

Southern Heretics: The Republican Party in the Border South
During the Civil War Era

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the emergence and establishment of the Republican Party in the Border South slave states of Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri during the Civil War era. As regional and national tensions over slavery began to consume American political life, Frank Blair and other likeminded antislavery leaders attempted to build a Republican organization within the Border South. This dissertation argues that to become a viable political alternative, Republicans in the Border South developed a particular ideology of liberal political antislavery. This ideology promoted a message of white supremacy and free white labor, and reinforced a desire to see the economic progress of their states untrammelled by slavery. As a result, this ideology attracted enough antislavery men to form the only viable contingent of Republicans in the southern slave states.

This dissertation also argues for the political importance of Border South Republicans during the Civil War era. Despite being small in number, they played an outsized role in the political and strategic direction of the Republican Party. Border South Republican leaders took an active role in party formation, and influenced major political decisions made during the war. Furthermore, Republican policy concerning black civil and political rights during Reconstruction were often made with Border South Republican concerns in mind.

Taking a chronological approach to tell the story of the Republican Party in the Border South, this dissertation examines how the liberal political antislavery consensus was shattered by the Civil War. As emancipation, black civil rights, and disenfranchisement emerged as political issues during Reconstruction, Border South Republicans would find themselves struggling to reconcile their ideological goals with political reality.

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inspiration and laughter, and I eagerly look forward to seeing what this incredible group of scholars has in store for the future.

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List of Abbreviations

The following list identifies those elements that appear frequently in the footnotes.

<i>CW</i>	<i>Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln</i>
<i>CWH</i>	<i>Civil War History</i>
FBP	Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872, Record Group 105, National Archives, Washington D.C.
<i>FCQ</i>	<i>Filson Club History Quarterly</i>
FHS	Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky
<i>FSSP</i>	<i>Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation</i>
<i>IL</i>	<i>Intimate Letters of Carl Schurz</i>
<i>JAH</i>	<i>Journal of American History</i>
<i>JSH</i>	<i>Journal of Southern History</i>
LOC	Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
MDHS	Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland
<i>MHM</i>	<i>Maryland Historical Magazine</i>
<i>MHR</i>	<i>Missouri Historical Review</i>
MHS	Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri
MSA	Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri
<i>OR</i>	<i>The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies</i>
<i>OVH</i>	<i>Ohio Valley History</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant</i>
<i>PJ</i>	<i>The Papers of Andrew Johnson</i>
PUL	Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey
<i>RKHS</i>	<i>Register of the Kentucky Historical Society</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Speeches and Correspondence of Carl Schurz</i>
SHSM	State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri

Introduction

Frank Blair was dying. A lifetime of alcohol abuse and a thirty- to forty-a-day cigar habit had so damaged his health that it had caused a massive stroke, leaving his right arm and right leg paralyzed. Seeking treatment for his paralysis, in 1873 Blair and his family travelled to the Clifton Springs Sanitarium in upstate New York. There, Blair hoped the sulphur waters from the mineral springs would cure his paralysis and allow him to return to active political life.

Furthermore, the time at Clifton Springs would allow him to reflect on his latest struggles. A recent defeat for re-election to the United States Senate had left him depressed and demoralized. Perpetually short of money throughout his life, Blair had come to rely on friends and family for financial assistance. With his brother Montgomery and his brother-in-law Samuel Philip Lee covering the costs of his stay at the sanitarium, Blair spent the majority of the summer attempting to recuperate. By the end of October, Missouri Governor Silas Woodson offered Blair the position of state commissioner of insurance, which paid an annual salary of five thousand dollars. Blair surely must have viewed the post as beneath him. He had been the first Republican congressman from the Border South, a Senator from Missouri, a Major-General in the Union Army under William T. Sherman, and the vice-presidential nominee of the Democratic Party during the 1868 election. Nonetheless, he gratefully accepted the post and the salary that it provided. However, the position demanded that he return to St. Louis to take up his new duties. There, his friends were shocked at his physical deterioration. In his younger days, Blair had been “a man of rare physical charm” and a “rugged force,” with steel grey eyes, a long drooping red mustache, and his distinctive reddish brown hair that topped a wiry but muscular physique. Now, leaning heavily on a crutch and a cane, and with a black servant to assist him, Blair “was a wreck

of his former self.” When his health continued to decline, Blair returned to Clifton Springs to resume treatment.¹

When Blair returned to the sanitarium, a reporter from the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* travelled down to Clifton Springs for an interview with Blair on current political affairs. Entering Blair’s small room, the reporter could not help but note his appearance. “The furrows on his forehead and the half-blurred look of his eyes showed that this was no ordinary or sudden suffering which had left him the physical wreck he was,” wrote the reporter, noting that “all that native energy which has been his strongest characteristic was gone.” Asked about the question of reconciliation with the South, Blair became pessimistic. “I see no hopes for such states as Mississippi and South Carolina, where the negroes are in the majority,” said Blair. “The negroes are arrayed against their old masters...they consult the latter in other matters but never listen to them in politics.” When asked about the relationship of the West with the rest of the Union, Blair predicted a bright future. “The West will have control in time...it is the central section and ought to have control,” pronounced Blair. With that, the interview concluded. Blair, struggling to get to his feet, offered his one good hand to bid the reporter farewell. With a melancholy air, the reporter likened Blair to a shipwreck stranded on some rocky shore. “One feels as although the strained and shattered hulk still retains some vestige of its once goodly proportion,” lamented the *Democrat*, “yet the first gale that dashes the waves against its weather-beaten sides will break it asunder and leave not a plank to mark the spot where it lay.” Despite his hopes for recovery, it soon became apparent that the sulphur springs were having no effect on

¹ Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, October 16, 1873, Blair Family Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as LOC); Frank Blair to Samuel Philips Lee, September 25, 1873, Blair-Lee Family Papers, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey (hereafter cited as PUL); William E. Parrish, *Frank Blair, Lincoln’s Conservative* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 282-87; William Ernest Smith, *The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics*, 2 vols., (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 1:458-60; C.B. Rollins, “Some Impressions of Frank Blair,” *Missouri Historical Review* 24, no. 3 (April 1930): 352-58 (hereafter cited as *MHR*).

Blair's paralysis. Returning home to St. Louis, Blair continued to decline. His mental and physical state had deteriorated to the point where he could barely recognize old friends. On July 9, 1875, hit with a seizure of vertigo, Blair fell and struck his head on some furniture. He never regained consciousness and died that evening. He was only fifty-four.²

Reaction to Blair's death differed throughout the country. In St. Louis the city was draped in mourning, with ships docked alongside the Mississippi River lowering their flags to half-mast. The St. Louis correspondent of the *New York Herald* remarked that "his death has cast a gloom over the entire community, and the people unite in paying the most graceful tributes to his manly virtues." Most obituaries emphasized Blair's military service during the Civil War, his role in keeping Missouri in the Union, or even his disastrous campaign for the vice-presidency. Few newspapers chose to emphasize the reasons why Frank Blair had become well-known in the first place. One exception was the *Stark County Democrat*, of Canton, Ohio. That paper noted that Blair's national profile had been cemented by his election to Congress in 1856 as "a man from a slave State who was opposed to the nationalization of slavery." Other newspapers were more critical of Blair's political transition. "From having been the leader of the emancipationists in Missouri, he became the extreme partisan of the South," noted the *Albany Evening Journal*. "From that time he lost the confidence of the country and ceased to be of any account in its political movements."³ If Frank Blair had simply been a former Union general, or just another ex-politician from Missouri, his death may have passed without the criticism found in the pages of the *Albany Evening Journal*. But Blair had been part of small group of men who before the Civil War had attempted to build a Republican Party within the slave states of Maryland,

² *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, February 16, 1874; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 288.

³ *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, July 12, 1875; *New York Herald*, July 10, 1875; *St. Louis Republican*, July 10, 1875; *Baltimore Sun*, July 10, 1875; *Stark County Democrat*, July 22, 1875; *Albany Evening Journal*, July 10, 1875.

Kentucky, and Missouri. For the better part of a decade, Blair was famous as the rarest kind of political figure found in mid-nineteenth century American history: an antislavery Republican elected to national office from a slave state.

This dissertation tells the story of the emergence and establishment of the Republican Party in the Border South slave states of Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri during the Civil War era. It examines how Frank Blair and other likeminded antislavery leaders attempted to build a Republican organization during the 1850s as regional and national tensions over slavery consumed American political life. When the Civil War began, it transformed the ideological direction of Border South Republicanism as party leaders grappled with unionism and emancipation. With the end of the war and with slavery dead, Border South Republicans would have to build their party while dealing with the issues of enfranchisement, reconciliation, and civil rights. But this is also a story of failure. Beyond Blair, the Republican Party in the Border South was a mostly inconsequential band of political no-hopers before the war. When the Civil War commenced, that small band of Republicans was subsumed within a larger Unionist movement, only emerging as a political force when battles over the emancipation of blacks took center stage. After the war, Border South Republicans remained mostly a political minority, kept afloat by disenfranchisement, federal patronage, black voters, and enthusiasm. Beyond short stints in postwar Missouri, they never achieved political power at the state level. Yet their story, with all of its successes and disappointments, adds a new layer of complexity to the political history of the Border South.

As historians have retreated from the idea of a monolithic American South bound together by enslaved labor and cotton, a new conception of multiple Souths has emerged in

recent decades. William W. Freehling has argued that there existed three distinct Souths: A subtropical Lower South, where its large enslaved black population produced the cash crops of cotton, rice, and sugar; a Middle South ranging from the Outer Banks on the Atlantic coast to the Blue Ridge mountains to the banks of the Mississippi River, whose enslaved population was smaller and its crops more diversified; and the Border South states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, with their small enslaved population, hubs of commerce, and heterogeneous population. Abutting the free labor states of the North, the Border South's political, economic, and social complexion was far different from her more southerly sister states. "As the southernmost South became the Old South, *our* Old South," writes Freehling, "the northernmost South became ambiguously southern."⁴ Attempting to understand this ambiguity resulted in a resurgence of studies on the Border South and its role in Civil War era politics in recent years. Focusing on issues of loyalty, Unionism in political culture, and regional identity, historians have deeply interrogated longstanding preconceptions of "North" and "South," to reveal a more complex understanding of regional identity than had been previously believed.⁵ As well, historians have recently begun to re-examine and build upon older but still useful narrative histories of individual Border South states during the Civil War era. Recent

⁴ Freehling determined that the Lower South included South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. The Middle South includes North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, and Arkansas, while the Border South includes Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. This dissertation will be using Freehling's terminology for the different regions of the South. Throughout this work, the term "border states" often emerges as a descriptor in quotations from primary sources. When used, it should be considered as interchangeable with the term Border South. William W. Freehling, *The Road To Disunion, Volume 1: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 16-36; quote from Freehling, *The South vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 17.

⁵ For examples, see Stanley Harrold, *Border War: Fighting Over Slavery Before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011); Aaron Astor, *Rebels on the Border: Civil War, Emancipation, and the Reconstruction of Kentucky and Missouri* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); Christopher Philips, *The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Michael D. Robinson, *A Union Indivisible: Secession and the Politics of Slavery in the Border South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

works by historians have explored southern identity, conceptions of neutrality, and the Confederate legacy in Kentucky.⁶ Other historians have questioned political realignment and wartime memory in Maryland.⁷ Still others have asked new questions about Missouri's experience with conventional warfare and guerilla violence, the rights of citizens during wartime, and the regional divisiveness which persisted for so long.⁸ Yet despite these approaches, there exists no study of the emergence and establishment of the Republican Party in the Border South.

This is partly due to the small numbers of Border South Republicans who existed before the war, and their lack of political success during Reconstruction. Because of this, Border South Republicans have remained largely unexamined in most general studies of the party.⁹ Richard H.

⁶ The classic text of Kentucky Civil War era history remains E. Merton Coulter's dated yet useful *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Gloucester, MA.: Peter Smith, 1966). Although firmly placed in the conservative and racist William A. Dunning School of Reconstruction historiography, Coulter's work still remains widely quoted even in newer syntheses about the Civil War in Kentucky. See John David Smith, "Whither Kentucky Civil War and Reconstruction Scholarship?" *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 112, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 223-247. For more recent work that examine Kentucky during the war, see James A. Ramage and Andrea S. Watkins, *Kentucky Rising: Democracy, Slavery, and Culture from the Early Republic to the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011); Gary R. Matthews, *More American Than Southern: Slavery, and the War for an American Ideology, 1828-1861* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014); James W. Finck, *Divided Loyalties: Kentucky's Struggle for Armed Neutrality in the Civil War* (El Dorado Hills, CA.: Savas Beatie, 2012); Berry Craig, *Kentucky Confederates: Secession, Civil War, and the Jackson Purchase* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014); Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁷ Both Jean H. Baker's *The Politics of Continuity: Maryland Political Parties from 1858 to 1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) and William J. Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances: Maryland from 1850 to 1861* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974) remain the essential texts in understanding the political history of Maryland during the Civil War era. Both works have been bolstered by scholarship from Charles W. Mitchell, *Maryland Voices of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); David K. Graham, *Loyalty on the Line: Civil War Maryland in American Memory* (Athens, GA.: University of Georgia Press, 2018).

⁸ William E. Parrish's *Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1861-1865* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963) and *Missouri Under Radical Rule: 1865-1870* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965) remain the important texts which examine Missouri during the Civil War era. New scholarship includes Louis S. Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri: A Military History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012); Mark W. Geiger, *Financial Fraud and Guerilla Violence in Missouri's Civil War, 1861-1865* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Dennis K. Boman, *Lincoln and Citizens' Rights in Civil War Missouri: Balancing Freedom and Security* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011); Jonathan Earle and Diane Mutti Burke, eds., *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri: The Long Civil War on the Border* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013).

⁹ George H. Meyer, *The Republican Party, 1854-1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Lewis L. Gould, *Grand Old Party: A History of the Republicans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Heather Cox Richardson, *To Make Men Free: A History of the Republican Party* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

Abbott's *The Republican Party and the South* remains the only full-scale work to delve into the emergence of the party in the South. Yet Abbott's work concentrates on the postwar Lower South, and stresses northern party strategists' attempts to create a base of Republican votes in the South while neglecting the political activities of southern Republicans within their own states.¹⁰ Eric Foner's work on Republican ideology in *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* does examine the role the Blair family played in establishing the Republican Party in the South. However, Foner mostly emphasizes the Blairs' promotion of colonization as a political strategy for gaining support in the Border South, and does not examine other issues.¹¹ Carl Degler has examined the varieties of southern antislavery in his book *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century*. Reviewing the activities of antislavery Southerners like Cassius Clay and Hinton Rowan Helper, Degler rightfully concludes that they were driven more by economic concerns for southern whites than by moral concerns over enslaved blacks. Yet Degler focuses more on individual efforts, and less so on party building in the Border South.¹² This dissertation addresses this neglect in the historical literature by solely concentrating on this one particular region over the course of the Civil War era, by examining the facets of party building in those particular states, and by exploring the diverse and sometimes contradictory political messages espoused by Border South Republicans.

This study is firmly rooted within the boundaries of "traditional" political history.

Broadly defined, traditional political history incorporates elections, voters, issues, political

¹⁰ Richard H. Abbott, *The Republican Party and the South, 1856-1877: The First Southern Strategy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

¹¹ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 268-74.

¹² Carl N. Degler, *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1982), 47-96.

parties, factions, and political leaders. Until the mid-twentieth century, American political history remained mostly within the style of what Thomas Cochran called the “presidential synthesis.” This synthesis tended to use presidential and congressional politics as its cornerstone from which to construct the story of American political history. Since then, American political history has gone through several methodological transformations that incorporated new fields and theories. Combining new social science techniques and computer analysis, the “New Political History” of the 1960s and 1970s moved towards analysing roll-call voting and electoral behaviour to explain shifting party allegiances. In the 1980s and 1990s, political historians turned to the concept of political culture, with its focus on unspoken ideas, attitudes, cultural norms, and social constraints. Other historians began examining how political structures and institutions became crucial actors in American political development. In recent years, historians have returned to mine the still-rich terrain of traditional political history. This does not mean a rejection of the methodological approaches that have transformed the field over the past half-century, however. As Gary Gallagher and Rachel Sheldon have argued, this renewed interest in traditional political history has allowed historians to revisit older scholarship while understanding how political culture and institutional restraints played a role. “Historians can breathe new life into federal, state, and local politics; partisan activities; elections; caucuses; and especially the politicians themselves,” write Gallagher and Sheldon. This dissertation attempts to do just that. While focusing on the traditional topics of political leaders and campaigns, it does so while asking questions about issues of labor, race, political economy, and ideology.¹³

¹³ Thomas C. Cochran, “The ‘Presidential Synthesis’ in American History,” *American Historical Review* 53, no. 4 (July 1948): 748-59; Joel H. Silbey, “The State and Practice of American Political History at the Millennium: The Nineteenth Century as a Test Case,” *Journal of Policy History* 11, no. 1 (1999): 1-30; Mark H. Leff, “Revisioning U.S. Political History,” *American Historical Review* 100, no. 3 (June 1995): 829-53; Meg Jacobs and Julian E. Zelizer, “The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History,” in *The Democratic Experiment: New Direction in American Political History*, ed. Meg Jacobs, William H. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 1-19; Gary W. Gallagher and Rachel A. Sheldon, “Introduction,” in *A*

This study is also informed by recent work in the area of borderland studies. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron have been at the foreground of this new historical interpretation. For Adelman and Aron, borderlands are “contested boundaries between colonial domains.” The imposition of nationally recognized state borders turned these borderlands into “bordered lands.” Both authors recognize that historians must begin to further examine the political and cultural fluidity of bordered spaces. Although Adelman and Aron concentrated mostly on imperial frontiers and borders in the colonial era, their framework proved enticing for scholars wishing to apply it in other regional or temporal contexts.¹⁴ Christopher Philips, in *The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border*, interrogates the fluid political framework of the “middle border,” a region of states which bordered the Ohio and Missouri Rivers. His work attempts to puncture the image of the static boundary between North and South, and instead looks at the rivers as “collective confluence between slavery and freedom.” As a result, this region traditionally accommodated slavery and avoided the sectional identities often imposed upon them by outsiders. It was only after the war, ironically, that a greater regional identity that identified with North and South was born. Stanley Harrold, in his work *Border War: Fighting Over Slavery Before the Civil War*, regards borderlands as places where “contrasting economic, political, and cultural forces compete, interact, and clash.” Unlike Philips, Harrold prioritizes the conflict over slavery as a key definer of regional identity. Both works help to deepen our understanding of the political, social, and cultural complexity of Border South, moving beyond basic notions of sectional identity. This dissertation attempts to

Political Nation: New Directions in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Political History, ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Rachel A. Sheldon (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 1-2.

¹⁴ Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” *American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 814-41; Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, “On Borderlands,” *Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (September 2011): 338-61.

build on the work done by Phillips and Harrold to look at Border South Republican politics through this prism of borderlands identity.¹⁵

To do this, this story of Border South Republicanism proceeds along two argumentative lines: First, it argues that to become viable political alternative in the Border South, Republicans in Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri developed their own regional version of what I call liberal political antislavery. This ideology grew out of the antislavery tradition and regional uniqueness of the Border South, which allowed criticism of slavery to exist in a way that it could not in the Middle and Lower South. Further explored in Chapter Two, this Border South liberal political antislavery promoted a message of white supremacy, a hostility to blacks, an irrefutable belief in the ideology of free white labor, and a desire to see the economic progress of their states untrammelled by slavery. This political ideology managed to attract enough antislavery men in the region to form the only viable contingent of Republicans in the southern slave states. This ideology was tested, however, during the Civil War and Reconstruction. The liberal antislavery consensus that had been the main driver behind Border South Republicanism was shattered, as emancipation, political disenfranchisement, and black civil rights emerged as political issues. However, strands of this ideology continued to percolate throughout Border South Republican politics during Reconstruction.

Secondly, the dissertation argues that Border South Republicanism had a greater impact on the development of Civil War era politics than previously thought. Despite being small in number, Border South Republicans played an outsized role in the political policies and strategies of the Republican Party. Before the war, Border South men like Preston Blair took on major roles in party organization in an attempt to make the national Republican Party a broad-based

¹⁵ Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward*, 1-21; Harrold, *Border War*, 2-3.

coalition. Because of their prominence as antislavery leaders in the Border South, party leaders like Frank Blair and Cassius Clay represented a threat to proslavery leaders in the Middle and Lower South. Border South Republicans, in the form of Edward Bates and Montgomery Blair, played an essential role in speaking for the South while in Abraham Lincoln's cabinet. Major political decisions regarding emancipation and black enlistment were taken with Border South interests in mind. Finally, Republican policy concerning black civil and political rights was designed to support a fledgling Republican organization in the Border South.

This dissertation takes a chronological approach to tell the story of the Republican Party in the Border South. In contrast to many previous political histories of the region that focus solely on the antebellum period, the Civil War, or Reconstruction, this dissertation will examine the establishment and development of the Republican Party across these often separated periods of study. By doing so, it allows us to perceive this era not as isolated divisions of peace, war, and reconstruction, but rather a longer period where ideologies were gradually transformed and political relationships constantly renegotiated. Chapter One examines the political, economic, and social evolution of Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, arguing that each state's relationship with slavery, labor, and democracy allowed them to remain distinct from their northern and southern neighbors. This distinctiveness allowed for the development of a particular Border South type of antislavery—liberal political antislavery. Chapter Two observes how ambitious political leaders like Frank Blair and Cassius Clay, frustrated by the conservative antislavery of an older generation that favored incrementalism and was hesitant to deal with the problem of slavery in the Border South, developed a liberal political antislavery that encouraged political action and emphasized the harmful effects of slavery on the economy of the state and on free white labor. While their efforts failed to win them political power, they would form an

ideological and organizational foundation for an antislavery movement in the Border South. This foundation would be bolstered by the emergence of a national antislavery party, the Republican Party. However, Chapter Three argues that the development of the Republican Party in the Border South during the 1856 election was hampered by conflicting ideologies, a lack of political organization, and by the political calculations of individual leaders. Despite their hopes that a strong organization could be established in time for the 1860 election, Chapter Four argues that the failure to build a competitive Republican organization in the Border South was the result of three factors: the inability to merge anti-Democratic partisans into the Republican Party, a series of external events which reinforced the view that the Republican Party was a haven for antislavery extremists, and the individual political ambitions of Border South Republican leaders.

Secession and civil war form the backdrop for Chapters Five and Six. Chapter Five argues by 1860-61, most Border South Republicans who previously promoted the politics of antislavery now found their message tempered by the politics of Unionism. In order to keep Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri in the Union, Border South Republicans would have to remain silent on the question of slavery and unite with men whom they had previously opposed politically. Chapter Six argues that despite efforts to keep slavery out of political life by emphasizing the Union, the political and strategic question of emancipating enslaved blacks shattered Border South Unionism. As the war took on a new emancipatory dimension, those who embraced the politics of emancipation would form the core of a dedicated Republican Party in the Border South.

Chapter Seven argues that in the immediate years following the war, Republicans in the Border South struggled to reconcile black political hopes and white political realities in an effort

to make themselves electorally viable. While some adopted a reconciliationist approach that promised to resolve the issues of the war at the expense of black Americans, other supported proscriptive measures for ex-Confederates while advocating for black suffrage. As Reconstruction continued, Border South Republicans struggled with increasing factionalism. Chapter Eight argues that from 1866 to 1870, Border South Republicanism was defined by a struggle between two factions of Republicans. The fight for black civil and political rights was embraced by a more radical faction, who pursued this agenda no matter the political cost. Another faction, meanwhile, began to embrace reconciliation and economic issues as a potential path to electoral success. In the end, the latter group prevailed.

For nearly two decades, this group of “southern heretics” challenged the idea of slavery within a slave society; championed unionism while their region was being torn apart by sectionalism; promoted emancipation as the greatest war their nation had experienced became a fight for freedom; and wrestled with black civil rights as a shattered nation tried to reconstruct itself. In doing so, they laid the foundation of the Republican Party in the Border South.

Chapter One

“Slavery, Then, Forms One Remarkable Feature of Distinction”: Slavery and the Development of the Border South

This chapter examines how Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri evolved as both slavery's border and slavery's borderland. To understand how a Republican Party emerged in the Border South first necessitates an understanding of the political, economic, and social evolution of Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri as individual states. All three states shared certain similarities: a significant enslaved population, a more diverse economy than in the Lower South, and prosperous urban centres. All were bordered by free states who celebrated their distinctive political economy of free labor in increasingly public ways. But on closer inspection, their Border South existed simultaneously with another Border South, one where each state's relationship with slavery, labor, and democracy was complex and contradictory. Rooted in its history as a tobacco colony, Maryland developed a culture of slavery that created a rural, agrarian planter elite who dominated political life and influenced a culture of deference. But changes in agricultural practices and economic diversification led to the emergence of a free black population, creating a culture where free and enslaved black labor operated alongside one another. In Kentucky, the hope that the region would become a paradise in the West for yeoman farmers was quickly dashed after statehood by a conservative, slaveholding elite wishing to recreate a plantation culture in the Bluegrass. Although challenged by Kentuckians who opposed slavery, these elites managed to integrate slavery within the constitutional framework of the state. As the state's economic base revolved around slavery, Kentuckians faced emergent free states in the West who increasingly defined themselves politically and culturally in relation to their slave state neighbor. In Missouri slaveholders would integrate proslavery ideology

alongside democratic politics to forge a slave society far different than in Maryland or Kentucky on the western edge of the republic.

As part of region which historical geographer D.W. Meinig has described as “Greater Virginia,” Maryland’s early political economy was based upon tobacco and slavery. First settled in 1634 as a refuge for persecuted English Catholics, tobacco, rather than toleration, quickly became the hallmark of the Maryland colony. As tobacco use exploded in popularity in Europe, it quickly became the leading cash crop for export in Maryland.¹ Until the late 1680s, most Maryland tobacco planters were more likely to rely on indentured Englishmen as a labor force. But as the price of tobacco gradually dropped during the late seventeenth century, the arithmetic of enslavement proved too alluring. Maryland planters coolly calculated that while enslaved African labor was more expensive, with a young, healthy enslaved male costing approximately £23 in 1674 versus an indentured servant whose price stood at £10 or £20, the dividends of that investment would be far greater. Replenishing their stock of indentured labor after their contracts were concluded would require constant money; enslaved labor, on the other hand, carried the benefits of lifetime labor and possible offspring. Planters made their choice. Over the next few decades, black enslavement took over as the primary source for tobacco labor in the Chesapeake. In 1658, within the main tobacco-producing counties of St. Mary’s, Calvert, Charles, and Prince Georges, there were approximately 100 enslaved blacks, making up 3 percent of the population. By 1710, enslaved blacks numbered 3,500, accounting for nearly 25 percent of the total

¹ D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 1, *Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 1:150-153; Russell R. Menard and Lois Green Carr, “The Lords Baltimore and the Colonization of Maryland,” in *Early Maryland in a Wider World*, ed. David B. Quinn (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 172-179; Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 3-9; Gloria L. Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650-1720* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 43-47.

population.² Eventually, with the tobacco prices remaining stagnant during the mid-eighteenth century, planters began to diversify their crops. With demand from Europe for grains increasing, planters began growing wheat and corn. Despite moving away from the monoculture of tobacco, the use of enslaved labor continued.³

The years after the American Revolution redefined Maryland as a “slave state” in a federal nation in which political distinctions were increasingly defined as being between free and slave. The move towards gradual emancipation of enslaved blacks in the northern states had begun even in the midst of revolution. North of Maryland in Pennsylvania, a Quaker-led emancipation movement had created a political climate in which antislavery sentiment could flourish. Driven by a complex amalgam of economic, social, and political factors, in 1780 Pennsylvanian legislators had passed a gradual emancipation bill which called for all children of enslaved blacks to be freed, and with all enslaved blacks having to be registered before November 1, 1780, or they would become instantly free. In a concession to Maryland, the bill also declared that slave state visitors, while residing or travelling in Pennsylvania, could hold onto to their enslaved property for six months while in the state. Any enslaved blacks kept in Pennsylvania longer than that term was instantly free. As well, clauses within the bill made it clear that the six-month residency would not apply to fugitive slaves, who would be immediately recaptured and returned to their owner. With Pennsylvania charting a course towards the gradual abolition of slavery, it now clearly defined itself as a free state, and its border with Maryland would become far more important as a symbolic boundary than a political boundary. Originally a

² Russell R. Menard, “From Servants to Slaves: The Transformation of the Chesapeake Labor System,” *Southern Studies* 16, (1977): 360-61; Menard, “The Maryland Slave Population, 1658 to 1730: A Demographic Profile of Blacks in Four Counties,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 32, No. 1 (January 1975): 30-31.

³ Alan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 47-49; Paul G.E. Clemens, *The Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern Shore: From Tobacco to Grain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 204-05.

surveyor's line, the Mason-Dixon line would become colloquially regarded as the demarcation line between slavery and freedom in the east.⁴

While some in Maryland briefly flirted with emancipationist sentiment, at no time did state-mandated gradual emancipation take root. Post-revolutionary emancipation in Maryland was driven by a select few who could not overcome the self-interest and political power of Maryland slaveholders. Maryland slaveholders could quell their own reservations about slavery in the abstract by supporting measures such as banning the transatlantic slave trade or legitimizing manumission by last will and testament, while opposing any political measures that would decrease the value of their property in enslaved human beings. Religious groups like Quakers and Methodists played a dominant role in organizing the Maryland Society for the Abolition of Slavery, and small clusters of antislavery societies appeared throughout both the Eastern Shore and the western counties by the 1790s. However, the Society never amounted to more than 250 people throughout the state, and disappeared by 1798.⁵ Far more successful were individual efforts to manumit enslaved blacks. With tobacco increasingly losing its lustre as a profitable cash crop, the growth of farming that required only seasonal labor, and with Baltimore emerging as the commercial and economic heart of Maryland, slaveholders and the enslaved took advantage of easier manumission laws each to their own advantage. The need for skilled

⁴ Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 93-98, 124-137; Paul Finkelman, *An Imperfect Union: Slavery, Federalism, and Comity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 46-49; George William Van Cleve, *A Slaveholders' Union: Slavery, Politics, and the Constitution in the Early American Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 59-66. An excellent and detailed look at the process of abolition in Pennsylvania can be found in Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁵ Stephen T. Whitman, *Challenging Slavery in the Chesapeake: Black and White Resistance to Human Bondage* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2007), 41-58; Anita Aidt Guy, "The Maryland Abolition Society and the Promotion of the Ideals of the New Nation," *MHM* 84, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 342-49; Gordon E. Finnie, "The Antislavery Movement in the Upper South Before 1840," *Journal of Southern History* 35, no. 3 (August 1969): 322 (hereafter cited as *JSH*).

labor in the shipyards, craft shops, and factories of Baltimore led to slaveholders selling or leasing their property, while enslaved skilled workers took advantages of urban economic opportunities to solidify their economic position in a way unavailable to the enslaved laboring on plantations in the Lower South. Because of this new economic relationship, slaveholders would use agreements of gradual manumission in order to secure productive labor from their enslaved workers. Enslaved blacks used these guarantees of manumission to begin to secure a financial future for themselves, by making funds from extra labor and pooling funds to buy family members out of servitude. In this new economic environment, manumission existed as tool to secure labor and allowed slaveholders to repurpose slavery in a more industrial environment. As a result, Maryland saw an increase in its free black population. Between 1790 and 1810, Maryland's population of free blacks had more than quadrupled, and would continue to steadily rise. By the 1850s, free blacks in Maryland were almost as numerous as slaves.⁶

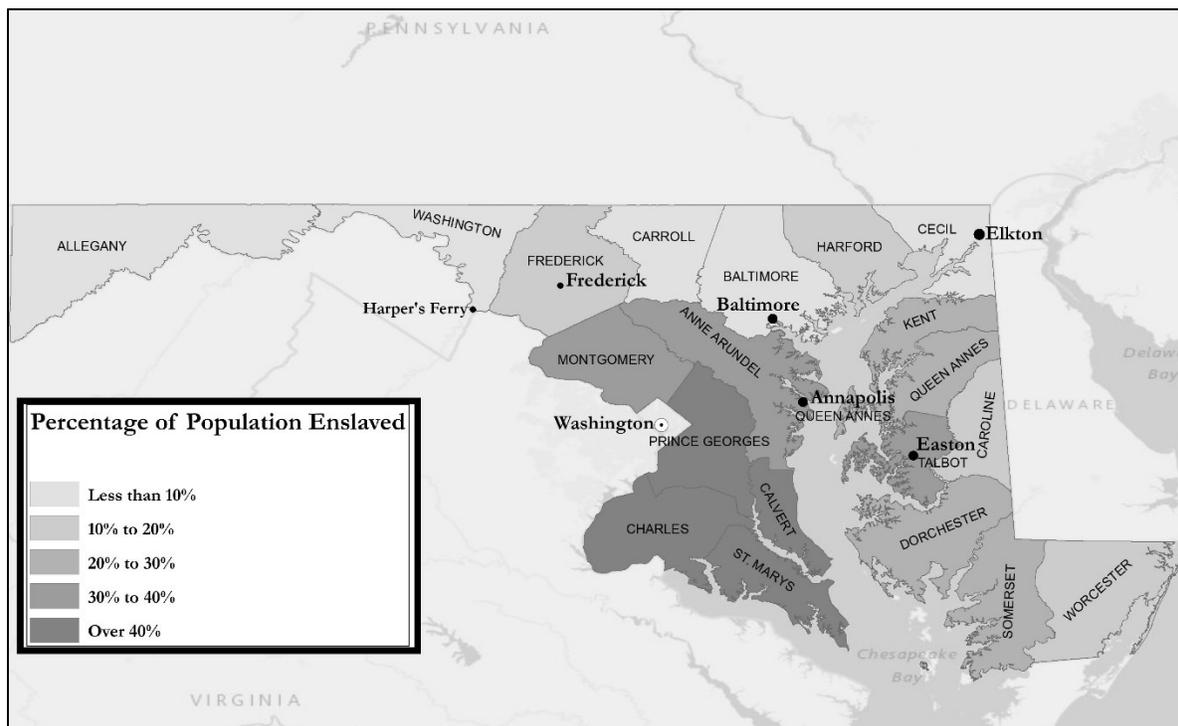
The increase in free blacks and the role they played in the economy of Maryland helped to stimulate a statewide debate over the future of free and enslaved black Marylanders. In 1832, a special state committee was formed to discuss the removal of all blacks in the state. This committee, made primarily of slaveholders, argued that in order for Maryland to become a free white labor utopia, free blacks should be forced to emigrate and help to colonize the West African coast. The state itself would assist the enterprise by appropriating \$20,000 a year to fund a state colonization society. While free blacks would be induced to emigrate, slaveholders would purge Maryland of slave labor by selling enslaved blacks to cotton and sugar planters in the

⁶ Stephen T. Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 1-7; Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 1-3. In 1850, Maryland had 90,368 enslaved and 74,723 free, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington, D.C., 1853), ix.

booming southwest. By removing both, according to the committee, Maryland would gain white immigrants and eventually rival larger northern states “not only in population, prosperity and wealth, but in the higher and more noble endowments of intellectual and scientific attainments.” Yet the legislation passed by the Maryland legislature failed to have any longstanding repercussions on slavery in Maryland. Most Marylanders often ignored or contravened the laws passed by the slaveholding majority in the legislature, choosing instead to simply free enslaved blacks without forcing them to emigrate overseas. As well, Maryland slaveholders discovered that that the profitability of selling enslaved labor further south could decrease the number of slaves in Maryland at a greater rate than legislated manumission and colonization schemes. In passing laws that did little to halt the growth of the free black population, the status of black Marylanders, both free and enslaved, remained in a state of curious evolution.⁷

⁷ The Maryland debates on can be seen in Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 1:199-207; Lacey K. Ford, *Deliver Us From Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 387-89; *Maryland Gazette*, March 22, 1832; Brugger, *Maryland*, 210-13.

Slavery in Maryland, 1850⁸



By 1830, Maryland's politics had taken a form far different from the standards imposed by the aristocratic men who had written the state's constitution in 1776. Those men had attempted to fashion a republican political system that privileged an elite few and kept power out of the "hands of the very lowest of people."⁹ Unlike the revolutionary generation who saw politics as an aristocratic pursuit and disdained the grubby business of stumping for votes, a new political generation actively embraced the principles of the democratic revolution. Parties soon developed an organized structure that solicited campaign funds from supporters, developed

⁸ Data compiled from *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*, 220; John H. Long, *Maryland Historical Counties*. Data Set. Laura Rico-Beck, digital comp. Atlas of Historical County Boundaries, ed. by John H. Long. Chicago: The Newberry Library, 2010. Available online from <http://www.newberry.org/ahcbp>.

⁹ Ronald Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissention: Economics, Politics, and the Revolution in Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 156. Davis Curtis Skaggs, *Roots of Maryland Democracy, 1753-1776* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 174-99; *Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland Held in at the City of Annapolis in 1774, 1775, & 1776* (Baltimore: 1836), 316-22.

newspapers that would act as partisan vehicles for political mobilization and messaging, and transformed campaign events into community celebrations. Throughout the state, campaign rallies would become an important and infamous part of electoral life. Candidates often addressed rallies that assumed a carnival-like atmosphere, replete with barbecue, bourbon, and fish fries. In Baltimore, passions stirred by intense political rivalries resulted in riots before and after the polls closed. Partisan mobs used clubs, pistols, bricks and stones against their opponents, earning the city the sobriquet “Mob Town.” This enthusiasm for political life was marked by a high rate of political participation, with voter participation amongst eligible voters reaching nearly 85 percent by 1840. Commentators feared that this political enthusiasm too often exacerbated dangerous divisions along regional lines within the state. Contests within the legislature over questions of apportionment and democratic reform often pitted Eastern Shore politicians eager to preserve their power against the rapidly growing and urban western portion of the state. One state legislator, concerned about the future of his state, noted that local interests “tended to impart to our state a character of a confederacy of two shores...to induce us, each to regard the other, as strangers and aliens in our own land.”¹⁰

The economic importance of Baltimore to the state of Maryland also emerged as an issue. Once primarily a shipbuilding town, by the 1840s Baltimore had grown into one of the largest cities in the southern United States, and one of its most important ports. Commercial and professional industries had made Baltimore the linchpin in the trade between the North and the South. With trade with New York and Boston growing yearly, Baltimore had also become a commercial

¹⁰ Brugger, *Maryland*, 179, 218-20; L. Marx Renzulli, *Maryland: The Federalist Years* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1972), 318-21; Norman K. Risjord, *Chesapeake Politics, 1781-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 548-49; W. Wayne Smith, “Jacksonian Democracy of the Chesapeake: The Political Institutions,” *MHM* 62, no. 4 (December 1967): 381-393; Thomas J. Scharf, *A History of Baltimore City and County: From Its Earliest Period to the Present Day* (Philadelphia: 1881), 778-89; John V.L. MacMahon, *An Historical View of the Government of Maryland from its Colonization to the Present Day* (Baltimore: 1831), 78.

banking, credit, and legal center for southern merchants and planters. Foreign trade, especially to the bustling ports of South America, also complemented Baltimore's economy. Because of the strong commercial ties between the two sections of the country, Marylanders were acutely aware of the threat to their economic livelihood whenever sectional issues flared. As a result, Maryland's political and business elites adopted a *de facto* policy of conservatism and moderation in all affairs. "We cast into oblivion the idle talk of those, who, knowing nothing, have expressed a wish that, in case of disunion, we should be united to the South," wrote the *Easton Gazette* at the height of the Nullification Crisis in 1832. "We have but one object that engrosses us, and that is to harmonize the national sense and feeling and to direct it indivisibly to guard and preserve the Union." Together, this elite helped to drive the search for solutions to political problems towards moderation, compromise, and quiet. To do anything else would disturb the sectional balance and interrupt the commercial potential of Maryland.¹¹

Slavery also played a key role in the development of Kentucky. In 1786, Kentucky had become a territory under the jurisdiction of Virginia. Land claims in Kentucky supported squatter rights, which meant that an individual could find vacant land and claim it by occupying, or "squattin'" on the unclaimed land. But the lands claims process within the territory was a mess. Land claims by non-residents and other absentee landlords led to a culture of litigiousness in Kentucky which forced many settlers to pull up stakes and move north of the Ohio River, or accept renting land. By the time Kentucky reached statehood in 1792, two-thirds of adult white males owned no land.¹² One consequence of Virginia's jurisdiction over Kentucky's land was

¹¹ Gary Lawson Browne, *Baltimore in the Nation, 1789-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Sherry H. Olsen, *Baltimore: The Building of American City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); *Easton Gazette*, December 15, 1832.

¹² Stephen Aron, *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, 58-81; Matthew Salafia, *Slavery's Borderland: Freedom and Bondage Along the Ohio River* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 30-32; Joan W. Coward,

that it enabled a clear pathway for the importation of enslaved blacks into the region. Enslaved blacks were present in the numerous settlement expeditions led by men like Daniel Boone, guiding, hunting, fighting, and dying alongside their white owners. By 1790, the Kentucky territory contained more than twelve thousand enslaved blacks.¹³ With free white labor in short supply, enslaved laborers cleared forests, built cabins, and planted gardens. By the close of the eighteenth century, Kentucky's enslaved population numbered more than forty thousand. Furthermore, Kentucky slavery was broadly based, with roughly one-quarter of households owning enslaved blacks.¹⁴

In the years following statehood, questions about Kentucky's dependence on slavery consumed much of the state's political life. Many proslavery Kentuckians wished to remake their state in the image of the ordered, gentry-dominated society of Virginia, and proposed a constitution that emphasized the protection of property rights—both in landed and chattel property. In order to make the institution of slavery perpetual, proslavery delegates at the Kentucky's first constitutional convention passed an article which forbade future legislatures from passing emancipation laws without slaveholder compensation.¹⁵ The question of compensated emancipation emerged again only a few years later when Kentuckians prepared to draft a new state constitution. An ambitious twenty-one-year old Kentucky lawyer named Henry Clay argued for the gradual emancipation of the state's enslaved blacks. "All of America

Kentucky in the New Republic: The Process of Constitution Making (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1792), 55.

¹³ Marion B. Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), xi-xv; Lowell H. Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978), 1-2.

¹⁴ Coward, *Kentucky in the New Republic*, 63; Ellen Eslinger, "The Shape of Slavery on the Kentucky Frontier, 1775-1800," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 92, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 2-3 (hereafter cited as *RKHS*).

¹⁵ Lowell Harrison, *Kentucky's Road to Statehood* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 152-68; Patricia Watlington, *The Partisan Spirit: Kentucky Politics, 1779-1792* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 220-22; Coward, *Kentucky in the New Republic*, 12-47.

acknowledges the existence of slavery to be evil,” wrote Clay, arguing “the sooner we attempt its destruction the better.” Gradual emancipation, Clay later wrote, would allow Kentucky to slowly adapt to a free labor system, while educating freemen in order to “qualify them for the exercise of the rights of a citizen.”¹⁶ Despite Clay’s call for emancipation, proslavery delegates to the state constitutional convention of 1799 reaffirmed the supremacy of slavery in Kentucky, by further denying the right of the legislature to prohibit any future importation of slaves, and depriving Kentucky’s free blacks the right to vote. Although some antislavery clergymen continued to call for emancipation, antislavery declined as a political force after the constitutional questions of 1799 were resolved. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, Kentucky had fully embraced slavery.¹⁷

This embrace of slavery covered all areas of the state. In eastern Kentucky, the absence of tillable land meant that many settlers with enslaved property bypassed the region, heading for the more fertile soil of central Kentucky. Those who remained, however, still retained some vestiges of slavery. From Lewis County on the Ohio River, with narrow but fertile valleys which produced small quantities of fruit, tobacco, cattle, and hogs, to Clinton County, nestled in the hilly Cumberland Mountains bordering Tennessee, all eastern Kentucky counties contained a small percentage of enslaved inhabitants. Blacks tended to mostly reside in towns, suggesting that most were either household servants or laborers.¹⁸ In western Kentucky, slavery also found a

¹⁶ [Scaevola], “To the Electors of Fayette County,” April 16, 1798, in *Papers of Henry Clay*, ed. James F. Hopkins (Lexington: University of Lexington Press, 1959), 1:6-7; [Scaevola], “To the Citizens of Fayette,” February 1799, in *The Papers of Henry Clay*, ed. James F. Hopkins et al., 10 vols. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959-1991), 1:12.

¹⁷ Coward, *Kentucky in the New Republic*, 123-61; Asa Earl Martin, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in Kentucky* (Louisville: Standard Printing Company, 1918), 30-32.

¹⁸ Lucas, *Blacks in Kentucky*, xv-xvii; O.G. Ragan, *History of Lewis County, Kentucky* (Cincinnati: 1912), 15-17; A larger demographic breakdown of both free and enslaved blacks in eastern Kentucky can be found in James B. Murphy, “Slavery and Freedom in Appalachia: Kentucky as a Demographic Case Study,” *RKHS* 80, no. 2 (Spring 1982), 151-169.

foothold. Along the Tennessee border, whose rolling plains and fertile soils produced tobacco, corn, wheat, and rye, enslaved blacks made up more than ten percent of the inhabitants by 1810. By the eve of the Civil War, places like Christian, Logan, and Todd counties, enslaved blacks made up more than one-third of the total population.¹⁹ The last area added to the state, Jackson Purchase, was thin-soiled, poor land subject to constant flooding. Bounded by the Tennessee River to the east and the Mississippi to the west, the Purchase soon filled with poor white farmers seeking to scratch out a living on land not already seized by wealthier farmers and slaveholders. While some settlers brought in enslaved blacks, they remained few in number. In Ballard and Fulton counties, the percentage of enslaved rose to nearly 20 percent, but in most counties of the Purchase, the enslaved population remained small.²⁰

¹⁹ Lucas, *Blacks in Kentucky*, xix-xxi; Lewis Collins, *History of Kentucky*, ed. Richard H. Collins (Covington, KY.: 1876), 125-5, 258-60, 479-80, 727-8

²⁰ Lucas, *Blacks in Kentucky*, xxi-xxii; Darrell Haug Davis, *Geography of the Jackson Purchase* (Frankfort: Kentucky Geological Society, 1923), 67-69.

of cotton needing to be roped and bagged, and enslaved blacks needing to be clothed cheaply and durably, Kentucky-grown hemp provided an invaluable resource. With a profitable cash crop, and a supply of enslaved labor, the denizens of the Bluegrass created a new culture nestled in the fertile soil of the area. Driven by enslaved labor and seemingly controlling Kentucky's economic destiny, this new aristocracy would seek to control Kentucky's politics as well.²²

It was the rapid economic growth of the Bluegrass region, along with its geographical location, which spurred one of the most important economic policies in American history which became the ideological foundation of the Whig Party. Located far from the major river arteries in Kentucky, most goods left Lexington by road. The main road connecting the region to Ohio River was poorly maintained and increased the transportation costs of goods to and from the region. These fears over the viability of transportation in the region, coupled with banking and tariff concerns, drove many of the Bluegrass elite to fall into line behind the economic philosophies espoused by Henry Clay. Marriage and his success as a lawyer had allowed him to acquire a significant amount of land and enslaved property, leading Clay to become comfortably ensconced within the Bluegrass elite. Raising hemp and breeding horses on his estate outside of Lexington, Clay would develop policies of internal improvements, protective tariffs, and banking policies that would ensure the financial sustainability and economic prosperity of his home region. Clay proposed policies of improving Kentucky's roads and rivers, and creating banks to expedite trade and commerce. As Clay's political reputation grew, he wanted to apply those

²² Karl B. Raitz, *The Kentucky Bluegrass: A Regional Profile and Guide* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Department of Geography, 1980), 1-8; Mary E. Wharton and Roger W. Barbour, *Bluegrass Land and Life: Land, Character, Plants, and Animals of the Inner Bluegrass Region of Kentucky* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1992), 1-18; Aron, *How the West Was Lost*, 125-7; James F. Hopkins, *A History of the Hemp Industry in Kentucky* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1951), 13-30; Lucas, *Blacks in Kentucky*, 4.

same policies to the entire nation. What was good for the Bluegrass, surmised Clay, was good for the United States as well.²³

If the Bluegrass became the region where slavery was most entrenched within the fabric of Kentucky, then the northern counties that ran alongside the Ohio River was where slavery's security began to fray. During the initial stages of Anglo-American settlement in Kentucky, the Ohio River served as an unofficial boundary between the settlers and the territory of the Ohio Indians. As new settlers with enslaved property ventured deeper into Kentucky, and as the threat from the Ohio Indians receded due to war, outmigration, and disease, the land above the Ohio River proved increasingly alluring to settlers seeking to escape the seemingly endless cycle of speculation and land claim settlement that had bedeviled Kentucky.²⁴ Unlike Kentucky lands, which before statehood were governed under Virginia law, the lands north of the Ohio were governed according to rules laid out by the new federal government. Under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the Continental Congress would set precedents on how territories should be surveyed, organized, governed, and achieve statehood. In addition, Article 6 of the Ordinance provided that "there shall be neither Slavery nor involuntary Servitude" in the new territories and provided for the lawful reclamation of any escaped slaves. Designed during a time of sectional division and constitutional crisis, the Ordinance was designed to cement the bonds of union among enterprising American who saw the West as the nation's great future. Despite its later use as a clearly defined standard which antislavery activists in the West would rally around, the antislavery credentials of the Ordinance were rather vague. Many of those who voted for it paid scant intention to the antislavery language in the document, and many slaveholders who voted for it thought that it might even strengthen slavery south of the Ohio. Finally, some viewed the

²³ E. Merton Coulter, "The Genesis of Henry Clay's American System," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 25 (1926): 50-54.

²⁴ Aron, *How the West Was Lost*, 50-3, 58-81; Salafia, *Slavery's Borderland*, 30-32.

Ordinance simply as pact between the various states, not entrenched within the Constitution and subject to revision in the future.²⁵

The Northwest Ordinance forced a redefinition of the Ohio River region into to a borderland where two political economies, one based upon slavery and the other upon free labor, would define themselves against the other. Separated from Kentucky by the Ohio River, the new states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois would each grapple with the question of slavery on their road to statehood. In Ohio, a flood of nonslaveholding Virginians and Kentuckians, drawn to the territory by cheap land prices, formed the base of an antislavery movement which constantly rejected proposals by slaveholders to bring in their enslaved property under the guise of indentured servitude. Looking south to Kentucky, they saw that the 1799 state constitution had “riveted afresh” the “chains of slavery” in that state and wanted to prevent Ohio from undergoing a similar fate.²⁶ Yet even as Ohioans congratulated each other for avoiding becoming enchained by slavery, the political economy of the state was still intractably bound to the institution itself. Labor shortages in Ohio in the early nineteenth century led to the hiring of enslaved labor from

²⁵ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al. (Washington, D.C., 1904-37), 32:343. Peter S. Onuf's *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), remains the best broad overview of the history of the Northwest Ordinance. The debate over the Ordinance's usefulness as an antislavery document can be seen in Paul Finkelman, “Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1986): 343-70. Finkelman declares that at the time of its passage, the Ordinance, in contrast to the image presented by nineteenth century abolitionists, was barely an antislavery document, and did not immediately or directly affect slavery north of the Ohio River. George William Van Cleve suggests that the Ordinance's passage, rather than being a monumental compromise which would define sectional relations in the United States for years to come, was instead simply a “side bargain.” His theory asserts that southern delegates would support slavery being excluded from the Northwest Territory in return for northern delegates withdrawing a treaty with Spain that would have barred American navigation on the Mississippi River. Van Cleve, *A Slaveholder's Union*, 153-67.

²⁶ John Craig Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 76-95, quote on page 89; Craig Thompson Friend, “‘Work & Be Rich’: Economy and Culture on the Bluegrass Farm,” in *The Buzzel About Kentuck: Settling the Promised Land*, ed. Craig Thompson Friend (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 125-52; *Western Spy*, June 26, 1802. For a deeper analysis of desire to plant a republican form of government in the Ohio Territory, see Andrew R.L. Cayton, *The Frontier Republic: Ideology and Politics in the Ohio Country, 1780-1825* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), 33-34; John D. Barnhart, *Valley of Democracy: The Frontier Versus the Plantation in the Ohio River Valley, 1775-1818* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953).

Kentucky owners on short-term contracts, with Ohioans hiring about two thousand enslaved laborers from Kentucky in the first decade of the nineteenth century.²⁷ Settlement in Indiana had failed to materialize as it had in Ohio, and the immense territory on the fringes on the American republic remained underpopulated. Although a proslavery faction had hoped to transform Indiana into a slave state by encouraging settlement by Kentucky and Tennessee slaveholders, few chose to settle in a territory where their property would not be protected. As a result, the political power of the proslavery faction began to weaken as more antislavery settlers moved into the territory. By the time Indiana applied for statehood in 1816, proponents of antislavery attempted to dismantle the last vestiges of slavery in the state by forever banning slavery and involuntary servitude in the state constitution.²⁸ The politics of slavery also played a key role in the formation of Illinois, which would eventually border Kentucky's westernmost counties. After the territory broke off from Indiana in 1809, a proslavery faction pushed for Congress to suspend Article 6 of the Ordinance. Congress refused. Just like in Indiana, southern slaveholders refused to migrate to Illinois, wary about the lack of protection for their enslaved property.²⁹ When Illinois applied for statehood, proslavery advocates were unable to consolidate themselves politically, and allowed an organized antislavery movement to emerge. This antislavery movement defeated the proslavery faction by appealing to economic and democratic arguments

²⁷ Ellen Eslinger, "The Evolution of Racial Politics in Early Ohio," in *The Center of Great Empire: The Ohio County in the Early American Republic*, ed. Andrew R.L. Cayton and Stuart D Hobbs (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 81-104; Stephen Middleton, *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 37-8, 42-73; Cayton, *Frontier Republic*, 54.

²⁸ Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 96-123; Onuf, *Statehood and Union*, 116-123; Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance: The Persistence of Bondage in Indiana and Illinois," *Journal of the Early Republic* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 21-40; Louis B. Ewbank and Dorothy L. Riker, eds., *The Laws of the Indiana Territory, 1809-1816* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1934), 138-9. A good look at some of Indiana Supreme Court Cases which eventually led to the end of slavery in Indiana can be found in Finkelman, "Almost a Free State: The Indiana Constitution of 1816 and the Problem of Slavery," *Indiana Magazine of History* 111 (March 2015), 64-95.

²⁹ Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 121-23; Suzanne Cooper Guasco, "The Deadly Influence of Negro Capitalists': Southern Yeoman and Resistance to the Expansion of Slavery in Illinois," *Civil War History* 47, no. 1 (March 2001): 7-29 (hereafter cited as *CWH*); Emil Joseph Verlie, *Illinois Constitutions* (Springfield, IL: Illinois State Historical Library, 1919), 38-9; Finkelman, "Evading the Ordinance," 41-51.

that found favour among the state's mostly southern yeoman farmers. Publicizing the evils of slavery, the benefits of a democratic order, and the ideals of free white labor, they managed to ensure that Illinois would remain a free state.³⁰

The statehood of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, along with each state's convoluted relationship with enslaved labor, complicated the boundaries of the Ohio River. The legacy of territorial slavery and the arrival of settlers from Virginia and Kentucky meant that parts of these new states—such as along the north bank of Ohio, and in southern Indiana and Illinois—would retain social and economic connections to the South. Kentucky and Ohio farmers sent their hogs to be processed in the slaughterhouses of Cincinnati, where their pork, preserved with Kanawha salt from the Appalachians mountains in western Virginia, would be sent south. Nor did the river determine the economic and social status of its black residents. Blacks, both free and enslaved, worked the newly developed steamboats which plied the Ohio River and enabled cities like Louisville and Cincinnati to thrive as commercial centers. Enslaved blacks labored at the salt works of Gallatin County in free Illinois, while free blacks living in Louisville worked as laborers, teamsters, laundresses, and tradespeople in slave Kentucky. “I confess I could not discover the difference in the appearance and condition of the two banks, which some [have] cited as one among many other proofs of the difference between the effects of freedom and the effects of slavery,” wrote the English writer James Silk Buckingham, as he travelled along the Ohio. “On both sides, the towns were neat and agreeably situated; on both, the hills were as well wooded, and the plain as well cultivated.” From a certain viewpoint, the Ohio River, like many

³⁰ Guasco, “The Deadly Influence of Negro Capitalists,” 15-17; *Edwardsville Spectator*, December 5, 21, 1822; Finkelman, “Evading the Ordinance,” 48-49; Onuf, *Statehood and Union*, 123-130; James E. Davis, *Frontier Illinois* (Bloomington, IL.: Indiana University Press, 1998), 153-165. For a larger look at the rhetoric of the Illinois convention movement of 1823-1824, one that saw the convention as a class conflict between poor whites and wealthy politicians in the state, see James Simeone, *Democracy and Slavery in Frontier Illinois: The Bottomland Republic* (DeKalb, IL.: Northern Illinois Press, 2000).

great rivers throughout history, became an artery of commerce, a region of cross-cultural mixing, a landscape of social fluidity and of economic integration.³¹

Yet slavery's borderland was simultaneously a bordered land. The establishment of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois as "free" states created in these states a political culture which emphasized freedom from slavery as one their foundational strengths. "An experiment is making in the West...the Ohio River is the line, which exactly defines the boundaries of the experiment," observed the *National Intelligencer* from Washington. "The Ohio is a broad line between the states which hold slaves, and those which have none—and although the effects may not be immediately perceptible yet they will undoubtedly develop themselves in the lapse of generations—*slavery*, then, forms one remarkable feature of distinction, between the banks of the Ohio." During celebratory dinners, Ohio's political and social elite drank toasts to their state's freedom from the "demon" and the "disgrace" of slavery. As the constitutional battles over statehood faded into historical memory, northwesterners embraced the Northwest Ordinance as the holy script which had kept these states from falling into the trap of slavery. "Certainly there is no statute or law enacted in any nation ancient or modern whose glorious and beneficial results are so prominently displayed in the very face of the land," wrote one Pittsburgh editor about the legacy of the Ordinance. Furthermore, the freedom secured by the prohibition of slavery played an increasing role in defining the moral superiority of the states of the northwest. Comparing Kentucky and Indiana, one letter writer noted that while both stands abounded in material wealth of "forests and fields," Indiana's prospects for the future remained superior.

³¹ Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward*, 15-20; J. Blaine Hudson, "'Upon This Rock'—The Free African American Community of Antebellum Louisville, Kentucky," *RKHS* 109, no. 3 (Summer/Autumn 2011), 304-5; Salafia, *Slavery's Borderland*, 118-125; Margaret Walsh, "The Spatial Evolution of the Mid-Western Pork Industry, 1835-75," *Journal of Historical Geography* 4, no. 1 (1978):10-12; James Silk Buckingham, *The Eastern and Western States of America*, 3 vols. (London: 1842), 2:436-7; Cayton, "Artery and Border: The Ambiguous Nature of the Ohio Valley in the Early Republic," *Ohio Valley History* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 19-26 (hereafter cited as *OVH*).

Indiana's "enlightened citizens" and "splendid public works" would thrive, as that state, unlike Kentucky, had not been "cursed with that incubus of slavery." The citizens of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, increasingly defined by their devotion to the ideology of free soil, free labor, and free men, would help to cement the Ohio River as the northern edge of slavery, hardening slavery's fluid borderland into a more static, bordered land. This ideology would also help to reinforce the increasing sectional identities of the Ohio River Valley, as Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois increasingly saw themselves as more "North" than "West."³²

Even as northwesterners were congratulating themselves on escaping the curse of slavery, events further west in Missouri Territory would emerge as the greatest sectional crisis in the history of the young republic. Long a region of trade and exchange, the region around the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri rivers were what Stephen Aron has described as a "confluence region." Unlike in the case of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, the Northwest Ordinance was not applied to this newly annexed territory, now called Upper Louisiana. Through both French and Spanish rule, the territory had become a small but thriving slave society by 1790. Although neglected by their imperial governments, French and Spanish inhabitants used enslaved labor in their agricultural and fur-trading economy. The numbers were bolstered by French and American slaveholders, who, seeing no future for themselves in the northwest, emigrated across the Mississippi to Spanish territory more amenable to slavery. Furthermore, the explosion of the sugar and cotton plantation economy in the lower Mississippi Valley created a new market for food and commodities. Slavery would form the connective tissue for the Mississippi Valley economy, with slave-grown wheat in Upper Louisiana feeding enslaved labor harvesting sugar and cotton in Lower Louisiana. By the time the United States annexed the territory in 1803,

³² *National Intelligencer*, September 17, 1816; quotes from Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 142; quote from *Miami of the Lake*, January 27, 1835, in Onuf, *Statehood and Union*, 152.

nearly one-fourth to one-third of the population of the territory's main settlements were enslaved. Hoping that the policy of benign neglect which had characterized the French and Spanish colonial administrations would continue under the Americans, the inhabitants of the region pressed Congress to avoid imposing any territorial acts which might threaten their slave society.³³

The failure of Congress to pass any territorial legislation that would clearly define the role of slavery meant that in Missouri slavery operated under a patchwork legal framework of inherited local laws and territorial statutes. As a result, thousands of slaveholders and aspiring slaveholders from Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and the Carolinas flowed into the territory, fleeing landlords, planter elites, or worn-out soil, and developing a slave society that fused black slavery with their own ideas of republicanism, democracy, and freedom.³⁴ This "slaveholding democracy" of Missouri slaveholders was the result of both the forces unleashed by the democratic revolution of the post-revolutionary era and their own westward movement from the eastern shores of the Tidewater. Missouri slaveholders saw their world now unencumbered by established deference, where merit and social elevation was now determined by individual talent and accomplishments all under the banner of capitalistic acquisitiveness. Missouri slaveholders also embraced slavery as consistent with democratic values. In a world where all white men were equal, individuals distinguished themselves from the great mass of the people by pursuing the goals of acquiring land and slaves. Therefore, for Missouri slaveholders, democracy meant more

³³ Stephon Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2006), xvii, 97-99; Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 30-54; Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 73-117; Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 141-42; Finkelman, *Slavery and the Founders*, 151.

³⁴ Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 55-75; David H. Fischer and James C. Kelly, *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 177-80; William E. Foley, *The Genesis of Missouri: From Wilderness Outpost to Statehood* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 131-46, 238-68.

than simply voting rights; it meant that individuals must have the opportunity to succeed in the race of life. Therefore, these opportunities must not be allowed to be foreclosed by anyone or anything—be it by economic control by federal banks or by the political control of eastern antislavery congressmen. Duff Green, a Kentuckian who settled in Missouri and who became a leading proponent of unrestricted statehood, exemplified this devotion to personal liberty. At a public dinner in Howard County, Green offered a toast to “The Union—It is dear to us, but liberty is dearer.” For Green, the opportunities statehood afforded to Missouri would mean nothing if individual liberties, including the freedom to be a slaveholder, were not upheld.³⁵

This embrace of slavery meant that the population of Missouri, both white and black, boomed during its territorial period. When the United States assumed control of the region in 1804, the population was approximately 10,000, of which about fifteen percent were enslaved. By 1820, the total population of Missouri was 66,586, with an enslaved population of 10,282. The counties of central Missouri—Howard, Callaway, Boone, and Cooper—the diversified farms of which produced with enslaved labor staple crops of tobacco, hemp, and cotton, along with a variety of grain crops and livestock, saw their populations increase as settlers flocked to the region. But central Missouri was not the only location whose population grew. St. Louis, originally a French fur-trading post on the Mississippi, boomed as an influx of white American settlers and their slaves raised its population to above 10,000. Slavery in St. Louis replicated

³⁵ The best analysis of the creation this Missouri slaveholding identity in central Missouri remains Christopher Phillips, *Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Creation of Southern Identity in the Border West* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 23-52; Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 1-10. Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, 2:273-9. Quote from Perry McCandless, *A History of Missouri*, vol. 2, 1820 to 1860 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), 6.

previous patterns of urban slavery found in southern cities. Because of labor shortages, slaveholders found a ready market for hiring out their enslaved labor in the city.³⁶

Slavery in Missouri, 1850³⁷



This resulting population increase meant that legislators in the territory could now apply for statehood, and they foresaw Missouri entering the Union as a slave state. However, Missouri’s entry into the Union came at a time when slavery was being thrust back onto the

³⁶ Hattie M. Anderson, “Missouri, 1804-1828: Peopling a Frontier State,” *MHR* 31, no. 2 (January 1937):150-152; R. Douglas Hurt, *Agriculture and Slavery in Missouri’s Little Dixie* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 80-81, 218-20; Astor, *American Confluence*, 175.

³⁷ Data compiled from *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850*, 654-55; Gordon DenBoer, *Missouri Historical Counties*. Data Set. Laura Rico-Beck, digital comp. Atlas of Historical County Boundaries, ed. by John H. Long. Chicago: The Newberry Library, 2010. Available online from <http://www.newberry.org/ahcbp>.

national stage. Proposals by southern politicians to strengthen the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 resonated along both the Mason and Dixon line and the Ohio River while northern politicians worried about the Act's potential encroachment on northern rights. Other issues, including concerns over the brutality of the domestic slave trade and the rise of abolitionist societies also inflamed sectional tensions. As the Missouri Enabling Bill was debated before the House of Representatives, a New York congressman named James Tallmadge introduced two amendments on February 13, 1819, which would prohibit the further introduction of slaves into Missouri, and stipulate that all slaves born in the *state* of Missouri be emancipated once they had reached their twenty-fifth birthday.³⁸ While the Tallmadge amendments were ostensibly about admitting Missouri into the Union, the controversy itself provided a vehicle for a larger national debate over the future of slavery in the United States. For northerners, the question remained whether slavery or freedom would define this new region west of the Mississippi. Seeing how Article 6 of the Northwest Ordinance had shut out slavery in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, northerners saw that in order to prevent slavery from taking root in the trans-Mississippian west, the federal government would have to take the lead in restricting slavery. For southerners, allowing the federal government to define the terms of a state's admission into the union opened up a new avenue to hem in slavery. For slaveholding Missourians, the Tallmadge amendments represented yet another threat to their concept of democracy. Although Tallmadge's amendments passed the House with narrow majorities, it met defeat in the Senate.³⁹

³⁸ Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 75-86, 177-212; *Annals of Congress*, 15th Cong., 2nd sess., 1166, 1170 (1817-19).

³⁹ The literature on the causes and the consequences of the Missouri Compromise are voluminous. Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) firmly places slavery at the core of the Missouri Crisis and the positions taken and arguments developed during the crisis laid much of the foundation for arguments over the territorial restriction of slavery which consumed the United States for the next three decades. An older, but still useful work is Glover Moore, *The Missouri Controversy, 1819-1821* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953). Focusing on the political machinations behind the Compromise, Moore's focus remains affixed on partisan politics, while deemphasizing the importance of slavery.

Kentucky's Henry Clay, who as Speaker of the House had introduced the Missouri statehood bill, observed that the controversy "monopolizes all our conversation, all our thoughts and...all our time. Nobody seems to think or care about anything else." Even more worrisome for Clay was that it seemed that in both congressional circles as well as in public speeches, "the topic of disunion is frequently discussed and with as little emotion as an ordinary piece of legislation."⁴⁰ The crisis soon began to consume the nation. Political speeches grew more heated and the atmosphere within Congress more tense as other legislative business was held hostage by the Missouri question. Northern restrictionists, who slowly realized that southern politicians would never accept any restrictions on slavery in Missouri, began to look for a way out. Under the direction of Clay, a select group of northern congressmen reached a compromise. By March 1820, Congress passed the Missouri Enabling Bill, which barred slavery from remainder of Louisiana Purchase north of the latitude 36°30'. In St. Louis, news of the bill's passage was greeted with celebration. City streets were filled with illuminated transparencies, including one which "[represented] a slave in great spirits, rejoicing at the permission granted by Congress to bring slaves into so fine a country as Missouri."⁴¹

Under the terms of the Enabling Bill, Missourians were required hold a state constitutional convention. Soon, a hastily assembled campaign for convention delegates was underway in the fifteen counties of the territory. Unlike the national struggle, which had been

Joshua Michael Zeitz's, "The Missouri Compromise Reconsidered: Antislavery Rhetoric and the Emergence of the Free Labor Synthesis," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 447-85, contends that the Compromise itself represents a transition point between two distinct stages of antislavery. Zeitz argues that the Compromise provided a platform for a new antislavery impulse which emphasized free labor and positioned slavery as threat to the political economy of the United States, rather than the "moral" strain of antislavery which dominated the revolutionary era.

⁴⁰ Henry Clay to John J. Crittenden, January 29, 1820, quoted in Moore, *The Missouri Controversy*, 90; Clay quoted in William J. Cooper, *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 141.

⁴¹ Forbes, *Missouri Compromise*, 69-120; Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion*, 166-68; Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 177-212; *Missouri Gazette*, April 5, 1820.

evenly matched between northern restrictionists and southern expansionists, the proslavery forces in Missouri held the upper hand. “The slave question was discussed with a great deal of asperity,” observed missionary Timothy Flint, stating that “no person from the northern states, unless his sentiments were unequivocally expressed, had any hope of being elected to the convention.”⁴² A few candidates argued for future restrictions on bringing in enslaved labor into Missouri. Although they varied on the method and length of time for the restrictions, all respected existing property rights and opposed emancipating enslaved blacks already in the territory. Despite their efforts, Missouri voters overwhelmingly elected proslavery delegates to the constitutional convention. At the convention, delegates drew up a proslavery constitution which, similar to Kentucky’s 1799 constitution, forbade the legislature to “pass laws...for the emancipation of slaves without the consent of their owners, or without paying them.” Furthermore, the constitution prevented “free negroes and mulattoes from coming in, and settling in, this state, under any pretext whatsoever.” This provocative action almost scuttled the compromise, as some northern congressmen refused to consent to Missouri’s admission because the ban on free blacks violated the “privileges and immunities” clause of the Constitution. Once again, Henry Clay stepped to the fore, burnishing his growing reputation as a compromiser by striking a largely toothless agreement that Missouri would never pass any laws which would violate the privileges and immunities clause. Using a combination of parliamentary maneuvering, pressure from President James Monroe, obfuscatory legislative language, and counting on the desire by most congressmen to simply resolve the Missouri situation, Clay managed sway enough House votes to remove the restriction on Missouri’s admission to the

⁴² Timothy Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years, Passes in Occasional Residences and Journeyings in the Valley of the Mississippi* (Boston:1826), 214.

Union. On February 26, 1821, the state of Missouri was welcomed into the Union as its newest member.⁴³

With the admission of Missouri, the United States had passed its first sectional crisis. As Robert Pierce Forbes has noted, the Missouri debates “ripped the façade of national consensus from American public life, [exposing] the hold that slavery had acquired over the process of national decision making.” For the next thirty years, the sectional fissures revealed through these debates would reappear when questions of national expansion loomed. But the debate over Missouri and its compromise also hardened the notion of a nation perpetually split along sectional lines between free and slave states. The resolution of the Missouri question, wrote Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes in his famous “fire bell” letter, had created “a geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated; and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper.” For abolitionists in the North, and proslavery advocates in the South, the Mason Dixon line, the Ohio River, the Mississippi, and Missouri’s border would be seen as a hard and fast border, to be contended and contested. Viewed as the Border South, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri would increasingly be seen through a sectional lens as either slavery’s northernmost border or freedom’s southernmost reach.⁴⁴

The Border South was a complicated and contradictory region in which differing views of slavery, on free labor, and on democracy were to be found. Maryland began as a tobacco

⁴³ *Missouri Constitution of 1820*, Article 3, Section 26, Missouri State Archives (hereafter cited as MSA); Floyd C. Shoemaker, *Missouri’s Struggle for Statehood, 1804-1821* (Jefferson City, MO.: 1916), 114-134; Donnie D. Bellamy, “Free Blacks in Antebellum Missouri, 1820-1860,” *MHR* 67, no. 2 (January 1973): 198-226; Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise*, 108-18.

⁴⁴ Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise*, 5; Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, 211-2; Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820, Thomas Jefferson Papers, LOC.

colony dependent on slave labor and developed into a hierarchical society where a rural, agrarian planter elite dominated much of the state's economic and political life. But even as slavery persisted in Maryland, a free black community emerged whose free labor was entwined with slave labour and, as Barbara Jeanne Fields has observed, "lodged a conspicuous anomaly in the heart of the slave order." The idea of Kentucky as "a good poor man's country" quickly gave way to the interests of land speculators and emigrants eager to replicate Tidewater society, leading to yeoman farmers emigrating to lands further north in the northwest. Developing a diversified agricultural economy, Bluegrass elites like Henry Clay developed an economic philosophy which encouraged internal improvements, tariffs, and banking reform. While attempts at solving the slavery question dominated Kentucky's early years, political leaders soon accepted the institution as an integral part of their state's political economy and incorporated constitutional protections for slavery. Missouri, on the other hand, had no such qualms about slavery. From the beginning, Missouri slaveholders fused proslavery ideology with democratic philosophy to create a slave society far different from that Kentucky or Maryland.⁴⁵

Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri all faced a situation with which no other slave state had to contend. Along slavery's northernmost border—the Mason and Dixon Line, the Ohio River, the Mississippi, and the political boundaries of Missouri—all three states were keenly aware that they existed on slavery's borderland. Because of this, slavery was not the hegemonic institution that it was further south. Each state depended on free and enslaved labor. Each state was well aware that further north or east of them existed a different political economy which challenged their own on a daily basis. Each state realized that their own cultural geography left room to maneuver for individuals to challenge slavery. As the issue of slavery began to dominate

⁴⁵ Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*, xi; Aron, *How the West was Lost*, 3.

American political life, this area of maneuverability allowed for a particular brand of Border South antislavery to emerge, one which would form the foundation of the Republican Party in the Border South.

Chapter Two

“To Get at the Ear of the People”: The Challenge of Antislavery Politics in the Border South

The foundation of the Republican Party in the Border South was driven by men who practiced a specific form of political antislavery, that of liberal antislavery. Unlike the Lower or Middle South, the development of the Border South had allowed for political antislavery sentiment to survive well into statehood. In contrast to abolitionism, which condemned the existence of slavery and sought its immediate and unconditional end, political antislavery merely questioned the influence of slavery in American society and sought a political solution through gradual means. Political antislavery remains an elastic concept for historians, encompassing a wide variety of individuals. To use it too broadly risks ignoring the shadings and subtleties in ideologies and actions. Therefore, it is essential to categorize the different strands of antislavery in the Border South, examining the ideas and political actors behind each strand.

Four broad strands of political antislavery thought existed in the Border South during the prewar era: conservative, moderate, liberal, and radical. Conservative political antislavery men were heirs to a Jeffersonian conception of antislavery. Like Jefferson, many believed slavery to be a blight on the republic, and hoped that slavery would gradually drift away. As William W. Freehling has argued, they had “a desire to terminate slavery, but only when the conditions were favorable.”¹ The primary element of conservative political antislavery was that any manumission of enslaved blacks be done individually and voluntarily. Most importantly, antislavery agitation be avoided. No one exemplified conservative antislavery politics better than Kentucky’s Henry Clay. As a Border South resident, Clay was aware of the danger posed to his home state by

¹ Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, 1: 122-23.

sectional tensions over slavery, and feared agitation over the question of slavery above all else. “A premature agitation of the question in [Kentucky] might throw us back instead of carrying us forward,” wrote Clay in 1831. Individual owners, not any government, would decide if, how, and when manumission should take place. “Congress has no power...to establish any system of emancipation, gradual or immediate, on behalf of the present or future generations,” Clay told John Switzer in 1831. Clay’s commitment to colonization and emancipation reflected this conservative nature. For Clay, colonization’s main purpose was to remove only free blacks from the Border South, while not affecting the enslaved labor that harvested Clay’s hemp and worked his farm. Although Clay presented himself as gradual emancipationist, his gradualism was so incremental as to be almost non-existent. In a letter to Richard Pindell, Clay advocated for “slow...cautious and gradual” emancipation in Kentucky. At some undetermined date in the future, those born after that date would be free once they reached the age of twenty-five; after that, they would be sent to a colony. Those already in bondage would remain so for the rest of their lives. Conservative political antislavery in the Border South, then, remained incremental in nature. For Clay and other conservative antislavery men in the Border South, slavery would have to be removed eventually, somehow, in some fashion—but the details remained sketchy at best.²

Border South antislavery moderates were perhaps the most difficult group to pin down. Like conservatives, they remained uncomfortable with slavery’s existence in American society, and hoped for a future in which slavery would disappear. Like Henry Clay, they sought gradual,

² Henry Clay to Thomas Speed, August 23, 1831, in *Papers of Henry Clay, Volume 8: Candidate, Compromiser, Whig, March 5, 1829-December 31, 1836*, eds. Robert Seager II and Melba Porter Hay (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky), 390-91; Henry Clay to John Switzer, May 19, 1831, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, New York; Robert Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 179-80, 717-18; Andrew Shankman, “Neither Infinite Wretchedness nor Positive Good: Mathew Carey and Henry Clay on Political Economy and Slavery during the Long 1820s,” in *Contesting Slavery: The Politics of Bondage and Freedom in the New American Nation*, eds. John Craig Hammond and Matthew Mason (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 247-66; Henry Clay to Richard Pindell, February 17, 1849, in *The Liberator*, March 16, 1849.

compensated emancipation, usually coupled with colonization. But unlike Clay, who conjured up a vaguely articulated future where enslaved and free blacks had “somehow” disappeared from the Border South, some antislavery moderates supported specific legislative plans and political action. Moderate political antislavery found its strongest support in Kentucky. For example, Robert C. Breckinridge’s moderate antislavery revolved around legislative means to rid Kentucky of her enslaved population. He argued slavery could be ended in Kentucky if the legislature made that enslaved blacks were a luxury rather than a necessity and should be taxed accordingly by the state. Placing a luxury tax on enslaved blacks would force slaveholders in Kentucky to either emancipate or move. As a result, slavery in Kentucky would be extinguished “in a few generations.” But if moderates like Breckinridge were the first to the battlements when emancipation conventions were called, they were also first to accept the results and retreat from emancipationist causes. After the failure of the emancipation movement in Kentucky, most simply gave up or left Kentucky. Few dared to join the antislavery third parties which had emerged by the middle of the nineteenth century.³

Those who preached radical antislavery compromised the smallest strand of political antislavery in the Border South. These men, often coming from a religious background, believed that slavery was morally and politically repugnant to America life. As such, they were for the immediate, uncompensated emancipation of enslaved blacks. Many even supported black civil rights and social equality. Unlike conservatives and moderates, who argued that question of emancipation must remain a state matter, many radicals believed that the federal government had a responsibility to intervene with slavery everywhere within the Union. While some radicals

³ Robert J. Breckinridge, *Hints on Slavery, Founded on the State of the Constitution, Laws, and Politics of Kentucky, Thirteen Years Ago* (Lexington: 1843), 14-15; Jennifer Cole, “For the Sake of the Songs of the Men Made Free”: James Speed and the Emancipationists Dilemma in Nineteenth-century Kentucky,” *OVH* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 28-36.

worked alongside political parties, they often became frustrated at the incremental and conciliatory political positions that political parties were often forced to make. John G. Fee, a minister from Bracken County, Kentucky, would eventually work alongside Cassius Clay in the antislavery cause. However, Fee eventually broke ranks with Clay and the Kentucky Republicans because they were far too willing to operate within the proslavery legal system that governed Kentucky. At best, radical antislavery men in the Border South, like Maryland's Joseph E. Snodgrass and William Gunnison, were subjected to ridicule and social alienation. At worst they were subjected to threats of physical abuse or exile. By 1859, Fee himself was driven out of Kentucky by proslavery forces and would not return until 1864.⁴

It would be liberal antislavery politics that would emerge as the ideological foundation of the Republican Party in this Border South. Broadly defined, mid-nineteenth century American liberalism was favorable towards commerce, viewed political parties a means for citizens to advance their interests, and believed in a democratic vision that was more reflective of society. Liberal antislavery men in Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri would pull together various ideas and concepts, and fuse them in a political ideology that was unique in the Border South. One of the key tenets of liberal antislavery was the belief that slavery impoverished local economies by preventing white immigration, driving down the cost of wages, and preventing much-needed capital from flowing into the state. To repair this, the Border South needed to remove slavery from their states. Faced with traditional political parties who did not reflect the interests of nonslaveholding whites, antislavery liberals argued that separate antislavery political parties were both practical and necessary. But to prevent accusations of radicalism, antislavery liberals

⁴ Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 26-44, 147; Victor B. Howard, *The Evangelical War Against Slavery and Caste: The Life and Times of John G. Fee*. (Selingsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1996), 23-30.

merged their antislavery ideals with the ideology of white supremacy. Emancipation should be encouraged by legislative means and compensated by the state, but once emancipated, free blacks should be sent elsewhere. Between the sale of enslaved property further south and emancipation and colonization schemes, blacks would gradually be removed from the Border South. In doing so, the region would become a free white labor paradise, ready to compete alongside the burgeoning economies of the North.⁵

To understand the establishment of the Republican Party in the Border South, it is essential to understand how the politics of slavery and of free soil shaped its origins. In a world with varying degrees of antislavery, these men sought to chart a new course. Driven by ego, ambition, opportunism, or faith, liberal antislavery men in the Border South attempted to transform their antislavery convictions into the beginnings of an organized political movement. In Missouri and Kentucky, domineering figures like Thomas Hart Benton and Henry Clay and their conservative antislavery views frustrated younger antislavery men like Frank Blair and Cassius Clay, compelling them to take up a more liberal antislavery viewpoint. Both Blair and Clay attempted to balance a message that slavery was destructive to their states' respective future, while distancing themselves from radical abolitionism. Attempting at first to work within the confines of both the Democratic and Whig parties in their states, both men would slowly move away from these parties. In doing so, they would articulate a message that the problem of slavery would have to be resolved by political means in order to make each state a paradise for free white labor. In Maryland, Joseph E. Snodgrass's attempt to field a Free-Soil party reflected the challenge of building an antislavery party in that Border South state. Although dedicated

⁵ This definition of mid-nineteenth century American liberalism is most clearly delineated by David F. Ericson, *The Shaping of American Liberalism: The Debates Over Ratification, Nullification, and Slavery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 19-24.

individuals committed to the cause of antislavery, Snodgrass and his allies failed to articulate a convincing message and were overwhelmed by the logistical necessities required to create a successful political party. Despite these early failures, liberal antislavery in the Border South would increasingly revolve around an ideology that emphasized the harmful effects of slavery on the political economy of the state and on free white labor.

