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“A Steady Opposition to Every Evolution of Radicalism”: Western Conservatism in Civil War Era Indiana

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“A Steady Opposition to Every Evolution of Radicalism”: Western Conservatism in Civil War
Era Indiana

by

Andrew Wayne Wiley

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Abstract

This dissertation examines conservatives in Indiana politics from the 1820s to the 1870s. During the Civil War Era, northern conservatives helped push Abraham Lincoln into the White House in 1860, and then forced an end to Reconstruction in 1877. While many historians have examined their motivations, they often lump conservatives in the northeast states with those in the West. Due to the state's population makeup, conservatives never lost their political punch in Indiana, making the state an ideal location to study western conservatives. Since they were so influential, every political party appealed to them. A broad examination of conservatives in Indiana between the 1820s and the 1870s reveals one key difference between western and northeastern conservatives. Although they shared a common reverence for the Union with other conservatives, those in the west were hardline racists devoted to white supremacy. They supported Indian removal while helping pass laws that prohibited African American migration. Once the Whig Party collapsed in the early 1850s conservatives, fearful of disunion, backed Democrats in 1856 and staved off a Republican victory. When the South threatened to push slavery westward, threatening white supremacy in the new western territories, western conservatives sided with Republicans and helped elect Abraham Lincoln. When Lincoln turned the Civil War into a war for emancipation, conservatives drifted towards the Democrats, forcing Republicans to water down their emancipationist rhetoric. Once the war ended, conservatives once again threatened to leave the Republican Party over African American citizenship and suffrage. Republicans explained Reconstruction as a strictly southern phenomenon that left white supremacy in the North intact. After Republicans passed the 15th Amendment and ensured African American suffrage, Indiana conservatives started leaving the party. Their racism forced

Republicans to make concessions that ultimately led to the end of Reconstruction. Although they revered the Union as much as other conservatives, they wanted a Union with white supremacy.

Preface

Portions of this dissertation were presented at the 2017 annual meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, and the 2017 annual meeting of the Midwestern History Association. Neither organization published any material.

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For Grandma and Allen

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Introduction

On an episode of *The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell*, Glenn Beck, a self-proclaimed conservative pundit, lamented Donald J. Trump's success in the 2016 presidential campaign. Beck was a longtime conservative commentator who grew up with the conservatism of Ronald Reagan. As a candidate in 1980, the future fortieth President and his party ran on a platform with a specific set of principles. The United States had hit a rough patch and a slight majority of Americans laid the country's problems at the feet of big government. Reagan's supporters argued big government interfered with private enterprise; Democrats had vested too many powers in the federal government. They wanted free trade, lower taxes, less government spending, and a strengthened American presence on the world stage. The platform committee summed up their position saying, "We seek to restore the family, the neighborhood, the community, and the workplace as vital alternatives in our national life to ever-expanding federal power." Beck was a devout follower of those principles; Trump was not nearly as devout.¹

In the late summer of 2016, Trump had stormed through the Republican Party primary and won the nomination. He did so while rejecting nearly every piece of the Republican platform of 1980. In fiery speeches, the Republican presidential hopeful had called for tariffs, a border wall, and then pitched angry conspiracy theories about immigrants bringing crime, drugs, and anarchy. He even called for isolationism on the world stage. The United States should withdraw as many troops as it could and possibly abandon its NATO allies in Europe. Beck was perplexed. How could Republican voters support this man over his opponents? Every policy, every speech, and every mannerism seemed anathema to the Republican Party of only a few years before. A distraught Beck even disavowed the term conservative saying, "I don't even call myself a

¹ "Interview with Glenn Beck," *The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell*, August 24, 2016; The American Presidency Project, "Republican Party Platforms: Republican Party Platform of 1980-July 15, 1980," <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25844> (accessed June 20, 2018).

conservative anymore, I don't even know what it means . . .” Beck and those like him were aghast. In their view Trump was radical. Nevertheless he won.²

The debate over Trump's conservatism continued after he won the presidency. Never Trump Republicans lamented as the new executive slapped tariffs on imports, threatened to tear up trade agreements, separated families who had illegally crossed the border with Mexico. Former President Obama, a Democrat, gave his thoughts on Trump's conservatism. At a speech in late 2018, the forty-fourth president said:

None of this is conservative. I don't mean to pretend I'm channeling Abraham Lincoln now, but that's not what he had in mind, I think, when he helped form the Republican Party. It's not conservative. It sure isn't normal. It's radical. It's a vision that says the protection of our power and those who back us is all that matters, even when it hurts the country. It's a vision that says the few who can afford a high-priced lobbyist and unlimited campaign contributions set the agenda. And over the past two years, this vision is now nearing its logical conclusion.

Oddly enough, Obama found some agreement with his longtime opponent Beck.³

Roughly one hundred and sixty years earlier, a previous generation of Americans debated the same issue. By 1856, anxieties about the future of slavery had finished off the Whig Party in the North and, amid the turmoil, northern conservative Whigs searched for a new home. The devoted followers had identified themselves as conservative and they wanted to find a new conservative party. Thinking these conservatives were the key to victory, politicians in the free states called themselves and their party the one true conservative entity in the race. Republicans, Democrats, and Know-Nothings made stump speeches, published editorials, wrote letters, adopted platforms, and passed circulars branding their party conservative. They argued all other

² “Interview with Glenn Beck”; Time “Presidential Announcement Speech-June 16, 2015,” *Time Magazine* <http://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/> (accessed June 10, 2018).

³ Barack Obama, “Speech at Illinois University” (speech, Champagne, Illinois, September 7, 2018), *USA Today* <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2018/09/07/president-barack-obamas-speech-transcript-slamming-trump/1225554002/>. When did you access this document?

politicians were radical disunionists, sure to provoke southern secession and a likely civil war.

Former Whigs, among others, asked one question: which party was the true conservative party?⁴

One resident from Indiana, a self identified Young Whig, thought he had the answer. After years of devotion to the Whig Party, he threw his lot in with the Democrats. Hoping to sway others, the young man explained his decision in the state's largest Democratic newspaper. He first detailed the long history of the Whig Party and its constant opposition to the radicalism that threatened the Union. According to the young man, the old Whig and Democratic Parties were equally conservative and conservatism was "a steady opposition to every evolution of radicalism." A Republican victory meant disunion and threaten white supremacy. Angered at the Republican Party, the anonymous writer saved his greatest vitriol for Millard Fillmore the former Whig President. According to the new Democratic convert, Fillmore had allied himself with the Know-Nothing radicals; he had betrayed his old conservative principles. Both radical parties had to be stopped. The only conservatives left in the field were the Democrats and their presidential nominee James Buchanan.⁵

The Young Whig and modern day Trump supporters shared much in common. Both claimed they were the real conservatives following the only conservative candidate in the race. Each had a legitimate claim to the title. Though more than one-hundred years separated them, they looked for a response to the perceived crises that threatened their idyllic societies. For the Whig in 1856, his solution meant changing political allegiances. Conservatives, working through the Whig Party, had fought to protect the Union from radicalism; Democrats promised to carry on the fight. For Trump supporters it meant supporting a person and policies contrary to the Republican Party's leaders and policies of the immediate past to bring back a time when, as

⁴ Matthew Mason, *Apostle of Union: A Political Biography of Edward Everett* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 210-14.

⁵ *Weekly State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 31, 1856.

Trump said, “we were not pushed around, we were respected by everybody, we had just won a war, we were pretty much doing what we had to do.”

Both groups were equally conservative and demonstrate a key facet of conservatism in American politics. Conservatism has always had different meanings at different times and locations. It has never been one consistent slate of policies or issues.⁶

In their own day, western conservatives shared many similarities with those in the South and East. Support for some tariffs, internal improvements, a national bank, and a reverence for the Union bonded them together. The similarities ended there. Support for white supremacy was a foundational tenet among conservatives in the western states. When crises hit the nation, their devotion to white supremacy had a dramatic effect on their choices at the polls. When the South threatened to push slavery into the western territories, western conservatives balked. If southerners brought their slaves with them, they could outcompete free laborers. It also meant an end to any chance to completely exclude African Americans, slave or free, from the territories. They supported Abraham Lincoln for president in 1860 as the best way to block southern slave owners. Once Republican policies threatened to end white supremacy in their own states, western conservatives wavered in their support. To bring them back, Republicans watered down their more radical voices. They sold emancipation as a war measure to save the Union, then pledged their party to white supremacy. Well before the national party abandoned Reconstruction in 1877, Republicans in the western states had long argued for its end. The conservative vote in those states was too important to lose.

Books about the Civil War and Reconstruction could fill hundreds of shelves. Most historians have reached one major conclusion: slavery caused the war. Starting at the

⁶ Gregory Krieg, “Donald Trump Reveals when he thinks America was Great,” *CNN*, March 28, 2016, accessed September 1, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/03/26/politics/donald-trump-when-america-was-great/index.html>.

Constitutional convention in 1787, debates over slavery's future ebbed and flowed periodically until the tensions burst onto the battlefield in 1861. Still, other questions remain. Although historian James McPherson noted the many books already on the bookshelves in 1988, the sheer volume of scholarship never intimidated him. He confidently predicted there was room for more work. Over three decades later, his statement stands. Why northerners suddenly confronted southerners over slavery after years of acquiescence remains an elusive question. The postwar years make that question more difficult. Although they spearheaded emancipation, Republicans later abandoned their efforts at Reconstruction in the South and ex-Confederates returned to power. Since a majority of northerners chose to confront slavery in 1860, the search for an answer lies with the northern public.⁷

There was one group of northerners who clearly explained their motivations during the tumultuous times: abolitionists. Antislavery northerners had a single goal, end slavery immediately. To put their convictions into action, they attacked the southern institution as an offense against God and labeled southern slaveowners hypocritical sinners for keeping their fellow humans in bondage. They sent tracts, held bazaars, formed political parties, sent petitions to Congress, and supported escaped slaves. When southerners threatened secession, abolitionists paid little heed to their threats. Amidst the sectional debates, they kept up their antislavery crusade. A few believed the North was better off in the long run if the South left the Union. When the war started, abolitionists jumped at the chance to fight the South. Unfortunately for their cause, abolitionists, as many historians point out, were a minority in the U.S. democracy. It took far more votes to destroy the institution.⁸

⁷ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 8.

⁸ Corey M. Brooks, *Liberty Power: Antislavery Third Parties and the Transformation of American Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 9-13; Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 2-4; Bruce Laurie, *Beyond Garrison:*

Historians have pointed to a variety of motivations for those northerners who ignored the abolitionists. These conservatives ignored abolitionist warning about a slave power and compromised with the South. When the Republican Party emerged, to get them on board, historians such as Tyler Anbinder have argued Republicans damped down their radical voices and played up the threat from southern slave owners. Russell McClintock noted the many attempts at compromise over slavery up until the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter. Hardly racial egalitarians, conservatives were reluctant emancipators. For more evidence, historians point to the postwar years. Republicans, although they supported Reconstruction for twelve years, abandoned it in 1877 leaving their African American allies to fend for themselves. While James Oakes, Eric Foner, and others argued Republicans eventually warmed to emancipation, all agree there were northern conservatives who equivocated on slavery and rights for African Americans.⁹

Of all the possible motivations for conservative northerners, one stands out. For most Americans in the nineteenth century, preserving the Union was paramount and drove the continual push for compromise. Elizabeth Varon zeroed in on this commitment. She argued devotion to the Union was the primary reason most Americans supported compromise. Northerners and Southerners, Democrats and Whigs, placed the survival of the Union above

Antislavery and Social Reform (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-10; Reinhard O. Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840-1848: Antislavery Third Party Politics in the United States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 1-4; W. Caleb McDaniel, *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists & Transatlantic Reform* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2013), 3-15.

⁹ Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know-Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), xiv; Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 8-14; Peter B. Knupfer, *The Union As It Is: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 207-11; Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 7-12, 225, 273, 275-80; James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013), xv-xxii; Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), xviii-xx; James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 108-17.

sectional strife well until the late 1850s when compromise gave way to conflict. If the Union survived, the legacy of the founding fathers survived with it. Varon was not alone. Gary Gallagher argued that saving the Union was a far greater motivation for northern soldiers than emancipation. The compromises, the subsequent war effort, and the turn towards emancipation were means to preserve the Union alone. Ending slavery was an afterthought.¹⁰

Historian George M. Frederickson asserted the Union had an even greater meaning for northern conservatives. In his examination of New England intellectuals, Frederickson contended nineteenth-century conservatives believed key institutions held society together. The Church, social organizations, and others provided essential stabilizers that ensured a well-ordered society. An orderly society prevented the social anarchy that threatened freedom. In the early American republic, conservatives found solidarity with their counterparts in Britain. As Adam I.P. Smith pointed out, these early American conservatives looked to Edmund Burke and others opposed to the anarchy in France for inspiration. Radicalism in France had destroyed the monarchy sending the nation into chaos. Conservatism was an opposition to the revolutionary mob; mobs of course were dangerous threats to society.¹¹

Burke had his contemporaries in the United States. The French Revolution frightened many Americans and conservatives remained skittish towards the possibility of revolutionary mobs terrorizing their own country. Although George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and most Americans decried factions, divisions emerged in the new republic. Though they rarely took the name, followers of Burke's ideas organized behind Alexander Hamilton. For Americans, among

¹⁰ Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 1-15; Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 2011), 1-2, 4-5.

¹¹ George M. Frederickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 23-24, 44; Adam I.P. Smith, *The Stormy Present: Conservatism and the Problem of Slavery in Northern Politics, 1846-1865* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 9-10, 15.

the institutions, one stood above all as the chief guarantor of freedom: the Union. As long as it endured, freedom endured. Hoping to preserve it, American conservatives developed a series of policies that ensured its survival. Hamilton's ideas about a national bank, protective tariffs, together with ideas about a limited franchise, attracted early conservatives petrified about another revolution. Each protected and strengthened the institutions in the country and stopped mob rule. They decried Jefferson and those who wanted to expand the franchise or push the country westward as revolutionaries akin to the fanatics in France. They fell in line with the Federalist Party in opposition to Jefferson's Republican Party.¹²

The Federalists were unpopular outside of New England where merchants favored the party's economic policies and Republicans crushed them by the early 1820s. However, conservatives remained. They still called for a national bank, a reasonably high tariff, massive funding for internal improvements, and slowed westward expansion. They believed each policy protected the Union, the main guarantor of freedom. A new political party developed around these policies, the Whig Party, which became a political home of conservatives. They even started using the word conservative in association with their party and its policies. Their devotion to the Union took another form when the country confronted the calamities over slavery. During the sectional crises in the 1840s and 1850s, conservatives provided crucial votes that nursed the compromises through Congress. Rather than an anarchical mob out to behead a king, overthrow institutions such as the Church, and plunge the nation into chaos, the Union faced radicalisms of

¹² Jeffrey L. Paisley, *The First Presidential Contest: 1796 and the Founding of American Democracy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 30-32, 42, 44, 49, 63-69; Adam I. P. Smith, "The Emergence of Conservatism as a Political concept in the United States before the Civil War," *Civil War History* (Expected 2020): 1-2, 5-6; Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 98-99, 303-05, 735.

a different kind. They had to guard the chief institution that preserved freedom against the many radical threats.¹³

Despite their hesitation towards revolutionary upheavals, conservatives believed in some inevitable change. However, they wanted moderate change through established institutions. Moderated progress could maintain the institutions they cherished. Transportation advances brought the country together while it boosted the economy. Both developments protected the Union. Daniel Walker Howe argued conservatives among the Whigs believed new technologies would transform and change mankind for the better while religion convinced many conservatives that the nation could improve collectively in economic and spiritual matters. While radical change was terrible, gradual measured change that stabilized their cherished institutions was desirable. As Howe argued, Henry Clay believed his American System, along with technological progress, generated economic security. Both could bring the nation together ensuring freedom on the continent through the survival of the Union.¹⁴

The battles between Democrats and their Whig foes changed the political language in the country. When Americans said conservatism or conservative, they generally meant a measured approach to change. Before the 1840s, Americans primarily associated the terms with the French Revolution, parties in Britain, or the reactionaries to the revolutions in Europe. Conservatives had stemmed the bloody revolution in France, dueled with the liberals in the British Parliament, and worked to tamp down the violent uprisings in Europe. By the 1840s, Americans gradually associated the terms conservative and conservatism with the Whig Party, often using conservative as another term for Whig. In his study of the terms, Smith found few Americans

¹³ Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2, 7, 129-31, 250-55, 543, 551-52, 554.

¹⁴ Smith, *The Stormy Present*, 2, 7; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 8-10; David Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 270-71.

used either word in politics after the French Revolution. Once Democrats battled the Whigs, both sides used it regularly. Politicians even used the terms conservative and liberal interchangeably as both indicated a well measured careful approach to change.¹⁵

Many northern conservatives brought their belief in gradual change and their devotion to the Union into the debates over slavery. Smith and Mason both argued northern conservatives hated slavery just as much as their abolitionist neighbors for a variety of reasons. They viewed the institution as a detriment to the country's morals sure to eventually bring down the Union. Although abolitionists labeled conservatives as proslavery sympathizers—some of the first to conflate northern conservatives with southern sympathizers—both authors concluded the abolitionists were wrong. Both point to conservative support for emancipation during the war. Immediate emancipation before the war likely meant disunion, anarchy, and thousands of African Americans slaves with little land or work. Once slavery threatened the Union's survival, northern conservatives cheered. They backed emancipation during the war believing an end to slavery meant saving the Union. Once the war ended, some conservatives backed off Reconstruction, limiting some of the more ambitious goals for rebuilding the South.¹⁶

Though the foregoing description of a conservative that thought ill of slavery yet put the Union first fits many northeastern conservatives, it fails in other regions of the country. Conservatives, as Samuel P. Huntington noted, wanted to defend institutions from extreme radical threats. However, the threats to institutions differ depending on time and place. For example, conservatives on the European continent followed Burke's writings. Because they were dealing with different situations, they adapted some of his ideas to deal with the radicalism

¹⁵ Smith, "The Emergence of Conservatism as a Political concept in the United States before the Civil War," 1-2, 8-14; Joshua Lynn, "Stephen Douglas's Enlightenment: Racial Difference and Illiberal Democracy in the Civil War Era Political Thought," *Civil War History* (Expected 2020): 2-5.

¹⁶ Smith, *The Stormy Present*, 16-22, 226-232; Matthew Mason, *Apostle of Union: A Political Biography of Edward Everett* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 7-8.

threatening their institutions. Though defense of certain institutions remained a core piece of conservatism, conservatives have to adopt different strategies to deal with different threats. However, these are means to an end rather than an end. Conservatives merely used them to defend the institutions they believed held society together. This raises several points. As the threats change to their favored institutions, conservatives can add or discard policies over time. Conservatives can also differ on what constitutes a clear and present radical threat to those same institutions.¹⁷

Conservatives in the United States differed with each other as much as those in Europe. The most obvious place where the Northeastern mold of conservatives fails was the South. In his work, Smith acknowledged the vast differences between northern and southern conservatives. Slavery permeated the region; its survival came first for most southerners. For a time, southern conservatives subsumed their fears over slavery's future, ignored the fire-eating radicals, and compromised with the North. Their willingness to compromise had a limit. If compromise with the North threatened slavery, southern conservatives joined their secessionist neighbors and leave the Union. After Lincoln won the Presidency, southern conservatives concluded staying in the Union jeopardized slavery. Although conservatives in four slave states convinced others that the Union protected slavery far better than a southern confederacy, southern conservatives provided the final push for secession in most slave states.¹⁸

While the Northeast was full of conservatives skittish about slavery, the North was not a monolith; there were vast differences between the many free states. As Christopher Phillips and several others have reminded readers, there was a third side to the Civil War era—the West. Due

¹⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, "Conservatism as an Ideology," *The American Political Science Review* 51 No. 2 (1957): 461-70.

¹⁸ Smith, *The Stormy Present*, 20-22; Michael D. Robinson, *A Union Indivisible: Secession and the Politics of Slavery in the Border South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 2-11.

to settlement, geography, and environment, the states west of the Appalachian Mountains and north of the Ohio River were a complex mix of peoples and cultures. Southerners moved into the area quickly after the American Revolution and New Englanders followed almost immediately after. The new settlers encountered a different environment than what they had left and the complex mix of settlers created a different society with different political cultures and a different outlook on the role of the federal government and race.¹⁹

Varying patterns of settlement created further divisions within the newer states. New England born settlers dominated states in the upper Midwest such as Michigan where they found land to settle on. These New England born settlers carried their own traditions with them. They transported their own unique culture to their new home and created what one historian called, “the Yankee West.” When Stephen A. Douglas forced the Kansas-Nebraska Act through Congress, the transplanted New Englanders in those states embraced antislavery. They backed John C. Frémont for president in 1856 and the first Republican presidential candidate swept the upper Midwestern states. Republicans reveled in the crushing victories concluding the upper Midwest was safe for the next election. Some historians note the upper Midwest was a region within a region with its own distinctiveness. Things were different further south.²⁰

The states along the Ohio River, what some historians have called the “lower North” were far different than states such as Michigan and Wisconsin. Settlers in those states along the Ohio River had vastly different origins. With their close proximity to the new states, Kentuckians and Virginians crossed the river looking for opportunities well away from slavery, wealthy

¹⁹ Christopher Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5-10; Adam Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 2-4.

²⁰ Susan E. Gray, *The Yankee West: Community Life on the Michigan Frontier* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 4, 9-14; William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 105-06, 413-14.

slaveowners, or disputed property lines. Migration rates increased in the 1820s and 1830s as southerners came to the new states in droves. Those born in slave states outnumbered their New England born neighbors and brought their own cultures to their new homes. As Phillips, Matthew E. Stanley, Nicole Etcheson, and others have argued, the southern influence gave these states north of the Ohio River a different political culture; it also influenced their views on race.²¹

Phillips, among many others, pointed out the ingrained racism in these western states along the Ohio River. Although racial prejudice was ever present in eastern states, most westerners were more ardent in their racism. When President Andrew Jackson called for Indian removal in southern states, westerners cheered his calls hoping to push tribes in their states further west. Memories of recent conflicts with Natives Americans were still fresh in their minds. Westerners reserved their greatest hatred for African Americans. Fearful of more African Americans coming into the region, residents in two states adopted laws to discourage African American settlement. Although upland southerners were certainly more prejudiced than the New Englanders who settled in the West, westerners, despite their origins, overwhelmingly supported the exclusion laws in Illinois and Indiana. Well before the end of slavery, westerners worked hard to preserve white supremacy in their new homes. Thanks to exclusion laws, there were far fewer free African Americans than there were in the Northeast or a similar legacy of gradual emancipation. Then the white settlers looked further west.²²

When southerners demanded slavery in the territories, westerners objected. They had spent several decades pushing off Indians and banning African American migration at home,

²¹ Matthew E. Stanley, *The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 22-37; Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), xi-xii.

²² Phillips, 17-18, 35-36, 41, 54, 63; Stanley, *The Loyal West*, 62-78. John P. Bowes, *Land too Good for Indians: Northern Indian Removal* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 21, 31-40, 48-49, 150-53; Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1-6.

they were not about to lose white supremacy further west. As Eugene H. Berwanger noted, racism rather than altruism or genuine care for slaves powered the western antislavery movement. This vehement racism more than any other reason caused westerners to ally with the Northeast against the South in a broad northern stand against slave expansion. They finally abandoned compromise over slavery in 1860, pushing Lincoln into the White House. During the war, many westerners only embraced emancipation as a war measure, then quickly abandoned Reconstruction for fear of African Americans coming north. A western voter could have been just as racist as a northern doughface, yet still vote Republican and support emancipation.²³

If westerners in the free states differed so much from Americans in the Northeast and the South, western conservatives likely shared these differences. Unfortunately, historians frequently lump them with their counterparts in New England, Pennsylvania, and New York under the collective term northern conservative. Although he acknowledged conservatives held many opinions on race, Smith made little distinction between the free state conservatives in his examination. Similarly, Mason used a New Englander rather than a westerner in his work as an example of a northern conservative. While he rejected immediate emancipation, Edward Everett was not as committed to white supremacy. He opposed Indian removal while he employed an African American to tutor his son. Daniel Webster, a Massachusetts conservative, opposed Indian removal as well; he helped lead the opposition in the United States Senate. Though they

²³ Eugene H. Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana: University Press of Illinois, 1967), 3-6; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 8-10, 26-27; Kristopher A. Teters, *Practical Liberators: Unions Officers in the Western Theater during the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 3-7; Leslie A. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 2-7.

stopped short of social equality, many Northeastern conservatives rejected the hard line racism Democrats frequently employed.²⁴

Conservatism came to the western states as the early settlers moved beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Although similar to Northeastern conservatives, those in the West above the Ohio River were different. While Northeastern states slowly abolished property restrictions on suffrage, settlers in western states either never adopted them or put up soft barriers to the vote. What was a key fundamental tenet of Northeastern conservatism—property restrictions prevented mob rule—quickly fell by the wayside in the newer. Even the main political party for early conservatives, the Federalist Party, never caught on in the West. Westerners generally agreed on an almost universal white male suffrage and the party of Alexander Hamilton harbored aristocrats bent on rule over the common man, or so many westerners believed. By the time Indiana and Illinois entered the Union, a potential path for success for the Federalist Party, the Democratic-Republicans had already usurped internal improvements, a key Federalist program. Other factors soon divided the westerners and gave conservatives an inroad to voters.²⁵

Conservatives found their chance in the West during the political battles of the late 1820s and into the 1830s. The ambitious programs Henry Clay, among others, proposed in Washington gained a following in the West. The internal improvements promised better roads for the West and better access to markets while tariffs promised to bring money into the new nation. Conservative parties won big in the western states behind the slate of economic proposals termed the American System. Even though Jackson won the western states during presidential elections,

²⁴ Mason, *Apostle of Union*, 6-7, 63-64, 157-59. Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 415; Stephen Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829-1889* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 101-08, 118-19.

²⁵ Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 5, 340-48; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 94-95.

conservatives tended to dominate when the General was off the ballot. An adopted westerner, William Henry Harrison, found great success in 1836 and 1840 in the western states with a campaign that favored the American System. During the Civil War, many western conservatives backed the Republican Party economic policies such as the Morrill Land-Grant Acts and the Homestead Act of 1862. So popular were the bills, even among conservatives, some Democrats argued that Republicans were initially against the latter bill and trying to place the western lands into speculators' hands.²⁶

The model of a Northeastern conservative fails in another way in the West. Mason and Smith primarily used Whigs in their studies of northern conservatives. As Yonatan Eyal pointed out, many Democrats, especially in the West, had accepted Whig economic policies by the 1850s. Phillips agreed. He argued that, with the exception of a national bank, the popularity of internal improvements forced western Democrats to support internal improvements and even acquiesce on a tariff in the 1840s. Other historians directly labeled Democrats as the conservatives during the war and in the early days of Reconstruction. Identifying conservatives with one party or the other often obscures how frequently they changed allegiances and how conservatism crossed party lines.²⁷

Western conservatives looked at other issues as well. As Michael D. Pierson pointed out, conservatives in the western states, as elsewhere, resisted challenges to gender roles or the workings of the family. Another issue that concerned the western conservatives was national expansion. Many conservatives feared expansion and reopening the debate over slavery.

However, some western conservatives remained ambivalent during the controversy over Texas

²⁶ Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward*, 50, 59-60; Holt, *Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 38-41, 101-05. *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), June 18, 1862.

²⁷ Smith, *The Story Present*, 142-44; Mason, *Apostle of Union*, 78-79; Yonatan Eyal, *The Young America and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3-14; Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward*, 60-62; Wickre, "Indiana's Southern Senator," 16.

Annexation and the election of 1844. Only when the country invaded Mexico did many turn against expansion. They followed Clay and Lincoln in their opposition to the war with Mexico in 1846. Their fears proved prudent when debates over the new territories broke out in 1848 as the war wound down.²⁸

Conservatives shared the virulent racism with their fellow westerners and worked to prevent African American settlement at home and further west. Though western conservatives were comfortable with white male suffrage, the conceptions about racial inferiority that pervaded the United States played into western conservative fears about threats to the Union. The vote was a powerful tool. With the vote, and sufficient numbers, African Americans could potentially gain real political power in the western states. For conservatives, African American suffrage presented another danger. If the country imbued suffrage on unfit voters, conservatives argued, it threatened the very survival of the Union. The uneducated class would vote for unqualified candidates. Western conservatives in Indiana and Illinois supported the exclusion laws and conservatives in the western states later vehemently opposed African American suffrage during and after the war.²⁹

Conservative commitment to racial exclusion in the West threatened their relationship with the most famous conservative west of the Appalachians. Clay opposed Indian removal during the 1830s, often delivering speeches against the policy. He even risked losing southern supporters when he spoke out against the South's peculiar institution. A slave owner who hated slavery, he argued against it, urged its end, and looked forward to a day without it. Though he opposed slavery, Clay, like Everett, never advocated immediate emancipation. The Kentucky

²⁸ Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts & Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 2-14, 162; Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 229-35.

²⁹ Kayssar, *The Right to Vote*, 70, 88-89; Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), 10-11, 95-96, 204-05;

statesman backed gradual emancipation in his state and believed slavery should end over a long period of time. Once it ended, Clay had a ready solution for the many former slaves. He, along with other Americans supported colonization societies. These societies offered African Americans a chance to settle in Africa, leaving the United States behind. While most western conservatives revered the Kentucky-born Whig, his opinions on slavery's future alarmed some of his admirers.³⁰

Though western conservatives celebrated Clay, the gradual emancipationist ideas that he and northeastern conservatives favored had the potential to bring massive social change to the West. Thousands of African American slaves toiled in Kentucky. If Kentuckians ended slavery, Americans on the northern side of the Ohio River expected a mass migration of former slaves into their states. Worse for the conservatives, a few states loosened their laws against African American suffrage. The new freedoms raised questions about equality and the future of African Americans in the country. If they had the right to vote in several states, could they vote in all states? Conservatives in the western free states never lost this fear. When Lincoln turned the Civil War into a war to end slavery, the possibility of slaves moving North terrified conservatives as much as others out West. After Republicans embarked on Reconstruction, the constant fear of ex-slaves moving galvanized conservatives giving Democrats an inroad to win elections in the West.³¹

Even the meanings of conservative and conservatism apparently changed in the West. After the Whig Party collapsed in 1854, the terms took on new meanings. Hoping to pick off some conservative voters, Democrats rushed to claim the title. Other politicians joined them. Republicans called their party conservative while Know-Nothings tried to show their

³⁰ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 585-87; Mason, *Apostle of Union*, 7-8.

³¹ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 585-87; Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom*, 101-08, 118-19.

conservatism to northern voters. In 1860, all four candidates professed their allegiance to conservatism. During the Civil War, Republicans and Democrats kept up the fight. After Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Democrats called the move radical. They portrayed themselves as conservative defenders of white supremacy and the Constitution. Following the war, the two parties once again fought each other for the title. Before 1854, conservative was another word for the Whig Party or its policies: centralized government, internal improvements, a national bank, and tariffs. By 1872, it meant a person opposed to centralized government who believed in the power of the states.³²

Although conservatives dramatically affected elections in several western states, Indiana offers the best window into western conservatism. On the surface, the state was similar to other western and even other northern states. As Etcheson noted in her work on Putnam County, Indiana, the state had a lot of things in common with other northern states. New arrivals had pushed the state's population ever higher in the 1850s as migrants from further east settled down or merely stopped for a bit on their way further west. By population, it was the sixth largest state in the Union at the 1860 census and carried thirteen votes in the Electoral College, a big prize for any presidential candidate. Indiana's population makeup was very similar to Ohio and Illinois. Southerners had moved across the Ohio River and New Englanders settled into the northern regions in those two states. Riverboats made stops on the Ohio River and trains crossed the state's interior carrying goods and passengers to destinations throughout the country. With rising urbanization, a nascent industry, and growing means of transportation, Indiana resembled many of its sister free states.³³

³² Stanley, *The Loyal West*, 41-45.

³³ Nicole Etcheson, *A Generation at War: The Civil War Era in a Northern Community* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 13-16; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1965), 537-38; Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward*, 57-58; Richard

Despite the similarities, the differences made Indiana a much better window than any other state into western conservatism. Though conservatives wielded power in Illinois and Ohio, their influence continued in Indiana long after it waned in the neighboring states. Though many conservatives were southern born, plenty came from New England as well. In their new home, conservatives vastly outnumbered the other new arrivals to the state: immigrants. While the foreign born settled in some of the larger cities in Indiana, their numbers paled in comparison to the immigrants in Ohio and Illinois. Because many conservatives argued for restrictions on the franchise or caps on immigration, Irish and German immigrants were unlikely to vote for conservative candidates. With low immigration, conservatives never lost their political punch in the Hoosier State. From 1856 well into the 1870s, political parties knew they had to win the conservative vote.³⁴

Unfortunately, for all the scholarship on conservatism and Indiana politics, there are no studies that focus exclusively on conservatism itself in the state or the West. Gregory J. Peek came the closest. He argued former Whigs, especially those in southern Indiana, remained skittish about the Republican Party's sectionalism. They threw their support behind the Know-Nothing candidate. Four years later, Republicans swore off congressional action on slavery, ran former Whigs in the 1860 elections, and then sidelined any hint of sectionalism in order to lure enough conservatives into the party. They further distanced themselves from abolitionists, a key concession for conservative former Whigs looking for a new home. According to Peek, the

F. Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 13-14; Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 267-68.

