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# The presidential election of 1864 in Northampton County, Pennsylvania : continued dominance of the Democratic Party despite fervent Union nationalism and support for the Civil War

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Election of 1864 in  
Northampton  
County  
Pennsylvania:....

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**The Presidential Election Of 1864 In Northampton  
County Pennsylvania: Continued Dominance Of  
The Democratic Party Despite Fervent Union  
Nationalism And Support For The Civil War**

by  
David W. Seiple

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Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee  
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in History

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Date

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## **Acknowledgment**

The person most responsible for both inspiring me to be a student of history and giving me the patience and resolve to complete this Masters Thesis is my late surrogate grandfather, Ernest R. Tilton, 1879 - 1971. As a child it was at his knee that I first heard stories of Easton in "the olden days," and it was through him, more than any other one person, that my great interest in history was acquired. Due to the warm friendship we shared, the fine example as a person he set for me, and for the wealth of information he imparted to me, this work is lovingly dedicated.

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## Preface

This paper is not intended to be a comprehensive study of the presidential election of 1864. It is neither intended to be a study of Lincoln's re-election in the state of Pennsylvania as a whole. The goal of this paper is to look at the election from the perspective of Northampton County, its citizens, and to what influences those citizens were subject that caused them to vote the way they did.

The primary question to be answered by this paper is, why was it that Northampton County gave such a **huge** percentage of it's vote for the Democratic challenger, General George McClellan? This is a most tantalizing question, for this was a state that gave most of its votes for Lincoln in an election which saw an electoral vote landslide for the incumbent. Could any overt differences be found between this county and others that voted for or against McClellan? What was the influence in the election, if any, of the percentage of free blacks or other ethnic groups, such as Germans and Irish, and foreign-born immigrants in each county as opposed to Northampton? Did either racism or nativism play a significant part in the election? Could any voting trends for Northampton County be found?

The paper also looks at the often-used charge that anyone who did not support Lincoln or at least the Republican-led war effort was a Copperhead, a derogatory term which at the very least implied a lack of patriotism and often opened one up to being accused of being a Southern sympathizer. This debasing and controversial relationship between opposition to Lincoln, the Union ticket and especially, the war, with being a potential traitor had been put forth to one degree or another by, among others, Wood Gray in his 1942 book, *The Hidden Civil War: The Story Of The Copperheads*, and in a Masters Thesis at Lehigh University in 1947 by James Meredith entitled, "The Copperheads Of Pennsylvania." Was this traditionally-accepted charge correct in Northampton County? Is the history of the Copperheads really a "tale of traitors and false profits," as Meredith claimed?<sup>1</sup> Were there really only two classes of people; loyal and disloyal?<sup>2</sup> Can the huge vote margin for the Democratic challenger be seen in any way as an act of subversion or a refutation of patriotism? Were in fact the Democratic-voting residents of this county any less loyal to the United States of America than those who favored Lincoln?

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Meredith, "The Copperheads Of Pennsylvania," Masters Thesis, Lehigh University, 1947, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> See Meredith, pp. 58-59. Meredith here is quoting from a speech at a Republican state convention in Pennsylvania in 1862.



Attempting to quantify the level of patriotism of any group, especially one as large as an entire county is, of course, a difficult endeavor, but outright acts of subversion, such as draft evasion or open sympathy for the Confederacy, are not. Was Northampton County a hotbed of anti-Unionism? Were its newspapers preaching anarchy or secession from the Union? What can be derived from the actions and recorded opinions of its citizens?

The most important part of this paper is the author's attempt to look at the election -- as far as is possible -- from the perspective of the average citizen. In so doing a heavy emphasis on the newspapers of the day was necessary, hence the numerous quotations from news articles, editorials and, to a much lesser degree, printed opinions of countians. Fortunately, Northampton County and the Lehigh Valley region as a whole in 1864 were blessed with at least six english-language newspapers and at least two German-language newspapers. This, as well as the fact that numerous New York and Philadelphia newspapers were readily available in the county, also provided an opportunity to see whether the local papers differed to any degree from their larger-city competitors. Though there are numerous books and scholarly articles which exist that cover this time period, it was these newspapers more than anything which proved most valuable for determining what forces molded the political opinions of the voting man on the streets of this Pennsylvania county.

One newspaper has been included in the study that was not in Northampton County. That newspaper is the now-extinct Allentown Democrat, which at one time had the largest circulation in Lehigh County. The line which divides Lehigh from Northampton County is also the city line dividing Allentown and its smaller neighbor to the east, Bethlehem. Allentown is part of the Lehigh Valley region and since, as far as can be ascertained, no paper was printed in either Bethlehem or its then much smaller suburb of South Bethlehem prior to 1870, the major paper read by those citizens was the Allentown Democrat. This paper's importance in influencing the voters of Bethlehem overshadowed the fact that it was printed a mile inside the next county. In addition, the citizens of Bethlehem that wished to read a pro-Republican paper had to settle for those three that were printed in and imported from the nearby county seat of Easton.

Unfortunately, not all of the newspapers of the Civil War years are still in existence. Most are no longer extant and are today only available on microfilm. Significantly, the microfilm copies of the Easton Express for the crucial years 1864 and 1865 are missing even though the newspaper was in operation during those years.

Even the official archives of the Easton Express (the only one of these newspapers that is still in existence and now known as The Express-Times) are devoid of copies from these years and there is apparently no explanation as to why they have mysteriously vanished. The same is true for the Allentown Democrat, for which no copies remain from mid-April 1864 to early summer 1865.

Some of the microfilm newspapers were well photographed and very easy to read, especially the Easton Sentinel and the Allentown Democrat. Other papers, such as the Northampton County Journal and the Easton Free Press, were less so and the most difficult to read was by far the Easton Argus. As most historians well know, reading hundreds of microfilm copies of newspaper articles of varying degrees of quality is a tiring, time-consuming, and thankless job that usually results in the worst of headaches.

As with anyone investigating a subject like this concerning a community, there had been the great initial hope that a few diaries from this period could be found. This would have been a potential treasure trove of information. Much to this student's great disappointment, not one single diary of a citizen of Northampton County covering the year 1864 could be found, even at the Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society.

In addition, nothing much could be found that had been written about this county on the subject of nineteenth-century presidential elections, and other than the faded, one hundred and thirty four year old newspaper articles that my eyes strained to read, there existed nothing at all about this particular election. There was thus no literature, or no one, that this student could really turn to for clues, inspiration, or prior "discoveries." It made the exercise all the more of an interesting challenge.

## Part One

### Introduction

Compared to the voluminously chronicled presidential election of 1860, the presidential election of 1864 has received scant attention. The traditional reasoning for this lack of interest was aptly summarized by the historian Charles Francis Adams Jr., who in 1900 made the assertion that the presidential election of 1864 between Abraham Lincoln and General George B. McClellan was of no special interest to the student of history because it offered "an infertile research field."<sup>3</sup> Until relatively recently this notion has, unfortunately, held sway. However, in the past two decades there has been a reevaluation, and the significance of the election has come under a new light.

Eighty-one years after Adams voiced his dubious opinion another historian, Harold M. Hyman, strongly refuted the long-believed assertion. Hyman, who contributed the chapter on the election in the book, *History Of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968*, is one of many scholars who today realize that this election was actually one of the most crucial in this nation's political history. Reminding us that one of the many remarkable facts about this war-time election was that it occurred at all, Hyman wrote, "Contrary to Adams' estimate, the 1864 election deserves historical respect and scholarly attention."<sup>4</sup> A few short years later in 1994, David E. Long brought the re-evaluation around full circle. In his book, *The Jewel Of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln's Re-Election And The End Of Slavery*, Long soberly writes, "The election of 1864 was the most important electoral event in American history."<sup>5</sup>

Study of the election in Northampton County, situated on the Delaware River in east-central Pennsylvania, illuminates a most interesting paradox: why was it that a county that so strongly supported the Civil War with great patriotic zeal could also vote so overwhelmingly for the Democratic challenger? How could George McClellan achieve such great popularity in spite of the vicious Republican propaganda onslaught that accused him of being an incompetent general and both he and his Democratic followers as being traitorous "Copperheads?" What were the factors that led to

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<sup>3</sup> Harold M. Hyman, "Election Of 1864," in Arthur M. Schlesinger and Fred L. Israel, (ed.), *History Of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968*, (New York, 1981), p. 1155.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> David E. Long, *The Jewel Of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln's Re-Election And The End Of Slavery*, (New York, 1994), p.xvii.

Northampton County's huge disparity of votes against the incumbent president while at the same time providing such strong examples of Union nationalism? These examples included high levels of volunteers for the war effort, a minimum of draft evasion, and a full scale pro-union riot in August 1861 that witnessed the burning in effigy of a Democratic politician, his near-lynching, the ransacking of the offices of the pro-Democratic newspaper, the Easton Argus, and the burning of the offices of their ideological partners, the Easton Sentinel.

In Northampton County all six of the major newspapers were printed in the bustling County Seat of Easton. At the time Easton was by far the largest city in the county and its importance and vitality commanded a respect during the years of the Civil War which have long since faded. Up until the 1890's when Allentown in nearby Lehigh County superseded it, Easton was the most important city in the Lehigh Valley region. Easton was at the time a center of industry and commerce and it continually grew throughout the nineteenth century at a steady rate. Northampton County's fledgling silk industry, which was centered in Easton and would eventually be the nation's second largest by the start of the twentieth century, attracted numerous immigrants for employment, as did the local brewing and iron industries and the nearby limestone and slate industries on the northern fringe of the county.

Transportation was also a major aspect of Easton's economic life, and because the city was built at the confluence of the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers, it was destined to become the hub of three great canals: the Morris Canal, which ran across the width of New Jersey; the Lehigh Canal, which still brought large amounts of coal and other raw materials down from the Democratic-voting Anthracite regions; and the Delaware Canal, which connected Easton with Philadelphia. Being strategically situated between New York and Harrisburg, and between Buffalo and Philadelphia, Easton and to lesser degrees Bethlehem and Allentown, were also major links in the state's quickly-growing railroad network. Quickly overtaking the canals, Northampton County and the Lehigh Valley region was being served by numerous small railroads, the most important of which was the fast-growing Lehigh Valley Railroad, whose founder, Asa Packer, was also the founder of Lehigh University in what was then the town of South Bethlehem.<sup>6</sup> In a few short years other famous train companies would

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<sup>6</sup> The town of South Bethlehem eventually merged with the larger town of Bethlehem, which was directly across the Lehigh River. Similarly, the borough of South Easton later merged with the larger town of Easton, again, directly across the Lehigh River.

serve the area such as the Delaware and Hudson and the Central Railroad of New Jersey.<sup>7</sup>

More so than the other two major cities in the region, Easton was also an opera, theatre and, later, a vaudeville town. Most of the acts which would eventually play in New York City or Philadelphia honed their craft first in the now long-gone theatres of Northampton County. But this fact, as with the railroads and the canals before them, served as very important links which brought the citizens of Easton (and to a lesser extent, the county) closer to the faster-paced, outside world. These links brought in not only freight and budding actors, but also a steady supply of diverse opinions and big-city newspapers that helped the urban areas of this region shed some of its provincial character.

It was this county that gave the Democratic challenger in 1864, General George B. McClellan, his third-highest vote percentage in the entire state of Pennsylvania. But it was also in this county's densely populated, increasingly ethnically diverse and economically vibrant capital town that witnessed the riotous destruction of a newspaper, a newspaper which also happened to echo the sentiments of many when it questioned not only the legality but also the morality of a war between the nation's once-united states.

The fact that the opinions of a newspaper could inspire a mob to destroy it illustrate not only the fervor of Northampton County's citizens in their devotion to their nation, but also the prominence then given to the printed word. In an age before radio, television and nationally distributed magazines, newspapers were once *the* most important disseminators of information. Much more so than today, the majority of newspapers of the 1860's were also overtly partisan to the ideology and principals of a particular political party. Such was the case of the Easton Sentinel, whose pro-Democratic, anti-war editorials were accursed by many as not only inflammatory but unacceptably offensive. The violent reaction of an inflamed citizenry against this small, local newspaper not only served to greatly accentuate the prominence of its written words, but also the importance of its opinions.

During the Civil War newspapers in Pennsylvania were in this respect identical to others throughout the North. In 1861 there were 28 daily and 242 weekly papers published within the state. The newspaper with the biggest state circulation was The

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<sup>7</sup> These three railroads all lost their independence in 1976 when they were merged with Conrail, the government-owned consolidated rail line along with other bankrupt railroads such as the Penn-Central, the Reading and the Erie Lackawana.

Public Ledger of Philadelphia, which was a Republican organ.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately for the Democratic readers of that city, their most influential paper, The Pennsylvanian, suspended publication in April 1861 and it was not until the colorful Adam Glossbrenner began the Philadelphia Age in March of 1863 that a significant Democratic paper was published.<sup>9</sup> Significantly, the Philadelphia Age, which was rabidly anti-Lincoln, not only advertised often in Easton's Democratic newspapers, but was also delivered to a few subscribers throughout the county.

During the same period Northampton County had no dearth of papers being vocal (and sometimes crude) in their support of either one of the two major political parties. The Easton Free Press, the Easton Daily Express and the Northampton County Journal were all staunch Republican supporters. They were equally staunch in their desire to see the Confederacy ruthlessly crushed and its leaders severely punished. The Easton Argus, the Correspondent and Democrat, which was a German language paper, and the afore-mentioned Easton Sentinel all strongly opined in favor of the Democratic party and their desire for a peaceful solution to the secession crisis. So to did the Allentown Democrat and the somewhat misnamed The Republican, another German-language paper, both of which were printed in nearby Allentown, just across the border to the west in Lehigh County.

Upon the pages of these journals was fought a battle of words for the hearts and minds of the voting and non-voting public alike that was occasionally vicious, at times desperate, but always unwaveringly sure of the righteousness of their position. This was an age of unbridled passion, and as the fighting wore on and the body counts mounted, there was never a want for issues to keep the fires burning brightly in the eyes of those expressing that passion.

The editorial battle lines were drawn, the positions of two opposing sides crystal clear. As the importance of the printed word soared to new heights, the journalists of the day gazed at each other through the no-man's land of the political landscape that lay before them, and unleashed the written barrages which would play such a great role in determining the votes of November 1864, the votes which would either reinforce -- or destroy -- the course of government, the prosecution of the war, and the rules of the nation's Reconstruction which would follow.

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<sup>8</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, "The Pennsylvania Press During The Civil War," Civil War History, 9, (1942), p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.

**Part Two**  
**The Term "Copperhead," Its Meaning,**  
**And Its Place In The Election Of 1864**

When studying this mid-war presidential election, it is paramount to remain aware of the harsh political and social climate in which it was held. This was the first time in history that a democratic election was held in the midst of a major war. This fact is compounded when one considers that in terms of casualties and property destruction, the Civil War was the bloodiest conflict - bar none - in this country's history. Yet, from the safe and distant vantage point of today - over one hundred and thirty-three years after the end of hostilities - both the war and its President, Abraham Lincoln, are routinely viewed in an exalted, glorious light. It was not always so. As William G. Carleton wrote in his essay entitled, "Civil War Dissidence In The North: The Perspective Of A Century," "The generation which lived through the Civil War was not as persuasively impressed by the Union-Lincoln mystique as were succeeding generations."<sup>10</sup>

Much maligned and under never-ceasing ridicule, the tenure of Abraham Lincoln was perhaps the most difficult and contested of any presidency before or since. The deep lines on Lincoln's face, the lines that helped cause him to exude a never-ending sense of sorrow, these were a testament to his difficult presidency. They were caused by the pressures, the controversies and the war-time horrors that were an integral part of the turbulent age in which he governed. He was not alone in his silent suffering, for an entire nation suffered along with him.

What must not be forgotten is that the Civil War not only ripped apart families and relationships on either side of the Mason-Dixon line, but it also caused a deep rift within northern society itself. The war, often remembered as the great patriotic crusade to destroy the national shame of slavery, was in reality a hotly-debated struggle which damaged the very fabric of American social cohesion. It caused literal hatred between the two major parties, it inflamed racial relations and opinions, and very often set neighbor and relative against each other in heated (and sometimes violent) debates and exchanges over a myriad of issues. The famous New York City draft riots, which witnessed great property destruction and the deaths of hundreds

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<sup>10</sup> William G. Carleton, "Civil War Dissidence In The North: The Perspective Of A Century," South Atlantic Quarterly, 65, (1966), p. 395.

including scores of lynched blacks, are only the best known of many instances of the breakdown of order caused by opposition to the war and the ferocity that it caused.

The result was that the presidential election of 1864 degenerated into one of the nastiest and hard-fought contests in our history. Unprecedented amounts of campaign monies were raised and the outpouring of political pamphlets -- often bitterly vitriolic -- exceeded anything this nation had ever seen in her entire political history. To put this into proper perspective, Professor David Long has opined that, "The invective, dirty tricks, and unprincipled methods exceeded anything seen before or since in American politics."<sup>11</sup> In Northampton County the contest was just as tense, just as bitter, and the pamphlets and editorials that were meant to sway the voters were just as mean and harsh as found anywhere else in the nation.

The pressures which pushed and pulled the citizens of this nation were enormous, and to the man in the street it would seem that there was little or no middle ground: one was either pro-Lincoln (or at least pro-Republican), in favor of the war, and deemed pro-Union and a loyal American; or one was pro-Democrat (or at least anti-Republican), and against the war and the deprivations and pain it caused. More often than not these people were often accused of being a traitorous, disloyal Copperhead. This produced a nervous, anxiety-filled atmosphere, and the examples presented below and throughout this paper were chosen to illustrate the inflexible, intolerant and very distasteful flavor of the times.

In regard to the question of whether one was or wasn't a Copperhead or a Unionist, and the reasons why, the following five editorials by newspapers in the Lehigh Valley region nicely sum up the prevalent attitudes of the day. They also show the bitterness and animosity that both camps projected upon the other. The first editorial, by the Allentown Democrat, and the second, by the Easton Sentinel, clearly show the motivations of those in opposition to the party in power. The next two articles, both by the Easton Free Press, concisely exhibit the opposite, pro-Republican view. The first article was written on February 10, 1864 by the fervently anti-administration newspaper, the Allentown Democrat:

#### **The Contrast**

Four years ago our Republic was a unit, peaceful and prosperous--a mighty power among the nations of the earth....But notwithstanding, sectional madness seemed to have seized upon the minds of the people; and, in 1860...the fever of fanaticism ran high as an epidemic, through all the free states. Indeed almost

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<sup>11</sup> Long, p. 177.



every pulpit in the North became a party forum. The "sin of slavery" was the great theme of the theologian, and the "impending crisis" and "irrepressible conflict" that of the statesman. The "Kansas troubles," the enormity of the Fugitive Slave Law, the Sumner outrage," and the Dred Scott decision, mingled in scores of churches with the psalms and prayers which were sent up to the throne of Grace. Ministers of the Gospel, in derogation of their holy calling, became stump orators--the sectional press, with the captivating motto of "Free speech, a free press, and free men," printed in large attractive letters, fairly reveled in all the extravagance of invective and denunciation, exhorting the people to come up to the help of the majesty of the laws. There was no bearing up against the fury and craziness of Republicanism...and Abraham Lincoln was elected President.

But how stand matters now? Has the party in power made good its promises? Is our country benefited by the rule of Abolitionism?...Instead of promised peace, unity and prosperity, we have war, dissolution and anarchy; and our once happy and peaceful country is drenched with fraternal blood--the first fruits of sectional agitation. Instead of prosperity it has burdened us with a National debt of countless millions. Instead of the guaranteed rights of personal liberty and security, it has suspended the writ of *habeas corpus* and suppressed the Constitution and laws. It has placed a censorship over the press; stricken down "free speech," and invented a new punishment--"banishment for opinion's sake." It has deprived the country of more than a half million of its best and bravest sons, and filled the land with widows and orphans. Instead of peace, prosperity and unity, we have dissolution, war, tax-gatherers, and shoddy contractors. What a contrast.<sup>12</sup>

The second anti-administration editorial focuses on the subject of states' rights which, in the opinion of the Easton Sentinel, had been trampled by the Republicans. On June 30th, 1864 it wrote,

**What Is A Democrat?**--Our Republican friends often sneeringly ask the question, what is a Democrat? We will answer them. A Democrat is one who believes in the sacred and inalienable right of sovereign States to rule themselves; who hold to the doctrine that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed; who gloried in the Union because its authority was based only on the free consent of sovereign and coequal sister States; and who hoped for universal happiness throughout the world, because he saw and felt the possibility of government established by consent, and resting not on force, but on the unconstrained affection of the people.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the war years the Democratic newspapers continued to print articles such as these, disclaimers to the hateful charges of disloyalty hurled against

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<sup>12</sup> The Allentown Democrat, February 10, 1864.

<sup>13</sup> The Easton Sentinel, June 30, 1864.

them. As the war ground on and its unforgiving body counts increased to sickening levels, the desperation of the Democrats to justify their position increased in the face of an almost frenzied Republican determination to crush the rebellion and make suffer all who supported it in any manner, shape or form. But not everyone who was a Democrat advocated secession, and in fact those Democrats in the North who *were* Southern sympathizers or who schemed to create a Confederacy in the Pacific North-West were in reality very small in number. Simply put, not everyone who was vocal in their disgust with the Lincoln administration or who wished to see him voted out could in truth be considered enemies of the Union. These facts made little difference to most Republicans, who continued for generations to use the term Copperhead as an example of someone who was vile and disloyal, and to "wave the bloody shirt" was a Republican tactic until almost the end of the century.

The situation in Northampton County was no different, and the pro-Republican newspaper, the Easton Free Press, summed up the Unionist viewpoint in a page one article on February 18, 1864 that denounced the Democrats and anyone who did not whole-heartedly support the armed suppression of the rebellion. Typical of the partisan, anti-Copperhead writing which appeared in pro-Republican papers all across the North, it reads simply,

**--What "Copperhead" Means.--**

For the benefit of those who do not find Copperhead in the Dictionary, we give the following analysis:

**C**onspiracy.  
**O**pposition to the war.  
**P**eace on any terms.  
**P**iracy.  
**E**nimity to the Union.  
**R**ecognition of the C.S.A.  
**H**atred of the government.  
**E**arnest sympathy with traitors.  
**A**narchy.  
**D**isloyalty.<sup>14</sup>

It followed this up two weeks later with an article that was reprinted from the New York Tribune. On March 3rd it wrote,

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<sup>14</sup> The Easton Free Press, February 18, 1864.

**What Is A Copperhead** --"A Union Democrat" finds this word utterly without sense, and asks us to give its definition. It strikes us that he should first have ascertained the meaning of a word before he pronounces so decidedly on its significance. We will try to give it in dictionary form, as follows:

**COPPERHEAD:** n. A very poisonous and malignant snake, which strikes without warning, and whose bite is almost certain death.

2 A human serpent, who hates those who stand up for their country against the deadly assaults of Slaveholding treason, and pierces them with his poisonous fangs whenever he can or dare.

