

Topic Page: [Hampton, Wade, 1818-1902](#)

Definition: **Hampton, Wade** from *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*

1818-1902

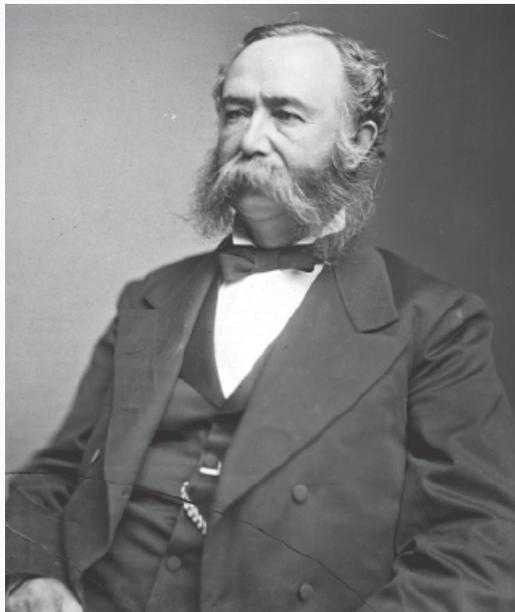
US soldier

He was born in Columbia, South Carolina, the grandson of Wade Hampton. In the Civil War (1861-65) he raised "Hampton's Legion". As brigadier-general he commanded a cavalry force (1862-63), was wounded at Gettysburg, received the command of Robert E Lee's cavalry (1864), and served in South Carolina against William Sherman (1865). He later became state governor in 1876, when he was instrumental in restoring white rule to South Carolina, and was a US senator (1878-91).

Summary Article: **Wade Hampton III (1818-1902) South Carolina Politician Who Sanctioned Violent White Resistance**

From *Defining Moments: Reconstruction*

Wade Hampton III was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on March 28, 1818. He came from one of the South's wealthiest and most influential families. His father, Wade Hampton II, owned a prosperous cotton plantation near Columbia, South Carolina. Known as Millwood, the vast estate featured an extensive private library and a large herd of finely bred horses. The younger Hampton grew up riding horses and hunting bears. He received a top-notch education from private tutors. He later attended South Carolina College, earning a law degree in 1836. Two years later he married Margaret Preston, with whom he had five children before she passed away.



After training to run his family's plantation for more than a decade, Hampton decided to enter politics. He was elected to the South Carolina state legislature in 1852, spending two terms as a representative and then two more terms as a senator. In 1858 he married Mary McDuffie, the daughter of a U.S. senator, with whom he had four more children. When his father died later that year, Hampton inherited a vast fortune that had been built upon human bondage. His property holdings included one of the largest collections of enslaved African Americans in the South, and his plantation operated on their forced labor. Although Hampton profited greatly from slavery—and apparently felt no qualms about the

immorality of it—he still expressed some misgivings as a legislator about whether the institution would benefit the state's economy over the long run.

Fights for the Confederacy

In 1860 long-simmering tensions between North and South came to a boil. When anti-slavery Republican Abraham Lincoln was elected president, South Carolina became the first state to announce its secession from the United States. Even though Hampton opposed the state legislature's decision, he threw his full support behind the Confederate States of America during the Civil War. He provided money to recruit and equip a military unit that became known as “Hampton's Legion.” Although he had no previous military experience, Hampton received a commission as a colonel in the unit, which included 1,000 Confederate infantry, cavalry, and artillerymen. He quickly proved himself to be a brave and valuable officer.

In July 1861 Hampton saw combat in the first major clash of the war, the First Battle of Bull Run in Manassas, Virginia. His unit held its position under heavy Union fire until reinforcements arrived, thus helping the Confederacy claim an important victory. In May 1862 Hampton was promoted to brigadier general. Although he was shot in the foot during the Battle of Seven Pines near Richmond, Virginia, he remained on his horse and continued directing his troops while a doctor removed the bullet.

When Hampton returned to action in July 1862, he was assigned to command a brigade of cavalry under General J. E. B. Stuart. He participated in several daring Confederate cavalry raids into Northern territory, earning a commendation from General Robert E. Lee. Following Stuart's death in 1864, Hampton assumed command of the entire cavalry corps for Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. He engaged in numerous clashes with Union cavalry forces and also conducted the famous Beefsteak Raid, an incursion behind Union lines that captured more than 2,400 head of cattle to feed hungry Confederate soldiers. In 1865 Hampton was promoted to lieutenant general—one of only three Confederates who had not graduated from the West Point military academy to reach this rank. He was sent to South Carolina, where he witnessed the fall of Columbia to Union forces under the command of General William T. Sherman.

Resists Federal Reconstruction Efforts

When Lee surrendered in April 1865 to end the Civil War, Hampton returned home to find that his plantation had been ransacked and burned during Sherman's destructive March to the Sea. In addition, all of his slaves had either run away or been set free by the Union troops. Even though the South's defeat took a toll on his personal wealth, Hampton initially urged former Confederates to support President Andrew Johnson's lenient Reconstruction policies and reconcile with the North as quickly as possible. Johnson pardoned Hampton and other Confederate leaders and allowed the Southern states to establish new governments. South Carolina's all-white government quickly passed discriminatory Black Codes that limited the rights of African Americans and returned them to a condition close to slavery.

