to a bimonthly journal. The expansion somewhat troubled Meriwether in the end, since the accumulation of enough high-quality contributions was difficult. "It would be easy enough to fill our pages by lowering the standard," the editor reported, "but that would be endorsed by none, and would in time defeat its own aim." Grand bibliographical
publishing schemes also amounted to little: the Southern History Association only
managed to complete one special project, the publication of an index to Bishop William
Meade’s *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia.*

Even with all this attention to publication, the commitments of most members of
the Southern History Association were not satisfied by the simple reproduction of
documents, no matter how important their contents were to the investigation of southern
history. As Woodrow Wilson wrote in an 1895 essay, “the truth of history is a very
complex and occult matter.” Though scientific historians seek the facts, “the facts do not
of themselves constitute the truth.” “The truth is abstract and not concrete,” Wilson
concluded, “It is the just idea, the right revelation of what things mean.”

Every time, then, that early southern historians complained that the “facts” were not known, or that
the South had done a poor job of preserving the “facts” of its own history, they also
conveyed their dissatisfaction with interpretation, and beyond that, with a master
historical narrative about the development of the nation that they felt slighted the
contributions of the South.

At the first annual meeting, Stephen Weeks therefore argued that the Southern
History Association “must furnish to students the materials on which the history of the
South is to be based”; otherwise “much of American history is inadequate and in some
respects unintelligible.” Edward Ingle’s study of the antebellum South’s two premier
magazines, the *Southern Literary Messenger* and *DeBow’s Review*, illustrates well how
these concerns with fact and interpretation were interconnected. Ingle argued that the
files of these periodicals must be preserved, because together they represented the main
currents of southern sentiment and public opinion—the facts, as it were, of antebellum
thought and culture. Moreover, these “facts” demonstrated for Ingle an overarching concern throughout this period with the economic, commercial, cultural, and intellectual “upbuilding of the South.” For someone interested in the progress of the New South, antebellum precedents were useful props for justifying new policies. But most importantly, Ingle’s concern with the preservation of the magazine files centered on the possibility of using these “facts” to rewrite the narrative sweep of American history. “Almost simultaneously with the birth of the conviction that history is something more than past politics,” Ingle wrote, “candid and broad-minded writers have realized that the story of our country has been told with misleading effect because of a failure to emphasize the South’s share in the making of it.” While Ingle admitted that “the South itself has not been wholly blameless” in this development, he argued “without invidious intent, that there had been too great a preponderance of Southern history from what may be termed the New England standpoint.” Instead, he looked forward to the “real historian of the United States, who is yet to be born.” This person “will take the position of the American citizen, knowing no section, but carefully weighing all facts relating to the North, South and West before embodying his conclusions in scientific philosophy.”

Despite this concern with the broader sweep of American history, most Southern History Association members were not prepared to disavow the South’s side in the Civil War. Most were not willing to go so far as Peter J. Hamilton in claiming that American history might be better off without so much attention to that conflict. Certainly the book trade, then as now, was still very invested in bringing out new works on the Civil War as the review pages of the Publications attest. For many members and readers, the Confederate experience remained central to their conception of southern history.
However, even those most interested in Confederate history hoped that the association's primary function would be the preservation of the "facts" surrounding that conflict while avoiding discussion of the "principles underlying the Confederate side of the war."59 Despite this dedication to the facts, Civil War documents were actually quite rare in the *Publications*. Perhaps this was a result of the Southern History Association's conscious effort not to step on the toes of other southern historical organizations, namely the Southern Historical Society and the veterans' groups who made the publication of Confederate documents their central purpose.60

Articles on the Civil War or Confederacy, however, were among the most frequent in the journal, though no more frequent than articles on other periods. Yet the majority dealt not with causes or battles but with Confederate institutions.61 This institutional focus brought Confederate topics into the mainstream of professional historiography, especially in line with trends emanating from Johns Hopkins University and Herbert Baxter Adams.62 Interpretively, these studies of the Confederate constitution, treasury, post office, and the like inserted Confederate history into an unbroken story of American national development. "The failure of the Confederacy to establish [a Supreme] Court is no longer of practical value," an introduction to a symposium on the judicial system argued. Still, the question was "of the highest speculative interest to all students of our political life," because "the whole incident is connected with a doctrine fraught with momentousness in our development."63 Most articles depicted the Civil War as a struggle for free government and fair representation, just as the War for Independence had been.64 *Publications* contributors minimized the extent to which the Civil War brought institutional change to the South and emphasized
persistent southern patriotism. One former Confederate official, for example, stressed that the South had always been "thoroughly imbued with Americanism." "Every patriot," J. L. M. Curry argued, "should labor for a better understanding of his fellow citizens, for the obliteration of the last vestige of sectional prejudice and bitterness, for the enlightenment of op[ion], . . [and] for the strengthening and ennobling of all influences which will perpetuate free, representative institutions." Understanding the South in the Confederacy, he concluded, was one key to becoming a better American.65

The majority of contributions to the Publications, however, looked beyond the Confederacy to other roles the South played in the founding and development of the nation. Several documents described important revolutionary battles that took place in the South; articles introduced obscure southern patriots or claimed famous ones as southerners.66 Faith in the Union was almost a new central theme of southern history. One writer embraced the Constitution as "the sheet-anchor of our safety, the truest security of the Union, the palladium of our liberties."67 The rare historian even criticized the persistence of a states-rights interpretation of the Constitution, as Peter J. Hamilton did when he argued that national development had by 1860 virtually amended the Constitution to prohibit secession. President Abraham Lincoln was therefore "wrong historically in speaking of a consolidated origin; but he was nevertheless then at the head of a national government." Similarly, Jefferson Davis "was legally right in speaking of the Constitution as a compact in origin; but the government founded on it was an institution that could not but take care of itself." Modern-day secessionists, Hamilton implied, contributed very little to the understanding of American history, because they ignored its obvious progress.68
The South’s contribution to territorial expansion was another important theme that association leaders encouraged scholars to pursue. Southerners, association president William Lyne Wilson said at the first annual meeting, had played a “prominent part . . . in extending the boundaries of our country,” yet the South “has never been represented in our written history proportionately to her great share in our historical development.” Perhaps due to the imminent centennial the Louisiana Purchase was a popular topic.69 Others drew attention to the southern frontier, the Texas Revolution, and the war with Mexico. The connection of slavery to these issues did not concern these historians. Instead, they argued that the desire for upward mobility, the transfer of American republican ideals to the frontier, and the solidarity of the Anglo-American people fueled settlement and annexation in the southwest. The justification for American expansion across the globe in their own time meshed nicely with historical precedent.70

The Reconciled South

If these historians stressed the South’s part in the development of the nation, (and, though less often discussed, if the South already possessed the economic keys to “American” success—namely, industry, ambition, and commerce), why then did they continue to insist on a regional identity?71 First, these scholars perceived southern culture and experience as distinctive and therefore inherently interesting. But in terms of intellectual and political needs, they also argued that the southern past offered the key to a truer, purer America. “The annals of our heroic ancestors, when truthfully told, will interpose a strong barrier to the many degenerating tendencies of the age,” Stephen Weeks argued. “They will call us back to the look at the rock from whence we are hewn,
and enable us to drink inspiration afresh from the well of the patriotism and honor of our fathers."^72

This call for a united tradition was not simply a response to the fragmenting currents of modernism that were transforming American culture. It also linked the South’s historical legacy to a specious claim of racial and ethnic homogeneity. As Woodrow Wilson claimed, the (implicitly white) southern historian had a specific obligation “to recollect and call to life again the best things of the thoughts and experience of the great and capable race to which we belong; that we may give to this compound nation of ours a new coherency and self-possession.” Similarly, Vanderbilt University Chancellor and Southern History Association member James H. Kirkland argued that the nation may soon “call... for an Anglo Saxon leadership and if so the response can come from no section sooner than from the south.” William P. Trent agreed: “The solidarity of our race is becoming daily a more potent fact which the historian of the present and future must keep before his eyes.” Samuel Chiles Mitchell similarly praised African American disfranchisement and the “educational revival” in the South for protecting the “like-mindedness” that was “essential in a democracy.”^74

Sectional reconciliation on these terms enshrined in the concept of professional regional history the same lily-whiteness then being defined for citizens in southern state constitutions. The basis of scientific historiography in the South was therefore no different from that of other progressive reforms pursued during this decade: it was dependent upon the “seminal” reform of legal segregation and African American disfranchisement.^75 “After a generation of struggle the South has come into her own again, [and] the Negro has found his intellectual and political level,” one reviewer wrote.
in the *Publications of the Southern History Association*. “It is now possible to look on
the political struggles of the *post bellum* period in the cold light of truth, unmoved by
partisanship, unswayed by passion.”

Consequently, some white southern historians no longer considered northern
historians to be the enemy they had once been. Singling out Harvard professor Albert
Bushnell Hart, Stephen Weeks asked a friend to reconsider his opinion that Hart’s
influential *American Nation Series* was biased against the South. “History training has
made him more liberal perhaps in spite of what he says and thinks and does,” Weeks
wrote. “Would he at any rate have been the rampant abolitionist of 50 years ago? I
doubt it. Would we have been the fire eaters and secessionists our fathers were? Have
not both Hart and ourselves progressed toward a common meeting place despite the fact
that we are apparently as far apart as the poles?” Historians of the South, Weeks
concluded, had an obligation to continue their dialogue with historians of the North,
converging on a “truth” that served reconciliation. Others argued that this dialogue
between historians was important to keep up if only to educate southerners on the
opinions of the “intelligent Northerner.”

Even the most recalcitrant white southerners, one finds, at least recognized the
importance perspective played on “truth.” “I found out long since that it was improper to
accept any statement made by a Northern historian regarding Southern men or Southern
motives,” Lyon G. Tyler wrote Woodrow Wilson. “Not because the Northerner
intentionally erred but because the glasses he looked through were altogether different.”
Reviewers often challenged authors’ claims to truth on this basis. In one review of a
book called *The True Story of the United States of American Told for Young People*, the
reviewer argued, "Whether this a 'true story' or not will depend on the latitude of the reader. If he is a New Englander he will doubtless praise it as the truth, nothing but the truth and possibly as all the truth; if he is a middle states man he will seriously question if it is all the truth; if he is a Southerner he will know that it is neither all truth nor all of the truth." "There are many things that will please the partisans of either side," a review noted of a similarly titled book, The True History of the Civil War. "There are more that will please only the opposition, but which are still known to be essentially true." In general, Publications reviewers tended to emphasize the importance of making southerners' southern history legible for other readers. In one review, for example, the author was criticized for being so defensive as to block intersectional communication. "With...less display of irritability and more conservatism in some of his conclusions, Professor Dyer can produce a work of much value which may in time convince the [northern] historians who already know it all."79

These white southern historians especially desired northern approval, because they believed their past provided answers to the problems of the modern nation. The nineteenth-century planter, though romanticized and idealized in their accounts, served as a relevant model for fruitful and moral living in the twentieth century. The planter and his wife were industrious, kind, hospitable, frugal, conservative, and uninterested in sacrificing their good life to material ambition.80 But most important, these plantation histories reinforced the antebellum planters' persistent racial significance for the postbellum South by turning the "slavery-as-school" historical interpretation into the model for contemporary American race relations. "So successful were [white southerners]" in uplifting and educating slaves, one reviewer noted, "that their plantation
system. . .has become the basis of the industrial system adopted by negro leaders of the present day for their own race.” Booker T. Washington’s plan for racial uplift was thus nothing new. As a reviewer of Washington’s Working With the Hands claimed, “the Southern planter with the complex organization of the society of which he was master furnished the model” for African American education in freedom. “The planter and his wife,” the reviewer concluded, “were the first superintendents of industrial schools for dependent races.” As a result of this obligation, some argued that “the master and mistress . . . were the only real slaves on the estate. They were the ones who felt the weight of responsibility and the burden of care.” They were therefore “the ones to whom the armies of the United States brought real freedom in 1865.” With freedom and slavery depicted this way, the historians of the Southern History Association wrote a new master narrative for their region, one shaped by the emancipation and progress of the white southern man.

The antebellum example also provided these historians with hope for the preservation of Anglo-Saxon purity in modern America. The southern planter, Louisa Preston Looney wrote, “represents a race from which many of us are proud to have descended and from which we might draw the purest inspiration of our life.” Peabody Fund director and educational reformer J. L. M. Curry praised “the South of the olden time” for its “Pure Anglo-Saxon Blood,” kept untainted by white southerners’ emphasis on family and extensive knowledge of their own genealogy. (Not surprisingly, the Publications of the Southern History Association included genealogy as suitable historical material.) The planters’ society was seen as the strongest connection to English civilization and a window on the foundational cultural roots of the United States.
For Woodrow Wilson, white southerners were “a people preserved apart to recall the nation to its ideals, and to its common purpose for the future.”

If the antebellum example stood as evidence of the essential Americanness of white southern history, Southern History Association members would have emphatically agreed with Walter L. Fleming that “no one but a Southern man can write [the] history” of Reconstruction. The Reconstruction story seemed to them to justify why white Americans ought to unite against the specter of black political participation. Yet Reconstruction was particularly passed over in the Publications. It seems the period was beyond investigation, being so recently past that it was known by white southerners (and increasingly by white northerners as Columbia University became the center for this type of Reconstruction study) to have been “an atrocious crime,” a “carnival of fanaticism,” an “orgy of misrule,” and an “abortion” of justice. A review of Thomas Dixon’s The Clansman went so far as to argue that “the dramatic possibilities of the real are almost more than the imagination itself can conceive.” The only fiction in the novel, the reviewer thought, was in Dixon’s “ton[ing] down historical facts to make them appear credible.” If fiction seemed truer than fact, it is not surprising that Reconstruction itself seemed beyond the purview of the scientific historian. “It is doubtful whether the truth is to be shown except through the power of imagination to create an impression,” another reviewer wrote of a “scientific” history of Reconstruction. “The millions of facts can never reproduce the tension and anguish of those years... There should be some delimitation to the so-called scientific historian.”
A Critique of Scientific History for the South

The historians of the Southern History Association thus wrestled with the epistemological problem of what it meant to know the southern past from the standpoint of the present. At the most basic level, their solution involved ferreting out the facts of southern history, recognizing the importance of perspective in interpretation, and striving for at least a dialogue, if not an agreement on, the important building blocks of (white) American history. However, writing regional history—which they felt fell outside a tradition of sentiment or defensiveness in an era of modern transformation—forced some of the more thoughtful members to probe the concept and purposes of history itself. Was “scientific history,” as defined in the burgeoning graduate programs in universities, North and South, the best approach to achieve their social goals? The American Historical Review certainly thought it was. Its editors argued that the Publications’ “scientific importance” would only be established by the extent to which the “scientific intention and spirit on the part of its chief promoters” was carried out. A much more authentic history was written, Edward Ingle argued, when “authoritative documents” were handled “in a scientific spirit” and “without fear and without favor.”

Personal experience and tradition were devalued in favor of the historical record, the source of scientific authority. To quote Ingle again, good history was written “not according to tradition or as surviving participants in history making might desire, but with the mind endeavoring to weigh facts and deductions therefrom, neither with prejudice nor with predilection.” For William P. Trent, scientific history meant removing the authority over the past from the hands of local groups, patriotic societies, and well-meaning amateurs, and placing it into the hands of scholars at the university.
"Both the collecting and the studying will be done on more scientific principles at a
university than anywhere else—certainly than anywhere else in the South," Trent argued
before a group of history students at Vanderbilt University, "and I have already shown
you that there is great need that scientific principles be applied to the study of Southern
history." Only professionals had the requisite training to do justice to the southern past.
"Books had frequently appeared treating various phases of this broad subject," a
*Publications* author noted, "but most of them were lacking in most of the critical
apparatus that marks the scholar." The problem with gentleman-scholars, the author
continued, was that they tended to be "lawyers, doctors, preachers, politicians, orators,
and statesmen" and thereby "brought to their task all sorts of training except an exact and
thorough knowledge of what constitutes history and what are the requirements of
historical writing." Historians, the author concluded, did not pretend that they could
argue in court, cure the sick, or preach the divine, yet these others "boldly essayed the
duties of the historian" with disastrous results. It was truly unfortunate," another
reviewer decided, that the "muse of history...has not seen it fit to surround herself and
her worshippers with a thick web of technical terms and a jargon of professional idioms"
to protect the field "from the incursions of the uninitiated."  

Scientific historians, moreover, could rest easy in their pursuit of truth even if it
was unpopular. Johns Hopkins University received praise for attracting a new breed of
southern student—one "more mature, more ambitious, and more ready to be emancipated
from local ideas, prejudices, and environments"—who was willing to go "forth to battle
for a higher standard of truth and accuracy, often at the cost of their popularity, if not
greater penalty, in their own homes." This idea of being prophets rejected by their own
hometowns meshed well with the sense of a new southern history serving a redemptive function for the region and the nation. Only the “true historian,” Woodrow Wilson mused, was “a latter-day prophet.”

In theory, at least, scientific historical method as understood in the United States assigned the historian the role of compiler and investigator more than interpreter. Yet the purposes of regional history at the turn of the century were, as we have seen, intimately connected to the making and conveying of meaning for the American past. Scientific history in practice certainly never removed the historian and his search for meaning from the process. At the end of the nineteenth century, Michael Kammen has suggested, scientific history functioned “as a part of a quest for moral truths that could be known with assurance and that would thereby provide a firm foundation for national identity and patriotism.” Similarly, Deborah L. Haines has argued that though monographic, scientific history developed a reputation for being dull, unpeopled, and institutional, the first generation of scientific historians “were passionate men, deeply concerned about the future of democratic society, deeply committed to communicating and shaping human character and morality, and warmly attached to the literary tradition in history.” Yet both Kammen and Haines focus their study on historians in a national framework, through nationally prominent universities and the American Historical Association. The Southern History Association provides us with an alternative insight into debates over scientific history in a regional context. The Publications, in fact, provided space for some searing critiques of “scientific history”—not because the scientific history of the South was thought to be dominated by the North, as one might suppose, but because some thought that the cost of claiming authority over the past
through science was too high a price for the region and the relationship intellectuals
hoped to forge with the public. The philosophy of history had become quite transformed
when some Ph.D.-holding historians claimed that history at its best was an artistic,
creative, and “vital speculation.”

One arm of the critique had to do with the way scientific history perpetuated the
isolation of the white southern intellectual and his work. Intellectuals in the South had
long felt disconnected from mainstream culture. From his self-imposed exile for health
reasons in the American Southwest, Stephen Weeks longed to be back in the academic
world even though it believed it to be a distinctly un-southern way to live. “It has always
been as you know the proud boast of the South that she produced men who did things,”
he wrote his friend Meriwether:

men who were too busy making history to waste time in writing
it . . . . The truth of the matter is that you and I are a couple of
black sheep that have strayed away from the goodly company of
the Southern fold. Instead of contenting ourselves with doing
things we thought it better and greater to write about other men
who did things. . . . We are not the doers of actions ourselves but
the trumpet peices [sic] by which other men’s actions are made
known to a none too willing world. We have thought that this
was a more glorious post than to do things ourselves and in that
we have strayed from our Southern training, far away from the
instincts of our forefathers.

Despite the alienation, Weeks desperately wished to get back to the ranks of the
“dreamer[s]. . . who only sit and think and write books.”

But intellectual isolation had more dangerous consequences for the historian of
the South who sought to be his region’s, and thereby his nation’s, redeemer. These
historians needed an audience. “Give a man with the natural tendency to dream,
segregate him in a learned institution from the daily life around him, supply him with
printer’s ink, and we have all the conditions for producing a book filled with the very
refinements of speculation,” one unnamed reviewer argued. “Such is this volume, a mass of fog floating around in which the average eye can every now and then see something in vaporous outline that he thinks he may recognize if the mist should clear away a little more, which it never does.” While ambiguity was an obvious problem, even a work praised as “minute, careful, exact [and] painstaking” could easily backfire with the public. “Modern historiography is becoming more and more relentless every year,” Meriwether wrote. “The general reader might find what he considers faults but as the book was not intended for him, his criticism would not really count against it.” After 1903, the Publications editor became increasingly concerned with the growing gap between history and the present, wondering “whether these labored treatises are worth anything either to the author or to others, in the way of preparing for a useful life.” “If the [graduate-training] process developed men who would be serviceable to their fellows after this deadening experience then the cost would be nothing, but so far precious few of them ever amount to anything more than pedagogical grinds,” Meriwether concluded. “Scarcely a round dozen of them can write anything that anybody will read outside of his own little sphere.” Perhaps he exaggerated, but his frustration was genuine when he claimed that “not a single product from the [scientific history] school in the last third of a century has made a ripple among intelligent people of more than a few inches in diameter.” “Is history of any service,” he pondered, “except through its influences upon the masses?” The academic historian was rapidly making himself irrelevant.

Taken to the extreme, this critique seriously undermined the authority that those with graduate training demanded their degree gave them to interpret the past. Why must “such painstaking labor” be allocated toward a question that “common sense” could just
as easily answer? By 1907, perhaps fed up with the *Publications* financial trouble that stemmed from slow-paying readers, editor Colyer Meriwether (despite his own Hopkins Ph.D.) really cut loose against "scientific history," claiming "any man with a fair amount of sense can write scientific history if he has a snout for rooting and claws for digging," or even better, "money at his command." Graduate schools had only provided "a paradise...for industrious mediocrity." If the purpose of scientific history was an obsession for all the facts, what separated the historian from the antiquarian, for whom "every fact is of equal importance?" In the end, Meriwether acquiesced in overturning all of the best intentions of the Southern History Association—those which had separated this organization from the mass of amateur-caliber historical production in the South—when he admitted that "it would be far better to have a partisan interest in history than none at all." He was now willing to permit textbook authors the right "to disregard nearly all the canons of scientific history" in order to attract the elusive reader.

Indeed, reviewers in the *Publications* often bestowed upon participants the special right to authoritatively interpret the past. In a reprinted memoir of a Confederate prison in Salisbury, North Carolina, for example, the editor pointed out that the author had lived in the town during the war and "therefore speaks with authority" on controversial issues of prisoner treatment. Sometimes memoirs were depicted as the purest form of truth there was. One antebellum reminiscence was hailed as "a conservative, unexaggerated account of plantation life in the South under the old regime by one who was reared on the plantation, and who knew all of the ins and outs, the cares and vexations of the planter's life, and who is therefore able to write of such things with all the devotion due to treasured memories." This devotion—which would have been called bias by these same
historians if applied by a northerner to his or her institutions—in no way prevented this work from being “one of the most faithful and accurate presentations of the life of the Southern planter... that exists in our literature.” When experience translated into authority to describe the past to the present, the claim of firsthand knowledge became very difficult to challenge. One participant stressed that her “being an eye witness and participator in these events” meant that she alone had the capacity to “preserve the truth of history” by freeing the “real facts” from a “web of romance.” While authors occasionally warned readers not to use memoirs uncritically, they generally concluded that any objections “are far outweighed by the service which the volumes promise to the cause of history in the South.” Again, Meriwether emblematically turned against the authority of the scientific historian when he announced that southerners who had served the nation “before and since the Civil War” were “best fitted of all to weigh public characters and events of the old era.”

This apparent abandonment of the tenets of graduate education genuinely troubled later historian Wendell Holmes Stephenson, who identified as the main trend of southern historiography the historians’ gradual liberation from their own “southernism.” Similarly, E. Merton Coulter concluded that Meriwether and his cronies were “downright against both” objectivity and scientific history. However, Meriwether and the others who took part in this critique were not advocating the abandonment of objectivity as a goal or fighting to retain their “southernism.” Review after review singled out the author’s objectivity as worthy of praise. Rather, they warned against the impossibility of creating “good” history without an audience. They were not afraid of criticism or even hatred; they feared benign neglect.
The second arm of the critique of scientific history turned the first on its ear: it blamed the public for its unresponsiveness to historical work even when the authors had made a sincere attempt to be readable and accessible. Whatever the cause—speculations ranged from the mind-sapping legacy of slavery to terribly inferior public education—the *Publications* editor became increasingly embittered by the lack of a reading public in the South.\(^\text{107}\) When one author of a novel that had been widely and favorably reviewed reported poor sales in the South, Meriwether chalked this up to another example of the “barbaric callousness of the general mass of Southerners to literary appreciativeness.”\(^\text{108}\) Meriwether also railed against “the southern indifference to history.” Southern libraries were inadequate; financial support of local and regional historical efforts was paltry; even the memorial societies tended to shirk their historical duties.\(^\text{109}\) Southern History Association membership patterns reflected the lack of institutional support for southern history. While up to 90 percent of individuals were from the South, defined broadly, only 39 percent of institutional members (public and college libraries, historical societies) were from the South.\(^\text{110}\)

This pessimism flies in the face of common interpretations of white southern culture that stress its proclivity—some say obsession—for the past. For Meriwether, the widespread assumption of a peculiarly historical southern mind was particularly galling. In a lengthy response to an article in the *New York Independent*, Meriwether took exception to the New Yorker’s claim that a “‘constant stream poured from the southern press’ in this historical crusade”—a battle in pen-and-ink to pass “down to another generation its own account of the Civil War.” This statement insulted Meriwether on a variety of levels, but not, interestingly enough, because of its insinuation of filtered
interpretive lenses and unscientific historical production. Instead he laughed at the reviewer for presuming a “territory so wide and so long, so varied in climate and soil, so mixed in racial origins could ever have one intellect.” But Meriwether’s primary disgust stemmed from the writer’s casual assumption that the South could easily create its own historical cottage industry. “If the reviewer knows of such a vast historical interest in the south it is certainly far more than publishers and book dealers have generally found there,” he wrote. Publishing houses rarely advertised in the South, let alone sent agents down to sell their products. Southern authors found the situation equally distressing. Even Varina Davis, widow of the Confederacy’s only president, had little sales success in the states of the former nation. Professional history was in the doldrums in the South with the AHA having only a small southern membership, his own magazine in its last issue, and three other historical periodicals “of good grade too” having shut their doors in recent years. Even the veterans groups “limped along very slowly.” “Certainly, there is sectional prejudice and local pride,” Meriwether concluded, “but these sentiments are not of the fervent kind that will pay for their own cultivation. It is seriously to be doubted whether a periodical in the south could add a dollar to its income by making special appeal to sectional feeling.”

This failure to communicate to a broad public had frustrating consequences for those few academics at the edge pushing interpretations that defied certain orthodoxies about the South. William P. Trent and John Spencer Bassett, for example, saw themselves as trying to elucidate a stubborn child by using history to compel new truths about the present. History served a political, social, and cultural purpose, but failure to achieve the purpose often tempted Trent and Bassett to give up both on history and the
South. "Shallow thinking on political matters, provincialism of taste & sentiments—
ignorance & vanity are the dominant characteristics of out people & they have got to
made to see these things before a real reformation takes place speedily," Trent told his
academic mentor Herbert B. Adams. "I see clearly after 10 years of life among them that
the Southern people will not be set right for more than one generation—that I cannot
head a party for active propaganda which might hasten on the process of regeneration &
therefore I much doubt whether five or ten more years of me in the South means much to
either party."\textsuperscript{112}

Bassett, too, often became discouraged. "What I have done has been much less
than I ought to have done I fear," Bassett wrote Adams, "Yet I have tried to remember
that it has been put on me to do God's work in the field of history." First and foremost,
Bassett wanted to impress upon his students the importance of "our historical ideal," "the
freedom of thought," and the creation of a space where thinkers could present their ideas
and "get a respectful hearing." Distressed by the outcome of the 1898 elections in North
Carolina and the incipient black disfranchisement movement, Bassett declared his
intention to try to "set a limit to this wildfire of prejudice that is in the South." He later
wrote William K. Boyd, himself a pioneer in creating manuscript collections and courses
in southern history at Duke University, that "it is very well in the South to be an
antiquarian but difficult to be a historian in the cosmopolitan sense. It is easy to do the
work of popular 'arousement,' but not that of mature and scholarly thinking. All the
impulse to stir up something leads to a stage of achievement which a cultured community
ought to have passed a generation ago."\textsuperscript{113} Trent and Bassett, however, were never
active or contributing members of the Southern History Association, though Bassett at
least joined the group at the outset with the hope that the organization would provide a
venue for his intellectual work.114 Failing to convince the region of new views and
resenting the obstacles to their ambition, both ultimately left the South and moved on to
less regional and less historical topics. Other white southern historians, fed up with their
“superior, New Southern, jackassical attitude” were not sorry to see them go.115

*Challenges to the Boundaries of Southern History*

Most historians of the Southern History Association, after all, remained
committed to a conservative interpretation of the regional past—one that, as we have
seen, advanced claims for the South’s enduring and exemplary relevance to the modern
American nation by depicting the timeworn influence of white southern men on
American national development. As part of this project, association historians de-
emphasized conflict in their interpretations, especially by downplaying the so-called
“race problem” that increasingly attracted the notice of northern philanthropic
foundations and their southern collaborators. This downplaying included narratives of
happy plantations, of course. But it also included a troubled disavowal of the authority of
scientific investigation that unintentionally threatened their own claims to scientific
authority over the past. When it came to race relations, the *Publications* argued that local
knowledge was infinitely more reliable than “academic acquaintance.” Most conferences
of northern reformers produced only “an outpouring of sentiment, commingled with a
display of much more or less excusable ignorance.” Mississippi planter and scholar
Alfred Holt Stone, the *Publications*’s regular reviewer of so-called “race problem
literature,” suggested that the shortcoming of these gatherings to help “the South solve
the racial problem” was a “failure to apprehend the true attitude of the Southern white
man on certain mooted questions.” Most importantly, this assertion of local control fit in
with the larger program of convincing the North of the white South’s authority over its
own history: to “have their practical knowledge of a difficult subject accepted by other
sections.”¹¹⁶

But in addition to claiming that the South itself could best take care of race
relations, Southern History Association historians also racialized their regional past for
consumption by the nation-at-large. The southern past was only relevant for the white
South (and by extension, white America) because according to most contributors, no part
of the southern black past had ever advanced American civilization. Yet African
American historians and writers by their very existence challenged this whitewashing of
the southern past.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the reality of the black historical experience infiltrated
every aspect of the white southern past these historians hoped to explore and was not
easily ignored. The white members of the Southern History Association thus struggled
both to get control over the meaning of the black southern past and to establish a color
line for their own profession. Scientific history and scientific racism thus collided in the
pages of the Publications of the Southern History Association.¹¹⁸

Indeed, many contributors tried to simply remove the black experience from the
realm of human history. As Alfred Holt Stone argued, the attempt to even make a place
for the black race in the history of mankind was just a “harmless” endeavor for African
Americans to work out for themselves.¹¹⁹ The “race problem,” one author (probably
Meriwether) pointed out, was “one of those mighty, overwhelming, primal matters that
are beyond the power of humanity consciously to change.” “It is seriously to be doubted
whether all the speeches and all of the books and all of the sentences of all of the courts and all of the conferences and all of the teachings have influenced or will influence the final result one iota.” With this pronouncement, Meriwether effectively tried to close the door on the possibility of change by denying black southerners the same access to the useful past that the Southern History Association worked to keep available for white southerners. Authors who “recognized that the negro is a negro, and not a black-skinned white man”—meaning, to them, humans rooted in biology and not culture or history—earned praise in the *Publications.*

Even those who believed in the capacity of African Americans for racial improvement in the South still kept tight control over the situation by insisting that whatever progress blacks had made occurred because of white influence. Reviewers approved studies that showed a historical tradition of southern whites working for the uplift of blacks. Instead of having crippled the region, slavery offered the perfect model for the return of prosperity to the region. “It is on the teachings of the slave system that Tuskegee is built,” one reviewer went so far as to say. Conversely, reviewers attacked those who dared to make critical comments about the slave experience like African American novelist Charles W. Chesnutt had in *House Behind the Cedars.* “The remarks on slavery would be irritating were they not amusing,” the reviewer remarked. “Apropos of the debasement of slavery with which the author begins it might be appropriate to ask whether without this ‘debasement,’ Mr. Chesnutt would have been engaged at this time in writing interesting but impossible novels or in dining—either in an active or passive sense—his African neighbors.” “The American Negro,” he concluded, “is the last to write against slavery if he knows aught of history.”
When they weren’t claiming credit for African American progress, reviewers in the *Publications* criticized African American scholarship from the basis of assumptions so undisputed by white scholars that they were considered unassailably true. In an article on the American Negro Academy, for example, Walter L. Fleming listed the ways that white scholars believed black scholars ignored the tenets of scientific southern history. First, he questioned their ability to be objective about their own past: “When slavery or anything connected with it is mentioned we hear the clank of chains and the cutting swish of the lash; the slaves, we infer, hate the whites with a consuming hatred, and the cruel masters endeavor to crush out the human feelings of the black; attempts at insurrections in which white women and children are to be massacred are glorified.” Second, he disapproved of their portrayal of Reconstruction as a policy to be emulated rather than reversed. The current move to disfranchise African Americans, Fleming thought, was a correction of a past mistake rather than a violation of the “Rights of Man.” Finally, Fleming opposed the American Negro Academy’s assertions that there were no fundamental differences between the races. The consequences of this belief—that “what is good for the white is good for the black”—signaled social and political changes that for Fleming threatened the stability of the white South and its most central assumptions. He concluded by dismissing black scholars as unscientific.  

The final strategy used by these white historians when challenged by the African American intellectual was to make him the exception rather than the rule. With this tactic, the reviewers for the *Publications* treated W. E. B. Du Bois with the respect they thought his Harvard doctorate warranted without risking an endorsement of his plan for social justice. The Atlanta University professor wrote in “the spirit of the ideal scholar,
of the scientific seeker for truth."\textsuperscript{126} With the exceptions in their places, members of the Southern History Association who thought about black scholarship were able to conclude that racial progress, in the end, must be measured by the masses rather than by the cultural and educational attainments of the talented tenth. "[A]fter all is said and done," Alfred Holt Stone argued, "the race...must stand or fall by the character of the masses of its people. It cannot be saved by the poetry of [Paul Laurence] Dunbar, by the novels of Chesnutt,..or [by] the culture and intellect of [Du Bois]."\textsuperscript{127} By the turn of the century, it is fair to say, growing African American participation in intellectual and cultural life—areas white southerners considered exclusively their own—threatened the white South more profoundly than northern interpretations of the Civil War. Defining "the South" as a field for history, then, had as much to do with establishing racial borders as geographic, cultural, or interpretive ones.

Just as important as policing the racial implications of professional regional history, however, was protecting the gender boundaries. Women were not banned from belonging to the Southern History Association. As Mrs. E. E. Moffett bragged, she had been "a subscriber to the Southern History Association since its first issue—I have every number from Jan. 1897–March 1903—and prize them greatly." Women like Mrs. Moffett represented approximately fifteen percent of the paid membership, though this count does not accurately reflect the number of interested women since there is evidence that many of the male members' wives participated in association events. However, only one woman entered in the membership ledger had a connection to a college. The rest of the female membership was rarely designated by a profession, while those that did have some sort of professional identification were most likely tied to memorial work.\textsuperscript{128}
The scientific historian in the *Publications of the Southern History Association*, however, was overtly male. Female historians were only praised when they produced appropriately feminine work: memoirs, domestic fiction, or Lost Cause memorials.\textsuperscript{129} If women dared to step beyond these prescribed roles, reviewers usually took harsh notice. In the review of the minutes of local Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) chapter meetings reprinted in the *American Historical Magazine*, for example, Meriwether pointed out that “some of the correspondents show a lamentable tendency to lapse into the whine of the average woman’s rights advocate, and want to hanker after strongmindedness—a course that would soon bring the order into disrepute and decay.” The blurring of memorial work with public political opportunity troubled Meriwether. “Some of the [DAR] chapters seem to be drifting more to work in the present than interest in the past,” a dangerous trend indeed. The Kansas State Historical Society *Transactions* suffered similar criticism: “It is wearisome. . .when the old maid comes in with her eternal harping on woman’s rights and emancipation, especially when she gives us neither Kansas nor history.” The volume, the note concluded, had too much “twaddle about female progress” and not enough good history.\textsuperscript{130} Women’s groups could not win with Meriwether. When they attempted appropriate historical or memorial work, as directed, they were cut down with criticisms of their “contempt for logic and rules of evidence. . . as characteristic in [their] history as in the chit chat of a social call or afternoon tea.” “These good ladies, for they are evidently in earnest,” a reviewer argued in another article, “hardly realize the sacred importance of historical truth any more than children.”\textsuperscript{131}
When women attempted historical work with a scholarly bent, they were usually criticized to the point of ridicule. Occasionally the reviewer restrained his remarks to the work at hand. A historical study of Alamance County by Sallie Walker Stockard, the first woman to receive a B.A. from the University of North Carolina, was disparaged as a “marvel of ignorance” and “a miracle of errors.” More often, however, the criticism revolved around pointing out women’s inherent intellectual weaknesses. In Ellen Churchill Semple’s case, her study of American geography was dismissed as overambitious and unoriginal, “perhaps due to feminine youthfulness.” In another case, even were it not clear to the reviewer “from the name [that] a woman is responsible for this monograph,” “a delicious bit of feminine logic in the middle paragraph of page 29 would settle deal. There we are demurely told than cane sugar is sweeter than honey sugar because honey sugar is less sweet than cane sugar.”

The more well-trained the historian was, the more she was criticized as a woman and less as a historian. Thus Susan M. Kingsbury, who had a Ph.D., received this critique of her important compilation of the records of the Virginia Company. The men of the Virginia Company, the reviewer wrote:

never for an instant dreamed that more than three centuries afterwards their every word and deed would be the object of the most searching and minute inquiry, and that too on the part of a woman. Still it is just the kind of task to suit the feminine intellect, one requiring unwearied patience and indefatigable zeal and tireless industry in gathering a mass of details and getting them with accuracy and arranging them with method. It demands no judgment, no sympathy, no power of generalization, just simple plain delving after the facts and unerring ability to copy.

The reviewer continued with a rumination on the relationship between Kingsbury’s intellect, femininity, and sexuality. “It seems very strange that woman, the most human of creatures in the ordinary affairs of life, should be so entirely machine-like when she
dips into history. There are exceptions, notably Mrs. Alice Morse Earle, but then judging from her title she either is or was married.” As an apparently unmarried woman historian, Kingsbury was castigated as a mannish transgressor of gender roles.¹³³

A final example comes from a review of a study that had nothing historical about it, included in the *Publications* it would seem for the sole purpose of defending science from female intrusion. “Perhaps another illustration of the connection between higher education and the racial suicide theory is *The Spermatogenesis of Anax Junius* by a woman, Caroline McGill, fellow in Zoology,” the editor noted. Although “the paper is got up in the most approved form and is strewn with scientific terms,” the editor reserved his criticism for the fact that those terms emanated from a woman’s mind. “How many men would like to marry a woman of so much zoological attainment?” With natural science by women seen as resulting in the masculinization of white women and scientific history by women seen as a suspect and wasteful use of time, Colyer Meriwether (likely the author of many of these unsigned reviews) was consequently appalled by the course of historical education in the nation’s colleges. The only standard of consensus seemed to be that “the real true purpose of the first year course in history is to make a scientific historian out of every student, even the girls!! Heaven save us!!”¹³⁴

Certainly some progressive university leaders, like Vanderbilt chancellor James H. Kirkland, praised white southern women’s unaided “striving” toward intellectual improvement.¹³⁵ Perhaps Meriwether was uniquely pathological in his fear of female intellectuals.¹³⁶ Even so, his overtly vocal guardianship of the gendered boundaries of the history profession in the South is important to understanding professionalization in the South. Meriwether may have been the only one in the *Publications* to call attention to
gender infractions in the historical profession, but he certainly was not the only white southern historian concerned with changing gender norms. B. W. Arnold Jr., another Hopkins Ph.D., seemed troubled by his own observations in a study of Virginia women in the Civil War. The war leveled class differences, legitimated remunerative work for women, and expanded opportunities and activities for women, but he concluded, "the average Virginia girl of to-day is no sense a new woman, the type is the same as of old, only developed and strengthened." Her new characteristics, being "more economical, practical, ambitious, business-like, independent, more widely traveled, [and] better informed generally," did not detract from her femininity: "she is none the less woman, nor has she lost a single charm of her loveliness and grace." Historians who examined women's issues did not keep their gendered moral judgments to themselves. Thus Walter Fleming pointed out in a review of the memoirs of one Virginia woman who had followed her husband to the battle front: "Had the Virginia Girl remained at home and worked, for the Confederate cause, she would have been much more useful, she would have been less in the way of her husband whose business it was to fight, and she might have made him some trousers to replace the non-descripts that we are told he had to wear." If she had done what Fleming expected of her, though, "we might not have had this pleasant little book." The decision between having the book and maintaining the gender norms, just beginning to cause trouble for some white male historians, would prove to be a thorny though less explicit problem as the twentieth century progressed.
A Successful Failure

The members of the Southern History Association thus attempted to erect a series of dikes to protect the field of southern history from the flood of modern change while still encouraging its controlled cultivation by scientific methods. The organization, however, failed to survive despite its growing membership. Perhaps, like John Spencer Bassett, some southern historians came to disapprove of “sectional organizations” and abandoned the regional integrity of their nationalist compromise. In 1899, Bassett considered setting up a North Carolina historical society as an affiliate of the American Historical Association. The Southern History Association may have considered this path for its own survival, and apparently approached the AHA about assuming regional branch status to no avail.\(^{139}\) Certainly finances were a problem. Not only were Southern History Association members incapable of paying their dues in a timely fashion, the *Publications* editor complained about the general “financial lukewarmness of the South for history.”

The case of a historical society in Nantucket particularly vexed him. This organization, established in 1894 and so only a couple of years older than the Southern History Association, had over three hundred members, maintained a regular publication, financed historical renovation projects, and owned property worth $3000. “All this wonderful result has been accomplished by a mere handful of people,” Meriwether marveled. In contrast the Southern History Association had a much larger pool of potential members but still failed to achieve what the tiny Massachusetts community had done. Perhaps Meriwether’s bitterness at the South’s stinginess stemmed from his own generosity toward the Southern History Association. He helped the organization financially during its last few years by contributing his own personal funds to the budget and by waiving the
personal stipend for his secretarial work. Since the South "is no longer poverty stricken," the financial neglect of his association’s goals was to Meriwether all the more galling.\textsuperscript{140}

The annual meeting, where members could meet, hear papers, and share ideas, was one of the first components of the founders’ plans that fell by the wayside. Only the first two meetings had any real research program. A third program was planned and advertised for 1899; however, the published report of the third annual meeting notes that the smallish group gathered "for the transaction of business and the election of officers only."\textsuperscript{141} Hereafter, the annual meetings were only conducted for business purposes and were so small that the group met in the library of the president’s home. Although they discussed "widening the scope, and increasing the membership of the Association" and anticipated special meetings or speakers, there is no evidence that the Southern History Association ever managed to conduct another historical meeting.\textsuperscript{142}

The \textit{Publications} also deteriorated well before its final issue came out in late 1907. Though subscribers remained faithful, the journal suffered from a lack of contributions and delays in publication. After 1904, most book reviews were unsigned, suggesting that Meriwether and possibly a friend or two were responsible for most of them.\textsuperscript{143} One author even reluctantly reviewed his own book. The journal became, according to Stephen Weeks, Meriwether’s own "semi annual tale of woe."\textsuperscript{144} Since article quality and variety declined around the same time, Meriwether relied increasingly on multi-part articles or extensive document sets. By late 1905, amateurish and popularized biographical sketches reprinted from southern newspapers made a regular appearance in the \textit{Publications}. Although the last issue contained no farewell, indicating that the editor did not know for certain that the journal was finished, it combined the
September and November numbers. A last-ditch attempt by University of Virginia professor Richard Heath Dabney to find a new financial home and editor for the *Publications* was unsuccessful. “The undertaking is too hazardous,” Walter L. Fleming responded from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, “so I am afraid to take it up.” Besides, Fleming added, “Washington...is a better center than here.” Meriwether accepted dues payments for 1908, but the *American Historical Review* announced the cessation of the *Publications* “temporarily at least” in January 1908.145

The Southern History Association’s central interpretive themes, however, formed the basis of the largest professional southern history undertaking in the early twentieth century: the thirteen-volume, cooperative series, *The South in the Building of the Nation*, published between 1909 and 1913. This series’ eight editors, with one exception, all held the Ph.D. and prominent professorships at southern universities. Almost half of the 57 authors in the first four volumes had been members of or contributors to the Southern History Association.146 The complete set, “designed to record the part in the South’s part in the making of the American Nation,” sought to further legitimate the study of the South as a region by producing a history on the scale of the *American Nation Series*, synthesizing “the multiplication of detached works” on the southern states. “Owing to peculiar conditions the South was, and to some extent still is, a sort of political and economic unit—a definite section—with an interrelated and separate history, special problems and distinct life,” the editors stated in the series preface. “It has been attempted, without disparagement to other sections, to provide for a judicious and unimpassioned account of the important and honorable part the South has contributed to the history and wealth of the Nation.”147 Like the contributors to the *Publications of the*
*Southern History Association*, these historians continued to claim as “the essential facts of Southern History” its distinctive and commercially ambitious colonial life, its expansiveness, its particular ties to English civilization, its skillful contributions to statesmanship and diplomacy, its devotion to a system of federal government, and its efforts to protect the purity of the Anglo-Saxon race. Their South was a progressive South—a region that made crucial contributions to American development where southern whites were allowed “to rule the lands which they themselves have developed” under their own direction, according to their own conditions.\(^{148}\)

Despite the staying power of the historical point of view it cultivated, the Southern History Association, as a little community of interested scholars, ultimately, could not be sustained. Yet the association set an important precedent in the development of regional historiography by codifying the borders of a new field. Its choices about appropriate topics, historical actors, intellectual authority, and the region’s relationship to the nation at large had ramifications for the field that persisted long after the organization folded in 1907. Its failure to create a space for professionals and amateurs to work together toward a redemptive history of their shared region compelled later historians to readily abandon such cooperation in favor of fully embracing the authority protected by an exclusively professional association. In the decade of the Southern History Association’s existence, approximately three hundred Ph.D.’s in history were awarded in American universities, more than tripling the existing number of American Ph.D.’s at the time of its founding.\(^{149}\) Finally, it may be seen as the most enduring legacy of these historians that their sense of region, defined by attached cultural and racial characteristics, came to be seen by later generations as naturally apparent.
“A Proposed Southern Historical Association,” n.d. [ca. early 1896] (quotation); and “The Southern History Association,” 1896; in Box 1, Stephen Beauregard Weeks Papers, Southern Historical Collection [hereafter SHC], Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.


Gaines M. Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913 (New York, 1987), 183–84. Bruce Clayton, in The Savage Ideal: Intolerance and Intellectual Leadership in the South, 1890–1914 (Baltimore, 1972), similarly argues that though the South’s first “full-fledged intellectual community” coalesced during these years, “one finds no genuinely emancipated mind.” Clayton concludes that the “savage ideal”—a term borrowed from W. J. Cash to describe the southern white male’s unquestioned loyalty to white supremacy—was ultimately so powerful that dissent was either crushed by opposition from the outside or by one’s own psychological need to conform (3–5, 13).

Membership peaked in 1906, when 270 people had paid their dues. Over six hundred people at one time or another were members of the Southern History Association. About one-sixth of these were libraries or institutions. The membership roll book for the Southern History Association is in the Colyer Meriwether Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. For published membership information, see “Historical Sketch of the Association,” Publications of the Southern History Association [hereafter PSHA], 1 (January 1897), 2–4; and “List of the Members of the Southern History Association,” PSHA, 8 (September 1904), 427–35.


7 R. A. Brock to the editor, January 26, 1896, *Richmond Dispatch*, clipping in Box 1, Folder 6, Weeks Papers.


Prominent scholars like Wilson were often recruited to membership in historical organizations as evidence of their endorsement of the group’s objectives (Thomas M. Owen to Wilson, February 20, 1899, *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, p. 106). Wilson’s promise of support joined the good wishes of Walter Hines Page, General Wade Hampton, Lyon G. Tyler, and other famous southerners in an advertising brochure for the Southern History Association (Box 1, Folder 5, Weeks Papers). Wilson, however, was a paying member of the association; in fact, he was one of the few who paid his dues in a timely and regular fashion for the duration of the organization (Membership roll book, p. 180, Meriwether Papers).


12 For an excellent example of this approach in a study of the development of modernism in America, see Daniel Joseph Singal, *The War Within: From Victorianism to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919–1945* (Chapel Hill, 1982).

United States, 1876–1901: As Revealed in the Correspondence of Herbert B. Adams (Baltimore, 1938), 10.

14 Coulter, "What the South Has Done About its History," 21. J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton agreed with this analysis of the failure of the Southern History Association, noting that "the contribution by the professional group to the publications of the Society were relatively few" ("History in the South—Retrospect of Half a Century," North Carolina Historical Review, 31 [April 1954], 175).


17 Van Tassel, "American Historical Association and the South," 476; "Periodical Literature: American Historical Review," PSHA, 8 (July 1904), 316–17; and Stephenson, "Thomas M. Owen," 213–15. The first AHA meeting held in the South was in New Orleans in 1903 to mark the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase.


19 Review of History of the American People, by Woodrow Wilson, PSHA, 7 (November 1903), 440 (quotation); and "Democracy and Culture," PSHA, 7 (November 1903), 510.

20 "A Proposed Southern Historical Association," n.d. [ca. early 1896], Box 1, Folder 5, Weeks Papers. The biographical information in this paragraph, unless otherwise noted, comes from this circular letter and "Historical Sketch of the Association," 2–4. See also Appendix A.

21 Stephen B. Weeks to [George S.] Wills, March 1, 1905, Box 1, Folder 2, Weeks Papers (quotation); Stephenson, Southern History in the Making, 95–96; and Jones, "Stephen Beauregard Weeks," 412.


23 Woodrow Wilson to Edward Ingle, March 5, 1901, in Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Vol. 12, p. 103.
24 Weeks, “On the Promotion of Historical Studies in the South,” 29–30. Brownlow recruited the 9th Tennessee Cavalry for the Federal Army. Among his many postwar federal appointments was agent for the Southern Claims Commission, the agency that redressed damages claims of unionist southerners.


27 This group is designated “charter members.” Information on this group comes from “Historical Sketch of the Association,” 2–4; and the Southern History Association advertising brochure. See Appendix A.

28 It is true that the association was dominated by the Virginia/Washington/Maryland area. Together, these members accounted for almost half of the charter group. Four members also resided outside the South.

29 The count of twenty-five includes three members who are identified only as “Dr.” without clearly stating whether the member holds a doctorate or a medical degree. Two charter members, Woodrow Wilson of Princeton University and Chancellor James H. Kirkland of Vanderbilt University, held both a Ph.D. and an LL.D.

30 William B. Hesseltine and Louis Kaplan, “Doctors of Philosophy in History: A Statistical Study,” American Historical Review, 47 (July 1942), Table 1, p. 772–73. Not every Southern History Association member’s Ph.D. was in history, however.


33 In the first slate of officers, almost one-third held the Ph.D., though Ph.D.’s represented only twelve percent of the charter membership. “Historical Sketch of the Association,” 7.

34 Most leaders of the memorialization movement in North Carolina, as described by Catherine W. Bishir in “Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past in Raleigh and Wilmington, North Carolina, 1885–1915” (W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity, [Chapel Hill, 2000], 139–68), were members of the association. For example, in the photograph on p. 152, six of the seven identified men (James Sprunt, Marshall DeLancey Haywood, Bennehan Cameron,
Joseph Blount Cheshire Jr., Alfred Moore Waddell, and Julian S. Carr) were all members listed in the roll book.


36 The AHA secretary (who, incidentally, was a founding member of the Southern History Association) also thought it inappropriate to augment the membership to bring in revenue for the *American Historical Review*. The leadership must not "subordinate the Association to a publishing concern." A. Howard Clark to Herbert B. Adams, May 22, 1900, in Holt, ed., *Historical Scholarship in the United States*, 279–80.

37 Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (Baton Rouge, 1970), 4–13 (quotation on p. 7). The percentage of D. C. residents in the Southern History Association fell over the course of the years. In 1904, D. C. residents represented only seven percent of the total. Over the entire period, they comprised one-fifth of the membership (Meriwether, ed., *Southern History Association*, 6–13; and Membership roll book, Meriwether Papers). Washington, however, remained the center of association business. Washington was also becoming an increasingly "southern" city. Between 1870 and 1930, the percentage of southern-born whites living in Washington more than doubled. In 1900, 15 percent of the white population was southern-born; in 1910, almost 20 percent was southern. Of the black population, about 36 percent was southern-born. Most Washington residents of both races were born in the District of Columbia. See Carl Abbott, "Dimensions of Regional Change in Washington, D. C.,” *American Historical Review*, 95 (December 1990), 1378–83, and Table 3.


39 Brock to the editor, January 26, 1896, *Richmond Dispatch*; and Colyer Meriwether to the members of the Southern History Association, November 23, 1897, Box 1, Folder 6, Weeks Papers. See also "Records of the South," April 25, 1896, for a similar expression of objectives by association president J. L. M. Curry.

40 "Notes and News: Memorial Societies," 418–19 (quotation). On memorial activity and the association, see "Notes and Queries," *PSHA*, 1 (October 1897), 325; "Notes and Queries," *PSHA*, 4 (January 1900), 66; Review of *Minutes of the Sixth Annual Reunion of the Sons of Confederate Veterans*, *PSHA*, 6 (May 1902), 275–77; "Periodical Literature:
Confederate Veteran,” PSHA, 8 (November 1904), 505–6; and Review of History of the Confederate Memorial Associations of the South, PSHA, 9 (September 1905), 332. Prominent veterans and Confederate historians included General Marcus J. Wright (one of the editors of the Official Records project), General M. C. Butler, and Thomas M. Owen. See also Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy, 183–84, on the connections between the Confederate generation and the Southern History Association.

41 Review of Half-Hours in Southern History, by John Leslie Hall, PSHA, 11 (May 1907), 213 (first quotation); Review of A Glance at Current History, by John Cussons, PSHA, 4 (January 1900), 30 (subsequent quotations); and Walter L. Fleming, review of A History of the United States, by Waddy Thompson, PSHA, 8 (November 1904), 480. See also Moore, “Recent Revival of Interest in Historical Teaching and Investigation in the South,” 203.

42 “Notes and Queries,” PSHA, 2 (July 1898), 311. See also Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy, 186–90; and Fred A. Bailey, “The Textbooks of the ‘Lost Cause’: Censorship and the Creation of Southern State Histories,” Georgia Historical Quarterly, 75 (Fall 1991), 507–33.


44 Review of The South’s Burden, or the Curse of Sectionalism in the United States, by Benjamin Franklin Grady, PSHA, 11 (March 1907), 132 (first quotation); and Review of Northern Rebellion and Southern Secession, by E. W. R. Ewing, PSHA, 8 (November 1904), 485 (second quotation). See also Colyer Meriwether, “Report of the Second Annual Meeting of the Southern History Association,” PSHA, 2 (January 1898), 1.

45 Marcus J. Wright, review of Civil History of the Confederate States with Personal Reminiscences, by J. L. M. Curry, PSHA, 5 (September 1901), 408 and 409 (first two quotations); and Review of Military Memoirs of a Confederate, by E. P. Alexander, PSHA, 11 (July 1907), 272 (last quotation).

46 “Records of the South,” April 25, 1896 (first quotation); Statement of James A. Harrison in the Southern History Association advertising brochure, p. 4 (second quotation); and “Historical Sketch of the Association,” 4 (Owen) and 5 (Woodrow). See also Kirkland, “Intellectual Tendencies of the South,” 9.

47 Peter J. Hamilton, “Early Southern Institutions,” PSHA, 2 (July 1898), 279. Hamilton consciously related his study of frontier institutions to the “imperial temptations” of the present.

48 “Historical Sketch of the Association,” 7; and “Publication of Confederate Rosters,” PSHA, 7 (September 1903), 410–13. One major bill under consideration was a plan introduced by Congressman J. William Stokes, a member of the Southern History
Association, to appropriate $5000 to the American Historical Association for a survey of the nation's public archives. The bill failed to pass, despite the active cooperation of various historical organizations in lobbying Congress. See "Congressman Stoke's [sic] Plan for Investigation of Public Archives," PSHA, 4 (May 1900), 199–201; Colyer Meriwether, "Report of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Southern History Association," PSHA, 5 (March 1901), 97; the obituary notice for Stokes in "Notes and Queries," PSHA, 5 (November 1901), 548; and "An Example—Canada's Work for History," PSHA, 5 (November 1902), 497–99. A federally funded comprehensive survey of this kind was not enacted until the New Deal with the Historical Records Survey.

49 "Minor Notices," American Historical Review, 2 (July 1897), 755 (quotation); and "Notes and News," American Historical Review, 13 (January 1908), 424. The Southern History Association dished out this kind of critique to other historical organizations. For example, a reviewer gleefully pointed out that Washington's Columbia Historical Society had "at last got headed in the right direction that all such organizations should be following, namely, the path of original material." Review of Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 8, PSHA, 9 (September 1905), 343.


51 Weeks, "On the Promotion of Historical Studies in the South," 31–32; and Marcus J. Wright, "Huck's Defeat, or the Battle of Williamson's Plantation, S.C., July 12, 1780," PSHA, 1 (October 1897), 252.


53 Meriwether, "Report of the Fifth Annual Meeting," 96 (quotation); and "Index to Meade's Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia," PSHA, 2 (July 1898), advertising insert.

54 "On the Writing of History: With a Glance at the Methods of Macaulay, Gibbon, Carlyle, and Green," in Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Vol. 9, p. 293 and p. 295. See also "An Historical Commentary and Critique," Ibid., Vol. 12, p. 61, where Wilson wrote, "Accuracy is not illumination, and no logic furnishes the key to interpretation, for there is no philosophy of history distinct from that of our human nature." See also Richard Heath Dabney, "Is History a Science?" [1890], reprint bound in Rare Virginia Pamphlets, vol. 54, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.


57 Marcus J. Wright did criticize the obsession with the Civil War for obscuring from popular memory the prominence of southern revolutionary forefathers. "A Sketch of the Life of General John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg," *PSHA*, 5 (May 1901), 181.

58 "Of the writing of books on our Civil War there is no end," the *Publications* noted in 1903 ("Confederate Naval Books and Others," *PSHA*, 7 [November 1903], 433).

59 "Records of the South," April 25, 1896 (quotation); and "The South in the War," April 25, 1896, *Washington Post*. See also "Notes and Queries," *PSHA*, 5 (January 1901), 85, where the editor states the association's intention to meet rising interest in Confederate history with an authoritative source of its facts.


61 The Southern History Association also advocated the study of the Confederate home front. "The inner life of the people, the way they lived, what they ate, and what they paid for it, what they read and how it was obtained, their efforts to educate their children and the success of at least one of the States in maintaining a system of public schools while the enemy were thundering at her gates—in a wider sense, the culturgeschichte, the social history of the Confederacy, is as yet largely unwritten," one review essay argued. This difficult but important topic must remain within the sphere of "the work of special students" ("Confederate Naval Books and Others," 433). For this type of contribution, see B. W. Arnold, "Virginia Women and the Civil War," *PSHA*, 2 (July 1898), 269–71; and Walter L. Fleming, "Home Life in Alabama During the Civil War," *PSHA*, 8 (March 1904), 81–103.


65 Johnson et al., "Why the Confederate States of America Had No Supreme Court," 96 (first quotation); and J. L. M. Curry, "The South in the Olden Time," PSHA, 5 (January 1901), 47–48 (second quotation). See also Review of Strange Stories of 1812 and Strange Stories of the Civil War, PSHA, 11 (September/November 1907), 357. The flip-side of praising southern patriotism was disparaging the name "rebel." See Graham Daves, review of A Rebel Cavalryman with Lee, Stuart, and Jackson, by John N. Opie, PSHA, 4 (September 1900) 355–56; and Review of The True Story of the United States Told For Young People, by Elbridge S. Brooks, PSHA, 11 (September-November 1907), 355.


68 Hamilton, "Lee and the Confederacy," 319, 321 (first quotation), and 323 (second quotation).


71 Review of *Southern Sidelights*, by Edward Ingle, *PSHA*, 1 (January 1897), 77; Review of *The Life of Henry Bradley Plant*, by G. H. Smyth, *PSHA*, 4 (January 1900), 38–39; "Notes and Queries: Southern Industrial Convention," *PSHA*, 5 (January 1901), 86–87; "Notes and Queries: Southern Character," *PSHA*, 6 (May 1902), 277–78; and "Southern Industrial History," *PSHA*, 7 (September 1903), 413. See also Daniel Joseph Singal, "Ulrich B. Phillips: The Old South as the New," *Journal of American History*, 63 (March 1977), 871–91, for a reinterpretation of the seminal slavery historian into "this framework of New South values" (873). The diagnosis of the South's poverty was rarely discussed in the *Publications*. All agreed that with the advantages of low labor costs, wealth was bound to find the South ("Light on the Negro Problem: A Review," *PSHA*, 4 [July 1900], 266; and Curry, "The South in the Olden Time," 47–48). The economic situation, to these men, was certainly never the fault of slavery. In fact, poverty clung to the South, Richard Malcolm Johnston argued, because former planters had not replaced the bonds of master-slave affection with the "general economic principles governing relationships between hirers and hired all over the world outside the South" (Johnston, "Planter of the Old South," 42–43). Similarly, another reviewer argued that the inefficiency of modern southern agriculture was the fault of the "stupidity of so many laborers that have to handle these new-fashioned implements" (Review of *The Cotton Industry*, by M. B. Hammond, *PSHA*, 2 [April 1899], 189).

72 Weeks, "On the Promotion of Historical Studies in the South," 34. See also Moore, "Recent Revival of Interest in Historical Teaching and Investigation in the South," 204.


Stephen B. Weeks to Colyer Meriwether, April 6, 1905, Box 1, Folder 2, Weeks Papers. Peter Novick describes the reconciliation of northern and southern historians in terms of a give-and-take with "considerably more give on the northern side" as northern historians bent "over backward to appease the southerners." Novick also points to the number of southern academics employed at northern universities as evidence of the ascendancy of the southern point of view on the past. What I think is missing from Novick's short account of southern historians in the early twentieth century is not only the sense of alliance nascent professional historians in the South felt with their colleagues in the North but also some recognition of the extent to which the "southern" viewpoint coming from this newly professional group was different from the enmity that persisted among amateurs and the reading public. To the white southern public, the southerners had made a much more certain compromise. See Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1988), 76–80 (quotations on 77 and 80).

"His final chapter on 'The Niggers' is hardly as rabid as one might expect from a New Englander, although at the same time he makes it clear that he does not sympathize with the Southern attitude, and in fact that he does not understand their attitude at all. . . . If for no other reason, Southern people should read it to see what an intelligent Northerner thinks of our race problem" (W. Roy Smith, review of *Highways and Byways of the South*, by Clifton Johnson, *PSHA*, 9 [March 1905], 141).


Review of *Studies in Black and White*, 211 (first quotation); and Review of *Working with the Hands*, by Booker T. Washington, *PSHA*, 9 (May 1905), 201 (second quotation). See also the review of *Letters from Port Royal*, edited by Elizabeth Ware Pearson, *PSHA*, 11 (May 1907), 215; Review of *The Negro in the South*, by Booker T. Washington and

82 Review of The Old Plantation: How We Lived in the Great House and Cabin before the War, by James Battle Avirett, *PSHA*, 5 (November 1901), 513. This reinterpretation of slavery also depended upon its acceptance as a “national institution” which southerners had resisted in their early history. The conditions under which the ante-bellum planter lived and worked, Louisa Preston Looney argued, “were neither his fault nor his responsibility.” See “On the History of Slavery,” *PSHA*, 5 (July 1901), 307 (first quotation); Weeks, “Anti-Slavery Sentiment in the South,” 87–130; and Looney, “Southern Planter of the Fifties,” 251 (second quotation).


84 Wilson, “Address before the Society of Alumni [of the University of Virginia], 290 (quotation); Review of The Old Plantation, 513; and Thomas L. Broun, “The Word ‘Tote,’” *PSHA*, 8 (July 1904), 294–96.

85 Walter L. Fleming to R. Heath Dabney, February 13, 1903, Box 1, Richard Heath Dabney Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.

86 Wells, Review of Reminiscences of a Southern Woman, 521 (first quotation); Review of Reconstruction History syllabus at the University of West Virginia, by Walter L. Fleming, *PSHA*, 8 (May 1904), 244 (second quotation); Kirkland, “Intellectual Tendencies of the South,” 12 (third quotation); and Review of Impeachment and Trial of Andrew Johnson, 302 (fourth quotation). There is some indication that the association tried to organize without success a “special meeting” on Reconstruction. See Colyer Meriwether, “Report of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Southern History Association,” *PSHA*, 7 (March 1903), 69.


89 Edward Ingle, review of The Lower South in American History, by William Garrott Brown, *PSHA*, 6 (July 1902), 347. Heath Dabney experienced first hand the consuming task of wading through personal reminiscence when he placed a public call for material
regarding Reconstruction for a book he had contracted to write. Though some of the material sent he found useful, he also received a "very rich lot of rubbish" (note written on envelope, Julian Betton to Dabney, February 23, 1903, Box 1, Dabney Papers). Ultimately overwhelmed by the offers of memoirs and documents, Dabney backed out of his book contract much to the chagrin of the series editor (Dabney to Guy Carlton Lee, February 19, 1903, and reply, February 22, 1903; Lee to Dabney, July 30, 1903; and notation of reply on top of this letter, dated August 8, 1903; all in Box 1, Dabney Papers).

90 Trent, _Study of Southern History_, 15 (first quotation); and “Herbert Baxter Adams,” 501–2 (subsequent quotations).

91 Review of _The Scotch Irish or the Scot in North Britain, North Ireland, and North America_, by Charles Hanna, _PSHA_, 7 (March 1903), 106. See also “The Florida Historical Society,” _PSHA_, 7 (September 1903), 415, which criticizes historical work by "incompetent men whose only qualifications are leisure for scribbling and an itch for publicity."

92 “Herbert Baxter Adams,” 501; and Wilson, “An Historical Commentary and Critique,” 61. In 1901, almost two-thirds of the total number of students at Johns Hopkins were southerners. Southerners earned 16 of the 26 Ph.D.'s awarded in June 1901 and made up half of the fellows at the university for the 1901–1902 academic year. “Notes and Queries,” _PSHA_, 5 (September 1901), 448.


95 [Wilson], “An Historical Commentary and Critique,” 61. See also Trent, _Study of Southern History_, 6.


97 Review of _What Is History?_, by Karl Lamprecht, _PSHA_, 9 (September 1905), 335.


104 Mrs. M. E. Robertson, "President Davis's Last Official Meeting," *PSHA*, 5 (July 1901), 299 (first quotation); "North Carolina in the Civil War," *PSHA*, 6 (July 1902), 331 (second quotation); and Meriwether, "Report of the Third Annual Meeting," 182 (third quotation).


Here I have defined the South broadly (the eleven states of the Confederacy, Kentucky, West Virginia, Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Missouri) to give the South the best chance to represent itself in terms of libraries. If the "South" is confined to the eleven Confederate states only, 57 percent of individuals were "southern," and only 28 percent of library subscriptions went south. Membership roll book, Meriwether Papers. Arkansas, Alabama, and Florida had no library members at all. Syracuse, New York, had two institutional subscriptions, while libraries in Seattle, Sacramento, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Salt Lake City, Des Moines, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Butte, Montana, Worcester, Massachusetts, and Brunswick, Maine—to name only a few—were subscribers.

"Notes and News: Amusing Ignorance," 377–78. See also William P. Trent to Woodrow Wilson, December 12, 1899, in Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Vol. 11, p. 294–95 for an example of a failed plan by a southern publishing house to bring out a cooperative history of the United States.


John Spencer Bassett to Herbert B. Adams, January 16, 1896 (first quotation), September 26, 1897 (second, third, fourth quotations), and December 16, 1898 (fifth quotation), in Holt, ed., Historical Scholarship in the United States, 242, 246, and 261; and Bassett to William K. Boyd, October 11, 1908, quoted in Clayton, Savage Ideal, 101 (sixth quotation). See also Wendell H. Stephenson, "John Spencer Bassett: Trinity College Liberal" and "John Spencer Bassett: Transitional Concept of the Negro," in Southern History in the Making, 93–131; and Clayton, Savage Ideal, 84–103.

Though I find no evidence that Trent was ever a member of the Southern History Association, he was closely associated with many of its leaders. See William P. Trent to Stephen B. Weeks, March 12, 1892, Box 1, Folder 3, Weeks Papers; and Trent to Woodrow Wilson, Papers of Woodrow Wilson, vol. 11, p. 294–95. Bassett's membership information can be found in the roll book, p. 11. Historian Andrew Sledd, who found himself in similar hot water with the southern public after he attacked white supremacy in a 1902 article in the Atlantic Monthly, was a member of the Southern History Association from 1904 on. See Clayton, Savage Ideal, 78–83; and membership roll book, p. 158.

Stephenson, "William P. Trent: The 'Mountain Fastness' at Sewanee," Southern History in the Making, 91–92; Stephenson, "John Spencer Bassett: Trinity College Liberal," 116; and Walter L. Fleming to J. G. de Roullac Hamilton, October 22, 1903, Box 1, Folder 1, J. G. de Roullac Hamilton Papers, SHC. Both Bassett and Trent retained their faith in "the cause" of promoting a critical southern history and attachment to the South of their youth. See John Spencer Bassett to Hamilton, June 28, 1906, Folder 1, Hamilton Papers (quotation); and William P. Trent to Hamilton, February 24, 1933, Folder 103, Hamilton Papers.

"Notes and News: Valuable Testimony on the Negro Question," PSHA, 8 (November 1904), 507 (first quotation); Alfred Holt Stone, review of The Negro Farmer, by Carl Kelsey, PSHA, 8 (May 1904), 240; Stone, "Some Recent Race Problem Literature,"
PSHA, 8 (November 1904), 451–52 (second and third quotations); "Notes and News: Southern Education Conference," 337; and Review of The Bright Side of Humanity: Glimpses of Life in Every Land, Showing the Distinctive Noble Traits of All Races, by Edward L. Pell, PSHA, 5 (March 1901), 165 (fourth quotation).


118 I have found one African American member of the Southern History Association (membership roll book, p. 34). William Hooper Council, president of the Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes, also contributed at least two book reviews and a lengthy article critical of William Hannibal Thomas's controversial The American Negro to the Publications. Although Council was known for being conciliatory toward segregationist whites, he also had a more militant side. He sued a railroad company in 1887, for example, after being thrown out of a first-class car. In the Publications, Council was very conservative, praising African American fiction when it showed the "devotion and fidelity of the negro" and the "undesirability of social equality from a negro standpoint." See W. H. Council, "The American Negro: An Answer," PSHA, 6 (January 1902), 40–44; Council, review of The Love of Landry, by Paul Laurence Dunbar, PSHA, 5 (September 1901), 431–32; and Council, review of The Wife of His Youth, by Charles W. Chesnutt, PSHA, 4 (July 1900), 283 (quotations). See also John David Smith, Black Judas: William Hannibal Thomas and the American Negro (Athens, Ga., 2000), 200; and Horace Mann Bond, "The Influence of Personalities on the Public Education of Negroes in Alabama, I," Journal of Negro Education, 6 (January 1937), 24–26.


121 Stone, review of The Negro Farmer, 240 (quotations); and "Current Notes," (review of Race Traits and Characteristics of the American Negro, by Frederick L. Hoffman), PSHA, 1 (January 1897), 77–78.

122 J. L. M. Curry, for example, argued that it was important to find "conclusive refutation of many pessimistic theories and a satisfactory argument in behalf of a just recognition of
the moral, intellectual and civil rights of the negro” (Curry, review of Future of the American Negro, 281–82).

123 “Book Notes,” PSHA, 2 (January 1898), 55; Review of The Cotton Industry, 189; Stone, “More Race Problem Literature,” 220; Review of The Negro in the South, 274; Review of Working with the Hands, 201 (first quotation); and Review of House Behind the Cedars, by Chesnutt, 434 (subsequent quotations).

124 Indeed, one writer (probably Meriwether) complained, it was not fair that the “desirable” goal of constitutionally guaranteed white supremacy could not “be accomplished, in an open and fair manner, without any imputation of wrong or injustice” (“Notes and Queries,” PSHA, 4 [May 1900], 228).


128 Mrs. E. E. Moffett to R. Heath Dabney, March 24, 1903, Box 2, Dabney Papers (quotation); “Records of the South,” April 25, 1896 (on wives at the meeting); Membership roll book, p. 104 (Louise Manly, Judson Female Institute); p. 12 (Mrs. Alice Truehart Buck, Confederate Veteran Hall); p. 98 (Mrs. E. D. Latta, North Carolina State Regent, D. A. R.); and p. 184 (Mrs. Helen DeBerniere Wills, Genealogist for the North Carolina D. A. R. and the Raleigh Circle Colonial Dames).

129 See, for example, Wells, Review of Reminiscences of a Southern Woman, 519–21; St. James Cummings, review of Doris Kingsley, Child and Colonist, by Emma Rayner, PSHA, 6 (July 1902), 362–63; Review of History of the Confederate Memorial Associations of the South, PSHA, 9 (September 1905), 332; and George S. Wills, review of Serena: A Novel, by Virginia Frazier Boyle, PSHA, 9 (November 1905), 436.


131 “Feminine Methods in History,” PSHA, 7 (January 1903), 66 (first quotation); and Review of Historical Collections of the Joseph Habersham Chapter, DAR, PSHA, 6 (September 1902), 439 (second quotation). On the DAR as historians, see also Scott E.


133 Review of *Records of the Virginia Company of London*, by Susan M. Kingsbury, *PSHA*, 10 (May 1906), 174–75. The review of the second volume was much more complimentary and less speculative about the femininity of its author. *PSHA*, 11 (January 1907), 55–56. The *Publications* editor was keenly aware of a presumed connection between marital status and the proper roles for women: in a piece called “Marriage and Patriotism,” he noted that the DAR “somewhat significant[ly] do not often honor the single sisters in the bestowal of offices.” *PSHA*, 4 (November 1900), 508.


“Notes and News: Virginia Historical Society,” 211 (first quotation); “Notes and News: Historical Interest in New England,” 70 (second quotation); “Historical Activity in New England,” PSHA, 7 (September 1903), 417; “Financial Statements for the Southern History Association,” PSHA, 11 (September/November 1907), 293–95; and “A Stimulus for Southern Historical Associations,” PSHA, 7 (January 1903), 63 (third quotation).


Meriwether, “Report of the Fourth Annual Meeting,” 146–48; and Meriwether, “Report of the Fifth Annual Meeting,” 95–98; Meriwether, “Report of the Seventh Annual Meeting,” 69 (quotations). There is no published report of what would have been the sixth annual meeting in 1902, and no further meeting reports after 1903. The Southern History Association offices, however, continued to serve some function by putting historians interested in similar topics in contact with one another. See D. M. DeWitt to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, July 20, 1905, Box 1, Folder 1, Hamilton Papers.

Meriwether, “Report of the Fifth Annual Meeting,” 96. Unsigned reviews were common in these years in other American historical journals; well into the 1930s, older historians still inquired about the editorial policy of various journals and newspapers regarding signed reviews. See Greg Dening, “‘P905.A512x100’: An Ethnographic Essay,” American Historical Review, 100 (June 1995), 858; and Charles W. Ramsdell to Howard M. Jones, December 5, 1938, Box 3N303, Charles W. Ramsdell Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. Consistent phrasing and style of many of the reviews suggest that they were written by one person, presumably Meriwether. However, some unsigned reviews indicate that they may have been written by Stephen B. Weeks; for example, the review of the 1901 AHA Annual Report contains a long digression on local historical activity in New Mexico, where Weeks had moved for health reasons (Review of Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1901, PSHA, 7 [May 1903], 214–19). It is fair to assume that other unsigned reviews may have been penned by other close associates of Meriwether but that the bulk were in fact authored by Meriwether himself.

Alexander S. Salley, Review of Marriage Notices in the South-Carolina Gazette, by Alexander S. Salley, PSHA, 7 (July 1903), 295–97; and Stephen B. Weeks to Colyer Meriwether, December 22, 1904, in Box 1, Folder 1, Weeks Papers (quotation).

Walter L. Fleming to R. Heath Dabney, January 8, 1908, Box 1, Dabney Papers; and “Notes and News,” American Historical Review, 13 (January 1908), 424.

The series’ general editors were Julian Alvin Carroll Chandler, Ph.D. (professor of history at Richmond College); Franklin Lafayette Riley, Ph.D. (professor of history at University of Mississippi); James Curtis Ballagh, Ph.D. (associate professor of history at Johns Hopkins); John Bell Henneman, Ph.D. (professor of English at University of the South); Edwin Mims, Ph.D. (professor of English at Vanderbilt); Samuel Chiles Mitchell, Ph.D. (president of University of South Carolina); and Walter Lynwood Fleming, Ph.D.
(professor of history at Louisiana State University). The exception was Thomas E. Watson, the former Populist Party candidate for president, autodidact, self-declared historian, and future senator from Georgia.


149 Hesseltine and Kaplan, "Doctors of Philosophy in History," Table 1, p. 772–73. Between 1896 and 1910, 312 Ph.D.'s in history were awarded in American universities. Between 1896 and 1905, 187 Ph.D.'s were awarded. See also Boyd, "Southern History in American Universities," 238–246, for one professor's optimistic look at the foundations that had been laid for research in southern history in the university.
Chapter Two

The Establishment and Growth of the Southern Historical Association

The failure of the Southern History Association indicated that the South lacked the institutions to support the full-scale pursuit of professional history and that an alliance between nascent academic historians and other historical workers seemed untenable. The burden for the production of "professional" southern history, consequently, moved north. Colyer Meriwether's critique of the methodology of scientific history did not resonate with the rising generation of southern intellectuals. Young white southerners (and a handful of African-American southerners) instead headed to Chicago, Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, and Boston to investigate their native regions for the Ph.D.¹

William A. Dunning's famous Reconstruction seminar at Columbia University was only the most prolific of programs, turning out dissertations sympathetic to the white South by both southern and northern students. Ella Lonn, a "self-admitted Yankee" and a Dunning student, later recalled that her investigation of Reconstruction in Louisiana "made my blood boil so much that I found myself thinking like a Southerner."²

The majority of these southern-born, northern-trained historians went home by choice to the South to begin their professional careers, some at considerable "sacrifice," refusing to be wooed by wealthier institutions in the North. J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, a Dunning graduate employed at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for example, did not find John Spencer Bassett's arguments for expatriation persuasive when Cornell University tried to hire him away in 1908. Hamilton was swayed more by his "attachment to Southern history" than by a desire "to go to the head of the profession in
America.” North Carolina and the South, Hamilton argued, needed him.³ It was not clear, however, that North Carolina thought that it needed the likes of Dr. J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, Ph.D. to proclaim what the “fair point of view” on the historical South should be.⁴ As a result, Hamilton and other academic historians increasingly recognized their own distance from the forms that the celebration of southern heritage took among the public and their isolation from each other. The pathways normally open to professional historians—publication in a national journal or attendance at a national meeting—were often closed off or too difficult to travel. As the American Historical Review more frequently rejected articles with a regional focus, one western author voiced his distress at this “difficulty that is going to be felt more and more, namely the lack of a suitable place for the publication of papers that are of regional interest as most papers are.” Southern historians were often told that their articles were not suitably national in scope. “What can one do against a point of view of that kind?” Hamilton queried of a southern state journal editor. “I am constantly freshly amazed at how widespread it is north of Mason and Dixon’s line.” Hamilton admitted sectional chauvinism worked both ways, but concluded that “still it is awfully irritating.”⁵

As the South fell into the Great Depression in the 1930s, the sense of isolation only grew stronger in the face of a mounting recognition that the region had real, deeply rooted, problems that required hard, intelligent investigation. And even though the excoriating cultural critic H. L. Mencken had claimed that the early-twentieth-century South was an uninhabitable desert for the creative or critical mind, this growing core of white intellectuals sought to embrace the mantle of scholarship and objectivity without having to shed their Dixie cloaks. For these intellectuals, the idea of forming a new
organization dedicated to professional southern history seemed to answer both of these needs.⁶

The founders of the Southern Historical Association (SHA), of course, did not invent the idea of a regional historical organization. As shown in the previous chapter, an earlier generation of southern historians and historical enthusiasts had attempted to create an organization for scientific history in the South.⁷ Other white southerners of a more sectionally defensive state of mind also wished for the revival of an organization dedicated to the preservation of “Southern history and Tradition in their CORRECTNESS.” How else, the former editor of the Confederate Veteran asked, will “the South be ready for [deliverance] from the bondage of misrepresentation?”⁸ While the Lost Cause sputtered on during the first three decades of the twentieth century, professionally trained historians also struggled to get control over the southern past. Both colleges and college professors in the South were poor and overburdened, yet some southern higher education institutions had taken strong steps toward becoming solid research centers.⁹ By 1935, Duke University, the University of Kentucky, the University of North Carolina, the University of Texas, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Virginia all had active Ph.D. programs in place in their history departments, geared almost wholly toward American history.¹⁰ Moreover, Ph.D. graduates of these institutions who completed their dissertations between 1926 and 1935 had almost exclusively obtained employment at another southern college or university. University presidents instructed department chairs to cultivate these connections with other southern institutions in order to maintain a viable regional job market for their doctoral students.¹¹
Professional historians in the South also eyed the success of other regional historical organizations, most notably the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (MVHA) which had been established in 1907. Although this organization's eventual transformation into one for all practitioners of American history tends to mask its regional origins, its founders variously intended the group to serve "these western states," "the fraternity of western historians," or "the history of the valley. . .liberally interpreted." "The publication of a magazine devoted to sectional history is by no means a new development," Mississippi Valley Historical Review editor Clarence W. Alvord wrote in the first issue in 1914. For Alvord and his compatriots, the multiplication of historical journals "of a high class" was a positive cultural development for the United States. Many white southern historians were actively involved with the MVHA, because they admired its journal and enjoyed how the organization provided a counterpoint to the northeastern-dominated American Historical Association. The preference for a scholarly alternative certainly rested in regional interpretive disagreements. But as Kentucky historian Thomas D. Clark reminisced, the MVHA also provided more provincial intellectuals the chance to chuckle over the "social gaucherie" of "Yankee" historians visiting the Mid- and Southwest. For many of the SHA organizers, then, the MVHA stood as an ideal to emulate. "There is no reason why in the course of a few years," the first SHA president E. Merton Coulter suggested, "we may not do for the South what the Mississippi Valley Historical Association has done for the Mississippi Valley."14

As with so many other intellectual developments in American history, southern colleges and universities lagged behind their counterparts elsewhere in institutionalizing
disciplinary departments and in encouraging academic specialization. At the most basic level, southern colleges suffered from a lack of financial and human resources, shortages that inhibited the development of "modern" educational institutions (a problem compounded, without a doubt, by the South's perverse dedication to supporting not one, but two, inferior systems of education). Yet some historians have argued that white southerners also had an ideological commitment to retain classical education with its traditional curriculum emphasizing certain core values over against what critics viewed as a decentered, anti-authority, elective system. By the first decades of the twentieth century, however, modern disciplinary specialization had come South, certainly to state and private research universities if not fully to the smaller and poorer colleges. By the early 1930s, over one hundred colleges in the South had courses in southern history specifically as part of their course offerings.

Following the departmentalization of academic life in the South, professors in every discipline began to form regional professional organizations. "Southern scholars," University of Virginia professor Thomas Perkins Abernethy explained, were finally ready "to stand upon their own feet intellectually." Historian Hugh I. Rodgers has counted fifteen learned societies established in the South between 1919 and 1941, including three important models for the Southern Historical Association: the South Atlantic Modern Language Association (est. 1928), the Southern Economic Association, and the Southern Political Science Association (both est. 1929). These groups legitimated specific disciplinary study in the South, created journals for the publication of increasingly specialized scholarship, and provided southern academics with an infrastructure for the communication of ideas and the recognition of professional excellence. Interestingly,
these organizations also set up networks for interdisciplinary cooperation in a regional framework—networks that became crucial as the Great Depression threatened much of the vitality of intellectual endeavor in the South. Almost as soon as they had formed these separate entities, the various association leaders communicated with each other about organizing conferences to discuss their region, confirmed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the "Nation's No. 1 economic problem."  

*The Founding of the Southern Historical Association*

The immediate impulse for what became the Southern Historical Association, however, came from a historian famous for his work on the American West, Frederick Jackson Turner. Though his ideas have by now been largely revised, Turner revolutionized the study of American history at the time by insisting that American institutions were born of the unique American experience and by suggesting that the analysis of the various sections was the best way to get a handle on the forces that drove American history. In early 1923 Turner encouraged Thomas Perkins Abernethy, one of his graduate students at Harvard, to set up an official network of historians of the South. "Why couldn't the Harvard group, Columbia, J[ohns] H[opkins] U[niversity], Wisconsin, etc. form an association of men interested in the scientific study of the South's history?" Turner wondered. He envisioned a society affiliated with the American Historical Association, like the Pacific Coast Branch or the Agricultural History Society, and felt the time was "ripe for such a meeting of men." The idea made sense to Abernethy, and he soon sent out inquiries. As Walter L. Fleming responded, the idea was "an interesting
proposition” but the members of his department at Vanderbilt were simply too “overworked” to participate in any extra-institutional organizations.22

Several years later, Abernethy, then a professor at University of Virginia, discussed the plan again with Charles M. Knapp of the University of Kentucky, Benjamin B. Kendrick of the Woman’s College of North Carolina, and Philip M. Hamer of the University of Tennessee. On October 23, 1934, Knapp sent out a circular letter to some of the most prominent historians across the South suggesting that sentiment seemed favorable toward “the formation of a Southern Historical Society, similar to the Southern Economic Association and the Southern Political Science Association.” The four professors invited these historians to join them as charter members of a new organization and suggested that they meet together shortly in Atlanta in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association (SPSA), November 1–3, 1934.23

This last-minute invitation prevented many interested historians who had not already planned to be in Atlanta for the SPSA from attending. University of Texas historian Charles W. Ramsdell, called by his peers the “Dean of Southern Historians” much to his own dismay, was unable to make the long trip from Austin on such short notice.24 The courage of the organizers, however, impressed him greatly. He had often thought of planning such a group but had always been dissuaded for two reasons. First, he believed that such organizations only thrived if they sponsored a historical journal. Second, he had always worried that the necessary journal would be prohibitively expensive and hindered by a shortage of well-written, insightful articles. “I am now convinced that, with the number of trained workers in the southern field, there is enough good material available,” he concluded, “but I do not yet see how the publication can be
financed.” Ramsdell then passed the buck: “I trust that your group, when it meets in Atlanta, will be able to solve this problem.”

What Ramsdell did not know was that the problem of funding had been worked out before the group in Atlanta even assembled. The money would come from the coffers of Huey Long. With his election as Louisiana governor in 1928, Long focused intensive energy and resources on building up his state’s languishing college into a first-rate university. Conventional wisdom held that Huey Long’s Louisiana State University was little more than a “pseudoacademic bog of politics and football.” In reality, as one contemporary recalled, Long’s support was not restricted “to the tiger for football parades”; he offered seemingly limitless new funds for the school’s academic programs. “What else may be said, of a bad nature, of the dead dictator,” one historian noted after Long’s assassination in September 1935, “at least he was a sincere patron of the University of Louisiana.”

The availability of funds and the desire for intellectual respectability at Louisiana State University led one of its young historians to contemplate the institution’s sponsorship of a historical journal. Wendell Holmes Stephenson (1889–1970) was the son of Indiana Quakers who developed an interest in southern history from his undergraduate mentor William O. Lynch at Indiana University. Earning a masters degree from Indiana in 1924, Stephenson next studied with the preeminent southern historian Ulrich B. Phillips at the University of Michigan for his Ph.D. He joined the faculty of Louisiana State University in 1927, soon benefiting from the largesse of Huey Long that enabled the history department to build up its faculty, library, and archival collections. Sometime in 1933, Stephenson first mentioned the idea of a historical journal to some
colleagues. When the invitation came to attend the organizational meeting in Atlanta, Stephenson revived his idea of a university-sponsored journal.27

Years later, Stephenson described his initial meeting with the president of the university, James Monroe Smith. Smith immediately warmed to the proposal for a journal: it seemed to fit well with LSU’s flush finances and “ambition for recognition in the scholarly world.” When Smith asked how much money such a project would require, Stephenson remembered that he “hesitated a moment; and in the split second while he was contemplating whether to ask for the conservative figure of a thousand dollars or the unrealistic sum of fifteen hundred, the president said, ‘Well, speak up! Would five thousand dollars be enough?’” Stephenson “managed to stammer that with the exercise of rigid economy a reputable quarterly journal of history could be published with that amount.” Stephenson left for Atlanta with a very big deal in his pocket.28

On the morning of November 2, 1934, eighteen men and women gathered in Atlanta’s posh Biltmore Hotel [Table 2.1]. All things considered, the group was fairly diverse. Only one of the eighteen was not academically employed, while the others represented a variety of institutions, including state research universities, small colleges, women’s colleges, and normal schools. It was a noticeably young group: the average age of the founders was 44; the youngest was 30 while the oldest participant was 68. Two of the historians who signed the original invitation for the meeting, Kendrick and Abermethy, had been unable to travel to Atlanta. When he called the meeting to order, Charles Knapp explained that many others “had expressed their approval of the movement while regretting their inability to participate personally.”29
Table 2.1
Founders of the Southern Historical Association

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn Trimmer Abbey</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Florida State College for Women</td>
<td>Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Perkins Abernethy</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen Bruce</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Hollins College</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John B. Clark</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Mercer University</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Merton Coulter</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>University of Georgia</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Davidson</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Agnes Scott</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwin A. Davis</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy Dodd</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>not affiliated</td>
<td>Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Truman Dorris</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>State Teachers College</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher M. Green</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Emory University</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip M. Hamer</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>University of Tennessee</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theodore H. Jack</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Randolph-Macon Women’s Coll.</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin B. Kendrick*</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Woman’s College of N. Carolina</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles M. Knapp</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>University of Kentucky</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross H. McLean</td>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Emory University</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Lisle Percy</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Piedmont College</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Petrie</td>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Alabama Polytechnic Institute</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter B. Posey</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Birmingham-Southern College</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxford S. Sartain</td>
<td>1894?</td>
<td>State Teachers College (Troy)</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendell H. Stephenson</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not present at the organizational meeting

By all reports, the group engaged in “lively” initial discussion about an issue that would prove to be a nagging conflict within the organization: whether its main objective should be to promote the history of the South, or to “stimulate interest in history generally throughout the South.” The Southern Historical Association passed its first compromise when it concluded that “these two purposes were not incompatible.” Article II of the proposed constitution, drawn up after much debate by Hamer, Abbey, Davis, Coulter, Petrie, and McLean, concluded that the “purpose [of the SHA] shall be the encouragement of the study of history in the South, with particular emphasis on the history of the South.” Interested parties therefore left the meeting believing their priorities had been assured; interpretations of that statement, however, varied broadly.

