THE NEGRO IN CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA AS REFLECTED IN THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER AND RELATED SOURCES, 1900-1910

A THESIS
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL BACKGROUND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL AND SOCIAL WELFARE ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The City of Charlotte, North Carolina, located in the western piedmont section of the state, was incorporated on November 7, 1768 as a part of Mecklenburg County. Between 1890 and 1900, the population grew from 11,557 to 18,091, which included 7,151 (39.5 percent) Negroes. But during the first decade of the twentieth century, which represents the period covered by this study, Charlotte experienced a phenomenal growth with the population reaching 34,014. Of this number, there were 11,752 Negroes (34.6 percent). This increase, which made Charlotte the largest city in the state in 1910, was caused by the development of industries and other forms of business.¹

This rapid growth in population and development of industry and business in Charlotte disturbed some of the old patterns of racial adjustment and necessitated a reassessment of attitudes on the part of both Blacks and whites.

Most of the material discussed concerning racial attitudes in Charlotte was obtained from the Charlotte Observer which constituted the main

primary source for the research on which this thesis is based. This conservative newspaper, which had statewide circulation, began publication on January 25, 1869 as an independent journal under the editorship of J. W. Wright, J. Jones, and C. R. Jones. In 1886, however, it became a Democratic organ and remained as such from 1892 until 1915 with D. A. Tompkins and Joseph Pearson Caldwell as co-editors. Under these circumstances, there will be some bias reporting of Negro activity which reflects the predominant white racial attitude for the period covered.

An example of a dominant attitude of Charlotte Negroes towards whites is illustrated in the following letter to the editor of the Observer by a prominent Negro minister:

The white man is the dominant race and according to his views of the ethics of right doing, he is moulding sentiment, expanding our civilization and building up this country. The negro, while contributing his part to the upbuilding of this country, whether for itsweal or woe, does so largely at the instance of the white man. Whether the white man comes into direct contact with him or not in business or in his religion, he, as a citizen and a man, is very largely what the influence of his 'white neighbor' has made him . . .

What should the relation of 'our white neighbor' be socially? I do not mean that we should be taken into their homes, or hotels, and treated in the same social manner that they would treat members of their own race, for I do not believe it could be satisfactory to them, and I'm sure it would not be congenial to the most intelligent and refined among my people. But what I mean is that, 'our white neighbor,' because of his advantages, ought to accord to his neighbor in black every courtesy, every kindness, every expression of humanity and good will as will inspire hope in his bosom, whether it is the unfortunate Jew on his way to Jerusalem; the untutored cook who rolls out your biscuits and prepares the pastry; the butler who stabulates your steed; or the minister or school teacher whose specific work is the uplift of people . . .

W. E. Hill, a Negro, praised the editor of the Observer and other

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3Charlotte Observer, June 8, 1903. Hereafter cited as Observer.
fair-minded citizens for statements made in behalf of the Black community. But when the editor asserted that Negroes did not take newspapers, Hill took exception. He claimed that while the number was not very large, it was growing, and in the weekly Negro journals reprints from the Observer frequently appeared which informed Negroes of what was being said about them. Professor Yorke Jones of Biddle University (Johnson C. Smith), a black institution located in Charlotte since 1867, wrote the editor that the race problem in the city was being partly solved because Negroes were striving to improve themselves with the help of the fair-minded white people.\footnote{Observer, August 18, 1904; March 10, 1907.}

In describing life in general in Charlotte in the early 1900's, Mrs. Maggie Grier recalls:

Long then so much Jim Crow. We would be standing in a store waiting on people to come wait on us, the clerks then was so superstitious over the colored people, they would look over you. Then some white woman come in and they'd run all over you to wait on them. Maybe you would be standing there a half hour and they'd look over you. There was a woman around here said the government was sending somebody round to treat you equal but it never came down to equal til these late years. We only had to go to town to buy shoes and cloth.\footnote{Interview with Mrs. Maggie Grier, eighty-three year old resident of Charlotte, January 25, 1975.}

Sam Grier described life by saying:

I was born in 1889. We had a few county stores but we had to go to Charlotte to do shopping. Everybody around here farmed or sharecropped. The streets in town were kept dirty. The streets wasn't paved, they had street cars and trolley wires above. When I went to town, it was about 12 or 15 miles, I mostly walked. We had to take our cotton to Charlotte. It wasn't until I was grown and married that we had ice boxes out here, and a man would come around selling ice.\footnote{Interview with Mr. Sam Grier, eighty-six year old resident of Charlotte, January 25, 1975.}
The reminiscences of Hercules Wilson are:

Charlotte was a very busy place and you could tell that it had a future. They had a motto 'Watch Charlotte Grow', and that seem to have taken hold of the businessmen, churchmen and everybody else in Charlotte. When shopping downtown whites treated Negroes about as they do now. Some understood that business growth was affected by how they treated people regardless of race. Some merchants would stand at the door and nod for you not to come in.

The people were not high bound religiously, they went to all the various schools and colleges. The Negro people in Charlotte, I think, were loyal to their school and their church, they were very loyal to their churches. The people in Charlotte, white as well as colored, thought well of the institution Biddle and its leaders. Dr. Sanders and Dr. McCrorey contributed to the educational atmosphere but they gave us, those two men gave of their lives for the betterment of all classes of people and all types. Everything that meant progress of the race Biddle University was in it. The community was cooperative with Biddle.

One of the strongest men around here at that time was a fellow by the name of Zack Alexander. He was an insurance man and a churchman, a good churchman and a good christian leader. Dr. J. T. Williams, Dr. George Williams, who was a dark skinned man we called black Dr. Williams, and Dr. R. P. Wyche along with Henry Houston were all very fine men here. I think we ought to pay tribute to the Negroes and white people of Charlotte for the spirit that was created during that period. It was during that period, that decade, that they began to see the need of each other. That's a personal opinion. I think the Negroes in Charlotte grew in everything that was worthwhile and somethings that were not. I believe the relationship between white and colored was as good in Charlotte as anywhere in the United States, and grew better as understanding between the races increased.

The white man used the Negro all from the days of slavery. And one of the big kicks now, the Negro is saying take your foot off my neck, you hold me down. It was during that period that some organizations were formed. The white man has found out that the Negro had some business ability. Time has shown that the Negro has grown from a little black pump to a great big bulldozer and are not going to take anything.7

The Black community slowly benefitted from some of the social and


7 Interview with Rev. Hercules Wilson, ninety-two year old resident of Charlotte, October 15, 1974.
economic changes enjoyed by the white residents of Charlotte. On April 25, 1903 the first street car line extended to the Biddleville (Negro) section of Charlotte, and by 1906 had reached the top of the hill opposite Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith). By 1905 telephone lines were being installed in the same area with twelve subscribers and the probability of several others.

However, in most instances, matters relating to or presented before the City Council by Negroes were tabled. For example, when the request was made for new horses by the Negro fire company, it was agreed that one of the old horses used by the white firemen would be given to the Negro firemen since one of the Negro company's horses had died. In 1904, when the issue of whether or not the new park should be exclusively for whites was discussed, it was decided that "no colored person shall be allowed, except they are nurses to children." In response to a complaint that many Negroes crowded about a Negro poolroom and restaurant on East Trade Street and made it impossible for ladies and respectable persons to pass, the chief of police was instructed to take steps necessary to abate the nuisance. When a Negro church asked the council for more land in the cemetery, the petition was referred to the cemetery committee with power to act.

In his history, D. A. Tompkins devoted a section to what he called the "Mecklenburg Negro." Along with a discussion of the inferiority of

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8 Observer, June 9, 1906.
9 Observer, December 23, 1905.
10 Observer, August 4, 1903; August 2, November 8, 1904; August 15, 1905.
the Negro he included illustrations of "Negro types." Tompkins asserted:

The Negroes of Mecklenburg county will average far above those in the 'low country', which means the territory lying on the South Atlantic and Gulf coasts. The county has very few of the descendants of West Coast cannibals, or 'blue gum niggers', and a large proportion Arab, Morrish and semi-civilized negroes from Central Africa.11

CHAPTER II

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The economic pursuits of Negroes in Charlotte between 1900 and 1910 were similar to those of Negroes residing in other southern communities. Although very few Charlotte Negroes received enough from their endeavors to be referred to as rich, the majority did engage in some activity to earn a modest livelihood. A Negro minister, Bishop George Clinton, asserted:

The struggle of the negro race is industrial. It is a struggle for better living—for better food, better clothing, and a better home, for a house with more rooms than one where a family may live together in decency and modesty, for better sanitation and better health, for freedom from debt, for skill in labor, for thrift, economy and industry, for opportunity and ability to earn $2, $3, $4, and $5 a day instead of 10 cents, 30 cents, and 50 cents. This is the real struggle.  

The principal agricultural pursuit in Mecklenburg County in 1900 was the production of cotton, with corn being raised on a large scale. Farmers, however, complained at this time about incapable and untrustworthy labor. One Mecklenburg farmer said "You cannot get enough good hands to work a cotton farm. The negroes in the county are growing very

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1 Observer, 24 February 1901.

trifling. They will not make a yearly contract. Indeed, they are very indolent and careless about working."\(^3\)

County authorities in 1903 took measures to deal with Negroes who made contracts with farmers and then deserted them without notice before the contracts had been filled.\(^4\) In 1905 farmers coming to town made pleas for the Observer to advertise the need for more Negroes in the county. One farmer stated:

We must have them if we have to go to Africa for them. Some people try to drive them away, but I would like to see a load come right from Africa. Labor is so scarce that we can barely get enough to work our crops.\(^5\)

The city was criticized for offering free wood and lunch to Negroes during cold weather because this practice spoiled Negroes who would be inclined to work on the farm only in the summer and fall. Many farmers agreed that it would have been easier to keep the Negro in the county if the town folk would have let him alone.\(^6\) With the increased interest in keeping Negroes in the county as farmers, Rev. William Stadelman, of Morrell Institute at Rock Castle, Virginia, offered fifty scholarships in agronomy, the study of a modernization of agriculture, to give to young Negro males in the city and in Belmont, N. C.\(^7\)

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\(^3\)Observer, 5 January 1900.
\(^4\)Observer, 20 May 1903, p. 6.
\(^5\)Observer, 7 June 1905, p. 5.
\(^6\)Observer, 24 May 1905.
\(^7\)Observer, 25 October 1908.
In August 1900, Biddle University inaugurated its annual farmers conference designed to improve the economic and social conditions of the farmers in that area. Under the leadership of Professor Henry A. Hunt, a graduate of Atlanta University in the Class of 1890, the Biddle conference focused its attention on farm ownership, how to secure a farm, how to utilize rainy days with profit, how to make a crop without going into debt, and business management. The success of this conference resulted in a larger attendance at the 1901 session.

