

From Wyatt Outlaw to the “Kirk Holden War”

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BEING
AMERICAN IS
MORE THAN A
PRIDE WE
INHERIT.
IT'S THE
PAST WE
STEP
INTO AND
HOW WE
REPAIR IT.

-AMANDA GORMAN

RECONSTRUCTION

Presidential Reconstruction

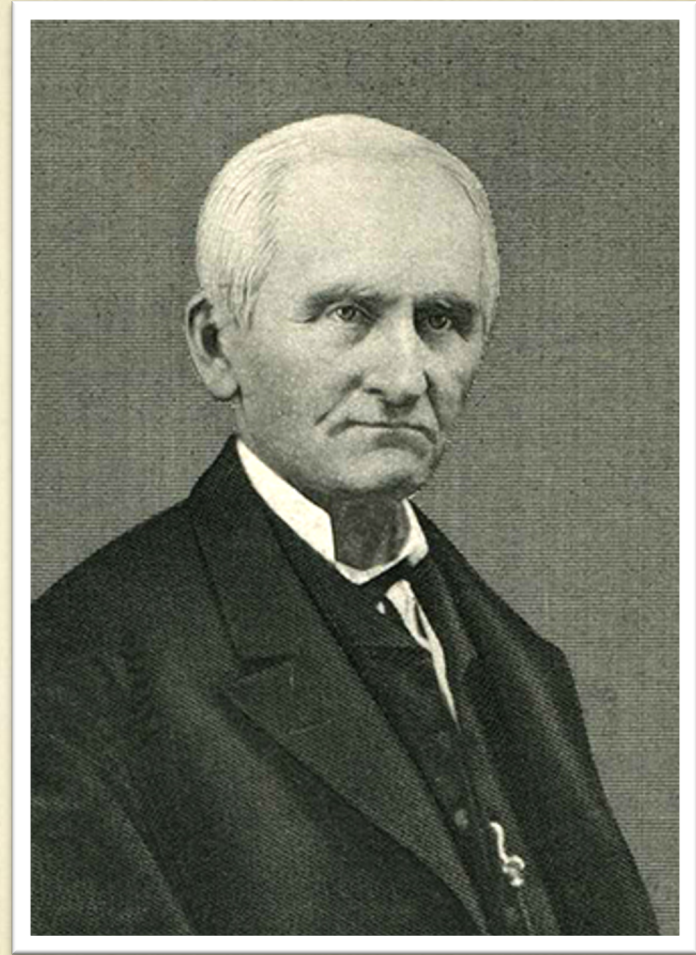
- After the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson moved to rebuild & reintegrate the former Confederate states under his Reconstruction plan.
 - Pardoned hundreds of Confederate offices & officials
 - Returned confiscated property to white southerners
 - Appointed Governors to supervise writing of new state constitutions
 - Agreed to readmit states if they ratified the 13th Amendment
- None of Johnson's requirements however guaranteed the protection of freedmen or stopped former Confederate leaders from regaining power in state governments. Johnson preemptively declared Reconstruction over at the end of 1865.
- Many states appointed former Confederate leaders to Congress and elected them to state government/ "Black Codes," or laws subjecting those formerly enslaved to a variety of restrictions on their freedom were passed. NC passed its own codes in 1866.)
- White supremacist societies, including the Ku Klux Klan, the White Brotherhood, and the Red Shirts, were formed to terrorize African Americans and Republican supporters into submission during this time.
- While many African Americans resisted and organized to the best of their ability, while at the same time newly freed people attempted to build a life for themselves, without protection from the Federal government, little would change.

Radical Republicans & Reconstruction

- Radical Republicans, who made up the majority in Congress, were furious with Johnson. They felt that his plan was too soft on the former Confederate states.
- Republicans overrode Johnson's veto to pass:
 - **Civil Rights Act of 1866:** defined US citizenship and affirmed that all citizens were equally protected by the law.
 - **Reconstruction Acts:** placed the southern states (except Tennessee) under military control, disfranchised many former Confederates, and required states to revise their constitutions to enfranchise freedmen.
- When these states were reorganized under their new constitutions, they were required to ratify the 14th Amendment, which would allow them to regain their seats in Congress.