Emory professor Ross McLean, the only person present whose main field of research was
European history, believed the compromise meant that the new SHA would function similarly to the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association. In his view, expense and distance prohibited historians in the South from taking full advantage of the programs sponsored by the national historical associations. The SHA, he hoped, would provide space for all history closer to home.\textsuperscript{31} The first editor of the new \textit{Journal of Southern History}, Wendell Holmes Stephenson, described the organization’s plans much differently in the first issue. "The major objective," he wrote, "involves the promotion of interest and research in southern history, the collection and preservation of the South’s historical records, and the encouragement of state and local historical societies in that section into vigorous activity." "As a secondary purpose," he added, "the Association will also serve...to foster the teaching and study of all branches of history in the South." The majority’s obsession for "topical purity," one European historian later noted, promoted "Jim Crow" policies in the association’s pursuits. In a typically southern policy, separate and equal purposes manifested themselves in a dominant/auxiliary relationship.\textsuperscript{32}

Little disagreement marred the rest of the constitutional decisions. There would be a president, vice-president, secretary-treasurer, and six elected council members who served three-year terms. The vice-president did not automatically become president the following year until 1938 when the association approved this constitutional amendment. The journal would be run separately by the managing editor, appointed by the president with approval of the council, and a board of editors, nominated by the editor with the approval of the council. Membership dues, set at $3 annually, included a subscription to the journal, and a payment of $50 secured a lifetime membership. The constitution also
stipulated that “all persons who are interested in promoting the purposes of this Association are eligible for membership.”

This unrestricted membership policy, which importantly did not require the approval of the leadership for new members, opened the door of the association to all kinds of people: professional and amateur, northern and southern, male and female, white and black. Although advertisements claimed the Southern Historical Association was “designed primarily for college and university teachers and researchers in the field of Southern history and for libraries,” the organization and its journal “should appeal also to ambitious high school history teachers and to laymen who are interested in the South’s history.” “Do not let the absence of degrees stand in the way of anyone joining the Association who is interested in Southern History,” the membership committee chair warned his army of solicitors. The leaders anticipated that the bulk of the association’s membership would hail from southern states, but they did not place geographical requirements on members. Therefore historian Grady McWhiney’s disappointment that “neither northern birth nor northern doctorates disqualify people from leadership in the Southern Historical Association” is historically misguided. The SHA never intended to prohibit non-southerners from membership or leadership, though truthfully no president came from a truly northern institution until 1951. Women formed about a quarter of individual members in the early years. This proportion was considered by the leaders to be “a large part” of the association and therefore deserved special representation on committees. The relatively significant female participation in leadership positions in the first five years of the association, however, fell off precipitously during World War II, not to recover until the 1980s. The association also claimed African-American
members from the first year of the organization, who, according to the secretary-treasurer, were accorded the same benefits as white members. As the secretary described these equal privileges in 1941, "Programs are sent to the Negro members as same as to the white." Although SHA constitutional policy may not have blocked black participation in SHA events, the tenacity of Jim Crow and the stubborn opposition of some white members prevented the full exercise of membership by African Americans. This important story of integration in the SHA is told in detail in a later chapter; at this point, it suffices to suggest that constitutionally at least membership in the Southern Historical Association was "limited only by interest in its objectives."37

Stephenson’s news of the Louisiana State University subsidy for a historical periodical made possible the transformation of the Southern Historical Association’s grand plans into reality. The group voted to accept the offer and establish simultaneously a quarterly historical journal with Stephenson as managing editor. Stephenson made it clear in his presentation that the journal would be the official organ of the association, and that the university administration would have no control over the journal’s content. Nevertheless, some of the association’s staunchest supporters worried about the relationship. “What do you think of the Southern Historical Association?” Fletcher M. Green later asked a colleague. “Will the connection of the Journal with Huey Long’s university kill it in its infancy?” Another historian jokingly predicted that Huey Long’s picture was certain to be the frontispiece in the first issue.38 The Great Depression, however, left few options for raising money elsewhere in the South. In Atlanta, with the choice between accepting the offer or having the whole idea of a Southern Historical Association die on the vine, the group took their chances with LSU. Stephenson had
stressed, after all, that "the agreement between Louisiana State University and the Association could be terminated by either at its pleasure." The popular press also approved this partnership, claiming that "the new *Journal of Southern History* has no greater affinity with Huey [Long] than Thomas Jefferson with Thomas Heflin."³⁹

At the organizational meeting, the founders also bypassed another tricky issue regarding the new journal's topical content. One member "raised the question as to whether the journal would be confined to Southern history." "It probably would," Stephenson conceded, "though final determination of this question would be made by the board of editors." In fact, not even the name of the new publication was decided at that first meeting in October 1934. For most of November and December, Stephenson wanted to call it the *Southern Historical Review*, though he was amenable to other suggestions.⁴⁰ While it is tempting to conclude that Stephenson's first-choice of a title was intended as a direct sectional affront to the *American Historical Review*, as at least one historian has done, no evidence exists to suggest this purpose. Moreover, though *Southern Historical Review* might be seen as a more inclusive title, suggesting that Stephenson hoped initially to publish articles on all aspects of history by historians teaching in the South, he actually always intended the Southern Historical Association’s journal to "contain monographs and documents in Southern history, reviews of books on all phases and periods of the history of the South, and probably book notes on other works in American history."⁴¹

Any confusion over the journal's name and content was resolved in December at the American Historical Association meeting in Washington where the board of editors planned to meet. At that breakfast meeting on December 28, 1934, apparently with little
controversy, the board of editors decided upon the name *Journal of Southern History* perhaps due to its more emphatic insistence on regional history. While defining “southern history” was no transparent issue, the Southern Historical Association committed itself to an elaboration of a regional vision that most of the other regional associations either never had or would soon abandon. When it came to professional history, “the South” was a living entity.42

The founding members left Atlanta full of enthusiasm for making the Southern Historical Association a viable project with a strong membership. When Hollins College professor Kathleen Bruce sent in her check for her first year’s dues, she expressed her frustration that she hadn’t seen a place on the form to apply for life membership. On closer examination she found the information she sought, tore up her check for $3, and replaced it with one for $50—a risky endorsement of an infant organization in cash-poor times. Letters flew back and forth between friends and colleagues sharing questions and gossip about the new association. “What have been the developments of the Southern Historical Association since its organization in Atlanta?” Fletcher Green asked in December. Things were not moving quickly enough for him: “I have had letters from friends in Alabama and the two Carolinas since that time and each and every one of them was favorably disposed toward the organization. I feel sure that I can enlist two or three additional members here at Emory among my graduate students and assistants.” Green actively recruited members because he wanted the association to “be an alive organization.”43 Graduate students consulted with their mentors about the validity of the association and its worthiness to receive a portion of their meager funds. Charles W. Ramsdell assured one of his former students in February 1935, “I think it would do no
harm and it may do good to join the Southern Historical Association. I don’t know how
it is going to pan out, but I am joining it in the hope that it may become a going
concern.” Prominent scholars who had not been in Atlanta for the organizational
meeting also expressed their willingness to cooperate in the venture, excited to see the
“Southern Association revived.”

By the first of the year, a membership committee chaired by the Journal’s
editorial associate Edwin A. Davis and composed of representatives from each state
began a well-organized campaign to solicit southern historians with the goal of reaching
500 members by the end of 1935. The committee received letters of interest from as far
away as the library of the Communist Academy in Leningrad and from such home-grown
sources that the inquirers felt obliged to stress their Colonial Dame and Confederate
lineages. Samuel A. Ashe, who would become one of the association’s most emphatic,
confused, and frustrated members, sent in his dues with what he thought was an
important qualification: “Perhaps I should say that I was born in 1840, was from its
beginning—and its end—in the Confederate army” and since then had “sought to have
our Southern people know the truth as to the action of our Fathers.”

In addition to these institutional forms of solicitation, association enthusiasts
garnered memberships from friends and colleagues in inventive ways during these early
years. One member called this approach doing “a little propaganda work for the
Southern Historical Association.” Kathleen Bruce reported a “good omen” for the
association’s rapid growth: “I looked out the door of my study—quite by chance—and
found there the packet of letters to be sent out to prospective members...just as my class
in the Old South had assembled to have tea with me, following upon their midyear
exams.” The coincidence “was really rather dramatic—at least that is the way it impressed me.”* Wendell H. Stephenson, while working on editing the correspondence of an antebellum cotton merchant, procured a subscription from his subject’s grandson.49 But the most creative approach surely should be credited to Philip M. Hamer. With his dues renewal in 1937, he also included a check for a new member. “Credit for this should go to Vanderbilt University’s football team,” he told the secretary-treasurer. “I bet $3 against membership in the Southern Historical Association that Alabama would win by not less than six points. I have another bet on the outcome of the Rose Bowl game, and if Alabama loses the Southern Association will gain a member.” “May the Association win,” the secretary replied, “but I am betting on Alabama.” Triumphanty, Hamer sent in another check on January 13, 1938: “The University of California’s team won this membership for the Association by defeating Alabama on January 1.” The fates indeed seemed to be on the side of the new organization.50

**Growing Pains in the 1930s**

Despite this general enthusiasm, not everyone was so certain of the association’s success. University of Texas professor Eugene C. Barker, for example, paid his dues for 1935, but wanted his membership to expire at the end of the year. “I agreed to join, though I thought the Journal not needed,” he wrote. “I still think so. It is a sort of fifth wheel.”51 Many feared the association’s scope was too limited and times too tough. “However much it might be supposed that the people of New England should read such a periodical as the *Journal of Southern History,*” a Tufts professor wrote, “I am frankly skeptical of the extent of its circulation here.” He did not expect to see the new journal
thrive in his region, where even though people “are as a rule interested in New England history, the New England Historical Quarterly has been on the verge of collapse for the last two years.” Similarly, Ohio State University professor Henry H. Simms endorsed the objects of the association and agreed to represent the membership committee in his state, but demurred, “I hope you are not too optimistic about the matter here.” Even William Lynch, anxious to support his former student in his new publication endeavor, warned Stephenson that poverty-stricken professors, especially outside the South, were much more likely to simply read the journal in their university library rather than subscribe personally. Still, he encouraged Stephenson to show potential members “tangible evidence” of the association’s work, like a complimentary copy of the Journal of Southern History, to convince them otherwise. Membership chair Edwin A. Davis agreed that the forthcoming journal would advertise that “the Association is a live-wire organization and that we mean business.” Unfortunately, financial considerations and postal regulations limited the numbers of free copies the membership committee could send out; moreover, the committee saw little real return on this investment.

Even though it was clear from the outset that the dominant focus of the organization would be regional history, many founding members made a good faith effort to solicit historians of all fields in the South to shore up their constitutional commitment to “the encouragement of the study of history in the South.” “It is hoped that this will be an alive organization and will stimulate interest in teaching, research, and publication of history in the South,” Fletcher M. Green told an Arkansas woman whose help in attracting members he hoped to procure. He argued that the SHA could benefit professional historians of all fields, high school teachers, librarians, and the interested
public. Similarly, E. Merton Coulter appointed a European historian, Emory professor Ross H. McLean, to the 1935 program committee in order to attract a wide variety of practitioners to the association’s activities. “I am a little dubious about getting sufficient interest in our Association meeting from those who work in European, Ancient and Medieval History,” Stephenson admitted, “but I am willing to put forth every effort to have that objective of our Association materialize.”\(^{54}\) For the first annual meeting, McLean arranged a roundtable discussion on introductory curriculum for freshmen.\(^{55}\) With the *Journal* closed to non-southern topics, however, many historians in the South felt that a single general-interest session at the annual meeting did not justify their becoming members of the Southern Historical Association.

By the end of 1935 the association had achieved about 70 percent of its first-year goal of 500, though membership statistics vary. The synopsis of the 1935 annual meeting in Birmingham recorded 372 members. The secretary-treasurer later reported that membership at the end of 1935 had been 354, probably the more accurate assessment.\(^{56}\) That first year the record keeping was total chaos, with the secretary-treasurer, editor, and membership committee chair all soliciting members and receiving dues payments. Many membership lists that survive from these years are almost illegible with their cross-outs and penciled-in changes. The amount of correspondence it took between the *Journal* and association offices to get the lists in line is truly staggering.\(^{57}\)

Evidently, some personality conflicts also required smoothing over to make this association of southern historians function properly. “Factions develop easily,” Walter B. Posey later remembered, and “we had some ill-feeling early in our history.” These problems variously had their roots in interpretive differences, job competition, or simply
in clashes of egos. After the organizational meeting, one professor wrote that he had been glad to hear that his mentor and one of his colleagues "got along together without any use of the code duello." He was consequently "convinced that . . . you two may be working together on the board of the Southern Historical Association as cooperatively as Webster said South Carolina and Massachusetts had in the Revolution." Institutional rivalries were another potential danger to the fledgling organization. There is some indication, for example, that "some of the Duke men [felt] a bit hurt because they were not consulted when the S.H.A. was organized." Association leaders assiduously tried to avoid the appearance of having any one group of members monopolize the journal, the reviewer list, the annual meeting program, or association positions. Despite their best intentions, the disgruntled still popped up occasionally with criticism that the "highest honors of the association" simply "alternat[ed] between Louisiana State and North Carolina University" and that liberal arts or teaching college faculty were ignored completely.

The communications section of the Journal of Southern History provided one outlet for personal venting of this kind, though this service unnerved its editors. When the first letter protesting a book review in the Journal arrived at the editorial office in July 1935, Stephenson reluctantly admitted that he would have to deal with controversy even "while the Journal was in its infancy." Editorial policy dictated that disagreements be discussed at a scholarly level. When personal rivalries tried to take over the Journal for their own exploitation, the editors diplomatically but emphatically reined in the feuders. In one case, Stephenson reminded the complainant that, as editor, his only interest was in "the advancement of historical scholarship in the South." If the protest
was designed solely to provoke a public response from the other, Stephenson refused to give it airing. The resulting feud would be "prejudicial to the best interests of our magazine, and might be interpreted to mean that a very serious rift had occurred in the membership of the Association." The protesting author had wanted some kind of public humiliation of his enemy—he was "a tight-fisted crank" who deserved to be taken "down a peg anyhow," especially since "he is shortly to be the president of the Association"—but agreed to let the matter drop. In practice, then, the editors drew the line at allowing the journal "to become the medium for the airing of personal controversies" though they embraced, if somewhat reluctantly, legitimate scholarly disagreement and discourse.

The most substantial source of the association's early turmoil, however, came from Secretary-Treasurer Charles M. Knapp. Elected to the position at the charter meeting he helped organize, Knapp promptly and inexplicably became the new association's biggest liability. Hints of his disorganization first came in December 1934, when various people who had been elected to the council and board of editors were not notified of their positions. Quiet gossip began circulating among the association's leaders soon after. "Please be discreet in referring to my criticisms of Dr. Knapp," Jonathan T. Dorris wrote Stephenson after the two had had a conversation regarding the Kentucky professor. Though Dorris wanted to remain professionally friendly with Knapp, he felt strongly that he could not "defend him when he neglects his duty as he has done by his inaction since our meeting in Atlanta." "I was provoked," Dorris concluded, "but really not surprised, from my knowledge of his disposition." After the executive council met at the American Historical Association meeting in December 1934, SHA president E. Merton Coulter "suggested [to Knapp] in as discreet way as possible the
absolute necessity for all to be up and doing now, including the secretary-treasurer.” Stephenson quickly resigned himself to dealing with Knapp for the year, “in so far as he is willing to work,” despite his personality or personal habits. Others anticipated “that some adjustment in that office” was “absolutely essential when we get to Birmingham [for the 1935 annual meeting].” The association stumbled through that first year and reproved Knapp silently for his inactivity by not reappointing him secretary at the annual meeting in Birmingham.

With his election as the new secretary-treasurer in 1936, University of North Carolina professor Fletcher M. Green (1895–1978) first realized the gaping mess the association faced. Some members reported that their dues checks had never been cashed, while others wrote that they had their cancelled checks but had not yet received the Journal. Some council members still had not been informed of their appointments. More crucially, Knapp would not turn over the records or the funds from 1935 to the new secretary. With the situation for Green getting more out of hand, Stephenson suggested in early February that Green “take the train for Lexington at once at the expense of the Association, and not to return until you have in your possession all of the records.” “Since everyone in the Association understands Knapp by this time,” Stephenson concluded, “there would be universal approval of the expense account.” This suggestion made Green uneasy. Not only was he afraid of “arous[ing] the ire of Professor Knapp,” he also felt certain he would return to North Carolina empty-handed.

As the days ticked by, and Green still lacked the records, and more importantly, the funds of the association, more drastic measures were taken. First, the president of the SHA, Charles W. Ramsdell, wrote an insistent letter to Knapp requiring him to transfer
the materials to Green. More dramatically, Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter sent letters to the dean and president of the University of Kentucky regarding that institution's most delinquent professor. Barely a week later, Green received a $995 check from Knapp with promises of additional records and funds in the near future. Though Green continued to press Knapp for the balance of the materials, he may have never received the rest. After all this hassle, Green was amazingly polite in his first annual report as secretary-treasurer when he attributed his lack of information and initial disorganization to "certain unavoidable circumstances." The shadow of Knapp's negligent conduct hung over the association for several years. A well-meaning attempt by president Thomas Perkins Abernethy to bring Knapp back into "active work" in 1937 by appointing him to the nominating committee only created "an embarrassing situation" as Knapp ignored all entreaties to participate. Green, moreover, proposed that the secretary-treasurer position be made permanent in order to protect the association from the chaos of regular turnover. After he had decided to step down in 1939, Green also recommended to the council that the new secretary receive some sort of compensatory stipend. With eight hundred members and $5000 surplus, the association, he thought, "ought to be able to pay someone to do the dirty work." When he turned over the office in 1940 to James Patton, Green was especially open to requests for assistance and sensitive to the needs of a rapid transfer of records and funds. Stephenson believed that only Green's dedicated service had rescued the association from certain failure. "When some scholar, fifty years hence, writes the history of our society," he predicted, "the name of Fletcher M. Green will occupy a significant place in our pioneer years."
Even with these initial conflicts, the association organizers felt generally confident that the mere existence of the association would make the practice and politics of history in the South more pleasant for everyone. "I feel very strongly that the Association is off to a good start," Vanderbilt professor William C. Binkley wrote. "From my own point of view the opportunity to meet with the other men of the Southern region has been invaluable, and I am looking forward to the continuation of these associations." Very quickly, meetings became an important networking event—authors negotiated with publishers, graduate students met new colleagues and potential employers, and historians became acquainted with scholars who they formerly had only known by reputation. By the end of the decade, graduate students and new historians were anxious "to get some suggestions as to the best procedure to follow to get the most from" SHA meetings. As Paul Murray put it, "I should like to learn all that I can of materials and methods for teaching, of course, but a few contacts with people in the field would probably be worth more to me right now." "The organization of the Southern Historical Association would be worth while if it did nothing more than bring the Southern students of history into closer relationship," Fletcher Green thought.

Many SHA members had never had access to this kind of scholarly interaction before, either because their own college departments were too small or the expense of the other historical associations was prohibitive. Though the SHA was less expensive to join than the AHA, the SHA considered its special value lay in its affordable annual meetings. Even professors at larger universities benefited from the closer-to-home SHA meetings. "Far be it from me to go to Providence [for the 1936 AHA meeting]," one Duke University professor admitted. "It is all I can do to stay at home. We are not nearly so
prosperous around here as the world imagines." The program organizers prided themselves on keeping down the costs of the SHA meetings. "The less expensive the meetings," one local arrangements chair argued, "the more people we are likely to interest." The association even selected the annual meeting date for late October or early November to facilitate widespread attendance. That date would not interfere with either the AHA meeting in late December or the MVHA meeting in April. The SHA meeting was also "late enough [in the fall] so that everyone would have received a salary check with which to pay expenses," yet early enough to guarantee mild weather for those who planned to drive, "even for those who must cross the [Mason-Dixon] line."77

The care which Southern Historical Association leaders took in planning their annual meeting around other activities indicated that they were as interested in facilitating participation in the national historical organizations as they were in creating a unique niche for their own. *Journal* editor Stephenson even claimed that attendance from southern states at American Historical Association events had increased in the years since the founding of the SHA because of the regional organization's endorsement of and participation in the AHA program.78 The comparison of state distribution of members in the Southern Historical Association and the American Historical Association is quite revealing of how historians in the United States distributed their organizational loyalty [Table 2.2]. Of the southern states, only Texas and Virginia had substantially larger memberships in the AHA than the SHA. Kentucky and North Carolina, and to a lesser extent, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Florida, had more balanced representation in both organizations suggesting that most historians joined both groups. But historians in the
Deep South states—Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia—overwhelmingly preferred the SHA to the AHA.

Table 2.2
State Distribution of Membership, AHA and SHA

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>1937</th>
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<th>1944</th>
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<td>235</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


After each meeting in the early years, the leaders congratulated themselves for “their courage and vision” and for providing a real service to the historical profession in the South. They were pleased that participants compared their meetings favorably to those of the older historical associations, and they felt validated that the AHA and MVHA sought their cooperation both in membership solicitation and program
development. SHA meetings, moreover, rapidly developed the reputation for being more informal and sociable. Indeed from some reports, the conventions sounded more like cocktail parties or college reunions than intellectual gatherings. Novelist Caroline Gordon described her experience at the 1936 Southern Historical Association meeting in Nashville as a weekend of "steam heat and parties." New York University professor Ralph B. Flanders concluded after the 1937 meeting, "I am convinced, more than ever before, that Southerners are just nicer than other people."81

The small minority of historians in other fields continued to make quiet challenges to the domination of association by historians of the South. "In fact," Fletcher Green warned one incoming president, "we have had some cancellations because no attention is to be paid to general American and related history." Following Green's advice, the 1936 program chair planned to include other kinds of history at the meeting and wanted the president to appoint at least one Europeanist to his committee. In principle, the president agreed; however, he added the qualification to his endorsement that the European or general history topics be at least "related to Southern history."82 Consequently, the second annual meeting's "non-southern" session was called "Europe and the South." The program chair optimistically concluded that the success of the meeting was "indicative of a unity and cohesiveness which is bringing together not only those interested in the history of the South but also those interested in European or other history." The persistent skepticism these other historians felt about their role in the Southern Historical Association was confirmed the following year when program chair Frank L. Owsley failed to make any accommodation for their fields and loudly proclaimed the organization's "vital need" to focus on regional history. The "greater
preoccupation” of the other historical associations “with the history of other regions than
the South in the face of a Southern historical renaissance,” Owsley argued, “combine to
make the Southern organization inevitable as a medium of self-expression.”

As 1940 approached, the dominant majority of the SHA finally worked out an
accommodation with the needs of historians in other fields. As editor of the Journal of
Southern History, Wendell Stephenson was uniquely positioned to understand the
influence that publication had over people’s perception of the Southern Historical
Association. His growing concern led him to ask the Executive Council to consider the
question of making a full-scale effort to expand the activities of the association, including
the possibility of establishing a second journal. One council member agreed that “the
time has come for doing whatever can be done to attract” historians in all fields to the
SHA. Although the new journal plan did not develop, the council called a meeting of
various non-American historians to determine the feasibility of drawing members from
this group. Ross McLean was tapped to chair this exploratory committee. “Just how
successful I shall be, I can’t say,” he wrote. McLean thought it might be too late to alter
the course and perception of the Southern Historical Association, having missed “the
opportune time to achieve that objective” at the founding. Even so, McLean found a
strong current of interest among “key men” in the South to take a more active part in
SHA events. The group ultimately recommended that the SHA president appoint to the
1940 program committee “a person who teaches history outside the field taken as the
main objective of the Southern Historical Association, and that this person be instructed
to schedule a maximum of two sessions” at the Charleston meeting. Although there
was some controversy over getting them both on the program, two European sessions—
with no connection to the South—appeared for the first time as options for interested members. Program chair Albert B. Moore called special attention to these well attended panels in his report on the meeting. "The importance of all teachers of history in southern institutions getting together once a year is obvious and the Southern Historical Association is the proper medium," he claimed. There was no good excuse, Moore continued, to treat other professors like "stepchildren" in the association, and he looked forward to including sessions on Latin American history in the near future. In fact, a discrete panel on Latin American history was introduced for the first time at the following year's annual meeting. In no way did these small steps distract the Southern Historical Association from its intensive focus on the history of the American South, but they did provide at least some measure of institutional support for its constitutional commitment to history in the South.

Despite some initial bumps, then, the Southern Historical Association established itself relatively quickly as the clearing-house for southern history, and its institutional success was eyed with some jealousy by scholars in other disciplines. By the time the group met in Birmingham for the first annual meeting in 1935, "any misgivings that may have lingered in the minds of the small group of historians of the South who had gathered in Atlanta in November, 1934, . . . were happily dispelled." The first issues of the *Journal of Southern History* were well received and favorably compared to the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* and the *American Historical Review*. The Depression had failed to thwart the growth of the new association. Active membership grew quickly in the 1930s, passing 500 in 1936, 700 in 1938, and approaching a thousand by 1940 [see Appendix B]. Annual meeting attendance also increased, though not as
dramatically; 109 registered for the 1935 meeting in Birmingham, while 279 attended the 1940 meeting in Charleston. "I was there when you men gave birth to the organization," one participant recalled in 1940, "and remember, with a laugh, the predictions of some of our close friends that the whole thing would flop." Ironically, the Southern Historical Association thrived during the depression that ravaged its region and faced its greatest financial challenges during the very years that brought relief and growth to the southern economy—World War II. The Depression may have been difficult, but most southern professors grasped the dawning reality that with war, "We are in for a bad time."91

The War Years

World War II instigated the most serious threat to the maintenance of the SHA as a viable organization by dangerously disrupting both its membership and activities. Certainly historians in the South were not alone in facing a redirection of their academic energies during the war. In an apology for a delayed submission, a British contributor to the Journal of Southern History explained, "Academic work is rather at a standstill in this country, owing to the stress of war; and it is very hard to get time to do anything." He doubted "that American journals will get many contributions from this side of the Atlantic until the Nazis [have] been satisfactorily disposed of."92 Similarly, the war quickly affected both American students and professors. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, University of Florida students developed a "what the hell does it matter" attitude in regard to school and study. "I feel intensely sorry for most of the twenty-year olds," another professor admitted. "They see little clearly to live for, few of them see anything at all to die for; they would prepare if they knew for what; they would strive if they knew
for what; but they don’t. They passively wait to be ordered out to the army with a kind of
shrugging, ‘Oh well, I’ve got to go sometime.’” Professors were distracted by the war as
well. “The damn war,” one Vanderbilt historian confessed, “has got my goat. I feel so
down that I am getting to be a defeatist, I fear.”  

The war also transformed the day-to-day functioning of the university. At one
North Carolina campus, for example, civilian enrollment dropped 60 to 70 percent. Since
military training frequently included historical instruction, colleges simultaneously faced
an upsurge in teaching needs as the armed forces moved onto campus training centers.
This same North Carolina college faced such shortages in history faculty—especially
since the department’s graduate students kept getting called up for military service—that
agronomists and sociologists were drafted to teach European history survey courses for
the student soldiers.  

There was hardly a major college campus that did not face
disruption and change by military intrusion. Moreover, the social composition of
college campuses altered as women gained more visibility as students and even as
teachers. “We even have three women teaching history now,” UNC professor Fletcher
Green revealed to a friend. “We have only 12 history graduate students, and the three
fellows are all women.” With so many women on campus, one former UNC student
surmised, “you must find yourself hampered in exchanging jokes and anecdotes like we
used to in the days of yore.”  

The more conservative campuses vocally resisted these
type changes. Mary Elizabeth Massey, who taught history at a small women’s college in
North Carolina, hoped to leave her position for one in a less stifling atmosphere. The
president of the college, she told her graduate advisor, would not allow soldiers to visit
the campus. “He was opposed to it because the girls might meet Catholics or Jews. I
about boiled over on that. Imagine such an attitude. I wonder what he thinks this war is all about.” “Our whole way of life is going to be changed by this defen[s]e program,” one professor quietly admitted, “and remain changed as long as we live.”

The war postponed professional development as well. Paper rationing delayed the scheduled publication of journals and drastically reduced the production of books. A July 1945 tabulation found that only 175 history books were published during the first six months of 1945 compared to 283 for the same period of 1944.98 In 1942 the Journal of Southern History reviewed 91 books; just two years later it reviewed 43 books; in 1945, it reviewed a paltry 23. “The output of books on subjects related to Southern history seems to have reached an alarmingly low level,” the editor reported in late 1944, “and I am disturbed over the difficulty of keeping a respectable book review section in existence for the Journal.” At the 1944 executive council meeting, the editor even raised the possibility of reviewing books outside of southern history to pad the section, but the suggestion was rejected without much discussion. He also considered expanding the documents section to bulk up the wartime issues.99 Not surprisingly, article submissions also decreased during the war, and large-scale research and writing projects were put on hold.100 Manuscript collection and archival development, both of which had been major activities at southern universities in the 1930s, were also hindered by the war. J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, the director of the Southern Historical Collection who was famous for traversing the South in search of documents to bring back to the University of North Carolina, even had to curtail his pursuits somewhat despite his best efforts to get new automobile tires from a potential source in Florida. As a mild form of substitute,
Hamilton petitioned the government on behalf of the Southern Historical Collection to protect historical documents despite the pressures of wartime production. ¹⁰¹

Many graduate students and young historians deferred their own professional advancement by volunteering for or being drafted into military service. Announcements of faculty leaves of absence for military service began to occupy a large portion of the “Historical News and Notices” section of the Journal of Southern History in May 1942. At the University of Virginia, the graduate student population declined by 69 percent and the faculty by ten percent between 1939 and 1945. “There is no use to get started on the situation,” one North Carolina graduate student wrote his advisor. “I am resigned to our fate, and I am trying to take it philosophically and patriotically. I hope I shall not do anything unbecoming a man, and an educated as well as a brave man at that.”¹⁰² Many historians, like Fred C. Cole and C. Vann Woodward, found war work in the nation’s capital. Cole was surprised at how many friends he had run into in Washington. (In fact, one historian estimated that 50 percent of historians between the ages of 25 and 40 had served “in some type of war-history activity” during World War II). Another historian joked with his advisor that writing history for the military was certainly less rigorous than graduate training. For the war, the student wrote, he had perfected “the art of writing history without documentation!” Though he was pleased to have a pleasant desk job, he spent most of his time inventing “fancy footnotes so somebody will think I have done some research.” “It’s not quite that bad,” he assured his mentor when he signed off, “but almost.” More seriously, the war especially hit home when young historians, students, or friends were killed in action.¹⁰³
Better established historians also put aside research and teaching for war work or political action. University of North Carolina professor Howard K. Beale, for example, took a leave of absence to work for the National Student Relocation Council, the organization that removed Japanese-American students from internment camps and placed them in eastern colleges. Others worked with the War Department to create informational and popular lectures that provided “a clear-cut understanding” of the causes of the European conflict for American soldiers and citizens. Some historians found this new emphasis on their authority as interpreters of the present both disconcerting and uncomfortable. At the 1940 annual meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, for example, a persistent and interested journalist assigned to cover the convention almost failed to find a single historian willing to talk about current affairs. Others found the sweep of events too horrifying to comprehend, let alone articulate. “The war’s end and the atomic bomb have left me in a state of subtle shock,” one wrote. “A lesser event would have started a flood of discussion from my typewriter, but this leaves me with an empty feeling that words or ideas are impotent. . . . Things happen so fast these days I have difficulty enough in keeping up with the facts and editorial comment; I seem to find no time to think for myself.”

The war crisis inevitably took its toll on the Southern Historical Association. Membership plummeted “truly in a bad way,” causing many to doubt the survival of the association. “It would surprise you to know how many of these [resignations] come from members now in the army and who say they cannot pay dues on $21.00 a month,” secretary James W. Patton complained to the editor of the Journal. “Others come from persons who say they must retrench—and there will doubtless be many more of these.”
Some resigned their memberships because military service seldom kept them in a single place long enough to receive the journal by mail, while others replaced their interest in the American South with the more immediate desire to understand European history. At the October 1942 SHA executive council meeting, Patton warned the leadership that the association had already lost 105 members and faced 147 in arrears for 1942. Not surprisingly, the situation did not improve in 1943. Patton reported to the president in September that the association had lost 121 additional members with 105 in arrears, marking the wartime low of 847 active members. By this point, however, Patton was more sanguine about the association’s prospects. “Obviously, we cannot continue indefinitely to lose members each year,” he admitted, “but with conditions what they are at present, it would seem that our situation is relatively good. . . . [O]ur annual receipts plus a liquidation of some of our investments, if necessary, should enable us to survive the war in satisfactory fashion—provided the war does not last too long.”

Part of the historians’ frustration with lagging interest stemmed from the fact that they believed scholarship of any sort, but certainly historical scholarship, was crucial to United States war efforts. “People may very readily ask what need is there for continuing cultural studies when many people believe that our very existence is at stake,” one grant commission reported in early 1941. With European scholarship disrupted, it seemed doubly important that American research and writing continue unabated. “It would be foolish to abandon culture and democratic methods at home if our technicians and manpower are being prepared to fight for its existence on the defense front.” In times of war and militarism, some historians relished the continued pursuit of humanistic study. Association leaders sometimes pleaded with resigning members to reconsider their
decision. Although "we regret very much to lose a member of the Association at any
time," Fred Cole explained to one member, "it is of more than passing importance in
times such as these." He believed that continued support of the association would
demonstrate that "those things that have been valued in times of peace will continue to
have an important place." On a more personal level, active SHA members enjoyed the
connections and feedback that membership afforded them. "Certainly academicians need
to promote morale in scholarly activities, despite the war," Wendell Stephenson
argued.110

While declining membership persistently threatened the Southern Historical
Association throughout the war, the organization faced a more immediate crisis in 1942
when a complicated series of events—some war-related, some not—culminated in the
termination of Louisiana State University's sponsorship of the Journal of Southern
History. Although some founders of the Southern Historical Association had been
somewhat nervous about establishing their new journal in a state so permeated with
corrupt politics, the relationship between the Journal of Southern History, its editor, and
the Louisiana State University administration had been secure, even healthy, for the first
four years. In the summer of 1939, however, LSU president James Monroe Smith, the
administrator who had generously funded the Journal along with a number of other
academic journals, was caught in a massive political and financial scandal, and after
having foolishly fled to Canada, was extradited and jailed. Among other things, Smith
had embezzled at least $100,000 from the university to fund his own personal
speculations in wheat futures, printed fake university bonds to cover his significant
losses, and forged minutes from board of supervisors meetings to authorize him to draw
cash from university bank accounts. Smith was convicted for mail fraud and sentenced to thirty years in state prison, where, historian Thomas W. Cutrer wryly notes, “to his credit, he spent his spare prison hours teaching his fellow inmates to read and write.” Related investigations compelled the resignations of two members of the board of supervisors and the university’s construction superintendent, who had been diverting WPA funds and materials into his own pocket. As a result of these flagrant indiscretions, the university underwent a total administrative reorganization.  

Although Journal editor Wendell H. Stephenson was at Duke University teaching for the summer session, friends and colleagues wrote effusively in support of the new-and-improved university. “Under the present circumstances I am sure that you had rather be at home for it must be very embarrassing for people to make inquiries about our unfortunate affair,” LSU historian W. B. Hatcher wrote. Though he feared the scandal had caused “irreparable damage” to the university’s reputation, he believed “that just [as] soon as we get over the first shock that everyone interested in the University will redouble his efforts to get out of the doldrums and by the time school closes in August that we will see our way clear to stage a comeback.” Professor Thomas Perkins Abernethy accepted the invitation to deliver the university’s Fleming lectures series in the midst of the uproar but assured Stephenson that LSU was certainly “a better place now than it was a few weeks ago!” Even the university’s graduate students reaffirmed their commitment to the institution: “We are strong in our condemnation of graft and corruption, but we are just as strong in our support of honesty and scholarship.” Stephenson confidently believed that LSU would overcome the tragedy and assured his Louisiana colleagues that professors in North Carolina felt the same way. “Educated men
are willing to concede that one man, or a small group of men, do not constitute a university; that it comprises essentially buildings, laboratories, libraries, students, and faculty,” he told a fellow faculty member. “These we still have to build upon. It is conceded on all sides that if the house is put in order, and the University depoliticized, the present difficulty may be a blessing in disguise.”

The Smith debacle resulted in a new and minute audit of the university’s financial status. Even an honest arrangement for Stephenson to receive half-pay from LSU while summer-teaching at Duke (to compensate for his continued work on the Journal of Southern History) came under administrative scrutiny—attention that so offended the upright Stephenson that he refused to accept the check so as to avoid any implication of impropriety. He even wanted to pay back, with interest, salary he had received during the summer of 1935 when he had been permitted a paid sick-leave. Fortunately for Stephenson, once the scandal died down the new administration would not hear of his returning salary rightfully owed him. The Journal, however, received its first budget cut as a result of the financial investigations. Colonel Troy H. Middleton, the university’s new comptroller and acting vice-president, determined that the salary of editorial associate Fred Cole looked suspicious on the books since it was budgeted under the university press and the Journal. Cole’s income was subsequently slashed by $50 a month. Despite Stephenson’s protests, the cutbacks remained in place with the administration claiming the new budget could not handle the original salary. For the first time, Stephenson’s assurance to his association colleagues that the university intended “above all...to keep our several lecture series, professional periodicals, and other scholarly functions going” rang hollow.
The scandal also resulted in a restructuring of faculty governance at the university. Stephenson became increasingly involved in campus politics despite the fact that he hated to be distracted from his research and editorial work. Though he appreciated the approbation of his colleagues in electing him to many leadership positions, he dragged through his other work, hoping "the God of Scholarship" would forgive him for his neglect. The administration changed again in the spring of 1941 as acting president Paul M. Hebert, who had served since Smith's resignation, was replaced by Campbell B. Hodges—a choice Stephenson was "most depressed" about. Still, instead of leaving LSU as he briefly contemplated doing, Stephenson accepted an appointment as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in July. With the increased burden of administrative duties Stephenson felt he could not continue as managing editor of the *Journal of Southern History*. That fall Stephenson communicated with SHA president Benjamin B. Kendrick about his impending resignation from the *Journal*. Although in the original draft of the letter Stephenson resigned outright, the version he actually sent Kendrick suggested that he and editorial associate Fred Cole simply switch positions. Kendrick felt certain that the executive council would approve the change at the annual meeting in Atlanta. Council members deeply regretted seeing Stephenson step down from the journal he had so carefully and lovingly created, but they accepted his resignation as managing editor.

While the *Journal* seemed secure from a leadership point of view, the financial situation for LSU's scholarly periodicals seemed shaky. President Hodges, particularly in war time, did not share the same opinion of the value of these journals that his predecessors had. Rumors about the demise of the *Southern Review*, a prestigious
literary magazine ably edited by LSU English professors Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks and also subsidized by the university, surfaced in the fall of 1941 in a New Orleans newspaper editorial. President Hodges was furious with Warren and Brooks, accusing them of leaking budget committee considerations to the press. The editors sent a letter to the newspaper, approved by the president’s office, publicly denying all rumors about the end of the *Southern Review*.\(^{118}\) Privately, however, they began soliciting the various foundations for grant support though their petitions were all rejected.\(^{119}\) In December, the budget committee denied all requests for university funds for the *Southern Review* and ordered that the editors’ salaries revert back to the English department budget. “The Committee does not feel that the University can continue to support so heavily an activity which relatively reaches so small a number of people,” it reported, “regardless of the fact that the Committee is fully cognizant of the high standing of this magazine in literary circles.”\(^{120}\) Consequently, the outpouring of support from those literary circles, including a petition from the Modern Language Association with over five pages of single-spaced, typed signatures, had no effect on the administration’s point of view.\(^{121}\)

With the January 1942 announcement of the cessation of the *Southern Review*, Southern Historical Association members not surprisingly became worried about the fate of their own journal at the same troubled Louisiana institution. Fletcher M. Green heard about the *Southern Review*’s termination from an article in *Time* magazine. “Really that is a tragedy for the Review had come to be one of the most distinctive and distinguished literary journals in the country,” Green told *Journal* editor Fred Cole. “Somehow Southern institutions are always suffering because of Southern poverty. I trust sincerely
that the *Journal of Southern History* will not be lost in these hard times.” SHA secretary James W. Patton became quite annoyed with Stephenson for being so secretive about the *Journal's* status. When he heard the *Southern Review* had been financially cut off, he wondered if the university had similar plans for the *Journal*. Stephenson replied that it was likely that the budget would be reduced but not wholly eliminated, and he felt certain there was no “immediate danger” to either the *Journal* or the association. In addition, the *Journal* was in a much brighter position than the *Southern Review*: Stephenson revealed that another institution had expressed interest in taking over sponsorship of the *Journal* should LSU be forced to give it up. Stephenson continued negotiations with the budget committee to retain the *Journal* under LSU sponsorship by offering to reduce the budget by $1600 and refusing to accept a personal salary increase. However, Stephenson “could still see that it might be embarrassing to retain one magazine and eliminate others”; if so, Stephenson suggested an alternative plan to redistribute the *Journal's* allotment to his own salary and to the budget of the College of Arts and Sciences.\(^\text{122}\)

As early as January 1942, then, the word was out that “the Journal was looking for a new ‘mama.’” Nevertheless, Stephenson persisted in making overtures to the LSU administration through March. “So we come to the question again,” Stephenson appealed to President Hodges, “as to whether we should attempt to make poor bricks without straw or whether additional straw might be provided here, or in the event it could not be, to relinquish our claim on the magazine to an institution which presently at least has more straw than we have.”\(^\text{123}\) Stephenson explained that since the December 1941 American Historical Association meeting he had been in discussions with William C. Binkley at Vanderbilt University about switching sponsors. When LSU finally pulled the plug on
the *Journal*, Stephenson and Binkley were immediately prepared to suggest the change to the SHA executive council.¹²⁴ In the interest of fairness to other institutions who might want to make a proposal to the association, however, Stephenson wanted to wait until the council meeting in the fall of 1942 before anything was officially decided about a move. In the meantime Stephenson and SHA president Albert B. Moore agreed that the association surplus, if approved by the council by correspondence, could be used to float the *Journal* until 1943 when Vanderbilt (or another institution) assumed control.¹²⁵

It took much negotiation and some hurt feelings to cement the deal whereby Vanderbilt University would take over responsibility for the *Journal of Southern History*. Secretary Patton continued to express his confusion over the dealings in early summer, having heard both that Vanderbilt had agreed to take the *Journal* and that LSU had offered a job to another professor that included the editorship. To insure continuity, the Vanderbilt plan included bringing Fred Cole to Nashville to serve as managing editor. Vanderbilt Chancellor O. C. Carmichael supported the proposal, but the Board of Trust preferred not to guarantee permanent sponsorship unless a grant from the General Education Board could be obtained to supplement the university subsidy. To Stephenson and Cole, the proposal sent to the outside granting agency somehow indicated that Vanderbilt had little confidence in Cole's ability as managing editor. If that were the case, "to move the *Journal* without his having any official connection with its future editorship would probably be a more satisfactory arrangement." Binkley promised that Vanderbilt preferred Cole and that they had included alternative in-house proposals with the grant application only to show that bringing Cole to Nashville was no more expensive than other options.¹²⁶
The concerns turned out to be immaterial in two ways. First, the General Education Board rejected the grant proposal outright, and Vanderbilt agreed to take the *Journal* only on a temporary year-to-year basis. Second, even though Binkley had made arrangements to keep Cole with the *Journal*, in September Cole accepted a commission in the navy. "His obligation to you demanded that he turn it down," Stephenson explained to Binkley, while "his patriotism and obligation to his country required that he accept it." In October 1942 Binkley and Stephenson began discussing the details of the transfer, while later that month the SHA executive council approved the new arrangement and Binkley as the new managing editor. Though hindered by war-induced delays, the *Journal of Southern History* survived both the war and LSU's scandalous retrenchment.

Wartime obligations and Southern Historical Association objectives collided in the subject of the annual meeting. The year 1942 opened with plans for the annual meeting that November in full swing. The program committee wanted the conference to focus on questions of war and reconstruction—topics that connected the host city, Montgomery, with the current global crisis. By early summer, however, various leaders had begun to discuss canceling the meeting. On the instruction of President A. B. Moore, secretary James W. Patton polled the executive council in late June. Moore and Frank L. Owsley advocated postponing all Southern Historical Association activities for the duration of the war, freezing the program for the 1942 meeting, and "then tak[ing] up from there when peace comes." Another council member who was also an army engineer suggested more drastic cutbacks: in addition to canceling the meetings for the duration of the war, he recommended eliminating all committee work, expanding the constitutional
powers of the association president, and scaling back the *Journal* to book reviews and news notices only. Others wanted to cancel the 1942 meeting but consider the question again the following year. What if, Benjamin B. Kendrick wondered, war became "the normal course of events"; were they really willing to never hold another meeting? Only two council members opposed the association's canceling the meeting voluntarily, but they agreed to comply if the federal government requested such conventions to cease. (One of these two later revised his vote to support cancellation.)

In any event, the clear majority favored skipping the meeting in Montgomery, though President Moore failed to gain an extension for the preparation of his presidential address by freezing the program and officers. The executive council met in October 1942 in Atlanta despite the war to approve the new *Journal* arrangements and to elect a new slate of officers.

Binkley and Stephenson made some effort to reinstate the annual meeting in 1943. The Mississippi Valley Historical Association had not cancelled its spring 1943 meeting, and Binkley thought it had been "well attended and...fully justified." The new program committee even recommended the option of arranging state or subregional gatherings that would still allow members to get together but reduce the travel distance. Always the supporters ran into the opposition of president J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton. He even opposed the idea of local gatherings: "If members of the Association want to get together, of course it would be all right, but I believe it would be a bad precedent to establish." Again secretary Patton polled the council in June 1943; again the majority voted to cancel the meeting though the vote was much closer with five members in favor of continuing with the meeting. Even the council decided not to meet in person but to
conduct all elections and other business by mail.135 “Personally, I regret very much that
the margin was so small,” Binkley confided to his co-conspirator Stephenson, “but after
all the Supreme Court has decided far more important questions by five to four without
wrecking the country.” Ironically, the *Journal* editor, who wanted a statement from the
president regarding the meeting’s cancellation for the August 1943 issue, had trouble
tracking down Hamilton because he was off on one of his manuscript-collecting jaunts.136

Advocates of holding meetings during the war had reason to be optimistic about
their chances in 1944, since Wendell H. Stephenson ascended to the presidency of the
Southern Historical Association. Stephenson “has energy and vision,” Binkley remarked,
“and those are two qualities that we need badly.” The year had barely started when
Stephenson put a campaign in motion for a convention that fall, including plans for all
SHA members attending the MVHA conference in the spring to meet. Stephenson
strongly stressed the importance of having a face-to-face discussion with the membership
before polling the council; the council, he felt, would put up “an adverse vote... without
much serious consideration of the welfare of the Association.”137 Over twenty members
gathered in St. Louis during the MVHA meeting, all of whom supported holding a
Southern Historical Association conference that fall. With the support of the members at
the MVHA meeting noted, secretary Patton again polled the council about the
advisability of holding a meeting in the fall, this time with positive results. Stephenson
was elated: “Perhaps if my year as President of the Association accomplishes nothing
more than a revival of the annual meetings, it will have been worthwhile.”138

Even a request from the Office of Defense Transportation (ODT) that all
conventions be suspended in 1944 due to increased travel pressure after the D-Day
invasion did not dissuade the Southern Historical Association from holding their abbreviated conference in Nashville, November 3–4. "I agree with you that we should pay no attention to [the ODT's directive]," Stephenson told Patton. "We have sacrificed the Association in the interest of the war effort for the past two years, and I believe we have legitimate reasons for our determination to assemble this year." If the ODT refused to prohibit intercollegiate and professional athletic travel, then Stephenson was not going to prevent this exercise of "academic morale." Some members, however, still refused to attend. Former president E. Merton Coulter, for example, had taken a pledge not to go to any conventions during the war not so much out of patriotism but because he hoped that his "abstinence from these public utilities may make it easier on a soldier." Those who did come—and there were only 114—claimed the meeting was one of the most enjoyable yet. The program committee emphasized "the social side" of the Southern Historical Association because "we have all been separated for so long." Even the reluctant Professor Hamilton was glad he went. 

The revival was short-lived. The plans for a tenth anniversary meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, were quickly and quietly cancelled. Again, the ODT had asked any convention with more than fifty out-of-town attendees to suspend their activities in 1945. In compliance the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce had requested confirmation that the SHA meeting had been authorized by the War Mobilization Board director. This time, the MVHA meeting was also affected, though that organization voted to carry over its officers for another year. William C. Binkley, who as MVHA president for 1944–45 was rolled over into office through 1946, opposed this procedure for the SHA, arguing that the continual change in leadership in the southern organization
had been “a very important factor in sustaining the interest in its work during the past two years.” Perhaps because the end of the war was in sight, there was little protest from the executive council about canceling the meeting. “It breaks my historical heart to vote for cancellation,” Stephenson admitted, “but there seems [to be] no other course.” Ella Lonn explained with her vote, cancellation “seems the only patriotic thing to do.” The end of the war came too late to reinstate the meeting, though the executive council met in Atlanta in November. Participation bounced back after the war. The 1946 meeting in Birmingham posted the second largest registered attendance at a SHA meeting to date.¹⁴²

The Postwar Years

Abundance showered the historical profession in the South in unprecedented ways after the war. Although in the immediate postwar atmosphere, colleges had difficulty competing with government salaries, more established historians hoped that younger prospects would abandon what they saw as an inflated federal pay scale for “the security of a dignified profession.” While they did not come back as quickly as some may have hoped, southern institutions were soon able to offer attractive economic opportunities. Graduate advisors who had been so despondent about placing their students before the war, often having to recommend several of their students for the same few positions, now found themselves bombarded with announcements of openings—the result of an expanded college population due to the G. I. Bill. As only one example of the turnaround in the job market, James W. Patton, now chair of the history department at North Carolina State College, mentioned in 1947 that he had hired a new instructor despite the fact that he “was not too highly recommended.” Patton, however, was “paying him at the
rate of $2400 plus the temporary bonus,” and he thought it likely there would be an
another immediate raise from a college-wide salary increase. “That is a lot of money for
a 24-year-old, without a Master’s degree,” Patton mused, “but salaries are that way
now.” Better established historians also found themselves being wooed by other
universities, with promises of higher salaries, smarter graduate students, or more lucrative
retirement packages, though many elected to stay where they were. Moreover,
university historians again felt comfortable appealing for funds for their projects. J. G. de
Roulhac Hamilton petitioned the University of North Carolina board of trustees for a
grant to the Southern Historical Collection for more storage space, staff, and equipment.
“It is time for the University and the State to decide if they desire to see this undertaking,
which has begun so finely, properly developed and maintained,” he insisted, so “that it
may retain the advantage it now possesses over a host of imitators.”

The Southern Historical Association also benefited from newly flush times. SHA
leaders began exploratory investigations of possible new endeavors, ranging from
establishing a publication endowment to serving as a clearing-house for granting agencies
to creating a state-of-the-field research report or annotated bibliography. Invitations
poured into the secretary’s office asking for delegates to represent the Southern Historical
Association at various events, from presidential inaugurations to historical preservation
conferences. Membership skyrocketed. At the 1946 annual meeting alone, Patton
reported the association signed up fifty-five new members. By the end of 1946, the
Southern Historical Association for the first time counted over one thousand members.
From 1946 through 1949, the active membership increased by an average of 138 per year.
With new prosperity coming South, the executive council approved in 1948 the first dues increase since its founding. Joining the SHA now cost four dollars per year.\textsuperscript{147}

The postwar meetings also attracted substantial participation, even though they were located in some of the smaller and more out-of-the-way cities of the South. The 1947 meeting in Savannah had 315 official registrants; the 1948 meeting in Jackson, Mississippi had, despite the “rather considerable inconvenience of travel” to that city, the largest attendance to date, 317. In 1949 the Southern Historical Association met in Williamsburg, Virginia, the farthest north and east that the association had ever traveled. Yet attendance was still high: if the spouses of the 298 official registrants counted, the meeting was the biggest ever, at 368. As the association grew, the program organizers took special precautions to “guard against the formality and the impersonality of the big national conventions and to preserve the intimacy and informality of our earlier days.”

As C. Vann Woodward pointed out in his report on the Williamsburg convention, despite what the average member “tells the dean or his wife he secretly regards these annual affairs as vacations from seminar papers, rather than opportunities for sybaritic overindulgence in them; and finally that he is primarily interested in seeing his friends.”

From the first postwar meeting, the program committee tried to pencil in even more time in the meeting schedule for “informal activities” and “talkfests.”\textsuperscript{148}

One aspect of the postwar revival was renewed pressure from historians in non-southern fields for a more visible role in the Southern Historical Association, particularly in its leadership positions. “It is very discouraging for those of us who have been interested in the S.H.A. since its organization—those of us who are interested in history \textit{in} the South as well as the history \textit{of} the South—to get so little recognition,” Ross H.
McLean protested when the nominations for the 1946 council were announced. Although the nominating committee had been instructed to try and balance their recommendations, McLean was dissatisfied with the vagueness of this rule. At the 1946 annual business meeting, therefore, the association approved Wendell Stephenson’s motion that non-American historians formally receive guaranteed representation on the executive council. \(^{149}\) With that decision, the Southern Historical Association leadership decided that any remaining lack of participation of other historians in association activities was the problem of the other historians, and not of the association. “Frankly, it seems to me,” William C. Binkley told an angry correspondent in 1949, “that your problem is not so much one of gaining the sanction of the Association as it is one of stimulating those in the non-Southern fields to take an active interest in your programs.” To expect “a sudden bursting into full-blown activity” was unreasonable. Finally realizing that the Southern Historical Association itself would never dedicate the kind of attention to all fields of history that it paid to regional history, a group of twenty-one European specialists decided a few years later to form a section within the SHA for themselves. The European section’s plans were modest, including a breakfast meeting held during the annual SHA convention and ownership over the European sessions on the SHA program, but formal organization gave these members of the Southern Historical Association a new outlet for their voice though the *Journal*’s pages were never opened to history outside the South. \(^{150}\)

The return of peace and financial security finally enabled Vanderbilt University to abandon its year-to-year sponsorship of the *Journal* and commit to a five-year partnership with William Binkley as managing editor beginning January 1, 1946. \(^{151}\) Despite this surface prosperity, all was not well at the editorial offices. The *Journal* was habitually
late. To try and save time, Binkley frequently did all the editorial work—verifying sources, checking proof, often rewriting whole paragraphs (particularly introductions)—himself, often without sending the changes or the galley proofs to the author for approval. "What’s the matter with our Bill?" a former editorial associate asked another Vanderbilt professor. "Doesn’t [the new editorial associate] do any of the work on the Journal? I sure as hell did when I was there. I earned every bit of what they paid me." At the 1947 annual meeting, Binkley described the article situation as "desperate." In an attempt to assuage things, Wendell Stephenson, now editor of the Mississippi Valley Historical Review at Tulane University, sent some of his rejected submissions Binkley’s way. On top of everything else, printers’ costs were on the rise, causing the Journal budget to be short $200 in 1947 and forcing Binkley to ask for a larger apportionment from the Vanderbilt administration for 1948.

Floundering in overwork and stress by the winter of 1948, Binkley announced to the Vanderbilt dean that he must retire from the Journal or "soon break under the strain." Everything in his professional life suffered: the Journal was behind schedule; he couldn’t devote enough attention to his courses, to his graduate students, or to his own research; he wanted to "take an intelligent part in numerous conferences and committee meetings." Adding to his burden was Binkley’s genuine devotion to and concern for the Journal. Though he had definitively resigned from the Journal, he always allowed for the possibility that he must continue as editor if no suitable arrangement could be made for the publication’s future. Indeed, for Binkley, determining the Journal’s future at Vanderbilt needed to be top priority for the administration. "If we want to continue sponsorship," he noted in a state-of-the-department report for Chancellor Harvie
Branscomb, "we cannot afford to postpone a decision until it is too late to make a satisfactory arrangement. If we should decide to give up sponsorship, we cannot, in fairness to the Southern Historical Association, wait until next summer to inform it of such a decision." With the *Journal*’s fate in limbo at Vanderbilt, Binkley delayed informing the association of his official resignation from the editorship.  

The Vanderbilt administration, however, did not act swiftly enough to satisfy Binkley’s sense of fair play. In mid-May, Binkley informed the association leaders that the administration had still failed to consider the *Journal* situation and that he was “less and less hopeful every day of obtaining a satisfactory solution.” “In all my dealings with administrative officers I have never run into such unreasonable stubbornness as we have faced on this question,” Binkley claimed. Moreover, he was highly embarrassed that he could neither officially extricate Vanderbilt from its relationship with the Southern Historical Association nor reaffirm its commitment. The situation devastated him; he told a friend, “I am about as low in spirit as I have ever been in my professional career.” Finally, in June, Binkley officially notified the association that Vanderbilt had decided to terminate its sponsorship. The administration believed that “the demands of the editorial duties are too great to be met satisfactorily without interfering seriously with the other responsibilities of the History Department staff.”

With the official resignation, Binkley sent an unofficial letter more revealing about the sources of tension between department and chancellor at Vanderbilt. “We were told that [editorial associate Henry L.] Swint and myself have been giving too much time to the *Journal* at the expense of what he [Chancellor Harvie Branscomb] considered more important responsibilities to the University,” Binkley revealed to Patton. If they couldn’t
do more teaching and research, then Branscomb didn’t want the *Journal*. Binkley was appalled that the chancellor failed to see that the *Journal* did act "as a service to the University in that it enabled the University to make a contribution toward the promotion of scholarship in the region." Frank Owsley was a bit more colorful in his description of the controversy. "Our boss [also called by Owsley "our Hitler"] told [Binkley], in substance, that he had been wasting his time and the University's money, and he let him know that he expected Bill to get off his fanny and do some worth-while research and writing," Owsley confided to Wendell Stephenson. Branscomb quickly became in the eyes of some association leaders a hopeless enemy of the intellect. He "has no more appreciation for scholarship than old General [Campbell B.] Hodges at L. S. U. back in 1942," Stephenson commiserated. Branscomb, however, would have seen himself in quite opposite terms. His goals as chancellor included the recruitment of top-notch faculty, the improvement of graduate programs, and the elevation of Vanderbilt to national eminence. With those funding priorities, the *Journal* did not seem to him the best outlet for the university's resources.

No one seemed concerned, however, that the *Journal* might not find another institutional home. Binkley actually looked forward to placing "before the Chancellor a proposition from a good southern university as proof that other administrations are interested in the set-up which Vanderbilt is being asked to throw away." The Vanderbilt professor had already discussed his distress with Thomas D. Clark at the Mississippi Valley Historical Association meeting in the spring and gave him the green light to propose the University of Kentucky as the new *Journal* sponsor the same day that he notified the association of Vanderbilt's termination. Word spread quickly that the
Journal was up for grabs.160 Emory University hoped to take on the Journal as the cornerstone of a new Ph.D. program in history. Its plan included hiring Binkley away from Vanderbilt to continue as editor—a plan Binkley was flattered by but ultimately not interested in. Although he applauded Emory's "forward-looking" administration and admitted that he would like to be part of an environment "where constructive planning is taken for granted," he did not want to be considered as part of any deal that included running the Journal. "The editorship is a man-killing job," he explained, "and no man should hold it long enough to let himself be killed."161 The Louisiana State University history department also wanted to make a proposal "in dead earnest" to get the Journal back to Baton Rouge. The University of North Carolina toyed with the idea, contemplating an editorial team of Fletcher M. Green and J. Carlyle Sitterson. In addition there were rumors that both Duke University and the University of Virginia considered throwing their hats into the ring. Stephenson had even heard the unlikely story that Vanderbilt considered making a last-ditch effort to retain sponsorship itself.162

With all this potential interest, Binkley anticipated "a rather strenuous session" at the annual meeting in Jackson to decide on the new sponsor and worried that a decision ought to be made earlier to ensure an effective transition. Consequently, the SHA president appointed a special subcommittee made up of E. Merton Coulter and the two former Journal editors to evaluate the proposals and make a recommendation to the council.163 Though the three men made plans to meet together in Atlanta, as the meeting approached only the University of Kentucky had made a formal proposal. Later both Emory and LSU officially backed out.164 "Unless some last minute bids come in," Patton assured Coulter, "your committee will never get an opportunity to go into action, and
Tom Clark will be the Editor of the *Journal.*” The committee formally voted Clark into office anyway, and the decision was ratified by the executive council at the annual meeting. The University of Kentucky’s sponsorship was announced in the November 1948 *Journal*, a feat made possible by the fact that the *Journal* was so hopelessly late. Binkley quickly transferred all editorial materials to Lexington by mid-December.¹⁶⁵

The *Journal of Southern History* thus survived another potential death-blow and entered a new decade of sponsorship at the University of Kentucky. Indeed by mid-century, the Southern Historical Association seemed to be on an even keel, although the *Journal* continued to struggle with timely publication. Membership stabilized around 1,600 people after the new secretary Bennett H. Wall, also of the University of Kentucky, removed all delinquent and even some dead life members from the rolls—the first time the membership list had been thoroughly updated in several years. Wall even wondered whether the Southern Historical Association had reached a “saturation point.”¹⁶⁶

This apparent institutional calm, however, masked the swelling tide of social and political reform that would completely transform the meaning of southern history in the southern present. Hints of an imminent turf battle over the meaning of “the South,” emanated from the struggle over the *Journal*’s fate at Vanderbilt in 1948. Chancellor Harvie Branscomb had a nationalizing vision for the university that thoroughly frightened her most sectional sons. As a result, they perceived that Branscomb had let the *Journal* sponsorship go in pursuit of this “national” reputation. “Would he blindly proceed to take away from the University the one characteristic which has given it individuality?” an outraged student of Frank L. Owsley asked:

> Would he sacrifice the truth, so carefully and painstakingly resurrected in order to reduce the effects of regionalism? Would he lose to Vanderbilt her position as the center of Southern
History only to see it shifted somewhere else[?] Can't he see beyond his Omnipotent nose that you cannot root out a force as strong as truth backed by evidence, and that it will only crop up again with even freer wings [elsewhere]?

Branscomb, Vanderbilt English professor Donald Davidson fumed, wrongly wanted to convert “the university into an extension of the Duke-University-of-North-Carolina school of ‘liberalism.’” Southern history, these Branscomb opponents argued, was not only a source for good scholarship, but a subject that necessarily promoted conservatism among its devotees. For these southern intellectuals facing certain change in the South, the idea of regionalism was malleable enough to serve as a fortification against social and intellectual revolution.

The Southern Historical Association successfully established the institutions which enabled the flowering of professional history of the South. It was poised to take advantage of a resurgent interest in regionalism, the growing stability and reputation of southern institutions of higher education, and the burgeoning authority that the historical profession attained over the interpretation of the American past. Yet the SHA and its journal were not isolated institutions that supported the growth of a strictly academic exercise. They became the site of a many-sided battle over the social, political, cultural, and purposeful definition of the region that accompanied the practice of history in the South. They served as a framework for larger questions about the persistence of a distinctive southern identity, the best solutions for regional problems, and the role of the professional historian in a volatile contemporary world. Though the politics of what the South was and what southern history meant crystallized in the light of civil rights movement, the Southern Historical Association had served as a testing ground for these debates from the moment of its founding.
1 Six African Americans (though not all southerners) had earned the Ph.D. in history between 1895 when the first one was awarded to W. E. B. Du Bois and 1935. Over 2000 were awarded to Americans by 1935. William B. Hesseltine and Louis Kaplan, "Negro Doctors of Philosophy in History," *Negro History Bulletin*, 6 (December 1942), 59.


3 Walter L. Fleming to R. Heath Dabney, January 26, 1903, Box 1, Richard Heath Dabney Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library [UVA]; Frank L. Owsley to George Petrie, February 25, 1921, Box 1, Folder 1, Owsley Papers; Frederick Jackson Turner to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, January 13, 1923, Box 1, Thomas Perkins Abernethy Papers, UVA; Fleming to Abernethy, May 11, 1928, Box 1, Abernethy Papers (first quotation); and John Spencer Bassett to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, May 27, 1908 (subsequent quotations), and June 21, 1908, Folder 2, J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton Papers, SHC.

4 Hamilton defended his dedication to his southern identity when a reader scorned him for giving value to the perspectives of the North. J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to Berkeley Minor, August 7, 1909, Folder 2, Hamilton Papers. In the quotation above, Hamilton originally had written “right” in the place of “fair.”

5 On academic isolation, see Walter L. Fleming to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, April 6, 1912, Folder 4, Hamilton Papers; Frederick Jackson Turner to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, January 16, 1922, Box 1, Abernethy Papers; and E. Merton Coulter to Abernethy, February 5, 1923, Box 1, Abernethy Papers. On rejection from “national” journals, see Morey D. Rothberg, “‘To Set a Standard of Workmanship and Compel Men to Conform to It’: John Franklin Jameson as Editor of the *American Historical Review*,” *American Historical Review*, 89 (October 1984), 962 (first quotation); and J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to James Southall Wilson, May 1, 1926, Box 21, *Virginia Quarterly Review* Collection, UVA (subsequent quotations).


7 In addition, some southern colleges had attempted without much success to establish historical societies. William P. Trent to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, February 24, 1933, Folder 103, Hamilton Papers (on Sewanee Historical Society); William P. Trent, *The
Study of Southern History (Nashville, 1895), 1–18 (on Vanderbilt Southern History Society); and Nannie M. Tilley, The Trinity College Historical Society, 1892–1941 (Durham, 1941).


10 William B. Hesseltine and Louis Kaplan, “Doctors of Philosophy in History: A Statistical Study,” American Historical Review, 47 (July 1942), Table 1, p. 772–73, and Table 2, p. 776–77. In addition to the older graduate program at Johns Hopkins University, there were graduate programs in history in other border states, including Missouri, West Virginia, and Oklahoma, and at specialized institutions, like Peabody College for Teachers and Southern Baptist Seminary. “American” history in this survey counted both North and South America. Of the Ph.D.'s granted at the above six southern institutions before 1935, 86 percent of the dissertations were on American topics. See also Appendix E.

11 Hesseltine and Kaplan, “Doctors of Philosophy in History,” Tables 6–7, p. 785–88. For example, three-quarters of Duke Ph.D.'s finishing in these years obtained employment in the South, while 100 percent of University of North Carolina, University of Virginia, and Vanderbilt graduates remained in the South. See Edwin A. Alderman to James Southall Wilson, July 14, 1927, Box 1, Virginia Quarterly Review Collection, for evidence that southern universities and colleges worked together to staff their departments. This relationship could backfire if the smaller institution came to feel it was being used by the research university or its graduates to advance their own careers shamelessly (Judson C. Ward to Fletcher M. Green, March 20, 1940, Folder 63, Green Papers).


14 Thomas D. Clark, "Our Roots Flourished in the Valley," *Journal of American History*, 65 (June 1978), 86–87 (first quotation on p. 87); E. Merton Coulter to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 13, 1934, Box 55, WHS (second quotation); and Charles W. Ramsdell to Charles M. Knapp, April 22, 1935, Box 3N293, Ramsdell Papers. The MVHA and SHA developed quite an overlap in leadership. Two managing editors of the *Journal of Southern History*, Stephenson (1935–1941) and William C. Binkley (1943–1948), also edited the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, from 1946–1953 and 1953–1963 respectively. A third editor of the *Journal*, Thomas D. Clark (1949–1952), was executive secretary of the MVHA from 1970–1973. Several early presidents of the SHA also served as president of the MVHA: Charles W. Ramsdell (1936; 1928–29); Stephenson (1944; 1957–58); Fletcher M. Green (1945; 1960–61); Binkley (1950; 1944–46); Clark (1947; 1956–57); Avery O. Craven (1951; 1963–64); and C. Vann Woodward (1952; 1968–69). In contrast, the only president in the first twenty years of the SHA who also served as president of the American Historical Association was C. Vann Woodward (1952; 1969).


The letter files of any historian in the 1930s are filled with the tortured stories of their students struggling to attain academic employment. C. Vann Woodward has said that the academic job market in the 1930s was far more desperate than any since. John Herbert Roper, *C. Vann Woodward: Southerner* (Athens, Ga., 1987), 103.


22 Frederick Jackson Turner to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, January 16, [1923], and Walter L. Fleming to Abernethy, February 28, 1923; both Box 1, Abernethy Papers. Turner’s letter is actually dated 1922, but since Abernethy’s inquiries are dated 1923, it seems reasonable to assume that Turner misdated his letter—a new year’s mistake.

23 A copy of this letter is in Box 63, Knapp folder, WHS. The political scientists later laughed at the irony that their organization provided the space for the organization of historians when in 1934 most political scientists still worked under the aegis of history departments. Mérritt B. Pound, “The Southern Political Science Association: An Inventory,” *Journal of Politics*, 11 (May 1949), 287.

24 Ramsdell (1877–1942) was a born-and-bred Texan who spent his entire intellectual career, from his undergraduate education until his death, at the University of Texas. Only his advanced graduate work took him away from Austin, in 1904–1905, to Columbia University. Ramsdell’s dissertation, *Reconstruction in Texas* (published 1910), is a classic example of Dunning school work. Wendell H. Stephenson, “Charles W. Ramsdell: Historian of the Confederacy,” in *Southern History in the Making*, 184–204. On being “the dean,” see Ramsdell to Stephenson, April 11, 1937, Box 3N303, Ramsdell Papers.

25 Charles W. Ramsdell to Charles M. Knapp, October 26, 1934, Box 3N294, Ramsdell Papers.


28 Stephenson, “Southern Avenue to Now,” 23. The subsidy ended up much greater. The *Journal* spent close to $5000 for each volume in printing costs and supplies. In addition to these costs, the university paid the salaries of the editors, released them from some departmental and teaching obligations, and supplied office space, storage, and secretarial

29 Philip M. Hamer, Minutes of the Organization Meeting of the Southern Historical Association, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2, 1934, p. 1–2 (Knapp quoted p. 2), in Box 71, SHA folder, WHS. There may have been other people present at the meeting who were not recorded as founders in the minutes. Much later, Wendell H. Stephenson tried to compile a written list of the founders "before we get too far away from the epoch-making date, November 2, 1934." Stephenson could "recall only thirteen out of twenty or more in the group." E. Merton Coulter, in trying to remember more of the "Immortal Twenty" wrote: "[Cullen B.] Gosnell was there, I am sure, but he may have just peeped in and should not, therefore, be counted. . . . There was also a woman from Atlanta there, who may have come in of her own accord, who had some foolish things to say—that is why I remember her. I believe her name was Mrs. Lamar Ellis—but surely she should not be one of the Immortals!!" Stephenson to Coulter, October 7, 1940, and reply, October 11, 1940, Box 55, WHS. Walter B. Posey remembered years later that the founders were all quite young ("Southern Historical Association," 60).

30 Hamer, Minutes of the Organization Meeting, 4. This remained the stated purpose of the SHA until November 1973, when the membership rejected a plan to revise Article II to read "with primary emphasis on the history of the South" and opted instead for simply "with emphasis on the history of the South." See "The Proposed New Constitution of the Southern Historical Association," JSBH, 38 (August 1972), 461–68; and "The Constitution and Bylaws of the Southern Historical Association, November 8, 1973," JSBH, 40 (February 1974), 107–14.


32 "Historical News and Notices," JSBH, 1 (February 1935), 107 (Stephenson quotations); and Kraehe, "History of the European Section of the Southern Historical Association."

33 After its ratification at the first annual meeting in November 1935, the constitution was published in JSBH, 2 (February 1936), 75–76. On the vice-presidential amendment, see Fletcher M. Green, "Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer," JSBH, 5 (February 1939), 78; and the amended Constitution of the Southern Historical Association, JSBH, 5 (February 1939), 81–82.

34 "Southern Historical Association," [brochure], May 1936, Box 76, JSBH Miscellany folder, WHS (first quotation); and Edwin A. Davis to Mary Watters, February 15, 1935,
Box 73, WHS (second quotation). The association, however, decided against expanding organizational benefits, like special programs or publications, to teachers or members outside the academy. See Wendell H. Stephenson to R. S. Cotterill, October 4, 1940, Box 53; and R. H. Woody to Stephenson, October 16, 1940, Box 74; both in WHS.

35 McWhiney, "Historians as Southerners," 13. On state distribution of membership, see Appendix C. Avery O. Craven, a southern-born professor at the University of Chicago, was the first SHA president to work in the true North, though Philip Hamer (1938) headed up the National Archives during his presidency and Ella Lonn (1946), who grew up outside the South, was a professor in Maryland. Interestingly, Craven’s first nomination to the presidency was overturned from the floor of the annual business meeting in 1947. Fletcher M. Green feared that “some will charge the rejection to the fact that Craven is not living in the South and hence will maintain that the Association is a very narrow, provincial one” (Green to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 28, 1944, Box 13, WHS). The more likely reason for the “revolution,” secretary James W. Patton suspected, was “a feeling that honors in the Association should go to persons who attend the meetings and are active in the Association’s work” (Patton to Green, November 20, 1947, Folder 145, Green Papers).

36 Fletcher M. Green, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 4 (February 1938), 69; Green to Charles W. Ramsdell, October 21, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 17, SHA Records (quotation); and “A Statistical Report on the Participation of Women in the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 52 (May 1986), 283. Although both other national organizations honored women historians with the presidency earlier than the Southern Historical Association (Nellie Neilson, AHA president in 1943 and Louise P. Kellogg, MVHA president in 1931), until the early 1980s, the SHA had honored more women with the position. See Pocock, “Presidents of the American Historical Association,” 1020; Sellers, “Semicentennial of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association,” 517; and Carol K. Bleser, ed., “The Three Women Presidents of the Southern Historical Association: Ella Lonn [1946], Kathryn Abby [sic, Abbey] Hanna [1953], and Mary Elizabeth Massey [1972],” Southern Studies, 20 (Summer 1981), 101.

37 James W. Patton to Benjamin B. Kendrick, October 26, 1941, Series A.1, Folder 34, SHA Records (first quotation); and “Southern Historical Association,” [brochure], WHS (second quotation). See also Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

38 Hamer, Minutes of the Organization Meeting, 3; Fletcher M. Green to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, February 25, 1935, Folder 113, Hamilton Papers (first quotation); and Wendell H. Stephenson to William C. Binkley, July 26, 1943, Box 52, WHS. Stephenson was reminding Binkley of Dwight L. Dumond’s jocular concerns about the Journal of Southern History back in 1934. There were similar concerns about Long trying to influence the Southern Review, published at LSU contemporaneously with the Journal. Many assumed that Long intruded upon the Southern Review editors’ lives and policies in concrete ways (see, for example, Bill Cunningham, ed., Kentucky’s Clark [Kuttawa, Ky., 1987], 127). Editor Cleath Brooks doubted that Long even knew the quarterly existed. Brooks, “The Life and Death of an Academic Journal,” in Bill Henderson. ed., The Art of Literary Publishing: Editors on Their Craft (Yonkers, N. Y., 1980), 91.
39 Hamer, Minutes of the Organization Meeting, 3 (first quotation); and the Norfolk Virginia-Pilot, August 2, 1935, quoted in Cutrer, Parnassus on the Mississippi, 65 (second quotation).

40 Hamer, Minutes of the Organization Meeting, 4 (quotations); Wendell H. Stephenson to Charles M. Knapp, November 28, 1934, Box 63, WHS; Stephenson to Walter B. Posey, November 26, 1934, Box 68, WHS; and Stephenson to Charles W. Ramsdell, December 13, 1934, Box 3N294, Ramsdell Papers.


42 William O. Lynch to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 18, 1934, Box 64; Philip M. Hamer to Stephenson, November 27, 1934, Box 59; and Stephenson to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, January 8, 1935, Box 50; all WHS; and Posey, “The Southern Historical Association,” 65. The Journal of Politics, the journal of the Southern Political Science Association, published articles on political theory, European politics, national politics, public opinion, and occasionally regional politics. Similarly, the Mississippi Valley Historical Association first considered changing its name and the name of its journal to reflect more accurately the scope and purpose of the association as early as 1943 (Aeschbacher, “Mississippi Valley Historical Association, 1907–1965,” p. 346).

43 Kathleen Bruce to Edwin A. Davis, January 17, 1935, Box 53, WHS; Fletcher M. Green to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 12, 1934, (first quotation); Green to Mary Watters, January 7, 1935 (second quotation); and Green to J. T. Dorris, January 7, 1935; all in Series 2, Folder 877, Green Papers.

44 James K. Greer to Charles W. Ramsdell, February 21, 1935, and reply, February 26, 1935 (quotation), Box 3N294, Ramsdell Papers. See also Ramsdell to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 17, 1934, and reply, December 19, 1934, Box 3N294, Ramsdell Papers; Henry T. Shanks to Fletcher M. Green, November 29, 1934, Folder 20, Green Papers; and William C. Binkley to Richard E. Yates, January 13, 1937, Box 2, Folder 14, Binkley Papers.

45 William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 14, 1934, Box 52; William B. Hesseltine to Stephenson, November 27, 1934, Box 61; and William O. Lynch to Stephenson, November 18, 1934, Box 64 (quotation); all in WHS.


47 I. Knishnik to Southern Historical Association, September 7, 1935; Tilghman E. Dixon to Edwin A. Davis, October 27, 1936; and William H. H. Peirce to Davis, April 1, 1935;
all in Box 72, Subscriptions Folder, WHS; and Samuel A. Ashe to Davis, February 28, 1935, Box 51, WHS (quotation).

48 Philip M. Hamer to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 6, 1935, Box 60, WHS (first quotation); and Kathleen Bruce to Edwin A. Davis, January 17, 1935, Box 53, WHS (second quotation). Soliciting one’s students was a common approach to membership augmentation: see William B. Hesseltine to Stephenson, November 27, 1934, Box 61, WHS; Fletcher M. Green to Stephenson, December 12, 1934, Series 2, Folder 877, Green Papers; and Green to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, July 25, 1937, Series A.1, Folder 18, SHA Records. The SHA did not enact a student membership rate until November 1954. Bennett H. Wall, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 21 (February 1955), 87.

49 Wendell H. Stephenson to Thomas D. Affleck, January 23, 1935, Box 50, WHS.

50 Philip M. Hamer to Fletcher M. Green, December 3, 1937, and reply, December 21, 1937, Folder 18; and Hamer to Green, January 13, 1938, Folder 19; all in Series A.1, SHA Records.

51 Eugene C. Barker to Edwin A. Davis, May 17, 1935, Box 51, WHS. Barker didn’t relinquish his membership after all. “Membership: Southern Historical Association, January 1, 1937,” Box 76, JSH Miscellany folder, WHS; and “List of Members and Exchanges: The Southern Historical Association,” January 15, 1945, Box 10, Professional Activities folder, Owsley Papers.

52 Ruhl J. Bartlett (Tufts) to Edwin A. Davis, January 16, 1935, Box 52, WHS; and Henry H. Simms to Davis, January 21, 1935, Box 70, WHS. “I am deeply disappointed that Virginia has not responded more rapidly,” Kathleen Bruce wrote of her recruitment efforts. “People react slowly as a rule and this is an unfavorable time economically” (Bruce to Davis, March 28, 1935, Box 3, WHS).

53 William O. Lynch to Wendell H. Stephenson, April 5, 1935, and March 12, 1935 (first quotation), both in Box 64, WHS; Edwin A. Davis to Charles M. Knapp, March 22, 1935, Box 63, WHS (second quotation); and Davis to Kathryn T. Abbey, April 17, 1935, Box 50, WHS.

54 Hamer, Minutes of the Organization Meeting (first quotation); Fletcher M. Green to Mary Watters, January 7, 1935, Series 2, Folder 877, Green Papers (second quotation); and Wendell H. Stephenson to E. Merton Coulter, April 4, 1935, Box 55, WHS (third quotation).

55 William C. Binkley to Ross H. McLean, July 3, 1935, Box 1, Folder 30, Binkley Papers; Binkley to McLean, August 11, 1935, Box 1, Folder 31, Binkley Papers; and William C. Binkley, “First Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 2 (February 1936), 71–73. There is no indication that McLean was pressured into this kind of pedagogical session instead of a panel strictly on European history.

56 Binkley, “First Annual Meeting,” 69; Fletcher M. Green, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 3 (February 1937), 92; and “Distribution of Members of the Southern Historical Association,” n.d. [end of 1936], Box 59, WHS. In August 1935, the editor reported membership stood at 324 (“Historical News and Notices,” JSH, 1 [August
1935], 411). A typewritten list dated October 25, 1935, shows 355 members; with
handwritten additions and deletions made at an unknown date, the total becomes 357
("Members of the Southern Historical Association," Box 77, WHS).

57 See, for example, Edwin A. Davis to Charles M. Knapp, March 22, 1935, and reply,
April 1, 1935, both in Box 63, WHS; and Wendell H. Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green,
January 8, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 1, SHA Records. Whole files in the SHA records
refer to updating membership information. See, for example, Series A.1, Folders 10–12.
The correspondence levels of these offices in general was immense. When James W.
Patton considered becoming secretary-treasurer, he asked outgoing secretary Fletcher
Green if the report that he spent over $44 in postage during 1938 really meant that he had
written "nearly 1,500 letters." Patton to Green, October 25, 1939, Folder 59, Green
Papers.

58 Walter B. Posey to Wendell H. Stephenson, October 26, 1941, Box 30, WHS (first
quotation); Henry T. Shanks to Fletcher M. Green, November 11, 1934, Folder 20, Green
Papers (second and third quotations); and David A. Lockmiller to Green, November 11,
1935, Folder 29, Green Papers (fourth quotation). See also James W. Patton to J. G. de
Roulhac Hamilton, April 9, 1936, Folder 119, Hamilton Papers; Mack Swearingen to
Stephenson, January 13, 1939, Box 72, WHS; and Charles W. Ramsdell to Stephenson,
January 13, 1938, Box 3N292, Ramsdell Papers.

59 William C. Binkley to E. Merton Coulter, June 14, 1935, Box 1, Folder 29, Binkley
Papers; Binkley to Robert H. Woody, September 30, 1936, Box 2, Folder 10, Binkley
Papers; Charles S. Sydnor to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, November 18, 1938, Folder 134,
Hamilton Papers; James W. Patton to Fred C. Cole, January 13, 1939, Box 67, WHS; and
"Distribution of Reviews in Volumes I–III of the Journal of Southern History, Arranged
by Institutions or Residences" and "Distribution of Reviews in Volumes I–III of the
Journal of Southern History, Arranged by Individuals," n.d. [ca. 1938], Box 71, SHA
folder, WHS.

60 For complaints, see George C. Osborn to Wendell H. Stephenson, February 1, 1944,
Box 30, WHS (quotations); J. T. Dorris to Stephenson, November 23, 1936 and July 11,
1937, Box 56, WHS; and A. T. Votwiler to Stephenson, July 15, 1938, Box 73, WHS.
Until the late 1940s, the presidency was held by a faculty member at a major southern
research university. Presenters at the first three annual meetings represented every major
southern state and private research university, but also several smaller southern colleges
and non-southern institutions, including Washington & Lee, Goucher College, Mary
Baldwin College, Florida State College for Women, Agnes Scott College, New York
University, Colgate, Converse College, Princeton, University of Chattanooga, Wofford
College, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Chicago, Harris Teachers
College, Morehead State Teachers College, Longwood College, and Augusta, Ga., Junior
College, among others. In the prewar years, however, approximately 168 individuals
filled some 226 slots at the annual meetings between 1935 and 1941. Perhaps this fact
contributed to the perception that a few institutions dominated the meetings.

61 Wendell H. Stephenson to Jennings B. Sanders, July 22, 1935, Box 70, WHS (first
quotation); Mack Swearingen to Fletcher M. Green, December 4, 1938; Stephenson to
Swearingen, February 8, 1939 (second quotation); Swearingen to Stephenson, January 13, 1939 (third and fourth quotations); and Swearingen to Stephenson, February 10, 1939 (final quotation); all in Box 72, WHS.

62 William C. Binkley to William Arthur Sheppard, November 24, 1942 (quotation), and Binkley to Robert H. Woody, November 10, 1942; both in Box 4, Folder 11, Binkley Papers. See also Wendell H. Stephenson to Thomas Kearny, January 21, 1938, Box 63; Mack Swearingen to Stephenson, December 15, 1939, Box 72; both in WHS. For a mature statement of the Journal editors’ position on protests, see Fred C. Cole, “Book Reviews: An Editor’s Point of View,” JSI, 13 (May 1947), 267–68.

63 Wendell H. Stephenson to Charles W. Ramsdell, December 19, 1934, and reply, December 21, 1934, Box 3N294, Ramsdell Papers; Jonathan T. Dorris to Stephenson, December 30, 1934, Box 56, WHS (first quotation); E. Merton Coulter to Stephenson, January 3, 1935, Box 55, WHS (second quotation); Stephenson to Dorris, January 5, 1935, Box 56, WHS (third quotation); and William C. Binkley to Ross H. McLean, October 21, 1935, Box 1, Folder 33, Binkley Papers (fourth quotation).

64 Fletcher M. Green, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSI, 3 (February 1937), 92–93; Wendell H. Stephenson to Charles S. Sydnor, October 30, 1935, Box 72, WHS; and William O. Lynch to Stephenson, November 29, 1935, Box 64, WHS. Knapp essentially disappeared from association activity after this point, and apparently felt “somewhat bitter. . .over the fact that he has been ignored” despite his “large part in the founding of the Association” (Thomas Perkins Abernethy to Frank L. Owsley, February 5, 1937, Box 1, Folder 8, Owsley Papers).

65 Fletcher Melvin Green, a native Georgian born in 1895, received his undergraduate degree from Emory University in 1920 and his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1927. The bulk of his teaching career was spent at UNC, with a brief exception as a professor at Emory University, 1933–1936. Green was primarily known as a teacher and a graduate mentor, having directed over one hundred dissertations. Five of his students became presidents of the Southern Historical Association. See Arthur S. Link and Rembert W. Patrick, eds., “Foreword,” Writing Southern History: Essays in Historiography in Honor of Fletcher M. Green (Baton Rouge, 1965); and Isaac J. Copeland and Edwin A. Miles, obituary for Green, JSI, 44 (May 1978), 347–49.

66 Fletcher M. Green to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 7, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 1, SHA Records; and Walter B. Posey to Stephenson, February 7, 1936, Box 68, WHS. “The list of members who paid Knapp seems to be constantly growing,” Green wrote in November, “and the only thing to do is just to take their word for it and add their names to the mailing list.” Green to Stephenson, November 2, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 3, SHA Records.

67 “I had a faint recollection that I had been made a member of the Executive Council, but Knapp seems to lose his papers as effectively as I do... so I have had no official notice.” Frank L. Owsley to Fletcher M. Green, June 15, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 13, SHA Records.
68 Wendell H. Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green, February 1, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 1, SHA Records (quotation), and reply, February 4, 1936, Box 59, WHS. "The suggestion that I made in my last letter represented my disgust with the situation," Stephenson later replied, "and I realized at the time that it would not be expedient to put that plan into operation." Stephenson to Green, February 12, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 1, SHA Records.

69 Charles W. Ramsdell to Charles M. Knapp, February 19, 1936, Box 3N293, Ramsdell Papers; Fletcher M. Green to Ramsdell, February 19, 1936, Series 2, Folder 877, Green Papers; and Ramsdell to Green, March 10, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 17, SHA Records.

70 E. Merton Coulter to Fletcher M. Green, March 3, 1936, Folder 33, Green Papers; Wendell H. Stephenson to Paul P. Boyd, March 5, 1936, Box 51, WHS; and Green to Stephenson, March 12, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 1, SHA Records.

71 Fletcher M. Green to Charles W. Ramsdell, April 4, 1936, Box 3N290, Ramsdell Papers; Green to Wendell H. Stephenson, March [30], 1936, Series A.1, Folder 1, SHA Records; Green to Stephenson, May 19, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 2, SHA Records; Green to Stephenson, September 26, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 3, SHA Records; and Green, "Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer," JSN, 3 (February 1937), 91 (quotation). The financial statement in Green's report stated that the cash balance from 1935 was $1155.41 (p. 96). Although I have not found the record, Knapp must have sent Green a check for additional funds at some point before the 1936 annual meeting, when this statement was made. It is clear that the correspondence and other records of the association's first year were never sent. The official Southern Historical Association records group at the Southern Historical Collection begins with Green's tenure.

72 Thomas Perkins Abernethy to Fletcher M. Green, April 21, 1937, Series A.1, Folder 18, SHA Records (first quotation); Green to Philip Davidson, October 22, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 13, SHA Records; and Green to Charles W. Ramsdell, February 23, 1939, Box 3N303, Ramsdell Papers (second quotation). The council approved a stipend for the secretary's work to begin in January 1942. Minutes, Executive Council Meeting, November 7, 1941, Series A.1, Folder 36, SHA Records.

73 James W. Patton to Green, January 1, 1940, Folder 61, Green Papers; Patton to Green, February 8, 1940, Folder 62, Green Papers; and Wendell H. Stephenson to Green, January 8, 1940, Box 59, WHS (quotation).

74 William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 8, 1935, Box 52, WHS. The Journal of Southern History, especially its "Historical News and Notices" section, also served as a virtual meeting place for historians in the South. Stephenson to E. Merton Coulter, February 14, 1935, Box 55, WHS.

75 Paul Murray to Fletcher M. Green, October 6, 1940, Folder 70, Green Papers (first quotation); and Green to William C. Binkley, March 20, 1935, Folder 877, Green Papers (second quotation). On SHA networking, see Leonard C. Helderman to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 2, 1935, Box 61, WHS; Binkley to F. Garvin Davenport, November 14, 1936, Box 2, Folder 12, Binkley Papers; and Binkley to Richard E. Yates, January 13, 1937, Box 2, Folder 14, Binkley Papers.
76 Paul Murray to Fletcher M. Green, December 16, 1942, Folder 96, Green Papers; Robert H. Woody to Green, January 2, 1937, Folder 39, Green Papers (quotation); and William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, January 10, 1940, Box 52, WHS. AHA annual dues in 1935 were $5; life memberships were $100. Constitution of the American Historical Association, in Lowell Joseph Ragatz, ed., Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1935, Vol. 1: Proceedings, 1933, 1934, and 1935 (Washington, 1936), xiii. Wendell H. Stephenson explained to the AHA offices that southern professors employed in distant and poor institutions could rarely afford to attend the national meetings in expensive northern cities. Stephenson to Bessie Louise Pierce, November 1, 1941, Box 1, WHS.