When the Colored Farmers' Conference met at Biddle in 1902, Professor Hunt gave an address in which the purposes and work of the conference were set forth and the first day was outlined as follows:

(1) Can the farmer make money?

(2) Where and upon what terms can farm hands be purchased in Mecklenburg County?

(3) Address—J. S. Leary (Negro attorney).

(4) How can the county schools be made more useful to the community?
   (a) What can be done to improve country school houses?
   (b) What can be done toward lengthening the term?
   (c) What can be done toward securing increased salaries for teachers?

(5) How can the wife assist in the matter of increasing the family income?

(6) Shall we have a fair?

Observer, 23 August 1901. Professor Hunt later became president of Fort Valley State College, Fort Valley, Georgia.
Progress in buying land and making improvements on farms reports were gratifying. The fact that Mecklenburg County fair authorities had intimated a willingness to permit the use of the fair grounds by Negroes at a suitable time under proper arrangements was brought to the attention of the conference. The conference of 1901 had set up a committee to start a fair for the Negroes of Mecklenburg and adjoining counties.  

At the start of the fourth annual session every Negro man in the county engaged in any agriculture pursuit was invited to be present. At the 1903 conference state chemist B. W. Kilgore lectured on "Crops of the Small Farm, Their Cultivation, Fertilization, Rotation and Improvement". Rev. P. P. Alston urged the people to buy farm homes, improve their methods of cultivation, educate their children, save their money, have a good bank account, live close to God and the race problem and all the other problems would adjust themselves. Remarks were made by Dr. J. T. Williams, United States consul to Sierra Leone, Africa. One of the resolutions adopted by the fourth annual conference was:

Our people should continue to put forth their best endeavors to buy small farms and thus settle and build up homes of their own. We must realize that the home is at the foundation of all society and government. No homeless people can ever rise in the true elements of manhood and christianity.

Each year it was predicted that the meeting would be more profitable and larger than the previous year and Biddle University was praised for encouraging the conference. The 1905 conference created a woman's section which was to give special attention to butter-making, chickens

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9 Observer, 2 August 1902.
10 Observer, 9 August 1903.
11 Observer, 10 August 1903.
home fruit garden, and questions of domestic science. The statistician reported that 1,069 acres of land had been purchased by Negroes of Mecklenburg County between 1903 and 1905. The necessity of making the farm more attractive to keep the boys on the farm and away from the city was urged at the conferences. The main purpose of the 1906 conference was to discuss acreage. C. C. Moore, of the state division of the Southern Cotton Association, was the main speaker.

In February 1909 the Farmers' and Workers' Conference of the Afro-Americans of Mecklenburg County convened in Charlotte. The subjects discussed included general and diversified farming, truck farming, poultry raising, dairying, teacher qualification, increasing school attendance, lengthening the school term, maintenance of public places, house keeping, cooking, and the maternal duty in child rearing. Discussion topics were led by race leaders and all subjects were intended to uplift the Negro race. Along the line of farm problems, Sam Grier reminisced:

After the 4H Club and county agent came about it helped us out a whole lot. Our agent was Mr. Harrison and he would come out and check your farm and tell you what you should plant and what places in the ground to plant it. Along in that time some white people wouldn't give you no garden. They might give you some little old place they know wouldn't make nothing but two or three rows, you might say under a tree or something like that. The white man we stayed with didn't do us like that, but he had to go in the category of the ones that did. The colored people 'round in this area had a hard time. Some of 'em didn't know when they took the cotton to the gin to sell it what they would get out of it. The boss man would have 'em seal it up at the gin and he wouldn't know how much it was.

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12 Observer, 19 August 1905.
13 Observer, 26 February 1909.
14 Interview with Sam Grier, January 25, 1975.
The idea for a "Colored Industrial Fair" grew from the conferences held at Biddle. The first annual fair was held at the Mecklenburg Fair Association grounds in November, 1902. (Reports of the fair were found through 1904). The fair, officially known as the Piedmont Colored Industrial Fair, opened each year by the mayor of Charlotte, Mayor Peter Marshall Brown, with a parade from downtown to the fair grounds. The objective of the Piedmont Colored Industrial Fair Association was to stimulate industry, skill, economy, thrift, and develop state pride among Negroes. The whites of Charlotte viewed the fair with interest and as an indication of Negro progress.  

The admission to the fair was 25 cents. In 1902 there were reduced rates on railroads leading into Charlotte. The officials for that year were: Attorney J. S. Leary, president; Henry A. Hunt, vice president; W. H. Green, secretary; J. T. Sanders, general manager; and Dr. Daniel J. Sanders, president of the board of directors. For the first two years the fair was in competition with smallpox in the community, bad weather and a circus; however, the attendance and interest greatly increased by 1904. In that year Negro farmers held a convention at the court house to stimulate interest in the Piedmont Industrial Fair in hopes of making it the best Negro fair in the state.  

Exhibits for the fair were made by various Negro schools and institutions in the state. Included among the exhibits were agricultural products such as cotton, corn, potatoes, turnips, cabbage, wheat and

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15 Observer, 26 June 1903; 10 November 1904.
16 Observer, 31 August 1902; 20 September, 15 October 1904.
oats; livestock and poultry; and industrial exhibits that displayed Negro handiwork such as a set of harness, a suit of clothes, and a pair of shoes. Probably not a dozen persons in the city knew that such handiwork was being done by Charlotte Negroes. A number of merchants and businessmen of the city contributed to the success of the fair by giving prizes for winning exhibits. In 1902 over $1,000 was awarded in premiums. Some of the premiums given in 1904 included a set of harness, two pounds of coffee, a pair of trousers, a lamp, a bridge, a dress suit case, a gift-framed picture, a rocker and a set of knives and forks. The amusements involved horse-racing, football, baseball, shooting matches, trotting and running races, a merry-go-round, and singing with groups in 1903 from Charlotte, Richmond, Virginia, and New York.

Since the temperament of the Negro was customarily believed to be unfitted for skilled mechanical work, Negro labor in Charlotte and the South generally was chiefly agriculture and personal services. Some want ads listed in the city newspapers specifically stated that only white employees were sought, but most of the employers that sought Negro help specified such as the following show:

(1) April 2, 1904
Wanted—First-class colored barber, Thad Tate, Central Hotel.

(2) March 29, 1906

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17 Observer, 9, 10 November 1904; 6 November 1903.
For a brief spell there was a move to replace Negroes with whites in jobs usually held by Negroes. In 1904 the city decided to replace Negro street cleaners with white for the good of the service. The Leland Hotel in 1905 decided to employ only white help and rid itself of Negroes. This trend had begun to spread over the state, and was tried by many hotels and restaurants through 1909. One Charlotte hotel dining room, however, began to reverse the trend by going back to Negro help because it felt that the Negro took directions and orders better.

During such emergencies as acute labor shortages or strikes, the Negro was regarded as a source of industrial man power. The first strike reported during this period of study was in 1900, when six white brick masons working on a graded school building struck and were at once replaced by Negro masons. Later that same year a petition signed by lawyers and businessmen was circulated asking for the appointment of a Negro, Sydney Justice, as a janitor of the court house. When a foreman for Southern Bell shot a Negro lineman in 1901, four Negro linemen working under the foreman refused to work. The vacancies were immediately

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19 Observer, 2 July 1904.
20 Observer, 18 April 1909.
filled by whites, and as a result of the strike by the Negroes, the
company made it a policy not to employ Negro linemen in the future.\textsuperscript{21}

About twelve Negroes working as extra hands for the city, at a rate
of 75 cents per day, struck in July 1903 for higher wages, demanding $1
per day. The request was refused and the men accepted 83 1/3 cents per
day or $5 per week. The next month 75 Negro laborers hired by Southern
Bell to dig trenches for underground cables at a rate of 85 cents per
day struck for $1 per day. The demand was refused and 65 of the group
quit work. The remaining 10 men were then paid 90 cents per day. In
1903 it was rumored that Negro cooks and house servants had formed a union
and that a number of cooks had agreed to quit a house without notice if
the pantry was kept locked or the general keys of the house were locked
up.\textsuperscript{22}

The request of 15 cents an hour demanded by most Negro laborers
was considered impractical by whites. When a group described as eight
idle Negro men were approached to work at a livery stable at 9 a.m., they
refused to work for less than $1.50 for the rest of that day. When denied
the increase, they remained content to stand on the corner. In defending
their actions, Bishop C. R. Harris, a Negro, pointed out that Negroes were
not given the same inducement of better ways offered to white men under
similar circumstances. In reply, the \textit{Observer} pointed out that some
"loafers used wages as an excuse," and when some refused to work they must
be recognized as domestic enemies.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Observer}, 29 March; 27 September 1900; 6 December 1906.
\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Observer}, 22 July, 7 August, 23 October 1903.
\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Observer}, 23, 27 October 1903.
Whites in the city displayed a vast interest in Negroes leaving the city; they feared a decrease in the already inadequate labor supply. An editorial in March 1900 warned employers to watch their cooks because within three days 40 Negro cooks had left the city for Northern points for more money in monthly wages. In 1901, a number of Negroes went to Norfolk, Virginia; some even mortgaged their crops and belongings to enable them to leave.24

Coal field employment attracted many Negroes from January 1903 through January 1904. By January 1903 over 150 Negroes had left the city to work in the coal fields of West Virginia and Virginia. By July of that year over 300 Negroes had departed in groups sometimes numbering as many as eighty men, women and children. Emigration agents were working so effectively sending labor to coal fields, railway constructions, and the women further North as servants that the general waiting room at the Southern passenger depot was congested a great deal of the time with Negroes. Large forces of Negro laborers also rushed from different sections of the South to points in Virginia where the double-tracking system had been started.25

Some Charlotte Negroes emigrated as far as St. Louis, Missouri and Los Angeles, California. But the largest exodus was reported in 1903 when 40 families left for New York to work as cooks, servants, and laborers in the subway and on buildings.26 That same year an unscrupu-

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24 *Observer*, 28 March 1900; 24 November 1901.
25 *Observer*, 10 January, 19 July 1903.
26 *Observer*, 23 July 1903.
A New Jersey Negro was in Charlotte motivating interest and investments of five dollars cash or two dollars a month for town lots and farms in a colony to be founded in that state. It was reported that ex-Congressman George White had bought 3,000 acres of land in New Jersey, and had laid out a town of 500 acres. The plan was to sell off these lots at $60 to $75 and farm lots of 20 and 50 acres. It was estimated that 100 Charlotteans invested in the all black town to be called Whitesboro. Seventy-five Negroes who had left the city bound for Baltimore, Maryland and Culpepper, Virginia, along with a white and Negro emigration agent who had promised to pay for their transportation, suffered deep humiliation. When it was time for fares to be collected the agents could not be found, causing their ejection from the train. The majority of the 75 men had to walk back to Charlotte from Salisbury, N. C., a distance of about 40 miles. 

