Peace Movement (Civil War)- Part 2: Initial Demonstrations for Peace [1]

Peace Movement (Civil War)

by William T. Auman, 2006; Revised November 2022.

See also: Heroes of America [2].

Part 1: Introduction [3]; Part 2: Initial Demonstrations for Peace; Part 3: The Peace Party, William W. Holden, and the Election of 1864 [4]; Part 4: The Final Defeat of the Peace Movement [5]; Part 5: References [6]

Part 2: Initial Demonstrations for Peace

The first political rallies for peace in the Confederacy occurred during the summer of 1861 in the central North Carolina counties of Randolph [7] and Davidson [8]. Protesting a draft of one-third of the state militia into the Confederate army, some 50 members of the Randolph County militia marched under a white flag and prayed for peace. At a "Union meeting" in neighboring Davidson County [8], leaders denounced the Confederacy and advocated reunion. Hundreds of troops were sent into the Randolph/Davidson area during this period to quell an uprising of armed militant Unionists. The peace and antidraft demonstrators of 1862 met the same fate: scores of dissidents were arrested by Confederate [9] troops and forced into the ranks or sent to prison for disloyalty.

In January 1863 northern Peace Democrats launched a peace movement that precipitated a southern peace drive, especially in North Carolina, where strong peace sentiment already existed. In May 1863 James T. Leach, a planter and enslaver of 150 enslaved people, wrote a letter to the *Raleigh Weekly Standard* suggesting that the South consider returning to the Union on the basis offered by the northern Democrats [10]. Leach was willing to cede Confederate independence for reunion based on an "honorable peace," a position considered disloyal by many southerners. That fall, peace candidate Leach was elected to the Confederate House, where, until war's end, he remained the most outspoken advocate for peace in the Confederate Congress.

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Additional Resource:

James T. Leach, North Carolina History Project: http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/436/entry [12]

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Authors:
Auman, William T. [15]
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