Examples -- Those who hurrah for Jeff Davis in loyal communities; those who publicly huzza for McClellan, but privately, and among their intimate cronies, avow that they hope to see Lee's army marching up Broadway, and Jeff receiving an ovation at the City Hall; those who propose to send embassies to Richmond, ostensibly in quest of "Peace" but really to encourage the Rebels to hold out and await the Presidential election; those who burned houses, and haunted inoffensive negroes in our streets, diversifying the slaughter and maiming of these, by processions to cheer under the windows of Gen. McClellan.

Now don't you see that "Copperhead" is one of the most significant words in our language?-- *Tribune*<sup>15</sup>

This was an age of revolution, an inflamed time when Vice-Presidential hopeful Andrew Johnson openly talked of hanging traitors at the Republican National Convention, when the Republican press disparaged the Democratic National Convention in Chicago as being "controlled by the most notorious disloyal men in the country," and the Easton Free Press called all Democrats "Copperheads, locofocos and southern sympathizers."<sup>16</sup> Judging from these words it is obvious that the intolerance of the pro-administration press in Northampton County was completely in line with the rest of the nation. On March 19, 1863, the Easton Argus wrote a rebuttal which was, like their Republican counterparts, essentially the same as with what was being written elsewhere by Democratic newspapers all across the North. It reads,

### **Our Duty**

The Democratic party has ever been, and yet is, a law-abiding party. It asks nothing but the rights under the Constitution and the laws. It resorts to no violation of either; It has a right to all the guarantees of public and private liberty, and of property, contained in our fundamental laws, and it will surrender not one of them. It has the right to discuss public measures, and will discuss them. It has the right to propose and advocate that policy which it deems best

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<sup>15</sup> The Easton Free Press, March 3, 1864.

<sup>16</sup> Phillip Shaw Paludan, The Presidency Of Abraham Lincoln, (1991) , pp. 273 & 285. See also the Easton Free Press, March 10, 1864.

for the nation, and it will exercise that right. It has a right to have its policy passed upon by the people at peaceful and untrammelled elections, and it will maintain that right. If found in a minority it yields obedience to all lawful rule of the majority; if it be the majority itself, it claims that its lawful will be respected. Whether in a majority or minority, it obeys all laws that are in force. Those it dislikes, it seeks to overthrow, not by violence, but by legitimate appeal.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The Easton Argus, March 19, 1863.

### **Part Three**

## **The Distorted Political Situation Of The Civil War Era**

Abraham Lincoln did not win a landslide victory in 1860. In a four-man race which saw each candidate do either very well or very poorly in particular sections of the nation, Lincoln was elected to his first term with only 39.8% of the popular vote.<sup>18</sup> This is somewhat deceiving, for he did achieve 54% of the Northern vote -- an 8% increase over Fremont's share in this region in 1856 -- and carried every Northern state except New Jersey, which he split with Douglas. This was a considerable political feat considering the fact that he was a relative unknown to much of the country prior to his improbable come from behind nomination at the Republican convention. However, what is perhaps most interesting and important about Lincoln's first election win is that the Republican candidate was not even on the ballot in ten Southern states.

Four years later a Lincoln re-election seemed to many observers to be as equally improbable as his nomination in 1860. The moderate Lincoln faced numerous obstacles in his bid to perpetuate his administration, but in the dark summer of 1864 his most telling problem was dealing with the radical wing of his own party, who seemed determined to replace him with a candidate more to their liking. As is well known, a shining example of his struggles with the Radical Republicans surfaced with the controversy over the Wade-Davis Bill, which sought to limit Lincoln's role in determining post-war Reconstruction policy and replacing it with a much harsher and punitive policy.

What is lesser known is that a group of conservative Republicans also tried to convince ex-President Millard Fillmore to abandon his much-enjoyed retirement and enter the ring in an attempt to unseat Lincoln. Lewis Cambell, an old Ohio Whig, had written that their objective was to create a third party that would deny the presidency to the "Copperhead democracy on the one hand and that class of men who are afflicted with the disease known as 'nigger on the brain' on the other." Campbell's dream was to resurrect the Whig Party and, that having failed, to construct a new party based upon the conservative Whig principles of the late Henry Clay. The work of this group -- who eventually even flirted with the idea of cooperating with the Democrats and General McClellan in order to deny Lincoln reelection -- came to naught.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Although Lincoln received only 39.8% of the popular vote, he did receive 180 electoral votes, giving him a comfortable cushion over the minimum 152 needed to win.

<sup>19</sup> William C. Harris, "Conservative Unionists And The Presidential Election Of 1864," Civil War History, 38, (1992), p. 303.

However, the candidacy of General John C. Fremont on the ticket of a third party known as the Radical Democracy proved to be a bigger obstacle to Lincoln. Initially Fremont did not actively pursue any nomination in 1864, but he later changed heart and accepted the nomination given to him at the Cleveland Convention and was quoted as saying that if Lincoln were to be renominated by the Republican Party that "it would be fatal to the country to endorse and renew a power which has cost us the lives of thousands of men, and needlessly put the country on the road to bankruptcy."<sup>20</sup> He initially had attracted the support of a number of Radical Republicans whose motto now was "Anything-to-beat-Lincoln."<sup>21</sup>

In the election of 1856 it had been generally agreed upon that the ex-Whig Fremont had lost because too many nativist Know-Nothings and conservative old-line Whigs had voted for Fillmore.<sup>22</sup> During that election in Pennsylvania, Fremont had run fairly well (he gained 32.1% of the popular vote) considering that Millard Fillmore, running on the Whig ticket, had siphoned off almost 18% of the votes. In Northampton County, however, Fremont had run third behind Fillmore, gaining only 14.1% as opposed to Fillmore's 22.2% and Buchanan's 63.6%. When his campaign began in earnest in January 1864 he was still reasonably popular in much of the state and the Daily Pittsburg Gazette summed him up as "a better man than the present incumbent in the White House."<sup>23</sup>

The Easton Sentinel, glad to quote anyone who was critical of Lincoln, printed Fremont's acceptance speech in their June 9, 1864 edition. His speech was significant, for in his words reside the sentiments that aptly capture the anti-Lincoln mood which was so strong amongst many in the North for most of that election year. These were also the same sentiments which would later propel the citizens of Northampton County to decisively vote against the sixteenth president. Note that the Sentinel incorrectly identifies this speech as having been given at the Republican National Convention.

### **Fremont Accepts The Nomination**

As a matter of record we publish the following letter of Gen. John C. Fremont, accepting the nomination for President, made by the Republican National Convention which met at Cleveland, Ohio, on the 31st ult.

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<sup>20</sup> See Long, p. 181.

<sup>21</sup> Harold M. Dudley, "The Election Of 1864," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 18, (June 1931-March 1932), p. 504.

<sup>22</sup> William Gienapp, "Who Voted for Lincoln?" in John L. Thomas (ed.), Abraham Lincoln and the American Political Tradition, Amherst, 1986, p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> Norman C. Brillhart, "The Election Of 1864 In Western Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania Magazine Of History and Biography, 8, (Jan. 1925). See also the Daily Pittsburg Gazette, January 22, 1864.

...in accepting the candidacy you propose to me, I am creating a schism in the party with which I have been identified.

Had Mr. Lincoln remained faithful to the principles he was elected to defend, no schism could have been created, and no contest could have been possible. This is not an ordinary election, it is a contest for the right even to have candidates, and not merely as usual for the choice among them. Now, for the first time since '76, the question of Constitutional liberty has been brought directly before the people for their serious consideration and vote. The ordinary rights secured under the Constitution and the laws of the country have been usurped by the Executive. It is directly before the people now to say whether or not the principles established by the Revolution are worth maintaining.

....(T)here must be a protest against the arbitrary violation which had not even the excuse of necessity. The schism is made by those who force the choice between a shameful silence or a protest against wrong. In such considerations originated the Cleveland Convention.

....(T)o-day we have in the country the abuses of a military dictation without its unity of action and vigor of execution. An administration marked at home by disregard of Constitutional rights, by its violation of personal liberty of the press, and, as a crowning shame, by its abandonment of the right of asylum--a right especially dear to all free nations.<sup>24</sup>

Fremont's campaign, though loud and earnest in its disgust with the Lincoln administration, never seemed to attract as much attention or strength as it could have. It seemed to have lost much of its steam even before the convention itself was held. Strangely, many of the most vocal men who had arranged the convention were absent; Horace Greeley, Wendell Phillips and the fiery ex-slave orator, Frederick Douglass, all stayed home. One of the main reasons is that a great number of Republicans belatedly seemed to understand that party unity would be of paramount importance if the upcoming election were to be won. For all the others Republicans who coveted the Presidency, such as Benjamin Butler and Salmon Chase among others, it was thought that none could attract enough attention and support to run as potentially well as Lincoln. For this reason, more than anything, a growing number of Radical Republicans decided to stay put with the incumbent and not openly break with him until after the election was - hopefully - won in November.

Nevertheless, Lincoln's problems continued, and despite the fact that his re-nomination at the Republican National Convention in Baltimore during the second week of June 1864 was secured by a healthy total on the first vote, many still feared that he would not even achieve the popular vote totals of four years previous. With growing hostility towards the war, towards the draft, increased taxes, mounting war

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<sup>24</sup> See the Easton Sentinel, June 9, 1864.

casualties (60,000 Union dead in the summer of 1864 alone) and what was widely perceived as incompetent northern generalship, the prospects for Lincoln's re-election seemed to be rapidly withering. To make matters worse, no president had been re-elected to a second term since 1832.

Pessimism within the Republican party abounded. Even Henry Raymond, chairman of the party, voiced to the president his fear that McClellan would triumph in November. Other advisors urged Lincoln to contact the rebels to discuss a possible ending to the war, something Horace Greeley had been printing in his New York Tribune for some time. By late August public opinion and unrest was so bad that the Party was desperate. On the 23rd Lincoln himself wrote a memo stating, "This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this administration will not be re-elected." <sup>25</sup>

Public opposition to Lincoln seemed to rise and ebb with the fortunes of the Union army.<sup>26</sup> The afore-mentioned loss of 60,000 Union men during the summer of 1864 amplified the growing sentiment of the populace that the Democratic press was correct in viewing the war as an unwinnable, bottomless pit of useless suffering and spilt blood. This was coupled with non-stop tirades against Lincoln and his administration charging, among other things, corruption, stupidity, a lack of courage, and the unpardonable sin of elevating the hated Negro over the Caucasian.

After Lincoln's re-nomination the Easton Argus on June 16th published their assessment of the Republican National Convention and the current administration:

(I)t would seem that Abraham Lincoln has been re-nominated for the presidency by the Abolition Convention in Baltimore. Hanibal Hamlin was rejected as the Vice-Presidential candidate, and Andrew Johnson was nominated in his place... (W)e present to our readers the following portrait of Mr. Lincoln and his cabinet, which is taken from the *New York World*, of Thursday:

The age of statesman is gone; the age of rail-splitters and tailors, of buffoons and boors and fanatics has succeeded. The problems presented for solution within the next four years are more complex and difficult, they require a larger grasp and deeper penetration than any which have ever been offered to the consideration of

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<sup>25</sup> See Paludin pp. 282-283. The entire memorandum reads as follows: "This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to co-operate with the President-elect so as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration, as he will have secured his election on such ground that he cannot save it afterward." This is reprinted in Alexander K. McClure, Old Time Notes Of Pennsylvania, Vol. #2, (Philadelphia, 1905), p.148.

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of northern public opinion directly following the fortunes of the Union army, see James M. McPherson, Battle Cry Of Freedom: The Civil War Era, (New York, 1988), chapter #24 "If It Takes All Summer," pp. 718-750. See also Paludan, p.289.



statesmen. But Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Johnson are both men of mediocre talents, neglected education, narrow views, deficient information and coarse and vulgar manners... Except a superficial knowledge of our domestic politics, such as may be picked up in the newspapers and in intercourse with the vulgar herd of office-seekers, Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Johnson have no attainments to distinguish them from the mass of ordinary citizens... (T)his country, with so proud a record, should now be reduced to such intellectual poverty as to have presented to it, two such names as Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson for its highest stations, in the most trying crisis of its history, is a cruel mockery, a bitter humiliation.

In a crisis of the most appalling magnitude, requiring statesmanship to the highest order, the country is asked to consider the claims of two ignorant, boorish, third-rate, backwoods lawyers, for the highest stations in the government. Such nominations, in such a conjuncture, are an insult to the common sense of the people. -- God save the Republic!<sup>27</sup>

The Easton Argus was not alone in condemnations as harsh as this. Democratic objections of the Lincoln administration were numerous and ranged from the suspension of the writ of habeas-corpus by executive action, the great extension of the power of an increasingly centralized Federal government, the seizure of private telegraphic dispatches and the arbitrary arrests of Democratic editors and newspaper men.<sup>28</sup> In Pennsylvania alone three different Democratic editors were arrested and forcibly taken to Washington for interrogation.

In response, the Republican Party in general and Lincoln in particular were demonized in the Democratic press throughout the North. It is no surprise to read the Lancaster (Pa.) Intelligencer refer to him as "a miserable low buffoon (who) disgraces the presidential chair."<sup>29</sup> The Harrisburg (Pa.) Patriot And Union echoed these sentiments, claiming Lincoln acted "more like a well-trained monkey than a man of sense and a gentleman."<sup>30</sup> The Carlisle (Pa.) Gazette called him an "imbecile."<sup>31</sup> Perhaps worst of all was the Selinsgrove (Pa.) Times which denounced Lincoln in their Christmas Day editorial of 1863 as,

one of the most deceptive, cold-blooded, unfeeling, and basest men....He is a liar, a thief, a robber, a brigand, a pirate, a perjurer, a traitor, a coward, a hypocrite, a

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<sup>27</sup> See The Easton Argus, June 16, 1864.

<sup>28</sup> See Andrews, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid p. 28. See also the Lancaster Intelligencer, July 28, 1864.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid p. 28. See also the Harrisburg Patriot And Union, June 13, 1864.

<sup>31</sup> Arnold Michael Shankman, "Conflict In The Old Keystone: Anti-War Sentiment In Pennsylvania, 1860-1865." Doctoral Dissertation, Emery University, 1972, p. 98. See also Carlisle Gazette, n.d., as quoted in the Bedford Gazette, April 26, 1861.

cheat, a trickster, a murderer, a tyrant, an unmitigated scoundrel, and an infernal fool.<sup>32</sup>

The stagnation of the war effort coupled with the continuing anti-war, anti-Lincoln onslaught of the Democratic press brought Northern morale to perhaps its lowest point in late August 1864. Even David Farragut's spectacular achievement at Mobile Bay on August 5th did little to improve Northern spirits. So demoralized was the North that even home front war songs, so popular during the conflict, changed almost overnight from upbeat, patriotic songs to the more somber themes of peace and a longing for the return to better times. Fittingly, the song entitled, "When This Cruel War Is Over," with its sad refrain, "Weeping, sad and lonely," was the most popular song of 1864.<sup>33</sup> Before its popularity as a song it was first a well-known poem, and it was printed in its entirety in the Easton Argus on March 5, 1863;

Selected Poetry  
**When This Cruel War Is Over**

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Dearest love, do you remember,  
When we last did meet,  
How you told me that you loved me,  
Kneeling at my feet?  
Oh! How proud you stood before me,  
In your suit of blue,  
When you vowed to me and country,  
Ever to be true.

Weeping, sad and lonely,  
Hopes and fears, how vain - yet praying,  
When this cruel war is over,  
Praying that we may meet again.

When the summer breeze is sighing,  
Mournfully along!  
Or when autumn leaves are falling,  
Sadly breathes the song,  
Oft in dreams I see the lying,  
On the battle plain,  
Lonely, wounded, even dying,  
Calling, but in vain.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid pp. 28-29. See also William A. Russ, Jr., "Franklin Weirick: 'Copperhead' of Central Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania History, 5, (1938), pp. 245-6.

<sup>33</sup> See McPherson, pp. 760-761.

Weeping sad, &c

If amid the din of battle,  
Nobly you should fall,  
Far away from those who love you,  
None to hear you call,  
Who would whisper words of comfort,  
Who would soothe your pain?  
Ah! the many cruel fancies,  
Ever in my brain.

Weeping sad, &c

But your country called you, darling,  
Angels cheer your way,  
While our nation's sons are fighting,  
We can only pray,  
Nobly strike for God and freedom,  
Let all nations see,  
How we love our starry banner,  
Emblem of the free,

Weeping sad, &c<sup>34</sup>

A less sad but still obnoxiously depressing poem with a similar title was printed in the Allentown Democrat on its front page on April 20, 1864. It reads,

**This Cruel War: --**

When this cruel war is over,  
And our friends all crippled are,  
All the nigs will be in clover,  
While the white trash can work and swear.  
Blacks at ease -- whites at labor,  
Pretty picture, ain't it neighbor?

When this cruel war is over,  
Many, very many years from now,  
And we the taxes then are paying,  
Abe will catch it some we trow.  
Blacks at ease -- whites at labor,  
Pretty picture, ain't it neighbor?

When this cruel war is over,  
And men in rags and debt and taxes,

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<sup>34</sup> The Easton Argus, August 13, 1863.

The politicians will be remembered,  
Who used our blood to grind their axes.  
Blacks at ease, whites at labor,  
Figure different, can you, neighbor?<sup>35</sup>

The malaise continued to spread. The usually headstrong Republican, Sydney George Fisher of Philadelphia, captured the mood around him when he sadly wrote in his diary that "Our American life of ease, security, freedom & tranquillity is gone forever. Taxation and debt, armies & war, and something to take the place of democracy are to be our portion hereafter."<sup>36</sup> In New York, the editor of the Tribune, Horace Greeley, dejected wrote on August 9th that nine tenths of the nation, both North and South, "are anxious for peace -- peace on almost any terms -- and utterly sick of human slaughter and devastation." Ten days later Greeley's despondency continued when he wrote that "Lincoln is already beaten....he can not be (re)elected."<sup>37</sup> On August 27th New Yorker George Templeton Strong added in his now-famous diary, "Lincoln loses ground every day."<sup>38</sup> Even veteran Republican leader Thurlow Weed was convinced that "Lincoln's re-election (is) an impossibility....The people are wild for peace."<sup>39</sup>

This increasingly pronounced morale problem was not lost on the Republican leadership, who rightly saw that with Northern support for the war effort dwindling, success on the battlefield was imperative if victory at the ballot box in November was to be achieved. However, politicians in the North were not the only ones astute enough to see the writing on the wall. Southern leaders realized that if they could hold out until the election, Northern war-weariness would escalate, greatly improving the chances of a Democratic candidate running on a peace platform. As one Georgia newspaper wrote, whether Lincoln "shall ever be elected or not depends upon...the battlefields of 1864. If the tyrant in Washington be defeated, his infamous policy will be defeated with him."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The Allentown Democrat, April 20, 1864.

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas A. Wainwright, (ed.), A Philadelphia Perspective: The Diary Of Sydney George Fisher, Covering The Years 1834-1871, (Philadelphia), p.451 (diary entry May 7, 1863). Herein cited as Fisher.

<sup>37</sup> Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas (ed.'s), The Diary Of George Templeton Strong: The Civil War, 1860-1865, (New York, 1952), p. 477. Herein cited as Strong. See also the New York Herald, August 9th and 19th, 1864.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 475 (diary entry August 27, 1864).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 761.

<sup>40</sup> See McPherson, p. 721. See also Larry E. Nelson, Bullets, Ballots And Rhetoric: Confederate Policy For The United States Presidential Contest Of 1864, (University, AL.,1980), p.14.

Unfortunately for Confederate hopes, the first of September witnessed the collapse of General Hood's out-manned and out-gunned defense of Atlanta. Within a day the victorious General Sherman was in complete control of the beleaguered city. Sherman's now-famous wire to Washington read simply, "Atlanta is ours, and fairly won."<sup>41</sup> The importance of this Union victory can not be over-stressed, for it brought about rapturous celebrations throughout the North and caused the South to realize their future had suddenly dimmed. As a man from North Carolina glumly lamented, "Never until now did I feel hopeless, but since God seems to have forsaken us I despair."<sup>42</sup>

Two weeks after the fall of Atlanta General Sheridan scored a triumph in the Shenandoah Valley, and the recent Union victory of David Farragut at Mobile Bay now seemed to take on new relevance. These three Southern debacles seemed to effectively counter the shouts of the Democrats who still bellowed on about the futility of the war. This was effectively summed up by Secretary of State William Seward who explained after reading Sherman's telegram, "Sherman and Farragut have knocked the bottom out of the Chicago platform."<sup>43</sup> It caused Lincoln to gather long-vacant support, and even the doubting Republican Horace Greeley wrote in his New York Tribune, "Henceforth, we fly the banner of Abraham Lincoln for the next Presidency."<sup>44</sup>

The final great breakthrough occurred with Fremont's withdrawal from the race on September 22nd after much delicate back-stage negotiations by Zachariah Chandler.<sup>45</sup> It was more a victory for the Republican Party as a whole rather than a personal victory for Lincoln. Fremont's official letter of withdrawal from the race stated,

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<sup>41</sup> See McPherson, p. 774.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 775.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Seward's statement was repeated in a speech he gave to the Lincoln and Johnson Association of Washington. The first paragraph reads, "Fellow citizens: The Democracy at Chicago, after waiting for six weeks to see whether this war for the Union is to succeed or fail, finally concluded that it would fail; and therefore went in for a nomination and platform to make it the sure thing by a cessation of hostilities and an abandonment of the contest. At Baltimore, on the contrary, we determined that there should be no such thing as failure; and therefore we went in to save the Union by battle to the last. Sherman and Farragut have knocked the bottom out of the Chicago nominations." See Horace Greeley, The American Conflict, II, (Hartford, Conn., 1867), p. 670.

<sup>44</sup> See the New York Tribune, September 6, 1864.

<sup>45</sup> The deal in which Fremont quit the race was achieved with the Lincoln's sacking of Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, who had been a major antagonist of the Radical Republicans. See Winfred A. Harbison, "Zachariah Chandler's Part In The Election Of Abraham Lincoln," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 22, (June 1935-March 1936), pp 267-276.

I believe I am consistent with my antecedents and my principles in withdrawing-not to aid in the triumph of Mr. Lincoln, but to do my part toward preventing the election of the Democratic candidate. In respect to Mr. Lincoln, I continue to hold exactly the sentiments contained in my letter of acceptance. I consider that this administration has been politically, militarily, and financially, a failure, and that its necessary continuance is a cause of regret for the country.<sup>46</sup>

The Northern Democratic press, however, was not so easily deterred by sudden rash of good fortunes bestowed upon the Republicans. In Northampton County, the Easton Sentinel wrote on October 20th,

We feel now that with a determined effort, the state can be carried for General McClellan by a very large majority....Let us stem the tide of the monied influence that will now be rolled upon the state in tenfold greater volume than before. Let every man who loves his country and values its prosperity, henceforth work and vote for a change in the present administration of the affairs of our national government. We *can* carry this state by an overwhelming majority for McClellan - *let us do it*. Let us turn out the party that is now beggaring this country - Let us place honest and patriotic men at the head of the nation and we will be rewarded in a re-established Union and a return of the happy days of peace and plenty...Although in all human probability General McClellan will be honestly elected President on the 8th of November next, still there is so large a margin of doubt, that Democrats cannot afford to consider the matter settled.<sup>47</sup>

Though Union victories in August and September had made a Union triumph seem imminent where it had recently appeared far off if not impossible, thus robbing the Democrats of one of their key propaganda weapons, they still possessed one attribute which was completely in their own hands; party unity. It was no mystery that the single greatest contributing factor of Lincoln's victory in 1860 was the split in the Democratic ticket between Douglas and Breckinridge. It was this more than anything which allowed the upstart Republicans to achieve the presidency with a paltry 39.8% of the popular vote. For the election of 1864 unity was essential and even Clement L. Vallandigham, the nationally known but extremely controversial Peace Democrat from Ohio, vocalized his opposition to the idea of a separate ticket. He was quoted as saying in the Chicago Times on August 8, "there can be no such thing as a war

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<sup>46</sup> See Greeley, p. 670.

