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## Oscar James Dunn: A Case Study in Race & Politics in Reconstruction Louisiana

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Oscar James Dunn:  
A Case Study in Race & Politics in Reconstruction Louisiana

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Urban Studies

by

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## ABSTRACT

The study of African American Reconstruction leadership has presented a variety of unique challenges for modern historians who struggle to piece together the lives of men, who prior to the Civil War, had little political identity. The scant amounts of primary source data in regard to these leaders' lives before the war, the destruction of many documents in regard to their leadership following the Reconstruction Era, and the treatment of these figures by historians prior to the Revisionist movement have left this body of extremely important political figures largely unexplored. This dissertation will examine the life of one of Louisiana's foremost leaders, Lt. Governor Oscar James Dunn, the United States' first African American executive officeholder.

Using previously overlooked papers, Masonic records, Senate journals, newspaper articles and government documents, the dissertation explores Dunn's role in Louisiana politics and chronicles the factionalization of the Republican Party in Reconstruction New Orleans. Born a slave and released from bondage at an early age, Oscar J. Dunn was able to transcend the stigma which was often attached to those who had been held in slavery. A native of New Orleans, born to Anglo-African parents, he was also able to transcend the language barrier that often excluded Anglo-Africans from social acceptability in Afro-Creole society. Although illiterate, Dunn's parents made critical strides in securing his social mobility by providing him with both a formal education and a trade apprenticeship. Those skills propelled Dunn forward within his Anglo-African community wherein he became a key figure in the community's two

most important institutions, the York Rite Masonic Lodge and the African Methodist Episcopal church.

This dissertation argues that Dunn's political ascent was linked to the political enfranchisement of antebellum Anglo-Africans in Louisiana, Dunn's involvement in Anglo-African institutions (particularly the York Rite Masonic Lodge and the African Methodist Episcopal church) and Dunn's ability to find middle ground in the racially charged arguments that engulfed Reconstruction New Orleans's political arena.

*Keywords:*

Oscar Dunn, Reconstruction, New Orleans, Republican, Louisiana, African American, Politics

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Although touted by James Lynch, black Secretary of State for the State of Mississippi, as America's first black executive officer, little is known about Oscar James Dunn.<sup>1</sup> Historians offer conflicting dates for his birth, cannot agree on his participation in the Civil War, and struggle to understand his place in the landscape of Reconstruction history. For many, Dunn served as a symbol of political excellence. For others, Dunn has been relegated to a footnote, one of three black men to serve as Lieutenant Governor of the state of Louisiana. This dissertation examines the life of one of Louisiana's premier black Reconstruction leaders, Oscar James Dunn. The narrative of Dunn's life reflects the many political, social, and economic changes that would shape Louisiana in his lifetime. The dissertation argues that Dunn's unlikely ascent to political power came as a consequence of the political enfranchisement of Anglo-Africans in Louisiana, his involvement in antebellum Anglo-African institutions, particularly the York Rite Masonic Lodge and the African Methodist Episcopal church, and his ability to find middle ground in the racially charged arguments that engulfed Reconstruction New Orleans's political arena.

A biographical study of Dunn offers not only an examination of the first black Lieutenant Governor's origin, rise to political power, and death; it also provides insights into social and political strife in the city of New Orleans during his life time. An examination of Dunn's political career chronicles the Universal Suffrage movement in

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<sup>1</sup> New York Daily Tribune, December 4, 1871, New Orleans Republican, November 26, 1871

New Orleans and the transition of many members of his constituency from slaves, to freedmen, and ultimately, to citizens. This transition was difficult not only for former slaves, but also for former masters and those blacks who had been free prior to the Civil War, particularly Afro-Creoles, for whom the delineations of being born free or being born in bondage had become a criterion of social status.

Through the examination of political tensions within the Republican Party in Reconstruction New Orleans, a sense of the party's inner workings emerges, revealing a divided black community with opposing notions of equality and citizenship. The Anglo-African and the Afro-Creole communities worked together on issues that were mutually beneficial and on issues that threatened the safety and political status of the black community as a whole. However, they had opposing views in regard to the civil rights which they were demanding as newly enfranchised citizens.

Any study of this group must consider that all of Louisiana's black leaders and their constituents prior to the Civil War, to a greater or lesser extent, control over their status within society. Even those who could boast of being "born free" and those who possessed the coveted title of "Free Men of Color" lacked electoral power and a state-sanctioned political voice. Therefore, the study of Louisiana's Reconstruction black leadership is also a study of the development of political personage within the broader African American community. Major concerns for most of Louisiana's black Reconstruction leaders were the expansion of suffrage to black males, maintenance of the newly emancipated status of the freedmen, equitable wages and control of freedmen's labor, the extension of civil rights and introduction of public education to their

constituency. Louisiana's black leaders aggressively petitioned for suffrage and, in doing so, found an eager ally in Republicans who were willing to enfranchise blacks to ensure Republican control in the South. This union between Louisiana's black communities and the Republican Party was a marriage of convenience and wrought with inequality. What initially began as a symbiotic relationship devolved into factional warfare as the political and social aspirations of the black populace clashed with those of many their white counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

*Understanding the complexities of Ethnicity and Class in Reconstruction New Orleans*

This dissertation employs three terms that require further explanation: Afro-Creole, Anglo-African, and "black community." The term Afro-Creole describes a bi-racial community which emerged early in Louisiana's colonial period as Europeans and African slaves began to engage in sexual relations. Anthropologist Virginia Dominguez noted that in the "overwhelming majority" of these unions the man was European and the woman was of African descent. In many of these unions, the European male chose a concubine and in exchange for the promise of sexual exclusivity he provided material support for the concubine and the children resulting from the relationship. In most instances, the children resulting from these unions were born free, but in the instances in when the mother was enslaved, the children typically were freed by their father and on many

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<sup>2</sup> C.B. Macpherson. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 263-265; Eric Foner. *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 263-265; Eric Foner. *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), xi-xxxi.

occasions these children were given the surnames of their fathers. Male offspring were often provided with academic instruction or vocational training as artisans or craftsmen, while female offspring were regularly encouraged to enter into concubinage.

This process of manumission via sexual relations had a number of lasting effects. The institution helped to create a tripartite social hierarchy in New Orleans, wherein the Afro-Creole assumed a middle position between that of the white and that of slave. Although the Afro-Creoles were often referred to as the “*gens de couleur libre*,” or “free people of color,” they did not share the same legal status or social status of their white fathers.<sup>3</sup>

The term Anglo-Africans describes the community of English-speaking, largely Protestant blacks in New Orleans. The Anglo-Africans were an extremely diverse group. Although some were free before the war, the vast majority were recently emancipated freedmen. Some Anglo-African were racially mixed, but few possessed the concentration of the European racial admixture that the Afro-Creoles did. Although a few Anglo-African could boast of being formally educated prior to the war, the vast majority of the group was illiterate agrarian labor by 1867.<sup>4</sup>

The last term, “Black Community,” describes the amalgamation of both the Afro-Creole and the Anglo-African communities of New Orleans after the ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Blassingame referred to this community as the “Negro Community”

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<sup>3</sup> Virginia R. Domínguez. *White by Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana*. (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 23-24

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



and noted that it was reflective of the duality found in both the Afro-Creole and the Anglo-African communities. Because of the complex and often contrasting dual natures of these communities they remained only loosely connected to one another by issues that the antebellum ethnic communities maintained were of mutual importance.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> John W. Blassingame. *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973) 154-155.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Few periods of American History have attracted as much attention as the Civil War and the Reconstruction period that followed it. According to historian Kenneth Stampp, “The Civil War, though admittedly a tragedy, is nevertheless often described as a glorious time of gallantry, noble self-sacrifice, and high idealism.”<sup>6</sup> The Civil War has been perpetually commemorated by many southerners because of the adulation of its heroes- Lincoln, Lee, Grant, Stonewall Jackson and a universe of others. Reconstruction, though connected to the Civil war, has failed to create similar iconic heroes and, as a consequence, many of the nation’s first African American political leaders have fallen into obscurity.

Historian Eric Foner maintained that the study of Reconstruction was important “because the issues central to Reconstruction—the role of the federal government in protecting citizens’ rights, and the possibility of economic and racial justice in a heterogeneous society—are still unresolved.”<sup>7</sup> In *Who Owns History?*, Foner argued that Reconstruction has been selectively remembered by white America.<sup>8</sup> Though the era is

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<sup>6</sup> Kenneth M. Stampp. *Reconstruction: an anthology of revisionist writings* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1976), 3.

<sup>7</sup> John Pine, and Gloria Session, “A Humanities Approach for Teaching the Reconstruction Era: Encouraging Active Learning in the Classroom,” *The History Teacher*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Aug., 1998): 467.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Foner. *Who Owns History: Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 199-204.

not forgotten, media, literature, and scholars reinforced the negative images until they formed an “invented reality.”<sup>9</sup>

Historian John Hope Franklin suggested that Reconstruction was a “special problem not only in the prosecution of the conflict itself but in the peculiar problems related to reconciliation once the conflict had been resolved.”<sup>10</sup> Franklin believed that every generation since 1870 has written a history of the Reconstruction era, and that each historian in writing his account of the struggle told as much about his own generation’s struggle in regard to race, as he did about the Reconstruction era itself. Franklin preferred to use the perceptions of the era as a gauge of race relations in the United States. Thus, by studying the works on Reconstruction that have been written over the last century one can provide a fairly clear notion of the problems confronting the periods in which the historians lived but not always as clear a picture of Reconstruction.<sup>11</sup>

The first wave of historians to examine Reconstruction’s black leadership wrote portrayals of these politicians that modeled racial stereotypes that were popular during the early twentieth century. These “Traditionalist” and “Consensus” historians branded Reconstruction’s black leadership as lazy, corrupt, ignorant, and ill-prepared. These unsavory images of black leadership were reinforced by negative portrayals of blacks in literature and on the movie screen. In these portrayals, blacks routinely exhibited sinister

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Parenti. *Dirty Truths* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1996), 240-243; Michael Parenti. *Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), 106-116.

<sup>10</sup> John Hope Franklin, “Mirror for Americans: A Century of Reconstruction History,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (Feb., 1980): 1 – 14.

<sup>11</sup> Franklin, 1-14.

qualities and proved themselves incapable of self-control, let alone of political governance.

In contrast, Southern whites, particularly the Bourbon Agrarian elite, emerged as the heroes in the Traditionalists' southern narrative. Dubbed the "Redeemers", the Bourbon elite took up the task of resisting Reconstruction by whatever means necessary. Despite rebelling against federal authority and often using violence and intimidation to invoke their will, the Traditionalists maintained that the Redeemers saved southern society by restoring the region's antebellum social and racial hierarchy.<sup>12</sup>

In Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* (1903) and *The Clansman* (1905), Dixon tells the story of how the Ku Klux Klan saved the South from complete devastation by black and white Radical Republicans. "The Clansman" described a state legislature composed largely of blacks, its chambers stinking of "vile cigars, stale whiskey, and the odor of perspiring Negroes"<sup>13</sup> Dixon portrayed Republican leaders, both black and white as lazy, vulgar, and thieving. He singled out two black characters, Speaker of the House Napoleon Whipper and Alexander Lenoir for special attention. Whipper was portrayed as a thief and gambler who stole state funds to pay off gambling debts, while Lenoir was made to appear more primate than man. Dixon further enraged readers by listing the

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<sup>12</sup> William Archibald Dunning. *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1907); Claude G. Bowers. *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1929); James Ford Rhodes. *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1893).

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Dixon. *The clansman; an historical romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 264-269.

legislation passed by the legislature meant to degrade and force interbreeding with whites. Among them were:

... A measure to disarm the whites and equip with modern rifles a Negro militia of 80,000 men; to make the uniform of Confederate gray the garb of convicts in South Carolina, with the sign of rank to signify the degree of the crime; to force whites and blacks to attend the same schools and open the State University to Negroes; to permit the intermarriage of whites and blacks; and to enforce social equality.”<sup>14</sup>

Dixon saw Whipper’s claim that he was “as good as any man in South Carolina” as his tragic flaw.<sup>15</sup>

D.W. Griffith immortalized Dixon’s *The Clansman*, by adapting it to film as “*The Birth of a Nation*” (1915). The movie became one of the most popular films in American history and by 1946 it had been seen by over 200 million viewers worldwide. Among those who praised the movie were Supreme Court Chief Justice Edward D. White and then President Woodrow Wilson. Wilson commented later: “It is like writing history in lightning.”<sup>16</sup>

Many of the earliest objections to Traditionalist interpretations came from former Republican politicians who had participated in Reconstruction. A black former Mississippi congressman, John R. Lynch and white former Louisiana Superior Court Judge, Albion W. Tourgée, both wrote narratives which differed sharply from those

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<sup>14</sup> Dixon.272, 267,267-268.; Howard J. Jones, “Images of State Legislative Reconstruction Participants in Fiction,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 67, Issue 4, (Winter, 1982), .321.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, 321.

<sup>16</sup> John Pine and Gloria Session, “A Humanities Approach for Teaching the Reconstruction Era: Encouraging Active Learning in the Classroom”, *The History Teacher*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Aug., 1998), 481 – 482. ; *The Birth of a Nation*, videocassette, directed by D.W. Griffith (1915; New York, NY: VCI Home Video, 1998).

presented by their Traditionalist counterparts. In 1913's *The Facts of Reconstruction*, Lynch refuted Traditionalist claims that black politicians had mismanaged state governments. He maintained that black politicians "have never dominated a state, nor have they controlled the Republican organization of any state to the exclusion of the white men". Therefore they could not be held responsible for many of the political actions which Traditionalists blamed them for. Lynch further maintained that Reconstruction as a whole was not the failure that Traditionalists had claimed. As evidence of the period's legitimacy, Lynch offered the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments as hallmarks of the era's success. In a tone unprecedented for its time, the former congressman directly challenged noted Traditionalist historian James Ford Rhodes by declaring Rhodes's 1906 *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850* as "the most biased, partisan, and prejudiced historical work" he had ever read.

Tourgée's analyses of Reconstruction were best selling biographical fictions (*A Fool's Errand* (1879) and *Bricks Without Straw* (1880)) loosely based upon his own experiences during the era. His protagonist, Comfort Servosse, was a conflicted white carpetbagger who was burdened with the difficult task of enforcing Reconstruction's civil rights provisions amongst his white southern neighbors. Although Servosse disapproved of the provisions which he maintained placed "the bottom rail on top", he diligently made every effort to enforce the laws passed in Washington. Tourgée proposed that Reconstruction was a "fool's errand" and represented the carpetbaggers, not as the opportunists that Traditionalists had envisioned, but as idealist fools. In Tourgée's works,

the carpetbagger was the hero and the failure of Reconstruction was invariably linked to unresolved tensions in regard to the Civil War, radical legislation coming from Washington, and southerners' stubborn resistance to their military occupation.<sup>17</sup>

Although Lynch's and Tourgée's portrayals of Reconstruction differed greatly from those of Traditionalists, neither Lynch nor Tourgée accepted fault on the part of their class. Lynch maintained that blacks were divorced from political power and were relegated to minor political positions, and therefore they could not be held responsible for the outcomes flaunted by the Traditionalists. Conversely, Tourgée maintained that Carpetbaggers were innocents quite literally placed at odds with the southerners whom they were sent to govern. Tourgée saw the carpetbagger as blameless and placed the fault for Reconstruction's failure with the federal government, white southern resistance, and legislation that even he perceived to be unfair. Although commercially successful, Tourgée's books did little to change Traditionalists' perspective in regard to Reconstruction, and they reinforced Traditionalists' portrayals of a black populace ill-prepared for self-governance. Lynch's writings were largely ignored by Traditionalist scholars but served as seminal works for subsequent revisionism.

Between 1924 and 1935, historians Alrutheus A. Taylor, Francis B. Simkins, Robert H. Woody, Howard K. Beale, and W.E.B DuBois published works that continued

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<sup>17</sup> John R. Lynch, "Some Historical Errors of James Ford Rhodes", *Journal of Negro History* 2 (October 1917): 345-68; John R. Lynch. *The Facts of Reconstruction: American Negro, his history and literature* (New York: The Neale Publishing Co., 1913); Albion Winegar Tourgée. *A Fool's Errand: By One of the Fools, a Novel* (New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert, 1880), 42.

in the Revisionist model established by Lynch. This second wave of Revisionists made sharp departures from the Traditionalist interpretations of the period by reexamining Reconstruction and the role of black leadership in Reconstruction's failure. In this second wave of Revisionism, Reconstruction's black leadership replaced the Redeemers as heroes of the era. These new critiques viewed Reconstruction's black leaders as the harbingers of change and equality, and stressed Reconstruction's successes - the expansion of public education, civil rights, male suffrage, and the economic reconstruction of southern states - over the period's failures. Whereas Traditionalists had blamed blacks and white radicals for Reconstruction's failure, the new Revisionist historians placed the blame for Reconstruction's failure upon the Bourbon Elite, southern Democrats, greedy carpetbaggers and the abandonment of black Republicans by their white counterparts. The new Revisionists, like their predecessors, were unable to garner widespread support for their iconoclastic interpretations of Reconstruction history because these interpretations differed drastically from social and political conventions of the day.<sup>18</sup>

It was not until the sweeping social and political reformation of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s that the Revisionists gained widespread support. As blacks emerged victoriously from the struggle to reaffirm the rights they had gained in the nineteenth century, it was easy for many to compare the contemporary political climate to

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<sup>18</sup> Alrutheus A. Taylor. *The Negro in South Carolina During the Reconstruction* (Washington: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1924); Francis B. Simkins and Robert H. Woody. *South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932); W.E.B. DuBois. *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: S. A. Russell, 1935); Howard K. Beale. *The Critical Year?* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1930).



that of Post-Civil War Reconstruction. As a consequence of these similarities, the 1960's were dubbed the "Second Reconstruction" and just as the first had enfranchised and empowered blacks, the second renewed interest in the previous Reconstruction era and in earlier Revisionist interpretations of first Reconstruction's black leadership. During the Second Reconstruction, Revisionist interpretations of Reconstruction replaced those of the Traditionalists as the most widely accepted perspective of the period. Historian Joel Williamson led this revival of Revisionism with his pioneering study of Reconstruction South Carolina. Williamson's research depicted blacks as active participants in their struggle for suffrage, equal rights, public education, and access to land. He contradicted Traditionalists' views that Reconstruction's black leaders were ignorant and childlike. Williamson's interpretations also challenged the early Revisionists' contentions that blacks had played a small role politically within Reconstruction governments. In succession, the Post-Civil Rights Movement Revisionists challenged the assertions of the Traditionalist historians and, one after another, established Traditionalist interpretations were replaced by new Revisionist versions.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the growing popularity of Revisionism, some Traditionalist historians refused to accept the movement's radical new interpretations. Historian E. Merton Coulter denounced Revisionists, arguing that "no amount of revision can write away the

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<sup>19</sup> Joel Williamson. *After Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965); Kenneth M. Stampp. *The Era of Reconstruction* (New York: Knopf, 1965); LaWanda Cox and John H. Cox. *Politics, Principle, and Prejudice 1865-1866* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1963); James M. McPherson. *The Struggle for Equality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964); John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction: After the Civil War* (New York, 1961); James L. Roark. *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Norton, 1977); C. Vann Woodward. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

grievous mistakes made in this abnormal period of American history.”<sup>20</sup> By the 1970s, several historians published interpretations of Reconstruction that rejected the main assertions of both the Traditionalist and the Revisionist historians. These new “Post Revisionist” interpretations looked critically at Reconstruction’s Black leadership and the role of Bourbon elite in Reconstruction’s tensions. Post Revisionists rejected the generalizations of its predecessors by maintaining that Reconstruction could not be fairly assessed by applying fault entirely to one race, black or white. Post Revisionists focused their attentions on Reconstruction as a political process that transformed both black and white communities in the South. By studying these communities, Post Revisionists found complex political networks operating in response to social, political, and economic situations that were often specific to a particular geography.<sup>21</sup>

An important study in the early Post Revisionist Movement was historian Thomas Holt’s *Black over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction* (1977). Holt’s reassessment refuted the conclusions maintained by Williamson. Where Williamson contended that the Republican Party had been ineffectual because its black leadership had distanced themselves from their white counterparts by only conceding to the demands of their black constituency, Holt’s new interpretation of the state’s black leadership maintained that Charleston’s black politicians, largely consisting of mulatto urban elites, had distanced themselves from their newly

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<sup>20</sup> Merton E. Coulter. *The South during Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1947), xi, 86, 336.

<sup>21</sup> Leon F. Litwack. *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Knopf, 1979); James M. McPherson. *Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Knopf, 1982); Richard N. Current. *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

emancipated black voting base by doing too little to address their constituency's demands for labor and land reform. Holt's research provided a new conservative image of the Reconstruction's black leadership and showed that internal tensions within the black community may have played a role in Reconstruction's failure. Holt's revelation that South Carolina's Reconstruction black community was fragmented and factionalized opened a new area of debate in regard to Reconstruction politics.<sup>22</sup>

Historians John W. Blassingame and David Rankin made similar revelations in regard to New Orleans's black leadership by showing that black politicians in the city were stratified by a complex array of factors. These factors included place of birth, social class during Reconstruction, antebellum social status, geography, occupation, age, skin color, wealth, and literacy, as well as cultural and religious affiliation. Rankin's research was largely quantitative and provided a picture of New Orleans politics and an image of the typical New Orleanian black politician of the era. This image revealed that the majority of black politicians bore little resemblance to the average black voter in Reconstruction Louisiana, who was more likely than not a dark skinned, Protestant, former slave. Rankin maintained that black politics in the state was dominated by Afro-Creoles, who had never been slaves, were connected by blood to some of the oldest white families in the city, were literate, spoke French, and worshipped in Catholic churches.

Conversely, Blassingame's research was largely qualitative and provided glimpses into New Orleans politics and culture. Although Blassingame acknowledged the

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<sup>22</sup> Thomas C. Holt. *Black over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

factors that Rankin employed in making his generalizations about black politicians, he also provided a far more detailed and balanced assessment of the city's "Negro community". Blassingame maintained that any assessment of the Negro Community within the city had to take into account the duality that existed in the city's two, often contradictory, black antebellum communities: the Afro-Creole and the Anglo-Black. The antebellum black communities of New Orleans were defined by their blood ties, fraternal and benevolent societies, and spiritual communities. Blassingame's intricate portrayal of these communities revealed that the amalgamated Negro community's leadership was often divided by antebellum prejudices and the conflicting interests of their ethnic communities, but were capable of working collaboratively on issues which were mutually important.<sup>23</sup>

Although Rankin and Blassingame provided a demography for New Orleans's black leadership, neither thoroughly examined the role this leadership played in politics within the city. Historian Charles Vincent's *Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction* (1976) assessed the political effectiveness of the state's black leadership by examining their ability to pass legislation that would benefit their constituency. Like many Revisionists, Vincent maintained that black legislators had successfully provided an array of social and fiscal reforms which benefited not only the state's black citizens, but its white citizenry as well. In similar fashion, Vincent disregarded black legislators'

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<sup>23</sup> John W. Blassingame. *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880*(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973); Rankin, David C., "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans" *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. XL, No.3, August 1974. 417-440; Ferdinand Tönnies. *Community and Civil Society*. Ed. José Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); *Émile Durkheim*. *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1964).

flaws, just as other Revisionists had, and by doing so he avoided discussion of the role they may have played in Reconstruction's failure. Despite the text's detail in regard to political matters, Vincent's research failed to examine the roles which factionalism and ethnicity played within the black leadership.

In the following decade, a number of books were published which grappled with the black experience during Reconstruction. One of the most noted was Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*. Foner's tome was the culmination of the Revisionist writing which preceded it and gained international accolades for successfully blending social and political history in its scholarship. Foner's portrayals of black communities and their leaders successfully fused the three images presented by Rankin, Blassingame, and Vincent into a single volume. He presented a narrative told from the perspective of the freedmen which incorporated the social and political aspects of the Reconstruction black community and its leadership. Foner portrayed the black leadership not as a set of cohesive groups of black politicians, but as individuals. By examining the role of the individual in the political arena, Foner demonstrated that a variety of issues politically galvanized the community while an array of social issues fragmented it. The two most important themes which Foner identified were free labor and the freedmen's developing ideas in regard to equal opportunity, freedom, and citizenship.<sup>24</sup>

Foner's scholarship renewed interest in Reconstruction history and established new interest in the emancipated freedmen. Several books published subsequent to Foner's

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<sup>24</sup> Eric Foner. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York, Harper and Row, 1988)

research modeled his even-handed evaluation of complex economic, social, and political issues in the Reconstruction South. In these new texts, the themes of free labor, equal opportunity, freedom, and post emancipation citizenship emerged.<sup>25</sup>

The most recent scholarship in regard to black politicians in Reconstruction Louisiana was contributed by historian Justin A. Nystrom whose research acknowledged the racial complexity which existed in New Orleans politics but, unlike Revisionists and early Post Revisionists, he maintains that many black politicians entered the political arena for the same reason as their white counterparts: financial gain. Nystrom portrayed the black community of New Orleans as having been fragmented by issues of race and notions of racial equality wherein some factions endorsed amalgamation by “passing for white,” while others strove for social equality. Still others were willing to accept a racially segregated community that resembled the antebellum social hierarchy.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Perman., ed. *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1991); Robert R. Dykstra. *Bright Radical Star: Black Freedom and White Supremacy on the Hawkeye Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Julie Saville. *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Leslie A. Schwalm. *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Paul A. Cimbala. *Under the Guardianship of the Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); Heather Cox Richardson. *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); David W. Blight. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Justin A. Nystrom. *New Orleans After the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom*. (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010)

*Specific Literature in Regard to Oscar James Dunn*

The first biographical sketches of Oscar James Dunn appeared in obituaries throughout the country shortly after his death in 1871. The three most important of these obituaries offer accounts of Dunn's life written by John Parson and J. Henri Burch who were life-long friends and Masonic lodge brothers of Dunn, and by James Dryden, a former employer of Dunn.<sup>27</sup> One of the earliest biographical sketches of Dunn, outside of those found in obituaries, was by William Wells Brown. Brown's sketch of Dunn is extremely scant on information but overwhelmingly supportive of the belief that Dunn was beyond ill repute.<sup>28</sup> The bulk of what is known about Dunn is contained in seven scholarly papers: Marcus Christian's "Men of Worth in Louisiana" and "The Theory of poisoning of Oscar James Dunn;" A.E. Perkins's "Oscar James Dunn;" "James Henri Burch and Oscar James Dunn in Louisiana" and "Some Negro Officers and Legislators in Louisiana;" Charles Vincent's "Black Legislators in Louisiana During Reconstruction;" and David Rankin's "The Origins of Negro Leadership in New Orleans During New Orleans." All of the articles concur on Dunn's sterling character but few delve deeply into his origin and rise to power in Louisiana's Reconstruction political arena. The work of historians Marcus Christian and A.E. Perkins give conflicting accounts of Dunn's origin and pre-war slave status but agree on Dunn's importance to both state and national politics. Rankin's and Vincent's work largely consist of scant biographical sketches of a

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<sup>27</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871(John Parson account); New Orleans Republican, Nov. 23, 1871 (James Dryden account),

<sup>28</sup> William Wells Brown. *The Rising Son: or the Antecedents and Advancements of the Colored Race* (Boston: A.G. Brown, 1874) 490 – 491.

number of political figures and therefore do not provide much detail about any single politician.

Despite the apparent lack of scholarly research about his life and career, Dunn has become something of an iconic figure and is commonly regarded as one of Louisiana's most honest politicians. The *New Orleans Republican* painted Dunn as a noble figure in Louisiana and maintained that he was an "honor to his race" as well as a "Christian gentleman and a talented politician."<sup>29</sup> Praise for Dunn would not be limited to members of his own party. His desire to mend postwar wounds would be proclaimed by Democratic state senator James Ogden, who commented

"I, too have a candidate for United States Senator, a man born among us that the Democrats are willing to send to the Senate, A colored man who by his dignity, honesty, courtesy, and intelligence, has won the respect of his political enemies, Lieutenant Governor Dunn. He knows our wants and sufferings, and is willing to extend to us the hand of fellowship."<sup>30</sup>

Because of such examples of Dunn's wide bi-partisan support, historians speculate that Dunn might have been a likely running mate for President Grant in the 1872 or the 1876 Presidential Campaigns. The *Courier Journal* of Louisville commented on this possibility stating,

"At the time of his death, Dunn was acknowledged leader of the Grant wing of Louisiana Republicans, and was engaged in a movement which, there are reasons to believe, had for its object the elevation of his name to a place of Vice President upon the Republican ticket next year, or in 1876 at the farthest. In this Black

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<sup>29</sup> New Orleans Republican, Oct. 19, 1871

<sup>30</sup> A.E. Perkins, "Oscar James Dunn", *Pylon*, 4 (1943), 115; The Picayune, July 7, 1868



Man's Party movement he had the sanction and the support of President Grant, and it is believed the President was willing to take Dunn with him on the ticket."<sup>31</sup>

What is ironic about this political ascent is that very little is actually known about Dunn and a mythology has developed in the absence of an historical record. The fact that so little is known about Dunn's life has not deterred scholars from noting his historical importance and sometimes incorrectly citing his achievements.

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<sup>31</sup> Perkins, 118.

### CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This dissertation employs both narrative and exposition to analyze the life and career of Oscar James Dunn. The dissertation, biographical in nature, broadly examines incidents relating to Dunn's life from 1822 to his death on November 24, 1871. The dissertation uses a mix of sources, including archival, newspaper, online databases, government documents, personal correspondence, and speeches. From family stories told to me by my great grandmother, I began researching primary sources in an attempt to validate family history. This research revealed a number of unknown aspects of Dunn's life and ultimately inspired me to use Dunn as the topic of my dissertation.

In researching this dissertation, I discovered several new primary sources, many of which will likely be of great importance to future scholarship. These formerly lost resources shed new light not only on Dunn, but also on New Orleans's Anglo-African Community and Reconstruction politics in Louisiana. The first of these new sources are notarial records which identify Dunn's former owner, George P. Bowers. They also provide details regarding Dunn's purchase by James Dunn, his stepfather. Until the discovery of these records, the identity of Dunn's former master and his possible place of birth had been a mystery.

Research also revealed four important new sources. Two are biographical articles about Dunn that were published shortly after his death and a third is an autobiographical article by Dunn's wife, Mrs. Ellen Dunn-Burch. The biographies of Dunn are important because they represent two of three known accounts of Dunn's antebellum life. Prior to

the discovery of these articles, scholars relied heavily upon an account provided by one of Dunn's prior employers, James Dryden, a white master plasterer from whom Dunn had run away and broken a contract with. The newly discovered articles were written by Dunn's intimate friends John Parsons and J. Henri Burch. The article by Ellen Dunn is the sole known account of her life and she sheds light on Dunn's marriage, her family's origin, and her life after Dunn's death. Research also unearthed a speech written by noted African American Journalist Major T. Chester Morris entitled "Remember Dunn, and Follow Ingraham". The article provides a wealth of information in regard to Dunn's political tensions, his last days, his death, and the state of his political faction after his passing.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Problem*

This research represents an historical analysis of one African American politician in New Orleans, Lt. Governor Oscar James Dunn, and uses him to chronicle political regimes, social activities, and race relations within the city of New Orleans. The subject provides a significant challenge for the researcher because there are no known collections of compiled writings related to Dunn. Similarly, there are also no known diaries or journals which were authored by Dunn or a ranking member of his constituency. Lacking these primary sources, the researcher must reconstruct Dunn's life using

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<sup>32</sup> The original act of conveyance denoting Dunn's sale was destroyed in a fire of Notary Greenburg R. Stringer, but a notation and summary can be found in conveyance book #7, p. 197, February 5, 1831; Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871 (Appendix A: John Parson's Biography of Dunn); Louisianian, December 6, 1871 (Appendix B: J. Henri Burch's Masonic Eulogy of Oscar J. Dunn); St. Paul Daily Globe, June 14, 1885 (Ellen Dunn-Burch's autobiographical article); New Orleans Republican, Nov. 23, 1871 (Appendix C: James Dryden's Biography of Dunn).

newspaper accounts from both Republican and Democratic newspapers. Because newspaper accounts are sporadic and typically deal with noteworthy events, I chose to sub-divide the chapters into historical vignettes occurring within the chronological delineation of the specific chapters.

The dissertation has been divided into nine chapters. Chapters One through Three (Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology) frame the research question by providing background information on Dunn and Reconstruction Louisiana. These chapters also provide information about the methodology that has been employed throughout the dissertation. Chapters Four through Eight are chronological and reflect on political, social, economic, and cultural events that would shape Dunn's life as well as those of the residents of Louisiana. The last chapter concludes the examination of Dunn's life by providing an overview of major events in earlier chapters and discusses the historical importance of Dunn.

The Fourth chapter "Giving Roots to the Rootless-The Origin of Oscar James Dunn (1822-1865)" examines Dunn's origin by closely investigating his parentage, education, social affiliation, and military service. The chapter also considers the impact that New Orleans's geography played on Dunn's antebellum life. The Fifth chapter, "Dunn's Political Ascension (1865 -1867)" analyses Dunn's role in the formations of Louisiana's black political organizations and, Post-Civil War social organizations. It also considers Dunn's first political posts. The Sixth chapter, "The Negro Lieutenant Governor and the Republican Schism (1868 – 1869)," outlines Dunn's ascension to the post of lieutenant governor and the factionalization of the Republican Party. The Seventh chapter, "No

Greater Divide (1870 – 1871),” chronicles Dunn’s struggle to usurp political control of Louisiana from his Governor, Henry Clay Warmoth, and Dunn’s untimely death. The Eighth chapter “Dunn –Forgotten Hero,” serves as the conclusion. This last chapter provides an overview of Dunn’s life and discusses the historical, political, and cultural importance of Dunn.

### *My Hypothesis*

This research is based on the theoretical premise that economic, political, and social forces precipitate change on both a macro level (in groups comprised of several individuals) and on a micro level (single individual). This dissertation similarly contends that an historical analysis of the life of a single influential political figure (in this case, Oscar J. Dunn) can divulge accurate depictions of the constituency that the political figure represents and identify socio-economic and political factors that affected that politician’s decisions. This research examines the public and private life of Dunn, thus providing an historical depiction of not only Dunn, but also the constituency he represented and the volatile forces that affected Dunn’s decisions. This historical analysis of Dunn’s life illustrates particular conditions that led to the emergence of New Orleans’s black political regimes, socio-economic forces that influenced the lives of the city’s inhabitants, and political factors that led to the factionalization of the city’s Republican Party.

## CHAPTER IV

### **Giving Roots to the Rootless: The Origin of Oscar James Dunn (1822 – 1865)**

The Reconstruction black politician has often been portrayed as a rootless figure; studies of these men commonly begin with their participation in the Civil War and end with the termination of Reconstruction.<sup>33</sup> The biographies of these men are often sketchy, incomplete, filled with contradictions, or entirely missing. One of the most disputed figures in Louisiana's Reconstruction history is Oscar James Dunn, a black man who rose from an obscure background and ascended to the position of Lieutenant Governor of the state.

What is currently known of Oscar J. Dunn can be attributed largely to the scholarship of two historians, A.E. Perkins and Marcus B. Christian. A.E. Perkins's 1943 article "Oscar James Dunn" was the one of first attempts to look biographically at Dunn's life. Perkins dealt chiefly with Dunn's political life and relied heavily on Appleton's Biographical Encyclopedia to provide information of Dunn's life prior to the Civil War.<sup>34</sup> The Appleton biographical sketch that Perkins provided portrayed Dunn as a runaway slave who had escaped from the construction firm of Wilson and Patterson. To support this claim, Perkins supplied a copy of the 1841 advertisement that ran for thirteen weeks

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<sup>33</sup> Rankin, David C. "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction" *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 40, No.3 (Aug.,1974), p. 418; Perkins, A.E. "James Henri Burch and Oscar James Dunn in Louisiana" *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Jul., 1937), p.332

<sup>34</sup> Perkins, A.E. "Oscar James Dunn" *Phylon*, IV ( 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr., 1943), pp. 102 -121; Appleton's Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. VII, Pg. 255

in the New Orleans's Daily Picayune.<sup>35</sup> Two years later, Marcus B. Christian's "The Theory of the Poisoning of Oscar J. Dunn" challenged Perkins's claim that Dunn had been a slave.<sup>36</sup> Christian's research on Dunn's origin relied heavily on an account given by Dunn to a Congressional Committee investigating riots in the city of New Orleans and on several newspaper articles written in the wake of Dunn's death.<sup>37</sup> Both historians relied heavily on accounts given to newspapers, testimonies given before Congressional Committee members, and remembrances of friends. Neither historian thoroughly explored accounts, testimonies, or data sources that were compiled before to Dunn's death or considered the validity of the sources on which they relied.

#### *Dunn's Parents*

Oscar J. Dunn's story began in Virginia with a free Anglo-African man named James Dunn. Documents suggest that James Dunn was born in or around Norfolk, Virginia, in the late 1790's, and that he was likely the child of Peggy, Mary, or Valentine Dunn, all of whom appear as free black inhabitants of Norfolk in the 1810 Census. Peggy, Mary and Valentine are listed in the census as heads of households that contained other free blacks; unfortunately the ages, names, and sexes of these free blacks were

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<sup>35</sup> Perkins, pg. 105

<sup>36</sup> Christian, Marcus B. "The Theory of the Poisoning of Oscar J. Dunn" *Phylon*, VI (3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr., 1945), pp. 254 – 266

<sup>37</sup> *Report of the Select Committee on the New Orleans Riots*, Washington, D.C., 1867, pp. 68 – 70  
Testimony of Oscar J. Dunn; *L'Abeille de la Nouvelle-Orleans*, November 23, 1871; and the *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, November 23, 1871

omitted.<sup>38</sup> Most likely, Peggy Dunn, a free black seamstress who resided in Norfolk County, was James's mother. The 1801 Tax Register of Norfolk County listed Peggy as having three children: Mark, Tom, and James. The ages of each were excluded from the record.<sup>39</sup>

James Dunn left Norfolk prior to 1818 and eventually landed in Petersburg, Virginia. Historian Tommy Bogger noted a sharp decline in employment opportunities for free blacks in the city of Norfolk and discovered a large influx of free blacks into Petersburg due to the city's burgeoning industries.<sup>40</sup> While in Petersburg, Dunn began working as a stage carpenter for the Petersburg Theatre's manager James H. Caldwell. James Dunn indentured himself to Caldwell, who subsequently brought Dunn to New Orleans.<sup>41</sup> Dunn and Caldwell later confirmed in the Mayor's Office Register of Free Colored Persons that Dunn arrived in the city in December of 1819, and Caldwell served as witness to Dunn's free status.<sup>42</sup> Caldwell's purpose for bringing Dunn to New Orleans was to assist in establishing New Orleans' first American Theater. It appears that as

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<sup>38</sup> The Federal Census of Virginia in 1810 listed: Valentine, head of a Norfolk County household of 2 "other free" [VA: 802] and Mary, head of a Norfolk County household of 4 "other free" [VA: 806]; Peggy Dunn is listed in the Norfolk County Tax Register 1801

<sup>39</sup> Norfolk County Tax Register 1801

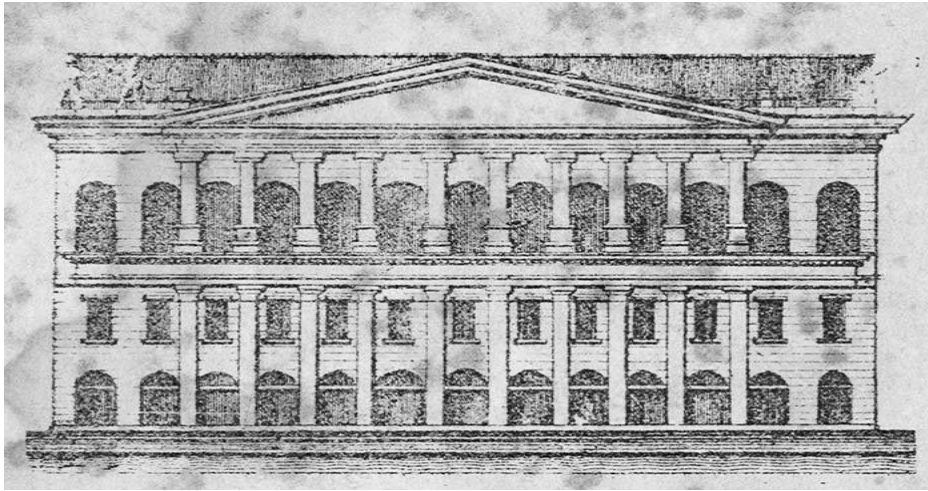
<sup>40</sup> Tommy Bogger, *Free Blacks in Norfolk, Virginia, 1790 – 1860*, Charlottesville, Va.; 1997, pp. 52-89

<sup>41</sup> James Caldwell appears in The Port of New Orleans Record Group 36, United States Customs Service, Collector of Customs at New Orleans Microfilm Rolls 1-3 of 25 (1818 to 1860) Housed at the National Archives, Washington D.C. transcribed by Dee Parmer Woodtor, PhD. Record #373 Owner: James H. Caldwell ~ Indentured Servants ... James, male, 18, 5' 8", mulatto - Betsy, female, 33, 5'4", mulatto - Amy, Female, 10, 4'11", Black; Weekly National Republican, Weds., Nov. 22, 1871

<sup>42</sup> Mayor's office Register of colored person 1840-1863 AA430 observation made by James H. Caldwell



Caldwell became increasingly successful so did his carpenter. On February 5, 1831, Dunn purchased three slaves from George P. Bowers, a commission merchant residing in the city. These included Maria (age 35), Oscar (age 9), and Jane (age 2). He purchased the slaves for a total of eight-hundred dollars payable over five months.<sup>43</sup>



**Illustration 1: American Theater (The Old Camp) Source: New Orleans Public Library (<http://nutrias.org/~nopl/monthly/october2002/1842f.htm>)**

It is probable that during the course of his living in New Orleans, Dunn knew Bowers's slaves prior to purchasing them. Dunn's home at 116 Poydras Street was a short walk to Bower's office at 8 Canal Street and his home at 45 Bienville Street. It is unlikely that Dunn purchased his slaves for their labor for by December 13, 1832, a scant

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<sup>43</sup> The original act of conveyance was destroyed in a fire of Notary Greenburg R. Stringer, but a notation and summary can be found in conveyance book #7, p. 197, February 5, 1831

twenty-two months after their purchase, Dunn petitioned the Police Jury for the emancipation of all three slaves.<sup>44</sup>

The price that Dunn paid for the slaves may be a hint to a possible pre-purchase relationship between Maria and James. Eight hundred dollars was far from the premium for a single slave, let alone the purchase of three.<sup>45</sup> The most telling clues to the possible affections shared between James and Maria are those within the emancipation records. Those records listed James Dunn as the father of both Oscar and Jane and the husband of Maria.<sup>46</sup> Oscar Dunn later clarified his connection to James Dunn during a testimony he gave to the Congressional Committee investigating the Riots of 1866. In his testimony, Oscar Dunn stated that James Dunn was his stepfather and that he had assumed James's surname. Oscar Dunn also confirmed his step-father's profession as a stage carpenter while testifying before the committee.<sup>47</sup> The identity of Dunn's birth father is unknown but may be closely linked to Maria's origin which is also unknown. No records have been found that explain from whom Bowers acquired Maria or where she was originally from. The original conveyance records that may have held clues to her purchase, place of birth,

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<sup>44</sup> Marie was listed as approx. 37, Oscar 10, and Jane 8; Orleans Parish Police Jury Petitions for emancipations of slaves 1827-1834 VJA 320; Louisiana Parish Court Petitions for the Emancipation of Slaves 1813-1843 VCP 320 petition 40B

<sup>45</sup> To determine the value of Maria Dunn, a sample of ten similar slave sales were averaged. The slaves sampled ranged in age from twenty-five to forty, were all mulatto, and all of the sale transactions took place in the Early American Period (1811 – 1820). This sampling determined that the estimated value of Maria Dunn was approximately \$1,256. The samples were gathered from Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's "Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719 – 1820" (2000). The database was accessed online at <http://www.ibiblio.org/laslave/> on May 12, 2006.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> *Report of the Select Committee on the New Orleans Riots*, Washington, D.C., pp. 68-70. (Testimony of Oscar J. Dunn); L'Abeille de la Nouvelle-Orleans, November 23, 1871

and former owner were destroyed in a fire that consumed the records of notary Greenburg R. Stringer.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the apparent lack of sources regarding Maria's origin, one can speculate based on a scant amount of secondary accounts. Dunn testified before the Select Committee investigating the Riots of 1866, that his mother was born a free woman and a native of the city of New Orleans. In the same testimony, he stated that he only left the state once prior to assuming political office. Dunn's sole excursion was a trip taken in 1859 to Louisville, Kentucky. Dunn did not provide the committee with information about the trip's purpose or intent.<sup>49</sup> A newspaper account following Dunn's death alleged that Dunn and his family were originally from Woodford County, Kentucky.<sup>50</sup> The unidentified individual making this allegation claimed that Dunn had openly admitted to being from Kentucky prior to taking political office, but upon receiving a post he denied his connection to Kentucky and claimed to be a native of New Orleans.<sup>51</sup> If Dunn's assertion of being born in New Orleans was true, then it is likely that Dunn would have been born in the Bower's home in 1822.

During Oscar Dunn's testimony before the Select Committee, he described his mother's profession as being a hotel manager. Dunn's testimony was supported by

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<sup>48</sup> New Orleans Notarial Archives maintains that the records from 1824 to 1842 were destroyed by fire. (<http://www.notarialarchives.org/planbook019001.htm> accessed on August 20, 2011).

<sup>49</sup> *Testimony taken by the Sub-Committee of Elections in Louisiana*, Washington, D.C., 1870 pp. 185-186. (Testimony of Oscar J. Dunn)

<sup>50</sup> New Orleans Republican, November 23, 1871; The New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, November 23, 1871

<sup>51</sup> The New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, November 23, 1871

evidence found in Parish Court records. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1834, New Orleans Parish Court records showed that the boarding house owned and operated by James and Maria Dunn, located at 116 Poydras Street, was broken into by Fredrick and John Proctor, along with a host of others. The men who forced their way into the Dunn home were armed with “clubs, sticks, knives, dirks, swords and pistols” and their intentions were to murder James Dunn and his wife.<sup>52</sup> The attackers savagely beat Dunn and his wife as terrified boarders in the home looked on. James Dunn was seriously injured during the attack and his wounds would call for a physician’s visit and an extended recovery period.<sup>53</sup>

The reason for the attack is unknown. What is known is that many of James Dunn’s attackers were arrested and charged with assault and battery on December 11, 1834. The names attackers were listed as James Anderson, William Nelson, James Rourke, Francisco Lhoret, Henry Huard, Lande Ferriere, J. G. Asher, Richard Terrel, Fredrick Proctor, Benjamin Bot, Simeon Carriere F.C.M., Ursin Brau F.C.M., Thomas Jenkins, Thomas Mullony, Patrick Summers, and John Warren; these names indicate that the group consisted of an interracial group of Latin and Anglo-American citizens.<sup>54</sup> The mob also had two members who were free men of color in the city.