77 Walter B. Posey to E. Merton Coulter, September 18, 1935, Box 68, Posey folder, WHS (first quotation); Wendell H. Stephenson to William O. Lynch, September 26, 1935, Box 64, WHS (second quotation); and Posey, “The Southern Historical Association,” 65. Cost still prohibited many interested yet overburdened professors from attending SHA meetings. See David A. Lockmiller to Fletcher M. Green, November 17, 1935, Folder 29, Green Papers; and Charles S. Sydnor to Stephenson, November 14, 1936, Box 72, WHS.

78 Wendell H. Stephenson to Bessie Louise Pierce, November 1, 1941, Box 1, WHS. In the early years, SHA leaders resisted cooperative sessions or meetings with other associations because they wanted the chance first “to establish our identity as an organization” (William C. Binkley to Charles W. Ramsdell, May 3, 1935, Box 1, Folder 27, Binkley Papers). Nevertheless, the Southern Historical Association should not be seen as having been organized in protest of or in rejection of the priorities of the American Historical Association. I disagree with the assessment of the SHA founding motives implied by Hugh I. Rodgers, “The Muses Organized,” 236–37.

79 William C. Binkley to Charles W. Ramsdell, November 26, 1937, Box 2, Folder 24, Binkley Papers (quotation); Wendell H. Stephenson to Charles M. Knapp, December 4, 1935, Box 63, WHS; Binkley to Robert H. Woody, December 2, 1936, Box 2, Folder 13, Binkley Papers; and Frank L. Owsley to Walter B. Posey, December 16, 1936, Box 1, Folder 2, Owsley Papers.

80 For favorable comparisons of the programs, see Wendell H. Stephenson to Herbert A. Kellar, November 29, 1935, Box 63, WHS; Robert H. Woody to Fletcher M. Green, January 2, 1937, Folder 39, Green Papers. For membership cooperation, see William C. Binkley to Culver H. Smith, November 14, 1936, Box 2, Folder 12, Binkley Papers (granting permission to solicit members for the AHA at the SHA meeting); and Binkley to Green, March 22, 1939, Box 3, Folder 8, Binkley Papers (asking permission to advertise the MVHA meeting through the SHA mailing list). For joint program development, see E. Merton Coulter to Stephenson, January 3, 1935, Box 55, WHS; Charles W. Ramsdell to Stephenson, February 2, 1935, Box 3N294, Ramsdell Papers; “Historical News and Notices,” JSB, 1 (August 1935), 408; and Binkley to Charles S. Sydnor, January 20, 1939, Box 3, Folder 5, Binkley Papers.

81 Caroline Gordon to Robert Penn Warren, n.d. [November 1936], Southern Review Collection (first quotation); and Ralph B. Flanders to Frank L. Owsley, November 25,
1937, Box 3, Folder 3, Owsley Papers (second quotation). For descriptions of the SHA’s sociability, see Robert H. Woody to Fletcher M. Green, January 2, 1937, Folder 39, Green Papers; R. S. Cotterill to Wendell H. Stephenson, January 6, 1940, Box 53, WHS; and Thomas Perkins Abernethy to Stephenson, November 16, 1941, Box 50, WHS.

82 Fletcher M. Green to Charles W. Ramsdell, May 18, 1936 (first quotation), and reply, May 24, 1936 (second quotation), Series A.1, Folder 17, SHA Records; Robert H. Woody to Ramsdell, May 14, 1936, and May 20, 1936, Box 3N290, Ramsdell Papers; and William C. Binkley to Woody, September 30, 1936, Box 2, Folder 10, Binkley Papers.

83 Robert H. Woody, “Second Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 3 (February 1937), 76 (first quotation), 88–90; and Frank L. Owsley, “Third Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 4 (February 1938), 55 (subsequent quotations). Even with an expanded schedule for meeting events and a more sympathetic program chair for 1938 (Phillip Davidson had been a main force behind the more general statement of objectives in the SHA constitution), a European session “failed to materialize.” Green to Philip M. Hamer, October 4, 1938, Series A.1, Folder 19, SHA Records [quotation]; and Phillip Davidson, “The Fourth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 5 (February 1939), 62–75. A similar commitment to broadening the scope of the meeting did not pan out for 1939. James W. Patton to Fred C. Cole, February 15, 1939, and reply, February 20, 1939, Box 67, WHS; and Patton, “The Fifth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 6 (February 1940), 74–75 and 85–87.

84 Wendell H. Stephenson to Charles S. Sydnor, January 7, 1939, Box 72, WHS; Albert B. Moore to Stephenson, November 1, 1939 (quotation), and reply, November 11, 1939, Box 65, WHS; Fletcher M. Green to Frank L. Owsley, November 14, 1939, and November 22, 1939, Box 3, Folder 7, Owsley Papers; Owsley to Green, November 14, 1939, Folder 59, Green Papers; and Stephenson, “A Proposal to Promote Scholarship in the South in the Fields of Ancient, European, and English History,” n.d. [1939], Box 10, Professional Activities folder, Owsley Papers.

85 Ross H. McLean to Frank L. Owsley, November 29, 1939, (first and second quotations), and January 8, 1940 (third quotation), Box 4, Folder 1, Owsley Papers; Executive Council Minutes, December 30, 1939, Series A.1, Folder 33, SHA Records (fourth quotation); James W. Patton to Owsley, January 6, 1940, Series A.1, Folder 35, SHA Records; and Owsley to McLean, January 17, 1940, Box 4, Folder 1, Owsley Papers.

86 Albert B. Moore, “The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 7 (February 1941), 55–56. On the misunderstanding regarding the number of European sessions, see Wendell H. Stephenson to John P. Dyer, April 9, 1940, Box 57, WHS; and Moore to Frank L. Owsley, May 2, 1940, Box 4, Folder 8, Owsley Papers.

87 Thomas D. Clark, “The Seventh Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 8 (February 1942), 67–68. Still, the Journal’s pages remained closed to Latin American history despite the fact that, as at least one observer noted, the SHA journal was “the historical journal in the U.S.A. most nearly suited for the publication of
an article on Caribbean or West Indian history” (Waldemar Westergaard to Stephenson, July 3, 1937, Box 72, WHS). Stephenson once tried including a study of emancipation in Jamaica within the “liberal definition of southern history,” but his reader was adamant that such a study had no relevance on southern history. “The South and Jamaica had emancipation in common but that is apparently all. The problems of transition... in Jamaica were entirely different from those in the South” Stephenson to Robert S. Cotterill, June 26, 1941, and reply, July 10, 1941, Box 53, WHS.


89 Binkley, “First Annual Meeting,” 69 (quotation); and Wendell H. Stephenson to Charles M. Knapp, December 4, 1935, Box 63, WHS. Attendance at the 1935 meeting was more than twice what organizers had expected. William C. Binkley to Walter B. Posey, November 1, 1935, Box 1, Folder 34, Binkley Papers).

90 William E. Dodd to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, June 25, 1935, Box 1, Abernethy Papers; Charles W. Ramsdell to Elizabeth Howard West, April 5, 1938, Box 3N292, Ramsdell Papers; William P. Brandon to Fletcher M. Green, October 11, 1937, Folder 46, Green Papers; Everett E. Edwards to Wendell H. Stephenson, April 20, 1935, Box 50; Harrison A. Trexler to Stephenson, November 6, 1936, Box 73; and Oliver P. Chitwood to Stephenson, February 18, 1937, Box 53; all in WHS. See also Fletcher M. Green, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” *JSJ*, 4 (February 1938), 68.

91 R. Casper Walker to Fletcher M. Green, October 28, 1940, Folder 70, Green Papers (first quotation); and George Petrie to Frank L. Owsley, August 20, 1940, Box 4, Folder 16, Owsley Papers (second quotation; emphasis in original). Attendance figures are from Binkley, “First Annual Meeting,” 69; and Moore, “Sixth Annual Meeting,” 55.

92 Gavin B. Henderson to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 4, 1939 (quotations) and August 22, 1939, Box 61, WHS. Henderson died tragically in a plane crash in Athens, Greece, in the summer of 1945. He had been on a lecture tour to RAF units stationed in the Mediterranean. See his obituary notice, *American Historical Review*, 51 (January 1946), 414–15.

93 Rembert W. Patrick to Fletcher M. Green, [December 1941], Folder 84, Green Papers (first quotation); Margaret C. McCulloch to Green, July 16, 1941, Folder 79, Green Papers (second quotation); and Frank L. Owsley to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 21, 1940, Box 66, WHS (third quotation). For similar conditions at LSU, see Fred C. Cole to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, March 6, 1942, Box 50, WHS.

94 James W. Patton to William C. Binkley, April 18, 1943, Series A.1, Folder 47, SHA Records.

95 For a description of the University of North Carolina in wartime, see J. Maryon Saunders to the Alumni of the University of North Carolina, September 22, 1943, Folder

96 Fletcher M. Green to John [?], November 29, 1943, Folder 106, Green Papers (first quotation); and Edwin Williams to Green, February 23, 1944, Folder 109, Green Papers (second quotation). See also Miriam G. Reeves to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 16, 1941, Box 69, WHS; and William B. Hesseltine and Louis Kaplan, “Women Doctors of Philosophy in History,” *Journal of Higher Education*, 14 (May 1943), 259.

97 Mary Elizabeth Massey to Fletcher M. Green, December 3, 1943, Folder 107, Green Papers (first quotation); and James W. Patton to Green, May 2, 1941, Folder 77, Green Papers (second quotation).

98 “Historical News and Notices,” *JSH*, 11 (August 1945), 438. On the problems of paper supply, see William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 22, 1942, Box 4, Folder 12, Binkley Papers; and Binkley to James W. Patton, January 26, 1944, Series A.1, Folder 53, SHA Records.


100 On the decline of journal submissions see Guy Stanton Ford, “Report of the Managing Editor of the *American Historical Review,*” in Ford, ed., *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1942*, I, 44–45; “Historical News and Notices,” *JSH*, 9 (August 1943), 433; William C. Binkley to Norman W. Caldwell, October 20, 1943, Series B.2, Folder 14, SHA Records; Binkley to James W. Patton, January 26, 1944, Series A.1, Folder 53, SHA Records; and Binkley, “Report to the Executive Council of the Southern Historical Association on the work of the Journal of Southern History for the year 1946,” October 31, 1946, Series A.1, Folder 71, SHA Records. On war-caused delays in research and writing (here, regarding the History of the South series), see the war-time correspondence between the contracted authors and the series editors, in Box 61, History of the South series folder, WHS. One historian believed that the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* was “impervious to current events and current forces,” arguing that the *Review* did not give “so much as a hint of the wartime paper shortage.” This

101 J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to J. E. Dovell, April 11, 1942, and reply, April 14, 1942, Folder 153, Hamilton Papers; and Gay Garrigan Moore, "The Southern Historical Collection in the Louis Round Wilson Library of the University of North Carolina, from the Beginning of the Collection through 1948" (M.S. thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1958), 44 and 53. Hamilton's collection efforts rebounded as the war progressed; he told two friends that 1944 had been a great year for collecting. Hamilton to Fletcher M. Green, August 10, 1944, Folder 115, Green Papers; and Hamilton to Avery O. Craven, July 27, 1944, Folder 164, Hamilton Papers. On his lobbying efforts, see James B. Vogler to Hamilton, March 23, 1942, Folder 153, Hamilton Papers; and Archibald Rutledge to Hamilton, October 15, 1943, Folder 161, Hamilton Papers.

102 Baxter, "Student Life at the University of Virginia During the Second World War," 222; and Judson C. Ward to Fletcher M. Green, May 30, 1941, Folder 77, Green Papers (quotation).

103 Fred C. Cole to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 14, 1944, Box 7, WHS; Roper, *C. Vann Woodward*, 130–32; William C. Binkley, "Two World Wars and American Historical Scholarship," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 33 (June 1946), 16–26 (first quotation on p. 25); Herbert Weaver to Frank L. Owsley, June 5, 1944, Box 6, Folder 5, Owsley Papers (subsequent quotations). On casualties, see the obituary notice for William DuBose Sheldon, "the first casualty of war among the membership of the Southern Historical Association," in "Historical News and Notices," *JSN*, 9 (May 1943), 288; the obituary notice for Ike Henry Moore, "Historical News and Notices," *JSN*, 11 (November 1945), 573; the obituary notice for Worthington W. Phillips (son of historian U. B. Phillips), *American Historical Review*, 49 (July 1944), 823; and A. B. Moore to Owsley, May 8, 1943, Box 4, Folder 8, Owsley Papers.

104 On Beale's work with the Japanese internment camps, see Howard K. Beale to Fletcher M. Green, January 17, 194[3], Folder 85, Green Papers. On war work generally, see Wendell H. Stephenson to J. Fred Rippy, August 8, 1940, Box 69, WHS; Green to James W. Patton, June 16, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 41, SHA Records; and Rembert W. Patrick to Green, July 11, 1942, Folder 91, Green Papers. On historians' wartime political activity, see Henry Steele Commager to Wendell H. Stephenson, June 5, 1940, Box 53, WHS; Beale to Green, July 15, 1940, Folder 67, Green Papers; and Arthur M. Schlesinger to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, July 19, 1940, Folder 144, Hamilton Papers.

105 Roswell P. Rosengren, Bureau of Public Relations, War Department, to Fred C. Cole, January 27, 1942, Box 73, Wa folder, WHS (quotation); and Ernest Cutts, "Press-Shy Historians Mum On Doings of the Present: Reporter Flits from One to Another Before Georgian Is Prevailed on to Talk of Stirring Times Today," *Charleston News and Courier*, November 8, 1940. The reporter for a competing newspaper had better luck: Joe Mulieri, "Historians Express Views on War and The Election," *Charleston Evening Post*, November 8, 1940. Both clippings are in Series A.1, Folder 736, SHA Records.

106 Thomas B. Alexander to Frank L. Owsley, August 25, 1945, Box 1, Folder 10, Owsley Papers.
107 James W. Patton to Albert B. Moore, March 2, 1942 (first quotation), and reply, March 5, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 43, SHA Records; Patton to Fred C. Cole, January 17, 1942, Box 67, WHS (second quotation); William C. Binkley to Patton, January 26, 1944, Series A.1, Folder 53, SHA Records; and Patton to Moore, January 14, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 43, SHA Records. See generally the correspondence filed in “Resignations” folder, Box 69, WHS.

108 “Membership,” October 18, 1942, Folder 156, Hamilton Papers; “Executive Council Minutes, Atlanta, Georgia,” October 18, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 42, SHA Records; and James W. Patton to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, September 22, 1943, Series A.1, Folder 58, SHA Records (quotation). Patton anticipated some improvement between September and the end of the year; indeed, 1943 closed with an active membership of 865. See also Appendix B.

109 Curtis W. Garrison (Hayes Memorial Foundation), “Report on the Operation of the Grants-in-Aid, March 1939 to April 1941,” Box 58, WHS (quotation); F. Garvin Davenport, review of Culture of Early Charleston, by Frederick P. Bowes, JSH, 9 (May 1943), 260; and Fred C. Cole to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, March 6, 1942, Box 50, WHS.

110 Fred C. Cole to Frank M. Harper, February 25, 1942, Box 60, WHS (first quotation); and Wendell H. Stephenson to William C. Binkley, May 22, 1943, Box 3, WHS (second quotation).

111 Cutrer, Parnassus on the Mississippi, 216–220, quotation on p. 220.

112 W. B. Hatcher to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 3, 1939, Box 61 (first quotation); Thomas Perkins Abernethy to Stephenson, July 16, 1939, Box 50 (second quotation); William J. Dodd to Charles W. Pipkin, July 1, 1939, Box 68 (third quotation); and Stephenson to Walter Prichard, July 17, 1939, Box 58, Fred C. Frey folder (fourth quotation); all WHS.

113 Walter Prichard to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 10, 1939, Box 68, WHS; Stephenson to Prichard, July 17, 1939, Box 58, Fred C. Frey folder; Stephenson to Fred C. Frey, July 18, 1939, Box 58; Stephenson to Troy H. Middleton, August 9, 1939, and reply, August 11, 1939, Box 64; all in WHS.

114 Wendell H. Stephenson to Fred C. Frey, September 12, 1939, and Lillian Stokes to Stephenson, September 27, 1939; both in Box 58, Frey folder, WHS; and Stephenson to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, July 18, 1939, Box 50, WHS (quotation).

115 Wendell H. Stephenson to William O. Lynch, December 7, 1940, Box 64; Stephenson to R. Casper Walker, January 26, 1941, Box 73 (first quotation); Stephenson to Ella Lonn, February 26, 1941, Box 64; William O. Lynch to Stephenson, January 31, 1941, and reply, March 9, 1941 (second quotation), Box 64; all in WHS; and Stephenson to Frank L. Owsley, July 31, 1941, Box 5, Folder 4, Owsley Papers.

116 Wendell H. Stephenson to Benjamin B. Kendrick, October 15, 1941 [unsent draft]; Stephenson to Kendrick, October 20, 1941, and reply, October 23, 1941; all in Box 63, misfiled in A.R. Kelly folder, WHS; and Stephenson to Kendrick, October 30, 1941, Series A.1, Folder 34, SHA Records.
117 Walter B. Posey to Wendell H. Stephenson, October 26, 1941, and James W. Patton to Stephenson, November 11, 1941; both in Box 30, WHS. See also Patton, "Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer," JSN, 8 (February 1942), 76.

118 "The South Needs It," New Orleans States, October 1, 1941; and Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren to the editor of the New Orleans States (and draft sent to President Hodges office), October 3, 1941; both in Folder 10, Miscellaneous Papers, Southern Review Collection. See also Cleanth Brooks to Wendell H. Stephenson, January 10, 1942, in this same folder.

119 Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks to Henry Allen Moe (Guggenheim Foundation), October 17, 1941, and reply, October 21, 1941; Brooks, Warren, and J. E. Palmer to David H. Stevens (Rockefeller Foundation), October 27, 1941, and reply, John Marshall to Palmer, November 14, 1941; Brooks and Warren to Charles Dollard (Carnegie Foundation), and reply, December 3, 1941; and Edwin R. Embree (Rosenwald Foundation) to Brooks and Warren, December 4, 1941; all in Folder 10, Miscellaneous Papers, Southern Review Collection.

120 Fred C. Frey, "Memorandum Regarding Budget Requests for 1942–1944 Biennium," December 6, 1941; and M. M. Wilkerson to J. E. Palmer, December 13, 1941 (quotation); both in Folder 10, Miscellaneous Papers, Southern Review Collection.

121 Modern Language Association, "Petition to the President of Louisiana State University," December 30, 1941; and Compiled List of Excerpts from Letters in support of the Southern Review, January 13, 1942; both in Folder 10, Miscellaneous Papers, Southern Review Collection. Some observers and participants attributed the termination of the Southern Review's funding not only to financial troubles but to "opposition within the university" to the Review and to its editors (Brooks, "Life and Death of an Academic Journal," 97–98; Louis D. Rubin Jr., "The Passionate Partisans: An Introduction," in Alphonse Vinh, ed., Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate: Collected Letters, 1933–1976 [Columbia, Mo., 1998], 2; and Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks, "Introduction," in Simpson, ed., Southern Review, Original Series, 1935–1942, p. 7–8). Since the Journal also came under fire, it seems clear that whatever opposition may have existed was not directed solely at the Southern Review for its artistic or political point of view. Instead, the opposition seems to have been more general—a failure to understand how academic publishing contributed to the reputation of a university.

122 Fletcher M. Green to Fred C. Cole, January 1, 1942, Box 54, WHS (first quotation); James W. Patton to Wendell H. Stephenson, January 1, 1942, and reply, February 2, 1942 (second quotation), Box 67, WHS; Patton to Green, February 6, 1942, Folder 86, Green Papers; and Stephenson to Fred C. Frey, December 17, 1941, Box 58, WHS (third quotation). Patton, however, was frustrated at the secrecy of these negotiations—"I am not sure how many of the L.S.U. cards are being put on the table"—since he had to make decisions regarding the investment of the association surplus without having all the information. Patton to Green, February 3, 1942, Folder 86, Green Papers.

123 Frank L. Owsley to Fletcher M. Green, January 28, 1942, Folder 85, Green Papers (first quotation); and Wendell H. Stephenson to Campbell B. Hodges, March 7, 1942, Box 61, WHS (second quotation). See also Editors of the Journal of Southern History,
Southern Review, and National Mathematics Magazine to Members of the Louisiana State University Budget Committee, n.d. [early 1942], Box 61, Campbell B. Hodges folder, WHS.

124 Wendell H. Stephenson to Albert B. Moore, April 9, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 43, SHA Records; and William C. Binkley to Stephenson, January 14, 1942, Box 4, Folder 1, Binkley Papers. See also Fletcher M. Green to Frank L. Owsley, February 11, 1942, Box 3, Folder 7, Owsley Papers, for assurances from the secretary-treasurer that the Vanderbilt proposal would receive “every bit of my influence.”

125 See the correspondence between Wendell H. Stephenson and Albert B. Moore, May 14, 1942, May 20, 1942, May 23, 1942, and June 1, 1942; and William C. Binkley to Moore, May 27, 1942; all in Box 65, WHS. Secretary James W. Patton asked council members to endorse the association’s taking over the printing costs for the August and November 1942 issues on June 8 (Series A.1, Folder 41, SHA Records). Association leaders credited LSU and Stephenson for the fact that there was a surplus at all (Frank L. Owsley to Cleanth Brooks, November 5, 1939, Southern Review Collection).

126 James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, June 8, 1942, Folder 90, Green Papers; William C. Binkley to O. C. Carmichael, June 17, 1942; Binkley to Albert B. Moore, July 2, 1942; John E. Pomfret to Fred McCuistion (General Education Board), July 2, 1942; Wendell H. Stephenson to Binkley, July 16, 1942 (quotation), and reply, July 23, 1942; all in Box 52, Binkley folder, WHS.

127 William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, August 20, 1942; and Binkley to Albert B. Moore, August 20, 1942; both in Box 52, WHS.

128 Fred C. Cole to William C. Binkley, September 11, 1942; and Wendell H. Stephenson to Binkley, September 12, 1942 (quotation); both in Box 52, WHS.

129 William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, October 6, 1942, and reply, October 8, 1942, Box 52, WHS; Executive Council Minutes, October 18, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 42, SHA Records; and James W. Patton, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 9 (February 1943), 94–95.

130 “Some day I expect to surprise the members of the Association by getting an issue to them within the month of its publication date,” Binkley joked in the midst of the war (William C. Binkley to James W. Patton, August 24, 1943, Series A.1, SHA Records).

131 On the 1942 program, see Bell I. Wiley to Fletcher M. Green, January 18, 1942, Folder 85, Green Papers. On cancellation, see Benjamin B. Kendrick to James W. Patton, June 8, 1942, and Albert B. Moore to Patton, June 11, 1942, both in Series A.1, Folder 34, SHA Records; J. G. de Rouhac Hamilton to Moore, June 15, 1942, and reply, June 23, 1942, Folder 154, Hamilton Papers; Patton to Benjamin B. Kendrick, June 27, 1942 (quotation); and William M. Robinson Jr. to Patton, June 30, 1942; all Series A.1, Folder 41, SHA Records.

132 James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, July 10, 1942, Folder 91, Green Papers (quotation); Green to Patton, June 30, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 41, SHA Records; and William C. Binkley to Patton, July 1, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 34, SHA Records. On
Binkley's changed vote see Binkley to Albert B. Moore, July 8, 1942, Box 4, Folder 7, Binkley Papers.

133 Albert B. Moore to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 10, 1942, Box 65, WHS; James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, August 18, 1942, Folder 92, Green Papers; and Executive Council Minutes, Atlanta, Georgia, October 18, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 42, SHA Records. Moore was the only president in the history of the SHA to miss the deadline for the submission of his presidential address to the *Journal of Southern History* and so fail to publish in the February number. See Moore to William C. Binkley, March 16, 1943, Series B.2, Folder 66, SHA Records; and Moore, "One Hundred Years of Reconstruction of the South," *JSR*, 9 (May 1943), 153–80.

134 On the MVHA meeting, see William C. Binkley to James W. Patton, April 27, 1943, Series A.1, Folder 47, SHA Records (first quotation); and Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 18, 1943, and reply, May 22, 1943, Box 3, WHS. On options for the 1943 SHA meeting, see Bell I. Wiley to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, March 31, 1943, Folder 158; A. W. Reynolds to Hamilton, April 30, 1943, and reply, May 31, 1943, Folder 159 (second quotation); all in Hamilton Papers.

135 James W. Patton to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, June 28, 1943, Series A.1, Folder 58, SHA Records. Benjamin B. Kendrick, Frank L. Owsley, Alfred J. Hanna, Stephenson, and Binkley all supported having the meeting. On the vote against having a council meeting, see Patton to Hamilton, October 15, 1943, Folder 161, Hamilton Papers. That tally was 3 in favor, 8 opposed.

136 William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 21, 1943, Box 52, WHS (quotation); and Binkley to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, September 14, 1943, Folder 161, Hamilton Papers. Hamilton finally sent in his statement in late October; it was published in the news and notices section of the August 1943 issue of the *Journal*—a fact which gives clear indication of the delays the *Journal* experienced in the 1940s. See Hamilton to SHA members, October 19, 1943, Folder 161, Hamilton Papers.

137 William C. Binkley to William O. Lynch, October 28, 1943, Series B.2, Folder 56, SHA Records (first quotation); and Wendell H. Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green, January 7, 1944, and March 19, 1944 (second quotation), both in Series 2, Folder 880, Green Papers.

138 Wendell H. Stephenson to James W. Patton, April 24, 1944, Series A.1, Folder 58, SHA Records; Patton to Executive Council members, April 27, 1944, Folder 163, Hamilton Papers; poll results are in Series A.1, Folder 57, SHA Records; and Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green, May 26, 1944, Series 2, Folder 880, Green Papers (quotation). "I doubt there will be much of a meeting, but I will rely on your judgment," J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton wrote, "so cast my vote with yours." Hamilton to Patton, May 1, 1944, Series A.1, Folder 57, SHA Records.

139 M. F. McCarthy (ODT) to Executives of Convention-Holding Organizations, August 11, 1944, Folder 115, Green Papers; Daniel M. Robison, "Eighth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association," *JSR*, 11 (February 1945), 80; Wendell H. Stephenson to James W. Patton, September 4, 1944, Series A.1, Folder 58, SHA Records (first
and E. Merton Coulter to Wendell H. Stephenson, October 8, 1944, Box 7, WHS (second quotation).

140 A. W. Reynolds to Fletcher M. Green, May 30, 1944, Series 2, Folder 880, Green Papers (quotation); and Bell I. Wiley, “Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 13 (February 1947), 75. See also William C. Binkley to Green, November 8, 1944; James W. Patton to Green, November 8, 1944; and J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to Green, November 17, 1944; all in Folder 118, Green Papers.

141 Perkins J. Prewitt (Birmingham Chamber of Commerce) to James W. Patton, January 12, 1945, Folder 120, Green Papers; Patton to William C. Binkley, January 14, 1945, and reply, January 17, 1945, both in Series A.1, Folder 59, SHA Records; and “Historical News and Notices,” JSH, 11 (May 1945), 278.

142 William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, February 19, 1945, Box 3, WHS (first quotation); James W. Patton to members of the SHA Executive Council, March 26, 1945, and replies, Series A.1, Folder 63, SHA Records (subsequent quotations); “Southern Historical Association Executive Council Meeting,” November 10, 1945, Series A.1, Folder 67, SHA Records; and Wiley, “Twelfth Annual Meeting,” 74.

143 William C. Binkley to Fred C. Cole, November 23, 1945, Box 7, WHS (first quotation); James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, January 10, 1947, Folder 137, Green Papers (subsequent quotations); and Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 19, 1947, Box 6, Folder 14, Binkley Papers.

144 Charles E. Rush to Thomas D. Clark, October 27, 1947, and reply, December 16, 1947, Series 2, Folder 881, Green Papers; Rush to James W. Patton, January 20, 1948, Series 2, Folder 881, Green Papers; Goodrich C. Wright to Fletcher M. Green, May 16, 1947, Folder 141, Green Papers; C. Vann Woodward to Green, January 7, 1947, Folder 137, Green Papers; and Wendell H. Stephenson to Green, May 3, 1946, Folder 135, Green Papers.

145 J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to Victor S. Bryant, February 20, 1946, Series 2, Folder 881, Green Papers.

146 For new projects, see Wendell H. Stephenson to James W. Patton, July 20, 1944, Series A.1, Folder 58, SHA Records (on bibliographies); Executive Council Minutes, Southern Historical Association, Nashville, Tennessee, November 2 and 3, 1944, Series A.1, Folder 67, SHA Records (on establishing a committee on research and endowment); James W. Patton to Thomas D. Clark, November 13, 1945, Series A.1, Folder 67, SHA Records (on administering grant funds); and Committee of Ten, “Research Possibilities in Southern History,” JSH, 16 (February 1950), 52–63. On delegate requests, see James W. Patton, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 14 (February 1948), 103–4.

147 On membership, see James W. Patton to William C. Binkley, November 6, 1946, Series A.1, Folder 71, SHA Records; and Appendix B. On the dues increase, see Patton, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 15 (February 1949), 85. The American Historical Association also experienced intensive growth in the immediate postwar period. Guy Stanton Ford, “Report of the Executive Secretary and Managing Editor for


149 Ross H. McLean to James W. Patton, December 14, 1945, Series A.1, Folder 64, SHA Records (quotation); O. C. Skipper to the Members of the Nominating Committee, November 9, 1943, Series A.1, Folder 52, SHA Records; and James W. Patton, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 13 (February 1947), 88.


151 James W. Patton, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 12 (February 1946), 84.

152 Henry L. Swint to Frank L. Owsley, January 21, 1946, Box 5, Folder 7, Owsley Papers (quotation). On Binkley’s editorial practice, see William C. Binkley to Arthur E. Bestor Jr., January 22, 1946, Folder 6; Binkley to Andrew Forest Muir, January 18, 1946, Folder 70; Binkley to Herbert Collins, July 31, 1946, Folder 20; Binkley to Lewis Atherton, September 13, 1946, Folder 3; Binkley to Walter S. Sanderlin, June 24, 1947, Folder 80; Binkley to Robert C. Black, October 15, 1947, Folder 8; and Binkley to Richard B. Morris, August 5, 1948, Folder 67; all in Series B.2, SHA Records. Writers occasionally got huffy about being cut out of the editorial loop (see John Tate Lanning to Binkley, April 21, 1945, Folder 49, and Milledge Seigler to Binkley, August 22, 1947, Folder 82; both Series B.2, SHA Records), but most seemed to accept this practice without too much complaint. See also Henry L. Swint, “William Campbell Binkley, 1889–1970: Historian, Editor, Teacher,” JSH, 37 (August 1971), 356.

153 William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 18, 1947, Box 6, Folder 23, Binkley Papers (quotation); Mrs. E. J. Land (Franklin Press) to Binkley, January 14, 1947, Series A.1, Folder 73, SHA Records; and Binkley to Philip Davidson, May 24, 1947, Box 6, Folder 16, Binkley Papers.

154 William C. Binkley to Philip Davidson, February 2, 1948, (quotations); and Binkley to Bell I. Wiley, February 12, 1948; both Box 6, Folder 25, Binkley Papers.

155 William C. Binkley to Philip Davidson, February 27, 1948, Folder 25 (quotation); and Binkley to James W. Patton, March 11, 1948, Folder 26; both Box 6, Binkley Papers.
156 William C. Binkley to James W. Patton, May 18, 1948, Box 6, Folder 28, Binkley Papers (first quotation); Binkley to Thomas D. Clark, June 9, 1948 (second quotation); Binkley to Patton, June 9, 1948 (third quotation); and Binkley to Patton, June 12, 1948 (official); all in Box 6, Folder 29, Binkley Papers.

157 William C. Binkley to James W. Patton, June 12, 1948 (personal), Box 6, Folder 29, Binkley Papers (quotations). See also Binkley to Patton, July 6, 1948, Series A.1, Folder 75, SHA Records.

158 Frank L. Owsley to Wendell H. Stephenson, June 30, 1948, Box 23, WHS (first quotation); and Stephenson to E. Merton Coulter, July 6, 1948, Box 7, WHS (second quotation).

159 Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy*, 452–53, 459–60, 474–77, and 483–84. Conkin does not discuss the cessation of Vanderbilt’s sponsorship of the *Journal of Southern History*.

160 William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 6, 1948, Box 7, Folder 1, Binkley Papers (quotation); Binkley to Thomas D. Clark, June 9 and June 12, 1948, Box 6, Folder 29, Binkley Papers; Clark to James W. Patton, June 25, 1948, Series A.1, Folder 75, SHA Records; and Binkley to Alfred J. Hanna, July 30, 1948, Box 7, Folder 2, Binkley Papers.

161 Ross H. McLean to James W. Patton, July 6, 1948, Series A.1, Folder 75, SHA Records; and William C. Binkley to Joseph J. Mathews, July 14, 1948, Box 7, Folder 1, Binkley Papers (quotations).

162 Bell I. Wiley to James W. Patton, July 9, 1948 (LSU interest); William C. Binkley to Patton, July 6, 1948 (UNC interest); Patton to E. Merton Coulter, August 26, 1948 (Duke rumor), and October 4, 1948 (UVA rumor); all Series A.1, Folder 75, SHA Records; and Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, August 10, 1948, Box 7, Folder 3, Binkley Papers (Vanderbilt rumor).

163 William C. Binkley to Thomas D. Clark, July 6, 1948, Box 7, Folder 1, Binkley Papers (quotation); and Binkley to James W. Patton, July 22, 1948, Box 7, Folder 2, Binkley Papers. On the committee: R. S. Cotterill to James W. Patton, August 1, 1948, Series A.1, Folder 76, SHA Records; and Binkley to Cotterill, August 9, 1948, Box 7, Folder 3, Binkley Papers.

164 E. Merton Coulter to James W. Patton, August 8, 1948, and reply, August 26, 1948, Series A.1, Folder 75, SHA Records. The University of Kentucky’s proposal can be found in Thomas D. Clark to Patton, July 10, 1948, in this same folder. See also Bell I. Wiley to Patton, September 9, 1948, and Ross H. McLean to Patton, October 1, 1948, in this same folder.

165 James W. Patton to E. Merton Coulter, October 4, 1948, Series A.1, Folder 75, SHA Records (quotation); William C. Binkley to Coulter, October 14, 1948, Box 7, Folder 4, Binkley Papers; “Historical News and Notices,” *JSH*, 14 (November 1948), 586; Talbert, *University of Kentucky*, 166; and Binkley to Patton, December 3, 1948, Box 7, Folder 6, Binkley Papers.
166 On delays see J. Merton England to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, January 15, 1949, Abernethy Papers; Thomas D. Clark to Frank L. Owsley, January 19, 1950, Box 2, Folder 8, Owsley Papers; and Wall to Fletcher M. Green, September 12, 1958, Series 1, Box 7, Folder 262, Green Papers. On membership, see interview with Bennett H. Wall by John C. Inscoe, March 27, 2000, video and transcript in author’s possession; and Wall, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” *JSH*, 20 (February 1954), 78 (quotation).

167 John Bennett Walters to Frank L. Owsley, April 2, 1949, Box 5, Folder 19, Owsley Papers (first quotation); Donald Davidson to John Gould Fletcher, June 14, 1949, Box 2, Folder 25, Davidson Papers (second quotation); and Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill, 2000), 31–32.
Chapter Three

Southern History, Broadly Defined:
The Professional Cultivation of a Historical Field, 1934–1945

The establishment of the Southern Historical Association (SHA) brought legitimate institutional form to professional regional history in the South. With successful annual meetings, a well-respected journal, and a growing membership, the Southern Historical Association replicated regionally the signposts of the American historical profession. Moreover, it set itself up as the clearing-house for the field by publishing bibliographies of recent articles, collecting and disseminating information on members’ works-in-progress, and funding a state-of-the-field report to guide future research endeavors. By 1944, president Wendell Holmes Stephenson was pleased to announce that “we are well on the road to the accomplishment of the original purpose in the founding of the Association: an organization that would weld historians interested in the South into a conscious unity.” With this kind of solidarity, the Southern Historical Association believed it stood as the foremost authority on what constituted credible and creditable “southern history.”

Association leaders thought the identifying characteristics of both “professional” and “southern” were self-evident. “I hope the purpose of the Association is directly in line with that of the American Historical Association, with the stimulation for historical research and lay study focussed upon Southern matters,” one professor at Sweet Briar College in Virginia intoned. “If, however, the development shows symptoms of filiopietism,” she warned, “I am sure that the organization will commit suicide by slow and absurd degrees.” Leaders hastened to reassure such concerned potential members of their
commitment to modern professionalism. They wanted to redefine the tag “professional Southerner” away from its tongue-in-cheek connotation of a diehard southern defender. In the modern South, they thought, professional and southern ought to be inherently compatible identities. Was it possible, though, to be truly “southern” without being filiopietistic? How would the professionalization of the field affect history for the non-professional? Southern Historical Association organizers were well aware that the earlier Southern History Association had founded on these same questions and were determined to avoid a similar fate. “The dictum seemed to be fixed and final that historical societies of broader interests than state lines could not be properly nurtured by generals, editors, diplomats, and governmental employees alone. Something more seemed to be needed,” University of Georgia professor E. Merton Coulter informed his audience at the first Southern Historical Association presidential dinner. Fortunately for southern history, “the era of the college professor and of the educational institution [had] arrived.”

This chapter analyzes the three main aspects of the association’s founding purpose: what it meant to be “historical,” “professional,” and “southern.” The ease with which association leaders claimed authority over the regional past not just as professional historians but as history professors and set up institutions for the study of southern history legitimated by the older and well-established American Historical Association, masks the intellectual struggle among members of the association regarding what professional southern history should look like. The Southern Historical Association intended that “southern history will be defined broadly” in its meetings and in its journal. On one level, this was simply a geographical distinction to include states beyond those eleven of
the former Confederacy. But this definition also meant that the region, rather than the
creation, dissolution, and memorialization of the Confederate moment, provided the
inspiration and reason for historical study. With this decision, the SHA erected a strict
but troubled line between the persistent guardians of Confederate heritage and the
professional practitioners of southern history. Broadly defining “the South” also
potentially opened the depiction of the region to more debate and variety than had
previously been allowed in popular tradition. Yet the mostly white members of the
Southern Historical Association were not entirely ready or willing to open up “southern”
history to the stories of all the region’s people or perspectives. As a result, the broad
definition also created the need to consider stylistic, topical, personal, and interpretive
criteria of inclusion and exclusion in order to enforce decisions about which definitions
of “southern history” to nurture and which to oppose. By the end of the association’s
first decade, however, any consensus that had been reached regarding the meaning of the
southern past had also already been sown with seeds of revision.

Setting Standards for History and Historians

For the history professors who made up the vast majority of Southern Historical
Association membership, the most clear-cut characteristic they attached to their
professionalism was their refusal to truck in the southern romantic tradition. Membership coordinators assured wary professors who wanted nothing to do with any
organization of “the apologetic variety” that the SHA had absolutely no intention “to
perpetuate nineteenth century Romanticism.” Association leaders saved press accounts
that praised the new Journal of Southern History for investigating the South’s “own
particular problems” without a “hint of the old romanticism on the one hand or the old resentful apologies on the other.”

Reviewers applauded authors who may have had an “antiquarian” interest in names, places, and local detail but who nonetheless remained faithful to the “muse of history” by eradicating any rose-colored sympathy for the Old South from their accounts. Editors were complimented for eliminating both “emotional and mawkish regional self-consciousness” and “self-pity and apology” from the Journal.

“Our main criteria,” Journal editor Wendell Holmes Stephenson stated, “are that studies must be scholarly and critical, must reveal historical detachment, must possess a degree of literary merit, and ordinarily should be heavily documented.” If there ever were a conflict between “popular style” and “what historians understand as scholarly work,” the Journal sided with the historians against popularity every time.

The protectors of the southern romantic tradition, however, could not be ignored without some consequence to the professional historian. For one, groups like the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) often materially assisted professional southern history, buying Journal of Southern History subscriptions for local and college libraries, contributing manuscripts to southern archives, maintaining research facilities, and awarding cash prizes. The association occasionally made decisions to tolerate the influence of these groups, as when Journal editors refused to endorse a demand that all Civil War memorial societies be disbanded. Still, some SHA historians resented the power that these groups continued to possess over things like advance publicity and book sales. In 1936 historians James W. Patton and Francis B. Simkins got into hot water with the Virginia UDC before their book Women of the Confederacy even hit the market. Opposed to the fact that the authors used the term “Civil War,” the UDC presumptuously
demanded of the publisher that the offending term be removed from the book before it was released. Patton was both angry and bemused. "It seems to me that we have softened the contents enough to satisfy the Daughters already," Patton told an inquisitive newspaper reporter. He insisted that they retain "Civil War," though his co-author was willing to let the publishers make the final decision. Patton prevailed, but not before the controversy had become the topic of heated discussion in the Richmond newspapers.\footnote{11}

Pressure from popular patriotic groups was also sufficient to dissuade some potential textbook authors from pursuing the task. One author found that publishers were "not interested in a book that would be blackballed by said guardians of liberty and tradition," while he was "not enthusiastic about one that perpetuated the vicious tradition of America always right and victorious and her enemies always wrong and vanquished."\footnote{12} The lingering power of women's patriotic organizations may have been maddening to the professional historian, but many must have agreed with one professor who went easy on local ladies' groups: "I cannot afford to anger the Natchez grande-dames and belles-dames, because I might in time need them."\footnote{13}

The objections of the UDC, however, no longer carried the serious political weight they once had, when southern college administrators had often bowed to popular pressure to restrict the academic freedom of faculty. At the turn of the century, a professor's career could be ruined, or at least derailed temporarily, by contradicting the white southern public's sense of historical tradition.\footnote{14} By the 1930s, history professors in the South were far more apprehensive about affronting a different constituency—the American historical profession at large. Despite the UDC outcry and press battles over \textit{Women of the Confederacy}, James W. Patton was always more concerned about the
book’s reception in professional historical journals. Perhaps the local press would attack the book for the term “Civil War,” but he was more certain that the historical profession would criticize any obvious paean to regional tradition. Local gadflies interested in their parents’ and grandparents’ good names—people who he thought were unlikely in any event to read the vast majority of scholarly output in southern history—did not deserve such serious attention. UDC complaints, therefore, often fell on deaf ears, politely noted but generally dismissed.

In the main, then, and especially compared to the supportive attitude of the earlier Southern History Association toward memorial and patriotic groups, the Southern Historical Association paid little attention to the often shrill protests and flounce invitations that emanated from the UDC and other local historical organizations. Some historians, like Fletcher Green, continued to give speeches to local groups: “If the big fellows can do it then I’m in good company.” Yet he also realized that “I ought to be at something more professional.” Others, like University of Texas professor Charles W. Ramsdell, essentially gave up trying to communicate with lay audiences. His feeling of divorce from public sentiment might seem surprising to those who would assume that Ramsdell’s Dunning-school approach to Reconstruction meshed seamlessly with white southern tradition. Ramsdell had in fact learned that a broad gap existed between his graduate school training and the expectations of more popular audiences. He became disheartened, for example, when he agreed to arrange a program for a Texas chapter of the UDC only to learn that “these good ladies and I do not have the same conception of a historical program at all, at all.” The Texas UDC was accustomed to programs of “poetry and sentimental passages from super-patriotic writers”—both subject areas in which
Ramsdell felt totally alien. Later, when he was tapped by Louisiana State University to inaugurate the Fleming lecture series in southern history, he begged the organizers not to "encourage any of the Daughters of the Confederacy to go to hear them," well aware they would object both to his tone and interpretation of the South's faltering performance in the Civil War. Indeed, as one lingering Confederate veteran anxiously pointed out to SHA leaders, "the tone of the periodical published at the University of Louisiana does not indicate that our men are of the same feeling as the Ladies."18

By the 1930s the Southern Historical Association's disavowal of the southern popular tradition signaled its members' basic indifference to widespread acceptance of their work.19 "I have come to the conclusion that there are two versions of history anyhow," Ramsdell confided to a colleague who was frustrated with public ignorance and susceptibility. There was "that of the serious students (who do not always agree, of course, but who are informed even when they disagree) and that of the general public whose ideas of what happened are based on propaganda and tradition, both of which are usually far from the real truth." "I am hopeful that, eventually, we shall get much nearer the truth than the older writers did," Ramsdell wrote in another letter, "but I do not know how long it will take to make the general public aware of what has been discovered." As a Civil War historian, Ramsdell was particularly well positioned to understand the tenacity of "a vast impalpable and imponderable folk-history and historical interpretation that defeats nine-tenths of [the "realistic" historian's] efforts."20 The Southern Historical Association provided an important and protected setting for the "informed" to debate the past with isolated impunity.
As for wider influence, most SHA historians placed their lots with teaching an increasing proportion of the South’s youth. Vanderbilt historian Frank L. Owsley candidly admitted to a friend in 1932 that he was under no illusions that the general reader found his books interesting. “Only the historian will read them,” he argued, “but it is the historians who teach history classes and write text books and they will gradually and without their own knowledge be forced into our position.” Owsley was not alone in his hope to reeducate the public-at-large via teachers and students. Hollins College professor Kathleen Bruce, for example, wanted to change jobs from the small women’s college to a larger state university, where her teaching skill could be put to good use “both in and for the South.” Wendell Stephenson hoped his courses in southern history at Louisiana State University “taught students to appreciate not only the contributions of the South, but also the problems, economic, social, and political, which face the South.” Stephenson also prided himself on the fact that a hefty percentage of his own students went on to become secondary- and college-level teachers themselves. History teachers, another professor devoted to reform pointed out, were uniquely positioned to encourage students toward “new ways of living and organizations of social action.” Similarly, Ella Lonn asked SHA members to remain “conscious” of the sentiment and misunderstanding that characterized “the wider audience outside” their association. As historians they could help eliminate the “last vestiges of [sectional] prejudice...as research scholars in searching out the truth, and secondly, as teachers in spreading the gospel of what we have learned.” In these ways, the “cloistered and unsung specialist” wielded great influence over “who molds the outlook of tomorrow.”
This redefinition of the audience for historical literature from the general public to a community of professors and students enabled the professional historian to consider himself or herself as a leader of opinion rather than as a slave to it. Every major southern university hoped to "command the attention and interest of the region" by "assum[ing] the leadership in promoting" historical research and publication. This type of investment further promoted professional authority, because, as one general reader pointed out, professional historical quarterlies were "accepted as Gospel Truth by most of us." Along with the American Historical Association, the Southern Historical Association moved away from the earlier cooperation between professional and lay historians toward a system where professional historians provided direction to amateurs. "Historical societies need, and in most cases welcome, the guidance of the scholar," an AHA special committee had reported in 1932. The membership of these societies, "composed of persons deeply interested in history though often without special training required for a correct understanding of historical problems," needed expert supervision to avoid wasting scarce resources in unscholarly pursuits. Such guidance, moreover, eradicated "the aura of a private club" from local societies and encouraged efficient and resourceful historical work. Fletcher M. Green proudly reported to the SHA membership in 1939 that "officers of local historical societies are beginning to look to the Association for leadership." In the South, where resources were already so limited and historical preservation so "hit-and-miss," such "competent professional leadership" seemed especially necessary.

Constitutionally, membership in the SHA was "limited only by interest in its objectives" and therefore included high school teachers, amateur historians, and other
interested readers. The founders of the organization, however, always intended for the SHA to serve as a “professional” association under the leadership of and dominated by university professors. SHA historians thus placed great emphasis on defining these professional (an earlier generation might have used the term “scientific”) standards of evidence, literary merit, interpretive ability, scholarly form, and historiographical knowledge. Members remained devoted to written historical documentation, suspecting that most other sources, especially oral ones, were “hearsay” or biased. They did not worry too much when non-professional historians encroached upon their areas of expertise. If studies by amateurs were published, they saw all the more reason for a valid, well-researched contribution on the same topic. Annual meetings remained a protected reserve for the professional largely because the program was arranged by invitation rather than by blind application. As a result, of the 164 individuals who served on SHA panels during the prewar meetings, only 23 were not affiliated with a college or university. The vast majority of these few were actually employed as historians for the Historical Records Survey, the National Park Service, the Library of Congress, or state historical departments.

Even so, Journal editor Wendell H. Stephenson complained that the annual meetings produced too many “amateurish” papers, not acceptable as “term reports from college seniors” let alone for the Journal. The Journal of Southern History was well known as the “heart of the Association,” a feather in the cap of its sponsor, the main representative of the Southern Historical Association’s work to the historical profession, and vigilant guardian of the standards the association wanted to uphold. As the association’s public face, it was also the site of most negotiation and conflict regarding
what "professional history" should be. By the end of its second year, the editorial policy of the *Journal of Southern History* reflected the association's concerns for high-caliber work in a fairly regular editorial routine. Many manuscripts that arrived in the editorial offices were rejected out of hand; few were accepted without further consultation. Most were sent to readers, usually members of the board of editors who could give "rather definitive advice" on the worthiness of the contribution. More often than not, the readers' reports recommended that the manuscript not be published, though often the readers encouraged the author to make revisions based on their criticism and resubmit the piece to the *Journal*. From the very beginning, the *Journal* editorial staff relentlessly checked citations, finding "a great number of errors in footnoting and in citing and occasionally in statements of fact." The *Journal* was in fact devoted to what one irate amateur reader and unsuccessful contributor called the "reader's torment"—"modern maddening documentation." Correct citations, however, remained essential markers for professional history of all types. In conjunction with other editors of historical periodicals, the editors of the *Journal of Southern History* even worked toward the adoption of a uniform style sheet to be shared by all professional journals.32

The *Journal* routinely returned manuscripts deemed "amateur," though the editors were skillfully diplomatic with their rejection notices.33 "It is not the type of material that we can use," aspiring contributors were often told. Editors latched onto any technical detail—length, topic, literary quality, lack of primary documentation—that could be used to justify the rejection.34 Occasionally, the editors seemed to make up policy on the spot, as when Stephenson informed one author that "we cannot print articles that emphasize genealogy nor can we use studies which cannot mention present day individuals by
name.” Another author who wanted immediate publication of an article advocating the preservation of a Louisiana site was told that “editorial policy will not permit us to help in the promotion of historical projects, worthy as they may be.” Other contributors editors scared off by requiring substantial revision in the footnotes, though they bent these rules if the article seemed important enough. One dutiful subscriber sent article after article to William C. Binkley in response to his wartime plea for more submissions, only to have each one summarily rejected. The first, which had originally appeared in the Confederate Veteran, was refused as “too general”; the second was rejected for inappropriate form; the third because it offered nothing new. Binkley’s reassurance that Journal authors did not have to have faculty positions to be published must have seemed insincere to this contributor. Almost 90 percent of article authors in the first twenty volumes of the Journal were in fact either graduate students, instructors, or professors at colleges or universities. For the most part, the rest were public historians, archivists, or librarians [Appendix D].

It is striking to the reader who peruses the book review section of the first few volumes of the Journal of Southern History how often reviewers snubbed books for not belonging within the professional circle. “History writing looks so easy that even intelligent laymen believe that they can write history,” one reviewer explicitly complained. “History writing is nonetheless a craft, and the rule still holds that it is not done well except by those who have training in it.” Reviewers often lamented their assignments to evaluate “such...history as one would expect from a retired business man turned collector and historian.” Although reviewers knew these authors may not have had the requisite training, they still perceived it as part of their duty to criticize these
works for "eulogistic phraseology," pervasive sectional animosity or defensiveness, or for their appeal to the "genealogical fringe." They disparaged these books as charming or entertaining and separated them from their own works, which were important, interpretive, and synthetic.\textsuperscript{38} Occasionally historians felt bad for holding these authors to an unattainable benchmark given their lack of training, but most would have agreed with Francis B. Simkins that "certainly it is time that these standards should be applied to the works of mature Southerners." Was it fair to expect "elderly Southern women" to be familiar "with scholarly treatises on defeatism and desertion" during the Civil War? another reviewer queried. Admittedly, no, it was not. But their ignorance of recent investigation at best qualified their work as evidence of historical attitudes rather than history itself.\textsuperscript{39}

"I am getting a little tired of the academicians' 'no poaching' attitude," one exasperated reader told the editor of the\textit{Journal}. American historical writing had a long tradition of exquisitely produced work from "those without a union card—which I take to be a Ph.D. in history." Graduate training, another critic privately asserted, only promoted "professional narrowness."\textsuperscript{40} Yet unlike its predecessor the Southern History Association, SHA academicians never developed a wholesale critique of professional history. Southern institutions were both graduating and employing increasing numbers of advanced degree holders and constantly sought ways to improve graduate education and research possibilities. Most dissertations in American history accepted by southern institutions between 1935 and 1943 were on "southern" topics. By 1940, some southern institutions asserted that they best served the needs of southern students pursuing advanced degrees in history.\textsuperscript{41} Southern Historical Association leaders even claimed
credit for some of this improvement, pointing to the professional inspiration and publication outlets the organization provided young scholars.\textsuperscript{42}

Authors offended by their relegation into the amateur camp occasionally protested the pomposity of the professional review. For the \textit{Journal}'s editorial staff, these characters' actions only further confirmed their status as hopelessly unprofessional. One outraged author argued that he had not expected "a reviewer by Sarcasm, and to me, personally, a jack ass." Though his book was described in the review as a "lengthy family glorification" that raised the reviewer's eyebrows on every page, the author took most violent exception to the reviewer's implication that the author had called General Robert E. Lee a traitor. What is interesting about the author's vitriolic response is not so much whether or not the reviewer misread the book (or whether the author misread the review), but the forces the author called into his corner in his own defense: the threat of a libel suit, his reputation as a government employee, a supposed legal brief from an attorney defending his interpretation, his social standing in various clubs, and his assumption that he was criticized for celebrating a northern soldier. His arsenal did not include "the facts." As a result, he was not comforted when one professor assured him that the book would stand or fall on its own merits, regardless of what reviewers said. The author's ultimate concern was with book sales in the South, and not the book's reputation with the historical profession.\textsuperscript{43} His inability to express his complaints in the format demanded by the historical profession further contributed to its dismissal of him.\textsuperscript{44}

As editors of the \textit{History of the South} series, Wendell H. Stephenson and Charles W. Ramsdell were surprised by the number of amateur historians who petitioned them about publishing their manuscripts as part of the series after the plans were announced in
the spring of 1939. One state superintendent of public schools in South Carolina wrote
on behalf of an 83-year-old man "in need of money" who wanted to publish a piece
called "Loyalties in Black and White" as part of the series. The purpose of the work, the
author's advocate explained, was "to correct some of the errors and misrepresentations of
Harriet Beecher Stowe in her book, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'" Despite the assurance that
"every word" of the manuscript was true, Stephenson and Ramsdell were of course not
interested in the work. "The ten-volume history of the South," such inquirers were told,
"is to be written by ten outstanding historians selected more than a year ago. Each one
has been assigned a definite period, in which he is an authority, and the volume he
produces will be a well-rounded and integrated work which will treat all the phases of
Southern history in the period." The unabashed willingness to petition a university press
about contributing a romantic or defensive piece to a scholarly series indicates that
amateur historians had not yet realized the extent of their divorce from the machinery of
professional southern history. "We received a number of letters of this kind," Stephenson
informed his university's president, "which we answer as tactfully as possible."

Historians of the SHA had a more difficult time with colleagues who held the
requisite identifiers—a Ph.D., or employment in a historical field—yet refused to
cooperate with the profession at large by acting like recalcitrant, unreconstructed rebels.
Dunbar Rowland, the director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History,
posed such a problem. Having already been a vocal part of an insurgent group protesting
the northeastern domination of the AHA's leadership in 1915—an experience that left the
conspirators "with few friends, robbed them of their prestige, and doomed them to the
ridicule of their colleagues"—Rowland seems like he might have eagerly embraced the
Southern Historical Association. Yet he never joined and was considered a member of the SHA only “by virtue of his position” as director of a southern state’s archives.46 He was one of the few high-profile “professional” southern historians who still vigorously objected to the term “Civil War”; he reportedly cultivated enemies in Mississippi by jealously guarding access to his department’s resources; he maintained a reputation as a troublemaker in historical associations; and he insisted always that southern history implicitly required a defense of southern historical motives. He especially resented the control of Civil War battlefield sites in Mississippi by the National Park Service. The “Norwegians and Yankees” in charge “know little or nothing of our...Southern, or Mississippi history, yet they go through our state selecting historic sites and telling people that we are very backward,” Rowland complained. Since park rangers “glorify and deify Lincoln and Grant and cast aspersion on Davis and Lee,” Rowland concluded that instead “the Military Parks in the South should be controlled exclusively by Southern people.”47 His volatile reactions even caused one historian to cut short his study of historical activity in Mississippi so as not to offend him with any “adverse criticism.” Yet upon his death in 1937, the Southern Historical Association voted resolutions of “respect and regret” in honor of his “amazing contribution to Southern historiography.” The death of Dunbar Rowland seemed to symbolize a passing of the torch to a younger generation who valued his work as a collector and administrator of documents but who found his irascible interpretations hard to swallow and certainly nothing to emulate.48

SHA historians increasingly assumed that only possessors of the Ph.D. had the skill and training to uphold the stylistic consensus they designated “professional.”
As Charles W. Ramsdell tried to explain, "professionals" recognized each other as "informed" even when they disagreed with one another. They pursued their subject with what they thought was a degree of detachment that "earnest" amateurs, though well-meaning, could not achieve. The author's "philosophy of life," if injected into historical work, rarely found welcome reception from SHA reviewers and often found itself the target of pointed criticism. "In historical investigation," historian J. G. Randall had argued in praise of the professionalization of history represented by the founding of the SHA, "the amateur inevitably betrays himself." What the history of the South needed was "more researchers and not more commentators."49 "As historians we must think and write as adults," newspaper editor George Fort Milton argued in the Journal of Southern History, by abandoning those "adolescent yearnings" for simple, monocausal, even mythical, explanations for the momentous sweep of human time below the Mason-Dixon line.50 Rarely did any bitterness against the sales potential of historical tradition seep into Journal reviews. "Most professional historians will read [the book] with a jealous and choleric eye," a typical review of this sort noted, "for they must produce works which are based on more judicious and exhaustive research, and which, in the interest of sound scholarship, are usually presented in a style anathematized by the buying public." At least publicly, however, SHA historians were not too depressed by their lack of appeal to a broader audience. They had committed themselves to pursue what they saw as a higher cause of truth, debate among themselves, and the tenure track.51

The separation of "professional" and "historical" from romantic and memorial also created a deeply rooted gendered component to the SHA's definition of professional identity. To be sure, fundamental, systematic discrimination against women existed in
colleges and universities across North America. But the popular idea of the duties and limitations of the white southern lady made it particularly difficult for women to be taken seriously as professional intellectuals in the South. The extent to which "the ladies" and the romantic tradition that SHA historians were assiduously trying to escape were linked caused some trouble for women trying to overcome assumptions of feminine amateurism and carve out space for themselves as history professors in southern institutions. If the "ladies" were largely incapable and romantic, then female professional historians were often thought to be mannish, troublesome, unglamorous, and difficult to handle. For these reasons, the editors of the History of the South series refused to consider appointing a woman to a volume for fear "of getting involved with a lady...in a historical way." Women also faced obstacles in the pursuit of graduate study in the South as leading professors vocally stated their preference for male students and found it somewhat disconcerting when wartime exigencies forced them to try out women in the places of their departed male students.

Still, sixteen percent of Ph.D.s in history awarded between 1882 and 1935 went to women (the first given in 1893), with well more than three-fifths of these awarded in the decade prior to the founding of the Southern Historical Association. Southern institutions, however, graduated only fourteen women (eleven percent of the southern total) from their history programs between 1931 and 1935. Southern female professors were usually confined to small women's colleges that were provincial, anti-intellectual, or even hostile to scholarship. Even the most successful female scholars—the ones who "could do as good a job as most men in the profession"—were barred from employment at prominent universities. At Vanderbilt, one historian stated matter-of-factly, "it would
be futile. . . for me to suggest to the administration that a woman be appointed to the position.” Charles W. Ramsdell—who, it is interesting to note, was married to a working research physician—recommended one of his best Ph.D. students with this caveat: “I do not think she is material for a university graduate school; and I should add that I have known very, very few women who are. Most women seem to be too practical minded to be interested in the abstract theories with which graduate teachers must deal.” Women were often passed over for top recommendations, because their advisors preferred “boosting a man.” Moreover, as faculty in poor, constrained institutions, women historians found themselves at a competitive disadvantage in terms of producing good scholarship, though male observers frequently attributed their lack of output to an inherent feminine deficiency of ambition and initiative. Women historians also lacked the research assistance that wives often provided their husbands. As Vanderbilt graduate student Blanche Henry Clark discovered after comparing her summer research notes to those of her married male classmates, “what she needed was a husband since it seemed necessary for husband and wife to work together on these programs.” Having a husband, however, would hardly have helped her predicament because most female historians (including Clark) resigned their positions upon marriage. Kathryn Trimmer Abbey’s marriage to historian Alfred J. Hanna, as one historian sighed, removed “the belle of the ball from our professional circles.” Her marriage had hardly been announced when interested men began pursuing her position at Florida State College for Women. Despite these limitations, most female members of the Southern Historical Association were in fact pleased with their participation and representation within the organization.
As they worked out what professional history would look like, pursuing their “manful effort” to understand the South, SHA historians used these “professional” standards as objective criteria for inclusion or exclusion from the esteem of the regional historical profession. Yet surely the yardstick by which they measured historical worthiness was also, at heart, subjective. For example, when Journal editors in this period sent submissions to readers for advice, the name of the author was never concealed. This lack of anonymity permitted readers to make decisions based on considerations beyond the manuscript’s historical contribution and style, even while their own identity and opinions were rigorously kept confidential. What a reviewer saw as an almost evangelical commitment to convert the reader to the author’s hostile attitude was to the author “an honest attempt to give a dispassionate treatment thoroughly justified by the facts revealed by long and painstaking research.” What another author saw as historical truth, the reviewer claimed could “only by courtesy be called history.” Where SHA members saw a space within their institutions for legitimate intellectual debate, amateurs who failed to receive the recognition they felt they deserved saw only exclusivity, clubbiness, and wagons circled against outsiders. As the best-selling popular historian Claude G. Bowers angrily argued when he failed to win a Pulitzer Prize for The Tragic Era, “professors. . .feel they are ordained by God to have a monopoly on the writing of history.” Another jilted author condemned the Southern Historical Association for letting his reviewer “hide behind the skirts of his COLLEAGUES in the Chairs of History like the [papists] hide behind the INFALLIBLE [sic] dictate of the Pope.” Nonetheless, they followed standards (SHA historians argued) that the historical profession at large recognized, the same “critical standards which, in this country outside the South, have
long been applied to books designed to be informing.” If they toed this line, the Southern Historical Association provided another opportunity “to prove that we are really doing something in historical work in the South.” The reward for this commitment was the authority to evaluate regional historical studies for the profession at large.66

**A Professional Regional Commitment**

With the rejection of the traditional protectors of heritage as authorities over the regional past, the Southern Historical Association opened itself up to accusations, ironically, of not being about the South at all. As the place where the public and the professional potentially intersected, the *Journal of Southern History* became the site for many of these contests. Indeed, when the editorship of the *Journal* changed, protesters expressed hope that finally “men who believed in Southern history [were] in charge of the *Journal.*” Many non-professional readers expected the association to act more like a propaganda branch that, in cooperation with other “southern organizations,” would disseminate a specifically “southern” truth about the past. This type of assistance was not forthcoming from the *Journal of Southern History*. As *Journal* editor Wendell Holmes Stephenson argued years later, professional southern historians sought to liberate themselves from “southernism”—a specific sort of conservative, defensive ideology that dictated how a person interpreted events, past and present. The more liberated a southern historian was from his “southernism,” Stephenson concluded, the more professional he became. SHA historians therefore resented when outsiders assumed the organization was made up of “unreconstructed Southerner[s]” in existence merely to refight the Civil War.68
The correspondence of Samuel A’Court Ashe (1840–1938), Confederate veteran and defender, with the leaders of the Southern Historical Association brings into sharp relief the way professionalism and regional history challenged the traditional tenets of white southern identity. Since the Civil War, Ashe had been a manuscript collector, newspaper editor, lawyer, U.S. District Court clerk, and North Carolina historian. Upon hearing in early 1935 about the formation of the Southern Historical Association, he quickly requested membership in the new organization. "I am so glad of the formation of your Society," he told membership coordinator Edwin A. Davis, because "many Southerners now join the North in blessing Lincoln." Ashe, on the other hand, "sought to have our Southern people know the truth as to the action of our Fathers." Consequently, he was "so glad of the birth of the Journal of Southern History" and looked forward to the editors' help in getting some of his most recent pamphlets published in bound form and placed in libraries across the country. Ashe prided himself on the fact that his articles were both "historical, and personal." He wrote "not to make money but to record for posterity the true facts about the Secession of the Cotton States in 1860." The editorial offices, and soon after the board of editors, were inundated with pamphlets and reprints from the elderly historian.

By the end of the year, however, the nonagenarian perceived that the history professors with whom he had been corresponding had been giving him and his mission little notice. "Why is there such a variance between you and the Southern Historians on the one side and the Confederates who have had the pamphlet...brought to the attention of historians at the North and in Europe?!?!?!" Ashe remonstrated. "I did not...know of the indifference of Southern historians!!!" His despair pointed to the Southern Historical
Association's basic success at wrestling "southern" identity away from Confederate ideology. Begging Stephenson to "please be a Confederate" and give lengthy notice to his most recent pamphlet in the *Journal of Southern History*, Ashe's frustration with the "Teachers of History" had only just begun.\(^{71}\)

Ashe had sent copies of his pamphlet on the "southern view" of secession to historians at the Southern Historical Association annual meeting in Birmingham and was deeply offended that "not a one ever acknowledged the receipt." "I am a Southerner," Ashe wrote SHA secretary Fletcher M. Green, "Are these historians really Southerners?!"\(^{72}\) Ashe had his doubts—he feared they might have heretical views like genuine respect for Lincoln and his war and worried that "many of our teachers do not tell our young men the historical facts." In Ashe's opinion, Lincoln had violated his presidential obligation to uphold the constitution when he came after the seceded states: "who of our Southern teachers tell the truth about that?" Their failure to pass on their Confederate heritage, Ashe warned, made the historians "objects of contempt."\(^{73}\)

Not surprisingly, Ashe next turned his attention to the "teachings of the historical Journal of Louisiana!—run by Southern Historical teachers."\(^{74}\) He now wanted the *Journal* not just to advertise his pamphlets or help him find a book publisher, but to print one of his articles, "The Steps that led to the War of 1860–65." Stephenson, always diplomatic, assured Ashe that while he could not accept material for publication without having first seen it, "anyone is welcome to send a contribution to the *Journal for consideration*" by the Board of Editors. By this point, Ashe was incensed. As far as he was concerned, having to "get the consent of a lot of your learned men" before publication "ended the matter for I had heard that a lot of them were Lincoln Fools."
After an incoherent mush of anger and argument, Ashe concluded his letter: "There may be many of Lincoln’s lionizers among those men interested in your publication. They ought to be put in jail—and so arrange [sic] as to have no Children! Good By! Yours—A Southerner." Ashe’s emphatic and eugenic dismissal of the Southern Historical Association and its journal in the summer of 1936 did not long remain in his increasingly feeble memory. He occasionally protested interpretations and the tone of the Journal, but never again with such bile. Yet Ashe had clearly demonstrated how non-professionals questioned the traditional southern loyalties of the SHA. Without loyalty to its past endeavors, the case for pursuing the history of the region seemed to him paltry indeed. To him and many others, there was simply no justification for sitting on the historical fence—"southern" historians should be "southern" advocates. The claim to be a "Southern" Historical Association therefore seemed to Ashe and his compatriots a full-out farce.

The Southern Historical Association was nonetheless determined to avoid any appearance of traditional defensiveness most noticeably through its commitment to an "objective" style. For one, the Journal of Southern History never failed to capitalize "Negro"—a small but important detail, and one that challenged the journalistic and publishing status quo. Editors quietly and without dispute altered all manuscripts to conform to this requirement. They also eliminated disrespectful and racist phraseology, turning "inferior race" into "black race," for example, or removing names like "darkey" and "self-betraying expressions like ‘the poor Negroes’" from submissions. More contested by some members was the Journal’s policy of using the term "Civil War." The closest thing to a statement regarding this policy decision came from William C. Binkley,
in a hasty and frustrated response to a contributor who protested the Journal’s refusal to allow “southern names” for the conflict:

I wish there were time to discuss some of the questions which you raise such as, for example, the use of the term “Civil War.” I am afraid, however, that any attempt to explain would require a disquisition which might not be altogether logical in its conclusions. If you ever become involved in editorial work, you will find that many problems have to be settled on the basis of generally accepted forms or practices and that if one takes the time to reason out all possible variations, he will soon become involved in delay which wrecks the general program.\(^80\)

The background to these “generally accepted forms or practices,” however, was both expedient and ideological. When one prominent contributor changed his title to the “War Between the States,” Stephenson hoped the change had not stemmed from an “impression that the Journal preferred” it that way. In the early years, Stephenson let the more traditional southern name stand if the contributor strongly insisted, but he usually suggested changing it to the more neutral Civil War. In fact, there are only seven instances in the first twenty volumes of the Journal where “War Between the States” was used as the name for the American conflict of 1861–1865. As one reviewer bluntly put it, there was “nothing to justify” using the old-fashioned and romantically tainted name in modern historiography.\(^81\)

In addition to the interpretive distance the SHA sought to impose between its work and that of “southern” ideologues, the association also made qualitative changes to the Journal to reinforce their professionalism. The cover of the first-volume issues, an elaborate, art-deco design with a large cotton boll at its center, received criticism from many corners. “The front cover of a scholarly publication should be strictly formal and bear prominently the table of contents,” University of Michigan professor Dwight L. Dumond had argued at an April board of editors meeting. “If you would remove the
cotton boll and replace it with the title and authors of articles included it would be, to my mind at least, an improvement.” Other board members agreed that a “more conventional cover” was needed but Stephenson was indecisive about what to choose in its place. He seemed to think that just the table of contents was too conventional. Ultimately, he went with the journal’s name printed in a large block font, the volume identification information, and the seal of the Southern Historical Association—the centerpiece of which was a columned plantation house. With minor changes, this design remained on the cover of the Journal of Southern History until 1951, when the big-house in the small seal was removed. With that decision, the last bit of Old South iconography was excised from the Journal of Southern History.82

Despite their rejection of popular images and interpretations, SHA historians never intended to abandon their identity as southerners. “It is fellows like you, raised and bred in the deep South, with a deep love for history and all it means, and prepared as you are,” one editor implored Fletcher M. Green, “who must bring our section into its proper historical place.” In fact, for all their commitment to doctoral degrees and professional training, most SHA historians from the South also drew on their “native understanding” as an extra source of authority, believing that “a man who has lived in the South or who has received a part of his training in the South has a much better understanding of Southern people and problems than one who has not had that advantage.”83 This identification with the South persisted, even when historians considered themselves exiled to the North. “The thing that pleases me,” Princeton University professor Thomas J. Wertenbaker pointed out, “is the fact that our own Southern historians are studying the relationship of the South to the Union and are correcting some of the misconceptions
which have grown out of the partisanship of writers in the past.” Even Wendell H. Stephenson, an adoptive southerner who grew up in Indiana, felt so deeply tied to the region that he complained about feeling out of place at national meetings “being a Southernor. . .among so many Yankees.” The Southern Historical Association thus provided a place for historians of the South to embrace their regional identity—to assert that their interpretations were somehow different or more authoritative than those put forth by non-southern historians—without forcing them to abandon the standards of truth that all professional historians in the United States recognized and agreed upon.

The Southern Historical Association therefore stringently drew the line between themselves and the popular conceptions of the southern past. They did this somewhat warily, because of their recognition that in the 1930s “there was more interest in Southern material than ever before” due in part “to the awakening interest in the South generally as a result of Gone With the Wind” in both book and movie form. “Like everyone else in America,” white southern historians enjoyed the Gone With the Wind mania, yet they were not satisfied to let Scarlett, Rhett, and Ashley (and to a lesser extent, Mammy, Big Sam, and Prissy) define the South for their generation. The South, as a region, offered an extraordinary historical opportunity. SHA historians wanted to take as a starting point their abiding fondness for their region, add to it some “philosophizing and interpreting” learned from their specialized training, and thereby redirect the South’s general attitude toward its past to allow a homegrown critical eye to join an increasing number of American historians genuinely interested in issues of the southern past and present.
A Civil War

Like the old Southern History Association, the Southern Historical Association expected its members to view the South broadly, as a coherent region with a long history, a history that (though this last part was under debate) did not all lead up inevitably to the cataclysmic Civil War. The Southern Historical Association, however, had a vocal contingent of members who insisted that the association recenter southern history around the Civil War, arguing that the period was “the heart of southern history.” Privately, some historians dreamed back to the Civil War as the fatal defeat of what might have been. “The South came so near victory so often!” Frank L. Owsley rhapsodized, “And had it won, what a great people, what a great civilization we might have had today instead of being the ‘poor, barefoot South.’” Yet the Southern Historical Association largely divorced an automatic defense of secession from the war’s history. As David M. Potter pointed out in a fifteen-year retrospective of the Journal, SHA authors evinced a “marked preoccupation with the period of sectional strife” without the “perpetuation of old emotional attitudes.”

Articles on the Civil War, its causes, and its politics formed a critical portion of Journal publications during its first two decades. In fact, the Journal of Southern History was the outlet of choice for Civil War studies; it published more than three times as many articles on the war as the Mississippi Valley Historical Review did in its first decade. The more popular magazines, like Atlantic Monthly, had also made a concerted effort to cut back on articles on the Civil War era, leaving the new Journal as an attractive—if unpaying—alternative for historians interested in the sectional conflict.

As historian Thomas J. Pressly has aptly illustrated, an analysis of the changing historical interpretations of the Civil War constitutes a book in and of itself. In
Pressly’s view, the establishment of the Southern Historical Association represented the “capstone” of historical scholarship’s “coming-of-age” in the South. The association’s institutional commitment to the South gave new form to white southerners’ growing discontent with the reconciliationist interpretation of the Civil War that had given equal glory to North and South. As a result, the Southern Historical Association “heightened the possibility that Southern-born historians, trained in the South, writing the history of the South at Southern universities, and using predominantly Southern sources might become as ‘biased’ in their own way as were the ‘outsiders’ against whom they complained.” Pressly found that “some (not all) Southern-born historians expressed interpretations of the causes of the Civil War characterized chiefly by their ardent defense of the South and by their sharp criticism of non-Southerners.” The chief orchestrators of this “new vindication of the South,” Pressly concludes, were Frank L. Owsley and Charles W. Ramsdell.90

This is not an unfair characterization of the work of Owsley, the decidedly more “ardent” and cantankerous of the two men. In the culmination of an argument that began at least a decade earlier with his contribution to I’ll Take My Stand, Owsley argued in his 1940 SHA presidential address that “egocentric sectionalism” in the North replaced the nation’s foundational emphasis on constitutional balance and sectional integrity with domination, compulsion, and attack. This egocentrism took its most noxious form, in Owsley’s view, in the condemnation that abolitionists directed at the South. Owsley never shied away from extremism in making his case: “Indeed, as far as I have been able to ascertain, neither Dr. Goebbels...nor Stalin’s propaganda agents have as yet been able to plumb the depths of vulgarity and obscenity reached and maintained by George
Bourne, Stephen Foster, Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner and other abolitionists of note." Time and again, Owsley lashed out at contrary interpretations, particularly ones that stressed the moral issue of slavery as a cause of war. His targets were plentiful. In his eyes, “90% of the Yankee historians” believed that the “Civil War was based solely on the moral issue of slavery.”

Like Owsley, Charles W. Ramsdell believed that the fact of secession could be separated from the inevitability of war. As Pressly pointed out, Ramsdell too placed the blame on the North, and specifically on Abraham Lincoln, for turning peaceable secession into armed conflict. Though contending that slavery was “a primary cause” of the war, Ramsdell also argued that violence was an unnecessary escalation to end an institution which was already on its way toward certain extinction. Pressly attributes to Ramsdell’s eminence and leadership within the southern historical profession the widespread adoption of these views on the war. Indeed, the theme the local press took away from Ramsdell’s 1936 SHA presidential address was that the “civil war effected nothing.”

Yet by linking Ramsdell to the “new vindication” school, Pressly leaves no way to analyze Ramsdell’s sense of his own level-headedness, his own belief that he and his generation had significantly introduced a new “critical ability” to the interpretation of the Confederate cause. Though he despised the “Lincoln legend,” he claimed he was committed to its destruction “because, and only because, I think it is untrue to the facts.” “I think some earlier southern writers hurt their own cause and discredited their own arguments by trying to prove too much,” Ramsdell told a friend. “The facts, carefully evidenced, are enough.” From Ramsdell’s point of view, his “Lincoln and Fort Sumter”
paper, which first presented these arguments to the 1935 American Historical Association meeting and was then published in the _Journal of Southern History_, was generously received by all but a "few historians—in the North!—[who] refuse to take it seriously" because they never "change a position once taken, regardless of new evidence." "The southerners were, or seemed to be, delighted," he informed another inquirer, while many prominent northerners also claimed to have been convinced. Ramsdell continued to brace for "a furious kick-back from various sources" over his interpretation, but it seems to have never really come. Instead, Ramsdell encouraged civil debate on this topic, politely agreeing to disagree with opponents "until some new and conclusive evidence—conclusive, that is, to both of us—is discovered." Since both sides were "subjectively bound" to their sources, Ramsdell foresaw little hope of resolution. Still, he placed special emphasis on the role this kind of debate played in the development of professional historical scholarship, because it separated what professionals did from the knee-jerk defensiveness of the persistent Lost Cause tradition. Although his ultimate defense of the reasonableness of secession and the imminent natural doom of slavery is considered incorrect today, it is important to recognize that his insistence on informed, reasoned, and bisectional inquiry also unlocked the door of regional historiography to competitive moral messages and methodologies.

At mid-century, however, Thomas J. Pressly was not alone in his conclusion that the founding of the Southern Historical Association exemplified a new organized defensiveness in southern historical scholarship. In a fifteen-year retrospective of the presidential addresses of the association, H. C. Nixon found that the speeches, "pretty well spiked with the hard liquor of polemics," baldly refused to admit that there was
"anything inherently wrong with the South, or anything to criticize." The Southern Historical Association, he argued in another article, enshrined a historiographical "conservative revolt" by giving form to the "interlinked doctrines of regional patriotism and conservation." It was a foundational principle of the Southern Historical Association, historian George Brown Tindall similarly suggested, that the "Civil War, its antecedents and its consequences, constitute[d] the very point of origin for the idea of southern history"; the early sectionalism therefore could hardly be surprising. Robert F. Durden observed that the SHA seemed at its founding "the vanguard of a defensive, almost neo-Confederate sectionalism." Hugh I. Rodgers, in a short article on the Southern Historical Association, similarly argued that the presidential address "often was the occasion of a post-Appomattox salvo northward." There is no denying that the wartime SHA presidents were sectionally truculent. A. B. Moore prided himself on the anti-northern "doctrine" of his 1942 address on northern economic abuse of the South and privately considered himself a "propagandist" historian. Benjamin B. Kendrick's presidential address was so critical of the North that he felt obliged to add a disclaimer to its published version. "Since the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States and with similar hostilities with Germany and Italy apparently inevitable," Kendrick wrote the Journal editor just after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and one month after the oral delivery of his address, "I think it would be in order for me to add...the following sentence. "The author wishes it understood that while he recognizes the necessity for complete national unity now that the country is at war, he sees no reason to modify any part of the interpretation he has placed upon events preceding the outbreak of war."
This monolithic conception of the conservative white southern historian and his defense of the southern view of the Civil War, however, distorts our understanding of the professionalization of history in the South in two important ways. First, it papers over the very real differences in conceptions of southern history between conservative professional and amateur historians. And second, it prevents us from examining the fissures, created by both internal and external forces, that eventually cracked open the South to a broader narrative of regional history and identity. These counter-trends actually existed within the Southern Historical Association from the very beginning. As early as 1937, more conservative leaders were afraid the association had been “taken out of the hands of the men who organized it” and had become “dominated by Yankeeized Southerners.” They also doubted that their traditional defenses of southern motives met with “much agreement” from the general membership. Other members protested that the wartime series of sectionally defensive SHA presidential addresses “could hardly be called ‘contributions’ to historical scholarship.” With this level of contest and debate, the organization was not the source of total, consistent, and institutionalized defiance that it seemed to be to later historians in the trenches of the civil rights movement. Instead, the association provided an arena for real intellectual competition where the prize was the authority of the association’s institutions. The polemicism of some presidents’ speeches indicates how much power over the conception of “the South” was available within those institutions.

It is true that those who hoped to provide more space for broader social history of the South faced tough opposition from the historical Johnny Rebs and the chronology of fate. For one thing, current events colluded with those interested in politics, war, and
reconstruction as World War II kept historians' eyes trained on these topics. Later, the impending Civil War centennial thwarted attempts to eliminate or expand the program beyond Civil War sessions. Still, there was from the beginning a significant cadre of resistance to and revision of Civil War issues and interpretations within the Southern Historical Association. Even historians who argued that the Civil War required and deserved multiple new studies realized that "the war of the states is happily only one field, and not the most important one for new research."102

These leaders wanted to make sure the annual meetings and journal represented a broad cross section of regional history that shifted "emphasis from the traditional approach by way of political activities or the Civil War complex to a consideration of life and living in the Southern region." They took seriously the complaints that the annual meetings tended to be "a little top-heavy with Civil War and Reconstruction materials" and consequently tried to shape the program to address certain "neglected" aspects of the region's history.103 Similarly, the editors of the Journal subtly tried to steer the publication away from any obvious Confederate focus by generally refusing to publish diaries or other first-hand Civil War accounts and thereby preventing the formation of any surface similarities between the Journal and other Confederate source-journals still in existence like the Southern Historical Society Papers. If complaints came in that the Journal was overloaded with Civil War articles, the editors extricated themselves from culpability by claiming they were chained to what was submitted.104

For the most part, then, the Southern Historical Association encouraged dissent and debate regarding the Civil War. Within the association's institutions, the Civil War was both the repressible and irrepressible conflict. It was debated as both inevitable and
unnecessary. As William C. Binkley reassured a young Kenneth M. Stampp when he inquired about submitting a manuscript that took on his elders' orthodoxies regarding Lincoln's role in starting the Civil War, "If one avoided the study of a particular subject because of the weight of the names of those who have already done something with it, we would soon arrive at a static view of our past, and historical research would become far less fascinating than it now is." Stampp's manuscript was subsequently published.\textsuperscript{105}

Some SHA leaders even claimed that they were not interested in the "Southern point of view" on the Civil War, while other readers clearly ascertained that many white southern intellectuals found the question of such perspective "taboo." As J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton piously stated, "I have not much interest in any point of view other than the truth."\textsuperscript{106} The Civil War, while important, was not the only regional cause to be studied by the Southern Historical Association.

\textit{The Meaning of the Southern Past}

SHA historians, therefore, were committed to a "South" that had historical importance beyond understanding sectional conflict. "The South deserves something better," A. J. Hanna concluded, "than that posterity should know of her principally through the bloody aspect of war, with which some writers are still preoccupied and still endeavor to make glorious."\textsuperscript{107} Distressingly for \textit{Journal} editors, the appropriate topics for a journal of this broader "southern" history were not always immediately obvious. When "the borderline of Southern history" seemed fuzzy, the editors asked for assistance from the board.\textsuperscript{108} By the mid-1940s, the editors had worked out a fairly consistent rubric for \textit{Journal} contributions. Articles should suggest regional significance: local or
state topics that made no effort to comment on the region in general were often not considered "southern" enough. Articles on "a broad national point of view which affects Southern history as a part of national history," like urban/rural conflict or sectionalism in national politics, were also considered appropriate. Finally, most board members believed that the occasional historiographical or other topic of general professional interest was all right, though many worried about the Journal taking space away from specifically southern articles or entering competition with more general interest publications like the American Historical Review.\textsuperscript{109} There was nothing particularly cut-and-dried about these definitions, leaving editors to their own best judgment on what to include. For example, one potential author inquired if the story of a career diplomat who happened to be born and raised in the South counted as "southern" history. The subject "had ceased to be a southerner," the editor responded, so the article had no place in the Journal. Border states, perhaps appropriately, also caused confusion. "Aspects of Oklahoma history are indubitably [sic] southern," Stephenson tried to explain to one author, "[such] as the movement of southerners (including southern Indians) into the territory, slaveholding Indians, the struggle for the region during the Civil War, the production of cotton, etc. There are doubtless other phases of Oklahoma history which are southern—and a scholarly study dealing with any of them would be considered seriously for publication in the Journal." In these cases, the editors ultimately had to rely on their own gut instinct or personal feeling, and there really was no guarantee of consistent policy.\textsuperscript{110}

Despite this kind of bewilderment over the boundaries of their own field, this first generation of successful professional southern historians did not argue the degree, extent,
or persistence of the South's distinctiveness in the way that historians in the mid-twentieth-century vigorously debated the South's "central theme." In this decade, the region's ontological existence was to them never in doubt. Building upon the developments of their predecessors in the Southern History Association and *The South in the Building of the Nation* series, Southern Historical Association members also separated the "South" from the Confederacy. Whatever arguments they made regarding the Civil War, SHA historians presumed an inherent and discrete southern identity with roots deep in the formation of the American republic. Their solutions for the region's problems had precedents in the region's historical past. Unlike their predecessors in the Southern History Association, members of this new association argued that the South was a region with an integrity unto itself and placed little emphasis on the example the South could provide the nation. "The great task in writing a history of the South," historian Clement Eaton believed, "is to separate its history from that of the Nation." Too often, "the tendency in writing such a work is to make it a history of the U.S. with the North left out." This regional moment was brief: by mid-century southern historians had returned to the position that they "were Americans writing about the South, just as other Americans were writing about the West or the North." From our post-modern perspective, where identities are seen as so contingent, malleable, and superficial, it is difficult to recapture this moment of devotion to the centering reality of the "South." Yet the story of regional history in the first half of the twentieth century is the contested and troublesome fragmentation of this "solid" southern identity—politically, racially, culturally, geographically, and historiographically.
SHA historians envisioned themselves as pioneers in a "wide open" field of historical investigation, because in their view enough work on their region had never been done.\textsuperscript{114} Moreover, as Duke University historian Charles S. Sydnor argued, the intellectual realization of a "South" beyond the Confederacy had led to methodological innovation on the part of southern historians. To investigate a civilization that existed outside of political institutions compelled the southern historian "to think in terms of social phenomena." As a result, Sydnor concluded that southern historians challenged the basic conception of early twentieth-century American historians that change inevitably connoted progress; they worked with the idea that institutions of the past may in fact have been preferable to the ones that subsequently developed; and they explored the cultural and attitudinal factors that explained the South's essence in the absence of state institutions or geographical borders. Sydnor's insight into the basis of regional history set up the foundations for political arguments that were both revolutionary and conservative. By emphasizing "the people," southern historians helped (Sydnor might have said led) the American historical profession to conceive of writing history from the bottom up. At the same time, by emphasizing the persistent example of the past, southern historians also enabled a conservative justification for the perpetuation of regionally distinctive institutions. Very different political outcomes grew from the same historiographical roots. Sydnor ordered a hundred reprints of this article. "I know it sounds prideful to want so many," he explained, "but I should like to use this article as a way of explaining to some of my cynical friends that southern history may have other objectives than to praise the South and damn the North."\textsuperscript{115}
The majority of the association’s members, according to its secretary-treasurer, were primarily interested in the Old South. The attention paid to the antebellum era by SHA historians, however, largely deromanticized the cavalier or plantation legend. There are few southern belles and planter-gentlemen in the early volumes of the *Journal of Southern History*; there are also few slaves. This turn to the white South delighted members who thought that historians had too long focused on issues of “slavery and politics.” As one critic argued, African Americans had “been nothing but a curse to the South from the time the first slave arrived at Jamestown till now,” and historians had neglected to study the progress of the white South “in spite of him.” Southern identity was therefore divorced from the legacy of plantation slavery. The idea of the antebellum aristocratic statesman was demythologized, and the yeoman farmer middle class was “discovered.” “Our concentration upon slavery and upon the great political battles in the national arena,” one historian noted, “has caused us to neglect the minute study of the actual social relationships between whites in the ante-bellum South.”

Historians also investigated the education, culture, and innovation of the antebellum white southern people. Old South panels at the annual meetings explored southern cities, scientific agriculture, plantation management, intellectual and entrepreneurial pursuits. Historians argued that the antebellum economy was progressive and uninhibited, and that its social structure and approach to government were democratic and forward-looking. Critics who argued otherwise—particularly if they incorporated a Marxist viewpoint in their analysis—were shut out of the *Journal* with an intensity that bordered on hysteria. To most professional historians of this generation, the antebellum South exhibited the indigenous and necessary building blocks
for solid economic growth and self-government. The "southern tradition," some argued, was entirely in line with New South solutions to a stagnant economy and regional poverty. At the first annual meeting, the figures chosen as "representative men of the Old South" were a "social scientist," an "industrial promoter," a "capitalist and philanthropist," and a historian. "So this was the Old South!" one Journal reviewer exclaimed in mock surprise. "It is hard to believe, if one has assumed that this region nourished few interests save the economic and the political, and that its cultural activities were limited to the making of wax flowers and the reading of Sir Walter Scott."

This prevailing interpretation of the antebellum South necessarily begs the question: what role did slavery play in this progressive Old South? SHA historians had relatively little to say about their region's peculiar institution. Reviewers greeted state slavery studies with enthusiasm, but these were primarily investigations into plantation management techniques and agricultural economics. As African American critics pointed out, even if "the Negro himself as a person" received attention in the study, "this human side of the equation is not enlarged upon." This emphasis not surprisingly led SHA historians to investigate the economy of slavery and its effects on the white South. Its profitability was debatable (indeed, some historians worried that the conclusion that slavery defied economic rationality was "an indictment of the Southern intelligence"), but most agreed that the institution's greatest sin was the production of "conditioned thinking" among whites. The myth of the happy slave, therefore, was nibbled at only on the edges. Most white southern historians were content to conclude that most slaves were well-treated and left it at that. Wendell H. Stephenson, for example, still quizzed his undergraduate students on their final examination about "services rendered the slaves
by the plantation system." White SHA historians were ready to concede that the South’s slaves were not necessarily loyal retainers during the Civil War as romance remembered, but were not quite ready to embrace a growing literature on slave resistance and revolts. Still, the gradual incursion of this kind of literature into white professional esteem stands as evidence of the nooks and crannies into which the Southern Historical Association’s idea of history from the bottom up could infiltrate to ultimately challenge the association of whiteness and southernness.