Following the Atlanta race riot of September 1906, a Negro exodus from Atlanta to Charlotte and surrounding areas took place in November of that year. One reason attributed to the large influx was the rumored circulated in Atlanta that there would be another riot on Christmas day to wipe out Negroes. The Observer welcomed the new arrivals and stated that nowhere else could they find better treatment or more profitable employment than in Charlotte.

In 1903 a Negro who had emigrated to the North stated that the wages were good but he could not wait to return home; that a Negro had

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27 _Observer_, 17 September 1903; 9 March 1904.

28 _Observer_, 29 November 1906.
been burned to ashes in the city to which he had emigrated. Another Negro who had gone to Clinton, Massachusetts reported that he and his wife had received the high wages that they had been promised but the cost of living was higher and the temperatures much lower. In 1904 it was reported that a number of servants that had been induced to go to the North were returning home in disgust. When a Charleston, S. C., newspaper rejoiced at reports in Charlotte papers about Negroes seeking homes and employment in the Northern states since their presence was a constant menance to white prosperity and to political and social life, the Observer rejoined that the Negro was the best farm laborer and servant in the world and emigration should be discouraged.  

An examination of Negro businesses in Charlotte for this period revealed some interesting facts. In February 1900, W. H. Houser, the Negro brickmaker, installed a new brick machine for his brick-making plant. His bricks were said to have been the best in the South. Houser was described as an honest, thrifty citizen worth $5,000 or $6,000 who had the support of many white friends in the city. By 1905 Houser's brick manufacturing plant had been so successful that he left Charlotte for Oregon to live for the fall and winter, leaving his business in the hands of his friend, John Walker.

Among other Negro business involvements in the city were: a transfer business—the only mention of this company was when its owner was reported ill on March 10, 1900; an employment bureau run by Luther

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29 Observer, 2 February, 1 March 1903; 10 January 1904; 23 July 1903.

30 Observer, 16 February 1900.
Williams; an undertaker—Sid A Coles, who became the only Negro undertaker with a license in Western North Carolina in 1903; a contractor—H. M. Grier, the largest Negro contractor in town in 1906; two private detectives—Van Griffin, and William Gould; a pressing establishment operated by John Ross; a billiard and pool room run by Kid Phelps, and numerous barber shops, a few restaurants, two drug firms and insurance companies.  

A report on local income taxpayers in 1902, listed four Negroes: (1) George W. Clinton, $200; (2) M. B. Houser, $300; (3) Dr. A. A. Wyche, $200, and Dr. D. J. Sanders, $500. Their incomes were considered enough for them to pay taxes. Under the income tax law the sum of $1,000 annually was exempted from taxation. However, in 1903, only one Negro in the city, Dr. D. J. Sanders, president of Biddle, returned an income of over $1,000.  

By October 1906 property values in the city were divided into three districts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District 1</th>
<th>Real and personal property</th>
<th>Polls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$2,115,084</td>
<td>1,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>$74,859</td>
<td>619</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District 2</th>
<th>Real and personal property</th>
<th>Polls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$11,081,267</td>
<td>2,799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>$328,875</td>
<td>919</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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31 Observer, 12 January 1904; 8 February 1903; 25 February 1906; 2 March 1904; 19 May, 25 July 1903.

32 Observer, 20 August 1902; 26 September 1903.
District 3  Real and personal property  Polls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Negro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$1,758,650</td>
<td>$74,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>$74,041</td>
<td>$754,33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In that same year it was reported that 300 whites and 150 Negro property owners had not paid taxes for 1905. In 1907 the taxable property of the races was kept separate and distinct for the first time in the history of the city. The breakdown was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Negro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of lots</td>
<td>14,980</td>
<td>1,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valued at</td>
<td>$8,324,605</td>
<td>$346,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of polls</td>
<td>2,935</td>
<td>939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous personal property</td>
<td>$2,610,640</td>
<td>$37,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank stock</td>
<td>$1,134,565</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other stocks and bonds</td>
<td>$39,540</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate excess</td>
<td>$380,475</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railway, telegraph and other franchises</td>
<td>$813,620</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money on hand</td>
<td>$230,652</td>
<td>$5,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solvent credits</td>
<td>$902,260</td>
<td>$4,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total aggregate on real and personal property</td>
<td>$14,436,330</td>
<td>$393,025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| School tax, including 40 cents on each poll | $30,046.66 | $1,161.65 |
| General city tax, including $1.60 on each poll | $120,186.64 | $4,646.60 |
| Total tax paid, including $2 on each poll | $150,233.30 | $5,808.25 |

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\(^{33}\)Observer, 14 October 1906.

\(^{34}\)Observer, 12 December 1907.
Among the more prominent Negro property owners in the city were Thad Tate, a barber; E. J. Young, secretary of the Piedmont Colored Industrial Fair Association and real estate dealer; J. T. Sanders, real estate dealer, newspaper owner, and lawyer; and W. H. Houser, owner of a brick manufacturing plant. In the Index to Real Estate Conveyances, Negroes were listed under all of the following: deeds, quit claim deeds, deeds of trust, chattel deeds, agreements, releases, power of attorney, mortgaged deeds, and mortgaged chattel. The price range of the property was from $12 to $7,825, the latter representing property purchased by the president of Biddle, Dr. H. M. McCrorey, consisting of 110 acres or more. For county property the range was from $40 to $1,000.\(^{35}\)

S. Wittowshy, the president of the Mechanics' Perpetual Building and Loan Association, was praised at a stockholders meeting of the Association in 1901 for promoting the general welfare of Negroes in Charlotte by encouraging them to secure homes of their own. By 1903, there was a great demand for nice, well located residences in the city, but the supply of such dwellings for rental purposes was almost exhausted despite the many that were being built. At the same time there were more vacant Negro tenement houses in the city than ever before. These houses were mostly on the outskirts of town and the vacancies were attributed to Negro emigration. In 1906 the trustees of Biddle University voted to purchase a suitable tract of land and establish an experiment farm in connection with the university. This tract con-

\(^{35}\) Mecklenburg County, Record of Deeds, Books 165, pp. 528, 161, 522, 242, 159, 190, 564.
tained 80 acres of well-watered fertile land near the school.\footnote{Observer, 4 November 1901; 20 September 1903; 26 April 1906.}

There were several Negro newspapers in Charlotte during the period studied. The Gazette, a semi-weekly newspaper, was established in 1903 and was exposed by the Observer only a few weeks after its first publication. The founder, D. Edward Bell, was accused of being one of the cleverest Negro swindlers to transact business in the city. He wore good clothes, and vowed that his paper was the best thing that was ever established for his race. Unfortunately, Bell used his position as editor of The Gazette to get credit from several Charlotte stores and wrote worthless checks. Bell was later found to have started other papers, sold out and swindled merchants in several cities in North Carolina.\footnote{Observer, 22 December 1903.}

The most respectable Negro owned and operated newspaper in Charlotte was The Star of Zion, an organ of the A.M.E. Zion Church. Apparently there was a friendly line of communication between the Star of Zion and the Observer. When mistakes in printing were made or controversial subjects printed in one newspaper, there was an immediate response in the other. The Observer on one occasion praised the Star for printing favorable comments about it:

The Observer is indebted to the Star of Zion, of this city, for every agreeable mention in its issue this week. It is correct in its implied statement that this paper is a friend to the colored race. It recognizes the virtues as well as the faults of the race and is gratified at every evidence that it is cultivating the one and overcoming the other.\footnote{Observer, 13 September 1901.}
When Oliver H. Arnold, a graduate of Howard University, came to Charlotte in 1901, and easily passed a rigid examination thereby permitting him to open a dental office in the city, the Observer did a reprint from the Star of Zion. It stated that Arnold was the first and only Negro dentist in the state and was fondly welcomed by the Negro citizens of Charlotte. But when the Star was incensed about bleaching cream and hair straightening product advertisements, the Observer commented:

Several hair and face bleaching white firms, who claim to have the power to make colored people's hair long and straight, and also make them white, are offering it big money to advertise their miraculous compounds, but it opposes these preparations and will not advertise them. It is well said that the black people are great imitators of the whites—unfortunately their limitation is in the main of the vices and follies of the white. They probably get the notion that by using some sort of decoction they can make their hair straight and their faces white when God made their hair kinky and themselves black, from seeing old white buds, who are getting gray and are ashamed of it, dyeing their hair and chin whiskers to make them black again. It is an effort, on the part of both to appear to be something that they are not, and goes to show how true it is that, without regard to race or color, people are, after all, a good deal alike.39

Despite these periodic disagreements, the Star of Zion characterized the Observer as the state's leading newspaper, with a liberal and progressive spirit.40 The Evening Chronicle, another white Charlotte newspaper, declared that evidence of progress among the Negro people of the city was that the Star of Zion had installed a modern linotype machine which was considered to be the highest style in the art of printing.41

In March 1908 the Negroes of the city were granted a weekly column

39 Observer, 3, 23 November 1901.
40 Observer, 7 January 1907.
41 Quoted in Observer, 13 August 1909.
in the Observer with Rev. R. H. Simmons serving as correspondent. In April 1908 Rev. George O. Bullock was named Negro correspondent to the Charlotte Evening Chronicle. The following are examples of the types of Negro community news discussed in the columns of the Observer: Negroes were encouraged to attend the Y.M.C.A. meetings every Sunday evening at 5 o'clock in the library; Church news and advice to ministers was reported by Rev. Simmons; Attention was directed by the correspondent to the increased interest of Negroes in buying land and building homes; and Rev. Simmons made a report on the ten modern Negro barber shops, and twelve clothes-cleaning establishments in the city.