Reconstruction in North Carolina

- William Woods Holden, a former supporter of secession, was appointed provisional governor by President Johnson in 1865.
- However, Jonathan Worth, the popular NC Treasurer & Conservative Party candidate, defeated Holden in a special election that same year.
 - The Conservative Party was a coalition of Democrats and former Whigs.
- Governor Worth *opposed* Radical Reconstruction and often clashed with the US military because he felt that they interfered with civilian affairs.
- The winter of 1866-67 heightened the political tempo as the national Republican Party swept the fall elections and gained control of Congress.
- In 1867, the military ordered a new election.
- Worth refused to run for reelection (on principle) and Holden won easily, by a vote of 92,325 to 73,594.



Jonathan Worth

Reconstruction in North Carolina

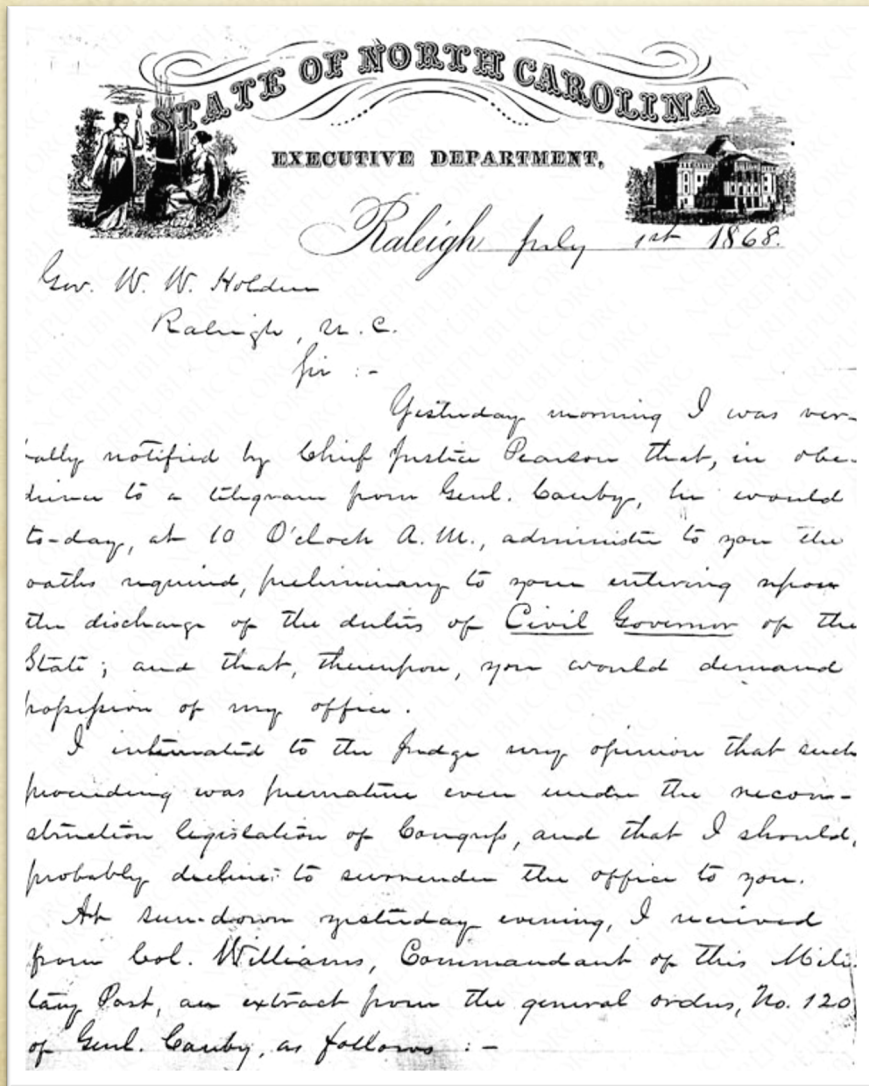
- By announcing its intention to grant blacks the vote as well as political and social equality, Congress effectively took over Reconstruction from President Andrew Johnson.
- In North Carolina, Holden, who had already begun to organize an independent political movement, committed to black equality in January 1867; two months later, after the announcement of Congressional Reconstruction, he launched a state Republican Party.
- In 1868, the Republican controlled government drafted a new, more democratic constitution, and ratified the 14th Amendment. As a result, North Carolina was admitted back into the Union.