The 1830s saw a renewal of political action in dealing with the issue of importing slaves into Kentucky. Although the state legislature had passed nonimportation laws in 1784 and 1798, a lack of stringent enforcement had led to Kentucky's enslaved population making up nearly a quarter of the state's population. This growth led to demands by both proponents of slavery and supporters of removal for more effective legislation. Moderate antislavery men saw a new nonimportation law as the only method of halting slavery's growth in Kentucky, while some slaveholders saw nonimportation as a means to increase the value of their own enslaved workers. "That slavery has been injurious to Kentucky, it is undoubted," wrote *Niles' Weekly Register* in February of 1830, and advocated for an end to importation enslaved blacks from other states. After several years of petitions, resolutions, and debates, advocates of nonimportation finally secured passage of a bill in February 1833. This bill provided that anyone who imported slaves, or knowingly bought, sold, or hired imported slaves, would be fined \$600 per slave involved. The law allowed for emigrants to Kentucky to bring enslaved blacks for their own use, providing that they had no intention of selling them. However, the new law upset farmers in the booming southwest of the state, who desired enslaved labor but resented paying the inflated prices imposed by Bluegrass planters when cheaper enslaved labor could be bought from Tennessee farmers eager to unload excess enslaved blacks. Rather than resolving the issue of slavery's

future in Kentucky, nonimportation restrictions would become a persistent political issue in Kentucky politics for the next two decades.⁶

Yet the passage of the Law of 1833 also provided an opportunity for some politicians to hone a new liberal antislavery message in Kentucky. None did so more than Cassius Marcellus Clay. During the 1850s, Clay would become one of the most prominent Border South Republicans, second only to Frank Blair. Examining his early political career reveals that Clay's liberal antislavery developed not in a straightforward fashion, but instead took a more circuitous route. Attempting to formulate an antislavery message that would help him build a political movement, Clay would push the edges of what was considered appropriate political discourse in Kentucky. In doing so, Clay would subtly undermine much of his own political career, and reveal the limitations of liberal antislavery in Kentucky. Born in Madison County in 1810, Clay was the son of General Green Clay, a Virginia emigrant who had become one of Kentucky's wealthiest slaveholders. Although born into a slave society and regarding slavery as "the fixed law of Nature," Clay's opinions on slavery were transformed while attending Yale College in Connecticut. In his autobiography, Clay recounted one occasion when he heard noted abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison speak about slavery. Garrison's passionate and logical arguments against slavery were "a new revelation" to Clay. Aroused from his apathy, Clay vowed that "when I had the strength, if ever, I would give slavery a death struggle." Despite his "revelation," Clay, like his cousin Henry, remained grounded in conservative antislavery beliefs when he returned to Kentucky. Elected to the state legislature in 1835, Clay felt that it was not the

⁶ By 1830, the enslaved population of Kentucky was 165,213 out of a total population of 687,917. *Abstract of the Returns of the Fifth Census, Showing the Number of Free People, the Number of Slaves, the Federal or Representative Number, and the Aggregate of Each County of Each State of the United States* (Washington: 1832), 27; *Niles Weekly Register*, February 6, 1830; *Session Laws 1832-1833*, 258; Harrison, *The Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 46-47; Harold D. Tallant, *Evil Necessity: Slavery and Political Culture in Antebellum Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 95-97; An older, but still useful examination of the Law of 1833 can be found in Martin, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in Kentucky*, 88-97.

appropriate time to debate the future of slavery. Stating that although he had once favored gradual emancipation, the political tensions exacerbated by the slavery issue left no other recourse except that “slavery must continue to exist until, like some ineradicable disease, it disappears with the body that gave it being.” Although defeated in 1836, he was elected once again to the legislature the following year, fully embracing his cousin’s American System of tariffs, banking, and internal improvements.⁷

It was Clay’s campaign for office in 1840 that cemented his reputation as a defender of the Law of 1833, and in which the former nonagitator became a determined advocate for liberal antislavery. Clay had moved from rural Madison County to Lexington, in Fayette County, an area that offered greater political prestige for an ambitious politician. Rich in tobacco, hemp, racehorses, and bourbon, Fayette County was also the beating heart of Kentucky slavery, with over ten thousand enslaved blacks laboring at the various plantations in the area. Under the electoral system of that time, three candidates were elected to represent the county in the legislature. All of the candidates were Whigs. The two incumbents were almost certainly guaranteed to be re-elected, which meant the real contest would be for the third seat. Robert Wickliffe Jr., the son of “Old Duke” Robert Wickliffe, one of Kentucky’s largest slaveholders and a key proslavery figure in state politics, was in the running for the third seat. As a newcomer to the county, Clay needed a political message with which to distinguish himself from the younger Wickliffe. He found it in the Law of 1833. The Old Duke, stumping for his son, argued that the law hurt slavery in Kentucky and was shutting out potential emigrants from slaveholding

⁷ David L. Smiley, *Lion of White Hall: The Life of Cassius M. Clay* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), 7-22; Cassius M. Clay, *The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay: Memoirs, Writings, and Speeches, Showing his Conduct in the Overthrow of American Slavery, the Salvation of the Union, and the Restoration of the Autonomy of the States* (Cincinnati: 1886), 55-57; Clay, *The Writing of Cassius Marcellus Clay, Including Speeches and Addresses*, ed. Horace Greeley (New York: 1848), 46, 53-55.

states. The law, in Wickliffe's opinion, was an "implement in the hands of abolitionists, to carry out their views in regard to our slave property." For his part, Clay embraced the law as a means to keep more slaves out of Fayette County. More importantly, this campaign allowed Clay to introduce his economic argument against slavery which he would return to again and again throughout his career as Kentucky's most prominent antislavery politician. "Negro slavery degrades the mechanic, ruins the manufacturer, lays waste and depopulates the country," he argued. For Clay, the evils of slavery rested not in its moral or religious context, but rather in its hindrance of economic progress and degradation of free white labor. Knowing that his message would fail to attract the planter class in Fayette County, Clay directed his antislavery appeals towards the skilled artists and mechanics of the county. "Every slave imported drives out a free and independent Kentuckian," said Clay. "The day is come, or coming, when every *white* must work for the wages of the *slave—his victuals and clothes—emigrate, or die!*" If Kentuckians adopted Wickliffe's plan of unimpeded immigration, enslaved blacks would pour into Kentucky. "If we pursue the plan proposed by [Wickliffe]," warned Clay, "[and] repeal this law, and receive all the surplus vicious slave population which may be thrown upon us till the whites are thrown into a minority...the star of our glory will have set forever." Clay's appeal to the economic self-interest of skilled manufacturers of Fayette County worked. He won a narrow victory against the younger Wickliffe, proclaiming it a personal triumph. Clay's victory in 1840 would transform him into one of the most prominent figures in Border South antislavery politics. It would also be the last election that he would ever win.⁸

⁸ Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 40-49; Robert Wickliffe, *Speech of R. Wickliffe on the Negro Law, August 10, 1840* (Lexington: 1840), 11-13, 21; Clay, *Review of the Late Canvass and R. Wickliffe's Speech on the "Negro law", September 25, 1840* (Lexington: 1840), 15-16.

While Clay would continue to argue for import restrictions in the state legislature, he saw greater political potential in attempting to develop a political base of non-slaveholders. Over time he would refine his political arguments that Kentucky's reliance on slavery diminished the state's economic future. In a speech to the legislature in January 1841, Clay painted an apocalyptic picture of a barren, impoverished state under the thrall of slavery. Take a day's ride from the capital, claimed Clay, and see fields "worn to the rock;" houses "untenanted and decaying;" depopulated towns with white Kentuckians "driven out by slavery and the unequal competition of unpaid labor;" listen to the children of those Kentuckians "crying for bread," while "the children of the African" are "clothed, fed, and laughing!" It was no wonder, then, that while "the North is radiant with railroads [and] the channels of her untold commerce," the South "hobbles on at an immeasurable distance behind." Clay's political arguments combined both his belief in the economic damage wrought by slavery as well as his own political self-interest. By appealing to nonslaveholding whites whom he believed had no had no vested interest in slavery, but had been economically affected by it, Clay hoped to build an army of artisans and laborers who would return him to office again and again. These were the people, announced Clay, "against whose every vital interest slavery wages an eternal and implacable war!"⁹

Notwithstanding his exhortations, Clay's army failed to materialize and return him to office during the 1841 election. In what would become a recurring theme in Clay's political life, his political judgement was suspect. Fayette County might have been the political heart of Kentucky, but it was a lousy place to foment a nonslaveholders revolution. Nearly forty-eight percent of the county's population was in bondage, making it one of the most highly enslaved counties in the state. The main crops of Fayette County were tobacco, hemp, wheat, and corn,

⁹ Clay, *Writings*, 71-74, 317-18; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 52-53.

which meant differing seasonal labor demands than the cotton and sugar monocultures of the Lower South. As a result, slaveholders monetized this labor flexibility by hiring out their enslaved property. For non-slaveholding whites, hiring enslaved labor meant another pair of hands to help with domestic work, to help run a small carpentry or blacksmith shop, or for a few days' work helping to bring in the harvest on their small family farm. While non-slaveholders in Fayette County might have previously supported Clay in his fight against importing more slaves into Kentucky, his desire to rid the state of slavery threatened a system in which existing enslaved labor was crucial part of their economic livelihood. As a result, there developed a base of support for slavery amongst white non-slaveholders in Fayette County. Clay's antislavery appeals to their economic self-interest found little traction amongst them.¹⁰

Defeated in Fayette County, Clay spent the next few years supporting like-minded office-seekers in Kentucky and expanding his national profile. He corresponded with prominent antislavery leaders such as Lewis Tappan and Salmon P. Chase. The *Cincinnati Gazette* praised Clay for "denouncing slavery in stronger language than any other man we know." In an 1843 pamphlet published by Horace Greeley's *New York Daily Tribune*, Clay brought his economic arguments against slavery to a northern audience. Distancing himself from what he saw as the moralistic arguments of northern abolitionists, Clay repudiated the notion of immediate abolition and proposed voluntary emancipation as "the most probable, the most desirable, and the most

¹⁰ *Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States, as Obtained at the Department of State, from the Returns of the Sixth Census* (Washington: 1841), 72-74; Aaron Astor, "The Crouching Lion's Fate: Slave Politics and Conservative Unionism in Kentucky," *RKHS* 110, NO. 3/4 (Summer/Autumn 2012): 297-99; Clay's brother Brutus who hired out dozens of his enslaved blacks every year, is the subject of fascinating study of enslaved labor hiring in neighboring Bourbon County in Keith C. Barton, "'Good Cooks and Washers': Slave Hiring, Domestic Labor, and the Market in Bourbon County, Kentucky," *JAH* 84, No. 2 (September 1997): 436-460.

practicable” solution. Declaring that there was no higher law than the Constitution, he insisted that any decisions on the future of slavery must flow from the Constitution itself.¹¹

Yet despite growing awareness of his antislavery doctrines, Clay was becoming more infamous for his violent reaction to threats against his person. One summer afternoon in 1843, while stumping for the local Whig candidate for Kentucky’s Eight Congressional District, Clay was accosted by one Samuel M. Brown. Offended by one of Clay’s remarks, Brown called Clay and liar and rushed at him. When someone in the crowd handed Brown a pistol, Clay drew his bowie knife and charged at him. Brown fired at point blank range, with the bullet lodging in the silver knife case Clay wore under his coat. Undeterred, Clay stabbed Brown in the face, cutting out his right eye, lopping off his left ear, hacking off a piece of his skull to the brain, and slicing his nose in two. He then picked up Brown, carried his unconscious body to the edge of a bluff, and rolled it into a creek. Despite his wounds, Brown lived. The trial which followed attracted national attention, as Clay was defended by his cousin Henry. Henry Clay’s stirring legal argument that Cassius had simply acted in self-defence, combined with the gory details of the attack provided Cassius with his first taste of national political fame. During his life, Clay had never shied away from a fight. At six feet, broad-shouldered and barrel-chested, he was a formidable physical opponent. His skill with the bowie knife only added to his reputation. Unlike antislavery leaders who condemned slavery in the comfortable environ of the pulpit or in lecture halls, Clay would come to be celebrated by some northern antislavery men for his particular masculine and western form of antislavery that sought to confront slaveholders upon their own ground, and defend themselves violently if necessary.¹²

¹¹ Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 58-59; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, August 7, 1843; Clay, *Slavery: The Evil—The Remedy* (New York: 1843), 3; *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, June 8, 1843.

¹² Clay, *Memoirs*, 82-85; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 61-63.

By 1845, Clay set out to chart a new course for antislavery in Kentucky. Eager to demonstrate his commitment to the antislavery cause and avoid accusations of hypocrisy, Clay had begun to emancipate some his own enslaved blacks the previous year.¹³ Drawing upon his belief that all plans for emancipation must flow from a constitutional basis, Clay called for a state constitutional convention and for emancipation candidates to be elected to it. Professing his moderate and balanced approach to antislavery, Clay maintained that “regard must be had to the rights of owners, the habits of the old, and the general good feeling of the people.” While remaining an “avowed and uncompromising enemy of slavery,” Clay’s plan would give time for those slaveholders most opposed to emancipation the opportunity to emigrate to more southern climes.¹⁴ In order to promote this constitutional emancipation, Clay established an antislavery newspaper in Kentucky which would become the official voice of his political movement. On June 3, 1845, *The True American* appeared in print. In slavery’s borderland, publishing an antislavery newspaper could be a risky proposition. Determined to avoid the experiences of both Elijah Lovejoy and James G. Birney whose antislavery newspapers had been destroyed by mobs, Clay lined the *True American*’s office with sheet iron, purchased two brass four-pounders and loaded them with shot and nails, and stocked the office with lances and guns. If his office were to be invaded by a mob, Clay had prepared an escape route from the building. The final touch was a keg of gunpowder and a match, designed to destroy the building. With articles and editorials brimming with vituperative attacks upon the planter class, coupled with a fervent appeal to the

¹³ As Jacob F. Lee points out, Clay’s decision to emancipate his enslaved blacks reflected the complicated nature of antislavery and emancipation in the Border South. From 1841 to 1844, tax records in Fayette County reveal that Clay owned between 30 and 32 enslaved blacks. While Clay manumitted all enslaved which he personally owned (around 12), provisions in his father’s will prevented him from manumitting the remainder. Clay was also deeply in debt, and although selling his enslaved property would have greatly helped his financial situation, he refused to do so, even accumulating more debt as he bought and freed 13 enslaved blacks who were related to those he had previously emancipated. See Lee, “Between Two Fires: Cassius M. Clay, Slavery, and Antislavery in the Kentucky Borderlands,” *OVH* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 57-58.

¹⁴ Clay, *Writings*, 181-82.

economic self-interest of Kentucky's laboring class, *The True American* slowly began to make its influence felt in Kentucky. Within a few months of publication, the paper had a subscriber list of nearly seven hundred, with Clay somewhat optimistically suggesting that the paper was likely read by fourteen thousand readers.¹⁵

Yet slaveholders had their limits on what they would tolerate. On August 12, 1845, the *True American* printed an article from a correspondent who argued for radical changes. Contending that slavery was unprofitable and would eventually disappear, the writer suggested that state legislatures should pass laws for the gradual emancipation of their enslaved population, and provide for its education after being freed. Even more controversially, the writer suggested that the state and federal governments should give freemen full political rights to hold office, to vote, to give legal testimony and sit on juries. "Make no distinction between them and ourselves," implored the anonymous author. "Leave the social part of their rights, to the conventions of society...all the law can do is to regard their political rights."¹⁶ With this article calling for full civil rights for blacks, Clay unwisely stoked the fire further. Carried away with his own rhetoric, Clay warned aristocratic slaveholders that "there are strong arms and fiery hearts and iron pikes in the streets, and panes of glass only between them and the silver plate on

¹⁵ Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 80-89; Clay, *Memoirs*, 105-6; Gene Murray, "The Lion's Roar: Cassius Clay's *The True American*," in *The Civil War and the Press*, ed. David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing, and Debra Reddin Van Tuyl (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 107-21.

¹⁶ *True American*, August 12, 1845. Clay described the correspondent was referred to simply as a "large slaveholder" and one of the "very first intellects of the nation." Smiley, in *Lion of White Hall*, suggests that the writer was Nathaniel Ware, a Whig slaveholder and an economist from Mississippi who published several treatises on political economy during the 1840s. He argued for that enslaved blacks should be removed from inefficient Border South agriculture, and put to work in factories in order to improve industrial productivity. However, he still saw that slavery itself was an economic disadvantage, but reconciled that it would exist in the United States for several years to come. His last published work, *An Exposition of the Weakness and Inefficiency of the Government of the United States of America* (1845), written in the wake of Henry Clay's defeat, was a pessimistic view of the future of the nation. He more openly criticized slavery as being detrimental to the nation, and foresaw that it would potentially cause a violent war between free and slave states. His letter in the *True American* seems to suggest that Ware was still casting about for new ideas in how to prevent this cataclysm. See William Diamond, "Nathaniel A. Ware, National Economist," *JSH* 5, no. 4 (November 1939): 501-26.

the board, and the smooth-skinned woman on the ottoman.” Although Clay rejected the notion that his words were insurrectionary, slaveholders claimed that he was essentially appealing to enslaved blacks to rise up in revolutionary fervor.¹⁷

Clay’s editorial propelled community leaders to action. Viewing these editorials as insurrectionary and intolerable, several prominent proslavery leaders in the city of Lexington gathered to publicly condemn Clay’s heretical opinions and ask him to discontinue publishing his newspaper. This infuriated Clay, who, although ill with typhoid fever, spent the next week publishing a torrent of pamphlets and special issues of the newspapers repudiating the charges. On August 15, Clay wrote that his revolutionary rhetoric was designed to appeal to non-slaveholders and called upon them to make his fight their own. “If you stand with me like men,” wrote Clay, “our country shall yet be free.” However, Clay soon became concerned that he might have gone too far. In a pamphlet addressed to the citizens of Lexington, Clay denied any revolutionary sentiment, repeating that he favored gradual and legal emancipation done through a constitutional process, a process which would bring slavery “to almost utter extinction in our state within the next thirty years.” For the emancipated free blacks, Clay encouraged a “voluntary migration to countries and climates as nature seems [to] have designed for them.” In the span of less than a week, Clay had gone from a radical firebrand of freedom calling for a social revolution to an antislavery moderate who wanted to proceed cautiously and conservatively. By Monday, August 18, a group of sixty proslavery men formed an extralegal committee and decreed that *The True American* be shut down, with its type and presses shipped

¹⁷ *True American*, August 12, 1845; Cassius Clay to Lyman Clary, September 18, 1845, in the *Liberator*, October 24, 1845; Stanley Harrold, “Violence and Nonviolence in Kentucky Abolitionism,” *JSH* 57, no. 1 (February 1991): 22-26.

to Cincinnati. While the mayor of Lexington publicly declared that this committee had no legal grounds to do this, city authorities could offer no resistance.¹⁸

Although publicly declaring he would not be censured, the closure of *The True American* was a clear defeat for Clay. Throughout Kentucky, slaveholders held public meetings condemning him as an irresponsible agitator who threatened the social order of the state. “To put such a lever as the Press into the hands of such a man as C.M. Clay,” wrote one Lexington newspaper, “is almost like putting a torch in the hands of an incendiary.” Re-establishing his newspaper in Cincinnati, Clay needed to rebuild his subscription list. Again aiming his editorial content towards the non-slaveholding class in Kentucky, Clay added a new economic element to his antislavery arguments. Under Clay’s plan, most enslaved blacks would be sold out of state. Their sale would provide capital for investment in manufacturing and would entice white laborers and “men of capital” into the state. Yet all of this must happen through the power of the ballot. This time directing his appeal towards the nonslaveholding inhabitants of mountainous regions in the eastern portion of the state, he called on them to seek office and cast out the slaveholding interests who dominated state governments. “The *true issue* begins to be understood, that we, the *non-slaveholders* of this state, are destined to overthrow slavery,” wrote Clay. “*We have the power*, when we understand each other, and *we will use it*.” Yet Clay’s efforts were stymied by new legislation passed by the Kentucky legislature, which fined any person not less than five hundred dollars for “disseminating written or printed documents” for the purposes of the “attempting to excite to insurrection, rebellion, or insubordination any slave.” The law hurt subscriptions in Kentucky, and Clay, who had increasingly grown weary of the

¹⁸ *True American*, August 12, 15, 1845; Clay, *Memoirs*, 108-9; Clay, *Writings*, 289-292, 307; Clay, *History and Record of the Proceedings of the People of Lexington and Its Vicinity in the Suppression of The True American* (Lexington: 1845), 1-35.

work required to put out the paper, left Kentucky in June 1846 to seek glory—and perhaps to rehabilitate his damaged political reputation—in the war with Mexico. Though the paper struggled on, a lack of subscribers and advertisements fatally crippled *The True American*, which ceased publication that October.¹⁹

In Missouri, Frank Blair would experiment with liberal political antislavery measures against the backdrop of Missouri Democratic politics. Blair had arrived in St. Louis in the early 1840s to begin a career as a lawyer. He was energetic, ambitious, and just a little conceited, and eager to make his political mark on the West. Immediately diving into state politics, Blair fell into the political orbit of Thomas Hart Benton, a close family friend. Much like Henry Clay, Benton was typical of Border South conservative antislavery. Born in North Carolina and educated in Tennessee, Benton had arrived in St. Louis in 1815, searching for a new beginning on the western edge of America. Benton's personality was a jumble of contradictions. While writing articulate editorials and history books about the United States and passionately stumping for Andrew Jackson, Benton simultaneously pursued violent and bloody vendettas against those who insulted his honor, including once killing a man who called him a puppy. Benton's political reputation in the territory was such that when Missouri entered the Union in 1821, Benton immediately entered the United States Senate. Benton's political ideology revolved around three basic tenets: securing the West as a white man's dominion, promoting hard money over paper money, and avoiding political agitation over slavery. Although he held proslavery views early on in his political career, the advent of territorial questions in the West by the 1840s had caused Benton's stance on slavery to change. Seeing sectional tensions as potentially fatal to the Union, Benton began to articulate his own conservative antislavery stance. "I am Southern by my birth;

¹⁹ *Observer and Reporter* (Lexington, Ky.), October 8, 1845; *True American*, March 4, 13, 1846; Murray, "The Lion's Roar," 118-19.

Southern in my affections, interest and connections,” roared Benton during the tumultuous Senate debates over the Texas annexation treaty. Declaring that he was “a slaveholder, and shall take the fate of other slaveholders in every aggression upon that species of property,” Benton affirmed that he would not “engage in schemes for [slavery] extension into regions where it was never known.” Over the course of his career, Benton’s particular brand of conservative antislavery soon revolved around the interconnecting principles of maintaining the Union, resisting slavery’s extension, and respecting individual property rights. It was an ideology that attracted young, ambitious men such as Frank Blair.²⁰

Blair’s entrance into the Missouri political arena came at a time when both Benton’s influence and ideology of conservative antislavery were being tested. Essentially a one-party state, fissures had been deepening in the Missouri Democratic Party over Benton’s leadership. Younger party members increasingly challenged “Old Bullion,” believing that he had dominated the state’s politics for too long and had begun to see Missouri as his own personal fiefdom. Furthermore, Benton’s opposition to the annexation of Texas on the grounds that it would lead to a war with Mexico placed him at odds with increasingly pro-annexationist sentiment amongst Missourians. By 1848, the volatile issue of the extension of slavery into the newly acquired Mexican territories began to dominate Benton’s re-election campaign.²¹ When Frank Blair arrived in the state capital of Jefferson City to secure the candidacy of a pro-Benton man for governor, he found proslavery Democrats all eager to challenge Benton’s political control of the state and nominate a proslavery man instead. After twenty rounds of balloting and hours of arm-

²⁰ William Nisbet Chambers, *Old Bullion Benton: Senator from the New West* (Boston: Brown, Little and Company, 1956), 72-75; Thomas Hart Benton, *Three Speeches...on the Annexation of Texas* (New York: 1844), 28.

²¹ Chambers, *Old Bullion*, Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 10-16; Montgomery Blair to Francis Preston Blair, April 22, 1842, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL.

twisting, Blair and other pro-Benton delegates managed to defeat the proslavery Democrats and secure a Benton man for governor.²²

Satisfied with shoring up Benton's support among Missouri Democrats, Blair eagerly awaited word from his father Preston and his older brother Montgomery, attending the national Democratic convention in Baltimore, on whom the party would pick as their presidential candidate. There, the Blairs found a party deeply divided over the issues of slavery in the newly acquired territories. Allied with former president Martin Van Buren, the Benton-Blair-Van Buren wing of the party had been united behind New Yorker Silas Wright as a candidate. Wright's support for the Wilmot Proviso, which would have banned slavery in territories acquired from Mexico, had gained him credibility amongst anti-extensionist Democrats. When Wright died suddenly in August 1847, this faction entered the convention without a credible candidate and with only "second-raters" like Lewis Cass, James Buchanan, or Levi Woodbury available. As the convention opened, a simmering dispute between the two wings of the New York Democratic Party soon erupted into full-fledged revolt. When the two competing delegations attempted to secure credentials, Democratic leaders, eager to promote party unity and to secure New York's 36 delegate votes, attempted to mollify the factions by allowing each delegate in both factions half a vote. But when a rule was added that all delegates must support the winning candidate, the New York delegation that supported both the Wilmot Proviso and Van Buren—which had been given the nickname "Barnburners"—angrily withdrew from the convention. The Democrats then adopted a pro-southern, proslavery platform which opposed federal interference in "domestic

²² Clarence Henry McClure, *Opposition in Missouri to Thomas Hart Benton* (Nashville: 1927), 149-50; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 35; Frank Blair to Elizabeth Blair Lee, April 8, 1848, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL.

institutions,” promoted non-interference with the rights of property, and condemned abolitionism as “dangerous [and] alarming.”²³

With the withdrawal of the Barnburners from the convention and Van Buren from the Democratic Party, the national political landscape changed. While Benton grudgingly decided to support Cass, in order to prevent further damage to the party, Preston Blair began encouraging his old friend Van Buren to become a candidate for the emerging Free-Soil movement. Frank Blair, meanwhile, remained faithful to his political mentor Benton, and viewed Cass as the best option for party renewal. Although Cass and the Democrats would probably lose the election, he believed that the party would be “purified by the fires of adversity.” For Frank, a Cass defeat would allow the Barnburners, as well as those who opposed the extension of slavery, to take control of the party in time for the next presidential election and to run Benton as a national candidate.²⁴

However, the Free-Soil movement soon began to grow. After the convention, over ten thousand people attended an open-air rally in New York to listen to John Van Buren, the president’s son, denounce slavery’s expansion and call for a convention to name a Free-Soil ticket. Two weeks later, in Utica, the convention nominated Martin Van Buren as the Free-Soil candidate for president. Six weeks after that over twenty thousand attendees, including Frank Blair, met in Buffalo to create a national Free-Soil Party with Van Buren and Charles Francis Adams on the ticket. In the sweltering heat of early August, political dissenters of every stripe met underneath a great tent near downtown Buffalo. This disparate group included rebellious

²³ Smith, *Blair Family*, 1:230-232; E.A. Maynard to Martin Van Buren, August 30, 1847, Martin Van Buren Papers, LOC; The best summary of the Baltimore Convention can be found in Joseph G. Rayback, *Free Soil: The Election of 1848* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 186-194.

²⁴ Thomas Hart Benton to Martin Van Buren, May 29, 1848; Francis Preston Blair to Martin Van Buren, June 2, 1848, Martin Van Buren Papers, LOC; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, June 7, 1848, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL.

Van Burenite Barnburners, “Conscience” Whigs angered by the selection of the slaveholding Zachary Taylor as their party’s candidate, skeptical Liberty Party men, free blacks, land reformers, and southern antislavery delegates from Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware. The gathering produced a platform that emphasized non-interference with slavery within any slave state, and a return to the “settled policy of the nation not to extend, nationalize, or encourage, but to limit, localize, and discourage slavery.” Furthermore, the party was pledged to enact legislation to prevent “the extension of slavery into territory now free.” The platform concluded by declaring, in no uncertain terms, that the party “inscribe upon our banner, ‘Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labor, and Free Men,’ and under it fight on, and fight ever, until a triumphant victory shall reward our exertions.” Infused with Free-Soil spirit, Frank returned to St. Louis to stump for the cause.²⁵

For a movement borne out of internecine political squabbles in the Northeast and the Northwest, the ideology of the Free-Soil Party should have appealed to Benton. His strong beliefs regarding the development of the West aligned with the ideology of the Free-Soil Party and its goal of preventing antidemocratic and anti-free labor principles from taking root in the West. The Free-Soil Party’s ideology rested on the principle that free labor was superior to enslaved labor because the incentive of wages and social mobility were far more productive than the violent coercion associated with enslaved labor. Furthermore, enslaved labor undermined the dignity of free labor by associating manual labor with servility. Finally, enslaved labor resulted in ignorance and socioeconomic stagnation wherever it existed, harming the enslaved and poor

²⁵ *New York Daily Tribune*, June 7, 1848; Rayback, *Free Soil*, 218-30; Oliver Dyer, *Phonographic Reports of the Proceedings of the National Free Soil Convention* (Buffalo, 1848), 19-20. For a good analysis of the struggle to convince Liberty Party members to support the Free-Soil Party, see Corey M. Brooks *Liberty Power: Antislavery Third Parties and the Transformation of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 145-49.

whites alike.²⁶ Since entering the Senate, Benton had supported land reform policies that would encourage emigration to cheap western lands as a means of providing opportunities for urban workingmen to take a chance at a new life, as well as supporting Western merchants with a new economic base. To Benton, emigration to western lands would reduce competition for jobs in Eastern cities, which would have the positive effect of increasing wages. Finally, this exodus of farmers and workingmen from the East would increase popular democracy in the West, strengthening the republic as a whole. Yet Benton proved unwilling to break with the Democratic Party, choosing instead to support Cass.²⁷

Benton's commitment to the Democratic nominee created political confusion in Missouri when his protégé Frank Blair chose to throw his support behind the creation of a Free-Soil Party within the state. Benton's refusal to support the Free-Soilers stemmed from an element of his conservative political antislavery: to oppose any policy or party that would create sectional divisions within the Union. It was on these grounds that Benton had voted against the Wilmot Proviso and now castigated the Free-Soilers for promoting sectional agitation. "[The Free-Soil Party] wanted to impair confidence between the North and the South, and to narrow down the basis of party organization to a single idea," Benton later wrote in his memoirs. Despite his reservations over the candidacy of Cass, Benton briefly campaigned with the Democratic candidate in Philadelphia and New York City, then returned to Washington. Meanwhile Frank and Montgomery Blair attempted to plant the flag of Free-Soilism in Missouri, developing a partisan newspaper called the *Barnburner*. During Benton's long silence during the summer of

²⁶ As Mark A. Lause has noted, the appeal of "free soil" and "free labor" in antebellum America was in their very elasticity as concepts, and has remained for scholars a complex and troublesome concept. See Lause, *Free Labor: The Civil War and the Making of the American Working Class* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), xii. The above definition of free labor is drawn from Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 11-39. See also Jonathan A. Glickstein, *Concepts of Free Labor in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 11-16.

²⁷ Ken Mueller, *Senator Benton and the People: Master Race Democracy on the Early American Frontiers* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014), 227; Chambers, *Old Bullion*, 115.

1848, *Barnburner* editorials implicitly suggested Benton's support for the Free-Soil Party. When Benton finally publicly announced for Cass in September, public confusion over his position emboldened proslavery Democrats in Missouri to defeat him.²⁸

Frank and Montgomery's efforts to rally support for the Free-Soil cause failed miserably. Missouri Democrats' commitment to their party's candidate was too strong and Cass easily carried the state. The *Barnburner* struggled to attract subscriptions and folded shortly after the election. Lacking Democratic support and an effective public voice, their efforts to get out the vote for Van Buren floundered and the Free-Soil candidate received a pittance of votes in Missouri. Frank acknowledged defeat in mid-September, confessing to his father that Benton's endorsement of Cass had "shut us out of all hope of carrying the state for Van Buren." Free-Soilism had little chance of succeeding in Missouri because its supporters were few, party loyalties were fixed, and there was limited financial support. Most importantly, the larger national issues over slavery's expansion had not captured the public's fervour yet. Frank's attempt to promote Free-Soilism in a slave state also proved politically challenging for Benton. With Frank increasingly seen as Benton's man, his promotion of Free-Soil principles proved problematic for Benton, who wished to avoid sectional agitation at all costs and promote Democratic unity. Despite his best efforts, Benton's break with both proslavery elements in the Senate and the White House, along with his refusal to publicly stump for Cass in Missouri, provided ample evidence to his political rivals that Benton, if not a Free-Soiler in disguise, harbored dangerous antislavery tendencies that put him outside of the mainstream of the

²⁸ Thomas Hart Benton, *Thirty Years' View* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1858), 2:723; Chambers, *Old Bullion*, 336-37; Mueller, *Senator Benton*, 228-229.

Democratic Party. For Claiborne Jackson and other proslavery and anti-Benton Democrats, the time had come to retire “Old Bullion.”²⁹

To kill Benton politically, Jackson and the other proslavery Democrats had to bring Benton’s antislavery and free soil tendencies into the public arena. An ambitious slaveholder from Howard County, Jackson had distanced himself from Benton during the debates over Texas, and had begun to see Benton as a political obstacle to his own ascension as a political heavyweight in Missouri. When the state legislature reconvened in January 1849, Jackson, now a state senator, introduced a set of resolutions developed by William B. Napton, another proslavery Democrat. These Jackson-Napton resolutions declared that Congress had no right to legislate against slavery in the territories; supported the policy of popular sovereignty in the territories; promoted the extension of the Missouri Compromise line into the new territories to prevent sectional disharmony; and most importantly, instructed Missouri’s representatives in Congress to act in accordance with these resolutions. These proslavery resolutions were designed to accomplish the simultaneous goals of publicly defining Missouri’s stance on slavery in the territories, pivoting the state towards the South, and imposing political restrictions on Benton which he could not possibly follow. In response, Benton criticised the resolutions as “fundamentally wrong” and refused to comply with them. He then embarked on a speaking tour to denounce the resolutions, accusing the proslavery wing of being in league with John C. Calhoun and other southern nullifiers. Despite Benton’s fiery pronouncements, he was keenly aware that retaining his Senate seat required that he retain support amongst his Democratic allies

²⁹ Frank Blair to Francis Preston Blair, September 13, 1848, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Chambers, *Old Bullion*, 336-37.

in Missouri. Once Benton returned to the Senate, he was careful to vote and speak against any measures that could have been construed as supportive of antislavery, free soil, or abolition.³⁰

The Jackson-Napton resolutions represented a turning point in Missouri politics. While splits in Missouri Democratic politics were not uncommon, they had often revolved around banking and money issues, or squabbles over internal improvements. With the resolutions, the schism between Missouri Democrats began to reflect sectional alignments. These proslavery resolutions reflected one faction's desire to steer the state into a closer orbit with the South by allying it with proslavery expansionists, pitting it against another faction which saw the future of the state tied to the East and the West and free of slavery. The conflict over the resolutions reflected a larger collision of two distinct versions of democracy in Missouri. One was of a slaveholders' democracy that had its roots in the very beginnings of Missouri statehood, in which the institution of slavery would provide the foundation of individual liberty and societal advancement; and the other, a democracy where the ideals of free soil and free white labor would reign. Slavery had now become the hinge on which political allegiances would swing. Although an electoral failure, the greatest legacy of the Free-Soil movement in Missouri was in helping to clearly delineate ideological boundaries in the state's political life. These ideological battles over slavery would continue to define state politics during the 1850s and form the basis for a Republican movement in Missouri.

The rise of the Free-Soil Party also provided an opportunity for those eager to revive political antislavery in the Maryland. However, faced with two relatively stable political parties and a lack of political organization, the results for Free-Soil in Maryland during the 1848

³⁰ Christopher Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate*, 170-73; Chambers, *Old Bullion*, 344-346; John D. Morton, "'A High Wall and a Deep Ditch:' Thomas Hart Benton and the Compromise of 1850," *MHR* 94, No. 1 (October 1999): 7-11.

election proved disappointing. Since 1832, Maryland politics had been comfortably ensconced within the Second Party System, with Whig party support coalescing in the rural Eastern Shore and the southern and western counties, with the Democratic Party holding onto Baltimore City and County. The slavery question had declined in political importance as Maryland voters had turned their attention to the prevalent issues in Jacksonian Maryland: banking, railroads, economic development, and the state's constitutional structure.³¹ But with the emergence of the Free-Soil Party, some antislavery men in Maryland saw an opportune moment to launch an antislavery party in the state. Joseph E. Snodgrass, a deeply religious physician and devoted abolitionist from Baltimore, had been hired in 1847 by Gamaliel Bailey of the *National Era* to work as reporter, covering antislavery meetings in Maryland and Delaware.³² Throughout the fall of 1847 and the spring of 1848, Snodgrass advocated for the formation of an antislavery party in Maryland in the pages of the *Era*, attracting the attention of a prominent Baltimore Quaker named William Gunnison. Gunnison soon wrote to Bailey that “quite a few persons in [Baltimore]” shared the paper's opinions. Gunnison and Snodgrass soon began planning a political rally in Baltimore to organize a state Free-Soil Party.³³

Writing in the *National Era*, Snodgrass believed that the prospects of a Free-Soil Party in Maryland were “flattering,” noting how significant it was that “many people of all classes and conditions—Whigs and Democrats alike—are openly advocating this movement.” While personally preferring a candidate like Free-Soil Senator John P. Hale or Liberty Party supporter

³¹ Brugger, *Maryland*, 219-29; Mark H. Haller, “The Rise of the Jackson Party in Maryland, 1820-1829,” *JSH* 28, no. 2 (August 1962): 312-7; Smith, “Jacksonian Democracy on the Chesapeake,”: 381-92; A. Clarke Hagensick, “Revolution or Reform in 1836: Maryland's Preface to the Dorr Rebellion,” *MHM* 57, no. 4 (December 1962): 346-365.

³² Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 13-8; Elwood L. Bridner, “Maryland Free Soilers and the Presidential Election of 1848,” *MHM* 97, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 308; *National Era*, September 9, 1847.

³³ *National Era*, May 4, 1848; Bridner, “Maryland Free Soilers,” 307; Roger Bruns and William Fraley, ““Old Gunny”: Abolitionist in a Slave City,” *MHM* 100, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 315; Scharf, *History of Baltimore City*, 122.

Gerrit Smith, Snodgrass conceded that former president Martin Van Buren would be an easier candidate to promote. While some newspapers were dismissive of the meeting, others took it seriously. “The prospect in Maryland of a Free-Soil ticket was by no means dim before,” reported the Baltimore correspondent of the *New York Tribune*. “At every turn voters could be met, who were not only willing but anxious to support such a ticket.” The two largest dailies in Baltimore, the *Sun* and the *Clipper*, had no qualms about the existence of a Free-Soil Party in the state, so long as it abided by certain conditions. Acknowledging the legal right of the party to exist, the *Sun* nonetheless reaffirmed that the party should only “express an opinion in relation to the introduction of slavery into any new territories acquired,” and not “to interfere by word or deed in the institution of slavery as it presently exists.” The *Clipper*, meanwhile, “had no objections to Baltimore being represented in the Free-Soil convention,” but warned delegates attending it “to be careful not to give countenance to any movement which may array North against South.”³⁴

On a warm night on July 24, 1848, over two hundred people crowded into Baltimore’s Union Hall for the Free-Soil meeting, with those unable to find seats standing in the street outside or peering in through open windows and doors. Harris Hicks, a local shoemaker, was introduced as temporary chairman, after which Joseph Breck read the motivations for the meeting. Acknowledging they were citizens of a slaveholding state, Breck promised that the Free-Soilers’ objective was not to interfere with slavery within Maryland, but instead to question the extension of slavery into the territories. Deciding to send eight delegates to the Buffalo Free-Soil convention, Breck introduced the resolutions upon which a Free-Soil Party in Maryland would be built: No interference by Congress in the slave states; no slavery permitted in any

³⁴ *National Era*, July 21, 1848; *New York Tribune*, July 18, 1848; *Baltimore Sun*, July 24, 1848; *Baltimore Clipper*, July 24, 1848.

annexed to the Union; and no slave territories to be organized. After presenting the resolutions, the now-famous architect of the Wilmot Proviso was introduced to the crowd. David Wilmot reassured the audience that the Free-Soil Party had no intentions on interfering with slavery in Maryland and reiterated his desire to limit the spread of slavery in the western territories. He was followed by Ohio's John Moseley Root, who used a rhetorical device fast becoming commonplace in political antislavery. Reinforcing the idea of slavery's deleterious effects on the social and economic life of the slave states, he took his Baltimore audience on an imagined journey down the Ohio River, contrasting the free and prosperous institutions of his home state with the decrepitude and backwardness of Kentucky. After Root concluded his speech to rapturous applause, John Hampden Williams announced that there would be a second meeting on August 20 to organize the party for the upcoming fall elections.³⁵

Despite a successful first meeting, the organization of a Free-Soil Party in Maryland began to fall apart almost immediately. First, Joseph Breck resigned, citing a desire to concentrate on his law practice. He was followed by Williams, who also resigned for unknown reasons. The departure of both men dealt a significant blow to the organizational capacity of the Free-Soilers. Even though Breck's and Williams's political experience had only ever consisted of ward-level Baltimore city politics, they were replaced by a coterie of men who lacked any political experience whatsoever. Furthermore, while the attendance of the Maryland delegation at the Buffalo convention gave the appearance of Free-Soil's appeal in the South, in reality the Maryland delegation contributed little to the debate and discussion on the party platform. Snodgrass, who had thus far tempered his abolitionist rhetoric, soon began to describe the Free-Soil Party as part of a larger abolitionist crusade. Perhaps emboldened by the spirit of the Buffalo

³⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, July 25, 1848; *Baltimore American*, July 25, 1848; *New York Tribune*, July 28, 1848; *National Era*, July 27, 1848.

convention, he wrote an article in the *National Era* questioning the benefits of slavery, attacking the proslavery press in Maryland, and suggesting that efforts to prohibit slavery in the territories were merely a prelude to ending the practice throughout the nation. “The emergency is finding leaders fit for the trial,” wrote Snodgrass, “and through true courage they shall yet be victorious in the noble conflict.” While Snodgrass may have seen himself as the courageous leader, and the Free-Soil Party as merely a vanguard to a broader antislavery movement, the Baltimore correspondent of the *New York Herald* saw matters differently. Snodgrass, the correspondent sarcastically noted, was a “regular dissolutionist...a speedy dissolution follows in every movement with which his name is connected...his advocacy is certain and speedy death to everything he touches, and such will now be the fate of the Free-Soil organization in Maryland.” Remarking that “many of those who were disposed to join the movement are now backing out,” the *Herald’s* correspondent put the blame squarely on Snodgrass’s personality and his radical antislavery.³⁶

Undeterred, Snodgrass continued to organize for the second general Free-Soil meeting in late August. Hoping that the meeting would advocate for the policies of the Buffalo convention, Snodgrass ambitiously intended to nominate presidential electors for Van Buren and prepare a full slate of candidates for every contested office in the upcoming election. When the meeting convened at noon on August 28, it was sparsely attended. Unlike the crowd of two hundred that filled Union Hall to for the first meeting in July, fewer than twenty people appeared, with none of the officers of the party present except for Snodgrass. Realizing that the numbers might have been low because the meeting was scheduled in the middle of the work day, Snodgrass recommended that the meeting be postponed until 4:30 that afternoon. When the meeting

³⁶ Bridner, “Maryland Free Soilers,” 310-1; Dyer, *Proceeding of the National Free Soil Convention*, 5-6; *National Era*, August 10, 1848; *New York Herald*, August 25, 1848.

reconvened, Snodgrass proceeded to nominate a slate of state electors, all of whom were absent from the meeting, none of whom were politicians or officeholders, and none of whom had even been consulted before their names were included on the party ballot. Before adjourning the meeting, Snodgrass read a letter of support from John Van Buren, the ex-president's son, who promised to travel to Baltimore in the near future to stump for the Free-Soil cause. With all business concluded, the small audience filed out of the hall.³⁷

After the debacle of the August meeting, interest in the Free-Soil Party in Maryland petered out. Many of the organizers who had joined the party, perhaps enticed by the excitement of backing an insurgent movement like Free-Soil, quickly abandoned it. Dr. R.T. Allen, a temperance advocate from the Eastern Shore, announced that he would not accept any position on the Free-Soil ticket. Frederick County farmer David Gamble, although being appointed as a president of the party at the August 29 meeting, had little involvement with the party thereafter. William Gunnison, whose affluent Quaker friends had bankrolled the party, withdrew from the Free-Soil movement after the Buffalo convention.³⁸ An attempt by Snodgrass to promote former Democratic Governor Francis Thomas as a supporter of the party also failed. Thomas, who had long been opposed to the extension of slavery while governor of Maryland, had publicly renounced Lewis Cass as a candidate and supported the principles of the Free-Soil Party. "I shall most certainly, if I live, and can attend the polls, vote for that electoral ticket which shall stand pledged to vote for Mr. Van Buren for the Presidency," declared Thomas. Although the endorsement of a supposedly dying man might not have been the best indicator of the political health of the Maryland Free-Soilers, Snodgrass nonetheless promoted the letter in order to give the party political credibility. It was all for naught, as Thomas walked back his endorsement in

³⁷ *Baltimore Sun*, August 29, 1848; *Baltimore Clipper*, August 29, 1848; *Baltimore American*, August 29, 1848.

³⁸ Bridner, "Maryland Free Soilers," 313-4.

October and instead backed Zachary Taylor for the presidency. By late October, Snodgrass himself had given up, choosing instead to campaign with Free-Soil leaders in Pennsylvania. “[Free-Soil] seems to have lost considerable of its vitality in these regions,” reported the *Herald*’s Baltimore correspondent. “Even the Quakers have thrown up their hats for old Zach, in preference to throwing away their votes on Van Buren.”³⁹

When the ballots were counted in Maryland, the Free-Soil Party had received only 126 votes. Only in Baltimore City and Frederick County did its vote reach double digits. In the weeks following the election, Snodgrass stopped writing for the *National Era* and focused on rebuilding his medical practice in Baltimore. He moved to New York in 1854 to work for the American Anti-Slavery Society. As was the case in Missouri, numerous factors contributed to the failure of the Maryland Free-Soil Party to gain any sort of political traction. The party had limited financial resources, which were further strained once Gunnison and his Quakers withdrew their support. As well, the lack of political veterans, men who knew how to mount and direct political campaigns, meant that the logistical groundwork of building the party was left in the hands of political neophytes like Snodgrass. Furthermore, the party failed to take a position on any local or state issues during the campaign. While keeping the territories free from slavery was a pressing concern to Free-Soilers in many western states, in Maryland the issue remained a matter of abstract principle. The partisan appeal of both main political parties was also a factor. “The Free-Soil movement troubled us not,” declared the Whig *Harford Gazette*. “Judicious men, amongst those who favored the principle, had no faith in its exponent, and knew that a vote for Van Buren would be thrown away.” The Maryland Whigs and Democrats both operated well-

³⁹ Frank F. White, Jr., *The Governors of Maryland, 1777-1970* (Annapolis: The Hall of Records Commission, 1970), 123-126; *New York Tribune*, September 4, 1848; *Baltimore Sun*, October 16, 1848; *New York Herald*, October 29, 1848. Francis Thomas did not expire as he predicted. He was later elected to Congress in 1861, serving as a Unionist, an Unconditional Unionist, and a Republican (See Chap. 5-7).

organized and well-connected campaigns in the state, and there were few, if any, defections to the Snodgrass' faction. For men like Gunnison, who would take a leading role in establishing a Republican Party in Maryland less than a decade later, the failure of Maryland Free-Soil Party was a cautionary lesson for future antislavery parties in the state. Whether that lesson would be learned remained another matter.⁴⁰

Cassius Clay returned to Kentucky after serving as an officer in the Mexican War. His quest for military glory had failed, as he had been taken prisoner before any of major battles had occurred. Deploring the increasing proslavery doctrines infecting both Kentucky Whigs and Democrats, he still sought to create a new opposition that would encompass antislavery principles and reduce the proponents of slavery to one party. "It was part of my policy to destroy the old parties," Clay wrote, "in order to build up a new one of universal liberty." Clay's timing could not have been better. The Whig hegemony that had defined Kentucky politics since the 1830s was now threatened by several emerging factors. Issues over Texas annexation and the Mexican War gave Kentucky Democrats a popular set of issues to rally around, while banking issues and policies of internal improvement no longer had the political strength that they once had for Kentucky's Whigs. Although Clay played a small role in the 1848 election campaign which saw the Whig Party's Zachary Taylor ascend to the presidency, he would be more active in another important political issue consuming Kentuckians: the passage of a new state constitution. During this struggle, Clay and other like-minded Kentuckians would attempt to form a new political coalition that would press for gradual emancipation and colonization in order to make Kentucky a society built upon free white labor.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Free Soilers received 74 votes in Baltimore City and 74 in Frederick County. Bridner, "Maryland Free Soilers," 314-5; *Harford Gazette*, November 10, 1848.

⁴¹ Clay, *Memoirs*, 169; Wallace B. Turner, "Kentucky State Politics in the Early 1850s," *RKHS* 56, no. 2 (April 1958): 123-24; Harry A. Volz, "Party, State, and Nation: Kentucky and the Coming of the American Civil War,"

After the presidential election, political life in Kentucky revolved around two issues, both of which helped to reignite the discussion of slavery in Kentucky and provided an opportunity to bolster the antislavery cause. The first was the Law of 1833, which had prevented Kentuckians from bringing enslaved blacks into the state. Seeking to ease restrictions on the import and sale of enslaved blacks, the Kentucky legislature repealed the law in February 1849. Secondly, Kentucky's state constitution was nearly fifty years old, and viewed by most as archaic and defective. But antislavery and proslavery Kentuckians wanted a new constitution for different reasons. For antislavery men, a new state constitutional convention offered the chance to put slavery in Kentucky on the road to extinction. If they could succeed in getting a measure similar to the Law of 1833 enshrined in a new state constitution, then they might prevent slavery from being perpetuated indefinitely within Kentucky. Proslavery Kentuckians, meanwhile, saw an opportunity to reinforce the institution of slavery within the state through constitutional provisions backing the free movement of slaves in and out of the state. With most favouring the drafting of a new constitution, albeit for very different reasons, Kentucky electors overwhelmingly voting for a constitutional convention to be assembled in 1849.⁴²

In preparation for the constitutional convention election, an emancipation meeting was held in Frankfort in late April 1849. It was sparsely attended, with delegates from only twenty-three of Kentucky's one hundred and three counties. The limits of emancipation were made apparent in an address by Robert J. Breckinridge, a Presbyterian minister who had been arguing for gradual emancipation since the 1830s. A member of one of Kentucky's most influential families and a slaveholder himself Breckinridge had become one of Kentucky's most prominent

(PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1982), 51-67; Christopher M. Paine, "Kentucky Will Be The Last To Give Up The Union." *Kentucky Politics, 1844-61*, (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1998), 73-74, 89-91.

⁴² Frank F. Mathias, "Kentucky's Third Constitution: A Restriction of Majority Rule," *RKHS* 75, no. 1 (January 1977): 1-19; Paine, "Kentucky Will Be The Last," 109-13.

emancipationists by the middle of the century. Breckinridge believed any proposals for emancipation emanating from the convention should focus squarely on future unborn enslaved blacks, rather than on the existing enslaved population. The convention agreed, and resolved that a system of “gradual, prospective emancipation” should be designed at the upcoming constitutional convention. Cassius Clay chafed at the moderate political antislavery of some of the convention’s delegates. Their program of *post-nati* emancipation would do nothing to deal with enslaved blacks currently living in Kentucky. Nonetheless, wishing to present a united front, Clay agreed with the resolutions. Clay also objected to delegates who feared political mobilization and were hesitant to run dedicated emancipationist candidates to the constitutional convention. “How are we to get at the non-slaveholders but by agitation?” asked an incredulous Clay. “We must seek them out—at the cross-roads and places of public resort in their neighborhoods...we want men on the stump. We want to get at the ear of the people.” Clay’s argument swayed the convention. Within days, local emancipationist meetings convened around the state, nominating antislavery candidates in twenty-nine counties.⁴³

Although emancipationists had hoped for a strong showing in the election for delegates, they fared poorly. Clay had hoped to carry the campaign to the voters himself, but he had been assaulted while canvassing for an emancipationist candidate in Madison County, and his injuries left him sidelined for the duration of the canvass.⁴⁴ As the campaign progressed, it became apparent that there were three factions competing for delegate seats: emancipationists, reformers, and those advocating for the status quo. Kentuckians who wanted political reform but who had

⁴³ *Louisville Examiner*, May 5, 1849; *Antislavery Standard*, June 21, 1849; Mathias, “Kentucky’s Third Constitution,” 4-5; James C. Klotter, *The Breckinridges of Kentucky, 1760-1981* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 39-75; Quoted in Victor B. Howard, “Robert J. Breckinridge and the Slavery Controversy in Kentucky in 1849,” *Filson Club History Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (October 1979), 333 (hereafter cited as *FCQ*); Harrison, *Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 53-60; Clay, *Memoirs*, 175-178;

⁴⁴ Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 138-41; Clay, *Memoirs*, 184-87.

no wish to free enslaved blacks feared that emancipationist candidates could draw votes away from reform candidates, leaving the field open for anti-reformers to secure a majority at the constitutional convention. “One will come out for emancipation and nothing else,” warned the *Louisville Democrat*, “another against emancipation, and for every other change generally desired, and a third will take a different position.” As a result, allies of constitutional reform and enemies of emancipation put aside long-standing partisan rivalries to run fusion candidates who negated the chances of those candidates who solely supported emancipation. The election of convention delegates cut across party lines, with 52 Democrats and 48 Whigs elected to the convention, and only two delegates elected who supported the emancipationists’ platform.⁴⁵

Meeting on October 1, the convention quickly assumed a proslavery bent. Composed mainly of slaveholding farmers and lawyers, the convention spent the first two and a half weeks debating the question of slavery. Kentucky’s proslavery leaders lined up to defend the institution and to warn against inserting any clauses in the new constitution which might threaten it. As a result, the convention wrote a state constitution that was fundamentally a proslavery document. The new Kentucky Constitution prohibited the legislature from taking any direct action against slavery. Furthermore, it retained the old constitution’s arcane structure for amendments, which dictated that Kentuckians could only alter the constitution by a convention which had been preceded by two successive popular polls.⁴⁶ For conservative and moderate emancipationists like Breckinridge, the passage of the new constitution meant that their campaign for gradual emancipation was over. “Having proved myself faithful to my convictions,” Breckinridge

⁴⁵ *Louisville Democrat*, December 8, 1848; Gregory P. Fields, “The Question of Slavery in the Kentucky Constitutional Convention of 1849,” *FCQ* 23, no. 2 (April 1949): 94.

⁴⁶ *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Kentucky, 1849* (Lexington: 1849), 5-7, 488-90; 458, 914. Mathias, “Kentucky’s Third Constitution,” *RKHS*: 7-19; *Third Constitution of Kentucky* (1850), see Articles Six and Twelve, 38-39.

explained, “I shall now prove faithful to the Commonwealth.” The proslavery leaders had boxed in Kentucky emancipationists. With the legislature prohibited from taking direct action on slavery, not even a majority of emancipationists elected to office could change the status of slavery in Kentucky. Gradual emancipation would have to be done through a state convention, with *that* convention only being called only after two consecutive referendums. With already limited public support for emancipating enslaved blacks, the prospects of waging two successful referendums to add emancipationist measures to the constitution would be near impossible.

Cassius Clay, unsurprisingly, was undeterred. He announced that emancipationists in Kentucky—under his leadership—would organize and offer candidates for the state elections in 1851. “I think I shall get from five to ten thousand votes,” Clay predicted to William H. Seward, “which will be a very good nucleus for future action.” Not expecting to win, Clay intended this to demonstrate that antislavery still remained a force in Kentucky politics.⁴⁷

Clay’s attempts to build a separate emancipationist party occurred against the backdrop of the most important state election in years. Kentucky’s new constitution had mandated that all state offices must be to be vacated. As a result, all elected offices, from the governorship to local officials, were up for grabs. Nominating himself for governor, Clay set out to convince antislavery Whigs to break from the state party and nominate a separate state emancipation ticket. Clay also nominated George D. Blakey, an emancipationist from southern Kentucky, as his running mate. Paralleling Joseph E. Snodgrass’s attempt at building a Free-Soil Party in Maryland, Clay’s effort at starting a statewide antislavery party suffered from a distinct lack of organization. A state convention was called for March but did not meet. A second convention was organization for late May, but much of the correspondence sent out announcing this

⁴⁷ *Frankfort Commonwealth*, March 29, 1849; Klotter, *Breckinridges of Kentucky*, 76; Tallent, *Evil Necessity*, 151-60; Cassius Clay to William H. Seward, April 24, 1851, quoted in Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 142-3.

convention was wrongly addressed and returned. Clay's "Emancipation Party" also suffered from the lack of a dedicated party organ. With the *Louisville Examiner* having folded, Clay wanted a dedicated paper in central Kentucky. He paid a printer in Lexington six hundred dollars to print a party newspaper, *The Progress of the Age*, which would expound the political objectives of Clay's new party. Defining the paper's main position as "*Emancipation upon the soil*—that all born in Kentucky after a certain day...shall be free," it would also promote the policies of universal education and internal improvements throughout Kentucky. Unfortunately, after printing three issues of the newspaper, the paper's editor fled the state with Clay's money. Offering money to anyone who would operate an antislavery newspaper for three years, Clay found few takers. Only the *Newport News*, a small paper in Campbell County published by a poor machinist named William S. Bailey, affixed the banner of Clay and Blakey to its masthead.⁴⁸

Clay repeated his message about the political and economic cost of slavery as he spoke throughout eighty of Kentucky's one hundred counties. Oftentimes speaking to empty rooms, Clay continued to promote gradual emancipation as the solution to Kentucky's ills. Castigating both Whigs and Democrats as the two sides of the same slavery coin, Clay's speeches emphasized the economic burden borne by nonslaveholders in Kentucky as a result of the enslaved labor. "There is no compensation for the evils of slavery, none, none whatsoever," Clay told an audience in Lexington. "It depresses us in the scale of social rank, deprives us of education, machinery, manufactures, and commerce [and] impoverishes us by the competition of

⁴⁸ Cassius Clay to Robert J. Breckinridge, February 27, 1851, Breckinridge Family Papers, LOC; Clay, *Memoirs*, 212; *Yeoman* (Frankfort, Ky.), May 30, 1851; *Progress of the Age*, April 19, 1851; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 145; Will Frank Steely, "William Shreve Bailey: Kentucky Abolitionist," *FCQ* 31, no. 3 (April 1957): 274-5.

slave labor.”⁴⁹ While one Louisville Whig newspaper criticized Clay for “ranging himself alongside of the vilest Disunionists of the North,” the *Louisville Democrat* anticipated that Clay’s efforts in the campaign could draw off a sizable number of Whig votes. The *Democrat*’s predication was correct. Clay’s effort resulted in a meager 3621 votes. With most of Clay’s votes coming from emancipationist Whigs, it was enough to throw the gubernatorial election to the Democrats. Clay’s pittance of votes also symbolized how the emancipationist impulse in Kentucky had faded by 1851. Many of the political allies Clay had fought alongside during the constitutional campaign of 1849 now drifted away from antislavery politics. Breckinridge, in ill health and beset by marital problems, began to espouse increasingly nativist and racist views. James Speed of Louisville, who had been one of the leading emancipationist organizers in the city, retreated from politics to concentrate on his law practice. Even Clay himself understood the limitations of a Kentucky-based antislavery party. If political slavery were to take root in Kentucky, alliances with antislavery men in the North must be forged.⁵⁰

While many conservative and moderate antislavery men such as Breckinridge considered the matter of slavery settled by the passage of new state constitution, one consequence of the repeal of the Law of 1833 was the growing business of slave trading in Kentucky. Although a domestic state market had always existed, the repeal of the law spurred the growth of larger and more profitable slave trading firms. By the 1850s, urban centres like Lexington and Louisville were home to numerous slave trading firms and markets. Slave pens, where traders stored their human chattel until they could be shipped further South, became more visible in these urban

⁴⁹ A list of the towns that Clay visited can be found in the *Kentucky Statesman*, May 28 and July 9, 1851; *Speech of C. M. Clay at Lexington, Ky., Delivered August 1, 1851* (Lexington: 1851), 11.

⁵⁰ *Louisville Courier*, March 3, 1851; *Louisville Democrat*, March 3, 1851; Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 160; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 146-147; Cassius Clay to Joshua Giddings, September 3, 1851, quoted in Byron R. Long, “Joshua Reed Giddings: A Champion of Political Freedom,” *Ohio Archeological and Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (January 1919): 33-36; Klotter, *Breckinridges of Kentucky*, 76; Cassius Clay to Salmon P. Chase, August 12, 1851, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

centers. Newspaper advertisements for these firms became more frequent and prevalent. The volume of enslaved human beings shipped to the Lower South to work on cotton and sugar plantations increased to the point that by the 1850s, over thirty-five hundred enslaved blacks were being shipped annually to Middle and Lower South. As Kentucky became a nexus for both overland and river-based slave trading, it strengthened the state's economic connection to southern slavery. Rather than gradually declining, as conservative and moderate antislavery men had hoped, slavery seemed to have affixed itself permanently to Kentucky's economy. The economic growth of slavery and the failure of the emancipationist movement seemed to portend a dim future for the politics of antislavery in Kentucky. After years of attempting to appeal to nonslaveholders through economic and political arguments, by 1852 it had become obvious that any political party that promoted antislavery in Kentucky had an extremely limited electoral appeal. Despite these obstacles, Clay refused to become discouraged. "The cause of emancipation advances only with agitation," advised Clay. "Let that cease, and despotism is complete."⁵¹

Although opportunities arose to contest slavery in the Border South through the emergence of the Free-Soil Party and constitutional conventions in Kentucky, these early attempts at building cohesive antislavery political parties revealed the obstacles facing such a task. In some case, like in Maryland, the political conditions were not yet ripe for an antislavery party to emerge. Traditional political parties were far too strong and united, and the issue of

⁵¹ Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, 84-86, 99; Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 141-143; Salafia *Slavery's Borderland*, 225. Two older but still useful sources on the slave trade in Kentucky are T.D. Clark, "The Slave Trade between Kentucky and the Cotton Kingdom," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 21, no. 3 (December 1934): 335-37; Wallace B. Turner, "Kentucky Slavery in the Last Antebellum Decade," *RKHS* 58, no. 4 (October 1960): 291-307; "Letter from Cassius M. Clay," in *The Liberator*, May 6, 1853.

territorial slavery had less resonance in Maryland than it did in states farther west. Furthermore, while antislavery men like Joseph E. Snodgrass were energetic in their desire to build an antislavery party, their lack of political savvy and ability to build alliances meant that poor political organization would plague their attempts at party building. In other cases, such as in Missouri, there existed a more organized effort to develop an antislavery political movement. Political antislavery in the form of the Free-Soil Party led to a deepening ideological division with the Missouri Democratic Party. As a result, two distinct visions emerged concerning the role of slavery in Missouri. One vision would be embraced by a proslavery faction whose commitment to slaveholding democracy meant supporting policies which protected slavery and aligned Missouri with the South. Another vision, inspired by Thomas Hart Benton but articulated through Frank Blair's liberal political antislavery, saw Missouri's future as dependent on white emigration to the territories, and in which free white labor would form the cornerstone of Missouri society. In Kentucky, attempts at revising state laws regarding the importation of enslaved blacks provided a means for some aspiring Kentucky politicians, such as Cassius Clay, to develop a distinct political identity as an advocate for antislavery and emancipation. Clay, looking to develop a political base of nonslaveholding Kentuckians that would propel him to office, developed a political philosophy which saw Kentucky's economic future threatened by the continued existence of slavery. Alternately both righteous and opportunistic, Clay allied with other Kentuckians concerned about slavery's role in Kentucky's political, economic, and social life. This growing antislavery sentiment in Kentucky in the 1840s provided a unique opportunity for antislavery newspapers and political figures to advocate for emancipation in a slave state. Clay's personality, and his violent response to both physical and written attacks by proslavery men, branded him as a dangerous agitator in a political landscape dominated by moderate and

conservative men. However, the political impetus for emancipation waned following the successful passage of the proslavery constitution of 1849, leading many leading antislavery politicians to retreat from the field, and leaving Clay to advocate for antislavery and emancipation increasingly alone. As a result, Clay concluded that a state-based antislavery party would have little chance of success in Kentucky and began to look North for allies in a burgeoning national antislavery movement. These early efforts to build a political party dedicated to antislavery in Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, would reveal the challenges which the Republican party would face throughout the 1850s in the region.

Chapter 3

“We Are Few; The Foe Is Many!”: The Origins of the Republican Party in the Border South

This chapter argues that the development of the Republican Party in the Border South during the 1856 election was hampered by conflicting ideologies, a lack of political organization, and by the political calculations of individual leaders. For years, antislavery men in the Border South had fought against slavery as individuals or small groups, and with the exception of the short-lived Free-Soil movement of 1848, without any national political organization. The emergence of a uniquely antislavery political party in the Republican Party changed the dynamics of political antislavery in the Border South. However, the ambitions of antislavery men seeking to join this new party had to be tempered with the political and institutional realities within the states themselves. In both Kentucky and Maryland, the Republican Party emerged as a political entity during the 1856 presidential election. In Kentucky, Cassius Clay worked to develop a party with other antislavery men like John G. Fee. But Fee’s more radical ideology clashed with Clay’s more liberal ideology, resulting in a split between the two men. As a result, Clay sought to burnish his national profile, leaving a skeleton organization in place in Kentucky. Faced with two strong political parties in Maryland, the Republican Party there suffered from a lack political organization and an environment where political violence hampered efforts to organize a party. In Missouri, Frank Blair achieved the most success, becoming the first avowed antislavery candidate elected to Congress from Missouri. But he did so while distancing himself from Republicanism. Aware that Missouri was undergoing a period of political realignment, and seeking to establish his own political career, Blair carefully sought a more incremental approach to developing a Republican Party in Missouri—one that would be on his own terms.

James K. Polk's efforts to bring the new territories of California and New Mexico into the Union by extending the Missouri Compromise line of 36°30' to the Pacific had resulted in congressional deadlock for much of 1846 to 1848. With Zachary Taylor's election to the presidency, many Americans were hoping to finally resolve the issue. "We confess that we are not very anxious as to the manner of the settlement of the territorial slave question, provided it can be settled permanently and without danger to the Union," opined the *Louisville Journal*. "We learn from the South, that great excitement prevails [on] the slavery question," wrote the *Baltimore Sun*'s Washington correspondent. "Dissolution of the Union is every where familiarly talked of, and its advantages to the South dwelt upon."¹ But the discovery of gold in California in 1848, and the population boom which had followed, prompted a new urgency to finally settle troublesome territorial questions. The nearly 80,000 Americans arriving in the region in the hope of striking it rich, coupled with the unruliness of the mining camps demanded some sort of overarching authority, and a state constitutional convention was called in June 1849. With the overwhelming proportion of emigrants hailing from free states, the new California constitution barred slavery. Electing a governor and state legislature in October 1849, California petitioned Congress for statehood.²

To avoid a contentious debate over congressional authority over slavery in territories, Taylor proposed that California with her antislavery state constitution be admitted to the Union. New Mexico, whose people would "at no very distant period" apply for statehood, should receive similar treatment. But proslavery southerners, increasingly concerned that sectional

¹ David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1976), 63-89; *Louisville Journal*, January 15, 1849; *Baltimore Sun*, January 25, 1849.

² Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005), 634-6; For more on California and questions of political authority, see Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 86-90.

equilibrium was disappearing and with it their political power, stood ready to oppose the admission of any future free states. Kentucky's Henry Clay, having been beaten by Taylor during the Whig convention, saw an opportunity to challenge Taylor's political leadership of the Whig party.³ Drawing upon his reputation as a compromiser earned during the battle over Missouri statehood, Clay presented a series of eight resolutions that would resolve the territorial question and quell sectional tensions over slavery. Clay proposed admitting California as a free state; establishing territorial governments throughout the rest of the Mexican Cession, with slavery to be determined by popular sovereignty; resolving a boundary dispute between Texas and New Mexico; abolishing the slave trade within the District of Columbia but leaving slavery unaffected; and strengthening the Fugitive Slave Act. Although Clay hoped to pass every proposal at once in a massive omnibus bill, his plan remained stalled until rescued by Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois. Using arm-twisting and political maneuvering, Douglas managed to break up Clay's massive omnibus bill into smaller compromise bills more easily passed. In the final days of the session, congressmen and senators celebrated their "compromise," which, in their minds would be the end of the slavery issue in American politics. Their celebrations were premature. With the passage of the "Compromise of 1850," Congress had merely evaded the slavery question.⁴

The stability of Maryland's political system was thrown into disarray in the aftermath of Compromise of 1850. The fracturing of the national Whig Party over the question of territorial slavery, combined with local issues concerning governance, sounded the death knell for

³ Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 95-6; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 146-47; The rupture between Taylor and Clay is examined in Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978), 67-100.

⁴ *Cong. Globe*, 31st Cong., 1st sess., 244-45; Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 90-120. For a deeper examination of the Compromise of 1850, see Hamilton Holman, *Prologue to Conflict: The Crisis and Compromise of 1850* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1964); Peter B. Knupfer, *The Union As It Is: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 158-200.

Maryland Whiggery. With the passage of the Compromise, the unity that had held the national Whigs together broke apart along sectional lines. Northern anti-slavery Whigs saw the compromise as an effort by slaveholders to align federal laws with slavery through the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act. Pro-slavery Southern Whigs saw in the compromise Northern efforts to suffocate economic growth in the South by admitting California as a free state.⁵ With little national strength to assist them, state Whigs in Maryland floundered. By the presidential election of 1852, disillusioned and dispirited Maryland Whigs could muster little enthusiasm for their presidential candidate Winfield Scott. For the first time in a presidential election, a Democrat carried the previously formidable Whig redoubt. So long the dominant political force in the state, the Whig party in Maryland, which had dominated political life in the state, was disintegrating.⁶

Accompanying the collapse of the Maryland Whigs was the retreat of the gentlemen politicians of Maryland, and the subsequent rise of a more populist political class. Political veterans such as the Whig novelist and former congressman John Pendleton Kennedy recoiled from the grubby maneuvering and pleading that antebellum electioneering required. “Nothing is more contemptable than the state politics and management of Maryland,” wrote Kennedy in 1850. “We have no man in service above mediocrity...[the] whole machinery of our politics is moved by the smallest, narrowest, most ignorant and corrupt men in the state.”⁷ Kennedy’s dislike of the new populist politics run by “mediocre men” was embodied by a new and mysterious nativist organization that took advantage of the Whig’s decline. Championing anti-

⁵ Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 90-120; Freehling, *Road to Disunion I*, 487-510; Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 553-98.

⁶ James Henry Warner, *The Maryland Constitution of 1851* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1902), 24; Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 33-48; Brugger, *Maryland*, 256-8.

⁷ John Pendleton Kennedy, *Journal*, April 20, 1850, John Pendleton Kennedy Papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland (hereafter cited as MDHS); Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 24-53; Baker, *The Politics of Continuity*, 1-21.

Catholicism and anti-immigration, the new party's platform proposed severely limiting immigration, lengthening the naturalization period for new arrivals, and restricting offices to Protestants.⁸ More commonly known as the "Know-Nothings" for their clandestine organization (party adherents were told to reply "I know nothing" when asked about the party by outsiders), this party found a receptive audience amongst the turmoil of economic and social change in Baltimore City. For many Baltimoreans, the most significant transformation was not in the increased industrialization or rising crime in the city, but rather in the composition of its citizens. The influx of German and Irish immigrants into a city already struggling with the divisions between free white and black labor reinforced fears that an essential 'American' character was being lost. The Know-Nothing party, in addition to their nativist ideology, promised a return to a revolutionary ideal of 'Americanness' that it claimed was in danger of being lost. During an era where the very survival of the Union seemed to be threatened daily by sectional tensions over slavery, the Know-Nothings offered an appealing if ambiguous alternative to the existing, worn-out political parties.⁹

Kentucky Whigs had hoped that the constitutional battles of 1849 and the Compromise of 1850 had removed the contentious issue of slavery from the state's politics. An open rupture in 1851 between two wings of the Whig party over the selection of a Kentucky senator proved

⁸ While various historians have utilized either American and Know-Nothings as the proper name of this political movement, for the purposes of this dissertation I have chosen to refer to them as Know-Nothings. The best overall analysis of Know-Nothingism remains Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). For southern Know Nothings, please see W. Darrell Overdyke, *The Know Nothing Party in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1950). The roots of nativist thought in the United States are explored in Ray Allen Billington, *The Origins of Nativism in the United States: 1800-1844* (New York: Arno Press, 1974), and *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of the American Nativism* (Chicago: Rinehart, 1964).

⁹ The Know-Nothing party in Maryland is thoroughly examined in Jean Baker, *Ambivalent Americans: The Know-Nothing Party in Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). An older, but still useful look is Mary St. Patrick McConville, *Political Nativism in the State of Maryland* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1928), which primarily explores the anti-Catholicism of the party. Also focusing on the anti-Catholic aspects is Benjamin Tuska, "Know-Nothingism in Baltimore, 1854-1860," *Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 11, no. 2 (July 1925), 217-51.

otherwise. Despite their previous electoral losses, Whigs still held a small majority in the Kentucky House of Delegates, and were due to select the state's next United States Senator. Political veteran John J. Crittenden, then serving as the Attorney General of the United States, wanted to return to the Senate. Archibald Dixon, an abrasive and ambitious lawyer from Henderson County, made it clear that he coveted the senatorial post. Crittenden, a conciliatory slaveholder who opposed the further growth of slavery in Kentucky remained hostile to Dixon because of the latter's support for the proslavery cause during the 1849 constitutional convention. Kentucky Democrats, meanwhile, sat back and watched with glee as Whig infighting escalated. Fearing that the rupture would spill over to the 1853 state election and damage future Whig prospects, Whig newspapers like the *Louisville Courier* urged that a choice be made to break the deadlock. It was to no avail. Balloting began in November and continued into December, with neither man able to secure enough votes. Backroom negotiations between factions went nowhere. With the threat of an irreconcilable split looming, Whig leaders decided to vote for Lieutenant Governor John B. Thompson, relatively unknown political figure with few political enemies.¹⁰

The Whigs further escaped another political schism when Henry Clay, now in poor health, decided to resign his seat in the Senate. With yet another opportunity to elect a senator, many Whigs feared a repeat of the rancor of the previous senatorial election. Crittenden, sensing he was not the first choice of the party, bowed out, leaving the Whigs to elect Dixon to the post. Dixon's election did little to assuage fears of the future survival of Kentucky Whiggery. Whig newspapers were less than laudatory of the selection of Thompson and Dixon, who both seemed

¹⁰ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1851-1852* (Frankfort: 1851), 89-264; *Louisville Journal*, November 22, 26, December 12, 1851; *Louisville Democrat*, November 22, December 13, 1851; Albert D. Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden: The Struggle for the Union* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 274-79.

politically inferior compared to men like Clay and Crittenden. Emancipationist Whigs were further outraged over the selection of a devoted proslavery man in Dixon. By the time the legislative session drew to a close, some Whig newspapers had grown increasingly concerned over the apparent political dysfunction of their once-mighty party. One more legislative session like the previous one, charged the *Louisville Courier*, and “there would not be so much as a grease spot left of the great Whig party of Kentucky.”¹¹

By 1854, the question of slavery in the territories, so skilfully evaded by Henry Clay and Stephen A. Douglas in 1850, could be evaded no longer. Under pressure from railroad promoters and politicians eager to organize the western territories in order to build a railroad to the Pacific, Douglas brought forward a bill to organize the region. However, southern senators like David Atchison of Missouri remained concerned that slaveholders would be legally forbidden from settling in the new territory. As a result, Douglas’s Nebraska bill repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which prohibited slavery north of the 36° 30’ parallel. It organized the region into two separate territories—Kansas west of Missouri and Nebraska west of Iowa and Minnesota. The Kansas-Nebraska Act did more to stimulate antislavery elements in the United States than any other event. For antislavery men it appeared that the Missouri Compromise, long considered sacrosanct, had been tossed aside by a cabal of slaveholding southerners eager to carve out a vast empire of slavery in the western territories. For these men, who could barely agree on how best to combat slavery, Douglas’s bill provided a rallying point for the disparate forces of antislavery and a cudgel with which to castigate their opponents as, “not only wrong on principle but also morally depraved and personally odious.”¹²

¹¹ Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden*, 279; *Louisville Courier*, January 9, 1852.

¹² The best synthesis of the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act remains Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 145-76 (quote on page 165). Older but still useful are James Malin, *The Nebraska Question, 1852-1854* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1953), and James A. Rawley, *Race and Politics: “Bleeding Kansas” and the Coming of the Civil War*

Unlike her Border South sisters, who often debated the future of slavery in the territories in the abstract, Missouri's proximity to Kansas and Nebraska meant that the question of expanding slavery further west would have real economic and social consequences for the state. By the beginning of February, 1855, a joint session of the Missouri Legislature had endured almost two months of debates and voting in an effort to choose the next Missouri senator. Frank Blair and his cousin Benjamin Gratz Brown sought to return Thomas Hart Benton back to the Senate. Proslavery Democrats were eager to retain the seat held by David Rice Atchison, while Whigs, holding the balance of power in the legislature once again, rallied behind the nomination of Alexander W. Doniphan. After the fifty-first ballot, three prominent members of the legislature stood to make some remarks concerning the senatorial election. Ordinarily, these remarks were merely a rehashing of past political grudges. But nestled amidst these partisan ripostes lay three distinctive visions concerning slavery's future in both Missouri and the West. These three conflicting worldviews on slavery would define Missouri politics in the late 1850s. As such they provided the ideological context within which Frank Blair would seek to build a Republican Party in Missouri.¹³

The first to speak was Frank Blair. Attacking Atchison and his alliance with southern disunionists, Blair blamed "Bourbon Dave" for undoing the work of "great men of compromise," and helping to drive a wedge between the North and South. But Blair's speech concentrated on the repercussions of Kansas statehood. Contrary to the beliefs of proslavery Democrats, declared Blair, it would be in Missouri's best interest for Kansas to become a free state. It was imperative,

(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979). For a deeper look at southern pressure on the Act, see Alice Elizabeth Malavasic, *The F Street Mess: How Southern Senators Rewrote the Kansas-Nebraska Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

¹³ *Journal of the House of the State of Missouri*, 18th General Assembly, 1st sess., 200-202; *St. Louis Pilot*, February 3, 1855.

