

Loris in Rebellion

By Catherine H. Lewis

The politics of Horry County have a turbulent history. Strong, conflicting sectional differences are apparent even now, but rarely have they reached the level of disaffection of the 1920s when the citizens of the upper reaches of the county tried twice to secede and form a new county.

Two related articles about Loris appeared on the front page of The Horry Herald of October 21, 1920. At the top appeared an article reprinted from the Wilmington Dispatch. Their Mullins (SC) correspondent had written:

LORIS CITIZENS WANT A COUNTY

While the people of Loris and vicinity are determined to divide Horry county, making a new county with Loris the county seat, the people of Floyds township are wondering whether or not it would be best for them to "take stock" in such an enterprise or to annex Floyds township to Marion county. The people of Mullins, of course, are encouraging the last mentioned proposition for several reasons. The biggest reason is that both want the Little Pee Dee river properly bridged and roads made. Too, it is nothing but natural to suppose that the people of Conway will oppose the formation of "Derham," the supposed new county, while they would not oppose the annexation of Floyds to Marion.

On the bottom left the other article, titled "Loris Citizens Want New County", describes the proposed new county as "a long narrow strip of territory running from the Lake Swamp to the Atlantic ocean, thus making a county rather in the shape of a shoe string." The movement was apparently well along, the necessary signatures on the petition had been secured, and the matter placed in the hands of a Columbia attorney, R. H. Welch.

The Mullins writer had hit upon some key issues. Since the beginning of the Independent Republic the political power of Conway had shut out the rural areas of the north and west. There had been previous rumblings. In spite of the lack of bridges, the people of Floyds Township had taken advantage of the amenities, particularly the stores, of the relatively prosperous towns of Mullins and Marion. This had been facilitated by the construction of a single lane wooden bridge at Galivants Ferry in 1902. Many families had connections by marriage and in business with the people of Marion County, Britton's Neck particularly.

If the people of Loris were rebels against Horry County, the people of Floyds were rebels against the county and Loris. Seeking to keep from being co-opted by Loris, a committee consisting of W. C. Hooks, Kirkland Floyd and A. T. Martin of Floyds and H. L. Ayers, C. O. Dixon, Jno. P. Cooper and S. R. Cooper of Mullins, presented a petition to Governor Cooper one day before the Loris

people could get their petition to him. It asked for an election for the annexation of Floyds Township as a part of Marion county. Clearly they were being encouraged and abetted by the merchants of Mullins, who were providing legal counsel.

They were also being encouraged, if not manipulated, by Conway interests. In a letter to J. I. Allen, Jr., from R. H. Welch, the representative of Loris' interests said. "They protest that they are not in league with the Conway people to defeat the new county, but actions will speak louder than words."

This could spell the end of Loris' ambitions, since without Floyds there was doubt Derham County would have a sufficient tax base to meet the state regulations for the formation of new counties.

H. H. Woodward, editor of The Herald, waded into the fight. Never one to separate news from opinion, he took a clear position against both movements the next week (October 28).

The governor held a hearing on November 9, 1920, at which all parties were represented. In spite of a letter (8 November 1920) signed by 23 residents of Floyds who claimed that they were told at the time they signed that the "object of this petition was to defeat the county movement," Cooper resolved his dilemma in an order that appeared to favor Floyds. It read in part:

...The hearing was held for the purpose of determining two questions. First the right of priority, if any, of the two petitions, and second if the petitions could be so amended as to avoid any overlapping of territory. I must conclude from the information submitted at the hearing that the petition for the annexation of Floyd's township to Marion county is in good faith, that it is not intended primarily to defeat the formation of the proposed new county, and that it will not have such effect as a matter of law. I am compelled also to find, as a matter of fact, that the petition for the annexation of Floyd's township to Marion county was filed with me prior to the filing of the petition for the formation of the new county. With the annexation of Floyd's township to Marion county there would still be sufficient territory and sufficient population and wealth for the formation of a county from the remaining territory of the county of Horry. It is urged, however, on the part of the petitioners for the new county, that excluding Floyd's township a new county could not be formed without violating the term of the act of the legislature prohibiting ill shaped counties. This does not appear, however, to my satisfaction. It is also urged that with the elimination of Floyd's township from the territory of the proposed new county, it will be necessary to include within the territory of the said proposed new county, persons who will be unfriendly to this formation. It is difficult, however, to see how this fact could operate against the new county petitioners, for the reason that the voters of Floyd's township would certainly oppose the new county project.