³⁴ Gregory S. Rose, "Upland Southerners: The County Origins of Southern Migrants to Indiana by 1850," *Indiana Magazine of History* 82 no. 3 (September 1986): 244-45; Francis A. Walker, *A Compendium of the Ninth Census (June 1, 1870.) Compiled Pursuant to a Concurrent Resolution of Congress, and Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 376; Gregory A. Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861" (PhD diss., University of Houston, 2010), 1-6, 15-20

strategy worked. Enough former Whigs, many of them in southern Indiana, voted Republican and pushed the party into the majority. The fragile coalition fell apart only two years later during the Civil War as many former Whigs left the Republican Party.³⁵

Other Indiana political historians generally agree with Mason and Smith. Conservatives in the state believed in the Union and they compromised with the South in order to save it. Republicans had scared those former Whigs in Peek's study. They feared the sectional rhetoric risked southern secession and Republicans had to assure them of their support for the Union. In his study on Jesse D. Bright, John J. Wickre used the same standard and applied it to men in both parties. Though he argued Bright had his own motives, Wickre asserted Whigs and Democrats, at least those who supported the compromise in 1850, were the conservatives in Indiana. He even labeled Indiana one of the most conservative states in the North due to its hatred of antislavery radicals. Beyond support for the Union, there is little agreement on what made a person conservative in Indiana or who were the real conservatives in politics.³⁶

In most studies of Indiana politics, historians connect conservatism with southern origins. Etcheson, Peek, and others argued upland southerners created different political cultures in their new home. Etcheson noted the new arrivals subsumed their identification with the South and created a new western identity until sectional tensions reawakened their southern identities in the 1850s. Most of the conservatives in Peek's work were southern born and resided in southern Indiana. Previous historians tended to agree, calling the New England born Hoosiers in the northern and central parts of the state either antislavery or outright abolitionists. Wickre

³⁵ Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861," 28, 34-38.

³⁶ Mason, *Apostle of Union*, 9-11; Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861," 19; John J. Wickre, "Indiana's Southern Senator: Jesse Bright and the Hoosier Democracy," (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2013), 21, 52, 55, 79, 87, 115, 121.

developed the argument further. He argued a proslavery Democrat who kept slaves in Kentucky ultimately controlled his party for the better part of a decade.³⁷

Election results and Republican success seem to back up the equation between a southern origin and conservatism. Quakers settled in east central Indiana and New England born settlers dominated the northern regions of the state. These were the only areas where those southern born conservatives never controlled local politics. Both regions nominated radical candidates such as George Washington Julian and Schuyler Colfax. Julian had joined the Free Soil Party in the late 1840s and Colfax opposed the exclusion amendment to the second Indiana State Constitution. Their radical positions made them almost anathema in the rest of the state while keeping them popular in their home districts. Colfax even survived the disastrous 1862 election when Democrats swept to victory after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The northern Indiana Republican represented his district in Congress, served as Speaker of the House of Representatives in Washington, and then won the Republican vice presidential nomination in 1868. Other than these few areas it seemed Peek was right, upland southerners held the balance of power in the state.³⁸

Historians have also been inconsistent on which party was the conservative party in Indiana. Phillip M. Crane labeled Indiana Governor Joseph A. Wright conservative even though Wright, a Democrat, backed the Lincoln administration during the war and was an antislavery advocate before the conflict. This seemed to contradict those historians who have called Whigs

³⁷ Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward*, 25-26; Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest*, xi-xiii; Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861," 1-6, 15-20; Wickre, "Indiana's Southern Senator: Jesse Bright and the Hoosier Democracy," 4-5, 7-12.

³⁸ Grace Julian Clarke, "The Burnt District," *Indiana Magazine of History* 27 (June, 1931): 119-24; Blue, *No Taint of Compromise*, 162-67, 180-82; Wickre, "Indiana's Southern Senator," 27; Christopher David Walker, "The Fugitive Slave Law, Antislavery and the Emergence of the Republican Party in Indiana," (PhD diss., Purdue University, 2013), 17-18; Jacquelyn S. Nelson, *Indiana Quakers Confront the Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1991), 2-4; Elfrieda Lang, "An Analysis of Northern Indiana's Population in 1850," *Indiana Magazine of History* 49 (1953):18-60; Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 240.

the conservative party during the 1840s. Wickre labeled both Whigs and Democrats conservative, at least those who supported sectional compromise in 1850. Peek took the opposite view and pointed to former Whigs as the real conservatives. Smith and Mason agreed with Peek. Both focused on Whigs in their works. Mason's subject was a former Whig long before he joined the Republican Party.³⁹

A limited timeframe is one problem that hurts many of these analyses of Indiana politics. Most of them stop short of Reconstruction or start after the antebellum era. The limited timeframe is also a common feature among general histories of conservatism. Smith limited his study to northern conservatives from the 1840s to 1865 when the Civil War ended and, due to his subject's death, Mason limited his to the same time frame. Peek was mainly concerned with how Republicans finally attracted conservatives and stopped at the 1860 election, although he noted the Republican coalition that won in 1860 quickly fell apart once the war started. This is quite remarkable because political parties, including those in Indiana, continued to push for the conservative vote well after the Civil War ended. Their constant focus on conservatives over such a long period gives an excellent opportunity to see what changed about conservatives in a western state and what remained the same.⁴⁰

A broader study of Indiana politics is not necessarily a new idea. Emma Lou Thornbrough started her narrative in the late 1840s and ended in the 1880s. Etcheson began her study of Putnam County, Indiana, in the 1850s and ended around the same time. The closest example of a broader political study of Indiana was Kenneth M. Stampp's, *Indiana Politics during the Civil War*. While he appropriately used a wider timeframe for his study, Stampp

³⁹ Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861," 15-20; Phillip M. Crane, "Governor Jo Wright: Hoosier Conservative," (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1963), 93, 133-34, 219, 222, 269. Smith, *The Stormy Present*, 16-19; Wickre, "Indiana's Southern Senator," 52, 63.

⁴⁰ Smith, *The Stormy Present*, 20-22; Mason, *Apostle of Union*, 310-14; Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Political Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861," 1-6.

viewed the parties as almost impenetrable barriers; few voters ever crossed the line. Whigs turned into Republicans, and Democrats never united a conservative coalition strong enough to win. Though he largely stuck to party identity as a strong motivator for voting patterns, Stamppp had the right approach in using a longer period to study the state during Civil War era.⁴¹

Looking at Indiana conservatives over a longer time reveals a more complex story. I define an Indiana conservative as a voter who believed in the Union, accepted the end of slavery, yet fought to prevent African American suffrage in their own state during and after the war. Before the war, Indiana conservatives were as antislavery as other northern conservatives; however, their antislavery was based on racism rather than a fear that slavery threatened the Union. Once the Civil War started, conservatives initially opposed emancipation then accepted the end of slavery as necessary to winning the conflict. However, from 1864 on, Indiana conservatives vocally rejected talk of suffrage for African Americans in Indiana. Although some Indiana conservatives accepted an expanded franchise, most never made the same journey with Lincoln during the war. The Illinoisan initially rejected emancipation then hinted at suffrage for African Americans shortly before his assassination. As national Republicans talked more and more about African American suffrage, Indiana Republicans had to reassure conservatives that they opposed it. As the talk grew louder, conservatives slowly left the party.⁴²

Conservatives were the majority in the Hoosier State. Other than Northern Indiana and areas in the eastern part of the state, few ever supported African American suffrage or even citizenship during or after the war. However, conservatism was not a permanent dividing line. Some Hoosiers dropped or took up conservative causes during the tumultuous era. A few Whigs who rejected the racial exclusion law in 1850 later opposed African American suffrage after the

⁴¹ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 704-712; Etcheson, *A Generation at War*, 13-17, 258-59; Kenneth M. Stamppp, *Indiana Politics during the Civil War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1949), 254, 268.

⁴² Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, xix, 8-12, 16, 330-32.

Civil War ended, while others took the journey with Lincoln and advocated arming African American soldiers before they eventually supported suffrage.⁴³

I exclude several groups from my definition of an Indiana conservative. Doughfaces—northern men who directly supported the South—are the first. Conservatives despised the thought of African Americans in the West and doughfaces might have wrecked white supremacy through compromise with the South. I also exclude copperheads. Many conservatives hated copperheads and believed support for the South meant a permanently severed Union. While copperheads shared a belief in white supremacy with conservatives, some were willing to work with the South such as Bright and risk a severed Union. I also exclude those copperheads that never relented on emancipation. Even during the height of the war, many peace Democrats viewed emancipation as unnecessary to winning the war. Though, few were outright traitors, copperheads were unconvinced: slavery had to remain.⁴⁴

Though southern born Hoosiers were undoubtedly more conservative than their New England born neighbors, conservatives hailed from all over the Union and resided throughout the state. A few less Republican votes here or there could throw a congressional election to a conservative candidate. The lack of conservative votes hurt the Republican Party in northern Indiana in 1862. As Mark J. Neely, Jr. noted, Republicans fully expected Democrats to put party aside during the war and most failed to see the danger in the upcoming midterm election. Like their counterparts in other states, Republicans suffered devastating losses at the polls in 1862. While they lost in southern and in some central Indiana elections, they lost several northern congressional districts as well. Even though they were outnumbered in the northern and some east central counties, conservatives were still a force in local politics, always putting pressure on

⁴³ Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*, 234.

⁴⁴ Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-12.

local Republicans to gin up their party base or moderate some of their radical views on the future of the former African American slaves.⁴⁵

A long look at conservatives in the Hoosier State helps answer a key question about conservatism. How did conservatives go from favoring a large centralized government in the 1840s to supporting greater power to the states in the 1870s? What changed about conservatives and what remained the same? The answer lies with their racism. Conservatives in the state helped push an exclusion law at the second constitutional convention in 1850, took a tepid approach to emancipation in 1863, then forced Republicans to back off their more radical goals during Reconstruction. At every turn, they feared the many ex-slaves who could come north bringing massive social changes to the state. Although Republicans ended slavery and conferred citizenship on the freedmen, they assured Indiana conservatives that white supremacy was safe. They even sold Reconstruction as a way to keep African Americans in the South. Once Republicans used the federal government to bring social change, conservatives put their faith in the states to stop them. Fear of losing white supremacy was the only tenet of conservatism that remained unchanged.⁴⁶

Even the disputes over conservatism continued well after the Civil War ended. From 1856 all the way to 1872, nearly every Indiana election featured at least two candidates fighting over who was the real conservative in the race. As Peek noted, Republicans fought to prove they were conservative in 1860. However, the fight continued long after Lincoln won the presidency. Democrats claimed they were the conservatives defending civil liberties in the fall of 1862 after Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Republicans countered in 1864

⁴⁵ Mark J. Neely Jr., *Lincoln and the Democrats: The Politics of Opposition in the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3-9; Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 118-123.

⁴⁶ Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 14-18; Donald F. Carmony, "The Indiana Constitutional Convention of 1850-1851," (MA thesis., Indiana University, 1931), 113-14, 132; Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom*, 101-08, 118-19.

saying a Democratic victory equaled a permanently sundered Union. Democrats struck back in 1866 labeling the Republicans as radicals who wanted African American suffrage. Republicans countered again in 1868 calling those Democrats who supported restoring suffrage to ex-Confederates radicals. Competition for the conservative title never ended. What Peek and others found in 1860, a mad dash for conservatism, continued well after Lincoln was safely in the White House and even after he was tragically assassinated.⁴⁷

Political rhetoric though could only go so far. It was much easier for politicians to call their party and their positions conservative if their opponents looked radical or sectional. After southern Democrats walked out on Stephen A. Douglas in 1860, it was hard for northern Democrats to claim a Douglas victory would keep the Union together. The 1864 Democratic candidate faced the same problem. Once Democrats drafted a peace platform, they appeared to accept a permanently sundered Union. Violence in the South after the war also hurt Democratic chances and made their pretensions to conservatism and stability look laughable. Once Republicans backed African American suffrage, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction. Their support for an expanded suffrage made it hard for Republicans to claim they backed white supremacy or were conservative.⁴⁸

For sources, I primarily used newspaper articles, speeches, circulars, and other public media for specific reasons. In order to convince voters their party or their policies were conservative, politicians had to take their message to the people. Although some politicians crafted their appeals to conservatives in dark rooms outside public view, such as during

⁴⁷ Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Political Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861, 17-20.

⁴⁸ Michael F. Holt, *The Election of 1860: "A Campaign Fraught with Consequences* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2017), 62, 123-30; Jonathan W. White, *Emancipation the Union Army and the Reelection of Abraham Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014). 99-101; Stephen V. Ash, *A Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot That Shook the Nation One Year After the Civil War* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2013), 187-89; Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom*, 326-28.

conventions when parties selected the candidate with the most conservative appeal or crafted a conservative platform, they generally fought each other over the title in plain sight. Even after they selected a candidate, the parties quickly portrayed him as the conservative choice in the race. Their man was a steady hand through the tumultuous times. The parties bombarded listeners with claims to conservatism hoping to pick off the crucial conservative voter reading the newspaper or at a speech. Almost anyone reading a political newspaper or a circular instantly found the word conservative or conservatism somewhere on the page.

Chapter one examines the society early Indianans built. Neither eastern nor southern, the new state and its people were western. Although conservatives supported internal improvements, tariffs, a large banking system, and revered the Union, they set out to purge their state of all non-whites. Conservative Whigs and Democrats alike pushed for Indian removal and outright bans on African American settlement. Their campaign for an exclusively white society culminated with a provision in the 1850 state constitution prohibiting African American settlement. Although they valued the Union, their devotion had a condition; it was a Union with white supremacy. Once the United States seized territories in the Mexican War, Indiana conservatives took a stand against slavery in the new lands. To satisfy their love for the Union and free soil in the West, candidates promised they could deliver both.

Chapter two examines the conservative search for a new political home. Northern reactions to the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 finished off the Whig Party as countless northerners feared a growing slave power that was determined to push their institution west. In a parallel to elections throughout the western states, Democrats, Republicans, and Know-Nothings appealed to the homeless Indiana Whigs. All three parties promised their candidate could deliver the free states conservatives wanted while keeping the Union together. They challenged each

other for the conservative name and the legacy of the Whig Party. In 1856 many Hoosier conservatives backed James Buchanan as that candidate. Millard Fillmore faced certain defeat and a victory for John C Frémont meant southern secession. Largely due to the crucial conservative vote, Buchanan won Indiana, a crucial state in his victory.

Chapter three argues that the actions of Buchanan and southern Democrats pushed enough Hoosier conservatives into the Republican Party. Over objections in his own party and from Kansas settlers, Buchanan attempted to force the proslavery Lecompton state constitution through Congress. In the 1860 election, Indiana conservatives once again looked for a conservative choice. After the South walked out on Stephen A. Douglas during the Democratic national convention, most of them calculated that Lincoln was the only candidate who could bring Kansas into the Union as a free state while keeping the nation together. Their support was just enough to push Indiana into the Republican column. Lincoln won, seven then eleven slave states seceded, and conservatives geared up for the coming war they long dreaded.

Chapter four follows Indiana conservatives during the war years. They were still the crucial swing vote Republicans had to have and the party played a delicate political dance to keep them. As long as Republicans pledged a limited war, Indiana conservatives were content with Lincoln's leadership. The Emancipation Proclamation changed all that. Fears of losing their white dominated society pushed many conservatives into the Democratic camp costing Republicans dearly in 1862. Republicans fought back. In 1864, they muzzled their more radical voices, pitched emancipation as a war measure only, and swore to keep the exclusion laws forbidding African American settlement. The strategy coupled with fears of Democratic treason worked. Lincoln won another term as president with strong conservative support.

Chapter five shows the slow conservative exodus from the Republican Party. After they briefly flirted with a return to the Democratic Party in 1866, southern violence kept many conservatives in the Republican camp. Republicans assured conservatives they opposed African American suffrage in the North and sold Reconstruction as necessary to rebuild southern society. A stable South meant fewer African American migrants to the state. The strategy worked until a Republican dominated Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment in 1869. The amendment stepped over state lines immediately granting African Americans men in Indiana the right to vote for the first. Only Democratic support for Horace Greeley, and Republican waffling on Reconstruction prevented a conservative flight in 1872.

The young Whig represented the key voters in Indiana and in the West before during and after the Civil War. Their belief in Union, a Union with white supremacy, steered them during the multiple crises. Because they were conservative they resisted the southern push to force slavery into the West, then forced the Republican Party to abandon Reconstruction years later. While his first goal, preserving the Union, made him similar to eastern conservatives and even some antebellum southern conservatives, the racism in western society meant that the young Whig author placed a very important condition on his support. Although Democrats were doubtless happy with their new convert in 1856, the young Whig, and others like him, disappointed many politicians over the twenty years between his letter and the end of Reconstruction.

Chapter 1: Economics to Sectionalism: Western Conservatives to 1850

Tensions ran high at the 1848 Democratic Party national convention, where delegates quarreled over their choice to run for president. After a lengthy process that saw a former president seek to run again, delegates nominated Lewis Cass. When news filtered out, a Whig newspaper editor in Evansville, Indiana, said that Democrats had made northern voters a promise. Cass and his popular sovereignty scheme offered to keep slavery out of the West while keeping the South in the Union. The Indiana Whig roundly rejected their assurances. He opposed slavery in the newly won territories and charged Cass with southern sympathies. He argued Southern delegates had pushed Cass to victory. In thanks, the Michigander WOULD return the favor by allowing his southern allies to spread slavery westward. Two years later Congress passed a bill permitting popular sovereignty in the western territories of New Mexico and Utah. In an about face, the same Whig editor seemingly dropped his opposition and supported the compromise.¹

The earliest Indiana settlers brought their unique politics to their new home. Yet, the issues and problems in their new state were different than those in their previous lands. Lack of infrastructure, hostile foreign powers, and lack of communication with the eastern states created a different environment in the West. In order to build their new society on the frontier, conservatives wanted new solutions. They looked to politics. As political organizations developed, western conservatives, many in the South and New England, gravitated towards the Whig Party. In their political battles with the Democrats, Whigs in the West assumed the

¹*Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), June 5, 1848, August 27, 1850.

conservative mantle. By the late 1840s, most Americans associated the terms conservative and conservatism with the Whigs and their party.

Though most politicians revered the Union, conservatives had specific ideas about how they could strengthen it. Like their brethren elsewhere, Indiana conservatives believed in institutions, and they believed the Union was their guarantor of freedom. To defend it, they wanted a vast system of internal improvements, a national bank, along with tariffs to fund the improvements. The new roads, canals, and later railroads, offered western farmers a hope for greater access to markets; a national bank could stabilize the economy; while tariffs protected nascent American industry. Conservatives' reasoning was simple. A strong economy protected the country from economic depressions and the violent social disruptions that accompanied them. These economic initiatives needed a strong central government. Often providing key votes for controversial bills, on numerous occasions western conservatives united with those in the Northeast to push through a slate of economic policies.

Although western conservatives shared many similarities with Northeastern conservatives, there were differences. Race quickly became the fault line between eastern and western conservatives. During the mid-nineteenth century, many New England conservatives opposed Indian removal and some supported gradual emancipation plans. Even Henry Clay of Kentucky, the most famous Whig and from a state most Americans considered western, opposed Indian removal while he suggested several plans for gradual emancipation. Convinced whites and non-whites could never live together peacefully, conservative Indiana Whigs, along with their Democratic rivals, supported Indian removal in the 1830s. After driving off Native Americans, they overwhelmingly supported exclusion laws that prohibited African American

migration. During the many debates over both, racism became a fundamental tenet for conservatives in Indiana.

Their commitment to white supremacy soon brought Indiana conservatives into conflict with the South. In 1848, the United States seized new lands from Mexico. The victory created a dilemma for the jubilant nation. Could southerners take their slaves into these hard won territories? Indiana conservatives joined their neighbors in a common answer: no. For conservatives, the prospect of slaves in the West threatened their hopes for an all white society. After both mainline parties promised to restrict slavery, western conservatives put the Union first, rejected direct confrontation with the South, and backed a sectional compromise two years later. Though conservatives loved the Union and compromised with the South to save it, their love was conditional. Despite the compromise, western conservatives were no southern-sympathizing doughfaces; they would never accept slavery in the West.

Historians have sometimes downplayed antislavery's popularity in Indiana and they seemingly have plenty of evidence. They often point to the failure of the Free Soil Party and the popularity of the Compromise of 1850 as two prime examples. Joel H. Silbey argued Whigs and Democrats put party loyalty over section and voted for their own candidates rather than the Free Soil candidate. A closer look at the two main parties tells a different story. In 1848, Whigs and Democrats bent towards free soil. They guaranteed free soil while assuring their plan stopped any chance for southern secession. Even in a state with a large southern influence, antislavery was overwhelmingly popular with conservatives. Though they wanted to save the Union, the Indiana conservatives wanted free soil with it.²

² Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 2-4; Gregory A. Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Political Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861." (PhD diss., University of Houston, 2010), 3-12, 156-66, 180-83; John J. Wickre, "Indiana's Southern Senator: Jesse Bright and the Hoosier Democracy." (PhD diss.,

Settlement patterns gave Indiana a complex population makeup and ensured conservative dominance well into the 1850s. Most of the early residents hailed from slave states in the Upper South where complicated property lines and competition with slaveowners made life difficult for poorer farmers. Through hard work, the new arrivals hewed a new home out of the wilderness; they had occupied the southern third of the future state after only a few years. Men born in the slave states exerted a powerful influence over the territory. Most early politicians traced their ancestry to Kentucky or Virginia. Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison was born in Virginia to a slaveholding family. Southerners founded many of the early towns. Madison and Corydon grew up around the river traffic heading down the Ohio to the Mississippi. With few roads or navigable rivers to the east, New Englanders had a much more difficult time moving into the fertile land north of the Ohio River. By the early 1810s, southern born settlers had a decided majority in the territory.³

In the 1810s, more settlers poured into the territory necessitating a formal government. A rising population, 63,000 in 1815, meant the territorial legislature could call a convention, draft a state constitution, and apply for statehood. The legislature called for a convention in 1816 to meet in Corydon along the Ohio River. Delegates at the meeting reflected the slave-state origins of most early Indiana settlers. Among the forty-three delegates, only seventeen were born in free states. During the long debates, the assembled representatives set up a state government that differed from those along the eastern seaboard. Most eastern states had placed a property requirement on the franchise. Those at the convention rejected these restrictions. While Indiana

University of Kentucky, 2013), 9-11; Kenneth M. Stampp, *Indiana Politics during the Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau Press, 1949), xvii; Joel H. Silbey, *Party Over Section: The Rough and Ready Presidential Election of 1848* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2009), 145-46.

³ Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest*, 2-4; Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 3-4; Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Frontier Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 277-80.

was still a territory, Congress had reduced property requirements on the franchise and few delegates were anxious to reinstate them. They decided all white male residents of longer than six months deserved the right to vote in the future state. After settling the questions about suffrage, the convention then turned to other issues.⁴

The members at the convention wanted a state for whites only. Although some owners had brought their slaves to Indiana, delegates wrote their hostility to slavery into the proposed state constitution. The early residents wanted to establish a society with few African Americans as possible. Banning slavery meant no enslaved African Americans and few at the convention wanted to compete with slaveowners or allow the institution to gain a foothold. After prohibiting slavery, they turned to free African Americans. In an obvious deterrent to any African American settlement, the convention banned them from the ballot box and the militia. Through their actions, delegates set up a society with plenty of safeguards on white supremacy. After they ironed out a few more details, delegates had crafted a complete constitution. The compact entered into effect in June 1816 after Congress accepted the document. Indiana joined the Union as the sixteenth state the same year. Once the convention broke, the real business of creating a state began.⁵

Other issues popped up for the western settlers. Migrants entered the state hoping to raise crops and then sell their products at markets. More ambitious farmers dreamed of selling their crops in far away cities such as Cincinnati or even New Orleans. Unfortunately for these hopeful agrarians, transportation proved difficult. Few developed roads passed through Indiana and

⁴ Cayton, *Frontier Indiana*, 246-47, 252-53, 256-58; *Western Sun* (Vincennes, IN), November 2, 1816; Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 29-32.

⁵ Stephen A. Vincent, *Southern Seed, Northern Soil: African-American Farm Communities in the Midwest, 1765-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 29, 63; Cayton, *Frontier Indiana*, 296-300; *The Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), October 9, 1841.

extensive railroads were decades off. When Abraham Lincoln's family moved to the southern part of the state in 1816, they had to cut their own road through the overgrown forests. Water routes offered a quick way to transport crops for those farmers living along the many streams that crossed the states. The waterways were not a viable solution for all farmers, however, and the lack of roads made many streams and creeks inaccessible. For a better solution, the state needed internal improvements.⁶

Although Governor Jonathan Jennings publicly advocated for internal improvements in 1818, progress was slow and farmers needed roads immediately. Undaunted, residents took matters into their own hands by petitioning for the improvements. One group of residents asked the General Assembly for a road between Lawrenceburg and St. Mary's in 1818. Three years later, desperate for access to outside markets, citizens in Vernon, petitioned the General Assembly to build a road between their town and the nearest port on the Ohio River in Madison. Others lobbied the Assembly for canals in order to improve access to major rivers, and petitioned for ferry service across the Ohio River, whose swift currents made crossing even in ordinary conditions a dangerous proposition without a proper ferry. The state government faced a challenge. There was little money to go around for new roads or canals yet residents clamored for them.⁷

Three years later, politicians added to the need for more roads in the young state. In 1821, a commission recommended moving the capital to the geographic center of the state near the White River. The commission's decision to locate the capital almost one hundred miles north of

⁶ George R. Wilson, *Early Indiana Trails and Surveys*, 6th ed. (Indianapolis, Indiana Historical Society Press, 2015), 1-9; William E. Bartelt, *There I Grew Up: Remembering Abraham Lincoln's Indiana Youth* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2008), 3-4, 12, 14-17, 34-36.

⁷ *Western Sun and General Advertiser* (Vincennes, IN), December 19, 1818; *Indiana Republican* (Madison, IN), August 8, 1818; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana* (Corydon: Brandon and Co., 1821), 77; Daniel Peart, *Era of Experimentation: American Political Practices in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 90-94.

the Ohio River seemed more hopeful than practical. At the time, there were few white settlers in the area and they faced a hardscrabble life raising crops or tending livestock. One early settler remembered only six cabins were in the area when the commissioners made their choice. For many potential settlers, there were good reasons to stay further south along the Ohio River rather than move north. The nearest port along the Ohio River was over one hundred miles away, a distance that proved daunting to anyone luckless enough to miss out on land along the southern river or its tributaries. Fortunately for the settlers on the frontier, federal politicians offered a solution.⁸

In Washington, several politicians formulated a plan to address some western demands. At the same time Hoosiers petitioned Congress for statehood, legislators in Washington posited an ambitious legislative agenda. The previous several years had taught them some hard lessons about fiscal policy. After the War of 1812 plunged the United States into an economic crisis, President James Madison, with support from Speaker of the House Clay, chartered a new national bank, passed a tariff on foreign goods, and approved federal funding for roads and canals. The Kentucky politician called his sweeping legislation the American System and he promised a bright future for the country. Popular in New England, the legislative programs faced stiff competition in the South. Most southerners hated the tariff. A tariff increased prices on all foreign goods and seemed to favor New England businesses over southern planters. Although Clay, a westerner, supported the new economic system, the legislation faced several tests in his home region.⁹

⁸ Oliver Johnson, *A Home in the Woods, A Pioneer Life in Indiana: Oliver Johnson's Reminiscences of Early Marion County as related by Howard Johnson* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1951), xxiv, xxv, 108-17.

⁹ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 79-89.

The first challenge for this new economic system in Indiana came in 1824 when Congress proposed higher tariffs to protect iron, textiles, wool, and other products. Without functioning political parties in the state, there was little to distinguish between politicians or determine their positions on important legislation. When the United States House of Representatives balloted on the new tariff, Indiana's representatives joined their eastern colleagues and gave their assent. One of them, John Test, wrote to his constituents praising the legislation. He expounded, "The manufacturers and the farmers may expect a change of times in their favor as soon as the system goes into operation: it will put a stop to the boundless flow of British goods and help our own manufacturers." In his account, "The West begins now to feel its strength-we have been long enough trodden under foot. The southern and northern people groan heavily about it, and so do the shipping merchants." Many voters seemed to agree with him as indicated by his re-election in 1824.¹⁰

The 1824 presidential election revealed strong support for the American System in the Hoosier State. As James Monroe ended his second term, five serious candidates vied for the presidency that year although South Carolinian John C. Calhoun dropped out early. Two of the remaining contenders, Clay and John Quincy Adams, supported the American System with its tariffs and federally funded internal improvements. In contrast, candidates William Crawford and Andrew Jackson publicly opposed any further increases in the tariff. In his few published lines of policy, Jackson asserted that states should primarily fund internal improvements rather than the federal government. Though Jackson won the popular vote in Indiana with 46.6 percent of the ballots cast, the results showed broad support for the American System. Clay came in second

¹⁰ *Public Leger* (Richmond, IN), May 8, 1824, August 7, 1824, January 1, 1825; *Indiana Gazette* (Corydon, IN), July 21, 1824, May 5, 1824.

with 33.7 percent; Adams garnered 19.6 percent at the polls. In total, proponents of the American System collectively won 53.3 percent of all votes cast in Indiana.¹¹

After Adams won and embarked on a drive for internal improvements, the American System's supporters prepared to fend off their critics. Though they never used the terms conservative or conservatism, proponents such as Jennings justified their support with conservative arguments. The American System offered a stable economy and hence the Union. Jennings explained his decision to support the tariff saying it was to "render us less dependent on foreign nations, both in time of peace as well as in war." In an 1825 message, he praised the many new roads between states as a benefit for the entire nation. The improvements increased connections between the states and strengthened the Union. His immediate successor as governor, James B. Ray, agreed. In his 1826 annual message, he called for new roads and canals through the state. Praising the General Assembly for authorizing a state road, the new governor noted a road through the state facilitated communication and rapid troop movements in the event of war with Britain.¹²

Though most conservatives in the state readily accepted the internal improvements and tariffs that Clay wanted, a national bank was another issue. No institution generated as much controversy as the Bank of the United States (BUS). Chartered in 1816 after the War of 1812 proved the need for a better supply of credit, the new bank, like the first one, had its detractors. Hoosiers remembered 1819 and the lean years following the panic. They remembered a financial crisis had happened after the BUS failed to control rampant speculation in western lands. Jackson supporters associated the BUS with aristocracy, a monopoly working for a monied

¹¹ Donald Ratcliffe, *The One-Party Presidential Contest: Adams, Jackson, and 1824's Five-Horse Race* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2015), 39, 161-64, 280.

¹² *Indiana Gazette* (Corydon, IN), July 21, 1824; *The Western Register and Terre-Haute Advertiser* (Terre Haute, IN), December 17, 1825; *Western Sun and General Advertiser* (Vincennes, IN), December 30, 1826.

interest out for its own gain. In 1831 the editor of the *Albany Argus* expressed his view of the BUS, a view the public evidently shared. He stated, “The United States Bank has the exclusive monopoly of the government deposits . . . And who shares the benefit of this monopoly? The stockholders of the Bank; a privileged order of 2 or 3000 monied men.” Jeffersonians had killed off the first bank chartered under Washington, many Hoosiers wanted the second institution to share a similar fate. Though Clay and other conservatives trusted the BUS as a stabilizing institution, the editor shared his distrust of the national bank with many Jacksonians in the state.¹³

Unfortunately for conservatives, Adams lost the presidency to Jackson in 1828. The former general and his opponents embarked on pitched political brawls after his victory. The battles between Jackson and his opponents such as Clay, coupled with the popularity of the American System, birthed new political organizations. After the Federalist Party faded into history, conservatives rallied under several different names. Those who supported Adams for president called themselves Adams or administration men. After Jackson won the presidency, his opponents joined together under the term anti-Jacksonian, before taking the name National Republicans. Conservatives, Anti-Masons, former Jacksonians, remaining Federalists, and later some nullification southerners, among others, banded together in this new coalition. They claimed they exercised a check on the president’s powers. Though strong, the new organization was unstable. It comprised many disparate factions; only their opposition to Jackson united them.¹⁴

The parties developed in a similar fashion in Indiana. Supporters took the name of their favored candidates at first: Adams men or Jackson men. Conservatives flocked to Adams and

¹³ *Indiana Palladium* (Lawrenceburg, IN), June 4, 1831.

¹⁴ Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6-18, 27-30.