Blair acknowledged, that Missouri's institutions be protected, and that the institution of slavery deserves an equal measure of protection. Nevertheless, he continued, does Missouri not have other institutions besides slavery which are equally in need of the same protections? And if the argument is that making Kansas a slave state makes slavery in Missouri more secure, Blair continued, then are there other Missouri institutions equal to or more important than slavery, which would be enhanced by making Kansas a free state? For Blair, Missouri's industry was a far more important institution than was slavery. A free Kansas, settled by free white labor, would increase in population more rapidly than a slave Kansas. This increase in the population of free white labor would then create a growing commercial market for Missouri goods and services. "Her position makes her dependent on Missouri for supplies," Blair argued, "and when she develops, her production will furnish freight for our railroads, and the interchange in production will benefit Missouri farmers, merchants, and mechanics." In contrast, a slave state next door would have fewer consumers, as "white populations require better and costlier articles than negroes." There would be less desire for the building of railroad in a slave Kansas, because in slave states "a large proportion of the population are not permitted to go from city to city." A white, free laboring Kansas would create an overnight consumer market for Missouri products, encourage the growth of railroads across the west from a Missouri hub, and stock Missouri railcars with raw material from Kansas. "If Kansas should be a free state," intoned Blair, "[Kansas] will be a customer, instead of a rival."¹⁴

Responding to Blair's salvo, George W. Goode, a proslavery Whig from St. Louis stepped into the fray. Goode had been a Virginia lawyer who had moved to Missouri after being banned from elective office there because of duelling. An unrepentant racist and a fervent

¹⁴ *Remarks of F.P. Blair of St. Louis, in the Joint Session of the General Assembly of Missouri* (1855), 1-5.

advocate for slavery, Goode classified anyone who disagreed with him on the question of slavery as an abolitionist. Casting his gaze towards Blair and the rest of the Benton Democrats, Goode believed that abolitionism had already “invaded our state in specious guise” of Blair and his allies, and unless stopped, Missouri would fall to “degradation and ruin.” For Goode, slavery was the “best devised scheme of mutual benefits” for black and white Missourians. Slavery’s benefits, claimed Goode, enabled white men to focus on “the refinement of manners and integrity of conduct,” while the enslaved benefited from their “gradual redemption from barbarism and debasement.” To those who argued that superior benefits of free labor, Goode emphasized that despite their mobility and ability to vote, the economic and social condition of humble laborers in the North was far worse than those enslaved laborers in the South. “There must ever be a menial, dependent class of society,” intoned Goode, arguing that it is better that they should be distinguished as such by their color, than by the equally humiliating badge of poverty and degradation.” With these intellectual, economic, and social benefits in mind, Goode declared that he “would not restrict, but *extend* the benefits of slavery.”¹⁵

Last to speak, and to rebut some of Goode’s accusations was representative James S. Rollins, a Whig from Boone County. Although trained as a lawyer, Rollins had diverse business interests, which included railroads and land speculation, and had become a champion of economic development in Missouri. Rollins was a large slaveholder, owning twenty-four slaves who worked his large 1,200-acre estate outside of Columbia. But Rollins had also supported the Missouri Compromise and disliked anything that smacked of agitation over the question of slavery. In his reply to Goode, Rollins attacked his desire to further expand slavery. “He would extend the area of that institution from the rising to the setting of the sun, and from the river to

¹⁵ W.V.N. Bay, *Reminiscences of the Bench and Bar in Missouri* (St. Louis: 1878), 569-71; *Speech of George W. Goode, Esq., Delivered on the Floor of the Missouri Legislature* (St. Louis: 1855).

the ends of the earth!” cried Rollins. As Goode listened, Rollins repudiated the proslavery Whig’s contention that the lowly laborer was no better off than the slave. “These ‘Sons of toil’ whose strong arms and patriotic hearts constitute the very substratum upon which rests our republican structure,” reasoned Rollins. For Rollins, Goode’s support of slavery’s expansion was not only anti-humanitarian, but it deliberately attacked the free labor yeomanry who supplied the foundation of American republicanism. Rollins called for a return to classical Whig principles on slavery, chiding what he saw as an emerging proslavery faction within the Missouri Whiggery that would tear the party apart. “Upon the question of slavery, I may safely say that the great Whig Party is sound and conservative,” declared Rollins, “[and] ready to resist illegal Northern aggression and abolitionism on the one hand, and to suppress Southern fanaticism and nullification on the other.” Missouri Whigs would not be affected, argued Rollins, by the emotional passions of nullifiers or abolitionists, but would remain centred, guarding the “purity and permanency on our institutions.” Above all, he contended that most Missourians simply wanted the slavery question to go away, declaring “the safety of their property, the integrity of the Union, and the permanency of the Government itself, cries aloud against further *agitation!* Let it cease!”¹⁶

Blair, Goode, and Rollins’s speeches represented three competing strains of political thought in Missouri at the outset of the Kansas crisis. Blair continued to channel Bentonian ideology, promoting the expansion of free labor in the territories as commercially advantageous to Missouri, while grudgingly accepting slavery as an institution within the state. Goode’s ideology remained in line with the principle of Missouri’s slaveholding democracy—in order for

¹⁶ *Speech of James S. Rollins of Boone County, in Reply to Mr. Goode of St. Louis* (Jefferson City: 1855). 15-18; A decent, if slightly melodramatic biographical sketch of Rollins life and legislative career can be found in William B. Smith’s *James Sidney Rollins* (New York: De Vinne Press, 1891).

slaveholding democracy to thrive, opportunity for settlement in the new territories by slaveholders must not be foreclosed. Rollins, meanwhile, clung to Whig principles of conservatism and non-agitation in an attempt to take advantage of the split within the Missouri Democrats. The three men also reflected larger national ideas about labor and slavery that were circulating throughout 1850s America. Blair and Rollins celebrated the free labor ideas quickly becoming the doctrine of the Republican Party, where free labor stimulated economic growth, social mobility, financial independence, and individual dignity. In contrast, Goode echoed the emergent proslavery theories of George Fitzhugh, who promoted the economic and social benefits of slavery while decrying the harshness and individuality of northern capitalism. Although the three speeches themselves did little to change the outcome of the debate, and the senatorial vacancy would remain unfilled for the next two years, the debates did draw certain Whigs and Benton Democrats closer together. The summer of 1855 would find those opposed to the extension of slavery in Kansas allying more closely with each other.¹⁷

The rush to settle Kansas carried with it overarching political implications. The act of claiming and settling this new territory represented an opportunity to strike a blow for either freedom or slavery. In the northeast, emigrant aid companies sought to speed the development of Kansas as a free-soil state by subsidizing thousands of antislavery emigrants from New England. While emigrant New Englanders made up only a small portion of early Kansas settlement, their symbolic and psychological effect was substantial. The danger of “Yankee abolitionists” importing their vision free soil republicanism was an obvious threat to the ideology of slaveholding democracy espoused by slaveholders like David Atchison, Claiborne Fox Jackson, and George W. Goode. For them, the defence of Missouri slaveholders’ democracy, combined

¹⁷ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 11-39; Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 2:35-39.

with the threat posed by runaway slaves in a Missouri surrounded on three sides by free states, demanded that Kansas become a slave state.¹⁸

To ensure that outcome, Missouri residents slipped across the state line to establish illegal claims on Kansas land even before the territory had been opened. Missouri slaveholders held proslavery rallies and conventions throughout the state, expressing outrage at emigrant aid societies as “an army of hired fanatics, recruited, transported, armed and paid, for the special and sole purpose of abolitionizing Kansas and Missouri.” Still other proslavery advocates formed secret defensive organizations to protect their legally dubious land claims, while others formed their own emigrant aid societies to assist proslavery emigrants to settle in Kansas. But by far the most dramatic, and democratically egregious, incident occurred during the territorial election in March 1855. The day before the election, a large group of armed Missourians crossed into Kansas in order to elect a proslavery territorial legislature. Between four and five thousand Missourians voted in the territorial election, leading to 5427 votes for proslavery candidates compared to 791 for free-soil candidates, a healthy and surprising majority, considering the official number of eligible voters within the territory numbered 2905. Within months, proslavery forces had achieved unanimous control over the territorial legislature in Lecompton, passing proslavery legislation that adopted Missouri’s slave statutes, enforced the Fugitive Slave Act, and disenfranchised individuals who refused to support proslavery laws. In response, free-soil emigrants formed a rival legislature in Topeka, where they ratified a constitution that prohibited slavery and arranged their own election for governor and representatives.¹⁹

¹⁸ Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas 2004), 37; Gunja SenGupta, *For God and Mammon: Evangelicals and Entrepreneurs, Masters and Slaves in Kansas, 1854-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 3-5, 80-91.

¹⁹ *St. Louis Pilot*, July 21, 1855; Floyd C. Shoemaker, “Missouri’s Proslavery Fight for Kansas, 1854-1855,” *MHR* 48, no. 4 (July 1954), 327-28; Jay Monaghan, *Civil War on the Western Border, 1854-1865* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955), 34-46.

The events in Kansas, and the inordinate number of proslavery Democrats involved, prompted urgent efforts in Missouri to create an alliance between like-minded free-soil Whigs and Benton Democrats. Blair and Benjamin Gratz Brown sought to strengthen the relationship with key free-soil Whigs leaders that had developed during the senatorial debates. In July, Brown wrote to Rollins, arguing that Whigs needed to dissociate themselves from the proslavery members in their party. Receptive to their entreaties, Rollins began to put out feelers amongst his Whig colleagues, suggesting an alliance between the two groups aimed at electing two Senators—Thomas Hart Benton and a free-soil Whig—during the next legislative session.²⁰ Blair and Brown also used the issue of Missouri's transcontinental railroad to develop a political coalition with free-soil Whiggery in preparation for the 1856 elections. Construction of the Missouri railway system had been achingly slow. The Pacific Railway had only reached Jefferson City by 1855 and had already burnt through its public subsidies. In an effort to reinvigorate railroad building, Blair and Brown joined with George R. Smith, an antislavery Whig from Pettis County, in sponsoring a railroad bill that would provide 10 million dollars in state bond guarantees to finish the line. The legislative maneuvering in passing the bill strengthened relationships between the Benton Democrats, who had dreams of a transcontinental railroad emanating from St. Louis, and the Whigs whose promotion of internal improvements was a key plank in their platform. Despite the bill being vetoed by Missouri's proslavery Democratic governor, Blair felt that Benton's Democrats alliance with the Whigs could continue

²⁰ Frank Blair to James S. Rollins, May 27, 1855, Benjamin Gratz Brown to James S. Rollins, July 20, 22, 1855; James S. Rollins to Abiel Leonard, November 19, 1855, James S. Rollins Papers, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri (hereafter cited as SHSM; *Missouri Democrat*, October 30, 1855; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 58-59.

during the 1856 elections. He began proposing a coalition that would rally behind a free-soil Democratic candidate for governor.²¹

As Kentucky Whigs openly pondered their political future in the aftermath of the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, they were increasingly challenged by the emergence the nativist Know-Nothings. As in Maryland, the Know-Nothings exploded onto the Kentucky political scene by capitalizing on the structural weaknesses of Kentucky Whiggery. Nativist sentiment had simmered at the edges of Kentucky politics since the 1840s, but the emergence of a substantial German population in Louisville and the growth of Catholicism in the state exacerbated nativist sentiment. More importantly, impatience with old political parties and old leadership contributed to an antiparty sentiment which this new party tapped into. Know-Nothingism provided a new outlet for political passions other than the slavery issue which had dominated state politics for the better part of a decade. Early in 1855, Know-Nothings won municipal elections in Louisville and Lexington. The appeal of this new party became clear when, in the summer of 1855, the Know-Nothing gubernatorial candidate, former Whig Charles S. Morehead, was elected, and the Know-Nothings captured sixty-one seats in the state House and elected twenty-five state senators.²²

Legislative business quickly revealed that the Kentucky Know-Nothings were little more than ex-Whigs clothed in nativist garb. When Morehead had been selected as the gubernatorial candidate, former Whigs quickly took over key organizational roles in party. When the

²¹ John W. Million, *State Aid to Railways in Missouri* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1896), 99-102; Adam Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 65-81; Samuel Bannister Harding, *Life of George R. Smith: Founder of Sedalia, Missouri* (Sedalia, MO.: 1904), 197-209; Frank Blair to Preston Blair, December 17, 1855, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL.

²² Michael Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development from the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 275-77; Agnes Geraldine McGann, *Nativism in Kentucky to 1860* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1944), 48-85; *Louisville Courier*, February 8, 10, 15, 1855.

legislature reconvened, nativist bills were bypassed in favour of internal improvement measures that had a Whiggish tinge. While some Whigs were pleased that the Know-Nothing Party had adopted Whig policies and mostly disregarded nativist issues during the legislative session, some old-line Whigs still hoped that their party could make a comeback in preparation for the 1856 presidential election. Other Whigs, still uncomfortable with nativist ideology, drifted towards the Democratic Party where they hoped to protect Kentucky slaveholders' rights and preserve sectional peace. By the beginning of 1856, a mash of shifting ideologies and identities characterized Kentucky's political landscape.²³

This was the terrain upon which Cassius Clay would attempt to build a Kentucky Republican Party. In preparing for the political battle to come, Clay would have to rely on political allies throughout Kentucky. One potential ally was a religious leader named John F. Fee. A staunch abolitionist, Fee had become an itinerant preacher with the American Missionary Association, travelling through Kentucky counties and preaching antislavery doctrines. In 1853, Clay asked Fee stop travelling throughout the state and to establish a residence in Madison County, which would provide a headquarters for church missionaries to preach the gospel of antislavery throughout the state. Clay also hoped that this homestead could provide him with a political power base in eastern Kentucky.²⁴ The tall, barrel-chested, black-haired Clay, customarily laden with pistols and Bowie knives, and the small, wizened, bald-headed Fee, armed with nothing more than the Bible, made for an unlikely pair of antislavery Kentuckians. Yet they both shared an affinity for the rigors of the antislavery struggle. When Fee moved to Madison, Clay and his allies would provide protection for Fee from proslavery mobs. When an

²³ *Kentucky House Journal*, 518, 586, 632, 637; Paine, "Kentucky Will be the Last to Give Up the Union," 217-21.

²⁴ Howard, *The Evangelical War Against Slavery and Caste*, 62-67; David L. Smiley, "Cassius M. Clay and John G. Fee: A Study in Southern Antislavery Thought," *Journal of Negro History* 42, no.3 (July 1957): 201-13; Clay, *Life*, 570-71.

audience in Lincoln County prevented Fee from speaking in the summer of 1855, Clay sprung into action. Assembling a group of men armed with guns and knives, Clay marched to Lincoln County to demand that Fee's right to free speech go untrammelled. "Tomorrow I go in the field of contest, to determine whether the liberty of speech and religious freedom is longer possible in a Slave State!" Clay asserted to the editor of the *Cincinnati Gazette*. The penultimate battle between liberty and despotism that Clay hungered for never materialized in Lincoln County; instead, both Clay and Fee apparently spoke to an attentive audience, and then returned home.²⁵

Despite their shared goal of making Kentucky free from slavery, friction was developing between the two men. Clay's tendency toward self-promotion and his propensity to seek confrontation when challenged were being questioned by some of Fee's more religious allies. "Does [Clay] think that a sermon of yours [is] of more value than 100 dead bodies?" asked abolitionist Lewis Tappan to Fee. In a letter to the American Missionary Association, Fee began to push back against the growing notion that Clay was the singular "bulwark of free discussion" in Kentucky. "The impression is, that free speech depends on one man," wrote Fee. "Free speech depends not upon C.M. Clay, John G. Fee, or any other man, but...upon the virtue yet remaining in the hearts of the people."²⁶ For his part, Clay began to disparage Fee for his public-speaking style and his message. "I think all oratory more effective when the attitudes are *easy* and natural and I may say *usual*," Clay told Fee after a Fourth of July speech in 1855, criticizing the reverend's posture and excessive foot-stomping. Later that November, Clay cautioned Fee against using language that could be construed as extremist. The tension between the two men

²⁵ Clay to Salmon P. Chase, August 12, 1851, quoted in Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 147-48; John G. Fee, *Autobiography of John G. Fee* (Chicago:1891), 54-55; *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 23, 24, 1855.

²⁶ Lewis Tappan to John G. Fee, July 20, 1855, quoted in Howard, *The Evangelical War*, 74-5; *National Era*, August 16, September 17, 1855; *The Ninth Annual Report of the American Missionary Association, Presented at Chicago, Illinois, September 26, 1855* (New York: American Missionary Association, 1855), 77.

also corresponded with their slowly changing attitudes towards antislavery activism in Kentucky. While Fee still believed in the practice of non-violence, he was becoming less and less convinced that moral suasion alone would convince slaveholders to emancipate their enslaved property. For Clay, whose reputation as an antislavery brawler still defined him, the political opportunities provided by the emergence of an organized antislavery party in the North meant that he would have to avoid being seen as an extremist.²⁷

As in Kentucky, Know-Nothingism provided a viable home for many of Maryland's ex-Whigs to retain political influence and to continue their political careers. But in order to recruit public figures to run under their banner, the Know-Nothing party often recruited men whose commitment to nativist principles was less than fervent. No man better exemplified this than Henry Winter Davis, whose journey from Whig to Know-Nothing to Unionist to Radical Republican would symbolize the development of Maryland Republicanism. Davis, a Baltimore lawyer who inherited a deep and abiding hatred of the Democratic Party from his father, had been deeply involved in Maryland Whig politics. Handsome, erudite, charismatic, and a superb orator, Davis had stumped for the Whig cause throughout the state during the late 1840s and early 1850s. Davis was drawn to the emergent Know-Nothings for the same reasons as many of his Whig colleagues had been. He had been discouraged by the weak and ineffectual Whig campaigns in the state, and the dynamism and energy of the Know-Nothings seemed to be the only way to defeat the Democrats. Furthermore, while Davis held no particular animus toward individual Catholics, he had become increasingly concerned over the potential political, economic, and social power that Catholicism could wield. Most importantly for Davis, who feared Border South Maryland's position in an nation increasingly divided over slavery, the

²⁷ Clay to Fee, July 7, 1855, quoted in Howard, *The Evangelical War*, 81-86; Harrold, "Violence and Nonviolence in Kentucky Abolitionism," 15-38.

Know-Nothings provided the best hope for developing a national party that could avoid the slavery question altogether. Davis himself provided the clearest summation of this new party's main objectives in a widely-circulated pamphlet, emphasizing the party's desire to "not tolerate any agitation of the subject of slavery in national politics...that subject is local." In the 1855 state elections, Davis would be one of three Know-Nothings from Maryland elected to Congress. Arriving in Washington in late autumn, Davis found a Congress divided amongst Know-Nothings, Democrats, and a new antislavery party, the Republicans.²⁸

This new antislavery party was still in its embryonic stages when Davis arrived in Washington. In 1854, some former Free-Soilers, Whigs, and anti-Nebraska Democrats in the northwest had united together politically to capitalize on the popular discontent over the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Their new "Republican" party was not an immediate success. While some states, like Michigan, easily rallied disparate groups together under the Republican banner, other states such as Indiana and Ohio saw fusion stymied by state issues such as temperance, the rise of the Know-Nothings, and by deeply entrenched personal political rivalries. Because of this, the Republican Party struggled in the 1855 fall state elections, where they lost ground to the nativist party. As a result, Republicans faced three challenges in their quest to become a truly national party. One was how best to capitalize on the ongoing situation in Kansas, as political indignation over Kansas was not as compelling to voters in eastern states as some strategists had hoped. Furthermore, the political resilience of the Know-Nothings forced a re-examination of Republican opposition to the nativist party. Seeing an alliance with the nativists as the only way to assert control over the House during the next legislative session, key

²⁸ Gerald S. Henig, *Henry Winter Davis: Antebellum and Civil War Congressman from Maryland* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973), 20-1, 29-30, 72-75; Bernard Steiner, *Life of Henry Winter Davis* (Baltimore: 1916), 80-83; Henry Winter Davis, *The Origin, Principles and Purposes of the American Party* (Baltimore: 1855), 37-38.

Republicans reduced their partisan attacks on the Know-Nothings and began to court nativist voters. Finally, party strategists wanted to avoid the fate of the Free-Soil Party, which had faded into political irrelevancy after the 1848 election. Republicans realized that the 1856 presidential election would be crucial to clarifying the party's political situation, honing its ideological focus, and broadening its base of support. A national organization would be required.²⁹

The first opportunity to do develop a more organized Republican Party came during the fall of the 1855, as national attention turned to the election of the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Congressional elections in 1854 and 1855 had returned a small majority of congressmen opposed to Kansas-Nebraska Act, including antislavery Know-Nothings, antislavery Democrats, Republicans, and a smattering of Free-Soilers.³⁰ Republican leaders saw an opportunity to bring potentially unite all the anti-Nebraska congressmen together by securing the position of Speaker of the House. Winning control of the speakership could allow them to appoint members to committees, determine legislation, and shape the political issues of the day. Putting forward a compromise candidate in antislavery Know-Nothing Nathaniel Banks, this anti-Nebraska coalition stayed united throughout the two-month speakership election until Banks won. Banks's elevation to the speakership offered more than just a political victory. Despite intense lobbying and pressure, the anti-Nebraska congressmen stuck with Banks through roll call after roll call, forging relationships between men of disparate political stripes and smoothing away partisan lines. Although still a minority party on their own, the Republicans had gained

²⁹ The fusion parties and candidates that formed the foundation of the Republican Party from 1854 to 1855 were often elected under a variety of different names, such as Anti-Nebraska, Independent, or People's Party. For the purposes of this chapter they will be referred to as Republicans. The best examination of the early attempts at fusion can be found in Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party*, 103-66, 235-37.

³⁰ The *Tribune Almanac* attempted to break down the party loyalties, but instead simply divided up the membership into 79 administration supporters, 37 proslavery Whigs or Know-Nothings that would support the administration, and 117 anti-Nebraska men (1856); *New York Tribune*, November 28, 1855; *New York Times*, November 26, 1855; *Missouri Republican*, December 3, 1855.

control of the speakership, could now organize committees under Republican direction, and had dealt a fatal blow to nativist prospects nationwide by cleaving away antislavery Know-Nothing northern congressmen from their southern brethren.³¹

Outside of Congress, political leaders were busy trying to give this new political organization some structure. Believing that Banks's election was but the first part of creating a larger national Republican organization several political leaders including Preston Blair decided to formally fuse the disparate political elements together. Over Christmas dinner at Blair's Maryland estate, they agreed to have an organizing convention in Pittsburgh in February of 1856. Lewis Clephane, the editor of the antislavery newspaper *National Era*, wanted Blair to become involved in this new party. As a former Jacksonian Democrat and a slaveholder, Blair's involvement with this new Republican Party could help broaden the party's appeal. But Blair remained unconvinced that there was any support for this new party in Maryland. Clephane then convinced a group of Quaker merchants in Baltimore to form a Republican organization and nominate Blair as a delegate to the convention. Unaware of Clephane's scheming, Blair, astonished and pleased to find a Republican organization in Baltimore, accepted the nomination and travelled to Pittsburgh.³² There, he found a sizable convention of nearly four hundred delegates and spectators, the majority from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York. There was a small contingent from the Border South, with Maryland's Blair being the most prominent member, while Kentucky was represented by the abolitionist newspaper editor of the *Newport*

³¹ A good account of the 1855 speakership battle remains Fred Harvey Harrington, "The First Northern Victory," *Journal of Southern History* 5, no. 2 (May 1939), 186-205; see also Gienapp, 240-48; Jeffrey A. Jenkins and Charles Stewart, *Fighting for the Speakership: The House and the Rise of Party Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 151-92.

³² Gienapp, *Origins of the Republican Party*, 250-53; Smith, *Blair Family*, 325-27; Lewis Clephane, *Birth of the Republican Party* (Washington: 1889), 8-10; Walter C. Clephane, "Lewis Clephane: A Pioneer Washington Republican," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.*, 21 (1918), 270-71; *Letter of Francis P. Blair, Esq., to the Republican Association of Washington, D.C.* (1855), 2-7.

News, William S. Bailey. Missouri's delegation included James Redpath, a reporter for the *Missouri Democrat* who had been covering politics along the Kansas-Missouri border and was an avowed antislavery man. His presence allowed the *Democrat* to be the only Missouri newspaper to report on the meeting.³³

As leading Republicans hashed out the convention details in the parlors of the Monongahela Hotel, they strove to avoid partisan factionalism from controlling the convention. "It was a difficult matter to harmonize the various party interests which were there represented," wrote Clephane, with each "striving for the ascendancy in the organization of the convention." With that in mind, Clephane and other organizers proposed that Blair be appointed as president of the convention. Blair was a slaveholding Border South Democrat, whose prominent role would signal the broad appeal of the nascent Republican movement. As president, Blair's speech to the convention appealed to moderation, to compromise, and to conservative values. Blair believed that a "considerable number" of people in the southern states were aggrieved by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, but had not yet made their feelings public. There were "multitudes of honest patriots...who love the Union, and would willingly resolve the compromises," reassured Blair. These patriots would seek to avoid "the frightful schemes of civil war and slave insurrection which might arise out of the collision of these two sections." The most important policy to prevent this, argued Blair, was the immediate reimplementation of the Missouri Compromise. That one issue, and *only* that issue, "should be inscribed on our flag." Blair believed that it would be enough to draw the thousands of party-less men who had been

³³ There was no official list of delegates published, and there was a mix of both spectators and participants coming and going throughout the convention. The best listing of the delegates come from Russell Errett, "Formation of the Republican Party in 1856," *Magazine of Western History* 7 (December 1887), 182-183; *Official Proceedings of the Republican Convention Convened in the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*, (New York: 1856), 1-32; Will Frank Steely, "William Shreve Bailey: Kentucky Abolitionist," *FCQ* 31 (July 1957), 274-75; Jim A. Hart, "James Redpath, Missouri Correspondent," *MHR* 57, No. 1 (October 1962), 70-78.

abandoned by the political parties in the South, who were now “indivisible” upon the object of opposing expanding slavery in the territories. Those thousands of patriots, worried about potential conflict or insurrection, would thus seek a new party which would restore the old compacts and repair the sectional breach.³⁴

For many, Blair’s presence at the convention either reflected a new attitude concerning slavery in the slaveholding states, or symbolized the opinions of small and disloyal minority of southerners. Few reports by antislavery newspapers from the convention ignored the symbolism of a slaveholding Border Southerner presiding over an antislavery convention. “The presence of [Blair] at the Republican National Convention troubles the slavery propagandists greatly...their jackdaw cry of sectionalism is already getting a little stale,” wrote the *Jackson Citizen*. The *Tribune*’s Horace Greeley, reporting from the convention, insisted that Blair’s paper represented evidence that a majority of Southerners wished to restore the Missouri Compromise. “The naked fact that citizens of several Slave States chose to attend this Convention,” wrote Greeley, “will pave the way for a freer proclamation of the long repressed anti-Slavery sentiment of the South.” Further west, the *Missouri Democrat* reported that Blair’s speech was received with “tremendous enthusiasm and applause.” Other newspapers dismissed Blair’s role in the convention. The *St. Louis Pilot*, the anti-Benton Democratic paper, accused Blair of overemphasizing his influence amongst his “southern friends,” stating clearly that “we have some of the same sort in

³⁴ Clephane, *Birth of the Republican Party*, 12-13; *Official Proceedings of the Republican Convention*, 5-8. Preston Blair’s importance to the operation of the convention itself has varied greatly in numerous histories of the convention over the years. Horace Greeley played a significant role in elevating Blair’s responsibility for the smooth running of the convention in his telegraphic dispatches in the *Tribune*. While William E. Smith’s biography of the Blair family emphasizes Blair’s “masterly political ability,” his interpretations of Blair’s role comes mainly from Henry H. Smith’s *All Republican Conventions Since 1856* (Washington, 1896). Henry H. Smith’s view was that Blair’s “ability, tact and discretion prevented a complete fiasco (9).” However, Russell Errett’s reminiscences of the convention note that while Blair was a “venerable looking old gentlemen,” (185) he was not successful as a presiding officer, and eventually surrendered the role to one of the younger vice-presidents. As I have argued above, Blair’s role was probably more symbolic than administrative.

Missouri...[they] are few in number, and are regarded only as pests of society.” In Maryland, the Baltimore Board of Exchange immediately called for a meeting to challenge Blair’s claim that there existed a Republican movement within the state, and to “vindicate the fair fame of our city from the imputation of abolitionist tendencies.” In Kentucky, reports criticized Blair’s warning to slaveholders to avoid endangering their property by bringing in enslaved persons into the new territories. By far the harshest attack came from the pages of the Know-Nothing *New York Herald*, which criticized Blair for taking a leadership position “at the head of the Nigger Worshippers Convention,” and accused him of disloyalty to his Democratic principles. “His is but another example illustrating how far the prompting of disappointed pride and ambition may overrule the dictates of gratitude, prudence, patriotism, and common sense,” thundered the tabloid.³⁵

The emergence of a national Republican Party and his father’s involvement in its creation complicated Frank Blair’s efforts in developing an antislavery party in Missouri. As the convention proceeded with other business, including designating Philadelphia as the site for a nominating convention later that summer, Preston Blair inserted Frank’s name onto the committee of national organization. Astonished that his father would appoint him to the committee without his knowledge, and concerned that being associated with the Republicans would damage his electoral prospects in the upcoming congressional election in the fall, Frank immediately resigned from the committee. To mitigate the political damage, he published a lengthy letter in the *Missouri Democrat*, reassuring his voting public that he was still “a Democrat of the Jackson and Benton school, and [did] not intend to abandon that faith, or

³⁵ *Jackson Citizen*, February 28, 1856; *New York Tribune*, February 25, 1856; *Missouri Democrat*, February 23, 1856; *St. Louis Pilot*, March 1, 1856; *Baltimore Sun*, February 27, 1856; *Louisville Democrat*, February 23, 1856; *New York Herald*, February 24, 1856.

surrender that proud title.” Despite his protestations, anti-Benton newspapers throughout Missouri concluded that Blair now operated in lockstep with the “Black Republicans.”³⁶

As Blair was dealing with the fallout from his father’s dalliance with the Republicans, the Missouri political scene remained in flux. Despite Blair’s efforts to develop a coalition with antislavery Missouri Whigs, too many Whigs remained wary of associating with Blair’s faction. Although the national Know-Nothing organization was disintegrating over the question of slavery, they still retained a semblance of political legitimacy by nominating former president Millard Fillmore as their presidential candidate. As a result, enough Missouri Whigs still viewed that party as a refuge from the increasingly sectional Republican and Democratic parties. The remnants of the Missouri Whigs held a state convention in St. Louis in April 1856 to adopt the Know-Nothing brand.³⁷ Further political confusion reigned when Blair and Benjamin Gratz Brown arrived in Jefferson City for the Democratic state convention in April 1856. The two Democratic factions, Benton and anti-Benton, held simultaneous conventions at either end of the state house. An attempt to reconcile the two factions and go into the 1856 election united failed miserably. In an era where party platforms mattered, Benton Democrats refused to accept any platform whose language suggested that they accepted the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The Benton Democrats declared reunion a failure, nominated Thomas Hart Benton for governor, approved their own delegates to the Democratic national convention, and presented their own platform.³⁸

³⁶ Gienapp, *Origins of the Republican Party*, 258-57; *Official Proceedings of the Republican Convention*, 25-28; *Missouri Democrat*, March 4, 1856; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 60; *St. Louis Pilot*, March 8, 1856.

³⁷ Murat Halstead, *Trimmers, Trucklers & Temporizers: Notes of Murat Halstead from the Political Conventions of 1856*, ed. William B. Hesseltine and Rex G. Fisher (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1961), 1-7; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 206-209; *New York Times*, February 26, 1856; James S. Rollins to George R. Smith, March 5, 1856, quoted in Harding, *Life of George Smith*, 326-27; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 60-61; Walter H. Ryle, “Slavery and Party Realignment in Missouri In the State Election of 1856,” *MHR* 39, no. 3 (April 1945): 326-28; John V. Mering, “The Political Transition of James S. Rollins,” *MHR* 53, no. 3 (April 1959): 219-20.

³⁸ An exceedingly thorough anti-Benton Democrats account of the convention can be found in *A Statement of Facts and a Few Suggestions in Review of Political Action in Missouri* (1856), 36-55, 77-89; see *Missouri Democrat*, April 22, 24, 1856 for the Benton Democrats account; *St. Louis Pilot*, April 26, 1856.

The Benton Democrats' platform reflected the uneasy relationship that Blair and Brown had with the Republican Party. Their party platform hewed to Bentonian principles regarding slavery while attempting to attract former Whigs with the promise of internal improvements. It recognized slavery agitation as the greatest danger to peace and prosperity in Missouri; was troubled by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise but refused to restore it out of concern for greater agitation; acquiesced in the principles of the Kansas-Nebraska Act; condemned secret societies like the Know-Nothings; supported funding internal improvements; ensured, by encouraging its construction through Missouri, that no one section reaped the benefits of the Pacific Railway; and denounced abolitionism, nullification, secession, and disunion as "elements of discord and distraction." Their refusal to support the reimplementation of the Missouri Compromise proved that the Benton Democrats were still not ready to run under a Republican banner. Their platform would be aimed squarely at voters who had supported Benton in the past.³⁹

Blair, who had affixed his eye on winning the St. Louis congressional seat, had to further confront several new political difficulties resulting from the nomination of James Buchanan as the Democratic presidential nominee, and John C. Frémont as the Republican candidate. Nominating Buchanan, the Democratic national convention passed a proslavery platform that reaffirmed support for the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Fugitive Slave Law, and popular sovereignty. Benton was pleased with Buchanan's nomination, telling reporters at the convention that he believed Buchanan's nomination would "restore peace to the country." Benton's acceptance of Buchanan as the nominee meant that for all intents and purposes, the Benton

³⁹ For the Benton Democrats' platform see *A Statement of Facts*, 82-83; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 60-61; Ryle, "Slavery and Party Realignment, 329-30; Norma Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise: The Political Career of B. Gratz Brown* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965), 56-59.

Democrats would be supporting a presidential candidate whose party's platform directly contradicted their belief in free soil. The political confusion was exacerbated when the *Democrat*, accused by other partisan newspapers of being the organ of "Black Republicanism," raised Buchanan's name to their masthead.⁴⁰

The selection of a Republican presidential candidate further complicated Frank Blair's political strategy. To win the 1856 presidential election, Republicans had to nominate a candidate acceptable to the party's various factions. Three of the leading candidates, New York Senator William H. Seward and Ohioans Salmon P. Chase and John McLean, were each viewed as unacceptable to the various factions. Casting about for an acceptable candidate, Blair turned to John C. Frémont, Benton's son-in-law. A southerner by birth, Frémont was young, energetic, and had achieved nationwide fame through his western exploration and his exploits in California, where he had assisted rebellious American settlers in achieving their independence from Mexico in 1846. Most importantly, Frémont had remained decidedly silent on the slavery issue. Early in 1855, Preston Blair began trying to build support for Frémont's nomination, and as the Republican convention approached he asked Benton to back his son-in-law. Benton refused, believing that Frémont would be seen as a sectional candidate whose election could disrupt the Union and declaring that Buchanan's candidacy was the "safest chance for preserving the peace of the country, now greatly endangered at home and abroad."⁴¹

Torn between his political mentor and his father, Frank faced an untenable situation heading into the summer elections. With himself running for Congress, his cousin Brown

⁴⁰ *Cincinnati Commercial*, June 3, 4, 1856; *Official Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention Held in Cincinnati, June 2-6, 1856* (Cincinnati, 1856); Halstead, *Trimmers, Trucklers & Temporizers*, 64; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 60-61. *Missouri Democrat*, June 7, 1856; *St. Louis Pilot*, June 12, 1856; Chambers, *Old Bullion Benton*, 420.

⁴¹ Gienapp, *Origins of the Republican Party*, 307-316; Allan Nevins, *Fremont: Pathmarker of the West* (New York: Longmans, 1955), 421-38; Frank Blair to Preston Blair, December 17, 1855, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; *Missouri Democrat*, June 14, 1856

running for re-election to the state legislature, and Benton running for governor of Missouri, Frank threw his support behind Benton and Buchanan. Writing to his brother Montgomery, Frank admitted that “the position of things is very embarrassing to me particularly as Benton is thoroughly for Buchanan.” Realizing he could not win election to Congress without the support of the Benton Democrats, the political option was to either support Benton or to withdraw from the race. Furthermore, the stakes were too high. Supporting Benton and Buchanan might at least allow the Benton Democrats to defeat their proslavery rivals. If the anti-Benton Democrats carried the state, they would “inaugurate in Missouri the same reign of terror which exists in Kansas,” Frank warned. “Should we make a useless effort for [Frémont]” he asked, or “shall we make an effort which may be effective to save the State from the Nullifiers?” Despite being “deeply mortified,” Frank reluctantly supported Benton’s decision and pledged to stand by the free-soil principles that he had espoused in his political career. Nevertheless, he admitted to his brother that he was not “half satisfied [with] the position I propose to take.” There would be no Republican ticket in Missouri in 1856.⁴²

As Frank Blair wrestled with the political tumult in Missouri, Cassius Clay and John G. Fee attempted to forge a new direction for antislavery politics in Kentucky. To prepare for the upcoming Republican convention in Philadelphia, Clay and Fee met in Madison County in April 1856 to form the Madison County Republican Association. To prevent accusations of promoting insurrectionary ideas to the enslaved—which Clay had himself been accused of during his tenure as editor of the *True American* in 1845—the association promised to advocate for antislavery within the boundaries of the law and to “resist all violence and indiscretion, either for the overthrow or defence of Slavery.” During the meeting, however, Fee challenged Clay’s assertion

⁴²Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 62-63; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, June 12, 1856, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

that the federal government bore no responsibility for slavery anywhere other than in the territories. The federal government, argued Fee, was “responsible for the strength and perpetuity of slavery [by] the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law.” Despite his concerns over the direction of this new party, Fee was elected to lead the Kentucky delegation to the Republican convention in Philadelphia.⁴³

The first ever Republican nominating convention assembled on June 17 in the Musical Fund Hall in Philadelphia. In contrast to the raucous Democratic and Know-Nothing gatherings, some reporters attending the convention noticed the convention’s atmosphere of seriousness and purpose. “There is but a slight quantity of liquor consumed [and] very little swearing is heard, and everything is managed with excessive and intense propriety,” reported Murat Halstead for the *Cincinnati Commercial*. The convention included several small delegations from the Border South. Maryland’s delegation included several men who had been peripherally involved in the failed Free-Soil experiment of 1848 like Frederick County farmer David Gamble and Quakers like Francis Corkran. Kentucky’s delegation also included veterans of the antislavery campaigns in the state like George D. Blakey, Cassius Clay’s running mate from the 1849 gubernatorial election, and William S. Bailey, the editor of the antislavery *Newport News*. Frank Blair’s decision to support Buchanan and Benton meant that there would be no Missouri delegation. Some newspapers dismissed the Border South delegations as little more than placeholders designed to give the appearance of a national political party. “The few *exotics* from Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky,” wrote the *Washington Daily Union*, “have no constituencies at home, and have no effect on relieving the convention of a strictly *sectional* assemblage.”⁴⁴

⁴³ *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, April 19, 1856; *The Liberator*, May 2, 1856.

⁴⁴ Halstead, *Trimners, Trucklers & Temporizers*, 87; Horace Greeley, *Proceedings of the First Three Republican Conventions of 1856, 1860, and 1864* (Minneapolis: 1893), 39-41; *Washington Daily Union*, June 21, 1856.

Now assembled, the convention pursued its main objectives: present a party platform and nominate their presidential ticket. In contrast to the vague language of the Pittsburgh resolutions, the Republican adopted in Philadelphia platform dealt in specifics. Instead of simply calling for restoring the Missouri Compromise and merely resisting the existence of slavery in the territories, the platform firmly repudiated the doctrine of popular sovereignty. There would no halfway measures or compromise in the territories. The Republican platform denied territorial legislatures, individuals, or associations of individuals to give “legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States.” Only Congress had the authority in the region, and that authority was designed to prevent slavery from taking root.⁴⁵ On the second day of the convention, delegates packed into the hot and muggy hall to nominate the party’s first-ever presidential candidate. Candidates Chase and Seward had withdrawn, with only McLean remaining on the ballot. Seeing the movement towards Frémont as unstoppable, McLean withdrew from the race to allow the sweat-soaked delegates to make Frémont’s nomination unanimous. The convention then selected as the vice-presidential nominee New Jersey’s William Dayton, a conservative Whig, over several other candidates, including Nathaniel Banks, David Wilmot, and a little-known former congressman from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln. Cassius Clay received four votes for vice-president.⁴⁶

With no Republican organization in place in Missouri, and with their standard affixed to Benton and Buchanan, both Frank Blair and Benjamin Gratz Brown campaigned hard during the August state and congressional elections. Blair was running in Missouri’s First Congressional District against incumbent Know-Nothing congressman Luther M. Kennett and Thomas C. Reynolds, a proslavery Democrat. Brown, meanwhile, spent most of the election attacking

⁴⁵ Gienapp, *Origins of the Republican Party*, 258, 335-37; Greeley, *Proceedings*, 43-44.

⁴⁶ Halstead, *Trimmers, Trucklers & Temporizers* 91-99; Johnson, *Proceedings*, 53-55, 63-66.

proslavery candidates through the pages of the *Missouri Democrat*. Although loyal to Benton, opposition newspapers still branded Blair and Brown as “Black Republicans,” equating them with radicals and abolitionists. Despite this, Blair was elected to congress and Brown was re-elected to the state legislature. Benton, despite being seventy-four and recently widowed, embarked on a strenuous campaign for the governorship. Covering over 1200 miles, traveling by train, horseback, and buggy, Benton made more than twenty-five speeches in towns throughout the state. Benton won St. Louis County handily but came a miserable third in the rest of Missouri, losing the election to proslavery Democrat Trusten Polk. The *Democrat* cheered Blair’s election, rejoicing that St. Louis County would be once again represented by a figure “who desired to devote the new territories of the United States to the tillage and agriculture of white freemen instead of slaves.” Benton was now viewed as a spent force and would never run for office again. His defeat brought an end to a political figure whose ideology and worldview had helped to shape Missouri politics for over three decades. Benton would die two years later.⁴⁷

The evening after the election, in honor of Blair’s victory, a group of his supporters clambered to the top of the highest bluff overlooking St. Louis and built a massive bonfire out of cords of wood and several barrels of tar. The bonfire was so big, one newspaper reported, that its flames could be seen for miles. With skyrockets whizzing and darting throughout the evening sky, the crowd cheered on Frémont, Benton, and Blair. Blair and his supporters exulted in their victory. Only thirty-five, Frank Blair was now the leading antislavery man in Missouri and was quickly becoming a national figure. His defeat of the proslavery and nativist opposition was heralded nationwide by Republican newspapers. “A Glorious Triumph...St. Louis is an Anti-

⁴⁷Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 62-65; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 63-64; for Benton’s campaign, see Chambers, *Old Bullion Benton*, 422-424; T.H.B. Dunnigan, “Heard Benton Speak,” *Missouri Historical Review* 26, no. 4 (July 1932): 398-399; *Missouri Democrat*, August 5, 1856; *St. Louis Pilot*, August 16, 1856; *Washington Union*, August 15, 1856; *Missouri Republican*, August 10, 1856.

Slavery City,” heralded the *Tribune* in response to Blair’s election. Saluting his “firmness and nerve,” Greeley’s paper hailed the great significance of Blair’s triumph as “an expression of a determination” by the people of St. Louis “not be domineered over and dictated to by those who insolently take it upon themselves to represent the only interest that is thought worthy of protection in the South—niggers, niggers, niggers.” Gamaliel Bailey’s *National Era* greeted Blair’s win as the beginning of “a new era in the politics of the country,” and as a harbinger of future Republican victories in the Border South.⁴⁸

In the aftermath of his election, Blair planned to unite the disparate antislavery elements in the city. “My idea is now to consolidate the parties here,” he told his father, “and I think that with proper management it can be accomplished.” Returning to Silver Spring to visit with his father in late August, Blair took the opportunity to confer with Frémont in New York. Enthused about Frémont’s chances, Blair wrote to James Rollins in September to begin formalizing a political alliance. “Both of us have long foreseen the state of things which have now come to pass and discussed the propriety of forming a Union Party,” Blair told Rollins. Despite Blair’s private enthusiasm for Frémont, any Missouri Republican organization would have to wait until the presidential election in November had passed. Blair had spent the summer backing the Democratic Party and the *Missouri Democrat* still had Buchanan’s name on its masthead. With no dedicated Frémont newspaper and no official Frémont ticket, voters in Missouri chose between Buchanan and Fillmore, with Buchanan winning the state by ten thousand votes.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Alton Courier* quoted in the *St. Louis Pilot*, August 23, 1856; *New York Tribune*, August 12, 1856; *National Era*, August 14, 1856.

⁴⁹ Frank Blair to Francis Preston Blair, n.d. (but obviously 1856), Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Frank Blair to James S. Rollins, September 15, 1856, James S. Rollins Papers, SHSM; Walter Dean Burnham, *Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955), 570.

In Kentucky, Cassius Clay found himself and John G. Fee increasingly at loggerheads over the ideological direction of Kentucky Republicanism. Fee increasingly promoted radical antislavery doctrines, which rejected the Republican policy of only limiting and localizing slavery, and called for the “immediate and unconditional prohibition and suppression of slavery in all parts of the country.”⁵⁰ One incident in particular ruptured their alliance and underscored the distance between liberal and radical antislavery in Kentucky. During a rally where Clay intended to finalize the Republican party organization in Madison County, Fee delivered an extraordinarily radical address. Holding a copy of the Declaration of Independence, Fee declared slavery legislation to be “absurd [and] illegal,” and announced that he would refuse to obey the Fugitive Slave Law. Clay immediately refuted Fee. “Mr. Fee’s position is revolutionary, insurrectionary, and dangerous,” Clay told the crowd. “As long as the law is on the statute book, it is to be respected and obeyed until repealed by a Republican majority.” Fee leaped to his feet to challenge Clay, shouting “There is a higher law!” When the meeting ended, some of the crowd went away saying, “Fee is religiously right; Clay is politically right.” Reviewing the whole debate in the *Newport News*, Fee regretfully concluded that “in truth, the Republican Party now seems to me to stand [with the slaveholder].” This disagreement between Fee and Clay would irrevocably damage their relationship, with both barely speaking for almost a year. Without Fee and his followers committed to the Republican cause, Clay lost a potentially valuable organizational ally in building a Republican movement in Kentucky.⁵¹

The split between Clay and Fee did little to affect the chances of Kentucky Republicanism in upcoming presidential election, as Clay was aware that Frémont had no chance

⁵⁰ Howard, *The Evangelical War*, 84-5; *Proceedings of the Convention of Radical Political Abolitionists, Held At Syracuse, N.Y., June 26th, 27th, and 28th, 1855* (New York: 1855), 52-56.

⁵¹ Fee, *Autobiography*, 102-05; Harrold, “Violence and Nonviolence,” 35-6; *Newport Daily News*, August 25, September 1, 8, 1856; Howard, *The Evangelical War*, 86-7; Harrison, *Antislavery Movement in Kentucky*, 73-4.

of winning the state. “Gentlemen, Kentucky can give you no electoral vote!” Clay wrote to a Republican ratification meeting in New York during the summer. “We are few; the foe is many!” Clay now faced a decision; stay in Kentucky with his skeleton organization and campaign hopelessly for Frémont; or stump for the Republican cause in states where they could actually win. It was not a difficult choice for the ambitious Clay. By heading north to spread the Republican gospel, he could keep his name alive for a potential vice-presidential—or even presidential—nomination in 1860.⁵² In Springfield, Illinois, he spoke before an large audience which included Abraham Lincoln. In Dayton, Ohio, Clay regaled thousands of enthusiastic young Republicans with tales of his battles against the slaveholding mobs of Kentucky. To a packed house at the Broadway Tabernacle Church in New York City, Clay illustrated how slavery had stunted the economic growth of the South by forcing free white labor out and reinforced an “oligarchic and despotic” form of government.⁵³

On election day, November 4, Kentuckians voted in record numbers. Eighty-three percent of eligible voters went to the polls. Buchanan defeated Fillmore by over 7,000 votes, becoming the first Democratic presidential candidate to carry the state since Andrew Jackson. The Democratic win was due, in part, to the party’s success in explicitly connecting the maintenance of southern rights with the continuance of the Union. A vote for anyone other than Buchanan, Kentucky Democrats argued, would mean a Republican victory and disunion. For the Republicans, Frémont had garnered only 373 votes. The electoral results reflected the unorganized state of the party in Kentucky. It faced two organized parties in the Know-Nothings

⁵² Cassius Clay to Republican Ratification Meeting of New York, in *Milwaukee Sentinel*, July 10, 1856; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 158.

⁵³ Clay, *Life*, 232-3; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 159; *Cleveland Leader*, July 31, 1856; Clay, *Speech of C.M. Clay Before the Young Men’s Republican Central Union of New York* (n.p., 1856); *New York Tribune* October 25, 1856; *Louisville Courier*, September 30, 1856; *Cleveland Leader*, October 1, 1856.

and the Democrats which distributed pamphlets, organized political meetings, and pulled in the vote on election day. The 1856 election was an inauspicious beginning for the Kentucky Republican Party. Its two most famous proponents were not speaking to one another, and without any sort of campaign organization, stump speakers, or newspapers, the party existed only in name. For Clay, the need to rebuild his finances and keep his name circulating in Republican political circles meant that he spent most of his time travelling in the north rather than throughout the counties of Kentucky building a political organization. For Fee, his dislike of a Republican platform that ignored slavery where it already existed fed into his political disillusionment with the party. “Should I support the Republican Party,” Fee asked, “[or] stand off with a few and get away from the movement...until I could get them to take abolitionist ground?” In 1856, his answer was clear. On election day in Madison County, Fee did not bother to vote.⁵⁴

By September 1856, with the national campaign in full heat, Preston Blair took the opportunity to put some meat on the bones of what had so far been a relatively scrawny platform of Maryland Republicanism. A group of Democrats had held a Buchanan rally on Blair’s property in Silver Spring, Maryland, and had raised a tall hickory pole topped with an antlered deer head—symbolic of both Andrew Jackson and James Buchanan—in sight of his house. Blair used this event to write a pamphlet entitled “To My Neighbors,” in which he dispensed with the conservative antislavery message of his Pittsburgh address. Instead, Blair’s message increasingly resembled the liberal antislavery ideology of his son Frank. Charleston, wrote Blair, was the “headquarters of an oligarchy which [would] bring under its subjugation the laborer of the white race as well as the black race.” Slaveholders used their economic and political power to keep

⁵⁴Paine, “Kentucky Will Be Last to Give Up the Union,” 221-25; Volz, “Party, State, and Nation,” 248-52; Jasper Berry Shannon and Ruth McQuown, *Presidential Politics in Kentucky, 1824-1948: A Compilation of Election Statistics and an Analysis of Political Behaviour* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1950), 28-30; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 162; Clay, *Memoirs*, 537; Tallant, *Evil Necessity*, 202 (quote).

nonslaveholding whites “impoverished...[leaving] them not an inch of soil they can call their own,” argued Blair. The Republican Party, he promised, would push for free homesteads in the territories, and would “fight the battle for the rights of the white cultivator of the soil and the white mechanics against all who would pursue him in to the new territories.” But Blair was less concerned with convincing his southern “neighbors” to support the Republican Party than he was in ensuring that Frémont’s campaign was successful. Blair took up residence at the Frémont headquarters in New York City and threw himself into the campaign, corresponding with Republicans throughout the country and acting as Frémont’s speechwriter.⁵⁵

While Blair dispatched missives throughout the country to garner support for his candidate, it fell to a small band of Republicans to establish the party in the state itself. Much like their counterparts in Kentucky, Maryland’s Republicans faced two well-oiled Know-Nothing and Democratic political machines. Both parties held nominating conventions, both utilized the political and financial resources of their partisans to print and distribute ballots, recruit speakers, hold rallies, and run partisan newspapers. By 1856, the Know-Nothings had for the most part dropped the secretive conclaves which had symbolized their organization, and adopted the practices of traditional political maneuvering. Know-Nothings trotted out luminaries like Henry Winter Davis to deliver speeches which ignored nativist issues in favor of promoting the conservatism of Fillmore, which would then be appropriately covered in the partisan *Baltimore Clipper*. The Democrats would argue that they, not the Know-Nothings, were the only party who could prevent the Republicans from winning, and relied upon former Whigs like

⁵⁵ *New York Evening Post*, September 20, 1856; Elbert B. Smith, *Blair*, 232-3; William E. Smith, *Blair Family*, 369-71; Francis Preston Blair, *To My Neighbors* (New York: 1856).

Senator James A. Pearce and congressman John W. Crisfield to publicly throw their support behind Buchanan.⁵⁶

The Republicans, meanwhile, had little money and a sparse organization. Essentially a collection of political part-timers, they managed to elect a Frémont electoral ticket, composed of Preston Blair, William Pinckney Ewing, James Bryan, John Lincoln, George W. Martinet, Francis Corkran, David Gamble, and Joshua Switzer. Some, like Gamble, had been peripherally involved in the failed Maryland Free-Soil movement of 1848. Others, like Corkran, were part of a long Quaker tradition of antislavery that had always existed in Maryland. But none were political organizers or persuasive orators. By the fall of 1856, Montgomery Blair, concerned about the viability of the electoral ticket in Maryland, proposed that former Governor Francis Thomas could be used as a potential stump speaker. Montgomery believed that Thomas was in “favor of Frémont.” However, there is little evidence that Thomas ever campaigned for the Republican cause. Without any campaign organization, no public speakers, and only the German-language newspaper *Die Wecker* supporting them, there was little opportunity to promote a coordinated Republican message.⁵⁷

Efforts to grow the Republican Party in Maryland were also stymied by the state’s tradition of political violence. Republicans faced an environment in which partisan clubs violently clashed with one another during rallies and on election day. Know-Nothing clubs, such as the Rip Raps, Blood Tubs, Plug Uglies, Stay Lates and Hard Times clashed with Democratic clubs like the Bloody Eights, Pluckers, Shad Hoes, Bloats, and Butt Enders. Already the

⁵⁶ Baker, *Ambivalent Americans*, 119-27; Henig, *Henry Winter Davis*, 88; Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 428-9; *Baltimore Clipper*, October 31, 1856; Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 96-7; *Baltimore Sun*, September 16, 1856; *Annapolis Gazette*, September 18, 1856.

⁵⁷ Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 95; *Baltimore Sun*, September 27, 1856; *New York Tribune*, October 16, 1856; Montgomery Blair to Preston Blair, September 12, 1856, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL.

Baltimore City municipal election had been marred by fighting between several clubs around Lexington Market, with several men killed and dozens severely wounded. This atmosphere of political violence suppressed the Democratic vote, allowing the Know-Nothings to win the municipal elections of that year. Between public voting and identifiable ballots, voters sympathetic to the Republican cause would have had to brave potential injury or even death in order to cast their ballot.⁵⁸ Imagined racial violence also hurt the Republican prospects. In late September, Maryland newspapers began running stories of enslaved blacks tearing down Democratic banners and fighting with white men while cheering for Frémont. “If the negroes do this much now,” asked the *Baltimore County Advocate*, “what will the state of feeling be among them should Frémont be elected? Is there not real danger?” With rumors of Frémont-inspired slave insurrections in Texas capturing attention nationwide, stories such as these merely reinforced the notion that a Republican victory would result in revolts by Maryland’s enslaved population.⁵⁹

Republicans’ efforts to hold public gathering were repeatedly threatened with mob violence. The first public meeting of the Republican Association of Baltimore was held on September 11 at the Temperance Hall in Baltimore, with William Gunnison delivering the opening address. Gunnison laid out the party’s campaign platform, decrying the charge that they were simply an abolitionist party, promoting colonization as the means of resolving the slavery issue, and declaring that slavery monopolized land in the slave states to the detriment of non-slaveholding farmers. As Gunnison concluded, a large group assembled on the floor and began

⁵⁸ Frank Towers, “Violence as a Tool of Party Dominance: Election Riots and the Baltimore Know-Nothings, 1854-1860,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 93, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 5-38; *Baltimore Sun*, October 9, 10, 1856.

⁵⁹ *Baltimore County Advocate*, in the *Jackson Picket Guard*, September 24, 1856; *Easton Star*, September 16, 1856; for more on the national scope of the 1856 insurrection scare, see Douglas Egerton, “The Slaves’ Election: Fremont, Freedom, and Slave Conspiracies of 1856,” *Civil War History* 61, no. 1 (March 2015): 35-63.

cheering for Buchanan and Fillmore. After the crowd threatened to tar and feather the delegates, the thirty Republicans decided to make a quick exit onto the street where a larger, uglier crowd of two thousand greeted them. One group descended upon Francis Corkran, pushing him to the ground, mashing his top hat and cutting off his coat tails which they distributed as souvenirs. As the Republicans took shelter in the offices of *Die Wecker*, the crowd threw stones at the building until the police arrived to restore order.⁶⁰

In the end, Maryland Republicans achieved a pittance of votes. Frémont received a meager 285 votes—only 159 votes more than had been cast for the Free-Soil Party eight years earlier. Fillmore’s brand of conservatism played well in Maryland, garnering him 47,452 votes to Buchanan’s 39,123. Marylanders had chosen conservatism and Unionism, but it was the only state which the Know-Nothing Party had won. Henry Winter Davis had consistently maintained throughout the campaign that the only way to settle the slavery question was “to be silent on it.” While that may have worked in Maryland, the fact that throughout the North the Republican Party had displaced the Know-Nothings as the strongest anti-Democratic party was noted by some Maryland newspapers. The *Easton Gazette*, ruminating on the election results, lamented the defeat of Fillmore and looked warily toward the future. The election of Buchanan, predicted the paper, would be “the means of laying a solid foundation for the Republican Party four years hence—giving to them by the time such a force as will overcome all opposition. Look out and mark this.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Scharf, *A History of Baltimore City and County*, 124-25; *Baltimore Sun*, September 12, 1856; *New York Times*, September 13, 1856.

⁶¹ *Review of the Meetings of the Presidential Electors in Maryland, 1789-1989* (Westminster, MD.: Opera Printing House, 1989), 13-4; Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 98-9; Gienapp, *Origins of the Republican Party*, 446-8; *Easton Gazette*, November 8, 1856.

In November, James Buchanan was elected as the fifteenth president of the United States. Although losing the presidential election, the Republican Party's first outing had achieved what it termed a "victorious defeat." Frémont had won the majority of the northern states, losing only New Jersey, Illinois, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. Looking ahead to 1860, Republicans knew that if they could add Pennsylvania, with its 27 electoral votes, and either Illinois or Indiana to the states already won, they would win the election. In the Border South, prospects for Republicanism were hazier. Frank Blair had won an immense victory in Missouri. Although campaigning as a Benton Democrat, Blair was proof that with a clear message and strong organization, an antislavery candidate could run and win in the Border South. In Kentucky and Maryland, larger questions loomed. Cassius Clay still symbolized the heart of antislavery politics in Kentucky, but could he build a Republican organization that could compete in the state? In Maryland, could anyone fill the leadership void amongst the state's Republicans and prepare the party to compete in 1860? Four days after the election, the *Albany Evening Journal*, flush with optimism over the Republican Party's performance in the election, predicted a great future for the party in the South. Pointing to Blair's victory and the votes for Frémont in Kentucky and Maryland, the *Journal* remarked that "henceforward, the Republican Party has an organization in the slaveholding states. Where did it ever take root, that it failed to grow? Wild as the statement may seem, we look confidently forward to the time when it will sweep the Slave States as it now sweeps the Free."⁶²

Despite the *Journal's* optimism, the results of the 1856 election revealed the difficulties of building a Republican Party throughout the Border South. Hampered by conflicting ideologies, a lack of political organization, and by the political calculations of individual leaders,

⁶² Gienapp, *Origins*, 421; Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 264-5; *Albany Evening Journal*, November 8, 1856.

Border South Republicans faced an uncertain future. As the Whig Party collapsed throughout the region, many prospective allies chose instead to seek shelter with the Know-Nothings rather than join the burgeoning Republican Party. Border South Republicans were further stymied by a lack of political organization. Without state central committees, county organizations, and widely-circulated partisan newspapers, Republicans found it difficult to communicate and to organize. Finally, individual party leaders attempted to reconcile their own political ambitions against political reality. Frank Blair realized the time was not right for a dedicated Republican Party in Missouri, and chose instead to support Benton and Buchanan. Cassius Clay weighed the prospect of running a hopeless campaign in Kentucky against the opportunity of developing his own national political profile, and judged accordingly. Preston Blair left the leadership of the Maryland Republican to a small band of political neophytes while he attempted to craft a national Republican message for Frémont. While northern Republicans hailed the party's "victorious defeat" in the northern states, the potential for future political success in the Border South remained unknown.

Chapter 4

“To Make a Vigorous Canvass and Lay the Matter Fairly and Squarely Before the People”: Border South Republicans and the Election of 1860

When members of the 34th Congress returned to Washington for their final lame-duck session in December of 1856, Henry Winter Davis took the opportunity to take stock of the election results and survey the national political scene. The Republicans, accused Davis, were nothing more than a sectional protest party whose popularity rested on public outrage over the Kansas-Nebraska Act. With a Democratic president in office and a Democratic majority in the House, Kansas would be admitted with or without slavery according to the doctrine of popular sovereignty. With their single issue gone, argued Davis, the Republican Party has “nothing to do, and can do nothing...it has no future.” Only the Know-Nothing Party, believed Davis, free from sectional affiliation, could be a true national alternative. “Its principle is silence, peace, and compromise,” declared Davis. “It allows no agitation...it maintains the present condition of affairs.” The *New York Herald* was less impressed by Davis’s prediction. “[Davis’] party will never reach beyond the functions of mere bushrangers or guerillas [until] they have thrown away the puerile mummeries and rubbish of Know-Nothingism,” pronounced the *Herald*.¹ Davis was a poor prognosticator. Within a year, his party would be finished as a national party, absorbed by the rapidly growing Republican Party. Davis himself would struggle to find a political home, eventually settling on the new Constitutional Union Party, which professed a belief in nothing more than the Constitution and the Union, and preached blessed silence on slavery issues. Davis may have embraced Constitutional Unionism in practice, but he supported Republicanism in principle, agreeing with the party’s stance on most issues. Nevertheless, Davis could not yet

¹ Henry Winter Davis, *Speeches and Addresses Delivered in the Congress of the United States and on Several Public Occasions, by Henry Winter Davis of Maryland* (New York: 1867), 78-82; Henig, *Henry Winter Davis*, 90-1; *New York Herald*, January 8, 1857.

publicly support it. Like many antislavery Border South men, Davis viewed the Republican Party as still too sectional and still too tainted by abolitionism to be a viable political home.

This chapter argues that the failure to build a competitive Republican organization in the Border South was the result of three factors: the inability to merge anti-Democratic partisans into the Republican Party, a series of external events which reinforced the view that the Republican Party was a haven for antislavery extremists, and the individual political ambitions of Border South Republican leaders. From 1857 to 1860, Border South Republicans had to contend with renewed proslavery efforts in Kansas, John Brown's raid in northern Virginia, the publication of Hinton Rowan Helper's incendiary book *The Impending Crisis of the South*, and the shattering of the Democratic Party into northern and southern factions. Using a liberal political antislavery ideology that fused emancipation and colonization, Frank Blair and Benjamin Gratz Brown hoped to unite the political opponents of the proslavery Missouri Democracy under the Republican banner. What resulted instead was a Republican Party with little support beyond St. Louis and which to its critics operated mainly as a vehicle for Blair's political ambitions. Cassius Clay, still concerned over his own political future, chose instead to focus his efforts on Republican campaigns outside of Kentucky. As a result, a moribund Kentucky Republican Party failed to make a dent in a political landscape dominated by parties keen to avoid the question of slavery altogether. Maryland Republicans, meanwhile, were accused of extremism and continued to face political violence, while potential allies like Davis remained content to see which way the political winds were blowing. As they prepared for the pivotal election of 1860, Republicans in the Border South struggled to define themselves and their party at a time when tolerance for antislavery politics was swiftly waning.

With the 1856 presidential contest settled, in Missouri Frank Blair and Benjamin Gratz Brown redoubled their efforts to forge a political alliance between antislavery Whigs and Know-Nothings and the remnants of the Benton Democrats. If Blair and Brown were to organize these disparate antislavery elements in Missouri into a Republican Party, they would first have to articulate policies that moved beyond simply opposing the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Now the leader of small yet vocal antislavery faction in the Missouri House of Representatives, Brown took the opportunity to outline his vision of a Missouri free of slavery and made powerful through the promotion of free white labour. In his speeches, Brown concentrated on the economic arguments against slavery and avoided condemning slavery and slaveholders as morally evil. Slavery was already declining in Missouri, said Brown. Standing on the steps of the Missouri Capitol building, he himself had witnessed gangs of enslaved blacks being driven along their route to Texas. "That sight was to me proof, strong as Holy Writ, that the doom was fixed upon slavery in the future history of Missouri." Why then not speed it along? Brown called for new legislation that would encourage immigration, commercial and manufacturing enterprises, railroad development, and free homesteads for the poor to help speed the increase of Missouri's white population. In conjunction with slaveholders selling their enslaved property to the cotton fields and sugarcane plantations of the Lower South, free white labor would flood into the state. The economic results of this policy would be immediate, argued Brown. Removing slavery from Missouri would increase trade and commerce and create new industries stimulated by an influx of capital from the northeast. Northern emigrants would no longer bypass Missouri and choose to settle in the western free states like Iowa or Nebraska. Turning to the proslavery Missourians who wished to make Kansas a slave state, Brown also warned that the constant agitation over slavery the territories jeopardized Missouri's position as the economic engine of the American

west, threatening the development of a transcontinental railroad with St. Louis at its hub. Finally, to answer those critics who saw himself and the other antislavery Missourians as nothing more than abolitionists, Brown insisted that he cared not for the welfare of the enslaved. What he proposed was not freeing blacks, but rather freeing whites from the economic completion of enslaved labor. “I seek to emancipate the white man from the yoke of competition with the negro,” declared Brown. “I aim to relieve the free man from conflict with the slave [and] I think it is to be accomplished, by its initiative stages chiefly by legislation for the protection and profit of white labor.”²

While emancipating Missouri from blacks had remained a constant theme in both Blair and Brown’s public pronouncements, they both lacked specifics on exactly how to achieve this goal. Over the course of the summer and fall of 1857, Blair would attempt to graft another idea onto his liberal antislavery policy: colonizing free blacks in Central America.³ If slavery, the bane of free white labor in the Border South were to end, something must be done with emancipated slaves. But where could they go? No northern state could absorb them, as white laborers would resent the economic competition of free blacks, and many western states had imposed restrictions of black immigration. Emancipation was a simple process, believed Blair, but the “amalgamation of the white and black races was abhorrent, and their existence under the same Government was impossible.” Colonization to Africa had failed, due to “the immense distance, the barbarous state of the mother country, [which] has paralyzed all efforts of the

² Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 66; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Missouri* (Jefferson City: 1857), 301; B. Gratz Brown, *Speech of the Honorable B. Gratz Brown of St. Louis, on the Subject of Gradual Emancipation in Missouri, Delivered to the House of Representatives, February 12, 1857* (St. Louis: 1857); Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 72-73.

³ Frank Blair to Francis Preston Blair, February 12, 1857, Francis Preston Blair to Frank Blair, March 19, 1857, Frank and Montgomery Blair Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri (hereafter cited as MHS); Blair Family Papers, Missouri History Museum, St. Louis; Frank Blair to Francis Preston Blair, February 22, 1857, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Frank Blair to Francis Preston Blair, March 25, 1857, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Donnie D. Bellamy, “The Persistence of Colonization in Missouri,” *Missouri Historical Review* 72, no. 1 (October 1977), 3-6.

benevolent societies.” Blair suggested that by colonizing both free and enslaved blacks in Central America, the United States could relieve itself of the moral, social, and economic burden of enslavement, reinvigorate the “feeble people” of the Central and South American republics, open up the region to American commerce, and supply much-needed labor to the tropical regions. “It is evident to every man of thought that freed blacks hold a place in this country which cannot be maintained,” concluded Blair. “The strong repugnance of the free white laborer to be yoked with the negro refugee breeds an enmity between races, which must end with the expulsion of the latter.” Immersing himself in books and studies about the feasibility of colonization in the region, Frank hoped that Congress would grant Missouri control over the sale of the remaining public lands in the state. The profits would be used to purchase Missouri’s enslaved and transport them to Central America. In January 1858, Blair proposed that a congressional committee be formed to examine the possibility of securing territory in Central America where blacks could be settled. Although Blair attempted to appeal of the anti-black sentiments of his fellow congressmen, his resolution never came to a vote. Congressional attention would be directed elsewhere, as the situation in Kansas re-emerged as a national political crisis.⁴

By 1857, proslavery Kansans saw that their window for making Kansas a permanent slave state was narrowing. Despite a variety of proslavery emigrant promotion schemes, the mass of settlers from other southern states had not materialized. With more free soilers pouring into the territory every month, it seemed only a matter of time before an antislavery constitution was passed, making Kansas a free state. With the term of the territorial legislature expiring in 1857, proslavery legislators feared that the October territorial elections would return a free soil legislature. This new legislature could then call for a state constitutional convention, pass a free

⁴ Cong. Globe, 35th Cong., 1st Sess., 293-98 (1858); Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 1:125-27; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 71-72; *Missouri Democrat*, January 22, 1858.

soil constitution, have it ratified by a free soil majority, and send it to Congress for ratification. The efforts of proslavery men would then be for naught, and Missouri would be hemmed in on three sides by free states. If they were to secure their gains, proslavery Kansans would have to work quickly. In February of 1857 they called for a state constitutional convention to be held before the territorial elections. Doubting the ability of the new territorial governor, Robert Walker, to prevent a fraudulent delegate election, most Kansas free soilers stayed home on election day, allowing the proslavery forces to elect a full slate of delegates to the state constitutional convention held in the small town of Lecompton. There, they ratified a proslavery state constitution and forwarded it to Congress. Almost simultaneously, the fall territorial elections had resulted in a slight free soil majority in the legislature. With the free soil majority urging Congress to reject the proslavery “Lecompton Constitution,” President Buchanan insisted on its immediate adoption, believing that it would resolve the slavery controversy in Kansas that had consumed the nation for the past three years.⁵

As Buchanan attempted to push the Lecompton Constitution through the Congress, the debates in the House over Lecompton showed how disparate views on slavery were becoming in the Border South. Thomas Anderson, a proslavery Know-Nothing lawyer came from Marion County, whose enslaved population of nearly three thousand sat uncomfortably close to free Illinois. Anderson spoke in favor of Lecompton, arguing that it was necessary to have “upon [Missouri’s] border a neighbor that would not interfere with their property, that would not, through incendiary publications and speeches, spread disaffection among their slaves and render insecure their habitations.” James A. Stewart, from Maryland’s Eastern Shore, took the

⁵ The full text of the Lecompton Constitution can be found in the *Daily National Intelligencer*, December 7, 1857; for more on the machinations of the Lecompton Constitution see Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, 151-54; Rawley, *Race and Politics*, 202-22.

traditional Maryland position. Approving the admission of Kansas as a slave state, Stewart called for the “rights of all sections to be preserved” and demanded that “aggression shall not be allowed from any quarter...North [or] South.” Samuel Peyton, a doctor from Bullitt County, Kentucky, advised that rejecting the Lecompton Constitution would lead to greater sectional animosity. “Excite jealousy and distrust between the North and South,” he warned, “and I tell you there is not power or patriotism enough in the Union to hold the government together.”⁶ But other Border South congressmen rejected the administration’s forcing Lecompton down the throat of Congress. Blair, continuing the theme which he and Brown promoted in Missouri, rejected the Lecompton Constitution because it closed off the territory to free white labor. The question of Kansas was “not a question between North and South...it is a question which commends itself especially to the non-slaveholding and labouring white men of the South.” Maryland’s Henry Winter Davis condemned the hypocrisy of the Democrats promoting popular sovereignty in Kansas, while ignoring the will of the majority there. “The President’s policy is high treason against the right of the people to govern themselves,” thundered Davis. Despite pressure from Buchanan, the House rejected Lecompton 120 votes to 112. A solid wall of Republicans and forty percent of Northern Democrats all voted against the proslavery constitution, with six Border South congressmen voting with them. Southerners had never before lost on a major slavery issue. The *Charleston Mercury* cast a suspicious eye towards those Border South congressmen who had voted against Lecompton. “All represent States where slavery may be gradually and safely abolished without ruin...the unsoundness of these states on the slavery question killed Lecompton.”⁷

⁶ Cong. Globe, 35th Cong., 1st Sess., 420, 1313-14, 1330-33 (1858).

⁷ Cong. Globe, 35th Cong., 1st Sess., 1282-84, 1435-45 (1858); Davis, *Speeches and Addresses*, 101; *New York Tribune*, April 2, 1858; *Charleston Mercury*, April 5, 1858, quoted in Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 2:141.

The defeat of Lecompton sparked new discussions about the possibilities of fusion between anti-Democratic parties. Bolstered by his role in helping defeat the Lecompton Constitution, Henry Winter Davis began suggesting that Republicans and southern anti-administration men could use the opportunity to form a new political movement to oppose the Democratic Party. Davis's tendency to align with Republicans in Congress was increasingly being noted by Democratic newspapers in Maryland. "Is it not, in very deed true...that 'Republicanism is marching Southward?'" asked the *Easton Star*. "Witness the votes of Henry Winter Davis in Congress." But Davis's plan rested on the curious assumption that the main objective of this political coalition would to silence the any questions on slavery. "Treat the [slavery] contest as ended," proposed Davis, "*silence* and agitation, abstinence from any platforms...nor resolutions from any policy, is the dictate of common sense." For Republicans whose platform rested on opposing the extension of slavery into the territories, Davis's plan a non-starter.⁸ If fusion between anti-Democratic forces was not going to happen at the national level, then some state organizations were willing to pick up the slack. By April 1859, the Maryland Know-Nothing state council passed a resolution calling for all anti-Democratic forces in every state to select delegates to a national convention to nominate candidates for the 1860 presidential election. Repudiating "abolition in the North and secession in the South," the council proposed to unite conservative men across all parties. Maryland, with "her devotion to broad and earnest nationality," would be the vanguard of the movement, by entering this organization in the upcoming state election. Yet if this new "opposition" party's main appeal would be its lack of definition, its decision to welcome allies of all political stripes—including Republicans—helped

⁸ Davis to Amos A. Lawrence, December 1858, quoted in Henig, *Henry Winter Davis*, 108-9; *Easton Star*, July 28, 1857; *Cecil Democrat*, February 21, 1857; Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York: Collier Books, 1948), 234-46.

to clarify the position of some Marylanders still looking for a political option. “I am forced into the ranks of the Democratic Party,” explained Augustus R. Sollers, a former Whig congressman from Calvert County, “because I behold in that party the only bulwark of Southern rights, the only political organization capable of stemming the tide of Northern fanaticism.” Other proslavery men in Maryland immediately condemned the platform as a “union with the Abolitionists.”⁹

In Kentucky, attempts to fuse local anti-Democratic forces at a state level also proved frustrating. Throughout 1857, Know-Nothing newspapers had constantly accused the Democratic Party of selling out the South because of its devotion to popular sovereignty. That doctrine, they argued, had resulted in nothing more than antislavery settlers filling up the west and the birth of the Republican Party. “The South, nobody can pretend to deny, is most infamously ensnared, cheated, humbugged, outwitted, befooled, victimized, and cleaned out by the Democratic Party,” accused the *Louisville Journal*. In response, some Know-Nothings saw an opportunity build a new national coalition based upon opposition to Lecompton and a devotion to the Union and the Constitution, while denouncing radical Republican tendencies like abolitionism. Such a coalition, some argued, would thrive in the political soil of Henry Clay’s Kentucky.¹⁰ By the fall of 1858, the *Louisville Journal* had called for a convention of all men “desirous of uniting in the overthrow of the present corrupt administration.” However, this vaguely-defined “Opposition” party sought to dispose of one of the main tenets of the Republican platform—the non-extension

⁹ *Baltimore Daily Exchange*, April 7, 1859; *Baltimore Sun*, August 26, 1859. Sollers had previously been a Whig and Know-Nothing, and some suggested that his change of heart also stemmed from his bitterness over not receiving a lucrative patronage position. *Frederick Examiner*, August 31, 1859; George Yellott, *An Ernest Appeal to Men of All Parties, Opposed to Affiliation with the Abolitionist, by a Citizen of Baltimore County* (Baltimore: 1859), 5-6, MDHS.

¹⁰ *Louisville Journal*, February 23, 28, September 16, 1857; *Louisville Courier*, April 24, 1858; Kirwan, *Crittenden*, 328-9.

of slavery in the territories.¹¹ With an alliance with Republicanism now fundamentally impossible, Opposition men met in Louisville in February 1859 to create a new party. This new party's platform would promote sectional peace, an end to agitation over slavery, and the maintenance of the Union. Some Kentuckians were left unclear as to who exactly the Opposition was. "It is hard to tell where our Opposition leaders now stand," wrote one Kentuckian to the *New York Times*. "They would have it that they are not 'Republicans' nor 'Democrats,' but somewhere between." As in Maryland, this attempt at fusion would not adopt Republican ideology, but rather hew to a conservative belief in the power of Union. Foreshadowing the principles of the Constitutional Union Party which would emerge a year later, this political group would attempt to find a middle ground between the increasingly hostile poles of proslavery Democracy and antislavery Republicanism.¹²

If fusion between anti-Democratic groups was still being discussed as hypothetical in Kentucky and Maryland, in Missouri fusion took a more practical course. As the August 1858 congressional and state elections approached, clear political identities had not been resolved yet amongst the former Bentonites, ex-Whigs, and Know-Nothings. Still not yet willing to adopt the Republican name, Blair, Brown, James S. Rollins, and George R. Smith had fashioned themselves into an "Opposition Party" with which to take on the proslavery Democrats. By April, Blair was busy attempting to encourage other ex-Whigs to actively involve themselves in the campaign. "Shall we in Missouri, after having begun the battle so gloriously be recreant?" Blair asked of James O. Broadhead. "It must not be...I feel perfectly that all that is requisite is to make a vigorous canvass and lay the matter fairly before and squarely before the people." Blair's

¹¹ *Louisville Journal*, September 20, October 23, 1858; *New York Times*, April 1, 1858; Foner, *Free Soil*, 203-05; Holt, *Political Crisis of the 1850s*, 208-11.

¹² *Louisville Journal*, February 24, 25, 1859; *Louisville Daily Courier*, February 25, 1859; *New York Times*, November 9, 1859.

conception of a “vigorous canvass” lay into in repeating his message of subsidized emancipation and Central American colonization. This new Opposition Party adopted a platform that denounced every facet of the Buchanan administration, opposed “negro equality,” and proclaimed the belief that the extinction of slavery would benefit Missouri. “Give us Missouri for white men,” declared Blair, “and white men for Missouri.” While Blair promoted his cause at political meetings throughout St. Louis, Brown supported him vigorously in the columns of the *Missouri Democrat*.¹³ However, Blair and Brown’s promotion of free white labor as a panacea for the state did not prove to be enough come election day. Blair lost in a three-man race against Richard Barrett, his Democratic opponent, and Samuel M. Breckinridge, a Know-Nothing. Meanwhile, Brown had run fifteenth in a field of thirty-seven for St. Louis’s twelve seats in the Missouri House and would not be returning to Jefferson City.¹⁴

The defeats of 1858 led to a growing distance between Blair and Brown, which would see both men struggle for primacy in Missouri politics. Frank Blair’s wife Apolline believed that Brown had poorly managed the Opposition campaign in St. Louis. “There is great mismanagement among Frank’s friends,” complained Apolline. “They were so confident he would have an overwhelming majority that they were not near as vigilant as they should have been.” When Frank returned from the lame-duck Congressional session in March 1859 to prepare for the upcoming civic elections, he found the Opposition party in St. Louis in disarray. “Our people [are] ready to give up... [they are] in despair and fighting like cats and dogs,” he wrote to Montgomery. The situation at the *Democrat* also had deteriorated. Brown had neglected

¹³ Frank Blair to James O. Broadhead, April 19, 1858, James O. Broadhead Papers, MHS; Blair’s nominating speech can be found in the *New York Tribune*, July 6, 1858, quoted in Smith, *Blair Family*, 1:429-30; *Missouri Republican*, July 19, 1858; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 72-73.