I have endeavored to give to these matters an impartial consideration, and my sole purpose is to render a decision in accordance with the law of this State. Under the provision of our law and constitution very little consideration is to be given to old counties from which it is proposed to form new counties, or to annex territory to another county, however, seriously such may affect the other county unit. I have concluded, therefore, to appoint commissioners and to give priority to the proposal for the annexation of Floyd's

township to Marion county, unless it shall later appear such annexation will operate to defeat creation of the proposed new county. If it becomes necessary to defeat one or the other project, then I think the lesser of the two should give way, but I am not convinced at this time that such is the case.

Cooper named a commission on the Floyds question at the same time: B.F. Harrelson and W. C. Hooks, proponents, and D. V. Richardson and J. T. Shelly, opponents.

The Floyds Township steering group moved aggressively to present their point of view. They scheduled meetings to inform the voters. Between Nov. 9 and Dec. 2 they proposed to stump in Athens, Mr. Pisgah, Pine Grove, Mr. Olive, Oakland, Spring Branch, Causey, Wanamaker, Cedar Creek and Floyds.

On Nov. 12, Governor Cooper named four commissioners to oversee the election: D. D. Harrelson and J. I. Allen, Jr., proponents, and D. M. Burroughs and George W. King, opponents. He also ordered the amendment of the new county petition to exclude Floyds Township and to change the requested territory to provide sufficient area to qualify under the law.

Beginning on the North Carolina and South Carolina State line at the point of intersection of Floyd's Township line with the same; thence in a southerly direction Floyd's Township line the line to Losing Swamp; thence the run of Losing Swamp to the intersection of the right hand fork of same with a public road leading from McQueen's Bridge to Cool Springs; thence the road in a southerly direction to Mill Branch; thence the run of said branch in an easterly direction to the intersection of th right hand fork of same with a road leading from Cannon's Mill to Cool Springs; thence said road in a Southerly direction to Chinnets Swamp; thence said swamp in an easterly direction to the head of its right hand fork, then a straight line to the intersection of two roads North of Privetts; thence one of said roads in an easterly direction to the first road bearing to the left; thence said last mentioned road in a Southerly direction to another road which intersects it at about right angles; thence said last named road to its intersection with another road running in an easterly direction; thence said last mentioned road to another road which intersects it at a point South of Good Hope Church; thence said last mentioned road in a Southerly direction to its intersection with a road running nearly North and South; thence said road in a Southerly direction to its intersection with a road leading in an easterly direction; thence said road across Kingston Lake to its intersection with the Conway and Whiteville road; thence said road in a Southerly direction to its intersection with a road leading in an easterly direction; thence said road and succeeding roads to Bear Bluff; thence a road in a Southerly direction to its intersection with a road leading from Conway to Wampee; thence said road in an easterly direction across Waccamaw River to a 'road intersecting the same; thence said last named road in a Southeasterly direction to its intersection with a road near Tilly Swamp Church; thence said road in a Southerly direction to the intersection of a road; thence said last named road to its intersection with a road South of Tilly Swamp; thence said last named road the line in a Southeasterly direction to its intersection with a road leading from Vaught to Cowpen Swamp; thence said last named road the line to the high water mark of the Atlantic Ocean; thence the high watermark of the Atlantic Ocean to the North Carolina and South Carolina State line; thence said North Carolina and South carolina State line to the beginning Point.

On the same day Doc D. Harrelson wrote a letter of thanks to the governor on the letterhead of the Farmers Bank (Loris). Dan W. Hardwick, **Chas. D. Prince**, G. D. McQueen, W. J. Hughes (postmaster), and Huger Richardson, M.D., endorsed it.