Clay later calling themselves anti-Jacksonians after 1828. In 1831, the anti-Jacksonians formed a state convention, passed resolutions, and railed against Jackson under the National Republican banner. They adopted a platform that praised Clay—they endorsed him as their choice for president in 1832—and called for adherence to the American System. The party believed in Clay. He was a fellow westerner who promised to use the federal government to foster his American System. Unfortunately for his supporters, Jackson’s popularity won out in 1832. Undaunted, the defeated Clay men licked their wounds while looking for another chance to beat their Democratic rivals. Subsequent economic crises and the popularity of internal improvements boosted the conservative vote.¹⁵

Clay men found their chance to win power in the many state elections. Although Jackson won Indiana’s electoral votes in 1828 and 1832 running against the American System, conservatives who supported the program were far more successful in other state elections. Since the federal government refused to fund the improvements, the state took over. Although they consistently pushed for an American System funded through the national government, anti-Jacksonians in the state took matters into their own hands. The Indiana General Assembly consistently voted for internal improvements such as a canal bill in 1832 and a new set of roads the following year. A majority of voters in Cass County cast their ballots for Jackson in 1832. One year earlier, a majority in the county voted for anti-Jacksonian Noah Noble in the gubernatorial election. A local Democrat identified anti-Jacksonian support for internal

¹⁵ *Cass County Times* (Logansport, IN), November 23, 1831; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 16-17.

improvements as the key to Noble's victory saying, "it was the Canal and the Road that influenced the vote." Though Jackson won the state, his party lost numerous races.¹⁶

Indiana conservatives agreed with their fellow conservatives in the Northeastern states about the American System with its tariffs, national bank, and internal improvements. However, they had different ideas about race. Starting after the Revolution, whites had slowly pushed into Native American lands, provoking violence with the region's first inhabitants. To relieve conflict, the United States government negotiated treaties with the different indigenous nations. The Treaty of Greenville, signed with several Native American nations in 1795, supposedly established a solid border for white settlement. Yet, the boundary lines disappeared quickly as white settlers encroached on native lands. The new arrivals increased the pressure on the Native American residents, and the government embarked on another round of contentious negotiations.¹⁷

Some Native Americans, fearing the increasing white population, rejected the treaty concessions. Tenskwatawa and his brother Tecumseh organized several nations into a widespread movement against white settlement in 1811. The rising quickly spread throughout the territory as Tecumseh proved a charismatic leader. Fearing an all out war on the frontier, territorial governor William Henry Harrison acted. He led forces to Prophetstown, a gathering place along the Tippecanoe River, and engaged in battle with the Native Americans. Though the battle was a draw, Tecumseh was away rallying more supporters; Tenskwatawa and his men withdrew to regroup. The conditions got worse for the Native Americans. Tecumseh fell at the Battle of the Thames in 1813, depriving the indigenous tribes of a charismatic leader. When the

¹⁶ *Cass County Times* (Logansport, IN), January 13, 1832, December 7, 1831; Lynn Hudson Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams and the Election of 1828*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 182.

¹⁷ Adam Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 162-63.

British and Americans negotiated an end to the conflict, the British reneged on their promises of securing sovereign territory for Native Americans. Without an independent land, many indigenous nations moved westward or ventured into Canada. Despite the U.S. conquests, some remained on their original lands.¹⁸

Once Indiana entered the Union, tensions periodically flared up between settlers and the remaining indigenous nations during times of supposed peace. In March 1824, several white settlers encountered a group of nine Native Americans in Madison County just outside the future state capital. The natives expected little trouble; locals had traded with the group and tolerated their presence. The newcomers showed no mercy. They killed all nine including four children. After the murders, the killers plundered the camp for supplies then set off on their way. One witness later stated the men believed local white communities would acquit them since their victims were non-whites. Although three of the men were tried and sentenced to death, largely to placate local tribes, the governor of Indiana pardoned one of the guilty due to his age. The episode quickly blew over, though tensions remained.¹⁹

In 1826, some remaining Native Americans posed an obstacle to a significant internal improvement. The General Assembly had finally granted funds for new roads that year. The legislation included one that crossed the state, connecting Madison on the Ohio River with Michigan City on Lake Michigan. A few remaining Miami and Potawatomi lived along the proposed route; both nations were reluctant to cede any additional lands. Hoping for a quick solution, Governor James B. Ray with other commissioners negotiated a new treaty between the United States and the Miami. Although both nations refused to leave the state, the Miami ceded large portions of their land to the federal government. The Potawatomi also relented; they

¹⁸ Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown*, 146-48, 192-97, 213-20.

¹⁹ David Thomas Murphy, *Murder In Their Hearts: The Fall Creek Massacre* (Indianapolis, Indiana Historical Society Press, 2010), 4-14, 113-16.

permitted the new road to pass through their lands. With few dissenting votes, the United States Senate ratified the Treaty of the Mississinewa, clearing the way for the road. Ray praised the treaty, expecting federal funding for the project. The treaties fit western conservative doctrine; Native Americans interfered with progress, they had to go.²⁰

By the late 1820s, most Indiana conservatives accepted the need for a stronger economy. They acquiesced to the increased tariffs, supported internal improvements, and believed in a strong federal government. Each policy strengthened the Union. In Congress, western conservatives including Clay sided with Northeastern conservatives, pushing bills through Congress dear to Clay's heart. However, they continued with their different outlook towards Native Americans. Unlike the conservative leaders in Washington, most Indiana conservatives pushed for Indian removal. Before 1828, the man in the White House did not agree with them. Adams, though he supported the American System, was sympathetic towards some Native Americans, calling one treaty between Georgia and the Creek nation a fraud. Western conservatives needed a new president who agreed with the removals.²¹

After 1828, western conservatives found a new ally in the White House. Although few conservatives in Indiana voted for him, Jackson brought with him a determination to move Native Americans west of the Mississippi. Under heavy pressure from Jackson, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830. The act gave the president power to negotiate with indigenous nations for removal west. During the final vote, Indiana's congressional delegation lent its full support. Both of Indiana's anti-Jacksonian senators supported the bill over the objections of other conservatives such as Clay and those in the northeast. Clay protested the new bill. He believed the removals broke treaties while inflicting cruel punishment on the Native Americans. In the

²⁰ *Western Sun and General Advertiser* (Vincennes, IN), December 30, 1826; *Public Leger* (Richmond, IN), November 25, 1826.

²¹ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 256-57.

House, only the anti-Jacksonian Test failed to vote for the bill: he was absent. Though aimed at the indigenous peoples in the South, other state governments welcomed the new legislation with open arms. With westerners wanting internal improvements and the Pottawatomis in the way, tensions escalated quickly.²²

At first, it seemed the western conservatives opposed the removals. Once conservatives learned of the brutal treatment of the Cherokee and the fraudulent methods to secure their lands, a few joined Clay in lambasting the president. At the 1831 National Republican state convention, conservatives inserted a resolution that criticized both Georgia and the president into the state platform. The delegates saved their harshest words for the jailing of several white Christian ministers. According to the Indiana conservatives, these ministers had successfully converted many Cherokee to Christianity, elevating and civilizing them. Jackson had interfered with their noble task. On paper, they joined Clay in his stance against Jackson. Over the next five years, the National Republicans had numerous chances to put their altruistic words into practice. Unfortunately for Indiana's native peoples, conservatives never backed their words with action.²³

One year later, a violent clash on the frontier in 1832 convinced many conservatives that Native Americans could never peacefully coexist with whites. Several indigenous nations under the leader Black Hawk launched a war against white settlers in Illinois. The brief war alarmed settlers who demanded further removals. The government acted quickly. The Pottawatomis along with several other nations ceded their lands for money and moved to reservations. In a sign of things to come, the federal government agreed to set aside land for the Potawatomi west of the

²² U.S. Congress, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States*, 21st Cong., 1st sess., May 26, 1830, 729-30; U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Senate of the United States of America*, 21st Cong., 1st sess., April 24, 1830, 268; *The Western Register and Terre Haute Advertiser* (Terre Haute, IN), October 2, 1830; J.M. Opal, *Avenging the People: Andrew Jackson, The Rule of Law, and the American Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 208-11.

²³ *Cass County Times* (Logansport, IN), November 23, 1831.

Mississippi. One National Republican editor celebrated the treaty saying, “these lands, when surveyed, and offered for sale, will open a valuable field to enterprising emigrants, and will undoubtedly, attract the attention of adventurers, from every part of the Union.” One year after both sides signed the treaty, Noble, the Whig governor, praised the agreement, noting that the northern part of the state was improving rapidly. Although the Potawatomi kept some lands, the writing was on the wall, the whites wanted them out.²⁴

In 1836 the United States government returned to negotiate with the Potawatomi. The last remaining group in Indiana resided along the Yellow River in the northern part of the state, the remnants of a once numerous nation. This last group had refused to move west after the earlier treaties hoping to remain in the face of white settlement. After long negotiations, many leading Potawatomi signed another round of land cessions, agreeing to move west. A few held out. Several chiefs declared the treaty invalid since the few who signed the treaty were not even leaders in their societies?. Despite their objections, the main commissioner for the government declared the treaty valid. The United States government accepted the Yellow River Treaty giving the Potawatomi two years to relocate west. One year later, white settlers moved onto their lands.²⁵

During the Indian removals Jackson, though popular in much of the country, added to his opposition in 1832. When the old general vetoed an extension to the BUS’s charter, few in the state paid much attention. Then he took his war against the BUS one step further. He redirected federal funds into state-chartered banks hoping to destroy the hated institution once and for all. National Republicans criticized the move calling it executive tyranny. They warned Jackson’s

²⁴ *The Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), November 8, 1832; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), December 13, 1833; R. David Edmunds, “The Prairie Potawatomi Removal of 1833,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 68 (Sept. 1972): 241-45.

²⁵ William Frederick Collins, “John Tipton and the Indians of the Old Northwest,” (PhD diss., Purdue University, 1997), 262-69.

move gave him unlimited power over public funds, a dangerous proposition for a power-hungry man. Conservatives rallied against the president. Though they publicly retained a disgust towards political parties, the National Republicans claimed their party existed out of necessity. It blunted Jackson's tyranny. Despite his war with the BUS, however, Jackson remained popular in Indiana. The war over the bank did not immediately hurt the economy and the state kept up some internal improvements due to the limited tariffs.²⁶

Jackson's foes grew after his war with the bank. They gathered behind Clay, Daniel Webster, and others in a grand coalition against the general. Anti-Masons, supporters of the American System, conservatives from every region of the country, some antislavery advocates, and even some former nullifiers from the South, added to the National Republican ranks. By 1834, most had taken up a different name: Whig. The newly minted Whigs drew inspiration from the past. In their struggle for independence, American patriots had used the name in their many battles against the British monarchy. According to Whigs in the 1830s, they similarly protected the country from a tyrant president bent on ruling with an iron fist. Hoping to promote their party, the Whigs of the 1830s compared their struggles with Jackson to those of the founding fathers. Indiana conservatives followed suit. In 1837, the party announced a call for a Whig state convention, officially taking the new name.²⁷

Though under a new name, Indiana conservatives still believed in the American System and Indian removal. With the Potawatomi slated to move west, Governor Noble and conservatives in the General Assembly acted. In 1836 they passed a massive internal improvements bill. The bill was ambitious. The state would borrow ten million dollars and spend

²⁶ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 373-86; Gerald Leonard, *The Invention of Party Politics: Federalism, Popular Sovereignty, and Constitutional Development in Jacksonian Illinois* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 11-17, 157.

²⁷ *Bloomington Post* (Bloomington, IN), December 15, 1837; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 27-30.

the money on new roads, canals, bridges, and a more recent invention, the railroad. The bill promised an end to Indiana's transportation problems while generating revenue. With these internal improvements, Indiana could challenge states in the east and emerge on the cutting edge of the transportation revolution. The bill easily passed both chambers of the General Assembly. The Indiana House of Representatives approved the bill fifty-six to eighteen. Even though Whigs held a narrow majority in the House, twenty-three Democrats crossed the party line. Noble signed the act into law after the state Senate passed a similar bill and conservatives confidently predicted an economic boom.²⁸

In 1838, with improvements going up, the newly elected Whig Governor, David Wallace, finally moved against some of the last Potawatomi in the state. The Treaty of Yellow River, signed in 1836, had ordered those remaining to move in two years. Wallace was a conservative who supported both removal and the mammoth bill passed under Noble; he wanted the Native Americans out. At first, several Indiana politicians tried to negotiate a settlement. On his several visits to the reservation, War of 1812 veteran John Tipton, the leader of the Indiana militia, warned the Potawatomi that the state wanted them out. After whites moved onto their lands, violence broke out prompting Governor Wallace to mobilize the state militia. He placed them under Tipton and ordered the old veteran to move the remaining Potawatomi. The move west took its toll. Sickness ravaged the party throughout its journey killing many along the way. Tipton led them as far as Illinois then relinquished command to the Illinois militia who continued

²⁸ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), January 23, 1836; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis: Douglass and Noel Printers, 1836), 232; *Members and Officers of the Indiana Legislature for 1835-6* in the James Whitcomb Papers Box 1 Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN (hereinafter cited as IHS).

the forced march. With most Native Americans gone, Indianans struck against the other non-white residents.²⁹

Though the state's first constitution banned slavery and discouraged their settlement, free African Americans migrated into Indiana starting in the 1810s. The population grew slowly at first. Census takers only found a little over three thousand in 1830 along with three slaves. Altogether they numbered less than one percent of the population, hardly a massive amount. Those initial migrants often lived near friendly Quaker communities where they could expect at least a mild toleration of their presence. The Society of Friends had officially prohibited slaveowners, and most members had voluntarily emancipated their slaves years earlier or left the society. Coming into Indiana shortly after statehood, Quakers flocked to the east central part of the state, where a few African Americans joined them. The new arrivals, this small number of African American migrants attracted some unwanted attention.³⁰

In an effort to make African American migration more difficult, the General Assembly passed a law in 1831 requiring all free African Americans to give security with their local county government for their good behavior or risk expulsion. As an even greater deterrent to African American migration, the bill fined whites who hired or harbored African Americans. The bill had an initially easy road. It passed the Indiana House of Representatives forty-seven to ten with few attempts to derail it. The new law faced a greater challenge in the state Senate, where it was nearly tabled before the senators voted on it. On the final vote, the bill passed eleven to ten. Many of the dissenters in the Senate had carried over from the previous elections and, although most later joined with anti-Jacksonians, one later attended the Democratic state convention of

²⁹ Collins, "John Tipton and the Indians of the Old Northwest," 315-329.

³⁰ *Abstract of the Returns of the Fifth Census, Showing the Number of Free People, the Number of Slaves, the Federal of Representative Number; and the Aggregate of Each County of Each State, of the United States* (Washington: Duff Green, 1832), 34-35; Vincent, *Southern Seed, Northern Soil*, 32-45.

1834. Governor Ray, who endorsed the many efforts for internal improvements, signed the new bill into law. Hoosier attitudes towards African Americans only worsened in the subsequent years.³¹

Despite the law, a few politicians spoke against the institutionalized racism. The state senators who opposed the bill explained their opposition in an address to the General Assembly. They decried the rash legislation noting the Indiana constitution declared all men equal regardless of race.

The undersigned cannot but express their melancholy regret, that for the purpose getting rid of what the majority call “a troublesome population,” it should become expedient, in the very infancy of our state government to contradict, by Legislative enactment, that portion of our constitution, which solemnly declares, “that all men are born equally free, independent, and have certain natural, inherent and unalienable rights . . .”

In the House, four southern representatives joined six others from central and northern districts to vote against the bill. Nevertheless, the law stood. When the final vote came, many of those same conservatives who favored the internal improvements voted for the exclusion law. The split presaged future tensions within the Whig Party. Members gave universal support for the economic programs, but split over racial issues.³²

Although they developed economic plans and battled each other at the polls, neither side, Democrats or Whigs, claimed their party or policies were conservative. Before the late 1830s, Americans used the terms conservative and conservatism in a variety of ways. At a July 4th celebration in 1830, shortly after South Carolinians claimed the right to nullify the federal tariff,

³¹ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis: George Smith, State Printer, 1831), 288; *Journal of the Senate of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis: George Smith, State Printer, 1831), 484-85; *Western Sun and General Advertiser* (Vincennes, IN), January 1, 1831; *Indiana Palladium* (Lawrenceburg, IN), September 24, 1831; *Indiana Palladium* (Lawrenceburg, IN), January 18, 1834; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), February 20, 1851.

³² *Journal of the Senate of the State of Indiana* (Indianapolis: George Smith, State Printer, 1831), 530-38.

those assembled in Clinton, Indiana, gave several toasts. After a lengthy address on the history of the nation, diners raised their glasses. For the eighth round, the toastmaster called out the South Carolinians proclaiming, “Tolerance of feeling towards those who differ from us on matters of public interest; opposed to that bitterness of spirit evinced by the politicians of the south; one a conservative, the other the bane of our institutions.” The nullifiers in South Carolina were radicals who wanted to destroy the Union while those opposed to nullification were conservative.³³

A few politicians disagreed with the Indiana toastmaster. The most famous nullifier claimed conservatism for his state’s cause. During his many debates in the United States Senate, Calhoun invoked conservatism to defend himself. He duelled with Webster, among others, calling the controversy over the power of the federal government a contest between conservatism and consolidation. On the Senate floor, the South Carolinian said “the Conservative principle . . . is now gettin [sic] to be better understood—States should stick to it with reference to the General Gov’t.” Calhoun then pointed a finger at Jackson calling him a consolidationist. The firebrand continued, “at one end of the avenue stands the white house, and at the other end the Senate Chamber.—“Consolidation” there—“Conservative” here . . .” Oddly enough, in a few years, the South Carolina senator found himself on the same side as Webster.³⁴

The parties developed different names for their policies. Rather than conservative Jackson called himself a reformer. He railed against the aristocracy and the BUS saying the rich corrupted the country. In Jackson’s view, reform was necessary to remove the corruption. Anti-Jacksonians merely expressed their faith in the American System while calling Jacksonians Tories for their subservience to the president. The newspapers generally used liberal and

³³ *Western Register and Terre-Haute Advertiser* (Terre Haute), July 24, 1830.

³⁴ *Vincennes Gazette* (Vincennes, IN), May 10, 1834.

conservative to describe the political events in Europe, relaying which side held an edge in the British Parliament. Other than the controversy over nullification, Jackson supporters, and his opponents, never engaged in pitched battles over conservatism. An economic crisis coupled with a presidential campaign changed that.³⁵

Jackson decided to return home and follow the precedent set by George Washington rather than run for a third term in 1836. For a successor, Old Hickory chose his friend: Martin Van Buren. A majority of Democrats agreed, nominating the New Yorker as their candidate at the national convention. Though he won the election, a majority of Indianans voted for one of his opponents, Harrison. Shortly after Van Buren took the oath of office he probably wished his party had nominated someone else. A financial panic gripped the entire country. Many banks, including Indiana's, suspended specie payments. The panic had arrived at a very inopportune moment for the country. Impressed with the Erie Canal, numerous state governments had taken out loans and embarked on vast internal improvement projects. Amidst the panic they had little money on hand to pay their creditors. Without a national bank, Jackson's former vice president had few resources at hand to manage the crisis. With the country still recovering from the Panic of 1837, another panic hit in 1839. Once again the nation descended into economic chaos.³⁶

The financial panics hurt Indiana and its residents deeply. Because the General Assembly had borrowed so much money under the 1836 Mammoth Bill, the state's finances were already weak. Indiana hurtled towards bankruptcy. Even though the state completed several roads and two canals within the next few years, many projects remained unfinished with workers dropping their tools and waiting for more money before resuming construction. Some residents still

³⁵ *Crawfordsville Record* (Crawfordsville, IN), May 3, 1834; *Indiana Palladium* (Lawrenceburg, IN), November 29, 1834; *Weekly Messenger* (Vevay, IN), June 22, 1833.

³⁶ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 483-88; Jessica M. Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, and the Creation of a Transatlantic Financial Crisis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1, 56, 192, 196, 210.

affirmed their support for Clay's system of internal improvements. However, they only wanted the projects if the state could avoid borrowing large sums of money. Indiana eventually reached insolvency twice and was bankrupt in 1841. Residents looked on in shame while legislators looked for a solution. In an embarrassing move, the General Assembly issued an apology to the state's creditors in 1845, and worked to pay down the debt.³⁷

According to conservatives, the country needed a new national bank to stabilize the economy before another crash hit the nation. From their national convention down to local meetings, Whigs across the country called for a new national bank modeled on the older two. At one meeting, Whigs echoed their fellow conservatives saying, "Resolved, that we believe a National Bank would equalize the currency, and greatly relieve the embarrassment of the people of the United States." Some even had an answer for the economic panic in 1819, a panic the BUS apparently failed to prevent. They blamed that depression on state banks, which they believed allowed the rampant speculation in western lands rather than the BUS. Since Whigs made their support for a new BUS central to their 1840 campaign, the election gave voters a chance to voice their opinion on the issue.³⁸

After two economic panics in 1837 and 1839, Whigs appeared ascendant. Although Van Buren defeated a round of Whig candidates in the 1836 presidential election, the Whigs made his presidency much more difficult. They won majorities in the United States House and Senate. For the presidential election, the party learned from its failure in the 1836 election. Rather than many candidates in different states, the nominating convention in 1839 chose one—Harrison. Their platform demanded a new national bank, high tariffs, and more federal funding for internal

³⁷ *Leavenworth Arena* (Leavenworth, IN); December 27, 1838; *Rising Sun Times* (Rising Sun, IN), April 22, 1837; *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), December 25, 1845; Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837*, 210

³⁸ *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), January 31, and March 13, 1840; Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837*, 150-54, 231

improvements. Indianans were familiar with the nominee. He had served as the Indiana territorial governor from 1801 to 1812 before resigning to serve in the army during the War of 1812. After the war, Harrison returned to his home in Ohio before serving in Congress along with several diplomatic roles. Possessing a canine appetite for fame, Harrison never left the public eye.³⁹

The one time territorial governor never lost his popularity with his former neighbors. They looked at him as a fellow westerner, a man who fought for them against Native Americans and the British as Jackson did. He often returned to Indiana on whirlwind tours through the state. In 1833 well-wishers held a dinner for him in Indianapolis that lasted several hours. After a lengthy speech, Harrison offered a toast to Indiana and her citizens. Once the dinner ended, he then went on his way while newspapers in the state followed his every move. Democratic Congressman John Law wrote to Van Buren about another tour two years later. After the party nominated him for president, Hoosier Whigs hosted a large ratification meeting on the Tippecanoe battlefield. Supporters from every western state attended the meeting, which participants called it the largest political rally ever assembled in the West. Indiana residents were proud of Harrison but the Whigs nearly deified him.⁴⁰

During the campaign, Hoosier Whigs played up their man's exploits on the frontier noting Harrison's role in Indian removal. In 1836, during his first run for president, the Indiana Harrison Convention praised his actions saying the land's first inhabitants, "were gradually overcome by the perseverance and firmness of general Harrison, and small portions of territory were occasionally ceded, until the right of domain to the Mississippi river was secured." In 1840, they once again played up Harrison's past as an Indian fighter. Harrison was the hero who had

³⁹ Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer*, xii-xvi.

⁴⁰ *Indiana Palladium* (Lawrenceburg, IN), March 2, 1833; John Law to Martin Van Buren, July 6, 1835, The Martin Van Buren Papers, 1797-1910, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), June 12, 1840.

pushed out the Native Americans and opened up Indiana for white settlers. Because he fought so hard against Native Americans, the former governor was surely an excellent candidate for president.⁴¹

It was in the heat of the 1840 campaign that Whigs accepted the conservative name. According to the Whigs, theirs was the conservative party and they proudly took the title. When one former Democrat converted, he expected his former partisans to call him a conservative, a name he gladly accepted. When Whigs advertised their mass meetings, they frequently labeled them conservative meetings. One Whig noted that even Van Buren's home state was leaning towards Harrison and identified a Whig rally in the state as a rally of conservatives observing, "There will be a conservative rally on that occasion, such as not has been known before in the State." Another Whig newspaper editor directly labeled Whig principles conservative: "Unfurl the Democratic Harrison Banner—It is inscribed with conservative principles." For adherents, Whigs were conservatives opposed to the radicalism of Jackson, Van Buren, and every Democrat.⁴²

If Whigs were conservative, they labeled their rivals lawless radicals. Whigs attacked Democrats saying their opponents advocated destructive change that blunted the country's economic survival. In a widely published speech on the floor of the United States House of Representatives, New York Congressman John C. Clark called the Democratic Party ardent agrarians out to crush the country's economy. According to Clark, Democrats acted solely due to party. At the height of his speech, he put it bluntly, "Party, in its relentless tyranny, exacts from its devotees, passive submission to its decrees, be they right or wrong. Against this tyranny, Conservatives will wage unceasing war . . ." When the Van Buren administration introduced the

⁴¹ *Crawfordsville Record* (Crawfordsville, IN), January 16, 1836; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), April 10, 1840.

⁴² *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), May 1 and June 19 and October 9 and October 23, 1840.

subtreasury system to head off another economic crisis Whigs called it executive tyranny. Under Jackson and Van Buren, Democrats had pushed executive power beyond the limits defined in the Constitution. Another Whig noted Harrison's opposition to, "the agrarian infidel principles . . . and resists the doctrine that the spoils belong to the victors, and that an executive or ministerial officer of government may assume the responsibility of construing the constitution and laws of the country for selfish or party purposes." Against these abuses of power, Whigs provided a conservative bulwark.⁴³

Democrats happily ceded the terms conservative and conservatism to their opponents, slandering them with the names. Conservatives were aristocrats wedded to minority rule. One Democrat hoped the "perfume of agrarianism" could destroy the "feted odor of conservatism." Not content to merely condemn the Whigs, another Democrat reached into American history and linked his opponents to the dreaded Federalists. Both wanted internal improvements, a tariff, a national bank, and greater power for a monied few. Democrats warned listeners that the end goal was a monarchy. In a widely published letter, one Virginia Democrat drew a direct line between the Whig and Federalist Party, a line based on shared economic values. He assured Democrats throughout the nation that "Conservatism is greatly on the wane, and will soon be perfectly extinct." Since the Whigs were aristocrats out to support a monied few, Democrats labeled their own party the last bulwark against an aristocratic or conservative takeover.⁴⁴

Van Buren and his party took on different names for their own policies. Some Democrats stuck to reform as a name for their policies. They promised to reform the government, seizing it from an aristocratic monopoly and returning it to the people. One Whig remembered that

⁴³ *Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), March 9, 1839; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), September 4, 1840; *Leavenworth Arena* (Leavenworth, IN), February 20, 1840.

⁴⁴ *Bloomington Post* (Bloomington, IN), July 13, 1838; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN) October 5, 1838; *Vevay Times and Switzerland County Democrat* (Vevay, IN), October 8, 1840.

Democrats had used reform as a watchword in 1828: “It is well known to you all that that before General Jackson came into office the cry of his friends was Reform! Reform!!” Van Buren called his policies by another name. When Whigs noted how his state had abandoned property requirements for the franchise, Van Buren called the policy a positive. The embattled president called the change a “liberal” move saying how the conservative predictions of doom and gloom from its end were wrong: “The government of New York has, for several years, been administered under the liberal system established by the new constitution, and the still more liberal amendment of 1826, in a manner which appears to have been satisfactory to the people.” For Van Buren, it was liberal to abolish property requirements and ensure all white males could vote.⁴⁵

Rather than accepting each other as legitimate opponents, Whigs and Democrats turned the campaign into a brawl. Democrats attacked Whig partisanship and Harrison’s military acumen. One former group of Harrison supporters switched their support to the Democratic Party. They explained their decision in an open letter to Indiana newspapers, saying, “we have become disgusted with the conduct of those who are on the slaughter field of Tippecanoe, making merry on that ground which was consecrated by the blood of a Davies [sic], an Owen, and a Spencer who fell in consequence of the lack of generalship in the commander on that fateful day.” The criticism of Harrison’s performance at the battle permeated many Democratic speeches, newspaper editorials, and rallies. On the floor of Congress, one Democratic Representative called the celebrations over Tippecanoe mere party pandering and noted the dearth of celebrations at the battlefield in the past. “Who ever heard of the celebration of the ‘Battle of Tippecanoe,’ until after the lapse of more than a quarter of a century.” At the same

⁴⁵ *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), October 23, 1840; *Leavenworth Arena* (Leavenworth, IN), March 14, 1839; *Vevay Times and Switzerland County Democrat* (Vevay, IN), April 15, 1840.

time many Americans visited battlefields for their landscapes rather than their history, most Americans, regardless of party affiliation, remembered Tippecanoe for its association with the Whig Party.⁴⁶

The propaganda fell on deaf ears. Voters pinned their economic woes on the party in charge, the Democrats. The 1840 elections brought the Whigs a triumph as voters turned out in droves. Harrison won the election and Whigs maintained their majorities in the United States House and Senate. Even though the 1836 internal improvements bill bankrupted the state, Whigs had won dominating victories in the Indiana state elections the year before. Triumphant Whig legislators in Washington and in state governments dreamed of more internal improvements, greater tariffs for more revenue, a strong economy, and above all, a national bank. The western-honed president had promised to support the Whig agenda and most believed him. After the inauguration, his new vice president, John Tyler, went home to his plantation in Virginia to wait out a boring term as second fiddle.⁴⁷

Thirty days into Harrison's presidency the former governor died. Tyler then assumed the office. A former Democrat, the Virginian still held many of his old suspicions about a new national bank and exorbitant federal spending. He further believed in states' rights over a strong centralized federal government, setting him at odds with his fellow Whigs. Most leading Whigs disagreed with the new president. They passed a slate of legislation including a charter for a new national bank, the most consistent Whig goal. Surprising his own party, the new president vetoed the charter with a stinging rebuke of the party that placed him on their national ticket. Without a president to sign legislation or a super majority to override Tyler's veto, much of the Whig

⁴⁶ *Vevay Times and Switzerland County Democrat* (Vevay, IN), June 18 and July 2, 1840; David A. Chambers, *Memories of War: Visiting Battlefields and Bonefields in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 37.

⁴⁷ Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 126-27.

agenda faded. Angered at the president, Whigs held a meeting and expelled the Virginian. Tyler struggled to survive without a party for support. At the height of their success, Harrison's untimely death scuttled Whig hopes.⁴⁸

Up until the mid-1840s, the Whig Party in Indiana remained united. The state's Whigs generally supported conservative economic plans at Washington and the racial policies such as Indian removal and African American exclusion laws at home. An increase in population hurt the unanimity within the party. Prior to the 1840s, the majority of Indiana's residents dwelled in the southern counties. The decade brought a change in population. Northeasterners traveled on the new roads and settled in the central and northern counties. The population grew at a rapid rate in the northern counties. Southern born Congressman Law was succinct: "Out of the hundreds immigrating to the West along the lake shore whom I met and with most of whom I conversed, I found no one either on foot, on horseback, or in carriage, who was immigrating from the South of New York. They were all from that State or New England." In east central Wayne County, over ten thousand more residents responded to the census in 1840 than ten years earlier. These new settlers brought their own politics and religious experiences.⁴⁹

One of these new residents was Schuyler Colfax. Colfax was born in New York and migrated westward with his family during the 1830s, settling in St. Joseph County near South Bend. The former New Yorker quickly established himself as a Whig following Clay in his many policies. Another up and coming Whig in the early 1840s was George Washington Julian. Julian was born in Wayne County and his parents raised him as a Quaker. Both joined Clay's party, yet both heard the siren call of antislavery opposing African American exclusion. Over the next

⁴⁸ Edward P. Crapol, *John Tyler: The Accidental President* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 8-20.

⁴⁹ *Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), December 19, 1840; *Message of the President of the United States, to the Two House of Congress, at the Commencement of the Twenty-Fifth Congress* (Washington: Blair and Rives, 1838), 283; John Law to Martin Van Buren, July 6, 1835, Van Buren Papers, LOC.

decade, new issues split the Whig Party and the two Whigs helped widen the chasm. It was a dress rehearsal for their party's national split one decade later.⁵⁰

A big test for the party's cohesiveness came in 1844. The candidates that year had competing visions about westward expansion. First, Democrats nominated James K. Polk for President. Polk promoted westward expansion as a key part of his campaign. He promised to annex Texas then seize all of the Oregon Territory. He hoped the free territory in the northwest was enough to placate northern Democrats wary about more slave territory while pleasing the South with Texas. Clay, the Whig nominee, vacillated on the issue. Many northern Whigs opposed more slave territory and the Kentuckian needed northern states to win the presidency. Rather than confront the issue head on, Clay waffled. In two public letters the man in his third run at the presidency seemingly opposed expansion and Texas annexation although he never explicitly rejected the idea. Northerners and southerners questioned what Clay's plans for the future. While Democrats rallied behind Polk, the Whig's non-answer created a problem that later haunted him in the election.⁵¹

Most Indiana Whigs rallied behind the Kentuckian. Hoping to get a jump on the Democrats, they started the campaign early in 1844. Before the national party even nominated Clay, Whigs in the state had pledged to accept whomever the party placed on the ticket, clearly favoring the Great Compromiser. In the east central Union County, the Young Men's Whig organization voiced their support for Clay at their annual convention. Older Whigs joined in. At the state convention in January 1844, the party adopted a platform that supported federal money for internal improvements, criticized the overuse of the veto power, and condemned the

⁵⁰ A.Y. Moore, *The Life of Schuyler Colfax* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson and Brothers, 1868), 32-39; Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 161-63.

⁵¹ Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 74, 76-77.