¹⁴ *Missouri Democrat*, August 4, 5, 1858; *Missouri Republican*, August 3, 1858; *New York Tribune*, August 5, 7, 1858; Montgomery Blair to Preston Blair, August 27, 1858, Blair-Lee Family Papers, PUL.

portions of the business of the paper while concentrating on editorializing. Furthermore, Blair accused Brown of being unambitious, and spending too much time with his new wife. In April of 1859, Brown announced his resignation from the paper, while assuring his readers that he remained committed to the “the cause of divine Freedom in the State of Missouri.” The paper’s Jefferson City correspondent, Peter Foy, took over as editor. Under Foy’s editorship the paper now publicly identified itself with the Republican Party. “The Republican Party is in reality the palladium of the Union and the rights of the States,” Foy declared in July 1859. “Looking below the surface, it becomes apparent that the Republican Party is the true conservator of the Union and of Constitutional liberty.” While the divide between the two men perhaps stemmed from Brown’s mismanagement of the *Democrat*, Brown’s growing role as a public figure in state politics surely must have grated on the ambitious Blair, who saw himself as a leading figure in Missouri politics.¹⁵

Now an ex-congressman, Frank Blair embarked on a lengthy speaking tour throughout the United States to promote his message of colonization. Both he and Montgomery hoped to enlist Wisconsin Senator James R. Doolittle, a conservative Republican, to the cause of colonization. Frank proposed to Doolittle that promoting a colonization platform amongst the party rank-and-file within western states like Wisconsin would help to advance the cause of colonization in Congress, as state legislatures would “impose backbone into [Republican congressmen] by declaring in favor of the measure.” Montgomery felt that should the Republican Party throw its support behind a national policy of colonization it might lead to growing support for the party in the Border South. “It would do more...than ten thousand speeches to define

¹⁵ Apolline Blair to Francis Preston Blair, August 6, 9, 1858, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, March 17, 1859, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Jim A. Hart, *A History of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1961), 39-42; *Missouri Democrat*, April 11, July 15, 1859; Smith, *Blair Family*, 460-61.

accurately our objects and disabuse the minds of the great body of Southern people [that] the Republicans wish to set negroes free among them to be their equals,” argued Montgomery. “This is the only point needing elucidation and comprehension to make us as strong at the South as at the North.” Should the Republican Party adopt the principles of colonization, said Montgomery, he would then run for office in Maryland. On a fundamental level, the Blairs truly believed that adopting colonization as party policy would be the only way to refute the charge that Republicans were for black equality. On a practical level, promoting colonization might allow southern non-slaveholders to accept emancipation and enable a Republican Party—controlled by the Blairs—to grow in the Border South and beyond.¹⁶

As Frank Blair stumped for colonization, three national incidents would jeopardize the prospects of the Republican Party in the Border South: the publication of Hinton Rowan Helper’s controversial book *The Impending Crisis of the South*, John Brown’s raid at Harpers Ferry, and a speakership battle in Congress. The publication and circulation of *The Impending Crisis* rekindled accusations by slaveholding southerners that the Republican Party was a haven for insurrectionists and extremists. Helper, a nonslaveholding North Carolinian, argued throughout his lengthy book that if the South were to survive, slavery must be abolished and the southern economy modernized. But Helper went further. His most radical proposals called for independent political action by nonslaveholding whites throughout the south, the disenfranchisement and taxation of slaveholders, and the immediate emancipation and colonization of blacks. In language reminiscent of Cassius Clay’s provocations in the pages of the *True American*, Helper raised the spectre of insurrection by an alliance of slaves and

¹⁶ Frank Blair to James R. Doolittle, November 3, 1859, Montgomery Blair to Doolittle, November 11, 1859, in the “Letters of Edward Bates and the Blairs, Frank P.—Sr. and Jr.—and Montgomery, from the Private Papers and Correspondence of Senator James Rood Doolittle of Wisconsin,” *MHR* Vol.11, no. 2 (January 1917): 135-37; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 79-80; Smith, *Blair Family*, 445-47; Foner, *Free Soil*, 276-80.

nonslaveholding whites. “Do you aspire to become the victims of white nonslaveholding vengeance by day, and of barbarous passage by the negroes at night?” Helper asked of slaveholders. “Would you be instrumental in bringing upon yourselves, your wives, and your children, a fate too horrible to contemplate?” To expand the book’s reach, Helper sought to publish an abridged version that could be more easily distributed. With the assistance of the *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, Helper circulated a fundraising letter for a compendium version. Several Republican congressmen allowed for the use of their names in the letter, cementing a clear relationship between the Republican Party and *The Impending Crisis*. But Greeley’s relationship with Helper went beyond simply connecting Helper with well-heeled Republican donors. By March 1859, Greeley and the *Tribune* were claiming that *The Impending Crisis* would be essential in promoting the Republican cause to the South. Helper’s book should “be given the widest possible gratuitous circulation, [in] Delaware, Maryland, and the other border slave states,” wrote Greeley. By the end of March, enough money had been collected to allow for the printing of one thousand sample copies of the compendium.¹⁷

Despite Greeley’s optimism, the reception of Helper’s book among Border South Republicans was mixed. Helper had written to Preston Blair in November 1858, asking him to endorse the book and to add several pages of his own views. While Preston supported the antislavery and pro-colonization message of the book, he could not accept Helper’s calls to violence. Frank Blair, on the other hand, had signed the circular along with Cassius Clay. Whether Blair and Clay had thoroughly read the book remains unknown. Helper’s economic arguments did align with much of the rhetoric both men had espoused throughout their careers.

¹⁷ *New York Tribune*, June 26, 1857; *Liberator*, July 3, 1857; Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South and How to Meet It* (New York: 1857), 128 (quotation), 155-56; David Brown, *Southern Outcast: Hinton Rowan Helper and the Impending Crisis of the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 140-41; *New York Daily Tribune*, March 16, 1859.

But Clay, who had his own history of careless pronouncements, should have recognized that the insurrectionary language in Helper's book was bound to be controversial.¹⁸ Nonetheless, both Clay and William S. Bailey, the abolitionist editor of the *Free South* newspaper in Newport, began distributing copies throughout Kentucky. In Maryland, William Gunnison, who had been involved in the 1856 state Republican Party, was busy distributing *The Impending Crisis* throughout the state. Despite few paid subscriptions, Gunnison persisted in doing so, despite risking being charged under an 1835 Maryland statute that made illegal the circulation of any printed material which could create discontent or stir up insurrection amongst enslaved blacks. Maryland newspapers attacked Gunnison for "laboring with these fanatics to overthrow the Constitution, and to incite our slaves to rebellion and murder." Despite the pressure from both newspapers and the law, Gunnison managed to distribute several hundred copies of Helper's book. Daniel Orem, an associate of Gunnison's, requested two hundred copies to be distributed in Dorchester County, Maryland. "The demand is almost entirely from the laboring classes," Orem wrote to Gunnison in December 1859. "Many of them say they had no idea of the disadvantages of slavery 'till they read this book." Many of these readers subsequently burned their copies after reading, in order to not be caught possessing inflammatory literature.¹⁹

The symbolic threat posed by antislavery literature was quickly accompanied by a very real raid on Harpers Ferry, which further hindered efforts by Republicans to present their party as politically viable in the Border South. On the evening of October 16, 1859 abolitionist John

¹⁸ Hinton Rowan Helper to Francis Preston Blair, November 4, 1858, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Smith, *Francis Preston Blair*, 250; Circular, reproduced in the *New York Daily Tribune*, December 4, 1858;

¹⁹ Brown, *Southern Outcast*, 144-147; Bruns and Fraley, "Old Gunny" *MHM*, 316-18; The laws, originally passed in December 1831, which concerning the distribution of "inflammatory materials," was a direct result of the Nat Turner Rebellion that previous August. See an Act Concerning the Punishment of Frauds, Chap. 318, Supplement, Sec. 1-2, in Clement Dorsey, *The general public statutory law and public local law of the state of Maryland: from the year 1692 to 1839 inclusive, with annotations thereto, and a copious index* (Baltimore: 1840), 141:1217-18; *Baltimore Republican*, January 21, 1860; Daniel S. Orem to William Gunnison, December 20, 1859, quoted in Brown, *Southern Outcast*, 148; *New York Daily Tribune*, August 12, 1859.

Brown and twenty men set off from a rented farm in western Maryland, and headed to Harpers Ferry, Virginia. In the dead of night they captured the town's federal armory, arsenal, and engine house. Brown and his men now had access to guns and ammunition with which to supply an army of liberated slaves from the surrounding region. Inexplicably, instead of raiding the armory, fleeing the mountainous regions of western Virginia, and commencing a guerilla campaign against slaveholders, Brown and his group barricaded themselves in the engine house. By the next day, Washington dispatched a company of Marines, commanded by Colonel Robert E. Lee, to attack the raiders. After a three-minute battle, half of Brown's men, including his two sons, were killed. Brown himself was captured, placed on trial, and executed two months later. In the immediate aftermath of the raid, some Border South newspapers downplayed the raid's importance but emphasized threat posed by the Republican Party. "The whole affair dwindles into utter insignificance as the literal facts are brought out," argued the *Baltimore Sun*. "If now, under a Democratic President, the Abolitionists are so bold, what may we not expect should a Black Republican be elected to the Presidency?" wondered the *Louisville Courier*. While Border South Republicans all disavowed the raid, it was trickier to distance themselves from Helper's book. Writing to Helper, Clay informed him that Harpers Ferry had "dashed all our hopes...few will venture to circulate your book here." In late October, Frank Blair wrote to his brother, expressing his concern over "that insane business of old John Brown at Harpers Ferry...I fear it will recoil on us as a party in the border states."²⁰

The controversy over *The Impending Crisis* and the shock of Harpers Ferry would soon coalesce with a speakership controversy in the House of Representatives during December of

²⁰ *Baltimore Sun*, October 19, 1859; *Louisville Courier*, October 20, 1859; Cassius Clay to Hinton Rowan Helper, November 29, 1859, quoted in Brown, *Southern Outcast*, 154; *New York Herald*, November 28, 1859; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, October 20, 1859, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

1859 that would further cripple Republican efforts in the Border South. As in 1855, no one party commanded control of the House. As in 1855, the speakership contest offered the opportunity for greater collaboration between anti-Democratic forces in House. After an inconclusive first ballot, John B. Clark, a slaveholding Democrat from Missouri, introduced a dramatic resolution. Clark declared that any candidate for the speakership who had endorsed the “doctrines and sentiments” of *The Impending Crisis* should withdraw from the election. “If men are to be placed in high positions in the country who have advocated what this book advocates,” argued Clark, then the whole country must be made aware of it.²¹ It was a threat directly aimed at the leading Republican candidate, John Sherman of Ohio. Sherman had been one of sixty-eight Republicans whose name had been attached to one of Helper’s fundraising letters, and who now professed his innocence. “I have never read Mr. Helper’s book, or the compendium founded upon it,” protested Sherman. Instead, Sherman admitted that he possibly signed a letter, allowing his name to be used in the circular. Attempting to salvage his position, Sherman declared on the House floor that “I am opposed to any interference whatever by the people of the free States with the relations of master and slave in the Slave states.” Sherman’s protestations were meaningless. Clark’s resolution had united the Democrats in determination to defeat Sherman, believing his elevation to the speakership would be tantamount to endorsing servile insurrection. The Republicans meanwhile, were determined to elect Sherman. As the election dragged on for eight weeks, the legislative agenda of the House ground to a halt, as sectional recriminations from both sides echoed throughout the chamber. Soon, members of both houses began arming themselves

²¹ Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 2:248-50; Cong. Globe, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., 3-4 (1859).

with bowie knives and revolvers. Floor debates simmered with the potential to explode into a full blown riot.²²

Sitting quietly as indignation swirled around him was Henry Winter Davis. Refusing to deliver any public statements on the speakership controversy, Davis saw an opportunity to further cement a relationship between the Republicans and the anti-administration Know-Nothings and Whigs of the South. Before Congress opened, Davis had conferred with Horace Greeley and assured him that if committee positions were awarded to Know-Nothing congressmen, then they would vote for a Republican candidate for speaker. Davis, in fact, viewed Sherman as the best candidate for the speakership, arguing that Sherman would “organize the Committees on the basis of recognizing all the opposition whether they voted for him or not [and] so constitute them as to stifle the negro agitation.” However, Davis discovered that there was little appetite for supporting Sherman within the Know-Nothing caucus. As voting dragged on with no end in sight, Davis began to urge Republicans to dump Sherman in favour of a more moderate candidate. By January Sherman withdrew, and the Republicans put forward William Pennington of New Jersey, a moderate former Whig. On the fortieth ballot, Pennington received 115 votes, just two votes shy of being elected. Finally, on the forty-fourth ballot, and in front of a packed gallery, Davis and another Know-Nothing congressman voted for Pennington, giving the Republican Party the coveted speakership. In return, several southern Know-Nothings received prestigious committee appointments. Davis, having broken the deadlock, was praised by the Republican press for “his boldness and elevation above mere partisan considerations.” The Maryland press was not as sympathetic. Davis, argued the *Baltimore American*, must “never

²² Cong. Globe, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., 21 (1859); Ollinger Crenshaw, “The Speakership Contest of 1859-1860: John Sherman’s Election a Cause of Disruption?” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 29, no. 3 (December 1942): 323-38; *New York Tribune*, April 7, 1860; *New York Herald*, April 7, 1860.

represent any portion of this State hereafter.” Echoing the *American*, the *Baltimore Sun* argued that Davis had betrayed his state, and called for his removal. “The time has come when Baltimore must have her true position in relation to the South, and any man who dares to trifle with her integrity at such a time as this, must be thrust aside or publicly rebuked.”²³

For proslavery men in the Border South, Davis’s heretical behavior during the speakership contest, combined with the release of the *Impending Crisis* and John Brown’s raid, was symptomatic of a larger problem: that slavery’s borderlands had become increasingly vulnerable to the lure of the Republican Party and its antislavery doctrines. For Clark, protecting slavery’s borderland from antislavery activity was the fundamental task of any Border South politician. Anything that was infected by antislavery and abolition had to be removed before it infected everything else. There was no room for compromise. John B. Clark revelled in his victory. “That resolution of mine has worked its effect,” bragged Clark to the House. “It has smoked out before the American people the fact that an endorser of the Helper book cannot be Speaker of the House.” Yet despite Clark’s efforts, a Republican had won the speakership and had done so with the aid of another Border South politician. For proslavery men, a Southerner had “betrayed” his allegiance to the South and had worked with Republicans to secure committee positions for other southerners in the House. If this could happen with Republicans controlling just one branch of government, what would happen should a Republican win the presidency, and the political power which that office held?²⁴

²³ Gerald S. Henig, “Henry Winter Davis and the House Speakership Contest of 1859-1860” *MHM* 68, no. 1 (Spring 1973): 1-19; Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis du Pont, December 20, 1859, Samuel Francis du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware; *Chicago Tribune*, February 1, 1860; *Baltimore American*, February 2, 1860; *Baltimore Sun*, February 10, 1860.

²⁴ Cong. Globe, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., 642 (1860); Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 2:265-66.

Tempered by the reaction to Helper's book, Brown's raid, and the speakership contest, some Border South men sought to forge an anti-Democratic coalition that would be strong enough to challenge for the presidency while distancing itself from antislavery agitation. This meant choosing a presidential candidate amenable to both Republicans in the North and anti-Democratic forces in the Border South who would be conservative and silent on slavery. A potential candidate emerged in the form of Missouri's Edward Bates. Long active in both state and national Whig politics, his conservative political antislavery revolved around the beliefs that slavery was as a local issue free from federal interference but slavery should not be extended westward. Frank Blair planned to have Bates' friends nominate him at a Missouri Republican convention in the fall of 1859 in order to promote his views nationwide before the Republican national convention in Chicago.²⁵ Using the prospect of Bates' candidacy, Blair and the other Missouri Republicans had hoped to absorb the fragmented Missouri opposition of former Whigs, ex-Democrats, and Know-Nothings under the banner of the Republican Party. Yet many of these prospective supporters of Bates refused to support him if he ran as a Republican.²⁶ When Missouri Republicans assembled in St. Louis to select their delegation to the Republican national convention, many of the Germans present were hesitant about supporting Bates because of his support for the Know-Nothings during the 1856 election. When a resolution supporting Bates passed, several of the Germans stormed out of the convention. While at least twelve of the

²⁵ Davis, *Speeches and Addresses*, 144-45; Reinhard H. Luthin, "Organizing the Republican Party in the 'Border-Slave' Regions: Edward Bates' Presidential Candidacy in 1860," *MHR* 38, no. 2 (January 1944): 138-61; Marvin R. Cain, *Lincoln's Attorney General: Edward Bates of Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965), 80, 90-91; *New York Tribune*, April 16, 1859; Edward Bates, *Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866* ed. Howard K. Beale (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 11-12; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, April 18, 1859; *Baltimore Clipper*, April 19, 1859; Frank Blair to Francis Preston Blair, October 6, 1859, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Frank Blair to James Rollins, November 10, 1859; John M. Richardson to James Rollins, August 25, 1859; Charles Gibson to James Rollins, October 28, 1859, James S. Rollins Papers, SHSM.

²⁶ Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 92; Cain, *Lincoln's Attorney General*, 97-98; James O. Broadhead to James S. Rollins, February 5, 1860, James S. Rollins Papers, SHSM; *Missouri Statesman*, March 9, 1860; *Diary of Edward Bates*, 70-72, 80-81, 83-84, 106-07.

delegates heading to Chicago were pro-Bates, several others went without committing to any one particular candidate.²⁷

Another Border South Republican saw himself as a potential candidate for national office. After the election of 1856, Cassius Clay spent the majority of his time digging himself out of bankruptcy. In spite of his financial difficulties, Clay continued to develop his national profile in the North by giving speeches on the effects of slavery on poor whites in the South.²⁸ As he spoke throughout the North, what little Republican organization that existed in Kentucky had withered away. John G. Fee had broken with Clay and had taken a more radical antislavery position. William S. Bailey, the editor of the only Republican newspaper in Kentucky was nearly destitute, and was begging northerners to subscribe to the *Newport News* to keep it afloat. In the congressional elections of 1858 Kentucky Republicans offered up no candidates, and Clay did not campaign in the state election the following year. Nonetheless, Clay's fierce ego and ambition encouraged his belief that he had the right political strategy for the 1860 campaign. Corresponding with Republican leaders, Clay suggested that defeat in 1856 lay in the mistake of not having a southern man on the ticket. "We must have one candidate of the two, this next canvass, *South* of the line," he told Salmon P. Chase.²⁹

With the 1860 campaign approaching, Clay set out to stake his claim as a Republican leader in a Kentucky where acceptance of political antislavery was quickly waning. John Brown's raid had left the state on edge, and false stories that Bailey had corresponded with Brown led a proslavery mob to break into his printing office in Covington, destroy his press and

²⁷ *Missouri Democrat*, March 12, 1860; *Missouri Republican*, March 11, 1860; Luthin, "Organizing the Republican Party," 149-50.

²⁸ Clay, *Life*, 537-38; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 156-7; *Cleveland Leader*, January 1, 1857; *New York Tribune*, February 7, 1857.

²⁹ *Easton Star*, May 5, 1857; *Massachusetts Spy*, September 9, 1857; Cassius Clay to Salmon Chase, March 6, 1857, quoted in Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 162-63.

throw his type into the river. Rumours that a similar insurrection to Brown's was being planned in the region between Lexington and Cincinnati circulated throughout Kentucky during the winter of 1859.³⁰ In November 1859, the remaining Kentucky Republicans held their state convention in Bailey's former print shop. There they endorsed the Republican platform of 1856, supporting freedom of speech, denouncing insurrectionary activities, and vowing to hold a state convention in Madison County to prepare for the presidential election. In his speech to the convention, Clay insisted that Brown's raid was merely the result of proslavery incursions into Kansas. "It is the realization of the scripture truth," said Clay, "that they who 'sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind.'" ³¹ But Brown loomed too large over Kentucky to simply be dismissed as the unpleasant side-effect of the Kansas debacle. False rumors began spreading of northern immigrants and boxes of rifles flooding into Kentucky. During a speech in New York City, Fee had publicly declared that "We need more John Browns—not in the manner of his actions but in his spirit of consecration." When word of Fee's speech reached Kentucky, a proslavery mob forced Fee, his family, and his missionaries to leave the state.³²

When the Kentucky Legislature reconvened in December 1859, the Republican Party was being vociferously condemned by the political leadership of the state. In his annual message to the legislature, Governor Beriah Magoffin held the Republicans responsible for both Brown's raid and the excitement which it had provoked in Kentucky. A few weeks later, on a gloomy and rainy night in Frankfort, Clay defended the principles of the Republican Party before several hundred listeners. Speaking on the steps of the legislature, Clay's three-hour speech refuted

³⁰ *Kentucky Yeoman*, October 30, 1859; *Cincinnati Gazette*, October 31, 1859. For rumors of insurrections in Kentucky, see *Louisville Daily Courier*, November 4, 1859; *Cincinnati Times*, November 4, 1859; *Cleveland Leader*, November 7, 1859; *New York Times*, November 9, 1859.

³¹ *Cleveland Leader*, November 18, 1859; *Louisville Daily Courier*, November 18, 1859; *Jeffersonian Democrat*, November 25, 1859.

³² Howard, *The Evangelical War*, 125-30; Harrold, *Border War*, 192-93.

every single accusation which had been made against the Republican Party. Clay followed his Frankfort speech by travelling to New York City, where he gave a speech at Cooper Union in which he declared that Republicans were too easily frightened, and needed a firm, unyielding leader who understood southerners but who was not afraid of southern extremists' intransigence. "Put me at the head of the United States," Clay declared to rapturous applause, "and I will whip them." Encouraged by the response in New York, Clay began putting out feelers to prominent Republicans like Thurlow Weed. While Seward was his first choice as the Republican Party's standard-bearer, Clay told Weed, he would put his name forward if the nomination became a free-for-all.³³

As Republicans prepared for their own convention in May, three other political conventions would transform the American political landscape in 1860. The Democratic convention in gathered in Charleston, South Carolina to choose their nominee. When delegates rejected a proslavery platform that insisted that the federal government had a duty to protect slavery in the territories, delegates from the Lower South bolted from the convention.³⁴ A few weeks later, the shattered Democratic Party reconvened in Baltimore, hoping to repair the breach between its northern and southern wings and enter the presidential contest united behind a strong candidate. They were spectacularly unsuccessful. Southern Democrats formed their own electoral ticket and elected Kentucky's John C. Breckinridge—the nephew of Kentucky emancipationist Robert J. Breckinridge—as their presidential nominee. Northern Democrats,

³³ *Louisville Courier*, December 6, 1859; *Speech of Cassius M. Clay, at Frankfort, Kentucky, from the Capitol Steps, January 10, 1860* (Cincinnati, 1860); *New York Times*, February 16, 1860; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 164-65.

³⁴ *Official Proceedings of the Convention of the Democratic National Convention, Held in 1860, at Charleston and Baltimore* (Cleveland: 1860); 62-66; Murat Halstead, *Caucuses of the 1860: A History of the National Political Conventions of the Current Presidential Campaign* (Columbus: 1860), 47-48. For a more detailed analysis of the political maneuvering of the southern bolters, see Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 2:273-78; Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election that Brought on the Civil War* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 73-82.

shorn of the party's proslavery wing, nominated Stephen A. Douglas.³⁵ Six days after the Democratic collapse in Charleston, supporters of the Constitutional Union Party had met in Baltimore. They were hopeful that the potential Democratic split improved the chances that their running as an independent party might very well succeed in throwing the election to the House. Selecting a platform that emphasized no political principles other than the Constitution, the Union, and the enforcement of the laws, the convention chose the former Whig John Bell of Tennessee as their presidential candidate. Bell was a colorless, uninspiring figure, and at the age of sixty-four, represented a political generation whose ideology of compromise was fading fast. Including the Republican Party, there would now be four parties competing for the presidency.³⁶

Opening in Chicago on May 16, the Republican national convention featured a crowded field of favourite sons. New York Senator William Seward was seen by most as the presumptive nominee. Rounding out the field was Ohio Governor Salmon P. Chase, Illinois's Abraham Lincoln, and Missouri's Edward Bates. As delegates poured into Chicago, filling up hotels, boarding houses, and private residences, a festival-like atmosphere descended upon the city. Leading the Missouri delegation was Frank Blair, while his father and brother headed the Maryland delegation. Occupying a suite of rooms on the first floor of the Tremont House hotel,

³⁵ The Democrat's Baltimore Convention is covered in Halstead, *Caucuses of 1860*, 201; Egerton, *Year of Meteors*, 148-175; Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 2:309-22; Dwight L. Drummond, *The Secession Movement, 1860-1861* (New York: Octagon Books, 1963), 77-97.

³⁶ Although an important aspect in one of the most pivotal elections in the United States, little recent scholarly work had been paid to the Constitutional Union Party. The only full length treatment of the party is John B. Stabler, "A History of the Constitutional Union Party: A Tragic Failure" (PhD. diss., Columbia University, 1954); Stabler takes sympathetic view to the party, in that it offered a forum for conservatives on the slavery question who disliked Republican radicalism and distrusted the Douglas of the Democratic Party. See Stabler, "Constitutional Union Party," 270-72, 299-300; George F. Milton, *Eve of Conflict: Stephen A. Douglas and the Needless War* (New York: Octagon Books, 1934), 450-51; Michael Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 231; *National Intelligencer*, December 26, 1859; *New York Express*, December 24, 1859; John V. Mering, "The Slave State Constitutional Unionists and the Politics of Consensus," *JSH* 43, no. 3 (August 1977): 396-97. *National Intelligencer*, May 10, 11, 12, 1860; *Baltimore Clipper*, May 10, 11, 1860, Halstead, *Caucuses of 1860*, 109; Joseph H. Parks, *John Bell of Tennessee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), 341-347, 353-55; Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 417.

the Blairs quickly began to cultivate support for their candidate Bates.³⁷ But their aspirations for Bates's nomination were derailed from the start. Throughout the spring of 1860, German Republican clubs nationwide had threatened to withdraw their support from the Republican Party because of Bates. Citing his nativist background, German delegates in Chicago now threatened to bolt from convention if Bates won the nomination. Despite this, Frank Blair pressed onwards, circulating papers extolling Bates's qualities, including his conservatism and ability to weaken the appeal of the Constitutional Unionists in the Border South. Delivering impassioned speeches for Bates before individual state delegations during the convention, Blair was rebuffed by Lincoln men like Gustave Koerner who argued that Bates was too old, too burdened by his nativist past, and most likely incapable of carrying his home state. By the middle of convention, it had become clear that Bates was no longer a serious option.³⁸

The legitimacy of Border South Republicans also came into question during the convention. When the convention opened, David Wilmot of Pennsylvania asked for an amendment to investigate the authenticity of Border South delegations. Since state population determined delegate size, the combined Border South delegates, added to those from Virginia and Delaware, held enough votes to sway the convention toward a specific candidate. Clothing his concern in an amendment over delegate credentials, Wilmot stated that this convention was meant to be for the "nomination of the Republican Party in the Union, not the nomination of respectable gentlemen *who may* belong to the Republican Party." Border South Republicans

³⁷ Egerton, *Year of Meteors*, 117-118; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 212-21; Ronald C. White, *Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2010), 319-24; Halstead, *Caucuses of 1860*; 120-22; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 96.

³⁸ The details of the Deutsches Haus conference can be found in F.I. Herriot, "The German Conference in the Deutsches Haus, Chicago, May 14-15, 1860, and the Candidacy of Edward Bates and Abraham Lincoln in the Ensuant National Republican Convention," *Transaction of the Illinois State Historical Society* 35 (May 1928): 101-92. Gustave Koerner, *Memoirs of Gustave Koerner: Life-sketches written at the suggestion of his children*, ed. Thomas J. McCormack (Cedar Rapids: 1909), 2:84-85, 88-89; *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 17, 1860; Luthin, "Organizing the Republican Party," 157-60.

immediately jumped up to rebut Wilmot's amendment. Maryland's Charles Armour attacked Wilmot and the Pennsylvania delegation as cowards. Unlike the Pennsylvanians who labelled themselves a "People's Party," Maryland Republicans were willing to openly identify themselves as Republicans, even in the face of mounting violence. "I faced the mobs in Baltimore...I went to my home and found that I had been burned in effigy and suspended by the neck because I dare avow myself a friend of freedom," shouted Armour. George Blakey of Kentucky argued that slave state delegates had just as much right to vote as free state delegates. "Who dare propose, I say, to institute a proposition here that the free born sons of Kentucky [have] not just as good a right to be Republicans...as the old Keystone State." Although Wilmot refused to concede, his amendment was eventually voted down. The majority of Republican delegates saw that ensuring slave state delegates were fully represented would be the best way to rebut accusations that the Republicans were but a sectional party.³⁹

On Friday, May 18, thousands of Republicans, bleary-eyed, hungover, yet effervescent with excitement crowded into the convention hall to select their nominee. Several thousand more waited outside for the results. As the voting began, the Blair-controlled Missouri and Maryland delegations stuck by Bates through the first and second ballot, with the Kentucky delegation splitting its votes amongst Seward, Lincoln, and Chase. While Seward held the lead through the first two rounds of balloting, Lincoln slowly crept up in votes until he only trailed the New Yorker by 3 ½ votes. By the third ballot, Seward supporters realized that it was over. Chase supporters, convinced by Lincoln men to throw their support to the Illinoisan, put Lincoln over the top. After a moment's silence, the convention exploded, as delegates stood on their chairs and shouted over the din to change their votes to make the selection of Lincoln unanimous. The

³⁹ Greely, *First Three Republican Conventions*, 111-22; *Missouri Democrat*, May 18, 1860; Egerton, *Year of Meteors*, 133; Halstead, *Caucuses of 1860*, 133-34.

Missouri delegation, which had supported Bates through all three ballots, immediately switched to Lincoln, with Benjamin Gratz Brown shouting over the crowd, “I am instructed to cast the entire vote of Missouri—18 votes—to that gallant son of the West, Abraham Lincoln!” The Kentuckians, stating that they came to the convention “not to intrude, but to sanction the expression that is now indicated,” moved their remaining Seward votes into Lincoln’s column. Under the control of Montgomery Blair, the Maryland delegation had cast nine votes for Lincoln on the third ballot, which suggested that the Blairs had already decided to move towards Lincoln, while keeping Missouri’s votes firmly for Bates out of loyalty. The Blairs found Lincoln a perfectly acceptable candidate. Frank had stumped for Lincoln in 1858, and Lincoln shared many of the Blairs’ views, including on colonization.⁴⁰

The convention then turned to the selection of the vice-presidential nominee. After the first ballot, Maine’s Hannibal Hamlin was the leading candidate with 194 votes, with Cassius Clay coming in second with a surprising 101 votes. But Clay’s strength remained mostly in Kentucky and Virginia, and Hamlin won the second ballot decisively with 357 votes. With the selection of the westerner Lincoln, it was necessary for geographical balance to pick a running mate from the northeast. In making Hamlin’s nomination unanimous, Clay’s friends urged the convention to remember the struggles that Clay had experienced while living in Kentucky. “It is a very easy matter for us who live upon soil unstained by slavery [to] advocate the principles of the Republican Party,” Caleb B. Smith of Indiana reminded the convention. “But, gentlemen, to advocate those principles upon the soil of slavery itself...requires a degree of moral heroism of which but few of us can boast.” Although Clay was disappointed, he nonetheless accepted the results. Clay’s defeat also revealed his limited appeal as political figure. In an atmosphere of

⁴⁰ Halstead, *Caucuses of 1860*, 142-49; Greely, *First Three Republican Conventions*, 154-155; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 96-97; Smith, *Blair Family*, 1:482-83.

heightened tension because of Helper's *Impending Crisis* and John Brown's raid, Clay remained too controversial a political figure. A bowie knife-wielding antislavery Kentuckian made for good newspaper copy; as a national political figure, it did not.⁴¹

When Blair returned to St. Louis, Missourians were preparing for the congressional and state election to be held in August 1860. However, the political scene within Missouri had begun to resemble the national one. Paralleling the split of the national party, the Missouri Democrats split into Breckinridge and Douglas factions, nominating their own separate tickets for the congressional and state elections that August.⁴² There was also a Constitutional Union Party in Missouri headed by ex-Whigs and former Know-Nothings whose ranks included James Rollins. Rollins had previously toyed with forming a political alliance with Blair. However, Rollins felt that the Republicans had "egregiously erred" in choosing Lincoln instead of Bates, and chose instead to back the Bell and Everett ticket. Furthermore, Rollins had decided to run for a seat in Congress. He realized that he would never be elected to Congress as a Republican in a congressional district so heavily enslaved and southern-oriented it was nicknamed "Little Dixie." Rollins therefore concluded that the Constitutional Union Party would be the safest option for his own political career.⁴³

Already teetering because of the failure of Bates' candidacy, the formation of a Constitutional Unionist Party in Missouri put an end to any idea of any political alliance between the Republicans and the anti-Democratic parties in the state. With separate political parties in the

⁴¹ Greely, *First Three Republican Conventions*, 160-63; Cassius Clay to Abraham Lincoln, May 21, 1860, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 166-67.

⁴² John F. Snyder, "The Democratic State Convention of Missouri in 1860," *MHR* 2, no. 2 (January 1908): 112-31; William H. Lyon, "Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Secession Crisis in Missouri," *MHR* 58, no. 4 (July 1964), 422-30; Phillips, *Missouri's Confederate*, 224-30.

⁴³ James Rollins to James Broadhead, February 1, 1860; James Rollins to Edward Bates, June 6, 1860, James Broadhead to James Rollins, June 28, July 8, 1860, James S. Rollins Papers, SHSM; James Rollins to James Broadhead, June 5, 1860, James O. Broadhead Papers, MHM; Mering, "The Political Transition of James S. Rollins," 221-22.

field, there was nothing left to do but to run a straight Republican ticket in the increasingly crowded field of Missouri politics. “There is no party with which the Republicans can identify themselves, even temporarily, without demoralization,” lamented the *Missouri Democrat*. In July, Republicans unanimously nominated Frank Blair for re-election to Congress and James B. Gardenhire for governor. A few days later, the Republicans commenced their campaign with a massive torchlight procession through the streets of St. Louis. Thousands of Republicans from each city ward marched through the streets, bearing torches and Chinese lanterns. They carried before them banners and transparencies emblazoned with slogans such as “Hurrah for Lincoln,” “Free Speech, Free Labor, and Free Soil for White Men,” “Frank Blair First and All the Time,” and “Railsplitters Not Ticket Splitters.” Converging in Lucas Market, the procession surrounded a stage upon which a portrait of Lincoln stood to listen to Blair’s speech. Standing in front of a sea of fire, Blair emphasized the importance of his election campaign. “St. Louis is the citadel of freedom in the Slave States of this Union, and it is this which causes every citizen abroad to regard us with more than ordinary interest,” emphasized Blair. He restated his preference for the Republican Party because of its doctrine of preserving the free territories for free white men, its policy on giving free land to homesteaders, and supporting a central line for the Pacific railroad. Most importantly, he reiterated that the Republican Party was “the party for white men...I go for preserving every foot of territory belonging the United States for that class of men.” Blair took direct aim at the hypocrisy of the Democrats’ proslavery doctrines. We are for keeping blacks out of the territories, asked an incredulous Blair, but the Democrats are for letting them in, and yet they argue that Republicans are for black equality? They wish to import more blacks into Missouri, thus degrading white labor, and yet they claim to be the party of white men? Only the Republican Party would free Missouri of the scourge of slavery by emancipating and colonizing

free blacks, Blair argued. “The great mass of the Republican Party is in favor of the separation of the races, [enabling] both to thrive and be happy.” Fireworks followed Blair’s speech, culminating in a principal display that featured Frank Blair’s name lit up in letters of blue fire.⁴⁴

While the ostensible goal of Missouri Republicans was to be competitive statewide, the primary objective was to return Blair to office in Missouri’s First Congressional District. In contrast to other Border South Republican efforts in 1860, Blair’s election campaign was a model of political organization, communication, and enthusiasm. Blair spoke and exhorted his partisans nearly every night during the opening stages of the campaign. His speeches were heavily documented by the *Missouri Democrat* and in German-language papers like the *Anzeiger des Westens* and the *Westliche Post*, while Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune* ran constant updates on the state of the campaign. Blair imported key nationally known Republicans such as Lyman Trumbull and Carl Schurz to speak on his behalf. Addressing large crowds of enthusiastic Republicans throughout St. Louis, few speakers strayed far from the Blairist message of promoting free white labor, decrying slavery’s detrimental effect on Missouri’s economy, preventing slavery in the territories, and promoting colonization as a potential solution for the “negro problem.” Attacking both disunionists and abolitionists for stirring up sectional resentment, all praised Blair fulsomely for his congressional service and for his leadership in the cause of making Missouri a free state. Only Samuel T. Glover, a St. Louis lawyer who had recently joined the Republican cause, made any attempt to question the morality of slavery. “The astounding fact,” said Glover, “is that that the free people of America—the only free people in

⁴⁴ *Missouri Democrat*, July 9, 15, 16, 1860; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 85-86. For a deeper analysis of the congressional race in the Missouri First Congressional District, see Stuart MacKay, “‘The Negro Occupies the Whole Time, and There is No Time Left for White Men:’ Slavery, Whiteness, and the Union in the St. Louis Press During the Election of 1860,” *Southeastern Review of Journalism History* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2019), 37-51; Nick Sacco, “Searching for Compromise: Missouri Congressman John Richard Barret’s Fight to Save the Union,” *The Confluence* 10, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2019): 9-13.

the world, as we have been wont to call ourselves—are on the eve of becoming a nation of slavery propagandists.” James Gardenhire, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, was all but forgotten. All Missouri Republicans’ efforts were focused on electing Blair and Republican state legislators. Gardenhire briefly attempted to drum up support for the Republican cause outside of St. Louis, but was met with small crowds and was often not even permitted to speak during political meetings.⁴⁵

The statewide election on August 6 provided mixed results for Missouri Republicans. Few Missourians beyond St. Louis voted for the Republican ticket. In a crowded field of four gubernatorial candidates Claiborne Fox Jackson, whose decision to ally with the Douglas wing of the Democratic Party had paid off handsomely, won the governorship. James Gardenhire, meanwhile, finished last. Nevertheless, the campaign had achieved its primary objective, returning Blair to Washington. Winning by 1,500 votes Blair declared that St. Louis was once again “a Republican city.” But although Blair had won his seat as a Republican and James Rollins managed to win his congressional seat as a Constitutional Unionist, the remainder of Missouri’s congressional delegation would be composed of Democrats. Despite his victory, Blair remained disappointed that Missouri’s ex-Whigs never rallied behind him. “Old Bates was absent and his friends did nothing to assist me,” he complained to Montgomery. For Blair, opposition groups’ failure to coalesce around his candidacy meant that he would owe them nothing from now on. “It obviates any necessity of me urging the appointment of Bates to the

⁴⁵ *Missouri Democrat*, May 23, 31, June 13, 16, 19, 21, 23, 1860; *Missouri Republican*, August 2, 4, 5, 1860; James Neal Primm and Steven Rowan, *Germans for a Free Missouri: Translations from the St. Louis Radical Press* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 114-20; Samuel T. Glover, *Speech of the Honourable Samuel T. Glover of the St. Louis Bar, Delivered at Turner’s Hall, July 26, 1860* (St. Louis: 1860), 2-3; Parrish, *A History of Missouri, Volume 3: 1860 to 1875* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 2-3.

Cabinet, and leaves us entirely free to use all our influence for the Maryland appointment,” referring to his father’s desire to see Montgomery placed in Cabinet.⁴⁶

Back in Kentucky, Cassius Clay and his small band of Republicans also faced a fractured political landscape. The Opposition Party, whose flirtation with the Republicans had ended when they realized that they would not compromise on territorial slavery, firmly supported the Constitutional Unionists as their national organization. For Kentucky Democrats, the fissures between the moderate and extreme proslavery wings of the party finally ruptured after the Baltimore convention, leading to separate Douglas and Breckinridge factions. Both wings would spend the majority of the election attacking each other for shattering party unity.⁴⁷ Clay launched the Republican campaign in Kentucky in July. Standing on the steps of the Louisville courthouse, Clay extolled the virtues of Republicanism and repeated his time-worn assaults on the economic stagnation inflicted on Kentucky by slavery. Attacking Douglas as incompetent and Breckinridge as a disunionist, Clay stressed both Lincoln’s Kentucky roots and his humble beginnings. “He belonged to that class that a great many think it won’t do to make a president of, but that I think will do,” exclaimed Clay. A correspondent for the *New York Evening Post* optimistically declared that “Republicanism is getting to be quite fashionable here...when Lincoln shall be inaugurated next March, you will be surprised to find what a crop of Republicans we’ll have in Kentucky.”⁴⁸ But Clay had no intention of campaigning in a state which would never go for Lincoln. Upon the urging of Indiana Republicans, Clay headed across the Ohio to campaign in that state. Since the 1856 election, Republican strategists had seen

⁴⁶ *Jefferson Inquirer*, September 15, 1860; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, August 7, 15, 1860, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

⁴⁷ A detailed examination of the rift between moderate and extreme proslavery Kentucky Democrats can be found in Paine, “Kentucky Will Be The Last,” 242-4, 255-9; *Louisville Courier*, October 5, 1860.

⁴⁸ *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, July 10, 1860; *Springfield Republican*, July 14, 1860; *New York Evening Post*, July 12, 1860.

Indiana as crucial to winning the presidency. Clay spend his time stumping through the southern portion of the state, where the southern-born population was deeply racist and viewed the Republican Party as nothing more than a coterie of busybody Yankees on a moralising crusade to control the lives of southerners. At the same time, this contempt was accompanied by an economic dislike of slavery, which had driven many of those residents out of their Virginia and Kentucky birthplaces. As a Kentucky Republican, Clay would counter Indianans' skepticism about his party by focusing on the message that slavery was a curse to poor white men, which should not be extended to the territories.⁴⁹

The November election showed that while Unionist sentiment in Kentucky remained strong, Republicanism was barely existent. With Clay stumping through Indiana and Ohio, the small band of Republicans in Kentucky ran a mostly symbolic campaign. A small state committee managed to nominate a Lincoln electoral ticket. But that was the extent of their labors. Their efforts accrued a meager 1365 votes, with most of those coming from Campbell and Kenton counties, directly across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. The Constitutional Unionist candidate John Bell handily won the state. However, despite native son John C. Breckinridge coming in second, Stephen A. Douglas' strong showing proved the strength of support for the Union and the Constitution in Kentucky. This Unionist sentiment would be tested in the aftermath of Lincoln's election. For Clay, the dismal results for Republicanism in Kentucky were mitigated by the Lincoln's victory in Indiana. In May, Lincoln had told Clay that "I shall, in the canvass, and especially afterward...need the support of all the talent, popularity,

⁴⁹ Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 169; Abraham Lincoln to Caleb B. Smith, May 26, 1860; Abraham Lincoln to Cassius Clay, July 20, 1860 in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler, 8 vols., (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953) 4:54, 85 (hereafter cited as *CW*); Caleb B. Smith to Abraham Lincoln, July 20, 1860, Cassius Clay to Abraham Lincoln, August 6, 12, 1860, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest*, 109-26; *Evansville Journal*, July 23, 1860.

and courage, North and South.” With Lincoln now victorious, Clay interpreted that letter as a promise of a powerful political appointment, perhaps even to the president’s new cabinet. After nearly two decades of fruitlessly fighting for antislavery in Kentucky, Cassius Clay would finally have his political reward.⁵⁰

In Maryland, Lincoln’s nomination was greeted with surprise by most Baltimore newspapers. “The nomination does not strike us as a strong one,” observed the *Baltimore Sun*. Lincoln, sneered the *Baltimore American*, was little more than a “third-rate district politician.” Some Maryland Republicans were also apprehensive about their party’s choice for president. Edward Stabler, a Republican from Montgomery County, confessed to Montgomery Blair that the “failure of my friend Bates has much cooled the fire of politics in my veins...but I hope for the good of the cause that the ardor of everyone will not cool as mine has done.” Others were eager for a political fight. “The occasion now presents itself to form a party here,” wrote William Marshall to Blair. “The failure to form a ticket here would anchor and perpetuate that distrust and feeling of shame.” Both Preston and Montgomery Blair realized that Lincoln carrying Maryland would be politically impossible, but a vigorous canvass would help to develop a political organization that could compete in 1864. At a rally in Pennsylvania, Montgomery declared that if voters in Keystone State gave the country four years of Republican rule, then he “would guarantee that Maryland would be with them.”⁵¹

Blair and his Republican cohort still had to deal with Henry Winter Davis, who himself was trying to navigate a political situation which seemed to change weekly. With the Democrats

⁵⁰ Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 458, 462, 472; Abraham Lincoln to Cassius Clay, May 26, 1860, *CW*, 53-54; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 168-69.

⁵¹ *Baltimore Sun*, May 19, 1860; *Baltimore American*, May 20, 1860; Edward Stabler to Montgomery Blair, May 21, 1860, William L. Marshall to Montgomery Blair, May 30, 1860, Blair Family Papers, LOC; *New York Commercial Advertiser*, October 5, 1860; Smith, *Blair Family*, 1:500-02.

divided between Douglas and Breckinridge factions, Davis saw an opportunity to finish off the party as a political force in Maryland. But the commitment by the Blairs to run a Lincoln ticket in Maryland risked drawing anti-Democratic votes away from the Constitutional Unionists and possibly allow the Breckinridge Democrats to carry the state. Davis wrote to his cousin David Davis, who was working as Lincoln's campaign manager, to convince Lincoln to end the Republican campaign in Maryland. Lincoln declined to interfere.⁵² Davis now had to tread a fine political line. In public, he supported the Constitutional Unionists; in private, he had to ensure that the Constitutional Unionists would not be so successful as to prevent a Lincoln presidency, along with his own prospects of a political future in the Republican Party. Since his role in the speakership controversy, his political opponents had accused him of masquerading as a Republican. Now, Davis would live up to that accusation. Warmly endorsing Lincoln to friends in private letters, on the stump Davis emphasized the virtues that the Constitutional Union Party would bring to the nation. "Mr. Everett and Mr. Bell, by virtue of the simple declaration that they are in favor of the Constitution, the Union, and the enforcement of the laws," Davis told a crowd of two thousand in Baltimore, "have pledged themselves to silence, to quiet, to leaving things the way they are." But Davis also reinforced that the Republicans, bound by their pledge of non-interference with slavery in the slave states, should not be feared. Some viewed the speech as signifying little more than Davis's modestly cloaked support for Republicanism. The major organ of the Constitutional Unionists, the *Baltimore American*, called the speech "a Lincoln *pronunciamento* in Bell clothing, or rather an eccentric Republican sheep with a Union Bell on its neck." The small group of Maryland Republicans also viewed Davis's speech as an attempt to

⁵² Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, July 1860, Samuel Du Pont Papers, Hagley Library, Wilmington, Delaware; Henig, *Henry Winter Davis*, 134-35; Steiner, *Life of Henry Winter Davis*, 191; William Leroy King, *Lincoln's Manager: David Davis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 173.

convey his eagerness for a position in the Lincoln administration. Writing to Lincoln, a Baltimore Republican named Worthington G. Snethen wrote that Davis's speech was emblematic of the "mum-on-slavery or non-intervention gentlemen who want to get into power under a Republican president."⁵³ As election day approached, Davis once more attempted to convince Montgomery Blair to end the Republican campaign for fear of vote-splitting. In response, Blair declared that Republican principles were far more important than placating sensitive Marylanders' predilection for silence on slavery. He would promote the Republican agenda in Maryland, no matter the political situation.⁵⁴

Montgomery Blair would use the election to promote a clear defence of Republicanism, in contrast to Davis's evasive support. In doing so, he could cement his political position as Maryland's chief Republican, rather than allow Davis to inherit it. Like his brother Frank, who articulated a message of liberal political antislavery which reflected Missouri's worldview, his brother Montgomery would tailor his message to fit Maryland's political concerns. During his speeches, Blair argued that the Republican position on slavery was merely an extension of the conservative political antislavery tradition in the state. "The Republicans stand where the fathers of the Constitution and where Clay and Benton stood in 1850," argued Blair. "[We] say that Slavery is a local institution and that territories which are free when we acquire them remain free... we are ready to meet all opponents and argue this 'question' before the people of all sections who are competent to decide it." Blair also cast Douglas, Breckinridge and Bell as all supporting the same disunionist principles, which implied that Blair was concerned about bolstering flagging Republican hopes in the state rather than attracting potential supporters from

⁵³ Henry Winter Davis, *Speeches and Addresses*, 158-186; *Baltimore American*, October 1, 1860; W.G. Snethen to Abraham Lincoln, November 3, 1860, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁵⁴ Montgomery Blair to Henry Winter Davis, October 15, 1860, Henry Winter Davis to Montgomery Blair, October 14, 1860, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Steiner, *Life of Henry Winter Davis*, 198.

other parties. This may have been a reaction to Davis's professed Republican leanings. By expounding a clear and direct partisan message, Blair, not Davis would then be seen as the true representative of Maryland Republicanism.⁵⁵

Blair stressed in his stump speech that the Republicans would not retreat even in the face of the political violence and hostility the party faced throughout the campaign. The threat of social exclusion and violence led many supporters to hide their allegiance to the party, further hurting its prospects for gathering new supporters. In Howard County, one Lincoln supporter wrote to Blair that if he made public his presidential choice, "they would not patronize me anymore and I have to live by my trade." Still, others remarked that there was "a great change in public sentiment," and while there remained threats, they still managed to circulate Republican policy amongst their neighbours. "About one week since I read our platform to a store crowded full of the fire-eating chivalry and although they were loud and coarse no one laid hands on me for I had friends there, more than I knew," wrote one plucky Republican from Charles County. However, the general sense among Republican supporters was that Lincoln's election was inevitable, and that once he was secured in office, Maryland Republicans could properly build the party's base. "Let Lincoln be once elected," George Palmer affirmed to Blair, "and then we can take a bold stand and measure words with our enemies to good advantage."⁵⁶

Maryland Republicans never organized a deterrent to the threat of political violence. Baltimore had a long tradition of political violence—so much so that the city's unofficial name was "Mob City." For Republicans in the Border South, the threat of violence at political

⁵⁵Montgomery Blair, "The Canvass in Maryland," October 13, 1860, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Ollinger Crenshaw, *The Slave States in the Presidential Election of 1860* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1969), 118-21.

⁵⁶N.H. Pollack to Montgomery Blair, October 23, 1860; William L. Donenbury to Montgomery Blair, November 6, 1860, Nathaniel Burnham to Montgomery Blair, October 29, 1860; George M. Palmer to Montgomery Blair, October 22, 1860, Blair Family Papers, LOC

meetings was a running concern. After one meeting in St. Louis was interrupted by violence, Republicans there had developed their “Wide Awake” branch. These Republican political clubs had originated in Connecticut and had spread nationwide during the spring of 1860. Composed of young men who wore oil-cloth black capes and soldiers’ caps, they marched in parades and operated as bodyguards for Republican speakers. During nighttime political meetings in St. Louis, Wide Awakes armed with lanterns atop of leaded sticks would form a perimeter outside the meeting to prevent disruptive elements from charging the meetings. But Maryland Republicans never managed to raise a force of Wide Awakes large enough to dissuade other political clubs from harassing them. When Maryland Republicans attempted to hold a torchlight procession, a crowd pelted the procession with stones, bricks, eggs, and garbage, uttering “all the epithets of odium that language could suggest.” However, the violence never escalated to a full-scale riot, even when a group of Breckinridge supporters confronted them. “Wonderful to relate,” exclaimed the *Baltimore American*, noting the decorum of the crowd, “with all the intensity of feeling manifested on the part of all opposite parties, there was no one killed, and no one badly beaten.”⁵⁷

The election day results boded poorly for Maryland Republicanism. With a relatively unknown candidate and a political organization whose greatest aspiration was to realistically compete in 1864, Lincoln only received 2,294 votes. His did not even appear on the ballot in several counties, and the majority of his votes were in single or double digits. Bell fared better, receiving 41,760 votes, 722 shy of Breckinridge’s total of 42,482.⁵⁸ Republican voters’ fears

⁵⁷*Missouri Democrat*, July 23, 1860; Jon Grinspan, “‘Young Men for War’: The Wide Awakes and Lincoln’s 1860 Presidential Campaign,” *JAH* 96, no. 2 (September 2009): 357-78; James Peckham, *General Nathaniel Lyon and Missouri in 1861: A Monograph of the Great Rebellion* (New York: 1866), xii-xiii; *Baltimore American*, November 1, 1860.

⁵⁸*Baltimore Sun*, November 24, 1860; Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 504.

social ostracism and physical assault, coupled with a political strategy mostly focused on preparing the groundwork for 1864, meant that there was little opportunity for Maryland Republicans to build support. Within a political environment where four parties competed for voters' loyalty, it was evident that Maryland Republicanism had the least amount of room to manoeuvre. That goal was stifled by the personal rivalry between Davis and Blair, each of whom yearned to become the leading Republican politician in Maryland in the aftermath of the election. With Davis, the Republicans might have recruited a potent ally who could have broadened the party's base of support and may have strengthened the party's claim to be the chief opposition to the Democratic Party. But seeing Davis as a political threat, Blair refused to cede any ground to Davis and remained committed to promoting Republican doctrines in the political arena. The struggle between Blair and Davis, and the challenges of remaining ideologically pure while trying to broaden the party's base would become a recurrent theme in Republican politics in Maryland over the next decade.

As attention in Missouri turned towards the presidential election in November, Frank Blair publicly vowed to campaign hard for Lincoln in the state. Yet he was also driven to cultivate his national political profile as the only Republican elected from the Border South. Ambitiously believing that he could "pull from 30 to 35 thousand votes for Lincoln" in Missouri, Blair planned to embark on a massive fall swing through the northern counties which bordered Iowa, whose population contained few enslaved blacks and might be more receptive to the Republican message of free labor. In his first speech in Ironton on September 10, Blair was accompanied by three hundred Wide Awakes from St. Louis on a special train. Met by an armed crowd at the courthouse, Blair challenged any man to attack him. With his praetorian guard of Wide Awakes, none did. The next speech outside St. Louis proved more violent. Invited to

Hannibal at the behest of Samuel T. Glover, this time Blair was without any Wide Awake protection. During his speech, Blair was constantly interrupted by cheers for Bell, Douglas, and Breckinridge, and bombarded by eggs and stones. The Hannibal speech effectively ended Blair's plan for any further speaking tours in the state. Instead, he left James Gardenhire alone to tour the state. Leaving Missouri to campaign for the national ticket and for local races, Blair spoke at huge Republican meetings in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania during the fall of 1860. It soon became apparent that Blair preferred speaking before immense crowds in Philadelphia to slogging through the dusty hamlets of northern Missouri. In part to repay the political debts of those who had stumped for him during his congressional election, the speaking tour also helped to raise Blair's national profile as the Border South's most ardent champion of Republicanism.⁵⁹

In the end, Blair's belief that he could pull over thirty thousand votes for Lincoln was overly optimistic. Stephen A. Douglas won Missouri, making it the only state which he would win in 1860. Lincoln received only 17,020 votes statewide, winning only St. Louis and Gasconade counties. Few Republican votes were found beyond St. Louis and the German-speaking counties east of the city. In rural counties, Republicans were often intimidated at the polls. On a hunting trip in Selma, a small rural community south of St. Louis, Bernard G. Farrar and several companions arrived a polling place at a store in the woods. A devoted Republican, Farrar was warned by a local that he dared not cast a vote for Lincoln at this poll. Loading his double-barreled shotgun with a full complement of buckshot in plain view of the poll clerk, Farrar loudly announced that he would vote as he pleased and cast his ballot for Lincoln. But

⁵⁹ *Missouri Democrat*, August 14, 28, September 11, 1860; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, August 15, 1860, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Peckham, *Lyon and Missouri*, xvi; Smith, *Blair Family*, 1:498-99.

despite such shotgun tactics, the vote for Lincoln in the rest of Missouri remained pitifully small.⁶⁰

On the surface, the 1860 election results for the Republican Party in the Border South could be found to be wanting, in winning only one congressional seat, and failing to win any electoral votes for Lincoln. In both Kentucky and Maryland, political leaders like Cassius Clay and Montgomery Blair realized that the political situation was not conducive to a Republican victory, and with their own political ambitions in mind, strategized accordingly. Yet the decision to run a full Republican ticket in Missouri should not be overlooked. It is easy to criticize Blair, Brown, and other Missouri Republicans for their fervent devotion to colonization, their appeals to white supremacy through free white labor, and their blatant racism. But unlike others, who hated slavery but who instead burrowed into the comfortable neutrality of Constitutional Unionism or the lost cause of Stephen Douglas's Democratic Party, these men backed up their beliefs with political action within an unapologetic antislavery party. The pitiful statewide Lincoln vote also masked a larger victory for Republicanism in Missouri. The election of Lincoln and Blair made real the deepest fear of southern proslavery men—a Republican insurgency within a slave state. While Frank Blair had breached slavery's walls once before, he had previously done it alone. This time, Blair would be reinforced with the full weight of the federal government and the treasures which it could provide in terms of patronage. The *Missouri Democrat* sounded an optimistic note after the election was over. "The duty of all loyal men,

⁶⁰ Stephen A. Douglas received 58,502 votes, with Bell coming in a close second with 58,362 votes, and Breckinridge running a poor third with 31,427 votes. Missouri would be the only state from which Douglas would receive its full electoral votes. Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 570, 578, 592; *Missouri Democrat*, November 15, 1860; Robert J. Rombauer, *The Union Cause in St. Louis in 1861: A Historical Sketch* (St. Louis: 1909), 108-09; Smith, *Blair Family*, 1:506-07.

now that the contest is over, is to rally around the nation's will," argued the paper, imploring that all partisan activity cease until the "enemies of the nation" submit to the laws. "But it is our firm belief, that never was the country less liable to be subjected to the devastating curse of civil war," assured the *Democrat*. "Peace will follow our victory."⁶¹

⁶¹ *Missouri Democrat*, November 7, 1860.

Chapter 5

“Let Us Have a Country First, and Then We Can Talk About Parties:” Border South Republicans and the Politics of Unionism

This chapter argues that most of 1860-61, Border South Republicans who for years had promoted the politics of antislavery now found their message subsumed by the politics of Unionism. Border South Republicans would have to silence their partisan position on slavery and unite with men whom they had previously opposed politically. Driven in part by the danger posed by Border South Republicanism, Lower South disunionists launched a campaign immediately after Lincoln’s election to convince all slaveholding states to secede from the Union. Although Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri would all reject secession, there remained pockets of secessionist sympathizers eager to see their states join the newly-formed Confederate States of America. To prevent this, Lincoln would have to depend on Unionist parties in all three states cobbled together from the remains of the Constitutional Union Party, along with some disaffected Democrats, and bolstered by the region’s small Republican factions. Many of these Unionists believed that a policy that concentrated solely on the Union and the Constitution and avoided affiliation with Republican doctrines might provide the best hope for keeping these states within the Union. In Missouri, Unionist sentiment espoused by Republicans like Frank Blair was tested when secessionists attempted to drag the state out of the Union, resulting in violent confrontation in the streets of St. Louis. In Kentucky, most Unionists found refuge in the simplicity of neutrality, paradoxically supporting the government while criticizing the administration. However, the ideology of neutrality was criticized by an emerging faction of Kentuckians like Joseph Holt and James and Joshua Speed, who increasingly identified with the goals of the Lincoln administration. In Maryland, Unionists at first attempted to follow a policy

of “masterly inactivity” to guide them through the secession crisis. When that failed, they turned to veteran politicians who promoted strict fidelity to the Union and the Constitution and avoided the question of slavery.

Throughout the 1860 presidential campaign, Lower South disunionists had spent much of the summer stoking fears of a Lincoln victory. Along with racial fears of slave insurrections and concerns over slavery’s economic future, many disunionists believed the success of the Republican Party in the election represented the single greatest political threat to the southern slavery. Alabama’s William Lowndes Yancey had spent the election traveling around the South warning voters that a Lincoln victory would result in swarms of Republicans taking up patronage offices throughout the South. “The abolition men of the border States are already numerous [and] they have a foundation in the South on which to base their operations,” declare Yancey. Men like Henry Winter Davis, Cassius Clay, Frank Blair, are “coming down on us with accumulating power and with aims of destruction.” To that end, said Yancey, “we might be compelled to seek escape from the aggression of the North by secession from her.” Albert Gallatin Brown warned Mississippians that the “stealthy tread” of Republicans already walked among them, and would result in nothing disaster and violence in the South. “Better to leave the Union in the open face of day, that be lighted from it at midnight by the incendiary’s torch,” warned Brown.¹ Now, with Lincoln elected, disunionists in South Carolina would echo Yancey and Brown by pointing to the Border South and the threat of Republican patronage as a rationale for secession. South Carolina disunionists argued that Republicans would abstain from implementing overt antislavery laws. Rather, by using the patronage powers of the presidency, they would subtly plant a Republican

¹ *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, October 30, 1860; *Macon Weekly Telegraph*, September 20, 1860; Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 2:336-37.

Party in the South. “Shall we put ourselves on our good behaviour, and *wait*, whilst he is organizing his cabinet and distributing his offices?” asked state senator John Townsend. “Shall we wait... to see, what tide-waitership he will confer on Louisiana and Georgia; what collectorship of customs in Florida and South Carolina; what little Post-office he will entrust to Alabama and Mississippi.” J.D.B. De Bow warned a crowd in Columbia that with Lincoln in control of the presidency thousands of ambitious office-seekers will pour out of every southern county to support a Republican administration. Soon, there would be an abolition party in the South made up of Southern men. “The contest for slavery,” thundered De Bow, “will no longer be one between the North and the South. It will be in the South, between the people of the South.” Look no further than Frank Blair’s election in Missouri, cried state senator J. Foster Marshall. Republicans will recruit “men in our midst who have ‘tender consciences’” with promises of offices and positions. By placing these men in post-offices and custom houses, these small redoubts “will increase under the auspices and patronage of the Black Republicans, until district after district, county after county falls into their power.”²

South Carolina would not wait. Events now moved with a rapidity that few had expected. Seeking to capitalize on popular outrage over Lincoln’s election, South Carolina disunionists quickly moved towards secession. “The tea has been thrown overboard; the revolution of 1860 has been initiated,” declared the *Charleston Mercury*. A state convention was called for December 17. Two days later, delegates voted unanimously to secede from the Union. Other Lower South states quickly followed. Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama soon passed legislation calling for state conventions. In Georgia, debates over secession had begun immediately after the election. Georgian secessionists echoed South Carolinian fears over the power of Republican

² John Townsend, *The South Alone Should Govern the South, and African Slavery Should Be Controlled by Those Only, Who Are Friendly to It* (Charleston: 1860), 12-13; *Charleston Mercury*, September 11, November 8, 1860.

patronage. Patronage, argued Governor Joseph E. Brown, would lay the groundwork for a Republican movement throughout the states of the South in 1864. "If Mr. Lincoln places among us his Judges, District Attorneys, Marshals, Post Masters, Customs House officers...with the control of these men, and the distribution of public patronage, he will have succeeded in dividing us to an extent that will destroy all our moral powers," warned Brown. On November 18, the Georgia legislature adopted a bill calling for a state convention to meet January 16. Within twenty-three days of Lincoln's election, five southern states had called conventions to consider seceding from the Union.³

Border South men in Washington, aware of their region's precarious existence within a nation seemingly drifting toward civil war, proffered up their plans for compromise. The most prominent was the Senate's "Committee of Thirteen," led by Kentucky's John J. Crittenden. In the style of his political mentor Henry Clay, Crittenden wanted to fashion a compromise package that would be the final settlement on the slavery issue. On December 18, Crittenden rose in the Senate chamber to present his package of proposals, a series of unamendable amendments to the Constitution. They included prohibiting Congress from abolishing slavery on government property or in the District of Columbia; compensation for slaveholders whose enslaved property could not be returned; prohibiting congressional interference with the interstate slave trade; and prohibiting future constitutional amendments that would give Congress power to interfere with slavery in the states. Most importantly, Crittenden's proposal would restore the Missouri Compromise line, and would recognize slavery south of the line within the territories.

Crittenden's plan would repudiate the doctrine of no slavery in the territories, a plank which had

³ *Charleston Mercury*, November 8, 1860; Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 485-91; "Joseph E. Brown's Secessionist Public Letter, December 7, from Milledgeville," in William W. Freehling and Craig M. Simpson, eds., *Secession Debated: Georgia's Showdown in 1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 148.

fueled the growth of the both Free-Soil movement and the Republican Party. Furthermore, Crittenden's unamendable amendments would do something to the Constitution which not even the nation's founders had dared: it would permanently and irrevocably affix slavery within the Constitution itself. With Lincoln encouraging his allies in Washington to "hold firm," the Crittenden resolutions were rejected by the Republicans on the committee. Despite its failure, Crittenden's resolutions would continue to live on in numerous Border South unionist proposals.⁴

In Missouri, the state government convened in Jefferson City on December 31. As the national crisis worsened, leading Missouri political figures began to stake out their positions on the secession crisis. It remained unclear which direction Missouri would take, but already signs were appearing that Missouri was in danger of slipping into the secessionist camp. Visiting Jefferson City as the legislative session opened, Frank Blair informed Montgomery that he had found secession sentiment widespread amongst the Democrats. Although Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson had run as a Douglas man, he strongly identified with the proslavery faction of Missouri's Democratic Party. His inaugural address was telling. Like his counterparts in South Carolina and Georgia, Jackson justified the actions of the Lower South by emphasizing the fear of Republican patronage on slavery within the South. Could the southern states, who had not contributed a single electoral vote to Lincoln, look "with unconcern upon the transplantation into their midst of thousands of Federal officeholders, exerting their influence, and the influence of their position, to break down the established social system of these States?" More importantly, in the Border South, where "a nucleus for accessions to abolitionism already exists," would the lure

⁴ Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden*, 375-81; Cong. Globe, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess. 112-14 (1860); *Senate Reports*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess. No 288, 2-18 (1860-61); Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 530-32; Abraham Lincoln to Elihu B. Washburne, December 13, 1860, *CW*, 151.

of public offices be “the premium for treachery to their social and domestic policy?” Reminding legislators that “destiny of the slave-holding States of this Union are one and the same,” Missouri should “consult her own interest, and the interest of the whole country, by a timely declaration of her determination to stand by her sister slave-holding states...with whose institutions and people she sympathizes.” To enormous applause, Jackson called for a state convention to determine Missouri’s relationship with the Union.⁵

To counteract the secessionist impulses brewing in Missouri, leading Unionists in the state began to organize pro-Union demonstrations. Yet the partisan warfare of the past decade could not easily be forgotten. A pro-Union meeting by former Douglas Democrats and Constitutional Unionists attempted to curtail Republican involvement by making support for the Crittenden resolutions a requirement for Unionism.⁶ The adoption of the Crittenden resolutions as a solution to the sectional crisis struck many Missouri Republicans as disingenuous. If these “Unionists” supposed devotion to the nation rested on such preconditions as constitutional protections for slavery, then many Republicans determined that the responsibility of keeping Missouri within the Union would rest solely on them. “The Republicans of Missouri, like the Republican Party at large, are devoted to the Union,” declared the *Missouri Democrat*. “[Our] attachment to it knows no condition or qualification.” Soon after, a series of meetings occurred between the Republican leadership in St. Louis. During one meeting Samuel T. Glover argued that the attitude of southern politicians in Congress made civil war inevitable. If the Union men were wise, said Glover, they should organize and arm themselves. Meeting in the counting room

⁵ Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, January 12, 1861, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; William Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1861-1865* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963), 6-8; *Missouri Democrat*, January 4, 1861; *Missouri Republican*, January 4, 1861; *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri*, Buel Leopard and Floyd C. Shoemaker, eds. (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1922), 328-39, Christopher Philips, “Calculated Confederate: Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Strategy for Secession in Missouri,” *MHR* 94, no. 4 (July 2000): 389-92.

⁶ *Missouri Republican*, January 10, 12, 14, 1861; *Missouri Democrat*, January 10, 12, 1861.

of merchant and St. Louis mayor Oliver D. Filley, they agreed to convert the Wide Awakes into a Union Home Guard which would serve as a paramilitary force in case of any attack on federal properties in St. Louis. Anticipating his frequent absences to Washington on congressional business, Blair recommended that a Union Committee of Safety be formed with Filley as its chairman and James O. Broadhead as its secretary, along with former mayor John How, Glover, and Julius J. Witzig. This group was to mobilize resistance to secession in Missouri while Blair was away.⁷

Blair still feared that Unionism in St. Louis remained hampered by partisan divisions. With the election to determine delegates to the state convention approaching, vote-splitting amongst various Union tickets might allow the disunionist element in St. Louis to elect their delegates to the convention and steer Missouri towards secession. Some Republicans were in favor of putting forward a straight Republican ticket on a platform of unconditional Unionism. However, Blair, Filley, How, Glover, and Broadhead sought a different course. Believing that many Union men in St. Louis would be loathe to support a Republican ticket, Blair suggested that the Republicans would need to swallow their pride and ally with other Union organizations to present a united front in the convention election. One Republican partisan protested. "I don't believe in breaking up the Republican Party just to please these tender-footed Unionists," he argued. "I believe in sticking to the party." "Let us have a country first," replied Blair, "and then we can talk about parties." At a meeting on February 6, an electoral ticket of fifteen candidates was proposed, made up of equal proportion of Douglas Democrats, Constitutional Unionists, and

⁷ *Missouri Democrat*, January 14, 1861; Peckham, *Lyon and Missouri*, 32-33; Thomas L. Snead, *The Fight for Missouri: From the Election of Lincoln to the Death of Lyon* (New York: 1886), 104-05. Samuel Glover to Montgomery Blair, January 18, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC

Republicans.⁸ Blair's gamble paid off. On election day, Unconditional Union candidates were elected by a 5,000 vote majority in St. Louis. Statewide, Unionists won by a majority of over 80,000. Blair had also been correct in his prediction: not a single avowed secessionist had been elected to the state convention. Of the 99 members elected to the convention, over half were declared Unconditional Unionists. The other portion was made up of Conditional Unionists whose opinions on secession wavered according to developing political circumstances, and many of those still sought to find a way to bring the seceded states back into the fold. When the convention would gather on March 4, these delegates would determine whether Missouri would remain within the Union.⁹

In the days following Lincoln's election, Kentucky Governor Beriah Magoffin attempted to steer his state through the crisis. Lincoln's election, Magoffin believed, was "insufficient cause for secession or rebellion." Magoffin's opinion was shared by almost every major Kentucky newspaper. The Constitutional Unionist *Louisville Journal* called for Kentuckians to gather in nonpartisan Union meetings to "give prompt and unequivocal expression [to] the deep and supreme feeling of loyalty to the Union which we believe animates our people." Douglas and Breckinridge Democratic newspapers argued that Lincoln would be kept in check by the institutions of government, as the Republicans did not yet control the House, Senate, or the Supreme Court.¹⁰ By late November, that unity was unraveling. Some newspapers like the pro-southern *Louisville Courier* pressed for a state convention to consider secession. Magoffin, watching events unfold in South Carolina, issued a letter to his fellow southern governors,

⁸ Peckham, *Lyon and Missouri*, 83-84; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 92; *Missouri Democrat*, February 7, 1861; Elizabeth Blair Lee to Samuel Philip Lee, February 12, 14, 1861, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL

⁹ Returns for St. Louis city and county can be found in the *Missouri Democrat*, February 19, 20, 21, 1861; *Missouri Republican* 19, 20, 21, 1861; the full roster of convention delegates can be found in Rombauer, *The Union Cause in St. Louis*, 147-49.

¹⁰ *Frankfort Yeoman*, November 17, 1860; *Louisville Journal*, November 10, 1860; *Louisville Courier*, November 9, 1860; *Louisville Democrat*, November 27, 1860.

calling for a convention to address the concerns of the South. Under pressure from southern secession commissioners, Magoffin reversed his earlier stance on secession. Addressing the legislature, Magoffin called for Kentucky to hold its own convention to determine the state's relationship with the Union. Such as a convention, according to Magoffin, would decide the "full and final determination" of Kentucky's future.¹¹

Magoffin's call for a convention occurred as Kentucky politics were being transformed by the secession crisis. Within the first few weeks of 1861, partisan differences were put aside as Kentucky Unionists strove to create a new party. On January 4, Robert J. Breckinridge, returning to political life after nearly a decade away, addressed a Lexington crowd on the current political crisis. Breckinridge's analysis of the current political situation rested on the belief that Kentucky's interests aligned more with the interest of the Border South and less with those of the Lower South. Unlike Magoffin, who saw Kentucky as bound to her southern sisters by "common interest, mutual sympathies, and with the whole social fabric resting on homogenous institutions," Breckinridge argued that Kentucky shared little with the economic system of the cotton states. Kentucky, said Breckinridge, shared more in common with the Border South and Border North states than with the Lower South states. Joining a confederacy of only slave states would simply "subject [Kentucky] to the dominion of the cotton States for all time to come." The only hope for the Union was for Border South men to work with moderates in the North and the South to fix the damage caused by extremists on both sides, argued Breckinridge.¹² Four days

¹¹ Magoffin to Southern Governors, December 9, 1860, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Kentucky* (1861), 19; Lowell H. Harrison and James C. Klotter, *A New History of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 186-87; *Louisville Courier*, December 18, 19, 24, 1860; Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001) 56-58.

¹² Beriah Magoffin to S.F. Hale, December 28, 1860, *Kentucky House Journal* (1861), 28; *Discourse Delivered by Rev. Dr. R.J. Breckinridge, on the day of national humiliation, January 4, 1861, at Lexington, Ky.* (1861); Klotter, *Breckinridges of Kentucky*, 76-81.

later, Constitutional Unionists and the Douglas Democrats met in Louisville, where both sides hammered out a platform agreeable to both parties. This new political organization styled themselves as Union Democrats. Declaring that Lincoln's election was not a cause for secession, they urged the anti-Republican majority in Congress to restrict Lincoln, protect southern rights, and adopt the Crittenden resolutions. Both parties pledged to defend the Union, but insisted that military force should not be used. To develop party unity and establish a political organization, a state central committee was formed, headed by George D. Prentice, the editor of the *Louisville Journal*, John H. Harney, the editor of the *Louisville Democrat*, and James Speed, a slaveholding Louisville lawyer. This new political organization demonstrated its formidable strength when Union Democrats voted down Magoffin's call for a convention and defeated a motion offering sympathy for the South. Party lines in Kentucky that had been in flux since the collapse of the Whig party were slowly hardening into two factions, as legislators began to choose between the Union and the South.¹³

South Carolina's secession also heightened political tensions in Maryland. Urged on by visiting secession commissioner Alexander Handy to call a special session of the state legislature to debate Maryland's relationship with the Union, Maryland Governor Thomas H. Hicks held fast. While sympathizing with the South, Hicks believed that Maryland had a deep conservative tradition that placed love for the Union and the Constitution above all things. "I cannot consent," wrote Hicks in a public letter, "in any precipitate or revolutionary action to aid in the dismemberment of this Union."¹⁴ By early 1861, the question consuming Maryland political life

¹³ *Louisville Journal*, January 10, 11, 1861; *Frankfort Commonwealth*, January 14, 1861; *Kentucky House Journal*, 64-5

¹⁴ *Baltimore Sun*, December 17, 19, 1860; Thomas H. Hicks to Alexander Handy, December 19, 1860, in *Journal of the (Mississippi) State Convention and Ordinances and Resolutions Adopted in January 1861* (Jackson, Mississippi: 1861), 181-83; Handy's pro-secession speech in Baltimore can be found in the *Baltimore Sun*, December 20, 1860.

was reduced to one issue: Governor Hicks' decision whether or not to call the state legislature into a special session. For his part, Hicks hoped for compromise and expressed the desire for common action by states of the Border South. In an effort to outline his views on recalling the legislature, Hicks publicly addressed the citizens of Maryland in early January. Noting that Maryland's geographical position made her likely to be the chosen battle ground in the event of conflict, Hicks remarked that any war would inevitably destroy "our cherished domestic institution" of slavery. Blaming the secessionist leadership of South Carolina and the "fanatical demagogues" in the North for the current situation, he fervently hoped that the Union would be preserved. Believing that the interests of Maryland were bound up with her fellow Border South states, Hicks promised that when "the proper time for action arrives, these sister States, bound in common destiny, will, I trust, act together." Writing privately to John Crittenden, Hicks remarked that in the current crisis, the Border South could serve as "the sheet anchor of our stranded ship of state." Like Breckinridge, Hicks believed that the mutual interests of the Border South would be enough to steer the Union away from disunion.¹⁵

The political meetings which sprung up in early 1861 reflected the wide variety of sentiment in Maryland. Meeting held through out the state varied from outright calls for secession to unconditional support for the Union. Some pro-secession meetings took a cautious approach to the crisis. One such meeting in Kent County declared that although the Union was a "political blessing," should efforts fail to secure the rights of both North and South then Maryland should "link her destiny with the slave states." Other pro-secession meetings were

¹⁵ George Radcliffe, *Thomas H. Hicks of Maryland and the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1901), 22-23; *Easton Gazette*, December 1, 1860; Elizabeth Blair Lee to Philip Lee, December 29, 1860, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Alexander K. McClure to Abraham Lincoln, January 15, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Hicks' address can be found in *Frederick Examiner*, January 9, 1861; Thomas H. Hicks to John J. Crittenden, January 5, 1861, John J. Crittenden Papers, LOC.

fierier. Meeting at the Maryland Institute in Baltimore, speakers implored Governor Hicks to call the legislature together to debate secession. “If an arbitrary Governor should refuse our request...then we will raise the banner of revolt against him,” cried former Governor Enoch Lowe, adding, “If after Virginia and Tennessee have spoken, and the loyal men of Maryland have spoken, he refuses, we will gibbet him.”¹⁶ Unionist meetings on the other hand, stressed Maryland’s commitment to the Union, her geographical position as a Border South state, and the protection of her domestic institutions. A meeting of the mechanics, farmers, and merchants of Cecil County, concerned about the economic future of their county so interconnected with Pennsylvania, called upon all Maryland men to take action in preservation of the Union. In heavily-enslaved Somerset County on the Eastern Shore, a meeting of Union men in Princess Anne debated what position Maryland should take. John W. Crisfield, one of the most influential lawyers and slaveholders in the state, argued that Maryland was “placed between two fires, and protection to our slave property is the most important consideration in this emergency.” Speaking before an audience of slaveholders, Crisfield maintained that slavery was best secured by remaining in the Union. Currently, their enslaved property was legally protected by the Fugitive Slave Act. But should their state secede Maryland slaveholders would have to rely on the “mercy” of northerners to retrieve enslaved blacks who had escaped. For the time being, argued Crisfield, Maryland should follow a policy of “masterly inactivity.”¹⁷

Maryland Republicans were divided on how best to deal with the secession crisis. With Republicanism still a watchword for fanatics and demagogues in the eyes of political leaders like Governor Hicks, some Republican leaders like Montgomery Blair sought to unite with other

¹⁶ *Baltimore Sun*, February 7, 11, 1861.

¹⁷ *Cecil Whig*, February 2, 14, 1861; *Easton Gazette*, February 2, 1861; Brugger, *Maryland*, 273; John R. Wennersten, “John W. Crisfield and Civil War Politics on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, 1860-1864,” *MHM* 99, no. 1 (Spring 2004), 5-6.

political parties to create a nonpartisan organization that would support the Union. Others were less convinced. Some Republicans like Worthington G. Snethen grew increasingly concerned that his fellow Republicans, in an eagerness to cement a Unionist alliance with former political foes, were distancing themselves from the basic tenets of Republicanism. Furthermore, Snethen believed that former Constitutional Unionists like Henry Winter Davis were using the crisis to gain favor with the administration for patronage appointments. Snethen warned Lincoln that these men had convinced Maryland Republicans like Montgomery Blair and Francis Corkran that without their support for a new Unionist coalition, Maryland might fall into the secessionist camp. "Mr. Montgomery Blair, and others of his ilk," Snethen told Lincoln, "are for a sort of "Union" party to take the place of the Republicans, and for dividing the patronage in this State between such Republicans as will go with him in their policy, and the Bell men of the Davis sect." The Maryland Republicans, according to Snethen, were "being demoralized under these influences," and it would "require all our efforts to resist them, and to prevent a stampede." Hardline Republicans like himself, William L. Marshall, and George Harris would resist building a coalition with their former political opponents. "There is nothing to compromise," concluded Snethen, "except *principle*, and that the Republicans will never do."¹⁸

As the secession crisis evolved, the politics of Unionism in the Border South would play a key role in the formation of the Lincoln cabinet. In order to build a cabinet which represented a nation which was quickly falling apart, Lincoln would turn to Border South men to represent southern interests. Although deluged by office-seekers, Lincoln wanted his three chief rivals for the nomination to join him at the cabinet table in order to avoid factional infighting. The appointment of New York's William Seward as Secretary of State and Ohio's Salmon P. Chase

¹⁸ Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 65-66; Worthington G. Snethen to Abraham Lincoln, November 26, December 8, 1860, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

as Treasury Secretary would offer geographical balance and satiate the radical wing of the party. Edward Bates's candidacy for the Republican nomination had also all but assured him a place in Lincoln's cabinet. "[Lincoln] assured me from the time of his nomination, his determination was, in case of success, to invite me into Cabinet," wrote Bates in his diary. "In fact, he was so complementary as to say that my participation in the administration, he considered necessary to its complete success." Installing a conservative ex-Whig from the Border South would permit Lincoln to balance both geographical and ideological needs. But Bates' selection still rankled some Missouri Republicans. Writing to Preston Blair, Benjamin Gratz Brown had a different opinion. Brown told Preston that friends of Bates had been lobbying hard for a cabinet appointment before the election, even though they had not supported the Republican ticket in the state. "For my own part I am also frank to say to you that such a choice would not advance us here in Missouri," warned Brown, adding that "all of Mr. Bates's friends, with one or two honorable exceptions, abandoned us in August and heaped abuse upon us in November." But when Frank travelled to Springfield to talk with Lincoln, it soon became apparent that Lincoln had pegged Bates for the position.¹⁹

The selection of Bates as Attorney General was troublesome for the Blairs, because Preston Blair wanted Montgomery to receive the position. Preston had always envisioned his sons ascending to the heights of political and judicial power in the United States. He saw Montgomery's appointment to Attorney General as the first step to an eventual place on the Supreme Court. Unlike Frank, whose charisma and energy made him a natural politician but who was sometimes prone to public hyperbole, Montgomery was far more comfortable in the legal

¹⁹ Kingsley S. Bingham, Solomon Foot, and Zachariah Chandler to Abraham Lincoln, January 21, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Bates, *Diary of Edward Bates*, 164-5; B. Gratz Brown to Francis Preston Blair, November 8, 1860; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, November 23, December 13, 1860, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL.

arena. Tall and lean, with a mind that operated as “an anvil for ideas to be hammered on,” Montgomery parsed every word he said with lawyerly precision.²⁰ During his conversations with Lincoln, Frank suggested that in lieu of the attorney generalship, his brother should be appointed to the War Department. Lincoln demurred, and suggesting Montgomery become Postmaster General instead. Frank’s request was accompanied by letters to Lincoln from various Blair allies supporting Montgomery’s appointment. These letters laid out the various reasons why Montgomery should be included in Lincoln’s cabinet, beyond it being a fitting reward for the Blair family’s many years of service to the Republican cause. As a cabinet member from a slave state Montgomery’s presence would demonstrate a sensitivity to the South. In addition, Montgomery would represent the views of the old Jacksonians who had left the Democratic Party while being seen as mostly satisfactory to all parties in Maryland. While the position of Postmaster General did not carry the same prestige as that of Attorney General, it was the largest dispenser of patronage positions in the federal government. Montgomery would have the ability to appoint a network of postmasters in various towns and cities, all loyal to the administration. Furthermore, Lincoln’s appointment of Montgomery would ensure the support of the entire Blair family. For the first time since Andrew Jackson’s presidency, Preston Blair would have the ear of the White House.²¹

With Bates from Missouri and Montgomery Blair from Maryland, the only Border South state left out of the cabinet equation was Kentucky. Hovering around the edges of Lincoln’s

²⁰ Frank Blair to Francis Preston Blair, November 8, December 23, 1860, Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, January 24, 1861, February 12, 16, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC; William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* (Boston: 1863), 43.