<sup>47</sup> The Easton Sentinel, October 20, 1864.

democrat or a peace Democrat...the minority must unfalteringly abide and support the action of the majority."<sup>48</sup>

At the Democratic National convention McClellan was nominated on the first ballot, overcoming the laments of those Peace Democrats who initially refused to support a general who had actively sought the military subjugation of the South. However, it was clear that support for keeping the Union intact was still extremely strong and the nomination of anyone who could be perceived as willing to allow disunion as a condition for peace would fare poorly at the polls. As Samuel L.M. Barlow wrote in a letter to Washington McLean on August 6th, "The nomination at Chicago of an out and out peace ticket, will result in the re-election of Lincoln. But give us McClellan and a true man from some one of the border states for the Vice-Presidency" and the Democrats would win.<sup>49</sup>

Barlow knew what he was saying, for the most powerful tool in the Republican propaganda arsenal was the charge that the Democrats, derisively referred to as Copperheads, were traitors, more interested in peace than a restoration of the Union. Any success the Democrats could achieve would be dependent on them successfully robbing the Republicans of that weapon by disavowing the cries of those Peace Democrats who, prior to the Chicago convention, did indeed desire peace at any price.

With McClellan as their nominee the Democrats felt sure that they had the perfect candidate. He was indeed a confirmed and committed Democrat and, being a general, it was thought that there could be no question as to his loyalty to the Union, his support for the war effort, and his desire for the defeat of the rebellion.<sup>50</sup> And McClellan was a genuinely popular and respected man among both the civilian population and in military circles. This last fact was especially important, and it was thought that with any other candidate the military vote would be completely lost.<sup>51</sup> Even the delegates from the west, who had been clamoring so hard for peace, gave him their undivided support.

By the time he was in his mid-thirties McClellan had indeed possessed an impressive -- and well-known -- résumé. As Philip Shaw Paludan states in *The Presidency Of Abraham Lincoln*, "General William Sherman called him 'a naturally

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<sup>48</sup> Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party In The Civil War Era, 1860-1868.* (New York, 1977), p. 122. See also the *Chicago Times*, August 8, 1864.

<sup>49</sup> See Silbey, p.123.

<sup>50</sup> See Silbey, p. 120.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

superior man,' and George McClellan was inclined to agree with that."<sup>52</sup> The future general had graduated second in his class at West Point in 1846 and had served with distinction in the Mexican War where he had been promoted first to Lieutenant and then to captain. A short time later he gained attention as a strategist following the publication of a report he wrote on military tactics in the Crimean War. Coincidentally, the man who sent him on this over-seas mission, which was to assess the strength of the European armies, was then-President Pierce's Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis.

Relegated after the war to the command of an engineer company on garrison duty in the western territories he eventually resigned his commission to take over as president of the Mississippi and Ohio Railroad, a position he held for four years. As a successful railroad executive his well-known abilities in leadership and administration became further refined, and when war had broken out in 1861 he was by far the most sought-after former army officer in the Union. When he put together his aptly named Army of the Potomac - a truly monumental task - his obvious skills as an organizer and master of logistics were not only greatly admired, but brought him instant fame. Promoted rapidly after his return from civilian life, McClellan soon became the second highest ranking army officer, second only to general-in-chief Winfield Scott. Within a short time after that he had convinced Lincoln that the aged Scott had to go, and it was McClellan who took his place.<sup>53</sup> His rise to the top had occurred with unprecedented speed.<sup>54</sup>

Despite his eventual sacking -- twice -- by Lincoln, McClellan's fame in many circles of Northern society had not diminished. He was still regarded as a hero in some circles and many fervently still believed that McClellan's military setbacks were caused -- at least in part -- by Republican interference in the war effort. A large bloc of people still saw him, like most of the delegates at the 1864 Chicago Convention, as the near-perfect candidate. Many newspapers -- including the Allentown Democrat -- had been advocating McClellan's candidacy in opposition to Lincoln for more than a year prior

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<sup>52</sup> See Paludan, pp. 84-85.

<sup>53</sup> McClellan and Scott clashed over Scott's disagreement with McClellan's vastly inflated estimate of Confederate troop strength. Though Scott was correct -- and thus McClellan wrong -- Lincoln sided with the latter, and fired Scott.

<sup>54</sup> After the war General Grant had identified this too-rapid rise to the top as the probable cause for McClellan's problems while in command of Union troops. See Stephen Sears, "God's Chosen Instrument," in American Heritage, (July/August, 1988), herein cited as Scars Instrument, p. 101.



to the Democratic convention. Typical of that paper's high opinion of McClellan is this February 24, 1864 editorial which read in part,

**FOR PRESIDENT IN 1864**  
**GEN. GEORGE B. McCLELLAN,**

Subject to the decision of the Democratic  
National Convention.

**General McClellan**

Will beyond doubt be the Democratic nominee for the next Presidency. His popularity is constantly in the ascent. In retiring him from public duty, the war department has clearly failed in withdrawing him from the public attention. The popular affection clings to him with a tenacity that can not be mistaken....and he is now regarded as a superior statesman as well as a brave general.....(His letters) indicate high moral principles, sterling patriotism, sound political views and a comprehensive grasp of mind that demonstrate their writer to be no common man....His name can not be mentioned in public assembly without provoking enthusiastic applause....Should General McClellan be nominated for the Presidency by the Democratic Convention, and of which there is no doubt, his election will be next to inevitable.<sup>55</sup>

The Republican press did not share the same view of General McClellan, and mercilessly disparaged his abilities as well as his commitment to the Union. In Easton, the staunchly Republican Northampton County Journal on October 19th, 1864 wrote an article entitled, "He Was Not There," cruelly tearing apart McClellan as an incompetent general who cost the lives of innocent soldiers and, more damning yet, implied that he was a coward. On November 2nd the same paper wrote, "Proclaiming the war to be a failure, George B. McClellan is himself the great failure of the war - a statesman without a record, and if we are faithful, history will add to his epitaph, that he was a candidate for the Presidency without an electoral vote."<sup>56</sup>

The Easton Sentinel countered this criticism by listing a number of praises given to the general by Lincoln himself in 1862. In the October 27, 1864 edition the Sentinel wrote reminded its readers that the President had indeed once been gracious and complimentary towards his top general, saying in a speech given at the White House in August 1864 that, "I believe he is an able and honest man." The beginning of the editorial began as follows;

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<sup>55</sup> The Allentown Democrat, February 24, 1864.

<sup>56</sup> The Northampton County Journal, November 2, 1864.

## REPUBLICAN ENDORSEMENTS OF M'CLELLAN.

The shoddy organs are so busy slandering M'Clellan that they forget that Mr. Lincoln wrote to him under the date of July 2d, 1862, as follows,

"I am satisfied that yourself, officers and men have done the best that you could. All accounts say better fighting was never done -- Ten thousand thanks for it."

Two days afterward, when Mr. Lincoln had fuller information, General McClellan received the following,

"Be assured the heroism of yourself, officers, and men is, and forever will be appreciated."<sup>57</sup>

Horace Greeley, a committed Republican and outspoken foe of McClellan, was nonetheless aware that the party of Lincoln would be making a grave error if they were to treat the Democratic candidate lightly. Though highly critical of both McClellan the general and McClellan the man, Greeley's fears and warnings made a number of influential ears stand on end, and his words were disseminated widely throughout the land.<sup>58</sup> Northampton County was no exception, and his editorial was reprinted in the Easton Free Press on March 24th, 1864. The article, in its entirety, reads,

**General McClellan.**--Horace Greeley concludes a long article on the Presidential prospects of Gen. McClellan in the following words:

"Let us not, then, commit the common error of underrating the strength of the foe. Gen. McClellan is to be the Pro-Slavery candidate for next President of the United States, and he will prove more formidable in that canvass than in the field. He is essentially not a soldier, but a politician, and his fighting and writing have alike been intended to train him for the Presidential race. There is not in all the loyal states a sympathizer with the Slaveholders' Rebellion who will not support him with desperate energy--not a man who, like Gov. Price of New Jersey, gravely proposed that his own state should become a satrapy of Jeff Davis's slave empire, or who, like our Gov. Seymour, wanted the Union constructed with New England left out, who is not a natural McClellanite. Add to every remaining devotee of the Slave Power the soldiers and others who will vote for him as a favorite General, and he comes a candidate hard to be beaten. Only digging down to the bedrock of Principle, and imbuing the masses with a stern repugnance to Human Slavery, with all its walks and ways, its incidents and belongings, can we insure the discomfiture of this, its final and insinuating

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<sup>57</sup> The Easton Sentinel, October 27, 1864.

<sup>58</sup> Greeley's fears were matched by his Republican contemporary, George Templeton Strong, who wrote in his diary during the Democratic National Convention on Sunday August 28, 1864, "General impression tonight that McClellan will surely be nominated at Chicago, and that he will not run well. I think A. Lincoln would find him a most troublesome antagonist."

representative and embodiment. And to this end, systematic efforts should be at once commenced and vigorously prosecuted."<sup>59</sup>

Part of these "systematic efforts" was the on-going work of the Republican press, and especially in the weeks leading up to the Democratic National Convention the assault on McClellan became increasingly coarse and mean. Despite the fact that he had been heavily courted for more than a year to be their candidate, his strength and respect within the Democratic Party was callously questioned in the Republican press. Vallandigham, relentlessly degraded for his strong views against the war, was named "the hero of the occasion" at the convention, thereby implying that he, and not McClellan, would be calling the shots in the Democratic party.<sup>60</sup> It also implied that whatever McClellan might say, a peace plank was the only objective the Democrats would pursue if they were to win in November. This was the view of the Northampton County Journal which wrote in an article entitled, "The Chicago Convention," on August 31st,

It matters little who the candidate will be... Neither does it matter what kind of platform is constructed. The position of the party is fixed as firm as fate as an opposition party to the present administration, and to the candidates of the Union Party... go in for the maintenance of the Union and of the Constitution by a vigorous prosecution of the war -- whilst the Democratic Party, as the opposition party, must be opposed to the war, and in favor of peace on any terms. It matters not, therefore, who will be the candidate, or what will be the platform made at Chicago... The nomination & the platform will mean peace at any price, and concession to the Confederacy, even though it be humiliating and degrading to the North and to the government. <sup>61</sup>

The Journal later added on September 7th that the entire Democratic platform was "not only weak, but unpatriotic, bitterly and blindly partisan & inflammatory. It will be hailed with joy in Richmond... but it will not and does not satisfy those who love the Union."<sup>62</sup> Republican papers across the north took advantage of what was interpreted as the Democratic platform's omission to insist on the Union "under all circumstances."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The Easton Free Press, March 24, 1864.

<sup>60</sup> See Silbey, p. 126.

<sup>61</sup> The Northampton County Journal, August 31, 1864.

<sup>62</sup> The Northampton County Journal, September 7, 1864.

<sup>63</sup> Silbey, p.134.

Horatio Seymour's keynote convention speech was especially attacked, with the Philadelphia Press saying that, "It is characteristic of the man and his party--not one word in denunciation of the rebellion, but hundreds in hatred of the Union."<sup>64</sup> So disgusted was the Republican Press that the New York Times lamented that the convention consisted entirely of "black hearted traitors."<sup>65</sup> The New York Tribune continued in this vein and accused the entire Democratic platform as being "concocted by rebels in Richmond...(and was) agreed to by disloyal politicians at the North in a conference with Rebels at Niagara Falls...and was taken to Chicago and adopted by a convention expressly chosen to adopt it."<sup>66</sup>

The charge that the Democrats were traitors was not merely a propaganda tool for the Republican Party, it was a firmly-held position of a great number of Americans. The belief that the Democrats *would* bring about a ruination of the country and a permanent split in the Union was not considered to be a far-fetched or unrealistic fear. It is not surprising in the least, then, to find a New Yorker like George Templeton Strong express this sense of horror at what so many like him feared the Democrats would accomplish if they won in the next presidential election. In his Friday September 2nd 1864 diary entry Strong glumly wrote,

I have little faith in McClellan's principles. I could write at least a page of indignations about the insult these Chicago resolutions have inflicted on the country... If the people should endorse them next November, the country is not worth saving; the title "citizen of the United States" is equivalent to that of coward, fainéant, serf, and craven, and I will emigrate and become a citizen of some community of gregarious blue baboons in South Africa.<sup>67</sup>

But was McClellan really running on a hidden peace plank as the administration and the Republican papers claimed? Was McClellan his own man, or was he really just a pawn of Vallandigham? Was the ringing Unionism in McClellan's acceptance speech after the Chicago Convention genuine? Was it sincere in his West Point address, his famous Harrison's Landing letter and the Woodward letter? It is a debate which continues to this day.

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<sup>64</sup> William Zornow, "Treason As A Campaign Issue," in Abraham Lincoln Quarterly, V (June 1949), p. 355. Herein cited as Zornow, Campaign. See also the Philadelphia Press, September 8, 1864.

<sup>65</sup> See Zornow, Campaign, p. 354. See also the New York Times September 24, 1864.

<sup>66</sup> See Zornow, Campaign, pp. 355-356. See also the New York Tribune, September 22, 1864.

<sup>67</sup> See Strong, p. 480 (September 2, 1864).

In his influential 1933 essay entitled "McClellan And The Peace Plank," Charles R. Wilson explores the pressures put upon the general during the National Convention.<sup>68</sup> Wilson attests to the fact that publicly McClellan did indeed always favor a restoration of the Union. In Wilson's estimate, a thorough reading of McClellan's papers reveals that,

There is no evidence that McClellan held any other than the strictest Union position at any time previous to the Chicago convention. The views expressed in his private correspondence during this period are entirely consistent with those uttered in public. If he so ardently desired the Democratic nomination in 1864 as to prostitute his principles in securing it, no recorded word or personal activity testifies to the fact.<sup>69</sup>

In the early 1930's Professor Charles Wilson had the lucky distinction of being the first to work with McClellan's official papers that had just recently been deposited in the Library of Congress. However, because of an undetected mistake by Wilson, he incorrectly determined that due to the great difficulty in securing Democratic unity McClellan did for a short time toy with the idea of accepting "the doctrine of an unconditional armistice and to risk the resumption of hostilities in case negotiations should break down." Wilson contended that since less practical minds (Vallandigham and his followers) had triumphed at the convention, McClellan was faced with a dilemma and was rendered temporarily unsure of which direction he should go. According to Wilson's interpretation of McClellan's rough drafts, McClellan eventually steered away from the armistice option and reverted to his original decisive attitude which was to insist upon recognition of the Union by the Confederacy as the only means of ending the war.<sup>70</sup>

The effective result of Wilson's essay was the promotion of the false belief that during the writing of his acceptance speech McClellan had considered the idea of following the peace wing of the Party led by Vallandigham and calling for a cessation of hostilities, thus wavering in his commitment to the "Union at all costs." In the years to come Wilson's work stood as gospel and has helped twist and distort the legacy of the 1864 Democratic candidate, adding fuel to the fire of the questioning of both McClellan's patriotism and his judgment.

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<sup>68</sup> Charles R. Wilson, "McClellan And The Peace Plank," American Historical Review, XXXVIII, (April 1933), p. 498.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 499.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, pp. 498-499.

The reason for the controversy was that within these newly-deposited papers Wilson had found what he thought were four (4) rudimentary drafts of the general's acceptance speech. When he read what he thought was the very first draft, he interpreted McClellan as being close to accepting the peace plank inserted in the manifesto of the Democratic National Convention at the insistence of Vallandigham. With this "discovery" Wilson charged McClellan with having "placed himself in a dangerous position" by coming close to changing his strategy in mid-course. McClellan, as this interpretation would have it seem, had turned his back on his many Unionist Democratic supporters. As Wilson disgustedly lamented, McClellan was "gambling with the Gods."<sup>71</sup>

Unfortunately for both Professor Wilson and General McClellan's reputation, the alleged first draft of the acceptance speech was not written by McClellan at all. Though the handwriting appears similar to McClellan's, what was thought of as the first draft was actually a letter written to the general by A. Banning Norton, a man originally from Texas who had been promoting the general as the next candidate well before the Democratic Convention. Immediately after McClellan had been chosen as the presidential candidate Mr. Norton wrote for the general a model acceptance letter to use as a guide. It was with this letter, which bears no resemblance in style or content to any of McClellan's other drafts, that led to the basis of Wilson's mistaken 1933 article.<sup>72</sup>

The list of historians who have blindly followed Wilson's essay and denigrated McClellan is exhibited in the voluminous works that have been published since 1933. In *The Politics Of Union: Northern Politics During The Civil War*, James A. Rawley wrote in 1974 that McClellan "weakly vacillated over his acceptance letter." In Joel Silbey's noted 1977 book, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party In The Civil War Era, 1860-1864*, "McClellan wavered, for a time, as to what to do." Jean Baker, who authored the book, *Affairs Of Party: The Political Culture Of Northern Democrats In The Mid-Nineteenth Century*, believed that the candidate showed "uncertainty about the platform." In the first major scholarly book covering the 1864 election, *Lincoln & The Party Divided*, William F. Zornow wrote in 1954 that McClellan was unsure of himself and "shifted his ground twice."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Stephen W. Sears, "McClellan And The Peace Plank Of 1864: A Reappraisal," in *Civil War History*, XXXVI, No. 1-4, (1990), pp. 58-59. Herein cited as Sears Reappraisal.

<sup>72</sup> Sears Reappraisal, p. 60.

<sup>73</sup> Sears Reappraisal, p. 57. See also, James A. Rawley, The Politics Of Union: Northern Politics During The Civil War, (Lincoln, Neb., 1980), p. 160; Joel H. Silbey, A Respectable

It is clear today that General McClellan believed as strongly in perpetual Union as any true patriot.<sup>74</sup> Though McClellan struggled through six drafts of his acceptance speech before he was finally satisfied, there is not one shred of evidence that he ever wavered from his strongly-held dedication to the Union. In fact, when the Democratic National Convention was postponed from July 4th to the end of August it was seen by many -- including McClellan himself -- as a manipulation by the peace wing of the Party and he threatened to withdraw his candidacy. The general's distaste for those elements within the Democratic Party that advocated an immediate halt to the fighting was so pronounced that on September 6th he wrote to William H. Aspinwall,

I will either accept on my own terms (you know what they are) or I will decline the whole affair. In my judgment my letter will be acceptable to all true patriots, & will only drive off the real adherents of Jeff Davis this side of the line...You are perfectly right...that the platform will be "the Union at all cost." Rest assured that I have the boldness to speak out my own mind, & the nerve to risk everything for my country...I both am & shall continue to be unpledged to any man except the real patriots of the land who value the "Union" above all things on earth.<sup>75</sup>

McClellan's personal experience had proven to him that any armistice with the South would either result in the South's independence or a completely foolish and unnecessary prolongation of the war. McClellan had witnessed first-hand during the Mexican-American War how general Santa Anna had skillfully used an armistice to fortify his defenses of Mexico City. The result was that the decisive battle was far bloodier and costlier than it could have been. This was not lost on McClellan who, when fellow Democrat George W. Morgan suggested to him that a pre-Convention call for an armistice would ensure him the nomination, became furious. In a response to one of his advisors McClellan stormily wrote, "Morgan is very anxious that I should write a letter suggesting an armistice!!!! If these fools will ruin the country I won't help them."<sup>76</sup>

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Minority: The Democratic Party During The Civil War Era, 1860-1868, (New York, 1977), p. 135; Jean H. Baker, Affairs Of Party: The Political Culture Of Northern Democrats In The Mid-Nineteenth Century, (Ithica, New York, 1983), p. 285; William F. Zornow, Lincoln & The Party Divided, (Norman, Oklahoma, 1954), p. 136.

<sup>74</sup> See Sears Instrument, p. 94.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Sears (ed.), The Civil War Papers Of George B. McClellan: Selected Correspondence, 1860-1865, (New York, 1989), p.594. See also Sears Reappraisal, p. 61.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

When the official Democratic delegation arrived at the general's Orange, New Jersey home and formally offered the nomination to him, he looked over the documents presented to him and said, I will accept "unless it be coupled with conditions distasteful to me."<sup>77</sup> McClellan finally finished his letter of acceptance on September 8th, and with it he made it crystal clear that he differed from Vallandigham's foolishly included Peace Plank at the Convention that professed "the experiment of war" to be "a failure."<sup>78</sup> Running obviously counter to the Peace Wing of the party led by the failed gubernatorial candidate from Ohio, McClellan stated in his letter that,

(T)he Union must be preserved at all hazards. I could not look in the face of my gallant comrades of the Army and Navy, who have survived so many bloody battles, and tell them that their labors and their sacrifice of so many of our slain and wounded brethren had been in vain; that we had abandoned that Union for which we had so often periled our lives.

A vast majority of our people, whether in the Army and Navy or at home, would, as I would, hail with unbounded joy the permanent restoration of peace, on the basis of the Union under the Constitution, without the effusion of another drop of blood. But no peace can be permanent without Union.<sup>79</sup>

Despite all this McClellan was still dogged throughout his life by the false accusation that he would have allowed the Union to be destroyed. His exasperation is felt in a letter he wrote to Samuel Barlow a year after the election saying, "I can't tell what the secesh expected to be the result from my election--but if they expected to gain their Independence from me they have been woefully mistaken."<sup>80</sup>

The reaction to McClellan's acceptance letter drew predictable response. McClellan's detractors, who still believed this to be a smoke screen hiding a nefarious scheme of their hated Copperhead rivals, denounced it bitterly. What they chose to ignore was the rift that McClellan caused by rejecting the convention's anti-war plank. Clement Vallandigham, the foremost anti-war Democrat in the nation, was enraged by

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<sup>77</sup> Nicholas Paul Kamaras, George B. McClellan And The Election Of 1864, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Delaware, 1976, p. 104.

<sup>78</sup> From the official "Resolution of the Democratic Platform," as quoted from Long, p.283.

<sup>79</sup> Letter of Acceptance, September 8, 1864, as quoted in Stephen Sears, The Civil War Papers Of George B. McClellan: Selected Correspondence, 1860-1865, (New York, 1989), p. 596. Herein cited as Sears Papers. This is the sixth and final draft produced on September 7 & 8 in New York City with the aid of Samuel Barlow and (apparently) a number of other unnamed advisors. See also Sears Papers, p. 597.