Because of the division both campaigns failed eventually, though the matter was still alive in 1924. On October 31, 1924, D. D. Harrelson, D. M. Burroughs, J. I. Allen, Jr. and G. W. King, the commissioners appointed by the governor in 1920 to find whether the new county of Derham would meet all the requirements of the law, reported to Governor Cooper's successor, Thomas G. McLeod.

We find that the proposed New County would have the necessary area.

In as much as former Governor Robt. A. Cooper ruled that the Floyd's Township annexation election have precedence over the new county election and in as much as the description of the proposed new county, as amended, does not include Floyd's Township, we find that the old county would not be left in the shape required by the law regulating the shape in which an old county must be left.

In his transmittal letter of the same date Allen stated:

Floyd's Township annexation election was never held, consequently the New County election could not be held....When Floyd's Township failed to have the election on the annexation proposition, it blocked the New County proposition. Although Governor Cooper promised that in case Floyd's Township annexation election was not held before Spring of 1921 he would allow us to go ahead, he did not do it.

I make this explanation in order to show that the failure to meet the constitutional requirements and the requirements of the statute laws of South Carolina relating to the formation of a new county was caused solely by Governor Cooper's ruling. Because the matter will no doubt come up again.

Burroughs ("Buck") H. Prince, now deceased, reminisced about this effort to establish Loris as a county seat in a personal letter to Catherine H. Lewis, May 22, 1976:

....a group of business men (your father [D. O. Heniford, Sr.] among them), farmers and politicians in the upper part of Horry began a movement for a new County, with the County seat at Loris. Two of the ringleaders were the late **William A. Prince, representative in the Legislature**, the late Jefferson M. Long, a young lawyer and aspiring politician. I had recently finished college where I studied Journalism and worked on a newspaper, and was working in Loris for the Imperial Tobacco Co. Prince was my uncle and Long was my friend, and it was they along with D. O. Heniford and the late Dan W. Hardwick, who induced me to become editor for a newspaper badly needed to solicit support for the new County.

Thus the Loris Observer was born with Long as publisher and general manager and I was reporter and publisher and general manager ... and editor. We bought a second-hand flat-bed press, a lot of type, and hired an alcoholic itinerant printer who, when sober, set every font of the type for that four-page paper by hand. It was quite a struggle, with many pitfalls. For instance, when our printer went on a spree, we had to go to Conway to get our paper printed for that week. Expensive, too, even then.

Rep. Prince and Jeff Long entered the next political campaign on the "New County" ticket. Prince ran for State Senate and Long ran for Prince's legislative seat--with full support of The Loris Observer, of course. But alas, the "Conway Crowd" as the opposition was called, swamped us in the election and the new County movement died. So did the Loris Observer

Jeff Long went back to full-time law practice. With printer's ink in my blood and a nose for news, I quit the tobacco business to go to work for the Columbia Record as a reporter, ending my news career in 1972 as an executive television producer for NBC News in New York.

The words of J. I. Allen, Jr., in 1924 were prophetic. The failure of their efforts did nothing to soothe years of outraged feelings of either Floyds or Loris.

Political strength was consolidated in Conway. Funds for improvements like roads and bridges continued to be dispensed by the Conway politicians.

The senator was the key power position in the county. He had with absolute veto control over the budget. The senator from 1912-20 was Henry L. Buck of Bucksville, who was identified with the Conway power center. He was succeeded in 1920-24 by Jeremiah Smith of Socastee, also associated with Conway. The rural areas, however, began to flex their muscles in a continuing tug-of-war. In **1920 William Armagy Prince whose base was near Loris and G. Lloyd Ford from Duford in Floyds Township were elected to the House.** In 1923-24 Ford was replaced by John Robert Carter, also from the upper side of the county. In 1925-26, however, Enoch S.C. Baker and Solomon Henry Brown served in the House, replacing the Loris men.

In the fall of **1926** M. J. Bullock (Loris School superintendent), J.P. Hickman (mayor of Loris), the Rev. Mr. Watson (Presbyterian clergyman), J. M. Long (Sen. Bud Long's father) and J. I. Allen (of Mullins) appeared in the office of Gov. Thomas G. McLeod in Columbia to present a petition from the voters of Little River, Wampee, Allsbrook, Gurley, Loris and parts of the Strand. Some 1700 people wanted a commission appointed to oversee an election and the creation of a new county across the northern part of Horry.

