

A Man Worth Knowing: George W. Julian, Irvington, and the Sincerity of Radicalism

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On the evening of 8 February 1910, on the campus of Butler College, a student debate organization called the Philokurian Society met for a public discussion. The statement to be debated was one which had polarized public discourse in America for the better part of the preceding half-century. The statement was especially divisive in the Northern states, and particularly relevant at Butler College, which, in 1910, was located on a small campus on the East side of Indianapolis, in the newly annexed town of Irvington – a community founded by abolitionists and built upon radical notions of reform. The intellectual combatants, prepared for the rigors of battle, volleyed the opening salvo of argumentation after the following statement was announced: “The Negro population of cities of the United States should be segregated.”¹ For the men who founded Irvington, the notion that public facilities ought to be divided according to race, or that society should be structured upon a foundation of racial hierarchy, was anathema to their progressive political and social values. Those early abolitionist founders – the long-time Radical Republican George Julian, his brother and fellow Radical Republican Jacob Julian, and their business partner Sylvester Johnson – had long battled against those who would limit the rights of African-Americans. It seems that the fighting spirit of their pro-reform convictions was alive and well that night at Butler College, nearly eleven years after the death of the most staunchly radical among them, George Julian. The arguments from the students who were in favor of segregation, however, would go on to carry the night, a sober reminder that social disunity over the issue of race relations in America remained.

Recent scholarship of the post-Civil War and Reconstruction years has levied harsh criticism toward Julian and the Radical Republicans, claiming the fight for the rights of African Americans had more to do with gaining and maintaining political power and less to do with the

¹ Hilton U. Brown, *A Book of Memories* (Indianapolis: Butler University, 1951), 77.

morality of the Radicals, who cared more for politics than for the plight of the black population in America. The results of the debate at Butler College that evening in 1910 perhaps add credence to the notion that the reform efforts of the Radical Republicans fell short. A brief examination of the town of Irvington and its founders, most notably Julian, however, provides evidence that such claims cannot be universally applied to the men who constituted the Radical Republican party during Reconstruction, as Julian, his family, and the community of Irvington in the late nineteenth century exhibited the virtues of reform: inclusivity, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

The Civil War and Reconstruction are two of the most widely scrutinized eras in the history of the United States. As subsequent generations of historians take on the task of interpreting the past through the evolving lens of modernity, the spectrum of analysis and argument broadens as the breadth of opinion diversifies. This is not to say that there is not consensus within the various intellectual schools of thought, but that the ever-expanding historiography offers a wide range of interpretations which must be considered if one is to obtain a holistic understanding of any historical subject. Where the legacy of the Radical Republicans is concerned, delineating the state of the field is facilitated by the application of a simple dichotomy: the success or failure of Radical Reconstruction. While a broad categorization such as this may seem to be an over-simplified approach to the complex task of organizing historical opinion and almost certainly represents a false dichotomy, its pragmatic utility as a lens through which one may examine a topic that is being continually revised by historians is warranted for present purposes.

Historian Mark Summers argues convincingly for the success of Radical Reconstruction in his work *The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction*. Summers presents a

Unionist interpretation of the period typical of the earlier revisionist Liberal Consensus school, a nationalistic summation of the era championed by historians Kenneth M. Stampp and John Hope Franklin. In the eyes of the Unionist, the Civil War was fought by the North to preserve the Union of the United States. Following this is the Unionist analysis of Reconstruction. Summers articulates this perspective in the introduction of *Ordeal*:

If we see Reconstruction's purpose as making sure that the main goals of the war would be fulfilled, of a Union held together forever, of a North and South able to work together, of slavery extirpated, and sectional rivalries confined, of a permanent banishment of the fear of vaunting appeals to state sovereignty, backed by armed force, then Reconstruction looks like what in that respect it was, a lasting an unappreciated success.²

This view parallels those held by many Radical Republicans of the time. Reconstruction was a continuation of the war. As historian William Gillette elegantly put it in *Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879*, "Appomattox signified much but settled little."³ Lee surrendering did not mean that the rebellion was vanquished. Once the fighting ended, the conflict was to be fought in political arenas lest those who still held true to the values of the Confederacy were able to reestablish antebellum practices in the South. To this end, black suffrage became an issue of national security and utmost concern for Radical Republicans. Summers quotes Senator Henry Wilson, who echoes the refrain of "ballots instead of bullets" which became familiar rhetoric during Radical Reconstruction: "To make freedom real... 'We must hold the rebels in subjugation for years with the bayonet, or we must put the ballot into the hands of the colored men of the South.'"⁴ The great achievement of the Radical Republicans, the Fifteenth

² Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 4.

³William Gillette, *Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 1.

⁴ Summers, *Ordeal*, 20.

Amendment, ratified in 1870, granted suffrage to black men and provided the metaphorical ammunition needed to fight the political war of Reconstruction.