<sup>80</sup> Letter from George B. McClellan to Samuel Barlow, Nov. 12, 1865, as quoted in Sears Reappraisal, p.64.



McClellan's obstinance, and suddenly canceled a series of speaking engagements. Significantly, two of these speeches were to have been in Pennsylvania; in Venango County on September 10, and in Lancaster County on September 17. His "official" excuse for the first missed engagement on September 10 was that he had missed a train connection, but he then corrected himself and canceled the rest of the speaking tour. McClellan now faced the possibility of losing the support of nearly half of the Party, and it was only later and after much convincing that Vallandigham followed his own earlier advice and towed the official Party line, now unmistakably set by the candidate himself.<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand the Democratic press showered predictable praise upon the candidate and his acceptance letter. The New Jersey Weekly True American reviewed it in an exalted fashion, questioning its readers "Can anything be more just or wise or honorable than this?" The Detroit Free Press agreed by writing, "We would not change a line or a word of this letter if we could. Its language breathes the loftiest position."<sup>82</sup> The Easton Sentinel reported on September 15th that the speech was "an earnest and patriotic letter" that was "breathing a spirit of devotion to the Union." It quoted a number of equally positive remarks from the Philadelphia Age and ended its summation by stating, "Let every honest man who loves his country read this letter of acceptance and compare its temperate councils with the mad plan of the Abolitionists."<sup>83</sup> In a separate article on the same page the Easton Sentinel wrote an article ,

**A Good Sign.**--The only three ex-presidents now living are with the Democracy and McClellan, namely: Milliard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan.--The administration of all these worthy and honored gentlemen was characterized by peace, prosperity and general happiness. It is certainly a cheering sign to see all of them arrayed on the side of that party which is the only true Union party of the country, and the only one capable of bringing back the country to its pristine condition.

Almost exclusively throughout the final eight weeks between his nomination and the election, the Democratic challenger remained near-silent at his Orange, New Jersey home. This was not entirely abnormal, for as the New York World editorialized

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<sup>81</sup> See Shankman, p. 277. It is also quite important to note that unlike Vallandigham's Ohio there was no comparable loss of support in Pennsylvania for McClellan.

<sup>82</sup> See Kamaras, pp. 104-105. See also the New Jersey Weekly True American, which also quoted the Detroit Free Press, both quotes from September 16, 1864.

<sup>83</sup> The Easton Sentinel, September 15, 1864.

on September 29th, 1864, "It is generally deemed indiscreet for a presidential candidate to make any public speeches during the campaign."<sup>84</sup> Much to the perturbation of the exasperated August Belmont, McClellan followed in line with this political tradition of the day and refrained from actively participating in the campaign. It would prove to be a fatal error.

Belmont was not alone in his urging of McClellan to speak out on the issues and the untruthful distortions of his aims and goals in the Republican press. William Swift Pattern, a well-known War Democrat from Pennsylvania wrote to McClellan on October 18th, "Would it not be well for you to issue another soul stirring address or letter similar to your letter from Harrison Landing or your letter of acceptance reiterating your firm determination to uphold the Union and nothing but the Union...?"<sup>85</sup> Hendrick B. Wright, writing from Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, begged McClellan to tour the state, warning that the election's outcome might be "doubtful" if he did not bring his message directly to the Keystone voters.<sup>86</sup> John C. Mather also wrote from Pennsylvania and urged McClellan to come to the state, saying that he was sure that a short tour would virtually ensure Democratic victory there.<sup>87</sup>

McClellan apparently did not comprehend the peculiarities and realities of hard-ball politics, and his naive response to his increasingly desperate supporters was that he had already made his positions and intentions well-known, and that any reiteration would be an unnecessary waste of time. It is clear from reading his letters and correspondence that politics was something he simply had no taste for. As he told Charles Mason, a supporter from Pennsylvania on October 3rd, "I have made up my mind on reflection that it would be better for me not to participate in person in the canvass."<sup>88</sup>

The Democrats nonetheless hurriedly carried on without their leader. In the first weeks after the convention and in spite of Sherman and Sheridan's victories there was still great enthusiasm amongst the faithful and well-attended rallies were organized throughout the North. As the New Jersey Weekly True American reported on September 9th, "large rallies" were conducted at Albany, Troy, Utica, Syracuse,

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<sup>84</sup> See Kamaras, p. 270. See also The New York World, September 29, 1864.

<sup>85</sup> See Kamaras, p. 272. See also William Swift Pattern to George McClellan, October 18, 1864, M.P.

<sup>86</sup> See Shankman, pp. 300-301.

<sup>87</sup> See Sears Papers, p. 613. Mather's letter can be found in the McClellan Papers (B-21:52), Library of Congress.

<sup>88</sup> See Sears Papers, pp. 608-609, letter from George McClellan to Charles Mason, McClellan Papers (B-21:52) Library of Congress.

Rochester, Ogdensburg, Buffalo, Poughkeepsie, Burlington, Portland, Bordentown, Portland, and Providence. A rally was also staged at Phillipsburg, New Jersey, directly across the Delaware River from the city of Easton.<sup>89</sup> On September 19th a rally was held at Pottsville and on the 24th there was a huge rally in the City of Lancaster, both in eastern Pennsylvania. On September 17th there was a large rally in Philadelphia centered around a damaged house that was undergoing extensive repairs. The banner over the building read, "The House Our Fathers Built: State Rights: Free Speech, Free Press, Founded by Washington, 1789; Damaged by Lincoln, 1861; Restored by McClellan, 1865."<sup>90</sup>

The high-point of the McClellan campaign in Pennsylvania occurred in Philadelphia at a mass rally on October 29th organized by the Keystone Club, the successor to the Central Democratic Club. The Keystone Club had staged successful rallies throughout the state and had brought in such politically powerful and well-known men as New York Governor Horatio Seymour, Emerson Ethelridge and the Vice-Presidential nominee, George Pendelton, as well as locally-known Democrats such as William Reed, General Robert Patterson, George Wharton and Charles Ingersoll. The rally was so large that it apparently was one of the largest -- if not *the* largest -- political event ever to be taken through the city's streets up to that time. In the words of James Ross Anderson -- who was a Republican -- "The procession was composed of 40,000 men, 5 abreast, & was 3 hrs. and 20 minutes in passing. This exceeded anything I had ever beheld."<sup>91</sup> It is a testament to what was the strength of the state's desire for a change at the nation's political helm.

Despite the pleading of his Democratic advisors to attend at least some of these rallies, McClellan remained mostly silent in his comfortable home, content to allow others to do the dirty job of politicking. His excellent speaking voice foolishly went unused, and the early lead he held over the incumbent slowly began to ebb. As the election date drew closer, most pro-McClellan rallies became ominously smaller, and yet McClellan's response was continued, incredulous silence.

The future Democratic challenger did, however, make an unexpected visit to Easton on June 7 & 8. The Easton Argus reported that he stayed at the Franklin House on Center Square and within an hour several hundred people had gathered in

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<sup>89</sup> See Kamaras, p. 112. See also the New Jersey Weekly True American, September 9, 1864.

<sup>90</sup> See Shankman, pp. 280-281. See also the Philadelphia Age, September 19, 1864.

<sup>91</sup> See Shankman, pp. 289-290. See also the Philadelphia Enquirer, October 31, 1864.

front of the hotel. A band arrived and played "several patriotic airs," and when McClellan stepped on the balcony,

His appearance was greeted with hearty cheers from the thousands of men in the street below and the waving of handkerchiefs from as many ladies...One veteran, who had lost a leg, hobbled in on his crutches, grasped "Little Mac" by the hand and exclaimed, "God bless you general. I fought for you for two years and would be willing to fight with you two more."<sup>92</sup>

The Easton Sentinel added that when news came from nearby Washington, New Jersey that McClellan was on his way to visit Easton, the cannon on Mount Jefferson was fired in his honor.<sup>93</sup> Described as being, "the man who occupies the inner niche in the heart of every true lover of his country," it was reported that "thousands" came from as far away as Bethlehem and Allentown on a moment's notice to see the famous general. After he had given a short speech from the verandah of the hotel thanking the crowd for "the manifestations of their feelings" and the city's hospitality, he....

....retired to the parlor of the hotel, where hundreds of his friends rushed to take the man they so deeply love by the hand. Subsequently he went to the residence of Judge Maynard, on Spring Garden Street, where he was called upon by hundreds of ladies. -- This is the way the people receive the man whom the abolitionists stigmatize as a traitor, and whom they declare has no friends. What other living man in the country can create such enthusiasm?<sup>94</sup>

In the local Republican newspapers not a word of McClellan's visit was uttered. And in spite of the obvious popularity of the general in Northampton, Lehigh and Warren (NJ) Counties the local Republican press continued its assault on the Democratic challenger. The most comprehensive rebuttal to the numerous Republican charges against McClellan came on October 27th on the second page of the Easton Sentinel. Entitled, "The Slander Falls Harmless," the editorial in its entirety reads,

Every slander printed or uttered against General McClellan has failed to reach the mark designed by his calumniators. No candidate was ever assailed more fiercely,

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<sup>92</sup> The Easton Argus, June 9, 1864.

<sup>93</sup> Mount Jefferson is situated next to the present-day Easton Public Library. It was once the site of a large mansion and at the turn of the century was known as "The Steckel Estate." Unfortunately, there remains today only bits of the foundation, the weed-covered remnants of what was once a grand cement stairway, and the charred ruins of the former horse stables.

<sup>94</sup> The Easton Sentinel, June 9, 1864.

and yet every attack has only increased the devotion of his friends and made them more determined to bear him on their strong arms to victory. He stands before the American people, unharmed amidst all the assaults that have been made upon him. Pure in private life, a brave and gallant soldier, beloved by the soldiers, and respected by the masses, he has to-day more ardent and enthusiastic supporters than any candidate that was ever before the people for their suffrages. But the deepest hold he has upon the country, results from his intense attachment to the UNION, and his determination to preserve it at every hazard. He is the only Union candidate before the people. With him "the Union is the one condition of peace." Unionists of Pennsylvania! by voting the Democratic ticket on the 8th day of November, you cast your ballots for the Union cause, and show your utter condemnation of Mr. Lincoln's only condition of Union and peace, "the abandonment of slavery."<sup>95</sup>

In regard to slavery, McClellan's drafts of his acceptance speech in Chicago record his view of it as being inherently wrong and a national evil. He believed that emancipation would tend to promote national security, "but I do not think that forcible abolition should be made an object of the war or a necessary condition of peace and reunion."<sup>96</sup> In this instance the general was in some respects closer to the view of the average Republican on the street than that of most Democrats, who seemed to universally view the Negro as the lowest of inferiors. For many Democrats fighting a war to preserve the nation was distasteful but could be at least partially justified, but for literally *all* Democrats the notion of fighting a war over the freeing of slaves was quite simply an abomination.

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<sup>95</sup> The Easton Sentinel, October 27, 1864.

<sup>96</sup> Wilson, p. 502.

## Part Four

### The Politics Of Race

In chronicling the race relations of any earlier era, it is paramount that the student of history must be forever careful not to impose the morality of his age upon that which he studies. This is especially true when investigating the politics of race which was, unfortunately, an integral factor in American society during and after the Civil War years. Especially for the Democratic Party the race card was, unmistakably, one of its most enduring strategies throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Acting as a mirror reflecting the sad history of American race relations of the day, racial politics became an increasingly important weapon for them after the Emancipation Proclamation formally took effect on January 1, 1863.

For a great number of Americans prior to the Civil War, slavery was considered the natural condition for the Negro. For a great number of others, like George Templeton Strong, slavery was considered a barbarism but not necessarily a sin.<sup>97</sup> For others still there was the belief that slavery should probably be abolished. But the strongest belief that seemed to unite many Americans was the notion that Negroes should never -- and could never -- be considered the equal of the white. It is not at all unusual to read opinions stated in diaries, books, editorials and letters which exhibited, quite openly and honestly, the depth to which this belief in gross Negro inferiority was ingrained in the morals and values of American society.

This sorry American reality was aptly summarized by a Midwestern Abolitionist named George Julian who dejectedly said, "The American people are emphatically a 'Negro-hating' people." Notable travelers like de Tocqueville and Olmstead had observed that race prejudice appeared to them to be worse in the North where slavery had already been abolished than in the deep South.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, Edward Dicey, an English reporter who traveled extensively throughout the Northern states during the early 1860's wrote, "It is hard for a European to quite appreciate the intensity of American feeling about colour." He noted that the usual American

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<sup>97</sup> Daniel Aaron, "The Greatest Diarist," in American Heritage, XXXIX, (March 1988), p. 98.

Strong later turned against the slaveholding system, but apparently never once deviated from his belief in Negro inferiority. See also Aaron, p. 99.

<sup>98</sup> Ira Brown, "Pennsylvania And The Rights Of The Negro, 1865-1887," Pennsylvania History, XXXVIII (January 1961), p. 45.

response given to him when debating questions of race relations was to be asked, "whether you would like your sister to marry a Negro?"<sup>99</sup>

One of the most note-worthy examples of this anti-black sentiment was written by a former resident of Pennsylvania, Bishop John Henry Hopkins, who was the Episcopal bishop of Vermont. Hopkins wrote a controversial -- but widely accepted -- tract entitled, *The Bible View Of Slavery*. In it he skillfully propagandized the theory that had already been almost universally believed in the South that slavery was sanctioned in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.<sup>100</sup>

Another man who wrote of the Biblical sanction of slavery was the Reverend Henry J. Van Dyke, who preached at the First Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn. In a widely-publicized sermon he gave on December 9, 1860 that was re-printed in a book entitled *Fast Day Sermons* as well as in various Democratic newspapers including the Age, Van Dyke said,

When the Abolitionist tells me that slaveholding is sin, in the simplicity of my faith in the Holy Scriptures, I point to him this sacred record and tell him in all candor...that his teaching blasphemies the name of God and His Doctrine...

Slavery is permitted and regulated by Divine Law, under both the Jewish and Christian dispensations, not as the final destiny of the enslaved, but as an important and necessary process in their transition from heathenism to Christianity--a wheel in the great machinery of Providence by which the final redemption is accomplished.<sup>101</sup>

Not everyone believed or thought this way. In Pennsylvania the apparent hot-bed of abolitionism was Chester County, to the south-west of Philadelphia, which had a strong representation of Quakers and was reputedly one of the main stops on the Underground Railway.<sup>102</sup> Eighty miles to the north-east in Northampton County, Radical abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Tilton and the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher and their views were well known, and the widely-read Independent was sold in the local stores and advertised in the area newspapers.

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<sup>99</sup> See Long, pp. 154-155.

<sup>100</sup> Shankman, p. 180. This tract was later expanded into book-length form in 1864 and re-titled, A Scriptural, Ecclesiastical And Historical View Of Slavery, Addressed To The Right Reverend Alonzo Potter, (New York, 1864). The Bishop Alonzo Potter had written a strong-worded rebuttal to Hopkins denying the Biblical sanction of slavery some years before.

<sup>101</sup> Ray Abrams, "Copperhead Newspapers And The Negro," Journal Of Negro History, XX, (1935), p. 132. Herein cited as "Abrams JNH." See also Rudd and Carleton (ed.s), Fast Day Sermons, (New York, 1861), p. 139 and 152-153.

<sup>102</sup> Ray Abrams, "'Jeffersonian,' Copperhead Newspaper," The Pennsylvania Magazine Of History And Biography, LVII (1933), p. 261-263. Herein cited as Abrams Jeffersonian.

Unfortunately, until the Republican Party rose from the ashes of the Whig Party in the late 1850's, the forces of abolitionism had led an uphill battle against a numerically superior force of writers, intellectuals and politicians who instilled in the minds of their fellow Americans the lowest opinions of blacks as well as reinforcing the numerous fears of what would happen if the "necessary" control mechanism of slavery were to be relaxed or -- worse -- abolished.

This sentiment was manifested in the deluge of requests Harrisburg had received in the two decades prior to Lincoln's first election to prohibit the future immigration of free blacks into the state. Though Pennsylvania was far from the last state to out-law slavery, neither was she at the forefront of protest against the suppression of Negro rights, the continuation of slavery in the South or its extension in the West. As Ira Brown wrote in his 1961 essay, "Pennsylvania And The Rights Of The Negro, 1865-1887," "The pre-war record of Pennsylvania on Negro rights was not different from that of the South in more recent times."<sup>103</sup> Racism still ran strong amongst her people and this resulted in a series of ugly anti-black riots which raged through the streets of Philadelphia in 1834, 1838, 1842, and 1849.<sup>104</sup> In addition, the State Constitution of 1838 disenfranchised blacks and declared them ineligible for citizenship.<sup>105</sup> Significantly, Thaddeus Stephens had caused a stir by refusing to sign the document because of the inclusion of its anti-black laws.

Opposition to slavery was the hallmark of the Republican Party, but abolitionism was not popular everywhere in the North. As Horace Greeley commented prior to the Republican National Convention in Chicago in May 1860, "I know the country is not Anti-Slavery. It will only swallow a little Anti-Slavery in a great deal of sweetening. An Anti-Slavery man *per se* cannot be elected; but a Tariff, River-and-Harbor, Pacific Railroad, Free-Homestead man, *may* succeed *although* he is Anti-Slavery."<sup>106</sup>

In 1860 abolitionism was especially weak in Pennsylvania. How an anti-slavery party could win in a state that was cool towards the question of abolition was a

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<sup>103</sup> See Brown, p. 45.

<sup>104</sup> The Philadelphia riot of 1838 began when a mob destroyed the newly-built Pennsylvania Hall after it was used for an assembly of a women's anti-slavery convention. See Brown, pp. 45-46.

<sup>105</sup> Shankman, pp. 3-4. Pennsylvania was not alone in denying the franchise to its Negro citizens. By the end of the Civil War negroes could generally vote only in New England (Connecticut being the exception) and New York had strict property qualifications for Negro voters. See Brown, pp. 50-51.

<sup>106</sup> See Gienapp, p. 55.



determining factor in the Republican strategies for both the presidential and state elections. Not strong enough in Pennsylvania to win on their own, Republicans were forced to run on a coalition that included free-soil Democrats, anti-Lecompton Democrats, Know-Nothings and former Whigs, and ran not as the Republican Party, but as the People's Party. The validity of this is absolute, for even staunch Republican Alexander McClure noted that "Pennsylvania at that time was not a Republican state. If (Andrew Gregg) Curtin had been nominated as a distinct Republican candidate for governor in 1860 his defeat would have been inevitable."<sup>107</sup>

Due to the fact that only two presidents prior to 1860 had been elected without Pennsylvania's electoral votes, it was imperative to any party -- and especially the upstart Republicans -- that the opinions of the voting public in that state be paid strict attention to. The Republicans also knew that in addition to the Keystone state they would have to add either Indiana, Illinois or New Jersey to the list of states carried by Fremont in 1856 in order to squeak-out the election. But without a victory in Pennsylvania they feared they stood no chance at all. Simply put, a candidate who was too vocal and determined on the issue of Abolition might not run strongly enough to win Pennsylvania, the most important state for the Republicans if they were to pull off an upset.

It was this point, perhaps more than any other, that caused William Seward, the odds-on favorite at the Republican National Convention in 1860, to eventually lose the nomination to the lesser-known lawyer from Illinois. Ever since his famous "Higher Law" speech in opposition to the Compromise Of 1850, William Seward had risen to the top of the anti-slavery wing of the Whig Party and then had quickly done the same again when he jumped ship to the newly-formed Republicans. To many he was a highly-principled hero. Unfortunately, due to his exceptionally strong stance against slavery there were many who thought that Seward was a revolutionary rather than a reformer, and the thought of him leading the Republican quest for the presidency in 1860 caused an increasing level of discomfort, most especially from the delegates of Pennsylvania.<sup>108</sup>

Though Alexander McClure theorized that it was the ardent opposition of the Know-Nothing Party that ruined Seward's quest for the nomination, it is clear that the overwhelming consensus of historians believe that it was his outspoken militancy on

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<sup>107</sup> See McClure (Vol. #1), p. 500.

<sup>108</sup> Earl R. Curry, "Pennsylvania And The Republican Convention Of 1860: A Critique Of McClure's Thesis," in Pennsylvania Magazine Of History And Biography, XCVII, (1973), p. 186.

the slavery question, especially in states like Pennsylvania, that caused his last-minute failure at the Republican National Convention. In addition, Pennsylvania Republicans also feared that Seward's anti-slavery stance would soon become the focal point of the election in their state, thereby overshadowing what they thought was a much more important election-winning issue, the tariff.<sup>109</sup>

The Democratic Party incorporated this history of racism into their election strategies and used it both often and effectively. In their Party platform at the state convention in Harrisburg in preparation for the 1862 state election it was officially stated that "The Negro race are not entitled to and ought not to be admitted to political and social equality" with the white race. Blacks were, so the official statement read, an "inferior but dependent race."<sup>110</sup>

This strategy of racial politics was still effective in Northampton County despite the presence of few blacks. In 1860 the number of blacks in Pennsylvania was 56,949 out of a total population of 2,909,215 or, 2.0%. In Northampton County blacks numbered a mere 141 out of a total population of 47,904, or 0.3%. In two Pennsylvania counties, Forest and McKean, there were no blacks at all. The fact remains that though few northerners had ever seen a slave and free blacks were proportionately few in number, the fear of race mixing and of a possible mass-migration of blacks northward provided the democrats with ample ammunition against the Republicans.

Despite the numerical insignificance of a black presence in Northampton County, the Democratic press continually reiterated its message of racism, concentrating especially on what they perceived as Negro cowardliness, stupidity and general worthlessness. This was done to reinforce in the minds of its readers their point that emancipation was a great blunder and to instill a distrust of Republican plans for future race relations that were based upon blacks being given greater rights and freedoms.

An example can be found on the second page of the March 5th, 1863 edition of the Easton Argus, which printed a song called "Fight For The Nigger," to be sung to the popular tune of "Wait For The Wagon." The first verse and refrain read,

I calculate of darkies we soon shall have our fill,  
With Abe's proclamation and the Nigger Army bill:  
Who would not be a soldier for the Union to fight?

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<sup>109</sup> See Curry, p. 191.

<sup>110</sup> See Shankman, p. 135.

Now, Abe's made the nigger the equal of the white.  
Fight for the nigger,  
The sweet-scented nigger,  
The woolly headed nigger,  
And the abolition crew.<sup>111</sup>

The great power to stir angry human emotion by the questions of emancipation, the widely-perceived threat of black northern migration and, most importantly, the great fear of race mixing, resulted in one of the most interesting hoaxes ever to be part of a presidential election. A few days before Christmas in 1863 there appeared for sale on the street corners of New York City a 72 page, anonymously authored pamphlet entitled, *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro*.<sup>112</sup>

The tract, which is somewhat disorganized and not made for easy reading, states in its introduction that Christianity and science have proved that "if any fact is well established in history, is that the miscegenetic or mixed races are much superior, mentally, physically and morally, to those pure or unmixed." The prediction is that the Russian, due to their incorporation of many different bloods, have the greatest future. America's promise is that it's future will be ensured by the mixing of the many races on her shore. "All that is needed to make us the finest race on earth is to engraft upon our stock the Negro element," because the Negro, being so unlike the white, will complete the final upward blend of the people's blood into the perfect hybrid.<sup>113</sup>

One of the tract's most enflaming qualities is its constant attack on the Irish, who had been disproportionately blamed for the draft riots of the previous spring. It asserts that the people of southern Italy are inbred and are "probably the lowest people, except the Irish, in the scale of civilization in Europe...brutal, ignorant and barbarous."<sup>114</sup> The tract continues with,

Whenever there is a poor community of Irish in the North they naturally herd with the poor negroes...connubial relations are formed between the black men and the white Irish women...(which are) pleasant to both parties, and were it not

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<sup>111</sup> The Easton Argus, March 5, 1863.