There were instances of whites who left in their wills money or property to their faithful Negro servants or Negro institutions. For example, the will of D. O'Donoyhue made December 21, 1901 bequeathed $250 of the real estate and personal property valued at $55,000 to Good Samaritan Hospital. Henry C. Eccles through his will of August 18, 1906 left $500 to Good Samaritan. The will of William B. Harris on December 3, 1906 bequeathed to Cornelia Barringer, his Negro housekeeper, the house and lot she lived in until her death. The real estate value was unknown but personal property was valued at $6,000 in the will of Reuben B. Weddington which was probated on August 3, 1901. Provisions were made in the will for Weddington's Negro servant, Robert Weddington, to receive the plantation of 104 acres that he lived on for the rest of his life. A 128 acre tract of land was granted another servant, Samuel Harrison, in trust of his minor daughter Lois, the namesake of Weddington's

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42 Observer, 2 March, 6 April 1908.
43 Mecklenburg County, Will Books 0, pp. 227, 16; P., p. 188.
mother. Money made from the use of the land by Harrison was to be used for Lois's education until she reached 21 years of age and would gain full possession of the land. In the will of R. M. Miller, with personal property valued at $75,000, his servant George Miller was bequeathed $500 to be paid to him at the rate of $10 a month. 44

Many instances can be cited of Negroes remembering relatives or institutions in their wills. The will of A. W. Calvin, one of the wealthiest Negroes in the county, was probated on February 27, 1902. His real estate and personal property was valued at $2500, and the executors were to collect from a $2,000 life insurance policy which was to be used for the education and supplies of his three boys. Money from Calvin's Building and Loan stock was to be also used for their education. 45 Calvin had once owned property northeast of the city known as Villa Heights, a small residential suburb. When his will was probated, his property consisting of houses and lots was left to his wife and three sons. After the death of Eli P. Preston in December 1902, the Observer stated that because everything had been willed to Preston's adopted daughter, Willie Mae, his wife would contest the will. Preston was also one of the wealthiest Negro men in the city and the paper valued his estate at $10,000, but a formal appraisal showed his real and personal property was valued at $5,000. Seven months later the real estate formerly owned by the deceased was sold. The property consisted of several houses and lots in Ward 3 and were sold for $2,070 and $92.50. 46

In the will of Liza Smith recorded in 1905 the personal effects were

44 Mecklenburg County, Will Books N, p. 440; P, p. 77.
45 Mecklenburg County, Will Books N, p. 376; O, p. 106.
46 Observer, 20 December 1902; 21 July 1903.
valued at $50.00. It stated that after funeral expenses were paid, one-third of the remaining money was to be given to the Mission Treasury of the Evangelistic Lutheran Mission Board of the Synodical Conference for Colored Missions.\footnote{Mecklenburg County, Will Book 0, pp. 242 and 323.} The estate of H. J. Green, Negro insurance man, consisted almost entirely of real estate in 1906 and was valued at about $10,000. Isabella Wyche, principal of the Negro elementary school and wife of Rev. P. W. Wyche, died in 1906. Mrs. Wyche was described as a distinguished educator and for 22 years had taught in the city. In her will Rev. Wyche was given possession of property and the bank account. The guardian of her four children was J. D. Martin.\footnote{Observer, 8 May, 15 August 1906; Mecklenburg County Will Book 0, p. 515.}

Dr. Daniel J. Sanders, president of Biddle University since 1891, died on March 6, 1907.\footnote{James M. McPherson, The Abolitionist Legacy—From Reconstruction to the NAACP (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 291.} Considered one of the most prominent of Southern Negro educators, he was the only Negro president up to that time. He had been editor of The Afro-American Presbyterian, the organ of his church. A man of learning and culture, he had won the respect and regard of whites and Negroes alike, and was said to have contributed more to the establishment of good relations between the races than any Negro in the city.\footnote{Observer, 7 March 1907.} In his will, which was probated on March 13, 1907, he left his wife a half acre lot, $2,000, three shares of stock in Queen City real estate, 60 shares of stock in Mechanics Perpetual Building and
Loan Association, household furniture, an iron safe, horse, carriage and buggy, and a cow; to his four sons, he left $500 each from an insurance policy; and to Daniel Jr. a gold watch and chain. His store and office building on East Trade Street was also left to his sons. Each of his three daughters received $2,000, and Mrs. Sanders was to provide for his mother for the rest of her natural life. Dr. Sanders also stipulated the children were to be educated at a Presbyterian institution under his wife Fannie's supervision, who was named executor of the will.\(^5^1\)

One of the most influential prelates in the A.M.E. Zion church of the South, Bishop Thomas H. Lomax, died in 1908 leaving an estate consisting mostly of houses in Ward 2 valued at $70,000. Bishop Lomax was described as one of the most striking examples of the ideal character for his race that had ever resided in Charlotte. The A.M.E. Zion Publication House was erected and equipped through his influence; he was one of the committee members who selected the site upon which Livingstone College in Salisbury now stands, and at the time of his death was a trustee there. He believed that education was most essential in helping his people to adjust themselves to the social and economic problems of the day. He was highly respected by a large number of whites in the city for his genuine efforts to improve the status of his people.\(^5^2\)

The estate of Grace Brown was valued at $1,000 in 1909 and Rev. P. P. Alston was the executor. It is interesting to note that Mrs. Brown stipulated that not more than $65 was to be spent on burial expenses.

\(^5^1\) Meckenburg County, Will Book 0, p. 571.

\(^5^2\) Observer, 1 April 1908.
To her two granddaughters she left a lot on S. Tryon Street and $75 each out of the money at the Charlotte National Bank. The household goods were to be divided between the granddaughters and Mrs. Florence Pethel. From the money in the bank, $12.00 was to be taken for a stone tablet at the head of the grave and the remainder of the money was bequeathed to St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church. To her stepdaughter $2 was bequeathed, and to the son of Mrs. Pethel, $50.53

A very significant phase of Negro business enterprises was the growth of insurance companies which evolved from secret fraternal organizations. The development of these companies was almost made imperative by the refusal of most white companies to write policies for Negroes, or to charge them at the same rate as other policy holders. The People's Benevolent and Relief Association, one of the most progressive Negro insurance societies of the South, had its headquarters in Charlotte. At the annual session held in 1905, the directors informed the public of the remarkable growth of the organization. The officers were: Professor C. S. L. A. Taylor, president; Rev. Robert Shepherd, vice president; E. J. Young, secretary and manager; and A. A. Wyche, M. D., medical director. In 1906 the Independent Order of Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria Charter was granted to Professor C. A. L. A. Taylor. Later that same year Bishop F. H. Lomax, Dr. J. T. Williams, J. C. Clement, and others were named as incorporators of The Afro-American Mutual Insurance Company of Charlotte. Policies of all kinds were issued and contracts supplied providing for the payment of

53 Mecklenburg County, Will Book P, p. 311.
sick, accident and death claims. The new company was begun under the auspices of Negro citizens of unquestioned character who were among the wealthiest of the race. The following were elected officers: Dr. J. T. Williams, president; Bishop T. H. Lomax, vice-president; Dr. Daniel J. Sanders, treasurer; and J. W. Crockett, secretary and general manager. The executive committee was S. B. Washington and Dr. George Clement.\footnote{Observer, 11 January 1905; 24 January, 9 February, 11 February 1906.}

Two months later the \textit{Observer} complained that the Afro-American Mutual Insurance Company encouraged illness because if a person paid 10 cents a week he would receive $2.00 a week when ill. The editorial claimed that some Negroes had been laying out sick from their jobs because the $2.00 a week was more than they would make at work. In 1907 the company announced plans to build a handsome brick office building costing approximately $15,000 in the rear of the Negro library on East Second Street. At this time, the company was twenty months old and had 19,000 policy holders and 164 agents. In 1908, the company had 200 agents in North and South Carolina, and more than 22,500 members with $624,768 of insurance in force, and had paid over $25,000 to its members in benefits.\footnote{Observer, 11 February, 16 April 1906; 19 December 1907; 26 July 1908.}

The Afro-American Insurance Company grew to be the most reputable in Charlotte. In April 1909 the following statement was printed by the \textit{Observer}.

\begin{quote}
Afro-American Mutual Insurance Company, of Charlotte, N.C.
Condition December 31, 1908, as shown by Statement field.
Amount of capital paid in cash - None - Mutual.
Amount ledger assets Dec. 31 previous year - $639.63
Income - from members $26,624.88; miscellaneous $218.98;
Total - $26,843.86
\end{quote}
Disbursements - to members $10,807.19
miscellaneous $15,685.18
total - $26,492.37
Policies or certificates written during year - number
of policies 9,371; amount - $321,213.00
Policies or certificates in force at end of year
number of policies 24,842; amount $865,974.50

 Assets
Value of real estate - $1,600.00
Cash in home office - 186.72
Cash deposited in banks - 605.20
Agent's debit balances - 70.20
All other assets, as detailed in statement - $1,540.00
   Total - $4,002.21
Less assets, not admitted - 1,384.09
Total admitted assets - $2,618.12

 Liabilities
Real estate (due) - $500.00
Total liabilities - $500.00
Balance on hand to protect contracts in addition to
   the right of assessments - $2,118.12
Business in North Carolina in 1908.
Policies or certificates in force Dec. 31 of previous
year, number - 12,815; amount - $472,719.00
Policies or certificates issued during the year,
   number - 8,546; amount - $296,498.00
Deduct decreased or ceased to be in force during the
year, number 1,888; amount - $87,220.50
Total policies or certificates in force Dec. 31, 1908,
   number 19,473; amount - $681,996.50
Losses and claims incurred during the year,
   number 6,680; amount - $23,605.30
Losses and claims paid during the year,
   number 6,680; amount - $23,605.30
Premiums and assessments collected during the year -
   $26,843.86

 President, J. T. Williams; Secretary, J. W. Crockett
Home Office, 227 East Trade Street,
Charlotte, N. C.

