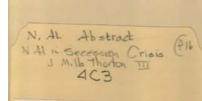
Image 1 r04c03-16-000-0001 Contents Index About



**NOPTH ALABAMA IN THE SECESSION CRISIS OF 1860-61"

One of the most powerful and pervasive myths about Alabama's past is the notion, which has taken root both in academic history and in the popular imagination, that North Alabama small farmers were Unionists and opposed the state's secession in 1861, while South Alabama planters and slaveholders were Southern Rights men, and ardently favored secession. This grossly misleading formulation of the nature of the internal struggle which produced Alabama's decision to repudiate its membership in the United States, has its objective origin in the mapping of the results of the Secession Convention election of December 24, 1860. The geographical distribution of the vote in that election is not at all ambiguous. Every single county in South Alabama except Conecuh voted for immediate secession, and every single county in North Alabama except Calhoun voted against immediate secession. The line of division on the map runs east and west straight across the middle of the state, dividing it into disagreeing halves.

As clear as this result is, however, it is subject to misinterpretation. A great many historians, looking at this map, have allowed
themselves to be led into an erroneous train of reasoning by it.

North Alabama was a region of small farms and few slaves, they say,
and South Alabama was a region of great plantations and many slaves.
Therefore, if North Alabama opposed immediate secession and South
Alabama favored it, the reason must be that small farmers were Unionists and large slaveholders were secessionists. Actually, such an
analysis is false on its face. The map does not divide plantation
counties from small farm counties. It divides North Alabama -- all

Names:

Thornton, J. Mills, III

North Alabama in Secession Crisis

1860-61

Places:

Alabama

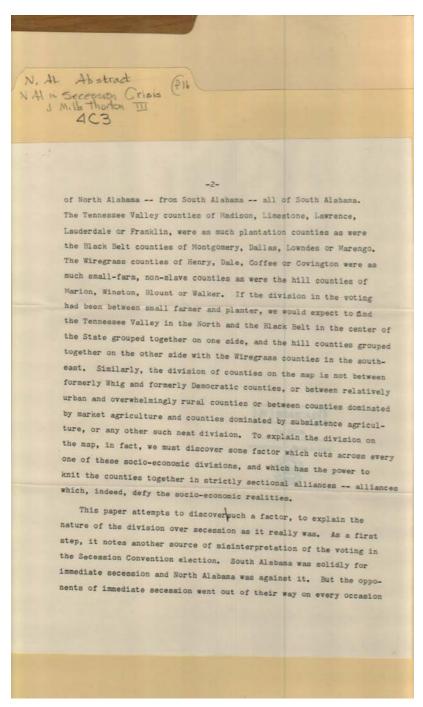
Types:

abstract

Dates:

1860-1861

Image 2 r04c03-16-000-0002 <u>Contents</u> <u>Index</u> <u>About</u>



Names:

North Alabama in Secession Crisis

Types:

abstract

1860-61

Image 3 r04c03-16-000-0003 <u>Contents</u> <u>Index</u> <u>About</u>

N. AL Abstract
N. Al n. Secepsion Crisis
J. M. Ib Thorton III
4C3

-3-

to denounce the charge that they were Unionists. Rather, they said, they were Cooperationists. Cooperationists favored secession by the lower South states as a cooperative unit, rather than individually and immediately, without consultation. The Cooperationists feared that the other Southern states would not secede, and Alabama would find itself out of the Union by itself. They wanted a convention of delegates from all the Southern states to agree upon a coordinated secession. Thus, a vote against immediate, separate state secession was not necessarily a vote not to secede. The candidates for the Secession Convention did not canvass that question. They debated only the proper means for seceding.

That observation leads to another one. The argument that secession was largely a movement of planters and slaveholders usually rests on the unexamined assumption that an appeal to defend slavery must have been, logically, an appeal to the owners of slaves. The truth, however, is that the case for secession was not only not directed primarily at planters, but was in fact directed almost exclusively at non-slaveholders. Non-slaveholders at the end of the ante-bellum period constituted two-thirds of the electorate. And planters— that is, owners of twenty or more slaves— constituted only 5.5% of the electorate. Any political movement which was not supported strongly by non-slaveholders, therefore, was doomed.