When compared (see Table 1: Attackers of James Dunn) a number of similarities among the attackers emerge. All of the attackers who could be identified were local merchants, craftsmen and business owners, and many of these men lived or owned

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<sup>52</sup> New Orleans Parish Court Records 1834 -1836 VCP roll 91 Record #7481, Mitchell’s New Orleans annual and Commercial Register (1834)

<sup>53</sup> New Orleans Parish Court Records 1834 -1836 VCP roll 91 Record #7481

<sup>54</sup> Louisiana Criminal Court First District (Orleans Parish) VMZ roll 300 1830-1846, Minute books v. 2 (2/6/1832 - 10/30/1835) entry dated: Thurs. Dec. 11, 1834

businesses within New Orleans's Second Municipality. James Dunn and his family resided in this section of the city, and as a businessman he may have interacted with these men on a regular basis. Fredrick Proctor, a coffee shop owner identified as one of the mob's leaders, owned a coffee shop called the Garrick's Head. The shop was located across the Street from the Camp Street Theatre, which was the very theater at which James Dunn worked and was no more than five city blocks from Dunn's home. Though no material has been found to shed light on the origin of the dispute, the mob's membership must be recognized as extremely untraditional. A possible explanation for Dunn's attack can be found in Leonard P. Curry's *The Free Black in Urban America 1800-1850*. In the text, Curry recounts a thwarted riot in August of 1835, wherein several hundred of New Orleans's white skilled laborers and artisans gathered to protest the employment of "slaves in the mechanical arts."<sup>55</sup> Dunn's attack may have been a precursor to this much larger demonstration and may be reflective of neighboring shopkeepers' disapproval of Anglo-African merchants and shop keeps.<sup>56</sup> What is known of the attack comes from a civil court suit filed by James Dunn's attorney John Nixon. In the suit, Dunn gave an account of the assault but neglected to provide information in regard to events leading up to the attack. Dunn's suit was only filed against Fredrick and John G. Proctor and requested that the pair pay Dunn one thousand dollars for damages and loss of wages.

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<sup>55</sup> Leonard P. Curry. *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800 – 1850: The Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) 96 – 97

<sup>56</sup> The two Free Men of Color who participated in the attack on Dunn's parents bear surnames which suggest that they were likely of Afro-Creole origin.

*Table 1: The Attackers of James Dunn*

<b>Names</b>	<b>Addresses</b>	<b>Professions</b>
William Nelson	Nayades n. Euterpe	Turner <sup>57</sup>
James Rourke	127 Tchoupitoulas St.	Trader <sup>58</sup>
Francisco Lhoret (possibly Francisco Louis )	140 French St.	Grocer <sup>59</sup>
Henry Huard	305 Dauphin St.	Bricklayer <sup>60</sup>
Lande Ferriere	C. Camp and Delord	Baker <sup>61</sup>
J. G. Asher	108 Julie St.	Grocer <sup>62</sup>
Richard Terrel	36 Tchoupitoulas	Western Hotel and coffee house Owner <sup>63</sup>
Fredrick Proctor	Jefferson Coffee house 176 Chartres c. Jefferson; and the Garrick's Head Coffee house, corner of Camp and Natchez opposite the Camp Street Theatre	Coffee shop owner <sup>64</sup>
Benjamin Bot	C. Conde and Madison	Washington coffee shop owner <sup>65</sup>
Simeon Carriere (FMC)	148 Bason St. (probably Basin St.)	Grocer <sup>66</sup>
Ursin Brau (FMC)	No information found	No information found
Thomas Jenkins	28 Gravier St. (upstairs)	Ship broker & commission merchant <sup>67</sup>
Thomas Mullony	No information found	No information found
Patrick Summers	15 Commons St.	Grocer <sup>68</sup>
John Warren	No information found	No information found

<sup>57</sup> Mitchell's New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register 1834

<sup>58</sup> Soard's New Orleans City Directory 1832

<sup>59</sup> Mitchell's New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register 1834

<sup>60</sup> Mitchell's New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register 1834

<sup>61</sup> Soard's New Orleans City Directory 1834

<sup>62</sup> Mitchell's New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register 1834

<sup>63</sup> Mitchell's New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register 1834

<sup>64</sup> Mitchell's New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register 1834

<sup>65</sup> Mitchell's New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register 1834

<sup>66</sup> Mitchell's New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register 1834

<sup>67</sup> Soard's New Orleans City Directory 1842

<sup>68</sup> Mitchell's New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register 1834

Documents were not found to confirm if Dunn won or lost the case, but by November of that same year, Dunn was in the financial position to purchase a piece of property from New Orleans real estate mogul John McDonogh.<sup>69</sup>

### *Oscar James Dunn's Youth*

Oscar James Dunn was born in 1822 and little more is known of his infancy.<sup>70</sup> The sole account of Dunn's youth was supplied by his longtime friend, John Parson, at the time of Dunn's death. Parson's account of Dunn's early life supports testimony given by Dunn before the Congressional Committee. Parson maintained that Dunn's earliest years were spent in school, and stated that Dunn received an "ordinary English education".<sup>71</sup> It is not clear what Parson meant by English education but it is important to remember that this education is being obtained during a time when the free black community of the city is largely French speaking and anti-American.

There are a number of possibilities that come to mind; Dunn's teacher could have been English or American, or he could have received his education from a protestant church school or private tutor. Historians Caryn Cossé Bell and H.E. Sterkx researched

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<sup>69</sup> While living on Poydras Street, James Dunn F.M.C. purchased a parcel of Land from John Mc Donogh. The parcel is located in the Fauburg St. Mary (Dist. 3) was designated No. 8 in Square no. 27. The property was located on Giraud St. between Canal and Perdido Streets and was purchased for \$1,250.00, payable in five payments of \$250.00 each. ( Conveyance Acts of Notary L.T. Caire, Nov. 4, 1834, p. 989)

<sup>70</sup> Oscar Dunn's birth year was determined by subtracting his age stated at the time of his emancipation; from the date listed on the emancipation records. Based on this record, Dunn's estimated year of birth was calculated at 1822. The estimated year of birth also corresponds to Dunn's age stated within the conveyance records when Dunn was purchased from George P. Bowers.

<sup>71</sup> Weekly National Republican , November 22, 1871 (Appendix A: John Parson's Biography of Dunn)

the Grimble Bell School in Landry Parish. Both Bell and Sterkx noted that the school was a “major educational institution” for free blacks in the region. The Grimble Bell School taught using the Lancastrian method, commonly referred to as the English method. Its tuition and board of fifteen dollars was very close to the twelve dollars a month Dunn claimed his parents paid for his schooling.<sup>72</sup>

Parson also used his account to plea Dunn’s case of being born a free man. It was no accident that Parson correlated Dunn’s education with his being born free. Parson went an additional step in his remembrances and pointed out that Dunn attended school at a time when slaves were strictly prohibited by law from attaining education within the state. Though Parson made no explicit replies to accusations that Dunn had been a slave, it is apparent that Parson tried to dismiss any such discussion by noting this distinction.<sup>73</sup>

Parson’s account of Dunn’s life elaborated on Dunn’s skill as a student and paid particular attention to Dunn’s “avidity” towards reading. According to Parson, Dunn’s passion for learning followed him for the remainder of his life, and his ambition for bettering himself would be a defining trait of Dunn’s character.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Caryn Cossé Bell. *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997) 126; H.E. Sterkx. *The free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana*, Rutherford, N.J., 1972, pp. 269 – 270; *Testimony taken by the Sub-Committee of Elections in Louisiana*, Washington, D.C., 1870 pg.179 (Testimony of Oscar J. Dunn); Blassingame, 11.

<sup>73</sup> The New York Tribune made a claim that Dunn had been a slave prior to the Civil War and used Dunn’s abandonment and bounty in 1841 as evidence of his slave status. (New York Tribune, November 23,1871); similar claims were launched by the New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, November 23, 1871; and the New Orleans Republican, November 23, 1871

<sup>74</sup> Ibid



At the age of fourteen, Dunn's formal education came to an abrupt halt. Historian Molly Niall Mitchell noted that "most of the children were expected to enter an apprenticeship with an artisan or tradesman at the end of their schooling."<sup>75</sup> Dunn's father apprenticed him to David or Samuel Jameson and George Patterson, master plasterers residing in the city.<sup>76</sup> His decision to do so secured Dunn a lucrative trade and placed him on equal footing with his Afro-Creole counterparts. Under the guidance of these men, Dunn learned the trade of plastering but upon achieving a degree of competency, Dunn left their employment to work for Thomas Dryden. While Mr. Dryden worked as plasterer, he had once performed as a vocalist of some note in the city. Dryden was responsible for introducing Dunn to music and was Dunn's first music instructor.<sup>77</sup>

The cordial relationship between Dunn and Dryden was brief and was prematurely cut short by a "mysterious incident" whose details were not mentioned in Parson's or Dryden's accounts of Dunn's life. Both men recalled Dunn's abandonment of his post of employment in the most favorable of terms. Parson looked nostalgically at the incident calling it a "misunderstanding" leading to a tragic "escapade," while Dryden recalled the desertion as Dunn merely losing interest in the trade. Earlier accounts of the desertion describe the incident in a much more sober and serious tone as Dunn's

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<sup>75</sup> Mitchell, Mary Niall, "A Good and Delicious Country: Free Children of Color and How They Learned to Imagine the Atlantic World in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana", *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 2. (Summer, 2000), pp. 123-144.

<sup>76</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871(John Parson account); Oscar James Dunn signed the Mayor's Register of Free blacks and his profession was listed as plasterer, November 22, 1856, Mayor's office register of free colored persons (1840 - 1863) AA430

<sup>77</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871(John Parson account)

employers issued a bounty for Dunn's capture and return. Records give no origin to the dispute and do not confirm if Dunn was ever arrested or returned to his post.<sup>78</sup>

### *Dunn the Music Teacher*

Parson noted that Dunn reluctantly returned to his job as a plasterer after the incident but continued his music instruction under the tutelage of an Italian by the name of Torna who resided in the city. Under Torna, Dunn mastered the guitar and became so skilled that he began taking on pupils of his own. Dunn appeared to have enjoyed his new profession as a music instructor but abruptly stopped teaching music due to a scandal involving another musician in the city, Thomas J. Martin.<sup>79</sup>

In late June of 1860, Martin, a free Negro, was arrested on the charge of threatening to burn down the home of Mrs. Ann Severs, a retired actress. The *New Orleans Times Picayune* printed that the victim's daughter, Miss Fanny Thayer, had become "infatuated" with Martin and fled from her parents' home to take up residence with him. Martin and Thayer had been involved in their relationship for three years and had a five-month old child when Thayer's mother arrived at Martin's door. When the mother of the Miss Thayer approached Martin in regard to the absconding of her daughter, Martin threatened that he would burn down her home if "she ever spoke of the matter". The mother promptly reported Martin's threat to the police which elicited his arrest. When arrested, Martin denied paternity of the child and made a number of

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<sup>78</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871(Appendix A: John Parson's Biography of Dunn);

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

undisclosed accusations against Severs.<sup>80</sup> In the days following his arrest, the allegations against Martin increased as new light was shed on the extent of his affairs and sexual relationships with his pupils.

By June 26, 1860, the *New Orleans Daily Crescent* termed Martin the “coffee-colored Lothario.” The *Crescent* also listed details of each of the women who Martin had seduced. Although the paper did not list the victims’ entire names, their first names, last initial, and short descriptions would have made it easy for readers to identify them. The *Crescent* surmised that Martin’s total victims numbered “nearly thirty” but could only confirm the half dozen or so ladies whom the paper detailed. The women who coupled with Martin were seen as innocent victims. Most were the young daughters of middle class or wealthy white families and a few were widows. However, all of the women were seen as blameless and seduced by the power of Martin’s “music dodge.” The paper also took the opportunity to note that Martin had a number of accomplices and promised to provide more facts daily.<sup>81</sup>

The next morning, the *Crescent* lived up to its promise by revealing that a manhunt was afoot for one of Martin’s accomplices who was referred to only as the “coffee-colored lothario number two.” The paper claimed that the second lothario had fled the city upon the arrest of the first and left in his wake an incriminating stash of evidence

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<sup>80</sup> New Orleans Times Picayune, June 25, 1860; Francis Vincent, ed., *Vincent’s Semi-Annual United States Register: January 1, 1860 – July 1, 1860*, (Philadelphia: Francis Vincent, 1860) 591; John W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans 1860-1880*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973) 19; Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in Cities: The South 1820-1860*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) 261; Sybil Kein, *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana’s Free People of Color*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000) 93-94

<sup>81</sup> New Orleans Daily Crescent, June 26, 1860

which included photos and love letters from his white devotees. The second lothario's destination was said to have been Canada and his chosen method of transit was the prior evening's train.<sup>82</sup>

The "Martin Affair" reached its climax on the evening of June 27, 1860, when a crowd of approximately two thousand gathered in Lafayette Square to voice their "individual sentiments" on the Martin matter. The mass had been summoned by placards placed around the city calling for a general assembly at 8:00 P.M. The gathering organized an "investigating committee," although the committee seemed more lynch mob than democratic body. The *New Orleans Crescent* commented that,

"The Committee will proceed in their duties without fuss and feathers – and though they may use the latter, with an addition of tar, on the proper and deserving subjects, still they will do so popularly and approvingly."

As the evening continued, a mob of a dozen or so men from the mass took to the streets headed for the parish prison. Once at the prison, the sheriff met the mob, and after three shots were fired into the air, the mob disbanded.<sup>83</sup>

Dunn's connection to Martin was noted by both Parson and Dryden. In Dryden's account, the relationship between Dunn and Martin was one of pupil and mentor, but in Parson's account Dunn and Martin were fellow teachers in the city until Martin's escapades brought all of the city's colored music teachers under the scrutiny of the

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<sup>82</sup> New Orleans Daily Crescent, June 27, 1860; New Orleans Daily Delta, July 27, 1860

<sup>83</sup> New Orleans Daily Crescent, June 28, 1860; New Orleans Picayune, June 29, 1860

mob.<sup>84</sup> Parson went on to acknowledge Dunn's appreciation for Martin's musical abilities but commented that Dunn believed Martin "had no degree of scientific culture". Dunn's and Martin's paths likely crossed musically as Martin composed the "Free Mason's Grand March", a piece that was probably composed for the Free Black Masonic lodges of New Orleans. Dunn was a member of standing in the lodge at this time and would have certainly participated in the commissioning process.<sup>85</sup> Though the connection between Dunn and Martin was tenuous at best, Dunn chose to leave his much loved post as musical teacher because of Martin's actions and returned to his trade as a plasterer after the Martin scandal.<sup>86</sup>

#### *A Plasterer again*

According to Parson, after the "Martin scandal" Dunn returned to the trade of plastering as his primary occupation. Having tested a music profession that afforded him the leisure time to pursue his academic desires, Dunn found it difficult to return to plastering. Parson wrote of the matter,

He [Dunn] was ambitious, however, to better his condition, and store his mind to study. While plastering he could read only in the evening after the day's labor had been done. But he was not satisfied with this. It was, therefore, with an idea that he was induced to open an intelligence office,

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<sup>84</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871 (Appendix A: John Parson's Biography of Dunn); New Orleans Republican, Nov. 23, 1871 (Appendix C: James Dryden's Biography of Dunn)

<sup>85</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871 (Appendix A: John Parson's Biography of Dunn); An account of Dunn's Masonic chronology was given by Henri Burch at Dunn's Funeral, Louisianian, December 6, 1871 (Appendix B: J. Henri Burch's Masonic Eulogy of Oscar J. Dunn) ; The Early Sheet Music Collection, New Orleans Public Library (Free Mason's Grand March)

<sup>86</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871 (Appendix A: John Parson's Biography of Dunn)

the duties of which would not interfere with his desire for increased hours of study.<sup>87</sup>

If Parson's account is correct, Dunn returned to the trade of plastering shortly after the summer of 1860 and continued at the profession until the fall of 1865.<sup>88</sup> Dunn probably saw great financial potential in the emancipation of slaves although there may have been some moral obligation on Dunn's part, having himself been born in slavery, to assist the recently emancipated.

Dunn opened his first office at 290 Girod Street between Magazine and Camp Streets. He was likely prompted by a series of circulars, letters, and newspaper articles that outlined the mandates of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands and the Department of the Gulf requiring that all recently freed slaves working on plantations have voluntary labor contracts.<sup>89</sup> In December of 1865, labor contracts became a mandatory feature in the acquisition of Freedmen labor and Dunn realized his niche lay in the assignment of this desperately needed labor force.<sup>90</sup> Dunn's intelligence office provided the recently emancipated with labor contracts and connected the plantation owner, who was in need of labor, with the laborer. Parson believed the service that Dunn was providing to be sound and pointed out that in many cases Dunn's service was

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> The Martin Scandal ended in the Summer of 1860 and Dunn announced the opening of his Intelligence office in the New Orleans Tribune, from November 26 - December 9, 1865

<sup>89</sup> New Orleans, Tribune, December 17, 1865; Black Republican, April 15, 1865

<sup>90</sup> New Orleans Tribune, December 24, 1865

“invaluable.”<sup>91</sup> The *New Orleans Tribune* recognized Dunn’s ability saying that “no one is more competent than Mr. Dunn” and no one expressed the “spirit of both employers and laborers, as he is, in the pursuit of his business, in close and constant contact with both.”<sup>92</sup>

Dunn was one of the first to open a business of that sort in the city but this relative monopoly was short lived as competing offices opened with the intent of providing agricultural labor. It is likely that Dunn’s involvement in benevolent associations and charities, such as the Freedmen’s Aid Association gave Dunn early advantage in recruiting freedmen laborers. At a meeting of the Freedmen’s Aid Association, he discussed his competition noting that not every one of these competing offices was reputable or acted in the best interest of the laborers they supposedly represented. He stated that his office received fifteen to twenty calls a day from planters seeking black labor and had placed workers on plantations throughout Louisiana. Dunn’s address went on to describe the typical arrangements he secured for his laborers as fifteen dollars a month for males and ten dollars a month for females. This handsome sum represented fifty percent more than the defined minimum amount outlined in General Order #23 for males and twenty-five percent more than the minimum for females.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871(Appendix A: John Parson’s Biography of Dunn)

<sup>92</sup> New Orleans Tribune, Feb. 22, 1866

<sup>93</sup> Dunn stated his typical labor rates as fifteen dollars a month for males and ten dollars a month for females, New Orleans Tribune, Feb. 22, 1866; Circular #23 defined the minimum wages for agricultural workers as ten dollars a month for males and eight dollars a month for females, Black Republican, April 15, 1865; Connor, William P., “Reconstruction Rebels: The New Orleans Tribune in Post-War Louisiana”, *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Spring, 1980), pg.177

### *Dunn the Mason*

Little is known of Dunn's social life. Dunn kept no known personal memoirs or diaries, and the recollections of Dryden and Parson exclude lists of friends, clubs or associations of which Dunn had been a part. Dunn had been an Ancient York Mason and, according to James Henri Burch, a longtime friend, local politician, and fellow mason, Dunn was accepted into the secret society on November 3, 1852.<sup>94</sup> Dunn was apprenticed into New Orleans's Richmond Lodge number one shortly after its establishment. The lodge's first Worshipful Master, William Gilbert, founded the lodge on May 3, 1849, along with three other black masons: James B. Berry, Peter R. McDonald, and George P. White. Dunn's lifelong friend John Parson was already a member of the masons, and by the time of Dunn's acceptance Parson was founding a second black lodge in the city.<sup>95</sup> Dunn proved to be an apt apprentice and excelled in Masonic Craft. In a single year (1863), he passed the first, second, and third (sublime) degrees of the craft.<sup>96</sup> The history of the early lodge is largely incomplete and a brief synopsis of the lodge's history was delivered by Parson in his address to The Eureka Grand Lodge at its first convention on December 17, 1863. The earliest records of the lodge sparsely cover the period between January of 1863 and January of 1869. For that

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<sup>94</sup> *Louisianian*, December 6, 1871 (Appendix B: J. Henri Burch's Masonic Eulogy of Oscar J. Dunn)

<sup>95</sup> *Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Eureka Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana from its Organization, January 5, 1863, to January 12, 1869*, New Orleans: John W. Madden Printer, 1869 (Iowa Masonic Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa), p.11

<sup>96</sup> *Louisianian*, December 6, 1871 (Appendix B: J. Henri Burch's Masonic Eulogy of Oscar J. Dunn)



reason, accounts of Dunn's early tenure in the lodge cannot be established. What can be gleaned from these records begins nearly a year prior to Eureka Lodge's first convention in December of 1863.<sup>97</sup>

In January of 1863, Dunn was actively involved in both the Eureka Grand Lodge and his local lodge Richmond number one. On January 7, 1863, John Parson, acting Grand Master of the Grand Lodge, appointed Dunn and members Lewis Banks and Jacob A. Norager to a committee to draft a constitution and by-laws for the Eureka Grand Lodge. The Committee completed the task and submitted a completed constitution and by-laws to the Grand Lodge on March 17, 1863. Dunn's duties within the lodge were extensive and, in 1863, he served in several posts in both the Eureka Grand Lodge and the Richmond Lodge number one. Dunn similarly served on five committees within the Grand Lodge in 1863 (Grand Masters' Address, Grievance, Unfinished Business, Foreign Correspondence, and Work).<sup>98</sup>

On December 23, 1863, Dunn was elected to the post of Senior Grand Warden within the Eureka Lodge. He assumed that new position at the first meeting of 1864. Dunn also retained the position of Worshipful Master at the Richmond Lodge and after a visit by the new Grand Master Lewis Banks, the Grand Master commented that the

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<sup>97</sup> Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Eureka Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana from its Organization, January 5, 1863, to January 12, 1869, New Orleans: John W. Madden Printer, 1869 ( Iowa Masonic Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa), pp. 1-66

<sup>98</sup> In 1863, Dunn served as Worshipful Master of the Richmond Lodge number one and in the Eureka Grand Lodge held the following posts: Deputy Grand master, Junior Grand Warden, Grand Chaplain, and Grand Senior Deacon; Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Eureka Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana from its Organization, January 5, 1863, to January 12, 1869, New Orleans: John W. Madden Printer, 1869 ( Iowa Masonic Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa), pp. 1-13

Richmond lodge “was in better condition in material, means, and prosperity than he had ever known.”<sup>99</sup> Dunn’s service on Grand Lodge committees continued, and in 1864 he served on four Committees: Unfinished Business, Foreign Correspondence, Dispensations and Charters, and By-Laws. By the end of the year, Dunn’s service must have caught the attentions of the Grand Lodge’s members, for on December 23, 1864, Dunn was elected Grand Master of the Eureka Lodge and at 7:30 P.M. on December 26, 1864, he was installed as Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Eureka Lodge.<sup>100</sup> Dunn’s involvement in Free Masonry provided him with invaluable leadership experience and likely established the foundation of his political network throughout the state. Dunn’s political camp was filled with his Masonic brethren, most of whom were loyal supporters of Dunn’s cause.

### *Dunn the soldier*

According to a number of sources, Dunn joined the First Regiment organized by Union forces in New Orleans in 1862. These sources recount that Dunn entered military service at the lowly rank of private, rose to the rank of captain, and resigned his commission after being passed over for a promotion in favor of a less qualified white officer. Dunn’s military career has been recounted as illustrious by both newspaper and scholar alike despite an overwhelming lack of evidence. The myth of “Dunn’s military

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p.17

<sup>100</sup> Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Eureka Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana from its Organization, January 5, 1863, to January 12, 1869, New Orleans: John W. Madden Printer, 1869 ( Iowa Masonic Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa), pp. 10 - 36

past” appears to have begun in the wake of Dunn’s death, as events in Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback’s life were mistakenly attributed to Dunn.<sup>101</sup> Researcher Barbara Young Wilke noted a similar instance of mistaken identity wherein a ship’s captain, Thomas P. Leathers, provided testimony during a trial that he owned both P. B. S. Pinchback and Dunn prior to the war and noted that both had worked aboard his vessels.<sup>102</sup>

A number of problems emerge when accounts of Dunn’s military career are examined closely. Accounts claim that Dunn entered the military in the summer of 1862 and after a scant year in service was promoted to the rank of captain before resigning in 1863. Although this elevation in rank was not impossible, it was extremely unlikely and none of the service records in the National Archives for Louisiana’s First Regiment match or closely resemble the one described in accounts of Dunn’s life.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> National Anti-Slavery Standard , Dec. 2, 1871; The American Annual Cyclopedia and the Register of Important Events of the year 1871, Volume XI, D. Appleton and Company, New York, NY, 1872, pg. 590; Eric Foner, *Freedom’s Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction*, (New York, N.Y., 1993), 67-68; Carole R. Taylor and Jane B. Chaillot, “Oscar Dunn,” in Glenn R. Conrad, ed., *A Dictionary of Louisiana Biography*, (New Orleans, 1988), 268-269; Aaron M. Lisee, “Oscar James Dunn” in John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography*, (New York, 1999), pp. 97-98; Perkins, A.E. “Oscar James Dunn” *Phylon*, IV ( 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr., 1943), pp. 102 -121; Emma Lou Thornbrough, ed., *Black Reconstructionists*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972), p. 174; National Anti-Slavery Standard, December 2, 1871; The Louisiana State Museum at the New Orleans Cabildo’s web site recounts Dunn’s life briefly noting his military Career (<http://lsm.crt.state.la.us/cabildo/cab11.htm> )

<sup>102</sup> Mrs. Josephine Decuir v. John G. Benson, No. 4829, 27 La. Ann. 1, Supreme Court of Louisiana, January 1875; Welke. Barbara Young, “Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law, and the Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920”. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; New York Times, June 28, 1896

<sup>103</sup> RG 94, Office of the Adjutant General, Volunteer Organizations Civil War, U.S. Colored Troops, 73<sup>rd</sup> Infantry, Entry 5514, Muster Rolls, Returns, Regimental Papers

Chronology emerges as a second problem with Dunn's military service. The service record of the First Regiment showed that the unit was quite mobile in 1863 and spent most of the year outside of New Orleans.<sup>104</sup> The regiment's service record clashes drastically with the roll of the Eureka Grand lodge to which Dunn belonged and it was impossible for Dunn to have been at both places at the same time or to have traveled from any of the campaigns back into the city to attend the meetings.<sup>105</sup> According to historian James T. Hollandsworth Jr., all of the First Regiment's line officers were black, and this core of black officers made it difficult for their commanding officer Nathaniel P. Banks to force their resignation.<sup>106</sup> It was not until May of 1863 that Banks discovered a method to rid himself of his undesired black officers. On May 22, 1863, the War Department in Washington passed General Order #144 establishing examining boards to uphold high standards for Union officers.<sup>107</sup> Banks used the general order to replace black officers with their white counterparts, which elicited protest, resignation, and desertion amongst black troops.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., *The Louisiana Native Guards, The Black Military Experience During The Civil War*, (Baton Rouge, 1998), pp.23-103;

<sup>105</sup> Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Eureka Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana from its Organization, January 5, 1863, to January 12, 1869, New Orleans: John W. Madden Printer, 1869 ( Iowa Masonic Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa), pp. 1-16; James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., pp. 23-103;

<sup>106</sup> James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., pp. 70-83

<sup>107</sup> General Order No. 144, in OR, Ser. III, Vol. III, p.216; James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., pp. 72-73

<sup>108</sup> James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., pp. 70-83

**Table 2: Discrepancies in the Eureka Lodge’s Roll and the First Regiment’s Service**

<b>Eureka Grand Lodge Meetings (held in New Orleans) attended by Oscar Dunn in 1863<sup>109</sup></b>	<b>1st Regiment, Louisiana’s Native Guard location at the time of the meeting<sup>110</sup></b>
March 17	En route to Baton Rouge
March 25	Baton Rouge
April 27	Baton Rouge
June 15	Port Hudson
December 17	Port Hudson
December 18	Port Hudson
December 23	Port Hudson

In accounts of Dunn’s military career, a white officer was promoted instead of Dunn to the rank of Major. This could have only have occurred after May 22, 1863, since all line officers before that point within the unit were black. Using May 22, 1863 as the earliest possible date for Dunn’s resignation brings the Masonic meeting rolls into question. Dunn would not have been able to attend lodge meetings prior to that date because his unit was out of the city. However, the minutes of the meetings give detailed accounts of Dunn’s participation in the lodge during a time frame when the regiment was out of the city. Since no records have been found which substantiate Dunn’s military status, evidence points toward an exaggeration or error in regard to Dunn’s military past.

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<sup>109</sup> Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Eureka Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana from its Organization, January 5, 1863 to January 12, 1869, New Orleans: John W. Madden Printer, 1869 ( Iowa Masonic Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa), pp. 10 - 36

<sup>110</sup> James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., pp. 23-88

Dunn certainly attended at least three meetings prior to the establishment of the examining boards (March 17<sup>th</sup>, March 25<sup>th</sup>, and April 27) further reducing the likelihood that Dunn served in the military (see Table 2: Discrepancies in the Eureka Lodge's Roll and the First Regiment's Service).

Shortly after Dunn's death, a third contradiction occurred when Dunn's family found themselves without means of support and deeply in debt. Had Dunn served in the military as sources claimed, his family would have been eligible to draw a pension based on his military service. Despite the desperate situation, Dunn's family failed to submit a request for a widow's pension even though they were in peril of losing their home.<sup>111</sup>

The fourth problem with Dunn's supposed military service is that Dunn's name does not appear on any known muster roll listings of the First, Second, or Third Regiments' members or memorials held after the Civil War.<sup>112</sup> The last and possibly most telling clue to Dunn's alleged military service was the lack of any mention of Dunn's

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<sup>111</sup> New Orleans Conveyance Records 1872 (Book #100), pg. 551; New Orleans Second District Court (1846-1880) Oscar J. Dunn Succession (Record # 35,055); New Orleans Republican, March 20 – June 26, 1872; German Gazette, March 20-May 4, 1872;

<sup>112</sup> RG 94, Office of the Adjutant General, Volunteer Organizations Civil War, U.S. Colored Troops, 73<sup>rd</sup> Infantry, Entry 5514, Muster Rolls, Returns, Regimental Papers; Joseph T. Wilson, *The Black Phalanx: A History of the Negro Soldier in the Wars of 1775, 1812, 1861-65, 1888*; (New York, 1968), p.176; James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., pp. 119 – 124; Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers*, (New York, 2000), pp. 30-311; A number of distinguished members of the Colored Soldiers and Sailors League were listed in the New Orleans Tribune. Dunn's name does not appear in the article although a number of other black politicians are accounted in the group's membership, New Orleans Tribune, November 10, 1866

service record by any of the three friends (Burch, Dryden, or Parson) who gave accounts of Dunn's achievements in the wake of his death.<sup>113</sup>

Although there is no evidence which suggest that Dunn fabricated an illustrious military record, there are a number of reasons why politicians in the era might have lied about their military service. Prior military service was nearly a prerequisite for participation in Reconstruction government, and many of Dunn's fellow politicians had this experience.<sup>114</sup> Politicians who were ashamed that they had not participated in the war might lie rather than be discovered as a non-veteran.

#### *What a difference a place makes: Geography in Dunn's Early Life*

Historian David Rankin looked closely at the importance of geography in his study of New Orleans' Reconstruction black leadership. He discovered that the bulk of New Orleans's black leadership came from the Creole Faubourgs of Vieux Carre, Marigny, and Treme. Dunn's geographic origin, like his early life, was one of dualism. Dunn's brief tenure as a slave was spent within the Vieux Carre and much of his early life as a free person was spent traveling between the American suburb of St. Marie and the Creole Faubourgs.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871 (Appendix A: John Parson's Biography of Dunn); New Orleans Republican, Nov. 23, 1871 (Appendix C: James Dryden's Biography of Dunn); Louisianian, December 6, 1871 (Appendix B: J. Henri Burch's Masonic Eulogy of Oscar J. Dunn)

<sup>114</sup> Rankin, David C. "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction" *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 40, No.3 (Aug.,1974), p. 434

<sup>115</sup> Rankin, David C., pp. 417-420

Dunn's life was symbolized by his ability to transcend a number of boundaries within Antebellum New Orleans. Dunn had experienced slavery and freedom prior to the war, he was the educated son of illiterate parents, and he was a plasterer and musical teacher. He frequently came into contact with both the Anglo-American and the Creole populace of the city. Dunn's rare condition of having been born a slave within the French speaking Creole community and having been freed early enough to avoid stigma, scarring, or scrutiny in regard to his prior slave status afforded him acceptability within the often restrictive inner circles of the Afro-Creole elites. Dunn's residential history was just as varied as his social experiences within the city.

Oscar Dunn resided at no less than four addresses in antebellum New Orleans (see Table 3). Dunn's earliest known address was the Bowers home at 45 Bienville Street in the Vieux Carre.<sup>116</sup> Dunn left the Bowers home at the age of nine in February of 1831 when he was purchased by James Dunn and moved into his home at 116 Poydras Street.<sup>117</sup> Dunn's next known residence was located on Desire Street near the corner of Casacalvo Street. Dunn's profession of plasterer was also listed in the directory. The following year, Dunn took up residence in the home of a free black man from Cincinnati, Ohio, by the name of George Marshall. Parson's depiction of Dunn's term as a boarder in the Marshall home was not favorable; Parson used the term "inmate" to describe Dunn's condition in the household but made no closer examination of Dunn's experience

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<sup>116</sup> Soard's New Orleans Directory and Mitchell's New Orleans annual and Commercial Register 1834

<sup>117</sup> Soard's New Orleans Directory and Mitchell's New Orleans annual and Commercial Register 1834



there.<sup>118</sup> According to Parson, Dunn moved into the Marshalls' home in 1848 and resided in the home as a boarder for a number of years. Census records substantiate Dunn's presence in the household as late as 1860.<sup>119</sup> The geographic and social link between Dunn and the Marshalls was severed when Dunn moved out of their home. Dunn's next known residence was recorded in 1865 as he moved to 290 Girod Street where he established his intelligence office. In that same year, Dunn re-established contact with Ellen Boyd Marshall, the widow of the recently deceased Peter Marshall, the owner of the home in which Dunn had boarded. According to Parson's account, Dunn began courting the widow Marshall in 1865 and married her on December 27, 1866. Dunn subsequently legally adopted her three children (Fanny, Lizzie, and Charles), giving them his last name.<sup>120</sup>

There has been very little scholarly research done in regard to the life of Ellen Dunn. A sole interview which she provided to the *St. Paul Daily Globe* serves as the only known autobiographical account of her life. According to the article, Ellen Dunn was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1826.<sup>121</sup> She was likely the daughter of Henry Boyd, a noted carpenter, successful businessman, and escaped slave.<sup>122</sup> The article further notes

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<sup>118</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871 (Appendix A: John Parson's Biography of Dunn)

<sup>119</sup> Ibid; Louisiana Census 1860, New Orleans, 4<sup>th</sup> Ward, Orleans Parish p. 197

<sup>120</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871 (Appendix A: John Parson's Biography of Dunn)

<sup>121</sup> St. Paul Daily Globe, June 14, 1885 (The article notes that Ellen Dunn-Burch was 59 at the time that the article was written. Mrs. Dunn's year of birth was ascertained by subtracting her age at the time of the publication of the article from the year the article was written.)

<sup>122</sup> Weekly Wisconsin, October 13, 1847; American Freeman, November 3, 1847; 1840 United States Federal Census, Cincinnati, Ward 1, Hamilton County, pg. 57 shows that Henry Boyd had three free

that she left Cincinnati at the age of 17 (about 1843) to move to New Orleans, where she worked as a teacher. The article purposely excludes any mention of her first husband, Peter Marshall, and suggests that she married Dunn during the “dark days of slavery”. This reference suggests that she married Dunn prior to the Civil War. Ellen Dunn’s chronology of events conflicts sharply with that provided by Dunn and that of historical records. The *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* noted that Ellen Boyd married Peter

**Table 3: Dunn’s Addresses and Dates of Residences**

<b>Date of Residence</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Address</b>
Prior 1834	Mitchell’s New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register (1834)	George P. Bowers – 43 Beinville St.
1834 -1846	Mitchell’s New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register (1834)	James Dunn - 116 Poydras St.
1846	Mitchell’s New Orleans Annual and Commercial Register 1846	Oscar Dunn, plasterer, Desire near Casacalvo St.
Approx. 1848 -1860	Weekly National Republican, Weds., Nov. 22, 1871; New Orleans Census 1860	Oscar Dunn was a boarder at the Marshall home at 338 Tchoupitoulas St.
1866	New Orleans Tribune, Nov. 15, 1866	Oscar Dunn, Intelligence Office, 290 Girod St. Between Magazine and Camp Streets
1867 - 1868	Gardner’s City Directory 1867, 1868	Oscar Dunn, Intelligence Office, 333 Custom House, between Claiborne and Derbigny Streets
1870	Gardner’s City Directory 1870	Oscar Dunn, Lieut. Gov. and President of the Senate, 11 Derbigny St.
1871	Gardner’s City Directory 1871	Oscar Dunn, Lieut. Gov. and President of the Senate, 332 Canal St.

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females between the ages of 10 and 24 residing in his home during the census. Ellen Boyd’s estimated age during that time period was between 13 and 15 years of age.

Marshall on May 11, 1842, a scant few months prior to the couple relocating to New Orleans and six years before Dunn began boarding with the couple.<sup>123</sup> According to Parson, Dunn resided with the Marshalls for approximately twelve years and subsequent to Dunn's leaving, Ellen was widowed. No records were located in regard to Peter Marshall's death, but a local directory of the city listed Ellen Marshall as the proprietor of a boarding house at the same Tchoupitoulas Street address where Dunn had previously boarded.<sup>124</sup>

Ellen Dunn excluded mention of her first husband during her biographical interview. Ellen may have avoided mentioning her first husband to detract any insinuation of a possible adulterous relationship between her and Dunn while he was a boarder in the Marshalls' home. A discussion of this sort may have brought to question her character, Dunn's reputation, and the legitimacy of her children. Ellen may also have avoided discussion of Marshall due to his social status in relation to those of her subsequent spouses. Dunn and Ellen's third husband, James Henri Burche, held lofty political and Masonic posts, and both were viewed as leaders within the black community of New Orleans.

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<sup>123</sup> Cincinnati Daily Gazette, May 11, 1842; Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871; St. Paul Daily Globe, June 14, 1885

<sup>124</sup> Soard's New Orleans Directory 1861

*Reaching a consensus on Dunn's origin*

The writings of A.E. Perkins and Marcus B. Christian serve as a foundation for the study of Oscar James Dunn. Both scholars recognized the importance of Dunn's contributions to both local and national history, but they also both share a common weak point. Both Perkins and Christian placed the bulk of their emphasis on Dunn's political career, neglecting an analysis of Dunn's origin and the events that led Dunn to take a political office. Both historians handled Dunn's origin briefly and relied heavily on secondary accounts from sources that lacked an intimate knowledge of Dunn.

Neither historian can be blamed for the inconsistencies in the two analyses of Dunn; instead, both scholars' work should be addressed in regard to the historic sources that were available when they were written. Neither Perkins nor Christian had access to many of the period's collections presently available to researchers, and recent advances in archival technology such as computer driven databases, larger microfiche collections, and the internet have revealed several new facets of Dunn's life.

These new sources helped greatly in clearing up apparent contradictions in the research of Perkins and Christian. Perkins's assertion that Dunn spent the bulk of his antebellum life as a slave proved to be incorrect, as did Christian's assertion that Dunn had never been a slave. The truth was something of a blend of both men's views. Dunn was most certainly born into slavery and spent nearly the first ten years of his life in bondage. Dunn left bondage at an age when heavy labor was probably not expected of him; therefore, he might not have considered himself a slave. Manumission afforded Dunn with a variety of opportunities that were impossible as a slave. Education was a

principle advantage of freedom for Dunn, and as Parson acknowledged, it became a vehicle for social elevation and employment for Dunn.

An unanswered question remains in regard to Dunn's bondage: was Dunn aware of his former slave status? Researchers may never discover whether Dunn purposely covered up his slave origin or if he merely forgot his childhood bondage. However, sources point toward a concerted effort not only on the part of Dunn, but also of his closest friends, to suppress knowledge of Dunn's former status as a slave. Parson claimed to have known Dunn since Dunn was four years old, yet he maintained that Dunn had never been a slave. Dunn also falsely testified that he was born in 1826, although this may have been merely a mistake. The deception may have served to confuse those who claimed that Dunn had been a slave and might be searching records for evidence. A hint of a concerted cover up also appeared in Burch's eulogy as he closed his speech commenting,

“Finally, brethren, our duties, as free and accepted Masons, are charged to avoid slander of true and faithful brethren; nor must we suffer it to be done behind his back, by which his reputation might suffer. How much more sacred and obligatory is it in this case. Brother Dunn is gone: we are the custodians of his character and virtues. Let us be vigilant that the first is not assailed by—we care not whom—and the second is practiced by all”<sup>125</sup>

Burch's closing statement left those who knew Dunn best with the obligation of protecting his “character” and “reputation.” The tone of Burch's comments suggested a certainty that Dunn's reputation would come under attack in the near future and regarded the Masons as “custodians” in charge of maintaining Dunn's “character and virtues.” A

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<sup>125</sup> Louisianian, December 6, 1871

number of individuals suspected Dunn of having once been a slave and had gone as far as printing their suspicions. Parson came to the defense of Dunn's character and answered these allegations shortly after Dunn's death by maintaining that Dunn had never been a slave.

What did Dunn actually have to lose by being discovered as a former slave, and how much stigma was actually attached to this former condition? Several period sources support the argument that free blacks were embarrassed or felt dishonored when confronted with the fact that they or their ancestors were formerly slaves.<sup>126</sup> The New Orleans *Daily Delta* pointed out that frequently the Creole free blacks of the city had taken to dueling when someone brushed on the matter of slavery lingering in their ancestral pasts.<sup>127</sup> An editorial in the New Orleans Tribune, penned by a writer calling himself "Junius", placed the blame for tensions between the free blacks and former slaves firmly on laws that barred association between the two groups. Junius believed that the legal system constructed by whites made the slave estranged of his free relatives and was at the root of the "disunity" between blacks in the city.<sup>128</sup>

Dunn fell squarely in the middle of both groups. He served as an advocate for the freedmen, protecting their interests in regard to their labor and contractual equitability, yet he considered himself to be a Creole free black. Dunn believed that the term Creole

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<sup>126</sup> Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., "Creoles and Americans" in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge, 1992), 173; John W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans: 1860 – 1880*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 21-22; Caryn Cosse Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana: 1718 – 1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1997)135-136.

<sup>127</sup> New Orleans Daily Delta, August 18, 1854

<sup>128</sup> New Orleans Tribune, March 31, 1865

was a matter of birth place, not sanguinity. Therefore all blacks born in the state shared the coveted title of “Creole” in Dunn’s eyes, along with all other state natives.<sup>129</sup> Dunn’s ability to transcend the social distances between the Creole Free black and the recently emancipated was most certainly useful to furthering the Republican cause throughout the state, and Dunn’s name was likely recognizable to blacks statewide due to the popularity of his intelligence office.

Dunn may have had a pragmatic reason for denying his childhood bondage. Dunn’s leadership positions within the black Masonic lodges of the city legitimized and propelled his leadership role within the Anglo-African community and served as a springboard for his political career. Masonic qualifications for initiation into the rites of Masonry prohibit the admission of a slave or a person born in slavery.<sup>130</sup> The discovery that Dunn was born in slavery to an unknown father may likely have destroyed not only Dunn’s social life but also his political career.

Historians have provided Dunn with an illustrious military past but as Christian asserted, there was no evidence to support this claim to a bold military record. In fact,

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<sup>129</sup> Testimony taken by the Sub-Committee of Elections in Louisiana (Washington, D.C., 1870), Testimony of Oscar J. Dunn, pg. 181

<sup>130</sup> Albert G. Mackey. *A Textbook of Masonic Jurisprudence; Illustrating the Written and Unwritten Laws of Freemasonry* (New York: Clark & Maynard Publishers, 1872) 31; Jethro Inwood and George Oliver, *Sermons in Which are Explained and Enforced the Religious, Moral, and Political Virtues of Freemasonry, Preached, Upon Several Occasions, Before the Provincial Grand Officers, and other Brethren in the Counties of Kent, Essex, Etc.* (New York: John W. Leonard & Co., 1856) 15; Rob Morris and Thomas S. Webb. *The Freemason’s Monitor, or Illustrations of Masonry* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys & Co., Cincinnati, 1859) 124; John Sherer. *The Masonic Ladder: or the Nine Steps to Ancient Freemasonry, Being a Practical Exhibit, in the Prose and Verse, of the Moral Precepts, Traditions, Scriptural Instructions and Allegories of the Degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, Master Mason, Mark Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master, Royal Arch Master, Royal Master and Select Master* (Cincinnati: Sherer & Co., 1866) 247 .

evidence suggests that Dunn had never served in the military in any capacity.<sup>131</sup>The origin of the myth of Dunn's military past appears to have been created in the wake of Dunn's death as biographers mistakenly ascribed Pinchback's career to Dunn.

This chapter has filled holes and addressed apparent contradictions in the current historic record in regard to Dunn's origin and his life prior to taking political office. It sheds light on a number of recent discoveries and new sources in regard to Dunn and owes a great deal of its success to the dedication and commitment of several academic collections, scholars, archivists and librarians.

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<sup>131</sup>Christian, Marcus B. "The Theory of the Poisoning of Oscar J. Dunn" *Phylon*, VI (3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr., 1945), pp. 255



## CHAPTER V

### Oscar J. Dunn's Political Ascension (1865 – 1867)

The political ascension of Oscar James Dunn was characterized by John Parson as nearly destined. Parson believed Dunn was “too prominent a colored man to be overlooked” in the city.<sup>132</sup> Dunn’s involvement as a prominent leader in the black Masonic organization and his successful intelligence office made him a man of distinction. These distinctions propelled Dunn to the forefront of any attempt to organize blacks in the city.