²¹ Benjamin F. Wade to Preston King, November 20, 1860, Marcus J. Parrott to Abraham Lincoln, December 20, 1860, Eli Thayer to Abraham Lincoln, December 21, 1860, James M. Ashley to Abraham Lincoln, December 22, 1860, William Pinckney Ewing to Abraham Lincoln, February 2, 1861, Francis Corkran and John C. Underwood to Abraham Lincoln, February 26, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Thurlow Weed, *Life of Thurlow Weed Including his Autobiography and Memoir*, ed. Harriet Weed (Boston: 1884), 606-07; Harry James Carman and Reinhard Henry Luthin, *Lincoln and the Patronage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 48-49.

appointments was Kentucky's most prominent Republican, Cassius Clay. Lincoln's hometown newspaper, the *Daily Illinois State Register*, noted in late December that a "cabinet appointment for [Clay] might be regarded as a declaration of war upon the South." As Lincoln debated his cabinet choices, Clay reminded the president-elect of his personal effort for him during the campaign. "In the success of the party, which you represent, I did feel that my long though humble services, did entitle me to a portion of the controlling interest in the administration of its destiny," Clay informed Lincoln. Unlike the appointment of Bates, whose Whig antecedents in Missouri reassured Missouri conservatives, and the appointment of Montgomery Blair, which would keep the influential Blair family content, the appointment of Clay would have caused political trouble in Kentucky. When Kentucky conservatives warned Lincoln that choosing Clay would threaten Unionism in the state, Lincoln decided against appointing Clay to the cabinet.²² Finally accepting the reality that he would not serve in Lincoln's cabinet, Clay lobbied for a diplomatic posting. He eventually accepted the ambassadorship to Russia. It would be the biggest mistake of his political career. Still deeply in debt, the appointment came with a sinecure that gave Clay the financial stability he so desperately needed. But it also took him away from the United States at its most perilous hour. Clay's entire political career had been built upon fighting the influence of Kentucky's slaveholding aristocracy. Now, the slaveholding oligarchy of the South was attempting trying to rip the Union asunder. Instead of facing his enemy across the nation's battlefield while supported by the full weight of the Union, Clay would instead find himself in distant Russia. As a new generation of men would build their reputations on the

²² *Daily Illinois State Register*, December 4, 1860; Cassius Clay to Abraham Lincoln, January 10, 1861; J. Hendershott to Abraham Lincoln, December 8, 1860, Lincoln Papers, LOC; Clay, *Memoirs* 250-52; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 171.

battlefield, and parlay those reputations into political careers, Clay's political star would begin to fade while he mingled in the salons of St. Petersburg.²³

With Clay not being an option, Lincoln still attempted to bring Kentucky into the fold. Some men had suggested that Lincoln retain the services of Kentuckian Joseph Holt, who was currently serving as Secretary of War in Buchanan's administration. The appointment of Holt, Orville H. Browning noted, would "take the life out of secession in the border slave states." However, Holt was being attacked by secessionist newspapers throughout the South as "recreant son of the South" because he had remained in Buchanan's cabinet. Lincoln also toyed with offering his old friend Joshua Speed a cabinet position, but Speed allegedly refused. Despite not having a cabinet representative from Kentucky, both Holt and Speed would play crucial roles in advising Lincoln on Kentucky issues throughout the war. Joshua's brother James, already a member of the Union Democrats state central committee, would also help provide Lincoln with crucial information about political sentiment in Kentucky.²⁴

Lincoln's decision to place two prominent Border Southerners in his cabinet signalled the political importance of the Border South to the new administration. A man like Bates would help promote conservative policies that would restore the Union and signal the importance of Missouri to the administration. The appointment of Montgomery Blair would appease the powerful Blair family and bolster Maryland's place in the cabinet. Beyond the political considerations of Bates and Blair's positions, their appointments also gave the Border South would the most important voice the region had ever had in a presidential administration.

²³ Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 176-178; Cassius Clay to Abraham Lincoln, March 28, May 11, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

²⁴ James Mitchell to Abraham Lincoln, January 17, 1861, L. Wiles to Abraham Lincoln, January 23, 1861, Orville H. Browning to Abraham Lincoln, January 19, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; *Louisville Journal*, January 21, 1861; *Louisville Democrat*, February 9, 1861; Lowell Harrison, *Lincoln of Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 121; Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 174-77.

Previous northern presidents had always attempted to maintain a regional balance when it came to cabinets, but that balance had often been reflected by proslavery voices from the Lower and Middle South. Now those voices were gone. As Border Southerners, Bates and Blair would now represent the entire South around the cabinet table. As a result, southern concerns would now speak with a Border South voice.

On Monday, March 4, 1861, and under a bright, cheerful sun that belied the gloomy mood of the nation, Abraham Lincoln was sworn in as the sixteenth President of the United States. As Lincoln stepped onto the platform to read his speech, already seven states had seceded from the Union and were in the process of launching their own slaveholding republic. Lincoln's speech would attempt to clarify the federal government's position on secession, which had been muddled and confusing during the dying days of the Buchanan administration. Lincoln repudiated the right of secession, declaring that "no State, upon its own mere motion, can lawfully get out of the Union; that laws and ordinances to that effect are legally void; and that acts of violence within any State or States against the authority of the United are insurrectionary or revolutionary." But Lincoln's address was also replete with expressions of conciliation. The government would not interfere with slavery in states where it existed, and asserted that in the matter of fugitive slaves Congress must make good on the unanimous oaths of its members to support the Constitution. Appealing directly to the people of the South, Lincoln asked them to consider that the responsibility for any conflict would be their own, and not the federal government's.²⁵

²⁵ *New York Herald*, March 5, 1861; *New York Tribune*, March 5, 1861; *New York Times*, March 5, 1861; Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln: Prologue to Civil War, 1859-1861*. 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950) 2:457-61; Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010), 157-59.

Even as Lincoln was speaking, 700 miles west of Washington delegates gathered in St. Louis to determine Missouri's response to the national crisis. Having decided to leave the crowded confines of the Cole County courthouse in Jefferson City for the more spacious Mercantile Library Hall in St. Louis, delegates from all over the state convened on March 4. As they entered the hall, they were immediately confronted with massive American flags, each bearing thirty-four stars, placed on either side of the chamber. Red, white, and blue bunting decorated the large alcove at the west end of the hall. A large stuffed American eagle with a strip of paper clutched in its beak bearing the words "Union Forever" was carried into the hall as the convention opened to loud demonstrations of applause. As the convention settled into a round of speechmaking, John B. Henderson, a slaveholding lawyer from Pike County, addressed the convention. A Douglas Democrat, he had run for Congress the previous August, campaigning against abolition and the expansion of slavery in the territories, but had been defeated by James Rollins. Calling for the preservation of the Union at all costs, Henderson declared that "I am willing to bury the weapons of party strife, and do all I can to preserve this Union." For Henderson, the value that he affixed to himself as a slaveholder was nothing compared to the survival of the Union. "Let me say to you, in all candor as a man, I this day would most freely and willingly lay upon the altar of my country every dollar I am possessed of upon this earth in order to be satisfied that my country is safe." Buried within Henderson's speech, however, was a recognition of how the secession crisis was breaking down the traditional partisan barriers of Missouri politics:

I am aware...that from the utterances that I have made today, and will yet make, some gentlemen will be pleased to call me a Black Republican. I have never yet cast a vote for a man claiming to be a Republican; and unless their views upon the slavery question shall be changed, so that they are no longer the party of the present day, I expect never to cast

a vote for one. But I have my rights in this country, and if the Republican Party are Union men, all I can say is that I will not abandon the Union because *they* cling to it.²⁶

Henderson's acknowledgment of the transformative effects of the secession crisis on Missouri politics would eventually be reflected in his own political transformation during the war.

Although Henderson refused to call himself a Republican during the convention, within a year he would be appointed to the United States Senate as a Unionist. Two years after that, this slaveholder from Pike County would find himself allied with Republicans and co-sponsoring a constitutional amendment to end slavery throughout the United States.

The convention appointed Hamilton Gamble as the chairman of the Committee on Federal Relations to examine Missouri's relationship to the federal government. A former Missouri Supreme Court Justice, Gamble was widely respected by both Unconditional and Conditional Unionists in the state. Gamble and his committee deliberated for five days before presenting their report to the convention. Speaking on behalf of the committee, Gamble remarked upon the southern fears about the patronage power of the Republican Party, but reminded the convention that political parties in power are transitory, often becoming divided because of internal jealousies and by the attacks of their opponents. At present, Gamble concluded, "there is no adequate cause to impel Missouri to dissolve her connection with the Federal Union." The committee's argument against secession also reflected the longstanding concerns of slavery's borderland. Should Missouri join a new confederacy, her geographical position would expose her to "annihilation." Emigration to the state would cease, as no southerner would dare venture into a frontier state, nor any northerner come to a foreign country hostile to his native land. Slavery in Missouri would be destroyed because Missouri slaveholders

²⁶ *Missouri Republican*, March 5, 1861; *Missouri Democrat*, March 5, 1861; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 10-11; *Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, Held at Jefferson City and St. Louis, March 1861* (St. Louis: 1861), 84-93.

would be surrounded by a foreign country who would not permit them to recapture escaped slaves. Missouri slaveholders and their enslaved property would be forced to move to safer environs further south. Secession, predicted Gamble, would result in the “spectacle of [Missouri] breaking up its most advantageous and important relation to the old Union, in order to enter a slaveholding confederacy and having itself no slaves.” Presenting a series of resolutions opposing secession and pledging Missouri to work towards a “fair and amicable adjustment” to the current crisis, the committee approved the Crittenden resolutions and called for a national convention to amend the federal constitution to protect slavery. When the final vote came, the convention displayed near unanimity in adopting the various resolutions. “God bless the Missouri Convention, and its wise and patriotic members,” exulted Edward Bates to James O. Broadhead. “I believe the country is saved...the prospects are evidently brightening.” Gamble and his committee’s resolutions were a near masterpiece of compromise. The resolutions had something for everyone. Unconditional Unionists supported the clear rejection of the legality of secession, while Conditional Unionists saw the adoption of the compromise and constitutional reform as beneficial to the current crisis. Even for those whose sympathies were slowly drifting southwards, the committee’s recommendation that the federal government take no military action towards the seceded states was appealing.²⁷

As the convention debated Missouri’s place in the Union, some Unconditional Unionists were growing increasingly worried about the military and political situation in the state. As word filtered into Missouri about secessionists in the seceded states taking control of federal property, concern grew over the position of the federal arsenal at St. Louis. Situated in the south

²⁷ *Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention*, 34-37; Dennis K. Boman, *Lincoln’s Resolute Unionist: Hamilton Gamble, Dred Scott Dissenter and Missouri’s Civil War Governor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 102-108; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 12-14; Edward Bates to James O. Broadhead, March 26, 1861, James O. Broadhead Papers, MHM.

end of the city, and with enough arms and ammunition to equip over forty thousand men, the arsenal was a tempting target for Missouri secessionists. Suspicious of the arsenal commander's loyalty, Frank Blair, through his connections in Washington, managed to replace the arsenal commander with Major Peter V. Hagner and strengthen the arsenal's defences with troops from Kansas led by Captain Nathaniel Lyon.²⁸ Despite Blair's efforts, the chain of command at the arsenal remained split between Lyon and Hagner, whom Lyon suspected of disloyalty. Charles Elleard and Peter Foy, after touring the arsenal, wrote to Blair that Lyon had little control over the defences of the arsenal. "Captain Lyon has no control over the buildings where he would like to place his men in case of necessity," declared Elleard.²⁹ The political scene in St. Louis also continued to worsen for the Unionists. Unconditional Unionists were defeated in the April municipal election as an anti-Republican ticket secured the mayoralty of St. Louis and won nearly every municipal ward. A few days after the election, Governor Jackson appointed a new board of police commissioners in St. Louis. Composed of secessionist sympathizers it immediately began to impose control on elements it found troublesome, passing a series of orders that closed down German theatres and taverns open on Sundays, while leaving taverns frequented by native-born Americans undisturbed. Additionally, the police board passed a series of orders designed to limit the assembly and movement of the black population of St. Louis. Its orders prohibited the gatherings of free blacks in churches, saloons, and public houses without permission of the Chief of Police; banned night assemblages of all free blacks; and gave notice that all free blacks within the city limits without a license would be arrested if they did not leave

²⁸ Daniel M. Frost to Claiborne Jackson, January 24, 1861, in Peckham, *Nathaniel Lyon and Missouri*, 43-44; Smith, *Blair Family*, 2:32-33.

²⁹ Nathaniel Lyon, letter of January 27, 1861, in Ashbel Woodward, *Life of General Nathaniel Lyon* (Hartford: 1861), 236; *Missouri Democrat*, February 23, 1861; *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880), 1:1:656-58 (hereafter cited as *OR*); Nathaniel Lyon to Frank Blair, April 6, 1861, Charles Elleard to Frank Blair, April 6, 1861, in Peckham, *Lyon and Missouri*, 70-72.

by April 24. Enslaved blacks, meanwhile, were not permitted to assemble or hire out their own time, and policemen had to be present during their church services. Controlling the political apparatus of St. Louis and the mechanism of law enforcement, secessionists hungrily eyed the store of arms located within the arsenal.³⁰

The situation, already tense, exploded on April 12 when Confederate forces fired upon Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. Lincoln immediately called for seventy-five thousand volunteers for ninety days' service to put down the rebellion. Asking each state to contribute a quota of men, Secretary of War Simon Cameron informed Missouri that its share would be four thousand men. Governor Jackson rejected Cameron's request immediately. "Your requisition [is] illegal, unconstitutional, and revolutionary in its object, inhuman and diabolical, and cannot be complied with," replied Jackson. "Not one man will the State of Missouri furnish to carry on any unholy crusade." At the same time, Jackson sent letters to Jefferson Davis, the newly-installed president of the Confederacy, requesting that siege guns and mortars be sent to Missouri at once. Finally, Jackson issued a call for the Missouri legislature to reconvene on May 2 to "place the state in a proper attitude of defence." Returning to St. Louis on the day that Jackson issued his refusal to Lincoln, Frank Blair set up preparing the city for conflict. Carrying with him a War Department order that gave Lyon access to five thousand guns with which to equip loyal citizens, Blair proposed arming his Union Home Guards. The commander of Department of the West General William H. Harney refused Blair's proposal, arguing that arming a Unionist paramilitary force would simply exacerbate the already tense situation in St. Louis. Using his political influence, Frank wrote to Montgomery, urging his brother to use his cabinet influence to remove

³⁰ *Missouri Republican*, March 19, April 2, 15, 1861; *Missouri Democrat*, April 6, 15, 1861; Henry Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody: The Missouri Years of an Austrian Radical, 1849-1866* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), 268-72; Peckham, *Lyon and Missouri*, 95-96; *OR*, 1:1:670.

Harney and appoint a new commander who would not obstruct Unionist men in St. Louis. Frank also telegraphed Cameron asking to enroll the Union Home Guards into proper military service in order to meet Missouri's quota. A few days later, Harney was dismissed. Blair's political influence had worked again. Now he and Lyon faced a state governor actively resisting the federal government. Missouri's own state militia, emboldened by the governor's proclamation, had already seized the small federal arsenal in Liberty on the western Missouri border, and transported it to Jefferson City.³¹

The firing on Fort Sumter and the commencement of hostilities challenged Kentucky Unionism. Since the formation of the Union Democrats, Union men in Kentucky increasingly relied on the somewhat nebulous strategy of opposing the Lincoln administration while supporting the government. "I have said the issue was not with the Government, but with the Republican Party, who have accidently gotten into power," declared Unionist Archibald Dixon to a crowd in Paducah. The government, Union Democrats argued, was steeped in history and permanency; the administration, on the other hand, was a temporary aberration. When Lincoln demanded that Kentucky furnish troops to put down the rebellion, Governor Magoffin replied that Kentucky would send no troops "for the purpose of subduing her sister Southern States."³² With war declared, Kentucky Unionists struggled to strike a balance between supporting the government and preserving neutrality. Union papers, while not endorsing Lincoln's action, condemned the actions of Southern extremists for deliberately provoking the conflict. During a mass Union meeting in Louisville, Kentucky Unionists outlined their position. Kentucky would

³¹ *OR*, 3:1:67-69, 82-83; *Messages and Proclamation*, 3:384; Frank Blair to Simon Cameron, April 18, 1861, Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, April 19, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Peckham, *Lyon and Missouri*, 102-103. Allan P. Richardson to James O. Broadhead, April 30, 1861, James O. Broadhead Papers, MHM.

³² Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Gloucester, MA.: Peter Smith, 1966), 35; *Louisville Democrat*, March 30, 1861; Beriah Magoffin to Simon Cameron, April 15, 1861, *OR*, 3:1:70.

instead remain neutral and at peace, said Dixon, and would “stand firm with her sister border States...to calm the distracted sections.” The idea that Kentucky should remain neutral in the conflict, and perhaps act as peacemaker quickly became the doctrine of the Democratic Unionists. When the legislature returned, the Kentucky House officially adopted a resolution supporting neutrality.³³

The limits to the policy of “masterly inactivity” promoted by Maryland Unionists like John W. Crisfield were discovered in April 1861. As word began to trickle in about the events at Fort Sumter, and Lincoln’s subsequent call for volunteers, tensions in the state—particularly in Baltimore—began to rise. When a regiment of Massachusetts troops headed towards Washington arrived in Baltimore, they were required to transfer to another railroad terminal across town to continue on their journey. Forced to march ten blocks along streets lined with jeering pro-secession Baltimoreans, the Massachusetts troops were soon showered with rocks and bricks. In response, some soldiers fired into the crowd, commencing a riot which left sixteen dead.³⁴ The Baltimore riot of April 19, combined with the secession of Virginia, further heightened tensions in Maryland. Governor Hicks, after months of avoiding convening the state legislature, finally relented and called for a new session. Assembling in Frederick, rather than in pro-secession Annapolis, Hicks delivered his message to the legislature. While he felt that neutrality was still the safest course, events had forced his hand. Seeing that there was no reason to oppose the federal government, declared Hicks, “I can give no other counsel than that we shall array ourselves for the Union and peace, and thus preserve our soil from being polluted with the blood of brethren.” Unlike Claiborne Jackson’s secessionist caginess or Beriah Magoffin’s sectional

³³ *Louisville Journal*, April 15, 16, 17, 1861; *Louisville Democrat*, April 18, 1861; Cong. Globe, 37 cong. 2nd Sess., Appendix, 74, 81 (1861); *Kentucky House Journal* (1861), 27-28.

³⁴ Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances*, 178-80; George W. Brown, *Baltimore and the Nineteenth of April, A Study of War* (Baltimore: 1887), 46; Thomas Hicks to Simon Cameron, April 20, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

neutrality, Hicks' speech sent a clear message through the state: Maryland would be for the Union.³⁵

In Missouri, tensions continued to rise as Unionists and secessionists attempted to secure the St. Louis arsenal. On May 6, the secessionist commander of the state militia had set up an encampment in a wooded valley six miles from the arsenal in the west end of the city. Naming it "Camp Jackson" after the governor, the various state militia companies in the city gathered there. However, the secessionists were badly outnumbered, with only around seven hundred men to nearly four thousand Unionists. Despite his strategic advantage and numerical superiority, Lyon saw the establishment of Camp Jackson as a direct threat to his position. "Having appealed to the South for assistance," wrote Lyon, "every appearance indicated a rapid accumulation of men and means for seizing government property and overturning its authority." Now determined to demand the surrender of Camp Jackson, Lyon sought the Union Committee's approval to take the camp the following day. Emboldened by Lyon's determination, all of the Committee members except for Samuel T. Glover approved the action. The next day, Lyon and the Union forces, made up of both regular troops and the Union Home Guards, marched through the street of St. Louis towards the camp. As they marched, thousands of curious spectators watched from windows and balconies. Tensions in the city were at their peak. By mid-afternoon federal forces had reached and surrounded the camp, leaving the secessionist commander had no other option than to surrender. Taking the assembled secessionist militia as prisoner, Lyon and his forces proceeded to march them back through the street of the St. Louis back to the arsenal. As they proceeded, a hostile crowd began gathering along the route. Shouting "Damn the Dutch," and "Hurrah for Jeff Davis," they began spitting upon and throwing rocks and bricks at the soldiers.

³⁵ *Frederick Examiner*, April 24, 1861; *Baltimore Sun*, April 29, 1861; Radcliffe, *Hicks of Maryland*, 71-73.

William T. Sherman, also recently arrived in St. Louis, was observing the procession of militia prisoners with his son when a drunken spectator fired his pistol into a crowd of Union Home Guards. As Sherman watched, the Guards began to fire over the heads of the crowds, creating a general stampede. In the confusion and turmoil that followed, twenty-eight people were killed and many others wounded. Blair and Lyon managed to regain control of the situation, finally returning to the arsenal that night.³⁶

In the aftermath of the Camp Jackson seizure, some political and military leaders attempted to broker a compromise that would restore some sort of order in Missouri. But there were limits to compromise. Viewing Blair and Lyon as irresponsible hotheads who had done nothing but provoke secessionist sentiment in the state, Hamilton Gamble encouraged Lincoln to call an inquiry into the Camp Jackson incident and utilize regular troops to keep the peace in St. Louis. But Frank Blair's allies in Washington convinced Lincoln otherwise. When General Harney—who been reinstated as the main Union military commander once again—brokered a compromise with General Sterling Price, the commander of the state militia, which declared that federal government would recognize the neutrality of Missouri, Unionists were alarmed. Reports of secessionist mobilization and the harassment of Unionists throughout the state became rampant. Through his relationship with Lincoln, Blair managed to remove Harney again from command and Lyon promoted to brigadier general. Lyon and Blair soon arranged for a conference between themselves and Governor Jackson and General Price in order to find a peaceable solution to the troubles in Missouri. After arguing over the relationship between the

³⁶ Rombauer, *The Union Cause*, 224-225; Peckham, *Lyon and Missouri*, 118-119, 139-140, Galusha Anderson, *The Story of a Border City During the Civil War* (Boston: Brown, Little, and Company, 1908), 86-89; *OR*, 1:3:4; Peckham, *Lyon and Missouri*, 140-141; Anderson, *Border City*, 94-98; Rombauer, *The Union Cause*, 229-31; William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of W.T. Sherman*, ed. Charles Royster (New York: Library of America, 1990), 190-92; James W. Covington, "The Camp Jackson Affair," *MHR* 55, no. 3 (April 1961): 197-212; *Missouri Republican*, May 11, 1861.

state and the nation for nearly four hours, Lyon had enough. “Rather than concede to the State of Missouri for one single instant the right to dictate to my Government in any matter however unimportant,” declared Lyon, “I would see [every] man, woman, and child in the state dead and buried. *This means war.*”³⁷ Shocked by Lyon’s pronouncement, Jackson and Price quickly returned to Jefferson City, where they issued a proclamation calling for all Missourians to rally to the state’s defense. Ordering the destruction of the railroad bridges across the Gasconade and Osage Rivers to resist any advance by Unionist forces, Price, Jackson, and a small force of state militia retreated westward to the river town of Booneville. Upon hearing of the governor’s proclamation, Lyon and Blair drew up a plan of attack and moved up the Missouri River towards Jefferson City. Finding the capital deserted, they continued upriver to Booneville. Lyon’s advance alarmed Jackson, who retreated again to the southwest corner of the state. Now controlling St. Louis and Jefferson City, Lyon and Blair had, for the moment, ended the immediate secessionist threat in Missouri.³⁸

The flight of Missouri’s duly elected state government from Jefferson City created a power vacuum. Union men, declaring that Jackson’s state government had “expatriated” itself and committed treason against federal forces, argued that all state executive offices now remained vacant. Reconvening at Jefferson City in July, the state convention appointed a committee led by James O. Broadhead to examine what actions should be taken to provide for the continuity of Missouri’s state government. Broadhead’s committee, drawing upon the provisions within the Missouri constitution, reported the vacant state offices could be filled by

³⁷ Hamilton R. Gamble and James E. Yeatman to Abraham Lincoln, May 15, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Rombauer, *Union Cause in St. Louis*, 246; James Gardenhire to Montgomery Blair, May 16, 1861; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, May 20, 25, 1861; Thomas Gantt to Montgomery Blair, May 21, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Parrish, *Turbulent Union*, 28-31; Lyon’s quote can be found in Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 199-200. A more sanguine, but no less dramatic version of this quote can be found in Peckham, *Lyon and Missouri*, 243-48.

³⁸ Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 32; Peckham, *Lyon and Missouri*, 253-55, 269-73; *OR*, 1:3:11-14.

appointees chosen by the convention for a term lasting until August 1862. It also recommended that all seats in the legislature be vacated. Agreeing that state elections be held in November 1861, and a loyalty oath enacted for elected offices, the committee's report was adopted by the convention. On the last day of the convention, delegates proceeded to fill the vacant state offices. Hamilton Gamble, who during the course of the conventions in St. Louis and in Jefferson City had attempted to mollify both conservative and more radical Unionists, was unanimously elected as the new governor of Missouri's provisional government.³⁹

Gamble's appointment and the establishment of a new provisional government ended one of the most tumultuous periods in Missouri's political history. In less than six months, a secession-minded governor and his allies had been driven out of office. St. Louis had seen fighting and bloodshed in its streets. Men whose political affiliations had previously been incompatible a year ago now found themselves standing alongside one another in a loosely defined Unionist party. Frank Blair, heading to Washington to assume his congressional duties, now found his reputation enhanced as the man whose bold action had helped to save Missouri from slipping into secessionist hands. His trusted ally Nathaniel Lyon was not as fortunate. Engaging Sterling Price's pro-Confederate state militia at Wilson's Creek, just southwest of Springfield, Lyon was shot through the heart and killed on August 9—the first Union general to be killed in the war. Hamilton Gamble now emerged as a trusted, respected, and conservative leader who had worked with Missouri's various Unionist factions to keep Missouri in the Union. "Although differing as to modes and schemes," Gamble had declared in his inaugural gubernatorial address to the convention, "we shall be found united in the great work of

³⁹ *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, Held at Jefferson City, July 1861* (St. Louis: 1861); John B. Henderson to James Broadhead, June 25, 1861; W.L. Lovelace to James Broadhead, June 27, 1861; Edward Bates to James Broadhead July 13, 1861, JBP; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 33-47; Boman, *Lincoln's Resolute Unionist*, 112-14.

pacification.” Yet Gamble’s address cautioned against reopening the one issue that had the potential to rip asunder the Unionist coalition in Missouri. In his proclamation to the people of Missouri in August 1861, Gamble promised that slavery within the state would not be touched. “No countenance will be afforded to any scheme or to any conduct calculated in any degree to interfere with the institution of Slavery existing in the State,” promised Gamble. “To the very utmost extent of Executive power, that institution will be protected.” So long as the question of slavery was avoided, surmised Gamble, Missouri’s place in the Union would remain secure.⁴⁰

The first test as to whether neutrality would bolster the cause of Unionism in Kentucky came during the summer of 1861. With Lincoln calling Congress to assemble on July 4, Governor Magoffin ordered that the state’s congressional elections be moved from August to June 20. Neutrality gave Unionist candidates a simple platform to campaign upon against their secession-orientated opponents, the Southern Rights party. “The attitude of the state...clearly settles the general duty of her representatives,” wrote the *Journal*’s George Prentice. “That duty is to vote, and speak, and act through every possible channel, as to promote a speedy, honorable, and salutary peace.” In addition to promoting Kentucky Unionists as peacemakers, Union backers also had to reinforce that their candidates would support the government, but not Lincoln, the Republican Party, or armed conflict. The men the Union Democrats nominated were older, long-established conservative political figures in Kentucky, men like John J. Crittenden, Charles Wickliffe, and Henry Girder. Unionist newspapers stressed that Union Democrats like Robert Mallory, running in the Seventh Congressional District, would remain true to the state’s doctrine of neutrality in Washington. “To vote for Mr. Mallory today is not to vote for the

⁴⁰ *New York Tribune*, June 29, 1861; *New York Herald*, July 2, 1861; Elizabeth Blair Lee to Samuel Phillips Lee, June 19, 23, 26, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Rombauer, *Union Cause in St. Louis*, 327; *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, July 1861*, 135; “On the Provisional Governor Assuming Office of the Executive,” *Messages and Proclamations*, 3:512.

support of Mr. Lincoln,” emphasized the *Louisville Journal*. The simplicity of neutrality worked. In what became a rout, Union Democrats captured nine out of the ten congressional seats. For Kentucky voters, these statesmen would head to Washington carrying a message of neutrality, peace, and reconciliation.⁴¹

Yet despite their overwhelming victory, there existed a faction within the Union Democrats who were skeptical as to how long this doctrine of neutrality would last. When neutrality was officially adopted by Kentucky in May 1861, Joshua Speed asked Joseph Holt to return to Kentucky to deliver pro-Union speeches, and to send a signed address on the subject of neutrality. Joshua and his brother James were both slaveholding Kentuckians who had known Lincoln since 1841. Both brothers had been antislavery Whigs who—despite their long friendship with Lincoln—had become Douglas Democrats by 1860. While Joshua maintained a conservative antislavery position, James, a moderate antislavery man, had himself been involved in the ill-fated emancipation movement in 1849. “Kentucky is nervous with excitement,” wrote Joshua, “and the people struggling between loyalty to the Government and deep seated distrust of the policy of the administration in regard [to] war.” If Kentuckians could be convinced that this war is not a war against “individual property and the institution of slavery,” the state would fully support the administration.⁴²

Holt declared that neutrality was untenable in every aspect. Kentucky would soon have to choose between a “government strong and able to protect her,” or throw in her lot with a

⁴¹ *Louisville Journal*, June 8, 19, 1861; *Louisville Democrat*, June 20, 1861; Harrison and Klotter, *A New History of Kentucky*, 189. The only Southern Rights candidate to win was Henry C. Burnett, who represented the Jackson Purchase. He would be expelled from the U.S. House of Representatives in December of 1861 for disloyalty to the Union. Craig F. Berry, “Henry Cornelius Burnett: Champion of Southern Rights,” *RKHS* 77 (Fall 1979): 266-74.

⁴² Surprisingly little work has been done on the Speeds and their roles in Kentucky politics. Gary Lee Williams “James and Joshua Speed: Lincoln’s Kentucky Friends” (PhD. diss., Duke University, 1971) remains the only full length examination of the brothers. See also Cole, “The Emancipationist’s Dilemma,” 29-35, for a detailed look at James Speed’s role during the 1849 emancipation convention; Joshua Speed to Joseph Holt, May 24, 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, LOC.

Southern confederacy which is “weak, and that contains in the very element of its life, the seeds of distraction and early dissolution.” Like John W. Crisfield in Maryland and Hamilton Gamble in Missouri, Holt contended that slavery in Kentucky was better protected in the Union than out of it. The state now enjoyed protection for slavery under the Fugitive Slave Act, argued Holt. Playing up borderland concerns over Kentucky’s porous border along the Ohio River, Holt maintained that should Kentucky join the Confederacy, “she will virtually have Canada brought to her doors.” With no recourse for retrieving enslaved property from free states, slavery would perish rapidly in Kentucky, “as a ball of snow would melt in the summer sun.” Holt’s letter provided the best rationale for unconditional support of the Union. Speed immediately had Holt’s letter printed up in pamphlet form, and more than 30,000 copies sent throughout the state. Holt’s letter was well received by some Unionists. “I was delighted with your stab at that monstrosity—neutrality,” wrote Theodore S. Bell. “Rest assured that the great heart of the people of Kentucky has no fellowship with that doctrine.” Holt’s efforts also appeared to work politically for the Union Democrats. During the state election in August 1861, Union Democrats had won 76 out of 100 seats in the state House, and took 16 of the 19 available Senate seats, giving them a majority in the upper chamber.⁴³

Kentucky’s official position of neutrality finally gave way after the August elections. Over the summer, Lincoln had asked Kentucky’s congressmen to approve the formation of a Kentucky regiment, to no avail. But with the Unionist victory in the state election, Lieutenant William “Bull” Nelson—hoping to draw upon Unionist sentiment in the eastern portions of Kentucky and Tennessee—established a camp in Garrard County to equip and train Kentucky Union regiments. When Magoffin complained to Lincoln that the establishment of the camp

⁴³ Joseph Holt to Joshua Speed, May 31, 1861, in the *Louisville Democrat*, June 9, 1861; Theodore S. Bell to Joseph Holt, June 9, 1861, James Speed to Joseph Holt, June 10, 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, LOC.

violated Kentucky's position of official neutrality and threatened the peace, Lincoln pointed out that Magoffin himself had done little to show that he supported the Union. "I do not believe that it is the popular wish of Kentucky that this force shall be removed beyond her limits," replied Lincoln, "I must respectfully decline to so remove it."⁴⁴ With the Union army now actively recruiting and training within Kentucky's borders, the illusion of neutrality so carefully maintained finally shattered in late September. Eager to control the strategic juncture of western Kentucky, where the Ohio, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland rivers merged, Confederate forces under General Gideon Pillow seized and occupied the river port town of Columbus. In response, Union forces under General Ulysses S. Grant seized Paducah. Reflecting on events, the Unionist *Louisville Democrat* took on a somber tone. "The war seems indeed to be coming upon us," wrote the *Democrat*. "The rash wickedness of secession, acting here as elsewhere, will plunge our state into ruin." With military forces fighting within the state and neutrality abandoned, Unionists in Kentucky would now have to contend with the difficult question of what wartime Unionism would now look like.⁴⁵

The firing on Sumter, the Baltimore Riot, and the secession of Virginia all sparked a movement toward creating a Unionist party in Maryland. "A party in favor of the Union at all hazards...must be organized," said the *Cambridge Intelligencer*. "Old issues have passed away, and with them party lines must be obliterated." As in Kentucky, Maryland would hold a June election to elect the state's congressional representatives. In congressional districts throughout Maryland, Union organizations quickly assembled to nominate candidates. These Unionist

⁴⁴ Abraham Lincoln to the Kentucky Delegation in Congress, July 29, August 5, 1861, *CW* 464; *OR*, 252-53; Beriah Magoffin to Abraham Lincoln, August 19, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Abraham Lincoln to Beriah Magoffin, August 24, 1861, *CW*, 497.

⁴⁵ Lowell H. Harrison, *The Civil War in Kentucky* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009) 11-12; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 106-110; *Louisville Democrat*, September 8, 1861.

candidates were an eclectic mix of retired political leaders and prominent men who now re-emerged into the political sphere. In the Fifth District of western Maryland, Unionists nominated former Governor Francis Thomas, whose sympathies towards antislavery and free soil had been known since 1848. John W. Crisfield was forced back into public life by the Unionists of the First District. Accepting the nomination “with profound gratitude,” Crisfield condemned secession as constitutionally illegal, arguing that the current administration—but not the doctrines of the Republican party—should be supported, and that Marylanders efforts should be “earnestly directed to the restoration of peace and fraternal concord.” In the heavily enslaved Maryland Sixth District, Unionists nominated Charles B. Calvert, whose family name was deeply embedded in the history of Maryland. A large slaveholder and farmer, Calvert would triumph in a tight race with the prosouthern candidate George Harris. In the June election, Unionist candidates would be elected in all of Maryland’s congressional districts, winning 72 percent of the vote. Furthermore, Calvert’s and Crisfield’s victories in the most heavily enslaved and southern-orientated counties emboldened Maryland’s Unionists. “Secession is at a discount in Maryland,” crowed the *Frederick Examiner*.⁴⁶

The one candidate who surprisingly failed to win re-election was Henry Winter Davis. Davis’s loss in the Fourth District stemmed from his increasingly difficult relationship with Maryland Republicans. Davis had been passed over by Lincoln for a cabinet position in favor of Montgomery Blair. Despite this, Davis, as the most senior pro-Lincoln elected official in the state, attempted to cultivate a relationship with Lincoln in order to dole out patronage in Maryland. Lincoln instead urged Davis and Blair to work together to divvy up patronage

⁴⁶ *Cambridge Intelligencer*, quoted in the *Cecil Whig*, April 20, 1861; *Frederick Examiner*, June 5, 12, 1861; *Weekly Civilian*, June 6, 1861; John W. Crisfield to the Union Committee of the First District, May 18, 1861, in the *Easton Gazette*, May 25, 1861; *Baltimore Sun*, June 3, 1861; *St. Mary’s Beacon*, June 6, 1861; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 63-64.

appointments. As a result, some Blair loyalists like Francis Corkran and William Pinckney Ewing were appointed to naval positions in the Baltimore Customs House, while Davis supporters Henry W. Hoffman and William H. Purnell were appointed as collector of the Port of Baltimore and as postmaster of the city.⁴⁷ But in the aftermath of Sumter, Davis implored Lincoln to place more federal patronage under his control in order to assist with his re-election. Davis was once again facing Henry May, whom he had previously defeated in 1855. Unlike Davis's unconditional unionism which closely resembled the Republican position, May's lukewarm unionism involved merely finding a peaceful solution to the crisis, and he was supported by prosouthern business leaders in Baltimore. Davis's desire to reward his supporters had also alienated some Baltimore Republicans who felt that Maryland's patronage appointments should remain in the hands of Republican men, rather than those who had previously supported the Constitutional Union party. While their votes might help Davis win, one correspondent reported, many Republicans were leaning towards voting a "blank ticket, *en bloc*, and thus maintain their self respect." Without the full-fledged support of Baltimore Republicans, Davis's re-election was in doubt. On June 13, May defeated Davis by over two thousand votes. Despite his loss, Davis was heartened that Unionism had swept the state.⁴⁸

Davis's defeat was symbolic of one of the major issues of this new era of Maryland politics, whereby Unionism was not synonymous with Republicanism, nor did it wish to be. Formulated for a broad and mass appeal, debates that veered into the knotty question of slavery were avoided in the lead up to the state election in November. As had been the case with the

⁴⁷ Henry Winter Davis to Abraham Lincoln, February 1861; Baltimore Maryland Republicans to Abraham Lincoln, February 4, 1861; Memorandum on Maryland patronage, April 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Edward Bates to Montgomery Blair, May 4, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Carman and Luthin, *Lincoln and the Patronage*, 207; *Baltimore Clipper*, April 16, 1861; *Baltimore Sun*, April 16, 1861.

⁴⁸ *Baltimore Sun*, June 22, 1861; Henry Winter Davis to Montgomery Blair, June 2, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC; *New York Tribune*, May 22, 1861; Henig, *Henry Winter Davis*, 159-60; Reinhard H. Luthin, "A Discordant Chapter in Lincoln's Administration: The Davis-Blair Controversy," *MHM* 39, no. 1 (March 1944): 30-31.

summer's congressional candidates, Unionists gravitated towards political figures unencumbered by the slavery questions which had dominated the 1850s, nominating men like former Whig Augustus Bradford as the party's gubernatorial candidate. In October 1861, Unionists "without regard to former political connections" gathered in Baltimore to formulate a platform for the upcoming state election in November. Declaring their organization would simply defend the Constitution and the Union, the Union state central committee urged silence on the slavery question. Unionists' opinions on slavery, argued the committee president Brantz Mayer, must "now be kept in strict subordination to the great National issue." Unscrupulous politicians on both sides would try to use slavery to divide Unionists, warned Mayer. "Tell them, Marylanders, that you defend nothing but what you announce, and frankly, that you announce nothing but the Union and the Constitution." When Francis Thomas mentioned slavery at a Union meeting in Baltimore, some Unionists asked that he not bring up the subject again. Maryland's Unionists would instead hew to the time-worn Maryland political tradition of silence on slavery.⁴⁹

This commitment to discuss nothing but "the Union and the Constitution" paid rich dividends in the 1861 state elections. Unlike in the congressional elections, which had been organized by former Douglas, Bell, and Lincoln men, the Union party apparatus had been overhauled by the summer on 1861. Gone were the loosely formed district and state committees which designated an equal number of positions for the various partisans; instead a more organized party structure emerged, with ward committees selecting delegates to city or county conventions, who would then appoint delegates to a state convention to nominate candidates. The organization paid off. On a damp and rainy day in November, with Union forces at a standstill in Virginia, Unionists scored a decisive victory in the state elections. Pro-secession

⁴⁹ *National American*, October 10, 1861; The address of the Union State Central Committee can be found in the *Cecil Whig*, October 19, 1861; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 63-64.

Democrats who had fashioned themselves into a States' Rights party were soundly defeated at the polls. Augustus Bradford, the Unionist gubernatorial candidate won his election by over 31,000 votes. Of the 74 candidates elected to the Maryland House of Representatives, only 6 were pro-secession men. Even in the state Senate, whose districts were malapportioned to favor slaveholding districts, Unionists took control. Despite States' Rights supporters' complaints that military coercion and intimidation had suppressed their voters, military commanders in Maryland usually differentiated between treasonous actions and political rhetoric on the stump and did not interfere with political meeting or arrest candidates. Furthermore, the Unionist victory was assisted by the exodus of thousands of potential States' Rights voters who had fled to Virginia to either take up residency or join the Confederate army. In the aftermath of the election, one Unionist from Baltimore wrote a relieved letter to William H. Seward. "Our election is now over and the result places Maryland in her true position," declared William Price, "staunch and prominent among the loyal states of the Union."⁵⁰

By the end of the summer of 1861, it was clear that Unionists' initial fear that the Border South would leave the Union had subsided. Kentucky and Maryland had, through their voters, elected strong Unionists to both Congress and their state legislatures. In Missouri, the violent collision between Unionists and secessionists in St. Louis, and the establishment of a provisional government in Jefferson City prevented secessionists from controlling the state. As Unionists in the Border South debated the relationship of their states with the federal government throughout 1860-61, there was one concurrent theme that wove its way through various arguments against

⁵⁰ *Baltimore Sun*, November 8, 9, 1861; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 70-75; Radcliffe, *Hicks of Maryland*, 116-17; A good example of the latitude given to secessionist candidates can be seen in the letter of Joseph Hooker to S. Williams, November 8, 1861, in *OR*, 1:5:646-7; William Price to William H. Seward, November 8, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

secession: that slavery remained better protected within the Union than out of it. “This war, commenced by the South, is not prosecuted by the Federal government for the emancipation of slaves,” proclaimed the *Missouri Democrat*. “It is prosecuted to put down insurrection.” When the editor of the prosouthern *Louisville Courier* argued that the aim of the war was to destroy slavery, the *Louisville Democrat* refuted the accusation. “We don’t believe any such effect is to follow as the result of the war; and this fighting to extermination is all bosh,” declared *Democrat* editor John H. Harney. “The moment it appears that there is a purpose to abolish slavery, the war will cease.”⁵¹

Facing the threat of secession, Border South Republicans embraced the politics of unionism, and the complications that came with it. In the first flush of unionism, Republicans now had to clasp hands with new allies whom only months earlier had been their political opponents. As the secession crisis tipped into civil war, Border South Republicans would be at the forefront of supporting the measures of the Lincoln administration to put down the rebellion. However, support for the administration’s goals had to be tempered with the understanding that Border South Republicans would continue to be silent on the subject of slavery. The question remained how long that silence could last.

⁵¹ *Missouri Democrat*, June 6, 1861; *Louisville Courier*, August 1, 1861; *Louisville Democrat*, August 29, 1861.

Chapter 6
**“The Prejudices of a Lifetime Are Riven by the Experience of an Hour”: Border South
Republicans and the Politics of Emancipation**

Two weeks after the first major battle of the war at Bull Run, the newly elected Unionist congressman from Maryland’s Sixth Congressional District Charles B. Calvert wrote to Abraham Lincoln to complain about a situation developing amongst enslaved blacks in his state. Enslaved blacks were using the confusion of war to pose as freedmen, by accompanying Union forces back to Washington and moving further north. Calvert was an influential slaveholder and farmer whose congressional district encompassed some of the most heavily enslaved counties in the southern part of the state. He insisted that “it is the duty of the Government to prevent the troops in the future from receiving, employing, harboring or concealing slaves in the camps.” If a policy of arresting and then returning these enslaved blacks to owners was not implemented, he warned, then slaveholding Maryland Unionists might refuse to support the administration. “These various grievances require immediate correction,” wrote Calvert, “if the Government desires to protect our Rights and encourage and foster the Union feeling in the Border States.”¹

This chapter argues that the politics of emancipation shattered Border South unionism, creating the foundation for a postwar Republican Party in the Border South. Despite efforts by Border South Unionists to keep slavery out of political life by emphasizing unionism, enslaved blacks had no qualms about using the war as an opportunity for freedom. Prior to the war the political geographies of freedom were clearly delineated—alongside the Mason-Dixon line, across the Ohio River, or along the Mississippi. But in the chaos of war, these political geographies were no longer fixed. Freedom now emerged wherever Union forces were

¹ Charles B. Calvert to Abraham Lincoln, August 3, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

encamped.² As new fronts in the war opened throughout the South, the question of black emancipation, which had been subsumed by unionist sentiment in the early days of the war, could be avoided no longer. If the politics of unionism blurred the ideological and partisan differences among Border South Unionists, then the politics of emancipation brought those differences sharply into focus. Driven by ambition and ideology, political figures like Benjamin Gratz Brown, John A.J. Creswell, and James Speed carved out political positions which would have been unfathomable before the war. In Missouri and Maryland, the politics of emancipation created a new political force in Radical Republicanism that would form the backbone of postwar Republicanism. In Kentucky, the Union Democratic consensus fell apart over the question of black enlistment and emancipation, leaving a core group to articulate a clear Republican message. As the war ground on and emancipation became intertwined with military strategy, those who embraced the politics of emancipation would form the core of a dedicated Republican Party in the Border South.

On a hot morning in July 1861, Major-General John C. Frémont was ferried across the Mississippi to St. Louis to take command of the Department of the West. Since his unsuccessful campaign for the presidency in 1856, Frémont had spent the past four years running a gold mine in California. When war broke out, Frémont had been recommended by the Blairs to command the Department of the West, which then included Missouri and Kentucky. Upon arriving in St. Louis, Frémont found Missouri in a disorderly state, and made a series of military decisions intended to address the situation. These decisions frustrated Frank Blair, who became concerned that Frémont was in over his head. “It seems to me that [Frémont] does not comprehend the work

² James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2013), 192-96.

he has undertaken to do,” he complained to his brother.³ Concerned that his influence was declining, Frémont issued a proclamation that transformed the course of unionism in the Border South. Increasingly troubled over the insurrectionary state of Missouri, on August 30 Frémont proclaimed martial law throughout the state. Anyone found with arms behind Union lines would be shot upon being found guilty by court-martial. Frémont’s proclamation also declared that the property of any Missourian deemed to have taken up arms against the United States is “to be confiscated to the public use, and their slaves, if any they have, are hereby declared freemen.” Frémont’s proclamation was met with cautious approval by some Unionist newspapers. “No other course than that adopted by Frémont can give peace to distracted Missouri,” affirmed the *Missouri Democrat*. “Whoever reads the following proclamation of the supreme general will see that we are done once and for all with half measures,” declared the *Anzeiger des Westens*. “Whoever plays the traitor now does so at the risk of his head.” Frank Blair was more circumspect. While he believed Frémont’s proclamation to be “the best thing of the kind that has been issued,” he feared that it would have little effect without the military power to enforce it.⁴

Frémont’s proclamation divided Missouri Unionists, many of whom, no less than six months earlier, had stood united during the convention in the Mercantile Library Hall. Some Unionists like John B. Henderson believed that Frémont’s proclamation had seriously damaged Unionist support throughout the state. “So far as I am individually concerned I care not one farthing about the negro question and no phase of that question can now move my mind,” Henderson told James O. Broadhead, “but you know the sensitiveness of our people on the

³ Nevins, *Frémont*, 473-87; *OR*, 1:3:416-17; Smith, *Blair Family*, 2:55-58; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 50-53; John M. Schofield, *Forty-Six Years in the Army* (New York:1897), 48-9; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, August 29, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

⁴ *OR*, 1:3, 466-67; *Missouri Democrat*, September 2, 1861; *Missouri Republican*, September 3, 1861; *Anzeiger des Westens*, September 4, 1861, in *Germans for a Free Missouri*, 284; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, September 1, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 60-61.

question of niggers and especially free niggers.” German Unionists, however, rallied behind Frémont and his proclamation and threatened to withdraw their support for the administration if he was removed. The *Missouri Democrat*, long the organ of Frank Blair and the Missouri Republicans, now threw their support behind Frémont and emancipation.⁵

If Frémont’s proclamation caused consternation within Missouri Unionist circles, it landed like an anvil amongst Kentucky Unionists, anxiously watching as Union and Confederate troops poured into their state. A proclamation giving military authorities the power to emancipate enslaved blacks exacerbated an already tense atmosphere. Frémont’s proclamation, according to Joshua Speed, would “crush every vestige of a Union party in the state.” Green Adams, a Unionist from Knox County, predicted that the proclamation would be “condemned by a large majority of [the] Legislature and people of Kentucky.” Joseph Holt informed Lincoln that the “Union loving citizens of Kentucky” had read the proclamation with “alarm and condemnation.”⁶ Furthermore, embedded within the complaints to Lincoln by Unionists was a persistent fear of slave revolts. “All of us who live in slave states whether Union or loyal have great fear of insurrection,” wrote Joshua Speed to Lincoln. “Will not such a proclamation read by the slaves incline them to assert their freedom?” Joseph Holt insisted that the liberation of a “population unprepared for freedom” would “prove a source of painful apprehension if not of terror to the homes and families of all.” As Speed travelled to Washington to confer with Lincoln about the developing controversy over emancipation in Kentucky, three Unionists telegraphed

⁵ Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic*, 120-21; Nevins, *Frémont*, 504-05; John B. Henderson to James O. Broadhead, September 7, 1861; James O. Broadhead to Montgomery Blair, September 3, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; *Anzeiger des Westens*, September 18, 1861, in *Germans for a Free Missouri*, 284-8; Peter Foy to Montgomery Blair, September 17, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Hart, *History of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 73.

⁶ Joshua Speed to Abraham Lincoln, September 3, 1861; Green Adams and James Speed to Abraham Lincoln, September 2, 1861; Joseph Holt to Abraham Lincoln, September 12, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 111-12.

Speed, warning him that if emancipation were not immediately renounced, “Kentucky is gone over the mill dam.”⁷

Lincoln responded quickly. Fearing that the proclamation might result in Kentucky’s secession, Lincoln asked Frémont to modify his proclamation to conform to the policy of the First Confiscation Act approved by Congress in August. That policy limited emancipation to enslaved blacks forced to take up arms or actively participating in the war for the Confederacy. Frémont refused. On September 11, Lincoln ordered him to modify his proclamation to conform to the Act. The president’s swift action earned him criticism from the Radical wing of the Republican Party who saw slavery and emancipation intertwined with the aims of the war. Lincoln replied that he had to revoke the order, or risk losing the Border South. “I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game,” wrote Lincoln. “Kentucky gone, we cannot hold Missouri, nor as I think, Maryland.” Over the summer of 1861, Unionists had won political victories in Kentucky and Maryland by promising voters that slavery in the Border South was safer in the Union rather than out it. For Lincoln, Frémont’s proclamation jeopardized that promise.⁸

Frémont’s proclamation had existed for less than two weeks. Like most things in Frémont’s life, his proclamation was impetuous and ill-conceived. It had no legal backing, could not be enforced in a chaotic Missouri, and in the end freed only two enslaved blacks. But the response to Lincoln’s alteration of Frémont’s proclamation changed the contours of Missouri politics. Missouri German Republicans had often subsumed their desire for radical political

⁷ Joshua Speed to Abraham Lincoln, September 1, 1861; Joseph Holt to Abraham Lincoln, September 12, 1861, F. Bullitt, W.E. Hughes, and C. Ripley to Joshua Speed, September 13, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁸ *OR*, 1:3: 469-70, 477, 485-86; For more on the passage of the First Confiscation Act, see Oakes, *Freedom National*, 136-39; Orville H. Browning to Abraham Lincoln, September 17, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Abraham Lincoln to Orville H. Browning, September 22, 1861, *CW*, 4:532-33.

change over slavery in order to gain political power, as they had done in the case the elections of Frank Blair. Only occasionally—such as refusing to support Edward Bates as a presidential candidate—did they reject conservative and moderate antislavery views. Now, Missouri German Republicans were upset when Frémont was forced to rescind an order that would have opened the door to emancipation becoming federal policy. But they were incensed when Frémont was forced out as commander of the Department of the West by the Blairs. Frémont and Frank Blair’s relationship had steadily worsened as both men clashed over the military direction of Union forces in Missouri. At the end of September, Frémont had Frank thrown in jail for “insubordination.” In response, Montgomery used his influence in the cabinet to remove Frémont. With their hero removed from command, Missouri Germans now accused Frank Blair of “despicable intrigues.”⁹ They found a surprising ally in Benjamin Gratz Brown. Ever since Blair’s first electoral loss in 1858, and Brown’s dismissal from the *Missouri Democrat*, relations between the two cousins had been strained. Approving of Frémont’s plan, Brown joined the Missouri Germans in supporting the proclamation and forming a Radical faction of Missouri Unionists. “There is no hope for the republic without a complete extermination of rebellion or without a hard blow at slavery!” exclaimed the *Anzeiger des Westens*. With the *Missouri Democrat* and the *Anzeiger* as their party papers, Brown and his Radicals would promote emancipation as a key war aim.¹⁰

Lincoln’s silence on slavery, coupled with his public revocation of Frémont’s proclamation, had led to increased concern from Germans, Radical Republicans, and

⁹ The circumstances involving the Blairs involvement in Frémont’s removal are recounted in Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 115-35; *Anzeiger des Westens* November 13, 1861, in *Germans for a Free Missouri*, 288; Arnold Kregel to Frank Blair, November 16, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

¹⁰ Paterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 106-07; *Anzeiger des Westens*, December 4, 1861, in *Germans for a Free Missouri*, 291-92.

abolitionists that an opportunity to destroy slavery was being lost. Yet by the end of 1861, with the Border South tentatively secured within the Union, Lincoln began turning towards more organized emancipation efforts. The *ad hoc* proclamations made by Frémont and other Union generals regarding the status of enslaved blacks had led to nothing but confusion amongst the ranks of the Union army and criticism from Border South Unionists.¹¹ A more practical solution was required. In November of 1861, Lincoln quietly drafted two proposals for federally funded state-based emancipation in Delaware, a Border South state with no more than two thousand enslaved blacks. Lincoln's plan for gradual and compensated emancipation was supported by Delaware Unionists but rejected by the state legislature as interference with state institutions.¹²

As Lincoln wrestled with a strategy for compensated emancipation, Frank Blair chafed as the Radical wing of the Republican Party increasingly pressed forward the question of emancipation in Congress. Before the war, Radicals were uncompromising on the principle that slavery was morally wrong and its extension into the territories forbidden. Now, Radicals advocated complete emancipation as a means to vigorously prosecute the war. To clarify Union policy regarding enslaved blacks escaping to Union camps Radicals in both the House and the Senate introduced legislation that made it a crime for Union soldiers and sailors to return enslaved blacks to their owners.¹³ The Radicals tenacious commitment to making emancipation a war aim grated on Blair and some other Border South Unionists. Blair soon began sitting on the Democratic side of the House, causing Thaddeus Stevens, the Radical congressman from

¹¹ Oakes, *Freedom National*, 181-89.

¹² See Drafts of a Bill for Compensated Emancipation in Delaware, November 26, 1861, *CW*, 29-30; H. Clay Reed, "Lincoln's Compensated Emancipation Plan and Its Relation to Delaware," *Delaware Notes*, Vol 7, no. 2 (1931): 27-78; Patience Essah, *A House Divided: Slavery and Emancipation in Delaware, 1638-1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 152-85.

¹³ *OR*, 1:8:405-07, 2:1:778-79; Cong. Glob, 37th Cong, 2nd sess., 58-9 (1861-62); Hans L. Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans: Lincoln's Vanguard for Social Justice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 4-5; Oakes, *Freedom National*, 181-89; Chandra Manning, *Troubled Refuge: Struggling for Freedom in the Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2016), 182-84; Smith, *Blair Family*, 2:130.

Pennsylvania, to accuse him of deserting the Republican Party. “If so, I go with the majority of the members,” responded Blair, “who vowed to support the Constitution Union[sic] about which we care more than we do the niggers.” Joshua Speed, visiting Washington in December 1861, noted that the Radical elements in Congress seemed to be more organized and growing stronger than the more conservative members of the House. “I am fully persuaded that there is mischief brewing here,” Speed told Joseph Holt. “A large and powerful party of ultra men is being formed to make war upon the President and upon his conservative policy.” Speed suggested that conservative Republicans, northern Democrats, and the Border Southerners in Congress form their own coalition to halt growing Radical strength.¹⁴

Pressed by Radical demands for more stringent emancipatory measures, Lincoln resuscitated his failed Delaware plan in a larger proposal for gradual, compensated emancipation in the Border South. In a message to Congress on March 6, 1862, Lincoln proposed to “cooperate with any state which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery,” by providing those states with funding to compensate slaveholders. Unlike the Delaware plan, Lincoln’s proposal offered no fixed amount of compensation—the “pecuniary aid” would be left up to the individual states to decide. So long as slavery persisted in the Border South, argued Lincoln, the Confederacy would continue to see them as absent sisters, waiting to be dragged back into the southern fold. “To deprive them of this hope,” said Lincoln, “substantially ends the rebellion, and the initiation of emancipation deprives them of it as to all the States initiating it.”¹⁵ Nothing about Lincoln’s proposal was binding, but immediate reaction amongst Border South

¹⁴ Elizabeth Blair Lee to Samuel Philips Lee, December 15, 1861, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Joshua Speed to Joseph Holt, December 8, 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, LOC.

¹⁵ Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans*, 210-11; Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 92-94; Cong. Globe, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1102-03 (1861-62).

congressmen was mixed. When Lincoln met with Border South congressmen four days later, they respectfully protested that slavery was already declining in their respective states and questioned the constitutionality of his proposal. But when the proposal came up for debate in Congress, their response took on a harder edge. “I would rather lose [my slaves] by the ‘underground railroad’ than be guilty of a violation of the constitution, by taxing the people to pay for the loss I might sustain by emancipating them,” declared Kentucky’s Charles Wickliffe. John J. Crittenden, seventy-seven years old, ill, and with two of his sons fighting on opposite sides in the war, argued that Lincoln’s proposal reintroduced the slavery question “at a time when we want no agitation.” When the joint resolution was finally passed in March 11, Frank Blair and newly-elected Missouri Senator John B. Henderson were the only Border Southerners who voted in favor of it. Lincoln was under no illusions that the Border South would accept, or even act upon, his proposal. “If one or more of the border-states would move fast, I should greatly prefer it,” he told Horace Greeley, but he wanted it to be done “*persuasively*, not *menacingly*, upon the South.”¹⁶

While most Border South Unionists in Congress remained apprehensive about emancipatory schemes, for others Lincoln’s proposal finally provided a clear policy to rally around. In Missouri, Brown took the reins of the emerging Radical coalition of Unionists. Brown’s re-entry into the political sphere after two and half year of relative political inactivity was born out of equal parts ambition, resentment, and ideology. Brown had long been irritated at his cousin Frank Blair’s political prominence in the state, and the insinuation that he had

¹⁶ John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, 10 vols. (New York: Century Co., 1914), 5:211-14; Charles M. Segal, ed., *Conversations with Lincoln* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 165-68; Appendix to the Cong. Globe., 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., Appendix, (1861-62), 69; Cong. Globe, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1173 (1861-62); Kirwan, *Crittenden*, 461-2; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 124; Abraham Lincoln to Horace Greeley, March 24, 1862, *CW*, 5:169.

mismanaged Frank's failed congressional campaign in 1858 still stung. Furthermore, Radicals like Brown had grown increasingly frustrated that most federal patronage in Missouri flowed through three men increasingly aligned with conservative Unionism: Frank, Montgomery Blair, and Edward Bates. Brown announced his intent to re-enter public life in a dramatic letter published in the *Missouri Democrat*. Missouri was in deep economic turmoil, wrote Brown. If Missouri did not abolish slavery in fifteen months, she would become an economic pariah, unable to secure settlers or stimulate investment. The majority of Missourians wanted slavery gone. Give them the vote on slavery, said Brown, and "the hours will be few that it will linger in the land." Brown, eager to distance himself from anything that smacked of Blairism, argued that the idea that colonization must follow emancipation was impractical, expensive, and "would do more to retard and embarrass the cause of emancipation than any action its enemies could take." Missouri's freed blacks should remain in Missouri, declared Brown, arguing, "if so many thousands of us have thus long borne with their presence here as slaves, surely others can endure their abiding here as freemen." Six years earlier, Brown had stood on the floor of the Missouri legislature and declared that he was "no believer...in the Humanitarian creed." Now, he was a full-fledged abolitionist. "Let us be solicitous chiefly of doing the Right in this grave matter of liberating a downtrodden race," concluded Brown, "and trust that God will so order all its consequences that they shall redound in benefits likewise." Along with other German Radicals, Brown established a Missouri General Emancipation Society in order to "further by all proper and lawful means the emancipation of slaves in the State of Missouri."¹⁷

¹⁷ Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, March 17, 1859, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 111-13; *Missouri Democrat*, April 23, 29, 1862, *Missouri Republican*, April 24, 1862, *New York Tribune*, April 29, 1862; Brown, *Gradual Emancipation in Missouri* (1857), 5.

The emergence of this new Radical faction in Missouri challenged Frank Blair's liberal antislavery that had formed the crux of his political ideology for so long. Despite their impracticality, the Blairs had never really given up on their colonization schemes. Preston Blair continued to pester Lincoln with proposals throughout the fall of 1861, while Montgomery urged Lincoln to incorporate colonization into his gradual emancipation proposal. When Congress was debating emancipation in the District of Columbia, Blair argued that the real cause of the rebellion was not slavery, but rather non-slaveholding whites fear of emancipation and subsequent equality of freed blacks. For Blair, the Radicals' continued pursuit of emancipation as a war aim would do nothing but lengthen the conflict. However, should emancipation be coupled with colonization, then the war could end. "The very prejudice of race which now makes the non-slaveholder give their aid to hold the slave in bondage," argued Blair, "will induce them to unite in a policy which will rid them of the presence of negroes." Believing that Lincoln shared his idea, Blair continued to promote his idea that free slaves should be transported and resettled in Central America.¹⁸ When Brown and the Radicals began advocating for immediate emancipation in Missouri, Blair contended that *his* policy of emancipation and colonization was the soundest. Gradual emancipation must be accompanied by compensation to loyal owners of enslaved blacks, accompanied by the separation of the races. "Immediate and uncompensated emancipation would come with a sudden shock, requiring an instant change in the habits and customs of a whole people," argued Blair. "When, except by a miracle, has such a change been wrought?" The Unionist consensus in Missouri, already strained by Frémont's proclamation,

¹⁸ Preston Blair to Abraham Lincoln, November 16, 1861, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Montgomery Blair to Abraham Lincoln, March 5, 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Cong. Globe, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., (1861-62), 1631-34; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 138; Smith, *Blair Family*, 136-37; a good historiography of Lincoln's use of colonization as policy during his presidency can be found in the Philip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page, *Colonization After Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 1-10.

grew increasingly frayed in the wake of Lincoln's emancipation proposal. Three factions emerged, ready to contest the 1862 fall congressional elections: The Radical faction who favored immediate emancipation; Conservatives who favored gradual, compensated emancipation; and a smaller group of proslavery Unionists who were against emancipation in any form.¹⁹

In Kentucky, Joshua Speed's desire for silence on the emancipation issue was not shared by all Border South Unionists—not even amongst his own kin. His brother James, as a state senator, was quickly gaining a reputation as one of the more radical men in Kentucky politics. “I am persuaded that this great evil, this terrible national sin, slavery, must die,” James Speed told Holt. Although the state legislature was not willing to “touch the subject of slavery” or anything “in relation to the negro,” Speed nonetheless put forward a bill in late December 1861 to confiscate the estates of Kentucky Confederates and to emancipate their enslaved property, thereby allowing the state, not Congress, to control the process of emancipation. For Speed, his bill provided a way to accommodate both emancipation and the understanding that slavery would remain a state issue. When his Unionist colleagues asked why the bill made no provision for selling confiscated enslaved blacks, Speed replied that the state should not be involved in the sale of human beings. “I cannot make you understand how much excitement the remark produced,” Speed told Lincoln. “I am regarded as ultra, almost an abolitionist, and of course any thing from me on the subject of slavery is regarded with suspicion.” Without support from his Unionist colleagues, Speed's bill never even reached the floor.²⁰

¹⁹ *Missouri Democrat*, May 10, 1862; Sceva Bright Laughlin, “Missouri Politics During the Civil War,” *MHR* 23, no. 3 (April 1929): 93.

²⁰ James Speed to Joseph Holt, December 12, 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, LOC; *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Kentucky* (Frankfort: 1861), 300, 310, 338; *Louisville Journal*, December 23, 1861; James Speed to Abraham Lincoln, December 22, 1861, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

The hostility towards James Speed's emancipation bill presaged the reaction to Lincoln's Border South emancipation proposal. Newspapers throughout Kentucky condemned the plan as "unnecessary, uncalled for, and calculated to do no possible good." The Lexington correspondent of the *Cincinnati Gazette* believed that if "the everlasting tinkering of Congress upon the slavery question" were not halted, then Kentucky would be lost. In Washington, Senator Garret Davis presented a petition from Kentucky residents calling on Congress to devote its energies to saving the country, and to cease discussing various schemes of emancipation.²¹ Yet proponents of emancipation for Kentucky remained optimistic. A twenty-four-year-old lieutenant from Louisville with the 2nd Regiment of the Kentucky Cavalry, stationed at Camp Andrew Johnson near Nashville, wrote to Lincoln after he had presented his compensated emancipation plan. "Emancipation in Kentucky, and its inseparable circumstance and consequences," wrote Charles D. Armstrong, "might save both the nation and civilization." Armstrong acknowledged that Kentucky political leaders, who, although "able, patriotic, and true," had neither the foresight nor the temperament to carry out the great work of emancipation. "New and young men alone can accomplish this blissful change," Armstrong declared, "for accomplished it can and must be." By the end of the war Armstrong would find himself a colonel, commanding the 125th United States Colored Infantry, a regiment made up mostly of freedmen from Kentucky.²²

Lincoln's emancipation proposal forced Maryland Unionists to finally discuss the future of slavery within their state. For the better part of the fall and winter of 1861-62, Maryland Unionists had maintained a surprising unity. Publicly emphasizing that their Union Party was merely an expression of patriotic loyalty, party leaders insisted that their organization floated

²¹ *Covington Journal*, March 15, 1862; *Cincinnati Gazette*, April 23, 1862; Cong. Globe, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1180.

²² Charles D. Armstrong to Abraham Lincoln, March 12, 1862; *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kentucky*, 2 Vols. (Frankfort: 1866), 1:53, 2:129-35, 907; Russell K. Brown, "The Last Civil War Volunteers: The 125th U.S. Colored Infantry in New Mexico, 1866-1867," *Army History* no. 92 (2014): 6.

above the machination of grubby electoral politics and divisive issues like slavery. But when enslaved blacks in the District of Columbia were emancipated by Congress in April 1862, it raised the question of how long slavery in Maryland could last. “The rebellion has at least secured the people of border states what they never had before,” remarked the *New York World*, “the power to discuss the subject of slavery and emancipation in their public journals and upon the hustings.” The time has come, argued the *Easton Gazette*, when Maryland must discuss slavery. “It has too long already been kept in the dim background of our politics. It was a phantom which all parties hoped to keep back from view.” Former Governor Thomas H. Hicks, writing to Lincoln in March 1862, agreed that the president’s plan for gradual, compensated emancipation in the Border South was sound. “I as a Marylander, and as a slaveholder, thank you for it,” wrote Hicks. “I consider the blow to be aimed as much at the ultraists of the North as at the southern fanatics.” Francis S. Corkran, writing to Montgomery Blair, assured the Postmaster-General that the portents were good for a discussion of emancipation in the state. “We will have an uphill business of it, but when the masses are willing to hear...the result cannot be doubtful,” wrote Corkran.²³

In Washington, the Radicals continued to press forward on emancipation. Arguing that more needed be done about slavery than simply compensating Border South slaveholders for their property, the Radicals passed another confiscation bill before the congressional session ended in July. The Second Confiscation Act freed all enslaved blacks belonging to rebels in the seceded states pending a proclamation by the president. Meanwhile, Lincoln once again attempted to convince Border South representatives to adopt gradual, compensated

²³ Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 78-9; *New York World*, April 15, 1862; *Easton Gazette*, May 10, 1862; Thomas H. Hicks to Abraham Lincoln, March 18, 1862; Francis S. Corkran to Montgomery Blair, May 20, 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

emancipation. Meeting at the White House on July 12, Lincoln told the representatives that if they had accepted his previous proposal, the war would have been over by now. Even though Unionists had beaten secessionists at the polls, said Lincoln, the Confederacy was still fighting because they held out hope that the Border South would join their slaveholding republic. Furthermore, argued Lincoln, the longer the war dragged on the more likely it would be that immediate and uncompensated military emancipation would end slavery in the Border South. Take the deal, implored Lincoln, or slavery in your states will be “extinguished by friction and abrasion—by mere incidents of the war. It will be gone, and you will have nothing to show for it.” Again, the majority of Border South representatives rejected the notion of gradual, compensated emancipation, arguing against the constitutionality of the proposal and its expense, while declaring that slaveholding remained a right that they should not be asked to relinquish. But it was not a united front. A minority of representatives believed Lincoln’s proposal sound, and merited the people of the Border South “calmly, deliberately, and fairly” considering the president’s recommendations.²⁴

With the Border South representatives seemingly unwilling to take further action, Lincoln decided upon a new tack. During a carriage ride through Georgetown with Secretary of State William Seward and Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, Lincoln broached the subject of emancipation by proclamation. During a cabinet meeting a few days later, Lincoln read aloud a draft of his proclamation. The first two sections of the proclamation revisited terrain familiar to most of the cabinet—making military and civil confiscation official federal policy, and recommending that Congress adopt measures for gradual, compensated emancipation within

²⁴ Cong. Globe, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., Appendix, 412-13 (1862); Oakes, *Freedom National*, 302-03; Trefousse, *Radical Republicans*, 216-17; Nicolay and Hay *Abraham Lincoln*, 6:109-11; Border State Congressmen to Abraham Lincoln, July 14, 1862; Minority response of Border State Congressmen to Abraham Lincoln, July 15, 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

states that wished it. The last section was radically different. In a single sentence of eighty-five words, Lincoln proclaimed that by January 1, 1863, all enslaved blacks in states where federal authority was not recognized—meaning the Confederacy— “shall then, thenceforward, and forever, be free.” Secretary of War Edwin Stanton endorsed Lincoln’s proclamation without reservation, while Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase, although supportive of the policy, thought that emancipatory powers should remain within the purview of individual military commanders. Welles was skeptical that the proclamation would help end the war and was worried about inflaming opinion in the Border South. Lincoln’s two Border South cabinet men, Montgomery Blair and Edward Bates, were more reticent. Bates endorsed the proclamation, but wanted emancipation coupled with compulsory colonization. Blair, meanwhile, warned that a proclamation of this sort might damage Republican prospects in the upcoming fall congressional elections. Seward, the last to speak, supported the proclamation, but warned that due to recent military defeats, the proclamation might seem as “the last measure of an exhausted government.” Better to wait until a military victory to issue the proclamation, argued Seward. Lincoln took Seward’s advice, and laid the proclamation aside.²⁵

Seward’s concern about the timing of the proclamation was well-founded, for by the summer of 1862 the Union military situation appeared grim. For years, political leaders in the Border South had warned that a sectional conflict between the North and the South would lead to the region becoming one vast battlefield. Now it appeared their worst fears had come true. In Missouri, pro-Confederate “bushwhackers” waged a guerilla war against both the Union army and Unionist Missourians along the state’s western borderland, plundering, burning, and

²⁵ Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson*, 2 Vols. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911), 1:70-71; Emancipation Proclamation, First Draft, *CW*, 5:336-37; Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation*, 117-25; Montgomery Blair to Abraham Lincoln, July 23, 1862, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Francis Bicknell Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln* (New York: 1866), 20-22.

killing.²⁶ In August 1862, a Confederate force under the command of General Braxton Bragg launched a new offensive in Kentucky hoping to arouse pro-Confederate sentiment in the state and extend the borders of the Confederacy to the Ohio River. Striking from Tennessee, Confederate forces advanced northwards winning a surprising victory in Richmond, and occupying Lexington and Frankfort by the beginning of September.²⁷ But it was a bloody engagement between Union and Confederate forces in Maryland that finally gave Lincoln the victory he needed to issue his emancipation proclamation. When Union and Confederate armies clashed near Antietam Creek in Maryland, the subsequent battle resulted in over 22,000 dead, missing, or wounded, and the retreat of Confederate forces back into Virginia. Although the Battle of Antietam was not a decisive blow to the Confederacy, it was enough of a victory for Lincoln to issue his proclamation. Calling his cabinet together on September 22, Lincoln presented his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. More radical than the first draft Lincoln had presented to his cabinet the previous July, this proclamation made emancipation a military act, not just a decree, and clearly laid out that Union troops were forbidden to return enslaved blacks to their owners. Despite its more radical bent, Lincoln remained mindful of Border South sensitivity toward emancipation. The proclamation did not cover the Border South, nor the Union-occupied areas of western Tennessee and northern Virginia.²⁸

²⁶ Jeremy Neely, *The Border Between Them: Violence and Reconciliation on the Kansas-Missouri Line* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 112-116; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 90-98; Hamilton Gamble to Abraham Lincoln, May 19, 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

²⁷ Harrison, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 40-42; Grady McWhiney, "Controversy in Kentucky: Braxton Bragg's Campaign of 1862," *CWH* 6, no. 1 (March 1960): 5-42.

²⁸ James McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 97-131; for a deeper military examination of the battle, see Stephen W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003); Richard Slotkin, *The Long Road to Antietam: How the Civil War Became a Revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2012), 357-378; Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 151-56; Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, *CW*, 5:433.

Despite the Emancipation Proclamation not applying to the Border South, emancipation nonetheless filtered into every aspect of political life in Missouri. Congressional elections were to be held in the fall of 1862, and Benjamin Gratz Brown and his Radicals were busy laying the groundwork for Radical Unionist candidates to challenge Conservatives like James S. Rollins and Frank Blair. During a meeting of the Missouri General Emancipation Society, Brown laid out the tenets of Missouri Radicalism. Meeting on the same day that Union and Confederate troops were slaughtering each other amidst the cornfields at Antietam, Brown rejected the notion that the war was simply one to preserve the Union, and insisted that the war symbolized the start of a new epoch. Slavery must be destroyed to wipe out disunion forever. Emancipation would promote enslaved blacks to rise up against their former masters. Freedmen should be enlisted in “African brigades” to fight for their own freedom. Colonization should be considered impractical and immoral. “This is an age of transformation, precipitated upon us,” Brown exhorted. “It is a passage from the Old to the New; abruptly, with disjointed effort, impeded by formalisms, reactions, civil war; yet, nevertheless, a veracious passage, AND WE ARE THE REVOLUTION.”²⁹ Brown’s address was followed by a speech from a St. Louis lawyer, Charles D. Drake. No one in Missouri politics had personified the notion of political malleability more than Drake. Over his political career he had been successively a Whig, a Know-Nothing, and a Democrat. He had supported Stephen Douglas during the 1860 canvass, even escorting Douglas to St. Louis during his campaign tour. As late as July 1861, Drake was fervently denouncing antislavery agitation. Yet the following winter, he underwent a political conversion to radicalism. Explaining his transformation, Drake likened it to casting off youthful passions and growing into

²⁹ *An Address by B. Gratz Brown, Slavery in its National Aspects as Related to Peace and War, Delivered Before the General Emancipation Society of the State of Missouri, at St. Louis, on Wednesday Evening, September 17, 1862* (St. Louis, 1862) 1-2; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 80; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 118-19.

manhood. “These progressions were but the results of an education by current events, whose power I could no more resist, than a tree can resist leafing,” explained Drake. Drake’s address, in which he argued that democracy and slavery were incompatible, served as a public declaration that he had allied himself with Brown and his German Radicals. Together, both Drake and Brown would become the faces of Radicalism within the state, and cornerstones in building a postwar Republican Party in Missouri.³⁰

With the Radicals gaining momentum in Missouri, Frank Blair attempted to shore up his political base and communicate his position on emancipation in preparation for the congressional election. In mid-August, he sold his remaining shares in the *Missouri Democrat*, which had now become an avowedly Radical and anti-Blair paper. Alongside old political allies like O.D. Filley, Barton Able, and John How, Blair established the *St. Louis Union*, a Conservative, pro-Blair paper and appointed Peter Foy as editor. Seeing that St. Louis Germans remained lukewarm to the president’s policy, Blair used his political influence to secure the return of former *Anzeiger des Westens* editor Henry Boernstein from his position as consul in Bremen to take over the editorship again.³¹ Facing the Radical candidate Samuel Knox in Missouri First Congressional District, Blair maintained that while he still supported emancipation, it should be done gradually, constitutionally, and not “according the demands of these howling dervishes and fanatical revolutionists.” Blair had tempered his position on colonization, now believing that compulsory deportation was unnecessary and that freed blacks would leave the United States out of self interest. But he was still adamantly opposed to blacks serving in the Union army. “It is

³⁰ *Missouri Republican*, October 20, 1860; Charles D. Drake, *Union and Antislavery Speeches Delivered During the Rebellion* (Cincinnati:1864), iv, 173-92; *Missouri Democrat*, July 11, September 19, 1862.

³¹ Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, August 2, 1862, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 148; W.E. Smith, *Blair Family*, 2:211-12; Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody*, 376-78.

derogatory to the manhood of twenty millions of freemen to confess our inability to put down this rebellion, without calling to our aid these semi-barbarous hordes,” said Blair.³²

The 1862 congressional race revealed how deeply the question of emancipation had seeped into Missouri politics. When Missourians went to the polls on November 4, candidates who supported emancipation—gradual or immediate—won the majority of congressional seats and both branches of the legislature. Blair defeated Knox by only 153 votes. Radicals had encouraged Brown to run against Blair in the congressional race, but Brown refused, hoping instead to be elected as Missouri’s next U.S. Senator.³³ In the election’s aftermath, the *Missouri Democrat* attempted to make sense of the political combinations now at play in Missouri politics. There now existed three classes of emancipationists in Missouri, suggested the *Democrat*. The first class were Immediate Emancipationists, consisting of Radicals like Brown and Drake, who wanted to “wipe out the institution of slavery at *once*,” under Lincoln’s compensation scheme. The second class were Conservative Emancipationists, men like Frank Blair and James S. Rollins. Although wanting to see Missouri rid of slavery, this “wait-for-a-while” group wanted the war ended before instituting gradual compensated emancipation. A third class of emancipationists also existed. These Proslavery Emancipationists did not believe in emancipation, but seeing that inevitability of it, preferred to hold out for as long as they could in order to secure the best possible deal. As 1863 dawned and the war approached its third year, it remained unclear which group would politically prevail in Missouri.³⁴

³² Frank Blair, *Address of F.P. Blair, Jr., to His Constituents, October 8, 1862* (St. Louis: 1862), MHM; *New York Times*, October 18, 1862; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 150-1.

³³ B. Gratz Brown to Abraham Lincoln, September 27, 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; *Missouri Democrat*, October 17, 1862.

³⁴ Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 120-1; *Missouri Democrat*, December 22, 1862.

As in Missouri, the Emancipation Proclamation began to break apart the Unionist consensus in Kentucky and helped to lay the groundwork for an organized Republican movement in the state. When Lincoln's proclamation came into effect on January 1, 1863, it contained two significant changes. The Emancipation Proclamation maintained that any slaves voluntarily entering Union lines were emancipated. In addition, the proclamation lifted the longstanding ban on blacks serving in the Union army. Lincoln had effectively turned the Union army into an army of liberation. Since the start of the war, some Border South Unionists had maintained that the sole purpose of the war was to restore the Union as it was. Now, the war appeared to be about ending slavery.³⁵ Both these changes were immediately condemned in Kentucky. In his message to the Kentucky legislature, new Governor James F. Robinson condemned the Emancipation Proclamation, arguing that it was unconstitutional and would increase resistance in the seceded states. Kentucky would be swamped with enslaved refugees, while southern fields and plantations would become barren. Robinson called on the legislature to reject the proclamation and the notion of the compensated emancipation. In late February, the Kentucky Senate unanimously passed a resolution protesting the Emancipation Proclamation. A resolution rejecting Lincoln's plan of compensated emancipation also passed, with only James Speed voting against it.³⁶

In congressional races across Kentucky in the summer of 1863, Union Democratic candidates scored a stunning victory, sweeping all of Kentucky's congressional seats and a majority in the state House and Senate. Their election platform had echoed the sentiments of the Kentucky legislature, condemning the Lincoln administration and calling the Emancipation

³⁵ Oakes, *Freedom National*, 340-45, 360-62; Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, 178-81; Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863, *CW*, 28-30.