The “solid” historiographical South, however, fractured most seriously over interpretations of Reconstruction. The consensus that Southern History Association historians, Dunning-school-trained historians, and the white southern people had attained regarding this tumultuous period began to crumble in the 1930s. Although nothing like a new consensus replaced the old, revisionist Reconstruction historiography best challenged what white southern historians thought they knew about their past. To be sure, African American historians had long challenged the prevailing view of Reconstruction as a period of regional oppression, “Negro domination,” graft, greed, ignorance, scalawags and radical carpetbaggers, terror and tumult, occasionally conceding that they may still have been “too close to the history of reconstruction to expect better treatment” but always insisting that the histories coming from white pens did not yet represent the “truth.” But white SHA historians did not ignore these challenges, and the reinterpretation of Reconstruction spurred debates not only on the role of African Americans in the history of the South but also on the place of revisionism in professional history. African American historian Charles H. Wesley presciently charged that such reinterpretation demanded an entire “reconstruction of history.”
Although Claude G. Bowers was most responsible for the widespread popularization of the Dunning school interpretation of Reconstruction through his best-seller, *The Tragic Era*, Walter Lynwood Fleming best epitomized that consensus to the founding generation of the Southern Historical Association. Fleming was honored as an intellectual parent by the Twelve Southerners who wrote *I'll Take My Stand* in 1930 and by the faculty of Louisiana State University who named their new lecture series in southern history after him.\textsuperscript{129} He was also the subject of two historiographical articles in the *Journal of Southern History*. The first, written by Fletcher M. Green, praised Fleming for instigating the trend in Reconstruction historiography to study the social and economic, rather than strictly the political, aspects of the period. The article, however, was criticized by *Journal* referees for its “eulogistic” tone. The second, written by William C. Binkley and printed in the *Journal* less than three years later, was less certain of how Fleming’s interpretations had stood the test of time, but admired him for his commitment to the South. Fleming “was one of the few who came back [to the South after graduate school], not of necessity but of deliberate choice; and he came back with a vision.” He therefore stood as both a precedent and an example for many of the founding members of the Southern Historical Association who took their commitment to the improvement of their native region seriously.\textsuperscript{130} Whatever conclusions historians in the prewar period wanted to draw regarding his perspective, objectivity, or interpretation, the Southern Historical Association had adopted Fleming as a forefather for his ardent belief that the southern historian had something particular and authoritative to say about his region’s past.\textsuperscript{131}
Fleming’s critics were vocal, however, and gradually made themselves heard among white southern historians. By extolling Fleming, *Journal of Negro History* editor Carter G. Woodson argued, Fletcher Green had allied himself with a “propagandist who made himself the defender of the anti-Negro Ku Klux Klan regime.” W. E. B. Du Bois similarly connected Fleming to a group of historians who “believe the Negro to be subhuman and congenitally unfitted for citizenship and the suffrage.” Other critics, like Fisk University professor Horace Mann Bond, were more willing to allow Fleming the prejudices of his time and class, but concluded that despite what “Reconstruction meant to Fleming, we may now agree that it involved social, economic, and political redefinition of the status of varied economic and racial groupings.” White SHA historians would not yet adopt wholesale the reinterpretation of these supposedly “caustic” Fleming critics, but most conceded the role revisionism must play in new times and contexts. The result was the most fundamental historiographical debate members of the Southern Historical Association faced in the organization’s first decades.132

It might be helpful to focus the discussion on the reception of a single revisionist history of Reconstruction before turning to the ways that some members of the SHA finally opened themselves up to a reinterpretation of their most inherited historiographical tradition. No other work of history would serve this purpose as well as W. E. B. Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction*, published in 1935. Du Bois’s study, which is only the most famous of a long line of African American additions to and revisions of Reconstruction history, departed from the assumption that Reconstruction was a real effort to recreate the class and racial order of the United States that had lasting if incomplete beneficial effects. Du Bois’s interpretation was hardly recognizable to white
readers who saw only the “horrors of the deconstruction called reconstruction,” and it ended with a cutting criticism of the anti-black stance of most white historians.\footnote{133}

Historians today generally assume that such a sweeping indictment of the white southern historical tradition—popular \textit{and} professional—was largely ignored by the historical profession.\footnote{134}

In fact, the argument was most certainly not ignored by white historians in the South. Du Bois’s study—and the revisionism it epitomized—inspired responses ranging from casual conversation to scholarly panels, short reviews to review essays. At least one Dunning-trained historian even added \textit{Black Reconstruction} to his course reading list.\footnote{135} To say that white southern historians responded does not mean that they were convinced by his accusations that white historians wrote racist propaganda more than history. Nor does it mean that his argument that African Americans “restored the South to the Union[,] established a new democracy, both for white and black, and instituted the public schools,” single-handedly transformed the majority’s understanding of Reconstruction.

As Du Bois himself recognized, he would not be able to persuade the reader who “regards the Negro as a distinctly inferior creation” incapable of a creative role in human history of the truth of his interpretation. As predicted, some readers rejected Du Bois out of hand for his strict criticism of white historians.\footnote{136} Many others failed to give Du Bois full historical hearing because of his Marxist interpretation of class and race relations in the Reconstruction South. Wendell Stephenson, for example, admitted that he did not possess the intellectual tools to distinguish between history underpinned by Marxist theory and communist “propaganda.” A sympathetic Francis Butler Simkins, Du Bois’s reviewer in the \textit{Journal of Southern History}, agreed that \textit{Black Reconstruction}’s emphasis
on “Marxian philosophy...does not leave sufficient room for consideration of the constructive achievements of the Negroes during Reconstruction.” With white historians in the South reading the work of Du Bois and other black historians, however, the process of debate opened the door, though tentatively and incompletely, to a reconsideration of the white Reconstruction consensus.¹³⁷

A central event in the Southern Historical Association’s engagement with issues of Reconstruction revisionism was a session at the 1939 annual meeting in Lexington, Kentucky, designed to showcase two of the most recent approaches to Reconstruction historiography. The panel featured a paper by Howard K. Beale and commentary by Simkins, one of the first white southern historians to rethink the problems of Reconstruction historiography. In 1932 he and Robert H. Woody had published South Carolina During Reconstruction, a book praised by the Journal of Negro History as “a common-sense, objective view of the most controversial period in American history” that emphasized “the villainy of white men” without “belabor[ing] unduly the rascality of Negroes.”¹³⁸ In his SHA paper, Beale emphasized the structural forces behind Reconstruction. “It is not so important to know whether a few more or a few less carpetbaggers or so-called scalawags were righteous or iniquitous,” Beale argued, “as it is to know what social and economic forces brought them to power and motivated them.” Simkins, endorsed by Beale as “a leader in fundamental reinterpretation,” urged that the idea of class struggle not overshadow the strange psychology of the white southern mind that led to their “aversion to the experiment of the Negro in politics.” Without this attention to race, historians would not fully understand how race/caste distinctions were strengthened during Reconstruction or the legacy of white supremacy that the twentieth-
century southerners had long defended and some now reconsidered. This program reportedly attracted a large audience of members and nonmembers alike.\textsuperscript{139}

This successful session was followed up the next year by a panel that did contrast older interpretations with the emerging revisionist perspectives. The program chair envisioned a round table where older Dunning school historians like J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, C. Mildred Thompson, and Charles W. Ramsdell would discuss changes they would make to their classic Reconstruction studies in light of new findings. Hamilton, for one, was not interested in participating. "As a matter of fact," he told the program chair, "if the revised point of view is that of Beale’s paper at [the 1939 meeting], I haven’t any interest in taking the matter seriously." Hamilton felt Beale’s class approach was "so apparently detached from the facts of the case" and "so lacking in historicity" that it did not merit discussion. Stephenson thought Beale and Simkins should not be put on the program again so soon, partially for diversity purposes and partially because "the Association was treated to their revisionist attitudes during the last program."\textsuperscript{140} The association was nonetheless treated to another discussion of revisionist Reconstruction historiography in Charleston in 1940. In the absence of Beale, Woody and Simkins restated their contention that revisionists (including Du Bois) had made positive changes to the understanding of Reconstruction by focusing squarely on the problems of race and class as well as on its constructive achievements. Most interesting, however, was C. Mildred Thompson’s concession that if she had it to do over again, she would include in her state study of Georgia more analysis of social and economic aspects of Reconstruction, and "‘most of all’ she ‘would want to know more about the part of the Negroes themselves in securing and maintaining their freedom.’" Although the value of
the older state studies was defended from the floor by another Dunning student, something approaching an alternative consensus was vaguely visible on the horizon—an approach that promised humanity and agency to the freedpeople, attention to the constructive benefits the South attained as a result of Reconstruction, and the shortcomings and unfinished nature of the nation’s democratic promise. 141

**The Historical South, Broadly Defined**

The historical South that the SHA imagined, studied, debated, and devoted itself to was thus much more complicated and contested than tradition claimed and historians have noted. There were basically only two ideas that SHA historians agreed upon during the association’s first decade. The first was that the South was real. It existed as a unique entity in history and persisted with a distinctive role in the world in their own day. The second is that their professional claim over the historical South lent them authority over the past as historians and separated their southern identity in the present from the Confederate one of the past. Within the framework of these two certainties, the debates over the meaning of the South’s past ultimately posed a crucial question that would shape the politics of southern history as the century progressed: whether “the South” was a place that essentially defended the old ways or incorporated and adapted to the new.

The South’s past thus lent itself to a variety of political positions, all of which found room within the institutions of this professional historical association. Studying the South could still be a sectional project whose goals were to define the South’s grievances against the North, to perpetuate institutional differences they approved, and to rail against changes they resented. Yet a growing number of southern historians
embarked on a regional historical project to identify the roots of contemporary problems and to seek out consistent and indigenous solutions to them. The special professionalized arena gave these historians room to show off their training and debate ideas that flew in the face of inherited assumptions, while also providing them with the mechanisms with which to judge relative truth without interference from popular tradition. As the association’s second president appreciated, professional historians were distinguished by being factually, methodologically, and historiographically informed even when they disagreed.

The Southern Historical Association, however, never functioned solely as an isolation chamber for academic debate. Its members also abhorred antiquarianism—the writing of “heroic annals of the dead past for the sake of the past.”142 For all their complicated claims and uses of “objectivity” (a topic that deserves its own chapter below), it is fair to say that most SHA historians envisioned a regional past that was useful to the regional present and future. They promised a diagnosis of what had gone wrong and the possibility of discovering a treatment for the economic, political, social, and racial troubles that plagued the South between the Great Depression and the end of World War II. In many ways, SHA historians lived in the historical South—a region where difference kept its citizens (white and black) from full integration into the promises of the nation. Historians of all political bents called upon this difference to chart strategies to cope with the challenges of modern American life.
1 Wendell H. Stephenson to James W. Patton, July 20, 1944, Series A.1, Folder 58, Southern Historical Association Records [hereafter SHA Records], Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill [hereafter SHC].

2 Jessie M. Fraser to Edwin A. Davis, March 2, 1935, and reply, March 19, 1935, Box 58, Wendell Holmes Stephenson Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University [hereafter WHS]. Historical subgroups were commonly warned of the dangers of filiopietism by more “objective” historians: see, for example, Evarts B. Greene, “Perspectives in History,” Journal of Negro History [hereafter JNH], 17 (January 1932), 8–10.


5 Approximately three-quarters of SHA members were history professors, graduate students, or libraries. “Membership: Southern Historical Association,” January 1, 1937, Box 76, JSH Miscellany, WHS; and “List of Members and Exchanges: The Southern Historical Association,” January 15, 1945, Box 10, Professional Activities file, Frank Lawrence Owsley Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University. On SHA historians abandoning the romantic tradition, see Charles W. Ramsdell to Alice Bell, April 18, 1935, Box 3N293, Charles W. Ramsdell Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; C. Vann Woodward, “Hillbilly Realism,” Southern Review, 4 (Spring 1939), 677; and Lester J. Cappon, “Two Decades of Historical Activity in Virginia,” JSH, 6 (May 1940), 191–92. See also James P. Hendrix Jr., “From Romance to Scholarship: Southern History at the Take-Off Point,” Mississippi Quarterly, 30 (Spring 1977), 193–211.

6 Elizabeth Howard West to Charles W. Ramsdell, March 23, 1938 (first quotation), and reply, April 5, 1938, Box 3N292, Ramsdell Papers; Edwin A. Davis to Jessie M. Fraser, March 19, 1935, Box 58, WHS (second quotation); and unidentified newspaper clipping [c. 1935], Box 76, JSH Miscellany file, WHS (third quotation).


9 Wendell H. Stephenson to Samuel A. Ashe, June 2, 1936, Box 51, WHS (first quotation); and Stephenson to Clyde B. King, February 15, 1941, Box 63, WHS (subsequent quotations). After a presentation at the 1935 Mississippi Valley Historical Association meeting, commentator Frank L. Owsley warned the young presenter “against
developing too fine a style." "I could not tell whether he was complimenting me," the presenter confessed, "or giving me a dig about having too little scholarship." James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, May 30, 1935, Folder 24, Fletcher Melvin Green Papers, SHC.

10 On the UDC and Journal subscriptions, see James W. Patton to Fred C. Cole, February 15, 1941, Series A.1, Folder 28, SHA Records. On the UDC and research, see Claude G. Bowers, "Rediscovering the Old South," n.d., Series 2, Folder 881, Green Papers (an advertising pamphlet for the Southern Historical Collection published by the North Carolina UDC); and J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to Members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, March 8, 1940, Folder 142, J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton Papers, SHC. On UDC prizes, see Mrs. T. W. Reed to Fletcher M. Green, February 11, 1936, Folder 32, Green Papers; and Wilbur G. Kurtz Jr. to Green, November 27, 1936, Folder 38, Green Papers. On refusing to advocate disbandment, see Stephenson to Robert W. Winston, April 15, 1935, Box 73, WHS.

11 Scott Hart, "'Civil War!' Delete It, Says U.D.C.: Authors of Book on Confederacy Declare Term Justified," unidentified newspaper clipping, ca. April 1936, Folder 35 (quotation); and James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, April 15, 1936, Folder 34; both in Green Papers.

12 Cecil Johnson to Fletcher M. Green, January 21, 1936, Folder 31, Green Papers. See also Fred Arthur Bailey, "The Textbooks of the 'Lost Cause': Censorship and the Creation of Southern State Histories," Georgia Historical Quarterly, 75 (Fall 1991), 507–33.

13 Mack Swearingen to Wendell H. Stephenson, June 16, 1937, Box 72, WHS. Rembert W. Patrick, for example, found his research conditions greatly improved when the UDC woman in charge of the Confederate Museum found out he was from South Carolina. Patrick to Fletcher M. Green, August 24, 1938, Folder 50, Green Papers. Mary Elizabeth Massey similarly tried to maintain good relations with the "dear sisters" though she considered herself in another league. Massey to Green, October 9, 1940, Folder 70, Green Papers.


15 Hart, "'Civil War!' Delete It." Patton was generally pleased with the reviews that the book received, especially from northern newspapers (Patton to Fletcher M. Green, October 30, 1936, Folder 70, Green Papers). The book received positive notice in the Journal of Southern History from Kathleen Bruce, especially for the authors' skill in avoiding sentimentality (JSH, 3 [May 1937], 230–32).

16 See, for example, Wendell H. Stephenson's polite refusal to change the assignment of the colonial South volume of the History of the South series despite the Virginia UDC's objections to the selected author: Matthew Page Arnold to Mrs. William A. [Helen F.]
Coleman, September 16, 1939; Coleman to Stephenson, October 19, 1939, and reply, November 16, 1939; all in Box 53, WHS.

17 For protests, see Mary Jones Calloway to Fletcher M. Green, May 2, 1944, Folder 112, Green Papers; and E. Dolly Lamar to J. G. de Roulliac Hamilton, July 5, 1938, and reply, July 11, 1938, Folder 132, Hamilton Papers. For invitations, see Carolyn J. North to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 11, 1938, and reply, May 18, 1937, Box 66; and Katherine Miller to Stephenson, February 10, 1941, Box 64; both WHS.

18 Fletcher M. Green to J. Carlyle Sitterson, February 20, 1936, Folder 32, Green Papers (first quotation); Charles W. Ramsdell to Elizabeth Davenport, December 13, 1933, Box 3N295 (second and third quotations); Ramsdell to Wendell H. Stephenson, February 7, 1937, Box 3N303 (fourth quotation); and Samuel A. Ashe to Ramsdell, December 12, 1936, Box 3N302 (fifth quotation); all in Ramsdell Papers.

19 On the beginnings of this trend, see Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy, 191.

20 Charles W. Ramsdell to Samuel E. Asbury, March 8, 1933, Box 3N294 (first quotation); Ramsdell to J. D. Eggleston, March 26, 1937, Box 3N302 (second quotation); and Ramsdell to Richard H. Shryock, June 14, 1936, Box 3N293 (third quotation); all in Ramsdell Papers.

21 Jack Temple Kirby has offered the important warning that in the South, particularly between 1890 and the mid-1930s, knowledge was rarely transmitted successfully in a top-down "pyramid" form. After the mid-1930s, though, Kirby argues the pyramid functioned, if imperfectly, and professional historians led the public toward "the abandonment of neo-Confederate sentimentality toward slavery and post–Civil War paternalism in race relations, . . .and the adoption of a neoabolitionist treatment of the Old South and the human rights causes since 1865, along with sympathetic portrayals of the white poor as well." Jack Temple Kirby, Media-Made Dixie: The South in the American Imagination (Baton Rouge, 1978), xiii–xvi (quotation on p. xv).

22 Frank L. Owsley to Allen Tate, February 29, 1932, quoted in Fred A. Bailey, "Plain Folk and Apology: Frank L. Owsley’s Defense of the South," in James C. Cobb and Charles R. Wilson, eds., Perspectives on the American South: An Annual Review of Society, Politics, and Culture, vol. 4 (New York, 1984), 101 (first quotation); Kathleen Bruce to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 24, 1936, Box 53, WHS (second quotation); and George E. Goodwin to Stephenson, September 30, 1939, and reply, October 10, 1939 (third quotation), Box 58, WHS.

23 Margaret C. McCulloch to Fletcher M. Green, July 4, 1940, Folder 67, Green Papers (first quotation); Ella Lonn, "Reconciliation Between the North and the South," JSK, 13 (February 1947), 14 (second quotation); and George C. Groce Jr. to Charles W. Ramsdell, February 15, 1938, Box 3N292, Ramsdell Papers (third quotation).

24 Newspaper coverage of SHA events rarely disputed the historians’ authority, even when their interpretations contradicted long-standing ideas about the white southern past. See, for example, "South’s Press Was Against Secession, Historian Asserts," Nashville Banner, November 21, 1936; Harnett T. Kane, "Young Historian ‘Sticks Neck Out,’ Explodes Orleans, Southern Myths: Finds Dixie Cities Much Like North’s," New Orleans
Item-Tribune, November 4, 1938; and Rebecca Franklin, “South Losing Its Individuality, Historians Are Warned Here,” Atlanta Journal, November 8, 1941; clippings in Series A.1, Folder 736, SHA Records.

25 William C. Binkley to O. C. Carmichael, June 17, 1942, Box 4, Folder 6, Binkley Papers (first quotation); and Agatha Welsh Maverick to Charles W. Ramsdell, November 11, 1931, Box 3N202, Ramsdell Papers (second quotation). See also Donald Davidson to Robert Penn Warren, February 20, 1936, Correspondence, Southern Review Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.


27 Fletcher M. Green, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 6 (February 1940), 90 (first quotation); Philip M. Hamer, “The Records of Southern History,” JSH, 5 (February 1939), 16–17 (subsequent quotations); and J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, “Three Centuries of Southern Records, 1607–1907,” JSH, 10 (February 1944), 3–36. On SHA leadership of local organizations, see also Julian C. Yonge (Florida Historical Society) to Charles W. Ramsdell, October 12, 1936, and reply, October 15, 1936, Box 3N290, Ramsdell Papers; and Wendell H. Stephenson to James W. Moffitt (Oklahoma Historical Society), December 21, 1936, Box 65, WHS.

28 “Southern Historical Association” [advertising brochure], May 1936, Box 76, JSH Miscellany, WHS (first quotation); J. E. Dowell to Fletcher M. Green, June 8, 1941, and July 10, 1941, Folder 78, Green Papers (second quotation); and Blanche Henry Clark to Fred C. Cole, June 20, 1942, and reply, June 22, 1942, Box 53, WHS.

29 William C. Binkley to Robert H. Woody, May 25, 1936, Box 2, Folder 7, Binkley Papers; and Jonathan T. Dorris to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 11, 1937, Box 56, WHS. The names and positions of participating individuals were found in the reports of the annual meeting, published in the Journal of Southern History each February. These numbers do not include as participants four individuals, usually civic officials, who gave welcome addresses to the SHA at the presidential dinner.

31 [William C. Binkley], "Notes for Chancellor Carmichael’s Use," [June 1942], Box 10, Professional Activities folder, Owsley Papers (quotation); Editors of the Journal of Southern History, Southern Review, and National Mathematics Magazine to Members of the Louisiana State University Budget Committee, n.d. [early 1942], Box 61, Campbell B. Hodges folder, WHS; and Binkley to Chancellor O. C. Carmichael, June 17, 1942, Box 4, Folder 6, Binkley Papers.

33 Evidence of the editors’ private opinions on manuscripts from discussions within the office is extremely rare. One surviving intraoffice memo from the Stephenson-Cole Mississippi Valley Historical Review years, however, indicates that the editors were not surprisingly much more frank with each other in their evaluations than comes across in formal correspondence: the article under discussion “stinks something awful” (Wendell H. Stephenson to Fred C. Cole, [March] 1948, Box 29, WHS).

34 The quotation can be found in Wendell H. Stephenson to George Viley Berry, April 7, 1937, Box 51, WHS; and Stephenson to John Francis McDermott, January 3, 1938, Box 64, WHS, regarding the rejection of McDermott’s manuscript, “The Creoles Were Immoral.” For other rejections, see William C. Binkley to Samuel Abrahams, March 5, 1947, Box 6, Folder 14, Binkley Papers (no new information); Stephenson to D. W. Knepper, March 24, 1937, Box 63, WHS (too much of a memoir); Stephenson to David C. Bramlette, May 16, 1938, Box 53 (too local); Stephenson to Will S. Tyler, April 2, 1939, Box 73 (too long); and Stephenson to George T. Ness Jr., September 24, 1942, Box 66 (no documentation); all WHS.

35 Wendell H. Stephenson to A. H. Starke, February 21, 1936, Box 69, WHS (first quotation); and Stephenson to Mrs. Louis C. [Caroline Kemper] Bulkley, March 8, 1939, Box 51, WHS (second quotation). On footnote problems, see Stephenson to Virginia S. Herold, March 6, 1936, Box 61; Fred C. Cole to Robert W. Barnwell Sr., June 30, 1942, Box 52; and George Fort Milton to Stephenson, July 11, 1935 and July 18, 1935, Box 65; all in WHS.

36 See the file of correspondence between William C. Binkley and Lloyd T. Everett, November 2, 1943–July 29, 1945, Series B.2, Folder 28, SHA Records.

37 Mack Swearingen, review of A Conscientious Turncoat: The Story of John M. Palmer, by George Thomas Palmer, JSHP, 8 (August 1942), 431 (first quotation); and John Tate Lanning, review of Florida Old and New, by Frederick W. Dau, JSHP, 1 (November 1935), 509 (second quotation).
38 As examples, James W. Patton, review of History of the College of Charleston, by J. H. Easterby, JSH, 2 (February 1936), 104 (first quotation); R. S. Cotterill, review of Transylvania Colony, by William Stewart Lester, JSH, 2 (February 1936), 109; John Carter Matthews, review of Richmond Homes and Memories, by Robert Beverley Munford Jr., JSH, 3 (May 1937), 235 (second quotation); and Herbert A. Kellar, review of Twelve Virginia Counties, by John H. Gwathmey, JSH, 4 (February 1938), 97–98.

39 Francis B. Simkins, review of Hampton and His Red Shirts: South Carolina's Deliverance in 1876, by Alfred B. Williams, JSH, 2 (May 1936), 282 (first quotation); and James W. Patton, review of Girls of the Sixties, by Elizabeth Waring McMaster, JSH, 4 (May 1938), 253 (second quotation).

40 Paul M. Angle to Wendell H. Stephenson, August 19, 1942, Box 51, WHS, published in "Communications," JSH, 8 (November 1942), 572–73 (first quotation); and James Truslow Adams to Stringfellow Barr, September 5, 1933, Box 1, Virginia Quarterly Review Correspondence, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library (second quotation).

41 For dissertation statistics, see William B. Hesseltine and Louis Kaplan, "Doctors of Philosophy in History: A Statistical Study," American Historical Review, 47 (July 1942), 785–87; and Appendix E. On graduate education at southern institutions, see “Minutes of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Conference of Deans of Southern Graduate Schools Held at Atlanta, Georgia,” December 6–7, 1935, Box 68, WHS; Charles W. Pipkin, "Memorandum on Southern University Conference Committee on Improvement of Graduate Instruction," March 12, 1941, Box 68, WHS; and Wendell H. Stephenson to John H. Shanks, January 1, 1939, Box 70, WHS.

42 On the SHA and graduate education, see Wendell H. Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green, November 10, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 3, SHA Records; Margaret C. McCulloch to Green, January 20, 1937, Folder 39, Green Papers; Charles W. Ramsdell to J. D. Eggleston, March 26, 1937, Box 3N302, Ramsdell Papers; Stephenson to James W. Patton, July 20, 1944, Series A.1, Folder 58, SHA Records; and T. Harry Williams, “The Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 14 (February 1948), 99. An article published in the Journal satisfied the publication requirement that some universities, especially Vanderbilt, attached to the receipt of the Ph.D. William C. Binkley to Stephenson, May 6, 1935, Box 1, Folder 27, Binkley Papers; and Binkley to Stephenson, June 3, 1936, Box 52, WHS.

43 Thomas Kearny to Wendell H. Stephenson, n.d. [January 1938], Box 63, WHS (quotations); James W. Silver, review of General Philip Kearny, Battle Soldier of Five Wars, Including the Conquest of the West, by Thomas Kearny, JSH, 3 (November 1937), 511; William O. Lynch to Stephenson, March 17, 1938, Box 64, WHS; and "Communications," JSH, 4 (May 1938), 260–62.

44 On the attempts to revise his complaint, see Wendell H. Stephenson to Thomas Kearny, January 21, 1938, February 26, 1938, and March 11, 1938, Box 63, WHS. For the widespread discussion of the case (due to Kearny's blanketing of the historical profession with incoherent protests), see Stephenson to William O. Lynch, March 21, 1938, Box 64; H. C. Byrd to Stephenson, June 13, 1938, Box 72, Subscriptions folder;
James Monroe Smith to Stephenson, June 30, 1938, Box 71; Richard R. Stenberg to Stephenson, October 10, 1938, Box 71; and R. L. Schuyler to Stephenson, October 20, 1938, and reply, October 24, 1938, and return reply, October 28, 1938, Box 51, AHA folder; all in WHS. See also Fred C. Cole, “Book Reviews: An Editor’s Point of View,” *JSH*, 13 (May 1947), 267–68, for evidence that this story attained exemplary status as what *not* to do in communications with scholarly journals.

45 D. L. Lewis to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 4, 1939 (first quotation), and reply, May 29, 1939 (second quotation), Box 63, WHS; and Stephenson to Paul M. Hebert, September 25, 1939, Box 61, V folder, WHS (third quotation). See also B. Floyd Flickinger to Stephenson, May 18, 1938, Box 57, WHS; Blanche W. Salter to Stephenson, May 9, 1939, and reply, May 15, 1939, Box 69, WHS; Rudolph O. Vorsusch to Paul M. Hebert, September 18, 1939, and Stephenson to Vorsusch, September 25, 1939, Box 73, WHS; and Anita Buchman Speer to Charles W. Ramsdell, September 9, 1939, Box 2R157, Ramsdell Papers.


47 Avery O. Craven to Wendell H. Stephenson, n.d. [May 1936], Box 55, WHS; W. Mary Bryant to Charles W. Ramsdell, July 12, 1936, Box 3N290, Ramsdell Papers; Stephenson to Thomas D. Clark, November 18, 1947, Box 6, WHS; and Grady McWhiney, “Historians as Southerners,” *Continuity*, 9 (Fall 1984), 4–6 (quotations).

48 Charles S. Sydnor to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 9, 1936, Box 72, WHS (first quotation); Sydnor, “Historical Activities in Mississippi in the Nineteenth Century,” *JSH*, 3 (May 1937), 139–60; and Mack Swearingen, obituary for Dunbar Rowland, *JSH*, 4 (February 1938), 121–23 (second quotation).


50 George Fort Milton, “Stephen A. Douglas’ Efforts for Peace,” *JSH*, 1 (August 1935), 261 and 263. Milton was editor of the *Chattanooga News* and one of the few amateur historians who passed muster with the SHA, even though many disagreed with his interpretations. See Charles W. Ramsdell to Milton, February 25, 1934, Box 3N295; and Dwight L. Dumond to Ramsdell, January 21, 1935, and reply, February 2, 1935, Box 3N294; in Ramsdell Papers. See also Thomas D. Clark’s estimation of J. Winston Coleman as a “cracking good amateur historian if there is such a thing” (Clark to Fletcher M. Green, April 11, 1940, Folder 64, Green Papers).

51 Edwin A. Davis, review of *Reveille in Washington*, by Margaret K. Leech, *JSH*, 8 [February 1942], 127. One southern book publisher appreciated Wendell H. Stephenson’s compliments on a historical series his firm had put out. “It is not our intention to villify [sic] anyone, but to get away from the maudlin stuff that litters the pages of Southern history,” he admitted. “We could make a great deal of money, and
temporarily a big name for ourselves if we wished to follow in the footsteps of Parson Weems, Thomas Dixon, and others, capitalizing sentiment and prejudice, and crucifying truth” (C. L. Worthington to Stephenson, December 5, 1935, Hac-Hy folder, WHS).


54 Wendell H. Stephenson to E. Merton Coulter, January 9, 1945, Box 7, WHS (quotation); and Henry T. Shanks to A. R. Newsome, July 29, 1943, Folder 103, Green Papers. Shanks, in charge of a search for a new dean of women at Birmingham-Southern College, made it clear that “we certainly do not want what is usually considered the typical dean of women. Instead, we would like a little glamour.” The college wanted a southern lady who could persuade families to send their daughters to Birmingham-Southern without fear of educating them out of their femininity. Similarly, A. B. Moore appointed “Miss Ella Lonn” to the SHA program committee because “she is a glutton for work and perhaps I could contribute something toward satiating her lust for it” (Moore to Frank L. Owsley, November 21, 1939, Box 4, Folder 7, Owsley Papers).

55 George Petrie to Frank L. Owsley, August 9, 1940, Box 4, Folder 16, Owsley Papers; Edwin Williams to Green, February 23, 1944, Folder 109, Green Papers; and Mary Elizabeth Massey to Green, March 25, 1944, Folder 110, Green Papers.


57 Kathleen Bruce to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 24, 1936, Box 53, WHS; Mary Elizabeth Massey to Fletcher M. Green, October 9, 1940, Folder 70, Green Papers; Louise B. Hill to Frank L. Owsley, April 7, 1940, Box 3, Folder 10, Owsley Papers; William C. Binkley to Arthur C. Cole, May 27, 1936, Box 2, Folder 4, Binkley Papers (first two quotations); Charles W. Ramsdell to L. H. Hubbard, April 27, 1938, Box 3N292, Ramsdell Papers (third quotation); and Massey to Green, August 13, 1942, Folder 92, Green Papers (fourth quotation).

58 “Whatever discriminations might exist against women as teachers or administrators, there were none against them as productive scholars. Editors and publishers did not exclude books and articles by women. Grants-in-aid and postdoctoral fellowships were not granted by misogynists. Any research workers in history faced problems of the accessibility of materials and proximity to research libraries. Yet libraries were as open to women as to men, and no sex lines barred them from research. The only tenable
conclusion is the obvious one that women did not engage in research and publication” (Hesseltine and Kaplan, “Women Doctors of Philosophy in History,” 257).

59 William C. Binkley to Frank L. Owsley, February 3, 1937. Box 2, Folder 15, Binkley Papers (quotation). The contributions of wives, moreover, were often publicly unsung, sometimes despite the husband’s best efforts. Thomas Perkins Abernethy, for example, wanted to list his wife as a joint author of his volume in the History of the South series, but editors Wendell H. Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter refused to grant this anomaly. See Abernethy to Donald Ellegood [LSU Press], September 21, 1960, and reply, March 3, 1961, Box 2, Thomas Perkins Abernethy Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library; and Virginia Van Der Veer Hamilton, “Clio’s Daughters: Whence and Whither,” in Michele Gillespie and Catherine Clinton, eds., Taking Off the White Gloves: Southern Women and Women Historians (Columbia, Mo., 1998), 68–70.

60 On the marriage and resignation of Kathryn Trimmer Abbey Hanna, see “Miss Kathryn T. Abbey Saturday Bride of Alfred J. Hanna; Announcement is of Wide Interest,” St. Augustine Record, July 7, 1941, clipping in Box 50, Abbey folder, WHS; John P. Dyer to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 9, 1941, and reply, August 1, 1941 (quotation), Box 57, WHS; and William C. Binkley to Henry L. Swint, July 20, 1941, Box 3, Folder 28, Binkley Papers. On Blanche Henry Clark’s marriage to historian Herbert Weaver and her resignation, see “Historical News and Notices,” JSH, 10 (November 1944), 501.

61 The first issue of the Journal of Southern History, for example, contained an article by a woman professor at the University of Wyoming who received the utmost praise from her graduate advisor, William E. Dodd. Laura A. White, “The South in the 1850’s as Seen by British Consuls,” JSH, 1 (February 1935), 29–48; Dodd to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, June 25, 1935, Box 1, Abernethy Papers; and the obituary for White, JSH, 14 (November 1948), 574. In the first twenty volumes of the Journal of Southern History, 26 different women contributed 25 articles and nine “Notes & Documents” (out of 302 total authors of 306 articles and 109 “Notes & Documents”). For more detailed participation information, see “A Statistical Report on the Participation of Women in the Southern Historical Association, 1935–1985,” JSH, 52 (May 1986), 282–88. For dissatisfaction with the way women were treated by the SHA, see Louise B. Hill to Frank L. Owsley, April 7, 1940, Box 3, Folder 10, Owsley Papers.

62 Unidentified newspaper clipping [c. 1935], Box 76, JSH Miscellany file, WHS.

63 On evaluations where the author’s identity came into play, see Richard H. Shryock to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 10, 1935, Box 70, WHS; Frank L. Owsley to Stephenson, December 22, 1938, Box 66, WHS; William C. Binkley to Stephenson, April 4, 1939, Box 3, Folder 9, Binkley Papers; Stephenson to Paul H. Buck, March 14, 1941, Box 53, WHS; Robert H. Woody to Stephenson, September 11, 1941, Box 74, WHS; and Herbert Weaver to Owsley, June 5, 1944, Box 6, Folder 5, Owsley Papers. On Journal policy to keep the evaluator’s identity secret, see Stephenson to Charles W. Ramsdell, April 4, 1935, Box 3N293, Ramsdell Papers; and Stephenson to Owsley, May 30, 1940, Box 5, Folder 4, Owsley Papers.
64 Cotterill, review of *Transylvania Colony*, 109; "Communications," *JSH*, 2 (August 1936), 428 (first quotation); and William E. Baringer, review of *This One Mad Act*, by Izola Forrester, *JSH*, 4 (May 1938), 254 (second quotation).


66 Simkins, review of *Hampton and His Red Shirts*, 282 (first quotation); and William C. Binkley to Fletcher M. Green, January 21, 1935, Folder 21, Green Papers (second quotation). University of Virginia professor Thomas Perkins Abernethy had found it "pretty insulting to our knowledge" that *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* editor Arthur C. Cole "pass[ed] over the historians of the South" to assign book reviews to less competent people. "Those Yankees just can't believe that anything good can come out of the South," he concluded (Abernethy to Frank L. Owsley, February 5, 1937, Box 1, Folder 8, Owsley Papers). Similarly, William C. Binkley encouraged his colleagues to attend national organization meetings: "It is incumbent on those of us who are in this part of the country to do all that we can to convince the rest of the profession that we really are alive and doing something in spite of their doubts" (Binkley to H. C. Nixon, July 3, 1935, Box 1, Folder 30, Binkley Papers). Charles W. Ramsdell similarly made it his mission to correct outsiders who thought "that southern universities are barren places" (Ramsdell to J. G. de Rouhac Hamilton, March 31, 1939, Series 1, Box 5, Folder 136, Hamilton Papers).

67 Thomas D. Clark to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 24, 1949, Box 6, WHS (first quotation); Samuel A. Ashe to Walter B. Posey, October 14, 1935, Box 51, WHS; Lucile Cary Lowry to Wendell H. Stephenson, n.d. (second quotation), and reply, November 6, 1937, Box 63, WHS; Lowry to Fletcher M. Green, January 10, 1938, Folder 47, Green Papers; Mary D. Carter to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, October 21, 1935, Abernethy Papers; and Carter to Charles W. Ramsdell, March 11, 1937, Box 3N302, Ramsdell Papers.

68 Stephenson, *South Lives in History*, xi (on "southernism); and Thomas Kearny to Stephenson, February 22, 1938 (quotation), and reply, February 26, 1938, Box 63, WHS.

69 Obituary for Samuel A. Ashe, *JSH*, 5 (February 1939), 125; Ashe to Edwin A. Davis, February 28, 1935 (first three quotations) and March 4, 1935 (last quotation), Box 51, WHS. See also Ashe to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 6, 1935, and reply, May 20, 1935, Box 51, WHS. The *Journal of Southern History* noted the publication of Ashe's most recent pamphlet (vol. 1 [August 1935], 413). According to the membership ledger in the Colyer Meriwether Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Ashe had not been a member of the Southern History Association.

70 Samuel A. Ashe to Wendell H. Stephenson, April 19, 1935 (first quotation); and Ashe to Walter B. Posey, October 14, 1935; both Box 51, WHS (second quotation).

71 Samuel A. Ashe to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 17, 1935, Box 51, WHS.

72 Samuel A. Ashe to Fletcher M. Green, January 14, 1936, Folder 31, Green Papers (quotations). It is actually not entirely clear to which meeting Ashe sent pamphlets. In
this letter, Ashe refers to "some sort of meeting two or 3 months ago of Historians of the South," seemingly referring to the first annual SHA meeting in late October 1935. In a subsequent letter, Ashe asks about "what proportion of those at the Chattanooga Meeting had read my pamphlet?" clearly referring to the December 1935 American Historical Association meeting (Ashe to Green, February 24, 1936, Folder 32, Green Papers). Perhaps he sent pamphlets to both. His exasperation with the historical profession in the South remains evident.

73 Samuel A. Ashe to Fletcher M. Green, February 24, 1936, Green Papers.

74 Samuel A. Ashe to Fletcher M. Green, February 24, 1936, Green Papers.

75 Wendell H. Stephenson to Samuel A. Ashe, June 2, 1936, and reply, June 6, 1936, Box 51, WHS.

76 Samuel A. Ashe to Southern Historical Association, August 12, 1936, Box 51, WHS: "I looked into the article by Dr. Avery Craven ["The Coming of the War Between the States," JSH, 2 (August 1936), 303–22] but could make nothing of it... The Southern States had a right to protect their citizens."


78 In a review of a southern history textbook, African American historian Rayford W. Logan criticized the publishing company for not having "learned that the spelling of Negro with a small 'n' indicates either ignorance or prejudice" (Review of Economic History of the South, by Emory Q. Hawk, JNH, 20 [April 1935], 250). Books were occasionally criticized in the Journal of Southern History for failing to conform to this "now generally established practice" (H. J. Thornton, review of Early American Views on Negro Slavery, by Matthew T. Mellon, JSH, 1 [August 1935], 396). The American Historical Review did not consistently capitalize "Negro" until 1936. The Mississippi Valley Historical Review did not adopt the practice regularly until 1942 (with one slip-up in 1943).

79 See the blue-pencil editorial changes re: "inferior race" made to Francis B. Simkins, "New Viewpoints of Southern Reconstruction," mss. in Box 70, WHS, published, JSH, 5 (February 1939), 49–61; and Bell I. Wiley to William C. Binkley, January 30, 1944, and Binkley to G. W. McGinty, August 29, 1944, both in Series B.2, Folder 58, SHA Records (quotations).

80 Sheldon Van Auken to William C. Binkley, May 1, 1948, and reply, May 4, 1948 (quotation), Series B.2, Folder 97, SHA Records.

81 Wendell H. Stephenson to Avery O. Craven, May 6, 1936 (first quotation), and reply, n.d., Box 55, WHS; Thomas P. Martin to Stephenson, June 27, 1935, Box 65, WHS; and Ruth A. Ketringle, review of William Mahone of Virginia, by Nelson Morehouse Blake, JSH, 2 (February 1936), 121 (second quotation). This count does not include instances when the term was used historically or facetiously. In contrast, well over two hundred articles between 1935 and 1954 referred to the "Civil War." Tallies were conducted using the JSTOR full-text search function (www.jstor.org).
Dwight L. Dumond to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 13, 1935 (first quotation), and October 21, 1935 (second quotation), both in Box 56, WHS; Stephenson to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, October 11, 1935, and reply, October 17, 1935 (third quotation), both in Box 50, WHS; William C. Binkley to Stephenson, February 3, 1936, Box 2, Folder 1, Binkley Papers; and Stephenson to Thomas D. Clark, November 3, 1951, Box 6, WHS.

John David Findlay to Fletcher M. Green, October 24, 1933, Folder 14, Green Papers (first quotation); Charles W. Ramsdell to Louise Phelps Kellogg, March 9, 1937, Box 3N302, Ramsdell Papers (second quotation); and Wendell H. Stephenson to Ramsdell, May 20, 1938, Box 3N292, Ramsdell Papers (third quotation). William C. Binkley hesitated recommending a Vanderbilt Ph.D. whose dissertation was on an Upper South topic as an expert on southern history, because he had “not been in the South long enough to be considered as having received special training in Southern history” (Binkley to Jonas Viles, March 19, 1936, Box 2, Folder 4, Binkley Papers).

C. Vann Woodward, “Exile at Yale,” in David Madden, ed., The Legacy of Robert Penn Warren (Baton Rouge, 2000), 23–31; Woodward, Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History (Baton Rouge, 1986), 109; Thomas J. Wertensaker to Frank L. Owsley, April 17, 1941, Box 6, Folder 6, Owsley Papers (first quotation); and Wendell H. Stephenson to E. Merton Coulter, January 8, 1937, Box 55, WHS (second quotation).

Louis B. Wright to W. T. Couch, March 11, 1930, Box 5, Folder 142, Hamilton Papers (first quotation); Louise Kellogg Phelps to Charles W. Ramsdell, March 3, 1937, Box 3N302, Ramsdell Papers (second quotation); Wilbur G. Kurtz Jr. to Fletcher M. Green, January 21, 1935, Folder 21, Green Papers; Joseph J. Spengler, “Analyzing the South,” South Atlantic Quarterly, 36 (April 1937), 232; Frank L. Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, April 13, 1939, Southern Review Collection; J. E. Dowell to Green, February 13, 1940, Folder 62, Green Papers; Paul Murray to Green, March 24, 1940, Folder 63, Green Papers; and Inventory of the Library of Dr. Charles W. Ramsdell, 1942, Box 2R157, Ramsdell Papers. Grace Elizabeth Hale has well argued how Margaret Mitchell’s famous opus restructured white southern identity for the nation at large, though many professional historians, I contend, were a bit wary of the Gone With the Wind hegemony. Hale, Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940 (New York, 1998), 244 and 258–68.

E. Merton Coulter to Wendell H. Stephenson, February 19, 1935, Box 55, WHS (quotation).

Thomas D. Clark, “The Seventh Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 8 (February 1942), 64 (first quotation); Frank L. Owsley to John Gould Fletcher, January 13, 1933, Box 1, Folder 1, Owsley Papers (second quotation); and David M. Potter, “An Appraisal of Fifteen Years of the Journal of Southern History, 1935–1949,” JSH, 16 (February 1950), 28 (third quotation).

Charles W. Ramsdell to J. G. Randall, June 28, 1936, Box 3N293; and Joseph Barber Jr. (editor, Atlantic Monthly) to Ramsdell, September 3, 1936, Box 3N302; both in Ramsdell Papers. The journal Civil War History did not begin publication until 1955, when the impending centennial spurred additional academic and lay historical interest.

90 Pressly, *Americans Interpret Their Civil War*, chap. 6, “The New Vindication of the South,” esp. 239 (first quotation); 240 (second quotation); and 243–44 (third quotation).


93 “The refusal of the antislavery men to accept this decision of the Supreme Court [*Dred Scott*] no doubt had some influence upon the movement for secession; but it is my opinion that secession need not necessarily have brought on war. Most people think of the two as inseparable; I do not” (Charles W. Ramsdell to Maury Maverick, December 24, 1936, Box 3N302, Ramsdell Papers).


95 Charles W. Ramsdell, “Some Problems Involved in Writing the History of the Confederacy,” *JSH*, 2 (May 1936), 137 (first quotation); Ramsdell to Mary D. Carter, April 1, 1937, Box 3N302, Ramsdell Papers (second quotation); and Ramsdell to J. G. Eggleston, March 26, 1937, Box 3N302, Ramsdell Papers (subsequent quotations).

96 Charles W. Ramsdell, “Lincoln and Fort Sumter,” *JSH*, 3 (August 1937), 259–88; Ramsdell to Fletcher M. Green, February 12, 1936, Series A.1, Folder 17, SHA Records (first quotation); Ramsdell to W. Mary Bryant, May 28, 1936, Box 3N290, Ramsdell
Papers (second quotation); and Ramsdell to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 10, 1937, Box 3N303, Ramsdell Papers (third quotation).

97 Ramsdell's correspondent agreed: "The broad fact of the difference, however, seems to me only to add interest and spice to the discussion, and I can not thank you enough for the spirit of your letters." Charles W. Ramsdell to J. G. Randall, January 22, 1940, and reply, January 25, 1940, Box 2R157, Ramsdell Papers. For Ramsdell's devotion to civil debate, see also Ramsdell to George Fort Milton, February 25, 1934, Box 3N295; Arthur C. Cole to Ramsdell, May 22, 1934, Box 3N292; and Ramsdell to Dwight L. Dumond, January 1, 1935, Box 3N294; all in Ramsdell Papers.


99 A. B. Moore to Frank L. Owsley, March 26, 1943, Box 4, Folder 8, Owsley Papers (first quotation); Moore, "One Hundred Years of Reconstruction in the South," JSH, 9 (May 1943), 153–80; Benjamin B. Kendrick to Fred C. Cole, December 9, 1941, Box 63, WHS (second quotation); and Kendrick, "The Colonial Status of the South," JSH, 8 (February 1942), 3n1.

100 Thomas Perkins Abernethy to Frank L. Owsley, February 5, 1937, Box 1, Folder 8, Owsley Papers (first quotation); and Allen Tate to Owsley, April 14, 1940, Box 5, Folder 11, Owsley Papers (second quotation); and Albert Simpson to Owsley, January 13, 1941, Box 4, Folder 22, Owsley Papers. "The 'Yankeezization' of southern history and of those who teach and write about it is one of the most persistent, if unacknowledged, characteristics of the historical craft's professionalization process," one unhappy practitioner has argued (McWhiney, "Historians as Southerners," 11). It is evident that these concerns and conflicts played themselves out in presidential elections though details regarding controversial elections remain somewhat shrouded in darkness. Politicking and alliance formation among various groups led to charges of "objectionable conduct" and "intrigue" in the nominations process. Charles S. Sydnor to Owsley, November 26, 1937, Box 5, Folder 9, Owsley Papers (quotation); and A. B. Moore to Owsley, August 5, 1938, Box 4, Folder 7, Owsley Papers.

101 Norman W. Caldwell to William C. Binkley, October 14, 1943, Series B.2, Folder 14, SHA Records (quotation). The editors worried about the effect this kind of defensive address had on the reputation of the association (Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 23, 1943, and reply, March 26, 1943, Box 52, WHS), but also recognized that these addresses were the most popularly requested reprints and therefore drew outside interest (Marie B. Owen to Stephenson, September 16, 1941, Box 50, WHS; James W. Patton to Benjamin B. Kendrick, November 11, 1941, Series A.1, Folder 36, SHA Records; and Fred C. Cole to Patton, February 23, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 38, SHA Records).
A. B. Moore to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 21, 1939, Box 65, WHS; Bell I. Wiley to Fletcher M. Green, January 18, 1942, Folder 85, Green Papers; Allen W. Going to Ollinger Crenshaw, February 2, 1956, James Welch Patton Papers, SHC; and Randall, "Civil War Restudied," 457 (quotation).

William C. Binkley to Herbert A. Kellar, June 1, 1938, Box 2, Folder 30, Binkley Papers (first quotation); Wendell H. Stephenson to Thomas D. Clark, December 3, 1940 (second quotation), and reply, December 6, [1940], Box 53, WHS; Clark, "Seventh Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association," 64 (third quotation); and Cappon, "The Need for Renewed Interest in Early Southern History," 108–18.

Civil War letters present quite a problem to an editorial board for there is a feeling in some quarters that the Civil War theme, especially as recorded in correspondence and diaries, has been overworked and that a magazine should concentrate on other periods and phases of history. Personally, I do not share this view, at least in its entirety. There are many aspects of Civil War history which are still more or less virgin soil, particularly is this true of nonmilitary phases" (Wendell H. Stephenson to Glover Moore, June 10, 1941, Box 66, WHS). See also Stephenson to Frank L. Owsley, September 9, 1935, Box 66, WHS; and Stephenson to J. V. Frederick, January 4, 1939, Box 58, WHS. For a statement of editorial policy regarding topical balance, see William C. Binkley to Norman W. Caldwell, October 20, 1943, Series B.2, Folder 14, SHA Records.


Will S. Tyler to Wendell H. Stephenson, February 20, 1939 (first two quotations), and reply, March 2, 1939, Box 73, WHS; and J. G. de Rouhac Hamilton to V. C. Burston, June 5, 1940, Box 5, Folder 143, Hamilton Papers (third quotation).

A. J. Hanna, review of The South to Posterity: An Introduction to the Writing of Confederate History, by Douglas Southall Freeman, JSH, 6 (August 1940), 414.

See, for example. Wendell H. Stephenson to William B. Hesseltine, December 4, 1934, Box 61 (quotation); Stephenson to John D. Barnhart, December 16, 1935, Box 52; and Stephenson to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, November 24, 1936, Box 50; all in WHS.

Paul H. Buck to William C. Binkley, April 1, 1943, Series B.2, Folder 50, SHA Records. For an example the rejection of a local, if southern, article, see Binkley to Norman W. Caldwell, October 14, 1943, Series B.2, Folder 14, SHA Records. For an example of the Journal's board working out an approach to historiographical articles, see W. Neil Franklin to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 19, 1940, Box 58; R. S. Cotterill to Stephenson, November 20, 1940, Box 53; Frank L. Owsley to Stephenson, November 21, 1940, Box 66; and Ella Lonn to Stephenson, November 27, 1940, Box 64; all in WHS.

Wendell H. Stephenson to Reinhard H. Luthin, February 1, 1936, Box 64, WHS (first quotation); and Stephenson to Gerald Forbes, November 20, 1939, Box 58, WHS (second quotation). See also Stephenson to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, January 1, 1937, and December 22, 1939, Box 50, WHS.

112 Clement Eaton to Fletcher M. Green, January 15, 1939, Folder 53, Green Papers (quotation); and E. Merton Coulter to Wendell H. Stephenson, February 3, 1937, Box 55, WHS. These historians were discussing William B. Hesseltine's one-volume *A History of the South* (New York, 1936) republished less than a decade later as *The South in American History* (New York, 1943) to reflect the author's contention that "the South's problems have been so distinctly American that the region's history must be integrated with the chronicles of the nation"—an approach that *Journal* reviewers found distinctly unsatisfactory. See the reviews by Daniel M. Robison, *JSH*, 3 (August 1937), 356–58; and Stephenson, *JSH*, 9 (August 1943), 404–6 (quotation on p. 404).

113 John Hope Franklin, "As For Our History," *Race and History: Selected Essays, 1938–1988* (Baton Rouge, 1989), 66 (quotation); and Charles G. Sellers, ed., *The Southerner as American* (Chapel Hill, 1960). "The several of us, all younger historians born in the South and concerned with southern history," Robert A. Lively explained to the incoming SHA president in 1955, "think that the traditional emphasis on the South's differences, on the struggle between the South and the world outside, is not only wrong historically, but that this emphasis, as a contemporary mood, confirms us in defensiveness, prejudice, and the belligerence of regional preoccupation" (Lively to James W. Patton, December 16, 1955, Folder 36, Patton Papers).

114 Fletcher M. Green to Chester M. Heck, September 27, 1935, Folder 19, Green Papers (quotation); Green, "Writing and Research in Southern History," *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association*, 12 (1942), 13–16; and "Research Possibilities in Southern History," *JSH*, 16 (February 1950), 52–63.


116 William P. Brandon to Fletcher M. Green, October 11, 1937, Folder 46, Green Papers; and David Rankin Barbee to Edwin A. Davis, May 7, 1935, Box 51, WHS (quotations).


121 See, for example, the correspondence re: Fabian Linden's manuscripts, "Some Notes on Slaveownership and Landownership in Louisiana, 1950–1860" [March 6, 1944] and "Economic Democracy in the Slave South: An Appraisal of Some Recent Views" [May 17, 1945], Series B.2, Folder 52, SHA Records; and Frank L. Owsley to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 12, 1939, Box 66, WHS.

122 William C. Binkley, "First Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association," *JSH*, 2 (February 1936), 73–75; and Richard H. Shryock, review of *Scientific Interests in the Old South*, by Thomas Cary Johnson Jr., *JSH*, 3 (August 1937), 358.


125 "History 131 [History of the South]—Final Examination," Box 75, History 22A folder, WHS.

126 On Confederate disloyalty, see Ella Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War* (New York, 1928); Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill, 1934);


128 Charles H. Wesley, “The Reconstruction of History,” *JNH*, 20 (October 1935), 411–27. More generally, some SHA leaders felt that “there is too much patching of old quilts in our Association, and that someone is going to be compelled to call for something new some of these days” (James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, January 13, 1941, Folder 73, Green Papers).


130 Fletcher M. Green, “Walter Lynwood Fleming: Historian of Reconstruction” *JSH*, 2 (November 1936), 498; Wendell H. Stephenson to Green, May 9, 1936, Folder 35, Green Papers (first quotation); Green to Stephenson, May 19, 1935, Series A.1, Folder 2, SHA Records; William C. Binkley, “The Contribution of Walter Lynwood Fleming to Southern Scholarship,” *JSH*, 5 (May 1939), 154 (second quotation); and Binkley to Herbert A. Kellar, July 17, 1938, Box 2, Folder 30, Binkley Papers.

131 Walter L. Fleming to Richard Heath Dabney, February 13, 1930, Box 1, Richard Heath Dabney Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.


135 J. G. de Rouhac Hamilton to Christian Dick, May 8, 1939, Series 1, Box 5, Folder 136, Hamilton Papers.

136 Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, 713 (first quotation), iii (second quotation), and 731–37 (Bibliography). Many white readers despised Du Bois’s annotated bibliography which separated his sources into categories like “Standard—Anti-Negro,” “Propaganda,” indifferent and fair historians, and “Negro Historians.” See Wirt Armistead Cate to Frank L. Owsley, October 10, 1935, Box 2, Folder 1, Owsley Papers; Revilo Pendleton
Oliver to Owsley, October 14, 1935, Box 4, Folder 14, Owsley Papers; Benjamin B. Kendrick to Charles W. Pipkin, November 27, 1935, Southern Review Collection.


138 Francis B. Simkins and Robert H. Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction (Chapel Hill, 1932); its review by Rayford W. Logan, JNH, 17 (October 1932), 497 (quotations); Simkins to Wendell H. Stephenson, August 20, 1938, Box 70, WHS; and Simkins, "New Viewpoints of Southern Reconstruction," JSH, 5 (February 1939), 49–61. The editorial board often enjoyed opening the pages of the Journal of Southern History to "provocative" debate. Board member Richard H. Shryock, for example, supported the publication of Simkins's "New Viewpoints" precisely because it would needle conservative members and because he thought the Journal owed it to the profession to air many different perspectives (Richard H. Shryock to Stephenson, October 4, 1938, Box 70, WHS).

139 Howard K. Beale, "On Rewriting Reconstruction History," American Historical Review, 45 (July 1940), 807–27 (first and second quotations on p. 810); and James W. Patton, "Fifth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association," JSH, 6 (February 1940), 81 (on attendance) and 83 (third quotation). See also Simkins, "New Viewpoints of Southern Reconstruction," 56–57 and 61. The Journal wanted to publish Beale's piece, but Beale had promised it already to the American Historical Review. Wendell H. Stephenson to J. G. Randall, November 16, 1939, Box 69; and Beale to Stephenson, January 13, 1940, Box 52; both WHS. See also Novick, That Noble Dream, 232–34.

140 A. B. Moore to J. G. de Rouhac Hamilton, May 13, 1940, and reply, June 5, 1940, Box 5, Folder 143, Hamilton Papers; and Wendell H. Stephenson to John P. Dyer, April 9, 1940, Box 57, WHS.

141 Albert B. Moore, "Sixth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association," JSH, 7 (February 1941), 66–68 (quotations on p. 67).

142 Cappon, "Two Decades of Historical Activity in Virginia," 191.
Chapter Four

The Politics of the Problem South: Agrarianism, Regionalism, and the Southern Historian

For all their investment in disciplinization and claims to special authority over the meaning of the South and its past, the founding historians of the Southern Historical Association were actually part of a much larger movement that embraced the region as the most essential source for social science, art, literature, political philosophy, and cultural criticism.\(^1\) While the “southern renaissance” first brings to mind the stunning literature of the 1930s and 1940s by authors like William Faulkner and Eudora Welty, many scholars have pointed out how this movement also encompassed a broad range of intellectual work by “nonnovelists and nonscholars,” historians, poets, and sociologists who sought to expound upon what they saw as a unique southern experience. Much has been written on the interwar resurgence of white southern regional self-consciousness and cultural creativity as a function of a confrontation with American modernity.\(^2\) With few exceptions, these studies structure southern regional thinking around two political poles. On the one hand, there was the “conservative complaint” epitomized by the Southern Agrarians and their 1930 manifesto I'll Take My Stand that turned a trenchant critique of industrialization, mass culture, urban dislocation, secularization, the atomization of society, and other factors of modern American life into a siren call for cultural reform based on an interpretation of the “southern tradition.”\(^3\) On the other hand, represented by Howard W. Odum and his powerful social science machine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was the liberal belief in planned progress—an attempt to bring the promise of modernization to the South as an answer to regional
backwardness, violence, poverty, poor health, and ignorance. With the exception of Frank Lawrence Owsley (1890–1956), a contributor to *I'll Take My Stand* and an outspoken Agrarian, professional historians are not usually included in studies of southern regionalism. Yet, as I have argued, the Southern Historical Association was as self-conscious and cohesive as these more frequently studied regionalist movements.

Despite the widespread agreement that both the Nashville Agrarians and the Chapel Hill sociologists had strong historical components to their work and despite the general recognition of the contemporaneous flowering of professional southern history in this decade, few scholars have explored the connections between the three approaches—literary, sociological, and historical—to the study of the southern region. Perhaps this lack of interest stems from the fact that the historians recast their own history to suggest that they had not really been participants in this regionalist dialogue at all. “Each group spoke mostly to its own colleagues,” one historian has concluded, and to an extent the growing departmentalization of intellectual life in the South and in the university mandated that this be true. However, disciplinary boundaries in the 1930s were still remarkably fluid, and southern thinkers found a wide array of intellectual tools and political viewpoints at their disposal when they turned their gaze on their homeland. In Charleston, South Carolina, for example, the historical preservation movement to create the nation’s first zoned historic district combined the Chapel Hill group’s concern with urban planning with the Agrarians’ emphasis on protecting the traditional southern landscape from intrusive development. Charleston’s preservationists consulted representatives of both factions for advice on how to proceed with their project, unconcerned with philosophical or political consistency.
This freedom persisted in the academy even with the trend toward professionalization that accompanied the financial stabilization of southern colleges and universities. Historians roamed at will among the various camps that formed in the face of the "Problem South"—the complex of social, economic, and racial troubles that critics disparaged and reformers sought to improve.¹⁰ As his biographer has observed, C. Vann Woodward "could be at once a Chapel Hill Regionalist and a Nashville Agrarian without putting up a permanent residence, physical or figurative, in either the University of North Carolina or Vanderbilt University."¹¹ A historian’s niche resided in that mysterious netherworld between art and social science, literature and sociology. Historians claimed advantages from both while proactively asserting their own discrete mode of inquiry.

This chapter, then, aims to restore white southern historians to the definitive and participatory role they played as professional intellectuals during the southern renaissance. Although they established institutions for and definitions of "southern history" during these years, they were not exclusively in conversation with themselves. After setting the resurgence of white southern self-consciousness in political and economic context, this chapter explores the interactions of the Southern Agrarians and SHA historians to demonstrate the extent to which the historians demanded a "provable" rather than an experiential or organic past from southern conservatives. Next, the connections between professional historians and regional sociologists are established as a window on the Southern Historical Association’s growing authority over the interpretation of the recent past. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of the Southern Review, a quarterly review published contemporaneously with the Journal
of Southern History at Louisiana State University that in many ways housed these three interacting intellectual camps between its covers.

Adding the historians to the depiction of southern regionalist thought therefore promises to complicate both our understanding of the literary and sociological conceptions of the southern past and the common conception that southern regionalism was a binary political struggle for intellectual control over the region’s future. For historians, the politics of the “Problem South” were not so easily slotted into categories of conservatism and liberalism, complicating Fred Hobson’s generalization that only the South’s liberal critics were “historical” while its defenders were “ahistorical.”12 All sides agreed that “the South” was something real to preserve and protect; what “South” they sought, however, was simultaneously a historical and a political question. Determining the role the past played in the present was a key part of that political alignment. Ultimately, most white southern historians saw their role as fusing tradition and progress by delineating a persistent distinctive identity in the face of what they perceived (and in many cases relished) as years of crucial social, political, and economic change.

The Nation’s No. 1 Economic Problem

There can be no doubt that white southern historians, like most southern intellectuals, were intimately affected by the diagnosis of the “Problem South.” The statistics of the economic blight across the South were truly overwhelming. In 1930 southern wage-workers earned 30 percent less than nonsoutherners, while per capita income in the South was approximately half the income in other parts of the country. The region was still predominantly agricultural, with two-thirds of the population living
and working in rural areas. What industry there was had been developed to take
advantage of the desperate straits of the region's mass of cheap unskilled labor.
Moreover, the isolation of the southern labor market, as Gavin Wright has argued,
ensured that even as wages rose in other parts of the country, the South retained its low-
wage status, resulting in a wider earning gap between regions in 1929 than there had been
in 1899. The Great Depression came on the heels of a succession of agricultural
catastrophes in the South, including boll weevil infestation, staple overproduction,
overseas cotton competition, the disastrous 1927 Mississippi River flood, and the 1930
drought. Cotton, tobacco, and sugar prices all dropped precipitously, and in June 1932
cotton hit its lowest price since the depression of 1894. With falling revenues, state
governments struggled to afford the basic services like schools and public health care that
Progressive reformers in the 1920s had successfully instituted across the South. In such
times of crisis, it cannot seem too surprising that the South abandoned its traditional
distrust of federal intervention and welcomed at least initially New Deal programs that
promised to rectify the "Nation's No. 1 Economic Problem." ¹³

These statistics translated into grim social reality for much of the rural South
before World War II—a social reality that gained particular legible poignancy when
interpreted by the lenses of talented photographers Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and
Margaret Bourke-White. To some white southern intellectuals, these images represented
"an authentic record of human betrayal in the South." ¹⁴ Others resented both the
pathological spin that critics placed on such images and interpretations of the region and
the inordinate frequency that such exposés won the Pulitzer Prize. Historians have since
lumped these interpretations of a sick or backward South into the phrase "the image of
the benighted South.” Whether indigenous or alien, these attacks have been claimed as the most compelling cause for the critical look inward in the 1920s and 1930s, an interpretation that retains much validity. As Howard Odum realized, critics like H. L. Mencken had “helped us a good deal by wounding our pride.”

Relying too heavily on the defensive burden of the “benighted South” as an explanation for the development of southern regionalist thinking, however, detracts from the extent to which most southern intellectuals had genuine constructive concern for the plight of the Depression South. Southern academicians from all fields and all political leanings—“people who are thinking seriously on these problems”—were obligingly attracted to these “public questions of a political, economic, and social nature” that troubled the South and its people. The archives of Southern Historical Association leaders are filled with overtures for participation in various conferences on conditions in the contemporary South. Many historians took part in interdisciplinary groups like the Southern Policy Committee, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, or the Southern Regional Committee (a subcommittee of the Social Science Research Council), that organized meetings on social security, the regional economy, the future of democracy, the development of southern institutions, and though tentatively at first, the improvement of race relations. Many would have agreed with W. T. Couch, the director of the University of North Carolina Press, who argued in 1935 that when facing the trilogy of troubles threatening the South—poverty, racial disharmony, and the threat of communism—“the one who should be blamed. . .is the one who is in a position to do something effective and who fails to do it.” These diverse academicians became the “new spokesmen of the South,” a new class of professionalized southern thinkers who
took over "the old monopoly of spokesmanship held by politicians, clergy, and press."

Who better to solve the South’s problems than professional problem-solvers? In arriving at this conclusion, southern intellectuals manifested in microcosm a larger American trend toward intellectual leadership in social and economic reform.\(^{18}\)

As a result, the white southern historian, though increasingly ensconced as a professor in a southern institution, found his work saddled with expanding relevance. "History is a guide to living," one Georgia professor claimed. The historian’s question—"What the South was?"—was inextricably and necessarily tied to the question of what the South should be in the present and what goals it should have for the future.\(^{19}\) For the most part, southern history professors and their supporters embraced this relevance, though they worried about the effect on their objectivity. It was still a risk many were willing to take. "The South needs critical scholars in the field of social science and history," argued the political scientist, reformer, one-time Agrarian, and historian Herman Clarence Nixon. After *I'll Take My Stand*, Nixon had little use for theory or manifestos; he wanted to use his scholarship to sustain real plans to reduce farm tenancy, alleviate agricultural poverty, or encourage rural cooperation.\(^{20}\) One journalist believed that a major function of southern history courses should be to "urge the young man of the South to stay in his homeland" where he would work "to improve southern conditions."

Another college professor admitted that he felt obliged "to do something, if only pass the word of conditions and how they might be overcome" to his students.\(^{21}\) Regional studies, like Howard W. Odum’s masterful compendium on the region’s socioeconomic conditions *Southern Regions of the United States*, also moved history professors to action. "As I read," historian William C. Binkley informed Odum, "I made mental note
of problem after problem on which we should be working here at Vanderbilt, and I am now trying to work out plans by which we can move toward a cooperative program of research in the Southern field."  

Odum's study provided a fitting blueprint for the newly prominent ambition of the southern university. Unfortunately, southern institutions of higher education, constantly used as pawns in state legislative battles and subject to the "caprices of politics," did not protect academic freedom as rigorously as some historians would have liked. Reformist politics were often targeted as communist by red-baiting university officials, community leaders, and alumni. On the other hand, more conservative intellectuals often felt that university administrators railroaded them into advocating a progressive liberalism. "I wonder sometimes how any of us can continue to have faith in the future of higher education in the South," Binkley bemoaned after a survey of the regional political scene. Yet the university remained the locus of optimism for southern intellectuals. "Even one university of first rank [in the South] would rally the intellectual forces of the region," Edwin R. Embree of the Rosenwald Fund argued in 1935; this institutional development was "the insistent need in American scholarship today." The Agrarians, at least initially, also placed their hope for wider cultural relevance in the easy communication the university afforded. John Crowe Ransom was hopeful about spreading "southernism" in this manner. "Look at the Vanderbilt crowd," he wrote Allen Tate, "the Candidates are always there, just waiting to be shown what their cause is. The same thing in half a dozen other Southern universities. This is where ideas are communication, even in the midst of general confusion." Through it all, most intellectuals retained their faith that the region, if not the individual, would be the
ultimate beneficiary of education. Southern institutions of higher education, each competing to be the "great 'regional university,'" could save the Problem South.\textsuperscript{26}

In discussing the contemporary South inside and outside the university, white southern intellectuals thus found themselves wearing all kinds of hats: sociologists and poets wrote history; historians discussed current economics and politics; journalists evaluated literature; literary critics planned political programs and advocated policy. The occasional historian even wrote poetry, if only in jest:

Yes, alas for the South!
And for southern Kultewer,
Were its poems like mine—
Only fit for the sewer.\textsuperscript{27}

Thinkers in the South were quite aware of the myriad ways the disciplines overlapped during this period. Regionalism was "popular. . . because of our preoccupation, now with science, now with art," Donald Davidson wrote. It was political, economic, and cultural all at once, and it took as its subject the enormity of "a South, more or less differentiated and conscious" with an "essence" perceived but difficult to define.\textsuperscript{28} "Poets have done better in expressing the oneness of the South," one historian remarked, "than historians in explaining it." Still, historians invested themselves in this challenge.\textsuperscript{29}

In addition, historical writing in the United States had increasingly broadened its methodology: more than past politics, historians in all regions of the country now claimed the expanse of human experience as their subject. Southern historians were not shy about asserting their own primacy in this intellectual development. Furthermore, the "new regionalism," as two of its advocates argued, assumed that this broadly defined past had relevance for the present and lessons for the future. It was interested in "those phases of the South's past that seem most pertinent to a fresh orientation in this age of dilemmas."\textsuperscript{30}
History, then, weighed heavily on all white southerners in the 1930s. For both conservatives and liberals, defining the *status quo ante* became the critical priority for answering the depressing question, "How did we end up here?"

**The Agrarian South**

To this question, the Southern Agrarians had very specific, quasi-historical answers that blamed the industrial capitalist North for obliterating all that was good and true in the Old South and inviting the possibility of communism into their beloved region. The Agrarians, one of the most frequently studied groups of southern intellectuals, were a loose alliance of poets, literary critics, and professors, most of whom at one time or another had been connected to Vanderbilt University. When they took their stand in 1930, the group formulated a cohesive, though internally diverse, argument for the protection of traditional rural values and social structures, which they labeled as both "southern" and "agrarian." Part political program, part aesthetic theory, part cultural criticism, and part agenda-oriented history, they posited agrarianism as the direct intellectual manifestation of the southern tradition "in the spirit of Lee and Jackson," "Rhett and Calhoun brought up to date."\(^{32}\)

Sympathetic historians tend to focus on the Agrarians' affirmation of religious humanism and anti-materialism. Indeed, as cultural critics the Agrarians did have interesting and resonant things to say about the relationship between religion, art, and the good life and the dehumanizing dangers of industrial capitalism. These thinkers rooted that criticism, however, in their own particular interpretation of the South's historical distinctiveness. Not content to simply critique American materialism, they believed that
the example of the historical South provided the only relevant retort to the onslaught of Progress. They claimed, moreover, that this distinctively southern tradition persevered in the present. The historical South was not to them merely a "metaphor," as Louis D. Rubin Jr. and others once argued, but the vision incarnate of the most humane form of civilization. In its planning stages, they even called their political program the "Old South Movement." Their manifesto was as much a history of the South and a defense of past difference in the present as it was a plan for the future. It asserted the necessity of continuity: an argument that "there can be no future without a past" and that "any old sort of future" must not "be recklessly imposed upon our particular past."

To be sure, the Agrarians recognized their own shortcomings as historians. On a stint as a history teacher in Memphis, novelist Andrew Nelson Lytle abandoned the assigned textbook because, he admitted, "I can't get them out of the Civil War." The dramatic power of the conflict was too much for him to move past. For Allen Tate, doing research for a biography of Stonewall Jackson only illuminated the fact that "the more I read the less I know how I am going to do the book." Nor did Tate finish a planned biography of Robert E. Lee. Similarly, Donald Davidson confessed that his struggle to write the history of the Tennessee River Valley illuminated "why serious authors, especially serious historians, are so likely to produce few books." Davidson's commitment to the genre was also hampered by his certain opinion that he would never be accepted by the ranks of the historical profession. It was a "harsh fact," he argued (not without reason), "that, when a so-called professor of English like myself writes history, or attempts to, the professional historians, generally speaking, will scorn him as an amateur." For this same reason, Frank L. Owsley and Lytle had a temporary falling-out
when a collaborative project to write a historical novel about Owsley’s “Uncle Dink”
turned out in Lytle’s hands as more fiction than history.36

Much of the Agrarians’ strictly “historical” work predated the formation of the
Southern Historical Association. Allen Tate’s biographies of Stonewall Jackson and
Jefferson Davis were published in 1928 and 1929; Robert Penn Warren’s study of the
John Brown raid came out in 1929; Andrew Nelson Lytle’s biography of Nathan Bedford
Forrest was released in 1931.37 These works received negligible attention from the other
professional historical journals: the American Historical Review ignored them all, while
the Mississippi Valley Historical Review printed reviews (both complimentary) of only
Tate’s Davis and Lytle’s Forrest. (In contrast, the Journal of Negro History, the official
organ of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and certainly considered
on the margin of professional historical activities by most white historians in the South,
published a devastating critique of the Agrarian historical program.)38 Later, the Journal
of Southern History editors were inconsistent about assigning Agrarian books for review.
Neither the second Agrarian symposium, Who Owns America? (1936), nor Donald
Davidson’s Attack on Leviathan: Regionalism and Nationalism in the United States
(1938) received notice in the Journal of Southern History. There was a review of John
Gould Fletcher’s history of Arkansas, although the reviewer used the occasion less to
assess Fletcher’s interpretation and more to lay out important research topics for the state.
Even Frank Owsley technically received little review attention in the Journal of Southern
History, because Owsley published only one book, albeit his most important, between the
time the association was founded and his death in 1956.39 The professionalizing white
historians in the South nonetheless had to come to terms with the historical work put
forth by the Agrarians, because the group had so successfully claimed to speak for "southern tradition" in the early 1930s.

For all their affectation that they wrote about the past, most Agrarians did not write history that satisfied the standards of professionals, and increasingly, they knew it. As Robert Penn Warren later explained to an SHA audience, both historians and novelists were concerned about the past, but historians required a "provable" past while writers of fiction had the flexibility of and commitment to imagination. The Agrarians, as novelists, poets, and critics, mostly wanted the regional past as material—a vast palette from which they could choose themes to illustrate the precariousness of the human condition and the reality of a southern alternative in the face of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and social change. Consequently, keeping Owsley, the only trained historian in the group, connected with their program became absolutely crucial to the legitimation of their historical productions whether fiction or biography. They all deferred to Owsley's opinion. "I am quite willing," Tate wrote to Owsley while working on Confederate diplomacy for his biography of Jefferson Davis, "to take your word for whatever happened." Owsley's work lent credentials to their vision and validated the past they used as "real." "It speaks with such authority," Andrew Lytle realized:

the very kind of authority that I have been looking for, to support my own instinctive beliefs and understanding of the past out of which I came, and which I knew must be so from my listening to the old people before they died. You know, you can get a feeling about a people, a family, or a society, and out of that feeling build up a just conception of it; but you have no proof, and that is just the thing you and your scholars have done, and are doing."
As Paul Conkin has argued, “every agrarian seemed to accept [Owsley’s] overall version of the southern past.” Indeed, the outlines of southern history seemed to be the only thing they all really agreed about and truly added consistency to their thought.\(^{45}\)

According to Frank Owsley, the history of the Old South provided both the model for the ideal society—a democratic yet organic world of rural landowners—and an illustration of the consequences of outside attacks on that world from abolitionism through the New Deal. With his research, Owsley hoped to illustrate that the Old South had a more equitable distribution of landed wealth than the romantic plantation legend allowed; that the Civil War had been caused by the cultural incommensurability of economic systems (urban-industrial versus rural-agrarian) and instigated by abolitionist attacks; and that the most crippling consequence of the South’s defeat was the section’s capitalist bondage to the North as a colonial or vassal state. Owsley meticulously studied land ownership patterns in the manuscript census with the intention of demonstrating conclusively that yeoman farmers dominated the antebellum countryside. Love of the land—not slave ownership, not racism, not aristocratic plantations—best characterized the “southern” tradition.\(^{46}\) Agrarianism was both literally and aesthetically connected to actual farming. Many of the Agrarians kept farms as retreats and considered themselves in touch with the working farmer. Owsley even bragged about his calluses and his “share cropper” and claimed that working the farm was “a great cathartic for the soul” that kept his “mental . . . [and] physical feet on the ground.” All good things in life, even for urban college professors and cosmopolitan intellectuals, stemmed from a relationship with the land.\(^{47}\)
The Agrarians' interpretation of history, which they equated with historical fact and southern identity, justified their critique of industrialism and northern financial capitalism.\textsuperscript{48} This was useful, even propagandistic, history. "We must go the whole hog," Tate argued, "or we shall end by merely brooding over the past. . . . [W]e must use the past for daring and positive ends." "The purpose of my life," Owsley has often been quoted as saying, "is to undermine by 'careful and detached,' 'well documented,' 'objective' writing, the entire Northern myth from 1820 to 1876."\textsuperscript{49} Theirs was largely history as conviction. History stood in the place of social bonds in an atomized modern world and at the same time empowered southerners to resist their own modernization. As a result, they bantered about several plans for fusing history and politics, including a sort of secret memorial society of college students dedicated to the veneration of the Old South, the preservation of the Confederate tradition, and the destruction of any physical symbol of national reconciliation.\textsuperscript{50}

Ultimately what the Agrarians advocated was not so much an interpretation of history, though certainly in some guises it approached history more than in others, as a defense of heritage. This extreme regionalism, Lewis Mumford argued, "was antihistorical and anti-organic; for it denied both the fact of change and the possibility that anything of value could come out of it."\textsuperscript{51} As Mark G. Malvasi has recently argued, this idea that "a piety for history, society, and tradition" was enough to hold a rapidly changing society together ultimately drove the Agrarians apart. Donald Davidson, certainly the most extreme in his devotion to a recreated past in the present, advocated a vision that was "more pastoral than historical." "In reconstructing the southern past," Malvasi concludes, "Davidson replaced the idea of history as a process of change with an
image of the past as a lasting source of identity, order, meaning, and being.” Not
surprisingly, Davidson was intellectually left behind by his former comrades-in-arms to
face the mid-century as a diehard segregationist. When history was a “sacrament,” as
Paul V. Murphy has pointed out, there was no room for “revision of the past nor reform
in the present.” Consequently, Davidson was fundamentally unable to “broaden his own
circle of southern identity.”

This conflict between heritage and history, between tradition and training, deeply
bothered the historian-general of the Agrarian movement, Frank Owsley. In many ways,
Owsley led the battle against tradition as long as it was the genteel tradition, the romantic
plantation legend, the “moonlight-and-magnolias” interpretation of the southern past.
Together with his wife and a number of talented graduate students from Vanderbilt
University, Owsley undertook the “painful process” of an intricate and minutely detailed
study of the manuscript census in pursuit of the most accurate depiction of southern
socioeconomic structure yet available. Yet throughout his career, current events
impinged on his historical work, perhaps none so much as the trial of the Scottsboro
Boys, nine young African American men who, while riding the rails like so many others
of their out-of-work generation during the spring of 1931, had been accused of raping
two white working-class young women. Their trial exposed the ravaging tensions that
exploded with any challenge to racial, political, sexual, or gender orthodoxy in the
American South.

As historian Dan T. Carter has argued, Scottsboro became a flashpoint for
American political identity. Conservative white southerners feared its implications of
“Communist subversion and racial insubordination” as the Communist party’s
International Labor Defense took over the representation of the accused. Radicals believed Scottsboro was the culmination of centuries of capitalist and racist oppression, while liberals saw the whole ordeal as another symptom of "the sickness which pervaded the South's regional culture." For Frank Owsley, the trial and surrounding public (read northern) outrage were simply the most recent manifestations of a repeated historical "mistake"—northern intervention in southern race relations. Following abolitionism and Reconstruction, Scottsboro represented the North's "third crusade" into the South. When he published an article in the American Review delineating the relationship between the three historical epochs, Owsley believed he had undertaken a "patriotic duty" by warning unsuspecting northerners that their indignation over the treatment of Scottsboro's accused would cause "direr consequences than those of the abolition crusade or reconstruction."

"To ignore the past, or to be too contemptuous to master it," he argued, "is to choose folly as a guide." Northern concern, Owsley concluded, had little to do with actual sympathy for southern African Americans; it had everything to do with the establishment of industrialism in the South "to gain power at the expense of both the whites and blacks."57

The reaction to the article at least among Owsley's circle was electric. Davidson had been "wondering and wondering why nobody, anywhere, told anything but a progressive-Northern-Communist tale" about the Scottsboro situation, and was ecstatic that "now at last here it is—an article by the right person." "Frank Owsley's after 'em again," he cheered, "and he must know I'm with him in the fray." Matthew Page Arnold, a Virginia historian of the traditionalist variety, told Owsley, "I felt like throwing my hat up in the air in jubilation that I had discovered another historian!"58 The article also
struck a nerve among the white southern reading public; several letters survive from
ordinary people who wrote in praise of Owsley’s contribution and who wanted to help
spread the word of this capitalist-Communist incursion. History marshaled for a political
rally cry proved to be an effective enlistment tactic. Owsley relished the times when his
work was literally met with approval by a rebel yell.59

The article made less of a stir among professional southern historians, though
certainly some responded to its visceral defense of the white South’s mores and justice
system. “In the name of Jove and all the gods,” University of Virginia historian Thomas
Perkins Abernethy wrote, “why has the South so long taken the interference and sneers of
the Yankees lying down?” Henry L. Swint, a future graduate student at Vanderbilt and
future editorial associate at the Journal of Southern History, wrote Owsley from Alabama
that the article was “a splendid demonstration of the value of the historical approach to a
current problem” and continued to update him from time to time on Communist activities
in that state.60

This article notwithstanding, Owsley attempted to keep his politics and his history
separate by publishing in journals that ideally matched the tone of his arguments. As
historian Michael O’Brien has aptly argued, “it was a difficult game to play, and he did it
badly.” The various “southern” journals to which Owsley contributed—the Southern
Review, the American Review, the Journal of Southern History, the Virginia Quarterly
Review—did not have discrete audiences. Every article he published ran the risk of
offending some important component of that relatively disparate reading public.61 But at
least he generally tried to be cautious about appearing too political in professional circles.
He published the Scottsboro article, for example, in the American Review, a journal that
one historian has called an “experiment in pro-fascism.” Owsley admired editor Seward Collins as daring in his defiance of the mainstream “scalawag and carpet bagger press” and in his willingness to publish “dangerous” essays that no other magazine would have touched, even as he feared his excessive fascism.  

Imperfect as his system was, Owsley transgressed all understood boundaries between the professional and the polemical when he took his Scottsboro show on the road. In the summer of 1933 University of Georgia historian E. Merton Coulter approached Owsley about writing a paper for a session on the Old South at the American Historical Association meeting in Urbana, Illinois, that winter. Coulter agreed to let him present his third crusade argument, “even if it does taper off into Scottsboro and the New South,” because he was certain it would instigate discussion “and that is exactly what we want.” Owsley was sure to be “the star performer” on the panel. The report of the meeting, however, hardly mentioned Owsley’s participation at all, a fact that has led at least one historian to argue that the editor of the American Historical Review ignored the paper on purpose in protest of its politics. While this conclusion seems logical, it is also possible that Owsley simply forgot to leave an abstract of his paper with the meeting organizers; the author of the report, unable to attend the meeting himself, relied on these abstracts for his description of goings-on. Knowing Owsley’s penchant for confrontation, if this rebuke had been intentional it seems unlikely that Owsley would have willingly participated in subsequent AHA events or would have allowed the slight to pass by without remark. From other sources, at any rate, we know that a buzz surrounded Owsley’s provocative piece. Owsley’s Vanderbilt colleague William C. Binkley reported that the paper “drew very little discussion in the formal session, but was
discussed extensively and freely in informal sessions around the lobbies.” Owsley told his Agrarian peers that “he got quite a favorable reception”: the “Southerners shed tears of joy” and “the Westerners were quite impressed.”

Still, the entire experience was trying for the Vanderbilt historian who worried how to balance his southern/agrarian crusade with his professional identity. “I am bitter to the marrow, clear through to the marrow,” Owsley confessed to a fellow Agrarian, “so bitter than I feel I am losing my poise as a historian.” He subsequently tried to distance himself from his political writing and concentrate on his “professional” work, namely his census research. Even so, Owsley reluctantly admitted that he had possibly “stepped outside the limits of history in my Scottsboro article and assumed the role of moralist or immoralist.” The desperation of the times, he later tried to explain, compelled the political vehemence of his history. In such a context, where some white southerners felt attacked by outsiders and distressed by the conditions around them, the detachment that the Southern Historical Association ideally expected from its members dissipated. In the midst of the increasing stringency of intellectual and professional boundaries (boundaries that had been erected partially to bring authority to the community of thinkers who adhered to them), some white southerners, like Owsley, tested those limits by experimenting with agenda-oriented history. Many of his peers still resented Owsley’s pursuit of the “incendiary” effect.

Owsley’s census research on the plain folk, however, was widely praised, published, and defended by the Southern Historical Association. Only three historians published more articles in the Journal of Southern History between 1935 and 1956 than Owsley’s four. Many historians believed his census research showed what the South
"was really like" by paying "attention to the great middle group" that historians had neglected. Privately, however, other historians bitterly criticized Owsley's dogmatism as unbecoming of a leader in a professional organization. Students complained that Owsley shut off debate in class, and that the Vanderbilt history department, in general, discouraged new avenues of scholarship. James W. Patton believed that he was not considered for an appointment at Vanderbilt because he was not "en rapport with Owsley's agrarianism." Owsley's conservatism was objectionable not because it necessarily betrayed any supposed commitment to "objectivity," but because his intolerance prohibited the useful exchange of ideas that they hoped the Southern Historical Association and its journal promoted.

The only other Agrarian-historian that the Journal reviewed extensively was Donald Davidson and his two-volume study of the Tennessee River. In the review of the first volume, University of Tennessee historian Stanley J. Folmsbee pointed out how much Tennessee history had been written by non-professionals. Adding Davidson to these ranks, Folmsbee complimented the Agrarian author for demonstrating something about popular writing style to the professionals and for avoiding "the plethora of errors frequently characteristic of non-professional work." The second volume, covering the transformation of the Tennessee River via the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), received far less praise from Folmsbee when it was reviewed a year later. Davidson was "still imbued with the sentimental nostalgia for the romantic, but somewhat imaginary, Old South which characterized the book I'll Take My Stand," Folmsbee thought. Confronted with the TVA, Davidson stood "with eyebrows raised in disparagement of what he terms with a touch of sarcasm 'modern progress' toward an industrial
civilization.” Folmsbee felt his turning a history of the river into a tract against federal projects and northern capitalism was unjustified. Davidson, however, believed he had been remarkably fair and even thought he had been too favorable. “As a historian,” he told a friend, “it was no business of mine either to attack or to defend TVA.”

These protestations aside, many SHA historians seriously doubted the objective historiographical ability of the Agrarians. They believed that the Agrarians were able to deliver only “dogmatic” evaluations of other works due to their political bias. That they presumed to know history and posed as legitimate appraisers of historical work bothered Charles W. Ramsdell, when Allen Tate accused him of having “little historical insight” in a review of *Culture in the South*, a collection of essays on contemporary southern conditions edited by W. T. Couch. “It may show little historical insight,” Ramsdell snapped, “but I submit that [Allen] Tate wouldn’t know whether it did or did not!”

Others were more quietly critical of the ways these intellectuals devoted their energies. After hearing John Wade give a paper at the 1939 Southern Historical Association meeting, E. Merton Coulter lamented the fact that Wade had “missed his calling by not lining up with us history people in the beginning.” Instead, Wade now faced his destiny “to be a country gentleman of the old school.”

The Southern Historical Association also vigorously protected the disciplinary boundaries of its journal. Of the 266 academically employed individuals who authored or co-authored an article in the *Journal* between 1935 and 1956, only 22 named a discipline other than history as their home department. However, members also recognized that “history” was only one productive approach to the study of the region. As a result, some SHA program committees made it a priority to incorporate these other approaches in its
annual meetings. When the Southern Historical Association planned for its second annual convention to meet in Nashville in the fall of 1936, program chair Robert H. Woody logically suggested a session on the Agrarians "since Nashville is their locale, more or less." Woody believed that the topic would greatly interest a large portion of the membership, but paused first for further consultation for fear that providing space for these discussions would be interpreted as an endorsement of the philosophy by a young organization still trying to establish its own disciplinary and professional merits. "It may be objected that this is a contemporary movement and not sufficiently "historical,"" he worried, or "it might appear that the Association was committed to Agrarianism"—both troublesome and undesirable outcomes. SHA president Charles W. Ramsdell agreed that the session would provoke much interest and discussion but warned that it needed "papers pro and con." Woody therefore decided to structure the panel as a debate with representatives of the Agrarians’ progressive adversaries from the University of North Carolina. He moved forward on the panel’s organization, soliciting advice from others to ensure fair commentators for the session that included papers by Vanderbilt English professor Donald Davidson and UNC Press director W. T. Couch. Everyone anticipated "a warm discussion." 