Dunn became an active member of the movement and as such attended meetings and signed a petition that requested that suffrage rights be granted to blacks in the state who had been free before the Civil War. The petition was delivered to President Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C., by two Afro-Creoles, Jean Baptiste Roudanez and E. Arnold Bertonneau. The delegates who had been sent to represent the state’s free black populace were likely selected because they possessed qualities that the community deemed to be least objectionable to whites. Both Roudanez and Bertonneau were formally educated, were fluent in French and English, and both possessed physical qualities, such as fair complexions and straight hair, which were frequently ascribed to whites.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871

<sup>133</sup> Blassingame, *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880*, 212; Jean-Charles Houzeau and David C. Rankin. *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune: A memoir of the Civil War Era* (Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 2001) 25n; Justin A. Nystrom. *New Orleans After the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a*

On May 23, 1865, Dunn appeared as chairman before a meeting at Economy Hall. The intended purpose of the meeting was the drafting of a resolution and invitation to be presented to Salmon P. Chase, Chief Justice of United States Supreme Court, who was expected to visit the city in the near future. The resolution pled the cause for black suffrage and argued that “suffrage was inherent to citizenship in a true republican government”. The resolution further noted that the blacks of New Orleans had served the Union faithfully and unlike their “disloyal” and “treasonous” white counterparts they did not deserve to be similarly disfranchised. An invitation was extended to Chief Justice Chase to speak before the group and two committees were formed. The first committee consisted of three members and was to request the Chief Justice’s presence at the proposed gathering. The second committee consisted of ten men from each of the city’s four municipal districts, for a total of forty men. This second committee’s goal was to raise funds to retain the largest possible hall for the gathering. The meeting closed with a speech given by a Mr. A. Jervis. Jervis’s speech discussed the aptitude of black men to exercise the right to vote and requested that “a line of demarcation be drawn between the friends and enemies of universal suffrage”. Mr. Jervis’s speech closed to enthusiastic applause and cheering from all the meeting’s attendees and afterward the meeting was adjourned for the evening.<sup>134</sup>

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*New Birth of Freedom* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) 202; Shirley Elizabeth Thompson. *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to Become American in Creole New Orleans* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 2009 ) 227-230;

<sup>134</sup> New Orleans Tribune, May 23, 1865

Chief Justice Chase replied to the committee respectfully declining their invitation asserting that he had recently given a speech on the subject of black suffrage in Charleston. Chase's letter supported the group's cause of equal rights but placed the responsibility for gaining the right to vote on the shoulders of the freedmen. Chase suggested that blacks should "persist in this claim respectfully, but firmly, taking care to bring no discredit upon it by their own action."<sup>135</sup> Chase's words were bold, but they lacked any promise of enforcement, regulation, or a firm commitment to changing the Southern status quo. The fate of black suffrage was still dependent on the good will of Southern white men and the persistence of blacks.

The words of A. Jervis's speech did not fall on deaf ears; on June 16, 1865, the *New Orleans Tribune* ran a small advertisement for a new association that was holding its preliminary meeting that evening. The association, borrowing Jervis' words called itself the "Friends of Universal Suffrage". The group's inaugural meeting was held at 49 Union Street in the city's First District. The advertisement listed the new organization's President as Thomas Durant and its Secretary as A. Jervis.<sup>136</sup> At this first official meeting of the Friends of Universal Suffrage a central executive committee was named. The membership of this committee consisted of six individuals from each of the city's four municipal districts, for a total of twenty-four members. The First District's representatives were Thomas Durant, W.R. Crane, Ansel Edwards, Charles Ogilvie, A.

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<sup>135</sup> *Library of Congress*, <http://www.loc.gov> (accessed May 25, 2006). An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadside and Other Printed Ephemera; Letter from Chief Justice Chase to a committee of colored men. New Orleans, June 6, 1865

<sup>136</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, June 16, 1865

Jervis, and Joseph L. Montieu; The Second District's representatives were B.F. Flanders, Henry Train, Anthony Fernandez, Sebastian Seiler, A. Commagere, and Oscar J. Dunn; The Third District's representatives were John McWhirter, H. Stiles, and J. L. Imlay, Roch Aberton, J.B. Duplane, and Firmin Christophe; and the Fourth District's representatives were Rufus Waples, A.H. Whitney, R.W. Stanley, S.G. Brower, D. C. Woodruff and Joseph P. Johnson.

The organization's president, Mr. Durant, then suggested that the group's efforts be directed toward the voluntary registration of "American citizens who are not recognized as voters" and to have their votes be collected for the next election for Governor and members of Congress. When asked to speak, the First District's representative W. R. Crane proclaimed that "the Southern rebels have failed by war and now they are coming back into the Union to revive the war at the ballot box."<sup>137</sup> Crane's proclamation was followed by a series of fierce accusations about the former Confederacy and their attempts to regain control of Louisiana. Crane warned that,

"They intend to elect themselves to office. They will ask for compensation for their liberated slaves. They will call, perhaps, a new Convention in this state, to assume a part of the debt of the rebellion. They contemplate also to revive African slavery in some form or other. They will devise a system of apprenticeship."<sup>138</sup>

Crane asked the organization not forget that "the price of liberty was eternal vigilance" and then set upon mapping out the Friends of Universal Suffrage's strategy for

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<sup>137</sup> New Orleans Tribune, June 18, 1865

<sup>138</sup> Ibid

undoing the rebel's plotted course of action.<sup>139</sup> Crane's strategy hinged on the economic fact that both the North and South had sustained an enormous amount of debt and that rebuilding the nation would be an enormous burden shouldered predominately by the North. Crane surmised that the most logical solution for reducing this burden was the creation of new taxpayers. Crane believed that this new tax-base should come from the recently emancipated slave, and argued that the addition of the freedmen as taxpayers would "convince both sections North and South that it will be advantageous to grant political rights to all men."<sup>140</sup>

By June 23, 1865, the Friends of Universal Suffrage was actively organizing sub-committees within its executive committee to further the organization's goals of enfranchising black voters. Dunn's first assignment within the organization was an appointment to a committee to fill the vacated seats left by two of the executive committees' members, John Mc Whirter and H. Whitney. On Dunn's suggestion, another committee was also formed to set "forth the true spirit and principles of this laudable organization."<sup>141</sup> Dunn along with Messrs. Fernandez, Aberton, Imlay and Christophe were appointed to a committee to draft a declaration outlining the organization's cause.<sup>142</sup> It was likely that Dunn first came into contact with Henry Clay Warmoth, a young judge and former union officer who had come to New Orleans for medical reasons, shortly after

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid

<sup>140</sup> Ibid

<sup>141</sup> New Orleans Tribune, June 24, 1865

<sup>142</sup> Ibid

receiving his assignment to fill the central committee's vacancies. Dunn recalled their first meeting shortly before his death stating,

“Sometime during the year 1865, Governor Warmoth sent me word that he would be pleased to see me at his office: the next day I called at his office and was cordially received. After speaking on various subjects, including political matters, I told him that we had an organization called “The Friends of Universal Suffrage” and invited him to be present at our next meeting, which invitation he readily accepted. I presented Governor Warmoth to the members of the organization, and upon my proposition he became a member.”<sup>143</sup>

Dunn later lamented his decision of vouching for Warmoth and would go to his grave stating that this was the single action which he could “never forgive himself for”.

<sup>144</sup>The *New Orleans Tribune's* account of Warmoth's introduction to the Friends of Universal Suffrage concurred with Dunn's account. On June 29, 1865, Warmoth and Thomas Lynne were presented by Dunn's committee to the central executive committee for the purpose of replacing the vacant positions formerly held by Mc Whirter and Whitney. Warmoth and Lynne on the recommendation of Dunn's committee were unanimously accepted and immediately assumed their places on the central committee.<sup>145</sup> Dunn's second committee fulfilled its obligation to the central executive committee on July 8, 1865, when it officially presented and published “The Appeal of the Central Executive Committee to all friends of Universal Suffrage.” The appeal was based firmly on the “sacred principles of the Declaration of Independence” and the committee's

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<sup>143</sup> Weekly National Republican, December 20, 1871

<sup>144</sup> Ibid

<sup>145</sup> New Orleans Tribune, June 30, 1865

members found that the most central of the Declaration's principles rested on the belief that "all men were created equal and were endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights." The appeal further challenged America to live up to the Declaration's principles by ending the hypocrisy that proscribed blacks strictly to servitude. The document warned that the continued maintenance of this blatant contradiction made the country susceptible to the formation of an aristocracy or monarchy. The appeal proudly proclaimed that slavery had placed a "dark spot" upon the Union's "starry banner" and pled on behalf of all blacks for life, liberty, and an unencumbered access to happiness. For Dunn and the other authors of the appeal these inalienable rights were contingent upon political equality and a belief that suffrage afforded the only path by which blacks could obtain a political voice, justice, or protection.<sup>146</sup>

In the days following the appeal, Dunn and a host of other prominent members of the Friends of Universal Suffrage began to petition Louisiana's Governor Wells on the matter of Negro suffrage. Wells replied to the Central Executive Committee members on July 10, 1865 stating that he believed that Negro suffrage was unnecessary because "the late entire slave population would support their former masters." The *New Orleans Tribune* took Wells' comment as an insult of the worst degree and challenged him to find an emancipated slave that would vote for his former master and added that a great number of these emancipated slaves had contrarily gone several steps in the opposite direction when they fought against their former masters in the recent war. The *Tribune*

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<sup>146</sup> New Orleans Tribune, July 8, 1865

replied to Wells' stating that they "hated hypocrisy" and openly asked for universal suffrage.<sup>147</sup>

Despite the lack of gubernatorial support, the Central Executive Committee of the Friends of Universal Suffrage moved forward with its plan to register black voters. On July 13, 1865, the organization ran an article in the *Tribune* requesting contributions on behalf of their anticipated registration drive and outlining how the registration of voters would be undertaken. This registration of black voters was viewed by the Central Executive Committee as an essential component of their plan for convincing Congress to support universal suffrage. The Committee's plan hinged on its ability to register an overwhelming "numerical force" of black votes loyal to the Republican cause and, in doing so, become an invaluable resource for the party. The committee believed that by providing Congress with "facts", in the form filled out registration applications, they could convince the Congress to support universal suffrage.<sup>148</sup>

The Committee had no illusions in regard to the difficulty of organizing and registering the newly emancipated black masses. The effort would require the formation of grassroots organizations in each parish and the hiring of agents to canvass on former plantations and rural farms. Above all, the Committee realized that the registration of blacks would require large amounts of money and called for donations both large and small.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> New Orleans Tribune, July 12, 1865

<sup>148</sup> New Orleans Tribune, July 13, 1865

<sup>149</sup> New Orleans Tribune, July 13, 1865



The next meeting of the Central Executive Committee was held on July 13, 1865, and voter registration pervaded the group's discussion. Dunn and Warmoth both appeared as prominent debaters at the meeting, Dunn calling for the organization of Republican clubs in districts of registration and Warmoth debating the platform and questions that would be presented to attract new registrants.<sup>150</sup>

The discussion of universal suffrage dominated the pages of the *Tribune* and, though it occasionally graced the pages of the New Orleans' white papers, it typically was met critically or not taken seriously. The New Orleans *Daily Picayune* for instance ran a tongue-in-cheek discussion of the matter on July 18, 1865. The article described the ranting of one of the papers' supporters known comically as "Snizzle". In the article, Snizzle pled the case for Native Americans to be included under the banner of universal suffrage. Snizzle portrayed the Indians as "children of the woods" who tirelessly "toil after the buffalo" without the benefit of the vote. Snizzle openly claimed to have an inside source within the Indian council named Buffalo Hump and openly declared that his support for Indian Suffrage was merely an attempt to get a political position. Snizzle was a symbolic representation of the scalawag, whose support the *Picayune* perceived had been purchased with promises of political positions. The article closed with Snizzle being dismissed as a crazed drunk who had driven off all who knew him with his ranting and served as a prophetic warning for those whites who openly supported Negro Suffrage.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> New Orleans Tribune, July 14, 1865

<sup>151</sup> Daily Picayune, July 18, 1865

At the July 27, 1865, meeting of the Central Executive Committee approved a set of six regulations in regard to voluntary voter registration. The first regulation maintained that there would be three commissioners and two clerks in each precinct of New Orleans, for the voluntary registration. The second regulation called for the establishment a registration bureau in each of the country parishes. The third regulation contended that voter registration would be extended to all loyal male citizens native born or naturalized above twenty one years of age. The fourth regulation required that registration logs be kept containing the names of every registered person, with a full description of said person. The fifth regulation required that Certificates of registration will be retained. The Sixth regulation required that after the registration of voters was completed, the books would be sealed and addressed to the secretary of the Executive Committee.

The first step to carrying out these regulations was the appointment of reliable commissioners and clerks and, on the suggestion of Warmoth, a committee consisting of Dunn, Crane, and Lynne was appointed to fill the positions. Chairman Durant called for the formation of a committee to prepare a memorial to address Congress in regard to its general plan for the governance of the southern states and its plan for those loyal to the union who resided within those states. Durant, Crane, Edwards, and Ogilvie were appointed to the committee in charge of drafting the memorial and on a similar suggestion by Durant a committee consisting of Woodruff, Dunn, and Crane was formed to choose “twelve men of African descent” to petition the current government of the state for voter registration. The committee was carefully instructed to select three men who had served in the army, three men who were distinguished in the areas of literary

and scientific achievement, three who were tax payers, and three who were recently emancipated.<sup>152</sup> At the next meeting, the names of the gentlemen who were asked to present themselves at City Hall to register to vote were presented to the Central Executive Committee. Captain James H. Ingraham, Captain James Lewis, and Sergeant Thomas P. Robinson were selected as those who had served in the army. Francois Boisdore, Paul Hecaud, and L. E. Couvertie were selected as those distinguished in science and literature. Francois Escoffier, Fredric Pascal, and J.B.D. Bonseigneur were selected as tax-payers. Each of these tax-payers were also veterans of the War of 1812. Dunn's committee was only able to fill one of the three slots allocated for freedmen; this slot was filled by Moses Townsend.<sup>153</sup> Dunn's committee promised to fill the two vacant freedmen slots by the next meeting and Dunn further reported on behalf of the Committee on Registrations that "seventy-five persons had already been obtained to serve as commissioners or clerks."<sup>154</sup>

Much of the Registration Committee's success was attributed to the support of Christian ministers who were willing to allow the use of their churches for voter registration, and the committee additionally reported that registration could begin as early as Monday, September 14th, 1865.<sup>155</sup> At the August 31<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Central Executive Committee, Dunn reported that the Committee of Registration had compiled a final list of

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<sup>152</sup> New Orleans Tribune, July 28, 1865

<sup>153</sup> New Orleans Tribune, August 11, 1865

<sup>154</sup> Ibid

<sup>155</sup> Ibid

commissioners and clerks, and had completed the blank forms that would be used during the registration. Dunn's committee established three places of registration in the First District, two in the Second District, two in the Third District, and one in the Fourth District.<sup>156</sup>

Dunn was praised at the very next meeting of the Executive Committee, not only for organizing the registration machinery throughout the city, but also for funding the project from his own coffers.<sup>157</sup> The next morning's edition of the *New Orleans Tribune* would publicly announce Dunn as the Chairman of the subcommittee on Clubs and urged all individuals interested in starting new Republican clubs to contact Dunn at his home on "333 Customhouse Street, between Claiborne and Derbigny Streets."<sup>158</sup> In the midst of these additional duties, Dunn continued to make stellar progress with the Committee of Registration announcing at the next meeting that "several districts" and "several hundreds of names" were already registered.<sup>159</sup>

On September 10, 1865, Dunn officially posted the location of sites and a time schedule for registration in the *New Orleans Tribune*. There were eight sites of registration sites in the city's four districts, and places of registration were open from four o'clock P.M. to nine o'clock P.M. daily. The only exception was Sunday, when places of

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<sup>156</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 1, 1865

<sup>157</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 2, 1865

<sup>158</sup> Ibid

<sup>159</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 8, 1865

registration were closed.<sup>160</sup> Though the registration of black voters was meant as a persuasion tool to convince Congress of the potential power of the black vote, it also served a practical purpose: the selection of delegates to the upcoming Radical Convention. This first election was scheduled for September 16, 1865 and votes were to be polled from a single polling place, 49 Union Street.<sup>161</sup>

Democrats did not sit idly by as blacks registered; instead they waged a war of misinformation and terror. Dunn reported to the Central Executive Committee that freedmen were being told that the voter registration rolls they were signing would be used to draft them into the military. Others were threatened with being hung on some later date. Dunn urged “the most commendable citizens, heads of families, men of intelligence, and men of wealth” to be the first to register, and to serve as examples to the reluctant freedmen.<sup>162</sup>In prophetic irony, Dunn comforted the fearful by declaring that “New Orleans will never be left without a Federal Garrison.” Dunn naively believed that “rebels would never take the power into their hands in the city of New Orleans.”<sup>163</sup>

Election Day went without incident of violence and voters casts their ballots in large numbers.<sup>164</sup> There are no records of many of the candidates who ran for delegate positions in each of the city’s districts. What is known is that Dunn appeared on the ballot

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<sup>160</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 10, 1865

<sup>161</sup> Ibid

<sup>162</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 13, 1865

<sup>163</sup> Ibid

<sup>164</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 17, 1865

as a candidate for delegate in the city's Fourth district and that Dunn and five other candidates (C. Dalloz, R. Mc Cary, B. Saulay, S. Seiler, and Charles Smith) in the district won seats at the upcoming convention.<sup>165</sup> All six candidates who won their seats received the same number of votes, two thousand five hundred and thirty-eight.<sup>166</sup>

The Universal Suffrage State Convention began on the morning of September 25, 1865, at 49 Union Street. The assembly was called to order by Mr. Crane, and shortly into the morning session Mr. Durant was elected the convention's president. The convention's attention was largely focused on the topic of universal suffrage and the extension of the suffrage campaign to the "farthest limits of the state", but by the evening session the emphasis of the convention had switched to a resolution proposed by the Sixth District Delegate Mr. Soulie.<sup>167</sup> Soulie's resolution suggested that the convention, in hopes of partnering with the National Republican Party, make all its acts and resolutions in the name of the Republican Party of Louisiana. Soulie's resolution was met with emphatic opposition by Dr. Cromwell, a delegate from the city's Second District.

Cromwell's opposition to Soulie's resolution was based on his belief that the principles of the Republican Party might not match the principles of this newly organized and substantially black organization.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid

<sup>166</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 19, 1865

<sup>167</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 26, 1865

<sup>168</sup> Ibid

**TABLE IV: Black Voter Registration Sites in the City of New Orleans in 1865** <sup>169</sup>

<b>District</b>	<b>Bureau Number</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>First District</b>	No.1	First Baptist Church corner of Edward and Cypress streets. (1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Precincts)
	No.2	49 Union street (5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> Precincts)
	No.3	Wesley Chapel on Liberty street, between Perdido and Poydras streets (7 <sup>th</sup> Precinct)
<b>Second District</b>	No.4	At the corner of Conti and Treme streets (8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> , and 10 <sup>th</sup> Precincts)
	No.5	At Economy Hall, Ursuline street, between Marais and Villere streets (11 <sup>th</sup> , 12 <sup>th</sup> , 13 <sup>th</sup> , and 14 <sup>th</sup> Precincts)
<b>Third District</b>	No.6	At the Orphans Schoolhouse, on Greatmen street, near Union street (15 <sup>th</sup> , 16 <sup>th</sup> , and 17 <sup>th</sup> Precincts)
	No.7	256 Mandeville street, between Claiborne and St. John the Baptist Streets (18 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup> and 21 <sup>st</sup> Precincts)
<b>Fourth District</b>	No.8	At the Wyan Chapel, corner of First, and Dryades streets (22 <sup>nd</sup> and 23 <sup>rd</sup> Precincts)

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<sup>169</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 10, 1865

H.C. Warmoth (delegate from the city's Third District) sided with Soulie declaring that, "the National Republican party had committed themselves in favor of universal Suffrage" and that "several well-known political men of the North declared themselves in favor of the very reform the convention wishes to now follow."<sup>170</sup> Mr. Jervis (delegate from the city's Second District) suggested that the organization adopt the name "Friends of Universal Suffrage" because it clearly stated the goal of the organization.<sup>171</sup> After no consensus could be reached on Mr. Crane's request of, the matter was sent to the Committee of Resolutions and the first day of the convention was adjourned.<sup>172</sup>

The second day of the convention was consumed with a variety of issues, but the two most important were the decision to draft a new State Constitution and the election of a Central Committee. The idea to redraft the constitution came from Warmoth, who passionately argued that the constitution of 1852 had lost all of its authority and the subsequent constitution of 1864 had failed to be ratified by a vote of the majority. Warmoth's suggestion was met with great support by his fellow delegates, who answered his speech with deafening applause.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid

<sup>171</sup> Ibid

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

<sup>173</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 28, 1865



On the third day of the convention, it became clear that Soulie and Warmoth won their debate with Cromwell and Jarvis as the convention adopted the new name the “Convention of the Republican Party of Louisiana”. Warmoth celebrated a similarly important victory as delegates cast ballots for a representative to carry their voter registration records and their pleas for suffrage to President Johnson. Dunn served as one of three tellers who tallied the votes and, though no exact numbers were recorded, the *New Orleans Tribune* noted that Warmoth won by an “overwhelming majority.”<sup>174</sup>

The Convention of the Republican party of Louisiana decided to continue the registration of Freedmen, in hopes of bolstering the number of registered potential Black voters. The delegates also decided that Warmoth would deliver the registration books and the voluntary election results of black voters after the November elections were held.<sup>175</sup> Once again, Dunn shouldered the responsibility of the registration and election machines and on his motion a subcommittee of five was assembled from the Central Executive Committee to assist him with the upcoming election’s preparation. Dunn set the closing date for this new round of registration at November 21, 1865, and set about registering immediately.<sup>176</sup> By the following week, Dunn reported to the Central Executive Committee that poll-books and tickets were in the process of being prepared. Dunn questioned the Committee, asking “Shall a place of election be designated in each

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<sup>174</sup> New Orleans Tribune, September 30, 1865

<sup>175</sup> New Orleans Tribune, October 1, 1865

<sup>176</sup> New Orleans Tribune, October 13, 1865

precinct?”<sup>177</sup> Dunn’s question opened debate amongst the committee members. Mr. Crane answered Dunn in the affirmative, believing that “a greater number of votes will be secured by using numerous places of election.” Mr. Crane also pointed out that two regiments of Black soldiers had recently been mustered out of service in the city and suggested that the registration deadline be extended to give the ex-servicemen an opportunity to register for the upcoming election. Dunn amended the registration deadline and set a new closing deadline for November 30, 1865.<sup>178</sup>

At the November 9, 1865, meeting of the Executive Committee Dunn reported that, between September 6 and November 6, 9,327 persons registered. Dunn was pleased with the registration numbers and thanked all the commissioners and clerks for their “arduous work” that had been “so faithfully accomplished.”<sup>179</sup> In a subsequent report, Dunn reported the number of votes placed by black voters in the parishes of Orleans, Jefferson, St. John the Baptist, St. Charles, Ascension, Point Coupee, St. Tammany, and Terrebonne. After noting the number of ballots cast, Dunn continued to inform the committee of obstacles that challenged some blacks as they attempted to register and vote. Dunn pointed out that several employers in St. Charles parish refused to allow their Black hands to attend the election and threatened those who defied them with discharge.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> New Orleans Tribune, October 20, 1865

<sup>178</sup> Ibid

<sup>179</sup> New Orleans Tribune, November 10, 1865

<sup>180</sup> Ibid

By December 13, 1865, the *New Orleans Tribune* reported that Warmoth had reached Washington and had been received by Mr. McPherson, the clerk of the House. The newspaper reported that state authorities' refusal to authenticate the election's returns forced the returns to be verified by Oscar Dunn and J. L. Montieu, Black citizens of the city, and J.L. Imlay, W. R. Crane, and Rufus Waples, White citizens of the city. Anthony Fernandez, Vice President of the Friends of Universal Suffrage, then attested to the validity of the count and John Graham, a Notary Public, then verified the vote. The records which Warmoth carried showed that the Black vote, if allowed, would constitute 79% of the total Republican voting population. Out of a total number of 21,405 votes that were cast in the voluntary election, 15,605 were cast by black voters.<sup>181</sup> This voluntary election also added tremendously to Warmoth's political clout by showing that he was overwhelmingly supported by the black populace.<sup>182</sup>

### *Outside of the Political Arena*

The fall of 1865 saw Dunn's increasing role in New Orleans's social and business arenas. In November of 1865, Dunn assumed a seat on the board of advisors for the Louisiana Association for the Benefit of Colored Orphans, a newly organized society that cared for and protected the black orphans of the city as well as financially supporting the

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<sup>181</sup> New Orleans Tribune, December 13, 1865

<sup>182</sup> Ibid



**Illustration 2: Freedmen voting in New Orleans (1867) Source: New York Public Library**

Orphan's asylum that housed them. The association consisted of men and women from many of New Orleans's most distinguished families. Alongside Dunn sat noted physician and New Orleans Tribune owner, Dr. Louis C. Roudanez and his wife, teacher and editor Mr. Paul Trevigne and his wife, Thomas Durant, Dr. J. P. Newman and others. The origin of the association was linked to the asylum's urgent need for support. Prior to the association's formation, the asylum was funded by the United States government, but in the fall of 1865 General Fullerton withdrew government funding from the institution thereby forcing the community to come to the rescue of the orphans.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> New Orleans Tribune, November 28, 1865

The association set education, protection, and “providing homes to the orphan, half orphan, homeless, and the friendless” as its goals, but further examination of the group’s articles exposes an additional fear which the association members shared. Article thirteen of the association’s constitution was the only article in the document that directly involved treatment of the orphans in the association’s charge. The article covered the topic of indenturing of orphans and stipulated that orphans preferably be indentured to only colored patrons. The association maintained that if an orphan must be indentured to someone other than a colored person, the indenture would require a majority vote of the board of managers at any regular meeting.<sup>184</sup> The association’s fear that apprenticed orphans would be mistreated and used as slaves if they were handed over to plantation owners who were desperate for a docile labor force.<sup>185</sup> W.R. Crane suggested at an early meeting of the Friends of Universal Suffrage that apprenticeship would be used as a means of enslavement. Further General Fullerton’s withdrawal of financial support for the asylum coincided with the State Senate’s acceptance of the Freedmen’s Bureau circular number twenty-nine calling for mandatory labor contracts between plantation owners and the freed men working their plantations.<sup>186</sup> After withdrawing financial support, Fullerton ordered that the orphans be apprenticed, but he quickly rescinded the order under pressure from the institution’s head matron. General Fullerton tried to manage the public relations fallout in regard to the institution by calling for support on

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid

<sup>185</sup> New Orleans Tribune, January 18, 1866

<sup>186</sup> New Orleans Tribune, June 18, 1865; New Orleans Tribune, Dec. 17, 1865

behalf of the orphans, but the *New Orleans' Tribune* and the association's members deemed Fullerton's behavior and his subsequent appeal as "pathetic."<sup>187</sup> Easy access to indentured black orphans may have reduced plantation owners' need for contracted labor; this could have affected demand for Dunn's Intelligence office which negotiated these contracts for a charge.

In December of 1865, Dunn became involved with a movement to establish a cooperative store called "Bakery for the People". The bakery's inaugural meeting was held at Economy Hall on December 29, 1865.<sup>188</sup> The *New Orleans Tribune* reported that the inaugural meeting was called to "apprise the public of the efforts already made to prepare the way for the organization" and to explain the institution's "usefulness" and "advantageousness."<sup>189</sup> The newspaper added that the organization selected bread as its introductory product because it was the first article of food and the first product that came to the mind of the organizations founders.<sup>190</sup> The Bakery was modeled after several cooperatives that had been very successful in Europe over the previous decade. The *New Orleans Tribune* pointed out that German laborers were able to pool together millions of dollars in capital by making extremely modest contributions each week. Those New Orleanians who contemplated and conceived of the Bakery believed that it could be used as a tool to quickly empower the millions of black freedmen as cooperatives had similarly

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<sup>187</sup> New Orleans Tribune, January 18, 1866

<sup>188</sup> New Orleans Tribune, December 28, 1865

<sup>189</sup> Ibid

<sup>190</sup> Ibid

done throughout Europe for the disenfranchised laborer. In reading the *Tribune* account, it becomes clear that Dunn and his fellow founders studied socialist principles and linked the condition of the former slave to that of the European proletariat. For the Bakery's founders, there was no difference between the capitalist and former masters; each strove to control labor and withhold fair wages.<sup>191</sup>

The mission of the Bakery was two-fold. First, it was to enable its members to purchase goods which the enterprise sold at a discounted price. This could be done because the members collectively purchased supplies, at a wholesale rate and passed the savings on to the members. Secondly, it was to expand into other businesses and products by reinvesting its profits into new enterprises. The Bakery's founders hoped that, like its European counterparts, the Bakery would expand into a wide variety of fields and products such as printing, blacksmithing, groceries, shoe-stores, wood and coal yards and home building. By controlling the means of production within these businesses the members would be assured fair pricing and the eventual control of their own labor as the cooperative opened businesses in the members' respective fields.<sup>192</sup>

The Bakery's management was called the Board of Managers and comprised six officers; a President, a Vice President, a Treasurer, and three inspectors. These officers were to be elected on the first of January, 1866, by a vote of the members. Membership in the Bakery was open to "all persons without discrimination of nationality, origin, or

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<sup>191</sup> New Orleans Tribune, December 24, 1865

<sup>192</sup> Ibid

color” and required only that those seeking membership pay a five dollar initiation fee and make their weekly contributions to the cooperative.<sup>193</sup>

On April 26, 1866, Dunn presided over a meeting of the bakery at St. James Chapel. The meeting sought to explain the inner workings of the organization to perspective members and was heavily endorsed by Reverend J. Turner, pastor of the St. James congregation and Reverend Stringer, a black delegate to the General Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the South. The meeting consisted of a series of speeches made on behalf of the organization, an explanation of the membership requirements and money management policies, and adjourned with a call for new members. Those who could not come forward and join the ranks of membership due to lack of funds were encouraged to visit the Bakery’s secretary, Mr. Aberton, at his home at 308 St. Ann where they would be able to register and pay their membership fee in installments of a dollar a week.<sup>194</sup>

Although the Bakery gained the commitments of three hundred former free men, the organization remained underfunded and never gained the support from the freedmen that Dunn had envisioned. Those Anglo-Africans that did join the Bakery found it dominated by Afro-Creoles and plagued by the historical distrust and language barriers which impeded the Bakery’s members “enthusiastically supporting the association.”<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid

<sup>194</sup> New Orleans Tribune, April 26, 1866

<sup>195</sup> Vandal, Gilles, “Black Utopia in Early Reconstruction New Orleans: The People's Bakery as a Case-Study” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* , Vol. 38, No. 4 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 451-452



Despite its lack of commercial success, “the People's Bakery represented a first attempt by New Orleans blacks to take control of their community's economic destiny.” The Bakery’s goals of training the agrarian freedmen in commercial and industrial skills and creating a cohesive black community made up of all classes and members of both the Anglo-African and Afro-Creole communities. The bakery took on the important task of severing the black community’s economic dependence on white businesses and employers and although ultimately unsuccessful the concept was a revolutionary departure from antebellum hierarchy.<sup>196</sup>

In February of 1866, Dunn became active within the newly formed Freedmen’s Aid Association of New Orleans. Dunn was called on by the association to lend his expertise in the field of black labor by presenting the association with an appraisal of the condition of black labor within the state. Dunn was regarded by the group as one of the state’s foremost experts in the field largely due to the success of his recently opened intelligence agency which found labor for plantation owners and provided freedmen working the plantations with labor contracts.<sup>197</sup>

Dunn’s speech dealt predominately with issues concerning both the freedmen and the planter. Dunn discussed the freedmen’s inability to have their grievances heard by General Baird and pointed out that freedmen had always been able to see General Butler about their problems. However, when these freedmen called upon Baird they were told

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 442-452

<sup>197</sup> New Orleans Tribune, February 22, 1866

by the General's servant that they couldn't see them. Dunn compared Baird's treatment of the freedmen to the attention given to white planters, whom Baird maintained an open door policy for seeing them whenever they wished.<sup>198</sup>

Dunn made the Association aware of the huge demand for black labor, pointing out that he had requests for black field hands from as far away as Mississippi. However, he refused to send blacks out of state. Dunn also pointed out that planters in the interior of Louisiana were similarly having problems attracting black labor and that the planters had come to the conclusion that "negroes will not work now that they are free."<sup>199</sup> Dunn quickly cleared up the planters' misconception by pointing out the back laborers that "will work when they are treated justly."<sup>200</sup> Dunn commented on shallow threats invoked by the planters who presented themselves as their former slaves' "true friends" while complaining of the freedmen's contracted rates. These planters stated that they preferred their former slaves who "had been raised with them" but threatened that if forced they would replace them with White laborers whom they speculated "would soon be in abundance."<sup>201</sup> The planters promised that if they were forced to use White field hands, they would never resort to the use of blacks again. Dunn taunted the planters with his

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid

<sup>199</sup> Ibid

<sup>200</sup> Ibid

<sup>201</sup> Ibid

reply that “he would be pleased to see them employ white laborers for their plantations for then they would properly appreciate the poor Negro.”<sup>202</sup>

On May 5, 1866, a special meeting was called and all citizens were invited to gather at Economy Hall. The meeting was called to order by Arnold Bertonneau, Afro-Creole wine merchant and former union soldier and immediately set out to elect officers before proceeding to matter of its organization. Dunn was elected President; Afro-Creole undertaker and livery owner Pierre Casanave, Anglo-African and Masonic officer Captain James Lewis, and Charles Dupasseau were elected Vice Presidents; and Manuel Camp was elected to the post of Secretary. Dunn proudly thanked those present for the great honor they had bestowed upon him by electing him President. After his brief speech, Dunn gave the floor and honor of announcing the purpose of the gathering to Mr. Durant. Durant announced to the waiting crowd that the Civil Rights Bill had been signed into law by the United States Congress and added that “civil rights can only be obtained when coupled with political rights.”<sup>203</sup>

### *Civil Rights and the Riot of 1866*

The passage of the Civil Rights Bill was a milestone on the path to equality for the meeting’s black attendees. The Bill defined and protected the freedoms afforded to blacks by the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and assured them that the state legislature could not, by enacting code or state law, take away the freedoms which the amendment granted. President

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid

<sup>203</sup> New Orleans Tribune, May 6, 1866

Andrew Johnson was firmly against the bill's passage and invoked a Presidential veto to cease the bill's progress. Despite Presidential resistance, the veto was overturned in both houses of Congress.<sup>204</sup>

The purpose of the gathering was pronounced in the group's resolutions which were unanimously adopted and read aloud by Captain Arnold Bertonneau. The group first resolved to offer the "thanks of the colored people of Louisiana" to all of the Senators and Representatives who had contributed their votes in passing the Civil Rights Bill. Secondly, the group resolved to form a permanent committee whose purpose was to present "main questions of general interest" in regard to the recent Civil Rights Act before "competent courts." Thirdly, the group resolved to immediately appoint the members of the permanent committee.<sup>205</sup>

For blacks in Louisiana, the Civil Rights Act meant the end of a binary set of laws that had restricted and regulated not only their actions, but also their movement. For whites, the act was one step closer to suffrage and the dreaded fear of a state dominated by blacks.<sup>206</sup> For this reason, whites in Louisiana maintained that blacks were "unprepared for self-government and should be regulated by laws framed for their

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<sup>204</sup> Eric L. McKittrick. *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) 108-109; Joe Gray Taylor, "An Impossible Task" in Otto H. Olsen ed., *Reconstruction and Redemption in The South*, (Baton Rouge and London, 1980) 205-206; Albert P. Blaustein and Robert L. Zangrando eds., *Civil Rights and the American Negro: A Documentary History*, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1968) 227-229.

<sup>205</sup> New Orleans Tribune, May 6, 1866

<sup>206</sup> James E. Bond, *No Easy Walk to Freedom: Reconstruction and the Ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment*, (Westport and London: Praeger, 1997) 84-86.

advancement and protection by a superior race.”<sup>207</sup> White Louisianans held firmly to the belief that the Civil Rights Act would be overturned in the Supreme Court, returning the social order in the state to its former condition. The ratification of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the former Confederate state of Tennessee on July 19, 1866 quickly eroded faith in a peaceful reassertion of white superiority.<sup>208</sup> On July 23, 1866, a call was issued for the reconvening of the 1864 Constitutional convention. Whites in the city deemed this brazen move as an attempt for Northerners and blacks to usurp power and to force the ratification of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and eventually force the white populace to submit to social equality for blacks. Whites in New Orleans decided out of desperation to take a stand against what they perceived to be Northern and black aggression, reverting to violence to maintain the social order.<sup>209</sup>

On July 8, 1866, Judge R. K. Howell, of the State Supreme Court, set a date for a meeting to discuss the possibility of overturning the Constitution of 1864. The meeting was scheduled for July 30, 1866, and was to meet at the Mechanic’s Institute, in New Orleans. The days preceding the meeting were filled with tension as Republicans, both black and white, enthusiastically announced the upcoming event.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid, pg.85

<sup>208</sup> Joe Gray Taylor, “An Impossible Task” in Otto H. Olsen ed., *Reconstruction and Redemption in The South*, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980) 205-206; Ficklen, *History of Reconstruction in Louisiana Through 1868*, 146-156; James E. Bond, *No Easy Walk to Freedom: Reconstruction and the Ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment*, 15-16.

<sup>209</sup> John Kenn dall. *History of New Orleans* (Chicago and New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1922) 305-308.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, pp. 307-310

Dunn and many other blacks in positions of leadership realized that the July 30<sup>th</sup> meeting was a smoldering powder keg with the potential to explode at any moment. Dunn stated that he was warned to stay away from the meeting and, like many others, he keenly skipped the ill-fated event.<sup>211</sup> The day of the meeting was nothing short of a massacre, leaving at least forty-six dead and sixty severely wounded.<sup>212</sup> Republican leaders who attended were the targets of brutal attacks and the keynote speaker, Dotsie died from wounds he received at the riot.

The months that followed the riot were a return to normalcy for Dunn. His Intelligence Office reopened in November of 1866 at 123 Girod Street and once again Dunn set about the business of contracting agricultural labor.<sup>213</sup> On December 7, 1866, the *New Orleans Tribune* listed Dunn as secretary of the new Freedmen's Savings and Trust branch in New Orleans, but the most noteworthy change in Dunn's life came on December 27, 1866, when he married the widow of George Marshall, the owner of the home that Dunn had boarded in.<sup>214</sup> Dunn, who had until that point been a bachelor, was now a husband and adoptive father to his new bride's three children.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> James G. Hollandsworth. *An Absolute Massacre: The New Orleans Race Riot of 1866* (Baton Rouge, 2001), 4-5

<sup>212</sup> Eric Arnesen. *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, Politics 1863-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994) 25.

<sup>213</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, November 15, 1866

<sup>214</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, December 7, 1866; December 30, 1866; *Weekly National Republican*, November 22, 1871; Some records show Ellen Dunn's previous surname as Marchand instead of Marshall, *Christian Recorder*, March 2, 1867.

<sup>215</sup> *Weekly National Republican*, November 22, 1871

### *White Lodge, Black Lodge*

On May 2, 1867, The *New Orleans Tribune* ran a very brief yet extremely important article. The article reported that on the evening prior to its printing “colored freemasons were invited to white lodges, and that they fraternized”.<sup>216</sup> This fraternization between white and black masons was seen by many in the populace as a move toward unity within the city, but Dunn and many members of the black lodges viewed this show of brotherly benevolence as nothing more than an attempt to divide the Anglo-African and the Afro-Creole, who had often been reluctant partners in the civil rights movement.

Within a few weeks, the fraternization between the black and white lodges, escalated from the polite gathering of blacks and whites with a mutual interest, to the installation of a new black lodge by the white Masonic organization of the state. The lodge was given the name Fraternité Lodge Number 20 and all of the work of the lodge was conducted in French. The new lodge’s membership included many Afro-Creoles of note, and many of its officers such as Henry Rey, Hyppolite Rey and Paul Trevigne were active in the civil rights movement.<sup>217</sup>

The July 21, 1867 edition of the *New Orleans Tribune* praised the Supreme Council of the Scotch Rite Masons for bringing a “complete union between two races” and included a letter from G. Garibaldi, a Mason of the 33<sup>rd</sup> degree praising Eugene Chassaing, Grand Commander of the Scotch Rite in Louisiana for “admitting all

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<sup>216</sup> New Orleans Tribune, May 2, 1867

<sup>217</sup> New Orleans Tribune, June 23, 1867

colored brethren into your lodges.”<sup>218</sup> On July 23, 1867, the *New Orleans Republican* ran an article titled “*Union of White and Colored Masons.*” The article maintained the position that a union had been forged between the white Scotch Rite lodges and several colored lodges of the city. The article also claimed that the colored lodges were working harmoniously under the auspices of the Supreme Council of which Chassaignac was the head.<sup>219</sup>

Dunn did not let Chassaignac’s claim of leadership of the black lodges go unanswered. Dunn, through an editorial letter written to the *New Orleans Tribune*, conferred his sentiments in regard to the matter stating,

“The statement that several colored lodges have fused, and are now working harmoniously under the supreme council of the accepted Scotch Rite for Louisiana, is a sad mistake or gross misrepresentation.”<sup>220</sup>

Dunn later clarified his position stating that,

“ there are no [colored] lodges in this state but those working under the jurisdiction of the M. W. Eureka Grand Lodge of F. and A. A. Y. Masonry for the State of Louisiana, of which I have the honor of being Grand Master.”<sup>221</sup>

Despite Dunn’s objections, membership in the newly established black lodge grew. An announcement of a grand soiree between the white and black lodges under Chassaignac’s authority listed a growing number of Afro-Creole elite. Henry

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<sup>218</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, July 21, 1867

<sup>219</sup> *New Orleans Republican*, July 23, 1867

<sup>220</sup> *New Orleans Tribune*, July 25, 1867

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*



Bonseigneur, Octave Rey, C.S. Savinet, and Arnold Bertonneau, were among a long list of well-heeled new members in the lodge.<sup>222</sup> For his part in establishing the black lodge, Chassaignac was bestowed with “several marks of honor and esteem”, including honorary membership in Paris’s lodge, La Rose du Parfait Silence.<sup>223</sup>

Dunn’s Masonic woes could not entirely be blamed on Chassaignac and the white Scottish Rite Masons. Dunn’s own Masonic organization suffered a series of internal rifts. In 1866, former Deputy Grand Master James B. Berry, who was once referred to by Dunn as the “demon of discord” was the focus of the disruption in Dunn’s organization. The problem began when Berry petitioned Dunn to issue a dispensation allowing Berry to open a new lodge in Mobile. When Berry decided that the issuance of the dispensation had taken more time than necessary, he petitioned the Grand Lodge of Ohio to issue a dispensation instead. The attempt to usurp Dunn’s jurisdiction became the center of a growing battle between Berry and Dunn. The Eureka Grand lodge expelled James Berry and the popular veteran and politician Jordan Noble on February, 19, 1867, and on July 25, 1867, Berry’s and Noble’s lodges made a complete break from the lodges under Dunn’s control. There was a thwarted attempt made by fellow mason Reverend John Turner, then pastor of St. James Chapel, to bring the parties together to repair the breach, but the attempt was abandoned by Turner out of loyalty to Dunn’s lodge.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> New Orleans Tribune, December 15, 1867

<sup>223</sup> New Orleans Tribune, November 8, 1867

<sup>224</sup> Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., *John G. Lewis, Jr. –End of an Era: The History of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Louisiana 1842-1979* (Leavenworth: J.A. Walkes, Jr., 1986) 28 – 37.

### *Cracks in the Foundation*

There have been no historical studies that measure the impact that internal strife within Masonic organizations had on Reconstruction politics in Louisiana. Historians Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Bell believed that the masons “provided an important nucleus for political activism”. If they are correct, it would not be unreasonable to deduce that fragmentation within the state’s Black Masonic machine could have equated to fragmentation within the state’s Black Political organizations.<sup>225</sup> Newspaper accounts suggest that Dunn’s woes extended beyond Masonic lodges and editorial melees. Dunn’s political tone began to shift during the fall of 1866. Once trusting of the Central Committee’s white membership, Dunn insisted that a clause be added to the organization’s rules ensuring “a guaranty for the African race to be represented.”<sup>226</sup> Dunn’s fears of black abandonment by white republicans were reinforced in May of 1867 as so called Radical Republicans excluded blacks from appointments on the city’s police force.<sup>227</sup> On June 17, 1867, during a meeting of the Central Executive Committee at Economy Hall, Dunn was nominated for both the presidency and the vice-presidency of the Central Executive Committee. Dunn finished fourth in the vote for presidency of the committee, finishing in a four-way tie with Dr. Cromwell, former Confederate President Jefferson Davis, and Confederate war hero and general, P.G.T. Beauregard. Dunn did

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<sup>225</sup> Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana 1915-1972* (Athens, 1999) 69-70.; Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cossé Bell, “The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850–1900,” in *Creole New Orleans*, ed. Hirsch and Logsdon, 201–61

<sup>226</sup> New Orleans Tribune, November 9, 1866

<sup>227</sup> New Orleans Tribune, May 10, 1867

however win the vote for the Vice-Presidency of the Central Executive Committee, decisively beating both Aristide Mary and Captain James Ingraham for the position.

However, Dunn's mobility within the organization would be short-lived.<sup>228</sup>

Dunn suffered further disenchantment in June of 1867, when the Central Executive Committee began accepting nominations for members during its reorganization. On June 20, 1867, Dunn presented a resolution to the Central Executive Committee in regard to nominations to fill existing vacancies within the committee's membership. Dunn maintained that many of the names that were submitted for nomination, particularly those submitted to represent the rural parishes, would not have been selected had an election been held at the organization's convention. Dunn argued that these candidates would not have been able to win the support of the convention and that all nominations made by the Central Executive Committee should respect the will of the convention. Dunn pointed out at the meeting that an "informality existed in the nomination of the new committee" and that two or three names that had been nominated from the floor of the convention were excluded from the official list of nominees". Dunn's inquiry into the matter was rescinded upon the request of Warmoth. Once rescinded, Warmoth addressed the committee strongly opposing Dunn's resolution.<sup>229</sup>

On June 22, 1867, *The New Orleans Tribune* ran a brief first page article stating that Dunn intended to resign from his newly elected post of Vice-President of the Central Executive Committee. The *Tribune* pointed out that Dunn had been elected to the post

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<sup>228</sup> New Orleans Tribune, June 25, 1867

<sup>229</sup> New Orleans Tribune, June 21, 1867

without his consent and that a number of other officers of the committee had resigned from organization's membership altogether.<sup>230</sup> Dunn's official resignation of the vice-presidency was submitted to the Executive Committee on June 24, 1867 and read as follows:

Gentlemen – Having read the proceedings of your organization in the New Orleans Republican of the 18<sup>th</sup> instance, I discovered that your humble servant was the favored candidate for the position of vice-president.