William Holden

Primary Source Review:

A Letter from Worth to Holden

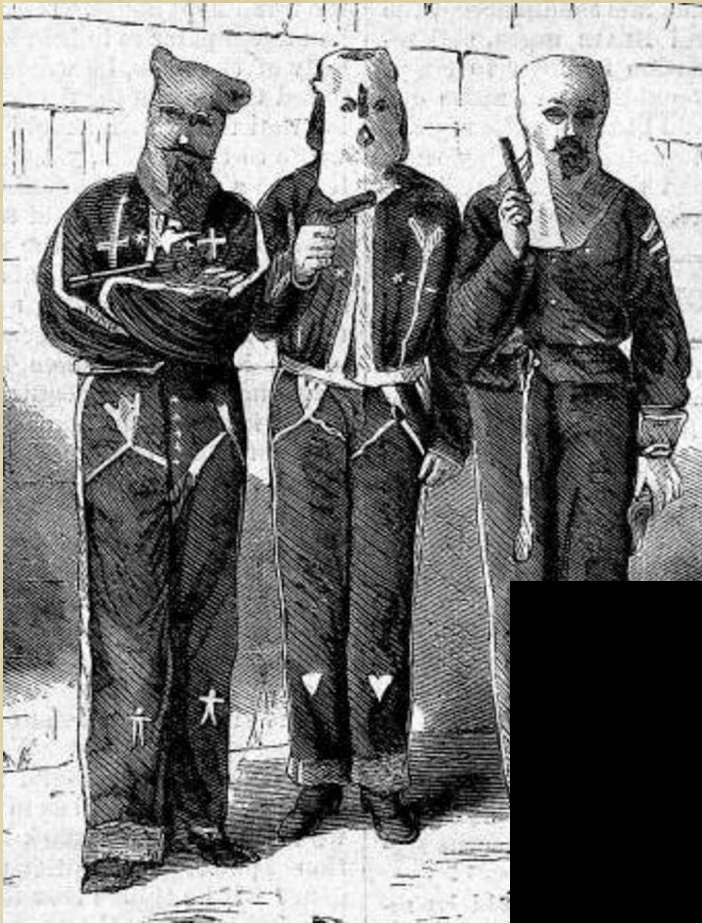


- What is Worth's purpose in writing this letter? What message is he sending?
- According to Worth, how did Holden become governor and why does he take issue with this?
- What challenges do you think Governor Holden would face as governor, both based on the way in which he reassumed office, and based on what you know of this historical period?

Holden as Governor

- When Governor Worth refused to recognize the Republican victory or to vacate his post before his term expired, Holden assumed the governorship through the direct interdiction of General Edward Canby and the Reconstruction laws.
- Holden faced enormous challenges during his administration:
 - reorganization of local and state governments
 - reestablishment of public schools open to all children
 - penal reform and the construction of a state penitentiary
 - development of a deteriorating economy by encouraging northern migration of labor and capital
 - expansion of railroads and other internal improvements
 - obtaining equal justice for all persons
 - figuring out what to do about escalating violence on the part of white supremacist groups such as the KKK