Democrats' hard money policy. The delegates passed another resolution that supported Clay's nomination for the presidency. In a clear move to avoid the issues, the party left out any references to slavery or emancipation. A few Whigs were unconvinced. They believed a slave owner naturally favored other slave owners. The initial wave of enthusiasm for Clay masked a growing division within the party.⁵²

Some Whigs were hesitant about the slave owner Clay. Over the course of the campaign, he and his party's wavering approach to national expansion fed a growing threat to his chances for the presidency. The threat lay with the many antislavery Whigs. After neither party took up immediate emancipation for the 1840 election, abolitionists formed their own political party. Calling for immediate emancipation, the nascent Liberty Party found some footholds in upstate New York and New England where disgruntled Whigs craved a pure antislavery party. Although he had little chance of victory, the Liberty men nominated James G. Birney, a former Kentucky slaveholder, as their presidential candidate. Despite Birney's gripping conversion story, few voters rallied to the party. The southern-born abolitionist failed to win a single electoral vote. No Hoosier cast a ballot for him that year and most states left Birney off the ballot. Despite the setback, the party lived on.⁵³

Liberty men persisted in their calls for immediate emancipation and won more Whig converts. Four years later, they were poised to make an impact. Although he had little chance of victory, members nominated the same candidate in 1844. Birney, in a show of dedication, accepted the nomination for another crack at the major parties. In Indiana, the Liberty Party held

⁵² *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 1 and August 1, 1844; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), May 24, 1844.

⁵³ Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 156-57; Corey M. Brooks, *Liberty Power: Antislavery Third Parties and the Transformation of American Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 40-42; Reinhard O. Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840-1848: Antislavery Third-Party Politics in the United States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 19-20.

a state convention in east central Henry County late in the summer and put several names forward to serve as presidential electors. Barely strong enough to nominate electors, they never mustered the power to run a slate of congressional candidates in much of the state. Without a large convention or following, Birney's bid for the presidency seemed over before it began. However, other than a straight out victory, there was one way Birney could influence the election in 1844.⁵⁴

Indiana Whigs looked at the Liberty Party in horror. Conservative followers of Clay attacked their former friends as traitors to the cause. After abolitionists denigrated the longtime Whig for his relationship with slavery, the editor of the Richmond *Palladium* brought up Birney's past intimacy with the institution. They called the abolitionists hypocrites for attacking Clay while defending Birney saying, "no man is perfect." The editor's anger only grew as more Whigs defected. Late in the campaign, he launched into a tirade saying, "But we hope those ultra Liberty men will learn to be a little more charitable, and more sparing of their abuse of another candidate, who is, and has always shown himself, a great friend of the slave . . ." At the Clay rally in Gibson County, one Liberty man showed up where local Whigs "treed him" until he reportedly ran him off. Although they were isolated to a few areas in the state, the Liberty Party threatened to siphon off essential votes. If Clay was to win the presidency, he had to at least keep some of these disgruntled voters in the fold.⁵⁵

A few Whigs called for Clay to put the issue to rest and disavow any further expansion. Though he never did, some loyalists had a solution. When Clay protested against the way President Tyler negotiated the annexation treaty, Hoosier Whigs seized the protest as an outright rejection. It was short of a full-throated rejection, yet, it was the closest Clay came to a rejection

⁵⁴ *The Little Western* (Noblesville, IN), July 20 and October 26, 1844.

⁵⁵ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), August 2, 1844; *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 1, 1844.

of national expansion. Clay's waffling tickled down to the state organizations. At a mass meeting in May 1844, Hoosier Whigs adopted a mixed platform on expansion. Although many party faithful rejected annexation, delegates never explicitly ruled out a Union with the Texas Republic. Instead of condemnation, Whigs at the convention blamed the issue on southern Democrats hoping to strengthen the southern portion of the country. Still, the accusations did their damage. Like Clay, the Indiana Whigs never explicitly wrote off annexation. They soon regretted it.⁵⁶

Birney was decisive in the election. In New York, over fifteen thousand voters, many former Whigs, cast their ballots for the Liberty man. Polk won the state with a mere five thousand votes. In Indiana, Clay's indecision on national expansion likely cost him the state's electoral votes. Over two thousand voters, many former Whigs, cast their votes for Birney. Four years earlier, in the east central Wayne County, almost seventy percent of voters cast their ballots for the Whig Harrison. In 1844, only thirty-five percent of voters favored the Whig candidate Clay. Birney won seven percent of the vote. Whig newspaper editors and politicians wrongly accused reluctant Whigs of staying home: turnout was actually much higher for both parties that year. Though Julian and Colfax supported Clay, other antislavery Whigs refused. Clay's failure showed the difficult problems facing the Whig Party. If a candidate leaned towards the antislavery wing, he risked losing conservatives. If he leaned towards conservative Whigs, antislavery men supported other candidates. Ultimately, the holdouts were decisive in the election and Clay lost his best chance at the presidency.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 1, August 8, and June 6, 1844; *Vincennes Gazette* (Vincennes, IN), September 19, 1844; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), October 4, 1844.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *The Liberty Party*, 211-15; *Leavenworth Arena* (Leavenworth, IN), December 3, 1840; *The Little Western* (Noblesville, IN), November 30, 1844; Blue, *No Taint of Compromise*, 162-63.

The lame duck President Tyler took one issue off the table. Shortly after Polk won the presidency, Texas entered the Union. Hoping to resolve the controversy before he left office, Tyler had moved the annexation bill through Congress. The new state added another headache for the country. After annexation, officials in the United States and Mexico argued over the new border. Hoping to strengthen the American hand, Polk instructed General Zachary Taylor to take his soldiers in Texas to the Mexican border as a show of force. Taylor was almost certainly in Mexico when Mexican soldiers fired on the Americans, but word about the incident spread as an act of aggression. War fever broke out in the United States. The once small army quickly expanded as the country geared up to invade the neighbor to the south and avenge those killed. Although many conservatives opposed national expansion for fear of waking the slavery issue, the war made expansion almost inevitable. With the expectation of new territories a familiar question arose, could slave owners take their slaves west?⁵⁸

A Pennsylvania Democrat in the United States House of Representatives thought he had a solution. In order to negotiate a peace treaty, President Polk requested Congress appropriate two million dollars. Hoping to reserve the new lands for non-slaveowners, Representative David Wilmot submitted an addition to the bill which read, “That, as an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any territory from the Republic of Mexico by the United States, by virtue of any treaty which may be negotiated between them, and to the use by the Executive of the moneys herein appropriated, neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory, except for crime, whereof the party shall first be duly convicted.” The Proviso caused a firestorm. Southerners, angry at the northern strike for free soil, called it odious and reprehensible. The northern dominated House passed the appropriations bill with the Proviso

⁵⁸ Joel H. Silbey, *Storm Over Texas: The Texas Annexation Crisis and the Road to Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 81-86, 113-15; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 233, 244-45.

intact while the United States Senate, equally divided between northern and southern members, rejected it. The debates raged on and eventually filtered back to the states.⁵⁹

Before Wilmot introduced his Proviso, Indianans were split on the war. Most Democrats supported it while most Whigs opposed the conflict. Some Indiana Whigs called the war simply a front for more slave territory, a gift to the South. They had some evidence. Polk had wavered on the Oregon Territory leaving more free soil on the negotiating table with Britain. A few even expected treachery out of the young president. In his lone term as a Congressman, Illinois Whig Abraham Lincoln, questioned the justification for the war, earning him the rather embarrassing nickname Spottie Lincoln. Others feared the expected peace after follow the conflict. Caleb B. Smith, a Whig from Connersville, Indiana, feared disunion saying, “I believe every province we may tear from that distracted country is only bringing discord and disunion among us, and is piling up for our children evils over which they will mourn when we are gone.” Smith warned that the new territories were desolate and could barely support the “half civilized hordes living there . . .” Clay made similar arguments against the war. Congress ignored Smith and the vaunted Whig leader. Representatives approved the treaty with Mexico, and absorbed the new territories.⁶⁰

Unionist men like Smith faced a problem, the Wilmot Proviso was overwhelmingly popular in the North. In east central Indiana, locals formed the Wilmot Proviso League. The League called for all residents regardless of party to oppose slavery in the newly won territories. Their charter read, “We herby pledge we will never again vote for any man who gives his influence or will give his vote to extend or sustain American Slavery to fill any office in the gift

⁵⁹ Silbey, *Storm Over Texas*, 123-28; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 250-51.

⁶⁰ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), June 4, 1846; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), October 27, 1846, December 1, 1846; *Tri-Weekly Journal* (Evansville, IN), January 15, 1848; Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward*, 84; Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (New York: Vintage, 2013), 248-55, 262-64.

of the people.” Members enshrined a moral opposition to slavery in their declaration of principles: “Whereas, Slavery is a great moral and political evil . . . the undersigned hereby form themselves into an Association . . . whose objects shall be to prevent the further extension and effect the final extinction of slavery from the United States of America.” Most Indianans agreed with their fellow northerners, slavery should stay in the South. The question became how to prohibit slavery in the new territories, while keeping the South in the Union.⁶¹

In 1848, as the calls for free soil grew, Whigs and Democrats tried to figure out a way to please their northern and southern wings for the coming presidential election. Democrats nominated the Michigander Cass for president. To placate both sections of their party, Cass advocated popular sovereignty in the territories. Under popular sovereignty, settlers could meet in a convention and adopt a slave or free state constitution. Whigs used a different technique to unite their party. Instead of Clay, the party nominated the war hero Taylor. The general was a slave owner and a political novice compared to other potential candidates. The man had never voted in an election or took part in a political campaign despite several opportunities. Fortunately for his new party, he said very little about the issues of the day leaving a blank slate for Whigs in both sections to paint him as sympathetic to their cause.⁶²

Both parties faced a surprising challenge in the North. Building off their more informal organizations, disgruntled northerners formed the Free Soil Party, held a national convention, and nominated a candidate for the coming election. Democrats should have recognized the candidate’s name; he was a blast from their political past, former President Van Buren. The new

⁶¹ *Articles of Union and Address of the Indiana Wilmot Proviso League* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Morning Herald, 1848), 3; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), February 8, 1848; Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840-1848*, 211-12; Jonathan H. Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil, 1824-1854* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 123-24.

⁶² Christopher Childers, *The Failure of Popular Sovereignty: Slavery, Manifest Destiny, and the Radicalization of Southern Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 136-37, 152-54; Silbey, *Party Over Section*, 68-71.

party hoped to pick off enough Democrats and Whigs in a grand coalition against slavery in the West. Taking a direct approach to the slavery question, Free Soilers believed Congress should ban slavery in the territories. The Free Soil men had learned an important lesson from their Liberty Party forebearers that made the new party stronger. They quelled any disunionist rhetoric and distanced themselves from abolitionists. Unlike the Liberty men before them, Free Soilers pledged to leave slavery alone where it existed, a deft move designed to win over an often-racist northern public.⁶³

The Free Soil Party won many converts in Indiana. One enthusiastic member established the *Free Soil Banner* in Indianapolis to serve as the party's largest mouthpiece. The editor called both parties tools of a slave power out to push slavery into the territories. He chastised former Whig allies asking, "are you for freedom or slavery for our territories?" He argued Taylor was an untrustworthy slave owner sure to back up his southern neighbors. Likewise, Free Soil men called Cass a tool of the southern slave power. The South had forced Cass to oppose the Wilmot Proviso. A Cass victory meant slavery in the west with more slave states. With a more moderate approach to slavery in the southern states, the Free Soil Party forced both parties to make certain assurances, assurances that haunted both sides in the coming years.⁶⁴

To answer the Free Soil challenge, both parties incorporated conservative free soilism into their state platforms, at least in the North. They promised prohibitions on slavery in the West coupled with an intact Union. Although they reiterated their support for growing the economy on "conservative principles," Hoosier Whigs focused on keeping the free soil voters. They claimed Taylor disagreed with the presidential veto and planned to leave the decision on slavery to Congress. Since free states outnumbered the slave states in the House, Congress could bar

⁶³ Silbey, *Party Over Section*, 76-79, 164-66.

⁶⁴ *Free Soil Banner* (Indianapolis, IN), October 27 and October 6, 1848.

slavery. Since Taylor planned to sign all bills congress sent to him, his victory virtually guaranteed new free states. On the eve of the elections, Whig newspapers went a step further. They depicted the former general thoroughly opposed to slavery's extension saying, "persons of unimpeachable veracity, who have conversed with Gen. Taylor concerning the extension of slavery, declare that he is, in opinion and feeling, opposed to it." Indiana Whigs could ill afford to lose any votes; they had to guarantee free soil.⁶⁵

Indiana Democrats followed suit and preached a different message than the national party. They placed their faith in Cass's plan for popular sovereignty. Since free state citizens outnumbered southerners, more antislavery settlers could go into the new territories, vote for antislavery constitutions, and then join the Union as free states. According to Democrats, this plan was foolproof. Even better for the country's survival, it kept the South in the Union. Democratic Congressman Robert Dale Owen assured his listeners slavery could never enter the territories. Mexico had banned slavery there before the United States seized them. Only Congress could extend slavery into the territories a move Cass planned to veto. There was no need for a Wilmot Proviso or a new political party, two things that risked antagonizing the South and afterwards disunion.⁶⁶

As they grasped for the free soil voters, politicians in both parties labeled their opponents as doughfaced southern sympathizers. Because he was a slave owner, Taylor made an easy target. Democrats argued Taylor had already spread slavery to Mexican Territories during the war and bought a new plantation there: "In addition to his One Hundred Thousand Dollars' worth of Slaves in Mississippi, he has invested eighteen thousand dollars more in 'human souls' upon his new plantation as above." Southerners added fuel to the accusations. One Democrat

⁶⁵ *Free Soil Banner* (Indianapolis, IN) September 8, 1848; *Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), August 26, 1848, October 14, 1848; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), July 4, 1848.

⁶⁶ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), July 19 and September 2 and September 21, 1848.

quoted the *New Orleans Bee* for evidence: “By birth, education, Habits, and Property, Gen. Taylor is identified with Southern interests and principles.” Free Soilers joined in. The main Free Soil newspaper routinely carried speeches and letters from southern Whigs endorsing Taylor as the proslavery candidate. Democrats presented the choice as a clear one. Vote for Taylor and get slave soil, vote for Cass and get free soil.⁶⁷

Southern support left Cass wide open for northern doubts about his free soilism. Whigs charged Cass with duplicity on slavery saying, “Keep it before the people, that to get the favor of the South, he abandoned the Wilmot Proviso in Congress . . .” One Whig editor charged Cass with outright support for slave extension. Cass had promised to veto the Wilmot Proviso or any similar bill in Congress. When one southerner guaranteed a Cass victory meant a veto for the Wilmot Proviso on the floor of Congress, Northern Whig papers brandished the speech as evidence that Cass was a doughface. Another Whig was more succinct, listing Cass under the heading “Slave-Extension candidate.” According to Whigs, the choice was clear. Vote for Cass and get slave soil, vote for Taylor and get free soil. Although both parties defended their free soil bona fides, they took it one step further, damning their opponents as traitors to the North.⁶⁸

Whigs and Democrats were right to fear the Free Soil Party. The election results that year revealed how much voters in the state favored the new party and its cause. Numerous Whigs, wary of Taylor’s status as a slave owner, abandoned their own party. They either voted for the Free-Soil ticket or stayed at home and Van Buren won 5.3 percent of the vote in the state, much better than the Liberty Party candidate four years earlier. The party did well in areas where Whigs were the strongest. Though small, the Free Soil vote likely cost Taylor the state and made the presidential election closer in the Electoral College. In Wayne County, a traditional Whig

⁶⁷ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), June 24 and July 19, 1848; *Free Soil Banner* (Indianapolis, IN), November 3, 1848.

⁶⁸ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), July 13 and August 10, 1848; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), 16 June 1848.

stronghold, Taylor won only 33 percent of the vote. Fortunately for the Louisianan, the old general's popularity carried him over the finish line; he did not need Indiana's electoral votes after all. Despite Taylor's win, the debate over slavery in the west continued well after the election ended, it soon influenced state and local politics.⁶⁹

The issue of free soil drove debates in local elections. When the General Assembly met to nominate a senator in 1848, candidates pledged to hold the line against slavery. In the days before the election, Democratic Governor James Whitcomb was the front-runner and the people demanded to know his position on the issue. In an open letter, Whitcomb assured readers that he intended to vote against any bill that permitted slavery in the territories. When the General Assembly elected Whitcomb to the seat, some Free Soilers lauded the election believing they had won the day. Others warned of treachery. They criticized their brother Free Soilers for celebrating Whitcomb's election. One Whitcomb critic voiced his concern saying, "Truly, the pay is coming before it is due." With a new senator pledged to free soil, Hoosiers looked to establish another wall against slavery in the 1849 elections.⁷⁰

The prospect of slavery in the West influenced local elections the following year as both political parties rushed to beef up their free soil credentials. They assured voters their candidates opposed slave extension. In their state conventions, both organizations enshrined a strong stance against slavery in their platforms. Whigs argued that since Mexican law had banned slavery in those lands before the war, they should remain free territory. One county convention declared, "no party can be found more in favor of Free Soil than the whig party." The Democrats claimed free soil at their state convention using the same logic: "inasmuch as New Mexico and California are, in fact and in law, free territories, it is the duty of Congress to prevent the introduction of

⁶⁹ Silbey, *Party Over Section*, 135-36; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), December 15, 1848.

⁷⁰ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), April 4 and April 11, 1849.

slavery within their limits.” Well aware of its popularity in the state, candidates in both parties scrambled to promise free soil on the canvass.⁷¹

The Whig and Democratic gubernatorial candidates traveled the state seeking Free Soil votes. Following their lead, newspapermen and allies pitched their candidate as the true friend of freedom in the West. On the campaign trail, Joseph A. Wright and his Whig opponent promised Hoosiers they only supported candidates for the upcoming Senate election—the second seat was due for a new candidate the following year—who espoused free soil. The two politicians had to hedge their bets. The Free Soil Party had nominated a candidate of their own for governor that year and neither man could afford to lose votes. After a spirited campaign, Wright won the election. As he swept to victory, Democrats also won a majority in the General Assembly. The victors promised to vote for Wright’s legislative goals and pay off the state’s remaining debt.⁷²

Though their candidate fell in the governor’s race, the Free Soil Party won a great success in eastern Indiana. In the Fourth Congressional District, where Quakers dominated, many voters had cast ballots for Van Buren in the 1848 election. One year later, there were just enough Free Soilers there to sway a local election the following year. In a move that echoed elections in New England, Democrats fused with the local Free Soilers. They nominated Julian, the former Whig, on the fusion ticket. Julian had become disillusioned with the Whig Party and struck out on his own after Whigs nominated Taylor for president. Supporting the Louisiana slave owner was a bridge too far for the Indiana politician. Whigs had dominated the Fourth district and Democrats

⁷¹ *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), January 2, 1849; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), January 3, 1849; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), January 11, 1849.

⁷² *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), May 23, 1849; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), May 30 and June 28 and August 16, 1849; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), June 1 and July 13, 1849; *Madison Daily Courier* (Madison, IN), July 10, 1849.

rarely had an opportunity to win the seat. Julian's nomination provided a chance to breakthrough.⁷³

Julian fought his Whig opponent over who was friendlier towards free soil. Democrats joined in. The editor of the state's largest Democratic paper assured readers that Democrats could trust Julian to bring in free states. Local Whigs agreed with the free soil position. However, they believed their candidate was sufficient to guard against slavery in the coming congressional session; a Free Soil candidate was unnecessary. As Julian's campaign picked up steam, local Whigs ramped up their attacks on their former ally. One Whig editor called Julian's party, the "abolition party," as a way to discourage more defections. The separation between conservatives and Whigs like Julian grew into a full-blown war as supporters argued with each other in the region's newspapers. While Whigs such as Julian agreed with their brethren on the economic issues, they were willing to take drastic action to keep slavery out of the West. At the polls, the fusion worked. Julian won his seat.⁷⁴

While Indianans voted in their state elections, events proceeded more quickly than politicians expected. The Gold Rush of 1849 swelled California's population so quickly that residents moved to draft a state constitution and petition for admission into the Union. No one expected the number of settlers in California or their rapid growth. Complicating matters, a few slaves made it into the state during the mad rush of migration before the territorial government called a constitutional convention. For the convention, Californians overwhelmingly elected antislavery delegates to draft the document making the result somewhat anticlimactic.

Californians adopted a constitution outlawing slavery and voters gave their approval at the polls.

⁷³ *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), December 15, 1848; *Madison Daily Courier* (Madison, IN), June 9, 1849; Mark Voss-Hubbard, *Beyond Party: Cultures of Antipartisanship in Northern Politics before the Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 76-78.

⁷⁴ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), June 20 and July 11 and August 15, 1849; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), June 21, 1849; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), July 6, 1849.

As representatives carried the document to Washington, storm clouds loomed over the Union. A new free state meant two new free state Senators. California's admission threatened to surely split the country in two.⁷⁵

California's entrance into the Union did not go smoothly. Fearing the political ramifications of upsetting the careful balance in the Senate, the South protested. Southern legislators in Washington pledged to block the new territory while northern politicians demanded Congress accept it as a new state. Indiana politicians and newspaper editors from both parties pushed their representatives to accept California with its free state constitution. Others turned their attention to the Southwest where they expected settlers in New Mexico and Utah to submit their own state constitutions in the coming years. If two territories prohibited slavery, it meant four more free state senators to Washington. The possibility was too much to bear for southern slaveowners.⁷⁶

The Indiana General Assembly took up the matter that winter and sent clear instructions to the state's delegation in Washington. After little debate, both chambers passed a joint resolution on slavery in the new lands.

Be it Resolved by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana, That our Senators be instructed and our Representatives in Congress be requested so to cast their votes, and extend their influence, to have engrafted upon any law that may be passed for the organization of the territory recently acquired from Mexico, a proviso forever excluding from such territory, slavery and involuntary servitude, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes, whereof the party has been duly convicted.

The resolution passed the House with a wide sixty-one to thirty-one vote. In his annual message, Governor Wright proclaimed: "It cannot be doubted but that the response of the people of

⁷⁵ Leonard L. Richard, *The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 9-14, 18-24, 24-26, 47-54, 91-94, 95-110, 137.

⁷⁶ Richard, *The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War*, 95-110.

Indiana to this momentous question will be unanimously in favor of freedom.” Coming events tested their resolve.⁷⁷

In Washington, Southerners continued to block California’s admission. To break the stalemate, Americans hoped Clay could engineer another compromise and the old Kentuckian gave it one last try. He proposed several bills to please both sections. The first two proposed bills accepted California into the Union without slavery while ending the slave trade in Washington. The third bill organized New Mexico and Utah into territories under popular sovereignty, leaving the decision on slavery to the settlers. To further sweeten the deal, the fourth and fifth proposals reduced the size of Texas while strengthening the Fugitive Slave Act. Clay and his allies stewarded the measures into one large omnibus bill, appealing to their fellow legislators to put country above section and pass the legislation. The bill failed.⁷⁸

Hoping to keep the compromise alive, Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas tried again. Though most Hoosiers, including their representatives in Congress, wanted free soil, Indiana Democrats waffled on their stance. Under duress, most of them slowly shifted towards compromise. After Douglas separated the bills, Indiana’s congressional delegation fell in line. The Little Giant and others warned the Indiana delegation of southern secession if the compromise failed. Adding to the pressure, Indiana Senator Jesse Bright urged his fellow Democrats to vote for the compromise. Bright was powerful within the Indiana Democratic Party and presented the choice as one between Union and disunion. On the controversial Fugitive Slave Act, six of the eight Democrats in the House voted for the bill. Their only Whig colleague joined them. The two dissenting Democrats represented northern districts where conservatives

⁷⁷ *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville,IN) December 7 and December 25, 1849; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana*, 1850, 230.

⁷⁸ Peter B. Knupfer, *The Union as it Is: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 180-85, 189.

were fewer. On the vote to organize New Mexico and Utah under popular sovereignty, only two voted against it. The bills passed and those who voted for them returned home to an uncertain reception.⁷⁹

Indiana Democrats returned to their state to face the voters. An election was coming the following year. Even before he assented to the compromise, one New Yorker criticized Whitcomb for changing his stance. In an angry letter, the disgusted New York politician chastised the Indiana Senator for betraying his principles. In Indiana, the criticism grew louder. One political rival attacked representative William J. Brown for changing his vote after promising to vote against any bill that extended slavery. Congressman Cyrus L. Dunham defended his about face as well. Dunham represented the Second Congressional District in southern Indiana where Democrats usually dominated. During the 1849 election, local Democrats promoted him as part of a Democratic bulwark against the slave owning Taylor. Dunham and other Democrats had enough votes to thwart the president if he pushed slavery west.⁸⁰

The compromise had concerned many Democrats in the state. Future Congressman John G. Davis voiced his opposition to the bills in numerous letters to a friend. He had supported the Wilmot Proviso and endorsed resolutions at the Democratic state convention opposing any slavery in the territories. Davis, along with his friend, Democratic Postmaster J. O. Jones, shared a moral opposition to slavery. In a letter to Jones, Davis lamented the new Fugitive Slave Act for its harshness and advocated changes. He wrote his friend, “You and I differ but little, if any, in regard to our views of the Fugitive Slave Law . . .” Both thought the bill unnecessary, a mere

⁷⁹ Wickre, “Indiana’s Southern Senator”, 85-86, 89-90, 94; U.S. Congress, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States*, 31st Cong., 1st sess., September 12, 1850, 1452; Richmond Palladium (Richmond, IN), October 23, 1850.

⁸⁰ James DeBaugh to James Whitcomb, April 19, 1850, Whitcomb Papers; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), March 28, August 1 and November 14, 1850; *Spirit of Progress* (Charlestown, IN), July 31, 1851.

pander to slave owners. The astute politician also worried about his party. If the compromise proved unpopular, the party could suffer damage at the polls. While Davis exchanged letters with Jones, others Democrats were already defending their vote on compromise.⁸¹

The embattled politicians came out swinging. Brown stated he only changed his vote “because the interests of the country had changed.” Local Democratic newspapermen pitched in. One defended Dunham in the southern second district and called him, “the friend of the people, the Compromise measures, and the Union.” Since the choice came down to Union or disunion, Democrats like Dunham voted for the Union. Dunham had changed his stance early on. Even before the final vote, he was a strong advocate for compromise. On the House floor in Washington, he relieved a speech chastising southern congressmen for their paranoia, arguing the southerners exaggerated the abolitionist numbers in the North. He assured them most northerners were perfectly willing to compromise. Instead, Dunham blamed the Whig Party for the excitement then urged a compromise. For a man who won election preaching free soil, the turn was a surprise.⁸²

Indiana politicians had another reason to support the compromise rather than disunion. Their voters wanted free soil in the west, yet few expected many slaves to go there. According to the editor of the *State Sentinel*, slavery could never go west due to the climate. The New Mexico Territory was hot, arid, and inhospitable to the major cash crops that relied on slave labor. For evidence, he used statements a few Whigs made during the 1848 elections when they argued climate rendered a congressional prohibition on slavery moot. The “law of nature” surely excluded the institution from the new territories. When a Whig newspaper attacked Senator

⁸¹ John G. Davis. *His Opinions Upon the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise, His Opinions on the Fugitive Slave Law. Choice Extracts from his Correspondence* (Terre Haute: Western Star Printers, 1856), 4-5.

⁸² James DeBaugh to James Whitcomb, April 19, 1850, Whitcomb Papers; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), March 28 and November 14, 1850; *Spirit of Progress* (Charlestown, IN), July 31, 1851.

Whitcomb for compromising, one Democrat stated the popular Indiana politician believed a prohibition law was unnecessary. Climate naturally restricted slavery. A provocative law was too great a risk over such little concern.⁸³

Reactions to the compromise exposed the gulf between conservative Hoosiers in both parties, and their more radical neighbors. Opponents of the compromise were mainly northern Indiana Whigs coupled with a few smattering of Democrats like Davis. They largely opposed the bills due to the increased fugitive slave act. The debates attracted attention outside Indiana. Charles A. Dana of New York wrote to Colfax, seeking information on how Hoosiers received the compromise. For all the talk about free soil, Dana only asked about Hoosier reactions to the Fugitive Slave Act. His views were similar to the Democrat Davis's opinion; the act was immoral and strengthened the South's reach into the North. Despite the rancor, the bills became law.⁸⁴

Amidst all the debate over the Compromise of 1850 in Washington, Hoosiers met in Indianapolis to draft a new state constitution. The General Assembly had placed a referendum for a constitutional convention on the ballot in 1849, and voters overwhelmingly approved. In a special election, voters then elected delegates to the convention in early 1850 based on the Senate and House districts. In a show of party strength, a little over two thirds of the delegates were Democrats, eighty-eight in total. The Whigs faced a daunting challenge during the convention. With a large majority, Democrats could railroad anti-bank amendments, place restrictions on internal improvements, or jettison funding for public education. Even if future Whigs won a majority in the General Assembly, changing a state constitution was a more difficult task. The convention assembled in an October meeting in the chamber of the House of

⁸³ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), June 20 and June 27, 1850.

⁸⁴ *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), November 1, 1850; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), December 12, 1850; Charles A. Dana to Schuyler Colfax, June 28, 1851, Colfax Papers Box 1 Folder 3, IHS; *John G. Davis*, 4-5.

Representatives before adjourning to a local Masonic Lodge. The delegates, including many future political leaders, then set to work.⁸⁵

One issue quickly divided the convention. Despite the fines and penalties, African Americans kept coming. Their numbers were still small—under one percent—yet legislation elsewhere gave the delegates a sense of urgency. African American men in Massachusetts had won the right to vote and those with enough property could vote in New York. Their enfranchisement raised an important question before delegates assembled at the convention: could an African American from Massachusetts or New York vote in Indiana? Article IV of the United States Constitution was explicit, “The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.” It seemed lawmakers in Massachusetts and New York had nullified a law in Indiana. If African Americans from those states came, delegates asked, could they vote?⁸⁶

Once delegates settled in they took up several measures to clean up obsolete laws from the first state constitution. They first set up committees to report on the conflicts and recommend changes. The convention charged one committee to look into the rights of residents, including African Americans. After most of the delegates refused to even consider it, Colfax, hoping to bypass them, proposed a popular referendum on universal suffrage. Opposition was fierce. David M. Dobson, a Democrat, stated: “I am satisfied that perhaps three-fourths of the citizens of the State would rather leave, if the negroes were to be allowed to come here and exercise the elective franchise.” In a dramatic moment, one delegate rose and asked if anyone supported “negro

⁸⁵ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 15, 1850; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era 1850-1880* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965, 41; Donald F. Carmony, “The Indiana Constitutional Convention of 1850-1851,” (Master’s thesis, Indiana University, 1931), 20-21, 24, 26-27, 31.

⁸⁶ *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana, 1850* (Indianapolis: H. Fowler official printer to the convention, 1850), 439-41; Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era*, 14; Keyssar, *The Right to Vote*, 54-55; Stephen Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829-1889* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 106.

suffrage” to stand up, all remained seated. James G. Read from southern Indiana voiced his opposition saying he represented, “a constituency which has a stronger feeling, perhaps, than any other in the State against the enfranchisement or even the immigration into the State of negroes . . .” Unsurprisingly, the proposition failed.⁸⁷

For some delegates, preserving white male franchise was not enough. Thomas Ware Gibson of Clark County—a county along the Ohio River—reminded delegates about the exclusion laws in some slave states that required freed slaves to leave after emancipation. Though he disagreed with seizing property from African Americans as some had proposed, Gibson warned the other delegates saying: “Everywhere you see States thrusting out their old and worthless negroes; and unless we would become the Liberia of the South, it is necessary for us to act, and to act promptly.” William C. Foster of Monroe County warned that more African Americans migrants meant more violence in the state. John Pettit of Tippecanoe County assured delegates that; “no two distinct races of people can live together for any length of time harmoniously . . .” For a Democrat, Pettit employed a conservative argument. If the races lived together, violence between the two threatened society.⁸⁸

Delegates echoed their constituents. The threat of former slaves venturing north seemed real for many Hoosiers. Kentucky lay due south across the Ohio River and whites had used slaved labor there for generations. In 1840, census takers found almost 800,000 slaves in the commonwealth spread from bluegrass farms around Lexington to the Mississippi River. If Kentuckians emancipated their slaves, they could migrate north. With the franchise, the new arrivals could have a massive influence on elections in Indiana. Adding to conservative

⁸⁷ *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana*, 233, 245-47.

⁸⁸ *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana*, 446, 461, 613.

apprehensions, Clay, the Whig leader, pushed a gradual emancipation plan in 1849. Northeastern conservatives such as Edward Everett apparently agreed with him, calling slavery immoral. With Clay's backing and northeastern conservative support, their combined power threatened to end the institution. The scenario involved many what ifs, but conservatives along with other Indiana residents wanted decisive action to eliminate any chances of African American political power in the state.⁸⁹

James Rariden, an older Whig from Wayne County, the home county of Julian and numerous Quakers, proposed the convention write an exclusion law directly into the new constitution. Rariden hated slavery. Yet he argued it degraded the white race even more saying, "I believe now, and I fear that it will ever be so hereafter, that negro slavery has done the white race much more harm than it will ever do the black race." He then supported an amendment ordering the General Assembly to pass exclusion laws during the next session. Illinoisans had incorporated a similar requirement in their new constitution two years earlier; Indianans should follow their example. The old Whig reiterated Pettit's argument saying more migration equaled "disquiet" in the state. Before delegates voted on it, the new proposition gained a few opponents.⁹⁰

Opponents tried to stop or amend the proposal. Isaac Kindley of north central Henry County objected to the amendment. According to Kindley, rejecting the amendment was an act of justice to African Americans who already lived there. He invoked the names of eastern conservatives in Massachusetts and noted how their state had recognized African American suffrage saying, "And if gentlemen, by a simple act of justice, should degrade themselves to the

⁸⁹ *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: Thomas Allen, 1841), 74; Howe. *What Hath God Wrought*, 586-88; Mason, *Apostle of Union*, 50-51.