<sup>112</sup> Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro, anonymous author and published anonymously in New York, 1863. See also Sydney Kaplan, "Miscegenation Issue In The Election Of 1864," in the Journal of Negro History, XXXIV, July 1949. All quotes from the work, Miscegenation, will from herein be cited as Kaplan.

<sup>113</sup> See Kaplan, pp. 278-279.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

for unhappy prejudice which exists, such unions would be much more frequent. The fusion...will be of infinite service to the Irish. They are a more brutal race and lower in civilization than the negro...coarse grained, revengeful, unintellectual...below the level of the most degraded negro.<sup>115</sup>

The solution to the "problem" of the Irish, so the tract professes, is that they should inter-marry and inter-breed with the Negro, a thought that most Irish-Americans of the time looked upon with horror. This was a shrewd and calculated ethnic insult, for the one of the tract's anonymous authors was in fact Irish. David Goodman Croly was born in Ireland and, along with his co-author, George Wakeman, both worked for the New York World, a newspaper that was one of the nation's most harsh critics of abolitionism. Croly especially knew full well what effect the tract would have on New York's large Irish immigrant population.<sup>116</sup>

This stated, the anonymous author questions the reader what is the meaning of all this alleged scientific "evidence?" The answer was that this was the upcoming year of the presidential election and the North must choose carefully if our nation's racial composition would be properly carried on to its ultimate miscegenetic destiny. The point was that emancipation was only the beginning, for emancipation in truth meant amalgamation, and the party of abolition was, in fact, "the party of miscegenation." Unfortunately, so the tract explains, the Republican Party "will not perform its whole mission till it throws aloft the standard of miscegenation."<sup>117</sup>

On Christmas day 1863 the anonymous author sent copies of the tract to the nation's leading abolitionists. By mid-January he had received numerous replies from Albert Brisbane, Parker Pillsbury, Lucretia Mott, Dr. James McCune Smith and the Grimké sisters. All the responses were, to differing degrees, positive, with the reply of Lucretia Mott, the Quaker leader of the Anti-Slavery Society being the most cautious.<sup>118</sup> The most enthusiastic reply was from Parker Pillsbury, editor of the National Anti-Slavery Standard, who was convinced of the tract's "correctness," and wrote "You are on the right track...pursue it; and the good God speed you."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, pp. 281-282.

<sup>116</sup> See Long, p. 154. This also had a huge effect on the Irish of Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, who made up almost half of that county's 4000 miners and voted Democratic in a solid bloc. See Paladino, p. 72. The Irish also made up 43% of that county's Democratic leaders between 1855 and 1872. See Paladino, p. 81.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, pp. 282-283.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p. 286.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p. 289.

By February the tract had received a rave review in Theodore Tilton's Independent and was thus being advertised not only in Northampton County but in many of the abolitionist newspapers across the nation. The New York Daily News, also available in Northampton County, was soon covering it, saying the theory of miscegenation was "the doctrine and dogma" of the Republican Party.<sup>120</sup> This was exactly the message that the tract was meant to falsely advertise, and the message was being digested by an ever-growing audience.

The tract even was denounced in Congress by diehard Copperhead, Samuel Sullivan "Sunset" Cox of Ohio. On February 17th Cox, dripping with revulsion after just reading the tract, thunderously decried the inferiority of the mulatto, saying "...he does not recreate his kind; he is a monster. Such hybrid races by a law of providence scarcely survive beyond one generation...and as De Tocqueville prophesied, the black will perish."<sup>121</sup>

Cox's main victim on that day in the halls of Congress was, of course, the Republican Party, whose tampering with the time-tested racial order, it was feared, would bring the nation to ruin. Cox continued the main part of his assault with,

The Republican Party...used to deny, whenever it was charged, that they favored black citizenship; yet now they are favoring free black suffrage in the District of Columbia, and will favor it wherever in the South they need it for their purposes...The Senate of the United States is discussing African equality in the street cars. All these things...ought to convince us that party is moving steadily forward to perfect social equality of black and white, and can only end in this detestable doctrine of--Miscegenation!<sup>122</sup>

Interestingly, the street car issue of Washington D.C. that Senator Cox spoke of in his speech was also addressed by the Allentown Democrat on February 24th. Entitled, "The Nigger In Cars," the article opined that this sort of behavior -- blacks mixing and sitting with whites in the same horse-drawn trolleys of the day -- was "eminently proper in that locality." The article concluded by saying that, "As niggers rule the roost at Washington it is no more than fair that they should ride in the cars. We hope the railroad company will procure special cars for Sambo, elegantly fitted up

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<sup>120</sup> See the New York Daily News, March 17, 1864. See also Long, p. 164.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, p. 296.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 296-297. It is also significant that one of Cox's main hecklers that day was Senator Kelly of Pennsylvania.

with silk velvet cushion seats," because no self-respecting white would want to sit in the same car.<sup>123</sup>

The term "miscegenation" was an invented one, not to be found in any dictionary prior to 1864. Historically the accepted term used for inter-racial breeding had always been "amalgamation," but the authors added to the uniqueness of the tract by creating a new word -- a word that was quickly picked up and used by editors everywhere. The result was that only a few weeks after "Sunset" Cox gave his now-famous speech in Congress the term "miscegenation" had become known far and wide.

One of the first newspapers to use the term was the New Hampshire Patriot, which added fuel to the already-set fire in March by printing a thoroughly mythical story entitled, "Sixty-four Miscegenation." The fable stated that sixty-four "abolitionist nuns" "who went to Port Royal (South Carolina) to teach the little niggers how to read and pray," had all given birth to "mulatto babies."<sup>124</sup> Though a hoax run by the Patriot to incite anti-Republican revulsion against that party's goals of better racial relations after the Emancipation Proclamation, this article was re-printed throughout the nation, including Northampton County. The Easton Sentinel ran an editorial which included a response to the fabricated story on March 31st, 1864. The article, which incorrectly names the new terms origin, reads as follows:

**"Miscegenation."**--This new word, which we find in almost every newspaper we pick up, is not to be found in any dictionary, nor was it ever, until quite recently, used in the English language. It has been coined by the radical abolitionists of the Wendell Phillips school, to soften down the term that must be otherwise used to express their doctrine --*amalgamation* of the white and black races. Under the rule of wise and great men, when our country was prosperous and happy, we needed no word to modify the disgusting idea of white people marrying negroes, or of having negro babies without being married. But when the worship of negroes has been introduced by the dominant party--when Massachusetts girls are sent to Hilton Head to carry out practically the ideas which the term "miscegenation" was introduced to represent, there is ground to fear the disgusting pit which has been dug for the degradation of the white race. The Devil is still busy.<sup>125</sup>

In the Lehigh Valley region the first known use of the word by a newspaper was the Allentown Democrat, which beat out the above-cited Easton Sentinel editorial by one day. On March 30th it wrote,

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<sup>123</sup> The Allentown Democrat, February 24, 1864.

<sup>124</sup> See Long, p. 166.

<sup>125</sup> The Easton Sentinel, March 31, 1864.

**"Miscegenation"**--is a new word just introduced by the Wendell Phillips school. It means the worship of the negro, and the intermarrying of the whites and the blacks. The word is not to be found in the dictionaries, but is a new invention to soften down the disgusting term of amalgamation, which means the same.<sup>126</sup>

In their next edition on April 6th the Allentown Democrat wrote an article, entitled simply, "Miscegenation," indignantly relating that a number of prominent Republicans were in attendance at the funeral of a black man named Owen Lovejoy in Brooklyn and then later at a "nigger meeting" at the Shiloh Church in New York City. The list included such names as William Cullen Bryant, the editor of the pro-Lincoln newspaper the New York Evening Post, and the noted historian George Bancroft.<sup>127</sup>

The next day, on April 7th, the term was again used by the Easton Sentinel in a short article entitled, "Miscegenation In New York." The paper reported indignantly that "An effort is being made in the New York Legislature to force negro pupils into the public schools, and also into the Troy high school."<sup>128</sup> Two weeks later the Sentinel again used the term reporting,

**Miscegenation.** - The New York *Times*, in an article on amalgamation says; "We shrink from putting on paper the stories which reach us to the prevalence amongst young white ladies of preference for colored men - pure black having the precedence in all cases where there is room for choice."

This is all the result of the teachings of Abolitionists and Union Leaguers. This is but a practical carrying into effect of the doctrine that the Abolitionists have been openly advocating. If the daughters of these nigger sympathizers, such as the *Times* has been, take their papas at their word and bring big buck niggers into their families, they ought not complain.<sup>129</sup>

The controversy continued. The message is clear that those who sympathized with the Republicans were at heart naive and were blindly being exploited into following a abolitionist-inspired course of action which would inevitably lead to the ruination of American culture and society. On June 16th the Easton Argus published a front page article entitled "Practical Miscegenation." Reprinted from The Detroit Free Press, the story told of a "sooty Ethiopian" who ran off with a farmer's daughter. The

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<sup>126</sup> The Allentown Democrat, March 30, 1864.

<sup>127</sup> The Allentown Democrat, April 6, 1864.

<sup>128</sup> The Easton Sentinel, April 7, 1864.

<sup>129</sup> The Easton Sentinel, April 21, 1864.

unnamed farmer from the town of Southfield in Oakland County, Michigan, "espoused the abolitionist doctrine....and employed one of the blackest Africans he could find." After taking this man "into the bosom of his family and treated him as one of his own offspring," he was repaid for his efforts by waking one morning and finding them both gone. Suspecting them to have run off to marry across the border in Canada, the article concludes that the mixed-race couple "will yet return, when the doting parents will receive them with open arms and establish them in a home of their own, as a living illustration of the beauties of practical miscegenation."<sup>130</sup>

Though the authors of *Miscegenation* remained anonymous and they had succeeded in causing quite a storm by their work, they still had not achieved their goal of getting get a leading Republican to wholeheartedly endorse it. In late September the authors even went so far as to deliver a copy to the White House, hoping desperately that the President would fall into their trap and foolishly endorse it. It was not to be. Lincoln was too shrewd a politician to be tricked into saying anything that could be turned against him, and he remained silent.

The closest they came was when Horace Greeley wrote in his New York Tribune that prejudice against blacks was "the result of a cruel and systematic degeneration," and likened it to the anti-Semitism of the Middle Ages. He continued by writing that, "God has made all men of one blood," and if a white and a black wished to marry it was no one else's business and they should be left alone.<sup>131</sup>

As the afore-cited brief sampling of editorials and newspaper opinions can attest, the Democratic press was supplied with ample ammunition with which to fire at the Republicans. Other Democratic newspapers across the country soon also spoke out against the curious little tract. The Washington (Pa.) Examiner complained that it already was "a celebrated anonymous work" that was remarkably consistent for an Abolition publication.<sup>132</sup> The now nationally-known Philadelphia Age ran several disgusted articles concerning the controversy, asking dryly, "Will it be a plank in Mr. Lincoln's next platform?"<sup>133</sup> So too did the equally nationally-known West Chester (Pa.) Jeffersonian, whose editor, John Hodgson, quickly acquired a great affinity for the word "miscegenation" and used it untiringly.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> The Easton Argus, June 16, 1864.

<sup>131</sup> See Long, p. 164. See also the New York Tribune March 16, 1864.

<sup>132</sup> See Kaplan, p. 311.

<sup>133</sup> See Long, p. 166. See also the Philadelphia Age, June 25, 1864.

<sup>134</sup> See Long, p. 167. See also Abrams, p. 280.



But as the controversy over the tract *Miscegenation* began to wane, Northern anti-black feelings did not. These feelings ran deep, and many an editor knew that editorials and stories that reinforced prejudice in the eyes of the masses would help sell newspapers for a long time to come. An example was witnessed on June 9th when the Easton Argus wrote two concurrent articles that read,

It is stated upon good authority that the colored division of the Ninth Army Corps has not been with the Army of the Potomac since it left the Wilderness. -- What has become of the dusky warriors? Have they skeddaddled, or been sent to some other field of operations where their precious lives will not be in such prominent peril? Can anybody throw any light up on this dark subject?

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A Negro as good as two white men. The "occasional" letter from Washington to the *Philadelphia Press*, suggests that for Negro barbarities perpetrated by rebels, they be made to give *two white rebels as hostages for the philanthropic investment*. What next?<sup>135</sup>

The Easton Argus on August 11th published another set of anti-Negro articles which read,

#### **Lincoln's Pets**

Lincoln's pet and favorite soldiers -- the Negroes -- the soldiers who according to stay at home war-abolitionists, are superior to the whites, behaved most cowardly, and were most terribly cut up, in Grant's recent bloody repulse before Petersburg. Lincoln's pets were not only among the first to "turn tail and run," but their running was very damaging to the efficiency of the white soldiers, and caused many of them to be slaughtered. But, what of this? Lincoln says, through Greeley, "to all it may concern...the war must go on. I will listen to no propositions for peace, which do not favor the Negro."

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A novel use for a Negro prisoner. -- On Saturday and Sunday, before the flag of truce went over, the Rebs at one point on their lines amused themselves by standing one of their colored prisoners on the ramparts as a shield, and shooting between his legs at our men. If they do not treat their colored prisoners any worse than this they may be pardoned.<sup>136</sup>

The Easton Argus repeated its criticism of what they described as Lincoln's "nigger war," writing that those unfortunate to have been drafted and unable to pay for a substitute "will now have no alternative but go into the army and fight with and for

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<sup>135</sup> The Easton Argus, June 9, 1864.

<sup>136</sup> The Easton Argus, August 11, 1864.

niggers." Again denouncing the draft as a clear example of the Republican Party's favoritism towards the rich, the article continues with, "the poor men, the mechanics and laborer of the country will have to do all the fighting in this war for the freedom and social elevation of the niggers."<sup>137</sup> Not to be outdone by their Democratic newspaper rivals, on October 27th the Easton Sentinel published the following article,

**Lincoln and the Negro.  
Facts For Honest Republicans**

We suppose there are several hundred of plain, honest Republicans in Northampton County, who would not vote for Mr. Lincoln if they were satisfied that he would extend favors or overtures to a Negro which he would deny to a white man. The honest Republicans do not believe that it is right to hold slaves, and they have heretofore supported Mr. Lincoln because they understand him to hold anti-slavery opinions. But they are white men with pure white blood in their veins, and though they may pity the poor Negro, and wish him well, very few of them would like to eat with them, still fewer like to sleep with him under any circumstances, and none at all prefer his company to that of a man of their own color, when left to their own free choice.

Now if these honest Republicans who, whilst they pity the Negro, still prefer the companionship of men of their own color, could be satisfied that Mr. Lincoln preferred a Negro's company to a white man's, and that he would do for a Negro what he would not do for a white man, we are persuaded that he would never get their votes. <sup>138</sup>

Republican papers were well aware that the race card was a powerful weapon in the hands of the Democrats and their allied editors. While the Abolitionist papers and journals, such as Theodore Tilton's Independent, were openly pushing for better race relations and improved rights for the oppressed black, other papers were more subtle. These more cautious editors rightly knew that the vast majority of Americans held differing levels of doubt as to not only the abilities of the newly-freed ex-slaves, but also doubts about where the Republican Party's far-reaching racial plans would lead the nation. The words of Radical Republicans like Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania caused many to openly wonder where the country would be led if their somewhat more conservative president was no longer able to check their more revolutionary ambitions.

The editor of the Easton Free Press, Lewis Gordon, was one of those whose attitude towards the blacks was more cautious than some of his contemporaries, such

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<sup>137</sup> The Easton Argus, July 7, 1864.

<sup>138</sup> The Easton Sentinel, October 27, 1864.

as John Hodgson. Designed to be a soothing reassurance that race relations in the future would not be the gloomy disaster as foretold by his Democratic editor rivals, the Easton Free Press wrote on February 25, 1864,

**Negro Recruitments**--The departure of a fourth full regiment of negro soldiers from Philadelphia is a fact that causes no excitement, so easily and gracefully have the public come to regard the raising of such troops as a right and proper measure. A couple of years ago, the appearance of a negro in uniform in the streets of Philadelphia, would have been the signal for a mob. But now, whole regiments are organized, and when they appear in the public thoroughfares, they are treated as respectfully as other soldiers. The fifth regiment will soon be ready to depart, and there is no sign of any abatement of the recruiting.<sup>139</sup>

Nevertheless, racism remained a major campaign strategy of the Democratic Party as it desperately strove to discredit Lincoln and the Party of Abolition. Throughout the Democratic National Convention, the issue of race again and again was stressed, with numerous speakers denouncing "the flat-nosed, woolly-headed, long-heeled, cursed of God and damned of men descendants of Africa." Another speaker screamed out about the "Negro-loving, Negro-hugging worshippers of old Abe Lincoln."<sup>140</sup>

After Democratic hopes had been suddenly shaken with the Union victories of Farragut in August and Sherman and Sheridan in September, the politics of race intensified. Though the controversial tract *Miscegenation* was by now old news and interest in it had begun to fade, the public was now bombarded with new publications and articles of Democratic propaganda. They all reinforced the same anti-black message and tried to keep the tract in the public's mind. It was in late September that the Democratic Central Campaign Committee released a publication entitled, "Miscegenation And The Republican Party," listing the favorable replies (not all of them truthful) of various Abolitionists to the still-anonymous tract.<sup>141</sup>

One of the most prolific -- if not eccentric -- racist authors of the Civil War era was a man named Dr. John H. Van Evrie. In the summer of 1864 he re-issued a book he had authored earlier under the new title of, *Subgenation: The Theory Of The Normal Relations Of The Races*, subtitled *An Answer To Miscegenation*. In the later stages of the presidential contest he also published another pamphlet entitled,

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<sup>139</sup> The Easton Free Press, February 25, 1864.

<sup>140</sup> See Long, p. 171.

<sup>141</sup> See Long, p. 172.

"Campaign Broadside No. 1-The Miscegenation Record Of The Republican Party," in which he borrowed various themes from the earlier tract, *Miscegenation*. This tract focused heavily on the blatant insults that had been heaped upon the Irish in *Miscegenation*, and he did all he possibly could to inflame the anti-black feelings in the Irish community.<sup>142</sup>

One of the most well-known propaganda tracts was entitled, *The Lincoln Catechism*, which dripped of racism and was noted for its crudity. Among others it attacked Pennsylvania Radical Republican Thaddeus Stevens, who was well-known at the time to have some sort of close relationship with his long-time mulatto maid, Lydia Smith. The *Catechism* also included "The Ten Commandments Under The Lincoln Administration" which partially reads,

What are the Ten Commandments? Though shalt have no other God but the negro.

Though shalt make an image of a negro, and place it on the Capital, as the type of new American man.

Thou shalt swear that the negro shall be the equal of the white man...

Thou shalt not honor thy father and thy mother, if they are Copperheads, but thou shalt serve, honor, and obey Abraham Lincoln.

Thou shalt commit murder--of slaveholders.

Thou mayest commit adultery--with contrabands.

Thou shalt steal--everything that belongeth to a slaveholder...<sup>143</sup>

As blatant as anti-Negro sentiment was expressed during this time frame, it was not the only form of racism; Anti-Semitism was also alive and well. It also played a part -- albeit minor -- in the 1864 election. The reason was that August Belmont -- a McClellan friend, confidant and political advisor -- was also the American agent for the powerful Jewish banking family, the Rothchilds. Because the war-time interruption of international trade cut deeply into their profits the Rothchilds were widely perceived as in favor of a termination of hostilities. The banking family's relationship with leading members of the Democratic Party only served to provide the Republican press with added ammunition to question whose interests the Peace Democrats were really looking out for. As the editor of the Chicago Tribune wrote on October 11, 1864,

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<sup>142</sup> See Long, pp. 168 & 172-173.

<sup>143</sup> See Long, pp. 173-174.

Will we have a dishonorable peace, in order to enrich Belmont, the Rothchilds, and the whole tribe of Jews, who have been buying up Confederate bonds, or an honorable peace won by Grant and Sherman at the cannon's mouth?<sup>144</sup>

Unfortunately, this pales in comparison with two same-day editorials that appeared in the Northampton County Journal on Wednesday November 2, 1864. The entire page is devoted to political news and opinions -- much of which is denunciations of the Democrats -- but August Belmont comes under particularly stern criticism.

August Belmont, the Jew banker of New York who carries the McClellan party in his breeches pocket, is currently reported to have boasted that he will run the price of gold up to 300 premium before the Presidential election, if it should cost him a million dollars. Belmont is chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and is also the American agent of the great European banking house of Rothchilds. He is a foreigner by birth and sympathies, rides six horses and an array of flunkies worthy of a dukedom, and has no affinity whatever with the Democratic institutions which he has assumed control. This foreigner is using his enormous financial resources to advance the interests of the Copperhead party, of which he is now the acknowledged leader. To run up the price of gold and every commodity of trade to the highest attainable point is now his aim. He hopes thereby to create a panic among the people which may induce them to throw themselves into the arms of the Copperhead organizations. This is a desperate move, proving that the enemies of the government are willing to invoke every calamity for the sake of stopping the war to put down the rebellion. In all this they are doomed to fail miserably. Neither Jewish craft nor foreign gold can change the set purpose of the American people to re-elect our honest, fearless and patriotic President.

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**Cool**--It is said that the Jew leader of the Gentile copperheads, Belmont, of New York, who issued the *pronunciamento* calling upon all the faithful Gentiles to illuminate their houses in honor of the Pennsylvania election, did not illuminate his own palace! His joy all evaporated in his proclamation.<sup>145</sup>

The racism that was evident in Northampton County before and during the election of 1864 must not be taken out of context. Though we today would sometimes not like to acknowledge it, it is necessary to understand that racism has indeed been an integral part of our past. Just as anti-Semitism has historically been a part of Christianity and Christendom until relatively recently, so too has black discrimination, persecution and distrust been a part of not only our nation's history, but also part of Northampton County's history.

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<sup>144</sup> See Kamaras, p. 153.

<sup>145</sup> The Northampton County Journal, November 2, 1864.

Racism played an important part in the election of 1864, just as it did to one degree or another in virtually every election in America throughout the nineteenth century. The examples presented in this section have been chosen *not* to prove that racism was more prevalent in Northampton County in the 1860's, but rather to prove that it was similar and in line with the racism that existed in most parts of the North at this time.