The first notice appearing in The Horry Herald was a reprint of an article that had appeared in The (Columbia) State. It quoted Mr. Bullock as saying the population of the area in question was largely white, and was engaged in tobacco, truck and strawberry farming. He said that Loris, the largest strawberry market in the state, probably would be the new county's seat.

McLeod appointed D. V. Richardson and **Charles D. Prince** to oversee the election. The creation of a new county would require two-thirds of qualified electors. He also named Theo C. Hamby and C. W. Wanamaker, neither a resident of the county, surveyors to lay out the new boundaries. Sanford D. Cox, an opponent, and George C. Butler, a proponent, he named a committee to investigate the population, area and taxable wealth of the new county and what would remain of Horry. They found the proposed Waccamaw County would have 324,391 acres and old Horry 335,839; taxable wealth of \$1,752,094 against \$2,338,267; and population of 18,653 against 16,479.

The proposed boundaries for the new county ran from the Dillon & Marion County Line to Lake Swamp, along its run to Losing Swamp, along its run to road from McQueen's Bridge to Cool Spring, along public road south to Mill Branch, up run of Mill Branch to road from Cannon's mill to Cool Spring, along road south to Chinhers Swamp, up run of swamp 3.1 miles to pine tree; south 82 degrees East 3.865 miles to intersection of 2 roads, 1 m. SW of Howell's siding to ACL & on to intersection with road to Good Hope, 5468 ft. to public road 3/4 m., W of Good Hope 4/5 m. to road near church NW to Good Hope Ch. 1.9 m. to road from Loris to Fairtrade southerly 1571 ft. to road leading to Kingston Lake, easterly to Kingston Lake, southeasterly to Conway & Whiteville, road, southwesterly .6 m. to road to Bear Bluff. Cross Waccamaw River SE 1.5 m. to Fairtrade-Little River road, SE to Jerry Branch, run of branch to Singleton Swash to Atlantic. Follow shoreline to NC-SC line and back to beginning point. 560 sq. miles (leaving 576 sq. miles in the old county). (Horry Herald 11 November 1926)

Bucks, Dog Bluff and Socastee would be the only townships unaffected by the proposed county lines. Little River, Floyds, Green Sea and Simpson Creek would lie wholly within the boundaries of the new county. Galivants Ferry, Bayboro, Conway, and Dogwood Neck would be divided.

Again The Horry Herald rushed to fight the movement. It took note in the October 21, 1926 issue of the history of the movement and of some issues involved, all from the opposing view. The paper never identified any individuals associated with the movement, except those attached to relevant legal documents. No statement of the views of proponents of the new county appeared in the months before the election. While declaring that what would be left of the old county would fare very well, the editor reminded the enthusiasts that they would have to assume a proportionate share of the outstanding indebtedness, construct the necessary courthouse and jail, and set up offices for new county officers and pay theta.

On the attitude of the "old" Horry, the editor showed how little the outlying regions were valued by Conway:

Those few who have had anything to say indicate that they are perfectly willing provided the people of Loris can bring themselves within the requirements laid down by the law. The argument is that what would be left of Horry would have a better chance to expand and grow. The work of its county officers would be less, hence they could do that work much better than they have been doing it. A lot of expense and a lot of worry could be dispensed with, and the time, money and trouble could be applied in the direction of solid development and progress

The bringing up of the new county idea just reminds us that there is a section of Horry that has never been worth much to Conway in a business way. We refer to Floyds township, and perhaps large portions of Green Sea and parts of Galivants Ferry. These sections have always been nearer to Marion and Mullins than they were to Conway, hence their business and trade has been going into the other county for all these years. So far as these portions of the county are concerned, it would make but little difference to Conway if they were included within the lines of a new county.

Nonetheless, Woodward summed up, "Horry is Horry with us, and we want it to remain so forever and ever."