⁹⁰ *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana*, 573-76.

level of such men as Webster, Everett, Winthrop, Mann, Adams, and Channing, I hope the sympathies of mankind will be a sufficient compensation.” John B. Howe of northern Indiana concurred. He argued African American men should have the right to settle and own property, rights guaranteed to all white males. However, like most others at the convention, he rejected any suggestions for suffrage.⁹¹

The debate continued on and on as the delegates struggled for consensus. In a passionate rebuke, Colfax predicted public shame for the state.

It will be long, long years before the slave States of our confederacy, who alone have control over their own institutions, will banish slavery from their borders, and before we shall, in this respect, stand free from stain in the eyes of mankind. But, sir, whether that time be far or near, let us act wisely in the present, and pause long before we adopt this section, which, when that time arrives, if ever it is destined to come, we shall blush with shame to remember that we placed it in our constitutional law.

A few others agreed with Colfax. David S. Kilgore, from north central Indiana, joined his fellow Whig to speak out against the exclusion section. He blamed the British for slavery in the United States rather than the southerners for keeping it. When the exclusion amendment came up for a vote, the members ignored Colfax.⁹²

After much debate, delegates finally reached a compromise over the exclusion amendment. Section Thirteen in the proposed state constitution explicitly prohibited African American migration, fined business owners for hiring them, and collected money from those fines to send African Americans to Africa. It also ordered the General Assembly to pass

⁹¹ *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana*, 577-78, 584-85.

⁹² *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana*, 617, 620, 629-30.

enforcement laws. Before it passed, Kilgore voted against the exclusion law. Though he stated his constituents opposed African American suffrage, he believed few of them supported an outright exclusion law. After more heated debates, the proposal passed, but with a condition. In a singular move, the delegates decided to separate Section Thirteen on the ballot. Voters could accept or reject the constitution then vote to include or reject section thirteen.⁹³

Before the convention adjourned, news about the 1850 compromise reached the state. Delegates debated the compromise measures. Although some questioned whether it was appropriate, Rariden offered a resolution in favor of the compromise. A few Whigs, including Colfax, objected. He condemned the new fugitive slave law as a proslavery compromise with little benefit for the North. Kilgore joined him. The Muncie representative even accused Rariden of collusion with Bright fresh from Washington and already prying into some of the convention's business. Rariden denied the charges, calling all those who objected disunionists working for a disunion party. A few Democrats assured the objectors that slavery could never go into those new territories due to climate or above the Missouri Compromise line, still protected by the 1820 compromise.⁹⁴

After some additional debate, Owen from Posey County, the same man who passionately defended Cass as a the defender of free soil two years earlier, offered a revised set of resolutions. The new resolutions endorsed the compromise and after several more rounds of amendments and debate, the chair called for a vote. Delegates supported the resolution ninety-nine to twenty-six. To push the resolutions over the line, Rariden and a few other Whigs joined Democrats to pass the measures. Kilgore and other northern Whigs voted against it along with William M. Dunn, a

⁹³ *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana*, 1800; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), November 29, 1850.

⁹⁴ *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana*, 1850, 865-915.

southern Indiana Whig from the abolitionist stronghold of Jefferson County. Colfax abstained along with a few Democrats. The few Democrats represented counties around Indianapolis including Alexander B. Conduitt who represented Morgan County. The divide among Whig delegates radiated outward to their brethren across the state.⁹⁵

Outside the convention, most Whigs, especially those in the southern or central parts of the state, endorsed the compromise. When word of the pro-compromise resolution reached the public, the Whig editor of the *Newcastle Courier* in east central Indiana applauded saying, “If this vote indicates anything, it is that the people of Indiana are for Peace, Harmony, and Union, and are determined to abide the peace measures of the last Congress.” A correspondent at the convention for the *Daily Journal* in Evansville noted the resolutions in his letter to the editor. Although he regretted the issue ever came up, the Whig reporter remarked the resolutions passed with a “handsome majority.” If the editor of one of southern Indiana’s largest Whig newspapers, a man who advocated free soil in 1848, objected to the compromise, he never printed it. Those who objected to the compromise faced another defeat in the General Assembly in 1851.⁹⁶

Before the General Assembly adjourned in 1851, legislators moved against an outdated resolution. In 1849 the legislators in both houses, with bipartisan support, passed a resolution instructing Indiana members in the U.S. House and Senate to vote against any compromise that left the western territories open to slavery. It had remained in force throughout the efforts at compromise. Two years later, Democrats in the General Assembly pushed a resolution through both houses endorsing all of the compromise measures. Their resolution included praising popular sovereignty for Utah and the New Mexico territories. The House passed the resolution

⁹⁵ *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana*. 915-29.

⁹⁶ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), December 26, 1850; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), December 17, 1850.

seventy to twenty-four with ten Whigs joining Democrats. Those few Whigs who supported the measure represented southern and west central districts far removed from the northern and east central areas of the state. The resolution faced a tougher road in the Senate where legislators eventually tabled it. Though the politicians accepted the compromise, most faced another election in the coming year. If Hoosiers wanted to voice displeasure at the compromise, they had a chance.⁹⁷

The compromise seemingly played little role in most elections. Democrats won nine of Indiana's ten congressional seats, the governor's seat, and majorities in the Indiana House and Senate. Only two of those who voted for the compromise, the Whig from the Seventh District and the Democrat Brown from northern Indiana, lost their election bids. The victory ensured the Democrats complete domination over the state. Things looked up for the party in the national races as well. Franklin Pierce won the presidency in 1852 even as leaders in both parties noted a lack of enthusiasm for the canvass. With their dominance in the state and on the national stage, Democrats had triumphed.⁹⁸

Conservative support for the compromise extended to the burnt district in the eastern part of the state. Democrats slowly abandoned their alliance with Julian after he came out against the compromise measures. The breakdown left an opening for the local Whig candidate, and he struck at the opportunity. The Whigs attacked Julian as a disunionist, a demagogue wholly opposed to the Union and peace with the South. The conservative editor of the local Whig

⁹⁷ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 15, 1850; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), January 29, 1851; *Journal of the House of Representatives, of the State of Indiana, During the Thirty-Fifth Session of the General Assembly, Commencing Dec. 30, 1850* (Indianapolis: J. P. Chapman, State Printer, 1850), 314-15; *Journal of the Indiana State Senate, Thirty Fifth Session of the General Assembly, Commencing December 30, 1850* (Indianapolis: J. P. Chapman, State Printer, 1851), 588, 700.

⁹⁸ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 21 and October 21 and November 25, 1852; Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 49-53.

newspaper berated Julian for his opposition and printed the Free Soiler's comments on the new fugitive slave law. Julian had reportedly said, "I would resist the execution of this latter provision, if need be, at the peril of my own life." Though Democrats never officially endorsed him, the Whig candidate defeated Julian with a fifty-two percent majority. After his victory, a local Democratic editor praised the election calling Samuel W. Parker, "an uncompromising Whig, but in favor of the compromise measures." If conservatives, or Hoosiers in general, were still worried about slavery in the territories, they never let on.⁹⁹

The election also affirmed the new supreme law of the state. Voters approved the new state constitution by a ninety-three percent majority. For the second question on the ballot, voters gave their assent to article thirteen with an eighty-four percent majority. Although opponents such as Kilgore, Colfax, and others gave impassioned speeches before the constitutional convention, their constituents supported exclusion. In Colfax's St. Joseph County, fifty-two percent supported the ban on African American migration. The numbers were more lopsided in counties further south. In Kilgore's east central Delaware County, eighty-nine percent voted for the exclusion section. In west central Tippecanoe County the majority was eighty-one percent. Voters overwhelmingly enshrined a prohibition on African American settlement in the state constitution; it required take a herculean effort to remove it.¹⁰⁰

In late 1851, state legislators descended on Indianapolis for the annual session, the first under the new state constitution. They quickly worked through the stack of bills and then turned their attention to the African Americans living in the state. The General Assembly took up two bills to complete their push for white supremacy. First, legislators passed an enforcement bill to give Section Thirteen some teeth. The law called for fines or arrests if any African American

⁹⁹ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), July 24 and August 21, 1851; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), July 23, 1851.

¹⁰⁰ *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), September 26, 1851.

refused to leave the state. The Senators passed it twenty-seven to twenty-one. One Whig from southern Ripley County joined Democrats and voted for the harsh measures. The nine remaining Whigs, with a few from southern districts, opposed it. The House passed its version of the enforcement bill fifty-two to twenty-six. Only nine Whigs voted for the legislation. Among them, five represented districts in northern Indiana.¹⁰¹

After passing the enforcement bill, legislators gave what they believed was an incentive for those African Americans living in the state. They set up funding for a new colony in Africa. In an lopsided vote, the General Assembly appropriated five thousand dollars for colonization. In the upper house, every Whig state senator voted for the bill. The only dissenters in that chamber were Democrats. In the House, the bill passed sixty to twenty-eight. Only Eight Whigs voted against it. Although a few Whig dissenters represented districts in the northern part of the state, there were some also dissenters from southern districts. To ensure adequate funding, legislators added an amendment to the bill that generated revenue for the new colonization scheme. If any African American failed to leave the state and incurred the fine, the money went to the colonization fund.¹⁰²

During the session, the House of Representatives asked Reverend James Mitchell, an agent for the American Colonization Society, to recommend a location for the new settlement. Mitchell was a representative for the state branch of the ACS, the Indiana Colonization Society. He reported back a few weeks later. Mitchell recommended Grand Cake Mount along the West African coast for a new settlement. The spot was close to Liberia and he believed the new

¹⁰¹ *Journal of the Indiana State Senate, During the Thirty-Sixth Session of the General Assembly, Commencing December 1, 1851* (Indianapolis: J.P. Chapman, 1852), 329-30; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the state of Indiana, during the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly, commencing December 1, 1851* (Indianapolis: J.P. Chapman, 1852), 1584-85.

¹⁰² *Journal of the Indiana State Senate, 1851*, 524-25; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the state of Indiana, 1851*, 1346-47; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), June 25, 1852.

colonists wanted a state before eventually joining the African Republic. The costs to set up a new settlement were inexpensive on paper. The reverend estimated passage and settlement for each emigrant cost the state fifty dollars. To garner support for the scheme, Mitchell produced several letters from African Americans who lived in Indiana requesting passage to Liberia. With a ban on settlement and a plan for colonization on the table, it seemed Hoosiers were on their way to an exclusive white society.¹⁰³

The 1852 elections revealed something else about the Democratic Party. Though the state platform objected to a “vast system” of internal improvements, Democrats praised their party for bringing eastern capital into the state to help fund railroads. After the canal building craze abated, railroads had taken over as the new preferred form of transportation. Despite their earlier anti-bank rhetoric, a few Democrats even helped Whigs defeat several anti-banking measures in the new state constitution. In another turn, the party’s platform accepted a reasonable tariff to raise funds for the improvements. Although they advocated a hard money policy and zero government debt, the Democrats accepted many of the old Whig policies they once opposed. After years of opposition, the popularity of the conservative policies won over the Democratic Party. By 1852, many could have been called conservative.¹⁰⁴

Even though the Whig Party was barely hanging on in Indiana, conservatism, or at least its western form, had triumphed. Democrats and Whigs had accepted many conservative economic policies while Hoosiers in all parties adopted measures to preserve their white supremacy. Although they espoused free soil in the West, most of Indiana’s delegation in Washington placed Union above free soil and chose compromise in 1850. Congress had not

¹⁰³ *Answer of the Agent of the Indiana Colonization Society To the Resolution of Inquiry on the Subject of African Colonization* (Indianapolis: J.P. Chapman, State Printer, 1852), 467-76.

¹⁰⁴ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), February 25 and August 7, 1852; *Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), March 10, 1852; Yonatan Eyal, *The Young American Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861*, 2-8, 10, 19; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 663.

legalized slavery in the territories during the debates over the compromise measures and it was unlikely to go there since Mexican Law had banned the practice years before. The compromise only opened the possibility for slavery in the two massive territories with arid climates. Why risk the Union over two places where slaves could never go? If conservatives were concerned about New Mexico or Utah, they never showed it at the polls. On most economic matters, on racial matters, and on free soil in the new western territories, conservatism, which incorporated white supremacy, had won out.

After the dust settled from the 1850 compromise, most thought the crisis was over. The Union had survived yet another threat. Secessionists in the South and abolitionists in the North were disappointed while conservatives celebrated the compromise as a triumph. The Union held. But it was only a temporary respite. In just two years the slavery issue came up again. Indiana Conservatives had to make another decision at the polls. Who could both win the free soil in the West and still hold the Union together? Which candidate was conservative and could keep slavery out of the territories? Their decision helped throw the election to one man and stave off the Civil War for another four years.

Chapter 2: “The Great Conservative Party”: Conservatism becomes the Middle Ground

In 1856 Alexander B. Conduitt entered the race for Morgan County’s seat in the Indiana House of Representatives. The rural county was only a few miles southwest of Indianapolis and a Whig stronghold. In order to win, Conduitt, like James Buchanan in the presidential election, needed Whig votes. Writing to Indiana Governor Joseph A. Wright, Conduitt expressed surprising confidence: “Whigs by the score in this neighborhood are warmly enlisted for Buchanan. Only those of decided abolition and Know Nothing proclivities oppose him.” Still, the Democrat felt he needed more Whig support and invited the governor to visit his home county saying, “I want you governor to appeal to the sentiments of nationality of Old Whigs here, and especially to support young men who are just entering the field of political privilege to start right. There is an attachment to the Union among the people that if appealed to earnestly must respond much to our advantage.” Regardless of how the young Democrat appealed to them, one thing is certain; Conduitt believed his election hinged on conservative Whigs. He was right.¹

Conduitt’s race was a microcosm of many elections in the Old Northwest. In 1854, temperance, nativism, free soilism, and abolitionism drew new voters into northern politics for the first time. These new combinations turned old enemies into allies and old allies into enemies. There were rebellions in both parties as political leaders gasped in horror at their old associates. Some outraged Democrats joined reform minded Whigs to oppose their national party’s seeming subservience to the southern slave power. The powerful combination of new voters, renegade Democrats, and reform Whigs threatened to end Democratic rule in Indiana and in other northern

¹ Alexander B. Conduitt to Joseph W. Wright, June 23, 1856, (quote) Joseph A. Wright Correspondence and Papers, Box 1 Folder 11, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana; *Plymouth Banner* (Plymouth, IN), November 2, 1854; *Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), December 1, 1852.

states for the first time in decades. To mount a comeback and regain their dominance, northern Democrats pinned their hopes on their old foes, conservative Whigs.²

Once the Whig Party collapsed, followers of the late Henry Clay looked for a new political home. At first, Know-Nothings seemed to have an inside track. Many Whigs had joined the Know-Nothings while the new organization claimed Whig heritage. They promised a national party built on a broad national platform, a party in which northern and southern members could belong. According to the upstarts, the new entity was Whig in all but name, a far better option for Clay devotees than the other radical parties in the race. In the North, Republicans claimed Whig heritage as well. Their new party was conservative along the same lines as the old Whigs. Democrats had reawakened the debates over slavery through the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Under the controversial act, Democrats had opened the west to slavery, Republicans argued, the very definition of radicalism. Of all the parties in the race, the Democratic Party seemed the least likely to win over their old foes.³

Despite the odds, through speeches, newspaper articles, and political rallies, Democrats won over the Whigs. They argued their party was the legitimate successor to the Whigs because they were the only conservative option in a race filled with radicalism. A vote for the other parties risked disunion, southern secession, and civil war. Convincing Indiana Whigs they were conservative was not enough. For Democrats, free soil was just as crucial to their campaign. While southern Democrats guaranteed new slave states to southerners, those in Indiana assured

² Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 103-04; Jonathan H. Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil, 1824-1854* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 160-61; William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 107-13; Mark Voss-Hubbard, *Beyond Politics: Cultures of Antipartisanship in Northern Politics before the Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 66.

³ Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 188, 442-43, 492; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 686, 706.

conservative Whigs, and those in their own party, that a victory for their candidate meant free soil and an intact Union. The strategy worked. With conservative support a Democrat won the presidency and the party swept many races in Indiana. Though the party celebrated, Democrats had made promises they could not keep.

Some historians have looked at the 1856 elections as a dress rehearsal for 1860. The election taught Republicans an important lesson giving them a road map to victory four years later. In their studies, William E. Gienapp, Michael F. Holt, and others proved conservative Whigs were the key voters in the race. Many crossed old party lines and voted Democrat for a variety of reasons. Gregory Peek argued that Indiana Republicans, with their plan to use Congressional action in the territories, frightened conservatives. Paul Nygard and Stephen Hansen had another explanation. They argued, Illinois Democrats slandered Republicans as disunionists and amalgamationists, knowing the accusations lured often racist western Whig voters. All agree that Democrats worked to win over their Whigs foes; however, slander was only one part of their campaign. Democrats took an even greater step to secure western conservatives. They claimed conservatism, shuffled themselves into the Whig legacy, and promised to deliver free soil. Although they certainly hurled accusations of radicalism, disunion, and racial amalgamation at Republicans, their struggle for the conservative mantle along with their promise of new free states was just as important to their success in the North.⁴

⁴ Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism & Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings & The Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), xiv; Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 979-81; Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party*, 415-16; Gregory Peek, "'The True and Ever Living Principle of States Rights and Popular Sovereignty': Douglas Democrats and Indiana Republicans Allied, 1857-1859." *Indiana Magazine of History* 111 (December 2015): 381-84; Gregory A. Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Political Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861," (PhD diss., University of Houston, 2010), 18-20; Stephen Hansen and Paul Nygard, "Stephen A. Douglas, The Know-Nothings, and the Democratic Party in Illinois, 1854-1858," *Illinois Historical Journal* 87, no. 2 (1994): 109-110, 119.

After the country compromised over slavery in 1850, sectional tensions slackened. Though opponents voiced their anger at the stronger Fugitive Slave Act, the compromise stood. While most Americans celebrated the Union weathering another storm, the brief respite veiled a growing threat. During the 1830s and 1840s, settlers had moved into the unorganized territories above the 36° 30' line. Their presence in the once sparsely populated lands alarmed southerners. Under the Missouri Compromise, any territories above the line remained free ensuring additional free states. Fearing more free states, and with them free state senators, southern senators blocked Congress from organizing territorial governments, the first step on the road to statehood. Although settlers petitioned the federal government several times, the territories remained unorganized; the nation once again reached an impasse over slavery. Then an Illinois senator stepped in.⁵

In 1854, Stephen A. Douglas revived popular sovereignty—Lewis Cass used it during his 1848 campaign—as a solution to the controversy. He first declared the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional arguing Congress did not have the right to prohibit slavery. According to Douglas, settlers in every territory, including Indiana and Illinois, had decided the legality of slavery themselves. The diminutive senator even argued Clay himself, the author of the Missouri Compromise, had declared the policy unconstitutional in 1850. With a relatively weak president in office and solid southern support, Douglas got his wish—the bill passed. The Nebraska Bill erased the Missouri Compromise line and organized Kansas and Nebraska into territories under popular sovereignty. Through the law, settlers had a say on slavery. Whether they voted to ban

⁵ Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 9-12; Michael F. Holt, *The Fate of their Country: Politicians, Slavery Extension and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 99-106.

slavery or embrace it, Douglas expected the South to respect the vote. After handshakes and backslapping with his colleagues, he boarded a train for home.⁶

Before Congress voted on the bill, several Hoosier Democrats predicted a devastating backlash. Congressman John G. Davis from the Seventh Congressional District initially opposed the bill. In a letter to his friend J. O. Jones, Davis fretted, “The slavery question is to give us trouble again, growing out of the formation of a Territorial Bill for Nebraska.” In another letter, the Congressman noted how he had warned leaders in the Democratic Party calling the bill, “unnecessary and ill advised. I have told Douglas so; I have told the President so, but it is to be met.” His main problem was the Missouri Compromise line. Unlike the New Mexico and Utah territories, Davis considered the old compromise a sacred compact between the two sections; those territories were set aside for free state settlers and should remain free. Under heavy pressure from party leaders and assurances from political allies at home, Davis voted for the Kansas-Nebraska Act. He soon regretted it.⁷

The act provoked a surge of anger in the North. Without the Missouri Compromise in place, slavery could go into Kansas, Nebraska, or both. The fallout over the bill effectively finished the Whig Party. The once powerful organization was already showing its weakness before Douglas’s bill. After the poor performance in 1852, the party was vulnerable and most Democrats had predicted the party’s destruction. The prediction proved correct. The party’s connections with northern abolitionists, both real and imagined, repulsed most southerners devoted to slavery. Few Whig candidates could win in the cotton belt states. By 1852, most Whigs in the Deep South had moved to the Democratic Party. Already a paper tiger in most slave

⁶ James L. Huston, *Stephen A. Douglas and the Dilemmas of Democratic Equality* (New York: Rowan and Littlefield Inc, 2007), 98-107.

⁷ *John G. Davis. His Opinions Upon the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise, His Opinions on the Fugitive Slave Law. Choice Extracts from his Correspondence* (Terre Haute: Western Star Printers, 1856), 5-6.

states, the act finished the party off in the North. Frustrated at Douglas and southern Whigs, northern Whigs bolted for better prospects. Many of them opposed slavery in the western territories and felt they could no longer work with southerners in a national party.⁸

News about the Kansas-Nebraska Act hit Indiana hard. The Whig Party collapsed quickly just as it did elsewhere. Northerners, wary of African Americans in the territories, feared the act meant slave expansion. In a surprise to some party leaders, many Indiana Democrats agreed with them. Outraged Whigs, Free Soilers, old Liberty Party men, and Democrats joined together in indignation meetings to discuss their next moves. Most ignored their old political affiliations hoping to present a united northern front against the bill. When some Democrats called the meetings abolitionist, attendees proudly cited how Whigs and Democrats had come together in a show of unity, disavowing any pretensions to abolitionism or racial equality. They had put aside party in a united front. The upcoming Democratic state convention added to their numbers.⁹

Though united on this one issue, the anti-Nebraska men were divided on national matters. Some of them initially joined the Know-Nothings. Alarmed nativists formed the secretive party after Catholic immigrants streamed into the country. The organization proposed limits on immigration or a restricted franchise in order to contain Roman Catholicism. Numerous candidates pledged allegiance to the order, taking oaths in secret meetings to vote for any candidate who took up anti-immigrant measures. Besides the Know-Nothings, there was a third option. Some antislavery men formed the Republican Party the same year. Born in the West, Republicans demanded Congress repeal the Nebraska Bill and place restrictions on slavery. Originally weaker than the Know-Nothings, Republicans found a foothold in Michigan,

⁸ Holt, *The Fate of their Country*, 110-11.

⁹ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), March 28, 1854; Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil, 1824-1854*, 192-98; Holt, *The Fate of their Country*, 109-15; Michael E. Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict in the Antebellum United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 143-44.

Wisconsin, and northern portions of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, areas where New England settlers outnumbered their southern born counterparts. As the two opposition parties gathered momentum, the nomination season added to Democratic woes.¹⁰

Rather than stopping the defections, local Democratic conventions bolstered the opposition ranks. Outraged at the bill, anti-Nebraska Democrats nearly usurped the party leadership. When Democrats in the Seventh Congressional District—in West Central Indiana—met to nominate a candidate for Congress, supporters warned the incumbent Davis about plans to nominate an “anti-Nebraska” candidate. Davis grew concerned. The startled congressman, now fearful of losing, wrote to his supporters and proposed a strategy, telling his friends “Now, when you get to the Convention and if you find it packed, would it not be best to propose an adjournment, until the various counties can be heard and express their preference . . . I don’t feel inclined to be beaten by the means used by a half dozen men in Clay and Putnam. I don’t feel like submitting to it.” Davis’s friends followed his advice, sidelining all challengers at the district convention. Though Davis prevailed, he angered fellow Democrats such as his former friend Jones. His support for the Kansas-Nebraska Act ensured stiff competition for his seat.¹¹

The insurgency reached a fever pitch when a Democrat in the southern Second Congressional District considered challenging William Hayden English at the district convention. Democrats had had a stranglehold on the district for many years and always counted it as a safe seat. Their political fortunes changed quickly along the Ohio. Angry at English’s vote for the Kansas-Nebraska Act, local Democrats talked of nominating another candidate. Concerned friends notified the congressman in Washington. The threat ended only after English supporters talked a popular Democrat out of mounting the challenge. Though his men “cooled

¹⁰ Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party*, 89-90, 92-93, 104-09.

¹¹ Davis. *His Opinions Upon the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise*, 1-4, 14-16.

him down,” any opposition to English’s nomination was a very serious matter for the party. English was a friend of Senator Jesse Bright, Indiana’s doughfaced, slave owning U.S. Senator, and de-facto leader of the state party. A loss for English meant a loss for the state’s strongest Democrat. Tensions within the party steadily grew during the summer; they came to a head at the state convention.¹²

Democrats met in Indianapolis that summer. Unlike the harmonious meetings of the past, the convention was rancorous as members battled each other over the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Bright who controlled the proceedings, ensured loyalty to the party and the controversial act by limiting debate over the controversial legislation. The heavy-handed tactics alienated many delegates. When Henry Ellsworth, the former Commissioner of the United States Patent Office, rose to speak at the convention, Bright sidelined him. One outraged Democrat labeled Bright the great dictator, and his actions gave opposition newspapers fodder for their articles. Frustrated, several anti-Nebraska Democrats left the convention to organize their own meeting. With the bolters gone, Bright exerted even greater influence within the party pushing support for Buchanan. In the convention’s final days, delegates passed a platform that praised the Nebraska Bill as a blow for democracy. While Bright was successful, the convention was a fiasco for the party, driving more Democrats into the opposition.¹³

The Democratic state convention only exacerbated the split in the party and the defections piled up. Critical for the coming elections, many newspaper editors bolted and renounced their old allegiance. Enthusiastic opposition papers welcomed each renegade to the fold. The editor of the opposition *Wabash Courier* in Terre Haute noted a newspaper editor in

¹² E.D. Logan to William Hayden English, June 1, 1854, William H. English Papers Box 1 Folder 15, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN (hereinafter cited as IHS).

¹³ *Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), June 3 and June 24, 1856; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), June 23, 1854; John J. Wickre, “Indiana’s Southern Senator: Jesse Bright and the Hoosier Democracy,” (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2013), 153-54.

northern Whitley County had sided against his old party. The long time Democrat cited the recent convention for his change of heart saying, “With our present views, we denounce it as one of the most damnable outrages ever perpetrated upon a Republican people and repudiate the action of the State Convention in endorsing the sentiments of that bill . . .” The threat of slavery going west was too much for the once loyal party man. As the year wore on, the opposition continued to grow.¹⁴

In the summer months, the opposition formally organized under a new name. Calling their new organization the People’s Party, adherents sought to bury differences and present a united front for the state elections. The new party used a variety of appeals. Schuyler Colfax ran for reelection in the northern district and another liberal Whig ran in the Fourth Congressional District. Both had a great advantage over their opponents due to their Whiggish leanings. The Free Soiler George Washington Julian had won the Fourth Congressional District in 1849; an antislavery Whig facing a pro-Kansas-Nebraska Act Democrat stood a good chance five years later. In southern Indiana, conservative Whigs such as George Grundy Dunn stood a good chance to win their districts. Dunn swore off any abolitionist leanings in his campaign as an olive branch to his many southern born neighbors. At their state convention, the anti-Nebraska men drafted a platform friendly towards older Whigs that disavowed abolitionism or emancipation. Enthused about the new party, one former Whig called it a conservative platform that every Whig could support.¹⁵

Sensing the growing threat, Democrats attacked the new coalition. They labeled their opponents abolitionists, saying a prohibition on slavery in the West was only the beginning. This

¹⁴ *Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), June 24, 1856.

¹⁵ *Greencastle Daily Banner* (Greencastle, IN), June 14, 1854; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 26, 1854; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1965), 60-65.

new political force intended to enfranchise African Americans while stripping white male immigrants. One Democrat echoed others in his party saying the new opponents were “denying to the foreigner that which they are seeking to bestow upon the negro—the right of suffrage, and of holding office.” Another Democrat called the outrage over the Kansas-Nebraska Act an excuse and the only salvation for abolitionism: “The Nebraska bill came in time to save abolitionism from immediate oblivion . . .” Democrats depicted the choice in stark apocalyptic terms. Republicans and Know-Nothings were sure to change the suffrage laws and permit African Americans the franchise, ending white supremacy.¹⁶

After a vigorous campaign Democrats came up short at the polls. Although they disagreed on national matters, Republicans and Know-Nothings held together in Indiana. Anti-Nebraska candidates cleaned up in the 1854 state and local elections winning several key races. In a spectacular success, they won nine out of eleven congressional seats. In the General Assembly, People’s Party candidates won fifty-five of one hundred seats in the House and held a two seat minority in the Senate. Those closely aligned with the Know-Nothings generally won in southern districts while those with closer ties to the new Republican Party won in northern Indiana. For the first time in years, Democrats were on the ropes. If the opposition held together in 1856, they threatened to give anti-Nebraska candidates the governor’s mansion, majorities in the state senate, two more congressional seats, and the state’s electoral votes.¹⁷

The result brought even worse news for Democrats. More voters showed up at the polls than in previous elections. In 1852 167,583 voted for three candidates running for Secretary of State. The same year, 183,134 residents cast ballots in the presidential election. Many had abstained from voting that year and it was a nadir in presidential elections. Two years later,

¹⁶ *The Prairie Chieftain* (Monticello, IN), August 31, 1856; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 21, 1856 (quote).

¹⁷ *Plymouth Banner* (Plymouth, IN), November 2, 1856; Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party*, 107-12.

183,895 residents cast ballots for the Secretary of State and the race outperformed the presidential election of only two years earlier. Temperance and nativism brought men into the contest as well, however, new voters, angry with Douglas and his Kansas-Nebraska Act, played more of a role in the Democratic defeat. If the trend continued, the large numbers combined with a united opposition could finish off Democratic Party in the North.¹⁸

While successful, the fusion party faced a problem in 1856. Who was their man for a presidential election? Hoping to form new a national political party, Know-Nothings met at Philadelphia to draft a common national platform. If the Know-Nothings could present a united front with northern and southern wings, they could win the presidency. In a clear nod to Unionist sentiment, delegates titled their organization the American Party, and the convention looked like a success. Then newly christened Americans debated slavery in the West. The party endorsed popular sovereignty, backed all existing laws on slavery including the stronger Fugitive Slave Law passed in 1850, and nominated former Whig President Millard Fillmore as their candidate. They hoped he could attract Republicans, Democrats, and former Whigs in a grand conservative coalition that crosses sectional boundaries. Though many older Whigs stayed, others, including Schuyler Colfax, bolted. He led the Indiana delegation out as they joined other northern delegations in a united stand against slave expansion.¹⁹

The Philadelphia Convention was a crucial moment for Indiana politics. Several northern delegations to the convention crafted a letter protesting Article XII—the article endorsed popular sovereignty—on the American platform. It rejected the platform due to Article XII and called for a new platform. Colfax, helped pen the northern protest letter and subsequently left the American Party. The protest letter and the walk out at the Philadelphia Convention should have come as no

¹⁸ Terre Haute Journal, (Terre Haute, IN), November 26, 1852; *Weekly Reveille* (Vevay, IN), November 2, 1854; Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party*, 107-12.

¹⁹ Anbiner, *Nativism and Slavery*, 165-72.

surprise. Many Indiana Know-Nothings, like their counterparts in other western states, prioritized antislavery above nativism. Thomas C. Slaughter, a southern Indiana Know-Nothing and later delegate at the 1860 Republican convention, clearly indicated his support for the Know-Nothing Party was only a means to an end. Slaughter wanted to limit the franchise in order to deprive the Democrats of a key constituency and stop the “slave power.” The ultimate sign of nativism’s weakness among Indiana Know-Nothings was their inability to pass any measure limiting the franchise to those born in the country. Though strong in 1854, the Know-Nothings, or Americans as they were calling themselves, grew weaker.²⁰

Despite the recent divisions, Indiana Republicans and Americans had every reason to expect success over the Democrats. Both parties pledged to cooperate and support local candidates under the People’s Party banner, vowing to save their differences for the national race. A friend of Indiana Congressman Will Cumback— who won his race in 1854—confidently predicted, “Doe Faces [sic] will be a scarce article in 1860 either Easte [sic] or West...” One American newspaper editor agreed. He hoped the People’s Party nominated a ticket with “such men, that the American party of the whole State may consistently lend the ticket their ardent support to crush detestable Old Lineism, the father of all the evil of which complaint is made.” With the right ticket, the opposition party could ignore national issues and focus on the state races.²¹

²⁰ *New York Evening Express* (New York, NY), July 13, 1855; Thomas C. Slaughter to Daniel D. Pratt, February 13, 1855, (quote) Daniel D. Pratt Papers Box 15 Folder 2, ISL; *Journal of the House of Representatives, During the 38th session of the General Assembly of the State of Indiana*. (Indianapolis: Austin H. Brown, 1855), 919-32; Carl Fremont Brand, “History of the Know Nothing Party in Indiana (continued),” *Indiana Magazine of History* 18, no. 2 (1922): 191-93; Ronald Matthias, “The Know Nothings in Iowa: Opportunity and Frustration in Antebellum Politics,” *Annals of Iowa* 53, no. 1 (1994): 25-27.