³⁶ *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1861-63*, 720-25, 956-60; James Speed to Joshua Speed, January 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

Proclamation “unwise, unconstitutional, and void.” Union Democratic papers believed that the sweep portended a future in which Kentucky would join with northern Democrats to remove the Republicans from power in Washington. But at the local level, Union Democratic victories reflected a less than unanimous acceptance of a state party platform. The First Congressional District, which only two years before had sent an avowed secessionist to Congress, now overwhelmingly elected a Unionist slaveholding lawyer and former Whig named Lucien Anderson. Anderson’s victory was aided when local Union authorities placed the opposing candidate in jail and prevented others suspected of rebel sympathies from voting. In the Sixth District, which encompassed the most northerly counties in the state, the local party apparatus chose Green Clay Smith over the incumbent congressman John W. Menzies, whom many regarded as too much of an anti-Lincoln man. During their convention, these Union Democrats vowed to support the war effort but refused to endorse the state party platform. The *Louisville Journal*, which had become one of the most bitter anti-administration papers in the state, denounced the Sixth District convention as merely a “Republican craft sailing under Union colors.” Perhaps worried that voters would see him as a Radical Republican flying the Union Democrat flag of convenience, Smith later vowed publicly to “oppose the radical measures of the Administration.” In the mountains of southeastern Kentucky, delegates of the Eight Congressional District nominated William Harrison Randall, a prominent lawyer in the district. The district convention said little about the state party platform, and refused to condemn the action of the Lincoln administration. Saying little about his own personal political beliefs, Randall easily won the election with no real opposition. Refusing to fall into line with behind the

state party platform, Union Democrats like Anderson, Smith, and Randall would chart their own political course, bringing them politically closer to the Republican Party.³⁷

Like Kentucky, Maryland would face critical state and congressional elections in 1863. Two years before, Marylanders had overwhelmingly voted in favor of the Unionist candidates who had ignored the slavery question in lieu of a more nebulous Unionist message. With the advent of the Emancipation Proclamation, the slavery question could be ignored no longer. As a result, the Unionist coalition began to fray. As in Missouri, the division between Maryland Unionists was no longer over emancipation, but rather what form emancipation should take. “Slavery is doomed,” declared the *Easton Gazette*, “the question is how it should be eliminated.” For men like Montgomery Blair, gradual emancipation was a necessity, but should proceed alongside compensating slaveholders. Increasingly identified as Conservative Unionists, Blair, along with prominent Maryland politicians like Thomas Swann, Thomas H. Hicks, and Governor Augustus Bradford, wanted to avoid making emancipation a political question in the 1863 state and congressional elections and tearing apart the Unionist coalition. On the other side, an increased number of Marylanders styled themselves as Unconditional Unionists, and argued that emancipation was the main political question facing Maryland. Although there was an attempt to reconcile the two factions in late spring, it had become clear that the two factions of Unionists would compete against one another in the upcoming election.³⁸

It was in the First District where the contest between Unconditional and Conservative Unionists was starkest. In the early days of the secession crisis, John W. Crisfield had secured

³⁷ Harrison, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 82-3; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 171-75 *Louisville Democrat*, March 20, 1863; Berry Craig and Dieter C. Ullrich, *Unconditional Unionist: The Hazardous Life of Lucian Anderson, Kentucky Congressman*. (Jefferson, NC.: McFarland and Company, 2016), 80-90; James Larry Hood, “For the Union: Kentucky’s Unconditional Unionist Congressmen and the Development of the Republican Party in Kentucky,” *RKHS* 76, no. 3 (July 1978): 199-205; *Louisville Journal*, June 6, August 20, 1863.

³⁸ *Easton Gazette*, March 28, 1863; Baker, *The Politics of Continuity*, 84-85; Peter Sauerwein to James Ridgely, December 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

Unionist support in his district by maintaining that the slavery in Maryland was best secured by remaining in the Union. When accepting the nomination of Conservative Unionists, Crisfield now argued that issues such as emancipation merely served to distract and divide loyal and patriotic men. As a slaveholder, Crisfield had long regarded slavery through the lens of benevolent paternalism. “I am the owner of slaves...they look upon me as their protector,” he declared to the House in 1862. “They have labored for me, it is true, but they have in turn received from me quite as much they have given me.” When Lincoln presented his proposal for compensated emancipation, Crisfield rejected any efforts, declaring any such measures antithetical to the well-being of Maryland’s enslaved. Emancipation without removal, declared Crisfield, would be an act of inhumanity. “We must either keep them as they are, or turn them off to be brutalized, and after a season of degradation and suffering to become extinct.” Firmly believing that the primary goal of the war was restoring the Union, Crisfield remained steadfastly opposed to any emancipation schemes. “First suppress the rebellion and restore the Constitution and the laws,” Crisfield declared to the electorate, “and then we may safely occupy ourselves with questions of domestic policy and social reform.”³⁹

Unconditional Unionists nominated John A.J. Creswell to run against Crisfield. A lawyer from Cecil County, Creswell had been involved in both Whig and Democratic politics for the better part of a decade. Burly and bearded, he was one of the wealthiest men in the county and from a family that had long opposed slavery. Accepting his nomination, Creswell declared that “emancipation in Maryland is already an accomplished fact and has come about as a necessary consequence...of the Rebellion.” After listening to Creswell speak on the need for recruiting black soldiers into the Union army during a mass meeting in Talbot County, the editor of the

³⁹ Wennersten, “John W. Crisfield,” 9-11; Cong. Globe, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1368 (1861-62); *Easton Gazette*, August 29, 1863.

Easton Gazette marvelled at the revolutionary change that had transformed Maryland. “Such speeches five years ago would have consigned the speakers in all probability to the fate of old John Brown,” observed William H. Councill, “but light is beginning to dawn upon the minds of the people.”⁴⁰ The subsequent campaign revealed how prescient Councill’s observation was. In his speeches, Creswell admitted his own culpability in maintaining the slave system, and castigated Crisfield for his reluctance to accept emancipation as the new order of things in Maryland:

In years gone by, there was a power here that ruled with a rod of iron. I was under the influence of it, I admit, and so were you. We never dared even to dispute its supremacy. Slavery, then was not a question of political economy; it was a question of political power, and we all, cowards as we were, shrank before it. That day has passed in Maryland.⁴¹

Creswell believed that the experience of war had forever transformed Marylanders’ opinions on slavery. “The minds of men move quickly amidst the violence of battle, opinions are moulded by the victories or defeats of armies,” concluded Creswell. “The prejudices of a lifetime are riven by the experience of an hour.” Despite such pronouncements, Creswell’s victory was also aided by blatant military interference, with Union officers deliberately interfering with voting at polling station. Even with the military interfering with Crisfield’s supporters, Creswell’s margin of victory was slim. Winning by 6,742 votes to Crisfield’s 5,482, the result indicated that there remained a deeply conservative streak on the Eastern Shore.⁴²

Crisfield and Conservative Unionists determination to prevent emancipation were not only hindered by the shifting political allegiances of the state, but by the actions of enslaved blacks who in combination with Union troops were emancipating themselves. Colonel William

⁴⁰ *New York Tribune*, October 16, 1863; *Easton Gazette*, October 24, 1863.

⁴¹ *Easton Gazette*, October 31, 1863.

⁴² Charles Wagandt, *The Mighty Revolution: Negro Emancipation in Maryland, 1862-1864* (Baltimore: Missouri Historical Society, 2004), 168-9; Wennersten, “John W. Crisfield,” 14; *Baltimore Sun*, November 7, 12, 1863.

Birney, the son of the prominent abolitionist James G. Birney, had been assigned to enlist black troops into the Union army from Maryland. Under pressure from Governor Augustus Bradford, Lincoln halted the recruitment of enslaved blacks from disloyal Marylanders in October. But Secretary of War Stanton, declaring black enlistment a “military necessity” convinced Lincoln to change his decision. Under General Orders No. 329, Lincoln ordered the recruitment of free and enslaved blacks in Missouri, Maryland, and Tennessee by mid-October. Although the orders provided for the orderly recruiting of black troops, the reality was anything but. Using steamers, Birney’s officers prowled the rivers and inlets of Maryland’s southernmost counties in search of recruits. Upon hearing that steamers were nearby, enslaved blacks, often under the cover of night, would come aboard. By morning, the steamer would already be taking their passengers to a Union camp elsewhere in the state. Unionist newspapers in Maryland reported on the exodus of enslaved blacks throughout the state. From Easton Point in Talbot County, the steamer *Champion* left with two hundred aboard. In Queen Anne’s County, large numbers of enslaved blacks walked away from farms to board federal steamers docked in Queenstown. In Somerset County, over one hundred and forty enslaved blacks left Princess Anne in late October to board the steamer *General Meigs* on the Pocomoke River—including six owned by John Crisfield.⁴³

In Missouri, the question of emancipation—and what method it would take—quickly consumed all political life in the state. With neither Radicals nor Conservatives controlling a majority in the legislature, developing an emancipation plan amenable to most would be near impossible. With the General Assembly deadlocked over the issue, Governor Gamble called for a state convention to adopt some scheme of emancipation. Over the next few weeks, both sides

⁴³ August Bradford to Abraham Lincoln, September 28, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Augustus Bradford to Lincoln, October 1, 1863, *CW*, 6:491; General Orders No. 329, *OR*, 3:3:860-1; *Easton Gazette*, September 12, 1863; *Annapolis Gazette*, October 1, 1863; *Baltimore Sun*, October 30, 1863; John W. Blassingame, “The Recruitment of Colored Troops in Maryland,” *MHM* 58, no. 1 (March 1963): 20-29.

wrestled over the implementation of emancipation. In the end, the Conservative faction prevailed. The convention adopted an ordinance that ended slavery on July 4, 1870, but kept those emancipated under the control of and subject to the authority of their former owners as servants for a specific period of time.⁴⁴

Missouri Radicals were enraged. During a fiery emancipation meeting at the St. Louis courthouse, Charles D. Drake accused Gamble of calling the convention merely to “ordain *bogus* Emancipation, in the hopes that the people could be made to accept it.” Emancipation meetings sprung up throughout the state to condemn the now-titled “bogus emancipation ordinance.” A state Radical convention was held in Jefferson City in September. Despite the hot, humid weather, hundreds of Radicals crowded into the Missouri legislature to listen to fiery speeches from Radical leaders like Drake, Henry T. Blow, and Joseph W. McClurg. The convention recommended a new, radical state constitution for Missouri, and called on the members of the General Assembly attending the convention to support Benjamin Gratz Brown and Benjamin F. Loan for Missouri’s Senate seats. As the meeting came to a close, a band struck up “The Star Spangled Banner,” as delegates cheered and waved their handkerchiefs in the air. Reverend T.B. Bratton, a Radical from Livingston County, then mounted the speaker’s stand to begin a rendition of “John Brown’s Body.” As eight hundred voices joined in the chorus, Bratton introduced a new verse: “Now three groans for the old Convention, as we go marching on,” cried Bratton, “Glory, glory, hallelujah!”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The best summary of the debates of June 1863 convention is in Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 141-48. The ordinance specifically called for those emancipated blacks over the age of forty to remain as servants to their owners for the remainder of their lives; those under twelve years of age until they reached twenty-three; and all others until July 4, 1876. See *Journal and Proceedings of the Missouri State Convention, Held in Jefferson City, June, 1863* (St. Louis: 1863), 367.

⁴⁵ *Missouri Democrat*, July 10, 23, 30, 1863; *Proceedings of the Missouri State Radical Emancipation and Union Convention, Convened at Jefferson City, Tuesday, September 1st, 1863* (St. Louis: 1863), 40.

Flushed with political enthusiasm, Missouri Radicals sought to demonstrate their strength in the state by electing one of their own to the United States Senate. Two Senate seats would be up for grabs when the legislature reconvened in November 1863. But fearful of another deadlocked session, Radicals decided to ally with supporters of incumbent Senator John B. Henderson, who sought re-election. Henderson and his allies had read well the shifting landscape of Missouri politics. Tempering his previous strict conservatism in order to appeal to both Radical and Conservative members of the legislature, Henderson accepted several Radical positions, including supporting the Emancipation Proclamation, the enlistment of black soldiers, and a new state constitutional convention.⁴⁶ As a result, Henderson was elected to a full term ending in 1869. The Radical *Missouri Democrat* begrudgingly admitted that Henderson was an acceptable candidate. “Let us not object seriously to Henderson,” proclaimed the *Democrat*, as “he is the most talented and influential of his party.”⁴⁷ Radical hopes were bolstered by Brown’s defeat of Blair ally James O. Broadhead in a close race for the term ending in 1867. As Brown headed to Washington to take up his position as Missouri’s newest senator, Republican newspapers celebrated his election with the same enthusiasm they had bestowed upon Frank Blair when he had been elected to Congress in 1856. “This election marks an era in the political history not only of Missouri, but of the whole country,” declared the *New York Times*. “Daylight in Missouri!” cried the *New York Tribune*, “[Brown’s] election now is an omen of good for the future.” In Philadelphia, the old abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison celebrated Brown’s election at a gathering of the American Antislavery Society. “Who ever dreamed,” marvelled Garrison,

⁴⁶ *Louisiana Journal*, December 5, 1863; *Missouri Republican*, November 20, 1863; *Missouri Democrat*, November 14, 16, 1863; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 172-73; *Missouri House Journal* (1864), 20.

⁴⁷ *Missouri House Journal* (1864), 20; *Missouri Democrat*, December 3, 1863.

“that Missouri would eventually elevate a radical, thoroughgoing Abolitionist, to the Senate of the United States?”⁴⁸

By early 1864 it had become apparent to Maryland’s Unionists that slavery, so long an integral part of Maryland’s social and political life, could survive no longer. In March 1864, the *Cecil Whig* estimated that thirty thousand enslaved blacks had escaped from the state since the beginning of the war. Combined with the recruitment of enslaved black men into the Union army, slavery was quickly disintegrating as an institution in Maryland. Despite all the friction between Conservative and Unconditional Unionists, both groups had now committed to ending slavery in the state. The division between the two groups now revolved around the question of compensation, and what the process of emancipation would look like. Despite slavery’s terminal condition, Conservative Unionists like still demanded not only immediate emancipation with compensation, but also a system of “wages [or] apprenticeship” to “guard against too sudden a revulsion in the inauguration and establishment of a new system of labor.” By early February of 1864, the Maryland state legislature had passed a bill calling for an election to be held on April 27 to decide for or against calling a state constitutional convention. Lincoln remained concerned that the emancipationist impulse could be derailed by infighting amongst Unionists over the issue of compensation. “I am very anxious for emancipation to be effected in Maryland in some substantial form,” wrote Lincoln to Creswell. “What I have dreaded is the danger that, by jealousies, rivalries, and consequent ill-blood...the friends of emancipation themselves may divide, and lose the measure altogether.” Should Unionists fail to secure control of the

⁴⁸ *New York Times*, November 14, 1863; *New York Tribune*, quoted in *Missouri Democrat*, November 19, 1863; *Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society, at its Third Decade, held in the City of Philadelphia, December 3rd and 4th, 1863* (New York: 1864), 28.

convention, feared Lincoln, political elements more inclined to support the continuation of slavery might triumph.⁴⁹

Despite Lincoln's fears, Unconditional Unionists successfully won control of the state constitutional convention. Unconditional Unionists elected 61 delegates to the 96-member convention, the remainder being Democratic delegates coming mostly from the southern portion of the state.⁵⁰ Against an Unconditional Unionist majority, Democratic delegates at the convention realized that they could no longer save slavery. Instead they used delaying tactics to postpone votes on emancipation. In a preview of their party's postwar political messaging, Maryland Democrats voiced their concerns over the status of free black labor in Maryland and played upon racial fears. "Are Maryland's blacks the equal of the white man?" asked Samuel H. Berry of Prince George's County to fellow delegates. "On, on, you go, step by step. You first liberate them, then give them the civil rights of citizens, and then for intermarriage and the commingling of the races." Despite Democratic efforts to block and delay the amendments, the convention passed a new state constitution with an article that declared slavery abolished in Maryland and all persons, "held to service or labor as slaves, are hereby declared free." Although the new constitution still had to pass a popular referendum, slavery, for all intents and purposes, was dead in Maryland.⁵¹

Although Maryland had taken first tentative steps towards emancipation, much of the progress made would be for naught if Lincoln were not re-elected. In Missouri, the battle over

⁴⁹ Cecil Whig, March 12, 1864; Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, 125-26; *Immediate Emancipation in Maryland, Proceedings of the Union State Central Committee, at a Meeting Held in Temperance Temple, Baltimore, Wednesday, December 16, 1863* (Baltimore, 1863), 14-15; William S. Myers, *The Maryland Constitution of 1864* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1901), 30-31; *Annapolis Gazette*, January 28, 1864; Abraham Lincoln to John A.J. Creswell, March 7, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁵⁰ Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, January 28, 1864, quoted in Henig, *Henry Winter Davis*, 197; *Frederick Examiner*, March 9, 1864; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 102-3; Baltimore Sun, April 5, 1864; Myers, *Maryland Constitution of 1864*, 34-35.

⁵¹ *The Debates of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Maryland*, 3 vols. (Annapolis, 1864), 1:111, 681.

who spoke for Unionism in the state merely intensified as political leaders prepared for the 1864 election. In his first major speech to the Senate, Brown had argued that the war itself had fundamentally altered the nation. “Who cares for the Union of the past—a Union fraught with seeds of destruction—bitter with humiliations and disappointments?” asked Brown. “There is a revolution in whose whirls we are eddying and with those currents we have to contend.” Calling for the confiscation of slaveholders’ property, land redistribution to freed blacks, and for the supremacy of federal authority over local governments, Brown aimed his sights at conservatives and moderates in Congress. There is no longer a Union Party, a Republican Party, or a Democratic Party, argued Brown. There is only a Radical Party and a Conservative Party. The Radicals “would grapple to the future and its precious promise by every mode and at all costs,” while the Conservatives “would cash now the revolution, and that at a heavy discount, to buy or retain office and power.”⁵² Brown’s rhetoric in Congress echoed Radical ideas in Missouri. During their convention in Jefferson City, Missouri Radicals election delegates to the National Union convention in Baltimore, and passed a radical platform calling for the vigorous prosecution of the war, immediate emancipation in Missouri, and a national constitutional amendment ending slavery. As well, they called for removal of cabinet members Montgomery Blair and Edward Bates, whom the Radicals saw as unsympathetic to their agenda.⁵³

With presidential, congressional, and state elections due to be held in Missouri, Conservative Unionists were concerned with the increasing control by the Radicals over the levers of political mobilization in the state. The Radical *Missouri Democrat* had become one of

⁵² Cong. Globe, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., 160, 201, 694, 922, 984; *Immediate Abolition of Slavery Act of Congress: Speech of Hon. B. Gratz Brown, of Missouri, Delivered in the U.S. Senate, March 3, 1864* (Washington: 1864), 4, 15-16.

⁵³ *Missouri Democrat*, May 28, 29, 20; *Missouri Republican*, May 27, 28, 1864; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 136; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 182-85.

the state's largest newspapers. St. Louis lawyer Charles P. Johnston had transformed the Missouri Union League clubs into a de facto wing of the Radicals, with Emil Preetorious doing likewise with the German Union Leagues. In response, Alexander J. Reid, the editor of the *Louisiana Journal*, suggested that Blair's newspaper the *St. Louis Union* counter the *Democrat's* influence. "It will inspire confidence in our friends," Reid informed James O. Broadhead, "I urge that the *Union* be immediately enlarged and made more vigorous!" During January and February, Conservatives began forming "Lincoln Clubs" throughout the state. Although the *Democrat* dismissed the purpose of these organizations as nothing more than to "disorganize and defeat [the] true friends of a freedom policy in Missouri," the St. Louis Lincoln Club called for another convention to choose *their* delegates to the Baltimore convention.⁵⁴

When two groups of Missouri delegates—Radical and Conservative—headed eastwards toward Baltimore in June 1864 for the National Union convention, it remained unclear which one would officially represent Missouri. For all their uncompromising rhetoric, Missouri's Radicals proved more adept at political compromise than many had originally thought. Striking a deal with the Illinois delegation, the Radicals told the Illinoisans that should the Conservative delegation be admitted, the Radicals would withdraw from the convention; however, should the Radicals be admitted, they would then go with the convention and vote for Lincoln. After some backroom dealing, the Radicals took their seats as the official Missouri delegation. Endorsing a constitutional amendment prohibiting slavery, the Missouri delegation also demanded and received a platform plank calling for a reorganization of the Cabinet to incorporate "only those who cordially endorse" the convention platform of a constitutional amendment banning

⁵⁴ R.J. Howard to Montgomery Blair, December 28, 1863, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Thomas H. Allen to James O. Broadhead, November 16, 1863; Alexander J. Reid to James O. Broadhead, December 21, 1863; James Davis to James O. Broadhead, James O. Broadhead Papers, MHS; Silvestro, "None but Patriots," 164-65; *Missouri Democrat*, February 20, 1864; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 183-84.

slavery—a direct blow aimed at Montgomery Blair. When all the other states voted for Lincoln, the Missourians moved that the nomination of Lincoln be made unanimous, which publicly confirmed their reconciliation with their Republican brethren.⁵⁵ Frank Blair, who had resigned from Congress to become a major general under the command of General William T. Sherman in Georgia, could only watch from a distance as events unfolded. Surprised and disappointed that his Conservative friends had been turned away from the Baltimore convention, he nonetheless urged his allies to rally behind Lincoln for the upcoming election. But the seating of the Missouri Radicals over the Conservatives sounded the death knell for Unionism in Missouri. This coalition, pieced together in the dark days of 1861 when Missouri’s future in the Union was most precarious, had survived elections and invasions. It dissolved with a whimper in the summer of 1864. The Conservatives Unionists who trudged back to Missouri from the Baltimore convention either supported Lincoln in silence or drifted into the Democratic Party. Two major Conservative papers, the *Missouri Republican* and *Missouri Statesman*, now openly identified themselves with Democratic presidential candidate George B. McClellan.⁵⁶

Lincoln’s prospects for a second term were bolstered by a series of events that removed most of his political obstacles for re-election. The Democratic convention in Chicago in late August chose McClellan to be their candidate on a peace platform that called for a negotiated peace with the Confederacy. Because of this “treasonous platform,” many wavering Radicals saw Lincoln as the only alternative. More importantly, the news of Sherman’s capture of Atlanta immediately galvanized the nation and revitalized the Republican cause. The gloomy mood of

⁵⁵*Presidential Election of 1864, Proceedings of the National Union Convention held in Baltimore, MD., June 7th and 8th, 1864* (New York: 1864), 34-46, 57-65; James G. Randall, *Lincoln the President*, 4 vols. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1945), 4:126; William F. Zornow, “The Missouri Radicals and the Election of 1864,” *MHR* 45, no. 4 (July 1951): 367-69.

⁵⁶ *Missouri Republican*, June 17, 1864; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 187; Elizabeth Blair Lee to Samuel Philips Lee, June 26, 1864, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; *New York Times*, July 17, 1864.

defeat and despair over Lincoln's re-election prospects was almost instantly replaced by feelings of impending triumph.⁵⁷ Some of Lincoln's allies remained concerned that Montgomery Blair's continued presence in the cabinet could influence Radical turnout. The previous year, Blair had exacerbated matters in a controversial speech in Rockville, Maryland, in which he denounced the Radical element of the Republican Party as being no better than the proslavery extremists that the Union was currently fighting against. Senior Republican leaders like Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, writing to Lincoln about the political currents in New England, informed the president that, "tens of thousands of men will be lost to you or will give a reluctant vote on account of the Blairs." Blair had earlier offered his resignation to Lincoln to be used at the president's discretion, but Lincoln had refused. Now, with election day fast approaching, Lincoln did the political calculus. Blair had to go. For their part, the Blairs accepted Montgomery's "martyrdom" as a necessity for Lincoln's re-election. "In my opinion it is all for the best," Preston wrote to Frank. "If it tends to give a greater certainty to the defeat of McClellan...it is well the Blairs prefer a restoration of the Union to all earthly personal interests." For Henry Winter Davis, the defeat of his bitter rival was a cause for celebration. "Blair is gone!" he told his friend Du Pont. "Our necks are relieved from that galling humiliation." Accepting Blair's resignation would do much to ensure Radical support for Lincoln and all but guarantee him re-election.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: Norton, 1977), 119-67; William F. Zornow, "The Cleveland Convention, 1864, and the Radical Democrats," *Mid-America* 36 (January 1954): 39-53; Michael Vorenberg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 116-21; Nevins, *Frémont*, 574; *New York Times*, June 3, 1864; William F. Zornow, *Lincoln and the Party Divided* (Norman, OK.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 144-46; David E. Long, *The Jewel of Liberty: Lincoln's Re-Election and the End of Slavery* (Mechanicsburg, PA.: Stackpole Books, 2008), 239-42.

⁵⁸ *Speech of the Hon. Montgomery Blair, Postmaster General, on the Revolutionary Schemes of the Ultra Abolitionists and in Defence of the Policy of the President, delivered at the Unconditional Union Meeting, Held at Rockville, Montgomery Co., Maryland, on Saturday, October 3, 1863* (New York: 1863), 3-4; Smith, *Blair Family*, 2:237-42; Smith, *Francis Preston Blair*, 332-33; Henry Wilson to Abraham Lincoln, September 5, 1864; Abraham

On September 6, after more than four months of work, the state convention finally submitted the new constitution to Maryland voters for ratification. Enough Unionists from both factions came together to advocate for the passage of the constitution and to stage rallies throughout Maryland. Yet when the state voted in October, the majority that Unionists had enjoyed in the last two elections had vanished. Statewide, the vote for the constitution was 27,541 versus 29,536 opposed.⁵⁹ Partly because of Unionist overconfidence in voter turnout in Baltimore, and partly because of Unionist infighting, it appeared that the new constitution and its article abolishing slavery had failed. Furthermore, a resurgent Democratic Party had utilized the constitutional ratification to galvanize support. Maryland Democrats had been energized by the fight over emancipation. Attacked by Unionists throughout the war as the party of “Dixie, [Jefferson] Davis, and the Devil,” Maryland Democrats presented themselves as a necessary political counterweight to the Unionists. As they had done during the state convention, they also appealed to racial fears of white Marylanders over black emancipation.⁶⁰ In the telegraph offices of the War Department in Washington, Lincoln anxiously awaited word of the result from Maryland. Davis’s political lieutenant Henry Hoffman and the editor of the *Baltimore American*, Charles C. Fulton, continuously telegraphed Lincoln over the next few days informing him of the vote count. By October 12, it was clear to Hoffman that only the votes of Maryland’s soldiers could save the new constitution. Four days later, as the soldiers’ votes slowly trickled in, Fulton was confident enough in the numbers to declare the constitution passed. “All hail Maryland as a

Lincoln to Montgomery Blair, September 23, 1864; Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Preston Blair to Frank Blair, September 23, 1864, copied in Elizabeth Blair Lee to Samuel Philips Lee, September 24, 1864, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Frank Blair to Preston Blair, September 30, 1864, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Henry Winter Davis to Samuel F. Du Pont, September 24, 1864, in *Samuel Francis Du Pont: A Selection from His Civil War Letters*, ed. John D. Hayes, 3 vols., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 3:393.

⁵⁹ Abraham Lincoln to Henry Hoffman, October 10, 1864; Henry Hoffman to Abraham Lincoln, October 12, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; County results for the constitutional vote can be found in Starr, *Maryland Constitution of 1864*, appendix.

⁶⁰ Wagandt, *Mighty Revolution*, 258; *Baltimore Clipper*, October 17, 1864; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 127-31.

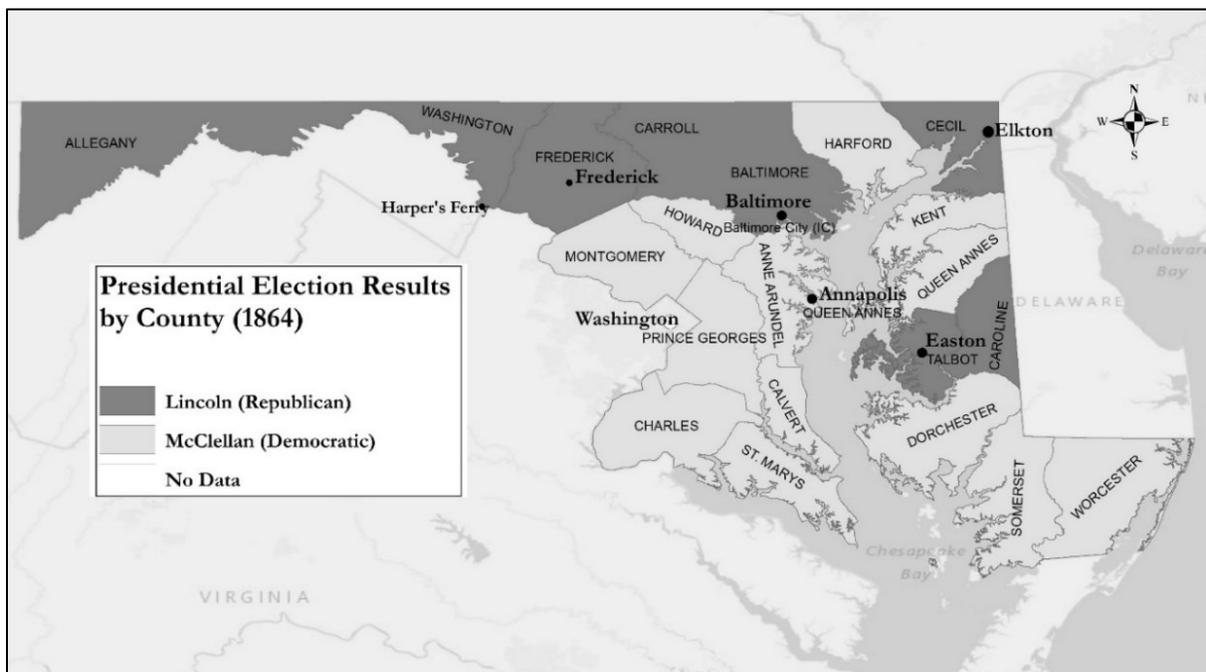
free state,” telegraphed Fulton to Lincoln. Maryland’s new constitution had passed by a mere 375 votes. By the end of October, Governor Bradford proclaimed the adoption of the new state constitution, to go into effect on November 1, 1864. Maryland was now a free state. For decades, Maryland had been slavery’s borderland, struggling to reconcile its economy, society, and politics with the reality of black enslavement. Now, Maryland would have to reconcile what black freedom would look like.⁶¹

The adoption of the new constitution also resulted in the election for state and congressional offices being moved to the same date as the presidential election. For Unconditional Unionists in Maryland, the results of the November election were mixed. Lincoln received 37,353 votes compared to McClellan’s 32,418, carrying the state by a comfortable margin. Henry Winter Davis had not been re-nominated in his congressional district, would serve out the rest of his term as a lame-duck congressman. For years, both Davis and Montgomery Blair had been uneasy allies, jostling for political influence in Maryland. Despite their differing personalities and conceptions of emancipation, both men shared a commitment to ridding Maryland of the curse of slavery. It was a cruel twist of fate that at the very moment of achieving that goal, both men were out of the political game. While Unconditional Unionists Francis Thomas and Edwin H. Webster retained their congressional seats, John A.J. Creswell did not. He was defeated by Hiram McCullough, a Democratic lawyer from Elkton with long-time proslavery opinions. Without the military interference involved in the previous year’s election, the Democratic vote rebounded on the Eastern Shore. Ironically, Creswell’s defeat was helped by some of the very measures for which he had advocated. In his previous campaign against John

⁶¹ Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 9:370; Henry Hoffman to Abraham Lincoln, October 12, 15, 17, 1864; Charles C. Fulton to Abraham Lincoln, October 16, 17, 21, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Starr, *Maryland Constitution of 1864*, 97.

Crisfield, Creswell had supported the enlistment of black soldiers, which would have enabled his district's counties to meet their recruiting quotas and prevent white Marylanders from being drafted. In the election of 1864, most Unconditional Unionists in Maryland could rely upon the votes of absentee soldiers—who tended to vote Unionist—to make up any shortfalls in the vote at home. With a 3,300 vote gap between himself and McCullough, Creswell had only received a meager 432 votes from soldiers. It was because the majority of his district's quota was comprised of black soldiers—who could not vote.⁶²

1864 Presidential Election in Maryland⁶³



The Union Democratic coalition in Kentucky, which had held together through elections, Confederate invasions, and the Emancipation Proclamation, finally ruptured over the issue of the enlistment of blacks soldiers into the Union army. When the order for black enlistment had been

⁶² Henig, *Henry Winter Davis*, 228-29; Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 505; *Baltimore Sun*, November 9, 1864; *Cecil Whig*, October 8, 1864; *New York Tribune*, March 13, 1865; Charles Branch Clark, "Politics in Maryland During the Civil War," *MHM* 39, no. 2 (June 1944): 157-58.

⁶³ Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 505-06; John H. Long, *Maryland Historical Counties*. Data Set. Laura Rico-Beck, digital comp. Atlas of Historical County Boundaries, ed. by John H. Long. Chicago: The Newberry Library, 2010.

given in May 1863, General Ambrose Burnside, then in charge of Kentucky, warned Lincoln that the recruitment of black soldiers would do nothing but harm Unionist efforts in Kentucky. “Kentucky is in good order now,” wrote Burnside, “the enrollment of these negroes is what the loyal people fear will do the harm.” For decades, Kentucky slaveholders looked warily upon their northern border as an escape route for their enslaved property. Now, it appeared that slavery’s borderland was quickly become slavery’s enclave, as a cordon of freedom began to stretch along the state’s southern border. With Confederate resistance in Tennessee swept away, Union army recruiting camps soon sprang up in Nashville, Clarkesville, and at Fort Donelson. Combined with the camps on the north bank of the Ohio River, enslaved blacks in Kentucky now flocked south and north in such large numbers that a delegation of Kentucky citizens petitioned Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to move the camps farther from the state’s borders. Eager to assuage worried Kentuckians, Lincoln had ordered that black enlistment in Kentucky be delayed until February 1864. When black enlistment resumed in February, the Union Democrat-controlled legislature vociferously opposed it. Governor Thomas Bramlette attempted to broker a deal with Lincoln, eventually reaching a compromise whereby no blacks would be enlisted in any county in Kentucky that met its quota by the enlistment of whites, and that any black troops would be removed from the state for training.⁶⁴

In Washington, some Kentucky congressmen began affiliating themselves with doctrines of Republicanism by declaring themselves in favor of black enlistment. Although elected as Union Democrats, Lucian Anderson, William Harrison Randall, and Green Clay Smith had

⁶⁴ Ambrose Burnside to Abraham Lincoln, June 27, 1863, *OR*, 3:3:419-20; Benjamin H. Bristow, Charles F. Burham, George H. Yeaman to Edwin Stanton, December 19, 1863, *OR*, 3:3:1174-75; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, December 7, 1863 to February 22, 1864* (Frankfort: 1863), 623; Victor B. Howard, *Black Liberation in Kentucky: Emancipation and Freedom, 1862-1884* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 60-1.

joined with Republicans to elect Radical Republican Schuler Colfax as Speaker of the House over a Peace Democrat. Believing that winning the war took precedence over preserving slavery, the three Kentuckians increasingly found themselves supporting Republican legislation that assisted the war effort.⁶⁵ When Congress finally revised the Enrollment Act in February 1864 to make all black men in both the free and slave states of the Union subject to the draft, Anderson, Randall, and Smith all threw their support behind it. While Anderson couched his support for black troops with a desire to compensate loyal Unionist slaveholders who might supply them, Smith argued for the enlistment of enslaved blacks of Confederate sympathizers as a war measure. On the day of the vote, both Anderson and Randall voted in the affirmative, while Smith, although declaring that he was for it, missed the vote because of illness. The other five congressmen from Kentucky all opposed the bill. By first associating themselves with Republicans over Colfax, and then supporting the Enrollment Act, Anderson, Smith, and Randall now completely severed all ties with the Union Democratic party in Kentucky.⁶⁶

By the spring of 1864, it had become clear that the breach between the two groups could not be repaired. When the Union Democratic central committee issued a call to nominate delegates to the upcoming Democratic convention in Chicago, rather than to the National Union convention in Baltimore, some Union men saw this as an attempt to “seduce the Union men of Kentucky to an affiliation with the notorious rebel sympathizers of the Northern states.” A new state organization would be required. In response, men across Kentucky began to organize an Unconditional Union party. In Covington, a large meeting of Unconditional Unionists endorsed

⁶⁵ Herman Balz, “The Etheridge Conspiracy of 1863: A Projected Conservative Coup,” *JSH* 36, no. 4 (November 1970): 549-567; Hood, “For the Union,” 205-6; Cong. Globe, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., 4-6 (1863-64); *New York Tribune*, December 8, 1863.

⁶⁶ Cong. Globe, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., Appendix, 102, 338, 516 (1863-64); Ira Berlin et al., eds., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867*, 3 series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983-2013) 2:2 (hereafter cited as *FSSP*); Hood, “For the Union,” 207-08.

the congressional actions of Anderson, Randall, and Smith. In Laurel County in western Kentucky, Unconditional Unionists passed a resolution asserting their confidence in Randall, and committed, that “while this war continues to consider nothing but the salvation of the Government.”⁶⁷ Already seen as one of the state’s more radical Unionists, James Speed quickly severed ties with the Union Democrats. Speed threw himself into helping to organize an Unconditional Unionist state convention that called for the re-election of Lincoln, immediate emancipation in the Border South, the abolition of slavery by constitutional amendment, and a resolution empowering Lincoln to call into military service any white and black men in all the states.⁶⁸

Concerned that their message of black recruitment and the abolition of slavery might drive away prospective voters, Unconditional Unionists attempted to assure Kentuckians that they remained committed to white supremacy. For many party members, slavery may have been against natural rights, but civil rights for blacks remained a bridge too far. Speeches and rallies during the election reinforced that message. At a meeting in Lexington, Green Clay Smith told a crowd that black recruitment was merely a war measure, not a social experiment. “I have come to believe that this government is for the benefit of the white people,” exclaimed Smith, “I love my son dearer than the negro. I do not prefer to see my son shot than to see a negro shot. But if it had not been for [those] in rebellion, this law would never have been necessary.”⁶⁹ Yet their message was hindered by the actions of Union army leadership in the state. In February 15,

⁶⁷ *Nashville Daily Union*, February 7, 1864; *Frankfort Commonwealth*, February 9, 11, 1864; J.M. Ogden to Robert J. Breckinridge, March 19, 1864, quoted in Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 180.

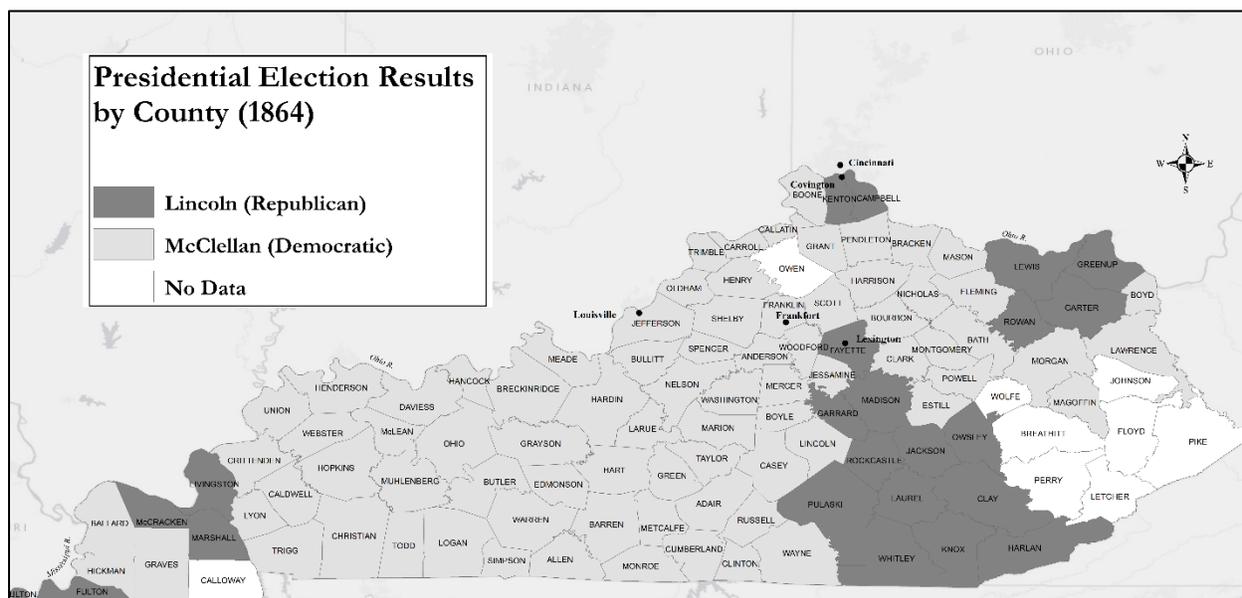
⁶⁸ *Louisville Journal*, May 26, 1864; Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 133-35; Joshua Speed to Joseph Holt, April 25, 1864, Joseph Holt Papers, LOC; James J. Miller to Montgomery Blair, February 2, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁶⁹ *New York Times*, April 3, October 9, 1864; *Knoxville Whig and Rebel Ventilator*, June 18, 1864; James Speed to John H. Ward, March 28, 1864, Speed Family Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky (hereafter cited as FHS); Cole, “James Speed and the Emancipationist’s Dilemma,” 39-40; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 181-82.

1864, General Stephen G. Burbridge had been put in command of Kentucky. A native Kentuckian born in Scott County, Burbridge arrived with two purposes: Suppress the constant guerilla activity crippling the state; and secondly, to quash any disloyal or rebel sentiment that might weaken Kentucky's attachment to the Union. But Burbridge's activity against guerilla activity hurt the Unconditional Unionist cause the most. On July 5, Lincoln proclaimed martial law throughout Kentucky, arguing that guerilla activity made it necessary to protect loyal citizens. With martial law in place, Burbridge quickly adopted a brutal policy of reprisals which mandated that for every Union citizen murdered, four random prisoners found guilty of guerilla activity would be executed. Throughout the summer of 1864, a cycle of revenge permeated Kentucky. By October, Burbridge again interfered with the election by issuing orders which permitted the arrest of any armed voters at polling stations. Burbridge's heavy-handedness was extremely damaging to Lincoln's already slim electoral prospects in Kentucky. "Mr. Lincoln will get a good vote in some parts of the state but not enough to carry it," wrote Joshua Speed to Joseph Holt, noting that Burbridge had "done us infinite harm." With Union military interference coupled with the unpopularity of policies of black recruitment and abolition, few, if any Unconditional Unionists anticipated a Lincoln victory in Kentucky.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Louis De Falaise, "General Stephen Gano Burbridge's Command in Kentucky," *RKHS* 69, no. 2 (April 1971): 101-27; Edwin Stanton to Stephen G. Burnbridge, July 5, 1864; General Orders No. 233, July 19, 1864, *OR*, 1:39:2, 163, 180-82; A good survey of guerilla activity in Kentucky can be seen in James B. Martin, "Black Flag Over the Bluegrass: Guerilla Warfare in Kentucky, 1863-1865," *RKHS* 86, no. 4 (Autumn 1988):353-375; 59-70; Joshua Speed to Joseph Holt, September 8, 1864, Joseph Holt Papers, LOC.

1864 Presidential Election in Kentucky⁷¹



In the November election, McClellan easily carried Kentucky with nearly 70 percent of the vote, one of only three states won by the Democratic Party in a Republican landslide. Yet despite the loss, Unconditional Unionists could take comfort that Republicanism had made considerable inroads in the past four years. In 1860, Lincoln garnered less than 1 percent of the total vote in the state; four years later, Lincoln received 30 percent of the total. In 1860, Lincoln had not carried a single county; in 1864, he had carried twenty-five. In the mountainous counties of eastern Kentucky, Lincoln carried Randall's entire Eight District. Despite their loss, some Unconditional Unionist took comfort that although they remained a minority they had emerged from the election with their principles intact. "We are less now but true," wrote James Speed to Lincoln after the election. Breckinridge struck a more pessimistic note. He noted with dismay how former southern sympathizers and Union Democrats had found themselves operating together. "The old secession party here, and the relapsed portion of the Union party are now

⁷¹ Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 458-86; Gordon DenBoer. *Kentucky Historical Counties*. Data Set. Emily Kelley, digital comp. Atlas of Historical County Boundaries, ed. by John H. Long. Chicago: The Newberry Library, 2010.

united, and have possession of this state,” Breckinridge informed Lincoln. If the Republican Party were to be sustained in Kentucky, predicted Breckinridge, it would need the full support of Republican leadership in Washington.⁷²

In Missouri, voters faced a raft of elections in the fall of 1864, when they voted in presidential, congressional, and state elections. Even more importantly, Missouri voters were to cast their ballots on a new state convention on emancipation. Governor Hamilton Gamble had died on January 31, 1864. His successor was Willard Preble Hall, a lawyer from western Missouri who sought to continue Gamble’s conservative policies. But the Radicals had gained too much strength in Jefferson City, and passed a bill calling for a state convention to reconsider the emancipation question. While Hall was confident that the Conservatives would defeat the scheme, Missouri Radicals emphasized the importance of this referendum. “The great question now before [the people of Missouri] is whether they will have freedom or slavery,” declared the *Missouri Democrat*. “There is no shirking the issue. It must be met.”⁷³

The Radical election campaign was assisted in no small way by one last Confederate effort to capture Missouri. Hoping simultaneously to strike a blow for the Confederacy and to damage Lincoln’s chances of re-election, Confederate General Sterling Price took an army of twelve thousand poorly armed and undisciplined soldiers from northern Arkansas into Missouri. The ex-Governor’s raid into his home state was a disastrous failure. After a series of bloody battles with Union forces in central and western Missouri, Price’s threadbare army limped out of the state a few days before the election.⁷⁴ Price’s raid, originally intended to weaken Union

⁷² Hood, “For The Union,” 210; Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 458-86; James Speed to Abraham Lincoln, November 25, 1864, Speed Family Papers, FHS; Robert J. Breckinridge to Abraham Lincoln, November 16, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁷³ Boman, Lincoln’s *Resolute Unionist*, 236-37; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 180-81; Willard P. Hall to James S. Rollins, February 5, 1864, James S. Rollins Papers, SHSM; *Missouri Democrat*, February 20, 1864.

⁷⁴ Price’s raid is examined in Mark A. Lause, *Price’s Lost Campaign: The 1864 Invasion of Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011); Kyle S. Sinisi, *The Last Hurrah: Sterling Price’s Missouri Expedition of 1864*

resolve, did more to bolster the Radical cause in Missouri than anything else. The threat of invasion amplified the Radical message that immediate emancipation was a crucial war measure necessary to securing peace in Missouri. “Who will pretend that [slavery’s] name and influence are largely instrumental in the production of our troubles—the incursion of rebel armies, and the desolations of civil strife?” asked the *Democrat*. Furthermore, Radical gubernatorial candidate Thomas C. Fletcher had spent the majority of the election campaign fighting against the Confederates, while his Democratic rival, the unfortunately named Thomas L. Price—who bore no relation to the invading Confederate general —failed to take an active role in the state’s defense. Finally, Price’s campaign had the fortunate side effect of attracting pro-Confederate Missourians to his army. When Price retreated from the state, they followed, ensuring that they would play no role in disrupting the election.⁷⁵

When the ballots were counted, Charles D. Drake informed Lincoln that the victory was a “a triumph of pure unadulterated Radicalism.” Drake’s confidence in the strength of Radicalism was genuine, but somewhat misplaced. Lincoln received nearly 70 per cent of the vote with 72,763 ballots to McClellan’s 31,099 —a far cry from the mere 17,020 votes that Lincoln had received in 1860. However, due to disenfranchisement under the loyalty oath along with those voters who had fled the state with Price, there were nearly 52,000 fewer votes cast than there had been four year earlier. In the state elections, Fletcher overwhelmingly defeated his Democratic rival Price by a 40,000 vote majority.⁷⁶ In the congressional races, eight of the Missouri’s nine congressmen elected were Radicals. Surprisingly, the only congressional district won by the

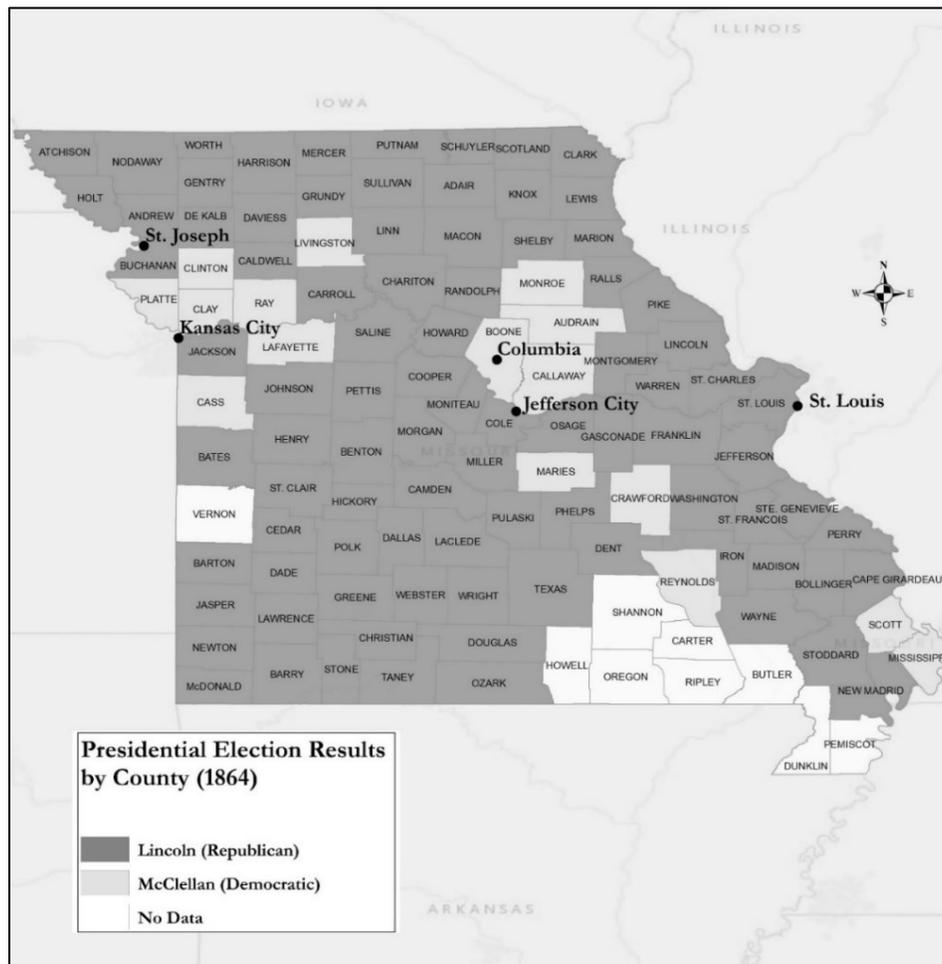
(Lanham, MD.: Rowan and Littlefield, 2015); Michael J. Forsyth, *The Great Missouri Raid: Sterling Price and the Last Major Confederate Campaign in Northern Territory* (Jefferson, NC.: McFarland and Company, 2015); *OR*, 1:41:307-17.

⁷⁵ *Missouri Democrat*, October 6, 1864; John Nicolay to Abraham Lincoln, October 10, 12, 18, 1864; N.D. Strong to Abraham Lincoln, February 13, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 194-95.

⁷⁶ Charles Daniel Drake to Abraham Lincoln, November 23, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 570-71; Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 195.

Democrats was Frank Blair’s old district in St. Louis. Democrats there managed to eke out a victory in a three-way race when Conservatives and Radicals each put a candidate in the field. Most importantly, voters approved the call for holding a state convention to deal with the emancipation question, and elected a slate of delegates of whom nearly three-fourths were Radicals.⁷⁷

1864 Presidential Election in Missouri⁷⁸



⁷⁷ *Missouri Democrat*, October 15, 18, November 5, 1864; John Nicolay to Abraham Lincoln, October 18, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC.

⁷⁸ Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 570-75; Gordon DenBoer, *Missouri Historical Counties*. Data Set. Laura Rico-Beck, digital comp. Atlas of Historical County Boundaries, ed. by John H. Long. Chicago: The Newberry Library, 2010.

The state convention assembled on January 6, 1865 in St. Louis's Mercantile Library Hall. In 1861 delegates had convened in the same hall during the secession crisis to debate Missouri's relationship with the Union, where they had approved John J. Crittenden's proposal to permanently guarantee the existence of slavery by constitutional amendment. Four years later, another convention was preparing to kill slavery in Missouri forever. That first convention had been dominated by southern-born slaveholders and lawyers. This convention would be made up not only of lawyers, but also farmers, physicians, and merchants. Delegates formed a special committee on emancipation, who reported back to the convention on January 11 with a short, simple ordinance, devoid of superfluous political philosophy or soaring rhetoric. "That hereafter in this State, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except in punishment of a crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted," read the ordinance, "and all persons held to service or labor as slaves are hereby declared free." William F. Switzler, the Conservative editor of the *Missouri Statesman*, attempted to attach an amendment to the ordinance that would develop an apprentice system for all emancipated enslaved between the ages of twelve and twenty-one, but it was overwhelmingly rejected. Finally, with a vote of 60 to 4, the ordinance of emancipation was adopted. Slavery was dead in Missouri.⁷⁹

The hall erupted with loud applause, the waving of handkerchiefs, and the flinging of hats. When news of the ordinance's passage reached Jefferson City, the state legislature immediately adjourned in celebration. Ebullient legislators and ordinary citizens crowded into the legislature's main hall for speeches and the singing of "John Brown's Body," as Governor Fletcher immediately telegraphed to Lincoln, "Free Missouri greets her elder sisters." In St. Joseph, people cheered in the streets as one hundred guns were fired off in celebration of the

⁷⁹ *Journal of the Missouri State Convention, Held at the City of St. Louis, January 6-April 10, 1865* (St. Louis: 1865), 2-25; William F. Switzler to James S. Rollins, January 15, 1865, James S. Rollins Papers, SHSM.

ordinance. Three days later, a massive celebration was held in St. Louis. As thousands celebrated in streets illuminated by bonfire and candle lights, fireworks were fired from the dome of the Court House. Celebrants wandered through the streets of St. Louis, marvelling as private residences attempted to outdo one another with illuminated displays. They could not help but notice one house on Lucas Place. For over fifteen years Frank Blair had promoted the cause of antislavery in his state. When slavery finally died in Missouri, Blair was eight hundred miles from home, marching through South Carolina with Sherman. But former mayor John How would not let St. Louisans forget Blair's role. Under an illuminated arch in front of How's house was mounted a plaster bust of Blair. Overhead, written in letters of light was the motto, "Honor to whom honor is due."⁸⁰

Before the war, political antislavery in the Border South had revolved around conservative, moderate, liberal, and radical ideologies to solve the problem of slavery. All sought to end slavery, but none could agree on how to do it. Conservative antislavery men wanted a long, slow process of gradual termination; moderates sought legislative means to reduce the number of slaves in their respective states; liberals wanted to use the full weight of the government to support emancipation and colonization to create a free white labor utopia; and the smallest and least politically successful group, the radicals, wanted slavery abolished outright. It was ironic, then, that in the end it was radical political antislavery that succeeded. For Border South Unionists, the politics of emancipation cut through, clarified, and consolidated ideological positions regarding slavery. The policy of immediate, uncompensated emancipation of the

⁸⁰ *Missouri Democrat*, January 12, 13, 1865; *Missouri State Times*, January 14, 1865; Thomas C. Fletcher to Abraham Lincoln, January 11, 1865, Abraham Lincoln Papers, LOC; *St. Joseph Herald and Tribune*, January 13, 1865; *Missouri Republican*, January 15, 1865.

Border South's enslaved became a kind of political litmus test for this emerging Republicanism. Whether it was called Unconditional Unionism or Radicalism, the politics of emancipation helped to discern political friend from foe. It allowed men like John A.J. Creswell, James Speed, and Benjamin Gratz Brown to embrace new political doctrines and to develop new political alliances that would form the basis of a future Republican movement in the Border South. Yet it remained unclear how this new movement would manage the new political reality of the Border South, with its unanswered question as to the civil and political rights of its newly freed blacks. Writing from Washington, Brown foresaw the political battle ahead. After abolishing slavery, wrote Brown, the next step in "completing the establishment of a freedom policy" was clear. By amending her constitution to permit black suffrage, Missouri could "redeem her fatal attitudes in the past by "laying the cornerstone of *an equal freedom* in the great valley of the Mississippi." Once Missouri's constitution was amended and equality of all men before the law proclaimed, predicted Brown, the people would accept it without relapse. After all, he added, "revolutions never go backward."⁸¹

⁸¹ *St. Joseph Herald and Tribune*, January 12, 1865.

Chapter 7

“The War Has Revolutionized Everything”: Border South Republicans and the Meaning of Reconstruction

In 1865, Border South Republicans faced an uncertain political future. With slavery dead and the war nearly over, the old issues of antislavery and unionism were quickly being replaced by new political concerns. This chapter argues that in the immediate years following the war, Republicans in the Border South struggled to reconcile black political hopes and white political realities in an effort to make themselves electorally viable. Some turned to the policies of Andrew Johnson, whose reconciliationist approach promised to resolve the issues of the war at the expense of black Americans. Others would support proscriptive measures for ex-Confederates while advocating for black suffrage. Facing a resurgent Democratic Party increasingly populated by ex-Confederates, Kentucky Republicans wavered between attempting to maintain wartime political coalitions and fighting for the gains made during the war, while distancing themselves from more radical ideas of black suffrage. In Maryland, Republicans would tamp down questions of black civil rights in favor of emphasizing their role in saving the Union. Postwar Missouri would be shaped by Radical Republicans who prioritized proscriptive measures to politically regenerate their state over questions of black civil rights. As battles over the meaning of Reconstruction were waged at the national and state level, Border South Republicans would struggle to define themselves politically.

The closing months of war had left Kentucky in a dreadful state. Of the 140,000 Kentuckians who had fought for the Union and the Confederacy, 30,000 never returned. The war had left scenes of physical devastation throughout the state, with crops lost, livestock taken, and fields and houses burned. Bands of guerillas roamed the state, plundering and murdering.

Accompanying the physical and economic devastation of the war was the fragmentation that now characterized Kentucky politics. By 1865, there were several political groups in the state: Union Democrats who had opposed immediate emancipation, many of whom were returning to their Democratic roots; Unconditional Unionists who supported immediate emancipation and were Republican in all but name; and Conservative leaders who clung to the remnants of Kentucky Whiggery and remained wary of Radical Republicanism and the Democratic Party. In the background lingered an amorphous group composed of southern sympathizers. Some had fashioned themselves into a State Rights party in 1863 and now looked to rejoin a resurgent Democratic Party, while others had joined the Confederacy and were now filtering back into Kentucky. Across this landscape ravaged by war and characterized by proliferating political identities, Unconditional Unionists would attempt to mold a new Kentucky Republican party.¹

The state legislature's rejection of the Thirteenth Amendment heralded an inauspicious start to postwar Kentucky. Formally abolishing slavery throughout the United States, the Thirteenth Amendment had been voted against by both of Kentucky's senators and five of the state's nine congressmen.² When it was sent to the individual states for ratification, Governor Thomas E. Bramlette submitted it to the state legislature and recommended its passage. Attempting one final time to salvage the notion of compensated emancipation, Bramlette recommended that the Kentucky legislature conditionally accept the amendment only upon receiving federal money for Kentucky slaveholders. But in the legislature, Union Democrats and Conservatives argued against ratifying the amendment because it interfered with the domestic

¹ Hambleton Tapp and James C. Klotter, *Kentucky: Decades of Discord, 1865-1900* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1977), 1-4; Harrison and Klotter, *Kentucky*, 215-17; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 239-56.

² Cong. Globe, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., 1490; 2nd Sess., 530-31 (1863-64); The four congressmen who voted for the Thirteenth Amendment were Unconditional Unionists Lucian Anderson, William H. Randall, and Green Clay Smith, along with George H. Yeaman.

institutions of Kentucky and it did not guarantee compensation. Kentucky, alongside Delaware, would be the only two Border South states not to ratify the amendment. After the failure of the legislature to pass the amendment, Union officers like General James S. Brisbin urged Bramlette to try again. Unsanctioned freedom was wreaking havoc on Kentucky, Brisbin told the governor, with her fields abandoned and her cities and towns crowded with newly freed blacks. “The sooner Kentucky makes up her mind to accept the new order of things and to establish labor upon a free paid basis, the better it will be for her,” argued Brisbin. Bramlette agreed. Although a conservative Union Democrat, Bramlette spoke in tones that increasingly resembled other Radical leaders in the Border South like Benjamin Gratz Brown. “This revolution cannot go backward,” Bramlette told Brisbin. “Slavery has become an incubus upon our energies, a burden to our advancement, and a negative to our prosperity.” However, Bramlette also noted, there was no hope of the Thirteenth Amendment passing under the current state legislature and its political combinations. It must be put to the voters in the upcoming August state elections. At stake was the control of the state legislature, along with Kentucky’s nine congressional seats.³

In preparation for the elections, Unconditional Union men would attempt to forestall their rivals’ accusations that they intended to “Radicalize” Kentucky upon a platform of black suffrage and racial equality. At a meeting in Frankfort in May 1865, the state executive committee decided upon a platform which would revolve around one single issue: the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment. Slavery was dead, declared committee chairman David S. Goodloe, “the events of the past four years have obliterated its substance and left nothing but a shadow among us.” As for black suffrage, he added, “the Unconditional Union party of

³ Tapp and Klotter, *Decades of Discord*, 2-3; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 259-61; Vorenberg, *Final Freedom*, 217-18; James S. Brisbin to Thomas E. Bramlette, April 14, 1865, Office of the Governor, Thomas E. Bramlette: Governor's Official Correspondence File, Military Correspondence, 1863-1867, Kentucky Historical Society; Thomas E. Bramlette to James S. Brisbin, April 22, 1865, in the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, April 26, 1865.

Kentucky had never contended or favored it.”⁴ Although the chances of claiming a majority in the Kentucky legislature were slim, Unconditional Unionists optimistically hoped that their entire congressional delegation might be re-elected. However, Lucian Anderson, seeing the political tide turning against him in the Jackson Purchase, declined to run for a second term. Brutus Clay, although voting for a Republican speaker in the House, had drawn the line at black recruitment into the Union army and the implementation of the Thirteenth Amendment. By 1864, he had turned his back on his Unconditional Unionist colleagues to support McClellan’s bid for the presidency. Green Clay Smith and William H. Randell were both re-nominated in their respective districts. New candidates were drawn from the ranks of the Union army. In the Fifth Congressional District, Unconditional Unionists pinned their electoral hopes upon Major General Lovell Rousseau. Encompassing Louisville and its surrounding counties, Joshua Speed hoped that enough Unconditional Unionist votes could be found in the city to counter the Democratic votes from the surrounding counties. In the Ninth Congressional District, a Union Calvary officer named Samuel McKee would carry the banner of Unconditional Unionism in the mountainous northeast of the state.⁵

Unconditional Unionists’ efforts to support the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment while distancing themselves from the question of black suffrage were not helped by the actions of Union officers in Kentucky. On July 4 1865, Louisville’s black population held a celebration of liberty. Under oppressive heat, a massive procession of black Louisvillians wound their way through the streets to a park on the city’s outskirts to listen to speeches. During one speech, the

⁴ *Louisville Daily Union*, May 30, 1865.

⁵ Craig and Ullrich, *Unconditional Unionist*, 181-82; *Speech of the Hon. Brutus J. Clay, of Kentucky, On the Subject of Amending the Constitution so as to Abolish and Prohibit Slavery* (Washington, D.C.: 1865), 1-7; Brutus J. Clay to Anna Clay, April 26, 1864, David S. Goodloe to Brutus J. Clay, April 19, 28, 1864, Cassius Clay to Brutus Clay, June 24, 1864, Clay Family Papers, Margaret I. King Library, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, June 9, 1865; *Frankfort Commonwealth*, May 16, 1865; Joshua Speed to James Speed, June 28, July 17, 1865, Speed Family Papers, FHS.

military governor of Kentucky, Major General John Palmer, exclaimed that he was all in favor of black suffrage. Palmer was then followed by Brisbin, who also called for black voting rights. “There are but two ways of defending liberty—with the bayonet or with the ballot—and we must give the blacks one or the other,” affirmed Brisbin. He argued that enfranchising black men was the only way of electing unconditionally loyal men to elective offices throughout the South. “Black men have earned the right to vote,” concluded Brisbin, “for men who know how to die for a country know how to vote for it.” Palmer’s and Brisbin’s message that black suffrage was inevitable hindered efforts by Unconditional Unionists to distance themselves from the question of black suffrage. Palmer and Brisbin—who never did try to conceal their Radicalism—merely reinforced Democratic accusations that the Republicans sought not only to end slavery, but also to implement radical social revolution.⁶

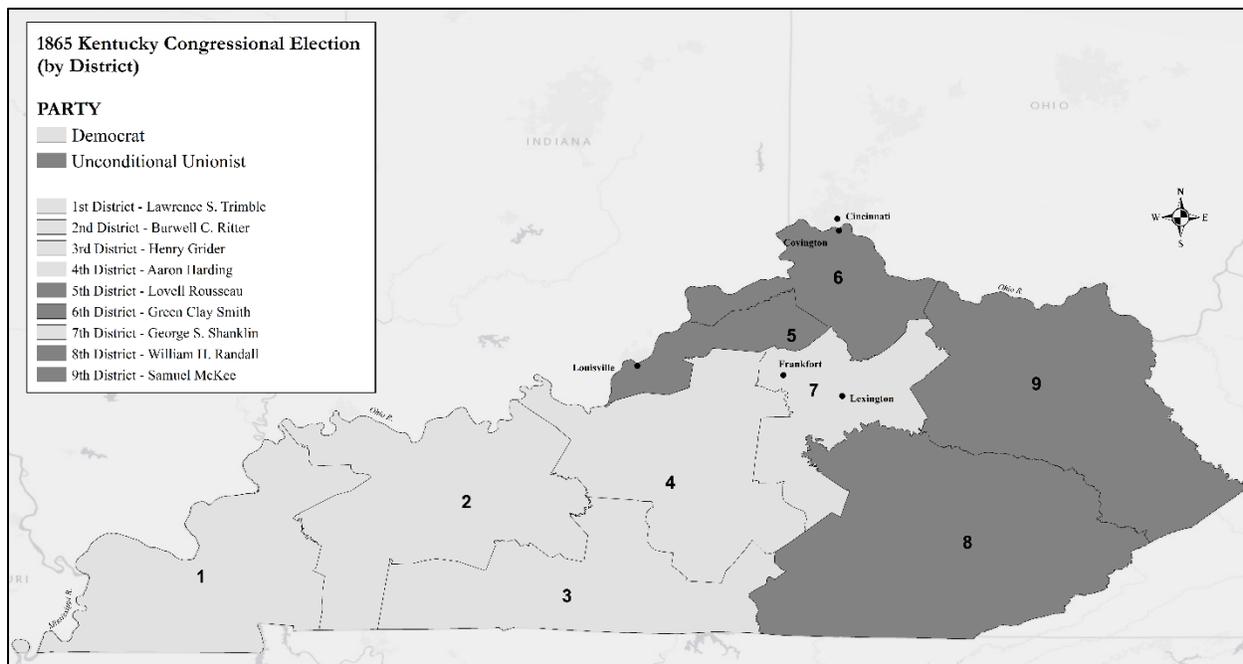
Held against a backdrop of military supervision, the August elections in Kentucky revealed the political divisions within the state. “Kentucky is just now stirred to its bitter depths on the slavery question,” wrote Brigadier General Clinton B. Fisk to Freedmen’s Bureau Commissioner Major General Otis O. Howard. “The devotees of barbarism cling to its putrid carcass with astonishing tenacity.” While Smith, Randall, Rousseau, and McKee were all elected to Congress, Democrats captured the other five congressional seats. Democrats also secured control of both branches of the Kentucky legislature. With Democrats in control of the legislature, any further attempt to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment would inevitably fail.⁷ Furthermore, the election was marred by aggressive military interference. With Kentucky still under martial law, Palmer issued a stringent set of voting requirements to ensure that only loyal

⁶ *The Liberator*, July 21, 1865; *Mystic Pioneer* (CT), July 22, 1865.

⁷ Fisk was the Freedmen’s Bureau Assistant Commissioner for Kentucky and Tennessee. Clinton B. Fisk to Oliver O. Howard, July 20, 1865, in *FSSP*, 1:2:705-06; Tapp, *Decades of Discord*, 12-13; Collins, *Kentucky*, 163.

men voted. Any persons who had “directly or indirectly given aid, comfort, or encouragement to persons in rebellion” and attempting to vote should be arrested and held for military trial. With reports of voters being turned away or arrested, newspapers throughout the region condemned Palmer’s heavy-handedness. The disenfranchisement experienced in 1865, coupled with the persistent fear of black suffrage, soon led Kentucky Democrats to repeal the Expatriation Act of 1862. These acts had stripped Kentuckians who had enrolled in the Confederate forces of their voting rights. Now, the repeal of these acts would allow ex-Confederates to fully participate in politics, thus creating a new voting base for Democrats, which would further hinder attempts to build a Republican Party in Kentucky.⁸

1865 Kentucky Congressional Election (by District)⁹



⁸ *OR*, 1:49:2:1092-93; *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, August 8, 1865, *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, August 9, 1865; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 283-84; *Kentucky House Journal* (1865) 75-76.

⁹ Kenneth C. Martis, *The Historical Atlas of United States Congressional Districts: 1789-1983* (New York: The Free Press, 1982); Jeffrey B. Lewis, Brandon DeVine, Lincoln Pitcher, and Kenneth C. Martis (2013) *Digital Boundary Definitions of United States Congressional Districts, 1789-2012*. <http://cdmaps.polisci.ucla.edu/shp/districts038.zip>. Retrieved from <http://cdmaps.polisci.ucla.edu> on June 22, 2019.

By February 1865, the work of the Missouri Constitutional Convention had stalled. Although the convention had passed their emancipation ordinance ending slavery in Missouri, a rift had developed between the Radical delegates led by Charles D. Drake and the more moderate and conservative delegates. While the latter group was content to merely tweak aspects of the state constitution, the Radicals wanted to completely overhaul it. Drake and his followers remained convinced that if they did not completely revise the constitution, the political gains made during the war could be supplanted by future legislatures. Drake himself couched the need for a new constitution in increasingly vivid and partisan language. “We intend to erect a wall and a barrier in the shape of a constitution that shall be as high as the eternal heavens, deep down as the very center of the earth, so that [Democrats] shall neither climb over it nor dig under it,” declared Drake. As the work of the convention proceeded, the issue of suffrage began to consume the majority of the convention’s time. Most delegates supported some sort of disfranchising ordinance against former Confederates. But Drake went further. Along with his Radical allies, he pushed through a disenfranchisement ordinance that required of individuals wishing to vote to take an oath that they had committed none of the proscribed eighty-six acts of disloyalty against Missouri and the Union. These acts ranged from taking up arms in rebellion, to giving aid to pro-Confederate guerillas, to espousing disloyal values as professors or teachers. Broad in scope, this “iron-clad oath” would become one of the most contentious aspects of postwar Missouri politics.¹⁰

Drake pursued disenfranchisement with almost fanatical devotion, energetically pushing his vision of a Missouri cleansed of disloyal citizens. It did not make him friends. “He pursues his object with inflexible perseverance, going straight forward like a mad dog looking neither to

¹⁰ *Missouri Democrat*, January 20, 1865; *Convention Journal* (1865), 35-36; William E. Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule: 1865-1870* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1965), 26-28.

the right nor left,” observed the *St. Louis Daily Dispatch*. Conservatives, moderates, and German members of the convention all chafed at both Drake’s leadership and the disenfranchisement ordinance. Some Conservatives, like William F. Switzler, believed that the ordinance should not be retroactive beyond December 17, 1861. He argued in that in the first flush of the secession crisis, many Missourians had said or done things which they now regretted. Is it fair for those who have since “seen the error of their ways” to now be disfranchised, asked Switzler? Moderates like Moises L. Linton asked that the loyalty oaths enacted by previous conventions suffice, and accused Drake of having no magnanimity for the defeated. Finally, Drake upset the Germans by attempting to lessen their political influence in St. Louis by favoring single-member state electoral districts. Drake had always been suspect to Missouri Germans because of his Know-Nothing background. Now, some German newspapers suspected Drake of trying to curtail German political power because of their support of Benjamin Gratz Brown.¹¹

Despite opposition, Drake and his Radicals managed to get their constitution passed by a vote of 38 to 13. Drake had earned a tremendous amount of political loyalty from the farmers and small town merchants who made up the bulk of the Radical delegates. During previous election campaigns, Drake had delivered speeches in small towns and rural communities throughout Missouri attacking the Gamble administration, which he believed had been too sympathetic towards rebels. Furthermore, many of these delegates came from border counties which had borne the brunt of fighting and guerilla warfare. Whenever moderates or conservatives spoke up against modifying rebel disenfranchisement during the convention, these Radicals would reply with stories of atrocities committed by rebel bushwhackers. Archibald

¹¹ *St. Louis Daily Dispatch*, March 4, 1865; William F. Switzler to James Rollins, January 15, 1865, James S. Rollins Papers, SHSM; *Missouri Democrat*, January 28, 30, 1865; David D. March, “Charles D. Drake and the Constitutional Convention of 1865,” *MHR* 47, no. 2. (January 1953): 110-23; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 30-31.

Gilbert, a farmer from Lawrence County, told the convention of a neighbor who, after being robbed by guerillas, was shot dead in front of his wife and daughter. John P. Mack, a farmer from Springfield, told the convention that his region had seen “poor Union women and children wading barefoot in the snow,” while “rebel women were dashing by in their fine carriages, carrying rebel letters and plotting treason.” Mack declared he would not cease to find ways of punishing rebels in every way constituent with the law, adding, “I hate them, and acknowledge it.” When these Radical delegates, driven by anger and inexperienced as lawmakers, arrived for the convention, it was only natural that they would turn to the familiar Drake as a leader. But there were limits to Drake’s radicalism. Drake quickly moved to postpone the debate when a motion to implement black suffrage was put forward by some of the convention’s most Radical members. Drake feared that Missouri voters might fail to ratify a new constitution that incorporated black suffrage.¹²

Although Drake himself believed that the new constitution did not require a referendum, political reality demanded that he submit it to Missouri voters for ratification. Toward the end of the convention, word reached the delegates that Robert E. Lee had surrendered in Virginia, resolving the overarching issue of the war. Fearing that the impetus for a new constitution might be lost, Drake blanketed the pages of the partisan newspapers throughout the state with warnings to voters that the defeat of the new constitution would result in “rebels, rebel sympathizers, guerilla marauders, bushwhacking cut-throats, Copperheads, Democrats, and Conservatives” retaking power in Missouri. The outrage over the assassination of Abraham Lincoln by southern sympathizer John Wilkes Booth also added to an atmosphere of vindictiveness which Drake attempted to cultivate. But the new constitution aroused little enthusiasm among other prominent

¹² *Missouri Democrat*, January 26, February 1, 4, 8, 1865; March, “Charles D. Drake,” 121-22; Charles D. Drake, *Autobiography*, 1055, Charles Daniel Drake Papers, SHSM.

Radical politicians. Despite containing no provision for black suffrage, Brown reluctantly endorsed it, while his senatorial colleague John B. Henderson maintained a discreet silence on the matter. Even more surprising was the reluctance of Radical Governor Thomas C. Fletcher to back the new constitution. For Fletcher, the new constitution took too much power away from the people; it was not progressive enough in regard to Missouri's blacks; and the disenfranchising clause hurt too many loyal Missourians. But during a secret meeting held in St. Louis, state Radical leaders pressured the three men to publicly support the new constitution. Unwilling to jeopardize their political futures, Brown, Henderson, and Fletcher agreed to do so. Their contribution remained half-hearted. Beyond a few last-minute speeches in St. Louis, they participated little in the campaign.¹³

The election results reflected Missouri voters' uneasiness with Drake's new constitution. In St. Louis, Germans, Democrats, and Conservatives united in an uneasy coalition to defeat the constitution. The counties of "Little Dixie" along the Missouri River, long affiliated with slavery and pro-southern in their views, also rejected the constitution. "Mr. Drake is plucked bare, and cast down upon his own dunghill," chortled Edward Bates, a firm opponent of the constitution. However, when returns from Radical counties in the north, northwest, and southwest portions of the state came in, the vote narrowed. As in Maryland, the new constitution was put over the top by the absentee ballots of Missouri's Union soldiers. On July 1, Drake and his friends waited anxiously across the hall at the Missouri legislature as Missouri Secretary of State Francis Rodman counted the votes in his locked office. When Rodman emerged, he revealed that the

¹³ Drake, *Autobiography*, 1065; *Missouri Democrat*, April 14, 18, June 6, 1865; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 146. Thomas C. Fletcher to S.H. Boyd, April 14, 1865, in the *Missouri Democrat*, April 22, 1865; David D. March, "The Campaign for the Ratification of the Constitution of 1865," *MHR* 47, no. 3 (April 1953): 223-32; Thomas S. Barclay, "The Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri: The Triumph of the Radical Republicans," *MHR* 20, no. 1 (October 1925): 32-33.

constitution had passed, 43,670 in favor, and 41,808 opposed. Governor Fletcher quickly issued a proclamation declaring that the constitution would be in force as of July 4, 1865.¹⁴

Missouri's political environment was drastically altered by her new Radical constitution. Although born in the midst of war, it echoed elements of the ideology espoused by Frank Blair and Benjamin Gratz Brown in the years preceding it. In the 1850s, Blair and Brown had identified slavery as the cause of Missouri's economic and social malaise. Remove enslaved blacks from Missouri, theorized both men, and watch free white labor rush in to revitalize Missouri both socially and economically. Now Radicals echoed Brown and Blair's theory, with a twist: instead of enslaved blacks, it would now be disloyal whites removed from Missouri. The stringent iron-clad oath of Charles D. Drake would excise from the political body all those who had supported secession or who had rebelled. Disenfranchised and with no political future, disloyal Missourians would depart, allowing loyal immigrants from the eastern United States and Europe to flock into the state.¹⁵ In the midst of the constitutional campaign, the *Missouri State Times* had summed up the Radical rationale for disenfranchisement:

The outside world is attentively and anxiously observing our progress. With a free State Constitution, and the adoption of a policy that will speedily and effectually eradicate the disloyal element from amongst us, Missouri will be regarded as an emigrant's haven of rest. Reject the proposed new Constitution and our State will be flooded with rebels, and those seeking homes in the West will shun us as a community of semi-barbarians.¹⁶

Disenfranchising secessionists would pave the way for a new Missouri, one where free labor, progress, and prosperity would rule. "The New Constitution is another matter of rejoicing," exclaimed the *Missouri Democrat*. "Slavery is abolished, and Missouri commences a grand

¹⁴ Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 46-49; March, "Campaign for the Ratification," 227-28; Bates, *Diary*, 486; *Missouri State Times*, July 7, 1865; *Missouri Democrat*, July 4, 1865.

¹⁵ Martha Kohl, "Enforcing a Vision of Community: The Role of the Test Oath in Missouri's Reconstruction," *CWH* 40, no. 4 (December 1994): 292-93; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 268-69.

¹⁶ *Missouri State Times*, April 22, 1865.

career with a heavy clog, which heretofore trammled her progress, removed entirely from her limbs.” In Holt County, tucked into the far northwest of the state, Reverend William E. Cummins evoked Missouri’s bright future during his Fourth of July oration. “Our vast resources must now be evoked,” preached Cummins. “Missouri has the location, and within her own fertile dominions, she has the material to place her first and foremost in the nation.”¹⁷

Alongside the iron-clad oath, the “ouster ordinance” passed by the state convention became another tool by which Radicals attempted to remake Missouri. It decreed that as of May 1, 1865, the offices of all judges and clerks of the Supreme Court of Missouri, the circuit courts, the county courts, special courts of record, and all county recorders and circuit attorneys be vacated. Governor Fletcher would then fill all vacancies until the next election, which would be held under the iron-clad oath. With nearly 842 offices to fill, Fletcher was bombarded with letters either from incumbents professing their loyalty and eager to be re-appointed, or from county Radical committees offering suggestions for new appointees. Even Fletcher’s brother was not immune to the race for spoils. “I don’t think you should appoint E.F. Honey for the reason that he voted against Old Abe, yourself, and all the county Radical ticket, and he is one that we wish to get out in this county,” wrote C.C. Fletcher, who then asked his brother to appoint him to the sheriff’s office. However, some incumbents refused to depart their offices quietly. When Conservative judges in Lafayette County refused to follow the ordinance, a crowd of supporters armed with pistols surrounded their offices. Fletcher ordered Captain E.C. Holmes and his militia of black soldiers to arrest the ringleaders, who were thrown into a building formerly used as a jail for enslaved blacks.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Missouri Democrat*, July 4, 1865; *Holt County Sentinel*, July 14, 1865.