Attorney for service, officers of company, Charlotte, N.C.
Business Manager for North Carolina home office.56

56 Observer, 27 April 1909, p. 10.
Cards of thanks from satisfied policyholders were printed in the *Observer*. The company was praised for its prompt payments of sick and death claims, and was declared to be the best company for Negroes.\footnote{Observer, 12 December 1909, p. 5.}
CHAPTER III

EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL AND SOCIAL WELFARE ACTIVITIES

Most of the educational and social activities experienced by Negroes in Charlotte between 1900 and 1910 were centered around the church. This institution served as an outlet for the Negro social mind and encouraged the development of educational institutions and fraternal organizations. In this respect, Biddle University founded April 7, 1867 by Rev. Samuel C. Alexander as Biddle Memorial Institute, played an important role.

Rev. Alexander had the idea of establishing a parochial school for the education of teachers and preachers of the Negro race. He moved to Charlotte in 1861 and in 1865, after the war, he noticed that Negroes no longer worshipped in the churches as they had done during the days of slavery. Instead, they held open air meetings conducted by one of their own. With this observation, Rev. Alexander saw the need of a school to train leaders for the race. Rev. W. L. Miller joined Rev. Alexander in his efforts since he was doing mission work among Negroes in the region. The Presbytery of Catawba had been formed and the movement for establishing a school was formally inaugurated on April 7, 1867. Mrs. Mary D. Biddle of the famous Philadelphia family learned of the work in one of the Presbyterian papers and immediately pledged $1,400 for the cause. When local Negroes heard of the first and generous contribution and learned how Mrs. Biddle's husband lost his life in the
cause of the Union army and human freedom, they requested of her the
privilege of perpetuating his memory in connection with this school.
This was granted and it was named The Biddle Memorial Institute. Mrs.
Biddle became an abiding and helpful friend of the school and watched
its development, and rejoiced in its growth.¹

In 1883 the name of the school was changed to Biddle University
and in 1891, the Presbyterian churches¹ confidence in the ability of Negro
leadership was demonstrated when the first Negro president, Dr. Daniel
J. Sanders, was elected. Thus Biddle became one of the first institu-
tions in the country founded by white missionaries to be transferred
to Negro leadership. Dr. Henry Lawrence McCrorey succeeded Dr. Sanders
in 1907 and served until his retirement in 1947, during which time the
university made great strides. He was an alumnus of Biddle and had
graduated from all of its schools, then took courses at the University
of Chicago in Hebrew and Arabic. At the time of his election he was
performing the duties of dean of the theological department of the school.²

Church related schools began to sing to survive at the turn of the
century. They sang to open wide the door to opportunity. Biddle at-
ttempted to strengthen its life-line through the medium of singing in
1907 when Dr. Thomas A. Long organized the first University Quintet. The
Quintet made its first significant appearance in 1909 on Young's Pier
on the Boardwalk of Atlantic City, New Jersey before the General Assembly

¹Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of
North Carolina for The Scholastic Years 1898-99 and 1899-1900, Charles
H. Mebane, superintendent (Raleigh, N. C.: Edwards and Broughton, and

²Charlotte Ivey Hastings, Our Mecklenburg Heritage (n.p. 1955),
pp. 46-47; Observer, 9 June 1907.
of the Presbyterian Church. The Quintet sang for that same body for more than thirty consecutive years following the initial appearance.  

Biddle had four departments: industrial, classical, normal and theological. The alumni numbered 806 in 1907 with 419 from the industrial and normal schools, 270 from the classical, and 117 from the school of theology. For the first twenty-five years of Biddle's existence the faculty consisted of white professors, but in 1891 several Negroes were substituted, and by 1894 the entire faculty was Negro. It was reported that the white people of the city neither fully understood or appreciated the institution. Students in the industrial school were taught printing, tailoring, wood working, shoe repair, shoe making and various other trades; and they built and designed the houses occupied by the professors during vacation months. Biddle students were so eager to learn, that very small boys and full grown men sat on the same seat in class. The older boys seemed to have realized they were there for a purpose and there seemed to have been no false pride. An Observer reporter said that he had never thought of Biddle seriously until he noticed the books belonging to a shoe shine boy, a Biddle student. After asking the boy to read a line or two of Latin he replied: "I was surprised to hear him rattle it off as though his skin were pure white." An education at Biddle was said to have been not only of the head but the heart and hands as well.  

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4 McPherson, Abolitionist Legacy, p. 291.  
5 Observer, 28 April 1901, p. 11.
Rev. Hercules Wilson, a student at Biddle in the early 1900s, recollects:

Biddle University was one of the best colleges for Negroes in North Carolina. It seems to me colleges were supported in every way largely by the church and the churches were very much interested in seeing Charlotte grow. The schools were really sectarian. At any rate the curriculum consisted of all the subjects that were being taught at the various colleges at that time, but in a rather small degree individually. They were growing.

Dr. Daniel Jackson Sanders had an impressive personality, you wouldn't look at him and think of him as just an ordinary Negro teacher. You would look at Dr. Sanders and he had a personality that would arrest you right away. Dr. McCrorey signed my diploma, the classes of 1907 and 1908 was the first diplomas he signed. Dr. Sanders and Dr. McCrorey were both well thought of. We did not have at that time the conveniences that students enjoy now, library books and no library facilities in comparison, but we did the best we could with what we had and so Johnson C. Smith kept growing.

At that time there were two brick buildings on the campus, Carter Hall and the main building. I started at Biddle in 1903. During the time entering after Dr. Sanders's death there was no president but Dr. George Davis called very affectionately by the boys 'Clink' served. Biddle students went to Seventh Street Presbyterian Church.

One example of Biddle's involvement with the educational aspirations of the city was the Colored Teacher's Institute held annually at the institution. The institute was intended to improve the schools of the city by offering lectures on how to teach the following subjects: arithmetic, spelling, language, geography, history, school management, pedagogy, and hygiene. An examination was given at the end of the sessions to determine if the person qualified for a teaching certificate. The attendance was usually between 20 and 113 annually.

Although the Presbyterian Church through Biddle University seemed


to have been most prominent in the educational life of the Negro community, there were other denominations that supported schools on a smaller scale. In 1900, according to the Charlotte City Directory, there were eight Baptist, eight Methodist, four Presbyterian, one Episcopal, one Congregational, and one Lutheran church for Negroes in Charlotte. Between that time and 1907 the number of churches added were four Baptist, two Methodist, two Presbyterian, and one Lutheran. After 1865 when many schools were connected with the church, First Baptist Church established the Wharton Normal Institute and Rowan Normal and Industrial School. In 1901, besides training girls in dressmaking, the Wharton Normal and Industrial School also gave students instructions in pulp-making. Both white and Negro citizens of Charlotte were generous in their contributions to the school. The president of Wharton, Rev. C. C. Somerville, was the pastor of First Baptist Church. Later the school expanded its courses to include training in domestic science, cooking, carpentry and brick laying.  

Rowan Normal and Industrial School was due to Rev. Somerville's efforts. In 1902 the school was praised for its excellent work among the Negroes of the city. The curriculum included grammar, cooking, sewing, housekeeping and various trades for boys. The school stressed the importance of an industrial education for Negroes and thought of it as the best form of education. Working with Rev. Somerville were two female teachers. The school motto was "Plow deep while sluggards sleep and you'll have corn to sell and keep."  

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8 Observer, 29 August 1901, p. 6.
9 Observer, 4 September 1902.
St. Peters Catholic School for Negro Catholic children of Charlotte was opened in September 1903. The school was conducted by the Sisters of Mercy in the rear of the white St. Peters Church. St. Michael's and All Angels Episcopal Church was established in 1882. Soon thereafter a mission for Negroes was conducting services in an old dilapidated building. The founders of St. Michael's realized that they could not carry on their work to any degree of success without the aid of a parish school. Thus, in the spring of 1884 a parish school was opened. Because of the rapid growth of the school an industrial department was added to teach boys and girls how to do some of the practical things of life, such as dressmaking, nursing, cooking, house keeping, house building, shoe making, printing and cabinet work. Also the school administrators were trying to check the strong tide of idleness and crime that seemed to have been leading so many youth to destruction.

The city Negro school occupied an old building in the First Ward in 1882 when the graded schools were organized in Charlotte. In 1886 Myers Street School was built with two stories and eight rooms at a cost of $2,800 thereby eliminating the first school. By 1904 Myers Street had sixteen teachers and Mrs. Isabella Wyche was the teaching principal. This was the only public school for Negro children until 1907 when the city limits were extended. Grades one through eight were taught. The school hours were from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., a half hour longer than the

10 Observer, 26 September 1903.
11 Observer, 22 November 1908.
12 Observer, 6 November 1905.
white school to avoid fights that might occur if both schools were on
the street at the same time.\textsuperscript{13} The course of study was about the same as
that of the two white schools except music and drawing was not taught
in the Negro school.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1906 Myers Street was hopelessly over-crowded in a majority
of the rooms with a total school population of 1,202. An appeal was
made for recommendations to relieve the congestion.\textsuperscript{15} In 1907 Biddle-
ville School with one teacher was brought into the city school system.
By September of that year there was another Negro school in Ward III
resulting from the still over-crowded conditions. In 1910 the number of
Negro children between the ages of six and fourteen in the city was
2,135, of whom 1,354 or 63.4 percent were in school and 781 were not.\textsuperscript{16}
A report on the city graded schools in 1904 revealed the following
interesting observations:

While discipline at the white school is good, that at the
negro school is better. The negro children walk a chalk line,
literally. \ldots The negroes are not so nearly exuberant on
the playground as the whites. There was much less rolloocking
and shouting among them. They take their work in profound
seriousness. They are cleaner and more neatly than you
would suppose, especially in the higher grades.