As an outsider, Davidson felt that the Agrarians had been invited into the historians’ circle to be belittled, to have their disciplinary differences accentuated and turned against them in a public forum. Still, despite misgivings about embarrassing himself "among the real historians," Davidson "plucked up [his] courage and accepted" the proposal, hoping that Owsley would be there to support him. As his work progressed on the paper for the SHA meeting, Davidson became more and more certain of
confrontation and overwhelmed by the "agony" of his preparation. Couch, his fellow
panelist, was likely to be "abusive and silly," Davidson predicted. Nonetheless,
Davidson assumed the mantle of agrarian apostle to the historians and promised to spread
"the true gospel before all who will listen to it."\textsuperscript{76}

The debate, not surprisingly, turned out to be "the feature session of the meeting."
The "air of expectancy on the part of the large audience," Woody reported, "was in every
way justified." His official account in the \textit{Journal of Southern History}, however, failed
to relate in detail the drama that unfolded during and after the presentation of the papers.
That the encounter was confrontational all agreed. Couch had brought a contingent of
allies from Chapel Hill with him to Nashville, including a young C. Vann Woodward
(who was then attending his first Southern Historical Association meeting). Woodward
later remembered Agrarians Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Andrew Nelson Lytle, and
others filling the front row of the audience, eager to enter battle. Novelist Caroline
Gordon, the wife of Allen Tate, laughingly described the scene to Robert Penn Warren
who had been unable to make the trip up to Nashville. Couch, she reported, "accused the
brethren of all the usual things, including intellectual dishonesty." His criticisms were
believed so personal and derisive that John Wade, an official commentator on the panel,
"felt that he ought to desert the subject assigned to him and deliver a lecture on manners."
Ransom, "shaking with rage," accused Couch from the audience of being both inaccurate
and ignorant.\textsuperscript{77} Woodward remembered Allen Tate leading an imperious procession out
of the room, shouting melodramatically "I shall withdraw my presence." It was,
Davidson admitted, "perfectly ferocious" and "extremely disagreeable"; he felt he had
been "soused...deep in a brackish bath." Gordon said that Couch felt he had been
"covered with brickbats." After the presentations in the debate were concluded, "the historians themselves did not do very much discussing," possibly stunned by the mass exit of angry Agrarians.78

Both Davidson and Couch soon published their SHA papers, Davidson in the *Southern Review* and Couch in the *South Atlantic Quarterly*.79 As a debate, these two papers serve as well as any pairing to illustrate the differences between the Southern Agrarians and the Chapel Hill Regionalists, or as Robert Penn Warren described it, between the Sons of the Old South and the Sons of the New South.80 Davidson criticized progressives for advocating standardization, large-scale industrialism, and the thrusting of northern urban-industrial ideas on the rural-agricultural South. Couch, in turn, criticized the Agrarians for an unreasonable reliance on ill-defined farming solutions, a failure to recognize exploitation as a part of the "southern" tradition, and inconsistency of thought. But what is especially interesting is how both men set up their arguments with a noticeable awareness of their particular audience. Davidson even went so far as to compliment the "brilliant and powerful school of Southern historians whose work is already modifying the course of Southern, if not national, thought." Both speakers hoped to convince these specialists of the error of the enemy by framing their remarks around the other side's failure of historical interpretation.81

Davidson intended for his contribution to "put into historical perspective, with as much positiveness as I can muster, the essence of the current arguments about agrarianism." The new southern liberals, while more attuned to the vagaries of history and regional distinctiveness than an earlier generation, to his mind still relied too heavily on a theory of economic determinism as the motivating force in history. Consequently,
his reformist opponents narrowed their choices for action to only those “that are available elsewhere in an irretrievably industrialized world.” But the South’s history should show, Davidson continued, that the region did not have to be industrialized, and more importantly, must not be industrialized. Instead, the Jeffersonian commitment to agriculture and widespread land ownership pointed to “the basic theme of American history” and “indicate[d] that Southern history is the key to American history.” Allowing this commitment to waver, as Davidson says Jefferson realized, would result in the degradation of the American experiment into a European-style class morass—a cultural and economic disaster. His opponents were wrong, Davidson emphasized, in “assuming that there are no Southern principles left to defend.” Instead the South protected the most American of traditions and preserved the only chance to “seek the twentieth century American equivalent of our earlier conceived destiny as a nation.” The Agrarians, Davidson concluded, were committed to “first principles,” not pragmatic or expedient “program-making.”

While Davidson faulted the Regionalists for economic determinism and pragmatism, Couch accused the Agrarians of romanticism and historical selectivity. History in fact tells us, Couch began, that “agrarianism” in the South took many disparate forms, from subsistence yeoman farms to large-scale commercial enterprises. Yet the “whole” of the “Southern tradition” seemed not to interest the Agrarians. More crucially, Couch questioned the much trumpeted connection of virtue and the cultivation of the soil:

Now let us see how the owner of a great plantation would go about his business and derive virtue from the soil. Do we find him like Cincinnatus engaged in plowing, planting, and harvesting? Not very frequently. On the contrary, he derives his virtue by proxy, or rather through a succession of proxies: his slaves, his drivers, foremen, overseers, and managers. He may
derive some virtue more directly, through his horse, when he rides out over his plantations.

The nagging question remained: why did the physical closeness to the soil of those proxies leave them “very definitely inferior beings”? The logic, Couch concluded, necessitated the superiority of the slave to the master, the greater virtue of the poor white “scratching at his patch of soil, now and then eating dirt” over his wealthier neighbor.

For Couch, linking virtue to farming in the antebellum South was therefore disingenuous and Agrarian theory a bunch of “romantic moonshine.”83 This debate particularly pointed the way toward what would become the explicit dividing line between southern conservatives and liberals as the twentieth century progressed: whether the New South should perpetuate or ameliorate racial and class hierarchy. Describing the antebellum South in the 1930s was hardly an academic question.

At any rate, the relationships between the various groups were not as irreparable as the pyrotechnics at the meeting seemed to indicate. That same evening, Woodward accidentally turned up at an Agrarian celebration party, an awkward turn of events given Woodward’s reformist point of view and his close friendship with Couch, but one that opened up new connections to other southern thinkers.84 In the spring of 1938 Davidson heard that Couch was “making overtures to close the breach that opened so awesomely at the Southern Historical meeting some time ago.” Couch “is not nearly so hostile as he thinks he is,” Allen Tate observed, and expected him to become less “pig-headed” in the future. The group always admired UNC Press, respecting the success of the southern publishing house even as they mistrusted North Carolina as a “center of progressive liberalism.”85 Moreover, the Agrarians maintained an interest in participating in
Southern Historical Association functions (the parties if not the sessions), never contending that the organization opposed them methodologically or politically.86

Only Davidson the grudge-holder retained a bitter taste in his mouth from this first experience with the Southern Historical Association. In March 1951 the program chair invited Davidson to give a luncheon speech at the annual meeting in Montgomery on the history and impact of agrarianism. At first, Davidson agreed to appear: “an invitation from the Southern Historical Association is practically a command, from my point of view.” 87 However, when he received the program draft that showed him slated for the final day of the meeting, Davidson was deeply offended. “I don’t see why I should go to the trouble of deciding what to say on a difficult and highly controversial subject, and make a trip to Montgomery, only to speak before the remnant of a meeting that undoubtedly, by Saturday noon, will be in process of dispersing to football games, T–V sets, and the like, or of getting on the road home,” he fumed. “If you are going to insist on my coming to speak, by invitation, you surely ought to give me a better ‘break’ than that.” Somehow Davidson remembered that both he and Couch agreed that the debate in 1936 “was handled rather frivolously. . .by those officially responsible for our appearance,” though from all available reports it was Davidson’s friends, and not their opponents or the organizers, who caused such a stir. At any rate, Davidson refused to be “speech-music for the exit of the 17th Meeting of the Southern Historical Association.” In the end, there was no Saturday luncheon session in 1951.88

Davidson responded with even more spleen when Louis D. Rubin, an intellectually, asked him to participate on a panel on “Southern History and Southern Writers” at the closer-to-home 1955 SHA meeting in Memphis. “Why should I go to any trouble to
put myself out for the Southern Historical Society?” Davidson asked, certain that the historians “would just sit back and laugh in their sleeves.” SHA historians, he continued, “are just so damned smug, with all their specialties and annotated minutiae, and there’s not one in 25 of them that has enough spunk and ability to really settle down and write history.” All they produced were “excavations, all made in libraries,” and, more dangerously for Davidson, “all so handsomely supported by grants from the Social Science Research Council.” He refused to submit himself to that audience—it made him “sick at my stomach” to imagine the historians “sitting on the front [row] and sneering and sneering at the backward Southern reactionaries.” Furthermore, Davidson was horrified that Tennessee senator Estes Kefauver had also been invited to speak at the convention on the benefits of the TVA. There would be nothing historical about the “SOUTHERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY” when it gave “a platform and an audience” to such “rot, deception, propagandist bunk and lies.”89

Southern historians, Davidson argued in another letter, weren’t even southern at all. Professionalization had removed them from “the soil itself, the geography, and the people” and instead located the sources of regional knowledge in libraries and archives. If they hadn’t “been there,” how could they possibly interpret the history? Davidson’s bitter and personal critique of SHA historians was part of his larger crusade against using sociology as a means for understanding culture or the human condition. Social scientists of all types, Davidson believed, falsely abstracted the past.90 For Davidson, the past was something experienced and remembered, not researched and revised. For the members of the Southern Historical Association, although they also gave more credence to the interpretation if it was written by someone “who has lived in the South or who has
received a part of his training in the South," it was ultimately the other way around. Without the need for research, interpretation, and revision, there was no basis for their authority or for their profession. 91

Certainly Davidson was the most extreme of the Agrarians in his disdain for professional history and in his veneration of an experiential regional past. As Michael O’Brien has convincingly argued, most of the Agrarians ultimately abandoned their advocacy of an Old South movement for broader intellectual aims. 92 But the tenacity with which the group held to its interpretation of a persistent and reclaimable regional tradition—and more importantly, the extent to which they connected their prescription for the Problem South to the supposed viability of this tradition in the modern world—points to an underexplored facet of the professionalization of history in the South. The politics of Agrarianism tried to undermine the authority of the historical profession by claiming its tenets were not crucial, and in fact were impediments, to understanding the South. Yet it was the Southern Historical Association that survived, because it had the flexibility to debate the interpretation of the past, even if in its early years those debates occurred within closely defined parameters. This outcome does not indicate that the Southern Historical Association was inherently liberal. As a professional organization dedicated to regional study, it had a commitment to preserve “the South”—a seemingly conservative venture—and a simultaneous commitment to promote deep and critical thought—a potentially revolutionary one.
Social Science and the South

The relationship between SHA historians and the growing number of professional sociologists in the South was much closer and therefore, like siblings, more subtly contentious. Regional sociology and professional southern history seemed to have grown up together.  

Because most were still committed to the idea of scientific history, there was hardly a historian who did not admire the possibilities for the data collected and the frameworks suggested by the southern regional studies undertaken by Howard W. Odum and his research associates. “To the historian,” professor William B. Hesseltine argued, “scientific sociology is a valuable ancillary subject and the sociologist a most useful compiler of documents.”

Facts illuminated the way of the future. As one reviewer of Odum’s Southern Regions claimed, “only persons afflicted with numerophobia will find [the study] of limited value; and persons so afflicted are of little importance to modern society.”

Sociologists, in turn, pursued this kind of endorsement for their approaches and conclusions from the ranks of southern historians. They desired the approbation yet resisted when historians disallowed them their own technical jargon and disciplinary symbols.

Moreover, southern historians realized that they had neglected the investigation of the recent past. Less than fifteen percent of all articles and documents published in the Journal of Southern History between 1935 and 1954 addressed post-Reconstruction topics. As a result, historians fretted that whole areas of study, like southern commerce and industry, had been relegated to the disciplines of sociology and economics and expressed concern that these social scientists and their journals were “not functioning properly in these segments of history.” Well into the 1950s, the Southern Historical
Association leadership continued to push for more attention from their members to topics like industry, urban life, business development, and labor and race relations. In the meantime, sociological studies were depended upon as the best available source of information about the recent past. These studies were therefore reviewed regularly in the *Journal of Southern History* even though some reviewers occasionally doubted their ability to evaluate "the mysteries of modern sociology." An example from the collaborative *History of the South* series illustrates well the consequences of the historians' neglect of the recent past. When series editors Wendell Holmes Stephenson and Charles W. Ramsdell made the original assignments for the series, despite their best efforts they could come up with no historian more qualified for the "Present South" volume covering the years 1913–1940 than University of North Carolina sociologist Rupert B. Vance. Honored by his selection, Vance was anxious about his own shortcomings as an expert in the field, particularly in the political and military areas, but he was ultimately pressed to accept the contract after the editors convinced him of the primacy of social, economic, and cultural factors to the interpretation of the period. The editors also had difficulty finding someone to write the preceding volume, the book which became C. Vann Woodward's *Origins of the New South*. Their original choice, Benjamin B. Kendrick, begged off from the project claiming that not enough "monographic material in the field [existed] to make possible the writing of anything like a definitive volume" on the period. Kendrick recommended the editors find a younger back to take on all the necessary "spade work." As historians became increasingly concerned with the apparent sociological domination of this period, they sought to reclaim access to the most recent past as part of
their own intellectual turf often by asserting the superiority of their own methodology and training. Historians who tried to synthesize scholarship on the recent South suffered from the fact that “the writings in the field are...too seldom the findings of sound historical research.” New South history often “smack[ed] too much of a sociologist’s report”: it was short on narrative, interpretation, and synthesis. Sociologists, some thought, too frequently interpreted data at face-value and thereby negated “standards of historical criticism.” Conversely, historians also accused sociologists of simply collecting and organizing data with no interpretation at all. Southern sociological studies, Charles S. Sydnor pointed out, were in this manner much like the region they investigated: they “possesse[d] a superabundance of resources” but were “somewhat deficient in technique and organization.” Moreover, where sociologists were interested in statistical markers of class, caste, or region, historians claimed access to understanding the human consciousness that gave these categories texture and function in social reality. Because the “eyes of the historian” were blessed with perspective, they fleshed out the continuities and relationships of the past to the present. “While the sociologist can aid,” William B. Hesseltine concluded, “he can in no sense supplant the historian.”

Furthermore, the politics of southern sociology were largely sympathetic to liberal regional and industrial reform. The discipline’s regional roots were located in an activist social work tradition. As Charles S. Sydnor explained in his review of Odum’s Southern Regions, the “highly commendable purpose” of sociological regionalism was “to transmute innumerable statistics into a condensed appraisal of the Southeast in order that an incontrovertible program of reconstruction might be deducted from this scientific appraisal.” This dedication to change in the present troubled those conservative
historians who, like their Agrarian allies, defended a narrower definition of the relevant southern past. The attempt by some Southern Historical Association leaders to include what were now considered more "sociological" topics on SHA programs—business and industry, reform, labor and race relations, and the costs of segregation—met with resistance throughout the first decades of the association's existence from members who argued that these were in fact "present problems of the South" that had little to do with the region's history. 108

As historian John Hope Franklin has pointed out, white southerners had a long tradition of resistance to change, resistance that proslavery theorist George Fitzhugh actually described in terms of the South's opposition to sociology. The "invention and use of the word Sociology in free society, and of the science of which it treats, and the absence of such word and science in slave society," Fitzhugh had argued in 1857, "shows that the former is afflicted with disease, the latter healthy." 109 Problem South sociologists, whether white or black, generally found the reverse to be true. "The South is being thumped and probed by the social pathologists," one exasperated reviewer wrote in the Journal. For white southern conservatives, the sociological/liberal taint rendered most New South history useless, having been written, as Frank Owsley lamented, "by its enemies." As another historian concluded, his colleagues had "silently rejected the sociological regionalists' concepts because of the political instrumentalism which was hardly concealed in the regionalists' approach." 110

Indeed, a comparison of reviews of John Dollard's 1937 study Caste and Class in a Southern Town by authors with different points of view highlights the extent to which social science was never pure science, above politics and above interpretation. In his
review for the Southern Review, I’ll Take My Stand contributor Lyle H. Lanier argued that “the impulsion to secure immediate results, often reinforced in the social sciences by the reformist zeal, can influence the investigator to disregard the stern precepts of scientific method.” Compounding Dollard’s bias, Lanier thought, was the fact that his psychoanalytical methodology, based on Freudian arguments about the social consequences of sexual repression, could not “claim the support of a single experimentally established fact” and therefore was a scientifically inadequate analytical tool. In response, Lanier made claims on history to refute the bias of psychoanalysis by arguing that white racism was not the result of repressed sexuality or envy but rather the historical facts of economics and northern interference. Remediying these historical problems, he concluded, would improve race relations, though never eradicate the foundational principle that white southerners refused to intermix with or be governed by black southerners.111

The Journal review, on the other hand, was penned by Alex M. Arnett, co-author with Benjamin B. Kendrick of the historical preface to Odum’s regional studies program, The South Looks at Its Past. Arnett gladly accepted the assignment to review Dollard’s book for the Journal, though he begged more time for its completion. “As you know,” he explained to editor Wendell H. Stephenson, “it is not a book to be reviewed overnight.” Arnett described the book as a “Southern Middletown” whose author, as a northerner, was in fact acutely aware of his own bias and assumptions. Dollard’s attempt to overcome that bias in Arnett’s estimation was totally successful: “No student in this field—North or South—has ever more nearly approached complete objectivity.” Unlike other northern investigators/muckrakers, Dollard was “no Carpetbagger, no Pharisee, and
no holy crusader.” Arnett spent the majority of his review explaining the various details of Dollard’s conclusions.\textsuperscript{112}

At one level, the disparity in tone and approach between these two reviews was the result of the very different editorial goals of the *Journal of Southern History* and the *Southern Review*. But the differences also point to the crucial role the editor’s subjective decisions played in assigning a reviewer.\textsuperscript{113} Occasionally public and private disputes erupted over the political slant of a reviewer in the *Journal*, as when Mack Swearingen lashed out against University of Alabama professor A. B. Moore’s review of H. C. Nixon’s, *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* for “personal bias” and for “exceed[ing] the bounds of fairness.”\textsuperscript{114} In part to avoid public controversies like this and in part to act in the best interest of competent reviewing, *Journal* editors almost always assigned reform-oriented sociological studies to people at least interested in the social insights the approach promised if not in total agreement with the interpretation of the data. Reviewers looked to these studies for answers to the South’s plight and were disappointed when they were found lacking. In the *Journal*, sociological studies were praised as “incriminating” in their exposure, “illuminating” even when “depressing,” courageous in their purpose, important even if largely incomprehensible to the average reader, and “generally worth reading as. . .social history.”\textsuperscript{115}

Carefully considered review assignments were also made for the growing genre of regional studies that proliferated in the 1930s and 1940s by journalists, activists, reformers, and indigenous observers who had, in Fred Hobson’s words, “the southern rage to explain.”\textsuperscript{116} These years saw the publication of some of the most famous and personal investigations of southern culture and history by white southerners ever written,
from Clarence Cason's *90° in the Shade* to Jonathan Daniels's *A Southerner Discovers the South* to W. J. Cash's *The Mind of the South*. Although not technically history, the *Journal* reviewed these books written from the "sociological-journalistic" point of view, as Donald Davidson had sardonically called it.117 These writers were largely critical of the region, though all invested in their own southern identity. As one reviewer put it, they were like "H. L. Mencken with kid gloves."118

Still, because these authors were critical to varying degrees of the regional status quo, white conservatives conceivably could have blown their books out of the water had they been chosen to write the reviews. As one conservative reader argued, these liberal authors were fiercely ideological and "frank indeed in tying together Negro Aspirations [and] . . . 'modern' sociology."119 Indeed, reviews in other venues where conservative writers were selected contrast sharply in tone and content from those in the *Journal*. Donald Davidson, for example, went so far as to joke that only Cash's legitimate white southern heritage kept him from "the gun or the rope" of the lynch mob.120 In the *Southern Review*, Frank Owsley similarly chastened Jonathan Daniels as amateur, vulgar, superficial, impertinent, and incompetent. *Journal* editor Wendell Holmes Stephenson praised Owsley privately for saying "what should have been said long ago" about *A Southerner Discovers the South*.121

Despite his personal opinions, however, Stephenson seemed to go out of his way to ensure "fair," even sympathetic, reviewers for these liberal critiques of the South. For Daniels's book, Stephenson recruited H. C. Nixon, the Agrarian-turned-reformer who was such a thorn in the sides of Owsley, Tate, Davidson and others.122 Virginius Dabney, for his only contribution to the *Journal of Southern History* during these years, was called
upon to review Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin's *The South in Progress*, a book he praised for its "meaty" contribution to New South analysis and for its "progressively oriented" viewpoint.123 Clarence Cason's "psychograph" of the region, *90° in the Shade*, was evaluated by Vergil L. Bedsole, a Louisiana archivist who was also often picked to appraise works of African American history for the *Journal of Southern History*. Too many southern historians, Bedsole thought, were "imbued with the ante-bellum South and slavery to shift their mental gears after passing the War between the States." In his view, historians must view "the Negro...as a vital, positive element of American life."124

Bedsole's constructive attitude toward African Americans as historical actors points to a fundamental reason many white southern historians resisted regional sociology and its willingness to consider ways to improve race relations across the South. A number of these reform-oriented sociological studies were written by African American or interracial groups of scholars. The editors kept opponents away from the *Journal*’s public forum by assigning these studies to other reviewers. As a result, African American sociologists retained in the *Journal* a degree of protection and respect for their work, as both scientific and professional, that was not generally accorded to African American historians.

The reputation of Fisk University sociologist Charles Spurgeon Johnson in the eyes of the Southern Historical Association is a good example of how the "science" of sociology worked to open doors for black intellectuals to sympathetic white audiences. When Johnson was appointed president of Fisk in 1946 after a long career there as a leader in interracial investigation, the black press pointed to this reputation as a symbol of his intellectual prowess. In 1946 Johnson was also elected president of the Southern
Sociological Society, the first mainstream learned society north or south to honor an African American intellectual in this way. "Among Negro sociologists he is in a class by himself," the Birmingham World editorialized, "among the whites, he stands in the very forefront, representing the most advanced sociological maturity."¹²⁵ In the Journal of Southern History, Johnson's work was praised as careful and detached and recommended for its reference-work qualities.¹²⁶ As a sociologist enmeshed in statistics and numbers, he protected himself from the rash judgment or biases to which African American historians were supposedly prone. This point was made crystal clear in a joint review of Carter G. Woodson's The Mis-Education of the Negro and Johnson's The Shadow of the Plantation in the first issue of the Journal. Woodson, reviewer Holland Thompson wrote, was "wearisome" and "critical" in his critique of the form and function of African American education and quick to blame white people for these "defects." Woodson's curricular insistence that black history should be promoted for self-esteem purposes (rather than for "truth") also sat wrong with Thompson. Johnson, on the other hand, provided a "serious sociological study" with admirable "understanding, sanity and clarity."¹²⁷

More varied was the treatment W. E. B. Du Bois received by reviewers in the Journal of Southern History, because he was evaluated according to the different disciplinary genres that he produced. Throughout his career, white southern reviewers praised him as a sociologist, and despite his Ph.D. in history from Harvard, discounted him as historian. Benjamin B. Kendrick, frequently called upon to review Du Bois's work, was grateful that Dusk of Dawn turned out to be more of a sociology of race relations than history as such, because he did not think that Du Bois had a satisfactory
handle on the “factual details” that “unduly annoy us pedantic historians, but are passed over quite unnoticed by sociologists intent only on the broader and more profound significance of cultural history.” Kendrick believed Du Bois did a generally poor job writing “conventional history.” He was unable to keep his “bias” out of his history, Kendrick argued in a review of another of his studies, but could still express an important message if read as “sociology.”¹²⁸ Like other sociologists, black and white, Du Bois was good for a source-book, for an index of attitudes and opinions, but certainly not for history. Moreover, his “poor opinion of southern historians” troubled his SHA reviewers. However, if they considered him as a sociologist—and so outside and at odds with their profession disciplinarily rather than racially—his opinion of white southern historians was less worrisome.¹²⁹

As a result, like New South history, some SHA historians considered African American history to be little more than sociology. The way most black history studies achieved praise from white SHA reviewers was to be considered “more sociological than historical.” SHA observers would have agreed with William B. Hesseltine’s compliment of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History’s sociological bent. “Because the Negro has been as often a sociological problem as a political factor,” Hesseltine said on the occasion of the organization’s twenty-fifth anniversary, “the Association was led by necessity into sociology.”¹³⁰ From the point of view that the discipline of history evolved as a branch of social science, this attribution of scientific rationality may seem the highest praise. Indeed, “sociology” provided African American scholars an entrée into white academic circles. The Southern Historical Association, however, co-opted the description “sociological” for an array of subjects and approaches that the majority
considered sub-par history. As a result, an important part of the racial integration of regional history would be the transformation of the study of the African American past from sociology to history in the eyes of southern white historians.

*Louisiana State University's Other Southern Journal*

While the *Journal* and annual meetings provided important if limited space for members of the Southern Historical Association to function as relevant intellectuals, SHA historians also used other venues for more active engagement in the spectrum of debates that occurred in the context of the Problem South. The *Southern Review*, published contemporaneously with the *Journal of Southern History* at Louisiana State University between 1935–1942, provides another source of insight into the professional historian's involvement in the outburst of creative regional thinking of the 1930s and 1940s. Although the *Southern Review* is primarily remembered for its contributions to American literature and literary criticism, the publication epitomized the southern renaissance by mixing literary with social criticism, fiction with journalism, poetry with philosophy, regional influence with national ambition.¹³¹

Though the editors at the *Southern Review* and the *Journal of Southern History* headed up magazines with similar aspirations, the two offices rarely interacted formally until they began to work together to save both publications from termination by the Louisiana State University budget committee. The journals traded advertising space and the editors very occasionally exchanged manuscripts they thought might be more appropriate for the other magazine, but for the most part, their authors were self-selecting.¹³² As a frequent contributor to both publications, Frank Owsley distinguished
in his own mind the kind of work appropriate for each journal. Thus despite Robert Penn Warren's continual entreaties for Owsley to submit the first article based on his census research to the *Southern Review* and despite the fact that the *Review* paid its contributors while the *Journal* did not, Owsley envisioned that his study needed to be "of a technical nature for the Professional Journals." With the exception of Owsley, the Agrarians had negligible contact with the *Journal of Southern History*, and instead thought of the *Southern Review* as their own, long-awaited, publication outlet.

The *Southern Review*, however, never developed into the Agrarian mouthpiece that some of the group had anticipated and others outside the group had feared. Owsley believed the new magazine "made a beautiful show" and "was also an excellent Review," but felt "that it is not, outside the realm of literature, a *Southern Review.*" Similarly, Donald Davidson worried that the *Review* was "slipping" and would "presently...be controlled from New York." One interested observer worried that the *Review* leadership lacked "a well-defined point of view" and therefore risked "sink[ing] into the quicksands of liberalism." Consequently, its supporters worked hard to ensure that the *Review* would be "dominantly Southern," by which they meant appropriately conservative.

These critics perhaps should not have been surprised that the *Southern Review* ended up politically and intellectually diverse. Although editor Robert Penn Warren had been a sympathetic contributor to *I'll Take My Stand* and remained close friends with many in the group, he held intellectual development over and above any steadfast regional credo. "Literary integrity," he argued, "is simply this: a man puts down what he thinks to be true in the best form he can command." After that, "the matter of publication
appears to be a purely practical matter.” Warren advertised the *Southern Review* under his direction as an interesting and well-rounded outlet for “the most vital contemporary activities in fiction, poetry, criticism, and social thought.” Moreover, in spite of its name the *Southern Review* would “not aim, especially in its literary aspect, at a sectional program, nor will it have an academic bias,” though its editors admitted their personal “regional and sectional piety.” Most importantly, the editors refused to dictate a political, sectional, or aesthetic viewpoint to its authors even when they personally disliked the submitted piece. In the end, most Agrarians were content with this combination. Davidson, for example, was “glad to see the Southern, the political-and-topical, the creative, the critical all given their place.” Just as the historians of the Southern Historical Association were pleased to have their journal prove that “we are really doing something in historical work in the South,” southern writers and thinkers were proud that such a “substantial review,” acclaimed at home and abroad, was published in the name of the South.

The *Southern Review* thus widely cast its net from its Baton Rouge home across the upwelling tide of modern intellectual work, and in the process, caught a few southern historians. And historians in general were intrigued. This journal was curious to know what historians thought about contemporary politics or the modern scene; it was also interested in what other kinds of thinkers thought about the latest southern historical studies. As a result, the *Southern Review* gave historians a freer rein over the approach to their topics than the *Journal of Southern History* allowed. Its editorial policy, in fact, demanded it. In the *Review* books served merely as points of departure for a broader essay. “The essay-review,” editor Cleanth Brooks recalled, “provide[d] a solution for
problems encountered for such a deep-draft, rather unwieldy craft as a quarterly review has to be.” The editors were more interested in “perspective,” in a “general point” or “tendency”; they hoped contributions would achieve “the unity and coherence of a well-argued thesis.”

This policy startled some professional historians enjoined to contribute to the Review but who were nevertheless accustomed to the “typical book review of the sort a specialist usually writes for a historical journal.” As Brooks explained to H. C. Nixon, whose manuscript he returned for revision, “we should like the review less merely descriptive and more critical, even if the criticism carries you on beyond the scope and context of the books themselves.” “We feel that you know the matters raised by these books as few other people know them,” the editor concluded, “and we are anxious that you speak out, out of that knowledge.” “Do not begin as if you were writing a regular review,” Warren similarly advised Frank Owsley, “but take the ordinary approach of an essay or article. . . . People read essays when they do not read what looks like a technical review.” In the Southern Review, recently published books provided an opening for the reviewer to expound upon pet political or historical theories. In contrast, the editors of the Journal of Southern History considered a review to be seriously flawed if the author used the “assignment as an opportunity to write an essay touching only incidentally or not at all on the contents of the book.”

In the case of history reviews, the editors of the Southern Review actually encouraged reviewers to link the history with the politics wherever possible though they claimed a “policy of non-interference” in the attitude, approach, or conclusions of the review. They even goaded reviewers into accepting the assignment by quoting passages
from the book in question that they knew would make the reviewer’s “hackles rise and
the ink churn in [his] fountain pen.” After Owsley had recognized the potential in the
Southern Review essay style, he made special requests for assignments that might serve
as “the peg I have been waiting for, on which to hang, among others, H. C. Nixon and W.
T. Couch.” The limitations of the professional historical journals began to frustrate him.
In one such case, he “smell[ed] fresh game” in a book assigned him by the Mississippi
Valley Historical Review and wondered if he might be also permitted to use it to “hang a
certain number of raw hides on the fence of the Southern Review.”

How, then, did this work in practice? Owsley sought out “special meat”—books
whose theses enabled him to shore up either his own ideas about the dangers of the
liberal-progressive panacea of modernization or about the historical consequences of
outside attacks on the traditional South. Take, for example, Owsley’s review of the
autobiography of Robert W. Winston, a North Carolina judge, attorney, historian, and
advocate of the disbandment of Civil War memorial societies. The Journal of Southern
History review, penned by Holland Thompson, kindly praised the book, concluding “the
reader will wish they might know the author.” Owsley had no such pleasantries to pass
on about this “half-baked liberal from North Carolina.” To Owsley, Winston wrote
propagandistic history, supported the environmental exploitation of his native region,
flirted too closely with the Republican party, happily represented “rich industrialists” like
the Duke family, became “a Northern sectionalist,” and most abominably for Owsley,
“wept over the crimes of his people for having owned negro slaves,” while “prepar[ing]
the way for white peonage: slavery without security.” Winston was an “Old Fashioned
Southern Liberal”—of the same ilk as Henry Grady, Walter Hines Page, and other
proponents of the reconciled, industrialized, and Yankeeized New South. The book itself was actually forgettable or unimportant, Owsley thought, unless "considered in its relationship to...the attitudes of many so called intellectuals of [Winston's] way of thinking." This assignment provided him an excellent opportunity to expose these "liberals" for their "fawning attitude" toward northern approval and abandonment of the (white) southern people.

At one point in early 1938, Owsley found himself "fed up" and "suffering from ennui momentarily, on the Causes of the Civil War." Looking back over his recent publications, Owsley realized he had "been writing this [essay on the irrepressible conflict] over and over" in "God knows how many...times and places." He could not stay away from the topic long, particularly when the Southern Review offered him the opportunity to blast a new book that he found particularly "execrable." In his review of Dwight L. Dumond's Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States, Owsley slammed the author for taking the abolitionists' point of view at face value. In fact, his ultimate judgment of the book was not much different from the reviewer in the Journal. E. Merton Coulter also found Dumond to be "as uncompromising in position and as dogmatic in statement as the abolitionists whom it seeks to explain and defend." Coulter, however, ended up making the more measured judgment the Journal of Southern History preferred, to the extent that he even gave Dumond's enthusiasm for the abolitionists a partial excuse in that the book was a public series of lectures and therefore designed to attract the audience's attention. Owsley, on the other hand, with the freedom that the essay-review format the Southern Review allowed, launched into an extensive point-by-point rebuttal that culminated in the linking of his plain folk research to his
analysis of the causes of the Civil War. This essay served much more effectively as a sounding-board for the politics behind Owsley's work by explicitly connecting his historical and political causes than it did an evaluation of Dumond. Owsley was pleased with the result.\(^{153}\)

While Owsley was a particularly political reviewer, other historians used the pages of the *Southern Review* to experiment with expanding their typical professional boundaries. Charles W. Ramsdell’s review of Carl Sandburg’s biography of Abraham Lincoln took at stab at analyzing the pervasive influence of the “Lincoln legend” on historical writing. Historians were not so much influenced by the extreme myth of Lincoln as a Christ figure but instead by a legend “derived from a higher intellectual level” which insisted on “Lincoln’s essential perfection in wisdom and conduct both as a statesman and a human being” who deserves at most “sympathetic criticism.” Unlike the more zealous of the Agrarians, however, Ramsdell was not willing to waive the right for white southerners to find some truth in this depiction.\(^{154}\) C. Vann Woodward took bolder steps in criticizing the “romanticism” that dominated thinking about the South “whether of the industrial or the nostalgic [Agrarian] type” and argued that “overbalanced emphasis on sectionalism” ought to be corrected “with a sharp reminder that there are conflicts other than sectional now facing the South.” He thought H. C. Nixon’s *Forty Acres and Steel Mules* provided a “splendid impetus to a new realism” through a class-based approach to analysis of the Problem South.\(^{155}\)

The *Southern Review* editors, however, did not always turn to historians to review the latest publications on the South. Sociologist Rupert B. Vance was a favorite contributor to the *Review* who often sought to bridge the gap between Agrarian and
regional planning solutions for the Problem South. He pushed Agrarian thinkers to consider more rigorously the implications of turning a literary or nostalgic movement into a program for agricultural economics.¹⁵⁶ Vance also used a review essay on C. Vann Woodward’s biography of Tom Watson and David Duncan Wallace’s History of South Carolina, to point to the limitations of alternative political traditions within the framework of one-party politics. What the South got was Tillman and Watson. What Vance hoped for the South was a class-oriented protest message from “highminded men who could think.” While such speakers would surely be at best ignored and at worst lynched, at least “their coming and speaking might dispel some of the hypocrisy, much of the vulgarity, and a little of the dreadful fog that has not lifted in these many years.” Lacking such authentic class consciousness, the possibility of protest, however flawed, seemed to him the only promise of republican government left to the South.¹⁵⁷

When Agrarian writers were asked by the editors of the Southern Review to review works of history, they tended to use the occasion to chastise “southern” historians for abandoning a sectional approach to the sectional past. Why didn’t Douglas Southall Freeman criticize Robert E. Lee’s failure to protect the southern tradition after Appomattox? Freeman instead praised Lee’s ability to stay above the fray of reconstruction politics to work toward sectional reconciliation. As a result, Andrew Lytle breathed a sigh of relief in his review of the multi-volume biography that “fortunately” southern leadership in the immediate postbellum era had transferred from Virginia to the “middle South, to those who led the Ku Klux Klan, that society which made survival possible.” Freeman’s interpretation would surely “crystallize the liberal idea of Lee,” Lytle warned his editors, and make “it much easier for them [white southern liberals] to
turn him to their bad ends. 158 Similarly, Davidson critiqued a biographer of the Lee family for supporting the "Lincoln myth"—where even white southerners embraced the assassinated president as one of their heroes—and for nationalizing Robert E. Lee’s contributions. Davidson’s assessment of the book was that it was an “attempt to annex the Southern hero...by distilling out of him most of his sectional essence.” In general, Davidson concluded, this type of history “plays up the nation and the state and plays down the section—the South.” He saw this approach as merely another form of northern “nationalizing” imperialism and feared his section’s easy acceptance of it. 159

The most direct debate on the dangers of a non-sectional approach to the southern past, however, stemmed from a suggestion made by Robert Penn Warren for Davidson to respond to Woodward’s review of H. C. Nixon’s Forty Acres and Steel Mules and his advocacy of the class approach to southern history. 160 In many ways, Davidson’s response provided no new ammunition against that liberal group of southern intellectuals who argued that addressing class issues might help alleviate southern poverty. But this article is exceptional in that Davidson explicitly stated what he thought the “sectional” approach to regional history protected:

The difficulty is enormously increased if the ‘class approach’ means, as it generally seems to mean nowadays, the obliteration of the color line in the South. Southern experience shows that the introduction of the race issue into general problems inevitably confuses all issues, postpones the solution of general problems, and renders any solution of the Negro problem more difficult than ever. This alone is a solid and sufficient reason for the traditional Southern insistence that the Negro be put in a separate category and that his problems be treated separately.

For all their earlier insistence that “the South” was defined by its agrarian and anti-northern position—“What we want to do is not to keep the negro down, but to throw the North out”—Davidson returned the essence of “the South” to the defense of white
supremacy.\textsuperscript{161} The reassertion of regional identity as based on whiteness (and the narrowing of liberal reform tactics from general regional improvement to the specific plans for the betterment of race relations) sharply defeated the brief possibility that coalesced during the southern renaissance that "the South" could be reshaped liberally and inclusively.\textsuperscript{162} 

\textit{The Politics of Regional History}

By way of conclusion, it will be helpful to examine one final example of the political flexibility and possibility that the Southern Historical Association afforded historians committed to a regional identity. Like C. Vann Woodward, Benjamin B. Kendrick (1884–1946), professor of history at the Women’s College of the University of North Carolina, occupied a nebulous position among the Agrarians and the Regionalists.\textsuperscript{163} On the one hand, he served as chair of the Southern Regional Committee and was closely involved with Howard W. Odum’s regional studies at the University of North Carolina. On the other hand, Kendrick had definite Agrarian sympathies that especially came to the forefront after a policy disagreement with Odum. As Michael O’Brien has described, Kendrick’s well-intentioned 1934 plan to form a new cross-institutional forum for cooperative southern studies sent Odum into a frenzied attempt to lock down the idea of regional studies for his institutions, his foundations, and his funding. Odum accused Kendrick of being in league with the Nashville group, perhaps out of fear, Donald Davidson thought, of some sort of “sociological sabotage.” Perhaps Kendrick’s consequent inability to cooperate with Howard W. Odum led him to become one of the four original founders of the Southern Historical Association in the fall of
1935. Kendrick had long supported the creation of an alternate venue for southern studies to be supported by a regional journal. However, he never intended to limit the study of "the South" to the Journal of Southern History or to maintain the historians' forum at the expense of other regional institutions. For example, Kendrick proactively tried to assist the Southern Review after its university subsidy was revoked by calling on key connections at various foundations to supply grant support for the magazine. Incidentally, Kendrick discussed these options with Review editor Robert Penn Warren at the 1941 meeting of the Southern Historical Association.

Most importantly, Kendrick thought specifically about the role the southern historian should play, beyond the primary one of teaching and research, in the social and political discussions of the 1930s. If the debate between the Regionalists and the Agrarians showed anything, Kendrick argued, it was that the historians of the South needed to "take hold of their task with a greater measure of vigor" and work out "the derivation of the Southern cultural tradition." If the South truly was a cohesive region, then it "must have a past and a future peculiarly its own—a history and a goal—a tradition and a plan." Historians formed the connection between the two camps. Kendrick specifically suggested that historians illustrate the plan inherent in the tradition by showing that "reform as a southern movement...is an old story and a continuous one." Kendrick thus tried to stake out a position for southern historians somewhere between Ódum and the Agrarians, borrowing what he saw as strengths of both without succumbing to the weaknesses of either. Historians, he concluded, had the best tools to uncover both the tradition and the plan from their beloved South.
Yet like many liberal-minded whites of his generation, the moment of defining the South as a region capable of its own reform gave way to a more typical defensive attack on the motives of the North. When Kendrick reviewed Odum’s *Southern Regions* for the *Southern Review* in 1937, he claimed for the historian the investigation and description of indigenous reform in the South and left for the economist the exploration of the “persistent. . .complaint against an imputed colonial status and its corollary of exploitation.” At the time of his presidential address, delivered in 1941, Kendrick described the history of the South as three centuries of colonial exploitation by a resource-grubbing and exploitive northern industrial economic culture. After the United States entered World War II, Kendrick too had retreated from the inclusive possibilities inherent in regional language to criticize “those ‘totalitarian liberals’ who believe we are fighting a global war for the Four Freedoms and a quart of milk for everybody everywhere, including the Negroes and such whites of the South as are agreeable to the Brazilian method of solving the race problem”—i.e. racial mixing. This kind of reliance on the South-as-colony motif and return to an unfailing defense of white supremacy seemed to some mid-century observers to be little more than unreconstructed and unconstructive southernism that should have embarrassed Southern Historical Association members. Kendrick’s presidential address, one reported, was “a masterly performance, a grand valedictory shortly before boarding a chariot for Valhalla to receive a royal welcome from John C. Calhoun and William Lowndes Yancey.” In this view, regionalism co-opted by Dixiecrats and segregationists was no regionalism at all.

White southern historians, then, played a key role in this moment of intellectual possibility that the “region” really was the best way to attack the problems of the Problem
South. While SHA historians maintained some distance from other social thinkers of the period by focusing on the maintenance of their own institutions, they had not yet written themselves out of the realm of relevance. Instead, within the context of the southern renaissance, historians asserted their ability not only to comment upon change in the present but also to foment or resist it. At the same time, they asserted themselves as objective critics and orchestrated events so as to consider all aspects of regionalist debate under their purview. Program committees liked political debates and pursued them with vigor, provided that the participants were “decidedly constructive.” “We don’t want a program that is out of balance,” one liberal member argued, “but who the ideal constructive conservative would be I do not know.”

In the context of the resurgence of southern self-consciousness in the 1930s and 1940s, the Southern Historical Association provided a third alternative to the either/or situation of art and science, literature and sociology. Although the debates were more intense between the two groups that historians have generally studied, both the Agrarians and the Regionalists made pains to come to terms with the challenge that an organization of professional historians posed. The sociologists, under the influence of Odum, sought to build on the brotherhood of science to encourage a common rational commitment to the betterment of the future. The Agrarians, especially Donald Davidson, drew on what they perceived to be the inherent conservatism of history as a discipline committed to the study of the past to encourage historians to join them in their stand for tradition in their region. With a better understanding of this political and intellectual triangle between the historians, the sociologists, and the Agrarians, it becomes clear that the debate that structured regional historiography for much of the twentieth century—whether the
region’s history was marked by continuity or change—was partially born from opposing political positions laying claim to the past.

What persisted was the historian’s unchallenged belief in the distinctive historical reality of the South. Neither the critiques of the southern liberals nor the warnings of the southern conservatives, historian Francis B. Simkins argued, eradicated this fundamental truth: “History, not geography, made the solid South.” Southern historians thus laid claim for their disciplinary project the roots of this identity.171 However, as Rupert Vance once pointed out, history’s lessons were “as varied...as the politics of the reader.”172 Nevertheless, many historians worried about the consequences of such politicizing under the aegis of the Southern Historical Association. As Benjamin B. Kendrick casually told the Journal editor as part of a reader’s report on a submitted article on prohibition, “it is not the business of an historian to pass on moral questions with too much dogmatism.”173 How much dogmatism was too much is the subject of the following chapter.


6 James P. Hendrix Jr. deserves credit for including the Southern Historical Association in his study of regional responses to the "benighted South" critics. He places the SHA in a chapter about the Chapel Hill influence on regionalism, but fails to make much argument for why the two movements were associated ("The Image of the Benighted South: Its Origins and Impact, 1919–1936" [Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State


12 Hobson, Tell About the South, 7.


14 Woodward, Thinking Back, 12 (quotation); Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White, You Have Seen Their Faces (New York, 1937); Dorothea Lange and Paul Schuster Taylor, An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion (New York, 1939); and James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (Boston, 1941). On


16 Cullen B. Gosnell to Fletcher M. Green, February 10, 1936, Folder 32, Fletcher Melvin Green Papers, Southern Historical Collection [hereafter SHC], Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. See also "An Announcement Concerning the Westminster Magazine," enclosed in Robert England to Green, May 7, 1935, Folder 24, Green Papers; "Conference on Southern Life and Culture: Sources of the South's Social and Economic Problems," April 17–18, 1939, Louisiana State University, copy of program in Box 75, Wendell Holmes Stephenson Papers [hereafter WHS], Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University; James W. Martin to Charles M. Knapp, December 19, 1935, Box 3N290, Charles W. Ramsdell Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; and Fred C. Frey to Wendell H. Stephenson, June 21, 1938, Box 58, WHS.

17 On the Southern Policy Committee, see the material in National Policy Committee folder, Box 66, WHS; and program for the Second Southern Policy Conference, Chattanooga, Tennessee, May 8–10, 1938, Box 69, WHS. On historians and the Southern Regional Committee, see Benjamin B. Kendrick to Fletcher M. Green, July 15, 1933, Folder 13, Green Papers; Benjamin B. Kendrick and Alex M. Arnett, The South Looks At Its Past (Chapel Hill, 1935), 188; Raymond D. Thomas to Frank L. Owsley, February 18, 1936, Box 5, Folder 2, Owsley Papers; and Richard H. Shryock to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 7, 1938, WHS. For more on the regional focus of southern liberal opinion in these years, see David L. Carlton and Peter A. Coclanis, "Another 'Great Migration': From Region to Race in Southern Liberalism, 1938–1945," Southern Cultures, 3 (Winter 1997), 37–62; Linda Reed, Simple Decency and Common Sense: The Southern Conference Movement, 1938–1963 (Bloomington, Ind., 1991); and Hollinger F. Barnard, ed., Outside the Magic Circle: The Autobiography of Virginia Foster Durr (Tuscaloosa, 1985).

18 W. T. Couch to Frank L. Owsley, March 14, 1935, Box 2, Folder 12, Owsley Papers (first quotation); Kendrick and Arnett, South Looks at Its Past, 190; Donald Davidson, "Expedites vs. Principles—Cross-Purposes in the South," Southern Review, 3 (Spring 1937), 655 (second quotation); and Richard Pells, Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years (New York, 1973), xii, 4, and 160. James C. Cobb has also argued that this dual concern with regional
backwardness and regional cultural identity that characterized intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s was “typical of emerging or developing nations around the world” (“World War II and the Mind of the Modern South,” Redefining Southern Culture, 40).


20 H. C. Nixon to Frank L. Owsley, October 25, 1933, Box 4, Folder 13 (quotation); John Gould Fletcher to Owsley, March 2, 1935, Box 3, Folder 4; both in Owsley Papers; and Charles Edward Smith, review of Possum Trot, by H. C. Nixon, JSH, 8 (May 1942), 287. See, generally, Sarah Newman Shouse, Hillbilly Realist: Herman Clarence Nixon of Possum Trot (University, Ala., 1986), esp. 43–94.

21 George E. Goodwin to Wendell H. Stephenson, September 30, 1939 (first quotation), and reply, October 10, 1939, Box 58, WHS; and Charles B. Clark to Fletcher M. Green, September 26, 1946, Folder 136, Green Papers (second quotation). Well-known southern liberals like Will Percy, Frank P. Graham, Lucy Randolph Mason, and Mary McLeod Bethune similarly formed a committee called the Council of Young Southerners whose motto was “Stay South, Young Man.” Malcolm Cotton Dobbs to Lawrence Lee, n.d. [February 1940], Box 59, Virginia Quarterly Review Correspondence, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library [hereafter VQRC].

22 William C. Binkley to Howard W. Odum, November 11, 1935, Box 1, Folder 34, William Campbell Binkley Papers, Vanderbilt (quotation); and Paul K. Conkin, Gone With the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University (Knoxville, Tenn., 1985), 382–83. Wendell H. Stephenson similarly proposed an annual conference to be hosted by Louisiana State University that would bring together experts from many fields to discuss that year’s most “pertinent” problems of the South (Fred C. Frey to Stephenson, June 21, 1938, Box 58, WHS). See also Paul H. Buck, “The Genesis of the Nation’s Problem in the South,” JSH, 6 (November 1940), 469, for praise of the new critical discourse that investigation of the “Problem South” had brought to regional studies.

23 Bell I. Wiley to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 26, 1935, Box 74, WHS (first quotation); William C. Binkley to Henry L. Swint, July 20, 1941, Box 3, Folder 28, Binkley Papers (second quotation); and Judson C. Ward to Fletcher M. Green, June 14, 1941, Folder 78, Green Papers. On anti-communism in the southern university, Shouse, Hillbilly Realist, 132–43; and James W. Patton to Green, April 17, 1940, Folder 64, Green Papers. Generally see Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession (Cambridge, 1988), 325–32. On opposition to collegiate liberalism, see Jonathan Daniels to Frank L. Owsley, April 4, 1936, Box 2, Folder 14, Owsley Papers; John Bennett Walters to Owsley, April 2, 1949, Box 5, Folder 19, Owsley Papers; Donald Davidson to John Gould Fletcher, June 14, 1949, Box 2, Folder 25, Donald Davidson Papers, Vanderbilt; and Francis B. Simkins to Charlotte Kohler, September 29, 1953, Box 56, VQRC. This idea that southern historians have been forced out of their ‘natural’ conservative position persists. See, generally, the special issue of Continuity (vol. 9, Fall 1984) on southern history and historians,

24 Embree quoted in Tindall, Emergence of the New South, 498. The northern philanthropic foundations' relationship to southern institutions was a vexed one. Even as colleges and universities in the South desperately needed the funding, many resented feeling obligated to accept or ape northern standards at the expense of regional distinctiveness. See, for example, William P. Few, "The Standardizing of Southern Colleges," South Atlantic Quarterly, 7 (January 1908), 1–10 (a criticism of the Carnegie Foundation for not supporting traditional southern denominational colleges); William E. Dodd to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, March 2, 1931, Box 1, Thomas Perkins Abernethy Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library (expressing his hope that the University of Virginia would procure an endowment for social science work from a source other than the Rockefeller Foundation because the university's "point of view and social attitude needs to be Southern"); and Allen Tate to Frank L. Owsley, November 29, 1939, Box 5, Folder 10, Owsley Papers (on the problems of southern institutions "imitating the Middle West").

25 John Crowe Ransom to Allen Tate, June 25, 1927, in Thomas Daniel Young and George Core, eds., Selected Letters of John Crowe Ransom (Baton Rouge, 1985), 175 (quotation); and Andrew N. Lytle to Tate, in Thomas Daniel Young and Elizabeth Sarcone, eds., The Lytle-Tate Letters: The Correspondence of Andrew Lytle and Allen Tate (Jackson, Miss., 1987), 36. As artists, many Agrarians also regretted the necessity of institutional jobs to support themselves and their writing. See Tate to Lytle, December 21, 1928, in Lytle-Tate Letters, 14; and Tate to Frank L. Owsley, November 20, 1939, Box 5, Folder 10, Owsley Papers.

26 Donald Davidson to Robert Penn Warren, February 20, 1936, Correspondence, Southern Review Collection [hereafter SRC], Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Of course, some intellectuals bemoaned the departmental and vocational turn southern universities were taking in the early twentieth century. See, for example, Edd Winfield Parks, "On Banishing Nonsense," American Review, 1 (October 1933), 560–77; Davidson to John D. Wade, March 3, 1934, Box 1, Folder 24, Davidson Papers; Wade to Frank L. Owsley, January 10, 193[8], Box 5, Folder 17, Owsley Papers; and Fletcher, "Education, Past and Present," I'll Take My Stand, 92–121.

27 "Jeremiads," April 7, 1933, Box 3N294, Ramsdell Papers.

28 Donald Davidson to John Wade, March 3, 1934, Box 1, Folder 24, Davidson Papers (first quotation); and H. C. Nixon, review of The South Looks at Its Past, by Benjamin B. Kendrick and Alex M. Arnett, Southern Review, 1 (Winter 1936), 685 (subsequent quotations).


Robert Penn Warren and Allen Tate vigorously opposed the name of the symposium. Warren called the title "the god-damnedest thing I ever heard of" and hoped it would be changed (Warren to Tate, May 19, 1930, in William Bedford Clark, ed., *Selected Letters of Robert Penn Warren: The Apprentice Years, 1924–1934* [Baton Rouge, 2000], 185). Tate and Warren formally protested the decision to retain the phrase from "Dixie" in a letter to Donald Davidson and John Crowe Ransom (September 6, 1930, in *Selected Letters of Robert Penn Warren*, 188–91). Tate and Andrew Lytle, at least, also made an effort for the title *Tracts Against Communism*. Lytle especially liked how that title would "surprise...the reader, expecting a discussion of the Reds and the activities of New York's idle who form the bulk of the supposed Communist party in this country" (Lytle to Tate, June 1930, in *Lytle-Tate Letters*, 38–39). H. C. Nixon preferred *The Promise of Southern Life* for its emphasis on the present and future, rather than past (Shouse, *Hillbilly Realist*, 57). See, generally, Conkin, *Southern Agrarians*, 70–72.

John Gould Fletcher to Frank L. Owsley, March 2, 1935, Box 3, Folder 4, Owsley Papers.

Louis D. Rubin Jr., "Introduction: Torchbook Edition (1962)," *I'll Take My Stand*, xxxiv; and Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams*, 103–4. Despite the best efforts of scholars to separate the cultural criticism of the Agrarians from the historical South, I am concerned and not convinced by arguments that posit that such cultural criticism can be removed from the integral reality of racial slavery in the Old South (see, for example, Eugene D. Genovese, *The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservatism* [Cambridge, Mass., 1994]). It is my contention that the Agrarians' prescription for the future is so intimately connected to their interpretation of the past that to advocate one without considering the full ramifications of the other is a dangerous position. The racial politics of southern history will be explored more fully in Chapter 6. In a revision of this introduction for a reprint edition, Rubin retreats from his earlier claim that the South for the Agrarians was purely metaphor ("Introduction: Library of Southern Civilization Edition [1977], "I'll Take My Stand*, xvi–xvii)."

Andrew N. Lytle to Allen Tate, January 31, 1929, and November 26, 1929, in *Lytle-Tate Letters*, 16 and 36 (first quotation); Donald Davidson, "State History," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, 2nd ser., 1 (January 1931). 139 (subsequent quotations); John Crowe Ransom to Tate, April 3 and 13, 1927, *Selected Letters of John Crowe Ransom*, 173; and Robert Penn Warren to Tate, [Fall 1929], *Selected Letters of Robert Penn Warren*, 167.

Andrew N. Lytle to Robert Penn Warren, April 1, 1936, SRC (first quotation); Allen Tate to Lytle, June 27, 1927, *Lytle-Tate Letters*, 6 (second quotation); O'Brien, *Idea of the American South*, 150–51 (on Tate and the Lee project); and Donald Davidson to Frank L. Owsley, October 29, 1946 (third quotation), and February 4, 1948 (fourth quotation), Box 2, Folder 16, Owsley Papers.


Fred Harvey Harrington, review of *Arkansas*, by John Gould Fletcher, *JSN*, 13 (November 1947), 573–74; and Rupert B. Vance, review of *Plain Folk of the Old South*, by Frank L. Owsley, *JSN*, 16 (November 1950), 545–47.


Some of them resisted the abstracting of the South’s past for such purposes. As Donald Davidson famously asked of Allen Tate’s “Ode to the Confederate Dead,” “Where, O Allen Tate, are the dead?” (Davidson to Tate, February 15, 1927, quoted in O’Brien, *Idea of the American South*, 139). O’Brien’s study is an excellent analysis of the ways different Agrarians used “the South” as a tool to pursue other literary and aesthetic objectives.

Allen Tate to Andrew N. Lytle, September 28, 1935, in *Lytle-Tate Letters*, 97; Tate to Frank L. Owsley, May 10, 1940, Box 5, Folder 10, Owsley Papers; Tate to Owsley, August 4, 1944, Box 5, Folder 11, Owsley Papers; and Paul K. Conkin, “The South in Southern Agrarianism,” in Numan V. Bartley, ed., *The Evolution of Southern Culture* (Athens, Ga., 1988), 132.

Allen Tate to Frank L. Owsley, July 2, 1928, Box 5, Folder 10, Owsley Papers (quotation). See also John Gould Fletcher to Owsley, June 9, 1933, and June 18, 1933, Box 3, Folder 4; and Donald Davidson to Owsley, August 3, 1936, February 4, 1948, and August 4, 1951, Box 2, Folder 16; in Owsley Papers.


47 Frank L. Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, February 17, 1938, SRC (first quotation); and Owsley to [Geoffrey] Stone, May 24, 1938, Box 1, Folder 2, Owsley Papers (second quotation). See also Conkin, *Southern Agrarians*, 61 (on Andrew Lytle’s family plantation Cornsilk) and 92–93 (on Allen Tate’s “resort” Benfolly); O’Brien, *Idea of the American South*, 97 and 113 (on John Wade’s peach orchards). By 1946, Owsley was trying to sell his farm. Owsley to Archibald Shepperson, February 8, 1946, Box 49, VQRC.


49 Allen Tate to Andrew N. Lytle, July 31, 1929, in *Lytle-Tate Letters*, 34 (first quotation); and Frank L. Owsley to Allen Tate, February 29, 1932, quoted in Bailey, “Plain Folk and Apology,” 101 (second quotation). See also Donald Davidson to Frank L. Owsley, July 29, 1933, Box 2, Folder 13, Owsley Papers; and Owsley to Lambert Davis, June 22, 1934, Box 36, VQRC.

50 Donald Davidson to Truman Hudson Alexander, January 1, 1930, Box 1, Folder 13, Davidson Papers; Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and Davidson to Stringfellow Barr, September 20, 1930, Box 1, Folder 15, Davidson Papers; John Gould Fletcher to Frank L. Owsley, December 1, 1933, Box 3, Folder 4, Owsley Papers; and Owsley to Fletcher, March 11, 1934, Box 1, Folder 1, Owsley Papers.


52 Malvasi, *Unregenerate South*, xiii (first quotation) and 157 (subsequent quotations); and Paul V. Murphy, “The Sacrament of Remembrance: Southern Agrarian Poet Donald Davidson and His Past,” *Southern Cultures*, 2 (Fall 1995), 84.

53 This is not to say that Owsley was not elegiac about the Old South. “Stonewall Jackson or Bedford Forrest should have seized control and become a Napoleon or a Mussolini and thereby saved the South from the 70 years of peonage which it has suffered at the hands of the God damn Yankees,” he wrote to a compatriot. Reliving the Civil War always gave him “fits of depression and despair for the South came so near victory so often!” Owsley to John Gould Fletcher, January 13, 1933, Box 1, Folder 1, Owsley Papers.

54 Frank L. Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, February 24, 1938, SRC (quotation); Owsley to Charles A. Beard, October 12, 1940, Box 1, Folder 2, Owsley Papers. For studies by Owsley’s graduate students, see Blanche Henry Clark, *The Tennessee Yeomen, 1840–1860* (Nashville, 1942); Herbert Weaver, *Mississippi Farmers, 1840–1860* (Nashville,

55 James Goodman, Stories of Scottsboro (New York, 1994).


57 Owsley, "Scottsboro, the Third Crusade," 258–59 and 274.

58 Donald Davidson to Frank L. Owsley, July 29, 1933, Box 2, Folder 16; and Matthew Page Arnold to Owsley, November 25, 1933, Box 1, Folder 12; both in Owsley Papers. Robert Penn Warren was "delighted" with the article, because he thought Owsley had gotten "to the root of the matter" (Warren to Seward Collins, [Early 1933], in Selected Letters of Robert Penn Warren, 221).

59 See, for example, Oze E. Horton to Frank L. Owsley, July 24, 1933, Box 3, Folder 12; Revilo Pendleton Oliver to Owsley, October 14, 1935, Box 4, Folder, 14; Ernst O. Hauser to Owsley, February 1, 1936, Box 3, Folder 10; all in Owsley Papers; and Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, February 17, 1938, SRC.

60 Thomas Perkins Abernethy to Frank L. Owsley, September 17, 1933, Box 1, Folder 8, Owsley Papers; Henry L. Swint to Owsley, October 16, 1933, and November 22, 1933, Box 5, Folder 7, Owsley Papers.


62 Albert E. Stone Jr., "Seward Collins and the American Review: Experiment in Pro-Fascism, 1933–37," American Quarterly, 12 (Spring 1960), 3–19 (first quotation); and Frank L. Owsley to John Gould Fletcher, March 11, 1934, Box 1, Folder 1, Owsley Papers (subsequent quotations). For Owsley’s opinion on Collins’s fascism, see Owsley to Lambert Davis, July 21, 1938, Box 49, VQRC; and Owsley to [Geoffrey] Stone, May 24, 1938, Box 1, Folder 2, Owsley Papers.

63 E. Merton Coulter to Frank L. Owsley, September 8, 1933, Box 2, Folder 12, Owsley Papers. The other panelists were Philip Davidson, J. D. Hill, and Thomas Perkins Abernethy.

64 O’Brien, Idea of the American South, 172; and Henry E. Bourne, "Urbana Meeting: American Historical Association," American Historical Review, 39 (April 1934), 434–35 (on the session) and 423n1 (on the abstracts). The report also failed to abstract J. D. Hill’s paper, "The Gulf Trade and Texas Independence." Owsley organized a panel for the 1935 AHA meeting, served on the Nominations committee in 1938 and 1939, wrote reviews for the American Historical Review throughout his career—always participating even when he opposed AHA policy. See, for example, William C. Binkley to Frank L. Owsley, March 10, 1937, Box 2, Folder 16, Binkley Papers; and Owsley to the Editor, American Historical Review, 52 (July 1947), 845–49. Owsley let people know his displeasure at perceived mistreatment. He exploded, for example, when an editorial miscommunication at the Virginia Quarterly Review led to the rejection of one of his submissions. "I am enraged at the casual return of my article," he wrote, "I do not know who is responsible
and of course I do not want to call anything or anybody names until I know where to aim my fire” (Owsley to William Jay Gold, July 18, 1938, Box 49, VQRC).

William C. Binkley to R. A. McLemore, January 15, 1934, Box 1, Folder 17, Binkley Papers (first quotation); and Donald Davidson to John Wade, January 15, 1934, quoted in O’Brian, Idea of the American South, 172 (subsequent quotations).

Frank L. Owsley to John Gould Fletcher, Fall 1933, Folder 1, Box 1, Owsley Papers (first quotation); Herbert Agar to Owsley, October 6, 1935, Box 1, Folder 8, Owsley Papers (second quotation); Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, March 25, 1937, SRC (on his “technical” and “professional” census work); Owsley to Warren, February 24, 1938, SRC (third quotation); Owsley to Thomas H. Carter, March 14, 1952, Folder 3, Box 1, Owsley Papers; and Merritt B. Found to Fletcher M. Green, February 7, 1938, Folder 47, Green Papers (fourth quotation).

“Economic Basis of Society in the Late Ante-Bellum South,” 24–45; and “Economic Structure of Rural Tennessee, 1850–1860,” JSIH, 8 (May 1942), 161–82 (both written with his wife Harriet Chappell Owsley); “The Fundamental Cause of the Civil War: Egocentric Sectionalism,” 3–18 (his presidential address); and “Pattern of Migration and Settlement on the Southern Frontier,” JSIH, 11 (May 1945), 147–76. In addition, Owsley wrote fifteen book reviews for the Journal. The historians with more published articles (five each) were Avery O. Craven, Francis B. Simkins, and J. Carlyle Sitterson. If “Notes and Documents” contributions are included in the count of author’s contributions, then Clement Eaton, Thomas P. Govan, Fletcher M. Green, and Charles S. Sydnor were published more frequently than Owsley.

Milledge L. Bonham Jr. to Frank L. Owsley, February 22, 1940, Box 1, Folder 18 (first quotation); and H. C. Nixon to Owsley, March 2, 1940, Box 4, Folder 3 (second quotation); both in Owsley Papers. The most famous SHA-backed defense of Owsley and his methods was the Journal of Southern History’s repeated refusal to publish critiques by Fabian Linden, discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Mack Swearingen to Wendell H. Stephenson, January 13, 1939, and February 10, 1939, Box 72, WHS; James W. Patton to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, April 9, 1936, Folder 119, J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton Papers, SHC (first quotation); Thomas P. Govan to Fletcher M. Green, April 20, 1936, Folder 34, Green Papers; Margaret C. McCulloch to Green, September 9, 1942, Folder 93, Green Papers; and Mary Elizabeth Massey to Green, February 12, 1942, Folder 86, Green Papers.

Stanley J. Folmsbee, review of The Tennessee, Vol. 1, by Donald Davidson, JSIH, 13 (February 1947), 111, and Vol. 2, JSIH, 14 (May 1948), 282; and Davidson to Harvey Broome, April 25, 1948, Box 2, Folder 22, Davidson Papers. James A. Barnes was kinder to Davidson’s intention in his review (Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 35 [September 1948], 322–23), admitting Davidson’s bias but justifying it as stemming “not from hatred of anyone else” but instead from “the love of something that has passed.” The second volume won the Pulitzer Prize. Conkin, Southern Agrarians, 157.
71 Henry T. Shanks to Fletcher M. Green, February 24, 1934, Folder 16; J. Carlyle Sitterson to Green, March 15, 1934, Folder 16 (quotation); and James W. Patton to Green, May 22, 1936, Folder 35; all in Green Papers.

72 Charles W. Ramsdell to Milledge L. Bonham Jr., May 29, 1934, Box 3N295, Ramsdell Papers; and E. Merton Coulter to Frank L. Owsley, November 16, 1940, Box 2, Folder 12, Owsley Papers.

73 See below, and also, James W. Patton to Fred C. Cole, January 13, 1939, Box 67, WHS; and James W. Patton, “Fifth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 6 (February 1940), 88.


75 Robert H. Woody to Fletcher M. Green, August 8, 1936, Folder 36, Green Papers; and William C. Binkley to Woody, September 30, 1936, Box 2, Folder 10, Binkley Papers. In his account of the debate, historian Thomas W. Cutrer gets the participants wrong, claiming John Crowe Ransom was the official panelist with Davidson a witness in the audience. Cutrer, Parnassus on the Mississippi: The Southern Review and the Baton Rouge Literary Community, 1935–1942 (Baton Rouge, 1984), 129.

76 Donald Davidson to Frank L. Owsley, August 3, 1936, Box 2, Folder 16, Owsley Papers (first and fourth quotations); and Davidson to Robert Penn Warren, November 12, 1936 (second quotation), and October 21, 1936 (third quotation), SRC. Davidson’s evident discomfort makes it clear that Davidson, at least, perceived the SHA historians as potentially hostile hosts of the event. His nerves make it difficult to accept C. Vann Woodward’s later contention that the Agrarians perceived the Chapel Hill delegation as “having emerged from the Trojan Horse” and that the Agrarians gained “enormous advantage” from their home turf, “verve, confidence, and spirited conviction.” The audience, as third party to the debating sides, clearly had the advantage. See Woodward, “Why the Southern Renaissance?” in The Future of the Past (New York, 1989), 214.


78 John Herbert Roper, C. Vann Woodward: Southerner (Athens, Ga., 1987), 91–92 (first quotation); Donald Davidson to Robert Penn Warren, November 29, 1936, SRC (subsequent quotations); Caroline Gordon to Warren, n.d. [November 1936], SRC; and Interview with C. Vann Woodward, March 16, 1999, Hamden, Conn., transcript in possession of the author. Davidson felt his commentator, University of Mississippi professor Percy L. Rainwater, had run him through the wringer, but from the published report, his comments seem quite tempered and reasonable (Woody, “Second Annual Meeting,” 84). Moreover, I find no reasonable basis to agree with Hugh I. Rodgers’s assessment of this interchange that the “discussion which followed” indicated that the historians “were sympathetic with [Davidson’s] conclusions.” Rodgers, “The Muses Organized,” 237.
Before delivering his paper in Nashville, Couch sent his manuscript for consideration to the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. Editor Lambert Davis rejected it, arguing that it was not “as good a job as it might be” though conceding it might be “well handled for a speech” (Davis to Couch, October 28, 1936, Box 13, VQRC). Immediately after the SHA meeting in Nashville, Couch sent his paper to Charles W. Pipkin, then the managing editor of the *Southern Review*, although it is unclear whether Couch simply wanted Pipkin to see the argument or whether he hoped to publish in the *Review*. At any rate, Pipkin read the paper without considering it for publication and returned it to Couch (Pipkin to John Crowe Ransom, December 7, 1936, SRC).

Robert Penn Warren to Allen Tate, [Fall 1929], p. 167, and Warren to Donald Davidson, November 11, 1930, p. 191, both in *Selected Letters of Robert Penn Warren*. The SHA encounter was not the first time the Agrarians and Regionalists had met in a well-publicized debate. In 1930, just before the publication of *I'll Take My Stand*, the two groups arranged a series of debates between different Agrarian representatives and *Virginia Quarterly Review* editor Stringfellow Barr. Though the positions were equally opposed—as Barr put it, “Commercial self-interest will prostitute my article and romancers will prostitute yours”—both sides approached the debates as a well-timed publicity stunt. See Barr to Donald Davidson, September 25, 1930, Box 13 (quotation); and Davidson to Lambert Davis, October 4, 1930, Box 16; both in VQRC.


Donald Davidson to Robert Penn Warren, October 21, 1936, SRC (first quotation); and Davidson, “Expedients vs. Principles,” 657–658, 660, 659, 667 and 668 (subsequent quotations). Davidson took some heat for breaking away in this article from the usual Agrarian commitment to European tradition in the antebellum South, but in the face of impending war in Europe, Davidson refused to continue to link the South’s fate to that of Europe. See Davidson to Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks, February 6, 1937, SRC. For a similar argument placed in the context of general “traditional societies” (as opposed to a “southern” society), see Allen Tate, “A Traditionist Looks at Liberalism,” *Southern Review*, 1 (Spring 1936), 731–44.

Couch, “Agrarian Romance,” 424–27, 419. Davidson privately and sarcastically called these conclusions a “wonderful chain of syllogisms” and a “jewel of logic” (Davidson to Robert Penn Warren, November 29, 1936, SRC).


Donald Davidson to Robert Penn Warren, March 27, 1938, SRC; and Allen Tate to Cleanth Brooks, April 30, 1938, in *Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate*, 43. On respect for UNC Press, see Davidson to John Gould Fletcher, June 5, 1934, Box 1, Folder 25, Davidson Papers; and Brooks to Tate, June 20, 1938, in *Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate*, 46. On the politics of UNC press, including Couch’s insistence that the press encouraged conservative as well as “leftwing” writers, see W. T. Couch, “Twenty Years of Southern Publishing,” *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 26 (Spring 1950), 171–85. Couch claimed “I found myself at times doing such things as attacking a certain group as hard as I could in
articles in public while I was working all hours to help an author who was trying to express this group’s opinions to get his book in shape for publication” (182).

86 For subsequent Agrarian presentations at SHA meetings, see Patton, “Fifth Annual Meeting,” 88 (John D. Wade); and Thomas D. Clark, “Seventh Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSJH, 8 (February 1942), 74 (Robert Penn Warren). On other types of Agrarian participation see Frank L. Owsley to Warren, October 18, 1938, SRC; Cleanth Brooks to Owsley, October 16, 1939, SRC; and Wade to Frank and Harriet Owsley, November 12, 1947, Box 5, Folder 17, Owsley Papers. Allen Tate joined the SHA for the first time in 1941 (Patton to Fred C. Cole, March 15, 1941, Box 67, WHS).

87 Lester J. Cappon to Donald Davidson, March 8, 1951, and reply, March 15, 1951, Box 2, Folder 16, Owsley Papers. Although the program chair for the 1941 annual meeting wrote in April that Davidson would be appearing on a panel that year, I have found no evidence from Davidson that he had agreed to be on this earlier panel nor did his participation occur (Thomas D. Clark to Fletcher M. Green, April 10, 1941, Folder 76, Green Papers; Clark, “Seventh Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association, 69–70).

88 Donald Davidson to Lester J. Cappon, July 26, 1951, Box 2, Folder 16, Owsley Papers; and Cappon, “Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSJH, 18 (February 1952), 69.

89 Donald Davidson to Louis D. Rubin, March 30, 1955, Box 2, Folder 46, Davidson Papers; and Silver, “The Twenty-First Annual Meeting,” 80–81. For Kefauver’s invitation, see “Historical News and Notices,” JSJH, 11 (August 1955), 426. The Kefauver speech ultimately did not take place; however, Davidson would perhaps have been more horrified that the Phi Alpha Theta dinner instead included a desegregated discussion of the recent Supreme Court decisions on segregation. On this groundbreaking session, see Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

90 Donald Davidson to Louis D. Rubin, January 3, 1955, Box 2, Folder 45, Davidson Papers (quotations). For an excellent analysis of the tension between Davidson and southern sociology, see Fred Hobson, “Odum, Davidson, and the Sociological Proteus,” Tell About the South, 180–243, esp. 228.

91 Wendell H. Stephenson to Charles W. Ramsdell, May 20, 1938 (quotation), and reply, May 25, 1938, Box 3N292, Ramsdell Papers. See also Nannie M. Tilley, review of The Tobacco Kingdom, by Joseph C. Robert, JSJH, (November 1938), 523, for the insight that “solid scholarship” could overcome accidents of birth—in this case that the author, “a native of cotton-growing Mississippi” successfully “penetrate[d] the intricacies of tobacco culture and manufacture.”


JSH, 24 (August 1958), 285–307; Grantham, "The Regional Imagination: Social Scientists and the American South," 154; and Singal, The War Within, 302. At a 1959 symposium on regionalism, William B. Hesseltine argued that in fact historical regionalism predated sociological regionalism by more than half a century and claimed that "historians paid little attention when sociologists belatedly discovered the region.” In this section, I hope to show this was decidedly not the case (Hesseltine, “Sectionalism and Regionalism in American History,” 31).

94 William B. Hesseltine, review of The Negro College Graduate, by Charles S. Johnson, JSH, 4 (November 1938), 539 (quotation); Charles S. Sydnor, review of Southern Regions of the United States, by Howard W. Odum, JSH, 3 (February 1937), 123–24; Herbert Weaver, review of Statistical Atlas of Southern Counties, by Charles S. Johnson et al., JSH, 7 (November 1941), 578–79; and T. Lynn Smith, review of All These People: The Nation’s Human Resources in the South, by Rupert B. Vance, JSH, 12 (August 1946), 441–42. In establishing editorial guidelines for the History of the South series, editor Wendell H. Stephenson recommended that the volumes on the recent past (vols. 9 and 10) use Odum’s Southern Regions as an example of how to balance the regional with the state/local. See “A History of the South, 1607–1940: Editorial Suggestions and Directions,” n.d. [September 1942], Box 61, WHS.

95 Joseph J. Spengler, “Analyzing the South,” South Atlantic Quarterly, 36 (April 1937), 232. “Careful reading of this work and careful diffusion of its contents should do much to dissipate the false conceptions spread by misinterpretations of the deservedly popular Gone With the Wind,” he concluded.

96 On rustling up historians’ support for "regionalism" as a sociological technique, see Howard W. Odum to Fletcher M. Green, May 31, 1935, Folder 24, Green Papers; Odum to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 8, 1938, Box 66, WHS; and Odum to Green, August 19, 1942, Folder 92, Green Papers. Odum also felt obliged to defend his discipline’s boundaries from disapproving historians: “And if the author just happened to be this year’s president of the national society of his own social science,” he wrote a critical historian-reviewer, “you surely wouldn’t begrudge him a few jargons” (Howard W. Odum to Stringfellow Barr, October 27, 1930, Box 36, VQRC).

97 Post-Reconstruction topics increased over the twenty-year period. In the first decade of the Journal, 9 percent of the contributions discussed this period (21 out of 219); in the second decade, almost 20 percent of the contributions discussed the post-Reconstruction period (39 out of 197).

98 Wendell H. Stephenson to Herbert A. Kellar, November 14, 1939, Box 63, WHS (quotation); Clark, “Seventh Annual Meeting,” 63–64; Southern Historical Association Committee of Ten, “Research Possibilities in Southern History,” JSH, 16 (February 1950), 52–63; and R. W. Patrick to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, December 31, 1957, Box 2, Abernethy Papers.

99 Joseph C. Robert to Wendell H. Stephenson, February 19, 1941, Box 69, WHS. Not all sociological regional studies now considered important to the period were reviewed in the Journal. Noticeably missing, for example, are reviews of Arthur Raper, Preface to Peasantry (Chapel Hill, 1936); Arthur Raper and Ira de A. Reid, Sharecroppers All
(Chapel Hill, 1941); and Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York, 1944). There is not enough evidence to ascertain why these books slipped through the cracks, although possibilities range from the mundane (the *Journal* never received a review copy or the reviewer failed to complete the assignment) to the extraordinary (the disarray of intellectual life during the 1940s that affected the efficiency of the *Journal* in general). See “Book Review Records,” Box 75, WHS. The *Journal*’s editors, however, claimed to make every effort to print reviews of all books in southern history. Fred C. Cole to Claude Elliott, November 24, 1941, Box 57, WHS.

100 Rupert B. Vance to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 19, 1938, and reply, November 22, 1938, Box 73, WHS; Charles W. Ramsdell to Vance, November 22, 1938, and reply, December 6, 1938, Box 3N303, Ramsdell Papers; and “Historical News and Notices,” *JSJ*, 5 (May 1939), 278. In the end, Vance backed out of the project, citing other responsibilities; by August 1956 the editors had offered the volume to George Brown Tindall (Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green, August 31, 1956, Series 1, Box 6, Folder 245, Green Papers; and George Brown Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913–1945* [Baton Rouge, 1967], x). Vance also served a term on the *Journal* Board of Editors (1950–1953).

101 Benjamin B. Kendrick to Charles W. Ramsdell, January 16, 1939, Box 63, WHS (first quotation); and Ramsdell to Wendell H. Stephenson, January 20, 1938, Box 3N303, Ramsdell Papers (second quotation). Kendrick nominated C. Vann Woodward for the job. Stephenson and Ramsdell, however, did not act immediately on this recommendation, fearing Woodward was too young and inexperienced to take on such a project. After weeks of dithering, the editors finally extended the invitation to Woodward, having decided that it was better to select someone who "is on the way 'in'" instead of "on the way 'out,'" thus paving the way for Woodward’s masterful *Origins of the New South*. Kendrick to Ramsdell, February 11, 1939 (quotation), and Ramsdell to Woodward, March 6, 1939; both in Box 3N303, Ramsdell Papers.


103 "Historical News and Notices" [on B. A. Botkin, *Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery*], *JSJ*, 12 (February 1946), 142–43 (quotation); and Smith, review of *Possum Trot*, 287.


105 C. Vann Woodward, "Hillbilly Realism," *Southern Review*, 4 (Spring 1939), 681 (first quotation); and Hesseltine, review of *Negro College Graduate*, 539 (second quotation).

106 Lee M. Brooks and Alvin L. Bertrand, *History of the Southern Sociological Society* (University, Ala., 1962), 13–18. This organization, founded in the shadow and example of the SHA, claimed that it “has no platform; advocates no pet reforms; defends no party;
and circulates no propaganda” even while it recognized its own tendency toward liberal reform, particularly in the arena of race relations (24). As historian Thomas L. Haskell has shown, American social science generally had its roots in a reform tradition. Haskell, The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority (Urbana, Ill., 1977), 100–4.

107 Sydnor, review of Southern Regions, 123–24. See also Lester J. Cappon, review of Southern Industry and Regional Development, by Harriet L. Herring, JSH, 7 (November 1941), 577.

108 R. W. Patrick to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, December 31, 1957 (proposed topics for the 1958 program), and reply, February 13, 1958 (opposition to those proposals), Box 2, Abernethy Papers.


110 A. B. Moore, review of Forty Acres and Steel Mules, by H. C. Nixon, JSH, 5 (November 1939), 568 (first quotation); Frank L. Owsley to Betty Chenault, February 11, 1953, Box 1, Folder 3, Owsley Papers (second quotation); and Hesseltime, “Sectionalism and Regionalism in American History,” 32 (third quotation).

111 Lyle H. Lanier, “Mr. Dollard and the Scientific Method,” Southern Review, 3 (Spring 1938), 657–72 (first quotation on p. 658, subsequent quotations on p. 665). Lanier echoed the same argument Donald Davidson had made privately regarding the “foolishly extreme” Dollard study. “Rather than depend on such science for guidance,” Davidson argued, “I should prefer vague intuition, plain common sense, or the unself-conscious judgments that grow out of local mores.” Davidson to John E. Pomfret, December 12, 1937, Box 1, Folder 37, Davidson Papers.

112 Alex M. Arnett to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 6, 1937, Box 51, WHS; and Alex M. Arnett, review of Caste and Class in a Southern Town, by John Dollard, JSH, 3 (November 1937), 522–23.

113 For the Journal’s concern to prevent feuds through careful consideration of its reviewer choices, see Fred C. Cole, “Book Reviews: An Editor’s Point of View,” JSH, 13 (May 1947), 264–74, esp. 265–66.

114 Mack Swearingen to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 10, 1939, Box 72, WHS (quotation). In this case, both parties were much more hostile in private than in their public responses published in the Journal (Moore, review of Forty Acres and Steel Mules, 568–70; and “Communications,” JSH, 6 [February 1940], 132–33). Swearingen and Moore are good examples of the extremes in political positions that the Southern Historical Association incorporated.

115 Clark, review of Deep South, 440 (first quotation); Holland Thompson, review of Shadow of the Plantation, by Charles S. Johnson, JSH, 1 (February 1935), 106 (second quotation); Rupert B. Vance, review of Economic and Social Problems and Conditions of the Southern Appalachians, JSH, 2 (May 1936), 286; Smith, review of All These People, 448; and H. C. Nixon, review of Tenants of the Almighty, by Arthur Raper, JSH, 9 (November 1943), 584 (last quotation).
116 Hobson, *Tell About the South*, 15.

117 Donald Davidson, "I'll Take My Stand': A History," *American Review*, 5 (Summer 1935), 305. Noticeably missing from this genre in the *Journal* are reviews of Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin's *The Making of a Southerner* (1947) and Lillian Smith's *Killers of the Dream* (1949). I do not mean to imply here that the *Journal* editors made a conscious statement against this type of female subjectivity; however, in light of Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's recent investigations into this kind of indigenous "female anti-racist tradition" in historical writing, it is tempting to ruminate on that possibility ("Open Secrets: Memory, Imagination, and the Refashioning of Southern Identity," *American Quarterly*, 50 [March 1998], 122). There is no evidence that the editors snubbed these works intentionally, however, and the *Journal* did review Lumpkin's earlier work *The South in Progress* (*JSH*, 7 [May 1941], 269–70). The review process was not as systematic as it is today. Publishers, for example, did not always automatically send relevant books directly to the *Journal*, forcing editors to be more proactive in soliciting books for review. Some indication of the review process can be seen in "Book Review Records," 1939–1942, Box 75, WHS, which lists books assigned, as well as books received but never assigned or reviewed.


119 Thomas B. Alexander to Frank L. Owsley, March 20, 1943, Box 1, Folder 9, Owsley Papers.

120 Donald Davidson, "Mr. Cash and the Proto-Dorian South," *Southern Review*, 7 (Summer 1941), 19–20. Davidson was almost certainly being tongue-in-cheek with his Klan and burning cross references, most likely to deflate through exaggeration Cash's sense of the savage ideal. Still SHA liberal historians with much justification to my mind considered this to be a "savage review" (Clement Eaton to Fred C. Cole, October 7, 1941, Box 57, WHS). The *Journal* review, by C. Vann Woodward, is an excellent example of how a liberal historian could be critical of Cash's interpretation without undercutting its fundamental call for reform (*JSH*, 7 [August 1941], 400–401). Woodward intensified his criticism much later: "W. J. Cash Reconsidered," *New York Review of Books*, December 4, 1969, pp. 28–34; and "The Elusive Mind of the South," *American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue* (Boston, 1971), 261–83.

121 Frank L. Owsley, "Mr. Daniels Discovers the South," *Southern Review*, 4 (Spring 1939), 665–75; and Wendell H. Stephenson to Owsley, May 24, 1939, Box 66, WHS. One presumes Stephenson was being honest here, particularly because he is speaking of a review in another journal. However, when one spends time with Stephenson's correspondence in bulk, the reader comes away with the overwhelming sense that the *Journal*’s first editor had finely honed political and conciliatory skills.

123 Virginius Dabney, review of *The South in Progress*, by Katharine Du Pre Lumpkin, *JSH*, 7 (May 1941), 269. Dabney's own work of this genre, *Below the Potomac: A Book About the New South* (New York, 1942), was not reviewed by the *Journal*.


126 Hesseltine, review of *Negro College Graduate*, 539–40; and Weaver, review of *Statistical Atlas of Southern Counties*, 578–79.


132 On manuscript cross-over, see William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, September 27, 1937, Box 2, Folder 22, Binkley Papers; Binkley to Stephenson, June 3, 1936, Box 52, WHS; Richard R. Stenberg to Stephenson, October 23, 1937, Box 71, WHS; Stephenson to Cleanth Brooks, November 28, 1940, Box 51, WHS; Edd W. Parks to Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, April 19, 1938, SRC; and Avery O. Craven to
Robert Penn Warren to Frank L. Owsley, February 11, 1935, Box 5, Folder 21, Owsley Papers; Owsley to Warren, March 25, 1937 (quotation), SRC; and Warren to Owsley, December 7, 1937, SRC.

Frank L. Owsley to John Gould Fletcher, March 11, 1935, Box 1, Folder 1, Owsley Papers; Fletcher to Owsley, March 13, 1935, Box 3, Folder 4, Owsley Papers; and Andrew Lytle, "Six Reminiscences: Andrew Lytle," in Lewis P. Simpson, ed., The Southern Review, Original Series, 1935–1942: A Commemoration (Baton Rouge, 1980), 14. In 1932, Allen Tate encouraged his compatriots to publish widely: "Till we get one of our own, we've got to use every organ we can" (Tate to Lytle, May 30, 1932, in Lytle-Tate Letters, 56).

The Southern Review was born from a partnership between Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge and Southern Methodist University in Dallas to edit the ailing Southwest Review. John McGinnis, one of the Dallas editors, was generally suspicious of the alliance with LSU and particularly wary of Robert Penn Warren's appointment to the editorial board. "We shall have to look to the foundations of the Review," he wrote. "I suspect an invasion of termites—Agrarian termites." McGinnis to Henry Nash Smith, September 6, 1934, quoted in Cutrer, Parnassus on the Mississippi, 39. See also Cutrer, p. 71.

Frank L. Owsley to Cleanth Brooks, September 10, 1935, SRC; Donald Davidson to Albert R. Erskine Jr., August 1, 1937, SRC; and Robert England to Owsley, April 19, 1935, Box 3, Folder 2, Owsley Papers. When the Virginia Quarterly Review first began publication, John Crowe Ransom also made the connection between a "southern" journal and a "conservative" viewpoint (Ransom to James Southall Wilson, November 3, 1926, Box 39, VQRC). The Virginia Quarterly Review, at first unofficially and later as a matter of editorial policy, became an organ for southern liberalism. See Lawrence Lee to Frank Porter Graham, December 3, 1938, Box 26, VQRC.


There are a few exceptions. John Gould Fletcher was from the start embittered toward the Southern Review because Robert Penn Warren had refused to back Fletcher up in a boycott of the Virginia Quarterly Review (for a recap of this controversy, see Conkin, Southern Agrarians, 119–20). His resentment only grew as the Review consistently turned down his submissions (Fletcher to Warren, April 22, 1935, November 11, 1935,
and February 17, 1938, SRC; and Fletcher to Charles W. Pipkin, January 22, 1938, SRC). Similarly, Donald Davidson grew frustrated that his creative writing students were shut out from the Review. "What am I to tell them?" he asked the Review editors. He found it troubling that northern editors, though "chilly and distant," were "more interested in the young writers whom I have to recommend than are my very old and dear friends" (Davidson to Cleanth Brooks, October 15, 1939, SRC).

140 Donald Davidson to Albert Erskine, March 10, 1938, and Katherine Anne Porter to Robert Penn Warren, April 1, 1935; both quoted in Cutrer, Parnassus on the Mississippi, 72. On the historians' pride in their own validation see William C. Binkley to Fletcher M. Green, January 21, 1935, Folder 21, Green Papers.

141 Walter Prichard to Wendell H. Stephenson, July 21, 1935, Box 68, WHS; Charles A. Beard to Charles W. Pipkin, August 7, 1938, SRC; Stephenson to Frank L. Owsley, May 24, 1939, Box 66, WHS; and Fletcher M. Green to Fred C. Cole, January 30, 1942, Box 59, WHS. Benjamin B. Kendrick, Frank L. Owsley, H. C. Nixon, Avery O. Craven, C. Vann Woodward, and Charles W. Ramsdell were all SHA leaders who published in the Southern Review.

142 Brooks, "Life and Death of an Academic Journal," 96. See also Cleanth Brooks to Frank L. Owsley, November 11, 1939, SRC, for editors' intentions to balance the "purely literary" with the historical.

143 Charles W. Ramsdell to Cleanth Brooks, February 14, 1940, SRC; Brooks to H. C. Nixon, September 4, 1935, SRC; and Robert Penn Warren to Frank L. Owsley, September 21, 1935, Box 5, Folder 21, Owsley Papers. See also Benjamin B. Kendrick to Charles W. Pipkin, November 27, 1935; Warren to Allan Nevins, January 18, 1938; Pipkin to Kendrick, January 12, 1937; and [Editor] to Herbert Agar, April 27, 1937; all in SRC.


145 Robert Penn Warren to John Gould Fletcher, April 29, 1935, Box P–Z, SRC (first quotation); and Warren to Frank L. Owsley, March 22, 1937, SRC (second quotation). See also [Editor] to Herbert Agar, April 27, 1937, SRC.

146 Frank L. Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, April 12, 1937 (first quotation), March 31, 1938, and October 18, 1938; Owsley to Cleanth Brooks, October 12, 1939 (second quotation), November 5, 1939, and January 2, 1940; all in SRC. The Virginia Quarterly Review also allowed its reviewers to experiment beyond the technical review, but it did not require the type of review essay desired by the Southern Review. See Owsley to Lambert Davis, June 30, 1934, and reply, July 3, 1934, Box 36, VQRC.

147 Frank L. Owsley to Lambert Davis, June 22, 1934, Box 36, VQRC.

Thompson did think that Winston was blind to the severity of agricultural and industrial problems in the contemporary South.

149 Frank L. Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, March 25, 1937, SRC.


151 Frank L. Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, April 12, 1937, and May 30, 1937, SRC.

152 Frank L. Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, February 17, 1938; and Owsley to Cleanth Brooks, November 5, 1939; both in SRC.