Gentlemen, I am duly sensible of the honor conferred, but must now without some regret, respectfully decline acceptance of the honorable position,

Gentlemen, I am with respect,

Your obedient servant,  
O.J. Dunn <sup>231</sup>

The changes in the Central Committee were apparent to more than Dunn. The *New Orleans Tribune*, in an almost pleading tone, asked that the old members of the committee refrain from disbanding until they were sure “that the popular will has been freely and is properly obeyed.” The paper supported Dunn's belief that informalities existed in the appointment of the new committee, but deemed it the duty of the old committee's membership “to hold to their trust until the people have decided.”<sup>232</sup>

The sentiment of the new Central Committee manifested itself at the July 1, 1867, meeting of the organization when a bogus resolution requesting that Dunn be dismissed

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<sup>230</sup> New Orleans Tribune, June 22, 1867

<sup>231</sup> New Orleans Tribune, June 25, 1867

<sup>232</sup> New Orleans Tribune, June 27, 1867

from the Committee's membership was read aloud. The resignation was read in Dunn's absence at the meeting and without Dunn's "knowledge or authority". Dunn responded to his alleged resignation by submitting an editorial letter to the *New Orleans Tribune* on July 2, 1867. Dunn maintained through the article that he had merely refused the Vice-Presidency of the committee and did not tender a resignation from the committee. The *New Orleans Tribune's* editors believed Dunn's forced resignation to be a trick on behalf of the new committee to rid itself of "one of the representative men of the colored population."<sup>233</sup>

Dunn, along with many of his radical political colleagues, was being forced from the political landscape of the city by his more Conservative Republican counterparts. Dunn's political fate shifted as quickly in his favor as it had against him. In July of 1867, General Phillip H. Sheridan, Commander of the Fifth Military District, began to enforce the radical Reconstruction Acts which were adopted by Congress in the Spring of 1867.<sup>234</sup> Dunn became the unlikely beneficiary of Sheridan's strict interpretation of the new acts' provisions in regard to the freedmen and once again, Dunn was thrust to the forefront of the city's political geography. The *New Orleans Tribune* strenuously praised Sheridan for attributing "a certain quota in nominations and appointments to the African race." The Tribune pointed out that Sheridan's support of blacks was contrary to his

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<sup>233</sup> New Orleans Tribune, July 3, 1867

<sup>234</sup> Ted Tunnell. *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana 1862- 1877* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984) 107; John R. Ficklen. *History of Reconstruction in Louisiana (Through 1868)*, (1910; repr., Gloucester: John Hopkins Press, 1966)187 – 192.

previous position and the general's most "flagrant opposition" came from one of his own appointee, Governor Benjamin F. Flanders.<sup>235</sup>

Sheridan's new equitable government became manifest on August 1, 1867, with the issuing of Special Order Number 107 which called for the removal of several city officials. On New Orleans' City Council, all but two of the sitting members of the Board of Aldermen and the Assistant Board of Aldermen were removed. Sheridan clearly stated his reasons for removing the boards' members as their inability to sufficiently maintain the city's credit and their failure to enforce, and attempts to impede, the Reconstruction Act. Dunn was one of three blacks appointed to the Assistant Board of Alderman, and the upper Board of Aldermen received two new black members. The *New York Times* reported that most of these men were mixed racially and one, most likely Dunn, was listed as the sole "full-blooded Negro." The *New York Times* also added that none of these men came from the ranks of the recently emancipated.<sup>236</sup> Local newspapers were mixed in their assessments of the new councilmen. The *New Orleans Bee* pointed out that the blacks selected for the City Council were of "favorable character" but other local papers did not feel likewise. The *New Orleans Times* and the *Daily Picayune* made clear their objection to the black councilmen, especially Dunn.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> New Orleans Tribune, July 27, 1867 *Sheridan vs. Flanders*

<sup>236</sup> New York Times, August 2, 1867; New Orleans Times, August 2, 1867; John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 18: October 1, 1867 –June 30, 1868* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967) 180-181

<sup>237</sup> Joseph G. Dawson III, *Army Generals and Reconstruction: Louisiana 1862 – 1867*, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982)56; New Orleans Times, August 2, 6, 9, 1867; New Orleans Bee, August 3, 6, 1867; New Orleans Daily Picayune, August 2, 1862

One of the first tasks undertaken by the new City Council was finding replacements for the many city posts that Sheridan's Special Order Number 107 vacated. Dunn, through vote of the aldermen, was elected to the judicial post of Assistant Recorder of the city's Second District Court.<sup>238</sup> Dunn's defense of the freedmen continued from his position on the Board of Assistant Alderman and on October 24, 1867, Dunn originated an ordinance calling for the integration of New Orleans's Public Schools. Dunn's ordinance passed in the lesser board of Alderman by a vote of six to three, but was easily defeated in the upper which only saw two votes cast in favor of the ordinance. It is unlikely that even had the ordinance been able to pass the upper board that it would have ever been administered throughout the city, because the city's mayor Edward Heath committed himself to refusing to sign the ordinance.<sup>239</sup>

Not all of Dunn's efforts on the Board of Alderman were as benevolent as his ordinance to integrate public schools. At a December meeting of the City Council, the question of growing expenditures came into question. In an effort to cut expenses, a call was issued for the reduction of salaries of all city officers. Dunn argued against the ordinance stating, "according to the City Charter the Council has no right to increase the salaries of officers of the city government and is of the opinion that for the same reason they cannot be decreased." Fellow Council member reminded Dunn that the order was issued by the Military Commander of the District and to this Dunn replied that "the military order was in relation to the laborers and police officers and no mention was

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<sup>238</sup> New Orleans Times, September 11, 1867

<sup>239</sup> New Orleans Tribune, October 31, 1867

therein made of the city government officers." A motion was lifted that the subject be handed over to the City Attorney but the motion was lost. Several motions were made to reduce the proposed salary reduction but they also were unsuccessful. Dunn then moved to amend the ordinance by striking out "all pay for the chairman of Finance, Streets, and Landings Committees of the Common Council" on the ground that "such economists as they claim to be should set example of working for nothing."<sup>240</sup>

Dunn's appointment to the post of Assistant Recorder made Dunn the first Black man in Louisiana's history to serve in a judicial capacity.<sup>241</sup> Dunn presided over the court for the first time on October 3, 1867, when Recorder Gastinel was forced to recuse himself to become a witness in a case of perjury that had been brought before his court. The plaintiff in the case was a local attorney, Ernest J. Wenck. Wenck maintained that the defendant, a local bail bondsman by the name of Henry Smith, had perjured himself when he swore that he was worth the thousand dollar surety required by the court. Smith's legal defense consisted of local attorney, J. P. Montamat and Judge Edmond Abell, First District Court judge who was removed from office by General Sheridan following the July 30, 1866 riot.<sup>242</sup> Exception to Dunn's judicial authority was voiced by Judge Abell as his client was being sworn in. Judge Abell maintained that Dunn, as a man of color, belonged to a class of people unknown to the Constitution and laws as a citizen of the state of Louisiana and was therefore unable to preside as a legal officer. Dunn, hearing

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<sup>240</sup> New Orleans Tribune, December 18, 1867

<sup>241</sup> New York Times, October 5, 1867; New Orleans Bee, October 5, 1867; Daily Opinion, October 5, 1867

<sup>242</sup> New Orleans Bee, October 5, 1867; John Kendall, *History of New Orleans*, (Chicago and New York: Louis Publishing Co., 1922), 313.



Judge Abell's exception quickly overruled and began the hearing. Dunn heard the testimony of several witnesses before calling Mr. Wenck to the stand. Mr. Wenck refused take his place upon the stand stating that his knowledge of the matter was merely hearsay. Wenck then stated that he "preferred the case should be transferred to the Grand Jury." Dunn replied that Wenck had made an affidavit and was expected to support it with his testimony. Wenck boldly declined to be sworn in by Dunn. Dunn charged Wenck with contempt of court, giving him the option of paying a twenty-five dollar fine or being imprisoned for twenty-four hours. Wenck paid the fine and continued to argue the case, which resulted in the discharge of Smith.<sup>243</sup>

As the year 1867 came to a close, Dunn regained his political position. Dunn was among a handful of Central Executive Committee members to transcend the Central Committee and assume political positions. Dunn's actions on the Assistant Board of Aldermen confirmed his commitment to Freedmen and his belief that education had been at the root of his own social elevation. Dunn's tenure as an alderman also shed light on his fiscal interests, which were not entirely benevolent. For Dunn, public service was both a calling of great responsibility and an occupation. Dunn's political positions were important, but by no means placed him at the apex of black social and political power in the city. Francis E. Dumas, a wealthy Afro-Creole, assumed the helm of Black politics in the city and was the only black to sit on the upper board of alderman. By the end of 1867, Dunn found himself with more influence than he had held prior to the war and, more importantly, he had earned the reputation as a friend to the newly enfranchised freedmen.

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<sup>243</sup> New Orleans Bee, October 5, 1867; New York Times, October 5, 1867; Daily Opinion, October 5, 1867

Their sheer numbers gave Dunn political clout that placed him on equal, if not better, footing than many of his Afro-Creole counterparts. Dunn's struggles in summer of 1867 were not forgotten and his rifts with Warmoth, his former lodge brothers, and Afro-Creoles who elected to join Scottish Rite Lodges widened.

# HARPER'S WEEKLY.

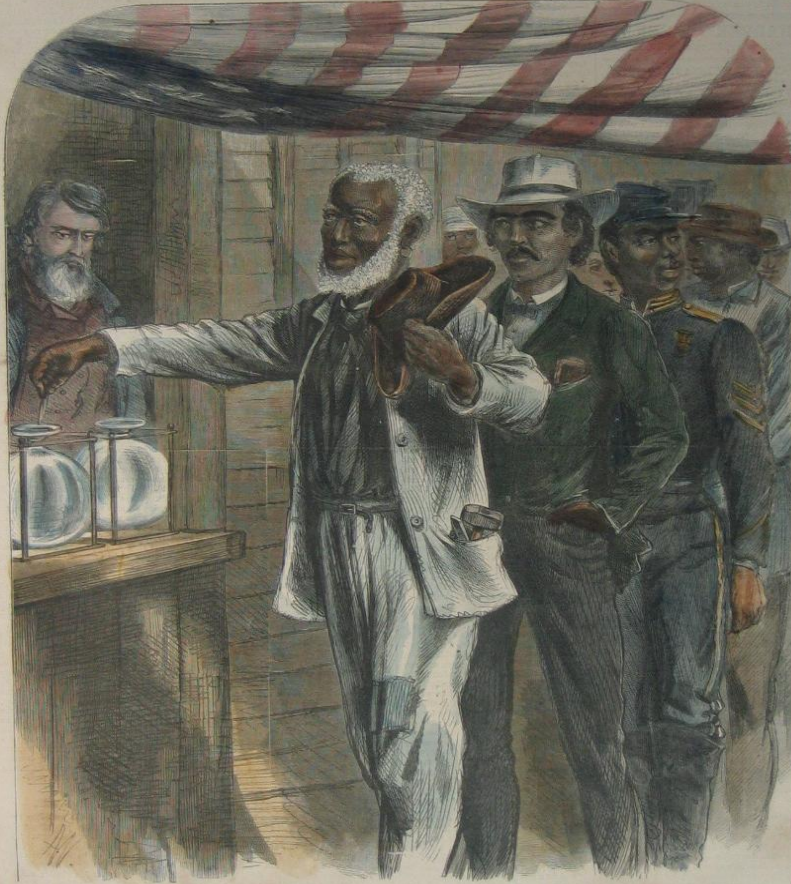
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"THE FIRST VOTE."—DRAWN BY A. R. WADE.—[SEE NEXT PAGE.]

**Illustration 3: First Vote** Source: Harper's Weekly (November 16, 1867)

## CHAPTER VI:

### **The Negro Lieutenant Governor and the Republican Schism (1868 – 1869)**

On November 23, 1867, seventy-eight delegates convened the opening session of a constitutional convention with hopes of writing a new constitution more favorable to the concerns of the black community. Eighty-one days later, on March 9, 1868, the convention achieved its goal. The proposed constitution included articles that provided universal male suffrage in the state, excluded only former confederates from voting rights, opened public schools to black students, and provided equal rights and equal access to every public conveyance and business. The constitution was scheduled to be voted on in the upcoming election in April 1868 and ensured that weeks and days preceding the vote would be filled with tension.<sup>244</sup>

In January of 1868, delegates of the Republican Convention convened to select candidates for the upcoming gubernatorial elections. Though the delegates met as a single party, most were keenly aware that there were at least two factions within the state's Republican ranks. Historian Richard Nelson Current noted that the Republicans who attended the convention could be divided into two groups: the Pure Radicals and White Republicans. Current argued that the White Republicans consisted of "white adventurers" who planned to use the black vote to get into office and in return would offer secondary political posts to docile blacks who were willing to do the White Republicans bidding.

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<sup>244</sup> Louisiana. *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention: For Framing a Constitution for the State of Louisiana* (New Orleans: J.B. Roudanez & Co, 1867).

Conversely, the “Pure Radicals” consisted mainly of black idealists focused on civil rights. On January 13, 1868, the factions selected their candidates; the Pure Radicals selected Francis E. Dumas as their candidate for governor and the White Republicans selected Warmoth. The first ballot count showed that Dumas received forty-one votes and Warmoth received thirty-seven votes. Not having sufficient votes to achieve the majority of the convention, a second ballot was cast. The second ballot showed that Warmoth had forty-five votes to Dumas’s forty-three. Upset with the outcome of the second ballot, Dumas refused to run for Lieutenant-governor leaving the nomination vacant.<sup>245</sup>

### *The Reluctant Candidate*

On the motion of Colonel Don Pardee, Dumas’s resignation was accepted and Dunn was subsequently nominated for the post of Lieutenant governor by P. B. S. Pinchback, a black Carpetbagger from Ohio and open Warmoth supporter. In Warmoth’s account of Dunn’s nomination, Dunn was one of five men selected as nominees for Lieutenant governor. During the first ballot, none of the nominees received the necessary forty-five votes to avoid a runoff. A second ballot was held between Dunn and W. J. Blackburn, and Dunn was nominated by a majority of votes.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Richard Nelson Current. *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers: A Reinterpretation* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1988) 76; Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction*, pp. 54 -58; New York Times, January 15, 1868; Waukesha Plaindealer, February 4, 1868; Uzee, Philip D., “The Beginnings of the Louisiana Republican Party” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Summer, 1971), pg. 210

<sup>246</sup> Warmoth, pp. 54 -55; The New Orleans Republican, January 15, 1868;

**Table V: First Ballot: Dunn's nomination**

Nominee(s)	Number of Votes Received
O. J. Dunn	38
W. J. Blackburn	23
L. A. Snaer	13
C. C. Antoine	8
G. W. Reagan	3

Source: Henry Clay Warmoth. *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1930) 54-55.

**Table VI: Second Ballot: Dunn's nomination**

Nominee(s)	Number of Votes Received
O. J. Dunn	54
W. J. Blackburn	27

Source: Warmoth, Henry Clay, "*War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana*", Southern classics series, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, S.C., 2006, pp. 54-55

According to John Mercer Langston, noted orator and black leader who was visiting the city at the time of the convention, Dunn was perplexed and seriously considered not accepting the nomination. Langston recounts that Dunn and his closest friends had great reservations in regard to Dunn running on the same ticket with Warmoth and just as the Republican party had divided into two factions, so did Dunn's friends. Dunn's closest friends feared the outcome of a Warmoth/Dunn ticket, believing that Warmoth and his supporters were using Dunn's nomination to secure his influence over the state's black populace and simultaneously divide the state's black leadership. If Dunn turned down the nomination, he would abandon the state to men whom he did not trust, and if he accepted the nomination he would fracture solidarity among the state's radical black leadership. According to Langston, this group of friends had "great weight

with Dunn” and, like Dunn himself, the group “favored a colored person” as governor of the state. Dunn was also overwhelmed with a great feeling of inadequacy in regard to his “political and official experience” and feared that he would be incapable of discharging his duties in an “acceptable manner”.

In Langston’s account, Langston joined Dunn for a walk on the evening of January 15, 1868, following Dunn’s nomination at the convention. Langston said that he engaged Dunn in “earnest appeal” that he accept the nomination as the men paced up and down Canal Street for four hours. According to Langston, he and Dunn were concluding their conversation on the steps in front of the Dunn home at four o’clock the next morning. Ellen Dunn, hearing her husband outside, exited her home in the midst of Langston’s appeal to her husband. Langston, in the presence of Mrs. Dunn, made a moving final appeal that her husband accept “in the name of his race, the high honor and responsibility tendered him”. Langston wrote that Mrs. Dunn replied, “My husband, you must do your duty” and succumbing to his wife’s plea, Dunn relented and stated that he would accept the nomination. Later that day, Dunn officially accepted the nomination and in an attempt to show his closest friends that he had not betrayed them, he stated during his acceptance speech that he “had not sought the nomination, but that he would serve in the interest of his party”.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> John Mercer Langston. *From the Virginia Plantation to The National Capitol: The First and Only Negro Representative in Congress from the Old Dominion* (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Co., 1894) 289; *The New Orleans Republican*, January 16, 1868; Perkins, A.E., “Oscar James Dunn”, *Phylon*, 4 (1943), pp. 6 ;

Despite Dunn's message of good will, it appears that Warmoth's alleged plan of fragmenting the black leadership worked effectively. In the days following Dunn's nomination, Dumas's supporters accused Warmoth of fixing the ballot and pledged that despite their not winning the Republican nomination for governor, they would not abandon their hope of electing Dumas.<sup>248</sup> In bitter opposition to the convention's nominations, the *New Orleans Tribune* wrote,

“The Freemen of New Orleans are not to be misled or insulted. They know who are true and who are false, and any petty herd of adventurers that seek to distort their views and overrule their judgment, will learn the full power of their resentment”<sup>249</sup>

The *New Orleans Tribune* did not limit its threats to the carpetbaggers; it also condemned the State Central Executive Committee by likening the committee to a small donkey powered craft adrift on a sea and heading unsuspectingly into a rising storm, only to end up shattered and stranded.<sup>250</sup>

The *New Orleans Tribune* opposed the decision to place strangers and aliens above the state's natives and old residents. It proposed solidarity amongst Conservative Democrats and dissenting Republicans by proposing that members of both parties act in the “interest of all Louisianans” and vote collectively against the Carpetbaggers.<sup>251</sup> In the following weeks, dissenting Republicans were referred to by their disagreeing cohorts as

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<sup>248</sup> New York Times, January 26, 1868

<sup>249</sup> New York Times, February 16, 1868

<sup>250</sup> Ibid

<sup>251</sup> New York Times, February 24, 1868



“bolters” and were accused of using their opposition to garner the inclusion of legislation in the new state constitution being drafted by the convention that would allow them social access to white institutions. A *New York Tribune* correspondent in New Orleans denounced the Afro-Creole effort to “legislate one person into the parlor of another against his will” and added that “the great mass of colored people [the Anglo-African community] are conservative” and “are content with the right to vote and be voted for”. The correspondent went on to state that the Anglo-African community “did not wish to invade public institutions which they had not been accustomed to frequent.”<sup>252</sup> Although Dunn led the Anglo – American contingent, his sentiments in regard to public accommodations and social access to public institutions were with the Afro-Creoles. During his acceptance speech for his nomination as Lieutenant-governor, he told crowds of onlookers that the new constitution would guarantee “all men privileges and rights, civil and political.”<sup>253</sup>

Despite Dunn’s nomination, his gains in the previous year vanished as quickly as they appeared. A thwarted attempt by members of the Board of Assistant Alderman to replace Recorder Gastinel with Dunn, against military orders, drew the retribution of General Winfield Scott Hancock, who in turn removed every man of color appointed by General Sheridan.<sup>254</sup> On February 7, 1868, the colored members were informed by Special Order Number Twenty-eight “that they had been removed for having proceeded

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<sup>252</sup> New York Tribune, March 16, 1868

<sup>253</sup> New Orleans Republican, January 16, 1868; Perkins, A.E., “Oscar James Dunn”, *Phylon*, 4 (1943), pp. 6

<sup>254</sup> New York Tribune, February 17, 1868

to hold an election for recorder of the Second district of New Orleans, in contempt of orders from the headquarters of General Hancock.<sup>255</sup>

As the state election drew near, the city's white populace lamented that Louisiana would "irretrievably be consigned to negro supremacy", and the *Picayune's* writers accused the white populace of being apathetic in regard to the seriousness of the impending election. Despite Warmoth's plan of fragmenting the black leadership worked effectively and, by March 1868, Dumas placed himself on the ballot as an independent candidate for Lieutenant-governor and was openly opposing Dunn.

As Dunn campaigned in rural parishes, where the Anglo-African vote was the majority, he rallied his base by reawaking antebellum prejudices which had divided the black community. Dunn called for solidarity among his constituency by maintaining that quadroon society was "puffed up" and "conceited" and by contending that his Afro-Creole opponents were only now willing to "stoop to the colored race and own themselves a part of it". Dunn argued that Dumas and his Afro-Creoles merely required that in exchange for this proposed amalgamation that Anglo-Africans concede to them "all the offices, all the honors, and all the emoluments".<sup>256</sup>

The election took place on April 17 -18, 1868. Dunn appeared on the state ballot as one of three candidates for Lieutenant-governor. Dunn's opponents were former

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<sup>255</sup> "Letter from the General of the Army in Answer to a resolution of the House of the ninth instant, relative to the removal of the city council of New Orleans and of Jefferson City, Louisiana" 40<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second session, House of Representatives, Ex. Doc. No. 209

<sup>256</sup> Shreveport Southwestern, April 15, 1868; Jean-Charles Houzeau and David C. Rankin. *My Passage at the New Orleans Tribune: A Memoir of the Civil War Era* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001) 55.

Lieutenant-governor Albert Voohries (Democrat) and Francis E. Dumas (Independent). Unofficial returns show that Dunn carried the state, defeating Dumas 45,751 to 4,791, with Voohries taking 22,204 votes.<sup>257</sup>

In the wake of the election, S.B. Packard, Chairman of the Registration Board, protested General Buchanan, the District's Commander, for not inducting the newly elected Republican officials in a timely manner and maintained that the Military Command's delay was not in compliance with the newly written constitution or in accordance with Congress's plans for Reconstruction. On June 6, 1868, Packard issued a proclamation denouncing the delay and was promptly arrested and taken to the city's military headquarters. Shortly after his arrest, Packard was released on his own recognizance and informed that he would be required to appear before a military commission for his actions.<sup>258</sup> As a consequence of Packard's arrest, the balance of the Board of Registration issued a second proclamation, this time denouncing General Buchanan. In retaliation, Buchanan had the entire board arrested and while in his custody he warned them that if Congress failed to legislate the matter of the re-admission of Louisiana into the union, the board would be rearrested and brought to trial before a Military commission.<sup>259</sup> General Grant intervened in the heated exchange by sending Packard a dispatch advising him to "issue no more proclamations or orders conflicting

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<sup>257</sup> New Orleans Bee, April 22, 24, 1868; Houzeau and Rankin, 55.

<sup>258</sup> Chicago Tribune, June 7, 1868

<sup>259</sup> Chicago Tribune, June 9, 1868; New Orleans Republican, June 9, 1868

with those issued by the Military Commander of the District.”<sup>260</sup> On June 13, 1868, Grant sent Buchanan a dispatch sustaining Buchanan’s actions. The dispatch went further to confirm that the newly elected Republican officers could not be installed without Buchanan’s consent at a time appointed by Congress. Grant advised Buchanan to await the act of Congress before “permitting the legislature to meet or officers to be installed.”<sup>261</sup> On June 27, 1868, Buchanan received an order from Grant calling for the removal of Governor Baker and Lieutenant Governor Voorhies. This order also authorized the appointments of Warmoth and Dunn to their vacated posts.<sup>262</sup>

### *The Test Oath Imbroglia*

On Monday, June 29, 1868, Louisiana’s legislature convened and was called to order by Dunn, now the newly appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the state. After the legislature was called to order, the temporary secretary approached the podium and read Buchanan’s order calling for the removal of Governor Baker and Lieutenant-Governor Voorhies. The secretary then called roll, to which thirty-four members answered. After roll was called, Grant’s orders in regard to installing newly-elected officers were read aloud. Grant’s orders suggested that the newly-elected officers only be required to comply with the oath prescribed by the new constitution. After the reading of Grant’s order, Dunn announced that he was not prepared to comply with Grant’s suggestion and

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<sup>260</sup> Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1868

<sup>261</sup> Ibid

<sup>262</sup> Chicago Tribune, June 29, 1868; Deseret News, July 4, 1868; New York Tribune, June 29, 1868; St. Joseph Herald, July 11, 1868; Republican Compiler, July 3, 1868

would require the more stringent test oath to be administered to all officers. The Democrats immediately appealed, arguing that Dunn lacked the authority to prescribe any oath outside of the one required by the new constitution and asked that the question be referred to General Buchanan. Dunn informed the Democrats that until they had qualified, by taking the oath, no appeal could be taken or motion offered. Dunn then ordered a roll-call of members and those who were willing to take the test oath were called forward to do so. Nineteen Republican members, the number necessary for a quorum, took the test oath, after which were administered the constitutional oath. In the House, similar demands were made of its newly elected members by R. H. Isabelle, its black temporary chairman, and a quorum of fifty-three Republican members took both oaths.<sup>263</sup>

On June 30, 1868, both houses were called into session and Democratic senators and representatives who refused the test oath assumed their seats. In the senate, Hugh J. Campbell, a Republican was sworn in as senator for the Second District, even though a Democrat, Anthony Sambola, had won the district's seat in the recent election. The addition of Campbell, brought the total of Republicans in the senate to twenty. Democrats struggled in vain to protest their exclusion and the taking of Sambola's seat but the senate's chair refused to recognize the Democrats and ignored their protests. The

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<sup>263</sup> New York Times, June 30, 1868; Chicago Tribune, June 30, 1868; Brooklyn Eagle, June 30, 1868; Lancaster Intelligencer, July 8, 1868; A. R. Cazaaran. *The Democratic Speaker's Hand-Book* ( Cincinnati: Miami print. and Publishing Co., 1868) 149; Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 18: October 1, 1867 –June 30, 1868*, pp.180-181

Democrats did, however, petition that a telegram written by General Grant and addressed to General Buchanan be read aloud by the secretary:

“I have no orders at present to give: but repeat to you, as heretofore, that the members of the Louisiana Legislature are only required to take the oath prescribed by their constitution, and are not required to take the test oath prescribed in the Reconstruction acts. Generals Meade and Canby are acting on this view of the case.”

(Signed) U.S. Grant

After hearing the telegram read aloud, Dunn suggested that the communication be referred to a committee. The Republican quorum adopted his suggestion and quickly appointed a committee to review the matter. Dunn then moved to the selection of permanent officers all of whom were Republicans, and followed with a resolution to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment. The resolution was postponed until the matter had been heard by the House; this was merely a formality, because the House, like the Senate, consisted entirely of Republicans who favored the amendment’s ratification.<sup>264</sup>

Before the legislature assembled on July 1, 1868, a large military contingent assembled in Lafayette Square, outside of the Mechanics’ Institute in expectation of violence. The contingent consisted of a section of artillery, a squadron of cavalry, two companies of infantry, as well as a large detail of police. The Senate was called to order at quarter past noon and a roll of only the members who had taken the test oath was called. After reading the roll, the committee that had been assembled to review General Buchanan’s order reported that they believed that the test oath should be discontinued out of respect for General Grant and that hereafter members should be allowed to qualify in

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<sup>264</sup> New York Times, July 1, 1868

accordance with the constitution of the state. Following the committee's report, a roll including the names of Democrats was read and the Democratic senators were allowed to be sworn in under the constitutional oath. This new roll excluded the name of Sambola, the Democrat who had been replaced by Campbell, and despite not being called, Sambola presented himself to be sworn in and was refused. In the House, similar proceedings were held in regard to the discontinuance of the test oath, although Republican representatives showed more opposition to doing away with the oath than did their Senate counterparts. When a new roll including the Democrats was read in the House, only three Democrats presented themselves to be sworn in under the constitutional oath. After swearing in the Democrats, a vote was held in regard to the ratification of the fourteenth amendment. The House voted in favor of ratifying the amendment by a vote of fifty-seven yeas to a mere three nays. The following day, the amendment was ratified by the Senate and an additional twelve Democratic members of the House were sworn in.<sup>265</sup>

Dunn's and Isabelle's clever insistence on applying the test oath secured the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment and placed Republicans in decisive leadership positions in both the House and Senate. Although convenient, Dunn's use of the test oath and the removal of Democrat politicians inflamed Democrats throughout the state. Democrats confidently declared that the laws enacted by the Republicans had no "binding

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<sup>265</sup> Chicago Tribune, July 2-3, 1868;

force or moral sanction” and additionally pledged that these laws would be “disregarded and declared null and void”.<sup>266</sup>

### *Dunn’s Inauguration*

On Saturday, July 11, 1868, the Constitutional oath of office was administered to Dunn by the Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court, Judge William B. Hyman. After taking the oath, Dunn addressed the senate. Dunn’s speech was brief and his words were carefully selected to quell Democratic tensions he so recently ignited. In a conciliatory manner, Dunn announced,

“As to myself and my people, we are not seeking social equality. That is a thing no law can govern. We all have our preferences; we all wish to select our associates, and no legislation can select them for us. We ask nothing of the kind. We simply ask to be allowed an equal chance in the race of life; an equal opportunity of supporting our families, of educating our children and of becoming worthy citizens of this Government”<sup>267</sup>

Although Dunn’s speech maintained that he and his people were not pursuing social equality, actions of the Radicals in the House that day were quite contradictory. Shortly after Dunn’s speech, Isabelle introduced a Civil Rights Bill to the floor of the House. The bill clearly stated that “all persons, without regard to race, color, or previous condition, shall enjoy equal rights and privileges in their traveling, being entertained,

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<sup>266</sup> Chester L. Quarles, *The Ku Klux Klan and Related American Racialist and Anti-Semitic Organizations: A History and Analysis* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London McFarland & Co., 1999) 40.

<sup>267</sup> Daily Journal-Syracuse, July 13, 1868; Daily Milwaukee, July 14, 1868; New York Times, July 18, 1868, The Coshocton Age, July 24, 1868; The Grand Traverse Herald, July 24, 1868; The New Orleans Bee, July 12, 1868; Daily Rocky Mountain News, August 1, 1868;



upon any conveyance of a public character, or place of public resort, or any place of business where a license is required by state law.”<sup>268</sup>

On Monday, July 13, 1868, Dunn and Warmoth were inaugurated at the Hall of Representatives in the Mechanics’ Institute. The following day, Warmoth officially informed General Buchanan, Command General of the district, of Louisiana’s ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.<sup>269</sup>

### *The Metropolitan Police Bill*

Republican leaders anticipated violent retribution from their Democratic counterparts and, immediately following the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, passed the Metropolitan Police Bill. This controversial bill placed authority of the New Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard parishes’ police forces in the hands of a board of commissioners appointed by the governor. Republican leaders justified this drastic consolidation of power by arguing that the existing police forces and the mayor could not be trusted and had participated or stood idly aside as Republicans were murdered during the massacre of 1866. Emboldened with the Republicans’ unrivaled power, Pinchback, senator of New Orleans’s Second District, boldly proclaimed that Democrats should “beware” and warned that their next act of violence would be the signal for a “dawn of

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<sup>268</sup> New York Times, July 18, 1868; Hartford Courant, July 13, 1868

<sup>269</sup> New York Times, July 15, 1868

retribution”. Despite Pinchback’s brazen threat of violence, the city remained peaceful as rival political clubs paraded in its streets.<sup>270</sup>

On September 19, 1868, Warmoth made his appointments to the new police board. W.R. Fish, J.R. Raynal, S.N. Burbank, Thomas Isabelle and William George were all named as commissioners on the new police board. Subsequent to this wave of appointments, Dunn was named as the board’s president. Dunn’s appointment came by way of Act 74 of the Constitution of 1868 which maintained that the Lieutenant Governor shall be ex officio President of the Police Board. Dunn’s critics maintained that his position on the board was in violation of Act 94 of the Constitution which stated that “no judicial power, except as committing magistrates in criminal cases, shall be conferred on any other officers than those mentioned in this title, except such as may be necessary in towns and cities”. It was also a violation of Act 117 which maintained that “no person shall hold at the same time more than one office of trust and profit.” Dunn’s supporters maintained that Dunn’s new role as Police Board President was not the creation of a new office, but was instead the conferment of duties upon the office of the Lieutenant-Governor by the authority of Legislature. The new police board was solidly Republican, although the majority of its membership was in support of Warmoth and three of the board’s members, Isabelle, Raynal, and Dunn, were black. The Metropolitan police force, commonly referred to as the “Metropolitans”, consisted of a total 373 officers, 130 of whom were black and 243 of whom were white. In protest to the new bill and its

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<sup>270</sup> New York Times, July 12, 1868; New Orleans Bee, July 12, 1868, New Orleans Bee, August 7, 13, 1868; New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, February 22, 1869; The Miscellaneous Documents printed by order of the House of Representatives during the Second Session of the Forty-Second Congress 1871-1872, Washington Government Printing Office, 1872, pg. 297; New York Times, September 6, 1868

interracial board, a number of the existing police forces' senior officers resigned. Despite this dramatic change in leadership, the city did not immediately descend into violence and chaos. Instead, the city was reduced to an uneasy harmony as rival political clubs continued to parade in the streets without incident. Although the city remained peaceful, the inhabitants seemed poised for the violence that was to come.<sup>271</sup>

On the evening of September 22, 1868, a large riot broke out as two Republican clubs, the Grant and Constitution, paraded down Canal Street. The *New Orleans Picayune* reported that the procession turned violent after a man yelled the names of Democratic politicians "Seymour and Blair" from the balcony of Dumontiel's Confectionery near the intersection of Canal and Bourbon Streets as the procession passed. According to the newspaper account, the peaceful procession immediately transformed into an angry mob as its members stormed the ice cream parlor in protest. The ice cream parlor and the street outside erupted into chaos as white customers and black club members clashed. Before the evening would end, the entire French Quarter would become a battlefield as countless blacks and whites joined the melees on its

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<sup>271</sup> Chicago Tribune, October 2, 1868; New Orleans Bee, September 19, 1868; New York Times, September 14, 1868; New York Times, October 4, 1868; The Morning Star and Catholic Messenger, November 22, 1868; *Annual Report of the Board of Metropolitan Police to the Governor of Louisiana for the Year Ending September 30*, New Orleans: A.L. Lee, 1800s; R.E. Diamond v. G.L. Cain, No. 1986, 21 La. Ann. 309, Supreme Court of Louisiana, April 1869; Dawson, III, Joseph G., "General Lovell H. Rousseau and Louisiana Reconstruction", *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Autumn, 1979), pp.378-384; W. Marvin Dulaney. *Black Police in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) 12; James Keith Hogue. *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006) 66.

streets. The riot was the largest scene of violence in the city since the massacre of 1866 and would serve as a precursor of events to come.<sup>272</sup>

After the Civil Rights and Public School bills were introduced in the legislature, Democratic clubs began to challenge the authority of the new police force and took to the streets in large, heavily armed processions. Throughout the latter portion of September and most of the month of October, roaming bands of Democrats sporadically ransacked and looted Republican homes, businesses and political clubrooms. As the city was reduced to a state of anarchy, one Democratic club, the “Innocents”, paraded in the streets of the city in small bands randomly killing blacks unfortunate enough to be in their path.<sup>273</sup>

In neighboring St. Bernard parish, rumors circulated that a black mob had massacred a white family and burned down two homes. The incendiary rumor caused whites to flee the parish for refuge in New Orleans. Many of the whites who remained in the parish formed mobs of their own and took to the streets hunting for blacks. Military forces under the authority of General Buchanan were dispatched to patrol New Orleans and St. Bernard’s levees. The soldiers who patrolled St. Bernard’s levees were periodically fired upon by mobs of whites, as the mobs scoured the area in search of black victims. In the days following the chaos, it was revealed that the rumored black mob had only existed as a figment of white Democrats’ imaginations. Subsequent

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<sup>272</sup> New Orleans Picayune, September 23, 1868; New York Times, September 23, 24, 28, 1868

<sup>273</sup> New York Times, October 4, 29, 1868; New York Times, November 2, 1868

investigations of the violence revealed that as many as fifty innocent blacks were slaughtered by white mobs.<sup>274</sup>

On the evening of October 26, 1868, a large crowd of armed Democrats congregated in Lafayette Square and on the steps of city hall and the nearby police station. Angry chants of “death to all carpetbaggers”, “death to niggers” and “we are going to rule” filled the evening air as the white mob gathered the courage to storm the buildings that they menaced. To quell the disturbance, Democratic leaders quickly rushed to the scene and urged the crowd to disband and return peaceably to their homes. Republican and Democrat alike anticipated a violent end to the evening’s events, additional federal troops had been transferred to the city in light of recent incidents and the Chief of Police, R. E. Diamond, had ordered all black officers not to report for duty in the belief that their presence might incite the mob. In turn, the Democratic leadership present addressed the crowd denouncing Republican Reconstruction while pleading for peace. The crowd reluctantly complied with the requests that they return to their homes after their leaders assured them that their show of solidarity would force Republicans to strike all black officers from the Metropolitan Police forces rolls.<sup>275</sup>

In the days following the gathering, New Orleans’s Mayor John R. Conway attempted to make good on the Democratic leadership’s promise of an all white police force by proposing that such a police force be established to rival that of the

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<sup>274</sup> New York Times, October 26, 27, 31, 1868; Lancaster Intelligencer, October 28, 1868

<sup>275</sup> The Globe, November 4, 1868; New York Times, November 2, 4, 1868; Lancaster Intelligencer, October 28, 1868

Metropolitans'. The Police Board's commissioners quickly countered Conway's proposal by filing an injunction in the Fifth District Court restraining the mayor from forming a rival police force.<sup>276</sup> On Saturday November 28, 1868, Judge Cooley of the Sixth District Court sustained Diamond's appointment as Chief of Police and ordered the Metropolitans not to interfere with Diamond in the discharge of his duties. In his opinion, Cooley noted that the "Metropolitan Police law does not deprive municipal authorities the power to establish a police force." Judge Cooley additionally noted that it was the option of the municipality to accept the law, which he deemed to be unconstitutional. Cooley further maintained that the state's constitution prohibited an elected official from holding two government posts simultaneously and argued that Dunn could not act as both Lieutenant Governor of the state and President of the Metropolitan Police.<sup>277</sup>

On December 4, 1868, Dunn presented the Metropolitan Police Board's injunction barring Conway and Diamond from interfering in the city's police matters before Judge Leumont of the Fifth District Court. Leumont dismissed the Police Board's injunction ruling in favor of the defendants. Leumont's opinion concurred with that of Cooley and maintained that the Metropolitan Police law was unconstitutional. Cooley's and Leumont's rulings created two rival police forces in the city, further increasing the chances that a violent clash would occur between the city's Democratic and Republican populace.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> New York Times, October 31, 1868; New York Times, November 2, 8, 1868; National Republican, November 30, 1868

<sup>277</sup> New York Times, November 30, 1868; Daily Syracuse Journal, November 30, 1868

<sup>278</sup> New York Times, December 4, 1868

The embers of smoldering hostilities were fanned as local and national newspapers printed letters and telegrams sent by the state's Republican leadership to military officers and federal officials. The letters shed light on what was occurring behind the scenes during the city's recent period of chaos. The letters and telegrams, which were often printed in the entirety, revealed Republican fears that the hostilities would escalate and recounted Republicans pleas for federal assistance. A correspondence between Dunn and Louisiana Senator William P. Kellogg was given particular attention by several papers after Dunn was misquoted. The misunderstanding occurred when several newspapers falsely alleged that Dunn had written Louisianan Senators with his apprehensions of troubles. Dunn quickly corrected and clarified his comments noting that he had informed Senator Kellogg of threats that had been made, but maintained that the threats had come from sources he did not believe were capable of carrying them out.<sup>279</sup>

### *The Civil Rights Bill*

The violence that occurred in and around New Orleans during September and October of 1868 cannot solely be attributed to the passage of the Metropolitan Police Bill. Democratic sentiments had begun boiling much earlier in the year, after black delegates in the State's Constitutional Convention drafted a new constitution guaranteeing blacks access to public accommodations and social access to public institutions which had been previously restricted to only whites. The proposed Civil

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<sup>279</sup> Daily Syracuse Journal, December 24, 1868; Evening Courier and Republic, December 23, 1868; Lewiston Evening Journal, December 23, 1868; New York Times, October 28, 1868; New York Times, November 8, 1868; Daily Observer, December 23, 1868; Anglo-American Times, January 9, 1869

Rights Bill reinforced the state's new constitution by reiterating its prohibitions on distinctions made on account of race and by attaching criminal prosecution in the form of imprisonment or fines on any violation of the new law.<sup>280</sup>

Prior to the introduction of the new constitution and passage of the Civil Rights bill, white Louisianans relied heavily on local courts to defend them against the encroachment of black civil rights. Local judges, politicians, police departments, and mob violence had successfully prevented the administering of a national Civil Rights Bill passed in 1866. Southern States argued that the bill was unconstitutional and refused to protect blacks who attempted to patronize white establishments. Judge Abell, of New Orleans's First District Court, and other Democratic politicians throughout the south fiercely argued the legality of the Civil Rights Bill of 1866. Southern states maintained that the Civil Rights Bill infringed on states' ability to define "state citizenship" and was therefore unconstitutional.<sup>281</sup>

By end of the summer of 1868, Republicans had eroded many Democratic defenses against the civil rights legislation. As Republicans seized control of the state's legislature, black Republicans cleverly deduced that they could undermine the Democratic argument in regard to the infringement of state's rights by writing the legislation into the state's constitution, thereby making Civil Rights the law of the land. Black politicians also realized that many of their white neighbors would merely ignore Civil Rights laws if there were no penalties associated with violations of the law and if

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<sup>280</sup> New York Times, July 12, 1868, August 30, 1868, October 4, 1868;

<sup>281</sup> Democratic Watchman, April 13, 1866; New York Times, May 11, 1866, May 18, 1867



there were no law enforcement components willing to enforce the new law. The success of Civil Rights in Reconstruction Louisiana was invariably linked to having not only written laws which compelled equal access to public accommodations, but also required courts willing to establish precedent in favor of the law and law enforcement agencies willing to enforce the law.

For Democrats in Louisiana, as well as the rest of the South, the transition of political power from Democrat to Republican could not go unchallenged. For white southerners, racial dominance was an integral component of Southern culture. Racial segregation was not a convenience or merely a political or economic means of control, but racial dominance was a way life. This dominance not only defined who the blacks were and where they belonged, but also defined the white social hierarchy by vesting power squarely in the hands of a slave-holding elite who owed their economic success and their genteel lifestyles to a permanently subordinate class of blacks. Although the Civil War had abolished slavery, southern whites continued to believe that the social order and continuance of their culture depended on racial dominance.<sup>282</sup>

New Orleans's Democrats perceived blacks' aspirations for Civil Rights as a contentious plot for mastering whites and usurping what whites' believed to be the natural order. As black politicians took control over institutions that had once served as vanguards of white dominance, whites resorted to violence. This desperate situation

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<sup>282</sup> David R. Goldfield. *Black, White, and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture, 1940 to the Present* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990) 13; Orlando Patterson. *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries* (New York: Basic Civitas, 1999) 174; Rebecca Bridges Watts. *Contemporary Southern Identity: Community Through Controversy* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2008)7-10;

reduced Democrats to reluctantly placing their hopes in the belief that Warmoth, being a white man, would never concede to black equality. Democrats urged Warmoth to veto the Civil Rights bill and argued that the governor would be compelled, by virtue of his race, to decline social equality. Conversely, black republicans believed that Warmoth would vote with his black constituency.<sup>283</sup>

On September 26, 1868, Warmoth vetoed the Civil Rights bill and offered a lengthy written explanation in regard to his decision. Warmoth attempted to justify his veto by noting that he believed the bill to be “impracticable” and “pernicious”. Warmoth linked violence and disharmony in the state to blacks’ repeated attempts to “advance their present condition”. He went on to note that racial barriers would “surely give way to the softening influences of time” and until such time as whites were willing to concede equality to blacks, blacks were to be patient and content with the rights that they had already gained. The governor closed by stating that he believed the Act to be “unnecessary”, “unwise”, and “calculated to demoralize the public conscience”.<sup>284</sup>

Warmoth’s decision not to support the Civil Rights bill infuriated Dunn and ended any cordial feelings that had existed between the Governor and Lieutenant-Governor. Warmoth’s decision also reunited factions of the Afro-Creole and Anglo-African components of the radical element of Louisiana’s Republican Party, which had split after Dunn reluctantly accepted the Warmoth camp’s nomination for Lieutenant-Governor.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> New York Times, September 28, 1868; New York Times, October 7, 1868

<sup>284</sup> New York Times, September 27, 1868; Hartford Courant, September 29, 1868

<sup>285</sup> New York Times, September 28, 1868; Constitution, September 29, 1868

On September 28, 1868, the Civil Rights Bill returned to the House where the veto was sustained by a split vote of thirty-two (32) to thirty-two (32). The *New York Times* pointed out that the votes were not split along color lines and noted that seven whites had voted to pass the bill while five blacks had voted to sustain the veto. Undaunted by their recent failure, Radical Republicans amended and renamed the bill, calling it “An Act to enforce the provisions of the Thirteen Article of the Constitution of Louisiana”. The refashioned bill was very similar to the original and merely replaced criminal prosecution with civil action. The amended Civil Rights Bill passed the state senate and became law on February 8, 1869.<sup>286</sup>

The passage of the Civil Rights Bill was a milestone for the consolidated Pure Radical faction of the Republican Party, now consisting of Anglo-Africans, Afro-Creoles, and Radical Whites. Although consolidated in their opposition to the predominately white conservative faction of the Republican Party led by Warmoth, the Anglo-Africans and Afro-Creoles remained sharply divided ideologically in regard to integration and the exercising of the newly acquired civil rights. For Dunn and his largely Anglo-African constituency, the new civil rights legislation gave blacks access to vital institutions like public schools and railroads for which the community paid taxes to support but prior to the law’s passage were prohibited from using. Dunn was a proponent of integrated public education and equal access on public transportation, but sources suggest that Dunn had no interest in integrating black social, religious, and fraternal organizations such the black York Rite lodges and the African Methodist Episcopal church. Similarly, Dunn believed

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<sup>286</sup> New York Times, September 29,30, 1868; New York Times, February 10, 1869

that black-owned saloons, restaurants, and clubs should be patronized by the black community instead of going to white establishments where they were not welcome.