North Carolina Hate Groups Emerge



“Ku Klux Klan Mask, 1870,”
NC Museum of History

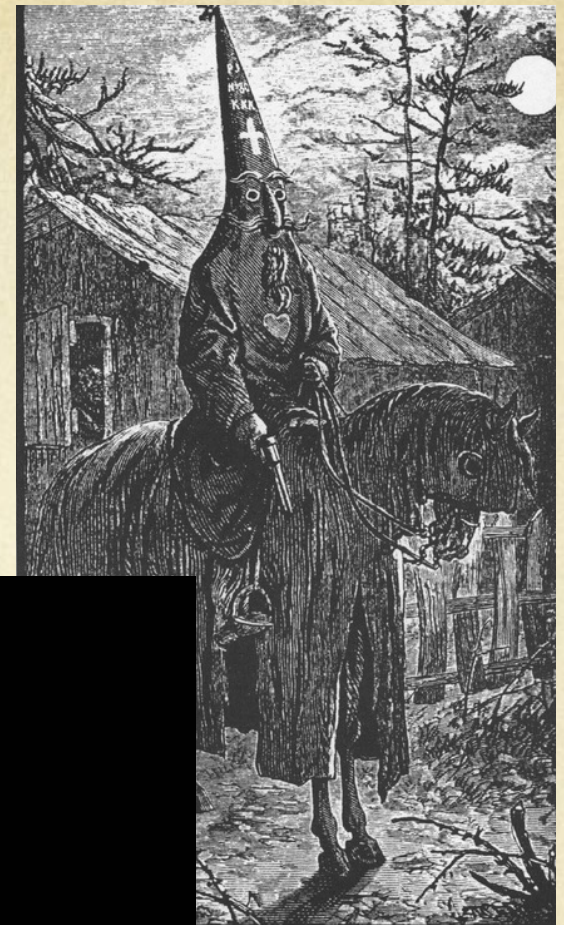


Illustration of
1870s NC
Klansman from
Albion Tourgee’s
1878 novel

RESISTANCE:

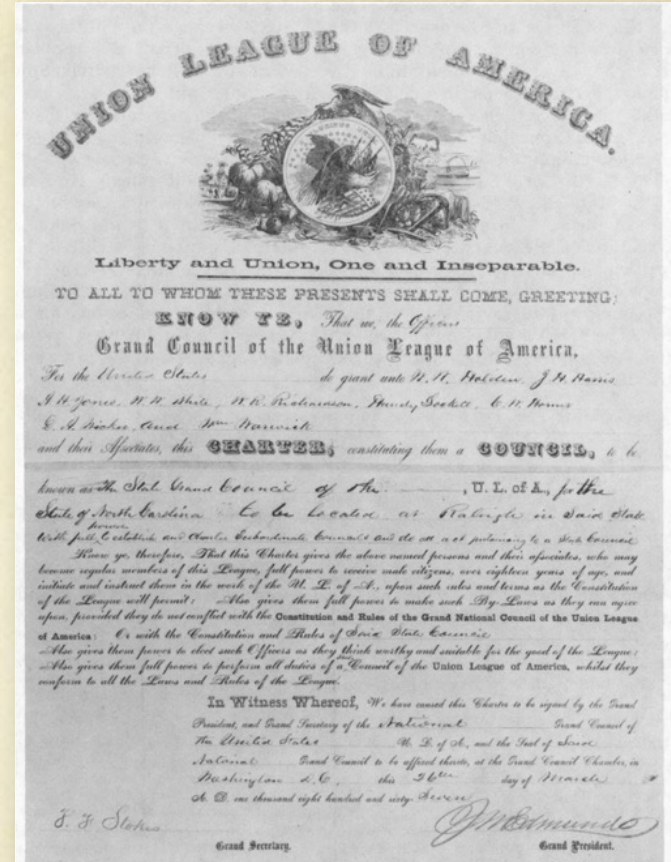
The Union League

- The Union League (or Loyal League) was the first African American Radical Republican organization in the US.
- Established in May 1863, within a year it claimed over 700,000 members in 4,554 councils across the nation.
- Many freedmen saw this as an opportunity to seek fair treatment and equal rights from federal & state govt., advocating for landownership by freed people & education, & assisting freed people with voter registration. They were engaged politically by petitioning, striking, and organizing campaign rallies.
- On 4 July 1865, 2,000 Union Leaguers marched in Raleigh's Independence Day celebration and North Carolina (at the time) provisional governor William W. Holden,
- The success of the League angered the KKK which increased its violence against the organization.