It is here in the timeline that many historians point to as evidence of the failure of Reconstruction. Although suffrage was granted to African Americans, they were not fully integrated into society. Eric Foner provides one of the premier accounts of the period that deem Reconstruction a failure, or, as he puts it, an unfinished revolution. *A Short History of Reconstruction: 1863-1877*, an abridged version of Foner's longer work, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, is a social history which deals almost exclusively with the experience of the black community during Reconstruction. The Emancipationist memory of the Civil War, as opposed to the Unionist perspective from which Summers wrote, holds that the conflict was primarily a struggle over slavery – not simply the preservation of the Union – and it follows that Reconstruction is a continuation of that struggle. Race and slavery, therefore, are the primary topics of concern. For Foner, Reconstruction did not end with an achievement of nationalistic goals. Rather, it was a stunted continuation of the promises of emancipation. It is a period which ought to have resulted in a social revolution.

In his view, Reconstruction provided an opportunity to build an egalitarian society from the ground up, but legislation passed by Radical Republicans, such as the formation of the Freedmen's Bureau, the Civil Rights Bills, and the Enforcement Acts, ultimately failed to live up to their promises of social equity, and the fulfillment of those promises would not happen for another century with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Indeed, some legislation enacted by the Radical Republicans resulted in living conditions for southern blacks which were not unlike their lives of enslavement during the antebellum years. "Reconstruction Radicalism," Foner writes, "was first and foremost a civic ideology, grounded in a definition of American citizenship ...

[but] Radical Republicanism did possess a social and economic vision... one that derived from the free labor ideology rather than from any one set of business interests.”⁵ This free labor ideology ostensibly motivated the Freedmen’s Bureau, which was in charge of supervising labor relations in the South. These labor relations did not result in economic freedom, however, and Foner offers an example of Reconstruction policy which failed utterly in attaining a semblance of equity. Often, under the supervision of the Freedmen’s Bureau, former slaves were made to sign labor contracts with their former slave owners which obligated the freedmen to live and work on plantations for a set wage which could not be renegotiated. The laborer, in some cases, was even prohibited from leaving the plantation. Foner criticizes the contract labor arrangement and, by extension, Radical Reconstruction, thusly:

To the extent that the contract system had been intended to promote stability in labor relations in the chaotic aftermath of the war and allow commercial agriculture to resume, it could be deemed a success. But in other ways, the system failed. For the entire contract system in some ways violated the principles of free labor... How voluntary were labor contracts signed by blacks when they were denied access to land, coerced by troops and Bureau agents if they refused to sign, and fined or imprisoned if they struck for higher wages?⁶

Failures such as those of the Freedmen’s Bureau are often laid at the feet of Radical Republicans, whom many historians accuse of losing interest or outright abandoning the cause of equality for African Americans. The Radical Republicans had begun to lose a bit of political steam after the death of prominent radical Thaddeus Stevens, who passed in August of 1868, only a month after the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified by the states. The Fifteenth Amendment passed in 1870, and shortly thereafter the old radical guard passed as well. Stamp, in *The Era of Reconstruction: 1865-1877*, provides a summary the waning years of the radical

⁵ Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction: 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2015), 106.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

sect of the Republican Party which highlights relevant issues, actors, and is so well written that the inclusion of the full quotation is warranted:

Stevens was only one of many radicals who were removed from public life by death or retirement. Joshua R. Giddings, Edwin M. Stanton, and Salmon P. Chase joined Stevens in the hell to which conservatives had consigned them; in 1869 Benjamin F. Wade lost his seat in the Senate, and the next year George W. Julian lost his seat in the House. Charles Sumner and Carl Schurz broke with Grant early in his first administration, and Grant's henchmen completely destroyed Sumner's power in the Senate. Horace Greeley, editor of the New York *Tribune*, and Edwin L. Godkin, editor of the *Nation*, both repudiated Grant and the Republican policy in the South. Many former abolitionists showed little understanding of the free Negro's postwar problems. In short, the force of a great movement for social reform seemed to be spent, and its leadership was being lost.⁷

That former abolitionists, such as Julian, did not understand or simply did not care about the postwar problems of the black community is a view shared by Julian biographer Patrick Riddleberger, who finds "the abandonment of the Negro by Julian and some other Radicals during Reconstruction to be an engrossing and a most significant aspect of Reconstruction history."⁸

Andrew L. Slap, while not arguing that radicals simply "abandoned" African Americans outright, does make the case that, to those Radical Republicans who joined the liberal republican movement, politics were more important than the problems that former slaves faced in the years following emancipation. Many members of the Liberal Republican Party, such as Sumner and Julian, were former prominent radicals who had helped facilitate the formation of the Free Soil Party and the Republican Party in the 1840s and 1850s, respectively. These men, according to Slap, "saw parties as creations organized around a great idea; they believed that when a party's

⁷ Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction 1865-1877* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 189.