Evidence suggests that Dunn was predominately interested in integration as a means to black self-determination. Dunn's political power was largely derived from two Anglo-African institutions: the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Prince Hall Masons. As a member of high regard in both institutions, it is likely that he correlated social integration with attempts to undermine the authority of both of these traditional institutions as well as an attempt to divide his constituency. Evidence in regard to his aversion to social integration can be found in his unfavorable comments about the integration of Masonic Lodges in Louisiana. As Scottish Rite Masons established integrated lodges in Louisiana, Dunn immediately denounced the legitimacy of the new lodges and maintained that there were no legitimate black lodges except those under his control. The subsequent success of integrated lodges became a point of contention between Anglo-African and Afro-Creole politicians as the latter joined the integrated lodges in great number. Historians Caryn Cossé Bell and Joseph Logsdon maintained that the integration of Masonic lodges caused a schism between Dunn and many of his Afro-Creole supporters and was the likely catalyst for his acceptance of the Warmoth camp's nomination as Lieutenant Governor.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> New Orleans Tribune, July 25, 1867; Sharlene Sinegal Decuir, "Attacking Jim Crow: Black Activism in New Orleans, 1925-1941" (Ph.D dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2009), pp. 22, 31; Caryn Cossé Bell and Joseph Logsdon, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans" in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* eds. Arnold R. Hirsch, and Joseph Logsdon, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, LA, 1992, pg. 249;

Democratic newspapers cheerfully printed “gossip” that was allegedly overheard during one of Dunn’s conversations. *The New Orleans Crescent*, *Natchitoches Spectator*, and the *Galveston Daily News* reported that a source overheard that Dunn was “warmly opposed to the idea entertained by men of his own color of thrusting themselves into public places frequented by only white men.” The article went on to note that Dunn espoused the sentiment that “negroes ought to patronize negroes, as whites patronized whites”. According to the article, Dunn further maintained that since blacks possessed the voting majority and political power, they should be capable of establishing their own theaters and saloons to rival those of whites. The article went on to note that Dunn proclaimed “let them start such places of their own and let the white trash alone in their glory”. Both newspapers praised Dunn as a “man of more than ordinary good sense” and both maintained that he was wise enough to appreciate “the inevitable and irreconcilable difference which exists between the white man and the black.” Similarly, both newspapers were forgiving of Dunn’s alleged use of the term “white trash” and concurred that they could hardly believe that Dunn would use such a term.<sup>288</sup>

Evidence similarly suggests that Dunn was also apprehensive about the economic consequences of integration. Dunn foresaw the potential economic power of the freedmen as they were transformed from slaves to wage earners. Dunn’s involvement in the Bakery for the People suggests that he was also keenly aware of the precarious vulnerability of the freedmen in becoming wage slaves if they could not control their means of production. Dunn believed that the Bakery was an integral step in the wide-spread

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<sup>288</sup> Galveston Daily News, August 28, 1868, Natchitoches Spectator, August 25, 1868; “The Southern States since the War”, *Fraser’s Magazine*. August 1874

establishment of black owned businesses and a means of financial independence for the recently emancipated community which relied heavily on the federal government and former masters (who were now their contractual employers) for support. For the Dunn constituency, a white dominated yet integrated market place was a short-term inconvenience that would ultimately give way to black owned businesses, which in turn, would culminate in financial independence for the black community.<sup>289</sup>

Conversely, many Afro-Creoles were not resigned to the notion of being forced to develop and patronize businesses and social institutions exclusively established for their community or being required to share these facilities with the Freedmen, who many deemed beneath them. The Afro-Creole elite demanded admittance into the city's best schools, the opera house's finest seats, and white social organizations such as the Scottish Rite Masons. Afro-Creoles defiantly declared that "we want to ride in any conveyance, to travel on steamboats, eat in any steamboat, dine in any restaurant, or educate our children at any school." What the Afro-Creole leadership sought for their constituency were "public rights" and equal access to all public conveniences. Historian Lawrence Powell defined public rights as "the principle that private establishments of public character could not racially discriminate."<sup>290</sup> Afro-Creoles believed that "public rights"

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<sup>289</sup> New Orleans Tribune, December 24, 28, 1865; Vandal, Giles, "Black Utopia in Early Reconstruction New Orleans: The People's Bakery as a Case-Study" *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 437-452

<sup>290</sup> New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, March 3, 1869; New Orleans Tribune, April 14, 1867; Powell, Lawrence, "Centralization and its Discontents in Reconstruction Louisiana" *Studies in American Political Development*, Vol. 20, Issue 2 (Oct., 2006), pp. 118; Vandal, Giles, "Black Utopia in Early Reconstruction New Orleans: The People's Bakery as a Case-Study" *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Autumn, 1997), pg. 451

were “essential to the substance and symbolism of the equal dignity of citizens in the public sphere.”<sup>291</sup>

Simply put, Dunn sought to maintain the autonomy of religious, social and fraternal organizations which had been established by the Free Anglo-African American Community prior to the Civil War. Dunn’s steadfast defense of these institutions may have been derived from a sense of benevolence for the institutions, which he was an active member of, but may also have been rooted in the belief that by maintaining control of these institutions, which were commonly trusted and regarded as a legitimate authority within the Anglo-African community, he could he could retain his legitimacy as the representative leader of that community. Conversely, if these institutions were absorbed by their white constituents in the Anglo-American community, example-if the African Methodist Church were absorbed by the larger Anglo-American dominated Methodist church or if the African American Masonic lodges were similarly absorbed by its white counterpart, then blacks would likely lose control not only of the institutions for their established purposes but also would lose control of the institutions’ abilities to serve as rallying points for issues of critical importance to Anglo-African community, particularly those issues which were points of contention between Anglo-African and the Anglo-American communities.

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<sup>291</sup> Scott, Rebecca J., “Public Rights, Social Equality, and the Conceptual Roots of the Plessy Challenge” *Michigan Law Review*, Vol. 106, (March 2008), pg. 781

*There and back again: The First Black Political Junket*

On March 24, 1869, Dunn and State Senator John Lynch presented themselves in the office of the President of the Jackson and Great Northern Railroad, former Confederate General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, with the intention of securing safe passage on the rail for an excursion later that evening to the nation's capitol. The *New Orleans Advocate* noted that Beauregard, being a staunch Conservative Democrat, had an established policy that restricted blacks riding the railroad to exclusively black passenger cars. According to the newspaper account, Dunn informed Beauregard that he had purchased a ticket and questioned Beauregard in regard to the accommodations that would be provided for him during the excursion stating, "I desire to learn, whether I may expect the same accommodations on your railroad as are extended to other passengers?" Beauregard replied to the Lieutenant Governor saying "colored people are not allowed in the car occupied by ladies and gentlemen, or white gentlemen". Dunn reiterated to Beauregard that he had

"paid the customary fare, and hold a ticket which entitles the holder to the ordinary accommodations of the road and to admission into the cars; open to other gentlemen. I expect to travel by night, and would like sleeping accommodations, and do not desire to subject myself to any treatment which would be considered humiliating".

Realizing that Dunn and Lynch intended to begin their journey that day, Beauregard urged the pair to direct their complaints to the Board of Directors which was meeting later that night. Beauregard added that if the board "did not feel disposed to act tonight" they could "apply to the next meeting of the board in eight to ten days". Faced with the option of missing the train, the pair had no choice but to concede to



Beauregard's policy, which was in violation of the state's constitution and the recently enacted law in regard to civil rights and public accommodations.<sup>292</sup>

Later that evening, Lynch sent Beauregard a letter to protest Dunn's treatment and in response to Dunn's denial of satisfactory accommodation on the railroad. In the letter, Lynch noted that he and the other white legislators had received free passes to ride the railroad at the beginning of the legislative session and explained that he was returning his pass, which was enclosed with the letter, because he could not accept "favours from any corporation governed by such rules as you [Beauregard] had stated that day". After depositing the letter, Dunn and Lynch set about their journey. In a gesture of support for Dunn and further protest of the railroad, Lynch joined Dunn in the colored car which the newspaper described as black and dingy. To make matters worse, there were no sleeping accommodations in the car, so the pair was forced to endure the first leg of their journey sitting uncomfortably upright in the substandard colored accommodations.<sup>293</sup>

Dunn and Lynch departed from the train in Louisville, Kentucky, and attempted to board an omnibus headed for Indiana. The *Louisville Democrat* noted that the Lieutenant Governor boarded a crowded omnibus and shortly after boarding his fellow passengers demanded that he be ejected or they be allowed to leave. Several other

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<sup>292</sup> The Radical Standard, March 27, 1869; Davenport Daily Gazette, April 12, 19, 1869; Decatur Republican, April 15, 1869; Janesville Gazette, April 19, 1869; Marysville Tribune, May 12, 1869; Evening Courier and Republic, April 8, 1869; Colorado Transcript, April 28, 1869; New York Daily Tribune, October 27, 1871; Vandal, Gilles, "*Rethinking Southern Violence: Homicides in Post-Civil War Louisiana, 1866-1884*" The history of crime and criminal justice series, Ohio State Univ. Press, Columbus, Ohio, 2000, pg. 176

<sup>293</sup> Davenport Daily Gazette, April 12, 19, 1869; Decatur Republican, April 15, 1869; Janesville Gazette, April 19, 1869; Marysville Tribune, May 12, 1869

passengers demanded the immediate satisfaction of throwing Dunn out of the vehicle's window. The omnibus's driver, hoping to resolve the conflict, refused Dunn's admittance in the omnibus. The driver then offered to allow Dunn to ride atop the omnibus behind the coach's driver in an area deemed the "niggers' car". Dunn refused the driver's offer and departed the omnibus. The pair subsequently hired a carriage to carry them across the river and into Indiana. Shortly after the pair's departure from the state, they became the targets of ridicule as Louisville's Democratic newspaper, the *Louisville Journal*, concurred with Beauregard's decision not to allow Dunn passage in a "white's only" car, rationalizing that the general had done so to spare the white passengers the burden of smelling Dunn's stench.<sup>294</sup>

The pair's journey improved when they reached Indiana. There, Dunn was permitted to occupy first-class accommodations for the first time during his journey. From Indiana, the pair traveled in comfort to Cleveland, Ohio, where they were warmly received upon their arrival. While in Cleveland, Lynch married and much to the chagrin of the Democratic press, Dunn attended the wedding as an honored guest. As Dunn and his friends planned their departure and the successive leg of the journey, they attempted to telegraph ahead to secure accommodations in Washington. The Lieutenant-Governor's friends initially attempted to secure lodging for the party at Washington's swank Willard Hotel located conveniently near the nation's capitol, at the northwest corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Fourteenth Street (See Illustration #4). The hotel's

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<sup>294</sup> Louisville Democrat, March 27, 1869; New Orleans Crescent, April 2, 1869; Buffalo Courier, April 13, 1869; Evening Courier and Republic, April 8, 13, 1869; Janesville Gazette, April 19, 1869; Colorado Transcript, April 28, 1869; Marysville Tribune, May 12, 1869; Daily Observer, April 9, 1869;

proprietors declined Dunn's request for rooms and informed Dunn that if he showed up and signed their register he would be promptly told that the hotel was "all full".

Ultimately, the party successfully obtained lodging at the Washington House hotel.<sup>295</sup>



**Illustration 4: The President Franklin Pierce Leaving the Willard Hotel (March 4 1853) Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction number: LC-USZ621782**

Dunn's mistreatment on interstate railways and in prominent hotels brought the question of equal accommodation to the national political forum. Dunn was in no way the

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<sup>295</sup> Evening Courier and Republic, April 13, 1869; Lafayette Advertiser, April 3, 1869; Galveston News, April 22, 1869; Georges Clemenceau. *American Reconstruction 1865-1870* (New York: The Dial Press, 1928)291

first black to protest accommodations on trains. New Orleans had struggled with a segregated “Star Car” system for several years prior to Dunn’s trip north. Dunn’s national notoriety assured that his protest and the details of his maltreatment would receive national press coverage. Dunn’s trek opened a national debate in regard to public rights and the Lieutenant-Governor’s patient demeanor garnered him accolades from many northerners sympathetic to the blight of the black community. Charles Sumner addressed Dunn’s mistreatment on the floor of the senate proclaiming

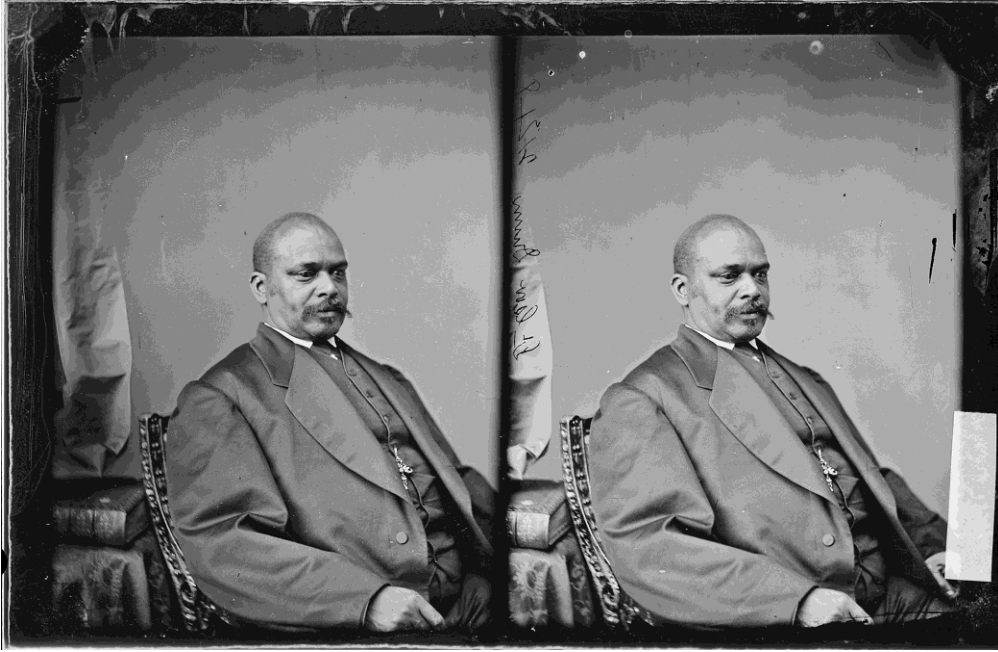
“It is not enough to provide separate accommodations for colored citizens even if in all respects as good as those of other persons. Equality is not found in an equivalent, but only in equality. In other words there must be no discrimination on account of color. The discrimination is an insult and a hindrance, and a bar which not only always destroys comfort and prevents equality, but weakens all other rights”<sup>296</sup>

On April 2, 1869, Dunn called upon the recently inaugurated President Ulysses S. Grant and was granted a private audience, which lasted a half hour. Newspaper accounts of the meeting note that the Lieutenant Governor dressed respectfully in a plain black suit and kid gloves. It is likely that one of the few surviving photographs of Dunn was taken during this trip as Dunn visited the studio of the famous Civil War photographer Mathew Brady (see Illustration #5). During the audience, Dunn sought federal appointments for members of the Pure Radical Movement, discouraged the appointment of former Confederate General James Longstreet, and requested that General Phillip Sheridan, the

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<sup>296</sup> C. Edwards Lester. *Life and Public Services of Charles Sumner* (New York: United States Pub. Co, 1874) 511.

general responsible for Dunn's own early appointments, be reinstated in his command in Louisiana.<sup>297</sup>



**Illustration 5: Lieutenant Governor Dunn Source: National Archives (Mathew Brady Photographs of Civil War-Era Personalities and Scenes. RG 111)**

After meeting with the President, Dunn visited the United States Senate. The Lieutenant-Governor was initially received in the Senate's cloakroom but as the room filled with admirers and well-wishers, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts invited him onto the Senate floor and formally introduced him to those senators who were still

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<sup>297</sup> Fort Wayne Daily Democrat, April 3, 13, 1869; Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, April 3, 1869; National Republican, April 3, 1869; Marysville Tribune, May 12, 1869; Weekly Atlanta Intelligencer, April 14, 1869; Winona Daily Republican, April 3, 1869; New York Daily Tribune, April 3, 1869; Galveston Daily News, April 3, 1869; New York Herald, April 3, 1869; Syracuse Daily Courier, April 7, 1869; Auburn Democrat, April 8, 1869; Southern Watchman, April 21, 1869; Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*: Volume 19: July 1, 1868 –October 31, 1869, 447,449

seated. Not every senator welcomed the opportunity to speak with Dunn; the Democratic Senator of Kentucky, Garrett Davis, declined offers of introduction, stating

“I want no introduction. Not that I have any objection to the nigger, for no man will extend more protection than I will when he is in his proper place. I don’t blame him either for being here on this floor, but I blame those who introduced him.”

The Lieutenant-Governor offered no rebuttal to Davis’s comments and continued his visit unabated. Dunn’s visit to the nation’s capitol continued to draw the attention and the scorn of the Democratic press which ridiculed Grant; and Dunn’s other hosts for entertaining blacks as equals.<sup>298</sup>

After leaving Washington, Dunn traveled to Massachusetts. While there, he visited the city of Lowell and marveled at the mechanical wonderments of the “City of Spindles”. In Boston, a dinner was thrown in his honor by distinguished members of the abolitionist movement. The dinner was hosted by Reverend J. B. Smith and amongst the distinguished invitees were Robert Morris Esq., William Lloyd Garrison, George T. Downing Esq., Lewis Hayden, Wendell Phillips, and Edwin G. Walker (a former member of the Massachusetts Legislature and son of abolitionist author David Walker.<sup>299</sup>

From Boston, Dunn and his companions made their way to New York City. On the way to New York, the entourage stopped briefly in Philadelphia where they were entertained at the Union League House in the company of Joseph Jenkins Roberts,

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<sup>298</sup> The Evening Telegram, April 1, 1869; New York Times, April 2, 1869; The Mail, April 9, 1869; Federal Union, April 13, 1869; Fort Wayne Daily Democrat, April 13, 1869; Janesville Gazette, April 19, 1869; National Anti-Slavery Standard, May 22, 1869

<sup>299</sup> Radical Standard, April 28, 1869, May 15, 1869

Liberia's first president, and Ebenezer Bassett, the United States' first black diplomat and the first Resident Minister to Haiti. On April 22, 1869, the party secured lodgings in the Metropolitan Hotel. The Lieutenant Governor was allowed to stay in the hotel on the condition that the visiting dignitary be restricted to sharing the quarters of the hotel's wait staff, while Dunn's white traveling companions were permitted to occupy rooms in the establishment.<sup>300</sup>

The following morning, the Lieutenant Governor became the target of an elaborate hoax orchestrated by a group of brokers working at the New York Stock Exchange. In anticipation of Dunn's visit, the brokers hired a local barber to impersonate the Lieutenant-Governor. The unidentified barber was presented before the board of the exchange in Dunn's place and was received as a visiting dignitary. The impostor was allowed to tour the exchange and was granted admission into the exchange's gold vaults. During the visit, the barber masking as the Lieutenant Governor was questioned by the board in regard to the financial fitness of Louisiana's bonds, to which the impostor replied to the inquiry by stating that he believed the bonds were "cheap at present prices". One of the board members jested with the impostor by suggesting that the spurious Lieutenant-Governor might "go short" on them. Being unfamiliar with the term, the impostor was forced to admit that he had no idea what the men were talking about. The joke was explained to the impostor to the amusement of all those present and the

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<sup>300</sup> New York Tribune, April 23, 1869; New York Herald, April 26, 1869; National Anti-Slavery Standard, May 22, 1869; Syracuse Daily Courier, April 28,30, 1869; New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, May 5, 1869; Southern Watchman, May 5, 1869; Galveston Daily News, May 9, 1869

accounts of the “colored Excellency’s ignorance of the argot of Wall Street” were published in local newspapers in the following days.<sup>301</sup>

The hoax at the New York Stock Exchange further elaborated the disrespect and maltreatment that the Lieutenant-Governor was subjected to as he visited the north. The brokers who played the prank were not publicly admonished or disciplined for disrespecting a visiting dignitary. There were public apologies or shows good faith. Moreover, Dunn made no witty retorts nor did he demand that perpetrators come forward or that the Exchange take some sort of disciplinary action.

On April 25, 1869, Dunn attended Sunday worship at Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York, in the company of Senator Rueben Fenton and General Wesley Merritt. The Plymouth Church and its founding minister the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher were iconic institutions within the Anglo-African community. Reverend Beecher, best known for his stirring sermons, unconventional antics in the pulpit and unflinching opposition to slavery, made the abolitionist movement a central feature in his sermons and had on numerous occasions used his sermons to raise money for the movement and for the purchasing of slaves from their bondage. Although the church had received numerous celebrity pilgrims, Dunn’s visit caused noticed excitement within the congregation. At the conclusion of Reverend Beecher’s sermon, there was a rush toward Dunn as the congregation lined up in a long procession to shake his hand. Democratic newspapers proclaimed the Lieutenant Governor to be the congregation’s “ebony idol”

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<sup>301</sup> New York Herald, April 24, 1869, May 3, 1869; New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, May 8, 1869; Coshocton Democrat, May 24, 1869;



and maintained that Dunn's presence provided evidence of the "despised African set up as a ruler over white men."<sup>302</sup>

Dunn's visit to Plymouth Church starkly contrasted the Lieutenant-Governor's treatment at his hotel and the disrespect that had been shown to him by New York's newspapers in the wake of the Stock Exchange prank. At the church, long known for its abolitionist connection, Dunn was received as a celebrity. Dunn's treatment in the north was as dichotomous as it had been in the south. In African American, Republican, and Abolitionists circles, Dunn was received graciously, but outside of these circles, he was often subjected to discrimination and became a target of disrespect.

On April 27, 1869, Lieutenant Governor Dunn and a party composed of Downing, R.H. Shannon, former U.S. Commissioner for the District of New Orleans, and several local officials toured New York's public schools. The party was received by S.S. Randall, the city's Superintendent of Public Schools and James Kelly, Esq., one of the School Board Commissioners at Grammar School No. 55, located on Twentieth Street near Seventh Avenue. At the school, Dunn was greeted by the principal, Mr. Baker, and was allowed to tour the school's classrooms and observe the students engaged in their studies. From the school, the party went to the Female Grammar School, located on Twenty –Fourth Street near Eighth Avenue, where they were greeted by the principals, Mrs. Kennedy and Miss Clarke.

The party next stopped at the Thirteenth Street School, where they were greeted by the school's principal, Mr. Hunter Esq. and was seated prominently atop a platform

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<sup>302</sup> Brooklyn Eagle, April 26, 1869, New York Herald, April 26, 1869; New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, May 8, 1869

that would allow the party to view the assembled students. Once Dunn was seated, a bell was rung, and the students were marched from their classrooms and were seated before the platform. As the students marched out of their classrooms, a piano played a musical cadence to which the students marched in lockedstep and single file. The massing of the children took approximately fifteen minutes and once the music ended nearly one thousand children filled the auditorium. Once seated, the student body was brought to order and a young student was called forward to recite a poem. The recitation was shortly followed by a song, after which Mr. Randall was allowed to provide a short introduction for Dunn. After his introduction, Dunn arose and briefly addressed the students, encouraging them to further their education and extending an invitation that they call upon him if they should visit Louisiana. From the School, the party made their way to the Hall of the Board of Education, on Grand Street near Crosby. At the Hall, Mr. Randall and Mr. Davenport, clerk of the Board, escorted Dunn through the all of the buildings offices and departments. The *National Anti-Slavery Standard* noted that Dunn also visited two of the colored public schools in the city, on Seventeenth Street under the charge of Mrs. Tompkins, and one on West Forty-First Street, near Seventh Avenue, under the principalship of Professor Reason.

At both schools, the Lieutenant-Governor was similarly received by people of his own race. Dunn's receptions were elaborately prepared for the visiting dignitary and Dunn's prominent seating made him the focus of the students' attention. Dunn was impressed with the students' academic work, musical abilities, and oratory skills.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> National Anti-Slavery Standard, May 15, 1869

Having been so well received by state and federal officials during his visit in New York, the Lieutenant-Governor requested that Abraham Oakey Hall, the city's mayor, pay him a social visit at his hotel. It is likely that Dunn misinterpreted his cordial public receptions as overtures to call socially on the city's Democratic elite. Dunn may have also believed that he shared some common experience with the mayor since Hall's father, James Morgan Hall had been a merchant in New Orleans and Hall himself had briefly resided in the city. Hall responded to Dunn's invitation by informing the Lieutenant-Governor that if he should call upon him for any reason other than official purposes a police officer would put him out of his hotel. The Mayor's reply to the Lieutenant-Governor's invitation was a clear indication that the democrats' public hospitality should in no way be misconstrued as acceptance or friendship.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Southern Banner, May 14, 1869; National Anti-Slavery Standard, May 15, 1869; Southern Recorder, May 25, 1871; Biography of New York Mayor, Abraham Oakey Hall. <http://aoakeyhall.com/1952.html> (Accessed on April 15, 2010); Galveston Daily News, May 15, 1869



**Illustration 6: Metropolitan Hotel (1863) Source: New York Public Library Digital Collection (<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?805269>)**

### *A Homecoming of Sorts*

On May 12, 1869, Dunn returned to the city of New Orleans. On the evening prior to the Lieutenant-Governor's return, the American Anti-Slavery Society held its thirty-sixth annual convention at Steinway Hall in New York City. At the function, Dunn's tour was heralded as a resounding success and a harbinger that change in regard to race relations was on the horizon. Although lauded as a success elsewhere, many blacks and Afro-Creoles in New Orleans maintained that the Lieutenant-Governor's treatment was deplorable in comparison to the recent reception of the noted African American journalist, Captain T. Morris Chester, by the Russian Emperor. Following Dunn's return to city, the State Supreme Court upheld the authority of the Metropolitan Police to administer police functions in the neighboring municipality of Jefferson. On May 17, 1869, the Metropolitans attempted to exercise this authority by dispatching a

contingent of three hundred officers to patrol the city and to provide a presence in the city's municipal offices.

The City of Jefferson's citizenry resisted the Metropolitan Police and a battle ensued. At the end of the melee, the Metropolitan Police were forced to retreat from the city and fourteen of the force's officers were wounded. The following day, Warmoth petitioned General Joseph A. Mower to intervene. In response, Mower dispatched a detachment of soldiers to accompany the Metropolitan Police and assist them in taking possession of the city. The force was led by Mower himself with Governor Warmoth and Police Superintendent Cain in accompaniment. The Jeffersonians did not engage the federal troops and allowed the Metropolitan Police to take possession of the city without resistance.<sup>305</sup>

In the days following battle, John J. Kreider, Mayor of Jefferson filed a suit in Sixth District Court. In his suit, Kreider maintained that the city had been invaded by the Metropolitan Police, that city offices had been taken over, and that the political positions of the Mayor and city council had been usurped by the governor and the Metropolitan Police Board. After taking possession of the city, a Warmoth appointee, Felix J. Leche, assumed Kreider's office and demanded the surrender of government documents. Kreider refused to relinquish his position and subsequently filed a suit demanding that he be retained as Mayor and requesting damages in the amount of \$100,000.00. Kreider's suit appeared before Judge Cooley, a Democrat, who had maintained that the Metropolitan

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<sup>305</sup> Radical Standard, May 12, 1869; New York Times, May 12, 20, 1869; Chicago Tribune, May 20, 1869; Deseret News, May 26, 1869; Putnam's Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science and Art Volume 14 Issue 19 (July 1869), pg. 115; an account of Captain T. Morris Chester's appearance before the Russian Czar appeared in the National Anti-Slavery Standard, May 8, 1869

Police force was unconstitutional. On June 14, 1869, Cooley ruled that the Metropolitan Police's Board had violated a previous court order which prohibited it from interfering in the operation of a municipal government's authority and were therefore in contempt of court.

Following Cooley's ruling, Lieutenant-Governor Dunn and the other five members of the board were arrested, imprisoned in the parish jail for six hours and were levied a fine of one hundred dollars each. In the days following Dunn's arrest, the Lieutenant-Governor bore the bulk of the blame for the incidents leading to the board's arrest and was deemed by the Democratic press to be a public official "who does not know the laws of his own state" and was thereafter used as an example of the wrongs of Radical Reconstruction. Dunn responded to the criticism by demanding that more blacks be placed in positions of authority within the Metropolitan Police Force. The Lieutenant-Governor's demands to increase the number of black senior officers were likely an attempt on the part of the Dunn to gain more control of the Metropolitans from the bottom up. Dunn and the Pure Radicals were in the minority on the Metropolitan Police Board of Directors, which was controlled by the Warmoth faction, but Dunn realized that he could gain operational control of the Metropolitans by placing his constituency in positions of authority.

The matter of Warmoth's political removals and appointments was ultimately heard before the State Supreme Court which ruled that the governor had no authority to fill a position which had no vacancy. The New Orleans Times clearly stated the Pure Radicals' apprehensions in the comment "Wickliffe today and tomorrow it may be

Dubuclet.” Despite its light-hearted and jingle like tone, the article demonstrated how the unconstitutional removal of a corrupted auditor might evolve into the removal of one of the state’s most highly regarded black politicians if unconstitutional removals were allowed to go unchallenged. The Supreme Court’s ruling was likely a relief to Dunn and his Pure Radical faction since the lion’s share of appointments were given to Warmoth supporters.<sup>306</sup>

### *Ending the French Masonic Invasion*

Although Chassaignac’s integrated lodges were praised throughout Europe for their acceptance of blacks and were congruent with Afro-Creoles’ desires for social acceptance, Dunn and the heads of many of the nation’s other Grand Lodges, both black and white, viewed Chassaignac’s Supreme Council of Louisiana as an infringement on the jurisdictional authority of the Grand Lodges already operating in Louisiana. Chassaignac’s lodges were first deemed clandestine and spurious in August of 1858 when he refused to accept the authority of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States. Despite condemnation, Chassaignac’s lodges continued to operate and to confer Masonic degrees. In 1868, the Supreme Council of Belgium, likely overflowing with enthusiasm in regard to Chassaignic formation of integrated lodges, deemed Chassaignac’s Supreme Council and its subordinate lodges legitimate. Thereafter, Chassaignac’s lodges were under the authority of the Supreme

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<sup>306</sup> New Orleans Times, April 1, 1869; New Orleans Daily Bee, June 16, 1869; Galveston Daily News, June 16, 1869; Radical Standard, June 16, 1869; Columbia Spy, June 19, 1869; Gettysburg Compiler, June 25, 1869; New York Times, August 2, 1869

Council of Belgium and the Orient of France. Masonic Historians attributed the Supreme Council of Belgium's acceptance of the clandestine lodge to the council's "zeal in behalf of a wide tolerance and liberty of conscience." Mistake or not, the Orient of France's endorsement of the lodge was officially recognized as an invasion, and all fraternal relations between the American Grand Lodges and those of the Orient of France were severed. Although no evidence was found which suggest that Dunn influenced the American Grand Lodges' decision to sever ties with its European counterparts, the outcome was very advantageous for Dunn and the Anglo-African lodges under his authority.<sup>307</sup>

Two prominent white Masons, Charles Laffon de Ladebat and Albert Pike, both members of the Scottish Rite's Supreme Council of the Southern States, were lauded as the engineers of the schism. The schism not only prohibited concourse between its membership and that of the Supreme Council of Belgium and the Orient of France, but also prohibited communication between its members and those of the York Rite Masonic organization's black and white lodges. Ladebat's and Pike's schism created a tripartite

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<sup>307</sup> New York Times, August 6, 1867; Grand Lodge of New Jersey. *Proceedings of the eighty-fourth annual communication of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of New Jersey* (Trenton, NJ: Murphy & Bechtel, Steam Book and Job Printers, 1871) 15-89, 238-239, 400-401; "Notes on American Masonry: Wisconsin", *Freemason's Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, January 28, 1871, pp. 63-65; Grand Lodge of California, "*Proceedings of the twenty-second annual communication of the M. W. Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of the State of California*" (San Francisco: Frank Eastman, 1871) 22, 43, 49, 95, 111, 129, 407-579; "French Masonry", *The American Co-Mason*, Vol. 16 No. 12, December, 1929, pp. 11-20; *The Radical Standard*, May 5, 1869



division within Masonry in the United States: The Scottish Rite, York Rite, and the Anglo-African York Rite.<sup>308</sup>

The divisions created by Ladebat and Pike were beneficial for Dunn. The tripartite schism assured Dunn that there would be no further incursions or threats against the Eureka Grand Lodge's supremacy of the Anglo-African York Rite Lodges. To commemorate and legitimize this authority, the Dunn Camp introduced Act 71 in the state legislature. The bill called for the incorporation of the York Rite Lodges, organizing them under the authority of the Eureka Grand Lodge. The Act was passed by the senate on May 5, 1869.<sup>309</sup>

#### *The Lieutenant-Governor's New Home*

On December 9, 1869, Dunn purchased a home from Anna Clara Meyer, widow of the late Isidore Small. The stately property was located on oak-lined Canal Street just north of Claiborne Avenue. Dunn's new home at 332 Canal Street was substantially larger than his previous abode and was prominently situated along the prestigious thoroughfare which bordered the American Sector and the Afro-Creole Fauburg of Tremé (see figures 7 and 8). The new home was within walking distance of the Lieutenant Governor's former residence and was a short distance from his church, St. James AME. He purchased the property for seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$7,500), two

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<sup>308</sup> New Orleans Republican, May 12, 1869

<sup>309</sup> New Orleans Republican, May 12, 1869; Supreme Court of Louisiana. *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana*. Volume XXV (New Orleans: Republican Printing office, 1873) 70-71.

thousand of which was paid up front. The balance was due in two installments of two thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars (\$2,750), to be paid on February 15, 1871 and February 15, 1872. Dunn's longtime friend, John Parson, attributed the Lieutenant Governor's decision to purchase the home to Dunn's belief that he should live in a manner befitting the office he held. The Lieutenant Governor's new domicile dwarfed his old home and was located quite literally on the dividing line between the French and American Sectors. Besides serving as a boundary-line, Canal Street existed as neutral ground in the city. As such, it was frequently used by all communities within the city and was often the origin of violent clashes and riots.

Dunn's home, although representative of Dunn's new status and wealth, was similarly reflective of his personal life and political beliefs. The home straddled two worlds, the Anglo-American suburb and the Afro-Creole faubourg, and was positioned in such a location that members of all of the city's political factions could meet there without the stigma of breaching social etiquette or placing their person in peril by traveling far within their political rival's camp. Evidence suggests that Dunn was aware of the importance of his home's location. On at least one occasion, General Robert E. Lee's death, Dunn used his home to gain support from the city's Democratic populace. On that occasion, Dunn respectfully decorated his home with black ribbons of mourning as a show of his sincere condolences for the Confederate hero. The Lieutenant Governor's show of respect was lauded by the Democrats and may have contributed in

some degree to the favorable comments and assessments he later received from that community.<sup>310</sup>

The selection of the new home brought changes in the lives of Dunn and his family. He and his wife chose to hire resident domestic staff to care for the new home. The United States Federal Census of 1870 shows that Ellen Daterwood, a forty-six year old black woman originally from Ohio, and James Stanford, a twenty year old black man originally from Arkansas, were selected to fill the domestic positions. More curiously, the census discloses that two German immigrants from Darmstadt, Germany, Elizabeth Weinberger age fifty-nine and Conrad Weinberger age twenty-four, were also living at the home at the time that the census information was gathered. The Weinbergers were likely boarders in the Dunn home and no information which could reveal the connection between the Weinbergers and the Dunn family was discovered. The only other information which was revealed in the census data were their occupations. Conrad Weinberger's occupation was listed as laborer and Elizabeth Weinberger, held the same occupational distinction as Ellen Dunn, that of a housekeeper.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> New Orleans Conveyance Records 1869, Conveyance Book#97, Page #318; Weekly National Republican, Nov. 22, 1871; 1870 United States Federal Census, New Orleans, Ward 3.

<sup>311</sup> 1870 United States Federal Census, New Orleans, Ward 3.



**Illustration 7: Canal Street above Claiborne Street circa 1860 - 1870 Source: W. H. Leeson Collection (New Orleans Public Library)**

In the second week of January 1871, the Radicals succeeded in integrating New Orleans's public schools. Conservatives, both Democrat and Republican alike, had resisted this union, first attempting to negotiate the establishment of two separate school systems (one for black students and the other for whites) which were equally funded from government coffers. When their pleas for a "separate but equal" system failed, conservatives vowed to employ violence rather than allow their children to attend integrated schools.<sup>312</sup> Dunn and his family led the movement to integrate the school system by being the first to enroll their children in the newly integrated schools. Ellen Dunn enrolled their three daughters, Fanny Dunn, Emma Dunn, and Charlotte Kennedy

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<sup>312</sup> New Orleans Times, September 3, 1867; New Orleans Tribune, December 20, 1867; Galveston News, August 21, 1868

into the Madison School for girls.<sup>313</sup> Charlotte Kennedy likely an orphan who was adopted by the Dunns, or a friend's child who resided with the family.

Dunn attempted to integrate New Orleans's public schools when he sat on the Junior Board of the City Council. In October of 1867, Dunn introduced a civil ordinance<sup>314</sup> mandating integrated public education. The ordinance failed to pass the Senior Board of the Council but the issue of public education returned the following spring at the Constitutional Convention of 1868.<sup>314</sup> In the spring of 1868, Delegates of the Louisiana Constitutional Convention passed Article 135 which forbade the segregation of public education.<sup>315</sup> Although the Article passed in 1868, the school's directors and the system's superintendent found creative ways of circumventing the Article and delaying integration. By 1870, Dunn's Radical Republicans controlled the School Board and during the Christmas break, Dunn enrolled his daughters in school.<sup>316</sup>

Both Oscar and Ellen Dunn were educated prior to the Civil War and both had held positions as teachers. Education had proved to be an integral vehicle of social elevation for Dunn, therefore it is not unusual that he would struggle to provide that opportunity to others born in bondage.

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<sup>313</sup> New Orleans Picayune, January 12, 1871; New York Times, January 18, 1871

<sup>314</sup> New Orleans Tribune, October 31, 1867

<sup>315</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, November 22, 1870

<sup>316</sup> New Orleans Daily Picayune, January 12, 1871



LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR DUNN PREPARED FOR THE WORST.

**Illustration 8: Lt. Governor Dunn and Family-In front of his home during the flood of 1871 with three daughters and wife on balcony - Source: Every Sunday, July 6, 1871 (Williams Research Center)**

## CHAPTER VII: NO GREATER DIVIDE: 1870 – 1871

The sentiment of dissatisfaction and distrust toward Warmoth and his faction grew in the fall of 1869. Democrats and Pure Radical Republicans alike questioned Warmoth's appointments, dismissals, and his use of the Metropolitan Police as his own private army. The Aldermen hired three attorneys to defend themselves against the governor's attempts to replace sitting board members with his appointees, and Warmoth's ejection of Wickliffe landed the governor and several of his supporters before a Grand Jury.<sup>317</sup> By the end of 1870, the tide of political success that propelled Warmoth would shift in favor of the Radicals.

### *The Masquerade Misadventure*

In March of 1870, Dunn accepted an invitation to the New Orleans Turnverein's (The Turners' Association of New Orleans) masquerade ball. The Lieutenant Governor's invitation had been extended by the association's Reception Committee and Dunn was warmly greeted by said committee upon his arrival at the ball. He was formally introduced to the ballroom, and despite being an honored guest, a large number of the association's membership took exception to Dunn's attendance. Although there were no instances of violence or outrages against the Lieutenant Governor while he was in

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<sup>317</sup> New York Times, April 6, 1869, December 2, 1869, January 2, 1870; Louisiana Democrat, September 6, 1871

attendance at the ball, Dunn's mere presence caused a stir that would be felt throughout the Turners' national association.<sup>318</sup>

In the days following the ball, the Turners' Association of New Orleans held meetings in regard to Dunn's recent appearance at their social function. The membership ultimately viewed the invitation with indignation and as a "violation of decency toward their guests and friends" who were in attendance. The membership blamed Dunn's invitation on a small group of members who for "selfish and personal reasons" attempted to advocate "social equality of the races". The local association not only condemned and moved to expel the members who were responsible for Dunn's invitation but also issued a public resolution in regard to their sentiments on the matter. The adopted resolution noted that Dunn's invitation was "a quasi act of usurpation on the part of individuals" who advocated the "social equality of races".<sup>319</sup>

Shortly after the New Orleans Turners issued their denunciation in regard to Dunn, the national organization intervened by maintaining that the sentiments espoused by the New Orleans chapter were in direct opposition with those of the North American Turner Union. The *New York Times* printed an excerpt from the national union's position.

The North American Turner Union purposes, by uniting all societies standing on the following platform, to assist them in their endeavors for educating their members as men of powerful bodies

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<sup>318</sup> New Orleans Tag Deutsche Zeitung, March 1, 1870; New York Herald, March 25, 1870; New York Times, March 30, 1870; Globus: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder -und Völkerkunde, Volume 17, Issue 1, (1870),pg.288

<sup>319</sup> Ibid



and free minds, and it is its especial aim to bring, by all means at its command, the endeavor for radical reform in social, political, and religious matters to the correct understanding of its members, and to work for the realization of these reforms and for the equal rights of all men.

The North American Turner union further moved for the expulsion of their New Orleans chapter and the maintenance of membership rights for the members who were responsible for inviting Dunn to the ball.<sup>320</sup>



**Illustration 9: Sketch of Dunn in Formalwear Source: Artist, Alfred R. Waud (Williams Research Center)**

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid

*Back in the Slammer Again*

On May 6, 1870, Dunn and the other members of the Metropolitan Police Board were arrested and imprisoned on a charge of contempt of court and were ordered to pay a fine of ninety-five dollars and to serve five days in Parish Prison. The warrants issued for the board members' arrests came from Judge Cooley, a nemesis of the Metropolitan Police Force since its inception. The new charge stemmed from the removal of the board's treasurer and Warmouth supporter, S. N. Burbank, who was dismissed by a board resolution for disobeying board orders. Subsequent to his dismissal, a disgruntled Burbank filed an injunction restraining the police board from electing a successor to his office of treasurer. Burbank's dismissal stemmed from a series of disputes which he had with a number of alleged warrant holders wherein he had failed to promptly provide monies they were owed. As a result of the outstanding debt, a series of lawsuits were filed against the Police Board. Burbank maintained that his inability to pay the warrants was no fault of his own and was ultimately the fault of the Police Board who refused to receive their assessed funding from the State's Afro-Creole Treasurer, Antoine Dubuclet.

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<sup>321</sup> New York Times, May 7, 1870; New Orleans Republican, May 7, 1870; Chicago Tribune, May 17, 1870; New York Herald, May 13, 1870; Wisconsin State Journal, May 9, 1870; State of Louisiana, ex rel. A. Willoz v. S. N. Burbank, Treasurer of the Metropolitan Police Board, No. 2465, Supreme Court of Louisiana; State of Louisiana, ex rel. John B. Howards v. S. N. Burbank, Treasurer of the Metropolitan Police Board, No. 2472, Supreme Court of Louisiana; State of Louisiana, ex rel. Hughes and Dejean v. S. N. Burbank, Treasurer of the Metropolitan Police Board, No. 2478, Supreme Court of Louisiana; Louisiana, "*Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana*" New Orleans: Printed for the state, by T. Rea, 1846-1903, pp. 298-300, 318-321, 365-366 and 379-380; *Albany Law Journal*, Albany, N.Y.: Weed, Parsons & Co, 1870, pg. 399

The board maintained that their refusal of the funds was based upon their required acknowledgement and approval of a contingency that was placed upon the funding. The Board of Aldermen, in approving the Metropolitan Police Board's assessed budget of \$805,000, placed the condition which maintained that funding should be raised by the issuance of state bonds in the same amount as was required to fund the organization. The proposed bonds were to be issued at a rate of seven percent interest and the Police Board was expected to ratify the receipts and sale of the bonds and to discount the city seven percent. Both Dubuclet and Dunn maintained that this approach to funding the Metropolitans was in violation of Act 49 which was passed in 1869. This Act made it the duty of the City of New Orleans to "appropriate annually out of its revenues a sum sufficient to pay the annual interest on bonds issued" and prohibited the selling of bonds at discounted rates. Dubuclet similarly contended that the Board of Aldermen's proposed method of funding would also have placed unusually heavy responsibilities on the Police Board's members.<sup>322</sup>

Unable to pay the alleged mounting debt, Burbank went against the board's orders and requested that Dubuclet surrender the proceeds from the sale of the bonds without the consent of the board. When the State Treasurer refused, Burbank filed suit. The concerted

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<sup>322</sup> New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, July 6, 9, 1869; New Orleans Republican, May 7, 1870; Chicago Tribune, May 17, 1870; State of Louisiana, ex rel. A. Willoz v. S. N. Burbank, Treasurer of the Metropolitan Police Board, No. 2465, Supreme Court of Louisiana; State of Louisiana, ex rel. John B. Howards v. S. N. Burbank, Treasurer of the Metropolitan Police Board, No. 2472, Supreme Court of Louisiana; State of Louisiana, ex rel. Hughes and Dejean v. S. N. Burbank, Treasurer of the Metropolitan Police Board, No. 2478, Supreme Court of Louisiana; Louisiana, "*Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana*" (New Orleans: Printed for the state, by T. Rea, 1846 - 1903, pp. 298-300, 318-321, 365-366 and 379-380

effort on the parts of Dunn and Dubuclet to steer clear of the funds retained in the state treasury for the Metropolitan Police proved to be a wise decision after the court denied the claims of two of the creditors, Hughes and Dejean, who were unable to substantiate their alleged debts. The lack of evidence on the part of the creditors made the issue of the bonds and warrants eerily suspicious. The state further asserted that the matter bore the appearance of fraud and went on to note that the Board of Metropolitan Police had within its rights the option of appealing and demanding relief from Burbank. Dunn and Dubuclet were not the only individuals to see through the alleged bond scam, just as Burbank was not the sole individual accused of fraud in regard to the warrants. In July of 1869, a Metropolitan patrolman was accused of forging warrants and in January of 1870, a crowd numbering in the thousands gathered in Lafayette square to accuse Warmoth of widespread corruption.<sup>323</sup>

### *The Voodoo Exorcism*

Sometime before St. John's Day, June 24, 1870, Dunn and some four hundred other spectators, both black and white, assembled at Soldiers' Joy Chapel on Marais Street. The chapel itself was a small and unassuming place but the event scheduled that evening was so rousing and spectacular that it would be recounted for years to come. The

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<sup>323</sup> New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, July 6, 9, 1869; New York Times, February 4, 1870; New Orleans Republican, May 7, 1870; Chicago Tribune, May 17, 1870; State of Louisiana, ex rel. A. Willoz v. S. N. Burbank, Treasurer of the Metropolitan Police Board, No. 2465, Supreme Court of Louisiana; State of Louisiana, ex rel. John B. Howards v. S. N. Burbank, Treasurer of the Metropolitan Police Board, No. 2472, Supreme Court of Louisiana; State of Louisiana, ex rel. Hughes and Dejean v. S. N. Burbank, Treasurer of the Metropolitan Police Board, No. 2478, Supreme Court of Louisiana; Louisiana, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana* New Orleans: Printed for the state, by T. Rea, 1846 -1903, pp. 298-300, 318-321, 365-366 and 379-380

focus of that evening's attractions was the chapel's minister, Reverend Turner, who also served as the chaplain for the state's legislature and was a member in Dunn's Masonic lodge.<sup>324</sup>

According to newspaper accounts, Turner had been recently taken by involuntary fits wherein he would impulsively mew like a cat and bark like a dog. These fits were prone to come upon the chaplain at both private and public moments. The fits had been witnessed at public occasions and had been attributed to witchcraft. Believing that his ailment could not be resolved by conventional means, he called upon the Voodoo Priestess, Malvina Latour, also referred to as Madame Lott. Latour was believed to be the sister of one of Dunn's black political rivals, Harry Lott of Rapides Parish, and was said to have been born in St. Louis, Missouri.<sup>325</sup>

The summoning of Latour was described by newspapers as advantageous for the voodoo priestess. It is likely that the "Turner affair" occurred in the midst of a power struggle within the Voodoo practicing community of New Orleans. The heralded Voodoo Queen, Marie Laveau, was nearing seventy when Latour was summoned to perform an exorcism on Turner and although some sources note that Laveau's followers voted Latour

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<sup>324</sup> New York Herald, July 12, 1870; Charleston Daily News, July, 15, 1870; Atlanta Daily Intelligencer, July 16, 1870; Fort Wayne Daily Democrat, July 19, 1870; Fort Wayne Daily Sentinel, January 20, 1871; Buel, James W. Buel. *Mysteries and Miseries of America's Great Cities; Embracing New York, Washington City, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, and New Orleans* (St. Louis: St. Louis: Historical Pub. Co, 1883) 539-540; Arna Wendell Bontemps. *100 Years of Negro Freedom* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1961) 45-46; Herbert Asbury. *The French Quarter An Informal History of the New Orleans Underworld* (New York, NY: Thunder's Mouth Printing, 2003) 275-277; Philip Dray. *Capitol Men: The Epic Story of Reconstruction through the Lives of the First Black Congressmen* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 2008) 391.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid; New York Times, June 25, 1893

Voodoo Queen on St. John's day of 1869, there is evidence which suggests that the transition of authority within the Voodoo community of New Orleans did not take place until St. John's Day of 1870 and may have been attributed directly to this spectacular event. The *New York Herald* described the exorcism as Latour's "hour of fortune" and the event that would lead to her "fortune and fame".<sup>326</sup>

The appearance of Latour at the church was nothing short of a grand spectacle and was compared to the entrance of a king or queen at royal court. For the occasion, Latour donned costly flowing gowns which trailed behind her as she walked down the center aisle of the church toward Turner, who began to M-E-O-W loudly after her entrance. In one hand, Latour brandished a wand, in the other, common table salt. When Latour reached the middle of the church she began to shake uncontrollably and convulse as though in the midst of a seizure. The priestess slowly sank to the floor, grinding her teeth and foaming at the mouth. Out of the crowd, a faithful minion emerged sprinkling her face with water and fanning her, and within a few moments she recovered, rose to her feet, and continued her march toward the reverend.