153 E. Merton Coulter, review of *Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States*, by Dwight L. Dumond, *JSR*, 6 (May 1940), 270–71; Frank L. Owsley, “Origins of the American Civil War,” *Southern Review*, 5 (Spring 1940), 609–26; and Owsley to Cleanth Brooks, January 2, 1940, SRC. Dumond was a well-respected member of the Southern Historical Association, appointed to the first Board of Editors in 1935. Opinion among leaders varied, however, as to the extent to which he represented the truth about the South. See J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to Lyon G. Tyler, January 31, 1933, Folder 103, Hamilton Papers; Philip M. Hamer, Minutes of the Organization Meeting of the Southern Historical Association, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2, 1934, Series A.1, Folder 16, Southern Historical Association Records [hereafter SHA Records], SHC; Charles W. Ramsdell to Dumond, January 21, 1935, Box 3N294, Ramsdell Papers; Wendell H. Stephenson to Coulter, January 31, 1940, Box 55, WHS; and Fred C. Cole to Howard C. Perkins, February 18, 1942, Box 67, WHS. See also Merton L. Dillon, “Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond: An Appraisal,” in Stanley I. Kutler, ed., *American Retrospectives: Historians on Historians* (Baltimore, 1995), 311–24, for an assessment on the way Dumond’s work shifted attention in Civil War scholarship back to the moral issue of slavery.


155 C. Vann Woodward, “Hillbilly Realism,” *Southern Review*, 4 (Spring 1939), 677. The *Journal* did not like this approach, implying that it emphasized the structural at the expense of the historical. See Moore, review of *Forty Acres and Steel Mules*, 568–70. This review caused much controversy in the *Journal* editorial offices. See Mack Swearengen to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 10, 1939, Box 72, WHS; A. B. Moore to Frank L. Owsley, December 16, 1939, Box 4, Folder 7, Owsley Papers; Moore to Stephenson, December 21, 1939, Box 65, WHS; and “Communications,” *JSR*, 6 (February 1940), 132–34.


Andrew N. Lytle, "R. E. Lee," *Southern Review*, 1 (Autumn 1935), 422; and Lytle to Robert Penn Warren, October 25, 1935, SRC. Compare this to the largely descriptive and complimentary review of Freeman’s work by Charles W. Ramsdell, *JSB*, 1 (May 1935), 230–36, which especially praises Lee for remaining above the fray of reconstruction politics to work toward sectional reconciliation (235). Freeman never joined the Southern Historical Association and always turned down invitations to speak before the group (Wendell H. Stephenson to John P. Dyer, April 9, 1940, Box 57, WHS; and James W. Patton to O. C. Skipper, November 27, 1943, Series A.1, Folder 52, SHA Records). Freeman also accepted but indefinitely delayed an invitation to deliver the Fleming lectures at LSU (see correspondence between Stephenson and Freeman, 1939–1940, Box 58, WHS).


Donald Davidson to Cleanth Brooks, July 3, 1939, SRC.

John Gould Fletcher to Frank L. Owsley, December 1, 1933, Box 3, Folder 4, Owsley Papers. Robert Penn Warren, who wrote “The Briar Patch” as the essay on southern blacks for *I’ll Take My Stand* similarly concluded, “Let the negro sit beneath his own vine and fig tree” (264). Davidson thought that the group had overly neglected “the Negro issue...in our previous survey of the Southern situation” (Davidson to Owsley, July 29, 1933, Box 2, Folder 16, Owsley Papers).


Robert Penn Warren to Benjamin B. Kendrick, November 27, 1941, and Kendrick to Edwin R. Embree (Rosenwald Fund), December 2, 1941, Folder 10, Miscellaneous Papers, SRC.

Benjamin B. Kendrick to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, July 15, 1933, Series 1, Box 4, Folder 106. This letter was part of a larger survey of historians at southern universities to
poll them on behalf of the Southern Regional Committee for their opinion on the balance
of teaching and research professors should maintain.

167 Benjamin B. Kendrick and Marjorie S. Mendenhall, “The South: Region or Colony?,”
Southern Review, 3 (Spring 1937), 633–646 (quotations on p. 636 and 642). Kendrick
brought Mendenhall on board to assist him with this review of Odum’s Southern Regions,
but admitted that she ended up doing most of the writing (Kendrick to Charles W. Pipkin,
February 20, 1937, SRC).

168 Benjamin B. Kendrick, “The Colonial Status of the South,” in George Brown Tindall,
ed., The Pursuit of Southern History: Presidential Addresses of the Southern Historical
Association, 1935–1963 (Baton Rouge, 1964), 90; and Kendrick, review of I Came Out
of the Eighteenth Century, by John Andrew Rice, JSH, 9 (February 1943), 137
(quotations).

169 H. C. Nixon, “Paths to the Past: The Presidential Address of the Southern Historical
Association,” JSH, 16 (February 1950), 34 (quotation). See also Tindall, “Introduction,”
Pursuit of Southern History, xiv; Robert F. Durden, “The Southern Historian Engagé,”
South Atlantic Quarterly, 64 (Autumn 1965), 509–10; and H. C. Nixon, “Southern
Regionalism Limited,” Virginia Quarterly Review, 26 (Spring 1950), 161–70. Other
SHA members thought it was “worth the price of membership” just to get the issue of the
Journal that contained Kendrick’s address (James W. Patton to Benjamin B. Kendrick,
November 11, 1941, Series A.1, Folder 36, SHA Records).

170 Holman Hamilton to Ollinger Crenshaw, February 14, 1956, Folder 38, James Welch
Patton Papers, SHC. On constructing balanced yet contentious political debates, see
James W. Patton to Fred C. Cole, January 13, 1939, Box 67, WHS; James C. Bonner to
Wendell H. Stephenson, February 15, 1950, Box 4, WHS; and O. C. Skipper to Frank L.
Owsley, November 25, 1953, Box 4, Folder 23, Owsley Papers.

171 Robert S. Cotterill, “The Old South to the New,” JSH, 15 (February 1949), 3; and
Francis B. Simkins, “The Everlasting South,” JSH, 13 (August 1947), 308 (quotation).
Simkins actually only partially quoted an idea taken from Rupert Vance: “History, not
gography, made the solid South, and to the extent that the area forgets its history and
allows the geography of the region and resource to assert itself will the South refashion
its cultural landscape along many and varied lines.” Vance’s take on the need to preserve
“the South” historically is obviously quite different from the use Simkins made of his
words in this piece. Simkins’s selective quotation preserved for his colleagues their
disciplinary and regional project. See Rupert B. Vance, “The Profile of Southern Culture”
[1935], in Regionalism and the South: Selected Papers of Rupert Vance, edited by John
Shelton Reed and Daniel Joseph Singal (Chapel Hill, 1982), 43.

172 Vance, “Rebels and Agrarians All,” 42.

173 Benjamin B. Kendrick to Wendell H. Stephenson, June 19, 1936, Box 63, WHS.
Chapter Five

Advocacy and Objectivity in the Southern Historical Association: Defining a Role for the Southern Historian in the Modern World

The Southern Historical Association (SHA) was the product of a resurgent commitment to a regional identity and plied its trade toward the explanation and betterment of regional problems, past and present. This regional priority, however potentially provincial it might seem, did not insulate its members from the maelstrom of crisis that enveloped the nation and the world between 1929 and 1945. The threats to regional and national stability from the radical left and the radical right were terrifyingly real for most white southern historians and necessarily colored the politics and purposes of their historical writing. The fate of the South seemed to teeter in the balance. As Frank L. Owsley later tried to explain to an inquiring researcher seeking to better understand his Agrarian critique, “It would be well never to lose sight of the fact that the thinking and writing were during much of the Great Depression that drove many young intellectuals into Communism and its concomitant, atheism.” The Problem South had inspired history with a purpose.

While some white southern historians watched warily and hoped for their region’s survival almost unchanged, other historians, white and black, hoped fervently that the global crisis would instigate real reform. “If the world does not completely crack up in the next few years or months,” historian H. C. Nixon said in March 1940, “I believe there is going to be distinctive progress, including intellectual progress, in the South.” “If the world does crack up,” conceding the likely possibility, “I believe that the South will suffer less cracking, partly because it has already had its share.” “Poor world!” race
relations reformer Margaret C. McCulloch similarly exclaimed, “It does seem almost like an incredible nightmare from which we are bound to wake, doesn’t it?” She strained to see the silver lining in the world’s crisis: “I hope some of us middle-aged folk who are old enough to have...vision and stability of values and young enough to go on working can help work out from amid the chaos new ways of living, new forms and organizations of social action... in the new age. Preserve the old forms we cannot if we would, but if we can help the youngsters [grasp?] their way to the new ones, it’s well worth living and very challenging to live.” Historical evaluation and interpretation were not far removed from this “mad contemporary world,” and southern historians embraced the vocabulary of modern American democracy’s new enemies—Nazis, fascists, communists—to make old debates and enemies seem more relevant and legible to their peers.\(^2\) “It would make little difference to the present and the future whether the South was right or wrong at critical, controversial points in its history,” Charles S. Sydnor argued during World War II, “but it is conceivable that an understanding of its evolution might be of help today and tomorrow.” “With problems of regionalism and nationalism pressing so heavily upon the world” of warring “variant civilizations,” how could southern history fail to be relevant?\(^3\)

The Southern Historical Association, however, also inherited conceptions of professionalism, objectivity, and the isolation of the ivory tower that caused many members to attempt to separate their craft, however imperfectly, from the world around them. *Journal* authors, many editorial board members felt, “should avoid *advocacy.*” These stringent claims came at the very time that the public-at-large demanded assistance in understanding “these rather dreadful days.” University of North Carolina historian J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton refused to comment publicly on current affairs because, as he
told one newspaper editor, "I [have] succeeded quite remarkably in insulating myself against the present, and so [have] nothing to say about it." Hamilton acknowledged "that of course, something of the present would keep creeping into my consciousness, and that, in consequence, I did reflect a good deal upon the question of why human beings behave as they do, but that I had found no adequate solution of the puzzle, and the public would not be interested." Human morality was not to Hamilton a historical problem. Reporters often had to search high and low to find southern historians willing to comment freely on current events, while magazine editors begged historians to suggest historical approaches to contemporary problems for the reading public despite the "guild's funk at prophecy." 

This chapter focuses on the debates that occurred among professional southern historians regarding the role of the historian and intellectual in the modern world, focusing on the era of World War II. The idea that the historian had an obligation to pursue a relevant purpose with his or her research raised its head initially during the first World War, when American Historical Review editor J. Franklin Jameson famously declared "the historian is also a citizen, and as such is entitled to speak his mind upon the issues of the hour." Faced with such a state of affairs, Jameson insisted that the historian must "come out from his cloistered retirement" and "use for the information of the public whatever knowledge of European history he may possess. . .energetically and boldly." As Peter Novick has shown, from these tentative steps toward reshaping professional history as the pursuit of past examples useful for the present, historians in the interwar period profoundly reconsidered the professional historian's commitment to objectivity.

Novick's otherwise brilliantly researched study, which fruitfully uses manuscript sources from both the American Historical Association and the Mississippi Valley
Historical Association, ignores the rich records of the Southern Historical Association and its leaders. In fact, by assuming that the formation of the Southern Historical Association was merely a transparent reflection of a defensive “regional consciousness” that automatically dictated interpretation, Novick fails to open the door on a site where very real debates, with very real stakes, over objectivity took place. This chapter intends to remedy this neglect. It should be clear by now that despite their devotion to a regional field, most white southern historians considered themselves to be full professionals, vested with interpretive authority by their training, and committed to their membership in the American historical profession. Unlike the remnant of Lost Causers who still cried into the wind about sectional vindication, academic historians in the South were engaged in broader currents of American historical and historiographical thought. The South’s professional historians had redefined “southern history” to distance themselves from a romanticized regional heritage and used the measure of “objectivity” as a standard for evaluation that favored themselves. Yet some now recognized that “objective” history, like “professional” history, was judged by seemingly obvious and rigid criteria that in fact turned out to be flexible and subjective. In the context of global crisis and ideological battles, the debate over whether historians were objective interpreters of the historical record or moral critics of the past and present gained special relevance. It had particular resonance for both white and black southern historians, however, as the controversy over the future of the South’s racial policies collided with the prevailing interpretation of the region’s history. The politics of race would test the Southern Historical Association’s general understanding of objectivity in history-writing more fundamentally than depression or world war.
Objectivity and Authority in the Southern Historical Association

During the early years of the Southern Historical Association, the insistence on practitioners’ total objectivity fortified the border between professional regional history and popular historical memory. The Southern Historical Association refused to be considered another organization of “American ancestor worshipers” and declined all genealogical and antiquarian submissions to the Journal of Southern History, though it certainly accepted dues from people who hoped “to learn of [their] people” through the association’s work. As the dividing line became clearer and professional historians attained more complete control over what constituted “reliable” history, SHA historians increasingly disregarded anyone with “an ancestral obsession or complex” and gave up the “attempt to correct. . .errors and misinterpretation, particularly when [the author’s] own family is concerned.” History must not be written, J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton insisted, “to the order of the family,” though relatives of famous white southerners often approached professional historians about endorsing or writing biographies of their families. Family members also often obstructed publication or refused access to sources when the “hundred thousand word eulogy of ‘papa’” they had expected didn’t materialize from the pen of the historian. For this reason, SHA members praised “the good judgment and sound patriotism” of relatives who permitted “a trained historian to use these papers exactly as his conscience might direct.” “If more of the descendents of important national figures would so interpret their duty to society,” historian John D. Hicks argued in the Journal, “we would be spared more frequently the customary spectacle of great men being made small by biographers chosen from the ranks of
broken-down journalists, incompetent friends or members of the family, and imposters who bind themselves only to glorify the sacred memory.\textsuperscript{12}

"Objectivity" was also invoked to further distance the Southern Historical Association from the tradition of sectional romanticization or vindication, whether from the northern or southern perspective. The \textit{Journal of Southern History} wanted to publish southern history, not history from the southern point of view, as editor Wendell H. Stephenson explained to an inquiring contributor:

As much of the history of the South was, until the present generation, written by Northerners, and much of it with a northern bias, we hope to be able to make a contribution by giving more attention to the field than has heretofore been given, and at the same time to present it objectively. So far as it is possible, we hope that the historical pendulum will swing in neither direction in the material we accept for publication. All we ask is that the South's history be treated fairly and objectively, that is, that problems be treated impartially, with materials drawn from all sources available.\textsuperscript{13}

"What kind of history is this to be?" historian Charles W. Ramsdell similarly queried at the keynote session of the first SHA meeting in 1935, setting the tone for future SHA investigations. "What we do \textit{not} want is a history that lays undue emphasis upon any particular phase of the story. . . . We want instead a full, comprehensive, well-balanced and articulated account that will give due weight to all discoverable factors."\textsuperscript{14} SHA reviewers expected subjects to be neither presented in "too favorable a light" nor "inspired by animosity." They warned readers when the romanticists and the patriots would approve of an interpretation, and perhaps more importantly, when they would disapprove. "There is a place for historical romance candidly written as romance," one reviewer admitted, "but there is no place for romantic history and drama presented as history." In these ways, "objectivity" was simply another element in the battle against
amateurs and unsubstantiated memory infringing upon the profession’s control over interpretation of the regional past.  

Despite the fact that its members were often individually involved in many different political movements, the Southern Historical Association was at first loathe to pledge itself officially to any moral viewpoint or to endorse specific policies, because its leaders believed such action would diminish their authority as impartial interpreters of the region’s past in the eyes of other professional historians. The Southern Historical Association instead underscored its own staunch objectivity through the end of World War II. “By objectivity the Southern Historical Association understands that facts answer for themselves,” a 1945 grant proposal written by SHA president-elect Thomas D. Clark announced:

All interpretations must be based upon ascertainable facts alone, and that opinion counts for nothing. Under no circumstances will this study be given a slant. The Association has no interest whatsoever in any special crusade, interest or issue, and would consider any study that was ‘slanted’ or biased as worthless. It will not lend its good name and reputation to endorsing a study which is not a forthright and honest factual one. 

Clark felt the need to assert the association’s commitment to objectivity was particularly necessary in this case, because his proposal asked the association to administer a grant from the Seagrams company to fund a history of the distilling industry in Kentucky. Admittedly this grant was politically tricky. The University of Kentucky, the flagship university of “a state which drinks wet and thinks dry,” had already turned down the money for fear of creating the appearance before the legislature that the university trafficked with the liquor interests. The distilleries wanted to open their archives to historians, but at the same time, they did not want the finished product to be “propaganda for the dry issues.” The historians wanted full access to the sources, but they also wanted
to be free from any managerial direction in the interpretive production of their study. The only solution for this conundrum, as Clark concluded, was that a highly regarded organization like the SHA, "who had no interest in any moral issue," take control of the grant to produce a study "purely for facts." Clark regretted that the SHA's expansion into funding historical research came from such a politicized subject but concluded "we will just have to take the money where we can get it so long as we do not prostitute the integrity of our people." The executive council approved the plans for the grant at the 1945 meeting. Its members did not doubt that the right historians could execute the project fairly, sympathetically, critically, and reputably.17

The same tentativeness toward sacrificing "professional" and "objective" standards is evident in some SHA historians' concerns about writing history for the war effort. C. Vann Woodward, for one, believed that writing accounts of naval battles for the military had sharpened his skills as a historian. Although the war distracted him from pursuing research in his chosen field, "the strenuous exercise of mind in a completely strange and highly technical field of history induced a new respect for precise and reliable information, exact timing, and the infinite complexity of events with large consequences." Others found that writing history for the government directly affronted their training as professional historians. Such a violation was inevitable when speed, simplicity, and certain perspectives were required, one graduate student told his advisor, but compared to other potential sacrifices made in war, this one seemed small indeed.18 Still, SHA historians were forced to consider what "objective accounts of history and events" designed to educate the American soldier and to serve as the historian's "patriotic contribution to the national defense effort" looked like.19 They found themselves, as
Fletcher Green put it, “on the horns of a dilemma.” War history was often “succinct and admirable,” yet Green “questioned the wisdom of writing history for propaganda, or for the purpose of indoctrination. . .[or] to inculcate certain views to the exclusion of others.” As “propaganda” earned odious connotations from the Nazi and later Stalinist regimes, many historians were ever more vigilant against such history, even when it was directed in favor of democratic ideals. 20

How, then, was “propaganda” to be distinguished from the fundamental duty of the historian to make an argument? Southern Historical Association historians were no longer satisfied by monographs whose authors failed to use their training and authority to present a well considered interpretation of events. “The time when a historian could be merely a recorder and an annotator is gone,” one reviewer announced in the Journal of Southern History. The problematic duty of the historian was to make judgments and draw conclusions without being partisan. “Even though it inevitably invites controversy,” another reviewer argued, clear interpretation was the only way to rescue the past from “an amorphous mass of meaningless information.” 21 Inference and estimation were important tools in the modern professional historian’s arsenal. Drawing the line between interpretation and advocacy was nonetheless difficult. Some tried to make the distinction by setting the means and the end apart. “Possibly the only contribution history or any other social science will ever make to the study of society is a refinement of method in handling of social data,” one observer concluded to his own satisfaction. “This may, in itself, constitute ‘an act of faith’; while the desire to hasten civilization forward to some desired end may yield—only propaganda.” 22 Others insisted that having a personal commitment or relationship to one’s subject—to attempt “native
understanding”—was the only way to “keep one free from dogmatism and, at the same
time, contribute to a truer because more sympathetic interpretation.” The troubled
compromise that SHA leaders tried to effect regarding attitude or point of view is
patently evident in Wendell H. Stephenson’s editorial directives for the History of the
South series:

Objectivity is prime requisite for the Series, but it should be
tempered with a sympathetic understanding of the fundamental
factors and problems which made the South southern and the
Southerner think and react as he did. The History should be more
than a factual account of Southern people and their institutions.
The meaning and significance of facts are fully as important as
the facts themselves.

Facts and meaning, objectivity and sympathy: none of these ideas were as transparent as
SHA historians wished, yet they set up their pursuit as the central indication of worthy
southern history.

Particularly in contrast to the other professional historical associations, the
Southern Historical Association was still cautious about making official statements that
might compromise the appearance of a non-partisan stance. Before the mid-1950s,
resolutions voted on at the annual meetings were usually expressions of thanks to the
meeting hosts or memorials in honor of retiring or deceased members. The closest the
Southern Historical Association came to making a political statement before the
segregation crisis finally forced its way into association business were resolutions
supporting the publication of the United States Territorial Papers by the Department of
State. The American Historical Association, in contrast, voted resolutions to assert
American academic freedom to confront the rise of fascism in Europe, to investigate
textbooks “prejudicial” to democracy in 1941, and to assist the Committee in Aid of
Displaced Foreign Scholars (which helped place many Jewish academic refugees in
American institutions). Privately and individually, southern historians were avidly opinionated and political, but they shied away from using their association to state directly a cohesive or guiding opinion on issues of the day. They agreed that their investment in "objectivity" that marked their association as different from romantic or popular history in the South was too important to sacrifice.

SHA leaders also reluctantly approved historical investigations beyond accepted boundaries of knowledge, fearing they might undercut the respect the association had garnered from the profession at large. The unearthing of the so-called "Dare Stones" was the first major opportunity that the Southern Historical Association had to use its newfound authority to legitimate or repudiate a controversial historical discovery for the historical profession. In November 1937 a tourist in coastal North Carolina reportedly stumbled upon a stone he found curious because of an apparent inscription on both sides. Unable to decipher the words himself, he sought help at Emory University, where professors speculated that the carving was a message from the "Lost Colony" of Roanoke. The "experts" at Emory determined that the inscription was a note to John White, the governor of the small band of colonists organized by Sir Walter Raleigh, from his daughter Eleanor White Dare (famous in American tradition for having given birth to the first Anglo child in the New World). White had left Virginia to negotiate for more supplies in England and returned only to discover the small colony mysteriously missing. The communication seemed to be a description of events that had occurred while White had been away. Over the next few years, forty-seven similar stones were collected. As the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* later pointed out, the Dare stones were "numerous enough if genuine to pave several colonial lacunae."
The Southern Historical Association first became involved with the Dare stones when Haywood J. Pearce Jr., a historian at Emory University, submitted an article on the new “evidence” to the *Journal of Southern History*. Although Pearce asserted “manifestly we can not vouch for its authenticity,” he hoped the *Journal* might see the value of publishing a preliminary “critical study” of the first stone. Stephenson agreed that the *Journal* was “the proper medium through which such an important contribution to Southern history should first find expression,” provided that Pearce was suitably “guarded in [making] statements about its genuineness.” As editor, however, Stephenson worried about the consequences that the publication of such speculation might have on the reputation of the association’s infant historical quarterly. As a result, he canvassed the editorial board for their opinion. It “appears that [Pearce] has made no exaggerated claims,” Stephenson carefully wrote, and that the investigative team was “proceeding by proper historical method to arrive eventually at the truth.” Still, he wanted some back-up advice on the risks and suitability of the article.27

Not surprisingly, the board members polled were intrigued by the possibilities of the Dare stones but were more concerned about the study’s scientific insufficiency. More importantly, the board members feared that the Southern Historical Association would be forced to defend the decision to publish such a piece to the historical profession outside the South. As Charles S. Sydnor concluded, the only way the article could fit in with the Southern Historical Association’s commitment to scientific history would be to couch its publication in terms of a historian’s-eye-view of how evidence is sifted, examined, and ultimately accepted or rejected. Even with this educational slant, Sydnor was still troubled by the death-blow the potential determination of fraud could be for the Southern
Historical Association. "What I especially fear," he confided to Stephenson, "is that a strong and overwhelming criticism might appear in something such as the *American Historical Review*, which I would consider very much to be lamented." If the Southern Historical Association could keep the debate within its own circle, it might be interesting; if on the other hand the SHA ended up "defending" something later proven counterfeit, the authority the association wanted over all things southern might quickly dissipate.  

Stephenson ultimately decided to publish the piece as a "study in historiography" but insisted on attaching what he later called a "face-saving" editorial to shape the piece as a window on the process of historical research and evaluation. Rather than validating the truth of the conclusions, the *Journal* here served "as a medium by which attention may be focused upon an interesting and significant problem, and thereby contribute to its ultimate solution." The association's fears of being laughed out of the historical profession did not materialize in official commentary on the article in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* and the *American Historical Review*.  

Even though the anticipated backlash did not come, the *Journal* editors still steered clear of a follow-up study by Pearce in November 1939. "At some later date the findings might merit inclusion in the *Journal*," new editorial board member Walter B. Posey argued. "The *Journal* may be missing a scoop, but to me the odds seem too heavy." Pearce was told the *Journal* did not want to get into the habit of publishing speculative studies.  

Dare stone mania, however, continued to grip the southeast over the following year to the extent that historians joked about finding stones in their backyards and along the Piedmont highways. Scholarly interest in the stones culminated in a symposium in late October 1940 at Brenau College in Gainesville, Georgia (an
institution founded and run by the Pearce family). In the end, only thirty-four scholars gathered to discuss the evidence, with a committee of five chaired by Harvard University professor Samuel E. Morison passing the final judgment that “the preponderance of evidence points to the authenticity” of the forty-seven stones thus far gathered.32

With this august endorsement, the matter seemed somewhat settled, and it appeared that the Journal had indeed missed a “scoop” in not following up with the Dare stone studies. In the ensuing months, however, the consensus of the historical profession on the stones fell apart when a “scorcher” of an exposé appeared in the Saturday Evening Post in April 1941. The magazine had purchased an article by Haywood Pearce that recounted the whole story of the Dare stones with the triumphant conclusion of the symposium committee, but the Post editor also sent the article to Boyden Sparkes, a frequent contributor and well-known writer, “with an invitation to check [Pearce’s] material.” “I had about made up my mind that the stones were genuine after Morison and others made their report,” SHA secretary-treasurer James W. Patton admitted, “but after reading [the Post story] I am as confused as before.”33

Sparkes’s subsequent investigation and article accomplished two things: it established the stones as fake by discovering the ring behind the hoax and the methods they used to perpetrate it, and it delivered a blistering appraisal of the ability of historians to get at the truth. The historians, after all, had declared the stones genuine; in a few weeks of “journalistic” investigative reporting, Sparkes had uncovered the real story. Where had the historians gone wrong? They were so immersed in the past that they had forgotten or were unable to investigate the present. Their attempts to check out the story had hardly been as “exhaustive” as they had thought. The original “tourist” was not a
tourist after all. He was a well-known scam artist from California who had earlier tried to sell the scheme to the Roanoke historical commission. In his article, Pearce had suggested that the people who found the series of stones were unknown to each other when in fact, they were all old friends. Pearce had said the experts could not replicate the manner of making the stones, but Sparkes found people in New York and in Georgia who agreed it was easy to do. Sparkes contacted other “experts” who had examined the stones and remained unconvinced of their authenticity, yet these opinions were not cited in Pearce’s Post article. Adding Hollywood intrigue, Pearce had contacted Cecil de Mille to pitch a movie about the Lost Colony based on the stones in hope of a Gone With the Wind—type windfall. The article revealed how much money Pearce had invested trying to authenticate this find and revealed how much Brenau College would stand to make if it were true. Pearce had been defrauded, Sparkes concluded, but he should not have been.

As for the stones, Sparkes found the real answer in an “acrostic” in the fifteenth stone: F A K E.34

With this article, the Dare stones were permanently settled as a sham, albeit a “hoax...on an incredible scale” almost beyond the imagination.35 SHA historians enjoyed the reputation of Harvard historian Samuel E. Morison being taken down a peg but regretted the personal aspersions cast on the Pearce family regarding their personal interest in the stone scandal. Although war work separated him from academia for a time, Pearce received a chilly reception when he returned to Emory afterwards to find that his colleagues “thought he was implicated in the fraudulent Dare stones.” It was not a fair assessment, one friendly observer believed, since other Emory professors had also believed them to be genuine. Pearce resigned from Emory in 1946, severed all ties with
Brenau College, and ended up at Eastern Michigan University for the remainder of his professional career.\textsuperscript{36}

In a retrospective essay on the first twenty-five years of the Southern Historical Association, Wendell H. Stephenson tried to separate the Dare stones controversy from the other "landmarks of the middle 1930's" that marked the successful professionalization of southern history.\textsuperscript{37} Perhaps Stephenson should not have been so hasty. While the events surrounding the Dare stones may not have revolutionized colonial historiography as advocates had hoped, they speak volumes on the way professionalization worked on historians in the South. Their authority in the 1930s was imperfect: ultimately it was a Harvard historian who "settled" the stones' provenance to the satisfaction—though temporary—of the profession at large. The Southern Historical Association, moreover, was hesitant to try out the extent of its authority over the regional past for fear of starting a name-calling contest with the American Historical Association. Finally, the Dare stones reopened the question of the real potential of "scientific" history. The attempt to research objectively, evaluate evidence, and revise interpretations resulted in the exile of a (most likely) honest practitioner of the craft from the South. It must have been unsettling to the Southern Historical Association that their efforts to keep their journal pristine from unsubstantiated claims could not in the end protect one of their own from accusations in the popular media. One historian Sparkes interviewed thought that Pearce had brought the whole scandal upon himself by daring to write "an article for persons other than scholars to read, before the committee had completed its work."\textsuperscript{38} If making an appeal to public interest ended up this way, who wanted to take the risk?
The issues of professionalization in the South raised by the Dare stones controversy most significantly point to the emphasis that SHA leaders placed on their national reputations and their standing with the American Historical Association (AHA). True, SHA members occasionally remarked in their personal correspondence that they felt personally out of place at the AHA. Many would have agreed with SHA secretary-treasurer James W. Patton’s assessment that “on the whole” AHA meetings were “too impersonal for Southern people.” Others were discouraged by their prospects for publication in the American Historical Review. Still, as Wendell H. Stephenson claimed, “there were three Associations I could not do without—the American, the Mississippi Valley, and the Southern.” Despite some feelings of distance, SHA members worked hard in the face of “some little difficulty” to receive “recognition from the American” as a group and as individuals. They sought positions on programs at national meetings and hated to turn down opportunities to contribute to the American Historical Review. They also served as executive officers in many of the different professional societies, always observing whether or not they found their region fairly represented in leadership positions.

As a result, SHA historians were intimately connected to wider historiographical and methodological debates that took place within the historical profession regarding the purpose and politics of professional history. In his study of these debates, historian Peter Novick notes that “it is difficult to make firmly grounded generalizations about the distribution of attitudes within the historical profession on ‘the objectivity question.’” “One has no idea how many historians thought seriously about the question,” he continues, “or had anything that could be described as ‘a position’ on it.” This warning
certainly holds true for generalizations about the historians living and teaching in the South as well. The submission of a manuscript by Louisiana State University historian Lynn M. Case to the *Journal of Southern History* in the late summer of 1942, however, forced many SHA leaders to crystallize (and record) their thinking on “objectivity” and its role in acceptable historical practice in the South. The readers’ reports from this manuscript provide a rare glimpse into how leaders of the Southern Historical Association conceived of their commitment to “objectivity,” characterized their relationship to the American Historical Association, and reconciled themselves to the possibilities and dangers that a “useful” past provided.

Case’s article stemmed from an assignment by *Journal* editor Fred C. Cole to review the published collection of essays from the 1940 American Historical Association meeting, *War as a Social Institution*. For Case, the collection opened the possibility for commentary on broader issues of historiography and method that he saw affecting the American historical craft. Case asked if he could expand the original brief review assignment into a larger review essay of “general historical criticism based upon the trends indicated” in recent AHA programs. Although Cole had not promised publication, Case returned the completed manuscript, which he provocatively called “From Ivory Tower to Curbstone,” late in the summer of 1942. Cole found the manuscript so controversial that he took the highly unusual step of soliciting readers’ reports from all eight members of the editorial board. Cole identified two central issues for them to consider: first, whether the article represented “sound” reasoning and conclusions; and second, whether the *Journal of Southern History*, as a regional journal, was the “proper place for its presentation.” The resulting correspondence serves as a snapshot of the
Southern Historical Association leadership’s collective opinion on the “objectivity” question in wartime and rumbling dissatisfaction with the path the American Historical Association had begun to travel.  

Case’s central complaint was not with Charles A. Beard’s famous contention that “written history” was “an act of faith” per se. Instead, he divided the American historical profession of the preceding decade into two camps, the Scribes and the Philosophists. The Scribes emphasized the first part of the Beardian phrase by arguing that “research and writing should go right on in spite of the fact that historians have lost their naïve belief in complete objectivity.” Even Beard was a Scribe, Case contended, because he never had the intention “to suggest that historians should stop writing history.” The Philosophists, on the other hand, had run off recklessly with the idea of “an act of faith.” In Case’s interpretation, the Philosophists thought that historians lacked a philosophy of life and so jumped full-steam into “program papers, radio round-tables, or curbstone conversations. . .[to] hastily develop and clarify their new-born or latent concepts of the universe.” The result? “Credos strode the stage, while written history languished in the wings.”

More crucially to Case, the Philosophists seemed to have taken control of the American Historical Association program committees to the detriment of historical practice in the United States. Case searched desperately for some sign of recognizable “history” in the AHA programs since 1936. The best he found were traditional seminar-style papers used as “fillers” in programs dominated by “ideas” and “cultural patterns.” The single most dreadful sign of this trend to Case was the advent of the “central theme” type of program,” first appearing in 1937 as “The Constitution of the United States, Its
Background, Its Content, Its Repercussions in Europe and Elsewhere.” “Such a theme and title,” Case argued, “reveal[ed] not only artificiality and narrowness, as well as popularization of choice,” but also made it impossible for decent, well-researched contributions to be prepared in the time allowed between the announcement of the “theme” and the start of the meeting. In the absence of research, “participants. . .would have to resort to philosophical meditation.” 45

Adding insult to this injury, the AHA program committees found new ways to marginalize those who wanted to present the results of their research to their peers. First, they speedily published these theme essays in special volumes under the AHA imprimatur, while more traditional research-based work became mired in the regular backlog of the professional journals. 46 Second, under the auspices of interdisciplinary cooperation, the AHA committees devoted even more valuable space on the annual programs to non-historians. These developments outraged Case, who simply wanted to find some “history. . .at a history meeting.” 47

Despite his worries about sub-par historical production being showcased at the nation’s premier historical organization, Case was at root disturbed by the extent to which “timeliness” (and its implication of popularization) had come to govern what constituted interesting or important topics. “There is a very definite justification for an occasional paper to draw attention to the application of historical lessons to current problems,” Case conceded, but he hated that “the historical sessions themselves [were] monopolized by papers dealing with the present.” This situation was “a perversion of the purposes of the [American Historical] Association.” Although the present must be informed by the past, “does this mean that yesterday should be forgotten in the excitement of today, or that
Clio's sober measures should be drowned out by the Wagnerian cacophonies of Mars?" Case's answer was a resounding no. The AHA should remedy its "defective leadership" by making "the historiography of the membership" the engine behind the makeup of the programs.48

The members of the Journal of Southern History editorial board approved of this weighty list of accusations directed toward the American Historical Association. W. Neil Franklin admitted his "hearty agreement with this powerful indictment of the program policy of the leading professional historical organizations in this country" and hoped that "beneficent results" would stem from its publication. Harvard historian Paul H. Buck thought Case presented a "sensible point of view" regarding the "ill-advised program building" of the AHA. Robert S. Cotterill was also "thoroughly in sympathy" with Case's views and thought the article was brilliant. "Perhaps it is the very thing that some members of the historical profession deserve," another mused. The editorial board agreed that the problem with the article was not the quality or accuracy of opinion expressed. As the Journal editor conveyed to the author, the board was in fact "unanimous in their commendation of the article."49

The problem with the article, most board members believed, was that publication of its argument in the Journal of Southern History would put the Southern Historical Association in an untenable and awkward position vis-à-vis the national organization. Though some acquiesced to its publication in the Journal, no one thought it was the ideal venue.50 Professional courtesy suggested that the SHA should avoid outspoken criticism of a "sister organization." Without direct and relevant application to or criticism of the SHA in the manuscript, Robert H. Woody warned that "no matter how correct the view
point is, it would be bad taste for the Journal to air it.” Both Woody and Fletcher Green, moreover, feared that outsiders would think the SHA had attacked the AHA and so sully and provincialize the reputation of the group. Most board members therefore preferred that Case at least try to publish first through the American Historical Review, though no one believed that editor Guy Stanton Ford would actually accept the article. Even the Mississippi Valley Historical Review would be a better arena than the Journal of Southern History, because it “insists that it is not a regional journal.” Finally, the board felt that the SHA had not sufficiently solidified its reputation to publish criticisms of this tone and magnitude. “The Journal is more limited in its scope, is younger, and is less able to bear the ‘jolt’ that will likely come from the older generation of historians,” Walter B. Posey concluded. Perhaps the fact that Case “defends the type of article which we usually publish” contributed to the board’s reluctance to use the Journal as a staging ground for an attack on the AHA. In the end, Case’s indictment of AHA policies was never published, perhaps because he soon after received a commission into the army.51

SHA Historians on the Curbstone

At the same time, the editorial board hinted at the possibility that the SHA itself needed such stern warnings from one of their own. Cotterill liked Case’s style—he wrote like “pundits in the old style of reviewing”—and wished Case would “extend his muckraking to the programs of the Southern Historical [Association]” which in his opinion had “been steadily degenerating for several years.” Green also endorsed Case’s point of view but felt obliged to confess that most of his colleagues at the University of North Carolina preferred the kind of programs that Case criticized.52 The past had
imposed itself on the present and vice versa. Whether they liked it or not, southern historians found themselves on the “curbstone” with their fellow citizens. For the predominantly white members of the SHA, the curbstone was an exciting yet dangerous place to be. To embrace the vocabulary and arguments of the present opened a world of illustrative and political possibility. It also meant reckoning more directly with alternative interpretations of the past from groups they had carefully defined out of their profession. To admit a breach in the wall of their own objectivity therefore simultaneously weakened one of their primary defenses of their particular authority over what “southern” history meant. The refusal to publish Case’s denunciation of this trend of historiography only put off a direct confrontation with that double-edged sword.

In the beginning, however, SHA historians were quick to jump on the injection of moralism in historical work—particularly when they disagreed with the moral imposed. The book reviews in the first fifteen volumes of the Journal of Southern History that take the work’s measure of “objectivity” as cause for criticism or praise are truly too numerous to count. Despite this apparent commitment, southern historians who stopped to think about it were in fact troubled by the relationship between historical and moral authority. Some tried to argue that what work they did as historians was separate from what beliefs they held as humans. “I still insist that the true historian has no right to say whether a thing is morally right or wrong—not as a historian, though he may do it as a moral or immoral being,” Frank Owsley sermonized. Others, like Charles S. Sydnor, tried out the idea that the entire field of southern history was in fact structured around a series of moral dilemmas. “The desire to prove that the South was right or wrong in its controversy with the North, and the use of southern history to support the racial
prejudices of the historian have caused much confusion in a field that is difficult enough without these distractions," he argued in a particularly prescient article. "If anyone wishes to test his own capacity for objectivity, he might try his hand at writing southern history or reviewing what others have written."55

For many observers, the claims that some southern historians made about their capacity for distance and freedom from moral judgment seemed at best ironic and at worst dishonest. As Southern Review editor Robert Penn Warren noticed, the contradiction was too obvious. When Frank L. Owsley tried to chastise an author in a review for transgressing the duties of the historian by "pass[ing] ethical judgments" on the past, Warren called his friend on his hypocrisy. That statement "would remove all valued judgments from historical matters, and it might be interpreted by some readers who would take it to say that there should not be such valued judgments as you make, for example, in your discussion of the crusades in the South in The American Review article or...by implication, in the present article." "I am sure that you treed me," Owsley admitted, "I seem to mean...that [the author] had no right to pass an ethical judgment, but that I reserve that right for myself." "I was being holy on that particular occasion," he continued, but the author "obviously does not have the proper ethical values, therefore he should not be permitted to express an opinion." Owsley then tried to make it seem like he was joking about the extent of his intolerance and allowed Warren to remove the offending sentence, but his honesty regarding the moral sources of his own assessment standards underscored the real problem Sydnor had identified in the evaluation of southern history. The claim to objectivity had become a codeword for the dominant point of view. Historians like Owsley made judgments regarding the validity of interpretation
based on an assessment of objectivity, yet interpretations that opposed the prevailing conventional wisdom were invariably castigated as not objective.\textsuperscript{56}

On the cusp of world war, however, the times seemed especially to call for a vigorous moral engagement with the past. The lessons of history had shown a “long record of appeasement failures,” one SHA historian argued. The lives and duties of soldiers in the past seemed uncommonly and closely familiar. One graduate student at work on his dissertation on local aspects of World War I in Charleston, South Carolina, admitted that “had I tried to do this study before 1940 I would have failed to have comprehended much that I have learned recently about the public mind, war spirit and national intolerance. I believe that I can do a better study with the background of current happenings to build from.”\textsuperscript{57}

The Civil War had been the world’s first “modern” war and seemed necessarily to provide a model for the United States in World War II.\textsuperscript{58} To our contemporary eye, the way the European conflict posed American “democracy” against Hitler’s racial politics seems patently obvious. Some southern historians, white and black, were ready to shout out the hypocrisy of fighting for racial equality and democracy abroad and trampling these tenets at home. Another group of white southern historians, however, found it equally obvious to appropriate the terminology of America’s opponents to describe threats to southern regional autonomy, whether historical or contemporary. The result was a new language for describing sectional tension and racial politics where each side tried to attach the moral advantage of opposing democracy’s enemies to their side. The question of which side—North or South—had been more “Nazi” during the Civil War and its aftermath was thus open for debate.
The prevailing explanation of the sectional controversy, especially around the Southern Historical Association at the time, was that it had been instigated by northern aggressors and abolitionist zealots on a nationalizing mission. "The rise of militant abolitionists, however sincere, domiciled in a section which did not have the southern problem [i.e., a large black population], deriding indeed, that there was a problem, frequently using violent language, and begetting its use by opponents, did much to cement the South in defense of her own way of life," the argument commonly went. Yankee abolitionists and business interests had pushed the South into secession and then pursued the South relentlessly, eviscerated it, and forced it back into the Union as a conquered vassal state.\textsuperscript{59} Union forces subdued fallen Confederate cities "with its secret police and other weapons of suppression" like Germany had occupied France.\textsuperscript{60} Most white southern historians thought the abolitionists had completely wrong ideas about the Old South, and many studies of the antebellum period in the \textit{Journal of Southern History} were designed to refute conduct accusations that were a century old. From this perspective, historians who had "apparently accept[ed] the abolitionist doctrine" could not possibly write objectively of the slavery controversy. The assumption—almost faith—was that the evidence, properly understood, proved the abolitionist perspective untrue. Real objectivity, these advocates argued, came from understanding the integrity and position of the South.\textsuperscript{61}

Frank Owsley was only the most explicit in assigning the adjective "fascist" to the characteristics of the historical North in this interpretation. To his mind, the abolitionists had a propaganda machine as brutally efficient as that of Joseph Goebbels, though Owsley felt certain the abolitionists had been worse. When southern historian Clement
Eaton criticized the antebellum South's censorship of abolitionist literature, Owsley was shocked at the author's intolerance of the South's intolerance:

It did not seem to occur to Mr. Eaton that the abolitionists and their political allies were threatening the existence of the South as seriously as the Nazis threaten the existence of England and that their language was so violent, obscene, and insulting that even Dr. Goebbels in all his flights has seldom equaled and never surpassed it. Under such circumstances the surprising thing is that so little was done by the South to defend its existence.

Similarly, in a review of a Union soldier's diary account of the march of Sherman through Georgia, Owsley compared the young writer's attitude to that of Mussolini who had recently described "the poetry and beauty of dropping poison gas bombs upon the noncombatants of the Ethiopian villages and towns." "Town after town, house after house, the Federals plundered, wrecked, and burned," Owsley bemoaned, "and the young diarist records that a good time was had by all." One Vanderbilt student even reported that Owsley had claimed in class that Abraham Lincoln and Adolf Hitler had been "equally cruel." Many of Owsley's peers felt that he pushed his analogies too far, though certainly some admired his audacity to write history with politics that suited him.62

To other observers, it was the historic and contemporary South that was Hitlerian—a region whose "prospects are bright for fascist and anti-democratic elements to dominate the political and social scene."63 These historians, many of whom were African American, were emphatic about rescuing the reputation of the abolitionists from those who would associate them with the Nazis. For example, Journal of Negro History editor Carter G. Woodson cut down one author who tried to paint the abolitionists as "fanatic," the pro-slavery advocates as rational, and emancipation a mistake. These accusations made for dangerous politics in the present, though "Hitler and his Aryans will
doubtless be glad to have such justification for their racialism."⁶⁴ Dissent in the South was "scrutinized and suppressed with relentless vengeance which smacked of Nazi-German restrictions upon Jews."⁶⁵ The pro-slavery advocates and not the abolitionists were the more dangerous propagandists and enemies of democracy. As historian Harvey Wish argued, George Fitzhugh's ideas belonged "within the ideological orbit of contemporary Fascism. From Fitzhugh to Mussolini the step is startlingly brief."⁶⁶ American racial ideology was no different from that of Nazi Germany. Books that exploded racial myths, whether European or American, should be "required" reading for all white southerners.⁶⁷ It made no sense to these historians "to fight for freedom and democracy in foreign lands" while maintaining "the caste system at home." In the face of such racial propaganda, Hitler, and the Ku Klux Klan, African American scholars along with their white allies reasserted their dedication to the "truth," which could only be determined through unbiased, non-racist, "objective" study of the past. This definition of objectivity could not be more different from that of the Owsley-type white southerner.⁶⁸

Perhaps the most famous example of likening the historical South to Nazi Germany comes from W. J. Cash's *Mind of the South*. A centerpiece of Cash's assessment of the culture of the South was its commitment to what he called the "savage ideal"—a complex of "ideas and loyalties of the apotheosized past fused into the tightest coherence and endowed with all the binding emotional and intellectual power of any tribal complex of the Belgian Congo." This foundational principle, which supported intolerance, conformity, anti-intellectualism, and irrational fear of change, "paralyzed Southern culture at the root." To underscore his intense criticism of this tribalistic, conformist mentality, Cash invoked comparisons to Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and
Soviet Russia.69 As his biographers point out, Cash "worried himself sick about Hitler and compared Ku Kluxers to Nazis and feared that the white South might capitulate finally to a version of fascism." Some later historians have even considered Cash's concern with the crisis of modern politics as the central focus of *Mind of the South.*

“What, I want to imagine Cash asking,” Richard H. King has written, “are the possibilities and perversions of democratic politics? . . . And, encompassing all these concerns, how did the political culture of the West produce fascism, Nazism, Stalinism, in sum, totalitarianism, and make it, not democratic politics and cultural freedom, appear the wave of the future as the 1930s accelerated toward disaster?” While in Mexico City on a Guggenheim fellowship only a few months after the release of *Mind of the South,* Cash became convinced Nazi agents were coming to get him and committed suicide.70 Although Cash’s fears were exaggerated and psychological, his choked feeling about the white South resonated with a rising generation of southern intellectuals.

It was the Communist threat, however, that seemed to most SHA historians both more imminent and more local. The Nashville Agrarians, as shown earlier, formulated a response to regional poverty and capitalist-led industrialization by advocating a southern historical tradition of small propertied farmers operating independently in a democratic landscape. Some of the group had even wanted to name their manifesto *Tracts Against Communism.*71 Most SHA historians disliked the moral fervor that the Agrarians introduced into their interpretations of the past but agreed with their suspicions of Communist propaganda posing as history. A resounding belief in their own superior “objectivity” enabled SHA historians to reject anything that smacked of the Communist taint. Criticism born of “a special thesis,” particularly “the usual left-wing, party-line
interpretation," was easily dismissed if not easily forgotten. "Objective" history could not be agenda- or thesis-driven, they argued. It was obvious to one SHA reviewer that the opinions of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels on the American Civil War were too prejudicial to be considered actual historical interpretation. Their arguments could be "useful and stimulating to the student of the Civil War who seeks the point of view of other students living at the time of the conflict," but readers were warned not to consider the book "an adequate and balanced treatment."  

Here again Southern Historical Association leaders did not want to sacrifice the reputation of their organization by accidentally publishing or reviewing "propaganda" in their journal. When James S. Allen’s _Reconstruction: Battle for Democracy_ arrived in the _Journal_ editorial offices billed as part of a series designed "to re[e]valuate the subject along Marxist-Leninist lines," Stephenson hesitated. "Some question arises in my mind as to whether this book is history or propaganda," he informed his chosen reviewer. "If the latter, it should not be reviewed in the _Journal._" While the reviewer’s perusal of the book revealed "a large grain of propaganda," he still thought the _Journal_ could review it safely.  

A manuscript submitted on Jews in the South also set off Stephenson’s alarms. He anxiously asked an editorial board member to read the article carefully for "any veiled propaganda." "On the whole it seems pretty objective to me, but in a few places, especially where [the author] alludes to present treatment of Jews, the question might be raised." In this case, the article passed muster as sufficiently "objective" and was published in the _Journal of Southern History._  

Although many of these concerns about "propaganda" and "objectivity" may have been genuine, they were also wrapped up with the rejection of certain methodological
approaches that could challenge the prevailing interpretation of what "southern" history meant to the dominant members of the Southern Historical Association. The investigation of class struggle fractured the white democratic landscape Owsley and others had worked so painstakingly to discover and threatened revolution in the troubled present. It was not well tolerated, moreover, by the Owsley cohort. The case of Roger W. Shugg is a good example. Shugg was an active and productive member of the Southern Historical Association, publishing an article on the persistence of the plantation system in postbellum Louisiana in the *Journal of Southern History* and serving at the request of Howard K. Beale on the SHA session at the 1940 American Historical Association meeting. Shugg’s book, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana*, was met with hostile anticipation by Owsley. “I located much of his statistical antebellum material for him and told him how to use it,” Owsley complained, “but his [Marxist] title gives me the impression that he has misused the material.” Although Owsley liked Shugg personally, he apologized that he could not remove the “fangs” from his review of the book for the *Journal of Southern History*. Shugg, he argued in that review, had been so preoccupied and overwhelmed by a Marxist interest in class conflict that he had misinterpreted the data. Whereas Shugg categorized class according to land type (so that owners of poor quality land were of a different class than owners of high quality land), Owsley thought all landowners owned property and were therefore more alike than different. The true “proletarian” class if there was such a thing, Owsley remarked, caused scarcely “a ripple upon the surface of an essentially property owning society.” To Owsley, his students, and his allies, Shugg often seemed like an organized agitator against the “truth” they professed. To Owsley’s opponents, Shugg was a welcomed
addition to that “generation of more realistic scholars” who were “rising up to describe the whole Southern society and to show the intense conflict which continually shook its foundation.”

Racism, anti-Marxism, and “objectivity” converged in the Southern Historical Association’s reaction to one of the most famous critiques of this early orthodoxy by Fabian Linden, then a young graduate student also interested in matters of economic and social structure in the antebellum South. When the *Journal of Southern History* published in August 1943 a short article by Harry L. Coles, one of Owsley’s graduate students, on land and slave ownership in antebellum Louisiana, Linden later submitted a detailed and critical response to the prevailing methodological, statistical, and interpretative standards used by the “Owsley school.” The flurry of correspondence that followed provides a fascinating insight into how SHA leaders responded to challenges to their historiographical status quo.

In the first version of his critique submitted to the *Journal* in March 1944, Linden contended simply that Coles had not adequately demonstrated his argument that there was a substantial and growing middle class in Louisiana in the decade prior to the Civil War. He set out an alternative statistical argument to show a large slaveless class and significant concentration of wealth. Although he approved of the intent to debunk the notion of a two-class world of planters and poor whites behind the Owsley school’s research, Linden worried that “the excessive zeal sometimes displayed in the refutation threatens to lay the groundwork for a new but no less spurious construction.” Editor William C. Binkley’s initial response was not one of obvious strident opposition to Linden’s thesis but one of concern regarding the technicalities of a “reply” of this kind.
He also believed Linden had missed the point by countering Coles's statistics derived from the manuscript census with statistics derived from the published census. He sent the manuscript to Wendell Stephenson for his opinion. The former Journal editor was supportive of Linden's attempt if not the form. It did not bother him that Linden and Coles used "about the same statistics for different purposes" because "each belongs to a different school of thought." While Stephenson admired the contributions of Coles and Owsley, he felt that Linden "has also made a contribution." He objected, however, to the fact that Linden had shaped his statistical study as an attack on the Owsley school as a response to a specific article and suggested that Linden reshape his statistics into something that resembled a "study" more than a "reply." In his rejection of the manuscript, Binkley urged Linden to "protect yourself from a possible error on the side of subjectivity" by being as careful and as honest as possible. "If you should then find that you have a constructive contribution to make on the subject," Binkley concluded, "we shall be glad to consider it."

Linden fundamentally disagreed with Binkley's editorial suggestions and defended the genre of reply that takes issue with the statistical method of an opponent. The Owsley group, Linden contended, used "appallingly unprofessional" statistical techniques that reduced their conclusions "in many cases to unfounded notions or unsubstantiated slogans." To sharpen his reply, he wanted the editor to clarify his dislike for the piece by being more specific on why and how he thought Linden's statistics and sources were faulty. Linden concluded his letter by protesting Binkley's warning about the piece's inherent "subjectivity," saying that he did not believe "criticism and objectivity are invariably mutually exclusive." Linden wanted the essay aired and
informed Binkley of his intentions to send it elsewhere. He considered Binkley’s recommendation to rework the piece to be an “outright rejection.”

Binkley refused to answer Linden’s questions, seeing no point in taking the time with such extensive argument when Linden himself had said he would send the article to another journal for consideration. He did try to insist that he had not meant to give a veiled rejection with his recommendation to revise the piece along the lines of the editorial board’s suggestions. Binkley, however, did disapprove of Linden’s interpretation and did not want to help it into print. Linden’s intention to publish the article elsewhere “does not worry me,” Binkley told Fletcher Green, “because I think that it would be easy for any of those of us who have worked with Owsley to point out its fallacies.” Binkley’s desire to protect his colleague thus hampered his own ability to consider the merits of Linden’s article objectively and independently.

Either Linden took Binkley at his word that the Journal intended to give him a fair hearing or he really wanted to make this argument on Owsley’s home turf, because the following year he sent in a much longer article, revised to some extent as recommended by the Journal editorial board and expanded to include criticism of additional Vanderbilt work. One historian who has studied the Linden critique as a lens on challenges to white southern orthodoxy has surmised that the Journal editors dismissed Linden’s submission out-of-hand without sending it out to readers for further evaluation. The Journal records prove this assumption is untrue, though the Journal referee procedure in these years certainly was not “fair” in the sense of being double-blind or anonymous. From knowing the name of the author, readers brought to their evaluations certain biases that necessarily affected the outcome of the process. At any
rate, the discussion surrounding the revised manuscript gives a much more complex picture of how white southern historians reacted to challenges to their authority and technique. Unconsidered rejection contradicted their professional obligation to make fair and measured evaluations.

Binkley, who must have been somewhat surprised to hear from Linden again after the tone and conclusion of their previous year’s correspondence, acknowledged the special situation of Linden’s most recent submission. The editor would definitely send the article out to the members of the editorial board, because “of the nature of the article, and because of my relationship to those who are under attack.” Binkley again gave notice to Owsley and company that criticism was imminent. He also sent the manuscript back out to Stephenson and Green, senior members of the association and current members of the editorial board. As Binkley saw it, there were four areas of concern in Linden’s new study. First, one of the works Linden criticized was the still unpublished dissertation of one of Owsley’s graduate students. Second, Binkley exhumed the distinction between the manuscript and the published census returns as incommensurate sources. Third, the editor was concerned that its statistical format and technical jargon were obscure and difficult for most historians to understand, and therefore prohibited their thoughtful evaluation of the conclusions. Finally, Binkley worried that too much time had passed since the original article by Coles had been published for Linden’s article to be a fair reply. “The principal difficulty with” sending the article to the rest of the board, Binkley told Green, “is the fact that both the subject and the method are so highly specialized and technical that only those who have been in direct contact with Owsley’s work are competent to pass judgment on the validity and
adequacy of Linden’s criticism.” With such a dearth of statistical experts not already connected to Owsley’s students, “the whole problem may have to be solved on the basis of ethics rather than of scholarship.” Southern Historical Association leaders did not like to admit when their morals or their politics governed their historical opinions. 87

Statistical method and technical issues had never prevented the publication of any of Owsley’s studies in the Journal of Southern History or the favorable reception of his students’ books in the reviews, so these arguments against Linden’s contribution were somewhat specious. 88 In their attempt to argue that the Journal should not promote such studies, the board members who read the submission invoked strange incarnations of their devotion to professional standards. Binkley tried to reason that for Linden “the absolute accuracy of the statistical formula becomes the end, while to [the Vanderbilt group], the statistical material serves simply as one of the means toward an entirely different end.” Statistical problems, he concluded, were not history if the scholar presumed “that human relationships can be reduced to statistical formulas.” Green conceded the new version was much improved over the original but concluded the article was still unpublishable. Instead of considering the possibility of revision, he assumed Owsley’s work was indisputably “true.” Linden’s work by comparison seemed untenable, because it made opposite claims on the facts. To his mind, only those unfamiliar with Owsley could find Linden persuasive. 89 Stephenson considered that it was neither “ethical” nor “professional” to make an extended critique of an unpublished dissertation (in this case Herbert Weaver’s Vanderbilt thesis), which was by nature incomplete and would certainly be revised upon publication. Furthermore, the putative certainty of statistical demonstration troubled the former Journal editor:
I do not believe that history can be reduced (or elevated, according to the point of view) to the status of a science. Sociologists and economists, and political scientists to some extent, have attempted it with their disciplines, but without any great measure of success, except to create a terminology which few people understand. I hope that the pages of historical journals will not be cluttered up too much with the sort of jargon employed by Linden.

The claim to science, Stephenson implied, eliminated the discretion of the historian. Linden must think that contextual “knowledge of the subject is a handicap for it prevents complete objectivity, and it might interfere with the ‘statistical processing’ of the data.” “All of this means, of course,” Stephenson concluded, “that he has left the human equation out of the picture.”

Rejecting Linden was therefore almost a foregone conclusion, yet both Green and Stephenson worried about putting the Journal in the position of becoming an obvious interpretive advocate instead of an impartial arena for airing historical ideas. Green’s solution to maintain an equal footing was to allow someone from Vanderbilt the opportunity to reply to Linden’s “attack.” At the same time, Green was tired of the subject and did not want to promote further controversy. Stephenson, having had the founding responsibility of creating a journal for well-respected, professional southern history, thought more specifically about the repercussions of the decision. Stephenson certainly wanted to reject Linden’s piece but asked whether it was right to “close the pages of the Journal to a criticism of a group of studies by Vanderbilt men.” Since Vanderbilt at this time was the official sponsor of the Journal, it might seem as if administrative or financial concerns had dictated editorial policy—an appearance the Journal had tried to avoid since its inception at Huey Long’s university. If, however, the Journal decided to publish Linden’s article, Stephenson wanted to make certain that
Linden knew “that he has but the one opportunity to speak his piece on this subject through the medium of the Journal,” and that Owsley had a chance to respond. In the interest of halting the controversy quickly, Binkley decided to seek no further opinions and rejected Linden’s manuscript again, feeling confident he had enough learned “ammunition” to shut down any further complaints. His rejection letter, moreover, overstepped the bounds of a disinterested editor. In his opinion, Linden had never appraised anything, but had only attacked. The piece was unpublishable and even unethical. “In the light of the advice received,” Binkley concluded, “it must also be stated that in our opinion the question of further consideration by us of such a contribution should be regarded as closed.”

Linden’s entry into the Journal of Southern History may have been prohibited by the SHA leaders’ unanimous opposition, but his dealings with the Southern Historical Association were not yet over. When the editor of the American Historical Review assigned the book review of Herbert Weaver’s Mississippi Farmers to Linden, Linden now had the opportunity to air publicly his statistical critique of the Owsley school in a journal that the Vanderbilt group considered damaging to its professional credibility. Always quick to castigate opponents, Owsley wanted the opportunity to defend his student. When American Historical Review editor Guy Stanton Ford promised Owsley only three pages for a response, the usual length allowed a communication in the Review, Owsley argued that the criticisms Linden had levied at Weaver were so severe that they required an article-length rejoinder. When Ford refused to make an exception, Owsley called in for reinforcements. “It seems clear that Ford does not fully understand the nature of the problem,” Binkley told Stephenson, “and I suspect that it would be difficult
for any of us here at Vanderbilt to explain the situation to him without seeming to be interested parties." Consequently, Binkley asked Stephenson to intercede on behalf of Owsley, feeling that Stephenson's position as the current editor of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* and former editor of the *Journal of Southern History* would carry weight with Ford. Ford agreed to print Owsley's response though Binkley and Owsley still hoped he would be more flexible with the page limit. In the end, Owsley's communication was barely five pages, but he was pleased how his SHA colleagues had supported himself and his students against a reviewer they believed was incompetent and incapable of a fair review.93

SHA members in positions to know about the Linden situation justified rejecting him with the assumption that he was a communist. After all, Linden had cited with approval Roger W. Shugg's work on Louisiana, already considered by many SHA leaders to be too Marxist and too anti-Owsley.94 Herbert Weaver professed surprise to hear that Linden had resubmitted his article to the *Journal*, because he had expected to see it turn up in the "Communist Daily Worker." In his *American Historical Review* response, Owsley accused Linden of writing "propaganda" befitting a class agitator rather than "historical criticism." Binkley agreed, dismissing Linden's review in a recommendation letter for Weaver as having been written by a "fellow traveler." "Frankly," Coles later admitted, "I thought [Linden] had one or two good points in his criticism of my paper. I am convinced, however, that he has a special thesis and that it is the usual left-wing, party-line interpretation, . . . camouflaged with statistical verbiage and pseudo-scientific hog wash."95 Still, if his critics satisfied themselves that Linden was a communist and therefore wrote agenda-driven history no better than propaganda and that Owsley was an
objective, knowledgeable, professional historian with all the accolades and endorsements of his colleagues, then consideration of the further repercussions of shutting revision and controversy out of their journal seemed unnecessary to SHA leaders. Unorthodoxy could not break down the walls of this "professional" opinion. The irony, of course, is that according to at least one later historian who met him personally, Fabian Linden was vehemently anti-communist.96

Nonetheless, the Linden incident illustrates one more important connection regarding "objective" history in the minds of white SHA leaders: the assumed correlation of communist "bias" with African American and Jewish historians. The fact that Linden was Jewish was not lost on his evaluators.97 Upon his article's rejection by the Journal, moreover, the various SHA participants speculated about where Linden's article would eventually appear in print, and with the exception of Herbert Weaver's expectation to see it in the Daily Worker, they automatically assumed it would find its way into an African-American journal, either the Journal of Negro History or Atlanta University's journal Phylon.98 Almost immediately after being rejected from the Journal of Southern History, however, Linden sent his manuscript to the Mississippi Valley Historical Review. Editors there sent the manuscript to referee Fletcher M. Green, who, it is safe to assume, simply repeated his objections to Linden's piece. At any rate, Linden was also rejected from the Mississippi Valley Historical Review.99 His article "Economic Democracy in the Slave South" was ultimately printed in the Journal of Negro History from essentially the same manuscript he had submitted to the SHA journal in 1945. SHA leaders were not surprised, nor did the Owsley group feel that publication in that journal—being beyond their pale—merited a reply.100
Objectivity, African American Historians, and the SHA

*Journal of Negro History* editor Carter G. Woodson’s decision to publish Fabian Linden’s critique of the Owsley school further confirmed for many white SHA historians what they already believed: that African American historians were probably incapable of the kind of professional objectivity and evaluation that they believed themselves to exemplify.¹⁰¹ Many believed African American scholars had a “jaundiced view of history” who were more interested in producing propaganda than scholarship.¹⁰² Despite his Harvard doctorate, W. E. B. Du Bois was one of the worst offenders in their eyes by writing from both a racial and a political point of view. When Du Bois wrote history, one SHA reviewer claimed, he was “so overwhelmed with the importance of his general theme that he . . . had insufficient patience to trouble himself overmuch with factual details.” Avery O. Craven, another prominent SHA historian, argued in another journal that Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction* was “only the expression of a Negro’s bitterness against the injustice of slavery and racial prejudice” based on “abolition propaganda and the biased statements of partisan politicians” instead of on “source materials.” “The result,” Craven concluded, “is not history but only a half-baked Marxian interpretation of the labor side of Reconstruction and a badly distorted picture of the Negroes’ part in Southern life.” E. Merton Coulter wrote that Du Bois did not write “straight forward history, but rather . . . polemic work interspersed with history.”¹⁰³ Woodson’s scholarship was similarly questioned for its emphasis on promoting African American self-esteem and was seen by some white historians as pretentious and self-important. More liberal-minded SHA historians, however, considered it “perhaps natural and pardonable” that Woodson set out to elevate the African American experience “at the expense of fairness
to the southern whites” due to the traditional disparagement of black life in white histories.¹⁰⁴

The list of accusations of bias against prominent African American historians goes on and on. Howard University professor Charles H. Wesley was criticized in the pages of the *Journal* for singing the praises too highly and uncritically of other African Americans, while casting aspersions on white southerners too freely.¹⁰⁵ Benjamin Brawley similarly lacked “the critical quality” and consequently produced an excessively “roseate” history of his race.¹⁰⁶ E. Franklin Frazier’s book *The Negro in the United States*, according to its *Journal* reviewer, contained insufficient amounts of “the objectivity, analysis, and clear exposition” found in other investigations of American race relations by white social scientists.¹⁰⁷

The line African American historians were expected to walk by the majority of white SHA historians was a narrow one. Several monographs by black authors received criticism not for pushing a point of view but for being dry and pedantic. “There is an apparent striving for objectivity throughout the study,” Bell I. Wiley wrote of Alrutheus A. Taylor’s *The Negro in Tennessee*, but this “overstraining for complete detachment on the author’s part gets him into his most serious difficulty.” The result was a “heavy and lifeless” narrative, impoverished by its lack of interpretation.¹⁰⁸ It is also important to stress that several black historians—John Hope Franklin and Lorenzo J. Greene to name only two—generally received complimentary reviews from white historians in the *Journal of Southern History*. As Arthur M. Schlesinger’s advertising blurb for Franklin’s *From Slavery to Freedom* illustrates, however, it was nevertheless commonplace to assume that the natural condition of an African American historian was to write with
bias. Franklin deserved special praise, Schlesinger suggested, precisely because he wrote “without a chip on his shoulder.”¹⁰⁹

The whole subject of writing African American history was confounded even more by many white SHA historians’ commitment to sources that tended to obscure the experience of the illiterate or oppressed, because those sources were supposedly more “objective.”¹¹⁰ SHA historians’ doubt about the legitimacy of oral tradition or testimony is a good example.¹¹¹ As one graduate student complained to his mentor, “all the oldtimers. . . are a bit put out when I tell them I am looking for written records and not their hearsay stories. They, like most laymen, do not appreciate the standards I am supposed to maintain.” The Southern Historical Association had little to say about the collecting of eyewitness accounts from former slaves by Works Progress Administration workers, except to note that there was a danger in accepting these interviews at face-value when they represented a faulty or biased view of the past.¹¹² In contrast, most white SHA leaders were in one way or another connected to New Deal programs of archival reorganization and preservation.¹¹³ Although some SHA historians to a certain extent also worried about the “bias” of written sources and cautioned each other to be aware of the inherent value judgments in the historical record, many still wholeheartedly believed in the documentary transparency of written sources.¹¹⁴

The result of these assumptions of bias was the development by some white southern historians of a critique of African American history for being “curative” rather than “objective.”¹¹⁵ When these two poles defined historical debate, consideration of revisionist points of view was difficult indeed. Take, for example, E. Merton Coulter’s reaction to criticism from his friend and editor Wendell H. Stephenson regarding the
manuscript of Coulter's contribution to the *A History of the South*, the intended flagship of modern regional historical interpretation. In his study of Reconstruction, Coulter paid little attention to the reverberating tide of historiographical change regarding the period. When Stephenson suggested that Coulter's professional reputation might suffer as a result of his "attitude" toward the freedpeople in the book, Coulter erupted in a defense of his own "objective" interpretation:

I am a little nonplussed as to what other attitude anyone would have me assume. . . . I took the Negro to be exactly what he was—an untrained race just liberated from slavery, who needed much better attention from the Federal government than he got. . . . My attitude is based on common sense and practical facts, on two years of research among the sources, and not on some 'revisionist' point of view assumed more through predilections than through a consideration of the cold facts. . . . I have rejected all [other points of view], and have adopted the point of view which comes from a consideration of the sources on the period. . . . But if my whole attitude is wrong, then I should like to know what attitude I should assume. Certainly it would have to come from a different set of sources from what I have used.

Coulter concluded with a statement that was unmindful at best and disingenuous at worst:

"But, of course, there is no need to discuss this farther, for nobody writes history from some preconceived attitude, that either he himself has taken up or that has been taken up by someone else."\(^{116}\)

Stephenson backpedaled his criticism and let Coulter have his way to the detriment of the series' volume on Reconstruction, which now failed to reflect the most vibrant historiographical debates in regional history. Privately, Stephenson remained worried about the book's reception and critical of Coulter's shortcomings as a historian. Coulter seemed "so mad at the radicals of the period." While the author justified his approach as the replication of the "spirit of contemporaries," Stephenson believed "perhaps a historian should do more than that."\(^{117}\) At first, though, Coulter seemed
vindicated. The standard-bearers of the white southern historical profession initially embraced his interpretation because of its vehement rejection of revisionism. His reviewer for the *Journal of Southern History*, Dunning-school dinosaur J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, applauded Coulter by spitting venom at revisionist politics. Instead of historical argument, Hamilton argued that revisionists had made "an apparent attempt, at this late date, with all available evidence to the contrary, to substitute for historic fact the outworn, disproved, and rejected falsehoods by which partisan, self-seeking, and often corrupt politicians, together with ignorant fanatics, moved by sentimental but spurious humanitarianism, supported the infamy of the carpetbag regime in the lately seceded states."\(^{118}\)

Slowly, and at first privately, dissent raised its head. "It's a crying shame the way the profession has reviewed Coulter's godawful book on Reconstruction," Louisiana State University professor T. Harry Williams exclaimed to a colleague. "Isn't someone going to have the courage to say it's based on race prejudice and distortion of the sources?"\(^ {119}\) John Hope Franklin's extensive review essay in the *Journal of Negro Education*, coupled with his rigorous effort to mail offprints to key historians across the country, began to turn the tide against the so-called "objectivity" of E. Merton Coulter and his white southern supporters.\(^ {120}\) As Stephenson had initially predicted, Coulter's attitude toward the freedpeople tarnished his reputation permanently.\(^ {121}\) As the first volume to roll off the presses, moreover, the entire series risked being tarred with this brush.\(^ {122}\)

As mid-century approached, the time was finally ripe for white members of the Southern Historical Association to embrace what African American scholars had been
saying in forums outside of the white historiographical mainstream for half a century: the vaunted “objectivity” of white southerners (indeed, of many white Americans generally) was not, in fact, so objective.123 “The so-called scientific point of view” that modern universities imparted to its trainees, Journal of Negro History editor Carter G. Woodson often contended, produced little more than “history made to order.” “The authors of a number of such works have learned that while ‘science’ may be used to advance truth it may be used also in a mentally undeveloped country like the United States to advance untruth.”124 For every negative review of an African American historian’s bias in the Journal of Southern History, there was an equally pointed criticism of white southern prejudice in the Journal of Negro History. “Young men of the South, keen of mind, having set themselves up as ‘liberals,’ after having learned the most advanced technique, now use that technique for the buttressing of ancient prejudices,” Sterling A. Brown wrote on the eve of the formation of the Southern Historical Association. What was this new southern history?:

The consistent method is of specious generalization, of damning with faint praise, of unwarranted suppression or heightening, of invective, of abuse, of undoubted partisanship under the guise of objectivity, of flagrant appeals to existing prejudices. We have too great a simplification of men and causes which were infinitely more complex. We have too much melodrama; too much childish hero worship and idol smashing.125

Where was the objectivity? “It is evident that when most white men write about Negroes they have in mind a double standard,” another Journal of Negro History reviewer wrote of one SHA historian. “What was ‘kindness to the slave’ was not ‘kindness to a white man.’ Can men of such bias write history?” It was white southern historians who wrote from selective data, injected prejudice and preconceptions of the present on the past, and wrote with thesis-driven agendas.126
Like Coulter, University of Chicago professor and native North Carolinian Avery O. Craven could not understand why this new point of view was now the more “objective” one. A *Journal of Negro History* reviewer had pointed him out as “an example of the effect provincial loyalties may have upon critical judgment and should be studied thoroughly as a document exhibit of the tenacity with which pedestrian attitudes maintain themselves in the face of professional training.” Craven was truly dumbfounded and frustrated by this appropriated critique of his “objectivity.” “The sum total of it is to just about convin[c]e me that the Civil War is not over and the only way to be ‘objective’ is just to denounce [sic] the South,” he confided to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton. “Then you have proven that you are broad-minded, objective, and scholarly.” It was enough to make him want to abandon the study of the South, because his work was “met with no appreciation and with only charges of bias.”¹²⁷ He was most perturbed that white historians in the *Journal of Southern History* of all places also criticized his work.¹²⁸

Since many African American scholars argued that white southern historians had an inherent racial bias, just as those same white historians assumed of them, they were pleased when signs of this native-born prejudice were overcome. “A new era has been reached,” Rayford W. Logan wrote of Francis B. Simkins and Robert H. Woody’s study of Reconstruction in South Carolina, “when two professors in two different Southern schools find a Southern university press willing to publish in an artistic volume that will hardly yield any profit a common-sense, objective view of the most controversial period in American history.” Unlike other studies by white southerners, these historians “do not hesitate to reveal the villainy of white men nor do they belabour unduly the rascality of
Negroes." Any "slight lapses" in objectivity only made "more apparent the detachment of the authors from any pet cause or thesis." Bell I. Wiley's racially denigrating terminology upset African American readers of his book *Southern Negroes*, but the *Journal of Negro History* reviewer was pleased that despite these symbols of his white southern background, the work was "far in advance of historical literature from the same source intended not to present the truth but to support preconceived ideas and maintain long established traditions." Wiley later professed to have been shocked that African American readers had reacted so negatively to his use of terms like "darkey" and sought to help prevent other *Journal of Southern History* authors from making the same insensitive mistakes.\(^{129}\)

For the most part, the main strategy African American historians used to critique racially biased history derived from the accepted terms of the historical profession. These white southern historians were biased, not objective, used faulty or incomplete sources, and let preconceived notions or agendas drive their research and writing. Yet some African American historians were willing to demand an entirely different conception of history's function in the modern world. "Negro history" (as opposed to the dispassionate study of the black experience) had "a purpose...built upon a faith," as Lawrence D. Reddick put it. People may object that "the validity of history as history is destroyed if it is urged forward by any purpose other than the search for truth or sustained by any faith save that invested in the methods and procedures." To Reddick, however, this idea that there was something that could be called "history as history," separable from the mind and time that produced it, was inherently faulty. "Negro history" worked, Reddick contended, because "the whole movement is an evidence of the emerging self-
consciousness of a minority group, and is, in part, its view of the present, even future, in the light of the statement of the past.” To achieve real purpose, the entire basis of history and historical practice needed to be reconstructed. Fundamental assumptions that always colored the historian’s perception of the past required total revision. Charles H. Wesley listed the new tenets of “true” history before a meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History: Africa must be considered a civilization on par with others; black people must be considered human beings with the agency to pursue their own goals of liberty and to act on their own behalf and for others; and African Americans must be seen as Americans, integral and important to the development of the nation. These assumptions did not constitute a glorification of the race, he insisted, but were only the simple attributes of humanity that telling the story of the human past required. Turning facts into the “basis for human action” was science “harness[ed]. . .in the service of humanity.” This was a new “sociology of knowledge” that took subjectivity as its central ideal. It was a fundamental challenge to the basis of the American historical profession.¹³¹

As World War II came to an end, the impasse over which group of historians best represented the “truth” of southern history became increasingly prominent as agitation over the South’s racial proscriptions heated up. With the desire for social and political change, new considerations of the strengths and limitations of “the objectivity question” came to the fore. For example, Wendell H. Stephenson, at work on a study of the South’s first historians, wanted to publish an article praising the kind of criticism historian John Spencer Bassett had brought to his investigation of the region in the early twentieth century. Would the Journal of Negro History be a suitable place, he asked his colleague
Fred Cole, or would such a move harm his reputation as an objective and impartial historian? Cole's answer revealed the complex of forces that beset the white southern historian tentatively stepping toward advocacy. "I do not think that the Journal of Negro History on the whole is too careful about the merits of the articles which it prints," because too many favored "the Negro point of view" or criticized those "who have not taken a pro-Negro slant." Such associations might undermine Stephenson's reputation as a careful, unbiased scholar. As a result, Cole thought Stephenson should seek out "a magazine noted for its complete lack of prejudice." Cole also worried that the Journal of Negro History was too marginalized from the historical profession. The article "will do more good" in a reputable, mainstream journal "pointing out the necessities for liberalism in the South, and for other purposes of historians." The unconvinced would only have their minds changed by forums that they respected. "I sincerely wish that I did not have this feeling concerning the Journal of Negro History," Cole concluded somewhat patronizingly but also with genuine concern for the fate of the South, "for I think that there is a great need for more and more individuals to write about Negroes and for them."132

Similarly, Margaret McCulloch, a professor at a black college in Tennessee, had inquired of her graduate school mentor about submitting to the Journal of Southern History an article based on some interviews of former slaves her students had collected. Her advisor's response that it would be more appropriate for the Journal of Negro History irked her, and she responded at length:

My preference for [the Journal of Southern History] is not a matter of publicity but one of scholarship. The history of slavery and reconstruction is being written by Negroes for Negroes from Negro sources and Negro view-point[s]; it is being written by whites for whites from white sources and white viewpoints. We
are consequently developing two group histories. . of group sentiment "Southern" or "Negro" akin to patriotism and destructive of true scholarship.\textsuperscript{135}

"True understanding," McCulloch believed, could only arise from "mutual insight." As a result, she wanted "this one small piece of study to find its place rather in a 'white' magazine than in a 'Negro.'" McCulloch envisioned a truly inclusive South that required inclusive story telling. In the absence of that, she would settle at least temporarily for reciprocal and respectful communication. As Benjamin B. Kendrick similarly argued, blacks and whites had more in common as southerners than differences. "We have both written our history to cure our disquietude and to comfort our wounded pride," he argued. The tragedy was that "in doing so we have wounded more deeply the pride of each other."\textsuperscript{134}

For both black and white southern historians, then, the "objectivity question" was a debate over the right to invoke "truth" and wield its immense cultural power. Interpret the past one way and Hitler seemed justified. Interpret it in another and the American democratic experiment seemed like it just might work. It was disingenuous for "the old conservative historians" to claim they lived isolated lives, Thomas D. Clark ultimately decided. "Society has too big a stake in the historian—and should have. They must be very demanding of him, too."\textsuperscript{135} When the civil rights movement entered white southern institutions, SHA historians realized that the only thing left to separate themselves from the outside world was the curbstone.
1 Frank L. Owsley to Thomas H. Carter, March 14, 1952, Box 1, Folder 3, Frank Lawrence Owsley Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University (quotation, emphasis in original). For another assessment of the context of the 1930s South on a historian with the opposite political point of view, see C. Vann Woodward, “Time and Place,” Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History (Baton Rouge, 1986), 9–27. For other examples of the perceived imminence of communism or fascism: Benjamin B. Kendrick and Benjamin B. Kendrick Jr., “Is Democracy Doomed?,” Southern Review, 6 (Autumn 1940), 336–42; W. T. Couch to Owsley, March 14, 1935, Box 2, Folder 12, Owsley Papers; and Charles H. Wesley, “The Concept of Negro Inferiority in American Thought,” Journal of Negro History [hereafter JNH], 25 (October 1940), 558.

2 H. C. Nixon to Frank L. Owsley, March 2, 1940, Box 4, Folder 3, Owsley Papers (first quotation); Margaret C. McCulloch to Fletcher M. Green, July 4, 1940, Folder 67, Fletcher Melvin Green Papers, Southern Historical Collection [hereafter SHC], Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (second quotation); and W. M. Brewer, review of Color and Human Nature, by W. Lloyd Warner, Buford H. Junker, and Walter A. Adams, JNH, 27 (January 1942), 104 (third quotation).

3 Charles S. Sydnor, “The Southern Experiment in Writing Social History,” Journal of Southern History [hereafter JSH], 11 (November 1945), 468. Sydnor requested one hundred reprints of this article to show his “cynical friends that southern history may have other objectives than to praise the South and damn the North.” Sydnor to William C. Binkley, November 6, 1945, Series B.2, Folder 93, Southern Historical Association Records [hereafter SHA Records], SHC. See also Frank W. Klingberg, “The Case of the Minors: A Unionist Family within the Confederacy,” JSH, 13 (February 1947), 45, for the argument that the Civil War was also an excellent case study for the post–World War II “interest in the fate of underground and resistance movements in the defeated countries.”

4 Robert S. Cotterill to Fred C. Cole, November 16, 1941, Box 53, Wendell Holmes Stephenson Papers [hereafter WHS], Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University (first quotation); Benjamin B. Kendrick to Wendell H. Stephenson, June 19, 1936, Box 63, WHS; Charles W. Ramsdell to Kendrick, February 7, 1939, Box 3N303, Charles William Ramsdell Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin; and J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to Claude G. Bowers, April 18, 1946, Series 1, Box 6, Folder 170, J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton Papers, SHC (subsequent quotations).

5 Ernest Cutts, “Press-Shy Historians Mum on Doings of the Present: Reporter Flits from One to Another Before Georgian is Prevailed on to Talk of Stirring Times Today,” Charleston News and Courier, November 8, 1940; Joe Mulieri, “Historians Express Views on War and The Election,” Charleston Evening Post, November 8, 1940; and Harnett T. Kane, “Varied Experiences of Three Historians Cover ‘Lesson’ For New Deal, Arctic Digging, Research.” New Orleans Item-Tribune, November 6, 1938: clippings in Series A.1, Folder 736, SHA Records. See also Stringfellow Barr to James Truslow

7 Novick, That Noble Dream, 182. See also the list of manuscript collections cited, 630–32.

8 J. O. Hertzler, "American Ancestor Worshipers," South Atlantic Quarterly, 36 (April 1937), 189–200 (first quotation); Lester J. Cappon, "Two Decades of Historical Activity in Virginia," JSH, 6 (May 1940), 189–200; Wendell H. Stephenson to A. H. Starke, February 21, 1936, Box 69, WHS; Tilghman E. Dixon to Edwin A. Davis, October 27, 1936, Subscriptions folder, Box 72, WHS; and Mabelle Smith Garrod to Fletcher M. Green, February 1, 1940, Folder 62, Green Papers (second quotation).

9 J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to Marion Butler, April 4, 1935, Series 1, Folder 114, Hamilton Papers (first quotation); and Hamilton to Dolly Lamar, July 11, 1938, Series 1, Folder 132, Hamilton Papers (second quotation). For other criticisms of the family biography, see James W. Silver, review of General Philip Kearny, Battle Soldier of Five Wars, by Thomas Kearny, JSH, 3 (November 1937), 570–72; Harrison A. Trexler, review of George W. Truett, by Powhatan W. James, JSH, 5 (August 1939), 410; Mack Swearingen, review of A Conscientious Turncoat: The Story of John M. Palmer, by George Thomas Palmer, JSH, 8 (August 1942), 430–31; and Daniel M. Robison, review of John A. Moon: Father of the Parcel Post, by Anna Mary Moon and Joe Phillips, JSH, 8 (August 1942), 433.

10 J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton to Dolly Lamar, July 11, 1938, Series 1, Folder 132, Hamilton Papers. For examples of family members petitioning for, complimenting, or criticizing professional accounts of their relatives, see F. L. Longstreet to Fletcher M. Green, November 7, 1934, Folder 20, Green Papers; Hamilton to Annie Wheeler, November 11, 1938, Series 1, Folder 132, Hamilton Papers; Thomas Kearny to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, December 13, 1938, Box 1, Thomas Perkins Abernethy Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library; and Percy Maxim Lee to Green, December 21, 1940, Folder 72, Green Papers.

11 John P. Dyer to Fred C. Cole, April 18, 1940, Box 57, WHS (quotation); and Rudolph L. Biesele to William C. Binkley, August 12, 1944, Series B.2, Folder 98, SHA Records.

12 See, for example, the lengths C. Vann Woodward had to go in order to access the Thomas Watson papers at the Southern Historical Collection: Georgia D. Watson to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, October 1, 1933, and Walter Brown to Hamilton, October 4, 1933,
Series 1, Folder 106, Hamilton Papers; John Herbert Roper, C. Vann Woodward: 
Southerner (Athens, Ga., 1987), 78–79; and John D. Hicks, review of Tom Watson, 
Agrarian Rebel, by C. Vann Woodward, JSH, 4 (November 1938), 538 (quotations).

13 Wendell H. Stephenson to Will S. Tyler, March 2, 1939, Box 73, WHS.

14 Charles W. Ramsdell, “Some Problems Involved in Writing the History of the 
Confederacy,” JSH, 2 (May 1936), 134 (quotation, emphasis in original); and William C. 
Binkley, “The First Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 2 
(February 1936), 69–71. Ramsdell’s paper, Binkley thought, “was exactly what we 
needed to start off the first program of the association” (Binkley to Ramsdell, November 
13, 1935, Box 1, Folder 34, William Campbell Binkley Papers, Special Collections and 
University Archives, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University).

15 Ruth A. Ketringer, review of William Mahone of Virginia, by Nelson Morehouse Blake, 
JSH, 2 (February 1936), 120 (first quotation); and R. S. Cotterill, review of Transylvania 
Colony, by William Stewart Lester, JSH, 2 (February 1936), 109 (second quotation); 
Francis B. Simkins, review of Hampton and His Red Shirts, by Alfred B. Williams, JSH, 
2 (February 1936), 282; Leslie M. Norton, review of Old New Orleans, by Stanley Clisby 
Arthur, JSH (February 1936), 412; and William H. Ellison, review of The Man Who 
Killed Lincoln, by Philip Van Doren Stern, JSH, 5 (August 1939), 402 (third quotation).

16 Thomas D. Clark, “A Proposed Research Project to Produce a Thoroughly Objective 
History of the Distilling Industry in Kentucky,” enclosed in Clark to James W. Patton, 
December 1, 1945, Series A.1, Folder 63, SHA Records.

17 Thomas D. Clark to Fletcher M. Green, July 5, 1945, Folder 126, Green Papers; Clark 
to Green, November 9, 1945 (first quotation), and December 1, 1945 (subsequent 
quotations), both in Series A.1, Folder 63, SHA Records; and Minutes of Southern 
Historical Association Executive Council Meeting, November 10, 1945, Series A.1, 
Folder 67, SHA Records. It appears, however, that the grants were never awarded, though 
a committee was set up. See Bennett H. Wall, “The Southern Historical Association, 

18 Woodward, Thinking Back, 46 (first quotation); Roper, C. Vann Woodward, 130–32; 
and Herbert Weaver to Frank L. Owsley, June 5, 1944, Box 6, Folder 5, Owsley Papers 
(second quotation).

19 Roswell P. Rosengren, Orientation Course, Bureau of Public Relations, War 
Department, to Fred C. Cole, January 27, 1942, Box 73, Wa folder, WHS.

20 Fletcher M. Green, review of Main Currents in American History, by Ralph H. 
Gabriel, JSH, 9 (May 1943), 258 (quotations). Curtis Nettels, in his review of 
Propaganda and the American Revolution, by Philip Davidson (JSH, 7 [November 
1941], 555–57), pointed out that forevermore propaganda had earned a sinister meaning 
and therefore must not be used to describe literature written with integrity and conviction 
and intended to advocate certain principles. Davidson strongly objected to this 
delimitation of the word (Davidson to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 12, 1941, Box 
55, WHS). See also a pamphlet of a roundtable discussion held at the University of 
Chicago by Archibald McLeish, Harold Lasswell, and Richard McKeon, called
"Propaganda Good and Bad," sent by Curtis Nettels to Fred C. Cole, April 15, 1942, in support of his criticism of Davidson (Box 66, WHS). Henry Steele Commager, as his biographer Neil Jumonville has recently pointed out, had no problem admitting that he wrote propaganda for the war effort, but Jumonville wishes that Commager had been clearer about making a distinction between his authority as a historian and his rights and duties as a citizen (Jumonville, Henry Steele Commager, 95–97).


25 See, for example, Fletcher M. Green to Cordell Hull, December 11, 1937, Series A.1, Folder 14, SHA Records; James W. Patton, "Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer," JSH, 8 (February 1942), 77; and Southern Historical Association Resolutions Committee [T. Harry Williams, Kathryn Abbey Hanna, and Fletcher M. Green], "Resolutions of the 16th Annual Meeting," November 10, 1950, Series A.1, Folder 78, SHA Records. This last group made certain to thank Georgia Tech officially for providing the members complimentary football tickets. On AHA resolutions, see Dexter Perkins to Charles W. Ramsdell, January 9, 1934, and reply, January 13, 1934, Box 3N295, Ramsdell Papers (on academic freedom); "Historical News: Annual Business Meeting," American Historical Review, 46 (April 1941), 737 (on "prejudicial" textbooks); and "Historical News," American Historical Review, 47 (April 1942), 702 (on refugees). On other political moves attempted with AHA or MVHA sanction, see Novick, That Noble Dream, 247–48.

Papers; and “Historical News and Comments,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 34 (December 1947), 529 (quotation).

27 Haywood J. Pearce Jr. to Wendell H. Stephenson, February 3, 1938, and reply, February 5, 1938 (first quotation), Box 68, WHS; and Stephenson to Charles W. Ramsdell, March 5, 1938, Box 3N292, Ramsdell Papers (second quotation).

28 Richard H. Shryock to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 7, 1938, Box 70, WHS; Charles W. Ramsdell to Stephenson, March 10, 1938, Box 3N292, Ramsdell Papers; and Charles S. Syndor to Stephenson, March 11, 1938, Box 72, WHS (quotations).

29 Wendell H. Stephenson to Haywood J. Pearce Jr., March 21, 1938, Box 68, WHS (first quotation); Stephenson, “Twenty Five Years of Southern Historical Writing,” in *Southern History in the Making: Pioneer Historians of the South* (Baton Rouge, 1964), 218n (second quotation); and “Historical News and Notices,” *JSH*, 4 (May 1938), 263 (third quotation).

30 The publication of the Journal’s Dare stones article was noted without comment in the *American Historical Review*, 44 (October 1938), 214, and in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 25 (June 1938), 154.

31 Walter B. Posey to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 5, 1939, Box 68, WHS (quotation); and Stephenson to Haywood J. Pearce Jr., November 9, 1939, Box 68, WHS.

32 William M. Geer to Fletcher M. Green, October 17, 1940, and Ben Gibson to Green, October 21, 1940, both in Folder 70, Green Papers; and “Historical News and Notices,” *JSH*, 7 (February 1941), 128 (quotation). For a fuller report of the stones and conference, see H. J. Pearce Sr., “The Dare Stones,” printed as the *Brenau Bulletin*, 31 (November 15, 1940), [1–15]. The full committee consisted of Morison, Thomas H. English (professor of English at Emory), A. L. Pickens (dean of Paducah Junior College), C. C. Harrold (president of the Georgia Society for Archaeology), and C. C. Crittenden (secretary of the North Carolina Historical Commission). Only Crittenden could be considered an active member of the SHA.