⁸ Patrick W. Riddleberger, *George Washington Julian: Radical Republican* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1966), viii.

objective was accomplished, new political parties should organize around the next great idea.”⁹ The issue for Radical Republicans was slavery, and their “great idea” had always been abolition. By 1870, slavery had been abolished and radical concerns moved forward. These concerns, notably, were not primarily associated with black integration into white society but were political. “A combination of mistakes, rivalries, and bad luck allowed the outsider Horace Greeley to capture control of the new Liberal Republican Party in 1872 and change its character,” Slap writes. “Stripped of its republican ideology, the new party concentrated on attacking Grant and Reconstruction, staining the reputations of both for generations.”¹⁰ The movement from a party which focused on reform to one which was built upon power politics and personal attacks rather than substantive issues, Slap argues, “doomed Reconstruction in 1872... Given the background of the men who started the movement this is extremely ironic, for in the previous decade many of them had led efforts to reconstruct the South and help African Americans.”¹¹

By splintering the Republican Party amid one of the most politically fractious periods in American history, a line can be drawn directly from the liberal republican movement to the Jim Crow era of the South. Taking this into consideration, Slap can be counted among the historians who see Reconstruction as a failure. Throughout these interpretations, Julian is often lumped into the category of former radicals who, ultimately, did not care truly care about the plight of the black community. With her study of the African American experience in Indiana in the nineteenth century, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900*, historian Emma Lou Thornbrough offers

⁹ Andrew L. Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction: The Liberal Republicans in the Civil War Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), xii-xiii.

¹⁰ Ibid., xxv

¹¹ Ibid., xi.

a pointed critique of the Radical Republicans: “The enthusiasm which had followed the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment gradually turned into disillusionment and frustration as Negroes came to realize that white leaders generally regarded them merely as pawns in the game of politics.”¹² While this sentiment may well be true of many white leaders and politicians during the Reconstruction era, even a cursory examination of the life of George Julian will lead to a more sympathetic view of one of the more consistently progressive public figures of the nineteenth century.

A glimpse into the family history of Julian reveals a man who came by his progressive attitudes towards social reform honestly. Both his mother, Rebecca Hoover, and his father, Issac Julian, came to Indiana in the early nineteenth century as part of the great Quaker migration from North Carolina.¹³ The Hoovers, like the Julians, had joined the Society of Friends in 1788 after the “noted old time English Quaker evangelist” Job Scott had visited Randolph County, North Carolina, and left a lasting impression on many families in that part of the state. Rebecca’s father, Andrew Hoover, went on to become a prominent member and leader within the Society.¹⁴

The Society of Friends has a long history of supporting progressive social reform. In North Carolina, they were confronted by laws that were particularly stringent with regard to the treatment of slaves. In 1777, the North Carolina General Assembly outlawed manumission, making the freeing of slaves – something which slaveholders who joined the Society were expected to do – illegal for slaveowners. “From the of the Revolution on,” writes Stephen

¹² Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1957), ix-x.

¹³ Riddleberger, *George*, 2.

¹⁴ Genealogical Notes from Rebecca Downey White and Isaac Hoover Julian, ca. 1901-37, pp. 12-13, Irvington Historical Society: *Collected Papers 1967-68*, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN (hereafter cited as Genealogical Notes).

Beauregard Weeks in *Southern Quakers and Slavery: A Study in Institutional History*, “the burthen of the journal of every Friend who visited the South is always the same – slavery. Some of the travelers of North Carolina made use of novel means to serve the slave.” Such novel means, a euphemistic description of breaking the law, could only do so much to help the noble cause of the Friends, who, at any rate, preferred to abide by the law whenever possible. The society sent several petitions to the General Assembly arguing for a repeal of the anti-manumission statute, but such appeals were of little to no avail.¹⁵ It was in this context that the “great Quaker migration,” as Riddleberger called it, occurred, and a large influx of Quaker settlers, spurred on by their resolute anti-slavery convictions, made their way to Indiana territory in the early days of the nineteenth century. The following quotation, which can be found in the Julian family genealogical notes at the Indiana Historical Society, works toward explaining why the early family history of George Julian is relevant: “it is significant that the Hoovers, like the Julians, left the south because of slavery, that they too live to advanced age, and possess in an unusual degree the courage of their convictions.”¹⁶ Upon studying his family history, one may reasonably conclude that Julian came into the world with little choice but to be a man who would detest slavery; a principled individual who would stand firm in the face of opposition on behalf of what he believed to be right and just.

A moral opposition to slavery and a steadfast resolve are not the only things that seemed to have been hereditarily bestowed upon Julian. A love of education and statesmanship were

¹⁵ Weeks, Stephen Beauregard, *Southern Quakers and Slavery: A Study in Institutional History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1896), 217-219.