Upon reaching the reverend, Latour announced that Turner had been bewitched by twelve individuals; she noted that nine of the perpetrators were men and the remaining three were females. She additionally noted that nine of the individuals responsible for Turner's condition were currently in the church, and the other three had exited the structure shortly after her entrance. After her pronouncement, the priestess began to seize

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid

again and, just as before, she slowly sank to the floor in the midst seizures. Unlike her last fit, Latour recovered nearly instantly and, without the assistance of her followers, she quickly rose to her feet. She proceeded to walk toward a small crack in the floor where she knelt down and began to fish, using her wand as a fishing rod and within a few moments pulled out a curious black creature, which resembled a mouse with huge protruding eyes. Latour then exited the church through its rear door and began to fish in the church's rear yard, just as she'd done in the church's interior. The church emptied as the throngs of spectators followed her and within a few moments Latour pulled a tiny black coffin from beneath a brick in the yard. Upon retrieving the coffin, Latour, followed by the huge crowd of spectators, re-entered the church. She then lit the church's stove and deposited the vermin which she'd recovered and the coffin therein to be consumed by flames. As the cursed items burned, the Voodoo priestess's minions danced and sang. Within moments, Turner arose to his feet proclaiming to be free of the curse, and joining the practitioners in dance and song.<sup>327</sup>

While some accounts suggest that Dunn's mere presence at the occasion mark him as a believer in the arcane, others note that Dunn dismissed the belief in voodoo as superstitious. Accounts from the 1890s of Dunn's death attribute the Lieutenant-Governor's demise to the practice of voodoo. One such account maintains that several members of the state legislature approached Dunn with their belief that he had been "conjured" after hearing that Lott had consulted his sister in regard to Dunn. Lott

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid

allegedly expressed to the men that his sister had made medicine and Dunn would shortly be dead. According to the account, Dunn laughed and dismissed their beliefs as superstitious. Dunn's friends urged him to go to Marie Laveau to seek a remedy for the curse, but Dunn refused. Believing they could thwart their friend's demise, his friends offered to spend the night, one sharing the bed with him. Despite their proximity, Dunn's friends arose to find him dead in his bed. Upon subsequent examination of the bed, his friends discovered a small voodoo fetish fashioned in the likeness of a human, with pins embedded in its head and body along with a note scrawled in French with the date of Dunn's death and the message that "O.J. Dunn will surely die" on the date aforementioned on the note beneath his pillow.<sup>328</sup>

The Malvina Latour episode is important for two reasons. First, the episode elaborates on an event which directly leads to the ascendancy of a New Voodoo queen in the City of New Orleans. This transition of power, from New Orleans's most heralded Voodoo Queen, Marie Laveau I, to the little known Malvina Latour. The second reason that the episode is important is because it creates an alternative murder theory- "The Voodoo Poisoning Theory. The theory maintains that Dunn was intentionally poisoned by political rival and brother of Latour, Harry Lott.

### *Airing Their Dirty Laundry in the Winds of Change*

In August of 1870, the Louisiana Republican State Convention met in New Orleans for the purpose of nominating the leadership of the Republican Party within the

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<sup>328</sup> Liberty Weekly Tribune, July 28, 1871; New York Times, June 25, 1893; Washington Post, September 9, 1894;



state. On August 10, 1870, both Dunn and Warmoth were nominated for the Presidency of the Convention and a vote by ballot was held to determine who would become president. Dunn was elected by a margin of fifty-three votes to Warmoth's forty-eight.

Dunn described the unique situation in Louisiana stating:

“It is the first time, I believe in the history of the Union, the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor have been members of the same convention, and I am sure it is the first time that a Governor and Lieutenant Governor have been candidates against each other for the presidency of the convention.”<sup>329</sup>

Dunn then turned so that he was facing Warmoth and added,

“I like the Governor very well. I thank you gentlemen of the convention, for the compliment you have paid me in electing me over him. I shall endeavor to perform the duties you have assigned to me faithfully and impartially.”<sup>330</sup>

Despite the Lieutenant-Governor's cordial public sentiments in regard to the Governor, there were noticeable hostilities toward the Warmoth Faction as the convention continued. Tensions came to a head on the fourth and final day of the convention as Charles W. Lowell, Postmaster and Chair of the Committee on Resolutions came to the platform. From the platform, Lowell read aloud a series of resolutions that the delegates decided would make up the party's platform in the upcoming election. Lowell's list of resolutions included two controversial issues: the integration of public schools and the enforcement of the Civil Rights Bill. Lowell reminded the delegates that

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<sup>329</sup> August 11, 1870; *The Sun*, August 11, 1870; *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 17, 1870; *New York Times*, August 19, 1870; *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 20, 1870;

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid*

the Civil Rights Bill, which by that point was commonly referred to as the “Isabelle Bill” had been passed last session and was not being enforced. Lowell added that the state’s constitution provided blacks with equal access to accommodations when traveling and in places of public entertainment; he further maintained that the state had failed to enforce these provisions when proprietors refused blacks. Several colored delegates spoke on the matter, each noting that Warmoth had withheld his signature from the bill. The delegates then demanded that the remedies outlined in the constitution of 1868 be enforced.

Warmoth supporters argued that the bill was not before the convention and that the matter should be handled in the legislature, to which several of the black delegates declared that unless steps were taken to satisfy their demands a rupture in the party was inevitable. One disgruntled black delegate proclaimed from the floor,

“We are not asking Democrats to give us our rights, but we see one class of Republicans forced to ask another class of Republicans for their rights. We are not asking a Democratic Governor, but we have to request a white Republican Governor to give colored men their rights. I am reminded of the Revolutionary orator who said, “We ask for peace, peace, and there is no peace”. So with the colored; they ask for protection, protection, and there is no protection. If the colored people have no right to ask for this, they have no right to be Republicans.”<sup>331</sup>

The *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin* praised the colored delegates of the convention for their articulate assertion of their rights and their decorum in regard to the hotly debated issues. Conversely, the newspaper noted that when the white carpetbaggers and the scalawags engaged one another on the issues debated, the scene changed

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<sup>331</sup> New Orleans Commercial Bulletin; August 12, 1870; New York Herald, August 20, 1870; Daily Milwaukee News, August 24, 1870;

dramatically. The newspaper faulted Warmoth for initiating the hostilities by responding to the colored delegates' pleas for protection, stating that he was not the sole obstacle in the way of their attainment of social equality. Warmoth reminded the delegates that the bill was passed despite his veto and further maintained that if his signature would achieve all that they desired that he would sign it that day, but he believed that the bill would eventually end up before the courts. To support his argument, the governor offered the example of an individual who had been accused of violating the bill, and noted that said individual would be subject to imprisonment and subjected to a fine from a recorder or Justice of the Peace without benefit of a trial by jury, thus depriving that individual of liberties acknowledged by the same constitution. He went on to rant that the proposed resolution was introduced for the mere purpose of creating discord and that the true origin of the resolution was a "clique of malcontents" headed by the Afro-Creoles of the *New Orleans Tribune*, who were opposed to him because he did not appoint every man who they had desired to political office. Warmoth, seeking to once again divide the colored Republicans, reminded the delegates that the Afro-Creole contingent had owned slaves, fought for the Confederacy, and regarded other blacks as beneath them. He went on to assure the delegates that harmony could be restored to the legislature and blacks' rights protected if the delegates would expel the contingent. As Warmoth closed his speech there were resounding applauses and cheering from the nearby lobby, but amongst the seated delegates, particularly those who belonged to the Pure Radical faction, there was marked silence.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Ibid

Lowell responded to the governor's speech by maintaining that Warmoth could enforce the colored rights if he endeavored to do so. Lowell continued by noting that the governor had no quarrel in regard to going before the Eighth District Court to enforce the Slaughter House Company's Regulations or using the Metropolitan Police against the butchers to enforce the regulations. Lowell added that by doing so on behalf of the Isabelle Bill, the governor could find a much better purpose for the Metropolitan Police than he did "in using them to them to help the Slaughter House Company beat the butchers". Warmoth interrupted Lowell, maintaining that his use of the Metropolitans was to enforce a writ and not a law. Lowell replied to Warmoth's distinction by noting that the writ was taken out by the State of Louisiana. He further contended that his proposed resolution was right and proper and reminded the governor that "in this government, every officer, however high his station was amenable to the people for his official conduct". Lowell reminded Warmoth that the segregated Star Car system had been done away with by the prompt and decisive action of Mayor Heath, General Sheridan, and streetcar executives who unilaterally agreed to "to permit travelers of all colors" Lowell added that similar forms of racial distinction could be done away with in the same manner.<sup>333</sup>

Warmoth refuted Lowell's allegations that he had misused the Metropolitans, to which Lowell asserted that he had a witness who would attest to the instance. Warmoth, now noticeably hot and sweaty, excitedly replied "the man that repeats it is as big a liar as

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid; Roger A. Fisher. *The Segregation Struggle in Louisiana* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press)38

the man that said it". The incendiary statement caused a sensational pause in the hall as delegates waited for a terrible retort. Taking advantage of the silence, Warmoth expelled an additional rejoinder, this time insinuating that Lowell had claimed financial benefit from the passage of the Ship Island Canal Bill. Lowell replied that the governor had also made money on the bill. The argument then descended into "legal quibbling" which was only discernable by the two men involved. Dunn, in his capacity as chairman, intervened in the squabble, which had now grown out of hand, by prohibiting both men from airing "indelicate references to personal matters". Despite Dunn's request, the governor continued, this time noting that when Lowell first arrived in the state he was a stranger, and if not for Warmoth's assistance Lowell would not have been admitted to the House of Representatives, voted in as Speaker of the House, or received his current appointment.<sup>334</sup>

Lowell maintained that Warmoth's allegations were lies. Lowell additionally noted that he had evidence showing that the governor was working with a ring of former Confederate officers, known as the Louisiana Legion, to aid him in his electioneering schemes. Warmoth challenged Lowell to produce his evidence and Lowell declined maintaining that "too much had already been done to the Republican Party". Warmoth put in the argument's last words by advising Republicans "to wash their dirty clothes in private, among themselves, and not wash them abroad before the public." Making light of the dispute, Surveyor-General Lynch closed the convention by noting that all the Pure

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid

Radicals need do is to elect members of the next legislature, who will put color folk into the tub and scrub them as white as any whites".<sup>335</sup>

### *Warmoth's Presidential Visit*

In the wake of the convention, Warmoth sought to dismantle the Pure Radicals by attempting to have their federally appointed officers removed. On December 1, 1870, Warmoth arrived in Washington and requested that President Grant remove United States Marshal Packard, Postmaster Lowell, and First District Assessor Joubert. The *New York Times* maintained that Warmoth attempted to gain Grant's support for the officers' removal by pledging his loyalty to the president in the upcoming presidential election. Warmoth's strategy was unlikely to succeed for a number of reasons. First, Grant had a well known distrust of Warmoth which stemmed from incidents which occurred while Warmoth served under Grant's command. During the Civil War, Grant dishonorably discharged Warmoth for cowardice and malingering and, rather than accept the punishment rendered by Grant, Warmoth circumvented Grant's authority by going to President Abraham Lincoln and requested reinstatement. Secondly, Grant's brother-in-law, James F. Casey, once an associate of Warmoth's, had distanced himself from the governor, and was therefore unlikely to plead on Warmoth's behalf for Grant's support.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid

<sup>336</sup> New York Times, December 2, 1870; Dubuque Herald, December 2, 1870; Galveston News, December 2, 1870; Titusville Morning Herald, December 2, 1870; The Daily Phoenix, December 2, 1870; Charleston

Warmoth's request to replace the federal officers led Grant to nominate B. P. Blanchard, a Warmoth supporter, for the position of Post Master, as replacement of Lowell. Despite Grant's nomination, Blanchard was rejected by the Senate and Lowell retained the position. Warmoth was said to have been incensed by the Senate's rejection of Blanchard and desired to have one of his supporters fill the state's impending vacancy in the Senate when the term of Senator Harris ended in March of 1871.<sup>337</sup>

There were a number of aspirants who wished to fill the impending vacancy that was to be created at the end of Senator Harris's term. Among those were the ex-governor Michael Hahn, Hon. W. L. McMillan, Hon. John Ray, Hon. John Lynch, Post Master C.W. Lowell, United States Marshal Packard, James F. Casey, Hugh J. Campbell, M.A. Southworth, J.H. Sypher, Hon. John S. Harris, Cyrus Bussey, Oscar J. Dunn, P. B. S. Pinchback, and Assessor of Internal Revenue, B.F. Joubert. Democrats hoped that the Radical Republican majority in the house would be split between Dunn and Pinchback, thereby creating a possibility that a candidate sympathetic to their cause could be elected.

Despite early predictions that the post would be filled by either Hahn or Pinchback, as the end Harris's term neared, the race came down to two contenders: Joseph R. West, a wealthy former Union general from California, and J. P. Kennedy, a personal friend of Warmoth's and wealthy resident of Red River Parish. The *New York*

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Daily News, December 23, 1870; Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 21: November 1, 1870 –May 31, 1871*, 270n-274n

<sup>337</sup> New York Times, December 3, 1870; Titusville Herald, January 9, 1870; New York Herald, January 9, 1870;

*Herald* predicted that the outcome of race would ultimately be determined by whichever candidate was willing to spend the most to purchase the position. The newspaper maintained that the position would like likely to go to West and contended that their sources reported that he was willing to spend as much as \$500,000 to get into office. Warmoth later maintained that the deciding factor in the selection of the new senator was the decision that white Republicans and Democrats would unilaterally support West, leaving the black vote split between supporters of Dunn and the supporters of Pinchback. The *Herald's* prophesied outcome proved correct and West was elected as Harris's successor.<sup>338</sup>

*The Failed Coup: While the cat was away*

On May 8, 1871, Warmoth severely injured his foot in a boating accident. The governor's wound necessitated an extended absence and surgery, and was the topic of considerable speculation. After his surgery, Warmoth left the state to recuperate at his home in Pass Christian, Mississippi. Rumors spread that the governor's wound was life-threatening and that his chances of survival were slim at best. Rumors also speculated that Dunn would assume control of the state and once in the governor's seat would undo Warmoth's appointments, replacing the governor's appointees with those of his liking. This absence presented Dunn and the Pure Radicals with the opportunity to wrestle

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<sup>338</sup> Lafayette Advertiser, November 26, 1870; New York Herald, January 9-10, 1871; Wisconsin State Journal, January 10, 1871;



control of the state from the governor's hands and gave them time to search unabated for records that would confirm their allegations of corruption and fraud.<sup>339</sup>

In the absence of Warmoth, there was some question in regard to who would be performing his gubernatorial duties. Evidence suggests that Dunn was initially reluctant about assuming the responsibilities of the infirmed governor. Questions remain as to whether the Lieutenant-Governor was informed of Warmoth's whereabouts and accounts suggest that Dunn first perceived the governor's disappearance to be some sort of hoax orchestrated to place him and the Pure Radicals in political peril.<sup>340</sup>

Shortly after Warmoth's accident, Dunn was called upon by the Spanish, French, Belgian, and English Consuls, each seeking the commutation of the sentences of two Spanish nationals, Vincent Bayonne and Petro Abriel, who were in the state's custody and were scheduled to be executed on May 13, 1870, for robbing and murdering a Malay cook. According to a variety of accounts, Dunn refused to commute the sentences of the two convicted murderers and told the consuls,

“Were I a white man, I would consider myself free to act, but as I am a negro, no end of abuse will be thrown upon me. The

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<sup>339</sup> Atlanta Constitution, May 14, 1871; Dubuque Herald, May 14, 1871; New York Times, May 14, 1871; The Sun (Baltimore), May 14, 1871; Herbert Asbury. *The French Quarter An Informal History of the New Orleans Underworld* (New York, NY: Thunder's Mouth Printing, 2003) 348-349; Henry C. Castellanos, Judith Kelleher Schafer, and George F. Reinecke. *New Orleans As It Was: Episodes of Louisiana Life* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006) 117 – 121.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid

Governor has left the state, I believe for St. Louis, to throw this responsibility on me. I will not assume it.”<sup>341</sup>

With his reply, Dunn sealed the fates of Bayonne and Abriel and, despite the efforts of the Foreign Consuls, both men were executed as scheduled. Dunn’s decision may have been sincerely based on his believe that Warmoth was attempting to avoid public scrutiny by placing the burden of approving or denying the commutations on his shoulders. The Lieutenant-Governor had previously been blamed for the actions of the Metropolitan Police and with the assistance of Dubuclet had narrowly avoided involvement in a scandal relating to the presentation of false warrants to the Metropolitans. Dunn may have additionally believed that Warmoth’s wounds were merely superficial and his absence was meant to force Dunn to perform an act that may have garnered a negative response from the general public.<sup>342</sup>

Despite the Lieutenant-Governor’s initial reluctance in assuming Warmoth’s duties, an incident involving Warmoth’s private secretary in late June of 1871 forced Dunn to reconsider his assumption of the Chief Executive post. On June 29, 1871, The *New Orleans Times* printed an account of an exchange that occurred between Dunn and Warmoth’s private secretary, Mr. Brogden. According to the newspaper account, Brogden informed Dunn that he would be taking a leave of absence, for which Dunn

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<sup>341</sup> Henry C. Castellanos, Judith Kelleher Schafer, and George F. Reinecke. *New Orleans As It Was: Episodes of Louisiana Life* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006) pp. 117 – 118.

<sup>342</sup> Atlanta Constitution, May 14, 1871; Dubuque Herald, May 14, 1871; New York Times, May 14, 1871; The Sun (Baltimore), May 14, 1871; Herbert Asbury. *The French Quarter An Informal History of the New Orleans Underworld* (New York, NY: Thunder's Mouth Printing, 2003) 348-349; Henry C. Castellanos, Judith Kelleher Schafer, and George F. Reinecke. *New Orleans As It Was: Episodes of Louisiana Life* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006) 117 – 121.

consulted the state law involving this leave. After consulting the law, Dunn maintained that it was necessary for Brogden to submit a written request for the leave and inquired whether the governor had ordered him to take leave. Brogden acknowledged that the Governor had requested that he take leave and he refused to submit a written request to the Lieutenant Governor for the approval of his leave. Dunn further questioned Brogden and in doing so discovered that Brogden had been instructed by Warmoth that he was to refuse Dunn's requests. After informing Dunn of his orders, Brogden locked the Executive Office and headed for Pass Christian with the keys to the office in his possession. Shortly after Brogden's departure, the Lieutenant Governor hired a locksmith and had the office re-opened.<sup>343</sup>

On July 4, 1871, Brogden returned from Pass Christian and upon discovering that the office had been opened, collected some the governor's papers and ordered a page to remove them from the office. When Dunn entered the office, Brogden declared that "he had been given instructions by Governor Warmoth to take charge of his private papers." Dunn replied that

"he was not aware that there were any papers with the exception of public documents in the building, but that if Governor Warmoth had any private papers there they should remain as inviolate as if they were locked up in his own house."

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<sup>343</sup> New Orleans Times, June 29, 1871; New York Times, July 4, 1871; Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Journal, July 4, 1871; Southern Recorder, July 18, 1871; Liberty Weekly Tribune, July 28, 1871; Charleston Daily News, June 30, 1871; Lerone Bennett. *Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, 1867-1877* (Chicago, IL: Johnson Pub. Co., 1967) 254.

After their brief conversation, Brogden left the building, likely on his way to inform Warmoth that Dunn had breached his office, seized his papers, and was assuming the office of Acting- governor.<sup>344</sup>

On July 10, 1871, the *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin* printed a proclamation issued by Dunn. The newspaper maintained that the proclamation caused “a good deal of excitement” and many officeholders were said to be standing “in aghast at its boldness”. Dunn opened his proclamation by stating that he was assuming the position of Acting Governor in Warmoth’s absence under the authority of the Constitution’s Article 65. He then announced a series of vacancies: the judgeship of the Eighth District Court, the office of the Recorder of Mortgages, the office of Superintendent of Charity Hospital, and the office of senator from the Second Senatorial District. Dunn then declared that under the authority of Article 62, which granted the governor the authority to fill vacancies that may happen during the recess of the Senate, he intended on filling these positions. He continued by noting that he was calling for the resignations of several political offices all held by Warmoth supporters and Democrats. The Mayor, Administrator of Finance, Administrator of Accounts, Administrator of Commerce, Administrator of Waterworks and Public Buildings, Administrator of Assessments, Administrator of Police, and Administrator of Improvements were all requested to resign. The Lieutenant-Governor justified his requested resignations by invoking Article 117 of the constitution, which maintained that no person shall hold or exercise, at the same time,

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid

more than one office of trust or profit, except that of Justice of the Peace or Notary Public, and noting that each of the officers were in violation of that article.<sup>345</sup>

The citizens of the state and the press were divided in regard to Dunn's domineering moves. Many contended that the true origin of the squabble was each camp's desire to control political patronage. Some feared that the state would be overrun by its black inhabitants. Others maintained that the dispute began nearly three years earlier when Governor Warmoth attempted to coerce Dunn to his policy. According to a newspaper account, Dunn did not take kindly to the governor's badgering and informed him "I shall not be told that I must do anything". The article further maintained that after repeated run-ins with the Lieutenant-Governor, Warmoth took a more clandestine approach to Dunn and thereafter placed Dunn's home under surveillance. It was alleged that the governor himself conducted many of these reconnaissance missions from his carriage, which he strategically parked in the vicinity of the Lieutenant-Governor's home. Warmoth's hands-on approach proved to be his undoing as Dunn and his supporters recognized the governor and thereby uncovered his scheme.<sup>346</sup>

Although many viewed the dispute as a squabble over political spoils, evidence suggests that Dunn's brash power-play was not an ill-conceived plan. Dunn controlled the largest segment of Louisiana's voters-the recently emancipated and newly

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<sup>345</sup> New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, July 10, 1871; Chicago Tribune, February 12, 1872

<sup>346</sup> New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, August 3, 1871; Carter Plantation Records, Box 35 ( Letter dated March 14, 1871 from Lillie to Maggie Turner)

enfranchised freedmen-and Warmoth's devout opposition to the "Social Equality Bill" gave Dunn and the Afro-Creoles a common banner to reunify the Pure Radicals under. The Lieutenant-Governor's opposition to Warmoth's financial schemes, his conservative interpretation of Social Equality, and his show of respect on the occasion of General Robert E. Lee's funeral garnered Dunn a measured degree of esteem from the Democratic populace of the city, who began to view him, as a more favorable alternative to Warmoth, although with some degree of trepidation. Even General Beauregard, who had once denied Dunn seating in the first class section of a train, commented that if he were made to choose "between Governor Warmoth and Lieutenant-Governor Dunn, I would prefer the latter." Another noted and respected Confederate war veteran, the Honorary Thomas C. Anderson representing the Opelousas District in the Louisiana Senate, maintained that,

"Dunn has made as impartial a president, and as competent an officer, as I ever knew; we number only seven conservative members in the State Senate, and cannot expect much consideration, politically; yet he is entirely impartial."

Dunn's support-building efforts and the increased tensions between the Pure Radicals and the Warmoth Regime foreshadowed the chaos that would ensue at the upcoming Louisiana Republican Convention <sup>347</sup>

On July 18, 1871, Warmoth returned to the city, much to the surprise of the Lieutenant-Governor, and quickly assumed the governorship. Warmoth first moved to renounce Dunn's authority by declaring that he had not been gravely ill but instead had

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<sup>347</sup> Dubuque Herald, July 23, 1871; Brooklyn Eagle, August 21, 1871; August 5 1871, Atlanta Constitution ; August 3, 1871;

been on vacation. The Governor further maintained that his “recreational leave” did not constitute an absence from that state as outlined in the state’s constitution. Warmoth then proceeded to scold Dunn stating,

“When I intend absenting myself from the state under such circumstances as render necessary the services of the Lieutenant Governor, I shall do myself the honor of officially informing you, until such time, I can but regard any act performed by you, in the capacity of Acting Governor, as an intrusion, calling for immediate revocation and rebuke. Harry Hews, whose pardon you informed me you had granted, will immediately be rearrested and recommitted to serve out the sentence imposed upon him by the court, your interposition being regarded as officious and wholly uncalled for.”<sup>348</sup>

Dunn replied to Warmoth,

“In the future, as in the past, I shall fearlessly assume and conscientiously perform the duties devolving upon me under the constitution. The ordinary courtesies that obtain among gentlemen and state officers should have induced you always to have notified of your intended absence from the state, but your neglect in this particular, while very damaging to you as a gentleman, in no sort relieves me from the obligation imposed upon me by the constitution, in your absence, nor invalidates any act performed by me as Acting Governor. Harry Hews, in my judgment has been legally pardoned, and if your Excellency will not consider it officious for me to express an opinion, I would respectfully suggest that you are acting outside of the constitution of laws whenever you attempt, without additional offense, to deprive him of his liberty, and such an attempt on your part will justly subject you to a rebuke from the sovereign people of Louisiana. In conclusion, permit me respectfully to decline accepting your Excellency as my exemplar in either modesty, courtesy, propriety, or official duty.”<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Chicago Tribune, September 1, 2, 1871; Daily Observer, September 1, 1871; Galveston Daily News, September 1, 1871; New Orleans Bee, September 1, 1871; Watertown Daily Times, September 1, 1871; Charleston Daily News, September 2, 1871; Daily Phoenix, September 2, 1871; Wisconsin State Journal, September 2, 1871; Janesville Gazette, September 5, 1871

<sup>349</sup> Ibid

Despite Dunn's urging, Warmoth did exactly as he'd promised and rearrested Hews reinstating his sentence.

In the days and weeks that followed the Governor's return, the City Council, by then largely consisting of Warmoth supporters, removed Recorder Staes of the Second District and Recorder Dumont of the Fifth District from office. Both were rumored to be supporters of Dunn and the Council provided no cause for their removal. The Governor similarly purged the Metropolitan Police force of all officers who were in support of the Lieutenant-Governor. Once free of Dunn supporters, Warmoth used the force to disrupt Dunn's political support base. The Governor accomplished this task by employing covert units within the Metropolitans to intimidate Republican Clubs that were in support of Dunn. The men selected for these dubious missions had been recruited by Warmoth for their lack of inhibitions in regard to using violence. These covert henchmen were referred to by the press and Pure Radicals as ruffians and thugs, and were alleged to have participated in the infamous riot of 1866.

The officers in these units were led by a Warmoth appointee Captain Lucien Adams. Adams had a long history of violence in the city and, like many of his men, had been suspected of participating in the aforementioned riot of 1866. Adams's strategy for infiltrating and disrupting the clubs was simple. Before setting out for the clubs, Adams ordered his officers to don civilian clothing in order to enter the clubs unnoticed, and once the meetings were called to order, the officers were commanded to become disorderly. In those clubs, where members resisted or tried to oust the unruly, the officers then resorted to violence. These altercations typically ended when uniformed bands of



Metropolitans showed up at the clubrooms and arrested those members who had engaged the infiltrators. Warmouth's Metropolitans disrupted the election of delegates for the upcoming Republican Convention. In infiltrated clubs, the delegates who were elected were often disputed, and in some clubs opposing candidates claimed to be the legitimate delegate for the convention. The aftermath of the Metropolitan infiltration left scores of Pure Radicals beaten and arrested. The Lieutenant-Governor was not immune to the violence and Dunn himself was forced out of a clubroom where he'd been scheduled to speak. One unidentified Warmoth supporter maintained that the Governor "would have control of the convention or blood."<sup>350</sup>

Dunn was also charged with using underhanded principles to gain an advantage in the upcoming convention. The Lieutenant-Governor was alleged to have used his influence and scare tactics in the heavily black rural parishes to pack the convention with delegates in his favor. An example of Dunn's use of his influence can be found in a letter which he wrote to a black politician in Opelousas, wherein he warned that "an effort is being made to sell us out to the Democrats...and we must nip it right in the bud." It was

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<sup>350</sup> Chicago Tribune, July 29, 1871; Galveston Daily News; July 22,29, 1871; Dubuque Daily, July 29, 1871; Daily Gazette and Bulletin, August 8, 1871; Winona Daily Republican, August 16, 1871; Janesville Gazette, August 29, 1871, September 5, 1871; New York Times, August 13, 28, 1871; New York Herald, August 8, 1871; Oswego Daily Palladium, August 7, 1871; "The Federal Army's Interference In Louisiana Politics," *The Nation*, September 7, 1871; *The Miscellaneous Documents printed by order of the House of Representatives during the Second Session of the Forty-Second Congress 1871-1872* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872)160-175 181-196(Testimony of S. B. Packard); Ella Lonn. *Reconstruction in Louisiana After 1868* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1918) 97- 99.

also alleged that the Dunn Camp, by controlling printing contracts, controlled the press in the rural parishes and therefore had an unfair advantage in those areas.<sup>351</sup>

### *The Two Conventions*

The impending Republican Convention's purpose was the selection of the state's Republican Central Committee and, although many regarded this as a minor task, both the Dunn and Warmoth camps realized that their political fates rested on their control of the new Central Committee. For Warmoth, controlling the makeup of the new Central Committee would assure his re-nomination as governor. Conversely, Dunn supporters believed that their control of the new Central Committee would assure Warmoth's impeachment in the next legislative session. In an effort to ensure that he would maintain control of the convention, Warmoth sought to control the location where the convention would be held. Warmoth's desired location for the convention was the statehouse; from this location he could employ the Metropolitans if the sentiments of the convention were not in his favor. To ensure that this location was used, Warmoth rented all the suitable halls in the city in an attempt to force the Central Committee to select the statehouse. Warmoth was later asked by a Congressional Investigating Committee to justify his decision to retain all the suitable halls in the city. During his interview, Warmoth maintained that he had retained each hall for the benefit of the Central Committee, on the

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<sup>351</sup> New York Daily Tribune, August 4, 1871; Madison Observer, August 9, 1871; Henry Clay Warmouth Papers (Letter from Oscar J. Dunn to John Simms, July 26, 1871); Ted Tunnell. *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana 1862- 1877* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1984)165.

occasion that the members of the committee were in dispute about the appropriateness of any single location.<sup>352</sup>

Evidence suggests that the governor's assertion in regard to the halls was untrue, for when members of the Central Committee inquired about each hall's availability; they were told that each was unavailable. As a consequence of the governor's actions and perceiving that Warmoth might once again employ the Metropolitans and his rowdies, the Central Committee decided on August 3, 1871, that the convention would be held in the United States Circuit Courtroom in the Custom House. Shortly after announcing the convention's location, the Pure Radicals maintained that they received threats of violence. The Pure Radicals were confident that the promise of violence was not an idle threat and put into place measures that would protect the convention from the riotous scenes of disruption that had been experienced weeks before in the Republican clubrooms. These measures included the deputization of additional federal marshals and the addition of a contingent of some forty infantrymen from Nineteenth United States Infantry. The committee, hoping to reduce the chances of usurpers entering the hall,

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<sup>352</sup> Telegraph and Messenger, August 6, 1871; New York Daily Tribune, August 8, 10, 1871; New York Times, August 9, 17, 1871; Evening Courier and Republic, August 18, 1871; Madison Observer, August 23, 1871; Janesville Gazette, August 29, 1871, September 5, 1871; "The Federal Army's Interference In Louisiana Politics," *The Nation*, September 7, 1871; The Miscellaneous Documents printed by order of the House of Representatives during the Second Session of the Forty-Second Congress 1871-1872 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872) 160-175, 181-195; Republican Party (La.). *Report of the Committee on Address: Appointed by the State Convention of the Republican Party of Louisiana, Convened August 9th, 1871, and the Address of the State Central Executive Committee, Elected by the State Convention, to the Republicans of Louisiana* (New Orleans, La: Printed at the Citizens' Guard Office, 1871) 1-23; Appendix F (Lieut. Gov. Dun to Hon. Horace Greeley); Lonn, 96 – 104.

decided that admission would require the presentation of a ticket issued by the postmaster, Mr. Lowell, who was also a member of the Dunn faction.<sup>353</sup>

By midnight, August 8, 1871, the eve of the convention, the postmaster had received one hundred and eighty-nine requests for tickets. The postmaster approved one hundred and eighteen of the submitted requests. The Dunn faction justified their refusal to issue tickets on the basis that a number of delegates' seats were disputed, because a number of Republican Clubrooms reported that their elections were taken over by infiltrators. In some clubrooms two rival delegates presented requests for the same seat, one from the Dunn Camp and the other from the Warmoth Camp.<sup>354</sup>

On the morning of August 9, 1871, the governor's supporters arrived at the convention and found its rotunda filled with heavily armed soldiers. Warmoth and a small group of his supporters arrived at the Custom House at approximately eleven o'clock and despite having tickets were informed that the courtroom would not be ready to receive delegates until eleven-thirty. The governor and his supporters were instructed to congregate in a smaller adjacent courtroom and as the group of delegates was on their way to the room, by coincidence, someone exited the larger courtroom from which the governor and his group had been barred. The opening of the courtroom's doors revealed to Warmoth and his supporters that the Dunn camp had already assembled in the courtroom and were in the midst of a secret meeting. Fearing the worst, Warmoth

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid;

<sup>354</sup> Ibid;

assembled his supporters in the building's rotunda and informed them that they were to proceed to Turner Hall, where a second convention would be held. In the Dunn Camp's account of the incident, which was subsequently presented to President Grant, no mention was made of the secret gathering. Instead, the Pure Radicals maintained that Warmoth deserted the Republican State Convention after being informed that the courtroom was not ready to receive delegates.<sup>355</sup>

The following day, the governor called to order the second convention, while the Dunn camp simultaneously continued with their convention. Each convention claimed to be the legitimate voice of the Republican Party in the state and similarly, each denounced the other as an illegitimate "bolter" convention. On the first day of the Warmouth convention, Pinchback was named the convention's permanent chairman and the delegates wasted no time in issuing condemnations of the Dunn camp's members. At the Custom House, Dunn was elected permanent chairman and in similar fashion, condemned the Warmoth camp for recent acts of violence. A long list of Warmoth's alleged violations were voiced, including assertions that he had stolen from the state and accepted bribes. After hearing the long list of complaints in regard to the governor, the Executive Committee adopted a list of resolutions calling for the integration of public schools, the reduction of state debt, a request for federal assistance for the purpose of preserving peace in the city, and a call for the removal of the governor from Republican

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid; Dubuque Daily Herald, August 8, 1871; Brooklyn Daily Gazette, August 10, 1871; New York Herald, August 10, 1871; Chicago Times, August 10, 1871; Edwardsville Intelligencer; August 17, 1871; Ohio Democrat, August 18, 1871;

leadership. At the close of the Dunn camp's convention, the Executive Committee composed and sent a letter to President Grant outlining their resolutions and highlighting the political difficulties in the city.<sup>356</sup>

The Warmoth Camp decided that an unaccompanied letter or telegram to the President would not suffice. The Governor and a contingent of twenty of his supporters delivered their grievances in person to President Grant as he was vacationing at his summer cottage in Long Branch, New Jersey. At Long Branch, Warmoth and his constituents urged Grant to maintain that their convention had been the legitimate voice of the Republican Party in Louisiana. The Governor similarly urged the President to officially condemn the actions of the Dunn camp. In Warmoth's account of the meeting, he maintained that he and his constituents were received coldly by Grant, who informed the group that he believed that the presence of federal troops did little harm to the convention. After hearing their grievance, Grant quickly closed the meeting and informed his visitors that he would investigate the matter thoroughly before taking any action.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid; Winona Daily Republican, August 10, 1871; Galveston News, August 10, 1871; Titusville Morning Herald, August 10, 1871; New York Herald, August 10, 1871; Brooklyn Eagle, August 10, 1871; Brooklyn Daily Gazette, August 11, 1871; Daily Observer, August 11, 1871; Hartford Weekly Times, August 12, 1871; Wisconsin State Journal, August 12, 1871; New York Times, August 13, 1871; Daily Kennebec Journal, August 14, 1871; Indiana Democrat, August 17, 1871;

<sup>357</sup> Chicago Tribune, September 7, 1871; New York Times, September 2, 1871; New York Tribune, September 6, 1871; Hagerstown Mail, September 8, 1871; Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 22: June 1, 1871–January 31, 1872*, 102n-103n; *The Miscellaneous Documents printed by order of the House of Representatives during the Second Session of the Forty-Second Congress 1871-1872*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872, pg. 271; Warmoth, Henry Clay, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana*, Southern classics series, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, S.C., 2006, pp. 117-118; Bowers, Claude G., *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln*, Houghton Mifflin Cambridge, MA, 367; Democratic Party, *The Campaign Text Book: Why the People Want a Change: the Republican Party Reviewed: Its Sins of Commission and Omission*, The Democratic National Committee, New York, NY, 1876, pp. 111-112; Dray, Philip, *Capitol Men: The Epic Story of*

Democrats in New Orleans looked opportunistically at the well publicized Republican dispute. Many viewed the dispute as a turning point in political sentiments and optimistically believed that the Republican schism would ensure Democratic success in upcoming elections. Conservative Democrats urged their more moderate party members who had reluctantly supported Dunn instead of Warmoth to withdraw their support of the Lieutenant-Governor and renew the solidarity of their party. Others viewed Grant's support of the Dunn Camp as a harbinger that the Lieutenant-Governor had been selected to be Grant's running mate in the next presidential election. Conservative Democrats in Louisiana rallied national support on the premise that the nation would soon be "Africanized" in the same fashion and by the leaders who were in control of Louisiana. Republican newspapers in support of Warmoth played on the populace's fears and published a note supposedly authored by Dunn advising "the colored people to vote only for colored men" and charging "that white men were not worthy of trust". Dunn strenuously denied authorship of the alleged letter, but it is likely that Democrats and Conservative Republicans believed that the sentiments espoused in the letter closely aligned with beliefs he had previously publicly maintained.<sup>358</sup>

In the wake of Warmoth's unsuccessful visit to Long Branch, the governor placed his support behind Horace Greeley, founder and editor of one of the nation's most

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*Reconstruction through the Lives of the First Black Congressmen*", Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 2008, pg. 114; Haskins, James, " *Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback*" Macmillan, New York, N.Y., 1973, pg. 97; Lonn, Ella, " *Reconstruction in Louisiana After 1868*" G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, NY, 1918, pg. 104;

<sup>358</sup> Lewiston Evening Journal, August 10, 1871; Galveston News, August 26, 1871; Oswego Weekly Advertiser, September 6, 1871; Evening Telegram, September 15, 1871; New Orleans Republican, October 19, 1871, December 7, 1871; Appendix F (Lieut. Gov. Dun to Hon. Horace Greeley)

influential newspapers, the *New York Tribune*, and Grant's Republican opponent in the Presidential election of 1872. In turn, Greeley supported Warmoth's cause and condemned the Dunn Camp and the support that the Pure Radicals received from Grant. The Warmoth Camp and the Democratic press employed a tactic previously used by the Pure Radicals. Prior to the Republican Convention of 1871, Dunn had rallied black support in the rural parishes by emphasizing Warmoth's Democratic support and his Democratic appointees. However, in the wake of the convention, the Warmoth faction accused Dunn of proposing a scheme to the Democrats wherein he would sell out the Pure Radical faction by abandoning efforts to integrate public schools and would denounce efforts to enforce social equality, in return for Democratic support of his bid for governor. What made this allegation particularly damning to Dunn, was the acknowledgement by Democratic leadership that the Lieutenant-Governor had approached them with the alleged scheme.<sup>359</sup>

Dunn denied collusion with the Democrats and responded to Greeley's support of Warmoth by writing a well publicized letter to Greeley. The Lieutenant-Governor's letter maintained that Dunn met with Greeley in June of 1871 when Greeley visited the city in hopes of garnering Republican support for his Presidential bid. During the visit, Dunn alleged that Greeley called upon him and proposed colonizing blacks in the state to

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<sup>359</sup> Anglo-American Times, September 30, 1871; Chicago Tribune, September 7, 1871; Carroll Herald, September 25, 1872; New York Times, June 14, 1872; *The Miscellaneous Documents printed by order of the House of Representatives during the Second Session of the Forty-Second Congress 1871-1872* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872) 306 (Testimony of Henry C. Warmoth), Warmoth, Henry Clay, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana*, Southern classics series, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, S.C., 2006, pg. xxiii;



publicly owned lands if and when he became president. Dunn contended that he denounced Greeley's proposal by maintaining that the blacks and whites of the state "mutually needed each other" and by avowing that without the support of Louisiana's colored people Greeley would "never be president". Dunn used his letter as an opportunity to recount the Custom House imbroglio from his perspective. In Dunn's account, the Lieutenant Governor reiterated the allegations of Warmoth's misuse of the Metropolitans to disrupt orderly assemblies and justified the use of tickets and the additional need for security by emphasizing the legitimacy of Radical Republicans fears that the Metropolitans would similarly be employed against the convention. The letter branded the governor as "the first gubernatorial bolter" and "the first Ku-Klux Governor", while accusing Warmoth and his cohorts of violence, theft and fraud.<sup>360</sup>

### *The Longest Second Line*

In November of 1871, Dunn was overcome by an illness which he initially mistook to be a cold. Believing his ailment was not life threatening, Dunn sought to relieve his symptoms by taking a popular patent medicine known as Cherry Pectoral. Despite his use of the medicine, Dunn's illness persisted and worsened. Although sick, he continued to make speeches to his constituency and rallied the support of the Radical Republicans. Three local newspapers, the *New Orleans Republican*, the *Weekly National Republican*, and the *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin* gave accounts of Dunn's last

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<sup>360</sup> Georgia Weekly Telegraph, September 12, 1871; New York Times, May 17, 1872; Appendix F (Lieut. Gov. Dun to Hon. Horace Greeley)

speeches. Historian Marcus B. Christian maintained that the tone of Dunn's last speeches alternated sharply between depression and high spirits. The speeches delivered by the Lieutenant-Governor at an unnamed church and the Seventh Ward Radical Republican Club were somber and foreboding. In the case of the unnamed church, Dunn's speech was deemed to be unlike any he had previously delivered.<sup>361</sup> His address to the congregants had an ominous tone of impending loss and the *New Orleans Republican* contended that Dunn spoke to his audience more like "a father instructing his children" than a politician. The speech urged his followers to be

"true Christians; to be honest in all their transactions; to do no wrong thing; to be consistent in their acts with their professions; to take nothing that did not belong to them, to pay their society dues and always be just."<sup>362</sup>

He further maintained that although "he made no professions of religion himself, he endeavored to do right and live honestly". He continued by noting

"he did not feel well then, and had not been well for several days, and this might be the last time he should ever address them: and therefore urged them to weigh well his words, and remember his advice and heed it"<sup>363</sup>

The account of Dunn's speech to the Seventh Ward Radical Republican Club appeared in the Weekly National Republican. The newspaper's account of the event noted that Dunn's address lasted nearly an hour and had required the

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<sup>361</sup> New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, November 22, 1871; New Orleans Republican, November 24, 1871; Weekly National Republican, December 20, 1871; Christian, Marcus B., "The Theory of the Poisoning of Oscar J. Dunn", *Phylon*, 6 (1945), pp.258 -259

<sup>362</sup> New Orleans Republican, November 24, 1871

<sup>363</sup> Ibid

Lieutenant-Governor to abandon his sick bed. His speech provided an overview of highlights in his political career and addressed his most important political regret.

In his address, Dunn lamented that

“In connection with Governor Warmoth, I did one thing for which I will never forgive myself. Sometime during the year 1865, Governor Warmoth sent me word that he would be pleased to see me at his office: the next day I called at his office and was cordially received. After speaking on various subjects, including political matters, I told him that we had an organization called “The Friends of Universal Suffrage” and invited him to be present at our next meeting, which invitation he readily accepted. I presented Governor Warmouth to the members of the organization, and upon my proposition he became a member. He was afterwards selected by us as a territorial representative to represent us in Congress.”<sup>364</sup>

The somber tone of Dunn’s church address led Christian to concur that Dunn was noticeably depressed. Evidence found in Major T. Chester Morris’s address, “Remember Dunn, Follow Ingraham”, given on the occasion of Dunn’s first memorial, affirms Christian’s assertion in regard to Dunn’s depression. Morris’s address attributed Dunn’s depression to Pinchback and maintained that on All Saints Day (November 1, 1871), Pinchback “sent word to the Lieutenant-Governor, through Colonel James Ingraham, that he intended to attack him in his “domestic relations.” Morris maintained that Dunn was particularly disturbed by Pinchback’s threat. Morris noted that,

“His [Dunn’s] great frame quivered when he received the dastardly message, and though he hurled back a defiance, it was easy to perceive that the envenomed arrow had reached his heart, where its poison was doing its deadly work. Though infidelity of friends, partisan treason, personal rancor, official indignities and incorporate insults had made him groan in the spirit, yet when he meditated over the impending blow that was to include his estimable and accomplished consort, and the orphaned

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<sup>364</sup> Weekly National Republican, December 20, 1871

children to whom he had been a father, his great heart burst with grief: and when disease came, his mind, which had been too heavily charged with the solicitude for those who were nearest and dearest to him, immediately dissolved itself into chaos, or passed to unknown realms, whither his soul soon after took its flight.”<sup>365</sup>

Although Morris’s address provided no further detail in regard to Pinchback’s allegations, Dunn’s reaction to the threat suggests that he was sincerely perplexed about the disclosure of Pinchback’s information, true or not.