From the first grade up the sizes are jumbled a good deal.
Sometimes a fellow with a moustache or nearly grown woman would
be found sitting among tiny children. What will surprise you
most of all is that the language they use is almost painfully
correct. The good old negro dialect is hardly in evidence. \ldots

Of three best teachers in the school none of them are full-
blooded negroes, and two of them are almost white. The principal
was asked how the full-breed negro compared as students with
the half-breed. She said that there is no varying difference

\textsuperscript{13} Harry P. Harding, \textit{The Charlotte City Schools} (Charlotte: Public

\textsuperscript{14} The Code of The City of Charlotte (Charlotte: News Printing

\textsuperscript{15} Observer, 3 October 1906.

\textsuperscript{16} Bureau of the Census, \textit{Negro Population 1790–1915} (Washington:
between them, but that if she were compelled to say one or the other, she would say that in her experience, the full-breeds were better. Judging from the recitations that day, the pure negroes will certainly bear off the palm. In one of the best classes the brightest children mentally were the darkest epidermically . . . . The students are pathetically in earnest; they are orderly; they are mannerly; they are as a whole clean and the chances are that they will make good citizens.17

Public library service began in Charlotte in 1900. In the act that authorized the library and appropriated funds, section two which was ratified March 15, 1901 stated:

That all citizens of the City of Charlotte shall have free access to and the use of the books in all the free libraries in the City of Charlotte now established or hereafter to be established. . . . Provided, the white and colored people shall be provided separate rooms, books and apartments.18

In October 1902 the school commissioners announced that sooner or later a library for Negroes would have to be established in the city. The commissioners were petitioned in July 1903 to grant the use of a fire engine house on Church Street for the establishment of the Negro library, a site that was said to have been accessible to the Negro population and cheap.19 Instead, Mayor Brown in May 1904 purchased a lot on the corner of East Second and South Brevard Streets at an auction for $1,200 to be the site of the Negro library.

By September 1904 plans for the library were nearly completed and called for a brick structure on a 60 x 150 ft. plot at a cost of $2,200. It was to be managed by six Negroes serving as trustees. Since

17 *Observer*, 21 November 1904.
19 *Observer*, 7 July 1903.
it had been estimated that Negroes paid four percent of the city's taxes, the library would be allowed an advantage in proportion to the amount of taxes. More important, it was gratifying to the Charlotte community that it was to be the first to put into practical application the idea of a library exclusively for Negroes. The contract was awarded to a Negro contractor, W. W. Smith, with a bid of $2,063.88 with an additional $150 for plumbing. The building was to contain a lobby, stack-room, two reading rooms and a rest room.20

Several baseball games were played by two Negro teams to raise money for the library. The teams were called the Fats and the Leans and usually played on Friday and Saturday afternoons at Latta Park. Admission was five and ten cents with all proceeds going to the Colored Carnegie Library. By March 1906 a number of citizens had expressed a desire to donate books to the library. Thad Tate, the well known barber, was in charge of the collections. Through the Observer the trustees of the library expressed thanks for donations from local citizens in both money and books.21

Aside from church services on Sunday and prayer meetings on Wednesday evenings, the next regularly scheduled meetings for Negroes in Charlotte were those of fraternal orders. Secret societies were one of the avenues used by Negroes to adjust to their minority status. The formal structures of Negro fraternal orders were almost exact replicas of white orders.

20 Observer, 24 September 1904; 3 March 1905.
21 Observer, 12 June 1906.
Negroes' secret societies allowed them to inhabit a world of nobles for a day, when their lives were most of the time spent in menial tasks and servile roles. The following Negro lodges were listed in the Charlotte City Directory in 1902: Unique Lodge, Paul Drayton, North State Lodge, Pride of Sharon Lodge, Rising Star, United Order True Reformers, Queen State Fountain, and United Order True Reformers, Charlotte Fountain. By 1907 neither Order of True Reformers was listed but the Queen City Lodge had been added. A Negro Elk's Lodge was organized and chartered in Charlotte in February 1903, and after a visit by the supreme organizer of the Elks in April of that year, forty Charlotte Negroes were initiated. By 1908 the Knights of Pythias was also a part of the secret societies for Negroes in the city.

Among other social activities enjoyed by Charlotte Negroes were:
(1) Biddle baseball games with various colleges; (2) games by local baseball teams as well as benefit games for the Negro library and Good Samaritan Hospital; (3) excursions to North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia that were church related; (4) camp meetings; (5) cake walks, festivals, carnivals, and picnics; and (6) various minstrel shows at the Academy of Music. Most of the minstrel troupes were all Negro. During performances at the opera house the balcony and gallery were always reserved for Negroes. Most social activities reported in the newspapers reserved seats for the white citizens of the city, and frequently many of them attended.

23 Observer, 2 April 1903.
Negroes in Charlotte were concerned not only with education for the young and social outlets for the adults, but also with social welfare for the needy of all ages. They often raised money to supplement the insufficient funds allotted to public institutions.

In this regard, the Mecklenburg County Home took care of the homeless and unfortunate people of the county and city of Charlotte. In 1902, the highest number ever cared for at the home was 76; 43 whites and 33 Negroes. Plans for three new one-story brick structures for the home were completed in 1904; one for occupancy by Negro men, one by Negro women, and the third by insane Negroes. In addition, provisions for a main building to be occupied by the white inmates were also made.\(^{24}\)

In August 1906, a committee from the board of county commissioners visited the county home property in Crab Orchard township and selected the site for the new Negro home planned for erection in the fall. The cost was estimated at $8,000 with accommodations for 40 to 50 inmates. The expected date for completion of the new home was December 1, 1906. The third building for the insane was to include 12 cells along with physician and keepers rooms. The Negro home was to be built a quarter of a mile to the rear of the white home so both could use the same septic tanks.\(^{25}\) In February 1907, the new home was ready for occupancy.

But more newsworthy was the establishment of the Good Samaritan Hospital of Charlotte which had the unique distinction of being the first hospital in the United States, and possibly the world, to be built and

\(^{24}\) *Observer*, 9 June 1904.

\(^{25}\) *Observer*, 26 August 1906.
operated exclusively for Negroes. The same group of people who made possible St. Peter's Hospital for whites took responsibility and credit for Good Samaritan. On December 18, 1888, the cornerstone of the original building for Good Samaritan was laid and officially dedicated on September 23, 1891. This hospital, located at 405 West Hill Street, was used for Negro patients and by both white and black doctors.\footnote{Blythe and Brockman, \textit{Hornet's Nest}, p. 315.} The Negro graded school, St. Michaels church school, and the Brotherhood of St. Andrew often gave donations for the support of the hospital. The hospital often sent messages to the newspapers concerning the condition of patients, well-known citizens of upstanding in the community, or shooting victims.\footnote{\textit{Observer}, 4 December 1900, p. 3.}

At a board of aldermen meeting in 1902, the managers of Good Samaritan read a petition stating:

\begin{quote}
. . . the city has allowed sick negroes to be sent there (to the hospital), by the city physician, and has paid the bills on presentation. But since January 1, 1902, to August 1st, seven months, the city has paid to Good Samaritan Hospital just $3, being three days board for a woman named Lizzie Roseboro. . . . Our object presenting this appeal is to request your honorable body to make some provision to assist the managers to maintain this charity . . . . We ask at least $300 a year and are willing to give full value in return by caring for the sick.
\end{quote}

The board took no action on the petition, but indicated it would see to it that the charity patients would continue to be sent to the hospital and the bills paid by the city.\footnote{\textit{Observer}, 2 September 1902.}

The efforts of Rev. G. H. Atkinson to raise money to buy two ambulances for the city's hospitals were greatly appreciated by the officers.
of Good Samaritan. By March 1903, Rev. Atkinson had raised $550 and turned the money over to a committee appointed to buy the ambulances. At the close of 1902, the hospital was deeply in debt. A new building had been completed but could not be used because funds were needed for furniture and equipment. Emphasis was placed on a number of valuable boxes of clothing, bedding and hospital necessities donated by branches of the Woman's Auxiliary of the dioceses of western New York and New Jersey.29

In the hospital report for 1903, a special plea for assistance was addressed to the Negro population and the cooperation of all charitable citizens was elicited. Mention was made of the donation of funds for putting in a furnace and water in the operating and laundry rooms by a woman in New York. A new roof for the older part of the house, gas, insurance, furniture and instruments were listed among the things needed. The hospital was especially pleased with the report of McD. Watkins, a dairy farmer, who proudly stated that each of his sixteen Negro employees cheerfully agreed to give to Good Samaritan one day's pay in the year, ranging from $.50 to $2.00.30

In 1905 41 patients paid at the rate of $1 a day for 648 days; 47 patients paid $.41 a day for 670 days; and 65 patients received treatment for 747 days for nothing. The cost of the hospital's rate for each patient per day was $1.25. A plea for aid was made. Once again baseball games were played between the two Charlotte Negro teams in 1906, the Fats and

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29 Observer, 31 March, 1 February 1903.
30 Observer, 28 February 1904; 29 August 1905.
the Leans, this time for the benefit of the hospital. The two teams were described in the newspaper as follows:

Tom Alexander, the baggage wagon black elephant, and Oscar Jackson, the general factotem of the Charlotte National Bank, will manage the Fats, while Thad Tate and Rafe Caldwell, two barbers, will muster the Leans.

But, the chief feature of the line up will be William Gorrell, of the Manufacturer's Club, who is to umpire the game.31

The games were played at the fair grounds and were said to be successful.

It was reported that as many people as read the posters attended the games. The admission was 10¢ per person.