33 Boyden Sparkes, “Writ on Rocke: Has America’s First Murder Mystery Been Solved?” *Saturday Evening Post*, April 26, 1941, p. 120 (first quotation); and James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, May 2, 1941, Folder 77, Green Papers (second quotation).

34 Sparkes, “Writ on Rocke,” 9–11, 118, 120–22, 124–26, and 128. Sparkes discussed how the background checks were not “exhaustive” on p. 125. Sparkes claimed he could see “Emory,” “Atlanta,” “Pearce,” and “fake,” hidden in the carvings of stone 15: “Is it an acrostic? I don’t know. But I am sure Eleanor Dare had nothing to do with it” (128).

35 Ross McLean to Fletcher M. Green, May 4, 1941, Folder 77, Green Papers. Attempts to rehabilitate the stones as genuine do persist but without much support. See Robert W. White, *A Witness for Eleanor Dare: The Final Chapter in a 400 Year Old Mystery* (San Francisco, 1991).

36 Thomas P. Govan to Green, May 1, 1941, Folder 77, Green Papers; Ben Gibson to Green, June 5, 1946, Folder 135, Green Papers (quotation); Haywood J. Pearce Jr. to Green, March 26, 1946, Folder 134, Green Papers; “Historical News and Comments,”
Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 33 (December 1946), 527; and "Historical News and Comments," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 50 (March 1964), 748.


39 James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, January 4, 1941, Folder 73, Green Papers (quotation); and Wendell H. Stephenson to E. Merton Coulter, January 8, 1937, Box 55, WHS. “We don’t like to write when we doubt whether our essays will be acceptable to the [A.H.R.] or the M.V.H.R., or if so, on conditions that so and so be done and delayed for two years or more” (Frank L. Owsley to Stephenson, May 31, 1935, Box 66, WHS; see also Harrison A. Trexler to Stephenson, November 6, 1936, Box 73, WHS).

40 Wendell H. Stephenson to Richard R. Stenberg, April 25, 1939, Box 71, WHS (first quotation). On the difficulty gaining recognition as an organization, see Wendell H. Stephenson to Charles S. Sydnor, May 22, 1939, Box 72, WHS; and Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green, May 26, 1944, Series 2, Folder 880, Green Papers (second quotation). On pursuing the opportunity to publish in the American Historical Review, see Stephenson to William M. Robinson Jr., October 19, 1938, Box 69, WHS; Ollinger Crenshaw to Green, October 31, 1940, Folder 70, Green Papers; and Henry T. Shanks to Green, September 2, 1942, Folder 93, Green Papers. On watching the South’s representation in national leadership positions, see Winnie Allen to Stephenson, July 14, 1937, Box 50, WHS; Maude H. Woodfin to Fletcher M. Green, September 9, 1938, Folder 47, Green Papers; Stephenson to Sydnor, May 3, 1938, Box 72, WHS; and Stephenson to E. Merton Coulter, June 14, 1950, Box 70, WHS.

41 Novick, That Noble Dream, 264.

42 Fred C. Cole to the Board of Editors, September 22, 1942, Series B.2, Folder 17, SHA Records. Case’s submission arrived at the SHA offices in the midst of the transition of the Journal from Louisiana State University to Vanderbilt University and of Cole’s induction into the navy. No brief review of Jesse D. Clarkson and Thomas C. Cochran, eds., War as a Social Institution: The Historian’s Perspective (New York, 1941), ever appeared in the Journal of Southern History.


44 Lynn M. Case, “From Ivory Tower to Curbstone,” unpublished manuscript in Series B.2, Folder 17, SHA Records (quotations on p. 3 and p. 4).


Case, “From Ivory Tower to Curbstone,” 8–11, 18 (quotation).

Case, “From Ivory Tower to Curbstone,” 13, 14, and 18.

W. Neil Franklin to Fred C. Cole, September 7, 1942 (first quotation); Paul H. Buck to Cole, September 22, 1942 (second quotation); Robert S. Cotterill to Cole, October 9, 1942 (third quotation); Walter B. Posey to Cole, October 6, 1942 (fourth quotation); Ella Lonn to Cole, September 19, 1942; Bell I. Wiley to Cole, September 19, 1942; William C. Binkley to Lynn M. Case, November 2, 1942 (fifth quotation); all in Series B.2, Folder 17, SHA Records.

Ella Lonn, Bell I. Wiley, and Paul H. Buck all thought publication in the *Journal* would be all right. The other five preferred that Case try the *American Historical Review* or the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* first before asking the *Journal* to make a decision.

R. S. Cotterill to Fred C. Cole, October 9, 1942 (first quotation); Robert H. Woody to Cole, September 26, 1942 (second quotation); Fletcher M. Green to Cole, September 26, 1942; W. Neil Franklin to Cole, September 7, 1942; William C. Binkley to Lynn M. Case, November 2, 1942 (third quotation); Walter B. Posey to Cole, October 6, 1942 (fourth quotation); Ella Lonn to Cole, September 19, 1942 (fifth quotation); all in Series B.2, Folder 17, SHA Records; and “Historical News and Comments,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 29 (March 1943), 663.

Robert S. Cotterill to Fred C. Cole, October 9, 1942; and Fletcher M. Green to Cole, September 26, 1942; Series B.2, Folder 17, SHA Records.


Frank L. Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, February 2, 1938, Correspondence, *Southern Review* Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (quotation); and J. G. de Rouhac Hamilton to Claude G. Bowers, April 18, 1946, Series 1, Box 6, Folder 170, Hamilton Papers.

Sydnor, “Southern Experiment in Writing Social History,” 459–60 (quotation). The problem with history, David M. Potter argued, was that it tended “to present issues in terms of sweeping alternatives (such as freedom and slavery)” when life was lived out in a series of moral and practical compromises. See Potter, review of *Lincoln and the South*, by James G. Randall, *JSH*, 12 (August 1946), 442.

57 Philip Davidson, review of Empire or Independence: A Study in the Failure of Reconciliation, by Weldon A. Brown, JSH, 8 (February 1942), 116 (first quotation); Thomas Robson Hay, review of Lee’s Lieutenants, by Douglas Southall Freeman, JSH, 9 (February 1943), 122; Ella Lonn, review of The Life of Johnny Reb, by Bell I. Wiley, JSH, 9 (August 1943), 421; and William M. Geer to Fletcher M. Green, October 17, 1940, Folder 70, Green Papers (second quotation).

58 John Bennett Walters, “General William T. Sherman and Total War,” JSH, 14 (November 1948), 447–80. This article was a distillation of Walters’ dissertation, written during World War II. See Walters to Frank L. Owsley, December 5, 1948, Box 5, Folder 19, Owsley Papers. For a later assessment of this trend, see Wendell H. Stephenson, “Civil War, Cold War, Modern War: Thirty Volumes in Review,” JSH, 25 (August 1959), 287–305.


60 Summary of Stanley J. Folmsbee, “Nashville During the Civil War,” in Daniel M. Robison, “Eighth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 11 (February 1945), 84.

61 Owsley, review of Letters of James Gillespie Birney, 264 (quotation); Simms, “A Critical Analysis of Abolition Literature,” 368–82; Fletcher M. Green, “Democracy and


63 The quotation comes from a solicitation by an editor of the *Southern Review* to southern historian and former U.S. ambassador to Germany, William E. Dodd, for a “timely” article in that southern journal regarding the rise of Hitler. Dodd never wrote the article. See [Editor of the *Southern Review* to Dodd, January 28, 1938, *Southern Review* Collection.

64 Carter G. Woodson, review of *The Slavery Controversy*, by Arthur Young Lloyd, *JNH*, 25 (January 1940), 110–12 (quotation on p. 12). Gilbert H. Barnes, the reviewer of this book in the *Journal of Southern History*, agreed that the argument was marred and biased by the author’s attempt to make the South seem reasonable in defending slavery (*JSH*, 6 [May 1940], 271–73).


66 Harvey Wish, *George Fitzhugh: Propagandist of the Old South* (Baton Rouge, 1943), viii. Wish’s book was part of the Louisiana State University Press Southern Biography series, edited by Wendell H. Stephenson and Fred C. Cole. “Its timeliness, in view of the obvious parallelisms to modern totalitarian ideas, should attract a more general reader than the scholar exclusively,” Wish thought. He also renamed the manuscript to emphasize its connection to the contemporary world. The manuscript was accepted in July 1941, but by September, Wish was pressing for accelerated publication so it would come out “in the present international situation.” Wish to Stephenson, June 18, 1941 (first quotation); Stephenson to Wish, July 31, 1941; and Wish to Stephenson, September 6, 1941 (second quotation); all in Box 74, WHS.


74 Wendell H. Stephenson to Robert H. Woody, March 11, 1940, and reply, March 20, 1940, Box 74, WHS; and Selig Adler, “Zebulon B. Vance and the ‘Scattered Nation,’” *JSH*, 7 (August 1941), 357–77. This article focused on the adulation of Vance by southern Jews for a speech he made that “pleaded their cause to the people of the United States” (358). Similarly, a Louisiana preservation group advocated the memorialization of Confederate general Judah P. Benjamin with this argument: “Now that hatred is being taught and practised in some European countries, would it not be a timely gesture for this country to show special honor to a broad-minded liberal as was Benjamin of Louisiana!” See Henri L. Guey, Allison Owen, and Mrs. Fred C. Kolman to Stephenson, April 26, 1937, Box 58, Ga–Gu folder, WHS.


76 Roger W. Shugg to Wendell H. Stephenson, November 29, 1936, Box 70, WHS; Shugg, “The Survival of the Plantation System in Louisiana,” *JSH*, 3 (August 1937), 311–25; and Howard K. Beale to Frank L. Owsley, March 30, 1940, Box 1, Folder 16, Owsley Papers. So far as I have been able to determine, the readers reports on Shugg’s article are not extant.
Frank L. Owsley to Cleanth Brooks, November 5, 1939, SRC (first quotation); Owsley to Wendell H. Stephenson, December 10, 1939, Box 66, WHS (second quotation); Owsley, review of Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 116–17 (third quotation on p. 117); and Lawrence D. Reddick, review of Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, by Shugg, JNH, 25 (January 1940), 116 (fourth quotation). Shugg was often depicted as the bogeyman of southern history by Owsley’s friends and allies. See Allen Tate to Owsley, November 26, 1939, Box 5, Folder 10, Owsley Papers; Stephenson to William C. Binkley, April 12, 1944, Box 30, SHA folder, WHS; and Herbert Weaver to Owsley, June 5, 1944, Box 6, Folder 5, Owsley Papers.

Harry L. Coles Jr., “Some Notes on Slave Ownership and Land Ownership in Louisiana, 1850–1860,” JSH, 9 (August 1943), 381–94, used the manuscript census to argue that plantation life had been over-emphasized at the expense of plain folk life in traditional scholarship; that there was a substantial middle class in Louisiana; that land and slave ownership was widespread while land and slave holdings were moderately sized. There is no indication that there was anything unusual or preordained about the process to accept Coles’s article for publication. See Coles to Frank L. Owsley, July 28, 1942, Box 2, Folder 9, Owsley Papers, where Coles expressed being nervous about his article submission.


Binkley also sent the article to Fletcher Green, although Green weighed in with his opinion well after Binkley had rejected the manuscript. Green claimed he was not qualified to judge the merits of statistical arguments but thought the Journal should at any rate avoid “controversial” papers (Green to William C. Binkley, June 27, 1944, Folder 113, Green Papers). Binkley also showed the manuscript to his colleague at Vanderbilt, Frank Owsley, perhaps to warn him about a potential critic. Linden also apparently personally contacted Harry L. Coles, the author of the article that inspired the response. In the correspondence between Owsley and his students regarding Linden, there is little indication that they ever took his criticism seriously, usually content to dismiss him for not accepting their distinction between the published and unpublished census.

William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 18, 1944, and reply, April 12, 1944 (quotation), Box 30, WHS. Stephenson went on to make the incorrect assumption that Linden was connected somehow to Roger W. Shugg and was criticizing Owsley in retaliation for Owsley’s critical review of Shugg’s book, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana in the Journal. Linden had in fact been a graduate student for a while at UNC and later studied with Paul H. Buck at Harvard. On Linden’s education see Ralph B. Flanders to Fletcher M. Green, September 20, 1941, Folder 81, Green Papers; Green to Binkley, June 27, 1944, Folder 113, Green Papers; and Jacqueline Goggin, “Countering White Racist Scholarship: Carter G. Woodson and The Journal of Negro History,” JNH, 68 (Autumn 1983), 364.

William C. Binkley to Fabian Linden, May 29, 1944, Series B.2, Folder 52, SHA Records.
83 Fabian Linden to William C. Binkley, June 2, 1944, and June 21, 1944 (last quotation), Series B.2, Folder 52, SHA Records.

84 William C. Binkley to Fabian Linden, June 8, 1944, and June 27, 1944, Series B.2, Folder 52, SHA Records; and Binkley to Fletcher M. Green, July 3, 1944, Folder 114, Green Papers (quotations). There is another hint that Binkley treated his Vanderbilt colleagues preferentially in this situation in Herbert Weaver to Frank L. Owsley, July 6, 1944, Box 6, Folder 5, Owsley Papers. Binkley also welcomed criticism of his home institution when he thought it was warranted. Thus when James W. Patton offered not to publish a review he had written that was highly critical of Vanderbilt University Press, Binkley agreed to print it anyway in hopes of spurring the press to reform its practice. See Patton to Binkley, April 14, 1945, and reply, April 19, 1945, Series A.1, Folder 60, SHA Records.


86 William C. Binkley to Fabian Linden, May 28, 1945, Series B.2, Folder 52, SHA Records (quotation); Harry L. Coles to Frank L. Owsley, June 9, 1945, Box 2, Folder 9, Owsley Papers; and Herbert Weaver to Owsley, June 25, 1945, Box 6, Folder 5, Owsley Papers. By this point, Owsley and his students were content to dismiss Linden as paranoid, communist, or worse.

87 William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, June 16, 1945, Box 3, WHS; and Binkley to Fletcher M. Green, June 18, 1945, Folder 125, Green Papers (quotations).

88 Frank L. Owsley and Harriett C. Owsley, "The Economic Basis of Society in the Late Ante-Bellum South," JSH, 6 (February 1940), 24–45; Owsley and Owsley, "The Economic Structure of Rural Tennessee, 1850–1860," JSH, 8 (May 1942), 161–82; and Frank Owsley, "The Pattern of Migration and Settlement on the Southern Frontier," JSH, 11 (May 1945), 147–76. For reviews, see Ralph B. Flanders, review of Tennessee Yeomen, 1840–1860, by Blanche Henry Clark, JSH, 8 (November 1942), 562–63; and Bell I. Wiley, review of Mississippi Farmers, 1850–1860, by Herbert Weaver, JSH, 7 (May 1946), 281–83. Wiley notes in his review, "Lacking an expert knowledge in statistics, the reviewer is unable to evaluate the author's technical methodology. But the study appears thoroughly accurate in detail" (283). The culmination of these studies, Owsley's Plain Folk of the Old South (Baton Rouge, 1949) was also well received by Rupert B. Vance in the Journal (vol. 16 [November 1950], 545–47), though Vance noted that Owsley was "much too innocent of the use and resources of modern statistical method" (547).

89 William C. Binkley to Fletcher M. Green, June 18, 1945, Folder 125, Green Papers (quotations); and Green to Binkley, August 8, 1945, Series B.2, Folder 52, SHA Records.

90 Wendell H. Stephenson to William C. Binkley, June 21, 1945, Series B.2, Folder 52, SHA Records. Stephenson's criticisms presaged arguments made against the claims to certainty later historians directed at those who employed cliometric methodology. For an

91 Fletcher M. Green to William C. Binkley, August 9, 1945, and Wendell H. Stephenson to Binkley, June 21, 1945 (quotations), both in Series B.2, Folder 52, SHA Records.

92 William C. Binkley to Fletcher M. Green, August 13, 1945, Folder 127, Green Papers (first quotation); and Binkley to Fabian Linden, August 13, 1945, Series B.2, Folder 52, SHA Records (second quotation).

93 Fabian Linden, review of Mississippi Farmers, by Herbert Weaver, American Historical Review, 52 (January 1947), 338–40; William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, February 19, 1947, Box 6, Folder 13, Binkley Papers (first quotation); Guy Stanton Ford to Frank L. Owsley, April 3, 1947, Box 3, Folder 5, Owsley Papers; Binkley to Stephenson, April 4, 1947, Box 6, Folder 15, Binkley Papers; Harry L. Coles to Owsley, April 20, 1947, Box 2, Folder 9, Owsley Papers; and Owsley, “Communications,” American Historical Review, 52 (July 1947), 845–49.

94 Wendell H. Stephenson to William C. Binkley, April 12, 1944, Box 30, WHS; Herbert Weaver to Frank L. Owsley, June 5, 1944, Box 6, Folder 5, Owsley Papers; Harry L. Coles to Owsley, June 9, 1945, Box 2, Folder 9, Owsley Papers; and Fletcher M. Green to Binkley, August 9, 1945, Series B.2, Folder 52, SHA Records.

95 Herbert Weaver to Frank L. Owsley, June 25, 1945, Box 6, Folder 5, Owsley Papers (first quotation); Owsley, “Communications,” 846 (second quotation); William C. Binkley to Carl C. Rister, April 30, 1947, Box 6, Folder 15, Binkley Papers (third quotation); and Harry L. Coles to Owsley, April 20, 1947, Box 2, Folder 9, Owsley Papers (fourth quotation).

96 Goggin, “Countering White Racist Scholarship,” 373n69.

97 See, for example, William C. Binkley to Wendell H. Stephenson, June 16, 1945, Box 3, WHS. This perceived correlation between communism and Judaism led Jewish liberals toward a variety of anti-communist measures. See Marc Dollinger, Quest for Inclusion: Jews and Liberalism in Modern America (Princeton, 2000), 130–37. Owsley had been accused of “mishandl[ing]. . . . the treatment of Jews” in his courses by a Vanderbilt trustee in the late 1920s, though he was exonerated by the administration. See Paul K. Conkin, Gone With the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University (Knoxville, Tenn., 1985), 359–60.

98 William C. Binkley to Fletcher M. Green, July 3, 1944, Folder 114, Green Papers; Herbert Weaver to Frank L. Owsley, June 25, 1945, Box 6, Folder 5, Owsley Papers; and Binkley to Green, August 13, 1945, Folder 127, Green Papers.

99 Mildred Throne to Fletcher M. Green, September 22, 1945, Folder 128, Green Papers; and Throne to Green, November 3, 1945, Folder 130, Green Papers. Jacqueline Goggin’s implication that Linden sent his manuscript directly and preferentially to the Journal of
Negro History after being rejected from the Journal of Southern History is therefore wrong ("Countering White Racist Scholarship," 365).

100 Fabian Linden, "Economic Democracy in the Slave South: An Appraisal of Some Recent Views," JNH, 31 (April 1946), 140–89. Carter G. Woodson apparently required no revision of the manuscript from Linden (Goggin, "Countering White Racist Scholarship," 365). On the reception of Linden's criticism by later historians, see Randolph B. Campbell, "Planters and Plain Folks: The Social Structure of the Antebellum South," in Boles and Nolen, eds., Interpreting Southern History, 50.

101 The publication of Linden's article in the Journal of Negro History substantiated Fred Cole's belief that the ASNHL organ was not "on the whole too careful about the merits of the articles which it prints" (Cole to Wendell H. Stephenson, August 7, 1946, Box 7, WHS).

102 Wirt Cate Armistead to Frank L. Owsley, October 10, 1935, Box 2, Folder 1, Owsley Papers. This attitude persisted among some white southern historians well into the civil rights era. See Grady McWhiney, "Black History or Propaganda?" in Southerners and Other Americans (New York, 1973), 182–97.


104 Holland Thompson, review of The Mis-Education of the Negro, by Carter G. Woodson, JSNH, 1 (February 1935), 105–6; James D. Glunt to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 31, 1937, Box 59, WHS, re: Glunt, review of The African Background Outlined, by Carter G. Woodson, JSNH, 3 (August 1937), 359–60. For more liberal assessments by white historians, see William B. Hesseltine, review of The Negro in Our History, by Carter G. Woodson, JSNH, 7 (August 1941), 419 (quotation).


106 Bell I. Wiley, review of Negro Builders and Heroes, by Benjamin Brawley, JSNH, 4 (August 1938), 406. Brawley was also chastised for being overly critical of white America. See V. L. Bedsole, review of A Short History of the American Negro, by Benjamin Brawley, JSNH, 6 (May 1940), 279–80.

107 Chase C. Mooney, review of The Negro in the United States, by E. Franklin Frazier, JSNH, 15 (November 1949), 545. Frazier's earlier Negro Family in the United States received generous praise from reviewer North Carolina College for Negroes professor Edgar T. Thompson (JSNH, 6 [February 1940], 128–30). For a similar point of view, see Bell I. Wiley, review of The Black Man in White America, by John G. Van Deusen, JSNH, 5 (November 1939), 565, which Wiley praises as "a happy contrast to the usual run of tomes touching on the subject of race relations which issue from the pens of Negro authors" because of "its scholarliness, its scope, its saneness, and its attempt at fairness in
dealing with highly controversial subjects.” More “doctrinaire” southerners, like Agrarian Donald Davidson, thought that most sociological research in the South needed to be redone, because most investigators, black and white, worked for a political agenda rather than for “objective” truth (Davidson to John E. Pomfret, December 12, 1937, Box 1, Folder 37, Donald Davidson Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University).


113 Philip M. Hamer to Wendell H. Stephenson, January 11, 1936, Box 60, WHS; “Historical News and Notices,” *JSH*, 2 (May 1936), 294; Kathleen Bruce to Stephenson,

114 On the “bias” of the written record, see Charles W. Ramsdell to George Fort Milton, February 25, 1934, Box 3N295, Ramsdell Papers; William B. Hesseltine, review of Grant and Lee: Study in Personality and Generalship, by Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, JSH, 1 (August 1935), 401; and Binkley, “First Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” 70 [Ella Lonn’s comments].


117 Wendell H. Stephenson to E. Merton Coulter, November 26, 1942, Box 61, History of the South folder, WHS; and Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green, December 8, 1947, Folder 146, Green Papers (quotations). Stephenson remained uneasy about this book: “Only an editor knows the weaknesses of the material that he publishes,” Stephenson commiserated with Knopf editor Roger W. Shugg. “If you have misgivings in regard to . . . Knopf publications that have passed under your editorship you can understand how I feel about Coulter’s The South During Reconstruction and other volumes in the same series. I am glad that I am not called upon to review the manuscripts which I edit” (Stephenson to Shugg, December 11, 1947, Box 29, WHS).

118 J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, review of South During Reconstruction, by E. Merton Coulter, JSH, 14 (February 1948), 135. Wendell Stephenson, in his personal copy of Allan Nevins’s assessment in the Saturday Review, underlined and starred the following sentence, perhaps to relieve his own insecurity about Coulter’s interpretation: “Here are all the facts that are needed to understand the South” (undated clipping in Box 7, Coulter file, WHS). See also the positive endorsements by Wirt Armistead Cate (American Historical Review, 53 [April 1948], 565–67); Henry H. Simms (Mississippi Valley
Historical Review, 35 [June 1948], 133–34); and Frank L. Owsley (Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 258 [July 1948], 153–54).

119 T. Harry Williams to William B. Hesseltine, n.d. [1948], quoted in Novick, That Noble Dream, 349n45. In an article on Reconstruction historiography, Williams himself had argued that the pre-revisionist narratives were “naïve” and “simple,” while the newer interpretations showed “balance and proportion.” As usual, though, Du Bois was seen as too Marxist to have gotten at the “truth” of Reconstruction. American Historical Review editor Guy Stanton Ford reportedly rejected Williams’s article for being “too controversial,” and Williams subsequently submitted it to the Journal. See Williams, “An Analysis of Some Reconstruction Attitudes,” JSR, 12 (November 1946), 469–86 (quotations on p. 469–70); and Williams to William C. Binkley, May 14, 1946, Series B.2, Folder 100, SHA Records.


122 “One hopes for a more objective approach in the succeeding volumes of this important series” (David Donald, “The Southern Memory,” The New Leader, July 31, 1947, clipping in Box 7, Coulter folder, WHS).


124 Carter G. Woodson, review of White Spirituals in the Uplands, by George Pullen Jackson, JNH, 19 (January 1934), 93 (quotations). American graduate programs, Woodson continued, were “centers of ‘research’ where men have been taught not to seek after the truth but to crush the truth” (94). See also Woodson, review of Lincoln and the South, by J. G. Randall, JNH, 31 (July 1946), 357.
Sterling A. Brown, “Unhistoric History,” *JNH*, 15 (April 1930), 134 (first quotation) and 161 (second quotation). This was a review essay of books by Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Claude G. Bowers, among others. Although Brown recognized that these authors were not actually professional historians, he argued his critique extended to professional historians because these authors “represent a tendency in modern historical writing” (135).


E. R. Thomas, review of *The Repressible Conflict, 1830–1861*, by Avery O. Craven, *JNH*, 24 (July 1939), 345 (first quotation); Avery O. Craven to J. G. de Rouhac Hamilton, March 30, 1943, Series 1, Folder 158, Hamilton Papers; Craven to Hamilton, n.d. [late spring 1943], Series 1, Folder 182; and Craven to Frank L. Owsley, August 10, 1945, Box 2, Folder 13, Owsley Papers. There is some question to whether “E. R. Thomas” was a pseudonym. Craven thought it was his former student Lawrence D. Reddick with whom he was not friendly. This review and the relationship of Craven with Reddick and with his African American students generally is discussed in Meier and Rudwick, *Black History and the Historical Profession*, 85–87, 103–4, and 129. The University of Chicago had awarded the most Ph.D.’s to African Americans by 1946. See Michael R. Winston, “Through the Back Door: Academic Racism and the Negro Scholar in Historical Perspective,” *Daedalus*, 100 (Summer 1971), 693.

Avery O. Craven to J. G. de Rouhac Hamilton, March 30, 1943, Series 1, Folder 158, Hamilton Papers. Craven thought Fletcher Green had given his book *Coming of the Civil War* a “rotten review.” To read the review, however, hardly brings to mind the kind of criticism Craven complains of in this letter to Hamilton. See Green, review of *The Coming of the Civil War*, 564–65.


133 Margaret McCulloch to Fletcher M. Green, March 16, 1937, Folder 41, Green Papers; and McCulloch to Green, June 22, 1937, Folder 43, Green Papers (quotation). No record exists to show that McCulloch decided to send the article to the *Journal of Southern History*, nor does it appear she ever published an article based on her students' interviews.


135 Thomas D. Clark, *Kentucky's Clark*, edited by Bill Cunningham (Kuttawa, Ky., 1987), 112.
Chapter Six

The "White Hope of the South"?
Challenges to the Practice and Politics of Southern History

Just before world war had again erupted in Europe, Frank L. Owsley wrote to his friend Robert Penn Warren in praise of their region's newest institution, the Southern Historical Association (SHA). What an opportunity the association provided scholars like themselves, Owsley told Warren. He and his wife were on their way to New Orleans for the fourth annual meeting to present publicly the first reports from the census research they had been conducting for the past couple of years. Membership in the organization was booming with "eight or nine hundred already." "That association," Owsley bragged, "is the white hope of the South." He pleaded with Warren to come down from Baton Rouge for at least one day of the meeting in order to see for himself the wonders that had been wrought in regional historiography.¹

Subsequent observers have often assumed that Owsley's assessment of the Southern Historical Association was not inappropriate. The very name "Southern Historical Association," one historian has surmised, "must have seemed ominous" to African American scholars and white liberal activists for whom "southernness" was equated with the defense of white political and social privilege.² Indeed, it makes no sense to claim that the Southern Historical Association was racially progressive even within the context of its time. It wasn't. The Southern Sociological Society (SSS), though a much smaller organization, had insisted from its first year on "sociological facing up to problems related to the folkways of segregation" in the South. African American sociologists presented papers and joined their peers for meals in unsegregated
private dining rooms at the very first meeting of the SSS, held in Atlanta at the Biltmore Hotel in April 1936. After an incident the next year in Birmingham where the hotel strictly enforced rules regarding unsegregated dining to the humiliation of black attendees, the SSS simply eliminated the annual dinner from its program but refused to compromise on other participation issues. While Vanderbilt professor and founding president E. T. Krueger had argued that any other stance on black membership in academic organizations was "untenable," he regretted that "the other social science societies lack insight." African American sociologist and Fisk University professor Charles S. Johnson praised "the uninhibited policy regarding Negro membership in the Society" as the only way to ensure the "greater freedom, intellectual honesty, and emotional detachment" that southern social scientists needed in their investigations of social problems. Johnson became the first African American elected president of a general academic society, regional or national, when the SSS picked him to lead their organization in 1946.3

Nevertheless, Southern Historical Association members were thinking, deeply if often conservatively, about the region, about historical practice, and increasingly about race. Overcoming the "Sahara of the Bozart" reputation with which H. L. Mencken had slapped the South (having pointed out specifically that the South lacked historians among other markers of culture and intellect) had required it.4 Their field of investigation had been born from a desire for restitution of the minority voice—in this case, the voice of the white southern experience that many feared would be industrialized, nationalized, and victimized out of existence. When Benjamin B. Kendrick reviewed the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, their similarities frequently amazed him. "We are all caught in the tragedy
inherent in the conflict between democratic theory and autocratic practice,” he wrote in an oddly philosophical conclusion to a regular book review in the *Journal of Southern History*. “It manifests itself along many lines other than race, and while sensitive souls among Negroes feel it most keenly, none of us escapes altogether.” The misfortune of their competing claims to be beleaguered by “America” was that white and black southerners mostly and perhaps irreparably injured each other.5

World War II, moreover, transformed the ends to which many southern intellectuals, white and black, put their thought. Demobilization did not mean that they returned to a totally familiar world. As SHA secretary-treasurer James W. Patton had predicted at the outset, their perspective and way of life would be forever altered by their war experiences. For some, this was not a fate to be lamented. “I am certainly looking forward to the gatherings of the American and Southern Historical Associations just after the war,” Vernon L. Wharton mentioned in 1943. He was naturally interested in the sessions, “but much more interesting will be the personal stories told by those who have been scattered all over the earth. I am expecting to find there a wide diversity of strongly held opinions and attitudes—a diversity that will fill our national life in that period.”6 As historian James C. Cobb and many others have rightly argued, every aspect of World War II—its mass mobilization, its encouragement of American industrial capacity, its rhetoric, its successful fight against Nazism and racist ideology—widened the horizons and brought home a real commitment to change in the minds of many southerners, black and white.7 For many African Americans, the war intensified their awareness of the hypocrisy of their nation fighting a war against a racist ideologue with one hand and oppressing its own minorities with the other. African American historians consequently
returned to face their work with “impatience and anger,” redoubled in their dedication to
make their scholarship have a function in the present. Some white southerners returned
home having realized the extent of their own misconceptions about African Americans
even if their understanding was limited and still framed by the cultural expectations of
their region and upbringing. As one historian stationed in North Africa revealed to his
mentor back in North Carolina, he finally understood why southern African Americans
had risked the dangers of the South, from hookworm to lynching, instead of pursuing
“repatriation.” The more sophisticated publicly testified to their newfound enlightenment
in an increasingly prevalent postwar genre that literary historian Fred Hobson has called
the “racial conversion narrative.”

For other white southerners, World War II was a cataclysmic challenge to a racial
order they thought they understood and controlled. Many had their first significant
experience with integration in the army, and many young white southern soldiers did not
like it, though they were unhappy being thrown together with Yankees and city-folk and
Jews as well as with African Americans. This group of displeased white southerners
anticipated political and civil agitation after the war and laid plans to resist. Like the
white Mississippi farmer who announced upon his arrival home from military service that
he had only begun to fight for his ideals, these southern intellectuals left the crucible of
war intent on protecting the South they had defined and knew. They gained additional
confidence from learning personally that their fellow white Americans from the
Northeast or Midwest were often as full of racial fears as they were. Sectional
defensiveness ceased to seem to this group like a contradiction to their comportment as
historians.
Yet most white southern members of the SHA were simply unsure of the future. They were temperamentally conservative and cautious, largely thoughtful and not reactionary. They clung to ideas of investigation and detachment. They craved "scholarly respectability" and worried about perceptions of themselves in the eyes of historians outside the South. Political confrontation within their own institutions troubled them. Most wanted to think through change and its ramifications before accepting it. All along they had criticized the white southern commitment to tradition, and now they confronted ideas that shook their inherited beliefs to the core. Many felt inadequate to the challenge. They read and they thought, and they often failed to act. Sometimes their quiet acceptance made it possible for braver souls to be iconoclasts.

What makes the Southern Historical Association an important lens on social change and cultural resistance in the mid-century South is the profound way that the civil rights movement required the meaningful integration of both historians and history. Distinctions SHA leaders had tried to make between their judgment as historians and their judgment as moral (or immoral) human beings simply fell apart. African American historians and their white supporters demanded that their humanity be taken seriously as people in the present and as spokesmen for people of the past. Reformers would not let the Southern Historical Association really become the "white hope of the South," but they also remained devoted to the project of regional history. Their ultimate solution was to integrate both the business of professional history in the South and the interpretation of the southern past. Instead of pulling out of the Southern Historical Association and leaving it to die plagued by a remnant of anti-intellectual white supremacists, white and
black reformers intended to transform it—to take over the authority of its networks and its publications for a newer, broader, more representative, southern history.

After all, too much real if cautious groundwork had been laid in the debates of the first ten years of the SHA—often on subjects that seemed to have nothing to do with integration or civil rights—to simply abandon this institutional ship. Seeds of a counternarrative to the “white hope” had been long planted within the framework of the SHA. “Ideas are weapons against prejudices, with no immunity for racial or regional prejudices,” one SHA reformer pointed out in 1950, happy to note that “many social-science students and others in the South are getting ideas.” Institutional structures and convention, however, made it somewhat difficult for these reformers to find each other and coordinate their calls for change in a meaningful way. As activist historian August Meier recalled, he had no idea when he turned his attention to discrimination within the Southern Historical Association that he could have found a cohort of white southern historians, some highly placed within the organization, who felt the same way as he did. He also failed to consider contacting any African American southern historians to join him in a push for institutional change. For some reason, “we viewed ourselves [“the small band of younger white scholars teaching at black schools”] as young Davids struggling alone against a Goliath represented by reactionaries in control of the SHA.”13

Their enemy was in fact much more deeply divided.

More SHA members than one might assume were intellectually prepared to think about social change as a fundamental part of regional history, and consequently as within their jurisdiction as a regional historical organization, rather than as antithetical to it. Advocates of change needed to justify their claims on the present as well, and they found
that justification in the region’s past. By mid-century, these historians, white and black, had redefined the South’s history so that it enabled, even compelled, social change in the region and in the nation.\textsuperscript{14} At the other extreme, some historians reverted to the argument that the South was and would always be a white man’s country. This was the real “truth” of southern history, they believed, and they would defend this source of regional distinctiveness to the bitter end. This idea of the South served not as a catalyst for change but as a bulwark against impending social and intellectual revolution.\textsuperscript{15} As the civil rights movement transformed the southern present into a stark moral choice between the past and the future, the cautious in the center had to choose sides. The narratives of southern history thus became emblematic of the possibilities for southern identity in the future. The story of the integration of the Southern Historical Association is thus one of bodies and minds, of the present and the past.

\textit{Black Historians and Black History in the SHA, 1935–1945}

Concerns about the Southern Historical Association’s consideration and treatment of its African American members came up early in the association’s history. The constitution had never placed restrictions on membership, and the association had counted a few African Americans among its members since its first year. All SHA members received the Journal and annual meeting programs. In the eyes of the executive council, these measures sufficed to show “equal” treatment and membership privileges.\textsuperscript{16} The leaders could rationalize their failure to do more with the fact that the other historical associations fared little better in making meetings accessible to all members.\textsuperscript{17}
No one seems to have substantially challenged the inability of African American members to actually attend the annual meetings of the Southern Historical Association until plans were well underway for the 1941 meeting in Atlanta. Rushton Coulborn, professor of European history at Atlanta University, wrote on behalf of his colleagues to inquire after arrangements for African American members at the upcoming convention. Benjamin B. Kendrick, president of the association, replied that if there were African American members (he did not know for sure), he was certain that "there are no debarring rules existing" in the bylaws to prohibit them from attending meetings. As far as the association was concerned, "Negroes have all the rights and privileges of any other member subject only to local city ordinances, state laws, or practices of the hotel in which the meeting is held." The association president thus uncourageously took cover behind local custom. Kendrick was upset that he had been caught off guard, confiding in the secretary-treasurer that he had been "afraid this problem would arise sooner or later."

He even thought he had asked the executive council to consider the problems and possibilities of serving African American members the previous year at the annual meeting in Charleston, though the minutes from that meeting do not record that the issue was raised at all. As the Atlanta convention approached, the Southern Historical Association had been pressed into its first opportunity to make something like a policy statement regarding African American participation.  

The association, however, skirted the challenge. Secretary-treasurer James W. Patton concurred with Kendrick's reading of the situation, noting that the constitution had no stipulation that "any class of members shall have any privileges that other members do not have." The association was in the clear to do no more. "Personally," he added, "I
should have no objection to attending a meeting of this sort where Negro professors were in attendance, and I presume that you feel the same way." He doubted, however, "if a majority of the members of the Association would share this view." Not only was the association hampered by custom and inertia, "the present situation in Georgia is scarcely such as to encourage experimentation along this line." The executive council passed the buck for further explanation to the local arrangements committee, who failed to challenge the Biltmore Hotel's dining rules on behalf of a handful of African American members and interested parties. At the Atlanta meeting, the executive council upheld its decision to leave the matter of African American participation to the local arrangements committee without any official support or pressure to object to the hotel's policies from the association leadership.\footnote{19} The published report of the Atlanta meeting contained no mention of any controversy regarding African American attendance. The program chair in fact praised "the degree of harmonious and mutual interest prevailing among scholars representing the various fields of historical endeavor" and "the wholesome crossing of special lines of interest" that the meeting had encouraged. The secretary, moreover, reported that 1941 had been a successful, prosperous, cooperative, and efficient year and did not publicize the discussion of African American members that had taken place during the executive council session.\footnote{20}

As a result of this inaction, the Southern Historical Association rightfully earned the enmity of Atlanta University professor W. E. B. Du Bois. He spent his time at the 1941 meeting dining privately with more sympathetic SHA members like Howard Beale and Vernon Wharton. Afterwards, he publicly chastised the political and moral weakness of the Southern Historical Association leadership. The Biltmore Hotel, he charged in
Phylon, would have considered allowing full participation of all members in official association affairs, including meals, if the local arrangements chairs, Emory University professor Ross H. McLean and Agnes Scott professor Philip Davidson, had pushed the issue. Instead, McLean and Davidson “while protesting their cordiality toward Negro participation in all meetings, begged that Negroes would not seek to attend luncheon and dinner meetings” for fear professors at Georgia state institutions would lose their jobs for being associated with such racial rebellion. The Southern Historical Association kowtowed too willingly to demagogue governor Eugene Talmadge and his recent purge of the University of Georgia, Du Bois charged. But he also thought the decision showed a lack of moral courage. White state employees, he countered, should have absented themselves from the SHA meeting, instead of forcing other members of the association “to make the sacrifice for them.”21 “After [this] revelation of your attitude toward colored members in your Atlanta meeting,” Du Bois resigned from the Southern Historical Association. Secretary Patton spread the word to other leaders of the association of this high-profile departure—“an echo from the Atlanta meeting[,] to which I did not reply.”22

Du Bois’s vocal action confirmed for SHA leaders their pre-existing conviction that some African American scholars were just too prickly to agree to take the small steps they envisioned against Jim Crow. The previous year, for example, the secretary of the Agricultural History Society, Arthur G. Peterson, had asked Wendell H. Stephenson, that society’s president-elect, for advice regarding the program and policy at their upcoming joint session at the American Farm Economic Association meeting in New Orleans. Membership from the South in the Agricultural History Society was very “slight,” much
to the chagrin of Stephenson who felt that southern historians should have a natural affinity for the organization. The joint session in New Orleans might attract additional southern members. When neither Rupert B. Vance nor H. C. Nixon could attend the meeting to speak on farm tenancy, Vance recommended that Du Bois, the “distinguished Negro historian of Atlanta University,” be invited to give the presentation. Du Bois admittedly had “a known particularist point of view,” Vance had written, but “his paper would be sure to offer evaluation that should stir up a great deal of discussion.” “The fact that [Du Bois] is a Negro would make no difference to me,” the Minnesota-born secretary of the Agricultural History Society told Stephenson, “but I do not know what the reaction of Southerners might be.” He hoped Stephenson would be “frank” with his advice.23

According to Stephenson, the problem with choosing Du Bois as a speaker was not his point of view: “Doubtless everyone present would like to hear him and would appreciate his presenting a paper.” The problem was the fact that “here in the lower South. . .it is still necessary to guard against untoward incidents in hotels.” These institutions did not like “the passing of Negro members of the Society and Negro speakers through the lobby, etc.,” and the organization would not want to suffer the “unfortunate repercussions” of such confrontation. If it were anyone else, like “a Negro of the type of Charlie Johnson,” Stephenson thought, no trouble would arise, because he “would have no objection to entering by way of an alley and the back door, if necessity required it.” Du Bois, though a professor in Atlanta, was “a Northerner with a doctorate from Harvard and if anyone disputed his right to all the privileges of white folks he might be tempted to create a scene.” New Orleans was quite cosmopolitan for a southern city and perhaps could rise to the occasion and be “pretty liberal and tolerant,” but
Stephenson suggested that it might be “expedient” to consider other safer alternatives. In the end, no invitation to participate was extended to Du Bois. The white historians in charge decided against rocking the southern boat.24

Annual meetings were thus basically closed to the full and active participation of African Americans. As Du Bois once sardonically put it, black scholars “were cordially invited to be absent.”25 The inclusion of African American members in other SHA projects during its first decade was hardly better. No article authored by a black historian appeared in the Journal before or during the war. While the Journal of Southern History reviewed books written by black authors from its very first issue, the editor had always commissioned white reviewers, usually without difficulty. No review written by an African American historian appeared in the Journal until February 1940 when Schomburg Collection director Lawrence D. Reddick became the first black historian to write for the Journal.26 Although the Journal editor unsuccessfully tried to commission a review from W. E. B. Du Bois almost immediately upon learning of his resignation in early 1942 (perhaps to entice him back into the fold of membership), no African American historian’s work appeared in the Journal again until 1949 when John Hope Franklin’s first review was published.27 For the entire time that the Journal of Southern History was sponsored by Vanderbilt University (1942–1948), no extant records document that any African American historians were sought out as reviewers.28

It is not necessarily clear that this gulf can be explained by a more hostile attitude of the Vanderbilt history department toward African American scholars and topics, but it is one possibility. White reformer and race relations activist Margaret C. McCulloch found in 1942, for example, that the Vanderbilt history department was not interested in
sponsoring her proposed historical study of race relations in Nashville since 1890. "I confess I was deeply shocked to find that so intense is their prejudice on the subject of the Negro that the head of the history department frankly told me they could not give me dispassionate scholarly objectivity in that field" and turned her application down. When she tried to reshape her project and present it to the sociology department, she found more encouragement. Still, the Vanderbilt sociologists also dissuaded her from pursuing graduate study there, since they felt certain that the required readers from other departments "would have it in for [her] for studying the Negro and would be out to 'break' [her]." Vanderbilt also had a much stricter policy against permitting African Americans to use the archives and the library compared to the policies at other southern institutions, state and private. On the other hand, while Frank Owsley's racial prejudices were well known, William C. Binkley directed a number of dissertations that engaged questions of race relations and black history. These Vanderbilt graduates ultimately played important roles in bringing the African American experience into the Southern Historical Association. McCulloch's job as an interracial organizer and activist may have rendered her in the eyes of the Vanderbilt faculty as the unobjective one. It is difficult to conclude with certainty, therefore, that Vanderbilt prejudice alone kept African Americans out of the Journal of Southern History; nonetheless, through the 1940s the Southern Historical Association fell behind the other historical associations in the promotion of work by African Americans.29

Even if the editors of the Journal of Southern History were not seeking them out, a small number of African American historians submitted manuscripts to the SHA periodical for consideration. Miner Teachers College professor William Miles Brewer, a
Harvard educated teacher and frequent contributor to the *Journal of Negro History*, was the first. In the spring of 1936, Brewer submitted a seminar paper on John Randolph that he had completed as a graduate student at Harvard. With his article Brewer carefully outlined his academic pedigree, mentioning a publication in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly* and his graduate work at Harvard and Johns Hopkins. Editor Wendell H. Stephenson quickly rejected his submission, because he thought it drew too much from secondary sources to qualify as original research for the *Journal*. He assured the author that the writing showed literary merit but suggested that it was more suitable for a “semi-popular” publication. Stephenson may not have known that Brewer was African American, and he did not send out the manuscript to outside readers for evaluation.30

In early 1937, Jessie W. Parkhurst inquired if the *Journal of Southern History* might be interested in a study of the “mammy” in the plantation household. Stephenson promised to consider it, and she submitted it that summer. Barely a week after the manuscript arrived in the editorial office, Stephenson rejected it with the blandest and least informative of notes: “I regret very much that it will be impossible for us to use your study. . . . Nevertheless, I am grateful to you for sending it to us for our consideration.” Barely a year later, Parkhurst’s article—an attempt to get behind the romance of white memory and the shame of black degradation to reveal the “actual role of the ‘Mammy’”—was published in the *Journal of Negro History*. Parkhurst went on to become Jessie Parkhurst Guzman, longtime professor, bibliographer, and director of the department of records and research at Tuskegee Institute. She had a masters degree from Columbia and had done further graduate work in history at the University of Chicago. Was it racism, bias against the topic, or evident lack of merit or reputation that
contributed to Stephenson’s hasty evaluation of her manuscript? Unfortunately, not enough definitive information exists to know for sure. Stephenson knew she taught at Tuskegee from her stationary, but whether he knew or cared that she was African American is not apparent. At any rate, he did not long remember her attempt at publication in the *Journal.*

James B. Browning, another Miner Teachers College professor and frequent contributor to the *Journal of Negro History*, attempted publication of a study on the economic development of antebellum African American churches in the *Journal of Southern History* in January 1939. No record remains of Stephenson having sent the article out for further consideration by an editorial board member. Instead, he informed Browning that the article “is not adapted to our magazine.” Again, one has to guess at the underlying reasons for its rejection. Browning’s manuscript may not have been sufficiently “southern.” It also may not have been sufficiently scholarly: in other cases, Stephenson cited concerns about an article’s adaptability to reject manuscripts that failed to meet his idea of professional standards. Browning’s article did not later appear in the *Journal of Negro History* nor does it seem that it was ever published in any academic journal.

While Brewer, Parkhurst, and Browning were dismissed quickly and without outside consultation, the same was not true for the fourth known African American scholar to try for publication in the *Journal of Southern History*, Howard University professor Charles H. Wesley. At the 1940 American Historical Association meeting in New York, Wesley and Stephenson had briefly discussed (in a chance meeting in the hotel lobby, no less) a study on the domestic slave trade that Wesley had undertaken.
With Stephenson’s apparent encouragement, he submitted it soon after to the *Journal.* Stephenson forwarded the article to Harvard historian Paul H. Buck for a reader’s report, first calling his attention to the fact that “this is the first time that a historian of the Negro race has sent us a paper for consideration.” (It was, in fact, only the first study by an African American that Stephenson knew about or remembered.) As Stephenson often did, he instructed the referee on his own leanings regarding the manuscript, though he did have particular knowledge on this topic from his own research in the Louisiana slave trade. Wesley’s use of the under-utilized slave ship manifests in the Library of Congress impressed Stephenson, but “the organization of the material seems defective and the arrangement monotonous.” Stephenson was also certain that other manifests existed in customhouses along the Gulf Coast that Wesley had failed to consult. Buck picked up these same phrases to recommend rejection of the article. “Wesley has got so little out of his rich material” that he had submitted not much more than a “list in deadly detail [of] the ships, their ports, their cargoes, etc.” Buck concluded that “there is much more in this material a more intelligent researcher could discover.” In his opinion, Wesley was a “hard-working, determined plugger with limited imagination and a tendency in his research to miss half the story.” Buck had reviewed Wesley’s recent book *Collapse of the Confederacy* unfavorably in the *American Historical Review* and knew Wesley had been “quite disturbed by my review and the criticisms it contained.” Again, the author’s lack of anonymity in the *Journal* process worked against him. Stephenson rejected the article several weeks later, with vague intimations that the *Journal* would reconsider publication if Wesley shortened it to a note about the manifest sources in the Library of Congress.34 When Wesley later sent an offprint of this same article from the *Journal of*
*Negro History* to the editorial offices, Stephenson responded that he would “always regret that we could not have it, in slightly revised form, for the *Journal.*” The article, he thought, made “a real contribution.”

Brewer, Parkhurst, Browning, and Wesley were all four active and prolific scholars with the credentials to back up their historical work (though only Wesley held the Ph.D.). Their experiences with rejection from the *Journal of Southern History* must have verified widespread assumptions among black scholars that they could expect little else but race discrimination from the white historical profession. As Jacqueline Goggin has shown, most African American scholars were dissuaded by academia’s pervasive racist culture from even trying to protest their exclusion. The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) and the *Journal of Negro History* were much more welcoming venues for their participation. To some, like Rayford Logan and Lorenzo Greene, the futility of submission seemed so strong that they simply refused to subject themselves to the anticipated rejection. John Hope Franklin recalled that he often tried to get his African American colleagues and friends to attend national meetings like the AHA without much luck. Franklin thought that their resignation not to attend detrimentally affected their own scholarship. To Franklin, there were obvious disparities in quality between AHA papers and those presented at “black professional meetings.” He was disheartened by “the willingness of some black scholars to settle for much less than first-rate papers” instead of challenging themselves to the standards of the “national professional meetings in my field.”

From what can be discerned from extant *Journal* files, it appears that these pioneer black contributors—particularly ones who Stephenson did not know—were rejected because their work did not meet the criteria set by the
*Journal.* These scholars suffered from often deficient institutional resources and access to research materials. But to argue that the race of the author did not matter to the *Journal* and its editorial readers belies the evidence shown in the Wesley case. It is tragic that Wesley did not test the issue by revising and resubmitting his article.

The *Journal of Negro History* offered an opportunity for publication among other like-minded historians who had a particular conception and high expectations for what the historical study of African Americans could achieve. As historians August Meier and Elliott Rudwick have noted, the founding of the ASNLH by Carter G. Woodson represented the "convergence of two distinct streams of historical publication: the long tradition of writing on the black past on the part of black intellectuals and polemists, on the one hand, and the professionalization of American historical study and the triumph of 'scientific' history, on the other." Using the sources and strategies of professional history, ASNLH historians hoped to show with authority the contributions African Americans had made in the past and also demonstrate their own skill and expertise to write history as a contribution in the present. The alternative venue also created a space for African American historians to wage a critical attack on the shortcomings, blind sides, and racist assumptions of most white historians.38

In the minds of black scholars, historians either recognized the full humanity of African Americans or they had not written real or effective history. Consequently, *Journal of Negro History* reviewers did not like most of the new state studies of slavery that came out in the 1920s and 1930s. To most white southern historians, slavery was an economic institution and slaves were resources; the purpose of writing its history was to learn more about agricultural economy or perhaps political philosophy but not to recover
the black experience.39 In these studies, one Journal of Negro History reviewer thought, "the slaveholder is made not only the chief performer, but the performance itself.” White scholars thus failed to understand the heart of slavery when they asserted that slaves were well treated and generally loyal. One reviewer made this point with this classic anecdote about a runaway slave peppered with questions by a curious white northerner. When asked why he had voluntarily left a situation where he had been treated kindly and provided with food, clothing, and shelter, "the Negro merely replied that that was a rather long story into which he did not care to go, but if his inquirer thought that his former situation was desirable the position which he had vacated in the South was vacant." If a historian could not understand the fundamental infringement slavery made on the human rights of black men, women, and children, then he had no business writing the history of the institution, let alone trying to describe the experience of the slaves.40

At the same time, there was a call among some African American historians to investigate the "southern" aspects of black identity and history.41 For example, William Pickens, the director of branches for the NAACP and himself a prominent black intellectual, wrote History of the South series editor Wendell H. Stephenson specifically to make a case for the inclusion of African Americans and African American historians in the series. Pickens hoped the editors would add another volume on the "Southern Negro" in order to help the series "expand the informative nature of a history of the South."42 These black scholars often praised books that mentioned the contributions African Americans had made to the region's culture and distinctiveness.43 They also detracted attention from the urban North as the center of African American life and culture. Benjamin Brawley, for example, thought that black literature had been too long centered
“on the Harlem obsession” and welcomed the fact that “our authors are ready to view the horizon with wider sweep” with special “attention directed to the South.” Woodson agreed that the preoccupation with Harlem had unfortunately created the “impression that Harlem is typical of the Negro in America.” “Nothing could be further from the truth,” he argued:

The most useful Negroes in this country have never lived in Harlem and seldom go there. To the Negroes in most parts of the country Harlem is not a place where one goes to do things but where one goes when he has the ambition to do nothing. . . . The striking evidences of the race are not to be found in Harlem. . . . A small city like Durham in North Carolina, or Richmond in Virginia shows more evidence of the Negroes’ approach to self-sufficiency. Were it not for the resources of other parts which enable Negroes to spend their time temporarily in Harlem, destroying what has been produced elsewhere, Harlem would hardly be known.

The New York neighborhood did not represent an accurate “cross-section” of the African American population. For the “truth,” the student should look elsewhere—especially southward.44 Woodson directed this effort by making the Journal of Negro History quite southern in focus, even as it defined “Negro history” broadly, to include African, Latin American, and North American subjects. Like Woodson himself, the majority of research associates “attracted to his orbit” also studied African American topics in the South. Consequently, the work of SHA historians was a particularly important target of comparison for ASNLH historians.45

There was little published in the Journal of Southern History during its first decade to suggest to African American readers that white southern intellectuals were rethinking their position on the role African Americans played in the region’s past. For example, one article described “Thirty Years of a Mississippi Plantation” without any substantial mention of the people who provided the labor for this praiseworthy scientific
agriculture. With the exception of noting the increased picking efficiency of the plantation's slaves over the years, the subject ascribed to cultivation was the planter. The growing interpretive interest in the farmer over the planter combined with the attempt to find in the Old South indigenous roots for an industrial, commercial economy and the debate over the political causes of the Civil War promoted a very white region in the pages of the *Journal of Southern History*. The typical SHA historian of this period, one white critic argued in 1950, "sought to conceal the southern Negro in a woodpile of constitutional abstraction, ignoring him statistically and spiritually." Most wrote "very profusely of the South as a minority and of sins against that minority but very skimpily of the South's minority and the sins against that minority." Even though the majority of Southern Historical Association members disavowed any neo-Confederate loyalty, their association of "the South" with the white experience was certainly well documented.

Despite all this, there were glimmering indications in the *Journal of Southern History* of the massive sea-change southern history would undergo in the postwar period. For one, the inherited narrative about Reconstruction had been pried open for debate by white and black scholars alike. What African American historians had been saying for decades about the positive contributions Reconstruction had brought the South and the legitimate good service black politicians had provided now entered the general lexicon of a large number of white southern historians. To argue otherwise by the end of the World War II, to the younger generation of historians at least, was terribly out of date. For another, some white southern historians had begun to look at the historic and political roots of their region's racism, finding it not in slavery or the legacy of the Civil War but in post-Reconstruction demagogic politics. By highlighting the political usefulness of
racism, these investigations provided an important counterpoint to those historians who argued that disfranchisement, for example, legitimately discriminated against ability. More important, the new attention paid to post-Reconstruction politics brought under the microscope the historical roots of the political and social system that governed the post-World War II South.

Finally, the first article published in the *Journal of Southern History* that investigated the lives of African Americans as historical subjects appeared in February 1943. Its author, J. Merton England, had completed his dissertation at Vanderbilt University in 1941 on free blacks in Tennessee and had subsequently gotten a job as an editorial assistant for Louisiana State University Press and the *Journal of Southern History*. In his article, England argued that slavery was not just an economic institution but more importantly a system for racial and social control. As a result, free blacks in the antebellum South were an anomaly to be feared, though those fears were often “utterly groundless.” Freedom in the midst of slavery was therefore always tenuous. Sources on “everyday life,” moreover, were particularly difficult to come by, and England regretted that neither newspapers nor court records preserved the “peaceful, normal activities” of the free class. Though England placed a paternalistic spin on his interpretation by concluding that “the capacities of the individual Negro to ingratiate himself with the individual white man” ameliorated their status and protected them from whatever harsh restrictions the law placed on them, his attempt to make African Americans the subject of their own past and a subject for white southern historians represented a new departure for the *Journal of Southern History*. Older white historians admitted their interest in “what
sort of people the free negroes were” but left the projects on the back-burner. A rising generation of white and black scholars had already started to find out.53

Black Historians and Black History in the Postwar SHA

Despite the break in activities caused by the stresses of World War II, the foundations had been laid well before the war for a full-scale reconsideration by white historians of the place of black historians in the association and of the black experience in the region’s past. The terms of the debate had already been established. Many of those white SHA members who had taken steps toward advocating the equalization of black history and historians, like Bell I. Wiley, C. Vann Woodward, J. Merton England, and others, intensified their activism after the war. They were joined by a number of new scholars ready to embark in full on their historical careers after the war ended. They incorporated increasing attention to the black past into their southern history courses at their white southern universities, sometimes much to the disappointment of their faculty colleagues.54 This group reached out to find both black historians and a white audience willing to confront white southern racial tradition and its prevalence in regional historical practice.

Southern historians were ready for the “vigorous resumption of the Association’s activities” after the war, and the program committee for the 1946 annual meeting in Birmingham fulfilled those desires.55 Observers noted the spirit of collegiality and fun that marked the meeting, as friends who had been separated during the war rejoiced in being able to get together again. The meeting placed an “unusual emphasis [on] informal activities, especially to talkfests of old acquaintances in lobbies, restaurants, and hotel
rooms”—all places where African American members, had they wanted to attend, would not have been allowed. These “unofficial sessions, developing quickly and without plan” and “extend[ing] late into the night” were the high-point of any SHA gathering. Black members, however, also missed out on the sociability of the official sessions in Birmingham, having to wait until the annual dinner dishes were cleared before slipping into the dining room through the kitchen door to hear the presidential address.56

The committee eschewed a central theme for the program, preferring to “‘beat the bushes’ thoroughly for prospective participants” and see what “‘grew up.’” In the process, they planned the first session on African American history at a Southern Historical Association meeting. The speakers, Indiana University professor Chase C. Mooney and University of Kentucky professor J. Merton England, were both Vanderbilt Ph.D.’s whose dissertations had examined slaves and free blacks in antebellum Tennessee. Neither participant used the opportunity to issue revolutionary calls for making African American history a central part of the study of the South, but the topic was still a first for the Southern Historical Association.57 The session’s novelty was noted by John Hope Franklin when he received the program by mail, despite his disappointment at having been excluded from the proceedings. While England’s work was familiar to him, he had never even heard of Mooney, he complained to Luther P. Jackson. It was “too bad the great white fathers in the South couldn’t bring themselves to invite you. . .or myself to participate.” Franklin, after all, had recently finished a study on free blacks in North Carolina, published by University of North Carolina Press, while Jackson had written a book on free blacks in Virginia, published by the American Historical Association. Both historians, moreover, had received glowing praise from
reviewers in the *Journal of Southern History*. In contrast, neither Mooney nor England had any major publications yet to their name. Franklin would have to wait a little longer before the right constellation of SHA leaders fell into place to organize his invitation to address the Southern Historical Association.\(^{58}\)

In the meantime, some SHA leaders had not yet recognized how African American history should be an integral part of the South they studied. If there was any group commissioned by the Southern Historical Association that especially represented the core of its leaders, it was the so-called "Committee of Ten" (later the Committee on Research in Southern History) organized in 1946 to discuss research possibilities in southern history with the ultimate goal of preparing a grant proposal for the major foundations. These ten represented three founding members of the association, six former and three future presidents, seven editorial board members, two secretary-treasurers, four executive council members, four program chairs, and two editors of the *Journal*.\(^{59}\) With a $500 allotment from the executive council, the committee met in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, for two days in February 1947 to create a wish-list of research topics. The conversation ranged from the importance of compiling regional bibliographies to the neglect of the southern colonial era to gaps in cultural, urban, and business history. Tacked on as an afterthought, according to the handwritten notes of the meeting, was the idea that "race relations" studies might be valuable if "adequately worked," but the committee agreed that there was no real need for them to encourage the field. The final committee report, which finally came out in the *Journal* three years later, cleaned up the written notes but came to the same conclusion:

> No specific recommendation has been made by the committee in the exceedingly complex field of race relations. Within the last three decades several mature studies of this important subject
have come from the presses. Some of them have opened new vistas toward a proper understanding of issues at stake, while others have stimulated a need for more penetrating research in many directions. The complexity of race relations demands the attention of more than the historian.60

The leaders of the SHA could not yet get their hands around this historical problem and its relationship to the southern history they studied. Their hobbled-together response even suggests that some were not convinced that there was a legitimate role for the historian to play in advocating social change or in studying aspects of the past that would enlighten that process. Significantly, race relations were not in their view a historical problem.

Although the leading lights of the association had been appointed to identify research topics, the Journal’s author list illustrates that the SHA organ was increasingly becoming an outlet for research done by newer and younger historians. In its first eleven volumes (1935–1945), full professors made up half the academically employed authors in the Journal. In the second eleven (1946–1956), just over a third were full professors.61 Some of these younger historians and convinced newcomers fortunately continued to tap at the door for recognition of the history of white southern racism and southern African Americans. A Yale instructor who investigated segregation in Union veterans’ societies in the South, for example, concluded with surprise that the former soldiers, having fought in a war to free African American slaves, had not “incurred any obligation to defend Negro rights against the dominant southern social arrangements.” Such agreement on the maintenance of white supremacy “regardless of section may have been an important step on the road to reunion, but it also definitely abandoned the Negroes to whatever discipline their white neighbors chose to impose.” The author had wanted to call his article “Jim Crow Enters the G. A. R.,” but the editor and the referee agreed that
this title was "too slangy" and "convey[ed] an erroneous first impression." A new title was dutifully agreed to, but the impression on readers and its indictment of the poison of southern white supremacy and northern complacency were no less powerful. University of Wisconsin professor Merle Curti actually wrote to the Journal editor to praise this article and the directions in southern history it represented.\textsuperscript{62}

Similarly, revisionist examinations of Reconstruction continued to make it through the critical process of the Journal and the program committee. One article on Reconstruction in Alabama by an archivist at the National Archives, Elizabeth Bethel, raised the eyebrows of the editor regarding her reliance on certain sources. "No doubt there was disorder in Alabama in 1867–1868, but statements concerning its extent, degree, cause, etc., cannot rest on unsubstantiated reports from interested parties," the editor warned, "such as [Freedmen's] Bureau officials, Radicals, leaders of white-Conservative-Democratic factions, etc." Who exactly this left to make reliable reports is not clear, but Bethel managed to revise her article to the satisfaction of the board. She chiseled away at the prevailing impression of the Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama that Walter L. Fleming had established by his failing to give it positive credit for anything other than assistance to destitute ex-Confederates. In Bethel's view, the Bureau had provided important and much needed services to both black and white southerners, but its downfall came from its association with "radical" political theories imposed by Congress. Her interpretation, then, only partially took up the mantle of the revisionists. Similarly, a session at the 1947 meeting in Savannah chaired by J. Merton England treated listeners to papers on "revisionist" approaches to disfranchisement in the 1890s. Commentator Howard K. Beale applauded the papers for their viewpoint and suggested that this kind of
scholarship dovetailed with "the function of the 'democratic historian' in contemporary controversies."\textsuperscript{63}

By the end of the following year, the first substantial changes in common practice at the Southern Historical Association had begun. Changes in leadership opened the possibility for new opportunities in 1949.\textsuperscript{64} For one, the Journal left Vanderbilt for the University of Kentucky. For another, James W. Patton stepped down as secretary-treasurer to become the director of the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina.\textsuperscript{65} Even if the new editor, Thomas D. Clark, and the new secretary-treasurer, J. Carlyle Sitterson, were no different temperamentally or politically from what came before, the face of the Southern Historical Association seemed different.

The association did not become the historical arm of the Dixiecrat insurgents in 1948.\textsuperscript{66} To be sure, Clark's first volume of the Journal contained the now typical examinations of white southern farmers and increasingly infrequent condemnations of the "bald attempt" by partisan congressmen to coerce the South into a new, submerged relationship to the nation.\textsuperscript{67} It also contained sharp counterpoints to the old popular stereotypes of "vengeance, disorder, corruption, [and] maladministration" of Reconstruction and examinations of the implementation of legal restrictions on African Americans, whether through "Jim Crow" laws or disfranchising constitutions. None of these issued strong moral accusations. Stanley Folmsbee ended his note on de jure Jim Crow with the conclusion that change in the law and in "public sentiment" would have to occur before "'Jim Crowism' becomes a thing of the past." George B. Tindall similarly ended his article on the mechanisms for black disfranchisement with a comment on the issue's continuing complexity.\textsuperscript{68} Nevertheless, the Journal seemed ready to take on
issues of blacks in the South, the institutional proscriptions which governed African Americans in public space, the political roles played by African Americans, the moods and vagaries of race relations, and "more direct consideration of the Negro himself"—the very issues identified by critics as having been almost wholly missing from the first fifteen volumes.69

These investigations by white southern historians into the development of southern institutional racism were joined by the first book review penned by an African American in seven years. John Hope Franklin had been assigned by the new Kentucky editors to evaluate a book by a white author, something that had never been done before in the Journal of Southern History. The book, Rollin Osterweis's Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South, was also not on a "black" topic like the books usually assigned to African American historians in the Journal and elsewhere.70 Franklin wrote a strong review that applauded the author for identifying elements of the unique regional mind and criticized him for underestimating the extent to which slavery and the plantation system formed a crucial part of the "fabric of [white] southern culture."

Almost as novel was the willingness of Vernon L. Wharton, a white historian teaching in Mississippi, to challenge the typical white understanding of Booker T. Washington in a review of a biography of the Wizard of Tuskegee. The biographer could have used the same material to show Washington as a "snooping, informant-cultivating despot" who "salved the consciences of southern whites by his proclamations of 'progress.'" The "recent improvements in opportunities for Negroes," Wharton continued, had been won as the result "of efforts of those whom Washington opposed, and by methods he
decried—literary and scholastic achievement, migration, labor organization, and political action.” Wharton endorsed these latter strategies.\(^{71}\)

The truly pathbreaking event of 1949, however, was John Hope Franklin’s appearance on a panel at the Southern Historical Association meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia. Although African Americans had participated in other academic meetings for years in the North and even occasionally in the South, the Southern Historical Association had never mounted a challenge to the personal and institutional resistance that had kept black scholars away from meetings.\(^{72}\) Program chair C. Vann Woodward, having selected a committee of willing accomplices, was determined to overcome this inertia. The committee imagined a “departure” from the usual SHA program and planned sessions that stressed “stock-taking,” reappraisal, innovation, and revision.\(^{73}\) Franklin’s role, the capstone of this new departure, was to make a definitive step toward the integration of the bodies and minds of the Southern Historical Association. Woodward and Franklin had become friends in the mid-1940s when they “quickly discovered the many bonds other than common scholarly interests to bring us together.” Together with Bell I. Wiley who had developed a tendency toward liberal activism, Woodward, Franklin, and the committee plotted a panel so attractive that the attending historians of the South would have no excuse other than their racism not to attend. To make sure of it, they scheduled the panel, “The South at Arms,” opposite a Latin American session.\(^{74}\)

Henry Steele Commager, professor of history at Columbia University, had heard about the plans, sought Franklin and the other southern historians out, and asked if he could preside over the session. Franklin was pleased with Commager’s “generous” introduction and delivered his paper on the roots of the South’s peculiarly martial spirit to
a crowded room. His fellow panelist Bell Wiley spoke on the reception of the Union army throughout the South, making the heterodox argument that white southerners reacted to the advancing troops with a range of emotions, from true hostility to genuine friendliness. Participants recalled that the session attracted a curious, large, and respectful audience. Townspeople even peeked in the windows to catch glimpse of the unusual scene of a black man speaking in a small southern hotel to a predominantly white audience listening politely. What a contrast this must have seemed to members who remembered the previous year’s meeting in Jackson, Mississippi, where black members attending the convention had to enter the hotel through a back door and then sit in the back of the meeting rooms. Franklin and Woodward had already decided not to challenge the hotel guest policies (Franklin instead stayed with friends in town), but it seems Franklin did attend the presidential dinner at the Williamsburg Inn, seated with a table of congenial allies to hear Lester Cappon’s address, “The Provincial South.”

Franklin’s participation defied the legal and customary proscriptions against his person. The simple fact of his physical presence at the SHA convention would have been an important attack on the segregated South, and most accounts of the 1949 event address this aspect. But Franklin also challenged intellectual segregation by daring to offer to a white southern audience his ideas on what made the white South tick. He investigated the heart of white southern historical tradition. Although Franklin had always been interested in the African American past, he was also concerned with the way that black scholars “had become the victim of segregation in the field of scholarship.” White scholars had largely conceded to black scholars the study of their own past. “To the extent that this concession was made,” Franklin later wrote, “it defeated a basic principle
of scholarship—namely, that given the material and techniques of scholarship and given
the mental capacity, any person could engage in the study of any particular field.” This
very problem defined “the dilemma of the American Negro scholar.” It is significant,
therefore, that he chose to be a historian of the white South in his first appearance at the
Southern Historical Association.77

The African American past was not forgotten at the 1949 meeting when white
historians Chase Mooney and Vernon Wharton appraised the status and needs of its
historiography. Mooney reviewed the historical literature on slavery and endorsed the
trend away from the institution’s legal and economic aspects toward investigations of its
cultural texture and social reality. Wharton’s assessment of the literature on black history
after the Civil War issued a “ringing challenge to the profession for its shortcomings in
this department.” White historians especially were still too likely to look at sources that
only revealed “the white man’s reactions to the black man’s encroachments.” African
American historians had been making such arguments all along, but many white SHA
members may have been forced to hear the challenge to think on these things for the first
time.78

Woodward and the program committee also used the occasion of the Southern
Historical Association’s fifteenth anniversary to turn celebration into a strong critique for
the future of southern history. They would not spare themselves the rod. Yale University
professor David M. Potter was tapped to evaluate the first fifteen volumes of the Journal
of Southern History. In his view, the Southern Historical Association had thus far
concentrated on the causes and aftermath of sectionalism without the “perpetuation of old
emotional attitudes.” That was a small step in the right direction, and one that he
understood. The sectional South, after all, was the least "elusive" South, the region at its most distinctive and clear-cut. After a certain point, Potter argued it simply became "fictitious" to speak of a "South." Still, he offered a long list of topics he wished to see in future Journal issues, including more attention to the politics of recent periods, "institutional controls upon race relations," and southern African Americans.79

The program committee also imagined a critique of SHA presidential addresses but struggled to find someone who could produce the kind of real critical grit they were looking for without endangering his own career. "It had to be a Southerner," Woodward mused, "but he could not be a past president of the sanhedrin nor a prospective one (of which there seems to be quite a number)." The committee unanimously selected H. C. Nixon, the former I'll Take My Stand contributor turned liberal reformer who now worked at Vanderbilt University in the political science department. Only Nixon was relatively free to speak his mind: "you know all the gentlemen concerned and are sufficiently out, and yet of the ball club to stand behind the pitcher's box and call the strikes for us."80

Nixon's finished product delivered the hoped-for "pungent appraisal" of the SHA leaders' history and attitude. Overall, Nixon thought the addresses were eloquent, devoted, and interesting, but dreadfully polemical, obsessive, and narrowly conceived. "There is, on the whole, too much use of the materials and the ideas of sectionalism, not enough of attention to diversity and group divisions within the 'Solid South,'" Nixon concluded. "I can find little recognition in the collection of anything inherently wrong with the South, of anything to criticize." The SHA presidents were more sectional than Frederick Jackson Turner, more romantic than Sir Walter Scott, and less concerned with
the moral burden of slavery than Thomas Jefferson or Robert E. Lee would have tolerated. A foreigner reading Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* and the collected Southern Historical Association presidential addresses would not recognize the land as the same place. Woodward loved it. Nixon’s paper was sour, satiric, biting, and terribly funny. “They will take it OK,” the program chair assured his rebel. “They will have to laugh or be laughed at. And several of your punches can’t be laughed off.”

The program committee insurgents expected some sort of disapprobation from the membership at large. Yet everything went off quietly and without rebuke. Woodward was perhaps the target of some grumbling, but his orchestrations were certainly not fatal to his career, nor was he the “free agent” separated from the track of SHA leadership that he imagined himself to be. Within a year, he had been elected vice-president, slated to become president in 1952. Nixon thought that his paper on the presidential addresses had been “received and supported much more sympathetically and enthusiastically” than he had expected. “The rank-and-file of membership was riper for my gospel than some of the higher leaders seemed to be,” he confided to a friend. They were ready to hear something new, long tired of the “patching of old quilts in our Association.” Journal editor Tom Clark printed both Potter’s assessment of the first fifteen volumes of the *Journal* and Nixon’s acerbic critique of the sectional character of past presidential addresses. “They” did indeed take it OK, and the widespread, if silent, acceptance ensured further support in the future.

The Southern Historical Association took steps backward along with its forward ones during its snail-pace integration process. In 1950, president William C. Binkley rebuked Nixon for expecting too much moral purpose for the historian: SHA presidents
had simply “dealt with what happened rather than what ought to have happened.” In 1951, the association convened in Montgomery where the “southern hospitality...in evidence” did not extend to African American members, who were forced to sit in the balcony of the Alabama House of Representatives at a special session on Jefferson Davis. At the same time, an increasing number of book reviews by African American scholars were published in the *Journal of Southern History*. An ASNLH-sponsored examination of the *American Historical Review*, the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, and the *Journal of Southern History* discovered to its investigators’ great shock that “the survey revealed a larger proportion of materials [“pertaining to the Negro”] in the last named than in the other two.” The ASNLH historians were not satisfied with this allotment of space and rededicated themselves to the *Journal of Negro History*, but they saw that their work was having an effect. In 1951 editor Tom Clark removed the plantation house from the *Journal of Southern History*’s title page. Former editor Wendell Stephenson called this move a “minor” change in the *Journal’s* appearance, yet the move was symbolically, rather than aesthetically, significant.

The intellectual integration of southern history was always accompanied by convoluted arrangements to physically accommodate all members. As the association grew larger through the 1950s, these machinations became increasingly complex and at the same time more important. At the 1952 meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee, the local arrangements chairman, Leroy Graf, had paid particular attention throughout the planning to make provisions for black members, including living quarters and dining options outside the headquarters hotel. The hotel management, however, was amenable to desegregated sessions—Elsie M. Lewis, a black historian, was scheduled to give a paper
on the African American “political mind,” for example—but reneged on the agreement to have a desegregated presidential dinner the very day the historians arrived. Graf and Secretary-Treasurer Bennett H. Wall, in charge of his first annual meeting, had absolutely no idea what to do. They checked with neighboring restaurants, but even if these places had been willing to integrate their dining rooms, no single facility was large enough to accommodate the SHA crowd. Wall remembers that they paced around the lobby, waiting for President C. Vann Woodward to arrive. All three agreed it was unacceptable to force African American members to miss the presidential dinner.87

Finally, Graf hit upon the idea of checking with the mountain resorts outside the city. When they found a place willing to have the whole group out for dinner, Graf arranged buses to cart the historians away from Knoxville, pleased to turn the tables on the hotel’s economic argument that they could not afford to offend white clients with a desegregated dining room. “So we went out to this place, I can’t remember whether it was five miles or twenty miles,” Wall later recalled, “but it was all pretty much in glee like you’d stolen a cake, because everybody was happy about cheating the hotel out of the one thing—the dinner party—that they make a good deal of money on.” The winter clutter of a summer resort did not deter the historians from enjoying their outing, even if Woodward’s poor speaking voice and a faulty microphone prevented them from fully understanding his presidential masterpiece, “The Irony of Southern History.” Although the move was made to include only a few African American members, no one complained, at least not to Woodward. Almost everyone seems to have willingly gone on the desegregation adventure. “And after that,” Woodward remembered, “we were integrated.”88
If only it had been so easy. In the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, the question of desegregation and policies of protest against discrimination in southern hotels had provoked "public rancor" and rendered devastating schisms within the organization.\(^89\) The Southern Historical Association wanted to avoid this level of controversy, but the weakness of the handshake contract with hotels, the expanding organization, a new secretary-treasurer interested in making things fair, and the mounting desire for some sort of policy statement from the leadership regarding inclusion stemming from threats from the floor of the annual business meetings, all combined to make African American participation official Southern Historical Association business for each of the next several years. On recommendation of President Kathryn Abbey Hanna, the council finally considered scrapping all meal functions for the 1953 meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, so as to avoid any confrontation with the hotel. In the end, however, they kept the social functions and restricted African American members from entering the room to hear the papers until after dinner was finished. Dissatisfaction with this exclusionary compromise led to much discussion at the Jacksonville council meeting and the ultimate decision to coordinate with the NAACP "to determine a list of places where accommodation for all members might be obtained in the South." More crucially, Woodward proposed a motion that all future meeting invitations be accepted conditionally "with the understanding that it is the policy of the Association that every reasonable effort be made to accommodate all members at all formal sessions of the annual convention." This motion—the so-called "Woodward resolution"—narrowly passed, with Secretary-Treasurer Ben Wall casting a supporting vote to break a 5–5 split. The new requirements, which in truth had no teeth for enforcement, were forwarded to
the succeeding local arrangements chair for the 1954 meeting in Columbia, South Carolina. The public face of the association contained no hint of this controversy. Wall simply reported to the association that 1953 had been a “trying year” for him.⁹⁰

And so it slowly went as the SHA executive council managed to drag its feet over the next several years instead of making a clear-cut policy against discrimination in southern hotels. In the meantime, the association depended on the personal influence of the local arrangements committee to see to it that hotels cooperated. In Columbia, for example, the local arrangements chair was a socially prominent professor who ensured that “there would be no obstacles” to full participation in the meeting, including luncheons, dinners, and tourist outings, for African American members. At the 1954 executive council meeting, Wall reported that the NAACP “was not aware that any ‘white’ hotels in the South handled Negro guests.” Seeing no other option, the council voted to continue making meeting selections on the basis of the Woodward resolution.⁹¹ Interested black historians were also encouraged to join the Southern Historical Association albeit with this statement of policy: “We welcome the membership of all persons interested in Southern history or history in the association. We print articles and run the program without reference to race or religion. In most cases in recent years the official meetings and official dinners of the Association have been open to all members. We are working toward that as a policy and making some progress—but slowly.”⁹²

At the same time, program participants became increasingly outspoken about functionally integrating southern history and criticizing opponents who disagreed that history could have a social purpose. At the 1954 meeting, Wood Gray and W. Stitt Robinson, for example, vocally debated the extent to which William E. Dodd’s devotion
to promoting democracy “had a vitiating effect on his writings” at a session on pioneer southern historians. Florida State University professor Benjamin F. Rogers’s investigation of the pan-Africanism of Du Bois and Marcus Garvey stimulated an “uncommon amount of discussion from the floor.” Nevertheless, the program chair noted that the session on the Progressive Movement’s “forward-looking white men” slotted opposite drew twice the audience “as the one that featured...the strivings of two Negro leaders.” The Columbia meeting also marked the first major panel allocated to a revisionist viewpoint on the antebellum South, provocatively asking “Was the Old South Backward or Merely Different?” Panelists dismantled the long-standing argument that the South had been economically and politically egalitarian for whites. The “disparity among men,” North Georgia State College professor T. Conn Bryan argued, was simply accepted as a fact of life. Thomas P. Govan suggested that sectional ill-will was caused by “slavery, rather than the incompatibility of capitalistic and agrarian economies,” and that the New South was no different from the Old South in its dedication to white supremacy. Some 250 people attended this session that cut right to the heart of the “southern past” that the Southern Historical Association had been dedicated to since its founding.93

The Politicization of the Southern Historical Association, 1955–1961

The Southern Historical Association stalled in making a principled stand against segregation, but personal initiative under the Woodward resolution enabled SHA leaders to encourage members to move toward a more liberal position. President Bell Wiley’s contribution to this pressure was the desegregation of the 1955 meeting at the Peabody
Hotel in Memphis, the “watering place” of Mississippi and Arkansas planters, commonly quipped to be the front-porch of the Mississippi Delta. The Delta was the deepest of Deep South places, where the white murderers of black teenager Emmett Till had been acquitted just weeks before the historians descended on Memphis. Secretary Wall had made the usual arrangements with the Peabody to enable African American members to attend both sessions and meals at the hotel. Although African American guests were not permitted to stay at the hotel, the local arrangements chair assured Wall that a new black hotel was nearby and that the Peabody had promised to allow black taxis to pull through the portico to drop off and pick up black members.

The 1955 meeting seemed to present to program chair James W. Silver an unprecedented opportunity for the Southern Historical Association to address the massive legal, political, and social change swirling around the South. The Brown decisions had been handed down; some southern universities had begun a slow march toward the admission of black students; the call for civil rights was rapidly becoming a movement. No matter the prejudices against political activism within the Southern Historical Association, Silver refused to reproduce a “staid” program of the past; and yet he recognized that there was “considerable variance of opinion in the association as to just what a program should be.” For the first time in the association’s history, the program committee officially polled the members for suggestions, proposals, and volunteers. Silver also tried to bring together scholars of different disciplines, politicians, and policymakers to create a place for real engagement with the social, economic, and political issues of the day. “Some people won’t like that but I think most will,” Silver wrote to
one of the pillars of the association, “I wonder if it wouldn’t be a good idea for the historians to listen to the economists for a year, and vice versa.”

The star attraction of the 1955 meeting, however, was the opening dinner session where three southerners—Cecil Sims, a Nashville lawyer; Benjamin E. Mays, the president of Morehouse College; and William Faulkner, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist—addressed the recent Supreme Court *Brown* rulings and the future of Jim Crow in the South. Six hundred people packed into the Peabody’s Continental ballroom, including newspaper photographers and “would-be gate crashers.” It was, as Silver later reported, “one of the most dramatic gatherings in the history of the Association.” One notable missing person was program committee member John Hope Franklin. Although Franklin had been very involved in the planning of the panel, particularly in his insistence that the black speaker’s paper not be labeled the “Negro’s view,” he refused to come to the Memphis meeting. “Even my thick skin can be wounded by a repetition of the insults and the indignities I have received there [at the Peabody Hotel] and numerous places like it. I can only hope that some day our South will permit me to be a man.”

Sims considered his response to the *Brown* decisions a “liberal” one, because he asked that the white South not resist through “delay or subterfuge” the ruling of the Supreme Court. “The agency set up by ourselves in our democracy to determine questions of this nature has unanimously rendered a decision which established with finality the illegality of compulsory segregation of the Negro in the public schools,” he said. Nonetheless, Sims pointed out that what was as at issue was the *compulsory* nature of school segregation. With truly equal schools, racial separation would likely result by choice. The legal obligation to desegregate, in his opinion, was not by any means a
moral obligation to pursue integration. Making the survival of the public school system his first priority, Sims expected that the South could come up with a "rational plan" that would satisfy the court's mandate without sacrificing the best education for the South's children. 99

Benjamin Mays captivated the audience with a moralistic approach to desegregation. He spoke in the cadences of a "magnificent old-style orator," Ben Wall remembered, building up to his main point that the United States must not tolerate its own hypocrisy. Either fix the problem, he argued, or change the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bible. Fix the problem, or suffer the consequences of America's hollow claim to be the exemplar of democracy in the Cold War world. "If we lose this battle for freedom for 15 million Negroes we will lose it for 145 million whites and eventually we will lose it for the world," he concluded. "This is indeed a time for greatness." The Southern Historical Association audience interrupted Mays at least twice with applause in the midst of his speech ("a phenomenon without precedent in the Association's history," President Wiley noted) and gave him a standing ovation. 100

William Faulkner's speech was a strange mixture of anti-communist rhetoric, racial stereotyping, regional devotion, and poetry. "To live anywhere in the world of A.D. 1955 and be against equality because of race or color," he began, "is like living in Alaska and being against snow." The only thing that kept America from strangulation by communism was the belief in human dignity, liberty, and equality. Without these three, Faulkner argued, America did not stand a chance at survival. People who believed in freedom needed to stick together "not as black people nor white people nor pink nor blue nor green people, but as people who are still free with all other people who are still free."
The United States was undeservedly lucky. Its nonwhite minorities already believed in the American promise; "even when ignorant from inferior or no education, even despite the record and history of inequality, they still believe in our concepts of freedom and democracy." Faulkner was in fact rather ugly about it: these people "who only three hundred years ago were eating rotten elephant and hippo meat in African rain-forests" wanted to join the fight for freedom and believed in America's possibilities. The choice to be slave or free was no longer a question of color. "We speak now against the day," Faulkner later added to his statement, "when our Southern people who will resist to the last these inevitable changes in social relations, will, when they have been forced to accept what they at one time might have accepted with dignity and goodwill, will say, 'Why didn't someone tell us this before? Tell us this in time?" He would not stand by to watch "not just Mississippi but all the South, wreck and ruin itself twice in less than a hundred years, over the Negro question."101

Even though these three in their own ways had begged white southerners not to resist the coming tide, the Southern Historical Association suffered some angry members. One Tennessee elementary school principal objected in advance to "what the tone of the program will be." The participants were clearly in favor of desegregation, he wrote. "Surely this is a departure from the virtue of objectivity to which any historical association should strictly adhere." Another irate member objected to the fact that the session included "none of the many distinguished men who have expressed contrary views." As a result, the SHA program "was not sincere study of current history, it was ex parte propaganda, wholly unworthy of any historical organization." This "student of History" subsequently resigned his membership. These are only two examples of the
many "hot" letters Secretary-Treasurer Bennett H. Wall received from displeased members. By the beginning of the new year, Wall reported that there had been more than a dozen similar resignations, mostly from members in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama, as a direct result of the "Segregation Decisions" panel. He was not terribly worried, because other new members had joined, perhaps in response to the same program.\textsuperscript{102}

The Southern Historical Association could have disavowed any direct support of these opinions had Wiley not wanted to publish and distribute the papers under the association's imprint, quickly "while memory of the session is still fresh." Though incoming president James W. Patton approved the plan, the secretary and the editor of the \textit{Journal} hesitated, not because they disapproved of the material, but because they thought such hasty action under SHA auspices set a "dangerous precedent" that could lead to a "haphazard publication policy."\textsuperscript{103} After much prolonged debate, council votes, and extreme caution for fear of losing membership over making a "political" statement, the pamphlets were finally mailed out to all SHA members from the SHA offices in August 1956. As a result of opposition in the council, the association had not paid for the printing and distribution and its name appeared nowhere on the pamphlet. The foreword also contained a disclaimer disassociating the Southern Historical Association and its members with contrary ideas from the opinions expressed therein. Still, Wiley was pleased. "Of course we will get some criticism for issuing the pamphlet, just as we got criticism for scheduling the session," Wiley informed his presidential successor, "but I think that the association will also get some applause for the venture."\textsuperscript{104}
The effect of all of these challenges to the practice of southern history—the desegregated dinners, the papers by black historians, the historical investigations of racism, the promotion of a liberal viewpoint—was to expose white southerners to a different South than the one they thought they knew. Many liberals within the Southern Historical Association worried that “the KKK...and the Dixiecrats have been fed directly or indirectly by a downward intellectual trickle of influence from a too self-consciously sectional interpretation of history.” In the mid-1950s, as resistance to civil rights initiatives through white Citizens Councils and the like escalated, these historians were not only distressed by their own complicity in promoting a narrative of regional history that supported such resistance but also found the segregationists loudly distasteful. It was the white southern segregationists who dominated the news footage and claimed “southern” privilege. As Wiley wrote in the introduction to the Segregation Decisions, “the vocal South—the South known to outsiders—is overwhelmingly segregationist. The session at Memphis revealed the existence of another and a liberal South—soft-spoken and restrained, but articulate and powerful—that is earnestly pledged to moderation and reason.” Moderation and reason: this could be the slogan for the Southern Historical Association’s approach to the world around them. Still, it was a time for cautious optimism. “The sun of intelligence is shining too brightly in the South for a...Civil War II,” one black journalist wrote just before the Memphis meeting. “Too many intelligent Southerners have seen the handwriting on the wall and they also see the futility of a Civil War against the Negroes of the nation. It is just a matter of time and the New South will be heard from.”105
While there were still white southern historians who simply did not understand or agree with the point of view of reformers, the massive resistance from most southern institutions of higher education disheartened many others. Some were shamed by such close-mindedness and legal transgressions in a university. Others who had more outspoken views on civil rights feared for the safety of their jobs. Still others worried that they possessed neither the constitution to work at these institutions nor the moral courage to protest. “The only firm conclusion that I have reached” after witnessing the spectacle of the attempted desegregation of his university, history professor Allen Going acknowledged, “is that the University of Alabama has demonstrated once again lack of foresight, planning, and leadership—and this time with near tragic results.”

The Southern Historical Association, too, still lacked a well-planned policy. Its accommodation of its African American members and black history topics had thus far been enabled by the personal influence of certain well-placed individuals within the association. The result was an inconsistent approach to black history and black historians. The planners of the 1956 meeting in Durham, for example, wanted to stay away from the desegregation issue physically and topically, though unsuccessful discussions apparently also took place about arranging the first joint session with the ASNLH. In the second half of the 1950s, generational and regional conflict challenged the complacency of the association to be satisfied with such piecemeal progress. These opponents organized themselves in preparation for the 1957 annual convention in Houston. A leader of the insurgents was Howard K. Beale, a former University of North Carolina professor who had long criticized the practice and politics of southern history and suffered the antagonism of his former colleagues at Chapel Hill and elsewhere. As
the 1957 meeting approached, Wall noticed that Beale "and so many of his abolitionist
friends in the South have paid dues or been re-instated that, I wonder what is up." In
order to avoid antagonistic conflict and political posturing on the meeting floor akin to
the chaos that reigned during the Mississippi Valley Historical Association's movement
toward official desegregation, Wall wanted to be sure that someone at the Houston
meeting knew parliamentary procedure.