²¹ Samuel Bryan to Will Cumback, March 15, 1856 (quote), Cumback Papers Box 1, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), January 28, 1856; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 71-73.

The coming year brought more confidence to the anti-Democrats. Hoping to repeat their successful triumph in the 1854 elections, the disparate opposition held another state convention in 1856. If they could unite it meant victory at the polls. The convention met in May 1856 with a clear goal to win over any remaining conservative Whigs. The early proceedings boded well. Delegates nominated a slate of both American and Republican candidates for the state races hoping the compromise could attract voters in both parties. At the top of the ticket, delegates nominated Oliver P. Morton for governor. Morton was a former Democrat who turned Republican after the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Though a former Democrat, he was from the burnt district, a Whig stronghold. For their platform, delegates took a balanced approach. The convention called for a five-year probation on the franchise, temperance laws, and then they turned to Kansas. They passed a resolution rejecting slavery in Kansas saying, “That we are in favor of the immediate admission of Kansas as a free state.” The jubilant delegates closed the convention convinced they could attract those critical conservative Whig votes.²²

National Republicans put in a full effort for Whig votes, especially those in Indiana. They made Henry S. Lane—a former Indiana Whig—the president at the National Republican convention. They highlighted a speech from another Indiana Whig then called for internal improvements, an old Whig goal. Republicans placed William L. Dayton of New Jersey on the national ticket as yet another olive branch. Dayton was once a Whig and a Republican newspaperman said of him, “If a conservative man is wanted by conservative Whigs, no one could be better trusted than he.” The *New York Times* predicted the party was sure to find friends in the South due to its conservative policy towards slavery there. The party nominated John C. Frémont for president. As well as attracting Democratic votes through his marriage to

²² *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), May 7, 1856.

Jesse Benton, the daughter of Democratic politician Thomas Hart Benton, Frémont was also a hero from the war with Mexico. Though Frémont had been a Democrat, in their nominations, their conventions, and their party platforms, Republicans had an overriding message; they were conservative and the true heirs to the Whig Party.²³

If Republicans and Americans were enthusiastic about their chances in 1856, Democrats were sullen. Despite the dour outlook, there was still a ray of hope. Two years earlier Democrats had laid the groundwork for a new alliance with conservative Whigs. Necessity had bred the desperate measure. When Democrats lost control of the Indiana House of Representatives, the loss had serious implications for the party in Washington. Before enough states ratified the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1913, state legislatures elected Senators to serve six-year terms. Democratic Senator John Pettit's term expired in 1855 giving the opposition a chance to elect a non-Democrat for the first time since 1845, a fact not lost on one People's Party editor: "One of the important duties devolving upon our next Legislature will be the election of a U.S. Senator, in the place of John Pettit, whose time expires in 4th of March next." The election proved more difficult than the editor thought.²⁴

In search of a remedy, Democrats bandied about solutions to protect the seat. The previous year's election offered one chance. Though the People's Party won a majority in the Indiana House, their representatives held a ten-seat majority, a narrow advantage. The results were even more mixed in the upper house. Democrats maintained a majority in the Indiana Senate and could block any nomination if they stuck together. Even worse for the People's Party,

²³ *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), October 10, 1856, June 27, 1856 (quote); *Proceedings of the First Three Republican National Conventions of 1856, 1860, and 1864, Including Proceedings of the Antecedent National Convention Held at Pittsburgh, in February 1856, as Reported by Horace Greeley* (Minneapolis: Charles W. Johnson, 1893), 24, 43-44; Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts & Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 117-18.

²⁴ *Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), January 19, 1839, November 18, 1854 (quote).

their coalition was quite loose. Hatred for the Democrats or the Kansas-Nebraska Act provided the only real unifying cause for the disparate members. Democrat and future Senator, Graham N. Fitch, saw an opportunity in the loose alliance. The ambitious politicians wrote to a friend asking him to encourage a few “fusion Democrats” to return to their old political allegiances when the election for Senator came up.²⁵

One Democrat had a bolder solution. Instead of picking off some fusionists, Democrats in the General Assembly should do the unthinkable and vote for a former Whig. The panicked Democrat wrote to Governor Wright and suggested the party should sway the election to a Whig candidate saying, “if we can have any influence in the election, let it be to secure an old fashioned Whig, not tainted with abolitionism.” Though Democrats later stalled and then prevented the election of any senator, the letter indicated that some members of the Party of Jackson were already seeing the conservative or “old fashioned” Whigs as politicians they could work with because they were perceived as untainted with radicalism. These early attempts grew more widespread the following year.²⁶

Politically astute Democrats across the state saw a golden opportunity to win over conservative Whig voters. In the southern Second Congressional District, a party organizer believed a few national Whigs in his area could be transformed into “reliable Democrats.” Another supporter reported on the split among northern and southern Americans at the national convention in Philadelphia. He confidently predicted future elections between “abolitionism with its various clerical Clay allies on the one side, and the Democratic conservative party on the other, around which the moderate men of all the old organizations will rally.” Signs that

²⁵ Graham N. Fitch to Allen Hamilton, January 25, 1855 (quote), Hamilton Family Papers, ISL; *Plymouth Banner* (Plymouth, IN), November 2, 1854.

²⁶ C. Carter to Joseph A Wright, October 19, 1854 (quote), Wright Papers Box 1 Folder 7; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 26, 1856.

Democrats could win over their foes were even more apparent when several Old Line Democrats and Whigs invited a former Democratic Congressman to their joint organization meeting in Greencastle, Indiana. Those at the meeting pledged their fealty to the Union citing the risk to the country if a Republican won the presidency.²⁷

Events outside the state made the conservative Whigs even more essential. Violence in Kansas pushed many voters into the Republican Party as free and slave state forces fought each other for supremacy. The violence in the embattled territory could even turn stalwart Americans into the Republican camp. One prominent newspaper editor from Greencastle, Indiana, Albert G. Patrick, initially supported the American Party. He placed Fillmore's name on his paper's masthead hoping the former president could unite the country. His sentiments abruptly changed when he moved to Kansas in late 1856. Writing to a Republican newspaper editor in Brookville, Indiana, Patrick announced his status as a Republican convert noting the violence had changed his mind, "Kansas is a great political mill where 'national' men are almost ground into 'abolitionists.'" In his mind Republicans were the strongest conservative options in the race. Southerners and their Democratic allies were guilty of atrocities. The bloody battles in Kansas convinced him the South would never accept a free state. Slowly, Republicans gained ground on the American Party.²⁸

Americans started out the 1856 campaign in a much better position than their Republican opponents. They labeled both Republicans and Democrats sectional parties and proudly proclaimed their organization the only national entity left. A Fillmore Club in Terre Haute argued Republicans were a northern sectional party and Democrats were a southern sectional

²⁷ A. P. Richardson to English, n.d., English Papers Box 2 Folder 12; A.S. Roache to John G. Davis, June 16, 1855 and William J. Blakes to John G. Davis, June 18, 1855, in the Davis Papers Box 2 Folder 2, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN (hereinafter cited as IHS).

²⁸ *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), Nov. 7, 1856 (quote); James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 148-49.

party saying both parties had a sectional agenda that “if carried out will weaken the bonds of this Confederacy, add agitation to agitation, and sow deep the seeds of sectional strife.” Fillmore himself echoed the nationalist sentiments. When he delivered a speech in Albany, New York, he condemned the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and rebuked the Republican Party. The Kansas-Nebraska Act has started the entire crisis and Republican solutions threatened to make it worse. According to the American candidate, both sides were sectional. Only the American Party was national. Despite a rush of enthusiasm, American prospects soured quickly and Fillmore looked like a long shot after a few weeks in the race. The party never recovered from its disastrous national convention.²⁹

To win over the old Whigs, Democrats first identified their opponents with radicalism. Painting their Republican opponents as social radicals was easy for Democrats in Indiana. They played on long held fears of racial amalgamation, fears a variety of residents held regardless of political affiliation. When the canvass began, most Democratic candidates in the 1856 elections cried abolition when speaking about their Republican opponents, and they spread rumors about African Americans support for their rivals. One Democrat said, “By advices from Randolph County, we learn that the friends of Judge Morton have employed a big buck negro to make speeches in his behalf in that section of the State. Probably these lovers and worshippers of the African race prefer the lectures of a real negro to those of their candidates, whom they have placed upon them as the advocates of his interests.” The rumors were untrue, yet, five years after residents included an exclusion law into the state constitution, racial fears were still high.³⁰

²⁹ *Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), July 30, 1856 (quote); *Weekly Reveille* (Vevay, IN), July 9, 1856.

³⁰ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), May 20, 1856 (quote); *Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), May 21, 1856; Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 980; Christopher Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 41.

Linking Republicans with abolitionists was an effective technique and lured some Whigs to the Democratic Party. Hiram T. Craig, who identified himself as an “old Whig” wrote a supportive letter to southern Indiana Congressman and Indiana Democrat English. He noted Republicans had distributed a pamphlet to defend themselves against charges of abolitionism. Francis P. Blair, a former Democrat, pitched an argument that warned northerners of a southern slave power out of control, presumably allied to the Democrats. Craig ignored the warnings. He repudiated the Republican Party, and stated he could not see a “Whig of ‘52” siding with “black republicanism.” A Whig noting his support for a Democrat in March of 1856 was an early indication that Whigs could join Democrats for the upcoming presidential election. Craig’s letter to English boded well for the prospective state representative Conduitt. Martinsville was located in Morgan County and Craig indicated he favored Democrats in the upcoming election.³¹

Craig and Conduitt identified a key weakness for Republicans. Democrats hit their opponents hard with two accusations: disunionism and race. Because conservatives believed in institutions to preserve freedom, the disunionist label was very effective; a Republican win threatened the Union itself. Democrats labeled the Republican nominee John C. Frémont a disunionist, circulating stories about their opponents. Allegedly, in Portland, Maine, abolitionists fired a sixteen gun salute to “one-half the states of the Republic” and raised a sixteen star flag, one star for every free state. One Democrat upbraided his Republican enemies saying, “Deny it some of its members may, the black Republican party is a disunion party. Its principles are all of

³¹ Hiram T. Craig to William Hayden English, March 24, 1856 (quote), English Papers Box 2 Folder 1; *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), December 27, 1856; Eugene H. Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 1-4.

a disunion character tendency: its acts and utterances are all of a disunion character.” This Republican Party was not conservative.³²

In response, Indiana Republicans refuted the accusations. They stalwartly defended their candidates as conservative on the issue of slavery. Calling the accusations against Morton a “low flung slang,” a close confidant explained the Republican candidate’s position as only opposed to slavery extension: “We know him to be opposed to the iniquitous repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and if that is abolitionism, then he is an ‘abolitionist.’ We know him to be opposed to the extension of slavery over territory now free, and if that is abolitionism, then he is an ‘abolitionist.’” Abolitionists gave the Republicans more evidence for their party’s conservatism. After the *Anti-Slavery Standard* condemned the party—the editor complained about the party’s reluctance on immediate emancipation—one Republican hailed the condemnation as a positive. In a hopeful comment, the Republican noted, “The conservative character of the Republican movement is becoming every day more and more conspicuous.” Even the abolitionists agreed, the Republican Party was conservative.³³

Democrats still had to deal with the American Party. Though weakened nationally, Americans were particularly strong in southern Indiana where the party’s vehement stance against abolitionists attracted conservatives with southern connections. Americans charged both parties with sectionalism; Democrats and Republicans both threatened the country’s survival. Most were former Whigs and supported Fillmore. In a widely reprinted speech, an American politician James G. Putnam summed up the party’s stance saying, “It is today the great conservative party of the country. It stands by the landmarks of the fathers. It meets radicalism head on.” A shrinking number of Americans in Indiana shared Putnam’s distrust of both

³² *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 19, 1856.

³³ *Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), June 4, 1856 (quote); *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN); October 8, 1856; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), October 19, 1856 (quote).

Democratic and Republican parties, and hoped a purely conservative party. An American meeting adopted a resolution saying, “we belong to the great conservative party who know ‘no North, no South, no East, no West, but our country, one and undivided.’” In a clear message to Whigs, the resolution echoed Clay’s words: the Americans were the Whigs reborn.³⁴

Unfortunately for the Americans, their party originated as a secret society. In secret ceremonies, the original Know-Nothings pledged their support for nativist policies designed to limit Catholic influence. Then, the order took to the streets. They rioted in cities such as New Albany, Indiana, in 1855 where they beat immigrants. In Governor Wright’s 1855 address to the General Assembly, he warned his fellow Hoosiers about the Know-Nothing Lodges saying, “It is an unpleasant duty to call your attention to the fact, that, in a few instances, in some portions of the State, indications of the existence of a spirit of mob-law and violence have appeared. Secret associations, usurping the prerogatives of law, have, (by means of disturbing the peace of families, injuring property, and inflicting corporal punishment on individuals,) undertaken to regulate the morals of the communities in which such lawless combinations are permitted to exist.” The violence the governor and others witnessed certainly portrayed Know-Nothings as radicals willing to use force to accomplish their goals.³⁵

More than a few conservative Whigs expressed alarm at what they termed “knownothingism.” In his letter to Congressman English, Craig lumped “knownothingism” with abolitionism as a radical threat to the nation. In a letter to the *State Sentinel*, the “young Whig” noted with pride his old party’s opposition to nativism. He considered Fillmore a traitor to Whig ideals and conservatism saying, “For this we can have no emotion save of contempt; our

³⁴ *Weekly Reveille* (Vevay, IN), April 9, and August 6, 1856; Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 213-14.

³⁵ *Journal of the House of Representatives, 1855*, (quote), 34; Lawrence M. Lipin, *Producers, Proletarians, and Politicians: Workers and Party Politics in Evansville and New Albany, Indiana, 1850-57* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 51.

contempt may be mingled with astonishment that a man who had once filled the Presidential chair as the dignified and respected representative of Whig principles should have stooped to the ridiculous mockery of the ‘third degree,’ or humiliated himself to become a tool of the party not his own.” Fillmore had debased himself with radical Know-Nothings; the party’s official name changed nothing. Without many options, the young Whig and others looked elsewhere for a true conservative candidate.³⁶

By late 1856, the leadership of the Indiana American Party could legitimately disavow membership within the Know-Nothing Lodges. In Evansville where the American Party still thrived, local newspaper editor and American Party leader Addison H. Sanders denied any membership in the secret society and worked to separate the term “know-nothing” from the American Party. In New Albany, another prominent American Party leader, Milton H. Gregg, alleged Frémont was a Know-Nothing since he spent time in California where Catholics abounded. The politicians downplayed the American Party’s nativism and actively appealed to immigrants throughout the campaign. Sanders himself stated, “we have no war to make in our paper against the Catholic Church.” The statement must have shocked those early Know-Nothings committed to nativism. While some conservative former Whigs in other places were perfectly willing to support restrictions on the franchise, they quickly distanced themselves from the rioting and the secretive origins of the Know-Nothing lodges.³⁷

Though Democrats persisted in throwing the “know nothing” label at American Party members, they found a much more effective argument. The party held a state convention in the

³⁶ Hiram T. Craig to William Hayden English, March 24, 1856; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 31, 1856 (quote).

³⁷ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), April 1, 1856; *New Albany Daily Tribune* (New Albany, IN), September 1, 1856; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 15, 1856 (quote); John David Bladek, “America For Americans: The Southern Know Nothing Party and the Politics of Nativism, 1854-1856” (PhD Diss., University of Washington, 1998), 185; Bruce Levine, “‘The Vital Element of the Republican Party’: Antislavery, Nativism, and Abraham Lincoln,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 1 no. 4 (Dec. 2011): 484-87, 493.

summer where they planned to endorse Fillmore nationally and a fusion ticket at home. The convention turned into a disaster. Delegates failed to endorse the state ticket. Former Secretary of the Interior, and former Whig, Richard W. Thompson, Indiana's leading American Party politician, offended many when he encouraged every American voter to "use his own pleasure in voting for state offices." Several immediately walked out and joined the Republican Party taking their support with them. Though the organization survived in Indiana, most politicians smelled blood. Serious observers saw the writing on the wall; the American Party was on its last legs.³⁸

Though weakened, Americans could still damage Republican candidates. In Indiana's First Congressional District, Americans and Republicans gathered in Princeton to nominate a candidate for Congress under the People's Party moniker. The convention nominated James C. Veatch, a Frémont supporter. Some local Americans accepted the Republican including most of the local newspaper editors. Many others rejected Veatch fearing he was secretly an abolitionist. Tensions boiled over at an American Party barbecue. Americans at the dinner charged Veatch with rigging the vote, saying the district convention railroaded the nomination. Indignant, attendees voted on a resolution to nominate their own candidate on a separate ticket. Ultimately, the Americans failed to make good on their threat though suspicions about Veatch remained. All over the state, there were opportunities to pick off the Americans.³⁹

Sensing a chance, Democrats moved in. They did something few of them could have imagined only eight years prior, they laid claim to conservatism. They pitched their party as the defender of the Union. It was a conservative organization determined to keep the nation together.

³⁸ Opponents frequently used this spelling when they accused opponents of involvement with Know-Nothings. *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 13, 1856; *Weekly Reveille* (Vevay, IN), July 23, 1856 (quote); Carl F. Brand, "History of the Know Nothing Party in Indiana (continued)," *Indiana Magazine of History* vol. 18, no. 3 (September 1922): 277-81.

³⁹ "American District Convention," *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), January 24 and August 2 and August 20, 1856; Evansville Fillmore Club to James C. Veatch, July 23, 1856, James C. Veatch Papers Box 1 Folder 1, IHS; Brand, "The Knownothing Party in Indiana (continued)," 267.

On receiving the nomination, Buchanan declared his party, “now the only surviving conservative party . . .” One northern Indiana Democrat called his party, “the great conservative party that holds in check the wild spirit of fanaticism, that sweeps over the land like a sirocco.” Less than a decade after Democrats had slandered Whigs as aristocratic conservatives and declared their party a force for reform, they challenged Republicans and Americans for the all important title. If they wanted to claim conservatism, they had to claim the Whig legacy. A tough job for the Party of Jackson.⁴⁰

For years, the Democratic Party had disparaged its Whig opponents as aristocratic traitors. The Whigs were the old Federalists in another guise; they had betrayed the Founding Fathers, the nation in the War of 1812, and they had betrayed the country again. Charging Whigs with aristocracy, a Virginia Democrat argued in 1840 the Whigs “have combined, under the comprehensive name of Whig, to put down the Republican Government established by our forefathers, and set up in its stead an Oligarchy of soulless Corporations...” The Virginian’s beliefs were widespread. When William Henry Harrison won the presidency, one Democrat published the general’s majorities next to the word “traitors.” Those like him viewed the party of Jackson as the only bulwark against the rise of an aristocracy, an aristocracy working through the Whig Party.⁴¹

Only death exempted Whigs from the abuse. While he was alive, Democrats constantly attacked Harrison as an old man or granny general. In a telling slight, the Indiana General Assembly refused to preserve the Tippecanoe battlefield due to its connections with the Whig

⁴⁰ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), June 23, 1856; *Marshall County Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), November 27, 1856.

⁴¹ *Richmond Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), August 11, 1840, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1840-08-11/ed-1/seq-4/>; *Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), November 21, 1840; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 2, 31; Gerald Leonard, *The Invention of Party Politics: Federalism, Popular Sovereignty, and Constitutional Development in Jacksonian Illinois* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 156-57, 169.

candidate. Their opinions changed after he died. In a dramatic turn, Democrats treated him as a hero who stood above party. While they slandered Clay in 1844, they lifted up the deceased president: “But our western people remember that Gen. Harrison was not their enemy. He fought for them when Mr. Clay refused...Gen. Harrison was a saint when compared with the black leg of Ashland.” While they debated an exclusion law at the 1850 constitutional convention, delegates, including Democrats, proposed a constitutional amendment to maintain the Tippecanoe battlefield, thirty-nine years after the battle and nine years after the general died. Harrison was a unique case as Democrats bashed the Whigs among the living.⁴²

Democrats even extended their newfound affections to the most famous Whig: Clay. Clay died in 1852: four years later, all three existing political parties fought over his memory. The man Democrats nominated for president complicated their love for the fallen Whig leader. Buchanan had a long history with Clay. There were credible rumors that the Pennsylvanian had started the corrupt bargain controversy in 1824. One man loyal to Clay said, “No man living who was an earnest friend of Henry Clay, can take to his bosom Jas. Buchanan. No man held Mr. Buchanan in more contempt than Henry Clay.” Republicans claimed Clay could never support a bill such as the Kansas-Nebraska Act since it eliminated the 1820 compromise while American Party members argued just as forcefully over Clay’s legacy. Democrat had to work hard to claim Clay’s memory.⁴³

Later battles between the two parties left their mark. Andrew Jackson maintained a hatred of Clay throughout his life. He soundly beat his opponent in the presidential election of 1832, and then killed off Clay’s beloved Bank of the United States. When Clay last ran for president in 1844, Democrats launched numerous attacks against the Whig as a gambler and a drunkard.

⁴² *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 10, 1844 (quote), December 26, 1850, September 16, 1852.

⁴³ *Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), July 5, 1856; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), June 11, 1856 (quote); Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 203-11.

Republicans and Whigs were right about the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The controversial legislation was a repudiation of Clay's belief that Congress should have the ability to regulate slavery in federal territories. During heated debates, Democrats themselves argued that the Kentuckian's grand compromise, the Missouri Compromise of 1820, was wrong and unconstitutional; hardly grounds to argue Clay would have put aside years of party conflict and joined with his old opponents in 1856.⁴⁴

Though they could not get "gallant old Henry," Democrats rolled out the next best thing, one of his sons. In a widely published speech, James B. Clay spoke about his decision to join his father's old enemies. According to written accounts, Clay attended a Democratic meeting "to strike one blow for the Union." He first explained why he avoided the American Party. The "Native American" party's anti-Catholicism repelled him and he accepted the Whig Party's death, a death symbolized in the death of his father saying, "the banner of the Whig party had been furled and laid upon his father's grave." Clay then urged all Whigs to vote Democratic calling the Party of Jackson, "the only party of the Union . . ." Once he made the announcement, Democrats planned to make sure Whigs across the West could see him.⁴⁵

Their love expanded to all Whigs late in the campaign. In contrast to Republican antiparty appeals, Democrats praised the old party as a brave check against abolitionism. Effectively writing out the many abolitionists and free soilers in the Whig Party, Democrats painted a past where both parties were conservative. One Democrat lamented the death of the Whig Party in a racist appeal, "The Democracy in the coming contest, have no such noble foe as the old Whig Party to combat, but a miserable wooly headed gang of fanatics, that have already commenced with unblushing effrontery to advocate the amalgamation of the whites with the

⁴⁴ Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 174, 194-96, 806-12.

⁴⁵ *Democrat and Sentinel* (Ebensburg, PA), August 13, 1856 (quote); Lindsey Apple, *The Family Legacy of Henry Clay: In the Shadow of a Kentucky Patriarch* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 105-08.

tawny African.” Former Indiana Congressman Joseph E. McDonald argued, “that until 1854 both Democrats and Whigs were always in favor of perpetuating the union of the States, and opposed to sectional Abolition parties.” Their conciliatory tone was far different than the often merciless insults Democrats hurled at their old Whig rivals over the previous years. In their account, Whigs and Democrats had placed Union over radicalism. They were both conservative.⁴⁶

For evidence, they pointed to the many frustrated antislavery politicians who left the Whigs for other alternatives. Calling the Liberty and Free-Soil parties “a mere speck on the political horizon,” one Democratic editor who backed a Free-Soil candidate for Congress in 1849, credited Whigs and Democrats with quashing both parties whom he lumped together. “Both the great parties of the country - Whig and Democratic – made war upon the Abolition Party . . .” Another Democrat praised the Whig Party for expelling James H. Cravens, a Republican and a former Free-Soil politician, due to his alleged abolitionist sentiments. “Originally a Whig and a Whig member of Congress, he became so thoroughly abolitionized that the Whig party discarded and refused to sustain him.” It was an odd statement since some Democrats in 1849 claimed that Cravens had left the Whig Party voluntarily due to President Taylor’s status as a slave owner.⁴⁷

Converted Whigs joined their new colleagues in a new accounting of the past. They praised Whigs and Democrats as conservative while papering over the former disagreements. In southern Indiana, one convert joined his former Democratic opponents and praised the old parties for putting Union above all else saying, “While the Democratic and Whig parties fought under their respective leaders for great principles with zeal, sometimes with violence, they were

⁴⁶ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), January 24, 1856; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), April 25, 1856.

⁴⁷ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), May 22, 1856; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), April 8, 1856; *Richmond Jeffersonian* (Richmond, IN), February 1, 1856 (quote), September 11, 1856; *New Albany Daily Ledger* (New Albany, IN), August 9, 1856 (quote); *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), June 14, 1849.

united on the question of the preservation of the Union and the rights of the States.” The new political parties jeopardized the Union; they were altogether different from the political parties of the past. Another Whig went even further saying, “There is now no material agitation of any point formerly disputed between these two parties; there is no important question to be decided on which they cannot concurrently act.” Both parties were conservative and conservatives placed the Union first.⁴⁸

As the American Party slowly dwindled, Democrats added another piece to their campaign. Such a weak party had no chance in the presidential election. Republican victories were surely coming in many northern states while most expected Democratic victories in southern states. Fillmore faced impossible odds. With the American Party on a downward slide and the Republican Party gaining, a vote for Fillmore was a vote for the Republican Party and abolitionism. The editor of the *Daily State Sentinel* was more forceful telling Americans, “they can vote for Buchanan as the only sure means of defeating Abolitionism, and putting down the spirit of disunion.” Democrats argued, there might be two conservatives in the race, but Buchanan was the only one who could win. The Americans should join with fellow conservatives and back Buchanan.⁴⁹

Republicans and Americans battled Democrats for the conservative name. Both blamed Democrats for the whole uproar over slavery since it was Douglas, a Democrat, who opened up the can of worms through the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Democrats were the true sectional radicals. One Republican declared his party the favorite in Indiana saying, “Indiana is conservative. She resists all sectionalism, and, most of all, that which seeks to push a sectional despotism into the free Territories of the Union.” Another Republican declared the national ticket conservative

⁴⁸ *New Albany Daily Ledger* (New Albany, IN), August 12, 1856; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 31, 1856.

⁴⁹ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 28 and November 7, 1856.

saying, “The fact is Frémont and Dayton are conservative men . . . They are not with Seward, Hale, Chase, and others of their ilk, neither are they with the ultra Proslavery propagandist of the South Carolina nullifying, Calhoun school.” Another Republican printed the proceedings of an Alabama Democratic meeting where delegates assured members that Buchanan wanted to annex Cuba, adding yet another slave state. Republicans howled that the move violated the Constitution. The Frémont man asked, how was Buchanan conservative?⁵⁰

Americans joined in on the chorus. One American blamed the turmoil over slavery on the “reckless demagogues in high places.” He contended the Missouri Compromise had settled the entire issue in 1820, Douglas created the new controversy that “produced a dangerous agitation on the country.” Fillmore was the only conservative in the race, well liked on both sides of the Ohio River and the Mason-Dixon Line, “it cannot be denied that Fillmore is loved by the conservative north and conservative south.” Another American placed the blame solely on Douglas and the Democrats saying, “No sooner did the waves begin to roll than the old Abolition craft was brought out again.” Had Douglas left the compromise in place, slavery would have remained a dead issue. Douglas and his party were radicals.⁵¹

Of course Republicans pitched their warnings about a broad southern conspiracy eager to force slavery into Kansas. The upstarts had plenty of evidence to work with. Democrats had wiped out the Missouri Compromise line with southern backing. A former American turned Republican spoke with certainty noting, “We have long known that the South desire the extension of slave territory, not only for the purpose of slave profit and traffic, but to secure slave power in the government.” Another Republican said a vote for the Cincinnati platform was a vote for slavery extension. If voters wanted to keep slavery out of the territories, Republicans

⁵⁰ *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), September 5, 1856; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), August 13, 1856; *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), October 23, 1856.

⁵¹ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), April 4, 1856; *Weekly Reveille* (Vevay, IN), October 29, 1856.

insisted, it required Congressional action. Only one party promised to contain slavery where it was, the Republican Party.⁵²

Republicans trained their political sights on the American candidate as well. They labeled Fillmore a strong supporter of slavery extension. After Fillmore spoke in Albany, New York, and called the Republican Party sectional, one Republican excoriated the former president: “It was simply and an indirect bid for Southern aid! Mr. Fillmore was anxious to convince the South that Slavery with all its hideous curses should be extended into regions where it had not hitherto existed.” Another Republican enthusiast, sensing an opportunity, begged Fillmore voters to cast off the New Yorker and go for Frémont. He noted: “The South have imposed terms upon the American order that have shorn it of its strength. They have ingrafted upon it the extension of their peculiar institution . . .” A vote for Fillmore was just as bad as a vote for Buchanan. A vote for Fillmore meant a Kansas with slavery.⁵³

Americans defended their candidate from the charges saying he was no mere tool of slave owners. They reviewed his time in office for evidence and argued the former Whig was a greater friend to free soil than Frémont. California had entered the Union under Fillmore’s watch; it entered as a free state. When several Republicans in southeastern Indiana displayed maps with the Missouri Compromise line extended all the way to California, one American turned the map on his opponents. He noted California extended below the old compromise line. In his eyes, Fillmore had actually extended free soil: “We merely mention these facts as a part of a part of the history of the times, and to indicate that Mr. Fillmore, in approving the Compromise measures of 1850, actually extended free soil much farther South . . .” Their message was clear. Fillmore was

⁵² *Wabash Courier* (Terre Haute, IN), July 12, 1856.

⁵³ *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), September 10, 1856; *Bedford Independent* (Bedford, IN), October 30, 1856.

a champion of free soil rather than an enemy to the North, a Fillmore victory promised to deliver the free states and keep the Union together.⁵⁴

Democrats had a much harder time defending their party from proslavery charges. At first, they reiterated arguments the party used in 1854 when Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Democrats argued that the bill only allowed settlers in the territories to decide on slavery for themselves; the party itself believed in non-interference only. The *Daily State Sentinel* further defined the Democratic Party's position as "Congressional non-intervention upon the subject, - that they advocate the right of the people in the States and Territories to settle the question for themselves." They brought up the debates over slavery in Indiana. Though the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 seemingly barred the institution, Democrats asserted Indiana settlers still had the right to permit the practice in their state though they ultimately decided against it.⁵⁵

The party coordinated a broad strategy that filtered down to the local races. Michael C. Kerr, a Democrat and future congressman, kept a scrapbook during the campaign and took notes at a meeting where Democrats planned out their talking points. The southern Indiana Democrat scrawled in his notes the same strategy most northern Democrats employed throughout the canvass. The Kansas-Nebraska Act only erased the old compromise line. Although Republicans and some Know-Nothings warned about a slave power taking slavery west, Democrats asserted the act only allowed settlers the right to vote on slavery. It never explicitly legalized it in the territories. With the strategy in hand, Democrats went about reassuring Indiana voters nervous about slavery in the West.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *Weekly Reveille* (Vevay, IN), September 17, 1856.

⁵⁵ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 4 and June 30, 1856.

⁵⁶ Michael C. Kerr, *Political Scrapbook* Walter Q. Gresham Papers Box 2 Folder 17, IHS.

