

Josephus Daniels Building

The Board of Trustees named this building in 1967 to honor Josephus Daniels, who studied law at UNC in 1885 and served as a trustee from 1901 until his death in 1948. The building has housed the Student Stores since its opening in 1968.¹

Daniels:

- Shaped strategy for the Democratic Party's white supremacy campaigns of 1898 and 1900
- Positioned the *News and Observer* as the propaganda arm of the party and used political cartoons and sensationalist reporting to demonize Black voters and politicians as a threat to whites
- As Secretary of the Navy, promoted Jim Crow segregation in the federal bureaucracy and racial subjugation in U.S.-occupied Haiti
- Opposed President Harry S. Truman's Committee on Civil Rights and its call for an end to Jim Crow segregation

Daniels was one of four self-avowed opponents of Black freedom and equal citizenship honored by the university's trustees amid the protests of the modern civil rights movement. The others were: William Waightstill Avery (Avery Residence Hall, 1958), a lawyer, enslaver, state legislator, and secessionist who represented North Carolina in the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America; Cameron Morrison (Morrison Residence Hall, 1964), governor from 1921 to 1925, who began his political career as an organizer of vigilantes known as Red Shirts during the state white supremacy campaigns of 1898 and 1900; and J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton (Hamilton Hall, 1972), a historian of North Carolina and the American South whose scholarship lauded white opposition to Black political, economic, and social equality in the post-Emancipation era.²

Josephus Daniels was born in 1862, one of three brothers in the household of Josephus and Mary Daniels. His father died in a military operation near the end of the Civil War, and young Josephus later grew up in Wilson, where his widowed mother moved to be close to her kin. Daniels began his career in journalism as a teenager. By the time he was twenty-three, he owned three newspapers: the *Wilson Advance*, *Kinston Free Press*, and *Raleigh State Chronicle*. In 1894, he purchased the *Raleigh News and Observer* out of bankruptcy, with financial backing from Julian Shakespeare Carr, the son of a Chapel Hill merchant who had made his fortune in

¹ Memorial resolutions for Josephus Daniels, February 16, 1948, Board of Trustees minutes, vol. 3, 399, and report of the Committee on Memorials and Naming Buildings, October 6, 1967, Board of Trustees minutes, vol. 11, 73, series 1, Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina (System) Records, 1932-1972, #40002, University Archives, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; "New Building is Named for Daniels," *Daily Tar Heel*, October 7, 1967.

² See Avery, Hamilton, and Morrison dossiers prepared by the Commission on History, Race, and a Way Forward.

tobacco and cotton manufacturing in Durham. Daniels quickly made the paper into one of the most influential publications in the state, largely by positioning it as the semi-official mouthpiece of the Democratic Party in the white supremacy campaigns of 1898 and 1900.³

In the elections of 1894 and 1896, a Fusion alliance of Black Republicans and white third-party Populists had won control of both the state legislature and the governor's office. In quick succession, they undertook an expansive program of social investment, particularly in the equitable education of Black and white children, and enacted reforms that put local government squarely in the hands of voters and safeguarded free and equal access to the ballot box. In March 1898, Daniels and two close friends – Furnifold M. Simmons and Charles B. Aycock, both rising stars in the state Democratic Party – met in New Bern to outline a strategy for defeating their Fusion adversaries in the next election. Their ultimate objective was to roll back legislation that promised political and social equality for Blacks, making way for the system of racial subjugation that would come to be known as Jim Crow.⁴



Josephus Daniels, 1905
Library of Congress

What followed was a vitriolic and violent campaign to restore white rule. Day after day, Daniels filled the pages of the *News and Observer* with scurrilous stories, cut from whole cloth, that demonized Black men as sexual predators, decried rampant corruption among Black officeholders, and maligned the masculinity of white men who voted for Black candidates. Years later, he confessed that he was "never very careful about winnowing out the stories or running them down." White voters, frenzied by appeals to their racial fears, "would believe almost any piece of rascality," Daniels said. "The propaganda was having good effect."⁵

Daniels used political cartoons to stoke white anger, fear, and resentment. He relied on Norman E. Jennett, a young artist who had joined the *News and Observer's* staff in 1895, to fashion powerful visual weapons.⁶

³ Lee A. Craig, *Josephus Daniels: His Life and Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), chaps. 1-5.

⁴ Glenda E. Gilmore, "Murder, Memory, and the Flight of the Incubus," in David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, eds., *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 74. The classic work on Fusion is Helen G. Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics: 1894-1901* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951).

⁵ Josephus Daniels, *Editor in Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 254, 295-96.

⁶ Rachel Marie-Crain Williams, "A War in Black and White: The Cartoons of Norman Ethre Jennett and the North Carolina Election of 1898," *Southern Cultures* 19 (Summer 2013), 7-31.



The Vampire That Hovers Over North Carolina.