Woodward's history introduced a new and portentous note into the debate, one that made the stakes higher than before.

the present limits would take in a quantify of beach lands which we do not recall were included in the first attempt. This may be owing to the fact that since the time of the first attempt the development of coastal lands of Horry has been making rapid strides. Large portions of this has been changing hands. Several syndicates are engaged in subdividing and selling lots in that section, whereas at the time the first petition was filed the Myrtle Beach Farms Company was practically alone in efforts to build the strand.

In the November 1, 1926, issue of the Horry Herald the editor introduces "a citizen living within the territory of the proposed new county of Waccamaw." This writer identifies himself only as "L.N." He [a presumption, to be sure--CHL] rings all the changes of patriotic and economic interest, and wonders if

The Burroughs, Collins, Bucks, Thompsons, Vereens, Stones, Nixons, Princes and Butlers, to say nothing of the county editors, the politicians, and others who have lived in Horry when it was practically unheard of, a remote, wild undeveloped spot, who have given of their best to see Horry become the full realization, how many of them would want now to live in a new county?

"L.N." says with assurance that the new county proponents certainly did not share,

Conway should want all of the county and sections to grow, so it will have more trade, help the outlying county from which comes weekly a great trade. A new county would retard the progress being made. Loris cannot be hurt by Conway.

They certainly would have agreed with his assertion that "Loris is on a main highway that leads to the Beach, that some day, will be hard surfaced."

The election was set for December 28, 1926. The editor of the Herald wrote on Dec. 16 an article headlined "Hating to See Horry Divide." He reported that "Old Horryites off yonder" and many residents of the proposed county had written the paper to express the hope that the proposal would be defeated. He refers to the recent creation of Jasper and Dillon counties and their uphill battle to survive on their own. He declares himself "hurt by it," and urges the eligible voters to think hard about what they would lose.

Preliminary returns printed in the Dec. 30, 1926 issue showed that the new county had not succeeded in attracting two-thirds of the voters. Although Taylorsville had not yet returned results, the returns stood at 713 for and 694 against. When the election commission met January 4, 1927, to certify the election, Taylorsville had still not reported, but **Charles D. Prince, of Loris, had already filed a protest** on the grounds of irregularities at the precincts in requiring identification of eligible voters. At this meeting the canvassers found that the vote tied at 702-702. The commission agreed to meet again on January 11.