Dunn’s last speech was made before the Third Ward Republican Club, and was dissimilar from those described in the *New Orleans Republican* and the *Weekly National Republican*. According to the *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, Dunn’s last speech was delivered on November 20, 1871, two days prior to his death, and was in stark contrast to the others which he had recently delivered. Christian maintained that as Dunn addressed the crowd “he appeared to be in excellent spirits” and the speech was “unusually funny”.<sup>366</sup>

The following day, November 21, 1871, Dunn was said to have also been in good spirits. He spent the afternoon with Marshal Packard and returned home that evening for dinner. Following his dinner, Dunn began vomiting profusely. Dunn’s sickness continued throughout the night and into the next afternoon. That evening, the family doctor, Dr. E.D. Beach was summoned to the home. Despite Dr. Beach’s attention

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<sup>365</sup> “Remember Dunn, and follow Ingraham!” Speech of Major T. Morris Chester at the Dunn Commemoration Meeting, New Orleans, November 4, 1871, pg. 4 (Appendix G)

<sup>366</sup> New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, November 22, 1871; Christian, Marcus B., “The Theory of the Poisoning of Oscar J. Dunn”, *Phylon*, 6 (1945), pg.259

throughout the night, Dunn's condition worsened. By two o'clock Tuesday morning, November 22, 1871, the Lieutenant Governor was unconscious. Within hours, Marshall Packard arrived at the home to check on Dunn's condition. Finding that the Lieutenant-Governor's condition was dire, Packard summoned another physician named Dr. Scott. Shortly after his arrival, Dr. Scott diagnosed Dunn's condition as congestion of the brain and lungs. Later that day, several other physicians were summoned to consult on the Lieutenant-Governor's condition, among them were Drs. Warren Stone, S.R. Hurd, L.C. Roudanez, D' Aquin and Gaudet. To the dismay of the family and friends who were assembled, the doctors concurred that Dunn was beyond their assistance and confirmed that his death was inevitable. Throughout the night and into the early morning of November 22, 1871, the Lieutenant-Governor clung defiantly to life, but as the city's fire alarm bells tolled at six o'clock, Dunn quietly died.<sup>367</sup>

Dunn's sudden death, in the midst of a heated Republican political skirmish, caused alarm within his constituency. The rumor that the Lieutenant Governor had been poisoned began on the morning of his death as Dunn's nurse declared that she had "never seen newmonia like dat". It did not take long for rumors to seep from the deceased's household into the general citizenry. On the evening of November 22, 1871, at least three physicians (Dr. Avilla-police physician, Coroner Creagh, and Dr. Castellanos) requested to perform an autopsy on Dunn to confirm that he had actually died from natural causes.

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<sup>367</sup> New Orleans Times, November 22-23, 1871; Christian, Marcus B., "The Theory of the Poisoning of Oscar J. Dunn", *Phylon*, 6 (1945), pg.258 -260

The physicians' requests to examine the Lieutenant-Governor's body were denied by the family's spokesman, James Lewis, a political ally and a member of Dunn's Masonic lodge. Lewis maintained that the family was satisfied that the Lieutenant-Governor had died of natural causes and assured the press and the host of skeptical physicians that an autopsy was unnecessary.

Lewis's assurances did little to dispel the rumors which were exacerbated the following day by Speaker Carter's announcement that he, too, had been poisoned. Carter's alleged poisoning inflamed an already volatile situation as Dunn supporters became convinced that a widespread conspiracy was in place to assassinate Republican Party members within the Lieutenant-Governor's political camp. As rumors of a possible Negro revolt began to circulate, several local newspapers decided to print a signed statement from Dunn's doctors in regard to his death. The statement printed by the papers maintained that the cause of Dunn's death was congestion of the brain and although the paper noted that seven physicians had attended Dunn during his illness, only three signed the document. The most conspicuous of the missing signatures was that of Dr. Roudanez, a supporter of the Lieutenant-Governor and the owner of the *New Orleans Tribune*. The missing physicians' signatures and rumors that some of the physicians had refused to sign the document because they believed the allegations that Dunn had actually been poisoned did little to dispel the rumors among the general populace. Although the prophesied riot never materialized, the belief that the governor was poisoned persisted.

Many historians have examined the possibility that Dunn's death did not occur as a result of natural causes. The most in-depth analysis of the "Dunn Poisoning Theory"

was written by noted black historian Marcus Christian. In his theory, Christian maintained that there were many who stood to benefit from Dunn's demise. The most likely beneficiaries were members of the Warmoth camp, particularly Warmoth and Pinchback. Christian similarly noted that Conservative Democrats also stood to benefit from the Lieutenant-Governor's death. For Warmoth, the timing of Dunn's death was nothing short of perfect. The Lieutenant-Governor's death occurred prior to the governor's corruption and impeachment trial, and with Dunn out of the way as his gubernatorial successor, Warmoth could ensure that he would remain in control of the state by replacing Dunn with a member of the Warmoth camp. Pinchback was the most logical choice for Dunn's replacement. As the most visible and most noted of the blacks within Warmoth's camp, Pinchback had the best chance of fragmenting the black vote which had been overwhelmingly in favor of Dunn. For Conservative Democrats, Dunn's demise ensured Republican Party infighting. This infighting may have likely divided the black vote between several factions thus assuring Democratic success in upcoming elections.

Despite its detail, Christian's research neglected the possibility that Dunn may have intentionally administered poison to himself. The "Honor Suicide Theory" relies heavily on newly discovered details of Dunn's private life and maintains that Dunn's death may have been a suicide precipitated by Dunn's fear that disastrous information regarding his personal life would inevitably be revealed by Pinchback. A key component of this theory is the account of Dunn's All Saints' Day letter from Pinchback wherein Pinchback threatened to reveal secret details of Dunn's family life. T. Chester Morris, a

close friend and political ally of Dunn's, maintained that Dunn was noticeably terrified by Pinchback's threat and noted that the threat had something to do with Dunn's wife and children. Furthermore, Morris maintained that Dunn's illness struck only after hearing this news. Although Morris maintained that Dunn died from grief, his recurring use of such words as murder, poison, barded darts, and venom during his Memorial speech in tribute to Dunn suggest a veiled attempt to hide his true sentiments regarding Dunn's death. Morris made no such attempt to hide the identity of the culprit who he deemed responsible for Dunn's untimely demise. During his speech, Morris never said Pinchback's name. Instead, he purposely avoided use of the name altogether, as though the mere utterance of it would sully the occasion at hand. Morris referred to Pinchback using descriptions which could not have been misconstrued or mistaken for anyone else. Morris depicted Pinchback as a "traitor" and a "wandering Machiavelian" and provided no redeeming qualities for Dunn's antagonist.

What could Pinchback have discovered about Dunn which would have induced the Lieutenant-Governor to commit suicide? Since no memoirs, diaries, or journals of Dunn family members have been discovered, the world may never know the truth behind Pinchback's "secret that would harrow your soul". There is a strong possibility that Pinchback discovered that Dunn had boarded with his wife and her former husband. Having been a boarder in the home prior to each of the children's births, Pinchback may have insinuated that the couple engaged in an adulterous relationship and thereby put into question the legitimacy of all three of Ellen's children and the character of Dunn's highly regarded spouse. This sort of revelation, true or false, could have been socially and



politically disastrous for Dunn's family. There is a possibility that, when faced with embarrassing allegations which defied simple explanation or could be misconstrued to Pinchback's advantage, the Lieutenant-Governor decided to take a path that would not lead to disgrace and dishonor for his family. The family's reluctance to release the Lieutenant-Governor's body for autopsy might similarly suggest that there may have been something that the family sought to withhold from the general public. Lastly, Burch's cryptic request that Masons "avoid slander of true and faithful brethren, nor must we suffer it to be done behind his back" appears to anticipate the release of controversial allegations about the late Lieutenant-Governor.

Dunn's funeral was held on November 23, 1871 the same day that the State fair opened in the city. In a show of respect for the late Lieutenant-Governor, Warmoth closed all city offices. At about one o'clock, a crowd began to assemble for several blocks around Dunn's home. An hour later the crowd, once sparsely assembled, had grown into a dense mass that was difficult to navigate. By the hundreds, admirers and friends lined up to pay their respect to the late Lieutenant Governor as his body lay in state in the front parlor of his home. The room quickly filled to capacity as a steady stream of more than five thousand friends and visitors viewed the body from one to three o'clock that afternoon.

Dunn lay in a massive mahogany coffin, dressed in a plain black broad cloth suit. About his neck hung the insignia of a "Past Master of the Masonic order". "At his head, feet, and side burnt three candles in silver candleholders adorned with emblems of the

Holy Trinity”. “The walls, pictures, and furniture were covered in white. The floor, mantle, and coffin were strewn with white roses.”<sup>368</sup>

The crowd was particularly solemn on the occasion; there were no outrages, no screams or cries, or acts of violence committed as visitors quietly made their way through the home. After viewing the body, the long lines of visitors were directed through two rooms of the home and were led to the yard. Once in the yard, the crowd returned to the front of the home via a narrow alleyway. At three o’ clock a contingent of masons from the Richmond Lodge No. 1 and the Eureka Grand Lodge arrived in full regalia. Shortly after their arrival, they began the “impressive ceremonies” of Masonic burial which were presided over by long time friend and Grand Master, John Parson. After the initial segment of the Masonic ceremony was completed, the pall bearers were allowed to carry the body from the home to the hearse which was waiting outside. On the left side of the coffin , G. Casenave, Colonel James F. Casey, Governor Warmoth, R. M. J. Kenner, S.B. Packard, C.S. Sauvinet, C.W. Lowell, James Graham, William P. Kellogg, and A. A Maurice served as pallbearers. On Dunn’s right, J. Henri Burch, Aristide Mary, P.F. Herwig, B.F. Flanders, G. C. Norcross, Arnold Bertaneau, G.E. Paris, D. C. Woodruff, James Lynch, and T. Morris Chester performed the same honor.

Critics of Dunn’s broad-base of support need look no further than the Lieutenant-Governor’s pallbearers to examine the diversity within his political camp. Among Dunn’s pallbearers were military officers, Masonic leaders, state officials, businessmen and

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<sup>368</sup> New Orleans Times, November 23, 1871; New Orleans Times, November 24, 1871

federal officers. The pallbearers represented every segment of the city: Northern whites, Southern whites, Anglo-Africans, and Afro-Creoles. Even Dunn's rivals Pinchback and Warmoth paid respect to their adversary.

The hearse led the procession from the home of the late Lieutenant Governor to the family's church, St. James African Methodist Episcopal church, a scant few blocks away. Behind the hearse, Dunn's widow and his now twice orphaned children rode in a grand carriage that had been lent unbeknownst to the family by Governor Warmoth. The carriage and the hearse were adorned with black pall and the horses were similarly draped with black crepe. After arriving at the church, Reverend Thomas, the church's pastor and Grand Chaplin of the Eureka Grand lodge, continued with the burial ceremonies.

The first of Dunn's eulogies was delivered by James Lynch, black Secretary of State for the State of Mississippi. Lynch's words sought to console not only Dunn's constituency in Louisiana, but also the lamentations of blacks who mourned Dunn throughout the nation. The *New Orleans Republican* printed the lengthy eulogy in its entirety. Lynch's opening statement showed profound respect and admiration for the deceased. In it, Lynch declared

"There now lies before us the remains of the first colored man who ever held an executive office in this country. The occasion is in no sense an ordinary one and ours is no cold tribute of respect. It is the struggle of the heart to express the agony of the public mind. Here lies powerless in death the great representative of our race. It seems as if we were in a battle-field—our ranks broken, and our flags trailing in the dust. Adversity is upon us; but our trust is in God—the same God in whom he trusted, and who has raised him higher and higher unto Himself. As the news spreads over the nation, every colored man's heart will bleed. The affliction is the nation's and the nation will mourn. In Lieutenant Governor Dunn it has

been shown that the colored man, crushed to the earth by a tyrannic power, could, when his shackles were broken, rise to dignity, usefulness, and the loftiest patriotism."<sup>369</sup>

After Lynch's Eulogy, a closing prayer was said and the services were once again turned over to the Masons. During the Masonic ceremonies, long time friend and politician, J. Henri Burch, eulogized Dunn a second time, this time noting his Masonic life and achievements therein. The Masonic ceremonies were closed with a prayer delivered by Reverend Thomas Granoa, after which the body was surrendered to Colonels James Lewis and James H. Ingraham. On their order, the pall bearers once again resumed their duties, returning the massive coffin to the hearse waiting outside the church.<sup>370</sup>

Outside of the church a large organized procession assembled. At the head of the procession was the Louisiana Legion band. Following the band, the entire Metropolitan police under the command of Colonel A.S. Badger marched in force. Behind the Metropolitans five hundred members of the Second Regiment of Louisiana Infantry under the command of General Barbor, followed by Kelly's Juvenile band. Behind the Band, two hundred and fifty members of the Third Regiment preceded all five hundred and eighty officers of the Carrollton Police under the command of Captain D. C. Woodruff.

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<sup>369</sup> New York Daily Tribune, December 4, 1871, New Orleans Republican, November 26, 1871

<sup>370</sup> New York Daily Tribune, December 4, 1871; Louisianian, December 6, 1871 (Appendix B: J. Henri Burch's Masonic Eulogy of Oscar J. Dunn); Louisianian, February 19, 1871; New Orleans Times, November 24, 1871; Donaldsonville Chief, November 25, 1871; Chicago Tribune, December 8, 1871

Following the Carrollton Police, the members of the Richmond and Eureka lodges escorted the hearse which followed immediately behind them. Alongside the hearse, pall bearers walked in lockedstep, each in the position he held alongside the coffin. Dunn's family members followed the hearse in carriages. At the head of the train of carriages were Dunn's widow and children.

Following the carriages of family members, the Lieutenant Governor's Republican clubs, the Third Ward Mother club and its subordinate Third Ward sub-club marched. Trailing the Third Ward clubs were the membership of each of the other fourteen ward clubs in the city. Behind the ward clubs, marched several of the city's benevolent societies followed by some two hundred carriages, several of which had been provide by Republican saloon owner John Hawkins at his personal expense.

On both sides of Canal Street, from the church to Magazine Street, huge crowds of the Lieutenant Governor's constituency collected. It was reported that some fifty thousand paid their respects to their fallen leader. The procession moved slowly, using the dirge provided by the bands as a cadence. The procession was so long, that "the head of the column had reached Magazine Street before the rear had moved, and had returned nearly to Claiborne Street when the line was yet in march." The turning point for the procession, Magazine Street, had quite fittingly brought the mass before the prominently placed statue of Henry Clay "the Great Compromiser". Quite ironically, just a few months earlier, a correspondent with the *Charleston Courier* had in jest suggested that the statue had been created in the likeness of the late Lieutenant Governor and had been an

image of Dunn in his antebellum state of bondage wearing an ill-fitting set of clothes that had been given to him by his master.

When the procession reached its final destination, St. Louis Cemetery Number Two, the masons completed their burial ceremonies. Dunn's body was then interred in the family tomb of Afro-Creole funeral director and close friend G. Cassanave. With the burial completed, the crowds did not disperse. Instead, the Lieutenant Governor's followers and devotees lingered in the cemetery mingling and reminiscing about Dunn's life until after dusk.<sup>371</sup>

#### *Hard Times and Fond Memories*

In the wake of Dunn's death, Governor Warmoth wasted no time in calling a special session for the purpose of replacing the Lieutenant Governor. Although convenient for Warmouth, Dunn's death also placed him in the precarious position of selecting Dunn's successor. Members of the Radical faction maintained that the governor should select a member of Dunn's contingent to replace the Lieutenant Governor; while members of Warmouth's Democratic supporters, by then organized into a group calling itself the "Citizens Association" demanded that the governor select a member from their ranks as a replacement. Warmoth realized that whomever he selected would likely become governor after his impending impeach trial and would be under great pressure to compromise with or cave in to the demands of the Radical faction. For this reason,

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<sup>371</sup> Louisianian, February 19, 1871; New Orleans Times, November 24, 1871; Donaldsonville Chief, November 25, 1871; Chicago Tribune, December 8, 1871

Warmoth sought to select a candidate who would desperately need his assistance and would be opposed by both his faction and the Radicals.

Warmoth decided to select Pinchback as Lieutenant-Governor because he knew that the Radicals would not accept him back into the faction and because his Democrat supporters would never support a black governor. The Dunn camp strenuously resisted Warmoth's efforts to replace Dunn with Pinchback. Despite their objections, Pinchback was selected to fill Dunn's post of Lieutenant Governor and would subsequently be elevated to governor after Warmoth's impeachment. Although the Dunn camp called for the removal of Pinchback, they were unclear about whom Dunn's legitimate successor was. Speaker Carter maintained that he should assume the post of Lieutenant-Governor but at least two blacks, Cesar Celestine Antoine and Charles Ingraham, were also touted as likely successors.<sup>372</sup>

Dunn's family fell on hard times as a result of the Lieutenant Governor's death. Dunn's succession records provide a clear understanding of the family's dire economic situation. A synopsis within the succession records noted that the family's assets were worth six thousand eight hundred and thirty-five dollars (\$6,835.00), while their debts stood at eight thousand nine hundred seventy-seven dollars and thirty-eight cents (\$8,977.38). A large portion of the family's cash assets were attributed to the sale and auctioning of real estate, the family's carriage, and their horses. The bulk of the family's

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<sup>372</sup> Daily Atlanta Sun, November 25, 1871; Mountain Democrat, December 16, 1871; New York Daily Tribune, January 4, 1872; Daily Rocky Mountain New, January 25, 1872; Owosso American, December 25, 1872; "Remember Dunn, and follow Ingraham!" Speech of Major T. Morris Chester at the Dunn Commemoration Meeting, New Orleans, November 4, 1871, pg. (Appendix G)

debt was an outstanding mortgage held by Samie Smith and Company on the family's home, debts relating to Dunn's illness and funeral, and a long list of personal debts which he Lieutenant Governor owed to business associates and friends.

As a housewife, Ellen Dunn had no means of support outside of selling family assets and property to pay off debts. Shortly after Dunn's death, she did, however, receive four hundred and thirty-three dollars and sixteen cents (\$433.16) which accounted for her husband's unpaid wages between October 1, 1871 and his death on November 22, 1871, but this small sum apparently did little to satisfy creditors.

As a consequence of the outstanding debt, the family's home on Canal Street was placed up for auction by the city's sheriff, C. S. Sauvinet, and advertisements announcing its impending sale were run in the *New Orleans Republican* and *German Gazette* from March until June of 1872. The highest and last bidder at the property auction was George M. Parker. Parker's winning bid of six thousand dollars (\$6000) was more than enough to pay off the family's debt. Despite purchasing the home at auction, Parker did not take possession of the property or evict the family. Instead, Parker sold the home to Ellen Dunn and assumed the debt as a loan with eight percent (8%) interest per annum. Conveyance records show that Dunn's widow paid three thousand five hundred dollars as a down payment and was required to pay the remainder of the debt by May 4, 1873.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> New Orleans Conveyance Records 1872 (Book #100), pg. 551; New Orleans Second District Court (1846-1880) Oscar J. Dunn Succession (Record # 35,055); *New Orleans Republican*, March 20 – June 26, 1872; *German Gazette*, March 20-May 4, 1872;



A number of sources confirm that Dunn's friends and Masonic brethren stood firmly behind their pledges of support for the deceased's family. Cassanave not only allowed Dunn to be buried in his family's tomb, he also generously gifted the family the horses and carriage that had been rented by the lieutenant governor from his livery. A fund for the widow and family was established and as members of the Colored National Convention organized their annual convention, which was to be held in the city in April of 1872, the keynote speaker and President of the convention, Frederick Douglass, was approached by a cadre of notables which included P.B.S Pinchback, James H. Ingraham, J. Stella Martin, James Lewis, H. J. Campbell, James Henri Burch, A.B. Harris, C.C. Antoine, George Y. Kelso, J. M. G. Parker, A. J. Barter, George Debezau, J. W. Quinn, Harry Mahoney, and host of others to give a lecture on any non-political issue he wished from which the proceeds from the admission would be donated to Dunn's family. Douglass maintained that it would be his "great pleasure" to deliver a lecture and announced that the lecture's topic would be "Self-Made Men". The *National Republican* promoted the lecture with zeal and encouraged Dunn supporters to donate to his fund by exhorting "let each one contribute his mite" in honor of Dunn's "cherished memory." Delegates at the convention adopted resolutions to honor the late lieutenant governor and resolved that at the closing of the convention they would collectively visit the home of the widow to pay their respects. <sup>374</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> New Orleans Second District Court (1846-1880) Oscar J. Dunn Succession Record (Record # 35,055); *National Republican*, April 14, 16, 1872

Although the generosity of Dunn's friends and associates proved capable of saving his family from immediate financial ruin, without regular infusions of monies to sustain the family Ellen Dunn fell into debt and again the beloved memory of her cherished husband and the loyalty of his friends came to the rescue of the family. During the two years following Dunn's death, the state's legislature passed three acts directly related to Lieutenant-Governor Dunn. In 1872, Act number 3 paid the remainder of Dunn's salary from his death to the end of his elected term (\$3,232.42) to his widow. The following year (1873), the legislature passed Act number 62, which granted Ellen Dunn five thousand dollars (\$5,000) to secure a home. This stipend likely went to pay off the debt she owed to Mr. Parker, the man who maintained the mortgage on her home. The same year, the legislature also passed Act number 57, which established the Oscar J. Dunn Monument Association of Louisiana for the purpose of erecting a fitting monument in honor of the late lieutenant-governor. However, the association apparently was unable to achieve its goal and the proposed monument was never erected.

In 1875, the Louisiana Senate approved the appropriation of two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) to remove Dunn's remains from the Cassanave tomb and to erect a tomb befitting the late Lieutenant Governor. Dunn's tomb, like his monument, was never erected and no reason was provided as to why the appropriation was never applied to its intended purpose.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> The New Orleans Bee, August 4, 1916; *Report of the Auditor of Public Accounts to the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana* (New Orleans, LA, 1870). 5, 17, 19 (although listed as 1870, it is likely that the report was created post 1872 since it notes Dunn's death and subsequent payments made to Ellen Dunn); Robert H. Marr. *A Digest-Index of the Acts of the General Assembly of Louisiana, Beginning with the Regular Session of 1870 and Ending with the Second Extra Session of 1910, and Including Such Local*

To ensure that Ellen and her children had a reliable source of income, Mayor Benjamin F. Flanders appointed Mrs. Dunn to the post of Keeper of the City Archives, a position which paid a salary of one hundred and fifty dollars per month. The remainder of Ellen Dunn's life would be spent in civil service. She would later serve as Chief Countress at the New Orleans Mint and in 1875 she married for a third time. Her third husband was James Henri Burch, a Masonic brother of her late husband and a key member of Dunn's constituency. The pair's nuptials were lauded as the social event of the year and were attended by a host of notables. Although remarried, Ellen did not give up Dunn's surname; instead she adopted the hyphenated "Dunn-Burch". By her own account, Ellen remained active in national politics serving as an unofficial advisor lobbying on behalf of "her people". In this capacity, she maintained that she was consulted by Frederick Douglass, Presidents Grant, Hayes, and Garfield, as well as United States Senators Conkling and Hoar regarding to the condition of "colored race" in the South.<sup>376</sup>

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*and Special Laws Adopted Prior to 1870 As May Still Be of Interest* (New Orleans, La: J.G. Hauser, 1912) 20, 138; State of Louisiana. *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana at the Session begun and held in New Orleans, January 4, 1875* (New Orleans: Republican Printing office, 1875) 160.

<sup>376</sup> New York Times, July 22, 1872; St. Paul Daily Globe, May 24, June 14, 1885; Nell Irvin Painter. *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction* (New York, New York: Norton, 1992) 37n;

The rivalry between the radical and conservative contingents of the Republican Party consumed Dunn's political career. Throughout the skirmish, Dunn proved to be a capable political opponent to Warmoth. Dunn's political and private reputations were the complete opposite of the governor's. The Lieutenant-Governor was regularly lauded as a family man who neither drank, smoke, nor gambled and as a political figure was routinely praised, even by his rivals, for his fairness, honesty, and competence in the commission of his offices. Although a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Dunn distanced himself from discussions of religion by maintaining that he "made no profession of religion". His decision to avoid theological debate or religious banter likely reduced conflict between his protestant Anglo-American supporters and his Catholic Afro-Creole base of support throughout southern Louisiana.<sup>377</sup>

Dunn replaced a religiously endorsed political platform with one seemingly governed by the moral precepts of "honesty" and "endeavoring to do the right thing", values highly regarded across religious lines. For many, Republican and Democratic alike, he was the personification of those precepts and was commonly regarded as beyond reproach. Newspaper accounts of Dunn's refusal to accept bribes reinforced the Lieutenant-Governor's sterling image.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Weekly National Republican, November 22, 1871(John Parson account); Indiana Progress, November 30, 1871; The Gleaner, August 7, 1871; Anderson Intelligencer, September 14, 1871; The Morning Star and Catholic Messenger, November 26, 1871; The Louisiana Democrat, November 29, 1871

<sup>378</sup> John Mercer Langston. *From the Virginia Plantation to The National Capitol: The First and Only Negro Representative in Congress from the Old Dominion* (Hartford, Conn.: American Publishing Co., 1894) 289; The New Orleans Republican, January 16, 1868; San Antonio Express; November 25, 1871; Perkins, A.E., "Oscar James Dunn", *Phylon*, 4 (1943), pp. 6; William Wells Brown. *The Rising Son; Or, The Antecedents and Advancement of the Colored Race* (Boston: A.G. Brown, 1874) 489-491; W. H. Croghan. *Talks for the Times* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Pye, 1896) 119-120; H. F.Kletzing, and W. H. Croghan. *Progress of a Race: Or, The Remarkable Advancement of the Afro-American Negro from the*

To compliment his precepts and differentiate him from the carpetbagger cohorts, Dunn adopted a form of intense humility in regard to his political offices. Dunn portrayed himself publicly as a politician devoid of political ambition and maintained that he had never sought any political position himself. Dunn, like the proverbial yeoman farmer, maintained that he had been pulled away from his personal pursuits to fulfill his obligation of citizenry.<sup>379</sup>

Dunn's rivals maintained that the sterling image afforded him was merely a mask and that the Lieutenant-Governor's true ambitions were as avarice-laden as those of Warmoth. Although no evidence has been discovered which suggests that Dunn personally benefited from graft or bribe, there is little doubt that he awarded newspaper contracts to his supporters and withheld such contracts from his rivals. George W. Carter testified to his involvement in circumventing printing contracts stating "knowing that the law was being used by the governor to perpetuate his power, Lieutenant-Governor Dunn and myself thought we were justified in using it also in support of the Reform movement."<sup>380</sup>

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*Bondage of Slavery, Ignorance and Poverty, to the Freedom of Citizenship, Intelligence, Affluence, Honor and Trust* (Atlanta, Ga: J.L. Nichols, 1903) 185; Methodist Episcopal Church. *Manual of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1883) 161.

<sup>379</sup> The New York Herald, October 2, 1870; The New Orleans Bee, October 20, 1870; New Orleans Republican, November 28, 1871; Perkins, pg. 107

<sup>380</sup> Ouachita Telegraph, October 21, 1871; United States. *The Miscellaneous Documents Printed by Order of the House of Representatives During the Second Session of the Forty-Second Congress. 1871-1872.: In Four Volumes.* Washington: G.P.O., 1872.

In death, Dunn became the heralded hero cut down in his prime, the prophet who would fail to reach the Promised Land. The *National Republican*, an organ of the Radical faction compared Dunn to the Prophet Moses maintaining

“He was to them, their great preservative, their leader, the embodiment of their hopes, the real Moses who, as they fainted and famished in the struggle to reach the goal of acknowledged manhood, smote the rock of adversity till it gushed forth the cheering waters of hope. It was Oscar J. Dunn who led his people from the land of oppression and bondage; it was he who, when they were hard pressed by political hate, with the mountains of prejudice on one side and the great deep sea of duplicity on the other, cheered their terror-stricken hearts with his own matchless faith calling for them to stand fast and see the salvations of the Lord.”<sup>381</sup>

So beloved was Dunn that another publication touted that “in every house owned, or rented, or occupied by a colored man you will find three likenesses -Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and Oscar J. Dunn.”<sup>382</sup> At least two local photographers provided photographs of the late Lieutenant-Governor and although their photographs of Dunn were seemingly sold in volume and in a wide variety of sizes, not a single example of these photographs has been found. Local photographer Theodore Lilienthal is known to have taken Dunn’s last commercial image, a post mortem photograph of the late governor as he lay in his coffin but like most of the images taken of Dunn, none are known to be in existence. Another relic which has eluded historians and collectors is the only known portrait of Dunn. The portrait was painted by noted artist John Tensfeld, as he toured the

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<sup>381</sup> National Republican, March 13, 1872

<sup>382</sup> Daily Republican (Decatur, IL), July 16, 1872

south and western states and is briefly mentioned in the *Brooklyn Eagle's* announcement in regard to the artist opening a New York studio.<sup>383</sup>

The Lieutenant-Governor was one of the most noted colored men of his day. Amidst the turbulence and uncertainty of Reconstruction, Dunn appeared unwavering. Dunn also served to disprove those critics who had maintained that Reconstruction was a complete failure because of the ignorance of the Republicans' black leadership.

At a time when many argued that blacks were incapable of performing the obligations of citizenship, Dunn and his cohorts, Afro-Creole, Anglo –African, and white, created an interracial and multicultural political coalition. The “Radical Political Machine” relied heavily on the support of rural black voters and as their acknowledged leader Dunn was able to repeatedly summon those supporters to the polls.<sup>384</sup>

Dunn iconoclastically destroyed stereotypes of blacks as docile, immoral, lazy, deem-witted, and childlike which had been perpetuated by Southern Democrats. He proved himself to be politically shrewd, industrious, ethical, and more trustworthy than the state's white governor. As the political climate in Louisiana shifted in favor of the Radical contingent, some Democrats voiced their preference for Dunn's leadership over that of Warmoth. Conservative Democrats who clung defiantly to the antebellum social order wherein blacks were relegated to the bottom rung of society prophetically announced the “Africanization” of the state in anticipation of Warmoth's impeachment. Others predicted the Africanization of the nation as they foresaw that Dunn's popularity

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<sup>383</sup> Brooklyn Eagle, June 20, 1873; New Orleans Republican, November 23, 1871

<sup>384</sup> Simon, ed., The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant: Volume 21: November 1, 1870 –May 31, 1871, 269n-270n

and ability to galvanize the black vote might force President Grant to select Dunn as his Vice Presidential running mate in the Presidential election of 1872.<sup>385</sup>

For the Conservative Democratic community, the demise of Dunn was an occasion for celebration and a rallying point for the Redemption movement. Within the ranks of the Democratic elite, Dunn's rise to power was seen as a perversion of the natural order. However by 1873, the prospect of Africanization that had once alarmed Democratic masses had not only passed but had become a point of jest. In that year, Democratic members of the elite secret carnival society, the Mystick Krewe of Comus, made a mockery of the Radical political machine and its deceased leader by constructing an elaborate parody of the administration as the theme of its annual Mardi Gras ball.

At the ball, the krewe's membership masqueraded as the "missing links" of the Darwinian theory of the origin of species. The member's elaborate costumes lampooned Republican notables by refashioning their images into those of grotesque monsters. At the head of the ball, the king of the krewe donned a massive gorilla costume in mockery of Dunn and was coronated as he sat upon his throne. The king's mockery made light of Democratic fears in regard to the late Lieutenant-Governor's political ascension by refashioning those fears into a menagerie of childhood nightmares ripe with a rogues

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<sup>385</sup> Coshocian Democrat, March 21, 1871; The Gleaner, August 7, 1871; Galveston News, August 26, 1871; Oswego Weekly Advertiser, September 6, 1871; Anderson Intelligencer, September 14, 1871; Evening Telegram, September 15, 1871; New Orleans Republican, October 19, 1871, The Morning Star and Catholic Messenger, November 26, 1871; The Louisiana Democrat, November 29, 1871; December 7, 1871; The World (New York), September 9, 1872; New York Times, July 4, 1896; Harpers Weekly, March 29, 1873, 244-247; *Americans Experience: New Orleans*. Produced by Amanda Pollak, Stephen Ives, Jenny Carchman and directed by Stephen Ives, WGBH Educational Foundation, 2007 (transcripts accessed online on December 12, 2010 - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/neworleans/filmmore/pt.html>)



gallery of monsters and villains. In this refashioning, Dunn once praised for kindness, generosity, and levelheadedness, became a beast and object of ridicule.<sup>386</sup>

In the wake of Dunn's passing two opposing interpretations of his life emerged. Amongst his supporters, Dunn was praised to a point of near mythic proportions becoming a tragic hero of unblemished record. Dunn's supporters in the remembrance of their fallen hero adopted the policy of "de mortuis nil nisi bonum dicendum est"



**Illustration 10: Krewe of Comus Ball Source: Harpers Weekly March 29, 1873**

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<sup>386</sup> Liberty Weekly Tribune, December 1, 1871; Harpers Weekly, March 29, 1873, pg. 247

maintaining that nothing negative should be said of the late Lieutenant-Governor.

Conversely, Conservative Democrats rewrote history by maintaining that Dunn had been a puppet of little consequence, and contended, in contrast to their previous beliefs, that their real threat had come from the white federal men who they maintained controlled Dunn.

## CHAPTER VIII: DUNN –FOREGOTTEN HERO

“Who knows whether the best of men be known or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot than any that stands remembered in the known account of time?”<sup>387</sup>

Sir Thomas Browne

For many in Louisiana, particularly those in the black community, Dunn’s death was a horrific tragedy. In death, Dunn left a tremendous void and although several Radical leaders were eager to fill the void, the Radical contingent was unable to regain the influence and support that it wielded under Dunn’s leadership. Dunn’s tenure as Lieutenant Governor denoted the golden age of Radical power, just as his death marked the onset of its demise. After Dunn’s death, men who had been central figures within the Radical contingent, such as Lewis and Casanave, defected to the Warmouth Machine. Others within the Radical contingent contended that violence and intimidation had been employed to quell political dissent in Dunn’s absence.<sup>388</sup>

Those Radicals who remained true to the causes espoused by Dunn invoked him regularly during speeches and proudly declared their connections to Dunn as badges of

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<sup>387</sup> Chambers, Robert, David Patrick, John Liddell Geddie, and James Cruickshanks Smith. *Chambers's cyclopaedia of English literature*(Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1978)594.

<sup>388</sup> Ouachita Telegraph, December 7, 9, 1871; Daily Atlanta Sun, November 25, 1871; San Antonio, November 25, 1871; Portsmouth Times, July 21, 1877; Samuel Sullivan Cox. *Three Decades of Federal Legislation, 1855 to 1885, Personal and Historical Memories of Events Preceding, During and Since the American Civil War.* (Tecumseh, Mich: Mills, 1885) 555; Democratic Party, “*The Campaign Text Book: Why the People Want a Change : the Republican Party Reviewed: Its Sins of Commission and Omission*”(New York, NY: The Democratic National Committee, 1876) 114; Perkins, A.E., “Oscar James Dunn”, *Phylon*, 4 (1943), 116

honor.<sup>389</sup> While visiting New Orleans, Frederick Douglass was invited to a party at the Governor's mansion during Pinchback's brief tenure as Governor. At the party, noted Afro-Creole editor and political activist Paul Trevigne was rumored to have praised Dunn and openly admonished Pinchback by maintaining proudly that Dunn had been "by far the most able" black politician in the state.<sup>390</sup> Other Dunn supporters within the spiritualist community sought a more literal connection to their fallen leader. Spiritualists maintained that they were able to summon the spirit of the late Lieutenant Governor during a séance wherein Dunn warned them of impending treachery and lamented the role he had played in dividing the radical ranks.<sup>391</sup>

Although Dunn cannot be heralded as the progenitor of black political leadership in the United States, he must be acknowledged as having played a pivotal role in the development of the idea of an archetypical black politician. Reverend B. F. Grimke described the ideal black politician by maintaining that the politician would possess a "character you can respect, and whose example you can recommend to your children". Grimke described the political stewardship of the ideal politician as one of "Pure Leadership" and on the occasion of Fredrick Douglas's funeral he recited a poem which he believed exemplified the characteristics which were requisite in such a leader. For the occasion, Grimke selected Josiah Gilbert Holland's *God give us men* for recitation.

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<sup>389</sup> Galveston Daily News, January 9, 1877; Charles Sumner and George Frisbie Hoar. *His Complete Works, With Introduction by Hon. George Frisbie Hoar* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1900) 221-222.

<sup>390</sup> Shirley Graham. *There Was Once a Slave: The heroic Story of Frederick Douglass*, (New York: NY, Julian Messner, Inc., 1947), 267

<sup>391</sup> Rene Grandjean Collection, Collection 85; Séance Registers, 1874, pg. 198

God give us men. The time demands  
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and willing hands;  
Men whom the lust of office does not kill;  
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;  
Men who possess opinions and a will;  
Men who have honor; men who will not lie;  
Men who can stand before a demagogue  
And dam his treacherous flatteries without winking;  
Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog  
In public duty and in private thinking.  
For while the rabble, with their thumb-worn creeds,  
Their large professions and their little deeds,  
Mingle in selfish strife, lo! Freedom weeps,  
Wrong rules the land and waiting Justice sleeps.

The words read by Grimke before the crowd of mourners meant to define the characteristics of pure leadership were eerily similar to those that had been used to describe the late Lieutenant-Governor. Grimke's wish for pure leadership was reiterated by W.E. B DuBois and later by Martin Luther King Jr. as he, too, invoked the words of Holland to describe the qualities of ideal African American leadership.<sup>392</sup> The idea of the

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<sup>392</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 469; Ronald W. Walters, and Robert Charles Smith. *African American Leadership* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999) 110-111

incorruptible and selfless African American public servant was conceived and embodied within Dunn, or at least within the memories which his supporters elected to retain. The National Republican predicted the essential role that Dunn would play in American history by noting that “when a future historian shall record the transition of the colored race from bondage to freedom, Lieutenant-Governor Dunn will not be lost in the multitude, but will appear high above his fellows, in himself a type of that very transition.”<sup>393</sup>

Despite the high regard in which he was held throughout the state at the time of his death, discussions of Dunn’s merits decreased as Redeemers reclaimed the South. In the scholarship of Dunningite historians, Dunn became a peripheral figure and was commonly mentioned as an accompaniment to the governor he so strenuously resisted.<sup>394</sup> Dunn’s incorruptible image and courage were revived by Revisionist historians who used Dunn to erode negative stereotypes that had been perpetuated by the Dunningites. The late Lieutenant-Governor’s memory became the center of renewed interest during the Civil Rights movement as Revisionist historians explored the roles which blacks had played in Reconstruction politics, and just as the National Republican had prophesied, the

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<sup>393</sup> National Republican, March 13, 1872

<sup>394</sup> New York Times, July 4, 1896; Gibson, A. M. *A Political Crime; The History of the Great Fraud* (New York: W.S. Gottsberger, 1885)249, 333; Perry Young. *The Mystick Krewe; Chronicles of Comus and His Kin* (New Orleans: Carnival Press, 1931) 89; Lonn, *Reconstruction in Louisiana after 1868*,

idealistic myth of Dunn, created by Dunn's followers in the wake of his death, was resurrected.<sup>395</sup>

Recent scholarship has struggled to reconcile the Mythic Dunn with the Dunn of historic record. Historians Justin A. Nystrom and Phillip Dray have conducted the most recent research on Dunn. Nystrom portrayed Dunn as an active supporter of Warmoth and maintained that Dunn deserted the Warmoth camp only after the Governor vetoed the Civil Rights Bill. Nystrom's Dunn bears little resemblance to the machine boss described in this dissertation. Instead, Nystrom maintained that Dunn was recruited into the Custom House clique by federal officers who led the resistance against Warmouth.<sup>396</sup>

Conversely, Dray's Dunn incorporated features of the mythic Dunn. Dray recounts Dunn sterling image but avoids discussion of Dunn's misuse of printing contracts. Both Nystrom and Dray provide brief overviews of Dunn's life and are extremely limited in regard to the sources used.<sup>397</sup> Recent trends in Reconstruction research have avoided biographies of Reconstruction leaders and instead have focused on grassroots examinations of freedmen communities. This bottom-up approach discounts the role of the single individual as a driving force in history. Unfortunately, this grassroots approach of researching history cannot adequately examine dynamic machine politicians like

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<sup>395</sup> National Republican, March 13, 1872

<sup>396</sup> Justin A Nystrom., *New Orleans After the Civil War: Race, Politics, and a New Birth of Freedom* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) 103-108.

<sup>397</sup> Philip Dray., *Capitol Men: The Epic Story of Reconstruction through the Lives of the First Black Congressmen* ( Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 2008) 111-117.

Dunn. To study Dunn, an exhaustive top-down approach is required and hopefully this dissertation renews interest in the late Lieutenant-Governor.





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## APPENDIX A: JOHN PARSON'S BIOGRAPHY OF DUNN

*Weekly National Republican (Wednesday, Nov. 22, 1871)*

Oscar James Dunn

“The materials for a biography of the deceased Lt. Governor are very scant, for until he was appointed a member of the City Council by Gen. Sheridan, in 1866 there was nothing eventful in his career. He was a quiet and retiring man, who kept the even tenor of his way, making friends wherever he went by his mild, unobtrusive manners and his industry and honesty.

It has been fully ascertained that the Lt. Governor was never in a condition of servitude. This we have fully ascertained from Recorder Parsons, of the fifth district, who has known the deceased for forty-two years, the acquaintance commencing when the later was four years old. At the time he was living with his parent, his father was a freeman, named James Dunn, having emigrated from Virginia years before. The elder Dunn was employed as a stage carpenter in the only American theater then in the city, known as the Camp Street Theater, and afterward as the Old Camp.”

“The earlier years of the Lt. Gov. Dunn were passed in school, for in the days of slavery the prohibitory laws relating to the education of the colored race did not extend to those who were free.

At school, Mr. Dunn received an ordinary English education and laid the foundation of the extensive knowledge he afterwards acquired, reading with avidity every book that came his way.

The result of this taste for study is shown in some extent by the dignified ability with which the deceased presided over the senate, never at a loss, and his decision acquiesced in by antagonists, as well as friends, as equitable and impartial.

At the age of fourteen years, the youth was indentured by his father to Messrs. Patterson and Jamison. He remained with them long enough to acquire a competent knowledge of the business. He afterwards worked for Mr. Thomas H. Dryden, well known among our older citizens as an excellent vocalist. The association with the vocalist seems to have awakened in Mr. Dunn a latent fondness for music, in which afterwards he became no mere proficient. On more than one occasion he told the writer of this sketch that while he supposed everyone gifted more or less with the musical faculty, still it had, he thought to be developed by circumstance.

His time was nearly out when, in consequence of a misunderstanding with his employers, he made one escapade. Like most men of placid tempers, when once roused his wrath was intense. So far as we can learn, this is the only instance in his life when he acted under its influence. We have never learned the cause but undoubtedly there was some strong provocation. Afterwards although not partial to the plastering business, the future Lt. Gov. worked at it for a number of years, and acquired some property. Some years before his death, he determined to cultivate his taste for music as a matter of profit. He took lesson on the guitar from an Italian artist, Mr. Torna. He became such a

proficient that he turned his attention to the instruction of pupils as a means of livelihood and to a great extent he succeeded. There is no doubt that he would have gone on prospering in his new career had it not been for an untoward circumstance connected with one of his race. There was at that time a colored teacher of the piano-forte and guitar by the name of Martin. This man possessed excellent natural abilities, and had no degree of scientific culture; in fact he composed a number of musical pieces, the merit of which was undeniable. But he was utterly unprincipled, and without detailing the circumstance which, even at this late day, might give pain to some, it is sufficient to say that Martin's conduct brought upon him the wrath of the community at large.

No man was more indignant than Mr. Dunn, and the matter had such an effect on him that he abandoned music as a means of support, and again resumed his trade as a plasterer. He was ambitious, however, to better his condition, and store his mind to study. While plastering he could read only in the evening after the day's labor had been done. But he was not satisfied with this. It was, therefore, with an idea that he was induced to open an intelligence office, the duties of which would not interfere with his desire for increased hours of study. He first established himself on Girod St., but finally moved to Customhouse Street, between Royal and Dauphine Streets.

He had, for some years, been a man of mark among his people. It was while he kept his insurance office that he was enabled to assist the people of his own race to the extent of his in no way ample means, as well as by counsel and legal advice, for although, he never passed the bar, his habits of study had given him an ample amount of legal learning. Many cases of hardship arose out of the emancipation of the colored race

at that time, principally among the aged and the decrepit, those who, having passed a long life devoting their bone and muscle to the profit of an owner became free just as they were unable to take care of themselves, and were, in many cases, exposed to the distress and want, from which they should have been protected. In many of these cases the good offices of Mr. Dunn were invaluable, and at the time Gen. Sheridan appointed a city council in which the colored element should form a part, Mr. Dunn was too prominent a colored man to be overlooked and without any solicitation on his part, he was appointed a member of the newly organized city council. His career since that time until his death is too well known to need repetition.

Mr. Dunn remained a bachelor during the most part of his life. He became acquainted with his widow twenty-three years ago, at which time she was living with her first husband, Mr. Marshall. Mr. Dunn at that time boarded with the Marshall's. After some years, when Mr. Dunn ceased to be an inmate of the house, Mr. Marshall died and left his widow to struggle through the world with three helpless children. Something near than six years ago, about the time he became a man of political importance, he renewed his acquaintance with Mrs. Marshall, they were married. Mr. Dunn legally adopted the three children, Fanny, Lizzie, and Charles. That he fulfilled the duties of a father one can judge by the deep affection, and unbounded confidence he inspired in his young protégés, who are now weeping in such desolate bitterness at their irreparable loss.

Lt. Gov. Dunn made no pretensions to rational brilliancy. His principal characteristics were a strong common sense and reliable judgment that could not be beguiled, with genial kindness temper that made him beloved by all. He never had an

enemy. How often has the writer of this seen him sitting in his office on customhouse, with little white children clustering around him, fondling their "Uncle Dunn".

On Monday when he was taken with his last illness, one of the greatest causes of his trouble was his inability to go to the Police Board and stand between harm and an accused policeman, a white man and the father of several children, and whom the kindly hearted governor feared would get treatment all the harsher for want of his good offices.

Governor Dunn had no children of his own, but his affections were amply gratified in the affection of his adopted children.

He died a poor man. After his elevation to the Lt. Governorship, he thought it right to live in a manner as the dignity of the of the office demands. The dwelling in which he died was bought and one installment paid, but no more. We believe, for the honor of our city, that his widow will not have added to her deep sorrow the burden of pecuniary difficulty, which would not have been her lot, had not her husband been exceptionally honest as well as a charitable man. The vehicle in which he occasionally took air was made a present by his friends; it followed the hearse of the funeral, deeply draped in black, the family following behind in a carriage belonging to H.C.Warmoth.