When Thanksgiving thanks were printed in 1907, two groups were added to the graded school and St. Michael's School. These groups were the Ebenezer Baptist Church and the Knights of Pythias Lodge No. 59. In 1909 the Observer reported on the six hospitals of the city. The following was printed about Good Samaritan:

This institution was opened for patients September, 1891, after nearly four years spent in collecting funds for its erection.

This institution was really founded in the spring of 1888 by Mrs. John Wilkes for the benefit of colored people of this city and community . . . .

It is a charity hospital, as no patient pays the cost of treatment. The cost per day is at least $1.40 . . . . There are 74 beds for patients besides a maternity ward . . . .

It is impossible to tell of the comfort this refuge for destitute sick, and for those who are better off, has given to the colored people. They have everything which in their homes are in most cases denied them. Warmth, good beds, proper food, careful nursing and the best skill of the Charlotte physicians.

The number treated increases annually and for several years has been over 200. Special gifts have been made for installing

31 Observer, 16 August 1906.
electric lights and for other equipment. Now the great need is for up-to-date new sterilizer, which will cost about $300 and which the managers are absolutely unable to provide. The cost of maintaining the hospital increases yearly. The total number of patients treated in the 17 years was 2,630.\textsuperscript{32}

Generally, Negro druggists and physicians were held in high repute. In 1903 Dr. W. H. Vick of Charlotte was praised by the Observer as a Negro with a good reputation. It was stated that there were plenty of white people who would sign a petition to the effect that Vick was of good character and administered the affairs of his drug store, on Trade Street, to the satisfaction of all its patrons. In 1906 it was reported that of the 132 applicants for doctor licenses, 85 were successful and six of the Negroes applying had passed.\textsuperscript{33} A three day session of the Negro North Carolina Medico-Pharmaceutical Association met in the city May 29, 1906. Dr. A. A. Wyche made the welcome address on behalf of the city physicians. with the welcome on behalf of the pharmacists being made by Dr. H. A. Fisher. An address entitled "Dentistry" was given by Dr. W. A. Pethel of Charlotte. The second session of the association was held at Dr. Pethel's office at 33 1-2 W. Trade Street. In 1908 there were 81 Negro doctors in the state, 34 pharmacists and 4 dentists. When the North Carolina Medical Pharmaceutical and Dental Association met in Winston-Salem, North Carolina at its nineteenth annual session, Dr. A. A. Wychewas elected secretary and treasurer and Dr. W. A. Pethel was elected corresponding secretary.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32}Observer, 18 April 1909.
\textsuperscript{33}Observer, 8 January 1903; 30 May 1906.
\textsuperscript{34}Observer, 19 June 1908.
CHAPTER IV

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

In the campaign of 1876, the determination of North Carolina whites to redeem the state from "ignorant Negro rule," created consternation among the Negroes of the state. Drastic steps to decrease the Negro voting power were taken by the state legislature. Registrars and judges were given wide and almost autocratic powers, and residence requirements and the right of one voter to challenge another were skillfully used to accomplish this objective.¹

In order to escape this situation, a few Negroes expressed an interest in Liberia and the then fading American Colonization Society, which was founded in 1817 to colonize free American Negroes in Africa. During the first ten years of Democratic rule after 1876, this interest became more intensified. The talk of a Liberian exodus from the city of Charlotte was promoted by the white president of Biddle (now Johnson C. Smith) University, Dr. S. Mattoon, who, in 1877, submitted a series of eight questions to the American Colonization Society. These questions pertained to the cost of transportation to Liberia, aid to Negroes by the society and Liberian government, and conditions aboard ship enroute to Liberia. However, Negro politicians, ministers, merchants and businessmen

adopted a conservative, if not hostile, view toward any efforts to remove Negroes from North Carolina because of their dependency on whites. Whites, on the other hand, were divided about exodus or emigration.²

While Negroes voted in fairly large numbers in the seventies, eighties, and the early nineties, from 1890 onward Negro disfranchisement became a leading issue. Sentiment for and against the pending suffrage amendment had been built up during the summer and fall of 1899. The Democratic newspapers stood solidly behind the proposal to eliminate the Negro from the electorate, and most of them preferred a constitutional amendment with the objective of restricting Negro suffrage to any other method.³

The gubernatorial nomination acceptance speech delivered by Charles B. Aycock on April 11, 1900, centered on Negro domination, the need of good government, and the unfitness of the Negro to govern. Aycock concentrated on convincing the people of a temporary need for the removal of the Negro from politics, and uniting in the cultural and material advancement of the state. Since the Negro was biologically and intellectually inferior, asserted Aycock, it was for the best interest of both races to have a compulsory segregated society.⁴ Congressman George White of North Carolina, the only Negro member in Congress at that time, stated that

²Ibid., p. 132.
³Observer, 10 February 1899.
white Republicans in the state were virtually united against the amendment and that he believed the Populists would fuse with the Republicans. It was his belief that in a fair vote the amendment would be defeated but because of Democratic control he realized that this was impossible.\(^5\)

Negro concern about the amendment was intense throughout the state. The Joint Committee on Constitutional Amendment gave a hearing to a representative group of Negroes while suffrage changes were being considered. A Negro council composed of sixty-nine delegates met in Raleigh a few days after the committee hearing. Congressman George White was among this group. The council addressed a memorial to the legislature asking that no laws be passed because the effect would be "to blunt our aspirations, ruin our manhood, and lessen our usefulness as citizens."\(^6\) Thus, the Negro population was in a period of renewed victimization. There had been a reduction in the Negro's freedom on many fronts, and a statewide restrictive suffrage amendment effort in the state had begun.

The campaign in Charlotte in support of the suffrage amendment was vigorous. Democrats organized a White Supremacy Club to help secure its adoption. The club stated its objective as being "to aid in maintaining White Supremacy and White Labor in North Carolina." The whites believed that the Negro vote was worse than an illiterate white vote because the white vote was said to be a thinking vote. Numerous articles appeared in newspapers declaring white superiority; that the white man was more capable


of government than the Negro. In most notices for political meetings it was specifically stated that the meetings were for whites only. Some notices went as far as to state: "No negroes were allowed to attend the speaking to-day, for sanitary reasons."\(^7\) Strong arguments were presented daily in support of the amendment:

The negro is inferior to the white man in intellect. Brain is the physical basis of intellect, the capacity of the cranium is the recognized criterion of mental power . . . . The brain of the negro is coarser, less dense, and has less complex convolutions than that of the white man. . . . The brain of the negro is therefore inferior to that of the white man both in quantity and quality. . . . The negro's place in every civilized government has been and is that of servant, not that of master. He must obey but cannot dictate. He must be ruled, but cannot rule.\(^8\)

All letters to the editor during the campaign were in favor of the amendment. One pointed out that white men were registering in large numbers while Negroes were apathetic. Another stated that more than 500 Negroes swore to the list taker that they had come from South Carolina within a year but were refused registration. The Observer asserted that:

It is safe to say that every negro in Mecklenburg County who has a right to register will be allowed to register and vote, and it is likewise true to state that the registrars will not permit the registration of newcomers, criminals, and 18-year old boys.\(^9\)

During the last days of the campaign, the Observer stated that the Negroes of Charlotte had not been troublesome in the campaign; that whites were confident that the full Democratic ticket would be elected on August 2 because it was the ticket of the "great white man."

\(^7\)Observer, 2 March; 27 April 1900.

\(^8\)Observer, 20 May 1900.

\(^9\)Observer, 12, 22 July; 21 September 1900.
The Star of Zion, the official organ of the A. M. E. Zion Church published in Charlotte, advised every Negro to vote against the amendment. Negro ministers were asked to urge their congregations to vote on election day and not stand around voting places in groups talking in the presence of whites. Negro race leaders were also asked to encourage their voters to be orderly.10

Headlines on August 3, 1900 of the Observer stated that there had been a white supremacy landslide, the amendment was carried by an overwhelming majority of nearly sixty thousand in the state. The editorial proudly announced:

The Negro's Farewell

At one of the election boxes in this city yesterday afternoon, while a number of white Democrats were getting the amendment and the Democratic ticket on one side of the street and the lot of negroes were handing anti-amendment tickets on the other side a man came along with a camera and took pictures of what he termed 'the sheep and the goats'. This attracted a crowd and some one cried out to the negroes who were voting: 'You, had better kiss the box good-bye'. The suggestion attracted several of the colored men who leaned over and kissed the ballot box a fond farewell.11

The constitutional amendment with the objective of restricting Negro suffrage was passed on August 2, 1900. A grandfather clause, a poll tax, and literacy test were added to the list of requirements with this action. Sections four and five of the suffrage amendment were designed to disfranchise illiterate Negroes without disfranchising illiterate whites:

Section 4: Every person presenting himself for registration shall be able to read and write any section of the Constitution in the English language; and in addition thereto, shall

10 Quoted in Observer, 28 July 1900.
11 Observer, 3 August 1900.
have paid on or before the first of March of the year which he proposes to vote, his poll tax, as prescribed by law, for the previous year, and shall exhibit his receipt therefore when he offers to vote. Poll taxes shall be a lien only on assessed property, and no process shall issue to enforce the collection of the same except as against assessed property.