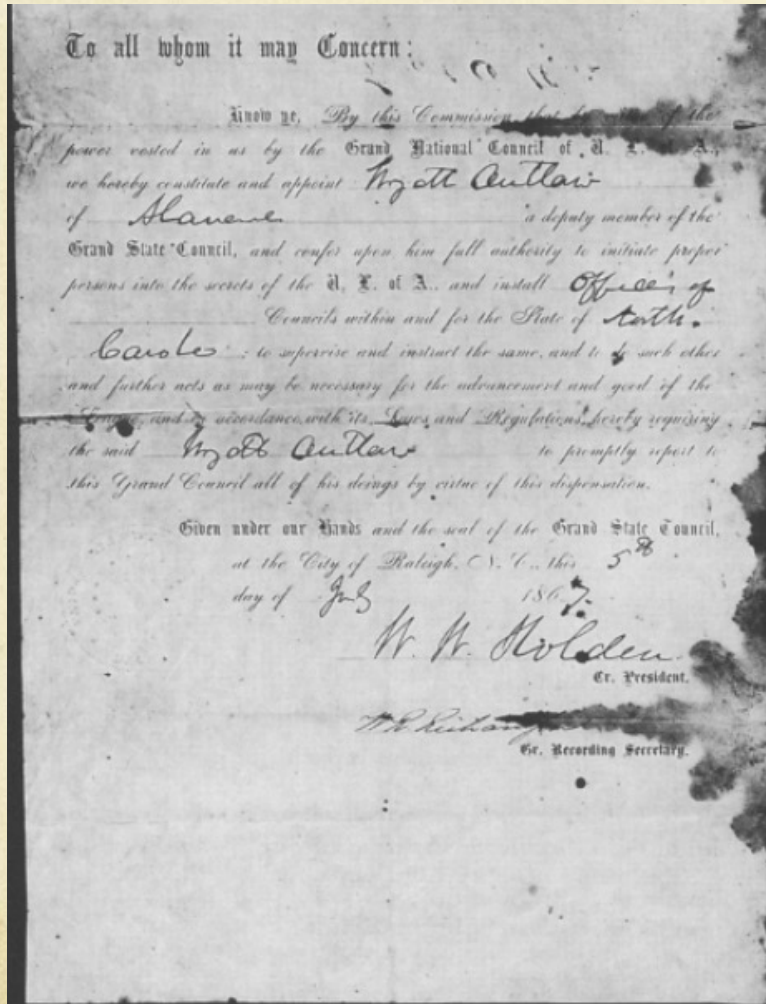
North Carolina's Union League

- North Carolina Union Leaguers were 80% black and represented nearly 40 % of the state's population. Its support was essential for Holden's gubernatorial victory.
- By the fall of 1867 Holden had merged blacks and whites into the state Republican Party, and was elected chair/president of North Carolina's state branch of the Union League.
- Holden worked tirelessly for the Republican Party and the Union League throughout 1867 and 1868. New leagues were recruited and old ones strengthened until almost every midland and eastern county supported 2,000 or more leaguers.