## Part Five

### The Election Of November 1864

In the mid-term election of 1862 the Republican Party lost much of their large majority they had unexpectedly won in 1858 and increased in 1860. As the war carried on and impatience began to set in, voters began to abandon the party of Lincoln. New York, New Jersey, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and even Illinois voted in Democrat majorities for state offices (Table A, page 57). It was only through a huge effort that the Republicans salvaged a majority in the House of Representatives, their advantage falling from 35 to only 18 over the Democrats.<sup>146</sup>

In the state elections of 1863 the Democrats had great faith that the vote totals of 1862 were not an aberration but rather the beginning of a trend. Unfortunately for the Democrats they lost in every single state; California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio. The gubernatorial race in Ohio was the most crushing, with Vallandigham losing by over 100,000 votes to John Brough. Significantly, the electorate in Ohio had been expanded since 1860 by 113,000, yet the Democrats curiously gained only 3000 of these votes, adding fuel to the fire to the already numerous charges of Republican vote fraud. Equally significant (and odd) was that 40,000 newly enfranchised soldiers voted almost entirely for the Republicans.<sup>147</sup> This indeed was the beginning of a trend, but not one favoring the Democrats. Vallandigham, who had been so confident of victory, was soundly beaten. Lincoln, who was ecstatic, was quoted as saying, "Ohio has saved the Union."<sup>148</sup>

In addition to the fact that it was held during a revolution, the Presidential election of 1864 was unique in several ways: It was the first truly two-party race since 1828; No president had been re-elected since 1832 and it was the first presidential election since 1844 in which the Democrats did not run on a ticket stressing such issues as banking policy, tariffs, land distribution, immigration or foreign affairs. For this election they concentrated rather on attacking the Republicans for what they charged was a blatant degradation of the Constitution, the accumulation of a huge national debt, an unwanted emancipation, and for their responsibility in starting and waging an unholy war with its horrible loss of life. These were highly effective charges, and prompted August Belmont to scream out during his opening/ speech at

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<sup>146</sup> W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892, (Baltimore, Md. 1955), p. 89.

<sup>147</sup> See Paludan, p. 227.

<sup>148</sup> Stephen B. Oates, With Malice Toward None: A Life Of Abraham Lincoln, (New York, 1994), p. 360.

the Chicago convention, "Four years of misrule by a sectional, fanatical and corrupt party, have brought our country to the very verge of ruin."<sup>149</sup>

**Table A.**

**Democratic Vote Percentages In Key States, 1861-1864** <sup>150</sup>

State	1861 State Elections	1862 State Elections	38th Cong. Elections	1863 State Elections	1864 State Elections	39th Cong. Elections	1864 Pres. Election
N. Y.	38.9%	50.9%	51.7%	47.4%	49.5%	50.5%	49.4%
N. J.	-----	56.8%	55.9%	-----	-----	52.5%	52.8%
Pa.	-----	50.4%	50.7%	48.5%	-----	48.8%	48.2%
Ohio	42.3%	50.8%	50.8%	39.4%	43.5%	44.0%	43.7%
Ind.	-----	51.9%	52.5%	-----	46.3%	47.0%	46.4%
Ill.	-----	53.2%	56.5%	-----	-----	45.2%	45.6%

Despite the effectiveness of the numerous Democratic charges, the Republicans still held several key advantages going into the 1864 contest. First, though the Democrats were barely able to avoid a split and thus retain unity, the Republicans were able to siphon off a number of the votes of Douglas Democrats -- often called "War Democrats" -- by appealing to their patriotism. These were people who agreed with the now-deceased Stephen Douglas that the secessionists *were* in fact traitors and the rebellion *should* be stamped out by use of arms. Consequently, they also generally agreed with their temporary Republican allies that most of the anti-war Democrats were as equally traitorous as the rebels in the South. Unlike the split in 1860 -- which the Party theoretically could have handled better -- this proved to be a largely uncontrollable fissure that the party tried desperately to somehow overcome. It was an unenviable task.

Another clear Republican advantage was that besides the negative campaigning of the administration, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton orchestrated a series of impediments for those in the military who favored and wanted to vote for the Democrats. Furloughs were generously given out to those soldiers who were openly rooting for Lincoln so they could go to their home state and vote. Those openly rooting for McClellan often were denied furloughs, thus artificially swelling the numbers of the Republican army vote. Quartermaster Generals who campaigned for

<sup>149</sup> See Silbey, p. 130

<sup>150</sup> See Silbey, p. 151.



the Democrats were often dismissed and anti-Lincoln newspaper editors were usually denied patronage jobs and government contracts.<sup>151</sup> Numerous newspapers in the North were forced to close, though some only temporarily. In addition, and as discussed previously, no less than three pro-Democratic editors from Pennsylvania alone were arrested.

This was not all. In 1863 Stanton also began a campaign to remove Democratic military officers who were too vocal in their opposition to the Emancipation Proclamation. Later, this harassment extended to those who supported McClellan. One colonel complained that Republicans could disseminate political views with impunity but Democrats "had to keep their mouths shut if they wanted to keep their positions." He was later quoted as saying that the obvious ethic of the now Republican-controlled military was "a soldier who don't agree with the Administration must be got rid of."<sup>152</sup>

To further their image as the defenders of patriotism and the Constitution, the Republican Party temporarily re-named their party The National Union Party. This was conceived at the National Convention in Baltimore. It helped to emphasize what the Republicans stressed was the great difference between the two parties -- one being unequivocally for the preservation of the Union, and the other as being, as they were fond of saying, "the party of Dixie, Davis and the Devil."<sup>153</sup>

Perhaps the greatest advantage possessed by the administration was in the field of propaganda. Though the Democratic Party had a great number of newspapers across the North that sympathized with them to one degree or another, they could not compete with the Republicans in the volume of anti-Copperhead tracts disseminated in print. In the realm of newspapers the Republicans could claim a type of coordinated strategy coming straight from the White House, where the majority of pro-Democratic newspapers were mostly independent and on their own.

Other than newspapers, the greatest disseminator of pro-Republican propaganda was a semi-secret organization known as the Union League of America. Begun in the town of Pekin in Tazwell County, Illinois in June 1862, the Union League was formed to further the Union cause and was based on a similar organization that had been formed earlier in Tennessee. Complete with a constitution and a secret ritual, the intention of the Union League was to be "a powerful instrument

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<sup>151</sup> See Paludan, p. 286.

<sup>152</sup> T. Harry Williams, "Soldiers In Blue: The Citizen Soldiers Of The Civil War," Mississippi Valley Historical Review,XXXI, (June 1944 - March 1945), p. 193.

<sup>153</sup> See Paludan, p. 272 and Silbey, p. 167.

in the hands of true Union men in sustaining and encouraging the Administration in its effort to put down treason and traitors; to preserve the Union in its whole territorial integrity; to maintain the laws, and to keep inviolate the principles of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence."<sup>154</sup>

The goal set down at the very beginning of its formation was to install councils in every town or at least every county until there was a huge League network across the North. Though the Union League was at first a secret society, and there exists today only sparse information about it, it appears that the League came very close to achieving its goals. In less than a year after its formation they held a convention in Cleveland in May 1863 where a man named James M. Edmonds was elected president. It was at this convention that a national network was established.<sup>155</sup> Soon afterward midwestern governors began to use the League to stifle Democratic opposition and Illinois, the home of its birthplace, eventually had the greatest membership with 140,000 members by the end of 1863.<sup>156</sup>

By October 1862 it already had a chapter operating in the nation's capital and after the national convention in Cleveland, the Washington chapter assumed the role of a central authority. It was through the work of the now all-important Washington chapter that a branch office was opened in Philadelphia in February 1863. William Morris Meredith, a well-known political personality from Pennsylvania who had been Secretary of the Treasury under President Taylor and later Attorney-General under Pennsylvania Governor Gregg Curtin, was elected the chapter's first president. This chapter rapidly grew in importance and was responsible for opening branches and disseminating pro-administration propaganda throughout the neighboring counties - including Northampton. By the end of the war the influence of the Philadelphia chapter was so great that most of Delaware, Ohio and New Jersey looked upon it as their parent chapter. Even Lincoln and most members of his cabinet were made members there rather than in Washington. Philadelphia was also instrumental in organizing a chapter in far-away Boston.<sup>157</sup>

Though ostensibly "secret" the Union League nonetheless attracted attention. On March 19, 1863 the New York Tribune wrote,

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<sup>154</sup> Anna Hardie, The Influence Of The Union League Of America On The Second Election Of Lincoln, unpublished Masters Thesis, Louisiana State University, 1937, p. 9.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p. iii.

<sup>156</sup> See Paludan, p. 224.

<sup>157</sup> See Hardie, p. 20 & 24.

No stronger evidence could be shown of the unswerving purpose of the people to support the government and restore the Union, than the spontaneous rising in all parts of the country, for the formation of a great National League. It is a reaction against the efforts, open and secret, of the anti-war party which can neither be mistaken or resisted.<sup>158</sup>

In Northampton County at the same time the reaction of the Easton Sentinel was not so positive. Obviously taking a shot at the League's covert status and its secret set of rituals it sarcastically wrote on June 25, 1863,

If it takes an oath to make an abolitionist loyal to the government, how many oaths would it take to bring his patriotism up to a volunteering and fighting pitch? Democrats need no oaths, they have always been loyal, but the men now joining the Union League should take such an oath three times a year. They have always been disloyal.<sup>159</sup>

Another example of the League's promotion of Republican objectives was a pamphlet entitled "Washington And Jackson On Negro Soldiers, General Banks On The Bravery Of Negroes," which was part of the administration's onslaught to convince the largely doubting public of the wisdom of arming blacks, a concept which was heatedly debated throughout the North. The debate was alive in Northampton County with the Easton Sentinel proclaiming,

**What Next?**--"Union Leagues, " composed of negroes, are being organized in Philadelphia. Petitions to the Legislature of this State are immediately to be got up "asking that body to take such action, previous to adjournment, as will give the colored people of Pennsylvania the right to vote, and all the privileges of other citizens."--The infatuation of the opposition on the nigger question will be noted in ages to come as one of the evidences of insanity of a large portion of the people of the present day.<sup>160</sup>

By the end of the war the League had printed 200 different pro-Republican propaganda pamphlets totaling well over one million copies. The Philadelphia chapter alone published 144 different pamphlets and later claimed to have distributed a total of at least a million copies.<sup>161</sup> Many of these were also re-printed in German. These various pamphlets covered numerous topics and were apparently very effective.

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<sup>158</sup> See Hardie, p. 24. See also the New York Tribune, March 19, 1863.

<sup>159</sup> See Meredith, p. 97. See also the Easton Sentinel, June 25, 1863.

<sup>160</sup> The Easton Sentinel, March 31, 1864 (?).

<sup>161</sup> See Hardie, p.30.

Contributors included lawyers, politicians, clergymen and a number of famous women of the time such as Mary Abigail Dodge, Anna Carroll and Emma Willard.<sup>162</sup> It also included amongst its supporters and contributors the well-know female orator, Anna Elizabeth Dickinson, who was so dynamic in her abolitionist and pro-Republican speeches that she was actually initiated into the nominally all-male League at Concord, New Hampshire.<sup>163</sup>

In New York City there was a very successful disseminator of pro-administration articles and leaflets known as the Loyal Publication Society. This group came into existence even before the Union League Of America, and after the opening of the League's Philadelphia chapter the two often worked in conjunction, at times loaning each other various resources and funds. About half of the pamphlets printed in Philadelphia were re-printed in New York by the Loyal Publication Society. This was in addition to the 87 pamphlets that the Society put out on its own, total copies being claimed to be "more than a million."<sup>164</sup> Between them the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania were saturated with pro-Republican, anti-Democratic propaganda. The minimum of one half million pamphlets that circulated in Pennsylvania alone in the last six weeks of the campaign far and away out-stripped the printed production of their poorly-coordinated Democratic rivals.<sup>165</sup>

The Union League did not limit itself to merely being a printing house. During the campaign the League organized countless public meetings throughout the North. Those voters identified and deemed "doubtful" were often sent free copies of League literature. Postmasters, school teachers, ministers and various others were inducted into the League and used to distribute literature on street corners as well as in places of work. As the book *The Chronicle Of The Union League Of Philadelphia* states, the huge amount of pamphlets and material distributed throughout the campaign -- and especially in Pennsylvania -- "was enormous."<sup>166</sup> Out-gunned and saddled with the harsh charge of being Copperheads, the Democrats were faced with a very difficult and exhaustingly uphill battle in their doomed quest to win back the presidency.

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<sup>162</sup> See Paludan, p. 224.

<sup>163</sup> James Harvey Young, "Anna Elizabeth Dickinson And The Civil War: For And Against Lincoln," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXI, (June 1944), p. 64. New Hampshire Republican state committee chairman Benjamin Franklin Prescott wrote to Dickinson May 11, 1863 saying, "You are the only woman who belongs to the Union League." Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> See Hardie, p. 31.

<sup>165</sup> See Hardie, p. 66.

<sup>166</sup> See Hardie, pp. 66-67. See also *Chronicle Of The Union League Of Philadelphia, 1862-1902* (Philadelphia, Pa., 1902), pp. 82, 84 & 86.

On election day, November 8, 1864, the Democrats still possessed a high degree of confidence that they could unseat Lincoln. Up until the last day McClellan himself was still being advised that the election would be his. However, this was not to be the case. Many of the state election totals were extremely close, but after the final tally McClellan won only New Jersey, Kentucky and Delaware, giving him a paltry 21 electoral votes. In the final popular vote total the Democrats gained 1.8 million votes out of 4 million cast, or 45% of the national total.

In New England as a whole the Republicans gained 32,661 more votes than in 1860, but the Democrats had a net gain of 66,995, making the vote totals closer in those states than had been originally projected. In Connecticut Lincoln won by a majority of only 2388 out of 86,958 votes cast. The same was true in New Hampshire where Lincoln won by only 3451 votes out of 69,441. In the most populous state, New York, the Republican margin was only 6749 out of 730,723, despite a McClellan landslide in New York City.<sup>167</sup>

In the new state of West Virginia, voters showed their gratitude for statehood to the Republicans by giving them a two to one majority over the Democrats, who carried only one of its 48 counties. In the other new state of Nevada, where the Republicans were rewarded for their support of a transcontinental railroad, the Democrats carried only one of its 10 counties. In California, Lincoln's vote went from 32.1% in 1860 to 58.6% in 1864. The number of counties he carried rose from 17 out of 63 (27.0%) in 1860 to 47 out of 70 (67.1%) in 1864. The total number of counties nation-wide was 719 for the Republicans to only 393 for the Democrats, or 54.7%. However, due to the rebellion, a total of 878 counties, mostly in the South, gave no returns at all.<sup>168</sup> After voting rights were returned in the coming years, the majority of these counties would vote staunchly Democrat for well over a century. After the demise of Reconstruction the wholesale disenfranchisement of Blacks further accentuated this fact.

For as close as many states totals were, the Democrats in truth suffered a devastating defeat. Lincoln gained 339,308 more votes than in 1860 and won with 55.08% of the popular vote, which was surpassed only twice in that century; by Jackson in 1828 and by Grant in 1872.<sup>169</sup> He carried five more states than in 1860: Missouri, Maryland, Kansas, and the afore-mentioned West Virginia, and Nevada. Not

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<sup>167</sup> See Burnham, p. 91.

<sup>168</sup> See Burnham, pp. 96-97.

<sup>169</sup> See Paludan, p. 290.

only was McClellan's loss in the Electoral College a debacle, the Democrats' congressional gains of 1862 were eliminated. In the Thirty-Ninth Congress there were only half as many Democratic representatives as after the 1862 election.<sup>170</sup> This especially was a cruel fact for the Democrats, for despite their rigid opposition it was this Congress which implemented two of their worst fears; the complete abolishment of slavery with the Thirteenth Amendment, and the harsh plan for the Reconstruction of the South forced through to fruition by the Radical Republicans.

In Pennsylvania Lincoln won by a vote total of 296,112 to 277,263, a margin of 18,849 out of a total of 573,375 votes cast. This translates to a 51.7% to 48.4% ratio. However, Northampton County gave McClellan a huge advantage, 6944 to 3726, or 65.1% to 34.9%. Only Monroe, Pike and Berks Counties gave McClellan an even greater vote advantage, 79.8% to 20.3%, 78.0% to 22.0% and 66.4% to 33.6% respectively.<sup>171</sup> In the case of York County, Democratic votes out-numbered Republican 60.4% to 39.6%. The decisiveness of McClellan's victory in Northampton, Berks and York Counties is no coincidence, for they are three of six Pennsylvania counties referred to as "German Counties," named so because until relatively recently ethnic Germans made up a sizable percentage, if not a majority, of the population. These counties also included Lehigh, Lancaster and Lebanon. The counties of Dauphin and Monroe also had large numbers of Germans, but they did not constitute as high a percentage of the county's total population as the other six.

As can be seen by **Table B.** (page 64), the six German Counties followed an obvious trend in their votes cast in Presidential elections between the years 1840 and 1864. In five out of seven elections this voting bloc gave a Democratic majority. This figure becomes six out of seven when the election of 1860 is considered due to the fact that so many voted for Breckinridge who withdrew from the Democratic Convention and ran on a third ticket. The only election during this time frame where these German Counties as a bloc gave over 50% of their vote for the Republican candidate was 1848, and that was an extremely close 50.4%.

The reasons behind the voting patterns of these German Counties are worth taking a look at. The German Counties were not, as it might seem, homogeneous units. Because religion as well as ethnicity played such a disproportionate role in the societies of the largely pre-industrial early and middle nineteenth century, it not surprising that these factors played a significant role in determining political loyalties

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<sup>170</sup> See Silbey, p. 149.

<sup>171</sup> See Burnham, pp. 716-7 and 720-1.

and subsequent voting decisions.<sup>172</sup> Since the German communities in America were, as in the various German principalities in Europe, fractured by different linguistic dialects and (especially) different religious sects that were often hostile to one another, the German Counties can be broken into two categories; the "Sect German Counties," and the "Church German Counties," of which Northampton was a member.

**Table B.**

<b>Percentage Democratic of the Total Vote In Pennsylvania <sup>173</sup></b>						
YEAR	Allegheny	Philadelphia	10 New York Counties	6 German Counties	Rest Of State	Whole State
1840	37.5%	50.3%	52.7%	52.7%	50.2%	49.9%
1844	40.3%	44.5%	55.1%	51.5%	51.7%	50.5%
1848	37.7%	40.1%	43.5%	49.6%	49.0%	46.7%
1852	40.6%	50.8%	51.8%	51.0%	52.5%	51.2%
1856	37.4%	54.4%	35.2%	56.7%	51.6%	50.1%
1860	29.5%	40.0%	32.1%	45.4%	43.4%	41.1%
1864	36.6%	44.1%	39.4%	54.6%	51.4%	48.4%
1892	39.4%	41.7%	38.1%	51.5%	47.2%	45.5%
<b>Percentage of State Vote Cast in Each Area</b>						
1840	4.2%	12.5%	9.9%	17.5%	55.8%	100.0%
1864	5.9%	17.4%	11.5%	14.7%	50.6%	100.0%
1892	7.8%	20.4%	9.5%	12.7%	49.5%	100.0%

The "Sect Germans" consisted primarily of Mennonites, United Brethren, Moravians, and a few other pietist, non-violent sects which were rather inconsequential in number. By far the largest of these sects were the Amish, who were Mennonites, and resided mostly (but not exclusively) in Lancaster County. These sects made up a majority of the ethnic Germans in the counties of Lebanon, Lancaster and Dauphin, and these Germans increasingly voted anti-Democratic after 1830. The geographic exception was the Moravians, who had established two of their largest and most important settlements in Northampton County. These settlements -- though

<sup>172</sup> For a discussion on the role of ethnicity, religion and voting in the state of Pennsylvania, see Roger Dewey Petersen, The Reaction To A Heterogeneous Society: A Behavioral And Quantitative Analysis Of Northern Voting Behavior, 1845-1870, Pennsylvania A Test Case. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1970. See especially Chapter Five.

<sup>173</sup> See Burnham (Elections), p. 37.

numerically small -- were in Nazareth Borough and Bethlehem (but not South Bethlehem), with tiny enclaves in Palmer and the West Ward section of Easton. Like the other Sect German communities they voted almost exclusively Republican in 1864.

The "Church Germans" were made up of Lutherans (Pennsylvania had the largest total number of Lutherans of any state in the Union in the 1860's), German Reformed (Calvinist), and a quickly-increasing number of Catholics who were mostly coming from the Rhineland and Bavaria.<sup>174</sup> These three sects made up the majority of German Americans in the 1860's as well as composing a majority of the large German element in the counties of Berks, Monroe and Northampton. These three sects voted slightly Democratic up to 1854 but with the rise of nativism they voted sharply Democratic thereafter.<sup>175</sup> These sects -- along with the Irish -- also rejected the anti-alcohol reformism of the Whigs and later the Republicans, viewing any form of prohibition as an unacceptable violation of their firmly-held customs and habits.

**Table C** shows the percentage of Democratic votes in these two different German County blocs over a number of years and includes the Presidential election of 1864. The influence and strength of the German vote is clearly apparent. Note that not all the years given are Presidential election years.

**Table C.**

**Democratic Voting Percent In Pa. German Counties, 1836-1864** <sup>176</sup>

	1836	1847	1852	1858	1864
	(Presidential)		(Presidential)		(Presidential)
<b>"Church German Counties"</b>					
Berks	75%	70%	66%	66%	66%
Northampton	63	54	60	58	65
Monroe	83	80	88	70	80
% Totals	74	68	71	65	70
<b>"Sect German Counties"</b>					
Lebanon	44%	43%	43%	36%	42%
Lancaster	40	35	36	38	37
Dauphin	41	38	44	40	44
% Totals	42	39	41	38	41

<sup>174</sup> German Catholic immigration from East Elbia (mostly Silesia and Posen) did not begin in earnest until after the 1880's.

<sup>175</sup> See Petersen, p. 114.

<sup>176</sup> See Petersen, p. 114. Table expanded to include the Presidential Election of 1864.



In Northampton County, as **Table D.** illustrates, a majority was given to the Democratic candidate in every election except one between 1840 to 1892. This occurred in 1860 when the Democratic Party split and a majority of countians voted for John Breckinridge, who ran on a third ticket. Surprisingly, the official Democratic candidate, Stephen Douglas, received only 115 votes. Thus, a majority still voted for an official Democratic candidate or a Democrat running on a third ticket against either a Whig or a Republican candidate during this entire fifty-two year span. In both these examples as shown by **Tables B** and **D**, Northampton County followed an even stricter pattern than the rest of the so-called German Counties, a few of which occasionally voted a majority for a Whig or (later) a Republican candidate.