¹⁸ *Convention Journal*, 155-58; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 32-34; Charlton H. Howe to Thomas C. Fletcher, April 4, 1865; Clarke Irvine to Thomas C. Fletcher, March 21, 1865, C.C. Fletcher to Thomas C. Fletcher,

The Radical program immediately provoked resistance from Missouri's Conservatives. In June 1865, prominent Conservatives like James O. Broadhead, Samuel Glover, James Rollins, and Thomas T. Gantt held a giant meeting at the St. Louis courthouse. Opposing the new constitution, the iron-clad oath, and the ouster ordinance, they condemned Governor Fletcher as an "insolent tyrant" for his actions in removing the Lafayette judges and warned the crowd of the damaging effects of Radicalism. "These [Radicals] seem to think that is not well that there should be more than a limited amount of liberty in the world at any given period," warned Gantt, "and now that the black man is freed, they seek to find compensation by reducing the white man to slavery." The Radical *Democrat* characterized the courthouse gathering as nothing more than "a meeting of citizens afflicted with those terrible ills of the flesh, dyspepsia and an accumulation of bile," adding that it was the largest collection of "indignant and confirmed invalids that has met in this city since the night of the capture of Camp Jackson." The *Democrat's* equating of Conservative leaders with the Missouri secessionists of 1861 was especially cruel. At great personal risk, Rollins, Glover, Broadhead, and Gantt had all worked together with other Unionists to keep Missouri during the dark days of secession. This invocation of disloyalty by a Radical newspaper revealed the deep antipathy between the two sides.¹⁹

As Border South Republicans struggled to determine their political role in this new postwar world, some began to gravitate towards the policies of the new president Andrew Johnson. At the outset of his presidency, Johnson demonstrated a relatability that appealed to different factions of Border South Republicans. Born in Tennessee, Johnson had experienced

March 19, 1865; Thomas Clement Fletcher, 1865-1869, Office of the Governor, Record Group 3.18, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri (hereafter cited as MSA); *Missouri Democrat*, May 31, 1865.

¹⁹ *Missouri Republican*, June 19, 1865; *Missouri Democrat*, June 19, 1865; T.J. Eales to James O. Broadhead, June 27, 1865, James Broadhead Papers, MHM; Thomas T. Gantt to Montgomery Blair, June 6, 9, 1865, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

poverty in early life along with little formal schooling. His real education came from the world of East Tennessee stump politics. As a congressional candidate in the 1840s, Johnson lauded the values of the working man and railed against the Tennessee slaveholding aristocracy who “infest our little towns and villages [and] who are too lazy and proud to work for their livelihood.” Men like Henry Winter Davis, who had fought against a similar slaveholding aristocracy in Maryland, could find common ground with this new president. Radicals like Missouri’s Drake, who himself advocated the disenfranchisement of Confederates, could most certainly back a man who upon assuming the presidency had declared that “Treason must be made odious, and traitors must be punished and impoverished.” Conservatives like Frank Blair, who had cultivated a relationship with Johnson back in 1864, could be reassured that the new president might support moderate reconstruction in the South. Even newly freed blacks in the Border South might be assured that Johnson would be as sympathetic to them as was his predecessor. As military governor of Tennessee, Johnson had declared to a black audience that “I will indeed be your Moses, and lead you through the Red Sea of war and bondage, to a fairer future of liberty and peace.” When General Palmer had addressed Louisville’s black population, he had assured the audience that he was “no abolitionist at all compared to Andrew Johnson.” Within the first few months of his presidency, Johnson was being praised by newspapers throughout the country for his conduct and his leadership of a nation still rocked by war and assassination.²⁰

But Johnson would chart his own course of Reconstruction, and black suffrage would not be a part of it. When Johnson’s cabinet debated the reorganization of North Carolina in May

²⁰ “To the Freemen of the First Congressional District of Tennessee,” October 15, 1845, in LeRoy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haksins, eds., *The Papers of Andrew Johnson*, 15 vols. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1967), 1:270 (hereafter cited as *PJ*); Hans L. Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 61; Henig, *Henry Winter Davis*, 240-41; Charles D. Drake to Andrew Johnson, April 17, 1865, Andrew Johnson Papers, LOC “Remarks on Assuming the Presidency,” April 15, 1865, *PJ*, 7:553-54; “The Moses of the Colored Men’ Speech,” *PJ*, 7:251-54; *The Liberator*, July 21, 1865; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 231.

1865, the issue of black suffrage had divided the cabinet. Gideon Welles, Interior Secretary John P. Usher, and Secretary of the Treasury Hugh McCulloch remained in favor of limiting suffrage to loyal whites, while Edwin Stanton, Postmaster General William Dennison, and newly-appointed Attorney General James Speed of Kentucky all supported black voting. For his part, Johnson believed that the federal government had no constitutional right to impose voting qualification on individual states. Furthermore, the Tennessean feared that freed blacks would form a political combination with their former owners to deny the political rights of poor whites. “The negro will vote with the late master, whom he does not hate, rather than the nonslaveholding white, who he does hate,” argued Johnson. “Universal suffrage would create another war, not against us, but a war of races.” Although remaining silent during cabinet debates, Johnson extended federal recognition to the new state governments of Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia—none of whom had enfranchised blacks.²¹

On May 29, Johnson announced his plan. All those who took an oath of loyalty to Union and supported emancipation would be granted amnesty and pardoned, and their property rights restored (except for enslaved property). Keeping in character with Johnson’s lifelong disdain for the southern aristocracy, major Confederate officials and owners of property valued at more than \$20,000 would have to apply individually for a presidential pardon. Johnson also appointed William W. Holden as provisional governor of North Carolina and instructed him to call a convention to amend the state’s constitution. All those pardoned could vote for delegates to this convention, but the voter qualifications were limited to those in existence before secession—which was limited to white men. Using North Carolina as a model for bringing the rest of the seceded states back into the Union, Johnson’s presidential Reconstruction would create a new

²¹ Welles, *Diary*, 2:301-03; Edward McPherson, *The Political History of the United States of America During the Period of Reconstruction* (Washington, D.C.: 1871), 48-49.

South in his own image, where nonslaveholding yeomen would hold political power, the slaveholding aristocracy would be humbled, and blacks would remain forever outside the bounds of citizenship.²²

Johnson's presidential Reconstruction policy, combined with the attacks by Missouri Radicals on former Unionists and the state's new constitution forced Frank Blair and Benjamin Gratz Brown to reconsider their political affiliations. Although he had spent the fall of 1864 fighting alongside William T. Sherman in Georgia and the Carolinas, Frank had stayed abreast of the political situation in Missouri. When he returned to St. Louis in June of 1865, he lent his support to Johnson's Reconstruction policy, and condemned Missouri's new constitution and the iron-clad oath. "If the persecuting and unrelenting spirit is allowed to keep alive animosity and keep a division," warned Frank, "it will be productive of no good result." Firmly setting himself up as an opponent of disenfranchisement and a proponent of immediate reconciliation, Frank, alongside his father and brother, would attempt to form a new conservative party in Missouri that would follow Johnsonian principles.²³ Although Brown had grudgingly supported the new constitution, he grew increasingly wary of the obsession with disenfranchisement of Drake and the Radicals. But Brown could not follow Frank and his band of Conservatives, believing that Johnson's Reconstruction policy would do nothing but restore power over blacks in the formerly seceded states. In a speech in St. Louis, Brown declared that universal suffrage was the "only remedy for disasters that follow from subordinating and disfranchising a race and incorporating it into a free country." Blacks should be enfranchised as they had proven their worth in fighting

²² Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 183-84; Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson*, 216-17.

²³ Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 202-06; Sherman, *Memoirs*, 643; Smith, *Blair Family*, 2:211-12; Apolline Blair to Frank Blair, November 26, 1864, January 9, 18, February 3, 1865, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; *Missouri Democrat*, June 23, 1865; *New York World*, June 27, 1865; Smith, *Francis Preston Blair*, 386-87.

for the Union. But Brown believed in reconciliation as well. Former rebels should be enfranchised because making a class “marked with the brand of disenfranchisement,” only ensures that “treason shall become chronic—an inheritance for the next generation.” For Brown, the nation’s only political course was to make universal suffrage the cornerstone of universal freedom.²⁴ By incorporating Radical goals regarding black suffrage with Conservative concerns over disenfranchisement of whites, Brown sought to chart a new liberal course in Missouri politics. It would not be easy. For years, Missouri politics had been in flux, with coalitions appearing and disappearing as circumstances warranted. Now Missouri appeared increasingly divided between Conservatives and Radicals. The *Missouri Democrat* took note on the current political situation in the state. “Thus there have come at last to be two parties, and only two, in Missouri, in form and name,” noted the *Democrat*, “the party of the Radical Unionists and the party of Union-Oath haters.” How Brown would deal with this new political reality remained as yet unclear.²⁵

As the sole Border South representative in Johnson’s cabinet, James Speed found himself in a position whereby he had to support the president and try to find a middle ground between cabinet conservatives like Welles and congressional Radicals. Throughout the war, James and his brother Joshua had served as an invaluable pipeline for Lincoln on Kentucky political matters. When Edward Bates decided to resign the Attorney-Generalship, Lincoln had proclaimed that “My cabinet has *shrunk up* North, and I must find a Southern man.” Lincoln turned to James Speed to take over the position of Attorney General regarding him as an “honest man and a gentleman,” who would be judicious in his position—unlike Montgomery Blair. For his part,

²⁴ Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 132-34; Benjamin Gratz Brown to Thomas C. Fletcher, September 14, 1865, in the *Missouri Democrat*, September 26, 1865; Brown, *Universal Suffrage: An Address by Honorable B. Gratz Brown, Delivered at Turner Hall, St. Louis, Mo., September 22, 1865* (St. Louis: 1865), 4-19.

²⁵ Barclay, “The Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri: The Triumph of the Radical Republicans,” 66-67; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, November 4, 1865, Blair Family Papers; *Missouri Democrat*, October 20, 1865.

Speed worked quietly and diligently behind the scenes, and played a key role in the transition after Lincoln's assassination. But Speed refused to abandon the question of black suffrage, even when his cabinet allies quietly dropped it after Johnson's May proclamation. In letters to Radicals like Charles Sumner, Speed argued that the reconstruction process must begin with "the people" –who consisted of black and white alike—remaking their governments at the state level. But Speed's Reconstruction policy remained maddeningly vague. Speed never fully resolved the paradox of how states, whose voting qualifications remained exclusively the domain of white men, could be compelled to enfranchise blacks without it being imposed by the federal government. Despite his uncertainty over how Reconstruction could proceed, it remained clear to Speed that black suffrage must remain at its heart. Joshua, noticing his brother's gradual drift towards a more Radical viewpoint on Reconstruction, cautioned James against making black suffrage a core political issue. "I think that the right to secede on the part of State," argued Joshua, "is not more absurd than for the General Government to claim to control the status of suffrage in the States."²⁶

For Kentucky's Unconditional Unionists still smarting from their electoral defeat in August, backing Johnson's agenda might help chart the way towards future electoral success. The legislature that assembled in Frankfort for the 1865-66 session looked upon Johnson's Reconstruction policies with approval. When Johnson ended martial law in Kentucky in October 1865, Conservatives held a large meeting in Lexington to thank the president and to endorse his Reconstruction policy.²⁷ Seeing support for Johnson growing in Kentucky, many former Lincoln

²⁶ Allen Thorndike Rice, *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time* (New York: 1886), 240-41; James Speed to Abraham Lincoln, December 1, 1864, Abraham Lincoln Papers; James Speed to Charles Sumner, June 17, 1865, Charles Sumner Papers, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Joshua Speed to James Speed, September 15, 1865, in James Speed, *Speed: A Personality*, (Louisville: 1914), 66-67.

²⁷ *Cincinnati Commercial*, October 16, 1865; *Cincinnati Gazette*, October 17; John B. Wilgus to Andrew Johnson, October 24, 1865, Andrew Johnson Papers, LOC.

men wanted to moderate any tendency towards radicalism and make camp with the state's Conservatives. During the legislative session, the Unconditional Unionist caucus endorsed Johnson's Reconstruction policies, condemned black suffrage, and called for the removal of federal troops and the Freedmen's Bureau from the state. These resolutions would meet the approval of the "fair-minded and practical men" of the party, said one Unconditional Unionist, while "a few extreme men might fly off, but even they will come back after a little reflection." By the beginning of 1866, Unconditional Unionists staked their hopes on a message of moderation and reconciliation, hoping that this message would pay off in electoral dividends.²⁸

For more Radical Unconditional Unionists in Kentucky, these resolutions were a humiliating defeat. One Kentucky Radical complained that "a more complete back down, a more humiliating confession that they were afraid of the adversary was never witnessed." Particularly egregious for Radicals were the political attacks on the Freedmen's Bureau in Kentucky, which had been established in late 1865 to assist former slaves in their transition from slavery to freedom. With the Bureau under attack from Democrats, Conservatives, and now some Unconditional Unionists, the Bureau's assistant commissioner in Kentucky Clinton B. Fisk accused all three groups of attacking the Bureau for their own political gain. Writing to his superiors in Washington, Fisk demanded that Bureau commissioner Oliver O. Howard press the need for more military protection for Kentucky's blacks.²⁹ Reports of outrages committed against black Kentuckians across the state filtered into Fisk's office and into the pages of Unionist newspapers. In Nicolas County, mobs of white men beat and shot black Union soldiers

²⁸ *Cincinnati Gazette*, January 5, 12, 24, February 2, 3 1866; Coulter, *Civil War and Reconstruction*, 298-99; Tapp, *Decades of Discord*, 14.

²⁹ *Cincinnati Gazette*, January 24, 1866; Clinton B. Fisk to Oliver O. Howard, March 5, 1866, Registers and Letters Received by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872, Record Group 105, National Archives, Washington D.C. (hereafter cited as FBP); J. Michael Rhyne, "'We Are Mobbed and Beat:' Regulator Violence Against Free Black Households in Kentucky's Bluegrass Region," *OVH* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 30-33.

who had returned to the county. In Bath County, white residents embarked on a campaign of terror against the local black community, robbing, beating, burning, and raping. In Boone County, gangs of whites calling themselves “Rangers,” sent notices to freedmen throughout the county warning them to leave the state.³⁰

With one faction seeing political dividends in allying with Conservatives, and a more Radical faction growing concerned that the achievements of the war were being frittered away, Kentucky’s Unconditional Unionists faced a political crossroads by the middle of 1866. Their early flirtation with presidential Reconstruction began to fade, however, when Johnson began to distance himself from Republican policies. When Republicans in Congress put forward a bill which expanded the mandate of the Freedman’s Bureau, Johnson vetoed it, fearing the bill expanded the power of the federal government. When Republicans passed a Civil Rights Bill which conferred citizenship to blacks and spelled out which rights they were entitled to, Johnson again used his veto powers. This time, Johnson’s veto took a distinctly racist tone. The Civil Rights Bill actually discriminated against whites, argued Johnson. “They establish for the security of the colored race safeguards which go infinitely beyond any that the General Government has provided for the white race,” Johnson wrote in his veto message, adding that “the distinction of race and color by the bill is made to operate in favor of the colored and against the white race.” In response, Congress overrode Johnson’s vetoes by repassing both bills with the required two-thirds majority. Furthermore, Johnson’s veto of the Civil Rights Bill ended any

³⁰ “Abstract of Certain Outrages Committed Upon Colored Persons in Certain Counties of the Eastern District of Kentucky,” Registers and Letters Received by the Commissioner, FBP; *Cincinnati Gazette*, January 12, February 20, 1866; George C. Wright, *Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940: Lynchings, Mob Rule, and “Legal Lynchings”* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 19-23.

opportunity of moderate Republicans working with the president, bringing them closer to their more Radical counterparts in Congress.³¹

With both the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil Rights bills passed, congressional attention now turned towards a proposed constitutional amendment which would redefine the notion of citizenship in the United States. Before the war, three-fifths of the South's enslaved blacks had been counted towards the region's congressional representation. Now, with blacks as free persons, all would be counted, leading to increased southern representation in Congress and in the electoral college. With only white men allowed to vote, Republicans were concerned that voters in southern states would simply return ex-Confederates to Congress, creating a southern bloc that could obstruct congressional Reconstruction and oppose black suffrage. Fearing this, the Joint Committee on Reconstruction proposed a new constitutional amendment that prohibited states from abridging equality before the law; provided for a reduction in congressional representation in proportion to the number of male citizens denied suffrage; prohibited ex-Confederates from voting in national elections until 1870; prohibited payment of Confederate debt; and empowered Congress to enforce the amendment's provisions. The lack of a provision for black suffrage was the most contentious aspect of the bill for most Republicans. Some Republicans seeing black enfranchisement as the ultimate goal of reconstruction balked at the timorous nature of the amendment. Other Republicans, seeing that the current political climate demanded an appropriate response, saw the reduction in congressional representation as an inducement for southern states to give blacks the vote. The third section, which disenfranchised

³¹ Patrick W. Riddleberger, *1866: The Critical Year Revisited* (Carbondale, IL.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 52-85; LaWanda Cox and John H. Cox, *Politics, Principle, and Prejudice, 1865-1866: The Dilemma of Reconstruction America* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 195-202; William R. Brock, *An American Crisis: Congress and Reconstruction, 1865-1867* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 18-19; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 243-51; "Veto of the Civil Rights Bill," March 27, 1866, *PJ*, 10:319.

all ex-Confederates, was regarded as too punitive by some Senate Republicans, who instead substituted a provision disfranchising only a small number of ex-Confederates who had taken an oath of loyalty to the United States and had broken it—men such as Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee. Nonetheless, the significance of passing such an important constitutional measure, no matter how flawed, could not be easily dismissed by even the most fervent Radicals.³²

The passage of the Fourteenth Amendment by Congress severed the final ties between the Republican Party and Johnson. Although the amendment had been stripped of its more radical measures, Johnson still refused to support it. For the president, passing a constitutional amendment while southern states went unrepresented was unacceptable. Casting an eye toward the upcoming congressional elections, Johnson and his allies called for a new national conservative party that would support Johnson's Reconstruction policies and oppose the Fourteenth Amendment and civil rights for blacks.³³ Still in cabinet, James Speed had grown increasingly distant from Johnson over his position on Reconstruction and civil rights. The president's veto of the Civil Rights Bill widened that gap to an irreparable breach. When Johnson demanded that Speed help build his new political party, the Kentuckian resigned. He could neither support a president who ignored black civil rights nor a political party that opposed the Fourteenth Amendment. Publicly responding to requests that he join Johnson's new party, Speed wrote that the "great issue" before the American people was the passage of the new amendment. Slavery was dead, said James, but "some of the most important of its incidents or compromises still remain—blots and incongruities upon the law." He would thus return to Kentucky to work for the rights of the freedmen and to work against Johnson. Ill and ensconced in the White

³² Joseph B. James, *The Framing of the Fourteenth Amendment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 112-17; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 251-54; Riddleberger, *1866*, 129-161; Cong. Globe, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., 3148 (1865-66).

³³ "Message re Amending the Constitution," June 22, 1866, *PJ*, 10:614-15; Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson*, 251-52; Welles, *Diary*, 2:528; Thomas Wagstaff, "The Arm-In-Arm Convention," *CWH* 14, no. 2 (June 1968): 102-04.

House, surrounded by bootlickers and office-seekers, Johnson would attempt to corral the forces of conservatism and racism into a new political movement with himself at the helm.³⁴

With slavery abolished and the war ended, Maryland's Unconditional Unionists struggled to redefine what their party stood for. The world that the Constitution of 1864 made was a world dramatically different than the one that had existed a few years prior. A two hundred-year-old social, political, and economic system built upon enslaved labor had been wiped away. Throughout the state, Marylanders struggled with how—or even if—to reintegrate returning Union and Confederate soldiers into their communities. White farmers wrestled with how to cultivate fields as black Marylanders flooded into the state's urban centres, eager to start working for themselves. Maryland politicians who had promoted union and emancipation during wartime now had to deal with the messy and complex issues of Reconstruction.³⁵

Believing that the black vote was the only means of maintaining Republican power in Maryland, some Unconditional Unionists openly advocated for black suffrage. Although initially supportive of Andrew Johnson's policies, by the summer of 1865 Henry Winter Davis had become increasingly frustrated with the president's refusal to implement Reconstruction policies that included black suffrage. For the rest of the year, Davis publicly advocated for black suffrage at speeches and rallies throughout the nation. But over Christmas, Davis took sick with a cold which soon developed into pneumonia. On December 30, 1865, he died at the age of forty-eight. Davis's death silenced one of the few voices unconditionally in favor of black suffrage within

³⁴ Joshua Speed to James Speed, April 1, 1866; James Speed to Joshua Speed, July 13, 1866; James Speed to Lucy G. Speed, July 15, 1866, Speed Family Papers, FHS; James Speed to James R. Doolittle, July 15, 1866, in the *New York Times*, July 17, 1866; Wagstaff, "The Arm-In-Arm Convention," 104.

³⁵ Fields, *Slavery and Freedom*, 131-34; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 139-41; Charles Wagandt, "Redemption or Reaction? Maryland in the Post-Civil War Years," in *Radicalism, Racism, and Party Realignment: The Border States During Reconstruction*, ed. Richard O. Curry (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), 146-51; Brugger, *Maryland*, 307-08.

Maryland's Unconditional Unionists.³⁶ For the majority of Unconditional Unionists, black suffrage was a step too far. Instead, they threw their political support behind Maryland's new registry law. Implementing the disenfranchising portions of the Constitution of 1864, the law was broadly supported by Unconditional Unionist papers as the only means by which to secure their political power. "The affairs of Maryland should be in the hands of capable, honorable, and loyal men," declared the *Baltimore American*. The law called for the governor to elect three registrars in each election district or ward to surmise the loyalty of voters. When the registrars all met in convention in Baltimore, they developed a list of twenty-five questions with which to determine the loyalty of prospective voters. All white male voters in Maryland would be placed on the registration books, and any who refused to answer the questions would be disenfranchised. This restrictive law allowed the Unconditional Unionists to eke out a victory in the municipal elections of November 1865. In Baltimore, with over 11,000 registered voters, only 5,193 actually cast a ballot.³⁷

Staking their political fortunes in 1866 on the disenfranchisement of disloyal, mostly Democratic voters, Unconditional Unionists were also challenged by the Conservative Unionists, now led by Montgomery Blair. Galvanized by opposition to the registry law, Blair sought to merge Conservative Unionists and Democrats in Maryland with Andrew Johnson's new national conservative movement. The relationship between the president and the Blairs had only grown since Johnson had become president. After delivering an embarrassingly drunken and rambling speech during his inauguration as vice-president, Johnson had sought refuge at the Blair family

³⁶ Henry Winter Davis to Charles Sumner, June 20, 1865, Sumner Papers, Harvard University; *Chicago Tribune*, July 6, 1865; Davis, *Speeches and Addresses*, 580-81; Henig, *Henry Winter Davis*, 248; *New York Times*, December 31, 1865; *Annapolis Gazette*, January 18, 1866.

³⁷ Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 147; Henry Winter Davis to James Scovel, May 27, 1865, in the *New York Tribune*, March 21, 1866; Wagandt, "Maryland in the Post-Civil War Years," 162-63; *Baltimore American*, November 18, 1864; William S. Myers, *The Self-Reconstruction of Maryland, 1864-1867* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1909), 31-33; *Baltimore Clipper*, November 8, 1865.

estate. With Johnson's ascendance to the presidency, the Blairs hoped to leverage their relationship with the new president to regain their lost political power. "We conclude that the Blair family are looking up again in the world," commented the *New York Herald*, and that "they have 'great expectations'—Old Blair and the Blairs—of 'Andy Johnson.'" By supporting Johnson, Montgomery Blair could once again become the main conduit through which patronage flowed in Maryland. Speaking throughout the state, Montgomery Blair led the opposition to the registry law, which he saw as undemocratic and which he warned would eventually lead to black suffrage.³⁸

Yet Blair's plan of rallying Conservative Unionists and Democrats into a new party failed at the state level. Echoing his efforts with Maryland's Republicans in 1860, Montgomery Blair tended to concentrate on national issues rather than building an effective party organization on the ground. Political maneuvering in New York and Pennsylvania, and delivering speeches on national issues took up the majority of Blair's time, while local issues in Maryland received little attention. In their rush to develop a national political party, Blair and his Conservatives neglected the sinews of state political organization, such as ward and district meetings, county conventions, and county executive committees. As a result, the Conservative Unionist party quickly faded away after the 1866 election. Most Conservative Unionists either walked away from politics altogether, or were absorbed by Maryland's resurgent Democrats.³⁹

For Unconditional Unionists, the accusation by both Conservative Unionists and Democrats that they supported black suffrage prompted a change in their political tactics. "The

³⁸ Smith, *Blair Family*, 2:328; Trefousse, *Andrew Johnson*, 189-91; *New York Herald*, May 12, 1865; Oliver L. Jenkins to Montgomery Blair, May 13, 1865, Blair Family Papers, LOC; William H. Purnell to Montgomery Blair, May 27, 1865, Blair-Lee Papers, PUL; Montgomery Blair, *Proscription in Maryland: Speeches of the Hon. Montgomery Blair, as President of the Anti-Registry Convention, to the Convention and to the Legislature of Maryland, Delivered 24th and 25th of January, 1866* (Washington: 1866), 6-7; *Baltimore Sun*, May 21, 1866.

³⁹ Cox, *Politics, Principle, and Prejudice*, 50-67; Baker, *Politics of Continuity* 150-55.

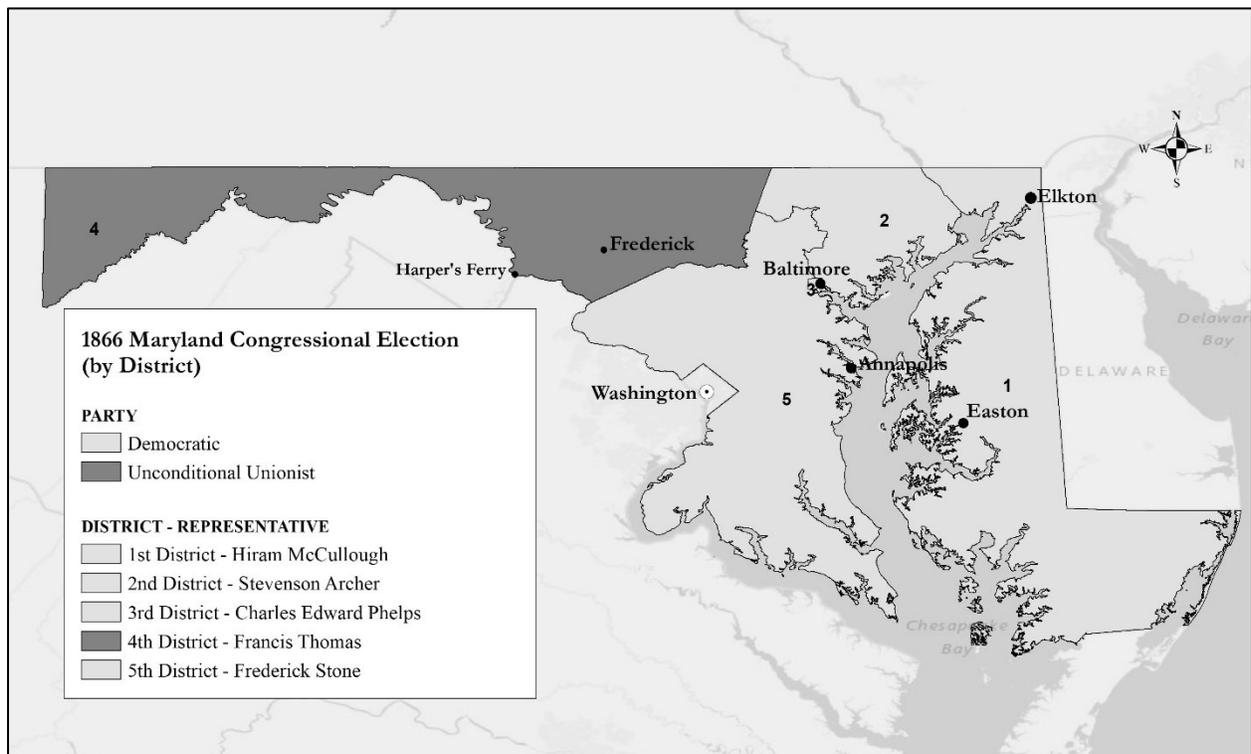
Union party to a man is opposed to admitting the blacks to the right of voting,” argued the *Frederick Examiner*. “Indeed, we do not know of a single Union man who is not as much opposed to negro suffrage as the Copperheads themselves.” Instead, Unconditional Unionists went into the state and congressional elections of 1866 emphasizing their role in saving the Union and condemning the Democrats as rebels. Waving “the bloody shirt,” Unconditional Unionists nominated candidates with military service, many of whom bore visible wounds. Yet despite their best efforts to distance themselves from the question of black suffrage, the consistent passage of civil rights legislation by congressional Republicans proved politically burdensome for Maryland’s Unconditional Unionists. Although eager to avoid discussion of any black civil rights issues, they could also not separate themselves from the policies of the Republican Party. When the Fourteenth Amendment was passed in June 1866, Unconditional Unionists were forced to tepidly support the amendment throughout the election campaign.⁴⁰

Even with the registry law in place and the political dispersion of Blair’s Conservatives, Unconditional Unionists were thoroughly routed in the November elections. By appealing to anti-black sentiment, opposition to the registry law, and concerns over congressional Reconstruction, Maryland Democrats swept the state. Holding onto the northern and western counties of the state, Unconditional Unionists could only watch as Democrats took control of the legislature. In the congressional election, only Francis Thomas was able to retain his seat in the westernmost Fourth District. In the election’s aftermath, Unconditional Unionist papers reflected what the results meant for their party in Maryland. “For the sake of the State and the enviable position she occupied during the rebellion, we could have wished for a different result,” cheerfully opined the *Frederick Examiner*. “But it is not our purpose to indulge vain regrets. The

⁴⁰ *Frederick Examiner*, May 16, October 27, 1866; *Annapolis Gazette*, October 11; *Baltimore American*, 5, 8, 1866; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 161.

Union men of the State, though defeated, are not dismayed.” The *Baltimore American* put it more bleakly. “The whole power of the State has passed out of [Unionist] hands...and the Democracy are from henceforward in full possession,” concluded the *American*. Like the *Missouri Democrat* had done in Missouri, the *American* also reflected on the bipartite nature of Maryland politics. With the election result, the Conservative Unionists had “ceased to exist” and “will no more be known” in Maryland. “We are henceforth Republicans and Democrats,” declared the *American*, “and on this basis all future political contests will be made.”⁴¹

1866 Maryland Congressional Election (by District)⁴²



⁴¹ Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 158-59; *Baltimore Sun*, November 7, 8, 1866; *Frederick Examiner*, November 14, 1866; *Baltimore American*, November 7, 1866.

⁴² Kenneth C. Martis, *The Historical Atlas of United States Congressional Districts: 1789-1983* (New York: The Free Press, 1982); Jeffrey B. Lewis, Brandon DeVine, Lincoln Pitcher, and Kenneth C. Martis (2013) *Digital Boundary Definitions of United States Congressional Districts, 1789-2012*. <http://cdmaps.polisci.ucla.edu/shp/districts038.zip>. Retrieved from <http://cdmaps.polisci.ucla.edu> on June 22, 2019.

When James Speed returned to Kentucky in the summer of 1866, he found the Unconditional Unionist movement in disarray and resurgent Democratic Party. “It is sad to witness the state of affairs in Kentucky,” wrote Louisville lawyer Benjamin H. Bristow to Speed. “The rebellious spirit in Kentucky assumes every variety of form, and is exhibited in every department of life.” A lack of any semblance of structure contributed to the disarray. “Without an organ, without an organization, without a leader, the party is not growing in the state,” Joshua Speed told his brother.⁴³ Kentucky politics had always shown a predilection for one-party rule, and the re-emergence of the Democratic party as the majority party in the state merely reinforced that tendency. The Whigs had controlled Kentucky for decades, only to be supplanted by the Democrats in the 1850s. With the war over, and the need for unionism abating, most Union Democrats simply returned to their Democratic roots. What made the return to Democratic prominence so hard for Unconditional Unionists to accept was how easily some ex-Confederates found themselves in positions of power. During the Democratic convention in May 1866, the preliminary candidates for the state clerkship all proudly declared their service in the Confederate army. Only backroom dealing prevented these candidates from becoming the party nominee. Although not all Kentucky Democrats were ex-Confederates, to Unconditional Unionists it appeared from the outside that all ex-Confederates were Democrats. This idea of a Democratic Party riddled with traitors and rebels would form the crux of much of the Kentucky Republicans’ message in subsequent elections.⁴⁴

⁴³ Benjamin H. Bristow to James Speed, July 11, 1866; Joshua Speed to James Speed, June 2, 1866, Speed Family Papers, FHS; Harrison and Klotter, *New History of Kentucky*, 240-41; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 303-09; Tapp, *Decades of Discord*, 15-16; *Cincinnati Gazette*, July 4, August 8, 10, 1866; James Speed to John Sherman, quoted in Gregg Phifer, “Andrew Johnson Loses His Battle,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (December 1952), 315.

⁴⁴ *Cincinnati Gazette*, May 2, 1866; Harrison and Klotter, *New History of Kentucky*, 242.

In the fall of 1866, James Speed set out to try to reorganize the sputtering Unconditional Unionists into a new state Republican movement. “It is rough and hard work but a labor of love,” he told Sumner, “and I am well and hopeful.” In September, Speed issued a circular calling for a new state convention. From throughout the state came suggestions from Republican men on how best to proceed. Understanding the political realities of the state, these Republicans nonetheless urged Speed to pursue a dynamic course of action. From Lexington, L.L. Pinkerton suggested that the party develop a “close, compact organization” coupled with “bold, decided, aggressive leadership.” B.L.D. Guffy from Butler County urged the formation of a state ticket for next year’s election. “We will doubtless be overwhelmingly defeated [but] will have the conscience of having done our duty,” wrote Guffy. D.S. Hays, in Christian County, demanded that a daily paper be set up in Louisville to oppose the Democratic *Courier* and to arouse Republican sentiment. “We must do something to redeem Kentucky,” implored Hays, adding, “the Democratic Party are making an early start and we must meet them.” An anonymous Kentucky Republican, writing in the pages of the *Cincinnati Gazette*—which had become the *de facto* Republican newspaper in Kentucky—called for the organization of a party based upon moral progress and the principles of the Fourteenth Amendment. “The war has revolutionized everything,” they wrote, “old issues are dead, old politicians are rapidly passing away, and the new order of things will be established here in Kentucky...now is the time for action.” Encouraged by the response, Speed organized a convention for February in Frankfort.⁴⁵

In late February 1867, over four hundred Republicans from across Kentucky gathered in Frankfort to organize their party, present a platform, and nominate a candidate for governor. A

⁴⁵ James Speed to Charles Sumner, October 16, 1866, Charles Sumner Papers, Harvard University; A.S. Hodges to James Speed, September 27, 1866; L.L. Pinkerton to James Speed, November 19, 1866; B.L.D. Guffy to James Speed, November 23, 1866; D.S. Hays to James Speed, November 23, 1866, Speed Family Papers, FHS; *Cincinnati Gazette*, December 11, 1866.

week earlier, Democrats had held their convention. Although managing to avoid selecting an ex-Confederate for governor, Democrats nonetheless selected John L. Helm, who had once advocated for secession and whose son Benjamin had been killed fighting for the Confederates during the Battle of Chickamauga.⁴⁶ The rebel undertones of the Democratic convention had alienated some of the remaining Conservatives. Seeing an opportunity to gain their support, James Speed ensured that the Kentucky Republican platform was moderate in tone. Avoiding the contentious issues of Reconstruction, the platform called for a “speedy restoration” of the southern states and said nothing about black civil rights. Nominating former Union colonel Sidney M. Barnes for governor, the convention created a congressional district committee to organize all nine of Kentucky’s ridings for the upcoming congressional election. Included in that committee was Cassius Clay’s old emancipationist ally George D. Blakey, who remained one of the few active links to Kentucky’s prewar Republican Party.⁴⁷

Because Congress had reconvened early that year, congressional elections normally held in August were instead held on May 4. Although managing to run candidates in every congressional district, Republicans were soundly beaten, with the Democrats sweeping the state, including the prized Eighth and Ninth districts. The contest in the Kentucky Ninth previewed the rhetoric which would infuse Kentucky politics for the next few years. The district, which ran from the waters of the Ohio to the eastern mountainous regions of the state, was held by Republican Samuel McKee. Running against him was Democrat John D. Young, a farmer from Bath County. During the campaign, McKee heaped blame upon Young and the Democratic Party for the violence and terror that had afflicted the district. “All those guerillas who roamed over

⁴⁶ *Cincinnati Gazette*, February 23, 1867; *Lexington Observer and Reporter*, February 27, 1867; Tapp, *Decades of Discord*, 19-20.

⁴⁷ *Cincinnati Gazette*, February 27, 1867; *Lexington Observer and Reporter*, March 6, 1867.

our own and other border states, burning our houses, murdering inoffensive citizens, turning our women into the cold, and plundering what little property the poor mountain people had...every one of them votes in the Democratic ranks today,” declared McKee to a Maysville audience. In response, Young accused McKee and the Republicans on promoting black suffrage and black equality. Days before the election, Radical newspapers in the district began to “wave the bloody shirt,” encouraging former Union soldiers to go to the polls and back McKee. “Shall they whose hands are yet red with the blood of your slain comrades rule the land you fought to save?” asked the *Gazette*. But on election day, Young triumphed over McKee by 1,479 votes. Stung by his defeat, McKee published an address to the Republicans of his district, calling for congressional Reconstruction measures to be applied to his state. “[Kentucky] is today the most disloyal of all states...today she is more hostile to national authority than any other state,” he wrote. “If her people would set her right they must go to work; and, if they will not do it, then the nation’s Congress will do it for them.”⁴⁸

The prospect of congressional Reconstruction being imposed on Kentucky further damaged Republican prospects in the state elections in August. Two days after Congress reconvened on July 3, the House refused to admit any of Kentucky’s new congressmen. John D. Schenck of Ohio waved before him a letter from McKee accusing Young of disloyalty, and asked the Committee on Elections to report on the case. Soon, other Republicans in the House proffered up documents accusing Kentucky’s other new congressmen of disloyalty as well. As the committee worked through the disputed election, some Radicals in Congress called for full-blown congressional Reconstruction in Kentucky. Visiting Washington, James Speed thought

⁴⁸ Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 108; Tapp, *Decades of Discord*, 21-22; Thomas Speed, *The Union Regiments of Kentucky*, 2 vols. (Louisville: 1897), 1:87; *Cincinnati Gazette*, March 26, April 30, 1867; *New York Times*, May 26, 1867.

that congressional Reconstruction in Kentucky might eventually happen. “I think that Congress is not only anxious to take some radical step in regard to Kentucky, something that will rouse the laggard thinkers of the state,” he wrote to his cousin Thomas. Despite their rhetoric, congressional Radicals knew their limits. Imposing Reconstruction on a state that had remained loyal during the war, no matter how insubordinately it was currently behaving, would be seen as overreaching by the federal government. Nonetheless, Kentucky Democrats used the threat of imposed Reconstruction to motivate their voters to turn out to the polls. On election day, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate Helm won 90,225 votes to Republican candidate Barnes’s 33,969 votes. In addition, Republicans won only 17 seats in the 138-person General Assembly. To make matters worse, the House Committee on Elections agreed to seat all but one of Kentucky’s Democratic congressmen. Only Samuel McKee could find some solace in the Committee’s decision. The Committee did find that many of Young’s campaign organizers and supporters had been disloyal during the war. As a result, McKee was allowed to return to Washington to fulfill the remainder of the congressional term. McKee’s presence as the sole elected representative of Kentucky Republicanism in Washington would soon imbue him with considerable political power.⁴⁹

The question of black suffrage also simmered beneath the surface of Missouri politics. Although black Missourians had petitioned the state constitutional convention in January of 1865 to extend to them the franchise, Charles D. Drake had refused to incorporate black suffrage into the new constitution. Drake believed that a constitution containing provisions for black suffrage

⁴⁹ Cong. Globe, 40th Cong., 1st Session, Appendix, 468-470 (1867); *New York Times*, July 4, 1867; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 333-34; James Speed to Thomas Speed, July 10, 1867, in “Records and Memorials of the Speed Family,” Filson Club, Louisville, Kentucky; *Louisville Democrat*, July 27, 1867; Harrison and Klotter, *A New History of Kentucky*, 241-42; U.S. Congress, House, *Cases of Contested Elections in the House of Representatives from 1865 to 1870, Inclusive*, 41st Cong., 2nd Sess., Misc. Doc. 152, 335-66.

would fail to be ratified by the white general public. Undeterred, black Missourians organized a state branch of the National Equal Rights League, an association founded during the war to promote emancipation, legal equality, and suffrage rights. Made up of both free and newly freed blacks, the Missouri League was led by Preston G. Wells, a successful St. Louis barber, and Blanche K. Bruce, a formerly enslaved twenty-year-old printer from Virginia.⁵⁰ The Missouri Equal Rights League developed a rationale for black voting that closely aligned with Radical Republican ideology. Black Missourians deserved the vote because they had been “true and loyal to our Government from its foundation to the present,” and had “never deserted its interest.” They demanded the vote because of the bravery of the nine thousand black troops who had enrolled under the banner of Missouri, while the “franchised rebel, the cowardly conservative—now the bitterest enemies of our right to suffrage—remained quiet at home, safe, and fattened on the fruits of our sacrifice, blood and toil.” Appealing to Radical concerns over the prospects of retaining political power, the black vote would aid in “the maintenance of authority over the disorganizing elements which attend a returning peace.” Hiring a young secretary named James Milton Turner, the Missouri Equal Rights League distributed pamphlets and organized speaking tours to promote black suffrage throughout Missouri.⁵¹

But black suffrage would not become part of the Radicals electoral strategy in Missouri. The Radical state central committee declared that the election would be fought upon the platform of fidelity to the new constitution. Radicals officially began their campaign in May 1866 with a mass rally in St. Louis, where beneath transparencies which proclaimed “Loyal men shall rule,

⁵⁰ John W. McKerley, “We Promise to Use the Ballot as We Did the Bayonet”: Black Suffrage Activism and the Limits of Loyalty in Reconstruction Missouri,” in *Bleeding Kansas, Bleeding Missouri*, Jonathan Earle and Diane Mutti Burke 204-24; Elsie M. Lewis, “The Political Mind of the Negro, 1865-1900,” *JSH* 21, no. 2 (May 1955): 189-91; *An Address by The Colored People of Missouri to the Friends of Equal Rights* (St. Louis: 1866), Appendix, 23-24, African American Pamphlet Collection, LOC.

⁵¹ *Address of the Colored People of Missouri*, 24-27; McKerley, “Black Suffrage,” 204-08.

not rebels” and “Union and liberty forever,” they celebrated the fifth anniversary of Nathaniel Lyon’s capture of Camp Jackson—conspicuously omitting the efforts of Frank Blair.⁵² Missouri Conservatives, meanwhile, planned to fight the election on their support of Johnson’s Reconstruction policies. Blair had gone on a speaking tour around the interior of the state in early May, arguing that Johnson should be supported and the iron-clad oath resisted. But his tour was characterized by political violence. In Booneville, several Radicals assaulted Conservatives after they had left Frank’s speech. In Warrensburg, after a five-hour speech, one of Blair’s supporters stabbed and killed the son of a man who had called Blair a liar. Radical newspapers seized upon this new outrage to condemn Blair as a “wandering political renegade and moral jackal.”⁵³

As party leaders stumped across the state, the business of registering voters began in September. The Registry Act called for the appointment of a supervisor of registration in each county to ascertain the loyalty of any individual wishing to register to vote. The Act, declared the *Missouri Democrat*, would be the “filter by which the scum and sediment of the rebellion are to be thrown off, and the water of our political regeneration rendered a fit baptismal font for the purification and salvation of the state.”⁵⁴ With Radical Governor Thomas C. Fletcher in charge of appointing county registration supervisors, there was little chance of appointing any man opposed to the Radical agenda. Furthermore, once county registrations were collected, they were sent to a board of revision that would have the final say on the eligibility of voters. The fact that

⁵² *Missouri Democrat*, May 11, 16, 19, 1866; Thomas S. Barclay, “The Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri: Radical Unionists and Conservative Unionists,” *MHR* 20, no. 2 (January 1926): 276-77; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 83-85.

⁵³ Frank Blair to Preston Blair, May 2, 1866, Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, July 1, 1866, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Frank Blair to James S. Rollins, May 23, 1866, James S. Rollins Papers, SHSM; Huston Crittenden, “The Warrensburg Speech of Frank P. Blair,” *MHR* 20, no. 1 (October 1925): 101-04; *Missouri Democrat*, June 13, 1866.

⁵⁴ *Laws of the State of Missouri, Passed at the Adjourned Session of the Twenty-Third General Assembly, Begun and Held at the City of Jefferson, on Wednesday, November 1, 1865* (Jefferson City:1866), 117-24; *Missouri Democrat*, July 3, 1866.

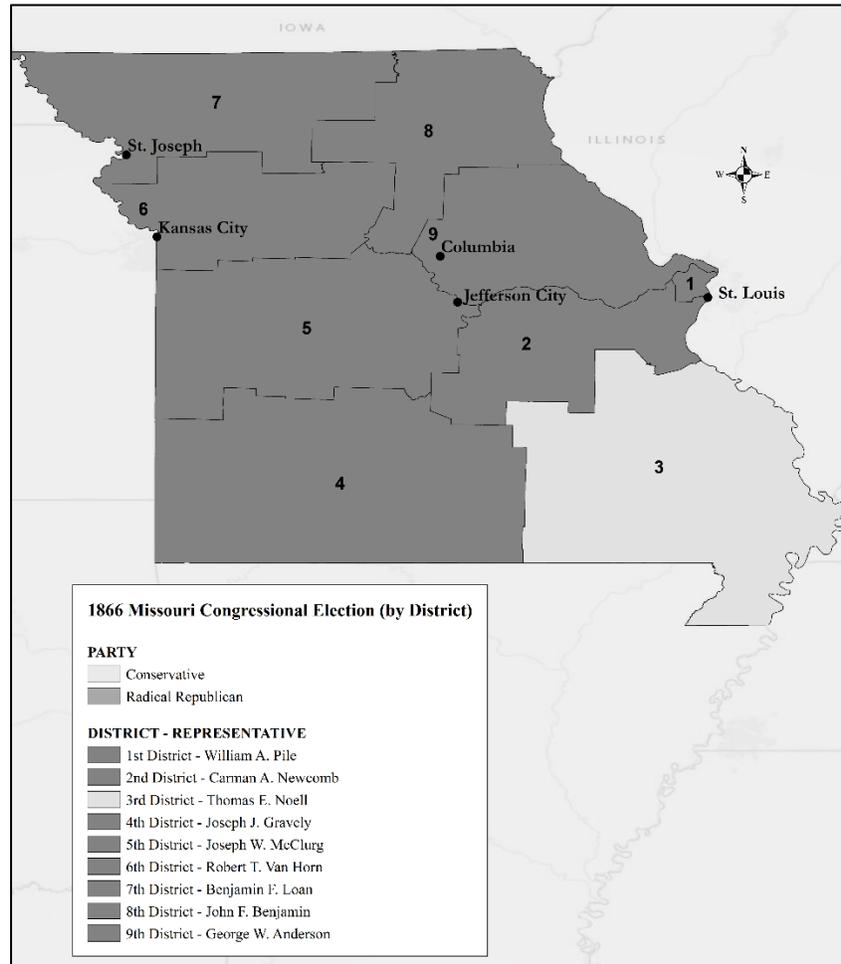
Radicals were in charge of registration at the county and state level dissuaded some Conservatives from registering. Despite calls by Conservative leaders for a mass registration drive, few Conservative in the mostly Radical north and northwest of the state bothered to register. The lack of Conservative registrations delighted Radical newspapers. “It is probable that there will be cast next week the largest honest vote ever polled,” earnestly predicted the *Democrat*.⁵⁵

When Missourians went to the polls on November 6, the efficiency of the Radicals disenfranchisement policy revealed itself. When the votes were counted, Radicals emerged triumphant. They had won control of both houses of the Missouri legislature by overwhelming majorities—103 seats to 36 in the House, and 28 seats to 8 in the Senate. Eight of the nine congressional districts in the state went Radical. The *Missouri Democrat*, with its usual understatement, heralded the Radical triumph as the beginning of a new epoch for Missouri. “As we look into the future we see the broad and thrifty farms, the busy towns, the teeming populations of the mightiest and most prosperous state in the Union,” declared the *Democrat*. “Within five years every man will count it an honor if he can say, ‘By my vote in 1866 I helped to make this the empire state of the West!’” Conservatives were more circumspect in their defeat. “The Registry Act has laid us out cold,” said the Conservative *Missouri Statesman*. “We went in lemons and came out squeezed.” For Frank Blair, the triumph of Radicalism in Missouri marked the end of his relationship with the Republican Party. From now on, Blair would turn his full attention to consolidating the opposition to Radicalism from within the Democratic Party.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 77-78; 96-97; *Missouri Democrat*, October 29, 1866.

⁵⁶ Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 98; Barclay, “Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri,” 288-89; *Missouri Democrat*, November 8, 1866; *Missouri Statesman*, January 4, 1867; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 248-49.

1866 Missouri Congressional Election (by District)⁵⁷



The Radical victory in Missouri heartened Charles D. Drake. With Radicals in control of the Missouri legislature, he finally had an opportunity to put the Radical programme into action. But another political opportunity seemed to beckon for the ambitious Drake. During the summer of 1866, Benjamin Gratz Brown had announced that ill-health would prevent him from seeking re-election to the Senate. Never enthusiastic about the new constitution and the loyalty oath, Brown had mostly kept silent on both issues. But in an open letter to the people of Missouri, he

⁵⁷ Kenneth C. Martis, *The Historical Atlas of United States Congressional Districts: 1789-1983* (New York: The Free Press, 1982); Jeffrey B. Lewis, Brandon DeVine, Lincoln Pitcher, and Kenneth C. Martis (2013) *Digital Boundary Definitions of United States Congressional Districts, 1789-2012*. <http://cdmaps.polisci.ucla.edu/shp/districts038.zip>. Retrieved from <http://cdmaps.polisci.ucla.edu> on June 22, 2019.

decried the new constitution and its disenfranchisement clause as “unworthy of a free people.” For Brown the only solution was to adopt a course of universal suffrage. “The capacity of voting is the protection against class legislation, the oppressions of race, the intolerance of party, and all those antagonisms which threaten to wreck and engulf liberty,” said Brown. As a result of Brown’s withdrawal, a race for the soon-to-be vacant senatorial post began. The *Missouri Democrat* immediately put Drake’s name forward. To place Drake in the Senate, argued the *Democrat*, would be “to crown most signally and most worthily, in the eyes of the world, the Radical triumph in Missouri.”⁵⁸

In the years immediately following the war, Republicans in Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, in an effort to remain politically viable, had struggled with how to reconcile the political realities of their individual states with the promises of Reconstruction. Kentucky Republicans had first attempted to continue the wartime Unionist coalition, but the resurgence of a Democratic Party whose membership increasingly seemed comprised of ex-Confederates forced the party to choose a new path. Kentucky Republicans would define and promote themselves as the party of loyalty, while refusing to take on stand on black civil rights for fear of alienating voters. Maryland Republicans faced not only a resurgent Democratic Party in their state, but also a Conservative movement led by Montgomery Blair that threatened the gains made during the war. Like their Kentucky brethren, Maryland Republicans also embraced the politics of the “bloody shirt,” while distancing themselves from questions of black civil and political rights. In Missouri, Radicals led by Charles D. Drake attempted to create a new

⁵⁸ Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 159-61; Evans Casselberry to Montgomery Blair, May 19, 27, 1866, Blair Family Papers, LOC; *Missouri Democrat*, July 2, November 23, 1866.

Missouri in which ex-Confederates would be disenfranchised by the state's new constitution.

Despite the demands of some Radicals to promote support for black suffrage as party policy, the Radical leadership in Missouri approached the issue with caution, fearing that supporting black suffrage might jeopardize the new constitution and rebel disenfranchisement. Yet the desire to balance black political hopes with white realities frustrated some Border South Republicans.

Radicals frustrated by the incremental pace of progress on black civil rights would soon begin to push for increased action on black civil and political rights—and in the process risk fracturing the Republican Party in the Border South.

Chapter 8

“Revolutions Never Go Backwards:” Border South Republicans and the Limits of Radicalism

This chapter argues that from 1866 to 1870, Border South Republicanism was defined by a struggle between two groups of Republicans: those who desired to pursue a radical agenda no matter the political cost, and those who sought political success by embracing gradual change. In Kentucky, Republicans found themselves pitted against a resurgent Democratic Party. Politically disorganized and dependent on federal patronage, Kentucky Republicans actively resisted radical doctrines like black suffrage only until it became a potential solution to their political woes. Likewise, Maryland Republicans steered away from radicalism until factionalism nearly rent their party in two. As a result, they would struggle to incorporate black Republican aspirations with white Republican concerns within a single party organization. In Missouri, a faction of Republicans grafted radicalism into the institutional structures of the state. Led by men who sought to create a new Missouri cleansed of southern disloyalty, their rigid orthodoxy forced the emergence of a new liberal wing of the Republican Party that sought reconciliation instead of retribution. In the end, Border South Republicans would have to grapple with how far radicalism would go in their respective states—and what the limits of radicalism should be.

By 1867, Democrats were in complete control of the Maryland legislature and had quickly begun dismantling the more controversial elements of the Unionist era. The disfranchisement measures passed in the Constitution of 1864 were abolished, and many of the loyalty oath provisions passed by previous legislatures were either abolished or amended. The legislature also took up the issue of the Fourteenth Amendment, passed by Congress the previous June. Believing it to be an infringement on states' rights, the legislature rejected the amendment.

Finally, Democrats in the legislature passed a bill calling for a new state constitutional convention. For the second time in four years, Marylanders would vote on whether or not to draft a new state constitution, one that might do away with the more contentious aspects of the Constitution of 1864.¹ Maryland's Unconditional Unionists did themselves no favors with their unorganized and shoddy response to the constitutional election. Viewing the constitutional election as illegal and unconstitutional they declined to participate in the election of delegates to the constitutional convention. As a result, almost all the delegates at the convention belonged to the Democratic Party.²

Unconditional Unionists saw that the revocation of wartime loyalty oaths would result in a flood of new Democratic voters. To survive politically, Unconditional Unionists would have to adopt black suffrage as the core policy of their party. Now having officially adopted the Republican brand, they held its first integrated convention in May 1867. With black and white delegates crowding into Baltimore's Broadway Hall, the topic of black suffrage consumed all debate. Addressing the convention, former congressman John A.J. Creswell reflected on the progress of the past few years. Paternalistically, Creswell hoped that the "colored man would show their appreciation" to the Republican Party "for the services rendered to them by sustaining those who had befriended them." But the convention also revealed an emerging theme that would be echoed throughout Border South Republican politics: the gap between white Republicans who believed the black vote was owed to them, and black political leaders who wanted a greater role within the party itself. In Broadway Hall, one black delegate after another mounted the rostrum to demand more action on civil and political rights from Republicans in

¹ *Maryland House Journal* (1867), 38, 51-55, 87-88; Myers, *Self-Reconstruction of Maryland*, 83-86.

² *Annapolis Gazette*, April 4, 1867; *Cecil Whig*, April 13, 1867; Myers, *Self-Reconstruction of Maryland*, 111-12; Earl M. Maltz, *Civil Rights, the Constitution, and Congress, 1863-1869* (Lawrence, KS.: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 131-35; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 276-77.

Maryland. William Samuels stated that Republicans “can only hope to destroy the oligarchy of Maryland by the assistance of the colored man.” Alfred W. Handy declared that the black men of Maryland would vote as they fought, “against rebels and for the Union,” and “sweep every rebel from office.” But once in power, added Handy, Republicans must give black men the right to run for office. Dr. Henry J. Brown implored the party to “inform the negroes in the counties of their political condition [to] get their votes.” Incorporating these demands into their convention resolutions, Maryland Republicans called upon Congress to “abolish all legal distinctions on account of color, and to give suffrage to the colored citizens of [Maryland] and all the states” at the earliest possible moment.³

Despite Republican fears, the Constitution of 1867 passed by the Democratic delegates retained most of the key elements of the previous one. Unionist innovations such as registration procedures and the prohibition on compensation to former slaveholders remained untouched. Although no accommodation was made for black suffrage, the Constitution of 1867 did allow for black testimony in court. The loyalty oath was removed, and new offices were created. One delegate from Prince George’s County wrote to Montgomery Blair that, in the end, the convention was “much gabble about nothing.” The new constitution was approved by Maryland voters in on September 18, by an almost two-to-one majority. “We heartily congratulate the people of Maryland that a monstrous usurpation of rights has been swept away,” declared the *Baltimore Sun*. For Republican newspapers like the *Frederick Examiner*, the passage of the constitution was the result of Republican disinterest and disorganization. Defeating the Confederacy and ending slavery had “lulled” Republicans in Maryland into a false sense of security. “Times have changed and we must shape our course of action to suit that change if we

³ Cecil Whig, February 23, 1867; *Frederick Examiner*, April 10, 1867; *Baltimore Sun*, May 15, 1867; Wagandt, “Maryland in the Post-Civil War Years,” 179.

wish to retain control,” demanded the *Examiner*, adding, “we must organize right away...the sooner we take time by the forelock the better it will be.”⁴

The *Examiner*'s plea for Republican organization was necessary, as party was woefully unprepared for an election campaign. The new constitution mandated that state elections be held in November 1867. Many of the Republican district and ward committees throughout the state had withered away because of factionalism and neglect. When the party met in Baltimore for its state convention, no more than sixty delegates were present, a third of them being from Baltimore. There were no delegates from the southern and eastern counties of the states, where Republican organizations had atrophied. Convention speakers alluded to the thin crowd, but insisted that simply because the organization was small now did not mean that it could not eventually “arise to become one of the most powerful parties in the state.” Resolving to fight the election on the “principles of universal manhood suffrage,” the convention nominated Hugh Lennox Bond for governor.⁵

The selection of Bond, a fervent Radical Republican, immediately painted the state party with the same brush. Politically, Bond had been a Know-Nothing alongside Henry Winter Davis and had joined the Union party at the outset of the war. Becoming an Unconditional Unionist, Bond pressed for emancipation and black enlistment in the Union army. A Baltimore lawyer, he had been appointed judge of the city's Criminal Court in 1860. Black parents, seeking to rescue their children from apprenticeships that resembled nothing more than quasi-slavery, could count on a sympathetic ruling in Judge Bond's court. As a result, his stature in Maryland's black

⁴ *Proceedings of the State Convention, of Maryland, to Frame a New Constitution, Commenced at Annapolis, May 8, 1867* (Annapolis: 1867); Wagandt, “Maryland in the Post-Civil War Years,” 172-74; John F. Lee to Montgomery Blair, June 12, 1867, Blair Family Papers, LOC; *Baltimore Sun*, September 19, 1867; *Frederick Examiner*, September 25, 1867.

⁵ *Frederick Examiner*, October 2, 9, 16, 1867; *Easton Gazette*, October 5, 1867; *Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1867; *Washington Evening Star*, October 11, 1867.

community grew. In October 1867, a political meeting of black Baltimoreans endorsed Bond for governor, with George H. Hackett praising Bond as a “firm and unswerving friend of our race when others held aloof, who has done all in his power to aid us in obtaining our rights as citizens.” Bond’s emphasis on black civil rights created enemies both public and private. Democratic newspapers tarred him as an “unscrupulous demagogue” who was “fanatical on the subject” of black suffrage. Bond received threatening letters from angry white Marylanders. “Look out you black-hearted nigger-loving son of a bitch, why don’t you leave Maryland? We are white men here,” wrote one anonymous correspondent.⁶

If in his devotion to emancipation and black civil rights Bond had embraced the very best elements of the political antislavery tradition in Maryland, he had also adopted one of its worst features: the absence of a coherent political strategy. Lacking in political instincts, Bond’s campaign soon resembled a humanitarian campaign to aid Maryland’s blacks rather than one to elect him as governor. The crowds attending his speeches were made up mostly of blacks, who could not vote. As Bond toured Maryland, the party struggled with organization and developing a coherent message. Many of the Republican candidates for state office were young and inexperienced, neglecting to even campaign. Attempts by Republican newspapers to proclaim a party message were scattershot at best. While the *Baltimore American* tried to appeal to anti-Democratic voters, other papers like the *Cecil Whig* clumsily attempted to fuse black suffrage and opposition to immigration hoping to appeal to voters’ latent nativism. “The fact is patent to every reflecting mind,” proclaimed the *Whig*, “that the colored men are better citizens, and are

⁶ Clayton Coleman Hall, *Baltimore: Its History and Its People*, 2 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1912), 3:897-99; Richard P. Fuke, “Hugh Lennox Bond and Radical Republican Ideology,” *JSH* 45, no. 4 (November 1979): 569-86. Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 9, 1867; *Baltimore Sun*, October 9, 1867; *Baltimore Gazette*, January 9, 1867; *Democratic Advocate*, October 31, 1867; Anonymous to Hugh Lennox Bond, November 1866, Hugh Lennox Bond Papers, MDHS.

competent to vote more intelligently than the great mass of low foreigners, who land on our shores and fill up the ranks of the [Democratic] party.” The selection of Bond, party disorganization, and the lack of a coherent message were too much for Maryland’s Republicans to overcome. On election day, Democratic gubernatorial candidate Oden Bowie won nearly seventy-five percent of the vote. Democrats also managed to win every seat in the state legislature, even in the Republican-friendly counties of the northern and western Maryland. Republican newspapers struggled to accept the result. “We were wholly unprepared for the overwhelming defeat,” confessed the *Frederick Examiner*. The *Cecil Whig*, meanwhile, preached patience. “The result...teaches us that the Republican Party must work, and work earnestly, embracing the cause of human rights, remembering that Jehovah is on the side of justice” wrote the *Whig*, “and in his own good time will give us the victory.”⁷

The abysmal rout of Maryland’s Republicans in the 1867 state elections forced them to reconsider the issue of black suffrage, a debate that resulted in a growing factionalism within the party. One faction, led by Bond, clashed with another, led by former congressman John A.J. Creswell. While both factions supported General Ulysses S. Grant as the Republican nominee for the presidency, the split between the two groups rested on two differing political strategies. The Bond faction, more radical in nature, wanted to grow the party by encouraging black voting in party meetings, as well as urging Congress to pass a law allowing black voting nationwide. The Creswell faction, which generally regarded black suffrage as electorally unpopular, believed that the party could grow solely through the use of patronage. The split also mirrored the geographical fault lines that had long characterized Maryland politics. To many Republicans in the heavily black counties of southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore, continued advocacy for

⁷ Fuke, “Hugh Lennox Bond,” 575-76; *Saint Mary’s Beacon*, September 5, 1867; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 183-85; *Cecil Whig*, November 2, 1867; *Frederick Examiner*, November 13, 1867; *Cecil Whig*, November 9, 1867.

the black vote could pay electoral dividends if and when black suffrage became legal. But to Republicans in the northern and western counties of the state, with its small black population, support of black suffrage had deeply harmed their party's prospects during the last state election.⁸

When the party met for the state convention at Baltimore's Front Street Theatre in March 1868 to prepare the upcoming presidential election, the split between the two factions widened even further. As the state convention opened, Bond and Creswell delegations were contesting to be elected as the state's delegates to the Republican national convention. As the Bond supporters became even more unruly in the gallery—which the *Baltimore Sun* casually reported as “violent talking” with knives and pistols, with one spectator “lightly stabbed”—the convention affirmed that only Creswell delegates could be elected as delegates to the party's national convention. When the party platform vaguely “affirmed its devotion to universal manhood suffrage,” one Bond delegate put forward a resolution asking the party to support black suffrage “as the cardinal principle of the party,” and to maintain it in “theory and in practice.” His resolution was quickly voted down. Several of the Bond delegates, many of whom were black, left the hall and planned to hold a separate convention.⁹ As Republican editors sniped at one another in the pages of partisan newspapers like the *Frederick Examiner* (supporting Bond) and the *Cecil Whig* (supporting Creswell), some party members urged Bond not to shatter the already fragile Maryland Republican Party over the issue. “Let us harmonize, organize and work for the *good cause*, and not quarrel over immaterial matters,” pleaded Henry Goldsborough. But the Bond faction remained adamant that their course was the only correct one. Looking southwards in the

⁸ *Baltimore American*, January 27, 1868; *Annapolis Gazette*, January 30, 1868; *Cecil Whig*, February 8, 1868; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 187; Wagandt, “Maryland in the Post-Civil War Years,” 182-83.

⁹ *Baltimore American*, March 6, 1868; *Baltimore Sun*, May 7, 1868; *Frederick Examiner*, March 11, 1868; *Annapolis Gazette*, March 12, 1868; *Cecil Whig*, March 14, 1868.

spring of 1868, Radicals in Maryland saw black and white constitutional conventions in the former Confederate state promising an array of radical measures, including universal male suffrage. Maryland, on the other hand, with her new constitution and her restrictions on black voting looked out of step with the times. During his faction's convention, Bond declared that "we are not here to quarrel with any wing of the party...but to reorganize the Republican Party of the State...to announce that the black man will be an active participant with us, that they shall be thoroughly enfranchised, and not regarded as consulting member." James H. Brown, a black teacher at a religious school in Baltimore, was more direct. "The day is coming when the black men will vote, and he will be the balance of power," said Brown, adding, "he will then stand by well-tried and true friends." Nominating their own delegates to the upcoming Republican national convention in Chicago, the Bond convention called for civil and political rights for all Americans, regardless of color.¹⁰

The 1866 state elections in Missouri had resulted in Radical control of the state. Yet at the very pinnacle of their success, Republicanism in Missouri was faced with an intraparty schism between the Radical faction and an emerging liberal wing. Shortly after the election, Benjamin Gratz Brown asked leading Radicals to attend a conference at the Planters House in St. Louis. Ostensibly called to discuss the upcoming session of the state legislature, it was in fact a meeting to propose implementing universal suffrage and universal amnesty in Missouri. To ensure that the state constitution conformed to the "requirements of genuine Freedom," Brown suggested giving black men the vote, eliminating the loyalty oath, and providing amnesty for all former rebels. These proposals caught the more fervent Radicals like Charles D. Drake

¹⁰ Henry Goldsborough to Hugh Lennox Bond, April 17, 1868, in the *Annapolis Gazette*, April 21, 1868; *Frederick Examiner*, May 6, 13, 1868; Mark W. Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 130-33; *Baltimore Sun*, May 7, 1868.

completely off guard, who later described the machinations of Brown as “an abandonment of all the Radicals of the State had gained after an unequalled struggle, and a “proffer of pusillanimous and unmasked surrender.”¹¹ Brown’s notion of universal amnesty was layered in both his ideological beliefs and his political pragmatism. He had constantly supported black suffrage since the war had ended, and he remained concerned that if a disenfranchised minority remained in Missouri it would simply create an angry and embittered generation. Universal suffrage would therefore solve all problems. Giving blacks the vote would give them the protection of the ballot, while removing disenfranchised rebels from the rolls would speed up the work of reconciliation. Brown also realized that while the Radicals were in the ascendancy in Missouri, their dependence on disenfranchisement over time would alienate more moderate voters. Finally, should Brown wish to return to politics in the future, universal suffrage could give him a political advantage over Drake. Although Drake had a fervent following in the rural western counties of Missouri, universal suffrage might give Brown a political platform upon which to rally disaffected Radicals and perhaps some Democrats to him.¹²

Concerned that Brown’s movement might undermine the possibility of his election to the Senate, Drake immediately went on the offensive. In the pages of the *St. Louis Daily Evening News*, he declared that he would not back down. “Seeing in [the constitution] our only sure protection against Rebellion, Copperheadism, and Blairism...I say, once and for all, stand by the Constitution just as it is,” declared Drake. The *Democrat* agreed, stating that “the time has not yet come to make rebel enfranchisement a part of the Radical program in Missouri.” When the Radical-dominated Missouri legislature reconvened in Jefferson City, many felt that Drake’s

¹¹ Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 161-62; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 100-02; Drake, *Autobiography*, 1216-19.

¹² *Missouri Democrat*, December 1, 1866; Andrew Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction: The Liberal Republicans in the Civil War Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 5-7.

nomination to the senatorship was a done deal. Despite energetic lobbying by Radicals for Drake, considerable opposition emerged from Germans still hostile to Drake and men from St. Louis and the northeast who had adopted Brown's Planters House platform.¹³ However, anti-Drake Radicals could not coalesce around a suitable candidate, and opposition to Drake amongst Radicals simply melted away. Drake's acceptance speech before the legislature was uncompromising in his devotion to Radicalism. Drake declared that Missouri must not fall back into her old ways, unlike the "degradation into which Maryland and Kentucky have fallen." Warning his fellow Radicals of plots to thwart the progress of Radicalism, Drake warned them to be vigilant. "No loose ends should be left, for, in some unguarded hour, they be seized up to pull down the whole fabric," said Drake. With political control of Missouri assured, Drake's disciples had sent their own high priest of Radicalism to bolster their allies in Washington. With Brown leaving the Senate and Thomas C. Fletcher content to finish out his gubernatorial term, Drake now appeared to be the undisputed political and ideological leader of the Republican Party in Missouri.¹⁴

Ill and exhausted, Brown retired to the country. As he withdrew from Missouri's political scene, a new figure emerged who would take his place as the main challenger to Drake's Radicalism. Carl Schurz had arrived in St. Louis in April 1867 to become a part-owner of the *Westliche Post*. Emigrating from Germany in the wake of the revolutions of 1848, the bearded, bespectacled Schurz had already carved out a significant role for himself within the Republican Party. A journalist, diplomat and a war veteran, Schurz was the darling of the congressional

¹³ *St. Louis Daily Evening News*, November 29, 30, 1866; *Missouri Democrat*, December 1, 1866; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 103.

¹⁴ Samuel Breckinridge to James S. Rollins, January 9, 12, 1867, James S. Rollins Papers, SHSM; *Missouri Democrat*, January 7, 8, 9, 17, 1867; *Missouri House Journal* (1867), 78-79; Thomas C. Fletcher to William Grosvenor, February 25, 1867, quoted in Barclay, "The Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri: Radical Unionists and Conservative Unionists," 303; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, January 17, 1867, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

Radicals for his support of Reconstruction and black suffrage in the South. Schurz had determined that partly owning the *Post* would aid his financial fortunes. “The business [of the *Post*] is extraordinary good and a few years will suffice to make me wholly independent in my finances,” he told one friend. His agreement with the paper also allowed him a “a surplus of free time,” which Schurz could devote to lecturing, thereby keeping his name in the public eye.¹⁵ Gradually Schurz began to make connections amongst the German population in Missouri. He was warmly received when he visited German settlements throughout the state, finding a strong anti-Drake element amongst them. As a well-known German-speaking Radical who had stayed out of the internecine battles of the past two years, Schurz seemed an attractive choice for many Radicals looking for a political alternative to Drake. But when the editors of *Missouri Democrat* informed Schurz that their paper would back him wholeheartedly if he should run for Congress, Schurz refused their offer. “I shall have to decide when the time is ripe,” he told his wife Margarethe in late September. “Although my election in this strong Republican district would be certain, I must first see how political forces shape themselves.” Instead, Schurz headed to Europe to spend time with his family. Before he left, he made arrangements to return in time for the Republican national convention in 1868.¹⁶

Facing an increasingly bleak future, some Kentucky Republicans turned to black suffrage as both their political salvation and their moral obligation. It was probably better to “be defeated

¹⁵ Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 168; Hans L. Trefousse, *Carl Schurz: A Biography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); Stuart MacKay, “The Promise of Free Labor: Carl Schurz and Republican Conceptions of Labor within the Reconstruction South,” in *Reconsidering Southern Labor History: Race, Class, and Power*, eds. Matthew Hild and Keri Leigh Merritt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018), 81-95; Carl Schurz, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz*, 3 vols. (New York: McClure Company, 1907), 3:256-57; Carl Schurz to Theodore Petrasch, June 27, 1867, Carl Schurz to Margarethe Schurz, April 17, 1867, in *Intimate Letters of Carl Schurz*, ed. Joseph Shafer (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1928), 374-77 (hereafter cited as *IL*).

¹⁶ Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 230-31; Barclay, “The Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri: Radical Unionists and Conservative Unionists,” 308-09; Trefousse, *Carl Schurz*, 163-64; Carl Schurz to Margarethe Schurz, July 8, 9, 16, August 12, September 10, 21, 1867, *IL*, 377-395; *Missouri Democrat*, September 10, 1867.

on the question of negro suffrage than not to make it,” admitted James Speed to Charles Sumner. A Freedman’s Bureau agent in Maysville wrote to his supervisor that even amongst conservative Union men, the opinion was growing that the “black soldiers who went into the Federal army” were more entitled to vote than “the men who went into the army of the Rebellion and waged war to disrupt and destroy the government.” Before a black meeting in Mount Sterling, Kentucky’s lone Republican congressman Samuel McKee called for immediate black suffrage and predicted that Kentucky’s blacks would be voting in the next presidential election. In a speech laced with humor and cutting remarks on the attitudes of white Kentuckians. McKee acknowledged his own change of heart. “I was opposed to the immediate enfranchisement of the black men who had lately been slaves, because I doubted if they were sufficiently well informed,” confessed McKee. “But I believe I was wrong then...when as slaves you knew upon which side to fight; I should never have doubted that you would know upon which side to vote.” Stung by three consecutive defeats, some Kentucky Republicans acknowledged that only with black votes could they politically compete with a resurgent Democratic Party.¹⁷

Accompanying this dawning realization that black suffrage could help tip the political scales for the Republican Party was the emergence of a formal, partisan consciousness amongst black Kentuckians. Throughout the previous year, both the Freedman’s Bureau and certain benevolent societies had begun to train black Kentuckians in the use of petitions and in their duties and responsibilities as voters. In mid-October 1867, the Negro State Central Committee of Kentucky issued a call for a state convention to be held on November 26 in Lexington, in order to take steps to secure the “right of impartial suffrage.” Held at the A.M.E church, the convention

¹⁷ James Speed to Charles Sumner, September 12, 1867, Charles Sumner Papers, Harvard University; C.J. True to R.E. Johnston, August 25, 1867, FBP; . Howard, *Black Liberation in Kentucky*, 151; *Cincinnati Gazette*, August 15, 1867; J.H.H. Woodward to James Speed, September 14, 1867, Speed Family Papers, FHS.

drew up petitions to be presented to Congress calling for black suffrage. W.F. Butler, elected as president of the convention, struck an optimistic tone. “First we had the cartridge box, now we want the ballot box, and soon we’ll get the jury box,” declared Butler, “thus we go boxing our way along, I don’t mean with our fists, but standing up and defending our rights.” Butler nonetheless cautioned against blind partisan loyalty. “We don’t want any half-hearted, rotten-at-the-core Republican or Conservative,” added Butler. “I prefer an open enemy to a man who gets down on his knees and tries to please everybody.” Other black Kentuckians echoed similar fears. During the Emancipation Day celebrations in Louisville, a young bank teller named Horace Morris warned against becoming “intoxicated at the great idea of political importance.” Morris argued that white politicians had previously used blacks as “a ladder” to gain power, then had “kicked the ladder from beneath them.” Instead, he recommended that hard work and education should be their main priorities.¹⁸

The cautionary note sounded by men like Butler and Morris was reinforced at the Republican state convention at Frankfort in February 1868. Black delegates to the convention were not permitted to be seated, and instead were required to watch on from the galleries. A motion in favor of black suffrage was defeated. Instead, delegates sidestepped the issue in favor of a bland statement supporting the “great principles of equal and exact justice to all men,” while simultaneously supporting the black suffrage measures of congressional Radicals. Reporting on the convention, the *Louisville Courier* saw through this political trickery. “They indorsed the negro supremacy and negro legislation of Congress,” accused the *Courier*, “and then they tried to save themselves and party by failing to enunciate any distinct proposition on the subject.”

¹⁸ Howard, “The Black Testimony Controversy in Kentucky, 1866-1872,” *Journal of Negro History* 58, no. 2 (April 1973): 155-56; *New York Times*, October 26, 1867; *Proceedings of the State Convention of Colored Men, Held at Lexington, Kentucky, in the A.M.E. Church, November 26th, 27th, and 28th, 1867* (Frankfort:1867); *Cincinnati Gazette*, November 28, 1867, January 3, 1868; *Louisville Courier*, January 2, 1868.

Instead of promoting black suffrage as an election issue, as Speed and McKee had wanted, the convention delegates instead previewed the grounds on which the 1868 election would be fought in Kentucky: loyalty to the Union. With Kentucky Union soldiers parading through the hall carrying their tattered and bullet-ridden regimental flags, the convention heralded the bravery and loyalty of Kentucky's Unionists during the war and backed Ulysses S. Grant as the Republican presidential nominee.¹⁹

In May 1868, Republicans from across the nation gathered in Chicago to nominate their presidential candidate for the upcoming election. Eight years earlier in the same city, Republicans had chosen a relatively unknown, dark-horse candidate in Abraham Lincoln to carry their banner. This time, however, the party was united behind the nomination of Ulysses S. Grant.²⁰ With the outcome assured, the gathering at Crosby's Opera House took on a more businesslike air than in conventions past. Nearly five hundred journalists perched upon the main stage to report the convention's proceedings in detail to readers across the nation. Carl Schurz was nominated as the temporary chairman of the convention, a position which gave him the traditional honor of delivering the keynote address. With hundreds of journalists reporting on his speech, it also assured Schurz a prominent role that would raise his profile in Missouri and nationwide. Turning to the issue of the two Maryland delegations, the convention's committee on credentials decided to compromise, allowing the Bond faction the right to be seated, although the Creswell faction would have the sole right to cast votes for a presidential nominee.²¹

¹⁹ Howard, *Black Liberation in Kentucky*, 153; *Cincinnati Gazette*, February 28, 1868; *Louisville Courier*, February 28, March 1, 1868.

²⁰ William S. McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1981), 272-75; Jean Edward Smith, *Grant* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 435-55; Brooks D. Simpson, *Let Us Have Peace: Ulysses S. Grant and the Politics of War and Reconstruction, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 205-24.

²¹ *New York Times*, May 21, 1868; *New York Tribune*, May 21, 22, 1868; Adams Sherman Hill, "The Chicago Convention," *North American Review* 107, no. 220 (July 1869): 167-86; *Proceedings on the National Union Republican Convention, Held at Chicago, May 20 and 21, 1868* (Chicago: 1868), 36.

The debate over the party's platform on black suffrage, however, demonstrated the limits of Radical Republican power. The platform's second plank, declaring that while Congress would guarantee the rights of black suffrage in the South for the reasons of "public safety, of gratitude, and of justice," also stressed that the question of black suffrage in the "loyal States" belonged solely to the people of those states. In a blow to those Border South Radicals who wanted congressionally imposed black suffrage in their states, the convention declared that because Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri had remained loyal during the war, black suffrage would remain a state issue. When Radicals attempted to add a clause into the platform reaffirming the Republican Party's commitment to universal black suffrage, Schurz instead moved to add a plank merely to commit the party to the principles of the Declaration of Independence. "We hail with gladness," declared Schurz's plank, "every effort toward making these principles a living reality on every inch of American soil." Schurz's moderate and intentionally vague plank passed. These verbal contortions allowed the Republican Party to keep equality before the law and southern black suffrage as their core principles. But by leaving black suffrage in the North—and by extension the Border South—a state matter, Republicans hoped their plank would prevent Democrats from tapping into anti-black sentiment in the upcoming election. In an ironic twist, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, so long treated as political extensions of the South, were now being politically grafted onto the North.²²

Republicans' fears about the Democrats' campaign strategy proved prescient. Within the Democratic establishment, there remained little consensus as to how their campaign should proceed. Would they campaign upon broad conservative principles by promoting unionism and

²² *New York Times*, May 25, 1868; *Proceedings*, 84-86; Hill, "The Chicago Convention," 175-76; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 337-38; Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans*, 399-400; Carl Schurz to Margarethe Schurz, May 24, 1868, *IL*, 436-38.

an acceptance of the South's defeat, while condemning congressional overreach and trying to appeal to military voters in the North? Or would the campaign hew to strict Democratic orthodoxy, by opposing black suffrage and stoking racial fears, and calling for the immediate restoration of the southern states without Reconstruction measures?²³ Convening in New York City, Democrats chose New York Governor Horatio Seymour as their candidate after a tortuously long twenty-one ballots. To bolster the ticket, exhausted delegates nominated Frank Blair as Seymour's running mate, hoping that Blair's military experience and his history as a Border South Republican-turned-Conservative-turned-Democrat might attract some voters. But in embracing Blair, they also embraced his increasingly racist and reactionary doctrines.²⁴ Throughout his political career, Blair had always peppered his speeches with racist statements. With black suffrage now a political issue, Blair's racism took on an increasingly strident and hysterical tone as he campaigned through the Midwest. Accusing Radical Republicans of promising white women to blacks in the South, Blair argued that only by separating the races could white Americans preserve the "purity, beauty, and vigor of our own race." Although some northern Democrats bristled at Blair's unambiguous racism, most Democrats rallied behind Blair's message. Blair's disastrous campaign soon forced Seymour to take to the stump himself in order to steer the campaign away from Blair's racist attacks.²⁵

²³ Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 199-207; Edward L. Gambill, *Conservative Ordeal: Northern Democrats and Reconstruction, 1865-1868* (Ames, IA.: Iowa State University Press, 1981), 127-28, 140-42; Lawrence Grossman, *The Democratic Party and the Negro: Northern and National Politics, 1868-1892* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 1-7.