Who was this supposed cabal planning to raise hell on the Southern Historical
Association floor? "They are all my friends but your students," Wall told his graduate
advisor Fletcher M. Green. In fact, despite Green's own cautious approach to the past
and present, many of his University of North Carolina students had developed into quite
liberal activists. "Several of his boys are abolitionists and quite a number are what
J. W. P. [Patton] would call 'operators,'" Wall wrote of the contributors to the festschrift
in Green's honor, Writing Southern History. Wall claimed these things with a measure of
pride as an "abolitionist" himself, having played a crucial part in testifying for Thurgood
Marshall in a 1949 case to desegregate the University of Kentucky. A second
component was a group of white, often Jewish, professors at black southern colleges,
men like August Meier who taught at Morgan State College in Baltimore and Howard
Zinn at Spelman College in Atlanta. The third component was African American
scholars in the South, interested in attending the Southern Historical Association
meetings and tired of the uncertainties and moral compromises that accompanied each
individual location.

As the meeting approached, the local Houston press boasted of the city's latest
"cultural stride" as the "brainy researchers into America's past" crossed the Mississippi
River for the first time in SHA history. An op-ed piece published just two days before
the meeting started even claimed that there was no “race hatred” in the South—that such
ideas were the result of vicious rumors spread by New York journalists. The writer’s
crowning piece of evidence? the fact that African American funeral processions received
white police escorts. Yet the stride was not so great as to allow full and free access to
the Rice Hotel for black members. Many professors from Houston’s college for African
Americans, Texas Southern University, worried about the long-term consequences of
their attending the conference under such stipulations. Black members suffered a number
of indignities at the Rice Hotel, including being prohibited from using the elevator to
reach the mezzanine level where some panels were held. Under the circumstances,
hearing Walter Prescott Webb advocate the removal of all segregation barriers “with all
deliberate speed” or George P. Shannon of the American Association of University
Professors discuss strategies for academic freedom in the face of massive resistance to
civil rights at southern institutions may not have seemed all that hopeful. “It is
discouraging and it is a disgrace to have a meeting held under the limitations on Negro
historians in Houston,” Howard Beale wrote to a despondent colleague afterwards:

I do believe, however, that it is best to push as far as one can
push and then take advantage of that much gain and hold the line
there by going to the meetings and using as much of what is
gained as one can. To stay away and boycott a meeting like that
because the developments were only a step in the right direction
I believe, on sober thought, would be a mistake. By doing what
you did, you accustomed the Houston Hotel to having Negros
using their facilities and you helped ‘hold the line’ as far as we
have been able to push it. I have great respect for Negros who
are willing to help the cause by going as far as it is possible to go
under what are humiliating conditions and thereby help make
possible for us all to go ahead in the future.

Beale and August Meier registered an official complaint of discrimination with the
Southern Historical Association and requested that the already assigned meeting for 1958
be moved from Nashville to a place that would fairly and equally accommodate everyone. The SHA leadership felt backed up against a wall, stymied by the refusal of most southern hotels to meet their preferred demands yet unwilling to use their strength to test them.\textsuperscript{114}

The Houston meeting marked the last time that these reformers would stand satisfied with halfway accommodation measures. Beale began a letter-writing campaign that he was certain made the SHA leaders “very unhappy by telling them that it is not the White Citizens’ Councils but good liberals who are willing to invite a convention and participate in meeting in their hotels under the rules there who are to blame for bad race relations.” Only a year after encouraging the Texas Southern professors in their decision not to boycott the Houston meeting, Beale changed his tune. Although he was asked to participate in the program, he refused:

I cannot bring myself to stay in a hotel where I cannot treat my Negro friends in the profession as I would treat them elsewhere and as any decent American should treat them anywhere. . . . This is 1958, not 1880. It seems to me incredible that people like yourself will be a party in 1958 to the practice of racists who are willing to treat a distinguished Negro historian as an inferior person not fit to stay in your hotels, not fit to use your toilets, not permitted to go above the ground floor, and not permitted to go with his friends into a restaurant for a meal. . . . I keep trying to understand you people who are participating in this sort of thing and sanction it by agreeing to such prohibitions on the part of your hotels.

By not being a part of the solution, Beale concluded, his friends at Vanderbilt were part of the problem. Surely he was right in his insistence that southern hotels would change the rules to keep the convention. By the late 1950s, the Southern Historical Association brought upwards of eight hundred people to town. Other southern regional associations, like the Southern Political Science Association, had already made it policy to meet only in hotels that would treat all members as guests. Chamber of commerce officials had
begun to notice that segregation drained convention dollars away. The Southern Historical Association could have used the profit card to the advantage of social justice.

August Meier agreed to be on a Nashville panel on the NAACP with black historian Lawrence D. Reddick. Since program chair Rembert W. Patrick was under fire from older members of the association for planning a meeting whose focus on the origins of the NAACP, labor, the economic cost of segregation, and other reform movements was not seen as suitably historical, Patrick and Meier relished their own boldness. Meier and Beale (who had a change of heart, deciding to attend the meeting but not stay at the Hermitage Hotel) also discussed strategies about raising a resolution against segregation and discrimination from the floor of the business meeting, but neither one thought he was the appropriate or most effective choice. In the end, they both sent letters to the executive council, speaking on behalf of SHA members who were frustrated by the refusal of the council to follow the example of other regional organizations and make a statement regarding meeting policies. Forced to discuss specific action, the executive council divided over even the question of appointing a committee to investigate the situation. The vice-president opposed such a move. "This was a historical association and not a League for the Betterment of Mankind or a Civil Liberties group," he argued before the council. All they had to do was try their best "to secure equal accommodations for all members and let it go at that." Bell I. Wiley and Rembert W. Patrick proposed a committee anyway, and the motion passed. Even as the politics of the present bubbled over at the meeting, the local Nashville white press praised the SHA historians for their fair, accurate, factual, unromantic yet sympathetic portrayals of the South's past.
Any semblance of holding things together fell apart in 1959 when the Southern Historical Association returned to the Biltmore Hotel in Atlanta, the site of the first protest against racial discrimination eighteen years earlier. The hotel vigorously resisted the association’s requests for accommodation, even refusing at first to allow black members to attend panels in the hotel. 119 As a result, the European History section, which had been formally incorporated at the 1955 annual meeting, acted in defiance of the council’s non-confrontational policy. A European historian had long been chosen for the program committee to organize sessions in other historical areas and had usually been left to his own devices. At the Atlanta meeting, however, Atlanta University professor Rushton Coulborn, who had agreed to be a commentator at one of these sessions, refused to cooperate at the Biltmore Hotel and recommended that the panel be moved to the Atlanta University campus in protest. Mississippi State College for Women professor George Monks, scheduled to chair the panel, would not participate if it was transferred out of the hotel. Tulane University professor John L. Snell, the program committee representative, decided without consulting the rest of the committee, the local arrangements chair, or the council to move to the session to the black university campus. 120

The council was outraged at Snell’s “arbitrary assumption of authority” and was now stuck with a bill for busing members from the Biltmore. Some members castigated Coulborn as a “professional trouble maker” who had a history of stirring up sentiment even though he knew well in advance the conditions under which the meeting would operate. 121 While the council was especially angry about the extent to which their authority had been usurped, the real issue was whether the association could continue to
function cohesively under such segregationist restrictions. Snell addressed the council
with a "cogent plea that the Association immediately get on a practical and liberal
operating basis concerning the program and other activities" by making it official policy
to oppose discriminatory hotels and insist on full and equal participation. Dewey
Grantham, the program chair, stepped up and supported Snell's opposition to the policies
of the Atlanta hotel and made the unpopular suggestion that the executive council finally
do what was right and decline to meet in hotels that discriminated against African
Americans. The council, however, ended up merely resolving to make sure that all
proposed meeting participants understood the conditions under which the SHA operated
and agree to stand by them. As a result of this inaction, the European History Section
used its newly institutionalized status to oppose the actions of the SHA executive council.
At its own business meeting two days later, the section passed a resolution to insist that
the SHA executive council "agree to hold future conventions only in hotels which have
explicitly assured the Council that all members of the Association will be permitted to
attend all scheduled meetings of the convention, including those at which meals are
served." This "European History section resolution" became the new touchstone for the
most enlightened policy the association had offered.

Despite their resistance to official change, most executive council members
recognized that the resolution of the segregation issue "was a moral obligation and. . .
procrastination was not the answer." In addition to dealing with the Atlanta University
move, the council had to prepare a statement for the following day's business meeting,
knowing full well that Spelman College professor Howard Zinn had planned to present a
resolution against discrimination from the floor. Some council members wanted to
preempt any discussion at the business meeting by updating the membership on the committee which had been appointed to appraise the status of hotel policies on segregation. Others were certain that even mentioning the committee would cause a floor fight and so should be kept under wraps. The debate was finally headed off when University of North Carolina professor James L. Godfrey argued that it was “unbecoming a learned organization” for the council “to take refuge in technicalities.” The leadership’s reluctant comments about an ongoing survey at the business meeting must have seemed utterly ridiculous when Zinn emphatically proposed that the association no longer meet places where all members weren’t treated equally. In front of the 550 people in attendance, Zinn’s resolution was ruled out of order, because the constitution stipulated that only the council had input on where meetings were held. Zinn generated a lot of publicity, telling one reporter that the resolution was not intended to prohibit the Southern Historical Association from meeting but to “get hotels to follow the American way.”

When the special committee finally finished its investigation, it found hotels of the appropriate size in three Florida cities, Kansas City, St. Louis, Oklahoma City, and Williamsburg, that would treat black guests equally in all areas, including providing rooms. Hotels in two Arkansas cities, three additional Florida cities, Tulsa, four Tennessee cities, and all major cities in Texas, would allow African Americans access to all facilities, except rooms. The council stalled over what to do with this information. One faction wanted to avoid the question about whether or not black guests could stay at the headquarters hotel, though a wiser group realized that the issue would only come up again and again until all aspects were definitively ruled on. A more legitimate worry was that if a resolution on equal accommodation passed at the 1960 annual meeting in Tulsa
on the periphery of the association’s usual circuit, other members might perceive the policy as having been the product of a minority effort concocted in a “smoke-filled room.” To avoid this appearance, the council decided to discuss the committee report again in Tulsa, publish it in 1961, and plan to open the floor to policy recommendations at the 1961 meeting in Chattanooga. The decision thus combined delay tactics with a real effort to be forthcoming about executive decision-making.  

In the meantime, Meier continued his letter-writing campaign to the council, sending an article on biracial conventions published by the Southern Regional Council to each council member and planning to publicly speak out on the issue at the Tulsa meeting. Meier’s plans to address the membership were almost derailed when he had a court appearance scheduled during the convention for his arrest at a civil rights demonstration in Baltimore. With that disaster averted, Meier made it to Tulsa and attended the business meeting where the council announced its intention to continue to operate under the current policy of meeting places where all members could attend all official functions. Meier decided not to present his case in the form of a resolution, because (as he later recalled) he could not find someone to second it. Instead he simply remarked that the council’s plan was insufficient and missed the point about equal treatment of all members. Meier was shocked at the applause and the compliments on his “courage” that he received. As he later told his college president, both of those facts were “an interesting commentary both on the timidity of southern scholars today and on the general timidity of scholars when dealing with the power structure of their own professional organizations.” At the same time, Meier underestimated the real undercurrent of support that much of the SHA membership and many of the leaders felt
for the proposals in principle even if they were unable to see their way to their enactment.\textsuperscript{127}

Meier, Zinn, and their compatriots considered presenting a constitutional amendment at the 1961 meeting in Chattanooga to force a policy change in meeting assignments but ended up drafting another resolution to petition the council to make a new policy. Even as the council now prepared to present the European History section resolution as their new governing policy, the insurgents raised the bar to provide housing without discrimination as part of the Southern Historical Association’s necessary commitment to its black members.\textsuperscript{128} John Snell’s response to Meier’s request to support the new resolution at the Chattanooga meeting is indicative of the place white professors in the South now found themselves. Just a few years before in Atlanta, Snell had been at the forefront of protest and change in the association. In 1961, Snell struggled with his own acceptance of compromised principles. He would certainly prefer African American members to eat and sleep in the same hotel as the meeting, Snell wrote to Meier after receiving a draft of the new resolution. He was afraid, however, that Meier’s policy would restrict the Council too much in selecting a place to meet at present, and make of it an organization working for change in hotel and even municipal policies. We must work for these changes as individuals, but I have traditionally questioned whether this is a necessary or desirable function of a professional historical society. What is \textit{most} important is that attendance at all professional sessions, including those at which meals are served, should be open to all on an equal basis. If, in addition, the Council can secure a hotel that will lodge Negro members, so much the better. This is my own highly individual thinking on this matter \textit{at this time}.

Snell sadly concluded, “It is not an admirable position, but one that I believe represents a compromise between the ideal and the real.” Reactionaries would have a field day if the
resolution failed. The implications for the future of the association were too dangerous and uncontrollable. He could not support the resolution as written.\textsuperscript{129}

The vehemence of the conservative members surprised and worried the more liberal members; the fear of losing the white southern moderate, still so delicately (or weakly) refusing to take sides, compelled most council members to warn Meier against the consequences of presenting the resolution.\textsuperscript{130} Meier struggled to convince them that his resolution did not transform the Southern Historical Association from its stated objectives into a political agitation group. “What I am working for is to get the SHA to treat all of its members equally,” he wrote, as “the only fair and democratic thing to do.” If African Americans could not feel fully welcome at the convention hotels, then it was the duty of the Southern Historical Association—not the hotel, not the city government—to make it so. He asked for and obtained permission to speak to the council before the business meeting to present his case in person, but the council, attached perhaps too firmly to a concern about the practical details of getting a convention of that size organized, could not be persuaded. “There are principles and principles,” T. Harry Williams argued, “and the important one in this whole issue is what is best for the Southern Historical Association.”\textsuperscript{131} As a result, the council passed a new version (“the Grantham resolution”) of their position on the annual meeting that stated principles while leaving some leeway for practical considerations:

The Executive Council of the Southern Historical Association has long been concerned over the difficulties the Association encounters in its efforts to secure equality of treatment for all of its members at the annual meetings. The officers of the Association have considered the problem thoughtfully and at length. They reaffirm their determination to hold the annual meetings under conditions which accord all of the Association’s members equality of treatment, and they intend to continue the progress that is being made toward this objective. In making
arrangements for future conventions, the Council will use its best efforts to see that all hotel facilities and other meeting places are open to the Association's members on a fully equal basis. It will accept no invitation from any sponsoring agency unless assurance is given that all members of the Association will be permitted to attend all official functions at the annual meetings, including those at which meals are served.

The resolution was affirmed at the business meeting. Meier later wrote that he had been “outmaneuvered” by the association leadership who had ranged from “frosty to indignant” to his proposals. SHA leaders would have argued that they had to pay attention to both the moral and the operational aspects of any policy decision.¹³²

Yet the effect of the Grantham resolution, the liberal leanings of the association leadership in the early 1960s, and the rapidity of change in the South after 1960 was that the Southern Historical Association never again met at a hotel that would not permit African American members all the privileges of guests.¹³³ In 1962, the association went to Miami and held a “history making” joint session with the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, presided over by Charles H. Wesley. By 1964, smaller southern cities like Little Rock and Memphis, tarnished by their images during the civil rights movement, begged the association for the business and made very rigid guarantees of fair and open treatment of all members.¹³⁴

The Southern Historical Association thus ignored, delayed, and debated the role of African Americans historians in their association and the role of African Americans in the South's past for twenty years. Over that generation's span of time, SHA members reconceived their own political purpose as historians, teachers, and intellectuals. Clement Eaton's 1961 presidential address on academic freedom in the South sealed this transformation. "Racial discrimination in our educational institutions is a great evil that we as an association and as individuals can not ignore, for it now has reached the point of
interfering with the free trade of ideas in our profession,” he said to an interracial dinner audience in Chattanooga. “Can we as individuals or as an association hide our heads in the sand and refuse to express our opinions on these vital subjects?” Integration in schools, in colleges, and in the Southern Historical Association was a necessary, evident, and irrevocably imminent fact of the southern future. It would and must happen, and those who opposed it would find themselves “in the future...ashamed of their stand.” “I urge you therefore to stand with the future and not with the conservative past,” Eaton pleaded. To take such “a bold and courageous stand on the integration of the races in our educational system” did not make the Southern Historical Association “a reform or crusading organization.” The future of the South’s education was their “province” and their ultimate purpose. We are teachers, Eaton insisted. “It should be a high honor for us to lead public opinion rather than tamely to follow it.” It was their duty, right, and privilege “not only to teach and write history, but also to influence even in a small degree, the course of future history.”

The Southern Historical Association did not serve as the “white hope” that Frank Owsley had expected it to be. Nor was it as reactionary as many subsequent observers assumed it had been. An important and persistent cadre of leaders instead insisted that the Southern Historical Association should be representative of the best thought of the region as a whole. It did take a seemingly endless amount of time to convince a critical mass of white members that they had to broaden their definition of “southern history” to remain a vital part of research and education in the region and in the nation. Most SHA members were extremely, even frustratingly, cautious, because changing their mind required the expansion of their conception of what a historian and a historical
organization did. If their excuses can be taken seriously, these members resisted the
transgression of their role as scientific and impartial investigators of the past more than
the physical integration of their association. They worried about the quality and
perspective of black history more than they worried about the presence of black
historians. They feared the consequences of making a political statement for social
justice in the name of the association more than they feared the consequences of
prolonged social injustice.

Nevertheless, the ultimate if imperfect integration of the Southern Historical
Association symbolizes one of the intellectual goals of the civil rights movement—to
accept and promote the humanity and history of African Americans as southerners and as
Americans. Instead of arguing that the idea of "southern" history was antiquated and
letting the Southern Historical Association devolve into the twentieth century's Lost
Cause, reformers convinced its members that the study of the South's past deserved the
work of all its people. The truly "objective" eye saw that investigators of the human past
should expect nothing less.
1 Frank L. Owsley to Robert Penn Warren, October 10, 1938, Correspondence, Southern Review Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.


3 Lee Marshall Brooks and Alvin L. Bertrand, History of the Southern Sociological Society (University, Ala., 1962), 24 (first quotation), 26, 47–50 (Krueger and Johnson quoted on 49–50), and Table 1, p. 28. On the repercussions of the Birmingham incident, see Wendell H. Stephenson to Arthur G. Peterson, September 24, 1940, Box 68, Wendell Holmes Stephenson Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University [hereafter WHS]. See also John Shelton Reed and Daniel Joseph Singal, eds., Regionalism and the South: Selected Papers of Rupert Vance (Chapel Hill, 1982), xvii. August Meier points out that both regionally and nationally, sociology organizations were ahead of the curve in recognizing the scholarship and participation of black scholars ("Black Sociologists in White America" [1977], in A White Scholar and the Black Community, 1945–1965: Essays and Reflections [Amherst, Mass., 1992], 81–83). Like the American Social Science Association, the SSS was born out of a reform tradition formally organized in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as the Southern Sociological Congress. See Brooks and Bertrand, 14–18; and Thomas L. Haskell, The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority (Urbana, Ill., 1977). The Southern Political Science Association also passed an official policy to ensure inclusion of all its members in all of aspects of its meetings, including housing, in 1956—much earlier than the SHA. See William C. Havard and Manning J. Dauer, "The Southern Political Science Association: A Fifty Year Legacy," Journal of Politics, 42 (August 1980), 677–78.

4 Fletcher M. Green, "Writing and Research in Southern History," Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association, 12 (1942), 3–17, esp. 12.

5 Benjamin B. Kendrick, review of Dusk of Dawn, by W. E. B. Du Bois, Journal of Southern History [hereafter JSJH], 7 (February 1941), 121 (first quotation); and Kendrick, "History as a Curative," Southern Review, 1 (Winter 1936), 550 (second quotation). "The current crusade to protect minorities against majorities seems to me to make my article timely," Frank Wyser Klingberg argued to the editor of the Journal, "Calhoun and his successors were pioneers in the study of methods and machinery by which a minority could resist the weight of a majority." Klingberg to Fred C. Cole, January 17, 1943, Series B.2, Folder 46, SHA Records; and Klingberg, "James Buchanan and the Crisis of the Union," JSJH, 9 (November 1943), 455–74.

6 James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, May 2, 1941, Folder 77, Fletcher Melvin Green Papers, Southern Historical Collection [hereafter SHC], Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Vernon L. Wharton to A. R. Newsome, December 31, 1943, Folder 107, Green Papers (quotation); and Fred C. Cole to Wendell H. Stephenson,


10 Herbert Weaver to Frank L. Owsley, August 21, 1941, Box 6, Folder 5; Allen Tate to Owsley, November 18, 1943, Box 5, Folder 11; Thomas B. Alexander to Owsley, July 25, 1944, Box 1, Folder 10; Albert Simpson to Owsley, August 17, 1945, Box 4, Folder 22; all in Frank Lawrence Owsley Papers, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University. See also Cobb, “World War II and the Mind of the Modern South,” 29–30; H. C. Nixon, “Southern Regionalism Limited,” *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 26 (Spring 1950), 164–66; and Nixon, “Paths to the Past: The Presidential Addresses of the Southern Historical Association,” *JSH*, 16 (January 1950), 34–38.

11 Thomas D. Clark to Fletcher M. Green, January 4, 1945 (quotation), and Jack Rabun to Green, January 10, 1945; both in Folder 120, Green Papers.

12 While short accounts of the integration of the SHA exist, they have typically been structured as part of an individual participant’s biography. Whatever other benefits memory may have, it is largely limited to the first-hand experience of an individual and often filled with mistakes of fact. See August Meier, “Introduction: ‘A Liberal and Proud of It,’” in *A White Scholar and the Black Community*, 20–22; and John Herbert Roper, *C. Vann Woodward: Southerner* (Athens, Ga., 1987), 163–70. A videotaped interview of Bennett H. Wall, SHA secretary-treasurer from 1952 to 1985, conducted by John C. Inscoe, was presented at a plenary session, “Discrimination and the Politicization of Scholarly Associations,” at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, March 30, 2000, St. Louis, Missouri; video and transcript in possession of the author.


16 James W. Patton to Benjamin B. Kendrick, October 26, 1941, Series A.1, Folder 34, Southern Historical Association Records [hereafter SHA Records], SHC. The constitution that governed the SHA in 1941 can be found in *JSH*, 5 (February 1939), 81–82. In 1935, at least Alrutheus A. Taylor of Fisk University and Monroe N. Work of the Tuskegee Institute were members ("Members of Southern Historical Association," October 25, 1935, SHA Membership folder, Box 77, WHS). W. E. B. Du Bois first shows up as a member in 1938, although he may have in fact joined earlier (Fletcher M. Green to Fred C. Cole, October 18, 1938, Series A.1, Folder 9, SHA Records). The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History seemed guardedly optimistic about the SHA when it was first organized and became an exchange member. See "Notes: Articles in American Magazines," *JNH*, 21 (April 1936), 229; and "Exchange List: Journal of Southern History," January 1, 1937, JSH Miscellany file, Box 76, WHS. Carter Woodson never joined individually and may have filed some sort of public complaint with the association (though it is possible that the secretary-treasurer had confused Woodson with Du Bois—see below). Margaret C. McCulloch to Fletcher M. Green, September 29, 1942, Folder 93, Green Papers.


18 Benjamin B. Kendrick to James W. Patton, October 24, 1941, Folder 34 (quotations); and Executive Council Minutes, November 7, 1940, Folder 33; both Series A.1, SHA Records. Rushton Coulborn received his undergraduate degree from McGill University and his Ph.D. from the University of London. He became chair of the Atlanta University history department in 1939 (Coulborn to J. E. Palmer, May 26, 1941, *Southern Review* Collection).

19 James W. Patton to Benjamin B. Kendrick, October 26, 1941, Folder 34 (quotations); and "Minutes—Executive Council Meeting, Atlanta Biltmore Hotel," November 7, 1941, Folder 36; both in Series A.1, SHA Records.


22 W. E. B. Du Bois to the Southern Historical Association, January 14, 1942 (quotations), enclosed in James W. Patton to Green, February 3, 1942, Folder 86, Green Papers; Patton to Fred C. Cole, January 16, 1942, Series A.1, Folder 37, SHA Records. A copy of Du Bois's resignation is also found in Box 2, Folder 2, Owsley Papers (presumably sent by Patton). The local black press was silent regarding the SHA meeting in Atlanta. Du Bois similarly resigned from the American Association of University Professors in 1945 to protest discriminatory meetings. See Robert L. Harris Jr., "Segregation and Scholarship: The American Council of Learned Societies' Committee on Negro Studies, 1941–1950," *Journal of Black Studies*, 12 (March 1982), 316.

23 Wendell H. Stephenson to Horace Adams, September 30, 1940, Box 50, WHS (first quotation); "News Notes and Comments: December Meetings of the Agricultural History Society," *Agricultural History*, 15 (January 1941), 61; and Arthur G. Peterson to Stephenson, September 18, 1940, Box 68, WHS (subsequent quotations).

24 Wendell H. Stephenson to Arthur G. Peterson, September 24, 1940 (quotations), and reply, October 16, 1940, Box 68, WHS.

25 Du Bois, "A Chronicle of Race Relations," 82. Much later, Howard K. Beale claimed that the SHA leadership had intentionally decided to accept dues from African Americans, because "they would be Negroes who would know that they were not expected to attend." I have not found any indication in the written records that this decision was consciously made, and Beale would not have been present to have heard any discussion on that point. It is possible, though, that such discussion took place. See Beale, "The Professional Historian: His Theory and His Practice," *Pacific Historical Review*, 22 (August 1953), 235.

26 The first issue of the *Journal of Southern History* contained a review of books by Carter G. Woodson and Charles S. Johnson (*JSH*, 1 [February 1935], 105–6). Stephenson generally had no trouble finding white historians to agree to review books by black authors. See Francis B. Simkins to Wendell H. Stephenson, October 2, 1935, Box 70, WHS; and Holland Thompson to Stephenson, March 9, 1935, Box 73, WHS. On the first review by an African American, see Lawrence D. Reddick to Stephenson, September 6, 1939, Box 68, WHS; and Reddick, review of *The First Negro Medical Society*, by W. Montague Cobb, *JSH*, 6 (February 1940), 130–31.

27 Fred C. Cole to W. E. B. Du Bois, March 19, 1942, and reply, March 27, 1942, Box 55, WHS; and John Hope Franklin, review of *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South*, by Rollin G. Osterweis, *JSH*, 15 (May 1949), 258–60. Du Bois wrote that he was too busy to take on additional review assignments.

28 The state of the *Journal* records from the Binkley years make certainty on this point impossible. His files in the SHA Records almost always deal with accepted material and
almost never with book reviews, while *Journal* business in Binkley's personal papers at Vanderbilt is sporadic.


30 William M. Brewer to Wendell H. Stephenson, March 2, 1936, and reply, March 10, 1936, Box 51, WHS. Brewer's manuscript was entitled "A Pioneer Defender of States Rights." Brewer was born in 1889 in Elberton, Georgia, and received both a bachelors and a masters degree from Harvard, in 1919 and 1929 respectively. He spent the bulk of his career teaching in Washington, D.C., first as a supervisor for the black public schools and then as a professor at Miner Teachers College. He was the editor of the *Journal of Negro History* from 1952 to 1970. See the sketch of Brewer by Barry E. Lee in "Editors of the *Journal of Negro History*," *JNH*, 76 (1991), 84.


32 Wendell H. Stephenson to James B. Browning, January 19, 1939, Box 51, WHS (quotation). For a similar rejection, see Stephenson to Will S. Tyler, April 2, 1939, Box 73, WHS. Browning's manuscript was likely a companion piece to an earlier publication: "The Religious Life of the American Negro Prior to 1861," *Church School Herald-Journal*, 13.2 (1931), 5–19 [published by the A. M. E. Zion Church in Charlotte, North Carolina].

33 There could have been others, of course. With the exception of 1938–1942 ("Record of Articles," Box 77, WHS), the editorial offices did not begin to keep and save comprehensive lists of submissions, acceptances, and rejections until 1962. See Series B.2, Folder 103 ("Articles Received, 1962–1974"); Series B.3 ("Material Concerning Articles Published," 1962 and ongoing); and Series B.4 ("Material Concerning Articles Rejected," 1962 and ongoing). This count of African American contributors relies on my having recognized the names in the extant editorial files.

34 Charles H. Wesley to Wendell H. Stephenson, January 7, 1941, Box 74, WHS; Stephenson to Paul H. Buck, March 14, 1941, and reply, March 29, 1941, Box 53, WHS;
and Stephenson to Wesley, May 28, 1941, and reply, June 9, 1941, Box 74, WHS. Buck had accused Wesley of "naïveté" and dogmatism and criticized him for an "amateurish insistence that he has discovered something of which other scholars were ignorant or which they were inclined to suppress." See his review of Collapse of the Confederacy, by Charles H. Wesley, American Historical Review, 44 (April 1939), 659. On Stephenson's research in the slave trade, see his Isaac Franklin, Slave Trader and Planter of the Old South (Baton Rouge, 1938).

35 Wendell H. Stephenson to Charles H. Wesley, May 26, 1942, Box 74, WHS; and Wesley, "Manifests of Slave Shipments Along the Waterways, 1808–1864," JNH, 27 (April 1942), 155–74.

36 The same problems with the Journal records discussed above at n28 again make it difficult to be certain that no other African American scholars sent submissions to the Journal during the Binkley years. Out of 102 files in Series B.2, SHA Records, only 16 deal with rejected material. Correspondence exists for 109 out of 135 articles and documents published under Binkley's watch. Despite the lower numbers of submissions due to the war, Binkley still rejected more articles than he accepted. In 1946, for example, 19 out of 35 article submissions were refused. See William C. Binkley, "Report to the Executive Council of the Southern Historical Association on the Work of the Journal of Southern History for the Year 1946," October 31, 1946, Series A.1, Folder 71, SHA Records.

37 Goggin, "Countering White Racist Scholarship," 358 (Logan and Greene), 356, and 359 (Franklin quotations). See also Winston, "Through the Back Door," 697 and 701.


39 U. B. Phillips, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment, and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime (New York, 1918);

Review of *Slavery in Mississippi*, by Charles S. Sydnor, *JNH*, 19 (July 1934), 332 and 334. Ralph B. Flanders’s 1933 study of slavery in Georgia was not initially reviewed in the *Journal of Negro History*, though a review of a later reprint edition points to the issues the reviewer noted of Sydnor: Edward F. Sweat, review of *Plantation Slavery in Georgia*, by Ralph B. Flanders, *JNH*, 53 (January 1968), 82–83. For a general critique of white historians of slavery (though an exception was made for the historian under review), see William M. Brewer, review of *Slavery Times in Kentucky*, by J. Winston Coleman Jr., *JNH*, 26 (January 1941), 112. See also Kenneth M. Stampp, “The Historian and Southern Negro Slavery,” *American Historical Review*, 57 (April 1952), 613–24.


William Pickens to Wendell H. Stephenson, May 31, 1939 (quotation), and reply, June 3, 1939, Box 67, WHS. Stephenson argued that since the series was intended to produce a well-rounded history of the South, “quite naturally, the Negro and his contributions to the development of the South will figure in all of the volumes.” How well each individual author lived up to this promise is debatable, but Stephenson’s nod in the direction of a South where black and white people made contributions is interesting.


46 Mack Swearingen, "Thirty Years of a Mississippi Plantation: Charles Whitmore of 'Montpelier,'" *JSH*, 1 (May 1935), 198–211. The purpose of this article was to use a plantation diary to show the scientific agricultural methods of a Mississippi plantation as a counterargument to the usual idea that plantations perpetuated "stupid agriculture" (211). For similar interpretive priorities, see J. Carlyle Sitterson, "Ante-Bellum Sugar Culture in the South Atlantic States," *JSH*, 3 (May 1937), 175–87; Joseph C. Robert, "Lee the Farmer," *JSH*, 3 (November 1937), 422–40; Edwin A. Davis, "Bennet H. Barrow, Ante-Bellum Planter of the Felicianas," *JSH*, 5 (November 1939), 431–46; and Thomas P. Govan, "Was Plantation Slavery Profitable?" *JSH*, 8 (November 1942), 513–35.


54 As one instructor informed his graduate advisor, his department chair worried that he had turned the Old South course into "a slave tour"—"he doesn’t care for what he calls the over emphasis on slavery." See Bennett H. Wall to Fletcher M. Green, May 6, 1945, Folder 123, SHA Records. See also A. R. Newsome to faculty members of the history department, August 30, 1946, Box 6, Folder 171, Hamilton Papers, for a department-wide controversy regarding the assignment of a specific course to a teacher others disapproved of for his personal politics.

55 Its chair, Daniel M. Robison of Vanderbilt University, had been appointed head of the program for the cancelled 1945 meeting and now had his chance to put something together. Bell I. Wiley, who had seen his own chairmanship of the program committee deferred twice during the war, was also an active member of the 1946 committee. See Bennett H. Wall, "The Southern Historical Association, 1935–1970: A Compilation of Officers and Other Data," *JSH*, 36 (August 1970), 395 (note: this list incorrectly says no one was appointed program chair in 1942; see "Historical News and Notices," *JSH*, 8 [May 1942], 294); Wiley to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, March 31, 1943, Folder 158, Hamilton Papers; "Historical News and Notices," *JSH*, 12 (February 1946), 134; and "Historical News and Notices," *JSH*, 12 (August 1946), 449 (quotation).

56 Bell I. Wiley, "The Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association," *JSH*, 13 (February 1947), 75 (first quotation) and 78 (second quotation); and Meier and Rudwick, *Black History and the Historical Profession*, 154.


59 The Committee: Lester J. Cappon, E. Merton Coulter, Fletcher M. Green, Wendell H. Stephenson, William C. Binkley, Alfred J. Hanna, Ella Lonn, Charles S. Sydnor, James

60 Report of the Meeting of the Committee on Research in Southern History, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, February 14–15, 1947, Series A.1, Folder 68, SHA Records; James W. Patton, handwritten notes on the meeting of the Committee on Research and Publication, Series A.1, Folder 77, SHA Records (first quotation); and “Research Possibilities in Southern History,” JSH, 16 (February 1950), 52–63 (second quotation on p. 63). The delay in publication was caused by two factors: 1) no committee member was completely satisfied with the list format of their recommendations, yet no one wanted to take the time to flesh it out into something useful; and 2) the executive council was unsatisfied with the finished product. In the end, Thomas D. Clark worked the notes up into the report that was published in order to demonstrate to the membership that they had completed something “tangible” and had not wasted association funds. On the first factor, see Lester J. Cappon to Patton, June 10, 1947, and reply, November 11, 1947, and the correspondence generally, in Series A.1, Folder 77, SHA Records. On the second factor, see Patton to Members of the Committee on Research, October 15, 1948, Series A.1, Folder 77, SHA Records; and Clark to Wendell H. Stephenson, October 25, 1949, Box 6, WHS.

61 These numbers include in the tally the presidential addresses, but not the annual accounts of the meeting or the secretary-treasurer’s year-end reports. The numbers are not skewed, moreover, by any change in the demographics of the war years: comparing the period 1935–1941 and 1946–1956 yields the same proportions. See also Appendix D.


63 William C. Binkley to Elizabeth Bethel, November 10, 1947 (first quotation), and reply, December 24, 1947, and Binkley to Bethel, January 17, 1948; all in Series B.2, Folder 7, SHA Records; Bethel, “The Freedmen’s Bureau in Alabama,” JSH, 14 (February 1948), 91–92; and T. Harry Williams, “The Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” JSH, 14 (February 1948), 102 (second quotation).

64 The nomination of Avery O. Craven to become president in 1949 had been rejected from the floor of the annual business meeting by the membership—the first time that the nomination committee’s recommendation had been overturned. Lester J. Cappon of the Institute for Early American History was nominated instead. Details of the business meeting were not preserved with the records, but it appears there was some concern about
giving the presidency to a professor at a non-southern institution. Others noted that the objection to Craven stemmed from his failure to participate in association activities. Cappon had a more amenable attitude to change than did Craven, but there is no evidence to suggest that this was a reason for the switch. See Wendell H. Stephenson to Thomas D. Clark, November 18, 1947, Box 6, WHS; James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, November 20, 1947, Folder 145, Green Papers; Green to Stephenson, November 28, 1947, Box 13, WHS; William C. Binkley to Lester J. Cappon, November 28, 1947, Box 6, Folder 22, Binkley Papers; and Patton, "Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer," JSH, 14 (February 1948), 105.

65 William C. Binkley to James W. Patton, January 26, 1948, Box 6, Folder 24, Binkley Papers.


70 African American historians had occasionally reviewed books by white authors in other journals, but almost always those white authors had written on black topics. Most famously, Carter G. Woodson reviewed American Negro Slavery, by U. B. Phillips (Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 5 [March 1919], 480–82). See also W. E. B. Du Bois, review of New Haven Negroes, by Robert A. Warner, American Historical Review, 47 (January 1942), 376–77; and Charles H. Wesley, review of Southern Negroes, by Bell I. Wiley, American Historical Review, 44 (April 1939), 657–58.


72 The AHA had re-desegregated its program panels in 1940 when program chair Merle Curti set up a session chaired by W. E. B. Du Bois, with papers by Charles H. Wesley, Rayford W. Logan, and Vernon L. Wharton, and comments by Alex M. Arnett, A. Ray Newsome, and Horace Mann Bond. This was the first time African Americans had given


76 While Franklin’s paper was well received at the meeting, two leaders of the Southern Historical Association, after much soul-searching, strongly criticized the eventual book, *The Militant South*, based on this research. See Wendell H. Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green, October 7, 1956, Folder 246, Green Papers; and reply, October 24, 1956, Box 13, WHS; and the reviews by Stephenson (American Historical Review, 62 [April 1957], 641–42) and by Green (Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 44 [June 1957], 140–41).


78 Woodward, “Fifteenth Annual Meeting,” 42. Wharton had reprimanded the white historical profession for their “sins” toward the black past before. See Vernon L.


82 Roper, *C. Vann Woodward*, 166; and C. Vann Woodward to H. C. Nixon, February 4, 1949, quoted in Shouse, *Hillbilly Realist*, 165 (quotation). In his acceptance of the vice-presidency, Woodward wrote, “it sometimes amazes me what a committee will do in a moment of irresponsibility and absent-mindedness.” Certainly he was being self-effacing, but one likes to hope that there was also a touch of the famous Woodward irony in his answer given his approach to history and the profession (Woodward to J. Carlyle Sitterson, November 17, 1950, Series A.1, Folder 78, SHA Records).

83 H. C. Nixon to Mack Swearingen, June 9, 1950, quoted in Shouse, *Hillbilly Realist*, 166 (first quotation); and James W. Patton to Fletcher M. Green, January 13, 1941, Folder 73, Green Papers (second quotation).

84 William C. Binkley, “The South and the West,” *JSH*, 17 (February 1951), 5 (first quotation); Lester J. Cappon, “Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” *JSH*, (February 1952), 60 (second quotation) and 64; and Meier and Rudwick, *Black History and the Historical Profession*, 154.


87 Thomas P. Govan, “The Eighteenth Annual Meeting,” *JSH*, 19 (February 1953), 51; Bennett H. Wall to Leroy P. Graf, October 18, 1952, Series A.1, Folder 95, SHA Records; Insoe interview with Wall; Roper, *C. Vann Woodward*, 167–68; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History and the Historical Profession*, 154. Each of these accounts (with the exception of the official one, which made no mention whatsoever of any of these last-minute changes) disagree on the timing of the decision to move the dinner out of town,
particularly whether or not Woodward was in town yet when the decision was made. Elsie M. Lewis’s paper, “The Political Mind of the Negro,” was the first article published by a black woman in the *Journal*, and only the second by an African American (*JSI*, 21 [May 1955], 189–202).

88 Inscree interview with Wall (first quotation); Roper, *C. Vann Woodward*, 154; Woodward, “The Irony of Southern History,” 3–19; and Interview with C. Vann Woodward by the author, March 16, 1999, Hamden, Connecticut, transcript in the author’s possession (second quotation). In this case, the association benefited from not having a written contract with the hotel. Though the hotel was able to renege on its end of the deal, the association was able to change its arrangements without financial sacrifice for breach of contract. The decision to make this kind of political action on behalf of the association can be costly now, as the Organization of American Historians discovered when it recently moved its spring 2000 meeting in St. Louis from the Adam’s Mark hotel after the chain was sued for discriminatory practice. See “News of the Organization: Adam’s Mark Trial Moved to St. Louis,” *OAH Newsletter*, November 2000, and other news releases regarding the meeting available on the OAH website (www.oah.org/meetings/2000/history.html).

89 The Mississippi Valley Historical Association desegregation story is a fascinating one, especially because the question of desegregation was entangled with the question of deregionalization. Its process began in April 1951 at its meeting in Cincinnati, when president-elect Merle Curti announced that he would not deliver his presidential address the following year to a segregated audience. The MVHA had already accepted an invitation to meet in New Orleans but backed out in favor of Chicago to protest southern hotel policies. The move was particularly hard on Wendell H. Stephenson and Fred C. Cole, editors of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* sponsored by Tulane University. See Paul W. Gates to Fred C. Cole, May 8, 1951, Box 12, WHS; Thomas D. Clark and Dwight L. Dumond to members of the MVHA, January 18, 1954, Folder 214, Green Papers (quotation); Ray Allen Billington, “From Association to Organization: The OAH in the Bad Old Days,” *Journal of American History*, 65 (June 1978), 75–84; Meier and Rudwick, *Black History and the Historical Profession*, 155–56; and Thomas D. Clark, “Our Roots Flourished in the Valley,” *Journal of American History*, 65 (June 1978), 85–107, esp. 93–98. Clark’s account includes a description of the ins-and-outs of arranging a desegregated MVHA meeting in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1953.

90 On the dinner in Jacksonville, see Rembert W. Patrick to Bennett H. Wall, December 9, 1952, and September 24, 1953, Series A.1, Folder 84, SHA Records. On the 1953 council meeting, see Wall, “Minutes of the Executive Council Meeting of the Southern Historical Association,” November 11, 1953, Series A.1, Folder 93, SHA Records (first and second quotations); and Wall, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” *JSI*, 20 (February 1954), 79 (last quotation). Present at the council meeting were President Kathryn Abbey Hanna, Vice-president Francis B. Simkins, past presidents William C. Binkley and C. Vann Woodward, Wall, and council members Joseph H. Parks, Ollinger Crenshaw, J. Merton England, J. Carlyle Sitterson, Weymouth T. Jordan, and James W. Silver. The ayes and nays were not recorded.
Bennett H. Wall to R. H. Wienefeld, October 20, 1954, and reply, October 28, 1954 (first quotation), Series A.1, Folder 85, SHA Records; Inscoe interview with Wall; and Wall, “Minutes of the Executive Council of the Southern Historical Association, Columbia, South Carolina,” November 12, 1954, Series A.1, Folder 93, SHA Records (second quotation). Since no hotels would provide rooms to black guests, the local arrangements committees included a representative from a local black college who arranged alternative housing.

Elmer C. Schwertman to Bennett H. Wall, September 28, 1955, and the reply to be typed and sent handwritten on the bottom of the page (quotation), Series A.1, Folder 103, SHA Records. Wall’s comment about religion points to another aspect of discrimination that the SHA tried to work around: some southern hotels also refused to serve Jews. There is less documentation on this point, but see, for example, Wall to Louis B. Harlan, November 15, 1960, Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records.

Ottis C. Skipper, “The Twentieth Annual Meeting,” *JSR*, 21 (February 1955), 71 (on Gray and Robinson); 76 (on Rogers and the progressive South); and 77–78 (on antebellum panel). Thomas P. Govan’s paper was published as “Was the Old South Different?,” *JSR*, 21 (November 1955), 447–55.


Bennett H. Wall to Enoch L. Mitchell, January 2, 1955, and reply, January 7, 1955, Series A.1, Folder 88. Again, the hotel tried to renge at the last minute even though tickets to the dinners had already been pre-sold. As Wall remembered, the hotel was under pressure not to desegregate from the planters who made weekend trips up to the Peabody out of the Delta. Wiley and Silver tried to pull all kinds of strings to no avail. At last, they ran into Claude Sitton, a prominent journalist and SHA devotee, who let them inform the hotel management that a newspaperman from New York was in the hotel and would write an article on the Peabody’s barring black professors from the meeting. The hotel caved under this larger pressure of media attention and informed Wall and Silver that anyone was welcome at association events (Inscoe interview with Wall).

James W. Silver to Frank L. Owsley, March 29, 1955, Box 4, Folder 21, Owsley Papers (first and third quotations); Silver to Fletcher M. Green, March 25, 1955, Folder 228, Green Papers (second quotation); and Silver, “The Twenty-First Annual Meeting,” *JSR*, 22 (February 1956), 59. The 1955 program committee consisted of A. J. Hanna (Rollins College), John Hope Franklin (Howard University), Albert D. Kirwan (University of Kentucky), Alfred B. Sears (University of Oklahoma), D. C. Sossoman
(Memphis State College), James L. Godfrey (University of North Carolina), and Harris G. Warren (University of Mississippi). See "Historical News and Notices," *JSH*, 21 (May 1955), 284.

97 Silver, "Twenty-First Annual Meeting," 60–61 (quotation). Only 513 had official registered for the meeting (59). In addition to the dramatic nature of the desegregated ballroom, the large audience, and the controversial subject matter, Ben Wall also remembered it being dramatic because he had been in charge of making sure that Faulkner stayed sober enough all day to give his speech successfully that night (Inscoe interview with Wall). The local black press commented favorably on the panel sponsored by the SHA: "Outstanding Leaders Tell Facts About Bias," *Memphis Tri-State Defender*, November 19, 1955, p. 2.

98 John Hope Franklin to James W. Silver, June 14, 1955, James W. Silver Papers, Department of Archives and Special Collections, Williams Library, University of Mississippi.


100 Inscoe interview with Wall (first quotation); Benjamin E. Mays, "The Moral Aspects of Segregation," *Segregation Decisions*, 13–18 (second quotation on p. 18); Wiley, "Foreword," 6 (third quotation); and Silver, "Twenty-First Annual Meeting," 61.


102 David Givens to Bennett H. Wall, November 1, 1955, Series A.1, Folder 95, SHA Records (first quotation); W. M. Drake to Wall, November 15, 1955, Series A.1, Folder 91, SHA Records (second quotation); Inscoe interview with Wall (third quotation); and Wall to James W. Patton, January 16, 1956, Folder 37, James Welch Patton Papers, SHC.

103 Bell I. Wiley to James W. Patton, November 28, 1955 (first quotation), and reply, November 30, 1955, Folder 36, Patton Papers; and Bennett H. Wall to Patton, December 19, 1955, Folder 36, Patton Papers (subsequent quotations).

104 Bennett H. Wall to James W. Patton, June 19, 1956, July 31, 1956, and August 6, 1956; and Bell I. Wiley to Patton, August 1956 (quotation); all in Folder 39, Patton Papers; and Wiley, "Foreword," 7. The pamphlet was paid for by the Fund for the Republic (uncredited for fear of offending southern moderates) and the Southern Regional Council.


106 For example, Francis B. Simkins could not understand how he had so quickly gone in the eyes of observers from a revisionist to an obstructionist. In trying to get a manuscript
for a seventh grade history textbook published, he received "radical criticisms" that "baffled" him. "A Negro was brought out of the wings to say that he gets the impression that I believe the Negro was happier as a slave than as free man! I know you sympathize with me when I say that I have grieved many times over the contradictions in the various criticisms and the reluctance on the part of some of the critics to allow an author to write his own manuscript" (Simkins to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, February 25, 1956, Thomas Perkins Abernethy Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library). See also Abernethy, "The Creed of the Old South," n.d. [June 1954], Box 7, Abernethy Papers: "We would do well to remember [the benefits of patriarchal, aristocratic, agrarian civilization], and not, under the mistaken idea that we are being 'liberal', disparage the regime of our fathers. History is not plastic; its facts do not change because times and conditions change."

107 Allen Going to Fletcher M. Green, February 13, 1956, Folder 239 (quotation); Mary Elizabeth Massey to Green, January 21, 1956, Folder 238; Mary Frances Gyles to Green, January 23, 1956, Folder 238; Herbert J. Doherty to Green, February 18, 1956, Folder 239; George Callcott to Green, June 24, 1956; all in Green Papers. See also Henry L. Swint to Frank L. Owsey, May 15, 1956, Box 5, Folder 8, Owsey Papers.

108 Holman Hamilton to Ollinger Crenshaw, February 14, 1956, and Allen Going to Crenshaw; both in Folder 38, Patton Papers (on not putting segregation on the program); "Personal: Historical News," JNH, 41 (July 1956), 282–83 (on possible SHA/ASNLH sessions); and Holman Hamilton, "The Twenty-Second Annual Meeting," JSB, 23 (February 1957), 70–81. The Executive Council made no major changes to its policy at the 1956 meeting except to agree that they had become large enough to consider making their own meeting decisions without waiting for an invitation and expecting institutional hospitality. William B. Hamilton to Fletcher M. Green, September 28, 1955, Folder 234, Green Papers; and Bennett H. Wall, "Executive Council Minutes," November 14, 1956, Series A.1, Folder 93, SHA Records.


110 Bennett H. Wall to Fletcher M. Green, October 8, 1957, Folder 256, Green Papers (first and second quotations); Wall to J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, October 3, 1957, Folder 241, Hamilton Papers (third quotation); Inscoc interview with Wall; and Franklin, "A Life of Learning," Race and History, 286–87. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill had long been recognized as a liberal place, even by the black press. See "Liberal U. of N. C. Among 10 Best," Birmingham World, October 29, 1946, p. 2; and William D.


112 See Howard K. Beale to [Howard H.] Bell, November 14, 1957, Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records, for a discussion of these feelings among Bell’s colleagues at Texas Southern University in Houston.


114 Stanley J. Folmsbee, “The Twenty-Third Annual Meeting,” *JSN*, 24 (February 1958), 73 (Webb) and 79 (Shannon); Howard K. Beale to [Howard H.] Bell, November 14, 1957 (quotation); Beale to August Meier, November 15, 1957; Meier to Bennett H. Wall, January 7, 1958; all in Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records. Wall dissembled a little bit when he told Meier that the executive council was restricted by what cities offered invitations, when the council had approached Nashville on its own initiative. “I do not feel that we have discriminated against any members of the Association because of race,” he responded, adding that besides, he only had one vote on the council (Wall to Meier, January 15, 1957, Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records; and “Executive Council Meeting Minutes,” November 14, 1956, Series A.1, Folder 93, SHA Records). The ASNLH meeting for 1958 was originally and knowingly scheduled to be held concurrently in Nashville, November 7–9, 1958, but was shifted for some reason to Richmond, Virginia. See “Personal: Historical News,” *JNH*, 43 (April 1958), 169; and “Historical News: The 1958 Annual Meeting,” *JNH*, 44 (January 1959), 97–98.

115 Howard K. Beale to August Meier, March 13, 1958 (first quotation), and Beale to Herbert Weaver, April 2, 1958 (second quotation), both in Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records; Rembert W. Patrick, “The Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting,” *JSN*, 25 (February 1959), 91–92; Beale to Meier, April 28, 1958, Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records; Phil Smith, “Segregation Ban Up Before History Group,” *Atlanta Journal*, November 13, 1959, clipping in Series A.1, Folder 737, SHA Records; and Inscoe interview with Wall. After passing a resolution that the association would only meet in hotels that provided housing accommodation for all its members, the Southern Political Science Association met at a hotel in Gatlinburg, Tennessee every year between 1956 and 1963. This policy caused Martin Luther King Jr. to accept an invitation to address the SPSA in 1964. It should also be pointed out that the SPSA was a much smaller organization than the SHA and so had a wider range of possible accommodations. See Havard and Dauer, “The Southern Political Science Association,” 677–78.

116 Rembert W. Patrick to August Meier, February 5, 1958, and reply, February 11, 1958, Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records; Patrick to Thomas Perkins Abernethy, December 31, 1957, and reply, February 13, 1958, Box 2, Abernethy Papers; and Patrick to Meier,
May 29, 1958, and Meier to Patrick, December 30, 1958, Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records. The NAACP panel consisted of papers by Meier, Reddick, and Flint Kellogg, and comments by Beale. In his comments, Beale "urged historians to be more diligent in their efforts to avert a complete blackout of free speech and open discussion of the current race problem" (Patrick, "Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting," 96).

117 August Meier to Howard K. Beale, September 14, 1958, and Beale to Meier, October 31, 1958, Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records.


119 Bennett H. Wall, "Minutes of the Executive Council of the Southern Historical Association," November 11, 1959, Series A.4, Folder 2, SHA Records; Inscoe interview with Wall; and Meier and Rudwick, Black History and the Historical Profession, 156.

120 Wall, "Minutes," November 11, 1959. The published report of the annual meeting contains no evidence of the controversy over this panel, mentioning only that it was held at Atlanta University and that "it became impossible for George R. Monks. . . to preside as scheduled." Crane Brinton of Harvard University took his place. Dewey W. Grantham, "Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting," JSH, 26 (February 1960), 74.

121 One council member reported that Coulborn had tried to cause a similar incident in 1950, the last time the SHA met in Atlanta, but I have found no corroborating evidence of this accusation. He may have been misremembering the 1941 inquiry.

122 Wall, "Minutes of the Executive Council," November 11, 1959. No record of the vote on this motion was recorded but the subject was divisive and caused "prolonged and lively" and "warm" discussion.


124 Wall, "Minutes of the Executive Council," November 11, 1959 (Patton and Godfrey quotations); August Meier to Martin D. Jenkins, November 22, 1960, Series A.1, Folder 159; Meier, "'A Liberal and Proud of It,'" 21; Grantham, "Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting," 71 (attendance at business meeting, but importantly, no other details); and Smith, "Segregation Ban Up Before History Group" (Zinn quotation).

August Meier to Members of the SHA Executive Council, October 30, 1960; Joseph J. Mathews to Meier, November 2, 1960, and reply, November 4, 1960 (on Baltimore arrest); all in Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records.

Bennett H. Wall, "Minutes of the Executive Council of the Southern Historical Association, Tulsa," November 9, 1960, Series A.1, Folder 93, SHA Records; William B. Hesseltine to August Meier, November 14, 1960, Series A.1, Folder 114, SHA Records; Meier to Martin D. Jenkins, November 22, 1960, Series A.1, Folder 159, SHA Records (quotations); and Meier, "'A Liberal and Proud of It,'" 21.

August Meier to Louis B. Harlan, December 16, 1960; Meier to Harold Fleming, January 17, 1961; and Meier to Howard Zinn, May 30, 1961 (copy of the proposed resolution); all in Series A.1, Folder 159, SHA Records; and Bennett H. Wall, "Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Southern Historical Association" [Detroit], April 20, 1961, Series A.4, Folder 2, SHA Records.

John L. Snell to August Meier, June 26, 1961, Series A.1, Folder 159, SHA Records.

Rembert W. Patrick to August Meier, July 1, 1961, and Joseph J. Mathews to Meier, June 30, 1961, both in Series A.1, Folder 160, SHA Records.

August Meier to Snell, July 4, 1961, Series A.1, Folder 159, SHA Records (first quotation); Clement Eaton to Meier, October 15, 1961, Series A.1, Folder 160, SHA Records; and Bennett H. Wall, "Minutes of the Executive Council of the Southern Historical Association," November 8, 1961, Series A.4, Folder 2, SHA Records (Williams quotation). In his autobiographical account, Meier gets the meeting place wrong, thinking the 1961 meeting was in Knoxville (Meier, "'A Liberal and Proud of It,'" 21).

Wall, "Minutes," November 8, 1961 (Grantham resolution); Bennett H. Wall, "Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer," JSH, 28 (May 1962), 221; and Meier, "'A Liberal and Proud of It,'" 21 (quotations). At the 1960 executive council meeting, Alfred B. Sears had argued that the trouble was the desegregation policy issue was both moral and practical yet the association could not understand the limitations of the practical side (Wall, "Minutes," November 9, 1960).

Meier and Rudwick, Black History and the Historical Profession, 156. Nevertheless, the executive council still resisted passing a more emphatic statement of its meeting policy. At the 1962 council meeting, for example, a resolution proposed by Dewey Grantham that required that "assurances must be made by the sponsoring agency that all members of the Association will be accorded equality of treatment in the use of all facilities in the headquarters hotel" was seconded by Fletcher M. Green but was defeated all the same. Bennett H. Wall, "Minutes of the Executive Council of the Southern Historical Association," November 7, 1962, Series A.4, Folder 2, SHA Records.

"Historical News," JNH, 47 (July 1962), 212; Mary Elizabeth Massey, "The Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting," JSH, 29 (February 1963), 86–87; and Inscoe interview with Wall. The joint panel, "The Negro American in History," offered papers by Frenise A. Logan (on black history in the Journal of Southern History), Howard H. Bell (on black
nationalism in the 1850s), and Lorenzo Greene (on black Union soldiers in Missouri). Wesley called the session “history making” in his opening remarks.


136 For a similar case in the American Council for Learned Societies, see Harris, “Segregation and Scholarship,” 326–27.
Epilogue

The Meaning of the Southern Past at Mid-Century

When this study was first conceived, I planned to end the story in 1954, the year educational segregation symbolically ended with the United States Supreme Court’s ruling on Brown v. Board of Education. That plan was scrapped when my research revealed that the Southern Historical Association interpreted “all deliberate speed” like the South’s public schools did. Although there were no dramatic confrontations barring African American historians from the SHA door, the Southern Historical Association members worked with careful deliberation rather than with speed. Even without massive resistance or reaction from its members, it took a long time for the Southern Historical Association to complete its institutional integration. “Moderation and reason” were indeed the bywords of white SHA liberals.¹

The year 1954, however, still retains its poetic significance, and so, it is still well worth considering what “the South” meant at mid-twentieth century to the historians who had cultivated its study for so long. If the South dismantled its legal and social protections of white supremacy and so counteract U. B. Phillips’s age-old “central theme of southern history,” was there anything “southern” left?² Critics of the Southern Historical Association saw any perpetuation of the field as tantamount to the creation of a new segregationist Lost Cause. Christopher Lasch, for example, argued in the early 1960s that the only function “southern history” played in the mid-twentieth century was to provide “resistance to innovation.” Its sole purpose, he thought, was to carry on “its fight, its rear-guard action against novelty.” The work of the Southern Historical Association only revealed a “doting absorption in the South and things southern.”³ Lasch
painted his critique with a broad brush. He rightly identified a new defensiveness in some southern historical work. What he missed with his sweeping generalization, however, was the fact that this most defensive work was set out as a last-ditch effort against a perceived homogenization and liberalization in regional studies that the majority of southern historians appeared to have adopted.

The best example of this kind of interpretation again returns us to the year 1954, when Francis Butler Simkins was president of the Southern Historical Association. His presidential address, “Tolerating the South’s Past,” levied strong accusations against his southern historian peers who in Simkins’s view had become too presentist and too unsympathetic to understand the basis and importance of the South’s uniqueness. “The historians of the South often do not grasp the most elementary concept of the sound historian: the ability to appraise the past by standards other than those of the present,” Simkins lamented. He chastised his listening audience for “accept[ing] a fanatical nationalism which leaves little room for sectional variations, a faith in Darwinian progress which leaves no room for static contentment, and a faith in the American dream of human equality which leaves little room for one person to get ahead of another except in making money.” The South cannot be understood with these values, Simkins argued. While he did not expect anyone to give up these beliefs as the basis for action in the contemporary world, he asked “that Southern historians not hide the fact that their ancestors did not put these dogmas into practice in the aspects of their lives” that explain regional difference. There was no use looking for values like class consciousness or racial cooperation in the southern past. To do so was a dishonest recasting of the South’s historical experience.4 The South, for better or for worse (and Simkins definitely thought
for better), was hierarchical, religious, aristocratic, and devoted to the color line. White supremacy, Simkins argued at his most vituperative, was "the soul of regional identity" and "the essence of Southernism." To eliminate the protection of white supremacy, in his eyes, would cause two fates worse than death: the homogenization of the South to the North and racial "mongrelization." If white southern historians were honest, Simkins argued, they would admit that their movement toward academic interracialism and commitment to racial equality were just lip service.⁵

To understand the full extent of Simkins's historiographical fears, his presidential address ought to be read as part of a response to C. Vann Woodward's mid-century definition of the purpose of southern history. When Simkins made accusations about casting about in the materials of the region's past for evidence of class consciousness or "forgotten alternatives" to racial segregation, he was talking to Woodward, whose presidential address only two years earlier had initiated the integration of the Southern Historical Association and reshaped the regional past in a new manner of distinction. Not only was the South not necessarily eternally devoted to those things that had made it historically different from the North like the legacy of slavery and racism or legalized segregation, in Woodward's view the South actually offered real instructive benefits to the nation to which it belonged. "In a time when nationalism sweeps everything else before it, as it does at present," Woodward argued before that carefully integrated SHA audience on the outskirts of Knoxville, the southern historian need not "be oppressed by a sense of his unimportance." For while the South may be unique in relation to its own nation, it had more in common with the rest of the world than did the United States. If the southern historian could adopt a position of irony and learn from the past what the
past southerner could not possibly have understood, the South could turn its legacy of “frustration and failure” into something enlightening for the United States in the modern world. White southerners on the eve of secession had thought themselves to live in the perfect republic; Americans in the atomic age would do well to consider the precariousness of any such claims. Antebellum southerners had allowed conformity and fear to shut down the free exchange of ideas and block out its own best critics. Americans fighting the Cold War should first understand the dangerous repercussions of ideological conformity. Defeat was a real possibility for any idealistic scheme. Economic systems that seemed stable and fundamental were in fact transitory. Southerners already knew “that history has happened to their people in their part of the world.” Woodward wanted southern historians to turn these liabilities into strong lessons for the future.6

A third trend in approaching “the South” after the Brown decision was to reassert the South’s persistent and consistent commonality with the nation. The most self-conscious of this new “school” of thought, if it could be called that, would be the historians who put together a panel for the 1955 American Historical Association meeting called “Southerner as American” that grew into a book of that same title, published in 1960. These historians, who included Charles Grier Sellers, John Hope Franklin, Robert A. Lively, George Brown Tindall, and others, did not argue that the South was losing its distinctiveness. Rather, they argued against the danger of any continued insistence on positing “southernism” (usually defined as a dedication to white supremacy, hierarchy, sectionalism) against “Americanism” (a belief in the equality of people, democracy, and common interest). If the two qualities were seen as opposites, “this emphasis, as a
contemporary mood, only confirms us [white southerners] in defensiveness, prejudice, and the belligerence of regional preoccupation.” In the areas important to the South of the civil rights movement, particularly the “American” belief in the equality of people, the more interesting conflicts were among southerners themselves rather than sectional ones. “We would write of the Union,” Robert A. Lively explained, “and the way the South has shared, and shaped in part, its hopes.” Southern history had been tragic, this group argued, because white southerners so often had acted against their own best interests. “Must Southerners of the 1960’s repeat . . . the mistakes of a century before,” Charles Grier Sellers asked, “or can they rediscover their forbears and discern the tragic dimension of their history?” The “Southerner as American” group still saw merit in a specifically southern identity, although what they thought was meretricious was not always clear to readers or reviewers. While these historians did not argue that the South’s uniqueness was fast fading as the twentieth century sped into its second half, their dissatisfaction with white supremacy as the central tenet of southern identity was emblematic of the explosion of attempts to define that innermost core of southern distinctiveness.

The conservatism of someone like Simkins seems particularly shrill, because it contrasted so completely with the broader and more diverse “South” that the younger generation of southern historians advocated. These historians wanted to be on the side of the civil rights movement. They perceived that southern history was again being structured around a series of dichotomous moral dilemmas: whereas good and evil were once assigned North and South (or vice versa), now good and evil represented civil rights workers versus Citizens Councils. Conservative historians, who had formerly clung to
“objectivity” as the best defense against allowing the past to become useful to others, now advocated a moral relativism and toleration of “difference” in order to remove the value judgment from the historian’s tool kit. E. Merton Coulter regretted that “the South” was again the nation’s “whipping boy,” even though he thought history showed that when the union failed to tolerate difference within its borders, tragedy resulted. Debate, Frank Owsley oddly contended, was not the proper format for historical matters.\textsuperscript{10}

It was the liberal southern historians, moreover, who now seemed somewhat wistful. The southern historians of the civil rights generation, David M. Potter pointed out, were “mostly liberal by persuasion and humanly wishful that the region they love should embody the cause they love. That is, they yearn for an equation between place and principle.” Though well intentioned, that longing may have produced history as sentimental as that of the Civil War romanticizers and insufficient in terms of furthering the historian’s unique intellectual contribution of providing understanding \textit{and} moral guidance.\textsuperscript{11} Liberal southerners sought change yet they sorrowfully recognized that with the desired change, “the South” would likely disappear.

It should not be surprising, then, that in the flux of the civil rights movement, the Southern Historical Association renewed its commitment to “southern” history and its “southern” identity. In 1962 at a slick convention hotel in Miami, a model Sunbelt city, the executive council discussed for the first time the possible elevation of a historian who did not study the South to the presidency of the Southern Historical Association. The nominations committee chairman reported a “strong desire” among the membership that this kind of appointment should be made. Although they turned to the SHA constitution, the intention of the founders on the leadership was not clear. Fletcher M. Green, a
founding member present at the 1962 council meeting, offered as evidence against the proposal his recollection that “from the beginning the association was to be a Southern Historical Association.” No one at the meeting seems to have expressed an alternative view. Change in leadership might result in broadening the scope of the Journal, one member worried. William B. Hesseltine argued that the Southern Historical Association should always remain “devoted to the history of the South.” T. Harry Williams thought it would be “tragic” if the presidential address did not relate to the region’s history. Dewey W. Grantham wondered how they might set up a nominations policy that would “encourage the European members” while “retain[ing] the purity of the organization.”

The executive council voted to recommend a vice-president for 1963 “in the American history field with an interest in southern history.”

The impetus for non-southern representation did not die out, and the following year, a well-respected European historian, Emory University professor Joseph J. Mathews, was elected vice-president. True to the council’s desires, Mathews delivered a presidential address in 1964 that touched on the history of the South by examining the study of history in the South. Mathews, however, was sharply critical of the navel-gazing of the majority of the South’s historians. Although he saw legitimate reasons, like access to source material, that had created the preponderance of professional historians of the South in the South, Mathews also worried that historians in the South had become satisfied by their own limitations. “Historians of the South have arrived at limited answers to vital questions through self-imposed restrictions on their view of history,” he charged. People in the emerging new South, he implied, needed desperately to learn to understand others.
Mathews's pleading did not alter the Southern Historical Association's dedication to its investigation of the region nor did it deter an enormous influx of new members from signing on to the association's chosen mission in the decade prior to his presidency. Between the *Brown* decision and 1964, the membership of the Southern Historical Association almost doubled.¹⁴ "It is rather difficult to deal systematically with more than nineteen hundred members and at the same time preserve the personal touch which made the Southern Historical Association dear to all of us," Secretary-Treasurer Bennett H. Wall reported at the end of 1955 after over 400 new members had been added to the rolls that year. "Perhaps we are killing the thing we love with this expansion."¹⁵ Depending on the personal inclinations of the program committee, the annual meetings varied in their proportion of attention to southern and other types of history. In 1953, for example, the committee's desire for a "catholicity of appeal" meant that half of the sessions were given over to topics outside southern history specifically. The following year, a committee with different priorities arranged for only four of twenty-two sessions to address topics outside the American South.¹⁶ The *Journal* without protest remained exclusively an area for the history of the South.

SHA historians were both gratified and troubled by the growing attention paid to the history of their region. Undoubtedly, some new members were attracted to the Southern Historical Association to indulge in the Civil War Centennial. Many established leaders and rank-and-file members resented "the Civil War boys" and their perceived schemes to dominate the association politically. Several people reportedly wrote to the editor of the *Journal* and the secretary of the association to express their "hostility toward turning the S.H.A. over to the Civil War Round Tables" and the "Book
The renewed "Civil War cult" somewhat surprised and depressed Wendell Holmes Stephenson, who had tried to keep Civil War documents and minutiae to a minimum in the *Journal of Southern History* under his editorial watch. "Read...a book a day on the Civil War period for a year or two," he urged Mississippi Valley Historical Association members in his 1958 presidential address, and "you may emerge from your self-imposed task with mingled feelings of weariness with humdrum monotony of thrice-told tales, of amusement at quibble and dribble, [and] of amazement at transgressions committed in the name of history." While there were certainly gems in the mix—work that "renewed [the reader's] respect and esteem for the march of the historical intellect toward a Republic of Letters"—Stephenson worried that this devoted emphasis to conflict dredged up long-settled issues and feelings and disrupted the everyday and harmonious aspects of human endeavor in the past and present.18

Other historians redirected their attention to the South due to their interest in the questions of the "Second Reconstruction." "Perhaps the social historian of the year 2,000 A.D. will choose as the greatest achievement of American society in the decade after World War II the new status of the Negro," Clement Eaton argued in 1955. He admonished southern historians to recognize "this probability by writing about the Negro in a new spirit."19 Slavery studies at mid-century were on the verge of a breakthrough in methodology and interpretation. In venues inside and outside the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, historians now advocated the search for the African American experience in new sources and in old sources in new ways. They asserted even more strongly the conflation of the "objective" and anti-slavery positions. The *Journal of Negro History* review of James Benson Sellers's study of slavery in Alabama, for
example, praised the work for its absence of proslavery apology while concluding that "Dr. Sellers has not always succeeded in achieving complete objectivity." The reviewer's chief complaint? Sellers "nowhere concedes that slavery was a moral evil which hampered the economic and social growth of the South, fostered the development of class and caste barriers, and dulled the sensibilities and perspectives of Alabama whites."²⁰

Older southern historians occasionally objected to this vocal insistence that southern history be redirected toward the empowerment of present civil rights struggles. Yet these historians were often implored to recognize how their own methodological and historiographical innovation had paved the way. For example, Frank Owsley criticized Richard Hofstadter's insistence that slavery be written about from the slaves' point of view. This kind of history would of course be "difficult" and probably "fragmentary," Hofstadter conceded, "but it is not quite so difficult as it at first seems to find data." "One can hardly tell just what the possibilities of any given type of inquiry are until someone tries it," Hofstadter argued, "which of course applied perfectly to your own study of the humbler classes of the Old South."²¹

Less conservative white southern historians also had a difficult time accepting the full ramifications of their project at mid-century. Wendell Stephenson, for example, became disheartened by the choices a review of a book by John Hope Franklin presented him. Franklin's interpretation of the antebellum South seemed to Stephenson to be "one-sided." Yet if Franklin was correct, "then I am a prejudiced Southerner, unable to rise above my environment of nearly thirty years." If Stephenson was correct, then Franklin needed to "turn his attention to a subject which his background will permit him to treat
objectively.” Who was right and who was biased? Fletcher Green, struggling with the same review for another journal, had no answers. With history so deeply revealing of “the mind of the author,” the founding generation of the Southern Historical Association—even those who embraced the social and intellectual enrichment of their association by integration—worried that they had in the process of fighting against the partisan interpretation of southern history only created a new, equally partisan, orthodoxy.  

The founding generation of the Southern Historical Association had reopened the region to critical inquiry and created a viable space for historical debate. They had insisted that a full investigation of all the sources would produce new narratives of the region’s past that would rescue “southern” identity from its romantic and problematic reputation. Moreover, they had insisted that studying the South, as a discrete region with minority voice(s), was a valid and important mode of inquiry. The disagreement and debate surrounding the role of the region in the present and future indicated that the institutions they had set up for the study of the regional past were basically working. Regional discourse survived a number of transformations and incarnations, enriched by new voices in conflict with old. In that moment at mid-century, before southern history had become “mythology” and African American history had become “Black Studies,” there seemed to be a moment—however transitory—when all that was needed was to open what had formerly been closed.


8 See, for example, the reviews of *Southerner as American* by C. Vann Woodward (JSH, 27 [February 1961], 92–94) and James W. Silver (American Historical Review, 66 [January 1961], 468–70).


10 Coulter, “What Is History and What Is It Good For?,” 17369; and Thomas P. Govan to Frank L. Owsley, January 18, 1954, Box 3, Folder 7, Owsley Papers. Coulter’s argument recalls Frank L. Owsley’s warnings against interference in the South’s business in “Scottsboro, the Third Crusade: The Sequel to Abolition and Reconstruction,” *American Review*, 1 (June 1933), 257–85. Owsley remained a touchstone for the “proper” historical view on the desegregation question for conservative white southerners until his death in late 1956. See, for example, Andrew N. Lytle to Owsley, February 26, 1956, Box 3, Folder 24, Frank Lawrence Owsley Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University: “I wish you advise me on this Yankee situation. I think they are going to let them in here [at a college in Florida where Lytle was teaching], and I have to make out today my attitude.”


13 Joseph J. Mathews, “The Study of History in the South,” JSH, 31 (February 1965), 16. Mathews was born and raised in Kentucky, received his B.A. and his masters from Duke University, and earned his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1935. He taught European history at southern universities for his entire career and was a professor at Emory from 1946 until his death in 1976. James Harvey Young, obituary for Joseph J. Mathews, JSH, 43 (February 1977), 15960.

14 In 1954 there were 1628 members; in 1964 there were 2969; in 1965 there were 3343. For figures, see Bennett H. Wall, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 21 (February 1955), 87; and William F. Holmes, “Annual Report of the Secretary-Treasurer,” JSH, 66 (May 2000), 376–77. The latter contains membership statistics for 1959 through 1999.


17 Allen J. Going to Ollinger Crenshaw, February 20, 1956, Folder 38, Patton Papers; Bennett H. Wall to James W. Patton, February 11, 1956, Folder 38, Patton Papers (quotations); and Wall to Fletcher M. Green, August 21, 1956, Folder 255, Green Papers.


21 Richard Hofstadter to Frank L. Owsley, May 18, 1954, Box 3, Folder 11, Owsley Papers.

22 Wendell H. Stephenson to Fletcher M. Green, October 7, 1956, Folder 246, Green Papers, and reply, October 24, 1956, Box 13, Wendell Holmes Stephenson Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

23 This argument was followed to a logical, but unhelpful, conclusion by later historians who argued that "[white] southern" identity represented something like an ethnic identity. See George Brown Tindall, *The Ethnic Southerners* (Baton Rouge, 1976).

Appendix A

Southern History Association Membership, 1896–1907

Table A.1
Southern History Association Founding Members

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>State of Residence (Original)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas McAdory Owen (1866)</td>
<td>Post Office Dept.</td>
<td>D. C. (Alabama)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Bell Brownlow (1839)</td>
<td>Post Office Dept.</td>
<td>D. C. (Tennessee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Davis Lodge (1865)</td>
<td>Columbian University</td>
<td>D. C. (Maryland/ New Jersey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Reaves Goodloe (1814)</td>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>North Carolina (same)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Malcolm Johnston (1822)</td>
<td>Lawyer, Educator, Writer</td>
<td>Maryland (Georgia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Brown Goode (1851)</td>
<td>Sec., Smithsonian Inst.</td>
<td>D. C. (Indiana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Howard Clark (1850)</td>
<td>Smithsonian Inst.</td>
<td>D. C. (Massachusetts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William C. Winlock (1859)</td>
<td>Smithsonian Inst.</td>
<td>D. C. (Massachusetts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Beauregard Weeks (1865)</td>
<td>Bureau of Education</td>
<td>D. C. (North Carolina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovick Pierce (?)</td>
<td>Bureau of Education</td>
<td>D. C. (Georgia?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermann Schoenfeld (1861)</td>
<td>Columbian University</td>
<td>D. C. (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Ingle (1861)</td>
<td>Ed., Baltimore American</td>
<td>Maryland (same)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Calbraith Butler (1836)</td>
<td>Former senator, Lawyer</td>
<td>D. C. (South Carolina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert P. Bourland (1861)</td>
<td>Prof., Peabody Normal Inst.</td>
<td>Tennessee (Arkansas)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.2
Southern History Association Charter Members, April 1896

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. H. Clay Armstrong</td>
<td>Sec., U.S. Legation to Spain</td>
<td>Madrid, Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. T. H. Ball</td>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>Crown Point, Indiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. William M. Baskerville</td>
<td>Professor, Vanderbilt University</td>
<td>Nashville, Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Prof.] Kemp P. Battle</td>
<td>Professor, University of North Carolina</td>
<td>Chapel Hill, N. C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. H. Blanton</td>
<td>Chancellor, Central University</td>
<td>Richmond, Kentucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Albert P. Bourland</td>
<td>Professor, Peabody Normal Institute</td>
<td>Nashville, Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. Robert Alonzo Brock</td>
<td>Sec., Southern Historical Society</td>
<td>Richmond, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. William Hand Browne</td>
<td>Prof., Johns Hopkins University</td>
<td>Baltimore, Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. John Bell Brownlow</td>
<td>Post Office Department</td>
<td>Washington, D. C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Philip A. Bruce</td>
<td>Sec., Virginia Historical Society</td>
<td>Richmond, Virginia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2 Information from “Historical Sketch of the Association,” 2–4. Additional biographical information, bracketed here, from “Southern History Association” advertising brochure, Series 2, Folder 5, Weeks Papers.
Southern History Association Charter Members, continued

Gen. Matthew C. Butler
Former senator, Lawyer
Washington, D. C.

Mr. Joshua W. Caldwell
Knoxville, Tennessee

Dr. John F. Calhoun
Clemson College
Clemson, S. C.

James H. Carlisle, LL.D.
President, Wofford College
Spartanburg, S. C.

Prof. Mitchell Carroll
Professor, Richmond College
Richmond, Virginia

Prof. Henry E. Chambers
Smithsonian Institution
Monroe, Louisiana

Mr. A. Howard Clark
Washington, D. C.

Mr. T. L. Cole
Washington, D. C.

William A. Courtenay
Peabody Fund
Newry, South Carolina

J. L. M. Curry, LL.D.
Asst. Secretary of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

Charles W. Dabney, Ph.D.
History Professor, Univ. of Virginia
Washington, D. C.

R. Heath Dabney, Ph.D.
History Professor, Univ. of Virginia
Washington, D. C.

Mr. J. J. Darlington
Washington, D. C.

Mr. James Wood Davidson
Washington, D. C.

Prof. R. Means Davis
History Prof., Univ. of South Carolina
Charleston, S. C.

Prof. John D. Epes
Professor, Saint Johns College
Annapolis, Maryland

Mr. John S. Fairly

Hon. John F. Ficken
Charleston, S. C.

Prof. John R. Ficklen
History Professor, Tulane University
New Orleans, Louisiana

Prof. R. E. Gaines
Professor, Richmond College
Richmond, Virginia

Prof. W. R. Garrett
History Professor, Peabody Inst.
Nashville, Tennessee

Mr. [Hon.] W. C. Glenn
Atlanta, Georgia

G. Brown Goode, LL.D.
Washington, D. C.

Mr. Daniel Reaves Goodloe
Washington/Raleigh

Dr. B. W. Green
Richmond, Virginia

Gen. Wade Hampton
Washington, D. C.

Col. R. A. Hardway
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Mr. [Prof.] W. L. Hargrove
Waco, Texas

James A. Harrison, LL.D.
Charlottesville, Virginia

Prof. T. P. Harrison, Ph.D.
Davidson, N. C.

John B. Henneman, Ph.D.
Knoxville, Tennessee

Henry H. Ingersoll, Ph.D.
Knoxville, Tennessee

Gen. Bradley T. Johnson
Baltimore, Maryland

Richard Malcolm Johnston
Baltimore, Maryland

Charles W. Kent, [Ph.D.]
Charlottesville, Virginia

J. H. Kirkland, Ph.D., LL.D.
Nashville, Tennessee

Mr. W. H. Lamar
Washington, D. C.

Gen. G. W. C. Lee
Lexington, Virginia

Dr. John A. Lewis
Georgetown, Kentucky

Lee Davis Lodge, [Ph.D.]
Washington, D. C.

Charles Louis Loos
Lexington, Kentucky

Miss Louise Manly
[Marion, Alabama]

Prof. W. Gordon McCabe
Richmond, Virginia

Prof. A. M. McConnell
Rome, Georgia

Prof. Thomas C. McCorry
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Prof. B. F. Meek, LL.D.
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Prof. J. C. Metcalf
Georgetown, Kentucky

Mr. H. C. Middleton
Augusta, Georgia

Prof. Samuel C. Mitchell
Richmond, Virginia

John T. Morgan
Washington, D. C.

U. S. Senator from Alabama
Southern History Association Charter Members, continued

Prof. William S. Morrison
Mr. Edward A. Oldham
Mr. Thomas M. Owen
Mr. Walter Hines Page
Prof. Thomas W. Palmer
Mr. George P. Pell
Mr. Lovick Pierce
Mr. H. Presnell
Judge C. W. Raines
Mr. G. H. Sass
Mr. Edward T. Sanford
Hermann Schoenfeld, Ph.D.
Judge Charles H. Simonton
Major W. F. Slaton
Charles Lee Smith, Ph.D.
Eugene A. Smith, LL.D.
Charles A. Stakely, D. D.
Mr. Alexander Summer
Prof. T. P. Thomas, Ph.D.
Gov. Hugh S. Thompson
Prof. J. Randolph Tucker
Prof. Charles W. Turner
Lyon G. Tyler [LL.D.]
Stephen B. Weeks, Ph.D.
Henry Alexander White
William H. Whitsitt, D. D.
Mr. J. H. Whitty
William L. Wilson
Woodrow Wilson [Ph.D.]
Mr. William C. Winlock
Prof. F. C. Woodward
Gen. Marcus J. Wright
Prof. W. S. Wyman, LL.D.
Mr. H. E. Young

History Professor, Clemson College
Post Office Department
Publisher
Professor, University of Alabama
Bureau of Education
Professor, Columbian University
Superintendent, Public Schools
History Prof., William Jewell College
Professor, University of Alabama
Minister
Bureau of Education
History Professor, Women’s College
New York Life Insurance Company
Professor, Washington & Lee
Professor, University of Tennessee
President, College of William & Mary
Bureau of Education
History Professor, Washington & Lee
President, Southern Baptist Theol. Sem.
Richmond Times
Postmaster General
Professor, Princeton University
Smithsonian Institution
Professor, Univ. of South Carolina
War Department (Official Records)
Professor, University of Alabama

Clemson, S. C.
Washington, D. C.
Washington, D. C.
Boston, Massachusetts
Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Washington, D. C.
Washington, D. C.
Austin, Texas
Charleston, S. C.
Knoxville, Tennessee
Washington, D. C.
Charleston, S. C.
Atlanta, Georgia
Liberty, Missouri
Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Washington, D. C.
Washington, D. C.
Baltimore, Maryland
New York, New York
Lexington, Virginia
Knoxville, Tennessee
Williamsburg, Virginia
Washington, D. C.
Lexington, Virginia
Louisville, Kentucky
Richmond, Virginia
Washington, D. C.
Princeton, New Jersey
Washington, D. C.
Columbia, S. C.
Washington, D. C.
Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Charleston, S. C.
Table A.3
Southern History Association Members by Place of Residence

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Place of Residence</th>
<th>Charter (95)</th>
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<td>North Carolina</td>
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<td>South Carolina</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
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<td>Florida</td>
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<td>Mississippi</td>
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Table A.4
Occupations of Southern History Association Members

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<th>1900 (223)</th>
<th>1904 (257)</th>
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<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Editor/Publishing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Minister</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public History</td>
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<td>9</td>
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</tr>
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<td>10</td>
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3 For Charter membership, see Table A.2. For 1900 roster, see Southern History Association Membership Ledger, Colyer Meriwether Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. For 1904 roster, see “List of Members of the Southern History Association,” Publications of the Southern History Association, 8 (September 1904), 427–35.

4 The absolute number of women in the charter list is 1. The total number of women in 1900 is 14.
Appendix B

Southern Historical Association Membership,
1934–1954

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Resigned</th>
<th>Losses Died</th>
<th>Dropped</th>
<th>Total Change</th>
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<td>41</td>
<td>+30</td>
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</table>

1 Unless otherwise noted, all membership information can be found in the annual secretary-treasurer’s report, published each February in the Journal of Southern History.
2 Active membership designates all paid individual and institutional subscriptions.
3 Total membership includes all active members plus all exchange members—those institutions that received the Journal of Southern History in exchange for sending the sponsoring institution’s library their publications.
4 The new member category counts the absolute number of new names added to the active membership list; it does not necessarily include reinstated members.
5 There is some discrepancy in membership reported for 1935 due to record-keeping troubles. In the report of the first annual meeting, 372 members were reported. The secretary-treasurer reported 354; this latter number is used primarily because it served as the baseline for all subsequent record-keeping.
6 Secretary Bennett H. Wall calculated membership differently, counting only paid-up people by subtracting delinquents from the active membership list. By this count, there were 1409 paid-up members in 1951 (1602 total – 193 delinquent) so 1528 can be seen as an increase.
### Appendix C

**Southern Historical Association Membership by State**

<table>
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<th>State</th>
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<th>1937</th>
<th>1938</th>
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1. Unless otherwise noted, all information comes from the annual report of the secretary-treasurer, published each February in the *Journal of Southern History*.

2. "Distribution of Members of the Southern Historical Association," n.d. (end of 1936), Box 59, Wendell Holmes Stephenson Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

3. Distribution statistics are not available for 1943. However state distribution for halfway through 1943 are given in "Historical News and Notices," *JSH*, 9 (May 1943), 284. This count comes from the Journal mailing list, rather than the secretary's official list of members, so may be somewhat inflated.

Table C.2

Distribution by State, Second Decade, 1945–1954

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<td>Maryland</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>50+</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Ohio</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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</table>

\(^5\) Marked increase likely the result of the 1953 annual meeting's being held in Jacksonville, Florida.
## Appendix D

### Journal of Southern History Authors, Volumes I–XX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volumes (Years)</th>
<th>Article Type</th>
<th>Number of Authors</th>
<th>College/University Affiliation&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I–V (1935–39)</td>
<td>Notes &amp; Documents Articles</td>
<td>27 82</td>
<td>21 74</td>
<td>77% 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
<td><strong>95</strong></td>
<td><strong>89%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI–X (1940–44)&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Notes &amp; Documents Articles</td>
<td>37 81</td>
<td>27 73</td>
<td>73% 94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>118</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>88%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI–XV (1945–49)</td>
<td>Notes &amp; Documents Articles</td>
<td>30 80</td>
<td>23 70</td>
<td>76% 87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>110</strong></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
<td><strong>84.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI–XX (1950–54)</td>
<td>Notes &amp; Documents Articles</td>
<td>22 68</td>
<td>17 60</td>
<td>77% 88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>85%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I–XX (1935–54)</td>
<td>Notes &amp; Documents Articles</td>
<td>116 311</td>
<td>88 277</td>
<td>76% 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>GRAND TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>427</strong></td>
<td><strong>365</strong></td>
<td><strong>85.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> This category designates graduate students, instructors, and faculty members of colleges and universities. It does not include librarians or archivists at college or university libraries. It also classifies the author by his or her status at the time of publication, except where noted.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the unusually large number of contributors who were in military service when their article was published, the tally for these years classifies authors according to their pre-war status.

495
Appendix E

Dissertations Accepted by American Universities, 1933–1943

Table E.1
Dissertations Accepted by Southern Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Degrees Awarded</th>
<th>Number on American Topics</th>
<th>Number (% of total) on Southern Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933–1934</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9 (64.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934–1935</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9 (39.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935–1936</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936–1937</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12 (63.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937–1938</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12 (70.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938–1939</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11 (57.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939–1940</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17 (63.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940–1941</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12 (57.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941–1942</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9 (60.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942–1943</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Information compiled from titles and institutions listed in Donald B. Gilchrist, ed., Doctoral Dissertations Accepted by American Universities, Vols. 1–6 (New York, 1934–1939); and Edward A. Henry, Doctoral Dissertations Accepted by American Universities, Vols. 7–10 (New York, 1940–1943).

2 “Southern” institutions are defined broadly and include Duke University, University of Florida, University of Georgia, Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University, University of Kentucky, Louisiana State University, University of Maryland, University of North Carolina, Rice Institute (now Rice University), Southern Baptist University, University of Tennessee, University of Texas, Tulane University, Vanderbilt University, and University of Virginia.

3 In “Modern History” only.

4 The classification of a “southern” topic is mine and is, of course, subject to interpretation. The heavy emphasis on southern topics at southern universities, however, should be clear.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Degrees Awarded</th>
<th>Number on American Topics</th>
<th>Number (% of total) on Southern Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933–1934</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6 (5.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934–1935</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11 (9.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935–1936</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9 (8.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936–1937</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>6 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937–1938</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>7 (5.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938–1939</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6 (5.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939–1940</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940–1941</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>11 (7.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941–1942</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6 (4.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942–1943</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5 (4.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix F

**Presidents of the Southern Historical Association, 1935–1961**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Birth–Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>E. Merton Coulter</td>
<td>University of Georgia</td>
<td>1890–1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Charles W. Ramsdell</td>
<td>University of Texas</td>
<td>1877–1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Thomas Perkins Abernethy</td>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
<td>1890–1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Philip M. Hamer</td>
<td>National Archives</td>
<td>1891–1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Charles S. Sydnor</td>
<td>Duke University</td>
<td>1898–1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Frank L. Owsley</td>
<td>Vanderbilt University</td>
<td>1890–1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Benjamin B. Kendrick</td>
<td>Women’s College of the University</td>
<td>1884–1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Albert B. Moore</td>
<td>University of Alabama</td>
<td>1887–1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>J. G. de Roulhae Hamilton</td>
<td>University of North Carolina</td>
<td>1878–1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Wendell H. Stephenson</td>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>1889–1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Fletcher M. Green</td>
<td>University of North Carolina</td>
<td>1895–1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Ella Lonn</td>
<td>Goucher College</td>
<td>1879–1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Thomas D. Clark</td>
<td>University of Kentucky</td>
<td>1903–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Robert S. Cotterill</td>
<td>Florida St. Coll. for Women</td>
<td>1884–1967</td>
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<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Lester J. Cappon</td>
<td>Inst. for Early American History and Culture</td>
<td>1900–1981</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>William C. Binkley</td>
<td>Vanderbilt University</td>
<td>1889–1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Avery O. Craven</td>
<td>University of Chicago</td>
<td>1886–1980</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>C. Vann Woodward</td>
<td>Johns Hopkins University</td>
<td>1908–1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Kathryn Abbey Hanna</td>
<td></td>
<td>1895–1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Francis Butler Simkins</td>
<td>Longwood College</td>
<td>1897–1966</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Bell I. Wiley</td>
<td>Emory University</td>
<td>1906–1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>James W. Patton</td>
<td>University of North Carolina</td>
<td>1900–1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Walter B. Posey</td>
<td>Agnes Scott and Emory</td>
<td>1900–1988</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>T. Harry Williams</td>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>1909–1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>William B. Hesseltine</td>
<td>University of Wisconsin</td>
<td>1902–1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Clement Eaton</td>
<td>University of Kentucky</td>
<td>1898–1980</td>
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_____.


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