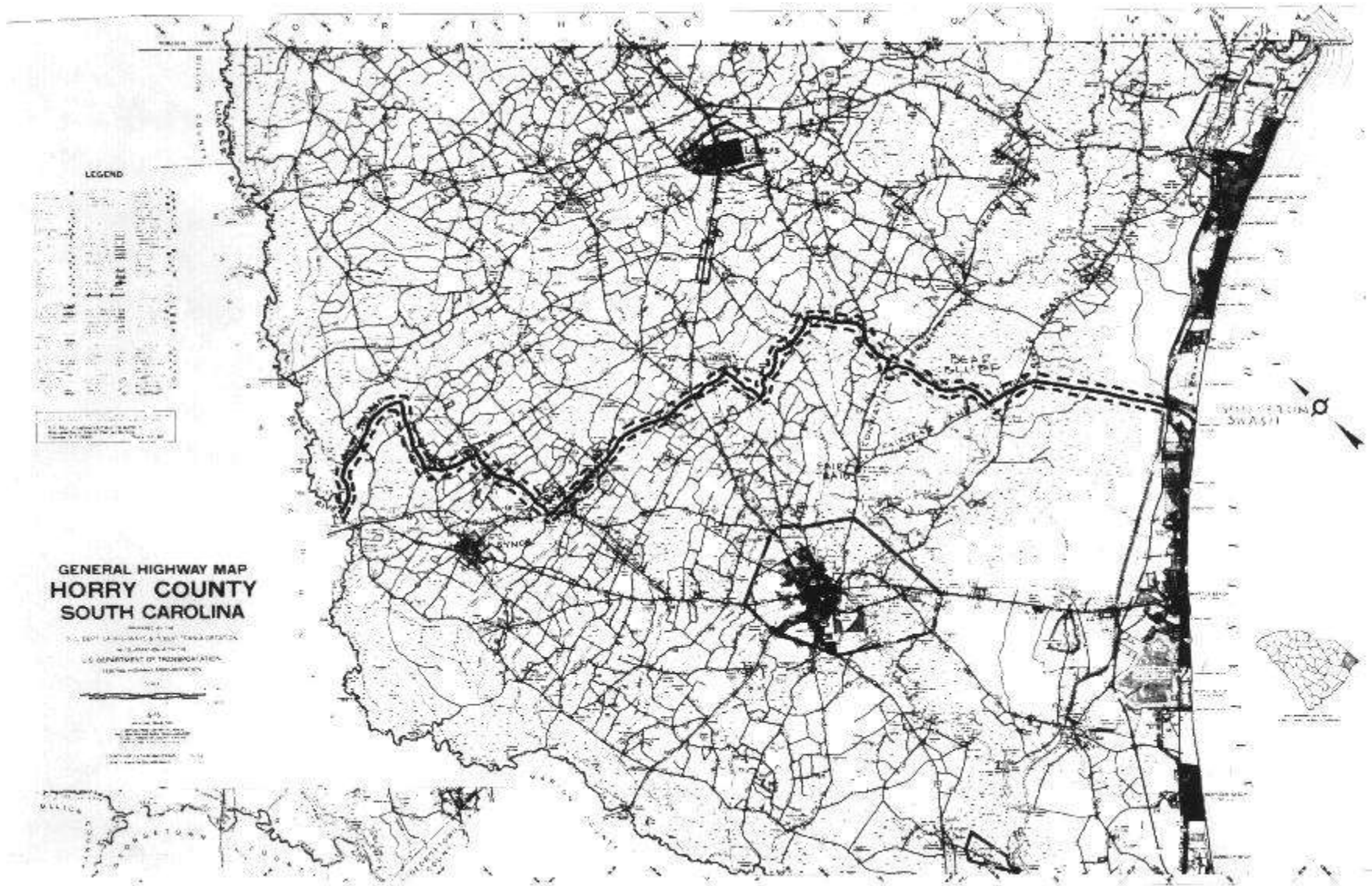
Other questions on the ballot were the choice of a name and of a county seat for the new county. Waccamaw was the overwhelming choice (325), followed by Liberty (115). Other suggested names were Cook (72), Green Sea (70), Loris (63), Bayboro (42), Wampee (20), Durham (16), Coast (14), Carolina (10), Lady (6), Oaklea (4), Duford (4), North Horry (3), Bryant (3), Troy (3). Zoan and Moultries garnered two votes each. Mushroom, Horry, Jr., and Boss each had one advocate. Although Loris was the overwhelming choice (572) as the county seat, Green Sea, Allsbrook, Wampee, Bayboro, Star Bluff, Duford, Red Bluff, and Gurley each had supporters.

On the 11th canvassers determined that the final vote was 706-739, making the failure of the new county official.

Although 15 of the 27 precincts open for the election filed affidavits of irregularities, they were dismissed as "stereotyped affidavits very probably signed under the urge of more or less partisanship and personal pleas." The commission found the results of the election to be valid.

For the next three decades the "Conway Crowd" continue to dominate the office of Horry County senator. In 1955 a youthful Loris resident, James Price Stevens, was elected senator and held the office until 1976, longer than any man before him. The absolute power of the senator diminished that year with the establishment of Home Rule and the transfer of the budget making process to the County Council. Stevens was succeeded by Ralph H. Ellis of Little River (1976-1984) and J. M. "Bud" Long, the son of one of the Loris rebels (1984-present).

Like a constant rumbling undertone the rural areas have continued their complaints. Now they have been joined, perhaps even eclipsed, by the roar of the Grand Strand. There has been recurrent talk of dividing the county along the Inland Waterway. One name suggested for the coast was "Brookgreen," but the movement has never reached the petition stage. Horry remains Horry, the largest county in South Carolina.



This map shows the boundaries proposed by Loris in its second attempt to separate from the rest of the county.

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