²⁴ Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, June 29, 30, July 1, 1868, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Smith, *Blair Family*, 2:406-07; *Official Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention, Held At New York, July 4-9, 1868* (Boston: 1868), 58-60; *New York Times*, July 10, 1868; *Louisville Democrat*, July 6, 1868.

²⁵ *Speech of General F.P. Blair, Democratic Candidate for Vice President, Delivered September 24, 1868, at Indianapolis, Before the Largest Political Meeting Ever Held in Indiana* (1868), Blair Family Papers, LOC; *New York Times*, September 28, 29, 1868; Oliver P. Morton, quoted in Simpson, *Let Us Have Peace*, 248; *Harper's Weekly*, September 26, October 24, 31, November 7, 1868; *New York Times*, October 28, 1868.

Missouri Radicals would head into the 1868 united behind Grant, but contending with two persistent political issues: black suffrage and registration. Persistent lobbying by the Missouri Equal Rights League had finally pressured Radicals in the state legislature to pass a suffrage amendment in March 1867. In the form of a constitutional amendment, the measure extended the franchise to black men, and removed the word “white” from the section of the state constitution which defined eligible voters. In addition, the measure called for the amendment to be approved by qualified voters in the 1868 election. Charles D. Drake, now fully converted to the cause of black suffrage, argued for its adoption as a necessity for not only the Radicals’ political survival, but for the nation’s as well. “With the ballot in his hand the Negro can and will quench the spirit of the rebellion to its very last spark,” Drake told the legislature after accepting his Senate seat. Now, Radicals in the legislature had put their stamp of approval on the policy. “Suffrage will add strength to the loyal element in the state,” reflected the *Missouri Democrat*, “especially in some localities where such additional strength is especially needed.” At the same time, Radicals moved to strengthen the registry law, giving the governor, not the counties, the power to select supervisors of registration. Observing how the rest of the Border South had fallen under Democratic control, some Radicals argued that the combination of black suffrage and continued disenfranchisement was necessary lest the same fate befall Missouri. “Do we want to take the risks and permit the rebels to get control of the state?” asked the editor of the *La Grange American*. “Do we want to make a Kentucky of Missouri?”²⁶

Promoting black suffrage and a new registry act gained greater importance for the Radicals because they now faced a resurgent Missouri Democratic Party. The collapse of the Conservatives in 1866 had all but destroyed it as a political faction. Meanwhile, what remained

²⁶ *Missouri House Journal* (1867), 497-504; *Missouri Democrat*, January 18, March 7, 8, 1867; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 240-42; *La Grange American*, May 21, 1868.

of the Democratic organization slowly began to reassert itself. Reminiscent of the language used by antislavery men to describe the condition of enslaved blacks, Missouri Democrats declared that *they* were now “downtrodden” and “bound to the iron hoofs of Radicalism.” Lewis Bogy, a former slaveholder, now complained that it was the Democrats who were the oppressed group. “We are going to make a mighty effort to break the shackles on our limbs, so as to enfranchise our people who are now anything but free men,” Bogy told Andrew Johnson. M.J. Payne, a former slaveholder from Kansas City, declared that “We have been fettered by chains, which have made us, in one sense of the term, the most abject slaves on the face of the earth.” Supporting Frank Blair’s campaign for the vice-presidency, Missouri Democrats vowed to fight against the Radical’s registry law.²⁷

Although the Radicals went into the 1868 election united, the speaking tours by Drake and Schurz revealed two emerging ideological strands taking root within the Missouri Republicanism. When the campaign officially began in September, Drake returned to Missouri to begin a massive swing through the state. In cities and towns across Missouri, Drake dredged up memories of Confederate disloyalty whenever he could. “Shall the people that saved the country rule it, or shall rebels and traitors?” Drake asked a St. Louis crowd. Rather than allow intelligent black men to vote, Drake told an audience in Kirksville, Democrats would rather pick a drunken man out of the gutter, and put a Democratic ballot in his hand in order to place a Democratic vote in the ballot box.²⁸ As Drake toured Missouri, Carl Schurz embarked on his own tour of Missouri’s counties. In contrast to Drake’s strident factionalism, Schurz’s tour had

²⁷ Frank Blair to James Rollins, February 9, 1867, James S. Rollins Papers, SHSM; Democratic State Association of Missouri to the Democracy of the State and City of New York, November 7, 1867, quoted in Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 238; Lewis V. Bogy to Andrew Johnson, February 19, 1868 Andrew Johnson Papers, LOC; *Missouri Republican*, May 29, 1868; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, May 29, 1868, Blair Family Papers, LOC.

²⁸ *Missouri Democrat*, July 20, September 16, October 5, 1868.

reconciliationist undertones. In Hannibal, Schurz told the crowd that the South had been not only defeated by the resources of the Union, but also “by the progress of the moral forces of the nineteenth century.” He beseeched Missouri rebels to abandon the Democrats and join the Republicans, who were the party of progress and of liberal ideas. “I want you, Democrats and Conservative rebels, to understand once more that this is a common country of ours, in which we must live together,” Schurz implored an audience in St. Louis. Schurz could not help but notice the warm reception that he and his ideas received from voters—even from former rebels. “My popularity is increasing from day to day and is beginning at times to be terrible,” Schurz boasted. While Drake stumped through Missouri intent on re-prosecuting the war, Schurz preached reconciliation. While Drake and his disciples remained cloistered in Jefferson City, untrusting of anyone who dared stray from the Radical path, Schurz cultivated friendships among a variety of influential Republicans like Benjamin Gratz Brown and *Missouri Democrat* editor William Grosvenor during meetings of the Twentieth Century Club in St. Louis, a political club whose very name bespoke progressiveness.²⁹

Schurz’s emerging liberal Republicanism also harkened back to the politics of progress espoused by Frank Blair and Benjamin Gratz Brown’s liberal antislavery ideology in the 1850s. Then, both Blair and Brown had argued that slavery had held back Missouri’s economic potential, and asked voters to join their party of economic and social progress. Eight years later, Schurz reinforced this same message. He implored another St. Louis audience, to picture an old proslavery Democrat, sitting in his farmhouse in rural Missouri, eating his hoe cake and his fried bacon, and washing it down with a bottle of whiskey. Imagine him, said Schurz, “swearing and cursing” at everything going on around him; the railroad that comes by his farm, the school

²⁹ Carl Schurz to Margrethe Schurz, August 9, 1868, *IL*, 442-443; *Missouri Democrat*, October 12, 27, 1868; Trefousse, *Carl Schurz*, 170-71.

house built in his neighborhood, the newcomers who settle near his lands, all the while “praying only that something of the old time may return.” Why do Democrats continue to indulge men like these, asked Schurz? Do they believe that he is their future? No, said Schurz, you cannot keep out the railroads, or schools, or any vestige of “tremendous engine of civilization” which moves the world forward. Instead, Schurz urged voters to flee from a party clinging onto the failed doctrines of the past. The Republican Party is the very embodiment of those great and progressive ideas, argued Schurz, which will make Missouri just like the progressive states of the North. “We cannot come to you,” Schurz concluded. “You must come with us. You must march with this great onward column of civilization, or it will march over you.”³⁰

The ideological rift between the politics of proscription and the politics of progress widened further with the defeat of the black suffrage amendment. On election day, Radical gubernatorial candidate Joseph W. McClurg, a reserved and quiet congressman from southwest Missouri, was elected by a 20,000 vote majority. Ulysses S. Grant received the state’s electoral vote by a similar majority. The Missouri legislature would again be dominated by Radicals, assuring the election of yet another Radical U.S. senator. Yet the black suffrage amendment was defeated by over 18,000 votes. Along with the predictable opposition from Democratic voters, the amendment was also defeated by a strong cohort of Radicals from St. Louis who voted for Grant but abstained from voting for the amendment. In light of this defeat, *Missouri Democrat* editor Grosvenor suggested a new course. If Democrats accepted black suffrage, argued Grosvenor, then Radicals should be willing to get rid of the disenfranchisement clause. “Let Democrats come forward like men, and, abandoning their malignant and proscriptive course,

³⁰ “The Doom of Slavery,” in *Speeches and Correspondence of Carl Schurz*, ed. Frederic Bancroft, 6 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1913), 1:131-32 (hereafter cited as *SC*); *Missouri Democrat*, October 27, 1868; Carl Schurz to Margarethe Schurz, November 2, 1868, *IL*, 448-49.

accept Republican ideas in their broadest and most liberal form,” declared Grosvenor. For Drake, this idea was tantamount to surrendering everything the Radicals had fought for. Dashing off a letter to the paper, Drake demanded black suffrage take priority, only after which rebel enfranchisement could be considered.³¹

For Maryland’s Republicans, the election results in 1868 were disappointing. The rupture between the Bond and Creswell factions never fully healed in time for the election and Republicans went into the fall election divided, demoralized, and financially exhausted. The Democrats swept every county, adding Maryland to the seven states won by the Seymour and Blair. All of Maryland’s five congressional districts went Democratic as well. Nonetheless, the political stock of their most prominent leader had never been higher. As rumors swirled around Washington as to who would make up Grant’s cabinet, John A.J. Creswell’s name was invariably mentioned. Creswell was emblematic of the type of man Grant wanted for his cabinet. Unlike Lincoln, whose cabinet of political rivals had steered the nation through the war, or Johnson, whose cabinet had fallen apart under the pressures of Reconstruction, Grant’s cabinet would be made up of men with whom he felt comfortable and who would run their departments smoothly and efficiently. While Creswell was considered to be one of the more Radical members of the cabinet—especially compared to the conservative Jacob D. Cox, who opposed black suffrage, or the patrician Hamilton Fish, who hated the Freedmen’s Bureau—he still reflected a more moderate Border South radicalism than a Hugh Lennox Bond did. His appointment as Postmaster General was thoroughly cheered “with unbounded satisfaction” by Maryland’s Republican newspapers, with good reason. As had been the case with Montgomery Blair, the position provided the opportunity to dispense valuable patronage positions. For

³¹ Lynn Morrow, “Joseph Washington McClurg: Entrepreneur, Politician, Citizen,” *MHR* 78, no. 2 (January 1984): 168-201; *Missouri Democrat*, November 17, December 14, 1868; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 258.

Maryland Republicans stymied by consecutive electoral defeats, the ability to dispense patronage could prove a valuable tool in rebuilding their political fortunes.³²

Creswell was now the *de facto* political leader of Maryland's Republicans. In the rooms of the Baltimore Union Club, the names of Creswell's friends were bandied about for positions such as collector of the port of Baltimore and city postmaster. Black Republicans also wished to take advantage of the opportunities provided by Creswell's appointment. The Colored Republican Association of Baltimore was delighted with Creswell's appointment. The Association later unsuccessfully pressed for the appointment of Bond as collector of the port, which was given to ex-congressman John L. Thomas. Some black Republicans did receive patronage positions, in the customs house and the post office. John C. Bush was appointed as Maryland's first black postmaster in the small town of Allans Fresh in Charles County. Isaac Myers, a caulker and trade unionist heavily involved in black Republican politics, was appointed as the nation's first black postal inspector by Creswell in 1870.³³

But black Republicans wanted more than simply patronage positions—they wanted a greater political voice in the party. The political conditions at the beginning of 1869 allowed for the Republican-controlled, lame-duck Congress to pass a constitutional amendment which, they hoped, might finally settle the issue of black suffrage. Fearful that the incoming Congress might not be so amenable to black suffrage, concerned that Republicans might lose control of various state houses in upcoming elections, and eager to assist Border South states where black suffrage was being denied, Republicans in Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment in February 1869.

³² Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 190-92; *Frederick Examiner*, July 8, 15, August 18, November 11, 1868; *Baltimore American*, March 6, 1869; Robert V. Friedenber, "John A.J. Creswell of Maryland: Reformer in the Post Office," *MHM* 64, no. 2 (Summer 1969): 134-35; Smith, *Grant*, 468-69; McFeely, *Grant: A Biography*, 291-302; *Cecil Whig*, March 13, 1869.

³³ *Baltimore Sun*, March 15, 25, 26, 1869, May 18, 1870; *Baltimore American*, March 17, 1869; *Washington Daily Globe*, March 11, 1869; *Port Tobacco Times*, May 20, 1870; *Annapolis Gazette*, March 10, 1870; Friedenber, "John A.J. Creswell," 142-43.

Guaranteeing that the right to vote in the United States would not be abridged by “race, color, or previous condition of servitude,” the Fifteenth Amendment, once ratified, would make black suffrage a reality throughout the entire nation.³⁴ As it went to the states for ratification, black Republicans in Maryland began to lay the groundwork for their participation in electoral politics. At a meeting of the Colored Republican Association of Baltimore, delegates called for the formation of their own state central committee to “look after the political interest of our own race in the counties of the State, and to perfect said organization.” At their state convention in June, nearly one hundred black delegates from nearly every county assembled in Baltimore. But even there the rift between the Bond and Creswell factions persisted. Several delegates who had supported the Bond faction took to the floor to protest Creswell’s dispensation of patronage trinkets for future black support. Reverend Sterrick of Calvert County accused those who had taken positions under Grant of being nothing more than “bootblacks and lackey,” and contended that Maryland’s blacks were more than capable of filling higher offices. Daniel Draper of Annapolis cautioned black delegates “to avoid the white Republican who would cordially take the hand of the colored man in the dark, but would refuse to recognize them in broad daylight.” The convention decreed that the black Republican state central committee should remain active until a biracial state central committee was formed, with equal numbers of black and white men aboard.³⁵

The demand for black office holding by the most fervent Radicals in Maryland led others to caution against going too far, too fast. Even with black suffrage soon to be enshrined within the Constitution, some Maryland Republicans strove to put limits on how radical the party

³⁴ Cong. Globe, 40th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1563-64 (1868-69); For more on the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, see William Gillette, *The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1964); Maltz, *Civil Rights*, 142-56; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 444-47.

³⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, March 26, June 2, 1869; *Easton Gazette*, June 5, 1869; *Annapolis Gazette*, June 10, 1869.

should be. During one meeting in Baltimore, a meeting of black Republicans condemned radical demands by Bond men at the June meeting for damaging the “unity and the perpetuation” of the Republican Party. These black Republicans were backed by Creswell-supporting newspapers that saw in the June convention nothing more than the disruptive elements of the Bond faction at work. The *Baltimore American*, under the editorship of Charles C. Fulton, condemned the actions of the convention as an attempt to “suborn their organization to the objects of personal ambition rather than devotion to principle.” The *Cecil Whig* took a more paternalistic view. Black delegates had been tricked by the actions of a few “scheming demagogues.” Counselling black Republicans to “consult their interest by remaining passive, and refusing to be tempted by those superserviceable friends,” the *Whig* urged them to “have patience and faith and wait a little longer.”³⁶

As in Maryland, the politics of patronage would play a key role in Kentucky Republicanism. However, patronage issues soon became intertwined with the question of how radical the Republican Party of Kentucky should be. Grant had lost Kentucky in the 1868 election. Republican leaders had chosen to emphasize Grant’s military record and his role in saving the Union, an unwise strategy in a state where the reputation of the Union military authorities was already low. This dismal showing was compounded by a lack of leadership within the party. Although the fifty-six-year-old James Speed was still seen as the titular head of the party in Kentucky, since April some Republicans had begun to complain that the party had degraded under his tenure. “[Speed] has not canvassed the State, nor has he taken an active part in any state canvass,” accused the *Gazette*, “and has allowed the Republican Party in Louisville to dwindle to three or four hundred.” Yet Grant’s victory nationwide signalled a new opportunity

³⁶ *Baltimore Sun*, June 15, 1869; *Baltimore American*, quoted in the *Frederick Examiner*, June 16, 1869; *Cecil Whig*, June 26, 1869.

to re-energize a party that had increasingly been viewed as a hopeless cause. With Grant now in office, Kentucky Republicans would be the immediate beneficiaries of federal patronage.³⁷

The dispensation of federal patronage would soon lead to two competing power bases of Kentucky Republicanism. After the election, Kentucky had no representation in Congress or in Grant's cabinet, the two vehicles through which patronage usually flowed. As a result, administration officials instead relied on the advice of a select group of Kentuckians living in Washington when doling out federal patronage. Far removed from the political and social reality on the ground, this Washington clique tended to be more radical in their ideology, and more susceptible to flattery by hungry-office seekers.³⁸ Composed of former Union officers, Freedman's Bureau officials, or Kentuckians who leveraged their connections with Grant, their appointments as revenue agents and postmasters gave them bureaucratic connections to numerous patronage jobs in Kentucky. Separated from the state by distance and ideology, the Washington clique quickly came under attack by Kentucky Republicans for meddling in their affairs.³⁹

In response, a new group of Kentucky Republicans, helmed by Benjamin Helm Bristow and John Marshall Harlan, took over the organization of the party in order to control patronage distribution and to prepare the party to be electorally viable. Born into an antislavery family in Todd County, Bristow had enrolled in the Union army, fighting at Fort Donelson and at Shiloh, where he was wounded. Returning home, he would spend the remainder of the war fighting

³⁷ Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 459; *Cincinnati Gazette*, October 23, 1868; Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 1:193; Ross A. Webb, "Kentucky: 'Pariah Among the Elect,'" in *Radicalism, Racism, and Party Realignment*, 125; *Cincinnati Gazette*, April 4, 1868

³⁸ *Cincinnati Gazette*, March 17, 1869; *Cleveland Leader*, March 18, 1869; *Kentucky Statesman*, February 11, March 20, 30, 1869.

³⁹ *Cincinnati Gazette*, June 20, 23, 1868; *Cleveland Leader*, April 17, 1869; William H. Wadsworth to John M. Harlan, November 27, 1868, John Marshall Harlan Papers, LOC; Calendar, April 24, 1839, in John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 31 vols. (Carbondale, IL.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), 1:363 (hereafter referred to as *PG*).

against guerillas throughout the state before being elected to the state senate in 1863. Eventually, Bristow became the leader of the band of Unconditional Unionists in the Kentucky legislature, advocating for emancipation and black recruitment. When James Speed was appointed to the cabinet, he recommended that Bristow be appointed U.S. District Attorney for Kentucky. Known for his bluff and frank manner, Bristow attempted to enforce the Civil Rights Bill and fought for black testimony in Kentucky's courts.⁴⁰ Louisville attorney Harlan also played an increasingly large role in developing a more organized Republican party. Tall and imposing, Harlan was a superb orator and a brilliant lawyer. His father, James, had been a slaveholder and a close confidante of Henry Clay. Both father and son had grown up as strong proponents of the Whig party. Harlan himself had followed a conservative course, supporting the Constitutional Unionists in 1860. Harlan had been elected as Kentucky's attorney general, where he led the state's legal opposition to the Thirteenth Amendment. He had supported McClellan during the 1864 election and had found a home amongst the Conservative party after the war. Defeated for re-election in 1867, and frustrated with the lack of opportunities in Frankfort, Harlan moved to Louisville where he soon partnered with Bristow. While their practice consisted of regular legal work, their firm also took on a number of civil rights cases. Like Bristow, Harlan was driven and ambitious, and threw himself into political organization. Alongside other men from the city, this Louisville faction of Kentucky Republicans took over the party's state central committee. In doing so, they would attempt to wrest control of patronage from the Washington clique, and try to transform Kentucky Republicanism into something other than a hopeless minority.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ross A. Webb, *Benjamin Helm Bristow, Border State Politician* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1969), 1-68. Webb's biography remains the only significant work published on Bristow's life, but focuses more on his legal career than his political role in Kentucky Republicanism.

⁴¹ Loren P. Beth, *John Marshall Harlan: The Last Whig Justice* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 1-80; John S. Goff, "Justice John Marshall Harlan of Kentucky," *RKHS* 55, no. 2 (April 1957): 109-33; Louis Hartz, "John M. Marshall in Kentucky, 1855-1877," *FCHQ* 14, no. 1 (January 1940): 17-40.

The Louisville faction soon realized that Kentucky Republicans lacked one of the most essential ingredients in nineteenth century politics: a dedicated and thriving partisan newspaper. Out of the sixty political newspapers in Kentucky, only five supported the Republican Party. Previous Republican papers like Albert G. Hodges's *Frankfort Commonwealth*, James Speed's *Louisville Daily Unionist Press*, and William O. Goodloe's *Kentucky Statesman* were all low-circulating newspapers which often teetered on the edge of bankruptcy. Hodge's *Commonwealth*, which had previously depended on lucrative state printing contracts to survive, could not survive in a Frankfort dominated by the Democratic Party. The *Unionist Press* had relied upon wartime government advertising to survive and had folded in December 1865. Other small Republican newspapers often emerged for a short period during political campaigns, only to cease publication once the campaign had ended. To avoid the problems that had befallen previous Republican newspapers, the Louisville faction fastened onto an innovative solution. To raise the \$25,000 initial capital requirement for the paper, they formed a joint-stock company, issued fifty-dollar shares, and gave each congressional district a stock sales quota. Though failing to raise the full amount of capital, they nonetheless proceeded with their publication plans, launching the *Louisville Commercial* on December 29, 1869. Although the paper would struggle financially during its earliest years, it remained an important and effective voice for Kentucky Republicanism. The decision to begin a properly financed Republican paper reflected a new professional mentality imposed on the party by Bristow and Harlan. A proper partisan newspaper would be critical in developing a more organized Republican Party in Kentucky.⁴²

⁴² J. Stoddard Johnston, *Memorial History of Louisville from Its First Settlement to the Year 1896*, 2 vols. (Chicago: 1896), 2:71; Albert G. Hodges to James Speed, November 27, 1863, SFP; Joshua Speed to Joseph Holt, April 25, September 8, 12, 1864, Joseph Holt Papers, LOC; J.G. Hatchitt to John M. Harlan, January 25, 1870, John Marshall Harlan Papers, LOC; *Cincinnati Gazette*, November 1, December 30, 1869.

In Missouri, the simmering tensions between the emerging liberal wing and the radical wing of the Republican Party finally ruptured into open conflict by 1869. Viewing radicalism as a political dead end, liberal Republicans would attempt to secure the levers of Republican power in Missouri. The first opportunity came when John B. Henderson's term on the Senate expired. Under the leadership of William Grosvenor, the *Missouri Democrat* began to promote Carl Schurz as the rightful choice for the position. In addition to promoting Schurz, the *Democrat* began supporting a more lenient policy towards former rebels. "The dogma of perpetual hate is as un-Republican as it is anti-Christian," stated the paper. "Time softens animosities, corrects erroneous judgments, removes bitter prejudices, and brings ultimately those who were the fiercest foes to struggle side by side for justice, loyalty, and the progress of mankind." The only other potential challenger to Schurz was Benjamin F. Loan, a well-known lawyer from St. Joseph who had served an three undistinguished terms in Congress. Loan was a devoted Radical, a supporter of Congressional Reconstruction, and was loyal to Drake.⁴³

The contest came to a head in Jefferson City in early January 1869, where Schurz and Drake would publicly clash over their vision of Republicanism in Missouri. The Radical party caucus had decided to hold a series of debates between the challengers for the Senate seat. As politicians, partisans, and onlookers poured into Jefferson City, the state capital took on a circus-like atmosphere. The city's hotels and rooming houses quickly filled up, and correspondents from national newspapers were present to send steady streams of telegraphic dispatches eastwards. When the debate opened, Schurz outlined his views. He supported the proposed Fifteenth Amendment and favored enfranchising former rebels *only* after the passage of the

⁴³ *Missouri Democrat*, December 23, 1868; January 4, 8, 1869; Carl Schurz to Margarethe Schurz, November 16, 1868, *IL*, 451-53; Barclay, "Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri: Signs of Change," *MHR* 20, No. 3 (April 1926): 407-08.

amendment. Reminding his audience of his military service and his closeness with Grant, Schurz reinforced the idea that time had come to move on from the war. "I hate treason from the very bottom of my heart, and detest all traitors, yet I am working more for the improvement of all than for the artificial keeping up of old animosities," Schurz concluded to applause. "If this is a sin against Radicalism, then I am willing to stand and fall with it."⁴⁴

A few days later, Drake took the floor to promote Loan's candidacy. Drake's remarks, however, became less about promoting Loan and more about attacking Schurz. As he spoke, Schurz consistently interrupted him, distracting Drake. Unable to continue, he resumed his speech the next morning. Angered by Schurz's interruptions, Drake accused the German Radicals of failing to support black suffrage only because they feared losing political influence. "If the negro should be enfranchised," shouted Drake, "then it would strengthen the Radical party so much that no longer would it be necessary at all for the German element to be clung to." Drake's anger at the Germans gave Schurz his chance. In his closing remarks, Schurz ruthlessly needled his opponent by bringing up Drake's own turbulent political past. Recalling Drake's past nativist and proslavery leanings, Schurz reminded the audience of the record of Missouri Germans. It was the Germans who rallied around the cause of Union, capturing Camp Jackson, and "threw their hearts as against the bayonets of the rebels" in Missouri. It was the Germans who fought in the Union army, "soaking the soil of many fields with their blood," while Drake stayed at home. It was the Germans who "rallied in St. Louis under the banner of free soil," while Drake stood in the legislature, "sustaining the selling and buying of human flesh." Schurz's evisceration of Drake was so complete that after the debate ended, Drake hurried back

⁴⁴ Carl Schurz to Margarethe Schurz, January 3, 1869, *IL*, 459-61; *Missouri Democrat*, January 8, 9, 11, 1869; *Missouri State Times*, January 8, 15, 1869.

to his hotel, checked out, and caught the night train back to St. Louis. Schurz was nominated the next night by a bare majority.⁴⁵

Schurz's acceptance speech to the legislature emphasized the main tenets of liberal Republicanism that he would attempt to graft onto the body of Missouri Republicanism. Viewing his victory as "evidence of the liberal and progressive spirit moving the people of Missouri," Schurz urged a new cooperative approach in the legislature. Reaffirming his support for black suffrage, Schurz encouraged the legislators to also support enfranchising former rebels. "It is a sense of necessity and justice which moves us, and not rankling hate or desire for revenge," implored Schurz. Finally, Schurz turned to the future of the Republican Party in Missouri. If Republicans want to preserve their power, argued Schurz, they must move past the issues of the past and look towards the future. "Our minds must not be absorbed by the passions and resentments sprung from the struggles which lie behind," said Schurz, "but be ready to grapple, untrammelled in their movements, with the problems that lie before us." Immensely proud of his achievement, Schurz believed that his election marked a turning point in Missouri. His election, Schurz told Margarethe, means "the disappearance of that dour party zealotry which has dominated under Drake's dictatorship." Now, Schurz's Liberals would substitute "a friendly, forgiving future policy for the bitter feeling and hatred which [has] characterized the spirit of party struggle up to this point." Schurz's confidence belied the reality that he had only been elected by a slim majority of 59 votes to Loan's 40. Radicalism in Missouri was not dead yet. But the senatorial election revealed the limits of Radicalism. In the aftermath of the 1868 election, Charles Daniel Drake had found himself the undisputed leader of a united Radical party

⁴⁵ *Missouri Democrat*, January 14, 1869; Schurz, *Reminiscences*, 298-301; Carl Schurz to Emil Preetorius, January 13, 1869, Carl Schurz to Margarethe Schurz, January 16, 1869, *IL*, 463-65; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 265-66.

in Missouri. Less than two months later, Drake found his party split and his leadership challenged. The senatorial contest had revealed a rising group of Liberal Republicans frustrated with Drake's imperious style, unsatisfied with proscriptive policies, and eager to move past the issues of the war.⁴⁶

The Liberal Republican fixation on ending rebel disfranchisement stemmed from their concern that their state was becoming an outlier in a more moderate national Republican movement. Once again, the fear that Missouri would remain out of step with the nation drove much of the political calculus. Before the war, Missouri Republicans feared that being the only western state with slavery would hinder their economic potential. For Radicals immediately after the war, it was the fear that without disenfranchising former rebels, Missouri would become a haven for ex-Confederates. Now, with Radicalism ebbing nationwide, their great fear was Missouri remaining an island of Radicalism in a sea of moderation. "While other States move steadily onward to heal the wounds and hide the wrecks of strife, to unite the people in a true Union of heart and head, and to grasp the boundless material prosperity which lies within their grasp, shall this State alone spurn its share of the blessings of peace?" asked the *Democrat*. Yet because the Radicals still dominated the Missouri legislature, any efforts to bring forth a constitutional amendment on universal amnesty were quickly squashed.⁴⁷

On May 19, 1870, under a cloudless sky and with a cool breeze blowing in from the Chesapeake, thousands of Baltimoreans came out to celebrate the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. "It was well that Baltimore should be elected as the city in which the enfranchised people of the nation should celebrate the great jubilee of freedom," proudly noted the *Baltimore*

⁴⁶ "On Being Chosen United States Senator," in *SC*, 1:474-78; Carl Schurz to Margarethe Schurz, January 16, 1869, *IL*, 464-67; *Missouri Democrat*, January 20, 1869; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 267.

⁴⁷ Simpson, *Let Us Have Peace*, 246-47; *New York Times*, May 7, 1869; *Missouri Democrat*, June 1, 1869.

American, referring to the lengthy existence of blacks in Maryland. A massive parade of black veterans, workingmen's associations, and political clubs wound through the city's downtown. As black and white spectators lined the streets, tubs of ice water lined the route ready to slake the thirst of weary marchers. By four o'clock, marchers and spectators alike had gathered to listen to speakers in front of Gilmore's Hotel.⁴⁸ Amongst the speakers was John A.J. Creswell. Invited in his capacity as a member of Grant's cabinet, Creswell delivered a surprisingly reflective speech. Like his campaign speech several years' prior, Creswell publicly acknowledged both his own and his state's problematic relationship with slavery. The passage of the Fifteenth Amendment should be cause of celebration for blacks and white alike, said Creswell, for it gives white Marylanders a chance to atone for the mistakes of the past. "We have abandoned the inspired doctrines of our fathers," argued Creswell, noting the history of black disenfranchisement in Maryland's history. Creswell also recounted the process of emancipation during the war. Emphasizing his own role in voting for the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments during his time in Congress, Creswell noted with honesty that black suffrage had never originally been the design of the Republican Party. A Republican president and a Republican Congress had, at the close of the war, been unwilling to consider black suffrage. But, said Creswell, events in the South finally forced the Republican party to consider black suffrage as imperative only "after years of trial, cautiously—I might almost say reluctantly." At the conclusion of the speeches, a resolution pledging the newly enfranchised vote of Maryland's blacks to the Republican Party was read aloud. "We look forward with confidence and satisfaction to the day," stated the resolution, "when we shall aid in placing our beloved State in line with the Republican States of the Union."⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Baltimore American*, May 20, 1870; *Baltimore Sun*, May 20, 1870; *New National Era*, May 26, 1870.

⁴⁹ *New National Era*, May 26, 1870.

Maryland Republicans like Creswell who had initially been reluctant to support black suffrage now eagerly embraced it the 1870s. Although the Democratic legislature in Annapolis had refused to ratify the Fifteenth Amendment in February 1870, when it became obvious that the amendment would be ratified by enough states, the legislature put forward a bill to enact legislation to conform to requirements of the amendment.⁵⁰ A few days later in Towsontown, a newly incorporated community north of Baltimore, Elijah Quigley and William Taylor became the first black men to vote in Maryland since the early part of the century. The vote, for five county commissioners, resulted in the entire Republican slate being elected. “The newly registered are very jubilant over the honor conferred upon them,” wrote the *Baltimore Sun*. In Alleghany County, black and white voters elected the entire Republican ticket for the mayor and city council of Frostburg. On the Eastern Shore, the process of black voting was more tentative. In several municipal elections held in April, lack of registration often stymied black voters. It was not until late May, during the Chestertown commissioner elections, that the strength of the black vote revealed itself. Black community leaders like William Perkins, a saloon keeper, James Jones, a grocer, and Perry Chambers, a farmer, worked alongside Chestertown’s white Republicans to develop a political organization that ensured each eligible black voter came to the polls. On voting day, 130 black Republican voters joined with 27 white Republicans to elect a straight Republican ticket, over 137 white Democratic votes.⁵¹

Organization and registration would be the pillars upon which this new Republican coalition would be built. “ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE!!” pleaded the *Annapolis Gazette* to the

⁵⁰ Maryland did not officially ratify the Fifteenth Amendment until May 7, 1973.

⁵¹ Brugger, *Maryland*, 306; *Baltimore American*, March 29, 1870; *Baltimore Sun*, March 31, April 4, 1870; Margaret Law Callcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics: 1870-1912*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 3; *Annapolis Gazette*, April 7, 1870; *Chestertown Transcript*, April 9, 1870; C. Christopher Brown, “Democracy’s Incursion into the Eastern Shore: The 1870 Election in Chestertown,” *MHM* 89, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 338-46.

black and white Republicans of Anne Arundel County. “If the Republicans of this county wish to reap the full fruits of their triumph over the opponents of universal suffrage, they must be stirring themselves.” The *Gazette*’s concerns about organization were reinforced by the stringent timelines of Maryland’s new registration law. Beginning in September, the law permitted new voters in the counties only three days to register, and six days in Baltimore. When Republican state chairman Samuel M. Evans pleaded with Governor Oden Bowie for more time to enroll Maryland’s nearly 39,000 eligible black men, Bowie refused. The current law, replied Bowie, provided “ample time for all disposed to avail themselves promptly, and in good faith, of the opportunity to register.” Despite the constrained timeline, more than 35,000 black men registered to vote.⁵² The potential of the black vote in Maryland also meant that Republicans, who only two years earlier had been hesitant about black participation, now warmly welcomed black men to participate in the political process. With the congressional elections on the horizon, black Republicans were elected as delegates to primary meetings throughout Maryland. Black delegates featured prominently in the nomination meetings for the Second, Third, and Fifth Congressional Districts.⁵³

Despite the high turnout and the strong support from black voters, the results were disappointing for Maryland’s Republicans. They had failed to carry a single congressional district. In 1868 Republicans had only lost the Maryland Fourth by fewer than 600 votes. By 1870, they hoped to reclaim it with the nearly 3,000 black men added to the voter rolls.

Nominating John E. Smith, local Republicans urged every eligible black voter in the county to

⁵² *Annapolis Gazette*, July 14, 1870; Oden Bowie to Samuel M. Evans, September 14, 1870, in the *Baltimore Sun*, September 16, 1870; Callcott, *Negro in Maryland Politics*, 24-25.

⁵³ *Baltimore Sun*, September 1, 2, 6, 10, 1870; *Frederick Examiner*, September 7, 1870; *Annapolis Gazette*, September 2, 30, 1870; Lynn M. Meekins, *Men of Mark in Maryland*, 4 vols. (Baltimore: B.F. Johnson, 1910), 2:135-37.

turn out for the party. Needing to secure every single black vote, Republicans attempted to paint Democratic candidate John Ritchie and his party as emblematic of white supremacy. When Ritchie made a speech in which he declared that he “did not want the colored man to vote for him,” Republican newspapers like the *Frederick Examiner* used his words to remind readers that the Democratic Party remained the “White Man’s Party.” However, Republicans also needed white Republicans to vote. Concerned that the district’s Germans, who had been hesitant about black voting in past elections, would choose to stay home, the Republican leadership made direct appeals to them, emphasizing their party’s support for Germany in her current war against France. Despite their efforts, it became evident that some Republican voters went for the Democratic candidate, with Ritchie winning by over 2,000 votes.⁵⁴ Southern Maryland’s Fifth District, with its large black population, was another congressional district that party leaders hoped to rescue from Democratic rule. In 1868, the Republican vote in the Fifth had netted a dismal 2,500 votes, compared to over 10,000 for the Democratic candidate. But now, argued the *Annapolis Gazette*, there were over 12,000 black votes for the taking. Despite black votes providing a Republican majority in Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, and Montgomery counties, the Democratic candidate William M. Merrick eked out a victory by 2,000 votes. “Though beaten and badly beaten in this state, we are not dismayed,” wrote the *Gazette*. “The ‘sober second thought’ of the Republicans in Maryland will bring them back to the Republican party, and the faith and hope of our colored friends will make them stand firm in our ranks in future elections.” The close result in southern Maryland along with the turnout of the black Republican vote would make that part of the state an immensely competitive area for years to come.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Baltimore Sun*, November 9, 1870; *Frederick Examiner*, August 31, September 7, 28, October 5, November 2, 9, 16, 1870.

⁵⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, November 11, 1870; *Annapolis Gazette* October 18, 21, November 15, 1870; Callcott, *Negro in Maryland Politics*, 30-32.

Notwithstanding the disappointing electoral results, the congressional elections signified a turning point for Maryland's Republicans. While the state itself remained fiercely Democratic, the Republican Party proved that it could at least compete, if not win, in elections. Maryland was now a two-party state. But the process had been neither smooth nor easy. The factionalism between the Creswell and Bond wings of the party had revealed the limits of radicalism in Maryland. Republicans had hesitantly accepted the most radical choices regarding black civil rights and black voting *only* when they had become politically necessary. The *New York Tribune*, analyzing the election results, believed that they portended a bright future for Maryland's Republicans. Prior to the election, "the Republican Party there was simply a gallant but hopeless faction—a mere color-guard, strong enough to keep up the flag but not to maintain the contest," argued the *Tribune*. "At last it is a live, formidable organization, becoming in reality a contesting party for the control of the state." But to do so, party leaders would have to grapple with how to incorporate black Republican aspirations with white Republican concerns within a single party organization. "What our Republican friends in Maryland now want is an understanding that the State is only large enough for one Republican party, not for two," warned the *Tribune*. "When they abandon their trials of skill at cross-purposes, they can bear the flag of Maryland Republicanism to victory."⁵⁶

In Kentucky, both black and white Republicans hoped the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment would change the political calculus in the state. In anticipation of the passage of the amendment, black leaders in Kentucky called for a state convention in late February 1870 to organize a black wing of the Republican Party. The optimism of the convention was marred by the stark reality of the violence blacks still faced in Kentucky. On the convention's first evening,

⁵⁶ *New York Tribune*, November 11, 1870.

a white laborer named Robert Henderson walked to the entrance of the theatre. Without any provocation, Henderson brutally attacked the first black man who came out, one George Mukes. Stabbed near the heart, Mukes—a formerly enslaved man who was a veteran of the 5th U.S. Colored Calvary—somehow managed to survive.⁵⁷ For white Republicans, the potential of black voting to strengthen the party in Kentucky was immediately apparent. Black voters could provide Republicans with greater strength beyond the remote mountain counties in the eastern part of the state, which had previously provided the political base of Kentucky Republicanism. The collapse of slavery had meant that thousands of rural blacks had migrated to cities and towns in Kentucky, bolstering the urban population of places like Louisville and Lexington. But while black voters might improve election results, some Kentucky Republicans feared that any hint of black office-holding would alienate moderate white voters. “It is better, in the present condition of Kentucky politics, to have no negro upon the ticket, and save ten votes, than to put one or more on, and lose ten votes,” advised one Republican. “In the cotton States the loss of a few hundred white votes is a trifling circumstance...but in Kentucky there is not a vote to fool away.” Still, with state and local elections forthcoming, the black vote was a resource that could not be ignored. Kentucky Republicans appointed a committee of black leaders, comprised of George A. Griffith, J.B. Stanberry, and Henry Marrs, to travel throughout the state to educate black men about their new duties as voters.⁵⁸

However, the first elections held after the implementation of the Fifteenth Amendment did little to change the prospects of Republicanism in Kentucky. The county and municipal

⁵⁷ Howard, *Black Liberation in Kentucky*, 154-55; *Louisville Commercial*, February 23, 24, 25, 1870; *Cincinnati Gazette*, February 19, 24, 26, 1870; *Frankfort Commonwealth*, February 25, 1870; *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kentucky*, Vol. 2, Appendix, 5.

⁵⁸ *Cincinnati Gazette*, May 24, 1870; Herbert A. Thomas Jr., “Victims of Circumstance: Negroes in a Southern Town, 1865-1885,” *RKHS* 71, no. 3 (July 1973): 255; *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, April 1, 1870; *Louisville Commercial*, March 23, 1870; Howard, *Black Liberation in Kentucky*, 155-56.

elections held in August 1870 were replete with Democratic intimidation. Leading up to the election, Democratic militias drilled nightly. Blacks heading to vote found polls closed or switched; once inside, they were subjected to a barrage of questions in order to delay voting. In some rural areas, *viva voce* voting was used, leading some wary black voters to abstain from publicly declaring their party preference. Despite Republican gains of smaller municipal offices, Democratic control of the state was unabated.⁵⁹ The congressional election results in November were no better. Democrats made a clean sweep of all nine congressional districts. James Speed, who had decided to run as the Republican candidate for the Kentucky Fifth, made an attempt at shoring up the black vote as he travelled throughout the state. But other Republicans felt that his gentlemanly personality, honed in the courtroom and around the cabinet table, was unsuited for the boisterousness of local congressional politics. Speed could not “stir the masses” or “mix with the boys,” Edgar Needham told Benjamin H. Bristow. As a result, Speed captured only a third of the vote in his district. For ten years, James Speed had been a dedicated Unionist when Kentucky’s place in the Union remained precarious; an Unconditional Unionist supporting emancipation and black enlistment; and finally a Republican, defending black civil rights. Now nearing sixty, and eager to spend more time with his law practice, his family, and his friends, Speed withdrew from the political arena. With Speed gone, new political leaders would take Kentucky Republicanism in a new direction—a direction that would retreat from radical ideas.⁶⁰

The nomination of John Marshall Harlan as the party’s gubernatorial candidate signalled a new tack by Republican efforts to run a competitive race. By the spring of 1871, the Louisville

⁵⁹ *Cincinnati Gazette*, August 5, 1870; Howard, *Black Liberation in Kentucky*, 157; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 428-29.

⁶⁰ *Cincinnati Gazette*, October 15, 18, 1870; *Louisville Commercial*, October 24, 25, 1870; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*; 432; Edgar Needham to Benjamin H. Bristow, November 15, 1870, Benjamin Helm Bristow Papers, LOC; Collins, *History of Kentucky*, 207; Speed, *Speed: A Personality*, 126-27.

faction secured control of the state central committee and forced out allies of the more radical Washington clique. At their convention, they nominated Harlan as the party's candidate for that year's gubernatorial election. Unlike the collection of placeholders and no-hopers that the party had previously selected as candidates, Harlan was a well-known political figure in his own right. Most importantly, the party's platform reflected a growing desire by the Louisville faction to focus on economic issues, rather than concentrating on previous civil rights issues. While the platform demanded the state ratify the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteen Amendments, the primary focus was on increasing immigration and the construction of railroads in Kentucky.⁶¹ Harlan and the Republicans had realized that a political opportunity had presented itself in the form of an internal struggle within the Kentucky Democratic Party, which pitted progressives against conservatives. Led by *Louisville Courier-Journal* editor Henry Watterson, these progressives believed it was time for Kentucky Democrats to realize that the war was over and its issues dead. Instead, Watterson called for a ratification of the Reconstruction amendments and encouraged industrial progress throughout Kentucky. Watterson and his "New Departure" wing struggled for party supremacy against the more conservative "Bourbon" wing, which fetishized the war and Confederate service. But Democrats had chosen to re-nominate incumbent Governor Preston Leslie, a colorless conservative who repudiated many of the elements of the "New Departure," and failed to mention anything about the state's economic issues in their platform. Sensing an opportunity to appeal to progressive Democrats, Harlan and the Republicans would stress economic issues during debates and on the stump.⁶²

⁶¹ *Louisville Commercial*, May 30, June 1, 1871; *Cincinnati Gazette*, May 15, 18, 1871; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 18, 19, 1871; Tapp, *Decades of Discord*, 40-44.

⁶² Joseph Frazier Wall, *Henry Watterson: Reconstructed Rebel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 91-96; Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 52-57; Tapp, *Decades of Discord*, 29-40; Thomas L. Connelly, "Neo Confederatism or Power Vacuum: Post War Kentucky Politics Reappraised," *RKHS* 64, no. 4 (October 1966): 257-69.

In language reminiscent of Cassius Clay's prewar criticism of slavery's effects on Kentucky, Harlan and the Republicans blamed the Democratic Party for her stagnant commerce and industry. Once again comparing Kentucky to her northern neighbors, Republicans argued that immigration and investment were being blocked from flowing into the state by racial violence and political stagnation that could be directly attributed to the Democratic Party. Look at the development of Ohio, said Harlan, with her three million people; of Illinois, with over two million. All these states are filling up, he noted, with no population coming to Kentucky. "Our resources are not developed, our population is not coming here, capital is not coming here, and we do not progress. To what is this due?" asked Harlan. "It is caused by this old Kentucky Democratic rot, which has hung like an incubus upon the energies of this State for the past five years." Bristow echoed Harlan's concerns as he stumped through Kentucky. "Where should now be smiling fields and bounteous harvests are waste places and desolation. Where should be heard the busy hum of machinery, producing wealth and power, under the guidance of skilled artisans, is heard only the creaking of grumblers, who mourn for slavery 'because it is not,'" proclaimed Bristow to a crowd in Covington. Republican newspapers, meanwhile, emphasized the party's commitment to economically revitalize an unproductive Kentucky. "[Harlan's] policy... is designed to promote the wealth of the state," argued the *Cincinnati Gazette*, whereas "the policy of Leslie is [to] isolate Kentucky from the country." Campaigning hard throughout the canvass, speaking every day, Harlan's efforts earned the respect of Republicans throughout the state. It was not enough. Despite receiving almost 60,000 more votes than the previous Republican candidate for governor, Leslie obtained about 126,000 votes to Harlan's 89,000. For most Kentucky Republicans however, the election was a successful failure. As in Maryland, they could finally argue that Kentucky was a genuine two-party state. Harlan's message had resonated

with enough voters that, while still a minority party, Republicans were in a less hopeless state than before, while Harlan himself had become a major political figure in Kentucky.⁶³

The ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment bolstered the Liberal cause in Missouri, allowing them to develop their own state political identity apart from the Radicals. With black suffrage now guaranteed by constitutional amendment, Radicals would have little excuse not to proceed with removing disenfranchisement. Despite the objection of Radicals from the southwest border counties, Liberals in the Missouri legislature forced the passage of an amendment enfranchising all those deprived of the right to suffrage due to their connection with the rebellion. This amendment would be submitted to Missouri voters during the fall state election.⁶⁴ With unity amongst Missouri Republicans increasingly impossible, Liberals began to promote their own gubernatorial candidate in the spring of 1870 rather than supporting the incumbent Radical Governor Joseph W. McClurg. Secluded in his country home near Ironton, Benjamin Gratz Brown had stayed abreast of political news, but remained wary about returning to elected politics. However, both *Missouri Democrat* editor William Grosvenor and Carl Schurz began pushing Brown's name forward as a Liberal gubernatorial candidate. Both men finally convinced Brown to emerge from his political seclusion. For Schurz and Grosvenor, Brown appeared the perfect candidate for this political moment. His fifteen-year record as a champion of free soil and emancipation would surely endear him to newly enfranchised Missouri blacks; his long alliances with German Americans would result in solid support amongst that community; and his policy

⁶³ Tapp, *Decades of Discord*, 43-46; Hartz, "John M. Harlan," 34-37; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 28, 1871; *Cincinnati Gazette*, June 3, 21, 1871; *Louisville Commercial*, July 4, 9, 10, 1871; Beth, *John Marshall Harlan*, 92-94; Webb, *Benjamin Helm Bristow*, 88-89.

⁶⁴ *Missouri Republican*, February 3, 1870; *Missouri Democrat*, February 4, March 16, 1870; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 279-81; Slap, *Doom of Reconstruction*, 13-14; Barclay, "The Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri: Parties, Politics, and Politicians," *MHR* 20, No. 4 (July 1926): 516-26.

on universal amnesty could gather support from Democrats eager to see disenfranchisement ended.⁶⁵

Radical and Liberal delegates poured into Jefferson City at the end of August for the Republican state convention. Even before the opening gavel had sounded, the atmosphere in the state capital reflected the tensions inherent within Missouri Republicanism. On the streets, in saloons, and in hotel lobbies, Radicals backing McClurg and Liberals backing Brown argued over the gubernatorial candidates and the enfranchisement of former rebels. Despite pleas for party unity, Radicals were unwilling to nominate anyone but McClurg, and Liberals unwilling to accept a platform without enfranchisement of former rebels. The convention appeared headed for an impasse. The resolutions committee produced both a majority report, which included immediate enfranchisement, and a minority report, which allowed for enfranchisement *only* when it could be done “with safety to the State.” This nebulous wording convinced none of the Liberals. After a short debate, the minority platform passed. Upon hearing the result, eighty Liberal delegates marched out of the Missouri House chamber and reconvened in the Senate chamber. Unhampered by the need to compromise with the Liberal wing, Radicals re-nominated McClurg, and passed a platform which included the vague promise of rebel enfranchisement.⁶⁶

In the Senate chamber, Liberals assembled under the leadership of Schurz to hammer out a platform and to nominate Brown for the governorship. As young Benton Democrats, Brown and Frank Blair had launched an antislavery faction of the Democratic party in the very same Senate chamber. That faction had eventually formed the foundation of a dedicated Republican

⁶⁵ Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 175-76; Trefousse, *Schurz*, 190; *Missouri Democrat*, June 1, 15, 1870; Kristen L. Anderson, “German Americans, African Americans, and the Republican Party in St. Louis, 1865-1872,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20, No. 1 (Fall 2008): 46-48.

⁶⁶ *Missouri Democrat*, August 27, 31, September 1, 2, 3, 1870; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 181-82; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 292-97; Barclay, “The Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri: The Undoing of Radicalism,” *MHR* 21, No. 1 (October 1926): 60-72.

Party in Missouri. Now, fourteen years later, Brown and the Liberals would attempt to close the book on over two decades of slavery and racial issues dominating Missouri politics. The Liberal platform advocated “conferring upon colored men equal political privileges to those enjoyed by all other citizens,” while at the same time removing “all political disabilities from whites.” As the Liberal meeting drew to a close, someone observed James S. Rollins amongst the spectators. Now a Democrat, Rollins publicly pledged his support to the Brown ticket. Rollins’s endorsement of Brown seemed to reinforce the hope that the Liberal Republican ticket could secure at least one-third of the Democratic vote in Missouri. Missouri Democrats had earlier decided to adopt a “possum policy,” which entailed not running a state ticket. Democratic strategists believed that running their own gubernatorial candidate would simply result in the Radical McClurg getting re-elected. Better to support Brown for governor while running legislative candidates, thought Democrats, ensuring the election of a governor amenable to enfranchisement along with a possible Democratic legislature. Viewing the political situation in Missouri with dismay, President Grant directed his patronage appointees to support the election efforts of the Radicals. “I regard the movement headed by Carl Schurz, Brown and company....as intended to carry a portion of the Republican Party over to the Democracy, and thus give them control,” wrote Grant to Charles W. Ford.⁶⁷

To further counter the Liberal threat, Radicals turned to James Milton Turner to solidify the black vote for their faction. Turner was a prominent black leader in Missouri who long advocated for black suffrage with the Missouri Equal Rights League. A charismatic and compelling speaker, he had become a favorite of white Radicals. Turner’s speeches to the black

⁶⁷ *Missouri Democrat*, September 5, 6, 1870; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 284-86; Charles Gibson to Montgomery Blair, September 30, 1870, Blair Family Papers, LOC; Ulysses S. Grant to Charles W. Ford, September 1870, in *USG*, 20:284.

community in Missouri took on an increasingly Radical tenor. At a public gathering celebrating the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, Turner demanded that black men vote against any proposed amendments which would enfranchise former rebels. Despite blacks acquiring the vote, said Turner, the legislature still had not yet made provisions for blacks to sit on juries nor run for public office. “Let [former rebels] be enfranchised,” asked Turner, “and what assurance have we that these disabilities will ever be removed from colored men?” Travelling though Missouri in the summer of 1870, Turner continued to oppose rebel enfranchisement while rallying the black vote behind Radical Republicanism.⁶⁸

With Turner urging black voters to support McClurg and to vote against the enfranchising amendments, Liberal leaders grew increasingly concerned that the black vote would go almost entirely Radical. To counteract Turner’s campaign Grosvenor recruited a prominent black leader from St. Louis, Charlton H. Tandy, to aid in the Liberal cause. Tandy had grown up as a free black man in slavery’s borderland. Born in Lexington, Tandy had helped lead escaping enslaved blacks from Covington to Cincinnati when he was a young man. Moving to St. Louis in 1857 to find employment, he worked a variety of jobs before the war. After the war, Tandy turned his attention to desegregating the city’s horse-drawn streetcars. Speaking to black audiences, Tandy accused McClurg and Turner of appealing to the “base prejudices” of black voters by supporting the continued disenfranchisement of former rebels. Instead, Tandy urged blacks to support the Liberal Republicans, to “cultivate peace and harmony” with whites, to

⁶⁸ Gary R. Kramer, *James Milton Turner and the Promise of America: The Public Life of Post-Civil War Black Leader* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 8-10, 42-48; *Missouri Democrat*, April 12, May 13, August 4, 5, 1870; *Missouri State Times*, May 27, 1870; Parrish, *Missouri Under Radical Rule*, 289-91; Barclay, “The Liberal Republican Movement: Parties, Politics, and Politicians,” *MHR* 20, no. 4 (July 1926), 543-48.

accumulate property, and to attend their own schools. Soon other black leaders joined the Liberal cause, espousing much the same message.⁶⁹

The election results in November 1870 signalled the end of Radical dominance in Missouri. The enfranchisement measures passed by a large majority, with opposition to the measures located in the staunchly Radical counties of the southwest. “The fetters which were forged in 1865 by the Drake constitution have fallen from the wrists of 75,000 white men,” declared the *Missouri Statesman*. A last-ditch effort by McClurg to reverse course and support the enfranchisement measure did little to help. Brown soundly beat him by over 40,000 votes. While most black Missourians voted Radical, it was not enough to defeat Democrat support for the Liberals. The Democratic Party’s “possum policy” had worked. Now Democrats held an absolute majority in the lower house of the Missouri legislature, and controlled the Senate alongside the Liberals. By not running their own state ticket, and throwing their support behind the Liberal Republican ticket, they now claimed credit for Brown’s victory. A week after the election, a group of St. Louis Democrats marched over to Brown’s residence on the corner of Sheridan and Webster avenues to serenade the governor-elect. Thanking them for their support, Brown declared to the cheering crowd, “I recognize my obligations are in the largest measure due to the Democratic Party of the state of Missouri.” If Brown had realized that the Liberal victory was due mostly to the Democratic Party, Carl Schurz did not. In a speech to the Senate in December, Schurz predicted that the Democrats in Missouri would soon be absorbed into a larger Liberal Republican movement. “I expect that a great many of those who were disenfranchised on account of their connection with the rebellion,” asserted Schurz, “will abhor a reopening of the questions that sprang from the war, sincerely accept accomplished results,

⁶⁹ Kramer, *James Milton Turner*, 49; “Biography,” Charlton Tandy Papers, SHSM; *Missouri Democrat*, June 6, July 2, September 29, 1870; *St. Joseph Herald*, October 11, 1870; Arenson, *Great Heart of the Republic*, 192-93.

honestly identify themselves with the new order of things, and vote accordingly.” Whether it was because of political naiveté or blind optimism, Schurz had contributed to his own political downfall. With Democrats now in control of the state legislature, there was little chance Schurz would ever be re-elected to the Senate.⁷⁰

Although they retained their support in the border counties of the southwest, the Radicals were now the minority party in Missouri. “I am sorry we failed in our late gubernatorial contest, but believe we made a good and fair fight,” wrote E.J. Smith to McClurg shortly after the election. Knowing he could never be re-elected to the Senate under a Democratic legislature, Charles D. Drake pressed Grant for a lifetime appointment as a court of claims judge and retired from the Senate. On December 16, Drake rose in the Senate to issue his farewell address. In a speech laced with sarcasm, Drake recalled how he came to Republicanism later in life than Schurz. Contrasting his and Schurz’s political history, Drake argued that “it is better to be a new Republican and a faithful one, than an old Republican and a treacherous one.” Drake maintained that through their policy of disenfranchisement, he and other Radicals in Missouri had saved the state from the postwar fate of Kentucky and Maryland. But towards the end of his speech, Drake turned reflective. Acknowledging his “mistakes, shortcomings and indiscretions,” Drake implored his senatorial colleagues to remember him with these words: “In every struggle of his country with the spirit of rebellion and treason, in every uprising of human rights against the disposition of slavery and caste, in every conflict of his party with open foes and treacherous friends, he was ‘faithful found among the faithless.’”⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Missouri Statesman*, November 18, 1870; *Missouri Republican*, November 14, 1870; *Jefferson City People’s Tribune*, November 23, 1870; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 189; Cong. Globe, 41st Cong., 3rd Sess., 126 (1870-71); Trefousse, *Carl Schurz*, 191; Barclay, “The Liberal Republican Movement: The Undoing of Radicalism,” *MHR* 21, no. 1 (October 1926): 59-108.

⁷¹ E.J. Smith to Joseph W. McClurg, December 10, 1870, Governors Records, MSA; Cong. Globe, 41st Cong., 3rd Sess., Appendix, 1-8 (1870-71); *New York Times*, December 17, 1870.

From 1866 to 1870, Border South Republicanism was defined by a struggle between two different groups of Republicans. The fight for black civil and political rights was embraced by a more radical group, who pursued this agenda no matter the political cost. Another group, wary about developing a party around racial political issues, began to embrace reconciliation and economic issues as a potential path to electoral success. In the end, the latter group prevailed. The small and disorganized band of Republicans who had made up the core of the party in Kentucky had, by 1870, become an organized political force in a two-party state. In a postwar Kentucky whose political currents oftentimes made it seem more Confederate than Unionist, Republicans depended on political patronage to build the foundation of their party. Wary about embracing radical ideologies, Kentucky Republicans only embraced black suffrage when it became politically necessary. But once the Fifteenth Amendment was implanted, Republicans leaders like Harlan and Bristow chose to focus on economic reform, rather than civil rights issues. In Maryland, the state party spent most of the postwar period divided between a radical wing who felt black suffrage should be the priority, and a more moderate wing who did not. As in Kentucky, the realization that black suffrage would be the only key to political survival in Maryland came only after a series of electoral defeats. By 1870, Republicanism in Maryland would be ensconced in one united party, but it would be a party that would have to fuse black political hopes with white political realities. It was in Missouri that the limits of radicalism had been most clearly realized. A Radical faction had taken control of the political institutions of the state. In their quest to base Radical Missouri upon the tenets of absolute and unimpeachable loyalty to the Union, this faction alienated Republican allies who sought to move past the issues

of the war. As a result, a new Liberal Republicanism emerged in 1870, one based in reconciliation and a hope that Missouri could become the leading state in the nation.

The new Liberal Republican governor embodied this hope in his inaugural address in Jefferson City. To Benjamin Gratz Brown, Missouri had gone through a remarkable political transformation in six years, and he truly believed that his notion of Republicanism would represent the future for Missouri. Addressing the packed legislature, Brown asserted that Missouri had now “arrived at the close of revolution.” The “lingering animosities of civil war” had been supplanted by “an accepted reconciliation on all sides.” His election, Brown argued, signalled that Missourians were ready to devote their energies to “something worthier than battling the dead issues of a buried decade.” Six years earlier, Brown had urged that newly emancipated blacks in Missouri be enfranchised, fearing that if not immediately given the right to vote, they could be re-enslaved. He had suggested then Missouri was in the midst of a revolution, and that “revolutions never go backward.” Now, according to Brown, the revolution was over.⁷²

⁷² Brown, *Freedom and Franchise Inseparable*, 8; *Missouri Democrat*, January 10, 1871; *Missouri Republican*, January 10, 1871; *Jefferson City People's Tribune*, January 18, 1871.

Conclusion

By 1870, the Republican Party was firmly embedded in the political foundation of the Border South, but seemingly rooted as a permanent opposition party to Democratic rule. In Maryland, Republican politics fell into a familiar pattern. With their strength in the western and southern counties assured due to the black vote, Maryland Republicans could consistently compete there and win state and congressional seats, along with a host of elected positions in local and county governments. Yet control of the state itself remained outside the purview of Maryland Republicanism. It would not be until 1895 that Republicans would manage to win power in the state.¹ Benjamin Gratz Brown and Carl Schurz would attempt to replicate the results of the Liberal Republican victory in Missouri nationwide during the presidential election of 1872. However, the conditions which had led to its success in Missouri could not be duplicated nationwide, leading to a resounding defeat for Liberal Republicanism. Meanwhile, Missouri Democrats would use the influx of enfranchised white voters to sweep the state election, winning a majority of the state's congressional seats and securing control of the state legislature. Since the end of the Civil War, Republicans—moderates, Radicals, and Liberals—had controlled the state's politics. It would be thirty-five years before they would taste power again. The Democratic Party's return to power represented the end to an era in Missouri.² Long past the days when Republicans were viewed as abolitionists and radicals, the Kentucky Republican Party now looked beyond wartime issues towards a future with a platform of economic and

¹ Callcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 82-89; Brugger, *Maryland*, 401-02.

² Slap, *Doom of Reconstruction*, 172-198; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 155-15; William Gillette, "Election of 1872," in *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968*, eds., Arthur M. Schlesinger and Fred L. Israel, 4 vols. (New York: Chelsea House, 1971), 2:1328-29; Parrish, *History of Missouri*, 280-81; *Missouri Democrat*, November 8, 1872.

social improvements. As the animosities of the war receded into memory and as most white Kentuckians embraced a wartime memory that privileged reconciliation—albeit a reconciliation that was increasingly viewed through a Confederate lens—Kentucky Republicans would find opportunities to criticize Democrats for their tepid encouragement for immigration, their lack of support for school funding, and their mismanagement of state finances. From their uneasy beginnings in a war-ravaged state, Kentucky Republicans had proved that their party might not always win, but it could always compete electorally.³

That the Republican Party in the Border South assumed some measure of stability by 1870 was due in no small part to its long and winding evolution as a political party. This dissertation has argued that antislavery politicians in the Border South, fearing the expansion of slavery into the western United States and seeking to develop a viable political alternative in the region, began to promote an ideology of liberal political antislavery that was unique to the Border South. This liberal political antislavery promoted a message of white supremacy, a hostility to blacks, an irrefutable belief in the ideology of free white labor, and a desire to see the economic progress of their states unimpeded by slavery. This political ideology managed to attract enough supporters to form a viable wing of the Republican Party in the region. This liberal political antislavery consensus was ruptured by the Civil War, as different Republican factions emerged, each with their own view on emancipation and black civil rights. Nonetheless, elements of this ideology continued to influence the direction of postwar Republicanism in the Border South.

This dissertation has also argued that the Republican Party in the Border South played an important role in the politics of the Civil War era. The desire to avoid the appearance of being a

³ *Cincinnati Gazette*, November 29, 1873; Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky*, 49-71.

sectional party meant that Border South Republicans like the Blairs played a prominent role in the leadership of the party. Border South Republicans played a leading role in keeping Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri in the Union. Strongly influenced by Border South Republicans, party policies regarding emancipation and black civil rights were carefully calibrated to avoid offending local sensitivities so that a postwar Republican Party might be built up in the region. Although small in number and limited in their political success, Border South Republicans played an outsized role in the politics of the Civil War.

This examination of the emergence and establishment of the Republican Party in the Border South also attempts to direct scholars into new directions in Civil War era political history. The re-emergence of a traditional political history that incorporates the methodological approaches of the past half-century offers new opportunities for political historians of the Civil War era. Moving beyond Washington and the White House, political historians can re-examine statehouses, town halls, courthouses and campaigns while viewing them through the prism of race, class, and labor. Reflecting both national priorities and local concerns, these political contests offer a window into the ideological battles that took place at the political grassroots. By examining the Republican Party in the Border South, this dissertation has attempted to add to a more nuanced understanding of Civil War era politics.

As memories of the struggles over slavery and emancipation faded in the minds of Border Southerners, many of those who had been involved in the establishment of the Republican Party retreated from electoral politics. In 1870, Hugh Lennox Bond was nominated to the Fourth Circuit Court by President Grant. Sent by Grant to prosecute the Ku Klux Klan in South Carolina, Bond's court eventually convicted several Klansman in what was widely seen as test of

the federal government ability to enforce the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Bond remained an uncompromising Republican until his death in October 1893.⁴ Imbued with the vast patronage power of the Post Office, John A.J. Creswell retained his position as the undisputed leader of the Maryland Republican Party during the early 1870s. For five years, Creswell instituted significant reforms that increased the efficiency of postal service in the United States. Retiring to Cecil County in 1874, he remained the grand old man of the Maryland Republican Party, delivering speeches at political meetings throughout the county when the need arose. In 1891, at the age of sixty-three, Creswell died in his country mansion near Elkton. “[Creswell] could never bear to follow, but always aspired to be a leader,” reminisced one Maryland Republican after Creswell’s death. “He would try to carry the current upstream, and as a result often met a counter current coming down.”⁵

Like Frank Blair, both Preston and Montgomery had left the Republican Party after the war. Preston had been involved since the party’s first wintry convention at Pittsburgh in 1856. There, the slaveholding Marylander had presided over a disparate collection of abolitionists, Free-Soilers, ex-Whigs, and former Democrats in an attempt to form a new antislavery political party. During the war, Preston had inserted himself into national politics, promoting the political futures of his sons and advising Lincoln on war policy. When Andrew Johnson assumed the presidency, Preston saw an opportunity to ally with the new president to combat what he believed to be the worst impulses of Radical Republicanism: black suffrage and civil rights. Returning to the Democratic fold, Preston wrote stump speeches for Frank’s vice-presidential

⁴ Peter G. Fish, “A New Court Opens: The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit,” *Georgia Journal of Southern Legal History* 2 (Summer 1993): 173-74; Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 173-75; Kermit L. Hall, “Political Power and Constitutional Legitimacy: The South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials, 1871,” *Emory Law Journal* 3 (1983): 921-51; *Baltimore Sun*, October 25, 27, 1893.

⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, June 25, 1874; *Annapolis Gazette*, June 30, 1874; Friedenber, “John A.J. Creswell,” 144-43; Ulysses S. Grant to John A.J. Creswell, June 24, 1874, *PG*, 25:136-37; *Annapolis Gazette*, August 19, 1873; *Baltimore Sun*, December 24, 1891.

campaign. For years, Frank Blair had been the favorite son and the great political hope of the Blair family. After Frank's death in 1875, eighty-five-year-old Preston lost much of his spark of life. He died a year later.⁶ The last of the Blair triumvirate that had dominated Border South Republican politics for so many years, Montgomery, lived until 1883. After his failed attempt to build a Conservative party in Maryland, Montgomery returned to the Democratic fold. In 1882, Montgomery won the Democratic nomination for Maryland's Sixth Congressional District. Although he had spent most of his life in politics, organized political campaigns, and had been a member of Lincoln's cabinet, this would be the first time Montgomery had ever run for elected office. Facing an energetic and young Republican candidate, and backed with the full weight of the Democratic machine in Maryland, Montgomery spent the election campaigning through the traditionally Republican western counties of the state. He was defeated by 1280 votes.⁷

In 1874 Benjamin Helm Bristow was appointed by Grant as Secretary of the Treasury. Commencing an aggressive program of reform, Bristow soon gained a national reputation. Hoping to parlay his reputation as a fearless reformer into higher public office, Bristow sought the Republican nomination for president in 1876. But at the national convention Bristow failed to secure enough support. With few political opportunities in Kentucky, Bristow moved to New York City to join a law firm. He continued to dabble in Republican politics until his death in 1896. John Marshall Harlan ran again for the governorship of Kentucky in 1875, but lost despite a valiant effort. Although regarded as a national figure, Harlan understood that future political success for a Republican from Kentucky could only come through appointment or election to high national office. Although Harlan was considered for a number of political positions, President Rutherford B. Hayes eventually appointed him to the Supreme Court, where he would

⁶ Smith, *Francis Preston Blair*, 436-37; Smith, *Blair Family*, 463-64; *New York Times*, October 20, 1876.

⁷ *Baltimore Sun*, October 2, 13, 1882; *Democratic Advocate*, October 21, 1882.

sit until his death in 1911. Harlan became known as “The Great Dissenter” for his numerous dissents on civil rights decision handed down by the Court, such as *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which upheld the constitutionality of segregation laws. Harlan’s appointment had personal consequences for his relationship with Bristow. For years, both men had been the driving force behind Kentucky Republicanism. But Bristow’s lifelong ambition was to be appointed to the Supreme Court, and he bitterly resented that Harlan had been chosen instead of him. After Harlan’s appointment, the two men would never speak again.⁸

After being defeated in the 1870 congressional election, James Speed never ran for elected office again. His life reflected the contradictions of antislavery in Kentucky. A moderate antislavery man before the war, James had gradually changed his outlook on slavery, becoming one of the founders of the Kentucky Republican Party and a fervent advocate for black civil rights. After his political retirement, he concentrated on his law firm and his family, spending his days at his country home outside Louisville which he called “The Poplars,” until his death in 1887.⁹ His brother Joshua, though less politically involved than James, nonetheless played an important role in keeping Kentucky in the Union during the early years of the war, and was crucial in the development of the Kentucky Republican Party. Becoming a prominent Louisville businessman, he became involved in banking, railroads, and hotels. He died in 1882. Joshua’s historical legacy remains forever tied to Abraham Lincoln. As one of Lincoln’s oldest friends, Joshua Speed remains a central figure in understanding Lincoln’s character and temperament.¹⁰

⁸ Webb, *Benjamin Helm Bristow*, 214-52; Beth, *John Marshall Harlan*, 98-132; Linda Przybyszewski, *The Republic According to John Marshall Harlan* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Webb, *Benjamin Helm Bristow*, 269-72.

⁹ Cole, “James Speed and the Emancipationist’s Dilemma,” 44-45; *Louisville Commercial*, October 20, 1870; Speed, *Speed: A Personality*, 117-36; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 30, 1882.

¹⁰ Kincaid, “Lincoln’s Confidential Agent,” 99-110; *Louisville Courier-Journal*, May 30, 1882. The friendship between Lincoln and Joshua Speed had recently been explored by Susan Krause, “Abraham Lincoln and Joshua Speed, Attorney and Client,” *Illinois Historical Journal* 89, No. 1 (Spring 1996): 35-50; Charles B. Strozier, *Your*

After returning from his diplomatic post in Russia in 1869, Cassius Clay found himself increasingly out of step with Kentucky Republican politics. Clay, who had once condemned the aristocratic slaveholders of Kentucky as tyrants, now saw the Radicals in Washington as oppressive and despotic towards the South. Abandoning the Republican Party, he openly joined the Democrats in 1875. Hoping that a Democratic administration elected in 1876 would bring forth the cabinet position he so desperately wanted, Clay's hopes were dashed when Hayes won the presidency. Retiring to his estate in Madison County, Clay became a lonely recluse. So long a pivotal part of Kentucky political life, he was gradually forgotten as the years passed and he grew estranged from family and friends. On July 22, 1903, Cassius Marcellus Clay, after a lifetime of surviving knife fights and gunshot wounds, died in bed at the age of ninety-three. As Clay lay dying, a bolt of lightning struck the statue of his cousin Henry Clay in Lexington's main cemetery, severing the statue's head clean off. One newspaper editor, upon observing the strange concurrence of events and reflecting on Cassius Clay's flair for the dramatic, wondered whether the lightning bolt had not simply mixed up its Clays.¹¹

Charles D. Drake, the leader of Missouri Radicalism, had resigned from the U.S. Senate in 1870 to take become chief justice of the United State Court of Claims on which he served until his retirement in 1885. After suffering from pneumonia, Drake died in Washington, D.C. in 1892, at the age of eighty-one. "Judge Drake himself was the most bitterly hatred man in Missouri," wrote one Kansas City newspaper in its obituary. "If popular indignation could kill a man he would have been blasted by the lightning's breath. But he never wavered, nor flinched,

Friend Forever, A. Lincoln: The Enduring Friendship of Abraham Lincoln and Joshua Speed (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

¹¹ Smiley, *Lion of White Hall*, 230-45; *Lexington Leader*, July 22, 1903; *Lexington Morning Herald*, July 23, 1903; *Louisville Evening Post*, in the *Lexington Leader*, July 26, 1903.

nor shook, nor changed.”¹² After 1870, Carl Schurz remained in a precarious political position in Missouri. His efforts in forming a Liberal Republican wing of the Republican Party had resulted in the Democratic Party returning to power in the state legislature. When Schurz’s senatorial term came up for re-election, the Democrat-controlled legislature elected a former Confederate general instead of Schurz. Despite the loss, Schurz’s political career was not over. As concerns over the economy and political corruption supplanted the issues of Reconstruction in the minds of northern Republicans, Schurz’s obsession with civil service reform served him in good stead with Hayes. Appointed as Secretary of the Interior, Schurz attempted, with limited success, to rid his department of the political patronage which had formed the backbone of American party politics for so long. Remaining active in Republican politics for the remainder of his life, Schurz died in 1906, perhaps the most famous German-American of the nineteenth-century.¹³

As the issues involving Reconstruction, race and civil rights grew less important for Republicans in the 1870s, black Republicans in Missouri gradually found their political opportunities foreclosed. With the Republican Party out of power in Missouri, and congressional Republicans seemingly focused on economic matters, black issues increasingly were forgotten. Although attempts were made by black leaders like Charlton Tandy and James Milton Turner to develop political clubs which would help elect blacks to local and state offices, these efforts were often ignored by white Republicans. In 1878, Turner sought the Republican nomination for the Third Congressional District. Even with his reputation as a black leader, Turner failed to secure enough votes to win the nomination. By the 1880s, Turner had grown disenchanted with the Republican Party. Organizing a black men’s convention in Jefferson City, Turner and the

¹² *New York Times*, April 2, 1892; *Kansas City Star*, April 5, 1892.

¹³ Trefousse, *Carl Schurz*, 216-234; *Missouri Democrat*, May 11, 1874, January 20, 1875; *Jefferson City People’s Tribune*, January 20, 1875.

delegates resolved that the black voter “henceforth not consider himself a subject for colonization and appropriation by any party,” but rather that the “individual right to think, speak, and act for himself be untrammelled by party chains.” Joining the Democratic Party, Turner remained active in Missouri politics until his death in 1915. Charlton Tandy remained committed to fighting for black civil rights in St. Louis. In 1879 he helped to raise thousands of dollars to help the “Exodusters,” black families from the South fleeing racial violence to settle in the West. Occupying a variety of patronage positions, Tandy remained politically active in the Republican Party for the remainder of his life, always pressing the party to do more to reward its black supporters.¹⁴

After concluding his term as governor, Benjamin Gratz Brown prepared to leave public life again. In his farewell address, he reflected on the changes that Missouri had undergone during his nearly twenty years of public service. Missouri, said Brown, was a “grand state, and deserves to be governed grandly.” The state had undergone “two great revolutions in political thought,” and Missourians “may feel well assured that its destiny is not yet fulfilled.” Moving to Kirkwood, a suburb of St. Louis, Brown rebuilt his law practice. Long afflicted by heart problems, Brown overtaxed himself while dealing with one difficult railroad case. He died in December of 1885, at the age of fifty-nine. Brown, wrote the *Missouri Republican*, had been a “conspicuous actor and participant through all phases of a trying era.” Missouri’s politics during the war had been convulsive, paradoxical, and dramatic. Brown’s own politics were similar. He had fought for the civil rights of blacks and ex-rebels alike. He himself had climbed the political ladder, becoming a state legislator, a U.S. Senator, and a Governor. Like the state itself, Brown

¹⁴ Lawrence O. Christensen, “J. Milton Turner: An Appraisal,” MHR 70, no. 1 (October 1975): 14-19; *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, August 26, 1882; Bryan M. Jack, *The St. Louis African American Community and the Exodusters* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 24-25, 76-79; “Biography,” Tandy Papers, SHSM.

had undergone a dramatic political transformation: from an emancipationist Benton Democrat, to a Unionist, to a Radical Republican, to a Liberal Republican, and finally returning to the Democratic Party. For years, Brown's grave in Oak Hill Cemetery consisted of a simple marker. In 1904, the state of Missouri finally erected an obelisk which bore the inscription, "In honor of one of her most illustrious citizens."¹⁵

Four years after his death, the friends of Frank Blair formed an association to build a monument to him. Organized by his old friends James O. Broadhead and Peter Foy, the Blair Monument Association would endeavor to raise money, design a statue, and find a place in St. Louis to put it. It was not easy. Fundraising for the statue was harder than anticipated, with one association member condemning the "ingratitude of the men of today" who did not recognize the role that Blair had played in saving Missouri for the Union. The association debated over what inscription should be placed at the base of the statue's pedestal. Some wanted a simple recounting of Blair's career, while others wanted a more thorough account of Blair's political legacy.¹⁶

On May 21, 1885, Blair's statue was unveiled in a corner of Forest Park. Despite inclement weather, nearly fifteen thousand people attended the ceremony. As rain poured down upon the audience, speaker after speaker extolled Blair's role in keeping Missouri in the Union, his military career during the war, and his campaign against rebel disenfranchisement in Missouri. Peter Foy, who had been an editor of the *Missouri Democrat* during its prewar days, praised Blair for "[standing] up for the men of his own blood, threatened in the cotton states with

¹⁵ *Jefferson City People's Tribune*, January 8, 1873; Peterson, *Freedom and Franchise*, 228-33; *Missouri Republican*, December 14, 1885; Daniel Grissom, "Personal Recollections of Distinguished Missourians: B. Gratz Brown," *MHR* 19, no. 3 (April 1925): 426; *Jefferson Daily Tribune*, July 13, 1904.

¹⁶ John S. Griffin, May 15, 1882, Frank Blair Monument Association Records, MHM.

the domination of the inferior race.” William T. Sherman reminisced about his late subordinate, noting that “as a citizen [Blair] claimed and exercised the widest range of individual opinion and action; but he was never ungenerous, unmanly, or unkind.” The ailing James S. Rollins took the opportunity to remark upon his old friend’s “liberality and magnanimity after the rebellion was overthrown.” Missouri Governor John S. Marmaduke, who had invaded his home state as a Confederate general, extolled Blair as “a typical lover of pure American liberty.”¹⁷

The only speaker to contemplate the complexity of Blair’s political history was Reverend Truman M. Post. Post had been an old friend of Blair’s, who had shared his antislavery and his Unionist beliefs. Unlike the other speakers, who mostly celebrated Blair as a defender of disenfranchised rebels and a critic of postwar Radicalism, Post’s oration analysed Blair’s political antislavery in a thoughtful and introspective manner. Halfway through his oration, Post attempted to crystallize the very essence of Blair’s Border South Republicanism. “It has often occurred to me that we have most imperfectly appreciated the position of antislavery men in a slave State before the war,” said Post. Unlike the antislavery men in far-off free communities, “surrounded and shielded by popular sympathy,” Blair had been forced to advocate for antislavery within a slave system. Said Post:

In order to work within a system, you must live within it—that is, must live in a measure *en rapport* with the people in it, through whom and among whom you have to work. You must not be so far in advance of them as to put yourself out of sympathy with them. You have to work, using as leverage the admissions of wrong or inexpediency, in reference to the evil to be reformed, already conceded among them, as a means of securing further convictions and further action, and must be able to suggest some possible way of escape from the evil, short of what they will shrink from as the very subversion of society.¹⁸

¹⁷ Dedication Programme, Frank Blair Monument Association Records, MHM, 10, 40-43; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, May 22, 1885.

¹⁸ Dedication Programme, Frank Blair Monument Association Records, MHM, 25-26.

Post never had the opportunity to deliver his oration. With rain pouring down on the spectators, and thunder and lightning all around, the committee deemed it prudent to skip the speech on account of the weather.¹⁹

Attempting to conclude the ceremony, Blair's daughter Christine unveiled the monument. The bronze statute presented Blair in full oratorical flourish, grasping a speech in one hand while emphasizing a point with the other. It was a pose reminiscent of Blair's many stump speeches throughout his political career.²⁰ Inscribed on the base of the statue was a recounting of Blair's many political roles: The free soil leader of the West; the saviour of the state from secession; the patriotic citizen-soldier; and finally, the "magnanimous statesman, who, as soon as the war was over, breasted the torrent of proscription, to restore the citizenship of the disenfranchised Southern people." That Frank Blair had been a Republican was not mentioned.

¹⁹ T.A. Post, *Truman Marcellus Post, D.D.: A Biography, Personal and Literary* (Boston: 1891), 420-21.

²⁰ *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, May 22, 1885; Koerner, *Memoirs*, 2:736-40; Parrish, *Frank Blair*, 289.

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