¹⁶ Genealogical Notes, 42.

evident in Julian, and the same was true of his father. Grace Julian Clarke, Julian's daughter and biographer, gives the following account of his father which highlights many of his achievements:

Isaac Julian, a man of scholarly tastes who appreciated the value of educational facilities in a new community, after assisting in clearing the land where Richmond now stands, taught the first school in the country during the winter of 1808-1809. He served as a private in the War of 1812 in Capt. Enos Butler's Company, eight Regiment, Indiana Militia, Col. George Hunt, Commander. He was commissioned a justice of the peace by both Governors Posey and Jennings, held the office County Commissioner, and was one of the first trustees of the town of Centerville. In 1822 he was elected as a Whig to the Indiana Legislature, which met in Corydon, then the capital of the state.¹⁷

Later in his life, after he had retired from the political spotlight and settled down in Irvington, George Julian's love of scholarship would be manifest in his writings, his support of academia within Irvington, and in his position as a leader on the Irvington school board.¹⁸ Before that, however, Julian would begin his long and storied career as a political activist in the Hoosier state with the party of his father.

In 1847, two years after joining the Whig Party and winning one of the three Wayne County seats in the lower house of the Indiana General Assembly, Julian sought the Whig nomination in the state senate.¹⁹ Into this race Julian brought the uncomfortable question of slavery, thus making his bid for the senate seat dubious, at best. As Riddleberger highlights, Julian was unafraid of bringing morality into politics, and did not shy away from the label of abolitionist, a pejorative term in most political circles of the time: "recent slavery letters of Julian's, published in a Centerville newspaper, irritated men of more conservative views. In these

¹⁷ Grace Julian Clarke, *George W. Julian* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1923), 28-29.

¹⁸ Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes* Vol. 1 1910 (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910) 246-247.

¹⁹ Riddleberger, *George*, 24-33.

he made two main points: first, that the constitutional right of freedom of speech was no longer accorded to abolitionists and, second, that colonization as a scheme for solving the slavery question was unworkable and morally wrong.²⁰ These views made Julian a radical in the eyes of the typical politician of the period and put him at odds with the local party leadership. His refusal to compromise conviction for party favor and a generally recalcitrant demeanor in the face of party leadership resulted in what many considered a lack of political shrewdness. On 8 July 1899, the day after his death, *The Indianapolis Sentinel* published an obituary that highlights his perceived lack of political success but also illustrates the scope of his influence on social reform in Indiana:

If a time shall come when a discriminating history of the past half century in Indiana shall be written it will probably pronounce George W. Julian the foremost statesman that Indiana has produced. This will appear an untenable proposition to those who are accustomed to measure statesmanship by political success, but when his life work is studied and the success he attained in securing the adoption of measures and principles is considered, no Indiana man has such a record. He was intensely radical, so much so that he never seemed to count the cost of any course he took, but appeared to contemporaries wholly destitute of political sagacity.²¹

During the election of 1848, Julian broke away from the Whig Party. The infamous Wilmot Proviso, a congressional proposal to outlaw slavery in territory recently acquired in the Mexican-American War, had brought the question of slavery to the national political stage, just as Julian had done in Wayne County the year before, and politicians were compelled to take an official stance with regard to the controversial subject.²² In a congress fighting for compromise, Julian predictably took up an uncompromising position in his unwavering opinion that in all new

²⁰ Ibid., 33.

²¹ *The Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 8, 1899.

²² David Potter, *The Impending Crisis: America Before the Civil War 1848-1861* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1976), chap. 4.

territories or states admitted to the union the institution of slavery should be outlawed. His antislavery conviction met with the nomination by the Whig Party of Zachary Taylor – a slaveholder – and Julian’s move from the Whigs to the newly formed Free Soil Party was official. Moving from the Whig Party came at no small political and personal cost to Julian. He recounts – at some length, but there is no man better for this task of description, so the full quote is included – the fallout from the transition in his *Political Recollections*:

Words were neither minced nor mollified, but made the vehicles of political wrath and the explosions of personal malice. The charge of “abolitionism” was flung at me everywhere, and it is impossible now to realize the odium then attaching to that term by the general opinion. I was an “amalgamationist” and a “wooly-head.” I was branded as the “apostle of disunion” and “the orator of free-dirt.” It was a standing charge of the Whigs that I carried in my pocket a lock of the hair of Frederick Douglass, to regale my senses with its aroma when I grew faint. They declared that my audiences consisted of “eleven men, three boys, and a negro,” and sometimes I could not deny that this inventory was not very far from the truth. I was threatened with mob violence by my own neighbors, and treated as if slavery had been an established institution of the State, with its machinery of overseers and background of pauperized whites; while these same Whigs, as if utterly unconscious of the irony of their professions, uniformly resolved, in their conventions, that “the Whig party is the only true Free Soil party.”²³

The split from the Whigs also briefly estranged Julian from his brother Jacob, at least professionally. A stalwart Whig, Jacob was elected from Wayne County to the Indiana House of Representatives in 1846 and again in 1848 and was seeking the support of fellow Whigs in his bid for the post of United States District Attorney for Indiana. In light of his strong party affiliation and professional ambition, Jacob asked to dissolve the law partnership he and his brother had held for the previous eight years.²⁴ This overview of Julian’s early political career serves to highlight the actions of a man who placed moral values over professional advancement

²³ George W. Julian, *Political Recollections, 1840-1872* (1884; repr., New York: Negro University Press, 1970), 65-66.