Some went further. As the campaign wound on, Democrats pointed to the many northern settlers entering the Kansas Territory. With so many northern settlers, there was little chance that a southern majority could take root and adopt proslavery constitutions. Ironically using the same Emigrant Aid Societies they castigated, Democrats touted many reports on the population in Kansas. “The National Kansas Committee says, there are today thirty thousand ‘free state’ settlers in Kansas, and only about five thousand ‘proslavery.’” According to their understanding of popular sovereignty, northern Democrats argued that the settlers could hold a vote and through sheer numbers ban the peculiar institution. With a guarantee of new free states, Indiana Democrats effectively treated popular sovereignty as conservative free-soilism, gaining more free states without antagonizing the South into secession.⁵⁷

Democrats in other states reassured their voters. A meeting in Pennsylvania generated controversy and alarmed some southerners. Proud of their native son Buchanan, Democrats in Smethport, Pennsylvania, held a mass meeting on September 18, 1856. When the Pennsylvanians advertised their meeting, they chose a rather unique slogan. “Buchanan, Breckinridge, and Free Kansas,” proclaimed the headlines as the organizers arranged the grand rally. The slogan generated headlines all the way to Louisiana where American newspapers brandished it against their Democratic opponents. Another Kentucky newspaper reported on a different Democratic meeting and cynically asked, “What will the Southern Democracy think of their candidate who has one rallying cry in the North and another in the South?” In speeches and circulars Democrats

⁵⁷ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), July 3, 1856; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 9, 1856 (quote), August 28 and October 2, 1856; Childers, *The Failure of Popular Sovereignty*, 7-8.

made a guarantee. Under Buchanan Kansas was sure to become a free state while southerners accepted the vote.⁵⁸

Democrats needed an explanation for why Kansas had not yet entered the Union as a free state. At first, they revived an old western trope, suspicions of easterners. Resentment towards easterners reared its head periodically in the Hoosier State. It was on full display during the debates over the 1850 Compromise measures when Indiana Congressman Willis A. Gorman addressed the United States House of Representatives and blamed New Englanders for the slavery agitation. Gorman asserted the goal of New Englanders was to divide the Democratic Party, a party dedicated to defending agrarian interests, into northern and southern wings. With the party divided into two sections, New Englanders could push their economic agenda and protect the “manufacturing capital in the North and East.” Western prejudice against the East never softened, it bubbled under the surface.⁵⁹

Democrats used these old suspicions against Republicans. Building on residual prejudices, they explained away the violence in Kansas as a result of eastern influence. They quickly pointed to the Emigrant Aid Societies. Abolitionists formed the societies in New England states to fund northern settlers moving to Kansas. They hoped the northern settlers ensured Kansas’s admission to the Union as a free state. According to former Indiana Senator Edward A. Hannegan who visited Kansas, the Emigrant Aid Societies were a land grab: “The first cause of trouble was the unjustifiable attempt of Eastern capitalists through what is termed the Emigrant Aid Society to engross the most valuable lands in the Territory, solely for the purpose of private speculation.” Hannegan argued most settlers only wanted to influence

⁵⁸ *Sugar Planter* (West Baton Rouge, LA), October 11, 1856, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86079096/1856-10-11>; *Kentucky Tribune* (Danville, KY), October 10, 1856.

⁵⁹ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), April 4, 1850.

Kansas's politics and Missourians were justified in crossing the border to cancel out the free state advantage. Another Democrat called the entire Republican Party an attempt to dominate the western and southern states. "These confederates – these New England Puritans and Wall street blacklegs – have gone to work to subject the balance of the country to their iron rule." The prejudice continued through the campaign.⁶⁰

According to Democrats, it was this violence that prevented Kansans from joining as a free state. For more evidence, they singled out one of their own. James H. Lane was born in Southeastern Indiana and he rose to political office. The Indianan served as a congressman during the contentious debates over the Kansas-Nebraska Act though he ultimately voted for the bill. One historian has argued Lane believed enough free state settlers in the territory guaranteed a free state constitution. The former congressman moved to Kansas where he turned against the Democratic Party, formed a militia, and fought proslavery settlers. Newspaper editors across the nation printed stories about his exploits, including his many bloody battles with proslavery Kansans. In 1856, he toured the old northwestern states looking for supplies, recruits, and sympathy for his cause. Unfortunately his tour came at a terrible time for Indiana Republicans.⁶¹

When Lane returned to Indiana, Democrats pounced. They said he was a radical stirring up trouble in Kansas, and he was out for blood: "this man James H. Lane comes into Indiana, maddened that he has not been permitted to reak [sic] his hands in the blood in the blood of a fellow man . . ." Others immediately connected Lane with Republicans in the state. They charged their opponents with collusion. Lane had sacked many proslavery towns and murdered proslavery men. According to Democrats, Republicans supported it all. One editor noted Lane's

⁶⁰ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN) (quote), July 7, 1856; *Bedford Independent* (Bedford, IN), June 26, 1856; *New Albany Daily Ledger* (New Albany, IN), August 19, 1856.

⁶¹ Ian Michael Spurgeon, *Man of Douglas Man of Lincoln: The Political Odyssey of James Henry Lane* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 18, 29-37, 39, 85.

army sacked Franklin, Kansas with supposed Republican support: “No letter written to the Abolition press, pretends to deny that Lane entered Kansas with a body of armed men, who signalized their introduction into the Territory, by the attack upon the Town of Franklin, Kansas . . .” Democrats asked, how could Republicans support such a man and claim they were conservative?⁶²

Even if Northern Democrats genuinely wanted Kansas to enter the Union as a free state, the party still had a southern branch. This same southern branch went about the South reassuring all southerners that Buchanan wanted more slave states. Reflecting on the 1856 canvass, one visitor to the southern states wrote about the duality of the Democratic campaign noting, “It is notorious that in the North ‘Buchanan and Free Kansas’ was the rallying cry, while in the South it was ‘Buchanan and slave Kansas.’” Though northern Democrats preached Union and a respect for the wishes of the settlers in Kansas, there were still doubts about southern Democrats. In his hard fought campaign Conduitt expressed his opinion that the Democratic Party was vulnerable if the Kansas controversy continued. Democrats had to address their party’s southern branch.⁶³

The American editor of Evansville’s the *Daily Journal* noted the change among Democrats on slavery in the West. He called them hypocrites and said,

It may probably astonish the Democracy of our neighboring state across the river to learn that right here in this neck of the woods some little leaders among their brethren, are boldly taking a free-soil position, and endeavoring to prove that the Democratic party has always been the party of freedom, and that the results of its aim and tendency, will be to utterly prevent any further slave territory—to prevent any more slave States coming into the Union.

⁶² *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), May 26, 1856, September 16, 1856.

⁶³ James Stirling, *Letters from the Slave States* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1857), (quote), 93; Alexander B. Conduitt to Joseph A. Wright, June 23, 1856, Wright Papers.

The hypocrisy astonished the American. Democrats had wiped out the old Missouri Compromise line; yet, they were calling themselves free soilers merely two years later.⁶⁴

The Democratic campaign peaked with one mass meeting. When Democrats in Crawfordsville, Indiana, planned a large public gathering in 1856, they wanted a grand rally with nationally recognized speakers. Early in August, the organizers informed Governor Wright they had sent a member to ask Democratic Vice Presidential candidate John C. Breckinridge and the son of Clay to address the Democracy in the Hoosier state. “The Democracy of Crawfordsville have deputed Mr. B.W. Hanna the bearer of this to go to Kentucky to procure if possible, the attendance of the Hons. J.C. Breckenridge and James B. Clay at a mass convention of the Democracy of this and surrounding counties at Crawfordsville on the 30th of August.” If the two men accepted, they were sure to garner much attention, drawing a sizable crowd and generating excitement.⁶⁵

Breckinridge was the perfect man to address concerns about southern intentions. When the Democrats convened to nominate candidates for president and vice president in early 1856, they faced a difficult choice. They needed a ticket that could placate the party’s northern and southern wings. Buchanan was out of the country during the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the subsequent violence in Kansas, giving him some distance from the controversy. His experience as a diplomat, politician, and legal commenter earned him high praise among the party and the longtime politician seemed a natural choice for the nomination. In addition to his high esteem as a statesman, Buchanan was a Pennsylvanian. With Republicans and Americans on the make in

⁶⁴ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 5, 1856.

⁶⁵ B.W. Engle to Joseph A. Wright, August 6, 1856, Wright Papers Box 1 Folder 12, ISL.

northern states, Democrats needed to pick off a few in the Electoral College. Buchanan could help the party keep the Keystone State and with it, the White House.⁶⁶

With their northern branch represented, party leaders needed a southerner on the ticket. Democrats followed a long held tradition in nineteenth century politics. Each political party sought to place a northerner and a southerner on the national ticket. The Whigs had followed the same tradition throughout their party's existence. For the vice presidential nominee in 1856, Democrats chose the young Breckinridge. Breckinridge was from Kentucky and was a slave owner. These were two useful attributes that came in handy to reassure southerners of the party's good intentions towards the South. Though the Breckinridge family knew Clay and often supported Whigs in Kentucky, the vice presidential candidate had joined the Democratic Party when he reached manhood.⁶⁷

Breckinridge was an ideal candidate for southern Democrats. If victorious, the Kentuckian sat next in line for the presidency and could break ties in the Senate in case of a deadlock, meaning more wins for the South. Though a plus in the South, Breckinridge had the potential to cause a few headaches for northern Democrats. He was from a slave owning family in a slave state. Still, Breckinridge's nomination offered an opportunity for Democrats in states such as Indiana. He was a key ally of Douglas, a man still popular enough to jeopardize the Democratic ticket if he turned rogue. Breckinridge's southern origins could also prove important. Though newspaper editors and northern Democratic politicians reassured their constituents of

⁶⁶ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 156-57; Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s*, 186; Martin H. Quitt, *Stephen A. Douglas and Antebellum Democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 126.

⁶⁷ Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 104, 712; William C. Davis, *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 27-28, 57, 172.

their party's commitment to a fair resolution on the violence in Kansas, a southern slave owner speaking directly to northern Democrats offered some reassurance to distressed voters. .⁶⁸

A tour around the states meant breaking a contemporary political tradition. In the nineteenth century, most politicians remained at home rather than taking to the campaign trail. This was especially true among presidential candidates. When a party nominated a candidate, he was expected to let surrogates go out and push his campaign for him. In 1856, there were some signs that this tradition was changing. When Henry Wise ran for governor in Virginia one year earlier, he toured the commonwealth giving speeches to party faithful. The Virginia Democrat attended barbecue after barbecue where he shook hand after hand in order to drum up support. Surprisingly, Wise won his election and beat his Know-Nothing opponent rather soundly at a time when the Know-Nothings looked ascendant.⁶⁹

Though Whigs throughout the country reacted with vitriol, the younger Clay also proved useful. He was now a full-fledged Democrat, ready to give his all for his new party. In the summer, he joined Breckinridge on his tour through the Old Northwest. They were friends and their planned trip took them through numerous states Buchanan needed if he were to win the presidency. Delighting Hoosier Democrats, both accepted the invitation and decided to stop in Indiana. In another surprise for Indiana Democrats, Senator Douglas promised to make an appearance at the mass meeting. Organizers dutifully organized trains to allow as many Democrats as possible to make the journey to the meeting and see the party luminaries. They wanted to hold one of the largest political meetings in the state's history and though other Democratic organizations planned mass meetings that year, they wanted to surpass them all..⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Quitt, *Stephen A. Douglas and Antebellum Democracy*, 126-27.

⁶⁹ Davis, *Breckinridge*, 149; Bladek, "America For Americans," 1-4.

⁷⁰ Apple, *The Family Legacy of Henry Clay*, 104-05; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 23, 1856.

The site Democrats chose held many layers of symbolism. Like other political parties in Indiana, Democrats chose Battle Ground, named for the Battle of Tippecanoe where American forces defeated the Shawnee chief Tecumseh. Though efforts to preserve the site stalled, the place was popular for visitors. In 1855 the New Albany and Salem Railroad highlighted the location in advertisements for the Indianapolis to Chicago route. “The Tippecanoe Battle Ground, a spot hallowed in the heart of every American citizen, is also seen by those passing over the route.” The site held an even greater meaning for the country.⁷¹

The location served Democratic efforts to promote their party as the party of the Union and remind Democrats and conservative Whigs of the sacrifices Hoosiers shared with their Kentucky neighbors. Regular United States Army troops comprised of Americans from all parts of the country fought in the battle. To increase the chances of victory, several militia units rushed to the battlefield and augmented the regular army regiments. Among the militia units were two raised in Kentucky. In the heat of the battle, several members of the Kentucky militia fell on the Tippecanoe battlefield making the ground hallowed for Hoosiers and Kentuckians alike. The sacrifices made the old battlefield an ideal place for a Kentuckian to give a speech emphasizing Union.⁷²

The old Tippecanoe battlefield held another meaning for long time Whigs. The Battle of Tippecanoe had launched Harrison into stardom. Some even called the Virginia-born general the “Washington of the West.” When Whigs nominated a presidential candidate in 1840, they chose “Old Tippecanoe,” partly due to his lasting fame. One enthusiast gushed, “The History of the West is his history.” Whigs in the state held a massive rally at the Tippecanoe battlefield and

⁷¹ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), December 26, 1850, December 29, 1855.

⁷² Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 172, 653; Adam Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 191-97.

party newspapers declared the meeting the largest in the West up to that time. One correspondent estimated over twenty thousand attended. Just as it was an ideal site for a Kentuckian to speak on sectional harmony, the battleground was ideal for the son of the legendary Clay to make his case to the conservative Whigs of Indiana, a fact Democratic newspaper editors played up.⁷³

One Democrat summed up his party's efforts to assume the Whig legacy through the meeting at Tippecanoe. "In May, 1850 [sic], there was a great Whig gathering at the Tippecanoe Battle Ground... There were hundreds of Kentucky Whigs present on that occasion, and they united with their Indiana Whig brethren without sacrificing a principle." The Democrat then compared his party and the Republicans with the old Whig Party noting, "No Kentuckian can or will be welcomed by the Black Republicans unless he first becomes a traitor to his own State... Indiana and Kentucky Democrats can mingle in loving concord as in former days..." The message to Whigs was clear. Democrats, like the Whigs, were national. Put the country over party, reject the sectional Republicans, and vote Democrat.⁷⁴

Though speeches in other cities delayed the two travelers in their journey to Indianapolis, the rally commenced on September 3. Steamboats and trains delivered the attendees as all present anticipated the distinguished set of speakers. After introductions the meeting's president introduced Breckinridge to the crowd. The young Kentuckian did not disappoint. He recalled the history of the area saying the meeting was assembled, "upon that blood-bought ground where their fathers had united before with their Indiana brothers, in defense of our country from a foreign and savage foe." Breckinridge declared the Republican Party a sectional party that welcomed civil war and warned "fifteen states believe that the Republican party was making

⁷³ *Leavenworth Arena*, (Leavenworth, IN), January 30, 1840; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), March 4, 1836 (quote), June 12, 1840; *New Albany Daily Ledger* (New Albany, IN), August 2, 1856; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 571-73.

⁷⁴ *New Albany Daily Ledger* (New Albany, IN), August 2, 1856.

most persistent efforts to create vindictive feelings in the minds of the people of the other portion of the Union, against the South.” The vice presidential candidate was on a roll; he then turned to slavery in the West.⁷⁵

Breckinridge addressed accusations about a slave power forcing slavery into Kansas saying, “he was connected with no political organization which desired to extend slavery; nor was he connected with one that opposed the free-expression of the voice of new communities upon this and all other domestic questions.” The Kentuckian continued, “The Democratic Party had endorsed the principle of leaving the people of the Territories free to say for themselves whether they should have slavery or not.” Breckinridge then called the Hoosiers to action against disunion, “Then let your exultant shouts be that you will cling to that Constitution and that Union under which we have heretofore lived so happily; and record a vow, never to be broken, to never unite with sectional parties to divide the Union with sectional lines.” The nominee finished with a last western appeal. “The beautiful Ohio, then, instead of being a barrier between us, will continue to only be an imaginary boundary between a community of brothers.” Anyone following the young man had a tough act to follow.⁷⁶

After Breckinridge, the president of the meeting called Clay to the platform. Addressing himself to the citizens of Indiana and of the “North West,” he explained his reasons for crossing partisan lines by invoking his father’s memory. He stated, “Fellow-citizens, educated beneath the shades of Ashland, the son, the partner, and the trusted friend of Henry Clay, to be a Whig was a part of my nature. So long as there was a Whig party in existence, so long as there was a Whig banner in the field, I was ready to follow it. I believe now that the principle taught by Clay and by Webster were true principles, and I expect always to follow them and by them square my

⁷⁵ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), September 11, 1856.

⁷⁶ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel*, September 11, 1856.

political life. But there is no longer a Whig party.” Clay then traced the course of the Whig Party and acknowledged the difficult choice former Whigs faced in the upcoming presidential election.⁷⁷

The son of Clay laid out the choices for former Whigs: “With the Union as above all parties in view, I propose to consider the claim of each to our suffrages.” He reviewed the American Party and portrayed it as a radical anti-Catholic organization. The son of the most famous Whig declared the American Party a lost cause saying, “Mr. Fillmore has not the least chance of success before the people, and there cannot be a sane reflecting man before whom I say it, that does not recognize that I am telling him only the truth.” For Clay, the election was down to two candidates. “The candidate of the Know Nothing Party being out of the question, if for no other reason, because he is not available, our choice is narrowed down to the Republican party or the Democratic.” In conclusion, the younger Clay endorsed Buchanan and all Democratic candidates. With two luminaries Democrats had assured those in Indiana that their party had no plans to force slavery west and their candidate could keep the Union together.⁷⁸

As Clay and Breckinridge moved on to other northern states their words generated a reaction in the South. One American, outraged at the meeting, called Clay “the degenerate son of a noble sire.” Other former Whigs questioned Clay’s motives noting he had torn down his father’s house recently to symbolize his break with the old Whig Party. Breckinridge’s speech provided southern Americans some political capital. Though he merely sought to reassure northern voters of the South’s conservatism on slavery extension, some southerners took the speech as something different. When they read the speech, Americans in Kentucky immediately

⁷⁷ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel*, September 11, 1856.

⁷⁸ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel*, September 11, 1856.

declared Breckinridge a free soiler and a traitor to the South. Of course the charge was false, Breckinridge's family had owned slaves and he later served in the Confederate army.⁷⁹

Others protested the meeting as a complete farce. They noted the duplicity in using the Tippecanoe battlefield and the Whig Party after years of condemnation. One Republican and former Whig was shocked on hearing about the Tippecanoe meeting noting, "We must confess that we have looked at this thing with blank astonishment . . . We all remember how the generalship of Harrison in that battle was criticized and denounced, and how the American people were told that the very name of Tippecanoe should fill every patriotic heart with grief and shame." An American editor joined his Republican opponent by downplaying the Democratic convention at Tippecanoe and asserting that "It bore no comparison with the Harrison celebration at the same place in 1840." Despite the Democrats' best efforts, not everyone subscribed to their new account of politics in the 1840s.⁸⁰

Throughout the canvass, Republicans realized they were slowly losing the conservative Whig vote. The combination of an American Party in the field combined with the Democratic outreach was clearly taking its toll. As the elections closed in, they tried to counter the radical accusation. Among the Whigs converts to the Republican Party, only one was considered conservative enough to attract the hold out conservative Whigs. Henry S. Lane was Kentucky born and had little connections with abolitionism or any abolitionists. Republicans throughout the state begged Lane to come and deliver a speech to draw the old Whigs into the Republican Party, and some Republicans deplored the few attempts to win voters in southern Indiana calling for more party attention in the region. A local Republican group in southern Indiana asked Lane

⁷⁹ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 11, 1856; Apple, *The Family Legacy of Henry Clay*, 105-06; Davis, *Breckinridge*, 150, 154-64, 293.

⁸⁰ *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), August 28, 1856; *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 10, 1856.

to visit their county adding that if the former Whig did not many old Whigs were “fixed to Fillmore.” Lane answered the call and traveled throughout the state speaking in most major cities, where he denied the charges of abolitionism.⁸¹

One major problem for the People’s Party in 1856 was their nominees. Two years earlier, a few long time Whigs threw their hats in the ring and ran for congressional seats. Dunn, a former Whig, ran for the Third Congressional District, a district in southern Indiana that could swing for Whig candidates, giving him a good chance at success. In the west central Seventh Congressional District, Harvey D. Scott ran against Davis. Dunn and Scott enjoyed the support of Republicans and Americans during their bids. One of the largest American Party newspapers in the Third District tacitly endorsed Dunn while nearly every major American newspaper in the Seventh went all in for Scott. Since Republicans cooperated and backed the two men, the combination worked. The two former Whigs won narrow victories in 1854.⁸²

Fortunately for their Democratic opponents, neither candidate stood for reelection two years later. Dunn stepped aside in his district and Republicans helped push a more anti-fusion candidate through their congressional district convention. The American newspaper editor in Vevay, Indiana endorsed the Republican candidate, though he buried the nomination on the back pages of his paper. Scott found himself in hot water with conservative Whigs in his district. The congressman wrote an open letter to his constituents in which he detailed the violence in Kansas. The People’s Party candidate noted the violence committed against the free state settlers and warned readers the South wanted slavery in Kansas. While Republicans and some Americans praised the letter, his frank account to voters and his calls for concrete solutions sounded more

⁸¹ Jesse L. Cox to Henry S. Lane, July 3, 1856 and John Steers et. al. to Henry S. Lane, August 15, 1856 in the Henry Smith Lane Papers Box 2 Folder 3, IHS; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 8, 1856.

⁸² *Weekly Reveille* (Vevay, IN), October 19, 1854.

Republican than conservative and he faced a difficult election. He clearly believed there was a slave power out to bring the institution west.⁸³

Despite their efforts, time for the Republicans ran out as election day arrived. In the state and local elections, more Hoosiers participated than had done so two years earlier. In 1854 the election for Secretary of State of Indiana garnered 183,895 votes. The 1856 election for Governor garnered 230,912. Turnout was even greater than the total number of voters in the 1852 election when only 183,170 voted. A closer look at the results indicates Democratic efforts to bring conservative Whigs into the fold seemed to have worked in many state elections. While most Americans voted with the Republican Party, some conservative Whigs crossed the old party line. Democrats won the governor's race, the House of Representatives in the Indiana General Assembly, and several congressional seats they lost in the 1854 elections. In Morgan County where Conduitt courted and later expected conservative Whig support, the Democrat won the election with a mere six-vote majority, a majority so close that there were rumors of a recount into December.⁸⁴

When Indiana voters went to the polls to elect a president, the results were murky. The number of Indiana voters increased dramatically. In 1852, 183,170 Hoosiers cast ballots in the presidential election. In 1856, 235,431 Hoosiers made their way to the polls, an increase of more than 52,261 votes likely due to increased migration to the state. When officials finally counted the results, the Democrat Buchanan won with a little over fifty percent of the vote, a drop when compared to Pierce's victory in Indiana with fifty-two percent of the vote in the 1852 election. Pierce faced a weakened opponent for the presidency with a weakened party behind him.

⁸³ *Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), June 18, 1856; *Weekly Reveille* (Vevay, IN), October 1, 1856.

⁸⁴ *Evansville Daily Journal*, November 8, 1854, (Evansville, IN); *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), November 25, 1852; *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), November 22, 1856; Carl F. Brand, "The History of the Know Nothing Party in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 18 no 3 (1922): 291-92.

Buchanan faced heavy opposition with new voters. Despite his drop in totals, Buchanan could have won if all Americans and Republicans voted for the same candidate. The historian Gienapp found conservative Whigs voted for Buchanan across the North.⁸⁵

In the Congressional races, Democrats made a comeback. Davis won his race in the Seventh while a Democrat seized the Third. In Davis's race, he won with almost fifty-four percent of the vote. Two years earlier, the Democrat lost his seat by over sixty-two percent. In the Third District, where Dunn, a former Whig, had won with over fifty-four percent of the vote, a Democrat won the seat with almost the same margin. The few People's Party delegates who hung on were in the northern and east central parts of the state, both in areas with a much different political culture. The People's Party had lost at the polls in many races; it was an unexpected comeback for the Democrats two years after their party nearly imploded.⁸⁶

Just how many conservative Whigs crossed over and voted for Democratic candidates is impossible to determine. Frémont needed voters like Craig and the conservative Whigs of Morgan County who pushed Conduitt over the top. Without Indiana, Frémont needed Pennsylvania and one other northern state that went for Buchanan in 1856 to overcome the massive electoral advantage southern Democrats gave their presidential candidate. Though Republicans picked up some momentum and won most free states, they still needed two more in order to win. However, Buchanan proved too strong and Democrats held on to the White House for another four years. Now he had to deliver the goods. Kansas had to enter as a free state.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), December 1, 1852; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), November 27, 1856; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 970, 978; Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party*, 416-17, 528.

⁸⁶ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), November 8, 1854; *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), November 6, 1856.

⁸⁷ Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party*, 416-17, 528.

As the political parties surveyed the aftermath of the 1856 elections, there was much to digest. To win, Democrats portrayed the Republican and American Parties as radical, painted themselves as conservative, and convinced many Whig voters to place Union above party and vote Democrat. To sweeten the deal, Democrats guaranteed free states in the West. The coalition of Democrats and conservative Whigs was just strong enough to win. They won the governor's office, the House of Representatives in the Indiana General Assembly, and all but five congressional seats. Even combined, the Fillmore and Frémont vote was not enough to win the day. Conservative Whig defectors to the Democratic Party delivered Indiana's crucial electoral votes to Buchanan. With such stupendous victories, the *State Sentinel* equated the Democratic wins to a victory for the Union saying, "When fanaticism howled, and threatened to open the floodgates of error, of anarchy, and the demon of disunion stalked through the land, the Democracy jumped into the breach, gallantly met the enemy and conquered. It was a fearful struggle, and a glorious victory." His party only had four years to gloat.⁸⁸

Republicans looked for someone to blame. Although many expected the Americas to vote for Fillmore in the presidential election, they lambasted their sometime allies for their losses in the state. A Republican newspaper editor in northern Indiana clearly held the Americans responsible for the state losses in including Morton's loss to Ashbel P. Willard in the governor's race: "Of the estimated twenty-five thousand Fillmore men in this state, at least fifteen thousand voted for Willard and the Locofoco State Ticket." A Republican committee published in an address to the Republicans of Indiana where they laid out the evidence for treachery among the Fillmore men saying, "every quarter or county that has contained an appreciable Fillmore element, has gone for Willard by immense majorities considering their vote of 1854." Though

⁸⁸ *Weekly Indiana State Sentinel*, November 13, 1856, (Indianapolis, IN).

Fillmore men denied the charges, Republicans kept that belief, Fillmore supporters, conservatives, swayed the election. Over the next two decades they made many attempts to win them over.⁸⁹

Once the election ended, Democrats in the state once again assured voters that Kansas was destined to become a free state. The *State Sentinel* declared the issue over and done with and they appeared to have some evidence to back it up. When one free state newspaper editor in Kansas published an estimate of the number of free state settlers in Kansas, the editor of the *State Sentinel* published the article for his readers in Indiana. The article carried the headline “Kansas is already a free state” and described thousands of free stater flooding into the territory. The Democrat later published another account from a traveler who returned from Kansas. The man confidently predicted the troubles in the territory were over, pinning all his hopes on a Buchanan led peace. With Buchanan in office, he concluded Kansas was free to join as a free state.⁹⁰

Though Democrats seemed to have the momentum and Buchanan was packing his bags for the White House, there were ominous warnings that many Hoosier votes for the Democrat were conditional. One Hoosier voter wrote to fellow Democrat Allen Hamilton and started the letter praising Buchanan’s election as a victory for the Union and anticipating a successful presidency “if he does not attach himself to the southern Car.” Though the Democrat congratulated his friend on the election, the letter ended with a warning for the Party of Jackson. “If he follows the footsteps of the present incumbent and slavery be introduced into Kansas, then in that case his election is to be deplored by every friend of humanity.” The letter reflected the sentiments of many Hoosiers regardless of party. If the Democratic Party was not conservative on the slavery issue, they risked losing their support. In only a few months events outside Indiana

⁸⁹ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), October 30, 1856, October, 23, 1856.

⁹⁰ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), December 9, 1856.

shook the conservatives from their brief alliance with their old Democratic rivals and hand Indiana to the Republican Party.⁹¹

⁹¹ A. Johnston to Allen Hamilton, November 12, 1856, Hamilton Family Papers.

Chapter 3: “The sectional candidate in the field”: Conservatives and the Coming War

In October 1856, Addison H. Sanders, editor of the Evansville based *Daily Journal* and a prominent American Party leader sold the paper and packed his bags for Iowa. Before departing, Sanders sold the *Daily Journal* to a local man. Though the newspaper changed hands, Sanders assured his readers that the *Journal*, under the new owners, remained an American Party newspaper saying, “The *Journal*’s politics will in no manner be affected by the change of proprietorship. It is still a Fillmore paper, earnest and honest in its preference, as it will be zealous in maintaining that preference above all others.” His prophecy was short lived. Four years later the American Party had fallen and the new publishers threw their support behind Abraham Lincoln, even printing excerpts of Charles Sumner’s famous speech “freedom is national-slavery is sectional” in the campaign’s final months. The defection was a harbinger for the 1860 election. Although Democrats won over numerous conservatives in 1856, the promises they had made about Kansas and the West haunted them as Republicans seized the western conservative mantle and the presidency.¹

In 1856 Indiana Democrats pitched their party as a guarantor for the Union and free soil. A President John C. Frémont might provoke southern secession and Millard Fillmore had little hope of winning. Conservatives agreed. Across the West, they went for James Buchanan giving him the presidency hoping for fair elections in the territories. With fair elections they could ban slavery and keep the Union together. For western conservatives, it was an attractive solution. Democrats promised free soil with an intact Union. Despite all their boasting at the end of the campaign, this new coalition was fragile. Democrats needed to keep the conservatives if they

¹ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), October 20, 1856 and July 7, 1860.

wanted to win the Indiana's crucial electoral votes. To keep them, Kansas had to enter the Union as a free state.

Four years later, Indiana conservatives abandoned Buchanan and his party. The Pennsylvanian went back on his party's promises to northern Democrats. He first interfered with the Dred Scott decision, pushing northern justices to join the majority. Then he endorsed the constitution proslavery settlers had drafted. Buchanan wanted the Union intact; a new free state was optional. Feeling betrayed, northern conservatives searched for a true candidate who could deliver free soil while keeping the Union together. In 1860, they finally turned to Lincoln. Out of the four candidates running that year, most determined he was the candidate best able to deliver free soil and keep the Union together. In their opinion, the Illinoisan was the true conservative free soiler in the race. Four years after they backed Buchanan, the western conservatives pushed Lincoln into the White House. Republicans had successfully taken on the mantle of western conservatism.

Eric Foner, among others, argued that northerners in 1860 accepted all those warnings about the southern slave power and voted for Republicans. He noted that the platform in 1860 adopted several radical positions although the party swore off any pretensions to emancipation. Others have looked at the Republican Party the same year and asserted the opposite. Gregory A. Peek argued Republicans moderated their message in Indiana. They nominated the former conservative Whig Henry S. Lane for governor, tacitly assented to popular sovereignty in Kansas, and sidelined their sectional members. A. James Fuller agreed with Peek about the party in Indiana. Republicans dampened down their message as they did in 1856. However, Fuller also noted that Buchanan had put most northerners in an uncompromising spirit. His push to bring Kansas into the Union as a slave state meant northerners would never accept a man who laid

down for southerners. Michael F. Holt also argued that many non-Democrats in both sections of the country were done with the main Democratic Party making a Republican victory even more likely.²

While Fuller asserted that the Panic of 1857, the Lecompton Constitution, and other factors allowed Republicans to paint Democrats as radicals, and, as Peek argued, Republicans worked to moderate their message, there was one other factor in the election, the Democratic convention of 1860. The convention descended into chaos after southerners, enraged at Douglas's opposition to the Lecompton Constitution, and angered that he was the leading candidate for the nomination, walked out. It was a clear tangible sign that the South rejected Douglas if he won the presidency. Western conservatives had two choices if they wanted free soil in the West, Lincoln or Douglas. Though the South rejected Lincoln as an abolitionist, southern Democrats had already walked out on Douglas. Their act disarmed a key argument for Douglas. It seemed southerners rejected both of them. Republicans seized on the convention. They pointed to it as a sign that southerners were just as hateful towards Douglas as Lincoln. Coupled with Republican claims to conservatism, the convention brought many additional conservatives into the Republican fold. Their strength pushed Lincoln into the presidency ensuring a hard line stance against slavery's extension.³

² Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 141; Leonard L. Richards, *The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 26-27; Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings & the Politics of Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), xiv-xv; Gregory J. Peek, "'The true and living principle of states' rights and popular sovereignty': Indiana Republicans and Douglas Democrats Allied," *Indiana Magazine of History* vol 111, no. 4, (December, 2015): 382-84; Michael F. Holt, *The Election of 1860: "A Campaign Fraught with Consequences"* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2017), xiii.

³ Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 206-07; Martin H. Quitt, *Stephen A. Douglas and Antebellum Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 143-44; A. James Fuller, "The Election of 1860 and Political Realignment Theory: Indiana as a Case Study," in *The Election of 1860 Reconsidered* ed. A. James Fuller (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2013), 218-20.

In 1857, apocalyptic Republican predictions about western slavery seemed unfounded. The Union was still intact, Kansans were working on a state constitution, and more free state settlers flooded into the future state. A jubilant Democrat composed a song celebrating the victory over the “disunionists” and predicting a peaceful four years: “At home we’ve been having an ‘illegant time,’ electing old Jimmy Buchanan, we gave him a platform with principles free, and room enough for him to stand on . . .” Northern Democrats expected a quiet four years under their leader. Unfortunately for the party faithful in the free states, the rosy campaign promises soon fell apart.⁴

The Supreme Court delivered the first dagger to sectional harmony that year. In 1833 a slave named Dred Scott sued for his freedom. His owner had taken him and his wife into the western territories and then Illinois. Scott argued his time in free soil entitled him and his wife to their freedom. The case worked through the court system before arriving at the Supreme Court. Hoping to solve the slavery issue once and for all, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney penned the majority decision in which he argued African Americans had no legal rights, including a right to sue. In a clear blow against the many personal liberty laws in states such as Pennsylvania, and any talk of emancipation, Taney’s decision even called the many free state constitutions into question. If owners could take their slaves to free territories and states, the antislavery constitutions were essentially null and void. The decision seemed sure to provoke a northern response.⁵

In Indiana, those Republicans from northern parts of the state decried the outcome. They immediately picked up on the implications, namely, states might lose power over slavery. Under

⁴ *Marshall County Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), January 8, 1857; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), January 7, 1857.