There never was in New Orleans a deeper feeling of regret felt and expressed than when the corpse of Oscar James Dunn was carried to his final resting place, amidst tens of thousands that thronged to pay the last tribute of respect. As an instance of the feeling of esteem for the lamented dead, extended far beyond the circle of his political associates, we will state that on the morning of the funeral, Mr. John Hawkins, so well known and deservedly popular among our citizens provided ten carriages at his own

expense, for the accommodation of the bereaved. There was no party feeling in the benevolent act, but it was a spontaneous tribute of esteem worthy the man who well knew that the high official position that Lt. Governor Dunn had attained had in no manner been a pecuniary benefit to himself.

Weekly National Republican –Weds. November 22, 1871, pg. 3 col. 5-6



## **APPENDIX B: J. HENRI BURCH'S MASONIC EULOGY OF OSCAR J. DUNN**

(Delivered Thursday, November 23, 1871)

Brethren,-This mournful scene and these solemn notes that betoken the dissolution of this earthly tabernacle, have again alarmed our outer door and another spirit has been summoned to the lad where our forefathers have gone before us. Again we are called to assemble among the habitations of the dead to behold the "narrow house appointed for all the living."

The Supreme Grand Master above, in the wisdom of his mysterious providence has been pleased to remove from his labors here below, to his Grand Lodge above, our beloved brother, Oscar James Dunn. To me has been assigned the honorable, but difficult duty, of speaking to you of his Masonic character. When I look around me and behold the many gray-haired masons, who have grown up in our ancient and beloved order with our departed brother, now lying in the cold embrace of death. I feel that to some of them, should be delegated this mournful, painful, but honorable task. But, as it is mine to perform, I approach it with a heart heavily frightened by the avalanche of grief and misery that has so suddenly swept us all; and with a faltering and stammering tongue.

Brother Oscar James Dunn first applied for the honor of Masonry November 31, 1852. He was found worthy and well qualified, and received his first light to the mysteries of Masonry. Having made sufficient proficiency in his first degree in January 1863, he was passed to his second degree, and finally, in the same year he was raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason. Thus we see that our departed brother has served

nearly twenty years in the honorable service of this ancient order. Possessed of pure motives, favorable opinions, a desire of further knowledge, and a zealous inclination to be serviceable to his fellow man, he by practice, conception, and exemplification, soon exhibited such a knowledge of the intents and purpose of the order to place him in the foremost ranks of the craft; and so strong was his Masonic claims upon them that in a token of recognition and appreciation he was thrice called to the chair as Worshipful Master of Richmond Lodge No. 1. In this position, his worthiness as a Mason, usefulness as a builder, up of the order in this part of the country, fidelity in the discharge of his duties, and his skill as a craftsman, recommended him to higher honors, and so he was advanced to the honorable and dignified position of Grand Master of Masons in Louisiana; and so acceptable was his work, so admirable his plans laid down on the trestle board, that he was continued in the same position for two years longer, and once afterwards he again filled this responsible office.

Brother Dunn as Worshipful Master exhibited a solicitude and love for his lodge not to be excelled. As a Master Workman he laid down upon the trestle board such designs for the guidance of the craft as to greatly increase their knowledge and usefulness here below, and to eventually by the faithful performance of the aims, prepare them for the designs laid down by the Supreme Architect of the Universe. As Grand Master of Masons he felt and exemplified the fact that he was the head of an institution whose foundation was based upon Christian principles and whose principle tenets were the practicing of Christian virtue.

Right worthily and acceptably did he fill those positions, zealous and with fidelity did he watch over the interests and labor of this craft, whilst with skill and [sic] he laid down on the trestle board such lasting and enduring designs that although he lies here to-day cold and dormant, mute his tongue, still his limbs, he lived and spoke to us in his bright [sic] beneficial labors and those [sic].

But brethren, we are admonished that our beloved order requires of us meekness, patience, and humility. Death has taken one from us whose place cannot be easily filled, the destroyer has leveled his shaft at our shirring mark, and he is with us no more but as deeply as we deplore his loss' grievous and almost unspeakable is our distress, we bow in meekness and humility to the stern decree of the Grand Master above, and looking up to him say, Father, God, Thy will be done.”

In the death of Brother Dunn, we have a striking example of the uncertainty of life. Truly has it been said, that so soon as we begin to live, that moment we begin to die. You, whose hair is already blossoming for the grave, little thought that you would live to pay the last sad tribute of respect to our departed brother. But so it is, and it plainly reminds us that “in the midst of life, we are in death.” Brethren, by the indissoluble chain of sincere affection binding us together, we are to relieve the distressed, soothe the unhappy, and restore peace and harmony where it does not exist. Our duty in this case is plain.

To us is bequeathed the widow and family of Brother Dunn. See to it that you perform this sacred duty in the fullest measure. He knew, if anything he knew in his last extremity that fond hearts, brotherly hands and willing minds were near his bereaved wife

and family, so soon to be left without his protection and care. And Oh God! Thou who art the husband of the widow, the Father of the fatherless, assist us here below to protect and sustain this bereaved widow and family. To us belongs the duty; without thy aid we cannot accomplish anything. As Thou hast bereft her of his presence be Thou her helper in this last hour of need. See to it, brethren, that the trust confided in us be faithfully guarded and diligently attended to. Finally, brethren, our duty as Free and accepted Masons are charged to avoid slander of true and faithful brethren; nor must we suffer it to be done behind his back, by which his reputation might suffer. How much more sacred and obligatory is it in this case. Brother Dunn is gone: we are the custodians of his character and virtues. Let us be vigilant that the first is not assailed by – we care not whom – and that the second is practiced by us all.

Let us be prepared to defend with all our hearts and strength the casket bequeathed to us by his death, and let us all unite in fostering and per perpetuating his memory and emulating his bright example. Hope, which is the anchor of the soul, leads us to believe that when our departed brother alarmed the outer door of the Grand Lodge above, he was found worthy and well qualified and fitting to be a “a stone in that temple not made with hands, but eternal in Heaven.”

**(Source: Louisianian, November 26, 1871)**

## APPENDIX C: DRYDEN'S BIOGRAPHY OF DUNN

gether.

We learn from the same source that Mr. James Dryden has furnished the following reminiscences of the late Lieutenant Governor. He says:

I have known Oscar J. Dunn between twenty and thirty years; he served his term as a plasterer in the city of New Orleans. During the time that Ransom Place had the American Theatre, now occupied by the Moresque building, he worked for him at the plastering. Not being particularly partial to the business, he made application to Mr. John Parsons, now Recorder of Algiers to teach him the guitar and music. Mr. Parsons and T. J. Martin, a composer of considerable merit, and author of several musical compositions, undertook the task.

Between the two he was well instructed and became so proficient as to enable him to support his family subsequently by teaching.

Thinking at one time he could better his condition, he opened an intelligence office but finding it not a pecuniary success, abandoned it and resumed the profession of music, at which he continued until he was appointed by General Sheridan a member of the City Council.

The subsequent public career of the deceased from the time he was elected Lieutenant Governor to the hour of his death, familiar to all Louisianians.

Public offices of the State were draped in mourning yesterday, in respect to the memory of the late Lieutenant Governor, and the flag over the State House was displayed at half mast. Governor Warmoth has directed that the State offices be closed today, and has requested the State officers and employes to attend the funeral of the late Lieutenant Governor Dunn.

APPENDIX D: OSCAR J. DUNN'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

(SATURDAY, JULY 11, 1868)

SENATORS OF LOUISIANA—The remarks of Senator LYNCH have caused me to feel sensibly the change that has been brought about—a change which is apparent to all present. The fact that the Senate of Louisiana is presided over by a man of my race, one who has ever been kept in obscurity, shows the progress which has taken place in the Southern States—a progress more rapid than that of the Northern States, East or West—and I hope that progress will continue until everywhere throughout this land intelligence will be respected, whatever the color of the skin. Not that I claim intelligence for myself, but I hope that by your assistance and kindness toward me and my race to prove worthy of every advantage bestowed upon us. There is no one present more anxious than I am to see the State of Louisiana restored to the Union—not as it was but as it is. Previously she was in the Union, and said to be a free State Government, but her freedom was confined to one class. Now she is going in under a republican form of government, granting civil and political rights to all men. As to myself and my people, we are not seeking social equality; that is a thing no law can govern. We all have our preferences. We all wish to select our associates, and no legislation can select them for us. We ask nothing of the kind. We simply ask to be allowed an equal chance in the race of life; an equal opportunity of supporting our families, of educating our children and of becoming worthy citizens of this Government. I am truly happy that we are about to return into the Union, for I, as much as any of you, object to military rule. I believe that there is ability enough in the State to govern our own affairs, and I believe that harmony will exist among us to such an extent that no interference of military power will be necessary on the part of the general Government. Gentlemen, I thank you for the kind courtesies and the leniency you have extended toward me. If any action of mine has been considered arbitrary, I hope that feeling will be removed, and that the Senate will believe I acted under my conscientious convictions of duty, for my sole object has been to act justly with all men. Certainly I shall use my utmost endeavors to preside impartially over this honorable body, and to promote harmony and dignity in its deliberations.

## APPENDIX E: LOUISIANA'S CIVIL RIGHTS BILL

Civil Rights Bill (offered to the House of Representatives on July 11, 1868 by

R.H. Isabelle)

### CIVIL RIGHTS' BILL.

The following bill was offered in the House on the 11th inst., by R. H. ISABELLE, (colored,) and passed its first reading:

**AN ACT** to protect all persons in their civil and public rights.

**SECTION 1.** *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the General Assembly of Louisiana, convened,* That all persons, without regard to race, color, or previous condition, shall enjoy equal rights and privileges in their traveling, being entertained, &c., upon any conveyance of a public character, or place of public resort, or any place of business where a license is required, in this State.

**SEC. 2.** *Be it further enacted, &c.,* That it shall be unlawful for any person or persons, commanding any steam or sailing vessel or water craft, plying in this State, to make any distinction on board of any of the above-mentioned vessels, to refuse accommodation on account of race or color.

**SEC. 3.** *Be it further enacted, &c.,* That it shall be unlawful for any person or persons conducting or controlling any railroad company, stage line or vehicle, to make any distinction, or refuse accommodation to any person or persons on account of race or color.

**SEC. 4.** *Be it further enacted, &c.,* That any person or persons violating the intent and spirit of this act, on conviction thereof shall be fined not exceeding \$500, recoverable before any competent tribunal in this State, or imprisonment not exceeding one year.

**SEC. 5.** *Be it further enacted, &c.,* That all acts, parts of acts, ordinances in force in this State contrary to the intent and spirit of this act, be and are hereby repealed and of non-effect.

**SEC. 6.** *Be it further enacted, &c.,* That this act shall go into effect from and after its passage.

## APPENDIX F: LIEUT. GOV. DUNN TO HON. HORACE GREELEY

*To the Hon. Horace Greeley, Editor New York Tribune:*

*Sir*--For reasons that will appear in the body of my letter, I address this communication to you. On the 9th of August last the Republican State Convention of Louisiana was convened by the Republican State Central Committee at 12 M. in one of the United States court rooms, situated in the Customhouse building.

The committee determined that the door of the court-room in which the Convention was to be held should be opened at thirty minutes before twelve o'clock for the admission of delegates, contestants and members of the press. Said committee, to prevent confusion and disorder, directed the chairman thereof to furnish delegates contestants and members of the press tickets of admission, and directed that none others should be admitted until after the temporary organization of the convention could be effected.

The committee gave due notice through the press of the points herein stated relative to the time, place and order to be observed in convening of the members and the organization of the convention. In the rules established, and measures agreed upon, they followed the precedents set by the Republican State Central Committee of Massachusetts and other States, and also by the National Republican Convention at Chicago, and they in nowise transcended their authority.

For weeks prior to the convention, the primary meetings of the clubs in nearly every ward in the city had been disturbed and broken up by the supporters of his Excellency



Governor Warmoth, through organized gangs of street and city employees moved from club to club, assisted by hired ruffians and thugs. Frequently the Metropolitan police, in uniform and in citizens' dress, of which Governor Warmoth is commander-in-chief, instead of protecting citizens in their assemblage, aided and abetted violent and bad men in their efforts to prevent the exercise by the people of the right of free assemblage and free speech; said disturbances frequently extending to personal violence and arrest--the parties assaulted and arrested by the police in every instance being those opposed politically to his Excellency.

These outrages have been followed up by threats, from prominent supporters of the Governor, that the police would be used to control the convention, and blood would be shed if necessary for the same purpose.

The premises considered, Marshal Packard, the chairman of the State Central Committee, being authorized to designate and secure a suitable place for the assembling of the convention, having failed after due effort to secure for that purpose the National Theatre, St. Charles Theatre, the Masonic Temple and Odd Fellows' Hall, and finding that the Mechanics' Institute, now used for a State House, Turners' Hall and every other available hall had been secured by, and was under the control of Gov. Warmoth and subject to the inroads of his police, selected one of the United States Court-rooms then unoccupied, as a suitable place for holding the convention, and said chairman being a United States Marshal, charged with the guardianship of Federal judicial authority, made requisition on General Reynolds, commanding the department, for a guard of forty

United States troops for the protection of public property in case of a riot, and appointed special deputy marshals to execute any writ or process that might issue from the United States Commissioner against any disturber of the peace in the building.

Gov. Warmoth about ten, being one hour and a half before the time published for the opening of the court-room for the admission of delegates, having supplied himself and friends with tickets, presented himself at the Customhouse door, and he and his friends were promptly admitted. He passed the point where the troops, having stacked their arms, were talking in groups, without molestation, to a point more than one hundred feet beyond, when he demanded entrance for himself and followers of the deputy marshal in charge of the convention room. When informed that no one was permitted to enter until the doors should be opened, at thirty minutes to twelve, he withdrew from the building, alleging that he was refused admission to the convention, and that Federal bayonets were present to intimidate the convention and prevent a free and full expression of the opinion thereof. More than a week before the assembling of the convention, Governor Warmoth stated to Senator Ray, a prominent member of the State Central Committee, that there would be two conventions; and about the same time, the *Louisianian*, of which Senator Pinchback, subsequently elected President of the Bolter's Convention, is proprietor, announced there would be two conventions and justified the holding of the same. These previous announcements by Messrs. Warmoth and Pinchback show that the Bolters, Convention had been contemplated and determined upon from the beginning unless the regular convention could be manipulated and controlled in the interest of his Excellency; and the hasty, indelicate, inexcusable withdrawal of his Excellency and his adherents

from the building one hour and a half before the time appointed for the organization of the convention and before there could be any authoritative action thereof obtained, upon the false and flimsy pretext that United States troops were present to intimidate and control the delegates, was but the ill-advised carrying out of a programme that had been already agreed upon by the small but mischievous clique of bolters and disorganizers who followed the leadership of Henry Clay Warmoth.

The action of the committee was not only sanctioned by the usages of party organization, but moderate and necessary, and the conduct of Federal authorities was discreet and wise, not only authorized but demanded by existing laws, and had they done less they would have failed in their duty. In this connection, justify to good and wise men, no less than fidelity to my party and my race, demand that I protest against the officious and unreasonable demand of yourself and other outside fault-finders, for the removal of the federal office holders for their action in connection with the late Convention. We recognize them by antecedents and position as the best representatives of the National Government, and for their personal integrity as well as their political sagacity and fidelity, we cordially support them. If the President desires to strengthen our confidence in him and increase the successes of the Republican Party in Louisiana, he will not only continue these faithful servants in their positions, but give them his warmest commendation for their conduct. This statement I make with a full personal knowledge of the sentiments of my people, and with the full knowledge of the delusions and illusions so unscrupulously circulated in the North and West relative to our sentiments on this subject by Senators Lynch and McMillen, and other so-called wandering Louisiana

Republicans, whom, in common with their class, while making their money by office-holding and speculations in connection therewith in Louisiana, live principally and spend their money in Ohio and other States; and from the appearance of your journals these gentlemen are better known by you and have much larger influence in your communities than in the State of their reputed residence, which, in this instance, they grossly misrepresent. Aye, more: the persistent and repeated outrages of his Excellency and his supporters, showing not only the presence of organized assaults upon the rights of citizens as guaranteed by the Constitution and the laws made thereunder, but the connivance of the police with the evil-minded persons perpetrating these outrages, clearly called for and would have justified the interference, for our protection, of the President, under the third section of the enforcement bill, of April 20, 1871. All the material facts herein recited, and more, are not only confirmed by the conduct of his Excellency in withdrawing from their beats, and massing in the neighborhood of the Customhouse, hundreds of the Metropolitan Police, and in an unavailing effort to call out the militia for the same nefarious purpose, but by affidavits of reliable and respectable men, who were personally cognizant of the facts alleged, and said affidavits shall soon be forthcoming to put the stamp of discredit upon the telegrams and communications that have been so industriously circulated against the good same of nineteen-twentieths of the *bona fide* Republicans of this State, who make up and constitute the opposition to the administration of Gov. Warmoth.

All the censures found in the journals against the action of the legitimate Republican Committee and State Convention have been grounded on allegations in conflict with the recital of facts already made herein.

It is alleged, or assumed by the aforementioned journals, that the United States courtroom was selected as the place of meeting as an excuse to obtain and use the Federal troops against the faction of Gov. Warmoth. It is further alleged or assumed that Gov. Warmoth was, with his friends, refused admittance to the room in which the Convention was to be held after he had made an effort to obtain entrance at the time unanimously agreed upon by the committee, including his own friends among them, to wit: 11:30 A.M.

Furthermore, it is alleged that the troops interfered to intimidate the delegates, and finally drove the Governor and his followers from the Convention. Each one of these allegations and assumptions is unequivocally and utterly devoid of truth. There was not a full company of troops, no Gatling guns, no privilege of entrance granted to any delegate not granted to the bolters, no interference on the part of the military with the members of the Convention, and no Deputy Marshals in the room where it assembled--and the men who originated the allegations herein denied, if cognizant of the facts at all of which they write and speak, knew that then utterances were groundless fabrications, and unworthy of credit. Two conclusions have been reached by the journals, making the animadversions complained of.

They say, admitting the existence of the outrages complained of by us as the justification for our course in the premises, it were better that Gov. Warmoth and his

faction, by fraud and violence, should have controlled the convention against the wishes of a majority of legally elected delegates, than that such questionable means should have been resorted to by us for protection of our rights, political and personal.

To this we respond, that those who live in New York and other States, and are consequently free from the insults and evils under which we live, without any great exercise of patriotism, or exhibition of sense, can afford to give us this gratuitous and silly counsel; but we who feel the pressure of the wrongs we suffer from his Excellency's administration, do not propose voluntarily to submit to them without a struggle for deliverance, much less help to continue them. Another alternative is suggested, to-wit:

That we should use force against force, forgetting that, as in the past his Excellency had contrived to perpetrate his outrages under cover of law, so as to make the innocent suffer for the conduct of the wrong doers, so in this instance we could not use the power that our superior numbers gave us by arming for self-protection without first violating the laws of the land, and putting ourselves in the attitude of outlaws in order to exercise the right of self-defense.

Again, we reply to our journalistic censors that we respectfully decline making cheap capital for the Democracy, and furnishing occasions for the sensational patriotism of Democratic journals by becoming political martyrs at the caprice and whim of H. C. Warmoth, the first Gubernatorial bolter, and the first Ku-Klux Governor of the party he has disgraced, and is now trying to destroy. Our liberties were won by the sword and sanctified by the baptism of patriotic blood, and with the memory of the heroes who won

them fresh in our minds, we do not propose that usurpers, even though they be Republican in name, shall deprive us of them, and if protection is denied us by officers of our own selection, we shall seek it from the same beneficent national authority that first made us free, and closed as with rights of citizenship.

Among the political journalists that have given credence to the manious misrepresentations made upon the true Republicans of the State in connection with the late regular Republican State Convention, none are more prominent than yourself in circulating with alacrity said misrepresentations, and none more pronounced than you in what we feel to be an unfair criticism and unjust denunciation of the course we were compelled to pursue by the outrages of his Excellency for the protection of our political rights, and you have done us a wrong, that justice to yourself no less than to the Republican party, requires should be repaired.

The course of Northern journals, both Democratic and Republican, in view of the precedents furnished by each party in similar cases, in censuring the State Central Committee for designating the United States Court room as the place for the assembling of the Convention and the use of the United States troops under the circumstances and for purpose specified, has created no little surprise. Allow me to refer you to illustrative precedents furnished by each of the great parties:

In 1858, pending the election of Mayor, political excitement between the Know Nothings and Democrats ran so high that fears for the safety of Federal property were entertained. The Customhouse, with Col. Hatch as Collector, was Democratic

headquarters, and violence was apprehended from the opposing party. Bad men prominent in the riot of 1866, and prominent lately as the leaders of the political thugs engaged in disturbing the primary meetings of our clubs, were the leaders then. At the request of Col. Hatch the Customhouse employees were armed with double-barreled shot-guns, and President Buchanan ordered a company of infantry from Baton Rouge to this place. Said employees and infantry occupied the building for more than a week, the Collector himself sleeping therein, and in the meanwhile the best citizens were excluded from the building, except when actual business, satisfactorily attested, entitled them to enter.

Again, in the election in October, 1870, in this State, for similar reasons, and with the approval of Gov. Warmoth, on the requisition of Marshal Packard, Federal troops were placed in the Customhouse, and one of the first parties asking the interference, in this latter instance, of the Federal authorities for the protection of his rights as a citizen under the Federal Election Law, was a Democrat. There was no enforcement bill, yet Federal interference was sought and obtained, bloodshed and riot in both cases prevented, and the troops neither intermeddled with law-abiding citizens, nor intimidated them in the free exercise of their rights. Strange that either Democrat or Republican with such antecedents should now censure us.

In your case we were not only surprised but mortified that one who had so fearlessly advocated the necessity of the legislation known as the Kuklux bill and its cognates, against the apprehended outrages upon the citizens of the colored race by ex-



Confederates who only partially accept the reconstruction laws, should be the foremost journalist gratuitously to denounce us for seeking the protection from the National Government authorized by the Constitution and laws, and the first to palliate and defend a pretended Republican Governor who has dared to perpetrate wrongs against his own party similar in character and enormity to those alleged to be perpetrated by, or apprehended from the anti-Republican political elements of the country. In view of your known liberality, reputed fairness and admitted fidelity to the principles and interests of the Republican party, your course is somewhat anomalous and inexplicable to us

It did not surprise us that the New York *Sun*, which seems to think that hatred of the President is a virtue that compensates for all its vices, should traduce us as an excuse to assail General Grant, but we expected better information and better treatment from you.

I am not an agriculturist, Mr. Greeley, but I have always recognized agriculture as not only an honorable and valuable industry, but I have welcomed the philosophical research and painstaking experiments that have elevated this industry beyond the position of a pursuit to that of a science, as one of the most substantial evidences of human progress. Stimulated by the desire to the extent of my opportunities and time to "intermeddle in all knowledge," I had determined when occasion offered to purchase and read your work entitled "What I Know about Farming," but I confess my desire to buy, and my curiosity to read your treatises, have been somewhat abated by the flippancy and haste with which you announce your conclusions upon the merits of the controversy now pending between the Republican party on the one side, and the faction of H. C. Warmoth and his office-

holders on the other; and, if your agricultural data and conclusions are not more reliable than the assertions made, and the conclusions reached by you relative to Louisiana politics, the man who reads your book and follows the teachings thereof will never make a successful farmer.

Indeed, many of the less charitable of the Republicans of Louisiana, in view of your well-known desire to obtain the Republican nomination for President in 1872, conjoined with Governor Warmoth's secret but well-known opposition to Grant, have supposed that your presidential aspirations have warped your better judgment, and that your course towards the Republican party in Louisiana would have been more just and kindlier if you had not known that the hearts of our people had gone out so unequivocally and unanimously to U. S. Grant as our great leader in the approaching presidential contest, and in this case you have not loved the Republican party less, but Horace Greeley more. But I am disposed to account for your hostility to our people upon grounds not very creditable, it is true, to your head, but more honorable to your heart. You have been misled by the false prophets that have gone up out of Louisiana into the North. Messrs. Southworth, Conway, Herron and others of the migratory bolters of Louisiana, have not appealed by card, telegram and in person to your credulity in vain. The character of the impressions made can be easily understood by us who know their "private" walks in "public" ways. Dr. Southworth is, by the appointment of the Governor, the Recorder of Mortgages for the parish of Orleans. It is his official duty to record the encumbrances that burthen the values of our city, and he has officiously made it his business more than any other man to impose upon us the Executive encumbrance that now sits like a frightful

nightmare upon the Republican party of Louisiana, and he was sorely troubled when the legitimate State Convention at its late session refused to mortgage for another term the interest and destiny of the State to his favorite, the present Governor. The Doctor is not an untruthful man, but his capacity for declaration and assertion is something wonderful. He can manufacture for himself credentials from Washington Parish, and yet, without a ripple o'er his placid brow, can assert that he, the imaginary representative of an imaginary constituency, is a *bona fide* delegate to the Convention, and his strength of assertion is such, that he has been known to convince both the Convention and himself of the validity of his claims. He is perfectly aware that out of one hundred and seventeen delegates fairly elected only thirty-one were present in the Bolters' Convention, yet he declares with a frankness and sincerity not to be questioned, that it is notorious, notwithstanding his positive knowledge to the contrary, that four-fifths, that is, one hundred bona fide delegates were present in the Bolters' Convention, and supported his Chief, Warmoth. The Doctor, as a diplomatist, is a success with simple-minded folk. He visits your State wearing the fresh laurels of a successful negotiation in real estate. He persuaded those unsophisticated gentlemen and simple-hearted financiers, Messrs. Warmoth, West, Dibble, Pinchback and Smyth, that they would confer a great benefaction upon the tax-ridden people of New Orleans, by purchasing in their behalf, for a park, a piece of real estate from said Southworth, and Rumor has placed additional laurels on his diplomatic brow, in that it is alleged that he has perfected a negotiation with you by which your great influence will be secured, to sustain the failing fortunes of

our Governor conditioned on the support by said Governor and his clique of your claims  
Presidentially in 1872.

The poetic State Superintendent of Education, Parson Conway, has made his  
enthusiastic presence also felt by you. Conway has a poetic tendency with a financial  
bias, and in his celebrated production, "Ten Cents for Cake," upon which his claims, as  
the Warmothean Poet Laureate rest, it is difficult to tell which of these characteristics  
most prominently appears. But we know that the poetic fire still burns in his soul, for  
wherever his romantic spirit finds expression, whether in the *Sun*, in telegrams, or  
Presidential letters, his fine creative mind retains its wonted power of getting up artistic  
fictions, regardless of expense, in which, without respect to "race, color or previous  
condition," and whether the subject matter be cake, finance or politics, he evinces an  
admirable readiness to invent theories and manufacture facts to suit and advance the  
interest of his master. These pleasing fictions of Parson Conway may have received a  
heartier credence from you because you were cognizant of a fact well known here, to-wit:  
That some two or three months ago our Parson essayed to organize in opposition to Gen.  
Grant, but in the interest of Warmoth, a Greeley club in this city.

You seem also to have felt the shock of the charge made by the gallant Herron. The  
heron was by the earlier naturalists classified with the pelican, the traditional bird of  
Louisiana, though a somewhat different classification now obtains. They both frequent  
the marsh, both eat fish, but one wades while the other swims. The similarity is sufficient  
to furnish an instructive parallel for the purpose of this letter.

Permit me to say, Mr. Greeley, *en passant*, that we understand, not only the habits of our native bird better than you do, but also we are better versed in the exigencies and wants of Louisiana politicians. The bird of State--the Pelican--is mythically reputed to feed and nourish its brood upon its own blood, and our Herron is like the mythical pelican with this marked peculiarity, that he does not play the part of the parent, but that of the young bird. I am impressed that our Herron is mainly and emphatically for Herron, and his fidelity to Warmoth finds its strength not in the political, but in the financial attraction of the situation, for he holds from his Excellency two offices--Tax Collector and Secretary of State--and the commissions of one and the salary of the other, are attractive, and not to be lightly esteemed. And you have listened to the beguiling voice of our worthy fellow-citizen, Mr. Fish, speaking daily through that mendacious sheet, the *New Orleans Republican*--he and Governor Warmoth owning or controlling a pecuniary interest in the same. This paper, of which Mr. Fish--as the condition of retaining the lucrative office of Register of Conveyances, received by appointment from and held by the pleasure of his Excellency--is the editorial figure-head, has been formally denounced by the State Convention for the miscellaneous and irrepressible tendency and habit that it has acquired of misstating facts and not telling the truth. Mr. Fish, though somewhat brigandish in style, is as "mild a mannered man as ever scuttled ship or cut a throat," and as a private gentleman bears a fair reputation for veracity, but as an editor he is not considered by the general public in this role as a success.

In fact, Mr. Greeley, the impressive South-worth, with his immense power of statement and a voice like the fabled bird of Pallas; the romantic Conway, with his poetic

enthusiasnt and license; the chivalric Herron, with his fiery front and reckless charge, and the gentle Fish, not in his role of gentleman; but as the irrepressible Munchausen of the New Orleans *Republican*, have been too many for your philosophic credulity. I can imagine Southworth's chuckle, and see his mysterious smile as it casts its weird beauty over his somewhat cadaverous but majestic countenance, when he shall describe to his Excellency the way in which the philosopher of the *Tribune*, the "great and good Horace Greeley, of New York and Texas," has been manipulated by the troupe of wandering minstrels from Turners' Hall, and hear him express the result thereof in his favorite phrase for characterizing a victory: "By George, Governor, we put him right through." I give these gentlemen prominence and space in this letter, not in proportion to the moderate estimate of their value and merit entertained by us who know them, but in proportion to the exaggerated importance that you and other journalists have given to their unreliable and mischievous fabrications. It may be that, bewildered by their repetitious appeals, you may have yielded credence to their wholesale misstatements of fact; but even on this charitable supposition, you stand justly charged with having taken up an evil report against your neighbor without cause, and without due consideration you have become on the *ex parte* statement of irresponsible place seekers, a party to a most unjust assault upon the *bona fide* Republicans of Louisiana.

In conclusion, permit me to speak frankly and advisedly of the feelings and purposes of the Republicans of Louisiana.

There are 90,000 Republican voters in this State, 84,000 of whom are colored. In my judgment, a fair and untrammelled vote being cast, 19--20ths of the Republican Party in the State, including a majority of the elective State officers and all the Federal officers, with few exceptions, are opposed to the administration of the present State Executive.

The party is not divided, nor does it propose to be, but it is resolved that its servant, the present Executive, shall not assume mastership over the people who made him, and shall not use the prerogative and power that was given him by the people to oppress and crush them; and with all due respect to you and your journalistic confreres, permit me to say that we know our evils and their remedies, and are competent to attend to our own political interest, and we intend to do so without regard to outside censure and dictation. We want for ourselves and the people of all parties better laws on the statute books and better men to administer the same, and we are persuaded that neither of these wants will ever be met so long as the present Executive exercises any material control over the politics of Louisiana. We are engaged in no strife of factions, but the people gravely and earnestly are fighting for their personal and political rights, against the encroachments of impudent; and unfaithful public servants.

In your lecture, delivered to the citizens of New York, after your return from Texas, you refer to a class of men, found in all the Southern States, as elements of the Republican party, hurtful to its integrity and dangerous to its safety; and you were pleased to characterize their conduct as "carpet-bag scoundrelism" You stated that the

good name and safety of the party demanded that when these men should press to the front and assume leadership of our hosts, we should say to them: "Go back, thieves!"

We have in our midst, from the North, East and West, men who have come among us to be citizens; they have invested their enterprise and their capital in our State, and have brought their household gods with them, and they, with us, are concerned to have good laws enacted, and honest public servants to execute them. Such men are not only welcomed cordially by the native population, but are esteemed by them as a most healthy and important element to the body politic We are sale that you do not refer to this class in your lecture. But there is a class in our midst of new comers who came without money and without any fixed political principles, adventures in character, and political brokers by profession, with a single axiomatic maxim as the basis of their lives, which they always, with the pertinacity of the sleuth hound, follow: "Put money in thy purse," without being overscrupulous as to whose money it is or how the transfer is accomplished.

Your description of these men is so life-like that it must have been drawn from nature. We recognized them as we read and felt that a "chiel had been amang us takin' notes and faith he'd prent them," Would you be greatly surprised. Mr. Greeley, to be informed that in the judgment of the good people of this State, irrespective of party, that the young man who now occupies the Executive chair of Louisiana, whose crimes against his party and his people you charitably ignore and whose championship you so boldly assume, is pre-



eminently the prototype and prince of the tribe of carpet-baggers, who seem to be your pet aversion.

Well attested facts, from the official history of his Excellency, will show that the people are not mistaken in assigning to him the leadership of the class you denounce.

In all candor, we believe that his Excellency Gov. H. C. Warmoth is officially derelict and politically untrustworthy. He has shown an itching desire, as manifested by repeated negotiations with certain leaders thereof, to secure the personal support of the Democracy at the expense of his own party, and an equally manifest craving to obtain a cheap and ignoble white respectability, by the sacrifice of the confidence and support of colored Republicans, and he is much more concerned to have the *entree* into good Southern society than he is to do the arduous but honorable work of elevating the masses of that race who elected him, and to perfect harmony between the races by an impartial and honest enforcement of the law. He has so frequently violated the Constitution he has sworn to obey and maladministered the laws he has sworn faithfully to execute, that he has succeeded in destroying public confidence not only in himself but in officials generally. He has so deceived the public faith and disappointed the public hope by the facility with which he makes, and the recklessness with which he breaks, his pledges, that we, in self-defense, have been compelled to withdraw our confidence from him.

We cannot and will not support him, even though the New York Tribune should remain his champion, for such support would inevitably involve the disastrous defeat of the Republican Party in the State of Louisiana.

Respectfully,.....Oscar J. Dunn.

Source: Library of Congress, American Memory Project, "*Lieut. Gov. Dunn to Hon. Horace Greeley*", Printed Ephemera Collection; Portfolio 25, Folder 12,

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(rbpe02501200\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbpe:@field(DOCID+@lit(rbpe02501200))) (accessed on August 6, 2010)

APPENDIX G: OSCAR J. DUNN COMMEMORATION MEETING

12  
**REMEMBER DUNN, AND FOLLOW INGRAHAM!**

— — — — —  
**S P E E C H**

OF

**MAJOR T. MORRIS CHESTER,**

AT THE

**D U N N**

**COMMEMORATION MEETING,**

*New Orleans, November 4, 1871.*

Mr. President and Fellow-Citizens:

A great man has fallen in Louisiana! Muffled drums, draped banners, a stricken grief, the poignant lamentations of a bereaved people, an immense funeral cortege, a community in sorrow, the commonwealth in misfortune, and a race in mourning, are some of the spontaneous tributes to the private and public virtues of Oscar James Dunn, our fallen chieftain! But yesterday he moved among us in all the grandeur of an incorruptible official—a spotless patriot, an exalted citizen, and a polished gentleman, whose direct influence for the public weal was exerted in the humblest hamlet—in the farthest part of the State. To-day he lies in the dark, solemn tomb, whither he was borne amidst the universal respect and regret of the good and virtuous, by an

afflicted people, rendered frenzy by a calamity so sudden and unexpected, that many are disposed to believe that it was the act of man rather than the dispensation of God that hurried him to the city of the dead. When physical means are used to murder a being, a skilful examination will always indicate what has been employed and the effect produced; but there are wounds of grief, metaphysical sorrows, and moral poisons which infect the very fountain of life, and are rapid in their destruction, which have ever baffled scientific investigation.

We have a daily confirmation of these painful facts. Only last week a few impulsive students desecrated a grave in Havana, for which several of them were injudiciously executed by blood-thirsty officials, in consequence of which a father has died of grief, and two mothers have become raving maniacs. Life, you will perceive, can be destroyed in many ways, without leaving any trace of the means used.

The late Lieutenant Governor possessed the confidence of his people in a marked degree, whom they followed as their great leader. Men who had been exalted to position, and betrayed their trust, endeavored to seduce him with bribes into an endorsement of their corruptions, which he indignantly rejected. They then attempted to coerce him by threats into a support of political pimps, which he treated with contempt or hurled back with scorn. Various machinations were instituted to lessen his influence and degrade his character, in which intriguing women loaned their charms, and undertook the execution of vile plots; but the purity of his private life enabled him to resist temptation, and spared us a crushing humiliation. To all invitations for mysterious and questionable assignments in unfrequented and dangerous localities, he returned a polite reply that he could be found in his office between specified hours, for the transaction of business or the reception of visitors. When it was ascertained that he was out of the reach of corruption, unserved by threats, and beyond the seductive influence of beauty, other means were essayed, other malicious resources were brought into requisition, to reduce him in the affection of his people, and lessen his power in quickening them to a proper estimation of public men and public measures. To see a black man, born in the South, in poverty, and matured in humble cir-

cumstances, exalted for his virtues, with an innate pride to creditably sustain his commanding position in public estimation, unsullied by imputation, unserved by threats, and unseduced by sirens, from the path of rectitude, is a spectacle for men to admire and gods to contemplate!

The giant form of the late Lieutenant-Governor, bearing upon his back the hopes of a race, was a conspicuous mark for the shafts of envy, hatred and malice; and as with these means depravity always has a decided advantage, they reached his heart with barbed darts, poisoned his life, and spirited their venom into his very soul, which hastened him to the grave. As all plans of attack had previously failed, the last one, the most dangerous and deadly, caused him to bow his head in sorrow, and ask whether the stabs came from men or fiends. Those who were most intimate with him, knew how proud he was of his upright character, and what supreme felicity he enjoyed in his domestic circle; while the piercing wail of his widow, as she gazed for the last time upon his coffin remains, "*Oh, I was so happy; he was so kind and good; I was so happy!*" told of a wreck of domestic bliss, and seemed to stir afresh the fountains of grief, and roll great drops of sorrow down our cheeks.

It was a part of the plan of some of the wandering Machiavellians who recently pilgrimage to Long Branch, where they were granted short grace, to asperse as much as possible the character of Lieutenant Governor Dunn, and to my certain knowledge there was one colored man who undertook this infamous work. While in the capital of Mississippi, a few weeks ago, in conversation with my friend, Professor Lawrence Minor, the polished Chancellor of Alcorn University, upon the aspect of political affairs in this State, in which I remarked that whatever might be said of the officials of Louisiana, the character of Lieutenant Governor Dunn was above every suspicion; to my astonishment, Col. Samuel J. Ireland intimated that he knew a man who had asserted corruption against him, and in confirmation of his avowment, he said to Professor Minor, "you know him, too," to which the scholar bowed a grave assent to the remark, which indicated that he did not believe in the allegation. I mentioned the occurrence to the Lieutenant Governor upon All Saints' Day, at the corner of Canal and St. Charles streets,



where I happened to meet him, and the reply of his wounded spirit was not only an indignant surprise, but an unreserved disavowal of every charge of corruption which could be possibly be alleged; and with an unerring instinct he designated the source from whence the imputation emanated. This same unworthy member of the colored family, not satisfied with that malicious stab, and gloating over the prospects of a more deadly thrust, sent word to the Lieutenant Governor, through Col. James Ingraham, that he intended to attack him in his domestic relations.

His great frame quivered when he received the dastardly message, and though he hurled back a defiance, it was easily to be perceived that the venomous arrow had reached his heart, where its person was doing its deadly work. Though infidelity of friends, partisan treason, personal rancor, official indignities and incorporate insults had made him groan in the spirit, yet when he meditated over the impending blow that was to include his estimable and accomplished consort, and the orphaned children to whom he had been a father, his great heart burst with grief; and when disease came, his mind, which had been too heavily charged with solicitude for those who were nearest and dearest to him, immediately dissolved itself into chaos, or passed to unknown realms, whither his soul soon after took its flight. Governor of Louisiana, you who heaped unmerited indignities upon your provisional substitute, railway corporations, ye who drove the second officer of this commonwealth from a first-class car; steamboat companies, ye who refused to grant to the Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana the privileges of your saloons; unfaithful friends, ye, whom he raised from insignificance to positions by his influence, from which ye seem to glory in your ingratitude; and vindictive spirits, ye who pursued him with such unrelenting fury, go to yonder city of the dead and look upon your ghastly work. Here in the presence of the sovereign people, in obedience to a conviction of duty and a sense of justice, and in the full faith of a retributive judgment, I arraign you, one and all, to answer before the bar of public opinion for the moral murder of Oscar James Dunn.

You all know how much he loved his people and how faithfully he was devoted to their interests. In this city, he had

established a character for honesty and integrity, against which the foul breath of suspicion was never breathed except by one man, and that—Oh, God! what a humiliating confession—was from the lips of a colored man. While Democrats, ex-Rebels, Conservatives, Republicans, and, in fact, men of every shade of political opinions in the State, and beyond its borders, have divested themselves of prejudice, and testified to the purity of his private and public character, the deep and damning disgrace of degrading him while living, and tarnishing his memory, has been monopolized by this same colored monster. For the sake of self-respect, in deference to a pride of race, and out of regard to the cherished principles which our great leader labored so faithfully to sustain, I could have wished that the first man to insult his memory had belonged to some other race than that with whom we are identified. Hardly had the tomb been closed over his mortal remains—even while the people's hearts were bursting with grief, and great drops of sorrow were rolling down the cheeks of stout men, who are not easily moved to weeping, and while the fountains of public affliction were stirred to their very depths, and seemed to surge beyond the confines of rationality, it was then that the *Louisianian*, under the immediate and responsible control of a well known colored man, in its edition of the 26th ultimo, under the caption of "A Comparison," attempts to rob him of the esteem which was so universally accorded while living, and to blur his memory. Such manifestations, over the body of a worthy and lamented citizen, indicates a malignancy of heart which would not scruple at any means, if the courage were present, and interest required it, to compass death. In this great grief in which this irreparable bereavement had plunged us, we suspended personal feelings and partisan rancor. We laid aside our political armor. We received as genuine the prompt and professed assurances of sympathy and condolence from those who had so unjustly abused and insulted our chief. We thought only of our loss and the State's misfortune, and when blinded with tears and demoralized by sorrow, we were startled by a broadside of vituperation, fired into the very coffin of the illustrious dead, as it was on its way to its last resting place.

Through vileness will be baffled, and wicked intentions brought

to nought, we shall never forget, if we ever forgive, the indignities which were heaped upon his life, and the vindictive spirit which pursues him in death. Depraved men may steal into the cemetery, burst open his coffin, rob him of his shroud, mutilate and insult his body, but they can never dim the lustre of his purity and patriotism—nor render his memory less dear to the people, nor prevent in our councils, the inspiration of his immortal spirit, flitting through the State in the accomplishment of his unfinished work. Though the blow was overwhelming, beneath which we staggered with crushed feelings and a bewildered mind, and though time has not yet assuaged our grief, a reflection has brought some consolation, which will be utilized in advancing the interests of the living, and increasing our veneration for the memory of the dead. Like the fragrance of flowers, eulogies, which a sovereign might envy, have come to us upon every breeze, which cheer our drooping spirits, quicken our devotion to the cherished principles which he had popularized throughout the State, inspire us with fidelity—which, was one of his cardinal virtues, infuse his animus into our natures, which will deaden all other than dignifying impulses, and which deepen in us the purposes to be like him, over whose grave we weep that we may live esteemed and die regretted.

When peculation had almost made itself respected by its generality—when corruption seemed to pervade every official department, and when depravity shocked public propriety by an unblushing exhibition of its defrauded wealth, it was then that his honesty of character and purity of purpose were revealed to the admiration of the State and the nation, standing as a rebuke and a reproach to every deviation from probity.

His private life was most exemplary, and his official robes, amid great temptation, were preserved without a blemish. He was the soul of honor and the type of true dignity. He passed away universally venerated and lamented, to that immaterial world, where in congratulations and commingling with martyred and illustrious spirits, he is saying to-night, "I fought a good fight upon the banks of the Mississippi—I kept the faith of the Republican principles; I resisted temptation in whatever plase it presented itself; I refused to compromise with fraud; I excoriated white treason and anathematized black traitors, and the

last order I promulgated was upon the information of good news from the Tenth Ward Club, that had remained faithful, in an important contest, sending it by one of my lieutenants, in which I said: *Tell the boys of the Tenth to stand together and be true to the end.*"

That was his last political injunction, and it still seems to be coming out of his gloomy vault—to resound from the abode of the departed; yea it has become a solemn admonition from the dead, to the boys of the Tenth Ward, to stand together and be faithful! As our souls are in sweet communion, with his immortal spirit, let us roll his last mandate along the banks of the Mississippi, speed it across the plains, over hills and dales, until it shall reach the furthest limit of the State, and be heard in the proudest mansions and humblest cabins, as a peremptory precept from the coffin of our dead chieftain, to stand with unwavering fidelity to correct and cherished principles. May the solemn injunction be swelled into a chorus by our people in every State, all over this Union, and from every quarter may there be one prolonged and jubilant shout of accord, as it is passed along the lines, in conformity with the spirit of the illustrious dead, to stand firm and be faithful. May it be the motto of every friend of our lamented Dunn! May it be the watchword of his legions of admirers! May it be the battle shout of myriads of hosts, who have vowed before God and the country to crush his enemies, and that the dead Dunn shall live again in the triumph of his principles! Such a man can never die, where private virtue and public rectitude are revered; but he will live in the affection of the people—in the bright page of the nation's history—in the cherished memories of association—in the ambition of his youthful admirers—in the traditions of a grateful people, and in the monuments of mournful hearts towering beyond the clouds, whose pedestal rests upon an enduring fidelity, while its inscription is written in the tears of a stricken people!

Though our standard bearer has fallen, the emblem of our glorious principles is still borne aloft by the gallant Ingraham, around whom the true and tried men of the State have rallied



with an enthusiastic confidence that denotes his power over mind, and his influence with the masses. While we bow with sorrow over the grave of our illustrious champion, our souls are in communion with his spirit, in which we are enjoined to hail with acclamation the coming chieftain, upon whose shoulders the mantle has fallen. Our champion is dead! Long live our champion! Let the inspiring shout which will quicken our friends and strike confusion to our foes, go up from this meeting to-night in thunder tones, *Remember Dunn, and follow Ingraham!* May it be the essence of every Christian's prayer, the substance of every minister's sermon, the sentiment of every family circle, the inscription of every patriotic club, the inspiration of every community, and the bugle call of our unwavering hosts. This demonstration, through which there seems to pervade a holy influence, attests the sincerity of the people to the principles which our lamented leader devoted his life to perpetuate; and if it is permitted to the departed to revisit former scenes and associations, the spirit of Oscar Dunn is hovering over us tonight in exultation of our fidelity and gratitude. Let us make the welkin ring with his last mandate—*stand firm and be faithful!*—until it shall elicit a corresponding response from every part of the commonwealth; until it shall reach the abode of departed spirits, and be answered back by the martyrs of July, **REMEMBER DUNN, AND FOLLOW INGRAM!**

## Vita

Brian Mitchell is a native of New Orleans and currently resides in North Little Rock, Arkansas. His academic studies have been purposefully broad and include B.A. in History, a M.A. in History, and a M.S. in Urban Studies. He has held teaching positions at Delgado Community College and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock where he is currently working as an adjunct professor.