The cartoon above, published on September 27, 1898, depicts Black political participation as a monster springing from the Fusion ballot box. Historian Glenda Gilmore has noted that the drawing was directly inspired by Furnifold Simmons, who, as chairman of the state Democratic Party, "chose as the central metaphorical figure of the [1898] campaign the incubus – a winged demon who has sexual intercourse with white women while they sleep. The Democrats charged that while white men slumbered, the incubus of Black power visited their beds."⁷

The cartoon below, published on October 15, 1898, warned that Fusion politics would produce a new form of slavery in which Black men would make themselves white men's masters. The white office seeker is literally belittled, and emasculated, by the act of pleading for a Black man's vote.

⁷ Rachel Marie-Crain Williams, "A War in Black and White: The Cartoons of Norman Ethre Jennett and the North Carolina Election of 1898," *Southern Cultures* 19 (Summer 2013), 7-31; Glenda E. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 99.



Daniels and his newspaper whipped white Democrats into fearsome mobs. At party rallies across eastern North Carolina, vigilantes known as Red Shirts turned out by the hundreds – and in some instances, by the thousands – brandishing weapons to terrorize Fusion voters. In Wilmington, acts of intimidation turned deadly when white rioters killed dozens of Black citizens and drove the city's biracial board of aldermen from office.⁸

On Election Day, Democrats took back control of state government, and once in office, set about consolidating their hold on power. In 1899, they passed North Carolina's first Jim Crow law, and a year later, the party's gubernatorial candidate, Charles Aycock, campaigned for

⁸ "The Red Shirt Movement in North Carolina, 1898-1900," *Journal of Negro History* 62 (April 1977), 174-84; LeRae Umfleet, *The 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Report*, 1898 Race Riot Commission, Research Branch, Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, May 31, 2006, <https://bit.ly/3dLwkRg>; David Zucchino, *Wilmington's Lie: The Murderous Coup of 1898 and the Rise of White Supremacy* (New York: Grove Atlantic, 2020). The red shirt was a symbol of the bloody sacrifice of Confederate soldiers who gave their lives to defend white rule and racial slavery.

ratification of an amendment to the state constitution that would disenfranchise Black men and many of their white allies. As in 1898, Daniels committed himself and the *News and Observer* fervently to the cause. When ballots were cast, Aycock and disenfranchisement won by a fifty-nine to forty-one percent margin. That victory marked the beginning of a new era of white rule that for more than half a century denied Black North Carolinians equal justice and the fundamental rights of citizenship.⁹

Daniels promoted that racial order not only at home but also on a national and a global scale. In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson appointed him Secretary of the Navy, and together with Postmaster General Albert Burleson, a Texan, Daniels eagerly promoted the president's efforts to segregate the federal bureaucracy along strict racial lines. That policy, journalist-historian Colin Woodard has noted, was "a direct assault" on Washington, D.C.'s "Black middle class, which had grown substantially . . . under the protection of the Pendleton Civil Service Act of 1883, a law that ensured that hiring was based on competitive exams, not race."¹⁰

As navy secretary, Daniels also directed the American invasion of Haiti in 1915, which President Wilson ordered as a means of securing military control over the Caribbean and protecting Wall Street investors' financial interests in the region. Daniels tasked white Marine units, mostly from the South, with imposing Jim Crow rule – "replete," Woodard has written, with "forced labor" and "summary executions" – on the world's first Black republic, established by slave uprisings in the 1790s. W. E. B. Du Bois described the American occupation of Haiti as "a reign of terror . . . and cruelty"; in the first five years, more than three thousand Haitians died at the hands of the U.S. military, many of them victims of what a federal report described as "indiscriminate killing." American troops remained in the tiny island nation until 1934, when power was transferred to a collaborationist government.¹¹

⁹ Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 259-60; J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974), 193. The amendment and the revised election law that subsequently put it into practice required that would-be voters wishing to register first demonstrate – "to the satisfaction" of local election officials – their ability to "read and write any section of the Constitution in the English language." That gave Democratic registrars wide latitude to exclude Black men from the polls. The amendment also included a grandfather clause that exempted from the literacy test adult males who had been eligible to vote or were lineal descendants of men who had been eligible to vote before January 1, 1867. That was a magic date, because it preceded the limited right to vote given to Black men under the Military Reconstruction Act, passed in March 1867. The literacy test was thus designed to achieve the very thing the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution expressly outlawed – voter exclusion based on race. See *Laws and Resolutions of the State of North Carolina, Adjourned Session 1900* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, and E.M. Uzzell, 1900), chap. 2; *Public Laws and Resolutions of the State of North Carolina, Passed by the General Assembly at Its Session of 1901* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, and E.M. Uzzell, 1901), chap. 89, sec 12.