²⁴ Riddleberger, *George*, 39.

and who endured hard costs on his familial relationships and personal safety in the name of reform. The charges historians make against the Radical Republicans that politics was more important than the social causes argued for by the party seem to be incongruous with Julian's moral character.

The charge made by the Whigs in 1848 that Julian carried in his pocket a lock of the hair of Frederick Douglass would, at least metaphorically, seem somewhat prophetic in hindsight. In 1852, Julian was appointed as a vice-president of a three-day anti-slavery convention held in Cincinnati. Also appointed as a vice-president was Douglass. Their meeting left a lasting impression on Julian, and it is reasonable to conclude, based on the following entry from his personal journal, that from that day forward he carried a piece of Douglass with him:

I was offered the presidency of the convention also, which I declined in favor of John G. Fee, but was unexpectedly appointed a vice-president, along with Douglass, Bigg, and others of different color. I am glad I attended this truly catholic anti-slavery gathering. I was delighted with the oratory of Douglass and with the man himself, and feel much strengthened in my desire to overcome the ridiculous and wicked prejudice against color which even most anti-slavery men find it difficult to conquer.²⁵

In this quote one sees a man who is self-aware of his prejudices and beginning to overcome them. Like Thomas Jefferson, the lifelong slaveholder, writing the Declaration of Independence and declaring to the world that "all men are created equal," it is an American historical irony that the politicians and reformers who fought the hardest against slavery in the nineteenth century were very often white supremacists. Most were born with that prejudice, and most died with it. Julian was not one of those men. As he recognized the injustice of his personal prejudice, so did he recognize the humanity in Douglass and carry that growing respect for

²⁵ Journals, May 5, 1852, *Julian Papers*, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, IN (hereafter cited as Journals).

people of color with him through the rest of his life. In 1874, shortly after removing to Irvington, Julian had a famous fellow reformer – the abolitionist, women’s rights activist, and former slave, Sojourner Truth – stay with him and his family for a week in their Irvington home. The two remained friends thereafter.²⁶ Perhaps many of the Radical Republicans who are blamed for abandoning the black community in the latter years of Reconstruction truly did not care about African Americans as people, but as a necessary component of the system against which they fought with the aim of attaining or maintaining political power and stability. This cannot be said of Julian.

The argument which is most effective regarding the ultimate failure of Reconstruction, as far as Julian was involved in it, is Slap’s contention that the splintering of the Republican Party resulted from the liberal republican movement and led to Reconstruction’s doom. While Julian did indeed break away from the traditional Republican Party, his move to the Liberal Republican Party had nothing to do with his feelings toward the black community or their role in society in the years following emancipation. Julian’s motivation was predominantly fueled by his increasing disillusionment with Republican leadership.

From the start, Julian found the Republican platform for Reconstruction to be too lenient. President Lincoln’s original Reconstruction plan was to offer a full pardon to the rebels who would be willing to take an oath swearing to support and uphold the United States Constitution. Julian, meanwhile, called unequivocally for the harshest of penalties for the leaders of the

²⁶ Irvington Historical Society: Collected Papers 1967-68. Further evidence of the sojourn at the Julian residence and of the relationship between Julian and Truth is found in the Pal Item, which is part of the USA Today network, in the following article: Steve Martin, “Out of Our Past: Sojourner Truth Visited Today in 1874,” *Pal Item*, September 21, 2014, accessed November 18, 2018, <https://www.pal-item.com/story/news/local/2014/09/21/sojourner-truth-visited-today/16032913/>.

recently vanquished Confederacy, stating he wished it were possible “to hang them to the sky that bends over us, so that all the nations of the Earth might see the spectacle and learn what it costs to set fire to a free government like this.”²⁷ Julian also called immediately for suffrage to be granted to the newly freed men, claiming “I would give the negro the ballot for another reason, and that is, that every rebel in the South and every Copperhead in the North is opposed to Negro suffrage. If there were no other argument than this I would be in favor of negro enfranchisement.”²⁸ By the end of 1868, Julian took the notion of enfranchisement a step further, and once again proved to be one of the most progressive men of his time. He became the first to officially call for universal suffrage in Congress when he proposed a bill “further to extend the right of suffrage in the Territories of the United States,” which read:

That from and after the passage of this act the right of suffrage in all the Territories of the United States, now or hereafter to be organized, shall be based upon citizenship; and all citizens of the United States, native and naturalized, resident in said Territories, who are twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and who have not forfeited their right by crime, shall enjoy the same equally, irrespective of sex.²⁹

After the death of Lincoln, Julian found in President Johnson a man who was not up to the task of rebuilding a nation. Julian would eventually be one of the seven members of Congress who worked together in preparing the Articles of Impeachment against the President in 1868.³⁰ One of the non-suffrage issues most pressing to Julian during the Johnson administration was land reform. He was of the mind that land ought to be taken from the rebels and redistributed to

²⁷ Speeches, 268, *Julian Papers*, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, IN.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 271.