**Table D.**

**Northampton County Presidential Vote Totals**<sup>177</sup>

Year	North. Co. Total Vote	Democratic Votes	Whig/Rep. Votes	Other Votes	Other Votes
1836	3804	62.5%	37.5%	-----	-----
1840	6684	57.4%	42.8%	-----	-----
1844	6646	58.2%	41.8%	-----	-----
1848	7432	56.6%	42.9%	0.5%	-----
1852	7397	59.5%	40.3%	0.2%	-----
1856	8266	63.6%	14.1%	22.2%	-----
1860	8722	1.3%	44.0%	52.7%	2.0%
1864	10,670	65.1%	34.9%	-----	-----
1868	12,553	61.8%	38.2%	-----	-----
1872	10,996	56.0%	44.0%	-----	-----
1876	14,593	63.5%	36.4%	0.1%	-----
1880	15,728	61.4%	37.9%	0.7%	-----
1884	16,042	59.2%	39.4%	1.4%	-----
1888	17,103	58.6%	39.7%	1.7%	-----
1892	17,579	58.7%	39.2%	1.8%	0.3%

Pennsylvania as a whole, however, did not follow the same trend. In the years following the election of Andrew Jackson, Presidential contests in Pennsylvania were extremely competitive with the Democrats usually winning. In the sixteen gubernatorial and presidential elections between the years 1836 and 1854, the

<sup>177</sup> See Burnham (Ballots), pp. 716-7.

Democrats won eleven. The demise of the Whig Party and the resultant political realignment of the 1850's was significant because voter preference shifted, giving the Republicans a narrow advantage. This continued until 1862 when the Republicans could claim an inheritance of the old Whig mass base almost in its entirety.<sup>178</sup> Pennsylvania thus became a Republican stronghold for much of the rest of the century. As **Table D** (page 66) exhibits, these voting trends in Pennsylvania as a whole did not alter Northampton County's dedication to the Democratic Party.

In the Eastern States the Democrats, and especially the Peace Democrats, found a great deal of support in the foreign born, most especially Catholics and the Irish. The Democrats were able to capture this bloc of voters almost in its entirety. They especially were able to make great use out of a propaganda campaign that played on the great fears of the newly arrived and the lowest strata of White labor (both of which were largely unskilled and poorly educated) that emancipation would cause an unwanted and possibly violent competition for jobs between poorer whites and Negroes.<sup>179</sup> It might, therefore, be a consequence that those Pennsylvania counties with either a large percentage of Negroes or foreign-born would result in a higher vote count for the Democrats and thus follow an observable trend. **Table E** (page 68) proves that this is not necessarily so. Of the six German Counties, Northampton and Berks turned in the highest percentage of votes for McClellan, 65.1% and 66.4% respectively.

However, while Northampton has the second highest percentage of foreign born (8.2%), Berks had the second lowest percentage of foreign-born, only 4.90%. Lancaster County, which had the highest percentage of foreign-born (8.4%), turned in the lowest percentage of votes for McClellan, only 37.0%. It must be noted that both these counties and the six German Counties had a significantly lower amount of foreign born than the state average, 6.4% - vs - 14.8%. In this example the percentage of foreign-born did not produce a trend of higher Democratic votes.

Lancaster County had the highest percentage of Negroes, 3.0%, which was well above the state average of 2.0%, yet it voted overwhelmingly for the party of

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<sup>178</sup> See Walter Dean Burnham, Critical Elections And The Mainstream Of American Politics, (New York, 1970), p. 35. The ten "New York Counties" were those in which the population was >10% of New York State origin: Bradford, Crawford, Erie, McKean, Potter, Susquehanna, Tioga, Venango, Warren and Wayne. The "German Counties" were Berks, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Northampton and York. Note that York and Lehigh Counties are not listed as "German Counties" in Petersen's work, and Dauphin and Monroe are not listed as "German Counties" in Burnham's work.

<sup>179</sup> See Carleton, p. 391.

emancipation. On the other hand, the two counties with the highest totals for McClellan, Northampton and Berks, had only a paltry number of Negroes, 0.3% and 0.5% respectively. Again, high numbers of Blacks in a given county did not translate into higher vote totals for the Democrats.

**Table E.**

**Pennsylvania German-County Statistical Information, 1864 Election <sup>180</sup>**

County Name	% Lincoln Vote	% McClellan Vote	% Black Population	% Foreign-Born Population
Berks	33.6%	66.4%	0.5%	4.9%
Lancaster	63.0%	37.0%	3.0%	8.4%
Lebanon	57.6%	42.4%	0.3%	2.6%
Lehigh	39.8%	60.2%	0.1%	8.2%
Northampton	34.9%	65.1%	0.3%	8.2%
York	39.6%	60.4%	2.0%	6.1%
6-County Ave.	44.8%	55.2%	1.0%	6.4%
Penna. Ave.	51.7%	48.4%	2.0%	14.8%

As **Tables F & G** show, the one fact which stands out about the vote totals of Northampton County is that McClellan received a monstrous landslide of 71.8% in the rural districts. Not one single rural district gave Lincoln a majority. Urban areas were markedly different, with three (3) out of ten (10) districts giving Lincoln majorities. Only Easton's Bushkill Ward, Easton's Lehigh Ward and South Easton voted a majority for Lincoln. If the three districts of Easton proper are combined, McClellan would have a majority of 926 to 854, or 52.0% to 48.0%. However, if the borough of South Easton is added to this total, McClellan's margin of victory narrows even more to 50.3%.

Due to its high percentage of anti-Democratic voting Moravian inhabitants (Sect Germans), Nazareth Borough was also extremely close, giving McClellan a razor's edge victory, 94 votes to 89 or, 51.4% to 48.6%. The other extreme was South Bethlehem, which already had a disproportionately high percentage of Catholics -- but no Moravians -- which gave McClellan 269 votes to a mere 46 for Lincoln, or 85.4% to 14.6%.

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<sup>180</sup> This data compiled from the official 1860 census.

**Table F. Final Citizen Vote Totals For Northampton County, Nov. 1864 <sup>181</sup>**

	Urban or Rural	<b>Lincoln (Union)</b>	<b>McClellan (Dem.)</b>
Allen	Rural	124	174
East Allen	Rural	75	159
Bath	<b>Village</b>	46	67
Bethlehem Borough	<b>Urban</b>	278	364
Bethlehem, South	<b>Urban</b>	46	269
East Bethlehem	<b>Urban</b>	81	94
Bethlehem Township	Rural	95	220
Bushkill	Rural	116	234
Easton, (Bushkill Ward)	<b>Urban</b>	339	240
Easton, (Lehigh Ward)	<b>Urban</b>	314	267
Easton, (West Ward)	<b>Urban</b>	201	419
South Easton	<b>Urban</b>	228	167
Freemansburg	<b>Village</b>	59	69
Forks	Rural	69	204
Hanover	Rural	22	100
Lehigh	Rural	179	391
Moore	Rural	140	434
Lower Mt. Bethel, U.D.	Rural	131	200
Lower Mt. Bethel, L.D.	Rural	75	299
Upper Mt. Bethel	Rural	123	662
Nazareth Borough	<b>Village</b>	89	94
Upper Nazareth	Rural	47	96
Lower Nazareth	Rural	66	192
Palmer	Rural	99	186
Plainfield	Rural	135	260
Saucon	Rural	159	576
Williams	Rural	217	375
Vote Totals	-----	3498	6812
Total Citizen Vote: 10,310		Total Dem. Vote: 6,812	Total Union Vote: 3,498

<sup>181</sup> As first reported in the Easton Free Press November 17, 1864. For ease in comparing newspaper reports of the day I have stuck with these county totals even though they are slightly different than the official numbers which were published later. Note: Small urban centers, such as Freemansburg, are listed as **Villages**. Larger towns, such as Easton, are listed as **Urban**.

**Table G.**

**Nov. 1864 Northampton County Vote Total Percentages, Rural -vs- Urban**

	<b>Lincoln (Union)</b>	<b>McClellan (Dem.)</b>
Total Vote	3498	6812
Total Rural Vote	1872	4762
County Rural % Vote	18.2%	46.2%
Candidate's % Of Rural Votes	28.2%	71.8%
Total Urban Vote	1681	2050
County Urban % Vote	16.3%	19.9%
Candidate's % Of Urban Votes	45.1%	54.9%

Due to their willingness to use the power of government and government funds towards internal improvements such as building roads and expanding the railroad and canal systems, Lincoln and the Republican Party had scored well with merchants, the better educated, industrialists, and those people connected with certain industries. These are concrete reasons why Lincoln fared so well in certain areas. In the Bushkill Ward of Easton, which was the merchant center of Northampton County, Lincoln polled 58.5%. In South Easton, which was heavily dependent on the employment provided by the three canals which met at the confluence of the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers, as well as the Lehigh Valley railroad, Lincoln earned 57.7%. In Freemansburg, which was a farming community that became a village due to the Lehigh Canal, Lincoln ran a reasonably respectable 46.1%. In rural Bethlehem Township, which abutted Freemansburg, Lincoln polled an anemic 30.2%.

Because McClellan won such a landslide in the rural areas of Northampton County and subsequently ran less well in its urban areas, can this be seen as unusual? Was this a state-wide or national trend? It certainly runs counter to the pre-election prediction of the Republicans, who were sure that Lincoln would probably not run as well in the urban areas as he would in the less urbanized or rural areas. This had been partially based on the assessment of John Hay who had written shortly before the Democratic national convention in Chicago that "there is throughout the country, I mean the rural districts, a good healthy Union feeling...but everywhere in the towns the copperheads are exultant."<sup>182</sup> Did this prediction pan out? Did Lincoln run better in the rural areas, or was it in fact McClellan whose strength lie in these less-developed, more isolated agrarian regions? What trends can be derived from the voting records?

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<sup>182</sup> See Zornow, p. 208.

**Table H.**

**Statistical Chart Of Lincoln Votes: Rural - vs - Urban, National <sup>183</sup>**  
**Percentage Vote For Lincoln**

<b>City</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Urban County</b>	<b>State Percent</b>	<b>Result</b>
Baltimore	Baltimore	84.28%	55.08%	1.53
Chicago	Cook	81.09	54.41	1.49
Pittsburg *	Allegheny	63.41	51.75	1.22
Cleveland	Cuyahoga	60.92	56.31	1.08
Philadelphia	Philadelphia	55.07 <sup>a</sup>	51.75	1.06
Newark	Essex	50.43	47.16	1.04
Rochester	Monroe	52.83	50.46	1.04
San Francisco	San Francisco	60.24	58.14	1.03
Cincinnati	Hamilton	55.87	56.31	.99
Providence	Providence	60.29	61.78	.97
Buffalo	Erie	49.41	50.46	.97
Boston	Suffolk	63.71	50.46	.88
St. Louis	St. Louis	61.22	69.38	.88
Brooklyn	Kings	44.75	50.46	.88
Albany	Albany	44.10	50.46	.87
Louisville	Jefferson	24.39	30.19	.80
Detroit	Wayne	43.66	55.88	.78
New York	New York	33.22	50.46	.65
Milwaukee	Milwaukee	31.59	55.88	.56

\* Pre-World War I spelling.

In his 1954 book, *Lincoln And The Party Divided*, William Zornow investigated whether the pre-election assessment of Hay was accurate. Zornow compiled a list of nineteen of the North's most populous cities (all with at least 40,000 inhabitants) and their county to see if there was a national trend of urban centers giving a higher percentage of votes to Lincoln than the rest of their home state (**Table H**). Each city was by far the largest population center in its given county. A result of 1.00 or greater shows that the urban area gave Lincoln proportionally more support than the rest of the state.

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<sup>183</sup> Zornow, p. 209.

**Table I.**

**Democratic Percentages In Small Towns -vs- Democratic Percentages In  
The Entire County In Selected Pennsylvania Counties <sup>184</sup>**

County	1851		1854	
	Small Towns	Total County	Small Towns	Total County
Adams	43%	44%	50%	51%
Bradford	46	54	27	33
Bucks	46	51	35	48
Cambria	----	----	64	66
Crawford	45	47	42	43
Fayette	47	54	----	----
Luzerne	47	59	44	57
Monroe	62	83	37	75
Perry	50	62	27	40
Potter	36	49	37	47
Susquehanna	55	60	38	43
Tioga	54	58	30	36
Venango	49	60	37	47
Warren	49	52	43	45

Of the nineteen cities listed, Zornow found that eight urban centers gave more votes to Lincoln than the rural areas did, and eleven cities which gave Lincoln fewer votes than the rural areas of the state. This list, though not decisive, shows the estimate of Hay to be largely correct; Lincoln usually ran better in rural areas than in urban areas. This follows the same pattern of 1860, where Lincoln consistently fared better in rural areas and did especially poorly in cities packed with immigrants, such as New York.<sup>185</sup> The important point here is that in 1864 McClellan's decisive strength in the rural areas of Northampton County does not follow the general national trend.

However, for a quarter of a century up to 1870 the voting patterns of Pennsylvania as a whole did not follow the national trend; Democratic candidates consistently fared better in rural areas than in towns and cities. This was the conclusion of Roger Dewey Petersen in his 1970 Doctoral Dissertation entitled, "The Reaction To

<sup>184</sup> See Petersen, p. 212.

<sup>185</sup> See Gienapp, p. 68. In 1860 Lincoln's best showing in urban centers of >50,000 inhabitants was Chicago (59%), and his poorest was New York (35%)

A Heterogeneous Society: A Behavioral And Quantitative Analysis Of Northern Voting Behavior 1845-1870, Pennsylvania A Test Case." **Table I** (page 72) shows fourteen different Pennsylvania counties in two elections, 1851 and 1854, and the pattern of Democratic strength in small towns - in every instance - lagged behind that of the rest of the county.

Considering that Northampton County voted so overwhelmingly for McClellan and his supporters held such high hopes for victory in 1864, the loss of the election was particularly hard-felt for the Democrats. The Democratic press of Northampton County reflected the general belief of the Party that the re-election of Lincoln was not only a terrible disappointment but would also result in a national economic and social catastrophe. The Easton Sentinel dejectedly wrote a summation of the election in its November 17th edition, but at its end the mood turns upbeat, and predicts that the misguided actions of the Republicans will ensure a brighter future for the Democratic Party.

(W)e look upon the defeat of the Democratic Party with the profoundest grief. We have devoutly believed (although our judgment may, perhaps, have been bribed by our hopes) that the election of General McClellan would lead to a speedy and amicable understanding between the two hostile sections; and that, in a spirit of mutual conciliation, the Union would have been restored, substantially on its old basis, without further bloodshed, and without the burden of maintaining a great and costly army of occupation in the South. This hope has met with a cruel and desolating disappointment. We will not affect to conceal the profound chagrin and sorrow with which we contemplate the result.

But with the Abolition party in power, justice and popular vengeance will go hand in hand. They who sowed the seed will reap the bitter harvest. The Democratic Party could not have prevented its ripening, but only have diminished the terrible abundance of the crop. But as things have turned out, the people, when the hour of sore distress comes, instead of cursing the Democratic Party, will turn to it for ruling. They will remember its warning, acknowledge its sagacity, and foresight, and cling to it for deliverance.....Within the next four years popular madness will have spent its force, and the public judgment be sobered and rectified in the school of calamity.<sup>186</sup>

The Republican press of Northampton County, as could be expected, had a much different interpretation of the election. The following segment of an article by the New York Times that was re-printed by the Northampton County Journal stands out as one of the more interesting of the newspaper articles uncovered. The reasoning of the article -- which is not nearly as unique as one would think -- presents an

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<sup>186</sup> The Easton Sentinel, November 17, 1864.



extremely biased analysis of why certain districts gave such a huge majority of votes for the Democratic challenger.

#### A Few Interesting

#### Figures From City Election Returns

We would like to have those "respectable Democrats" who stood by their party in the recent election, bestow a little attention on the analysis of the returns from the city. They should ask themselves the question why it is that lowest districts of the city, the haunts of vice and crime, the notorious headquarters of gamblers and ruffians, and all the most crowded and wretched of the "tenement-house" districts, give tremendous majorities for the Opposition, while the wards where are intelligent American mechanics, and where are gathered the most education and character among the mechanics and professional men, uniformly poll a strong Union vote....(F)rom Main to Kansas this is the general rule....The vicious and ignorant population of the cities and manufacturing villages has been for McClellan, while the strength of Lincoln lay in the farming classes, and the intelligent classes of the towns.

Thus in this city, in the First Ward, where there are near as many rum-holes as houses, and where in a small space is gathered a fearful amount of wretchedness and poverty, Gen. McClellan has ten to Mr. Lincoln's one, or 2161 to 213; and a notorious district of it giving the Democratic candidate twenty to the Union one, or 640 to 34.

The Fourth Ward, where are the worst dance-saloons and murderous haunts of the city, shows nearly six to one for its favorite, or 1379 to 435; one district (Sixth) giving twenty-five as many votes to Gen. McClellan as to his opponent.

The Sixth Ward again, once ill-famed for its Five-Points, and still containing an awful amount of ruffianism and vice-tenders the Peace Democracy nearly eleven to one, or 3457 for McClellan to 329 for Lincoln.

The Eleventh, where are immense multitudes of ignorant Germans, packed and thronged in lofty tenement houses, and where domicile, the rag pickers and bone gatherers of New York, testifies its honor to the distinguished General of the Democracy by 5532 against 1880.

On the other hand, the Ninth, a most intelligent and orderly ward, with large numbers of native-born mechanics and business people, gives Mr. Lincoln 3488 against 3844.

The fifteenth, unquestionably the most intelligent and orderly ward in the city, shows the only Union majority, 2244 against 1970.<sup>187</sup>

In New York City, which gave McClellan a healthy majority of the vote, the Republican newspapers all came to similar evaluations of the election, and many of these articles were reprinted across the land by papers such as the Northampton County Journal. The poorest districts of New York -- and especially those areas worst

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<sup>187</sup> The Northampton County Journal, November 16, 1864.

affected by the great draft riots the previous year -- *had* consistently given McClellan overwhelming majorities, a fact that did not go unnoticed. Pro-Lincoln editors gleefully voiced their opinion that McClellan had attracted the lowest elements of society. As the New York Times dryly wrote on November 12, 1864,

They should ask themselves the question why it is that the lowest districts of the city, the haunts of vice and crime, the notorious headquarters of gamblers, and ruffians, and all the most crowded and wretched of the "tenement house" districts, give tremendous majorities for the opposition.<sup>188</sup>

George Templeton Strong, ever critical of the Democrats, had correctly predicted that Lincoln would lose New York City, and his reasoning is akin to the above-quoted editorials. Strong, who had said that "The rabble of New York is generally not well informed,"<sup>189</sup> and that they, the masses of immigrants and the poor, were generally unworthy and questionable people who could not be trusted to vote "correctly." Strong elaborated on this sentiment in his diary entry of September 17, 1864, which reads,

"Mac" will carry this city by a great majority, but it will be made up in great measure of what Milton calls "the ragged infantine of stewes and brothels, the spawn and shipwreck of taverns and dicing houses," and of ignorant emigrant gorillas (Governor Seymour's "friends") to whom our fatal laws concede the right of suffrage, for abuse and mischief. It is certain, however, that many weak-backed men of respectability will go the same way...<sup>190</sup>

These Republican assessments of the election seem harsh, but they do have a certain amount of truth to them. It is a statistical fact that the poorer urban areas, those housing the unemployed and under-employed, and especially the recent immigrants and the Irish, voted against Lincoln by huge margins. These were the broken-down sections of New York City, the tenement neighborhoods that would be so starkly captured on film a generation later by Jacob Riis.

It is thus no surprise that the poorest sections of Northampton County, the areas with the most immigrants and the most poor, were those districts of Easton that voted for McClellan. It was precisely these regions that feared and loathed an unfair conscription draft that they could not afford to buy their way out of. It was also these

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<sup>188</sup> See Kamaras, p. 289. See also the New York Times, November 12, 1864.

<sup>189</sup> See Strong, p. 509, diary entry Nov. 6, 1864.

<sup>190</sup> See Strong, p. 490, diary entry September 17, 1864.

regions that genuinely feared the potential competition for scarce jobs that would occur if the newly-freed slaves were to emigrate northward. Though surveys had indicated that most southern blacks had little desire to move north, Democratic propaganda had been extremely successful in exploiting these largely unjustified but very real fears.<sup>191</sup> When Ohio Congressman Samuel Cox was quoted by the New York Herald that he predicted a "blood bath" in Northern streets because of this "inevitable" competition, he knew exactly what effect he would produce.<sup>192</sup> It was the same message that Fernando Wood used to great advantage in his successful campaign for mayor of New York in 1861.<sup>193</sup> The poor, the immigrants and the Catholics, all of whom had resented the Know-Nothing Party and now the Republicans for their Nativism, were easy prey for this sort of campaigning, and the huge votes against Lincoln in these poor areas is a testament to this fact's validity.

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<sup>191</sup> Albon P. Man Jr., "Labor Competition And The New York City Draft Riots Of 1863," Journal Of Negro History, 36, (October 1951), p. 404.

<sup>192</sup> See Man, p. 378.

<sup>193</sup> See Man, p. 379.

**Part Six**  
**A Look At The Patriotism Of Northampton County**  
**Leading Up To The 1864 Election**

The fact that conditions existed during the Civil War that evoked and sustained great passion is not hard to explain or understand. Neither is it difficult to see why the two political parties of the Civil War era were so bitterly at odds or why they slung political mud at each other with such ferocity. What is more difficult to decipher, however, is why the claim of the majority party against those derisively known as Copperheads as being in some way inherently evil has not only continued, but been given credence by so many scholars despite evidence to the contrary. The charge would especially be incorrect in areas where, despite overwhelming support for the Democratic Party, overt American nationalism would still be displayed and love of county never wavered. In the county of Northampton, American nationalism was so prevalent that it makes the charge of disloyalty not only blatantly false, it makes it incredulous.

Easton, the County Seat of Northampton and at the time one of the largest towns in the state with a population of approximately 12,000, had begun to celebrate with great fanfare the important anniversaries of the nation soon after the national crisis began in earnest when South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20th, 1860.<sup>194</sup> The first patriotic celebration was on January 8th, 1861, in honor of Andrew Jackson's great victory at New Orleans in 1815 and his oath during the nullification crisis of 1832 when he declared he would "hang as high as Haman" the man who attempted to dissolve the Union. Three military units paraded down Northampton Street, the main thoroughfare, and the large cannon owned by "Poly" Patier on Mount Jefferson was fired. A month later on Washington's Birthday an even larger display with equally larger crowds in attendance was exhibited. Once again the six-pounder of Mr. Patier was fired loudly to the cheers of the faithful who had come from miles around to see the great parade.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> The population of Bethlehem in 1860 was about 5000 and the population of Allentown was about 10,000. See Edwin Cottington, Easton Goes To War, April, 1861, (Easton, Pa., 1961), p. 16. See also M.S. Henry, History Of The Lehigh Valley, (Easton, Pa., 1860) p. 3 and pp. 118-119.

<sup>195</sup> See Cottington, pp. 3-4.