Far from arguing for secession in order to preserve a special, non-American civilization in the South, advocates of disunion actually argued for it in order to preserve what they claimed to be a truly American, truly democratic, truly egalitarian society from

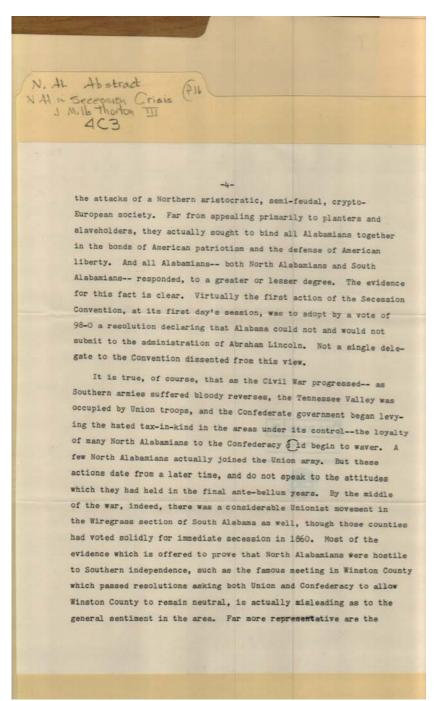
Names:

Cooperationists

Unionists

Types:

Image 4 r04c03-16-000-0004 <u>Contents</u> <u>Index</u> <u>About</u>

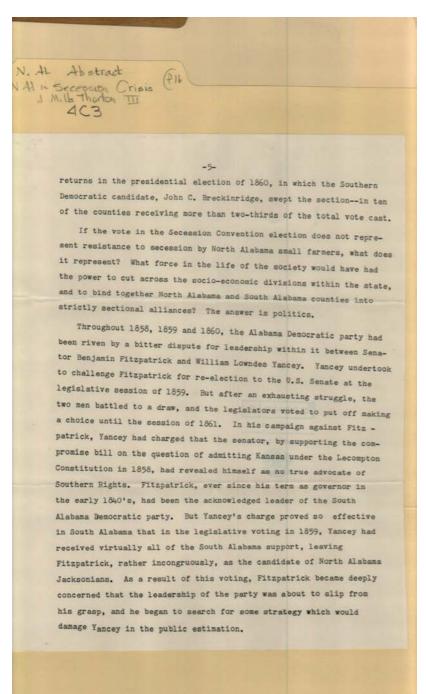


Names:

Lincoln, Abraham

Types:

Image 5 r04c03-16-000-0005 <u>Contents Index About</u>



Names:

Breckinridge, John C. Fitzpatrick, Benjamin

Types:

abstract

Yancey, William Lowndes

Image 6 r04c03-16-000-0006 <u>Contents</u> <u>Index</u> <u>About</u>

N. AL Abstract
N. Al in Secresian Crisis
J. Mills Thorton III
4C3

-6-

The Secession Convention election provided Fitzpatrick with his opportunity. It was Fitzpatrick who first espoused the Cooperationist rationale in Alabama. He hoped, by adopting it, to define for himself and his faction within the party a position which would seem both staunchly pro-Southern Rights and at the same time sober, careful and statesmanlike. He wanted to make Yancey seem rash and inexperienced, pursuing an ill thought-out course with hidden pitfalls. Fitzpatrick hoped that he could show that Yancey did not know how to defend Southern Rights effectively, while older, experienced leaders like himself were able to foresee and provide for such dangers as the possibility of Alabama's finding itself out of the Union alone.

Fitzpatrick's supporters rallied immediately to the Cooperationist position, once the senstor had announced it in a statement which he issued to the press shortly after the result of the presidential election was known. Yancey took up the challenge, announcing that Cooperationism was crypto-submissionism. And the battle lines thus were drawn.