1867 charter establishing a council of the Union League in NC

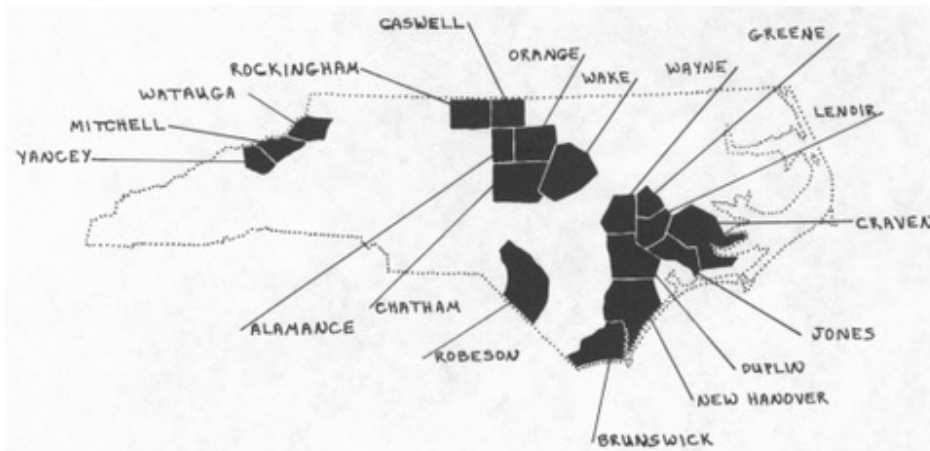
Wyatt Outlaw



- Born into slavery in Alamance County, Wyatt Outlaw escaped and joined the 2nd Regiment, **Colored Troops** in 1864
- 5 months after returning home in 1866, Outlaw attended the **1866 Freedmen's Convention** in Raleigh & was elected to the 5-man executive board.
- He went on to organize the **Alamance County Loyal Republican League**, comprised of black & white working men.
- In July 1867, Outlaw accepted a **Union League** commission from Gov. Holden. (Appointment doc pictured.)
- As a prominent civic leader, he went on to become the town of Graham's first Black commissioner and constable

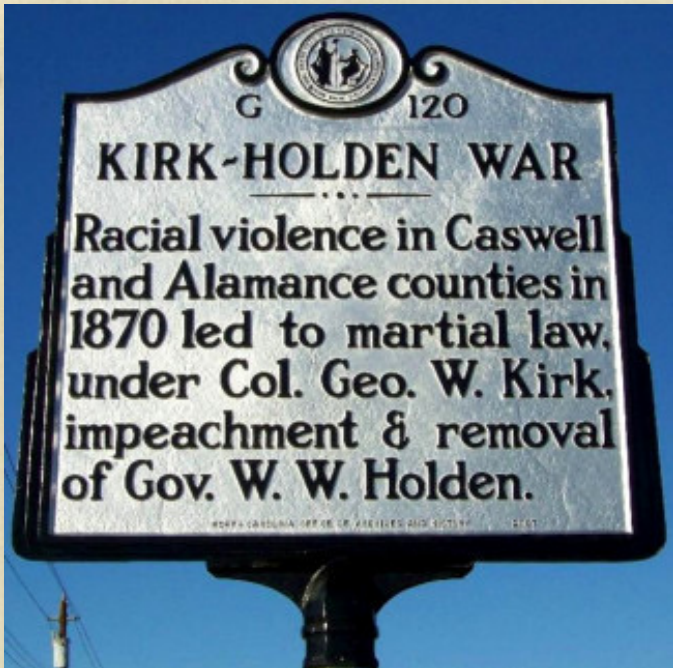
Kirk-Holden War

- After gathering his troops from Western NC (and some from Tennessee), Kirk traveled to Raleigh on July 18 to meet with Gov. Holden - who gave him a list of people to arrest.
- Over the next two weeks, Kirk and his men arrested 82 suspects from Alamance and 19 from Caswell. These men were denied habeas corpus, held in jail, denied bail, and, in some cases, never told why they were being arrested.
- A few prisoners were even tortured. Holden responded forcefully, writing to Kirk, "All prisoners, no matter how guilty they may be supposed to be, should be treated humanely."



This map shows those counties in which violence and disorder were most prevalent and Holden's detectives were most active. Map prepared by Kathleen B. Wyche.