²⁹ A Bill Further to Extend the Right of Suffrage in the Territories of the United States, H.R. 1531, 40th Cong., 3rd sess., *Congressional Globe*, 543. That Julian was the first to call for universal suffrage in Congress is a conclusion reached by the author based on extensive research – the subject may have been broached in debate but Julian’s bill seems to be the first of its kind proposed in session.

³⁰ Clarke, *Julian*, 308.

the newly freed blacks of the South.³¹ It is conceivable that such an action plan would have avoided certain failed efforts, such as the contract-labor debacle sponsored by the Freedmen's Bureau discussed previously. Throughout this period, Julian's rivalry with Oliver P. Morton, a fellow Republican who served as Indiana's governor and in the Senate, was ongoing. Political shrewdness, which Julian lacked, was one of Morton's great strengths. Unlike Julian, Morton, as historian James Fuller writes, "thought it foolish to take too strident a view on any issue that might drive away potential supporters. Compromise was expedient."³² During Reconstruction Morton's notion of expediency would manifest itself in what Julian, among fellow disillusioned radicals, would consider wholesale political corruption. By the time Ulysses S. Grant was up for reelection as the Republican candidate for President in 1872, the perceived corruption of the Republican Party had become too much for Julian, who was at this point aligned with Grant's political rival Charles Sumner, and he joined Sumner in the Liberal Republican Party in support of Horace Greeley. The split saw both the Republicans and Liberal Republicans make opposing the other party the platform of their candidacies. Julian's response to calls of apostasy from the Republicans touches on several relevant issues, including the moral consistency with which those in the Liberal Republican Party conducted their political affairs, the slavery issue, and the corrupt state into which he felt the Republican Party had fallen under the Johnson and Grant administrations. It serves as a fair response to those who, like the Republicans at the end of the 1860s and historians such as Riddleberger, would claim that Julian abandoned African Americans, and thus deserves to be included in full:

The Liberal Republicans had not changed any of their political opinions, nor deserted any principle they had ever espoused, touching the questions of slavery

³¹ Riddleberger, *George*, 214.

³² A. James Fuller, *Oliver P. Morton and the Politics of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2017), 43.

and the war; and yet there were now in the fiercest antagonism with the men who had been politically associated with them ever since the organization of the party, and who had trusted and honored them through all the struggles of the past. They were branded as “Apostates” from their anti-slavery faith; but slavery had perished forever, and every man of them would have been found fighting it as before, if it had been practicable to call it back to life; while many of their assailants had distinguished themselves by mobbing Abolitionism in the day of its weakness. How could men apostatize from a cause which they had served with unflinching fidelity until it was completely triumphant? And how was it possible to fall from political grace by withdrawing from the fellowship of the knaves and traders that formed the body-guard of the President, and were using the Republican party as the instrument of wholesale schemes of jobbery and pelf?³³

By 1872, Julian, whom historian Claude Bowers refers to as the “old Abolitionist, with extreme views on universal suffrage, but with an inveterate hate of jobbery and corruption,” seemed to have had enough of the “jobbery” of the Republican Party, Liberal, Radical, or otherwise, and left the party for good.³⁴ This was not the only change happening in his life at this time – an ongoing battle over the location of the Wayne County seat had finally been resolved with the removal of the seat from his hometown of Centerville to Richmond. Soon Julian would also be removing from Centerville and settling in the place where he would call home for the remainder of his life: Irvington.

“Jacob has removed to Irvington,” Julian wrote in his journal in December 1872. “His new town near Indianapolis.” Lamenting the loss of the county seat in Centerville, it seems that around this time at the end of 1872 Julian began seriously considering moving away from his hometown, writing “I never planned to leave this town and the home to which I am so much attached.”³⁵ By February of the next year, he had made the decision to join his brother: “it is only within the last few months that I have come to the reluctant conclusion that we cannot remain in

³³ Julian, *Political Recollections*, 344-345.

³⁴ Claude G. Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution After Lincoln* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1929), 379.

³⁵ Journals, December, 1872.

Centerville... I know nothing of nothing better than to settle in the vicinity of Indianapolis, which is undoubtedly destined to be one of the largest cities in the middle west, and where we shall be accessible to society, libraries, lectures, etc.”³⁶ Access to society, libraries, and lectures was, by design, one of the foundational elements of to the new town.

In 1870, Jacob Julian and his business partner Sylvester Johnson, a fellow lawyer, former Whig, and progressive Quaker, pooled their resources and, with an additional investment from Julian himself, bought three hundred and twenty acres of land just east of Indianapolis for one hundred dollars an acre. Jacob and Johnson formed a business partnership with Dr. Levi Ritter, who owned an adjacent sixty acres, and small land company which controlled twenty more. The small alliance immediately set out designing a town to build upon the four hundred acre plot of land.³⁷ This rather unusual set of circumstances – a group of former radicals, reformers, and Quakers creating their dream town during the era of Reconstruction – creates an equally unusual opportunity to examine the moral fiber and the strength of convictions for social reform and diversity of those who, at least in the political arena, fought for the rights of the underprivileged and disenfranchised. A brief look into the early history of Irvington will reveal a town uncommonly tolerant, inclusive, and integrated.