When news arrived in Easton on April 12, 1861 that hostilities between the states had commenced at Fort Sumpter, the city wasted no time in intensifying the displays of patriotism that they had already begun to exhibit three months previous. A great crowd assembled at the old Court House on Center Square to hear speeches by numerous officials, all expressing great support for the Union against "traitors and rebels," who were now "trampling our flag under their feet." These speeches were met with what the local papers described as "unanimous approval," and within two days the city witnessed 80 volunteers for military service.<sup>196</sup>

The public speeches and other expressions of patriotism continued, unabated, for quite some time. As the Northampton County Journal wrote, "Never since the days of the Revolution, has the patriotism of our citizens been so deeply stirred, never was it so prompt to make all sacrifices for our country's honor and defense."<sup>197</sup> The displaying of the national flag began throughout the county and especially in the densely populated County Seat, where hundreds upon hundreds of flags could be seen hanging from every imaginable spot. From telegraph poles to barber shops, from omnibuses to the horses that pulled them, and from the windows of homes, schools and stores, everywhere could an American flag be seen. So high was the demand that soon the local store stocks were depleted and a flag could not be had "for love or money."<sup>198</sup>

High levels of volunteerism continued throughout the war. Altogether an estimated 5897 men from the county enlisted for service in the army during the war, another 8064 men were drafted.<sup>199</sup> The most important volunteer unit was the 153rd Regiment, which was unique among Pennsylvania units by being the only one stocked entirely of men from Northampton County. This unit was formed after a patriotic meeting was called in the then-small town of Nazareth on July 28, 1862. Sensing that the North was losing the war, the town heard patriotic speeches throughout the summer from speakers near and far. At the July 28th meeting the appeal for volunteers was sent out and met with great response. Nazareth, with a manpower quota of thirty-four, signed up one hundred and two men. All together, Northampton County

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid, p. 5. See also The Easton Free Press, April 18, 1861 and the Easton Argus, April 18, 1861.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, p. 10. See also the Northampton County Journal, April 17, 1861. Further instances of great patriotic excitement in Easton are recounted in the Easton Argus, April 18, 1861.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, pp. 10-11. See also the Easton Argus, April 25, 1861.

<sup>199</sup> David Colley, "Military History," in Two Hundred Years Of Life In Northampton County, PA., 10, (Easton, Pa., 1976), p.46.

volunteered nine-hundred and ninety men for the 153rd Regiment, exceeding their 300-man quota by a factor of more than three.<sup>200</sup>

The 153rd was to see action at the Northern debacle at Chancellorsville in April of 1863. Distinguishing itself against overwhelming odds, the unit was withdrawn back into Pennsylvania where it soon played a crucial role at Gettysburg. What is important to note is that after an arduous march of several days through mud and on the eve of what was now expected to be a major conflagration, the men were faced with a dilemma; their terms of enlistment had expired, and they could legally return to their homes. Thus, the night before the battle began they were presented with a choice. Private Reuben Ruch of Company F later recalled the speech given to the troops by a major as they rested at a barn near an Almshouse on the outskirts of Gettysburg. The private wrote, "We were a nine-months' regiment, and our time had expired on the 22nd of June. The Major told us that our time was out and if there was a man in the ranks who did not wish to go into battle; he should step out, that it was no disgrace; but the enemy was in our native state, and that the people of Pennsylvania looked to us for relief, and that it was our duty to protect our homes. Then the Major finished his speech. We gave three cheers and not a man stepped out of the ranks."<sup>201</sup>

Though displays of patriotism of the local citizens abounded and a reading of the local papers of the time suggests that it was nearly a unanimous belief that the southern states were wrong to secede, not all were in favor of war. It was this important point that would keep Democrats and Republicans at bitter odds against each other for years. The debate was stated succinctly by the Easton Free Press when it wrote on April 18, 1861 that it was an impossibility during a time of war for there to be two patriotic parties. In essence, they believed that there could be no "middle ground," and that one could only be for or against the government, either "loyal or disloyal."<sup>202</sup> The Journal echoed this sentiment, saying that "abettors of treason" should choose their words carefully lest they someday would "either be compelled to swallow (their) ugly words, or be publicly branded as traitors."<sup>203</sup>

A war of words ensued between those who supported the war effort and those who believed it to be Constitutionally unjustified and morally wrong. The Easton

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<sup>200</sup> Edwin B. Cottington, The Role Of The One Hundred Fifty Third Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers Infantry, In The Civil War, 1862-1863, (Easton, Pa., 1949), pp. 7-8.

<sup>201</sup> See Cottington (153rd), pp. 22-23.

<sup>202</sup> See Cottington (War), p.7. See also The Easton Free Press, April 18, 1861.

<sup>203</sup> See Cottington (War), p. 8. See also the Northampton County Journal, April 17, 1861.

Sentinel wrote an interesting article on August 1st, 1861, explaining quite clearly the chasm which separated the two sides.

### **Patriotism**

It is the duty of the citizen to render active support and willing obedience to every right law, established by the executive, legislative and judicial authority, constitutionally embodied, as the Government of the United States. There is no clearer implied power than that such a government, for the purpose of sustaining the rights of all under it, and for the purpose of enabling it to act for the common good and benefit of all, has the undoubted right, when assailed by a portion, to exercise the powers of all loyalty - remaining to sustain itself - crush insurrection or rebellion. In the exercise of this power *Patriotism* manifests itself.

It is our object to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit patriotism. That which springs from honest motives is genuine. That which is actuated by vengeance, hatred, malice, and corruption is bogus. We see both kinds around us, and we regret to be compelled to admit that the counterfeit largely predominates.

It is a question whether the politician of the present day...has *sufficient practical integrity* to be able now to emit a spark of the true electricity of patriotism. We do not say that the machine is incapable of being excited by it; but we do say that if it is or has lately been connected with corruption, selfishness, enmity, revenge or ambitious avarice, it is so diluted by evil, that in honest strength and potency it must fail to illuminate a spark; unless perfectly insulated from vice, it cannot shine with the true blue lustre of our fathers' Patriotism.

Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel...Political corruption is enveloped now in sham patriotism, yet we trust the people will distinguish between the genuine and the bogus, and affix the indelible stamp counterfeit on that loud, violent denunciation of others, while its own practices fester with bad food it furnishes our army, and shakes with the coldness of public scorn while enveloped in its flimsy blankets.

....The Constitution and the Union, now and forever, one and inseparable.<sup>204</sup>

After the Northern debacle in July at Bull Run, the rift between patriot and alleged traitor had grown wider, and the attacks on the Democrats and those newspapers endorsing their positions increased. On the afternoon of Monday August 19, 1861, there was a meeting of the town Democrats in Easton's Center Square. The main speaker was the well known Easton resident, Colonel Philip Johnson. Sensing that the words of the Democrats and especially the anti-war colonel were overly critical of the Union and the war effort, a pro-Republican crowd gathered that evening to express its anger. Tensions increased and, after a scuffle at the American Hotel on the Square in which pistols were drawn, the crowd went on a rampage. Three days later the Journal wrote in glowing terms that Colonel Johnson was burned in effigy and

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<sup>204</sup> See the Easton Sentinel, August 1, 1861.

the crowd "would have scuttled his house, had it not been for his family and several Republicans who were present."<sup>205</sup>

The mob moved to South Third Street where it ransacked the office and printing shop of the Easton Sentinel, building a bonfire with the pillaged artifacts in the middle of the street. It later moved down the block to the offices of the Easton Argus, also destroying much of its equipment. The Journal reported that its publisher, "Mr. Neiman, resides in another part of town, which perhaps saved him from personal harm."<sup>206</sup>

Despite the riot, despite the accusations, and despite the ongoing feud fought with words in the County's newspapers, the Civil War, and the county's high level of volunteers for it, continued. And in 1864 the Republicans and their anti-Democrat propaganda machine were positively trounced by the votes of those who continue to this day to be derisively remembered as Copperheads. Unfortunately for those who voted their conscience against an incumbent president whose war they opposed, the stigma continues.

As Richard O. Curry wrote in his essay entitled, "The Union As It Was: A Critique Of Recent Interpretations Of The Copperheads," what is most surprising is that so many modern historians have accepted as true the charges of the Radical Republicans against their conservative foes.<sup>207</sup> What the editors of the Northampton County Journal, the Easton Express and The Easton Free Press in the 1860's and so many historians in this century have failed to understand, is that it *was* indeed possible for a Radical Republican and a conservative Northern Democrat to both be legitimately patriotic to the Union while disagreeing over the nature of that Union.<sup>208</sup> This was summed up nicely in a letter by a man named John J. Davis, a leading West Virginia Democrat, who wrote to his fiancée,

I look upon secession and abolition as twin brothers -- I am no extremist -- I condemn, abhor and detest the abolitionists and their unconstitutional schemes...I do not want the South subjugated, but I do want those citizens in rebellion subjected -- I mean subjected to the laws and made obedient to them. The doctrine of states' rights as expounded by Yancey and Jeff Davis is a heresy, fatal to the existence of any government constructed upon such a theory -- On the other hand the idea of "centralization," or conferring upon the Federal Government unlimited power over

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<sup>205</sup> See the Northampton County Journal, August 21, 1861.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> Richard O. Curry, "The Union As It Was: A Critique Of Recent Interpretations Of The Copperheads," Civil War History, 13, (March 1967), p. 26.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.



the states is a heresy I do not countenance -- Both dogmas are contrary to the spirit and letter of the Constitution.<sup>209</sup>

This helps explain the thoughts of those thousands from Northampton County who volunteered for service in a war that so many thought to be constitutionally wrong. Contrary to what many in the past have believed, the people of Northampton County in this respect were not alone. In defense of the solidly Democratic-voting citizens of Northampton County and in line with the point of Professor Curry, the paradox of democratic counties sending an above-average percentage of their young men to battle as volunteers was also witnessed in several states of the Middle West. In Indiana, Illinois and Ohio, volunteers not only proportionately furnished recruits to the Union armies better than most states in the East, but the Democratic counties tended to be the best counties for volunteers. As professor William G. Carleton points out, because these Democratic counties repeatedly filled their quotas, many of them were not subject to the draft until 1864, nearly at the war's end.<sup>210</sup> Obviously, the fact that so many of the people in these areas voted for McClellan does not qualify them to be traitors or in any way un-American.

In 1961, Lafayette College History Professor Edwin B. Cottington wrote a pamphlet entitled, *Easton Goes To War, April, 1861*. The events which transpired in Easton and throughout Northampton County after South Carolina's secession and the first few months of the war are faithfully recounted within its pages. What Cottington emphasizes in his conclusion is the patriotism of the citizens of Northampton County. Cottington writes,

.....(T)he men of Easton did join the army in large numbers, but most of them had little doubt about the "true offenders in this secession move." In spite of political differences the people of Easton closed ranks and for the time being at least united against a common foe. Many of them with relatives living in the South immediately sensed the personal tragedy of a civil war with "brother fighting against brother." (April 25, 1861) If saddened by this situation, as they probably were, they nevertheless made a brave showing and blithely sent their boys off to finish a war which someone else had started. In so doing neither they, nor anyone else, anticipated how long it would take and what would be the cost.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

<sup>210</sup> See Carleton, p. 392.

<sup>211</sup> See Cottington (War), pp. 14-15.

Four years later, with the war raging on and the body counts piling staggeringly high, Northampton County voted for the Democratic challenger by a huge margin, yet kept their love of country intact. Their repudiation of Lincoln was crystal clear, as were the high numbers of volunteers who continued to come to the aid of their country.

Where did this word Copperhead come from? It's genesis is seemingly lost in obscurity and it has proven to be difficult to find who and where its usage as a Civil War era insult first was used. James Rhodes, in his *History of the United States From The Compromise Of 1850, IV*, found its first appearance in the October 1, 1862 edition of the Cincinnati Commercial.<sup>212</sup> An author named Albert Mathews had written in 1917 that "the earliest known instance is from Illinois, in reference to Indiana," in a Chicago Tribune article for September 24, 1862.<sup>213</sup> Paul Smith, in an article in the American Historical Review in July 1927, wrote that an example of the word Copperhead was first used by the Cincinnati Gazette on July 30, 1862. The Gazette had written that "The Copperhead Bright Convention meets in Indianapolis today," in reference to the Democratic state convention. This article by the Gazette was soon reprinted by other newspapers such as the St. Louis Tri-Weekly Democrat on August 1st, the Springfield Weekly State Journal on August 6th, and in Ohio by the Wooster Republican on August 7th.<sup>214</sup>

In 1938 another article on the subject appeared in the Mississippi Valley Historical Review by Charles Coleman. He acknowledges the findings of Rhodes, Matthews and Smith, but found that John B. McMaster had uncovered an even earlier usage of the word in the Cincinnati Commercial for August 17, 1861, almost a year before Smith's earliest discovery. The Commercial had printed a letter sent to the editor requesting that the term "Copper Heads" be applied to the opposition Peace Democrats of that state. As the letter suggested, their motto should be a quote from the Bible, "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust thou eat all the days of thy life." (Genesis 3:14)<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> As quoted in Paul Smith, "First Use Of The Term Copperhead," American Historical Review, 32, (1953), p. 799. See also James F. Rhodes, The History Of The United States From The Compromise Of 1850, (New York 1904), Vol #4, pp. 224-225.

<sup>213</sup> See Smith, Ibid. See also Albert Mathews, Publications Of The Colonial Society Of Massachusetts, #20, (1917).

<sup>214</sup> See Smith, Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Charles Coleman, "The Use Of The Term "Copperhead" During The Civil War," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 25, (June 1938-March 1939), p. 263. See also John B. McMaster,

The articles by Smith and later Coleman make clear that the meaning of the word Copperhead has almost always been a dual one; always leveled against the Peace Democrats, real traitors and open Southern sympathizers, but also used as a generic term to describe the Democratic Party as a whole. An example is quoted from Coleman, who found an editorial by the Cincinnati Commercial from September 4, 1861 entitled, "The Trail Of The Serpent Of Conspiracy." This article refers to the "northern tools of the political Brahmins of the South," as being "like Copperheads and rattlesnakes in winter, cold in their stiff and silent coils" when the patriots of the North rallied to their cause. A later article from the same newspaper referred to "The Copper Heads, as the blind and venomous enemies of our government found in our midst."<sup>216</sup>

Though the word Copperhead has today lost its effect to raise passions and cause anger as it once did, there have been a number of scholars who have kept its once-vulgar meaning alive. One was Thomas Meredith, who wrote a Masters Thesis at Lehigh University in 1947 entitled "The Copperheads Of Pennsylvania." Apparently unwilling to see little difference between a true subversive who actively aided the South or conspired to form a slave-holding Confederacy in the Pacific North-West, with the vast majority of Democrats who remained loyal to the Union to the end, Meredith's condemnations of the Copperheads can be at times, unfortunately, unnecessarily and unjustifiably brutal.

Meredith concedes that the term Copperhead has meant different things to different people over the years, but he is in league with Wood Gray's now out-moded interpretations of Copperhead disloyalty. Meredith writes, "The interpretation of Wood Gray is probably the soundest:

Since it was purely an epithet, it never had any definite range of application, being sometimes used to refer only to those who believed to be actively in sympathy with the Confederates but on other occasions fixed on the Democratic party as a whole. "Tory" was employed earlier in the war, but it lacked spontaneity..."Copperhead" stung like a lash."<sup>217</sup>

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History Of The People Of The United States During Lincoln's Administration, (New York, 1927), p. 167.

<sup>216</sup> See Coleman, *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> See Meredith, p. 10. See also Wood Gray, The Hidden Civil War, (New York, 1942) p. 141.

Meredith writes that the term Copperhead "generally connotes active opposition to the war rather than the passive religious or moral objection."<sup>218</sup> However, the percentage who had objected to the war strictly on religious or moral grounds were proportionally few, and yet, for many scholars and not just Meredith, this nonetheless justified as fair game most of the rest of the Democratic opposition to fall into the unsavory category of "Copperhead. "

Unfortunately for these many historians such as Meredith before and since, much of their treatment of the Civil War Democrats has been based upon the acceptance of -- and the reaction to -- the official government reports by former Secretary of War Joseph Holt and Mayo Fessler on anti-war radicals, secret organizations and possible conspiracies. Holt's report, entitled *Report Of The Judge Advocate General, 1864*, came out at the same time of the famous Indiana treason trials in 1864, which were already being used to great effect by the administration to link this quite real but over-blown conspiracy as being an integral part of a Democratic strategy to help the South win its freedom. The timing of the release of Holt's report thus helped to amplify it and add credence to its anti-Copperhead conclusions. Holt wrote that "Judea produced but one Judas Iscariot....(but) there has arisen together in our land an entire brood of such traitors...all struggling with the same relentless malignity for the dismemberment of our Union."<sup>219</sup>

Unfortunately, both reports - which varied greatly in their methodology and sources -- were at times hyperbolic and self-serving in that they uncovered traitors and conspiracies under literally every stone that they looked. Coming out in the months before the election of 1864, these reports seemed to paint a picture of a Democratic Party dripping with disloyalty. So too did the voluminous 1000-page report by General Rosencrans which, like the others, vastly overestimated the size and strength of secret, anti-government societies.<sup>220</sup>

Though these reports did find great amounts of evidence pointing to some very real conspiracies, their findings were blown out of proportion. In the end, they only served to feed the Republican propaganda mills by equating "the Democratic Party with Copperheadism and Copperheadism with treason."<sup>221</sup> Not everyone was taken so completely by all this; even Lincoln was leery, and was quoted as saying that "Nothing

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<sup>218</sup> See Meredith, p. 9.

<sup>219</sup> See McPherson, p. 782. See also Long, p. 151.

<sup>220</sup> For a short review of the report by Rosencrans, see Meredith, p. 81.

<sup>221</sup> See Long, p. 151.

can make me believe that one hundred thousand Indiana Democrats are disloyal."<sup>222</sup> Still it was, at minimum, clear that although every Democrat may not be a traitor, "certainly every traitor is a Democrat."<sup>223</sup>

The Republicans made great use of these reports, and Meredith was not alone in agreeing with their biased conclusions. His laconic assessment was that, "The reasoning and conclusions seem sound and accurate."<sup>224</sup> But much like the government reports which sensationalized the extent of a relatively small number of Democrats who had taken their zeal too far, so too did Meredith take too far his assessment of the Copperheads of Pennsylvania, whom he called "a fifth column action."<sup>225</sup>

It is symptomatic of the times in which he wrote that he also incorrectly determined that the mostly-Irish Molly Maguires, because of their resistance to the draft and their staunch devotion to the Democratic Party, were an anti-Union, disloyal organization motivated by sympathy for the South. Much like the Republican press of the 1860's he also harshly (and repeatedly) belittles the Irish coal miners of the anthracite region, calling them "a rather lawless element."<sup>226</sup>

In this mostly inaccurate categorizing of the Molly Maguires as Copperheads resides an important point: The miners of Schuylkill County, of which the Molly Maguires were a part, were *not* motivated by Southern sympathies or any overt will to destroy the United States. As Grace Palladino points out in *Another Civil War: Labor, Capital And The State*, these miners, suffering as they did in one of the world's most dangerous professions, saw their employers -- and not the Southern slaveholding aristocracy -- as their enemy.<sup>227</sup> In short, they were not part of any Democratic-led conspiracy.

This is a distinction which has been over-looked by so many who have rushed to lump all those against the war, against the draft, against the Republican President, against the Radical Republicans and their plans for Negro equality, as being inherently disloyal to the nation within which they lived. There is, it is argued here, a very-real

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Kenneth Stamp, "The Milligan Case And The Election Of 1864 In Indiana," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 31, (June 1944-March 1945), p. 43.

<sup>224</sup> See Meredith, p. 11.

<sup>225</sup> See Meredith, p. 146.

<sup>226</sup> See Meredith, pp. 92 & 111. Meredith also makes the important distinction of Irish and German areas. In the former there were numerous examples of draft evasion, riots and questionable behavior; in the latter there was a distinct lack of such problems. This is key, for Northampton County was, as stated previously, one of Pennsylvania's "German Counties."

<sup>227</sup> Grace Palladino, Another Civil War: Labor, Capital And The State In The Anthracite Regions Of Pennsylvania, 1840-1868, (Chicago, Ill., 1990), p. 71.

distinction between a subversive and one who voted for the Democratic Party in 1864. There is, without doubt, a difference between overt sympathy with the South, and wishing for the lawful removal -- through election -- of a President who was, lest we forget, justifiably unpopular with a great number of people. What this paper has striven to find is, when the voters of Northampton County gave the Democratic challenger George B. McClellan such an overwhelming victory, were they expressing sympathy for the South and showing disloyalty to the Union, or were they merely expressing their Constitution-given right to vote out a president they truly thought was doing a bad job? To be proven to be the former would qualify them as being true Copperheads, completely deserving of all the scorn and disgust that the term evokes. But to be the latter would show that they were merely good and decent citizens, devoid of any blame, and unworthy of any scorn.

The history of the Presidential election of 1864 in Northampton County as documented in this paper has uncovered no overt examples of anti-Unionism. There were no known conspiracies to disrupt the Union or its war effort, there were no acts of sabotage, nor was there any evidence of Southern-sympathizing secret societies as were uncovered in places like Indiana.<sup>228</sup> In addition, draft evasion, which was a serious problem in many areas -- and especially in the Eleventh Congressional District which included the counties of Carbon, Wayne, Pike, Monroe and Northampton -- was extremely low in Northampton County. This is a significant fact, for one fifth (1/5) of all the draft recruitment officers killed while on the job died in Pennsylvania.<sup>229</sup> In Northampton County it has been recorded that draft officers were "respectfully received."<sup>230</sup>

It seems that if there can be found a near-perfect example of the falsity of the charge of Copperheadism as an expression of disloyalty, it can be found in the case of Pennsylvania's Northampton County. Here the citizens continued to vote the Democratic ticket up to and including the pivotal election of 1864 and yet, throughout

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<sup>228</sup> Though Meredith apparently greatly over-estimated the extent of the influence and popularity of the truly traitorous secret organizations in Pennsylvania such as the Knights Of The Golden Circle, even he concedes that other than in York County and possibly in Schuylkill County there was "little more than a trace" of the KGC in eastern Pennsylvania (see Meredith, p. 85). Shankman states that "it is not likely that there were many - if any - KGC lodges in the Keystone state." See Shankman, p. 212. No evidence has ever been uncovered of this group's existence in Northampton County.

<sup>229</sup> See Shankman, p. 223.

<sup>230</sup> See Palladino, p. 99. See also the Easton Argus, date unspecified.

the entire Civil War, continued to exhibit a high level of patriotism and support for the Union cause.

Perhaps the most fitting end to the case against the notion that Northampton County Pennsylvania was in any way disloyal for voting so heavily for the Democratic challenger in 1864 was written by a staunchly Democratic newspaper from the borough of Easton. On April 25, 1861, when the first shots had been fired, the nation was at war and the call to arms had been announced, the Easton Argus wrote, "(A) discussion of what might have been can do no good now and we see only the duty at hand of every man who loves the flag of his country and wishes the Republic preserved to stand squarely on the side of the constituted authorities, in defense of our national honor and the existence of our Union."<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> The Easton Argus, April 25, 1861.

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## **Vita**

The author of this thesis, David Wilfred Seiple, the son of Wilfred R. and Gizella (nee Nagy) Seiple, was born in Easton Pennsylvania on December 30, 1957. He graduated from Easton Area High School in June 1976 and soon entered the work force, eventually taking a position with Pfizer, Inc. in 1978. He entered Lafayette College in Easton Pennsylvania as a part-time student in the summer of 1984 and graduated with a degree in History in June 1989. He began his studies at Lehigh University in January 1993 and graduated with a Masters Degree in History in May, 1998. He is also taking education classes at East Stroudsburg University and plans to become a teacher and a writer.

**END  
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