The defiant stand adopted by South Carolina and other Southern states angered people in the North and convinced Radical Republicans in Congress to take over Reconstruction in 1867. They divided the South into military districts and sent Union troops to protect the rights of freedpeople. As a result, black citizens were able to participate in conventions held to rewrite the state constitutions. The South Carolina convention included 77 black delegates and 48 white delegates. They adopted a new constitution that outlawed racial discrimination and allowed all male citizens to vote.

Hampton became a vocal critic of the far-reaching changes the Republicans imposed upon the South. “If we had known that you were going to back with bayonets the carpetbagger, the scalawag, and the negro in their infamous acts,” he declared, “we would never have given up our arms!”¹ Like many other white Southerners, he believed that African Americans were inferior to whites and not capable of handling the responsibilities of citizenship, such as voting and holding public office. He resented the biracial legislature that was elected in South Carolina and claimed that the black politicians and their white Republican allies were incompetent and corrupt. Hampton also became a proponent of the Lost Cause myth, which glorified the culture of the Old South, claimed that African Americans were happy under slavery, and praised the honor and courage of Confederate soldiers who fought to defend the South against Northern aggression.

Sanctions Violence and Election Fraud

In 1876 Hampton ran for governor of South Carolina against Republican incumbent Daniel Henry Chamberlain. During his campaign, he gave speeches to groups of African-American voters in an attempt to convince them that they would be better off under white leadership. Meanwhile, Hampton's supporters engaged in intimidation, violence, and election fraud in their determination to reestablish white supremacy in the state. Armed white Democrats on horseback surrounded polling places to prevent black voters from casting ballots. Election observers reported seeing single Democratic voters depositing a dozen or more paper ballots. Thousands of black voters received ballots that said “Union Republican Ticket” at the top but only listed the names of Democratic candidates.

The initial results showed that Hampton had won the election by a slim margin of 1,134 votes, 92,261 to 91,127. Some counties, however, reported that the Democrats had received a higher number of votes than the total number of registered voters. The disputed election results put South Carolina in turmoil, with both parties claiming victory, setting up legislatures, and installing governors. A similar controversy surrounded the presidential race. Democratic candidate Samuel J. Tilden received 250,000 more popular votes than Republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes, but neither man received enough Electoral College votes to win the election. Until South Carolina and other disputed states finalized their election results, the presidency remained undecided.

Congress eventually proposed a compromise to resolve the situation. In exchange for Hayes being named president, Congress agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South and formally end Reconstruction. The loss of federal protection allowed white Democrats to reclaim control of the South and take away most of the civil rights African Americans had won during the postwar period. Hampton assumed the governorship as soon as the federal troops left the South, with his white supporters calling him the “Savior of South Carolina” for redeeming the state from Reconstruction-era reforms.

Hampton was reelected to a second term, but he stepped down in 1879 after winning a seat in the U.S. Senate. He served in the senate until 1891, then spent several years as the U.S. commissioner of railroads before retiring in 1897. He died on April 11, 1902, at the age of eighty-four. A statue honoring his service to the Confederacy was erected at the South Carolina state capitol.

Sources

Ackerman, Robert K. Wade Hampton III. University of South Carolina Press Columbia, 2007.

“Wade Hampton.” History.com, 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.history.com/topics/american->

[civil-war/wade-hampton.](#)

“Wade Hampton.” Know Southern History, n.d. Retrieved from
http://www.knowsouthernhistory.net/Biographies/Wade_Hampton/.

1

Quoted in

“Wade Hampton.” Know Southern History, n.d. Retrieved from
http://www.knowsouthernhistory.net/Biographies/Wade_Hampton/.

APA



Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Wade Hampton III (1818-1902) South Carolina politician who sanctioned violent white resistance. (2016).
In L. C. Hillstrom, *Defining moments: Reconstruction*. Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, Inc. Retrieved from
https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hampton_wade_1818_1902



© 2016 Omnigraphics, Inc.



© 2016 Omnigraphics, Inc.

APA

Wade Hampton III (1818-1902) South Carolina politician who sanctioned violent white resistance. (2016). In L. C. Hillstrom, *Defining moments: Reconstruction*. Detroit, MI: Omnigraphics, Inc. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hampton_wade_1818_1902

Chicago

"Wade Hampton III (1818-1902) South Carolina Politician Who Sanctioned Violent White Resistance." In *Defining Moments: Reconstruction*, by Laurie Collier Hillstrom. Omnigraphics, Inc., 2016. https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hampton_wade_1818_1902

Harvard

Wade Hampton III (1818-1902) South Carolina politician who sanctioned violent white resistance. (2016). In L.C. Hillstrom, *Defining moments: Reconstruction*. [Online]. Detroit: Omnigraphics, Inc. Available from: https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hampton_wade_1818_1902 [Accessed 14 October 2019].

MLA

"Wade Hampton III (1818-1902) South Carolina Politician Who Sanctioned Violent White Resistance." *Defining Moments: Reconstruction*, Laurie Collier Hillstrom, Omnigraphics, Inc., 1st edition, 2016. *Credo Reference*, https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hampton_wade_1818_1902. Accessed 14 Oct. 2019.