From the start, the vision of Irvington was one of affluence and culture. The lots were expansive and expensive while building restrictions called for large, beautiful homes to be built with attention paid to style and elegance.³⁸ Johnson, who was the head of the Indiana Horticulture Society and on the Board of Trustees at Purdue University, was particularly

³⁶ Ibid., February, 1873.

³⁷ Short History of Irvington, pp 1-2, Irvington Historical Society: *Collected Papers 1967-68*, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN (hereafter cited as Short History).

³⁸ Short History, 4.

concerned with the beautification of the landscape, and the town was planned with this in mind.³⁹ “Mr. Johnson, Mr. Julian, and the county surveyor of Wayne county,” writes Vita T. Cottman in her quaint account of the town “Historical Sketch of Irvington” in *The Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History*, “with more regard for the artistic than for the tired feet of humanity seeking shortest routes, wandered in and out, following little creek beds, bending out and around to avoid cutting down some of the fine forest trees, and so staked out the curving streets for the town.”⁴⁰ So it was that Irvington was to have a carefully planned visual aesthetic which accentuated the natural beauty of the Indiana landscape.

This plan was meant to attract to the town Hoosiers of means and refinement. Jacob is quoted as hoping that Irvington would be “a home for intellectuals and scholars, a place of seclusion and aloofness from the turmoil of life, but not complete isolation.”⁴¹ As Cottman writes, “the name itself bespoke culture.”⁴² Jacob was an avid reader of the famed writer Washington Irving, and so named the town after the popular literary figure. The original plan for the town stipulated that a bust of Irving was to be placed in the center of one of the town parks, Irving Circle Park. So concerned with the town attracting a well read, cultured, and progressive population were Jacob and Johnson that they also stipulated in the original town plan the eventual construction of a women’s college – quite a progressive proposition for the time – on the same circle which featured the bust of Irving.⁴³

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Vita T. Cottman, “Historical Sketch of Irvington,” *Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History* 7, no. 4 (December, 1911): 148-149.

⁴¹ Short History, 2.

⁴² Cottman, *Historical Sketch*, 149.

⁴³ Paul Diebold, *Greater Irvington: Architecture, People, and Places on the Indianapolis Eastside* (Indianapolis: Irvington Historical Society, 1997), 16.

The plan for Irvington as a place of culture and affluence that would nurture the intellect as well as engage the senses with beautiful scenery had at least one ironic consequence considering the values of the founders: it would almost certainly lead to a lack of diversity. The high cost of entry into the community would have created a form of de-facto segregation. With most lots being sold by the acre, there was never going to be a substantial black population in Irvington. According to Thornbrough, most of the blacks in Indiana in the early 1870s were farm workers. Even as a majority of the black population moved toward urban centers – by 1900 only twenty six percent of African Americans in Indiana lived in rural areas – they retained a predominantly rural skillset. As Thornbrough notes, “a study made after the census 1890 showed only 2,287 Negro men out of a total Negro population of over forty-five thousand in Indiana as engaged in trades which could in any sense be classified as skilled.”⁴⁴ Even with a skilled job, it was likely that a black worker would not make the same amount of money for doing the same work as a white worker. This was an injustice few black Hoosiers had to endure, however, as “the failure of negroes to gain an entry into the skilled trades and industry was due in part to their own lack of training, but it was primarily due to the attitude of white employers and workers.”⁴⁵ With such poor employment prospects, no African American Hoosiers would have been able to afford to live in Irvington. The fate of racial homogeneity was avoided, however, by the relocation of Northwest Christian University from its location on the near North side of the city to Irvington in 1875, where it was renamed after the President of the University, Ovid Butler.⁴⁶

The desire to make Irvington a place of culture and refinement both almost shut out the black population and allowed it into the community. Northwestern Christian University needed a

⁴⁴ Thornbrough, *Negro Before 1900*, 348-349.

⁴⁵ Diebold, *Greater Irvington*, 351.

⁴⁶ Short History, 5.

larger campus, and upon hearing that the school was looking to relocate, the Julians made an offer of twenty-five acres of land and \$150,000.00 to construct the first building. By all accounts, this figure included near the entire sum payments the men had received from sale of the lots. The Julians, along with Johnson, were fully invested in the growth of the community around the college.⁴⁷ The growth of the town around the college resulted in an increasingly diverse population in terms of both race and social class. As recounted in “Short History of Irvington,” “Butler was a healthy influence in the developing years of Irvington because it lent great intellectual and cultural growth to the community. However, there followed to this community college professors and other personnel who could not afford the elegant homes which the founders had planned.”⁴⁸ What followed was the re-zoning of the lots in Irvington. Multi-acre plats were split into smaller lots upon which more affordable homes could be built. People of lesser means than the well-to-do class of early Irvingtonians were now able to afford to build homes in the community, and the price of rentals was affordable enough that even some African Americans could move into the neighborhood. Several did, and found employment in the town working as maids and butlers for the wealthier class in the budding town.⁴⁹