Kirk-Holden War



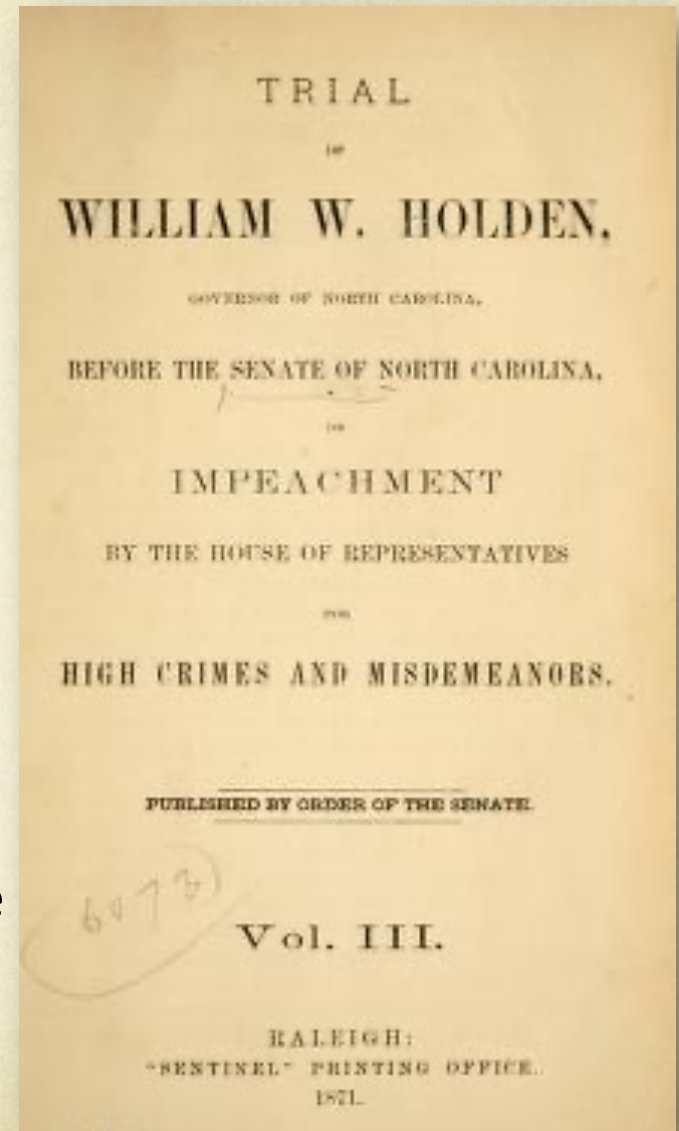
- Many Conservative papers were sympathetic to the KKK & their goal of overthrowing the Republicans and restoring “white only” rule, so they either ignored the KKK’s violent acts or claimed they were part of a Republican conspiracy.
- After the arrests, Conservative newspapers began calling the campaign against the KKK the “Kirk-Holden War”.
- Kirk’s second in command arrested Josiah Turner, publisher of one of the most influential Conservative newspapers, *The Raleigh Sentinel*. Turner was referred to as “King of the Ku Klux” because of his fiery writing.
- This further escalated anger towards Gov. Holden.

Kirk-Holden War

- The Chief Justice of the NC Supreme Court issued writs of habeas corpus so the prisoners could be brought before the court and charged. He also noted that the 1868 NC Constitution forbid the governor from declaring marshal law. Holden ignored the orders, arguing that he had the right to use whatever means to restore order and protect innocent citizens in Caswell & Alamance.
- The Federal Government intervened and ruled against Holden, noting he must allow the prisoners a day in court. Two court hearings were scheduled, one in Raleigh and one in Salisbury.
 - The trial in Salisbury was disaster. The prosecutors were caught off guard, believing that it was only a preliminary hearing, so they didn't prepare any evidence against the accused. The judge was forced to let all the men walk free.
 - The trial in Raleigh was better. The prosecution provided enough evidence for 49 men to be charged with crimes. Their trials were held in local courts in Alamance and Caswell.

Kirk Holden War

- Ultimately, all the men were acquitted of any charges. This helped prove Holden's assertion that civil government was useless against the Klan.
- Due to the negative press & legitimate concerns about executive overreach, the Kirk-Holden "war" managed to turn many North Carolinians against the Republican party.
- Conservatives made sweeping gains in the election of 1870 and gained control of the General Assembly.
- This led to Governor Holden's impeachment.



Impeachment of Governor Holden

- Holden's political enemies brought forth eight charges including declaring martial law; unlawfully raising troops; illegally declaring counties to be in a state of insurrection; illegally arresting citizens; seizing, detaining, imprisoning, and depriving those citizens of their liberty and privileges as freemen; and refusing to obey a writ of habeas corpus.
- The impeachment trial lasted for seven weeks and the prosecution and defense put forth arguments and together cross-examined 170 witnesses.
- Holden was convicted of six offenses and by a 36 to 13 vote, the Senate removed Holden as governor and barred him from holding future public offices at the state level. Lieutenant Governor Tod R. Caldwell succeeded Holden.
- Governor William Holden's **impeachment** marked the second time that an impeachment of a governor occurred in United States history. His **conviction and removal from office** marked the first time in the nation's history.