Section 5: No male person who was on January 1, 1867, or at any time prior thereto entitled to vote under the laws of any state in the United States wherein he then resided, and no lineal descendant of such person, shall be denied the right to register and vote at any election in this State by reason of his failure to pass the education qualification prescribed in Section 4 of this article; provided he shall have registered in accordance with the terms of this article prior to December 1, 1908, and no person shall be entitled to register under this section after that date.12

Several reasons were given for the Negro not taking a more active interest in the election: (1) the Democratic majority had said in no uncertain terms during the campaign that the Negro was not expected to vote; (2) it was believed that most Negroes probably chose to remain on good terms with their white neighbors and employers by staying away from the polls because of public opinion.13 No statistics are given for registration, but of the 12,586 males of voting age in Mecklenburg County in 1900, 5,063 or 40.2 percent were Negroes.14 The Presbyterian Standard, an organ of that denomination, commented on the result of the August 2, 1900 election as follows:

'It does not need a prophet's eye to see that the negro is going to need protection from the hoodlums of our own race. We must protect him. Nor is it necessary to be a prophet's son to predict that in years to come and not so far away, the better class of negroes will regard such protection by their votes in the


14 Twelfth Census of the United States 1900, Vol. II: Population,
interests of good government and high morality for which their protection stand. They behaved well during the recent campaign, and at the election many abstained from voting while many others voted for the amendment and the Democratic ticket. So likewise did many Populists and Republicans, and it cannot be doubted that they did this in confidence in the pledges of Mr. Aycock, Chairman Simmons and others, that with the adoption of the amendment the race issue would be eliminated from N. C. politics. We owe it to honor and good faith these pledged be observed. We owe it to these black people who have just been disfranchised that no unwarranted, unnecessary hatred be excited against them.15

On the other hand, the Afro-American Presbyterian made this pertinent observation:

If the colored people had any fears—baseless fears as they might have been—that the passage of the amendment by a 50,000 majority meant they had no friends left among the white people, these fears will disappear as a result of the protest on the part of the best whites against the resurrection of the negro issue. The negro is realizing, that it is only the unscrupulous politician that is raising the negro cry again and appealing to prejudice and passion. The negro is realizing that while the whites were determined to refuse the ballot to the illiterate negro, nevertheless, these very people are the negro's best friend. This realization means much to both races and to, 'the peace and dignity of the State'. It means an adjustment under the new conditions, an assurance to the negro, a guarantee to him of protection and friendship.16

The adoption of the suffrage amendment was regarded as a final solution to the Negro as a factor in North Carolina politics. As the illiteracy rate was 47.6 percent among Negroes in the state, the literacy requirement for voting was written into the state constitution. North Carolina was the fourth state of the South to adopt a constitutional amendment depriving the majority of the state's Negro citizens of their right

15Quoted in Observer, 16 August 1900.
16Quoted in Observer, 29 August 1900
to vote. This action by the state was deplored by some progressive journals such as Outlook:

It is perfectly legitimate for a community to confine the suffrage to those who can read and write; it is not legitimate to give the suffrage to ignorant whites and deny it to educated blacks. . . . Physical terror was employed to prevent negroes from voting; social terror to prevent white men from voting. Free discussion from the platform was prevented; free discussion in the press was threatened. These methods of carrying the amendment are far worse than the amendment itself. In this respect, the dishonor of the State of this election is greater than the dishonor inflicted upon it by the misbehavior of a comparatively small number of negro officials under what was miscalled 'negro rule'. Argument is possible for the amendment; argument would be plausible if for 1908 was substituted 1902; but there can be no defense, no apology, no excuse for the methods which were employed to secure its adoption.

The plight of the Negro worsened as efforts were made to improve it. Strong men of the Negro race counseled their followers to forebearance, thrift, economy and education. Rev. Hercules Wilson remembers the political atmosphere of Charlotte during this suffrage campaign as follows:

Well I was a young man just getting from the youth stage into manhood. And I think as well as I can remember, the people were not all together in favor. There were some who thought the Negro did not need the ballot but they were few. And their objections just gave the others good talking point, show them where they should have the ballot.

Mr. Sam Grier asserted:

When I come up colored people didn't vote. The white people I guess told 'em if you didn't have nothing you might say just

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18Editorial, Outlook, May-August, 1900, p. 843.

your house and that would be all that you would not be eligible to vote, but it don't make no difference if you don't own anything you got privilege to vote, this time and day. They had 'em fooled that colored people didn't have no voice in government. They fooled 'em.  

As the presidential election in November 1900 approached, the Observer stated that the majority of Negroes in Charlotte would not go to the polls and vote. On election day, however, President McKinley was said to have had a small majority in Charlotte despite the lack of Negro votes. The day following the election it was reported that the Negro vote in Mecklenburg County was exceedingly light; that there seemed to have been no interest taken in the election by Negro citizens. But Negro participation in politics continued to some degree in the city in the face of great odds, while whites in the county were urged to register and fully exercise their voting privileges.

In spite of these circumstances, two years later 2,200 Negroes were registered in the county. The chairman of the Democratic executive committee was quoted as saying "And how then can we take the Negro out of politics?" On September 9, 1902, Negro Republicans advertised in the Observer:

Colored Republicans to Meet

The colored Republicans of Mecklenburg are to have a caucus in Charlotte Saturday. The call for the meeting is signed by H. M. Grier, Oscar J. Jackson and A. J. Stewart, committee-men from Ward 2, box 2. They announce that the meeting is to be held to consider 'matters of importance', and all colored Republicans are invited to attend.

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20 Interview with Sam Grier, eighty-six year old citizen of Charlotte, January 25, 1975.

21 Observer, 7 November 1900.

22 Observer, 1 August 1902.

23 Observer, 9 September 1902.
Five days later the Observer gleefully reported that the meeting had failed to materialize since only four persons showed up, and they were the ones who called the meeting. In October, 1902 an editorial expressed doubt as to whether as many as 5,000 Negroes were registered in the state. But in April, 1903 the nadir was reached when the registration in the city was reported to be 2,402, of whom only 51 were Negroes.24

The trend of Negro voting in the state was Democratic, especially in Charlotte. This trend was indicated in 1904 when a Negro newspaper, the Charlotte Gazette, stated that it was best for all the people of the state—white, black, and those of neutral tints—if the government was in the hands of the Democratic party.25

Another illustration of the Democratic trend was in 1906 when the Star of Zion, official organ of the A. M. E. Z. Church, reported that the majority of Negroes voting that year would cast their ballots for Democrats because they were sick and tired of 'lily white' Republicans. The white citizens of the state, it continued, were said to be more liberal to their Negro neighbors since the stormy days of 1898 and 1900.26 However, in 1908, the senior Bishop of the A. M. E. Zion Church, J. W. Hood, opposed this idea by asserting that the Democrats had been responsible for every national act against the Negro and had opposed every national act in the Negro's favor. The Observer boldly agreed with the Bishop and asserted that the Democratic party had deliberately disfranchised the black man.27

In 1905, J. T. Sanders, one of the best known Negro citizens of

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24 Observer, 28 October 1902; 11 April 1903.
25 Quoted in Observer, 6 November 1904.
26 Quoted in Observer, 27 November 1906.
27 Observer, 1 August 1908.
the city and editor of the Charlotte Advertiser, declared his candidacy for alderman from the Second Ward. Sander's political affiliation was not mentioned. He stated that the present administration was neglecting the Second Ward in the matter of lights and streets; that he had brought this matter to the attention of the city authorities because the Negro citizens of his ward paid taxes and deserved more benefits than they were receiving. Not since 1893 had Charlotte had a Negro alderman, Dr. John Taylor Williams, who served on the board from the Second Ward.28

During the presidential campaign of 1908, one of the Negro newspapers in Charlotte, Star of Zion, supported the Democratic candidate, William Jennings Bryan.

Negro Votes for Bryan
Leading Men of Race for Him

Dr. Clement, Editor of the Star of Zion, the well-known Colored Religious Paper of This Section of the South, Advocates the Democratic Candidate With Force—He Thinks That the Negro Has Been Mistreated by the Lily White Republicans of the State—An Interesting Interview Got by An Observer Man—A Thousand Negroes in This County Entitled to Vote—A Unique Situation Here—Will the Democratic Give Glad Hand?

"How many negroes will vote in this county this year'? asked an Observer man of a leading colored physician yesterday. "I have no idea how many will vote but about a thousand are entitled to do so and, I understand, many are registering'. "All will vote for Taft, I presume', said the reporter. 'No, I am not for Taft, but I am under the impression that a majority of our people are going to vote for Mr. Bryan'. . . . 'Dr. Clement can give it to you; he is very much interested' . . . . "I see, Dr. Clement, said the Observer man. It is account of the treatment your race has received at the hands of lily white Republicans, and not account of the Brownsville affair.'

28 Observer, 1 April 1905.
'Yes, that's right'. . . . .

'Are Mecklenburg negroes registering'? 'Many of them are'.

'How many are entitled to register'? 'Close to a thousand'.

The Star of Zion, however, congratulated William Taft on his victory in 1908 and in March 1909 when Taft was inaugurated, twenty-eight Charlotte Negroes left for Washington to witness the event.\(^{30}\) Despite all the efforts directed toward eliminating the Negro as a political factor in the state and the city, the Negroes of Charlotte seemed determined to remain on the political scene to some degree. They continued to have an interest in the political developments of the city, the state, and the nation.

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\(^{29}\) Observer, 22 October 1908. Dr. Clement, later bishop of his church, was the father of the future president of Atlanta University, Dr. Rufus E. Clement.

\(^{30}\) Observer, 9 November 1908; 3 March 1909.
CONCLUSION

The bitter memories of the Civil War and Reconstruction made the White South more resolute than ever to uphold the principle of white supremacy. This attitude was reflected in all aspects of southern life whether it be political, social, or economic.

The above observation certainly applied to Charlotte, North Carolina between 1900-1910, the period covered by this study. Politically, Negroes were more or less powerless following the ratification of the disfranchisement amendment in 1901. Also, many had become disenchanted with the Republican Party, and a few even suggested supporting the Democratic Party. But in the face of great obstacles, some Negroes registered and voted in the general elections.

In the field of education, an ambitious start was made in the early days following the Civil War by the establishment of schools by northern missionary associations such as Biddle University. Unfortunately, these schools reached only a few and the Negro masses were exposed to inferior education because the city of Charlotte and the South in general faced "the impossible task of educating two races out of the poverty of one." In keeping with the idea of maintaining white supremacy, the local press lauded those courses offered by the industrial schools but was extremely critical of classical education being provided at Biddle University.

While some Negroes acquired a degree of economic independence, many
were victims of wage-slavery and the sharecropping system. Recognizing the importance of this supply of cheap labor, white employers resisted efforts of Negroes to migrate to the North in order to improve their economic status. Negro leaders emphasized the importance of acquiring land, thrift, cleanliness and good citizenship. In this way, they felt, the Negro would gain the respect of their white neighbors.
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