By 1887 the community of African Americans in Irvington was firmly entrenched, evidenced by the construction of the “Negro Baptist Church,”⁵⁰ which was built near the college. The church was a cornerstone of the black community during Reconstruction. The presence of a black church in Irvington is evidence of a strong black community. Foner refers to the creation of the independent black church as a “momentous and irreversible consequence of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁸ Short History, 8.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 12

emancipation,” claiming “second only to the family as a focal point of black life stood the black church” and that “the church was the first social institution fully controlled by black men in America, and its multiple functions testified to its centrality in the black community. Churches housed schools, social events, and political gatherings.”⁵¹ While the multifunctionality of the black church helped make it a focal point of life in the community, in Irvington, it need not function as a school, as both the public schoolhouse and Butler College were integrated from their construction. Photographic evidence suggests that a substantial portion of the student body at Irvington Elementary School were African American.⁵² Thornbrough points out that while only nine black students graduated from Indiana colleges between the Civil War and 1900, four of them were from Butler College in Irvington.

The first Negro graduate from Butler College was Gertrude Mahorney of the class of 1887. She was the only colored woman to receive a degree in Indiana before 1900 and one of eighty-two in the United States to receive a degree before that date. Her brother, J. T. Mahorney, Jr., of the class of 1889, was the second colored graduate from Butler. A third graduate from Butler was Ezra C. Roberts of the class of 1898.⁵³

George Julian’s daughter, Grace Julian Clarke, graduated from Butler in 1885, placing her there at the same time as Gertrude Mahoney. It is telling that in a time when the majority of white men in Indiana would have been in favor of segregation, Julian’s daughter was attending college with African-American schoolmates.

Clarke, went on to become a leader in the women’s rights movement in Indiana, was a product not only of her father but of Irvington. The town was steeped in reform tradition. Sylvester Johnson considered it his greatest achievement and the proudest fact of his life that he

⁵¹ Foner, *History of Reconstruction*, 40-41.

⁵² Irvington Historical Society, *Irvington Elementary School*, 1896, Photograph, Assorted Images from IHS Collections, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN.

⁵³ Thornbrough, *Negro Before 1900*, 344-345.

was able to secure in the original town plan a clause which was “inserted into the deed of every piece of ground lying within its original limits” that prohibited “the sale of liquor on any premises inside the corporation on penalty of its reverting to its original owner.”⁵⁴ An amalgamation of reform movements occurred in Irvington. Temperance, universal suffrage, and human rights were issues championed by Julian in his years as a congressman and they are reflected in the historical record of the town he helped to build, alongside his brother and their fellow Quaker partner Johnson.

The values of Irvington’s founding fathers have not always been championed in the community. Corruption, racism, and utter disregard for the rights of women were exemplified in a man who called Irvington home in the 1920s. “In 1925,” writes Dawn Mitchell of the *Indianapolis Star*, “David Curtis Stephenson was the most powerful man in Indiana. He owned politicians, up to and including the governor. He could send hundreds of hooded Klansmen marching through the streets. He could have a man beaten up or make him disappear. He raped women and got away with it.”⁵⁵ D.C. Stephenson, the former Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, is arguably the name most closely associated with Irvington in the present day. This serves as a reminder that the fight against bigotry, racism, and oppression is ongoing. It makes the remembrance of men like Julian all the more important. The significance of his sincere radicalism and its lasting impact on the Irvington community must not be diminished if it is to be a source for moral inspiration, and that begins with refuting claims made within the revisionist Reconstruction historiography.

⁵⁴ Cottman, *Historical Sketch*, 151.

⁵⁵ Dawn Mitchell, “Retro Indy: KKK in Indiana and the rise of D.C. Stephenson,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 20, 2014, accessed December 9, 2018, <https://www.indystar.com/story/news/history/retroindy/2014/02/20/d-c-stephenson/5641029/>.

George Julian died in Irvington in 1899, but the spirit of his convictions – that human rights are universal, that progress must not be curtailed for want of power, that an acceptance of diversity and tolerance are virtues to be admired – exists to this day, as it did that night in at Butler 1910 when students arguing against segregation took up the flag of progress and carried on the fight waged by Julian for so many years. The accusations that the radicals of Reconstruction abandoned the black community do not maintain integrity when aimed at the Julians. They were radicals who built a town within which the black community established itself and found opportunities that were not common during the era. It can rightly be said that George Julian was as consistently progressive as any man in Indiana has been since it was admitted to the union in 1819, and it can rightly be said that the community of Irvington, the state of Indiana, and the United States enjoy a social diversity and respect for universal human rights because of Julian and the men and women, like him, who were not afraid to push the boundaries of progress and reform and be labeled a radical. “Here was a man worth knowing,” Grace Julian Clarke writes of her father at the close his biography, “a man whose life, apart from any public or political significance, was a distinct asset to the community, an incentive to higher things, and an unmistakable proof that humanity’s march is onward.”⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Clarke, *Julian*, 439.