What the returns in the Secession Convention election actually show, therefore, is the relative strength in North Alabama and South Alabama of the Fitzpatrick and Yancey factions of the Democratic party. The North Alabama vote for Cooperationism does not reflect a common socio-economic structure in the region, for there was none. Rather it reflects a common commitment on the part of party leaders in the area to prevent the Yanceyites from taking over control of the dispensation of Democratic party patronage, and a common hostility on the part of much of the North Alabama electorate to the rise of the young, ambitious attorneys and laissez-faire advocates from

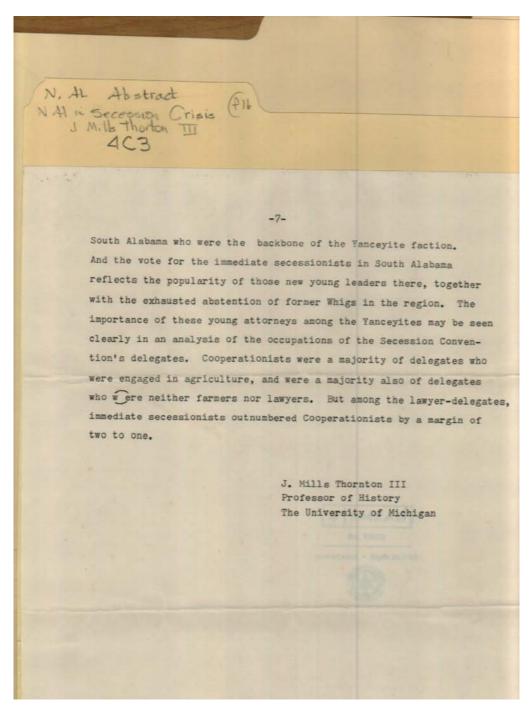
Names:

Fitzpatrick,

Yancey, William Lowndes

Types:

Image 7 r04c03-16-000-0007 <u>Contents</u> <u>Index</u> <u>About</u>



Names:

Thornton, J. Mills, III

Yancey, William Lowndes

Types:

Contents Index About

Table of Contents

 Image 1
 (r04c03-16-000-0001)
 Image 4
 (r04c03-16-000-0004)
 Image 7
 (r04c03-16-000-0007)
 Name & Place Index

 Image 2
 (r04c03-16-000-0002)
 Image 5
 (r04c03-16-000-0005)
 Table of Contents
 About the Collection

 Image 3
 (r04c03-16-000-0003)
 Image 6
 (r04c03-16-000-0006)

Contents Index About

Name & Place Index

Alabama <u>1</u>
Breckinridge, John C. <u>5</u>
Cooperationists <u>3</u>
Fitzpatrick, Benjamin <u>5</u>
Fitzpatrick, <u>6</u>

Lincoln, Abraham 4 North Alabama in Secession Crisis 1860-61 1, 2 Thornton, J. Mills, III 1, 7 Unionists 3 Yancey, William Lowndes 5, 6, 7

Frances Cabaniss Roberts Collection

Preferred Citation: Frances Cabaniss Roberts Collection, Archives and Special Collections, M. Louis Salmon Library, University of Alabama in Huntsville, Huntsville, AL.

Collection Scope and Content: The Collection of 114 Linear ft. includes a total of 156 Archival Boxes. The Frances Cabaniss Roberts collection covers the historical records of the Cabaniss Roberts family. This collection contains extensive correspondence records of the Cabaniss Roberts family circa 1830 to 1930.

Archives/Special Collections Access Restrictions: None

Conditions Governing Use: This material may be protected under U. S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S. Code) which governs the making of photocopies or reproductions of copyrighted materials. You may use the digitized material for private study, scholarship, or research. Though the University of Alabama in Huntsville Archives and Special Collections has physical ownership of the material in its collections, in some cases we may not own the copyright to the material. It is the patron's obligation to determine and satisfy copyright restrictions when publishing or otherwise distributing materials found in our collections.

Provenance: Gift of Johanna Shields on October 28, 2006.



The UAH Archives and Special Collections M. Louis Salmon Library