¹⁰ Colin Woodard, *Union: The Struggle to Forge the Story of United States Nationhood* (New York: Viking, 2020), 308. See also Eric S. Yellin, *Racism in the Nation's Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson's America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

¹¹ Lee A. Craig, *Josephus Daniels: His Life and Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 273-75; Woodard, *Union*, 348; W.E.B. Du Bois, "Haiti," *Crisis* 19 (April 1920), 297-98; "The Battle of 1920 and Before," *Crisis* (March 1921), 206; *Inquiry Into Occupation and Administration of Haiti and Santo Domingo, Hearing Before a Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo*, United States Senate, Sixty-Seventh Congress, First and



Haitian resistance leader Charlemagne Peralte, executed in 1919 by U.S. Marines. Here, his body is on public display, tied to a door and crowned with a Haitian flag. A military photographer took this picture, which U.S. officials reproduced in the form of leaflets that pilots dropped from airplanes as a warning to Peralte's followers. Such strong-arm tactics won Daniels the derisive nickname, "Josephus the First – King of Haiti." This reprint, captioned "Charlemagne Peralte, Mort pour la Liberté," is from "Les Funérailles De Charlemagne Peralte," *Relève* 4 (Mars-Avril-Mai 1936), 145.¹²

Daniels supported the presidential candidacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 and was rewarded with an appointment as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, a position he held until 1941.

Second Sessions (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 2:1518. For a detailed account of the occupation of Haiti, see Brandon R. Byrd, *Black Republic: African Americans and the Fate of Haiti* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), chap. 5, and Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1971). From his office in Washington, D.C., Daniels also managed puppet governments in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. See Craig, *Josephus Daniels*, 266-77.

¹² Yveline Alexis, "Nationalism and the Politics of Historical Memory: Charlemagne Peralte's Rebellion Against U.S. Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1986" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 2011); "An Iconic Image of Haitian Liberty," *The New Yorker*, July 28, 1015, <https://bit.ly/3xunUry>; George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 389.

Over the course of that decade, his son Jonathan began to turn the *News and Observer* in a progressive direction. He supported labor unions and urged white North Carolinians to accept the gradual desegregation of their society. But the elder Daniels remained unreconstructed.

In early November 1947, Josephus published one of his last editorials in the family paper. It was a blistering critique of the report recently released by the President's Committee on Civil Rights, which Harry S. Truman had appointed the year before. The report took its title – *To Secure These Rights* – from the Declaration of Independence, and it recommended immediate "elimination of segregation, based on race, color, creed, or national origin, from American life." Daniels was incensed. He mocked the report, even though a close friend, University of North Carolina president Frank P. Graham, was one of its authors, and he warned that it posed a dangerous threat to the "sovereign power" of the southern states. Daniels also reached back to 1898 and white supremacy's most lethal trope: the Black incubus and the sexual vulnerability of white women. He agreed with the committee's denunciation of lynching but questioned why its report included "no word of condemnation of those guilty of the rapes for which the crime has most frequently been resorted to, or the indignation felt by most Southern people who are portrayed as guilty of prejudice against the Negro." On these grounds, Daniels concluded that the "remedy" proposed by the president's committee – a swift end to Jim Crow, enforced, if necessary, by the federal government – was far worse than the disease it sought to cure.¹³ Two months later, Josephus Daniels died at his Raleigh home.

In 2006, the *News and Observer* formally apologized for the role the paper and its editor had played in the white supremacy campaigns of 1898 and 1900. The time had come, the editorial board and publisher explained, to "get on the right side of history." More recently, the Daniels family removed a statue of Josephus from a park in downtown Raleigh. They had placed it there in 1985 to honor their forbearer's contributions to journalism and service to the nation. The family also endorsed decisions to strip Daniels' name from a local school and a building on the campus of North Carolina State University. Frank Daniels III, Josephus' great grandson, explained these actions with a reference to the racial reckoning ignited by the COVID-19 pandemic and the police killing of George Floyd, both of which exposed deep racial injustices in American life. "The time is right," he said. "[Josephus Daniels'] legacy of public service does not transcend actions he took to favor white folks over Black folks."¹⁴

UNC Commission on History, Race, and a Way Forward

¹³ "Remedy Worse than Disease," *News and Observer* (Raleigh N.C.), November 2, 1947; *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1947), 166.

¹⁴ "Why North Carolina Papers Apologized for Role in 1898 Race Riots," *Editor & Publisher*, November 20, 2006, <https://bit.ly/2YYKJFv>; *Dedication Ceremony for the Unveiling of the Statue of Josephus Daniels, September 24, 1985* (Raleigh, N.C.: Josephus Daniels Charitable Foundation, 1985); "Statue of Josephus Daniels, Publisher and White Supremacist, Removed from Raleigh Square," *News and Observer* (Raleigh, N.C.), June 16, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2C1Zxdo>; "Josephus Daniels' Descendants Wrestle with His Statue and a Legacy of White Supremacy," *Herald-Sun* (Durham, N.C.), June 20, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2NYSuoA>.