⁵ Jeremy J. Tewell, *A Self-Evident Lie: Southern Slavery and the Threat to American Freedom* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2013), 113-19

the headline “Slavery alone national,” the editor of the Republican *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* published the majority opinion. The Republican called it “windy and infamous.” He then said, “By this decision the Missouri Compromise is declared void, and the slave holder has the same right to bring and hold in bondage his slaves among us, that we have to take and hold our horses and cattle in a slave state.” He agreed with other northern Republicans, and said if the Declaration of Independence did not apply to all men it was a “self-evident lie.” Another Republican called the decision a mere paper tiger. Although he said they must abide it, he encouraged all to “seek, by every means in their power, to reform it.” Some Republicans went a step further.⁶

Democrats resolutely toed the party line despite the rather obvious contradiction between the decision and popular sovereignty. After they had supported popular sovereignty and sold it to the northern public as conservative free soilism, the Supreme Court decision seemingly invalidated their arguments. States could not prohibit slave owners. Still, they twisted and contorted themselves into supporting it. One Democrat blamed the court case for Scott’s predicament. The editor praised Scott’s owner as a kind master to her slaves. Some Democrats even said a Massachusetts Republican owned Scott and his entire family. After a Republican warned the case made slavery national a Democrat charged: “The process of reasoning by which the Express arrives at such a conclusion, must, certainly, be a new feature in the science of mental philosophy.”⁷

⁶ *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), March 19, 1857; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), March 19, 1857.

⁷ *Marshal County Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), April 2, 1857; *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), May 9, 1857; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), March 23, 1857; Christopher Childers, *The Failure of Popular Sovereignty: Slavery, Manifest Destiny, and the Radicalization of Southern Politics* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 250-58.

Republican opposition to the ruling gave Democrats an opening. They labeled any dissent an attack upon a national institution. Explicit in his defense, one Democrat used conservative respect for institutions as a hammer against Republicans. Calling it “A New Plot of the Negro Worshippers,” a northern Indiana Democrat excoriated Republicans as well as calls to ignore the ruling. He said of the Supreme Court, “the spotless reputation of the eminent jurists composing that Tribunal, should forever shield them even from the base attacks of those who are willing to see the flag of our country trailed in the dust like some loathsome weed because they hate its free institutions . . .” Another urged Republicans to move to some African nation where they “could live in a paradise of niggerdom undisturbed by fugitive slave laws, Dred Scott decisions, and Democratic rule.” According to Democrats, Republicans were radicals and fanatics; their reactions to the case were one more example.⁸

Most conservatives were unmoved. Few Americans joined their Republican neighbors in a collective outrage as they had following the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The American Party editor of the *Daily Union* in Terre Haute, Indiana, cited the outcry as evidence Republicans wanted equality between the races: “It strikes us that this is pretty strong proof of what we have asserted, that a considerable portion of the Republican party—besides the old abolition part—are in favor of the doctrine of negro equality with the whites.” Other conservatives echoed the Terre Haute editor’s opinion. One even pronounced the matter of slavery “settled” since the Supreme Court’s decision looked irreversible. The Court had ruled. Any hostility towards the ruling smacked of hostility to the country’s institutions. Republicans had to overcome this skepticism if they wanted to beat the Democrats in 1858 and 1860.⁹

⁸ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), April 6, 1857; *Bedford Independent* (Bedford, IN).

⁹ *Daily Union* (Terre Haute, IN), August 22, 1857; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), March 9, 1857; Kenneth M. Stampp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 104-08; Tewell, *A Self-Evident Lie*, 117-19. Quitt, *Stephen A. Douglas and Antebellum Democracy*, 129-30.

Undaunted, Republicans kept trying. Several Republican newspaper editors gathered in Indianapolis for a convention to plan out their next campaigns. Some of the American men derisively called it a meeting of “small-fry” newspapermen since many Republican editors were absent. The members passed several resolutions including an antislavery measure that read, “we are inflexibly opposed to the extension of Slavery—that we do not seek to disturb in States where it now exists, but we will never consent that it shall pass into territory secured to freedom by the Constitution of the United States.” One conservative agreed saying, “We would like to know if there are ten men in the State of Indiana who are not willing and ready to endorse this sentiment . . .” Support for a free state Kansas was still paramount. As long as Kansas entered the Union as a free state, most Hoosiers tolerated the Dred Scott decision and the new Democrat in the White House.¹⁰

On the eve of 1858, American Party men along with most Democrats confidently predicted a free Kansas. One conservative ran an article from a southern newspaper lamenting the many free state settlers in Kansas proclaiming the territory lost to slavery. Democratic editors circulated an article from a Detroit newspaper that assured readers: “There is no considerable party there in favor of making it a slave state.” When free-state Kansas settlers refused to vote in elections for the constitutional convention, Democrats seized the initiative. It was the Republicans who wanted the crisis to continue. The Republicans wanted to make a political issue out of it. As the year ended, one Democrat proclaimed triumph saying, “Both the National Democratic and Free State Parties in Kansas are pledged to make her a free State . . .” The prediction was a little premature.¹¹

¹⁰ *Terre Haute Daily Union* (Terre Haute, IN), July 21, 1857.

¹¹ *Terre Haute Daily Union* (Terre Haute, IN), July 18, 1857; *Marshall County Democrat* (Plymouth IN), September 3, 1857; *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), May 30, 1857; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 14, 1857 (quote).

Unfortunately for Democrats and those last remaining Americans, Kansas once again took center stage. Needing a convention to draft a state constitution, Kansans held a territory wide election. With fraudulent voting, intimidation, and a boycott among free state voters, a majority of proslavery delegates won. Predictably, the delegates drafted a state constitution that permitted slavery in Kansas. The convention, meeting in Lecompton, called for a referendum. The referendum, gave Kansans a choice, enter the Union as a slave state or outlaw any future importations. Unfortunately for free state settlers, neither option removed slaves already in the territory and they could not reject the constitution. Outraged antislavery men boycotted the referendum and it easily passed. The Lecompton convention, overjoyed at the result of the election, submitted the proslavery constitution to Congress. At almost the same time, the antislavery men won a majority in the territorial legislature. They put the entire constitution to another referendum where voters rejected it.¹²

The Buchanan administration faced a difficult choice: accept the proslavery constitution or accept the results of the second referendum. In the 1856 campaign, Democrats reassured voters that Buchanan was different than President Franklin Pierce. Buchanan had been out of the country in Great Britain and offered little commentary on the violence in Kansas. Democrats assured northern voters that Buchanan wanted the majority of Kansans to decide on their state constitution without interference. Forcing slavery on the settlers could bolster antislavery forces in the North and undoubtedly excite the slavery issue. Coupled with the 1856 Democratic national platform where Democrats pledged to respect the will of the majority of voters in

¹² Stamp, *America in 1857*, 167; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 164-67; Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 152-67.

Kansas and stop the violence in the territory, many northerners assumed that Buchanan disfavored agitating the slavery issue any further.¹³

Buchanan took another path. The new president wanted a resolution to the slavery controversy. Owing much of his election to the southern branch of his party, Buchanan, along with several other northern Democrats, determined to bring Kansas into the Union as a slave state. A new slave state placated the South, gave them more slave territory, two more proslavery senators, and, according to some Democrats, ended the fighting over slavery. Buchanan placed the Lecompton Constitution before Congress calling for a vote in spite of the recent referendum where a majority of voters rejected the proslavery document. While the controversy over the Dred Scott decision incensed many abolitionists, free-soilers, Republicans, and others in the North, the Lecompton Constitution had the potential to shift remaining conservatives in the American or Democratic parties towards the Republican camp.¹⁴

Buchanan and his allies made a grave miscalculation. Even in the midst of their victories in 1856, there were signs that Democrats could lose northern conservatives if the party decided to force slavery on the settlers. One early sign emerged among several Indiana conservatives during the 1856 campaign for Indiana's First Congressional District. The district was located in southern Indiana along the Ohio River, and Democrats often held it without much trouble. In 1854, disgruntled voters, angry with the party over the Kansas-Nebraska Act, nearly sent a non-Democrat to Washington as their representative. It was a wake-up call for some Democrats in the area. They realized they could no longer make a lackluster effort in their campaigns; they had to fight for the district.¹⁵

¹³ *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), January 27, 1858; Childers, *The Failure of Popular Sovereignty*, 243-45.

¹⁴ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 166-67; Stamp, *America in 1857*, 281-84.

¹⁵ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 13, 1851, November 8, 1854, September 27, 1856.

After the close election two years before, the 1856 contest for Indiana's First Congressional District heated up as opponents hoped to take the seat. Democrat James Lockhart and Republican James C. Veatch trawled the district for votes throughout the summer. Both candidates openly courted the many former Whigs in the area, especially those who joined the American Party. Since the American Party in Indiana failed to nominate a candidate of its own for that district, many Republicans, including Veatch, expected its voters to support the Republican candidate in a united campaign against the Democrat. To sweeten the deal, Veatch even pledged to support Fillmore should the former president win another term. With a united front, victory seemed within his grasp.¹⁶

Veatch had a complicated political background and needed the conservative Whigs. He was from a Scottish family that eventually came to Indiana in the 1810s. Active in politics, he remained a Whig until the party collapsed in 1854. Afterwards the southern Indiana resident supported temperance laws, holding some meetings in his home. When he decided to run for county auditor in 1855, a joint convention of Know-Nothings, former Whigs, temperance advocates, and others nominated him as their candidate in a failed bid for the office. Veatch's allegiance to the American Party waned after his defeat. After a joint Republican and Know-Nothings convention nominated him as their candidate for the First Congressional District in 1856, Veatch's political opinions changed. The one-time Whig openly declared his support for John C. Frémont in the presidential election and stated his support for Kansas's entry into the Union as a free state. There were rumors that the newly minted Republican opposed any Kansas state constitution that allowed slavery in the new state.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 17, 1856, August 23, 1856, October 2, 1856.

¹⁷ Alvin Elias Veatch, *The Veatch Family in America: Being a History of the Descendants of James Veatch who came to American from Scotland A.D. 1750* (Havelock, Nebraska: O.F., 1904), 1-7; *Planter Weekly* (Rockport, IN), May 6, 1854; *Rockport Weekly Democrat* (Rockport, IN), September 15, 1855.

Though few northern Democrats expected Kansans to adopt a constitution permitting slavery, Democrats pounced on the rumors. They charged that Veatch, along with his Republican allies, was forcing free soilism on the Kansas settlers. Many Americans wanted to support Veatch, however, the Republican's supposed position was a step too far for many conservatives. One local "Fillmore Club" expressed their concerns in a letter to their sometimes ally. The members of the club believed that territories had a right to enter the Union "with or without slavery" once the territory met the population requirement and adapted a constitution supported by a "clear majority of the people." Any interference usurped the will of the voters and risked disunion.¹⁸

Buchanan's efforts convinced many conservatives that there was a radical slave power in the South intent on pushing slavery on western settlers. Before 1858, New Albany newspaper editor and American Party leader Milton H. Gregg had always shunned such theories and treated southerners with kid gloves. Residing along the Ohio River, Gregg trusted the southerners to respect the will of the Kansas settlers. He changed his tune in early 1858. The southern Indiana printer lambasted the South and its efforts to bring Kansas into the Union as a slave state. "Not what Kansas shall become, is now the question—but whether it is indeed necessary that guarantees foreign to the Constitution should be given to the Southern states of this Union" According to the once proud American editor, if Kansas joined the Union as a slave state it was a clear fraud. According to him, the South was pushing slavery into Kansas and was therefore guilty of sectionalism. It was the South and its southern slave owners that jeopardized the Union.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), July 31, 1856; Fillmore Club of Evansville to James C. Veatch, July 23, 1856, James C. Veatch Papers Box 1 Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN (hereinafter cited as IHS).

¹⁹ *New Albany Daily Tribune* (New Albany, IN), March 27, 1858; *Daily Union* (Terre Haute, IN), January 9, 1858.

The Lecompton Constitution convinced other Hoosiers that a radical slave power was pushing slavery west. Yet, some singled out a few conservative southerners outside the Democratic Party for their opposition to the embattled president. The editor of the *Daily Journal* in Evansville praised southern conservatives such as former Whigs and the remaining American Party men who criticized the Buchanan administration, lauding them for going against the wishes of other southerners. In Terre Haute, the American newspaper editor joined in the rage and demanded the administration reject the proslavery constitution. He joined other Republicans and called for a new convention in Kansas and a fair election to vote on a new constitution. Conservatives were not the only ones alarmed. Unlike the Dred Scott decision, Buchanan's actions garnered the attention of conservatives.²⁰

Democrats within Indiana pondered if their party could fall from power. In the southern Second Congressional District, local Democrats warned William Hayden English, about the damage Buchanan's support for Lecompton brought to the party. One said that Democrats "can not be sustained" if Congress accepted the Lecompton Constitution "without a vote." Another predicted mass defections within the party arguing the "rank and file" among the Democrats in one county believed the Lecompton Constitution was a "clear violation of the principles and pledges of our party." A third Democrat suggested giving Kansans the opportunity to change their constitution at "any time" in order to placate Democrats opposed to Lecompton. For English, the news was a shock. His district sent Democrats to Washington in years when few others won. If he was on the ropes, it was a bad sign for other Democrats in the state.²¹

²⁰ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 6, 1858.

²¹ Simon K. Wolfe to William H. English, January 12, 1858 and M.C. Kerr to William H. English, February 19, 1858 and Simon K. Wolfe to William H. English, March 26, 1858, in the William Hayden English Papers Box 2 Folder 5, IHS,

The timing was horrible for Democrats. They had an election to win and some realized their party had a steep hill to climb. Though many Hoosier Republicans had long been suspicious of the South, some Democrats in the state now blamed the southern branch of their own party for creating the controversies. Where two years before numerous Democrats pitched conspiracy theories arguing that the Republican Party was an eastern party out to advance eastern industrialists. Hoosier Democrats now accused the South of an insatiable appetite for more slave territory. One Democrat writing to Congressman John G. Davis lamented there was “no sacrifice of principle too great for the North West to make so the South is satisfied.” Signs of strain on the links between the South and the Old Northwest even appeared among English’s supporters in southern Indiana. Cracks within the party started widening.²²

The anger over the Lecompton Constitution split the Democrats. On one side, Buchanan men stuck to the president. On the other side, a growing number of Democrats denounced the executive. As more men came out against the document, the insurgents gained a powerful ally. Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas railed against the constitution. Calling it a sham and a fraud on the Kansas settlers, his opposition had severe consequences for the Democratic Party. Douglas, who was instrumental in Buchanan’s victory in 1856, turned on the president. In a public breakup with Buchanan, he denounced the Lecompton Constitution on the floor of the United States Senate, decrying the Pennsylvanian and his administration. Some Republicans even praised their old foe for his strong stand against the proslavery constitution. Anxious Democrats in the party waited for the coming year. They first had to nominate a slate of candidates for office, a process that promised more division.²³

²² J.B. Clay to John G. Davis, February 7, 1858, John G. Davis Papers Box 2 Folder 14, IHS; Simon K. Wolfe to William H. English, February 19, 1858, English Papers Box 2 Folder 4.

²³ Stamp, *America in 1857*, 292-93. Quitt, *Stephen A. Douglas and Antebellum Democracy*, 126-27

Tensions came to a head in early 1858. The Democratic state convention turned into a raucous affair according to Republican and American observers. Buchanan supporters clashed with Douglas supporters for key positions in the meeting. Others resigned or left in a huff. Rival delegates screamed over each other calling their opponents traitors to the cause or to the Union. Bright made an appearance at the proceedings, leading to more consternation. Amidst all the shouting, Buchanan men put across a state platform. It heartily approved Buchanan's course on Kansas, the Dred Scott decision, and charged the Republican Party with "outrages on the public." One angry Douglas man proposed a resolution endorsing popular sovereignty "as laid down and vindicated by Hon. Stephen A. Douglas in his late speech in the United States Senate . . ." Douglas supporters cheered the resolution which failed. Hoping a more peaceful meeting, a few supporters called for another meeting to adopt a new platform. Though Democratic Papers friendly to Bright and Buchanan painted a far rosier picture, the party was divided.²⁴

Once the convention ended, the sides drifted further apart. The remaining Buchanan men rallied around the longtime Senator Bright, hitching their fortunes to his popularity. English from the Second Congressional District became a key ally for the slave owning senator. Both men were prominent Buchanan loyalists in Washington, and English pushed a bill to hold a new referendum in Kansas as a compromise. The English Bill allowed Kansans to accept the Lecompton Constitution along with additional land, or reject the constitution and statehood in an up or down vote. The bill failed for several reasons. It said nothing about slaves already in the territory. The bill angered many in Indiana who viewed it as a bribe. The few Democrats who

²⁴ *Randolph County Journal* (Winchester, IN), January 14, 1858; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), January 9, 1858.

stuck with President Buchanan, praised English for his stand, and blamed criticisms of the bill on abolitionists.²⁵

The other faction followed Douglas's lead and renounced the Lecompton Constitution. Most in this camp rallied around former Indiana Governor Joseph A. Wright and identified themselves as "anti-Lecompton" Democrats. As the battle lines formed, party members found themselves on one side of the fence or the other based on their support for the Lecompton Constitution. The split included numerous Democratic newspapers. The editor of the *Crawfordsville Review* called the English Bill a "humbug." It was all a plot to ensure slavery in Kansas: "Far from offering a point of compromise, it is in effect only strengthening the ultra South in the efforts it will make to maintain Slavery in Kansas." Oddly enough the Democrat praised Buchanan while blaming Bright for all the mischief.²⁶

If the 1860 presidential election had been held in 1858, Douglas might have won. Many former Whigs agreed that Douglas was conservative unlike the sectional Buchanan. Douglas supporters enthusiastically reported numerous Whigs and Americans voicing their support for Douglas, and predicted the conservatives backed Douglas. One local Democrat confidently predicted a conservative union between Douglas and former Whigs saying: "I heard two old Fillmore Whigs say yesterday that he was their man for 1860." Others predicted a non-partisan rally for Douglas and praised him for his non-sectional stand calling him the "only one conservative, the only one that can save the Union." Some hopeful Democrats predicted all, "will

²⁵ W.H. Fogg to William H. English, April 28, 1858, English Papers Box 2 Folder 6; John J. Wickre, *Indiana's Southern Senator: Jesse Bright and the Hoosier Democracy* (PhD Diss. University of Kentucky, 2013), 189, 206-13.

²⁶ Wickre, *Indiana's Southern Senator*, 217-23; *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), March 13, 1858.

rally round Douglas regardless of party” and local Democrats followed Douglas’s lead in claiming conservatism in hopes of winning at the polls.²⁷

Anti-Lecompton Democrats declared only a united conservative front could stop a Republican victory and disunion. One Democrat placed the hopes of any future success on Douglas and other conservative Democrats in the North saying, “for upon the bold decisive stand of the conservative part of the Democratic members rest – the future prosperity of democracy.” Some Republicans labeled those Democrats in Indiana opposed to the Lecompton constitution as the “conservative” members of the party, praising them for their stand and hoping for a union with all others opposed to the constitution. Democrats at another meeting in Putnam County endorsed the 1856 Cincinnati platform calling it the “true test” of party loyalty. They called it “wise and conservative” in a clear rebuke of the Lecompton Constitution. Douglas was not the only one to tack his name to the conservative mantle.²⁸

Numerous Douglas Democrats reached out to Americans and former Whigs, advertising themselves as the conservative candidate for the upcoming elections. In the Seventh Congressional District, sensing the decided shift in the political winds, Representative Davis looked for allies among his former political enemies. He voiced his opposition to the Lecompton Constitution when he ran for reelection and proposed a new convention in Kansas should draft a new state constitution. Once drafted, Davis argued Kansans should vote in fair elections backed up by the federal government. Davis enraged some of his former allies. Due to Republican support for the Democrat, one angry Buchanan man referred to Davis as the “Republican’s candidate for Congress in this district.” Buchanan Democrats, led by Jesse Bright, later

²⁷ W.B; Krumbhaar to John G. Davis, December 16, 1857 and A.B. Florer to John G. Davis, December 1857, in the Davis Papers Box 2 Folders 9 and 10.

²⁸ Dan Fosselman to John G. Davis, December 3, 1857, Davis Papers Box 2 Folder 9; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), October 1, 1858; *Indiana Press* (Greencastle, IN), August 7, 1858.

nominated a candidate of their own to oppose him in the coming election, hoping to scuttle him at the polls.²⁹

Davis's fight against the Buchanan men garnered admiration among anti-Lecompton Democrats and former conservative political opponents alike. As he canvassed his district, many allies prevailed on Davis to drop the old party label, buried as it might be, in his fight with the Buchanan administration and its allies. They implored him to go with another title in order to attract a broad array of conservative voters. Members of the American Party of Owen County prevailed on Davis to run as an "independent candidate" for the Congressional district. They thought he could attract more support, and their letter expressed admiration for his stand against the administration in Congress. Among those who signed the letter, six identified themselves as an "old Line Whig" while others identified themselves as Americans. A union of conservative Whigs, Americans, Democrats, and even Republicans was his for the taking.³⁰

The split between administration Democrats and anti-Lecompton Democrats spread throughout the state. In the third district, Buchanan Democrats wrested control of the local convention. They nominated a loyal man for the congressional race and passed a resolution favoring the president and Bright. Democrats from Rush County objected to the nomination and vowed to oppose him. One local Democrat predicted defeat for the candidate. His party had nominated a radical rather than a conservative, the party was headed for disaster: "In 1854, this clique prevailed and were defeated. In 1856, the more conservative wing triumphed and elected their entire ticket. Now this proslavery faction by deception again triumphed, and we think they see the writing on the wall." Democrats faced divisions throughout the state. Though the

²⁹ Wickre, *Indiana's Southern Senator*, 194, 222.

³⁰ *Indiana Press* (Greencastle, IN), June 5, 1856; American Party of Owen County to John G. Davis, July 5, 1858, Davis Papers.

Buchanan wing was certainly smaller, the convention in the Third District proved they refused to yield.³¹

Buchanan Democrats did not allow the anti-Lecompton forces to claim conservatism without a fight. They fired back against accusations the sectional accusations. A Democrat writing on behalf of his party in Clay County, Indiana, rejected the opposition's assertions saying, "We claim to be a part and parcel of the great National Democratic, Party, whose principles are neither radical nor destructive, but whose conservatism is its vitality." Another Democrat in Davis's congressional district roared his support for Davis's opponent who fully endorsed Lecompton and the administration. He railed, "Nor will the Democrats of old Vermillion trust him but will unite on Henry Secrest, one whom they can trust, to do battle for them against Black Republicanism and all the other isms that are opposed to the best interests of our common country." To these pro-administration Democrats, Douglas and other anti-Lecompton Democrats were just as radical as any Republican.³²

Though they backed Buchanan, his supporters could not publicly acquiesce to slavery in Kansas. Instead, they renewed their vows from 1856. Buchanan was a conservative and Kansas would become free soil. They blamed the free state settlers in Kansas for the problems. Despite the Lecompton Constitution, they were still certain a free Kansas was still guaranteed. Because there were more free state settlers, they could easily amend the state constitution: "It cannot but be admitted that the free state party have the organization of the State government by election; they have the power to speedily amend or change the constitution . . ." The Buchanan men asserted the free state men had their chance to choose constitutional delegates and they refused, however, they could still outlaw slavery once the territory became a state. Of course the

³¹ *Versailles Dispatch* (Versailles, IN), July 9 and October 8, 1858.

³² *Indiana Press* (Greencastle, IN), August 28, 1858.

argument ignored the rampant fraud and voter intimidation that plagued the elections over the previous years. Still, Buchanan Democrats promised free soil.³³

The largest group of Hoosiers who supported the Lecompton Constitution lived outside the state. Numerous Indianans living in Washington D.C., working for or closely related to legislators, formed their own Democratic club. They had formed a similar organization during the 1856 presidential election to support their own candidates and they once again joined together to support the president and his friend Bright. The organization was entirely loyal. They condemned all attacks on the administration, supported the immediate acceptance of the Lecompton Constitution, and called a popular referendum on the proslavery constitution unnecessary. They argued that voters had their chance to decide one year earlier, the proslavery men won out. The free state settlers had lost fair and square at the polls and the constitution should stand. While they were certainly loyal to Buchanan, finding pro-Buchanan Democrats back in their home state was a bit more difficult.³⁴

Within the state, Buchanan men encountered challenges in unexpected places. In the Second Congressional District, English faced a tough Republican challenger. To stave it off, English and his supporters claimed he was the true conservative candidate in the race. His plan was the best chance to bring Kansas in as a free state and keep the Union together. They praised the “English bill” as a way for Kansans to vote on the Lecompton Constitution and reject it, the surest way to remove slavery there. A local Democratic newspaper called the whole controversy overblown, saying, “Everybody, except the ultra Black Republican Abolitionists has cried out for the last two years, ‘We are tired of Kansas; do talk about something besides Kansas.’” This was the almost universal sentiment among the conservative men of all parties.” The editor continued

³³ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), February 23, 1858.

³⁴ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), February 23, 1858.

to praise English for getting rid of the Lecompton Constitution, and he predicted a Kansas without slavery, “The Lecompton Constitution having been killed off by the vote taken under the provisions of the English bill, there is no longer a possibility of Kansas being made a slave State.” In a supposedly reliable district, English and his party had to work for the conservative mantle.³⁵

Unfortunately for Indiana Democrats, there was another faction vying to unite anti-Lecompton men in a conservative coalition. At first, Republicans considered working with Douglas and his supporters. In late 1857, Schuyler Colfax led a delegation to visit Douglas and see if they could rally behind him. At their meeting, the Illinois Senator promised to keep up the “principles of popular sovereignty,” and do “justice to the people of Kansas.” In a pointed moment, Douglas asked for the delegation’s support in the upcoming contest. Colfax and his fellow Republicans demurred. They made no commitments to the Illinois Senator. The delegation left Douglas, went back to Indiana, and prepared for the upcoming elections. Though a complete fusion never happened, Republicans had a good chance to pick up conservative voters.³⁶

After rejecting an official fusion with the Douglas men, Republicans got to work. They met at the state convention and delegates adopted a platform calling for a new state constitution in Kansas and pitched their party as a “conservative” party. Their platform echoed Senator Charles Sumner’s famous speech: “That Freedom is National and Slavery Sectional” and pronounced their opposition to slavery’s westward expansion. Learning from their experiences of the past, delegates included a plank that explicitly pledged to leave slavery alone where it already

³⁵ *New Albany Daily Ledger* (New Albany, IN), August 13, 1858; Stamp, *America in 1857*, 327-28; Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, 179-81.

³⁶ Schuyler Colfax et al., Interview with Stephen Douglas, December 14, 1857 Folder 3 Schuyler Colfax Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, IN.

existed. They hoped an explicit statement could deter any accusations of radicalism; it was a clear attempt to claim conservative free soilism: free states with a whole Union. With pledges to leave slavery alone in the South and prevents its expansion, Republicans pitched themselves as conservative free soilers.³⁷

The 1858 state platform worked. It was enough to demonstrate the Republican Party's conservatism to at least some reluctant Americans and some Democrats. A few months before his death, Milton H. Gregg in New Albany announced his support for the "anti-Lecompton ticket" and said he supported it as long as Republicans opposed the proslavery constitution. In his words, "The platform is sufficiently conservative in character to enlist the cordial support of all the opponents of the Lecompton fraud whether they call themselves Republicans, Americans, Old Line Whigs, Free Soilers, or Douglas Democrats." Gregg also cheered Republicans for chasing away George Washington Julian whom he labeled an abolitionist. Although the platform shared many similarities with the national Republican platform of 1856 and Republicans had chased Julian away that year as well, Gregg declared the Republican Party conservative.³⁸

In Evansville, the editors of the *Daily Journal* were not ready to join the Republican Party; it was still too radical for their tastes. They also recognized the weakness in the American Party. Rather than shift to a new organization, this time, the editors suggested an alternative. They rejected calls for a new "conservative" party and, in a display of antipartyism, blamed party spirit for leading the country to the precipice of war saying, "the days of disinterested patriotism are past. Men will not now labor for the good of the country without personal object." The

³⁷ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), March 11, 1858.

³⁸ *Randolph County Journal* (Winchester, IN), March 11, 1858; *Terre Haute Daily Union* (Terre Haute, IN), March 26 and April 23, 1858; *New Albany Daily Tribune* (New Albany, IN), September 18, 1858; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), March 18, 1858; George Washington Julian, *Political Recollections: 1840-1872* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, and company, 1884), 153-55; Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 169-70.

editors had a unique idea based on their growing antipathy towards political parties: “The most judicious step for the period is – instead of forming a new opposition party, to be banded and arrayed against the supposed enemies of the country – to dissolve party organizations – bring the people together as fellow-citizens – not as hostile partizans [sic] – to decide every question as it may arise upon its own merits.” It was similar to Republican antiparty rhetoric that decried partisanship as the chief enemy to the country. The editors did not hold on to this antiparty stance for long.³⁹

Despite their initial stance, the editors soon warmed to the Republicans. They praised Republican candidates and lauded a party they once called abolitionist for moving away from the old “sectional” arguments. When a Republican judge spoke in Evansville, the editors commended his speech for its conservatism: “It was a clear exposition of the doctrines of the most conservative class of Republicans. He was national in all his views, and little exception could be taken to his doctrines.” The editors hoped the party further distanced itself from abolitionism saying, “The surest means to secure the triumph of the opposition is to silence in their ranks all discussion of slavery for two years . . .” It seemed the controversy over the Lecompton Constitution left many Americans open to Republican claims to conservatism.⁴⁰

Others advocated a different course. Even though his party had collapsed at the national level, editor I.M. Brown in Terre Haute, Indiana, maintained his allegiance to Fillmore and urged all Americans to form an alliance with the Anti-Lecompton Democrats. He stated, “It is very well known to every man who has got sense enough to see anything that there are quite a large number, if not a majority of the Democratic party in this state, ‘opposed to the Lecompton policy

³⁹ *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 24, 1858; Mark Voss-Hubbard, *Beyond Party: Cultures of Antipartisanship in Northern Politics before the Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 210-13.

⁴⁰ *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 28, 1858.

of the present administration,' and that the entire American party are so." Rebuking Republican leadership, Brown asked, "Will the Democrats and Americans opposed to the Lecompton swindle fall into the Republican ranks? We think not." Without national or state leadership, Americans, as they did after the Whig Party fell, searched for the more conservative option. For Brown the anti-Lecompton Democrats were the best option left.⁴¹

More than willing to hold out an olive branch, Anti-Lecompton Democrats proudly took up the conservative mantle. When some conservative Americans demurred on a union with Republicans, Democrats loyal to Wright and his faction of the party rejoiced. They predicted a disaster for the new alliance: "The political temple erected with so much labor and care, upon the 4th of March, by the Republican castle builders, when the day of trial comes will be found to rest upon a very unstable support and insecure foundation." If Democrats could reach out to conservative Americans along with a few conservative Republicans, they could present a united front that against the Buchanan men in the state and stop the Republican advance. Unfortunately for the Douglas men and the Buchanan men, there were not enough homeless conservatives out there. Many had already made their way to the Republican Party, a fact the elections bore out.⁴²

The 1858 Indiana elections turned into a major defeat for most Democrats. Anti-Lecompton candidates won sweeping victories in the Indiana Congressional elections. Whether Democrat or Republican, anti-Lecompton men won in nine congressional districts. The only lost the First and Second Congressional Districts. In the third Congressional District, the Republican won with a near fifty-two percent majority. Two years earlier the Democrat had won with nearly fifty-four percent of the vote. Buchanan men suffered devastating losses in the state elections. In the Indiana General Assembly, those who supported the president lost most elections leaving

⁴¹ *Terre Haute Daily Union* (Terre Haute, IN), January 15, 1858.

⁴² *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), March 30, 1858.

Republicans with a definite chance of seizing control of the Assembly in 1860. Republicans made solid inroads in southern counties such as Switzerland County and Rush County where a sizable amount of Democrats had walked out of their congressional district convention. If the union of anti-Lecompton men could agree on a national candidate, their victory was certain in two years.⁴³

After the 1858 elections, Buchanan Democrats hoped their anti-Lecompton brethren would return to the fold. The main Democratic newspaper in Indiana, the *Sentinel*, and one that generally supported the Buchanan administration, predicted most wanted to come back so long as the party avoided any further “distractions.” The long time Democrat predicted the party’s conservatism heralded future victories: “The history of the party teaches that if it ever gets upon the wrong path, its conservatism will soon restore it to the true way.” The *Sentinel*’s editor reassured his readers about the upcoming presidential campaign in 1860 saying, “We are satisfied no new issue will be presented by its next National Convention, to distract the organization.” Editors and individuals from competing parties had other ideas.⁴⁴

A few conservatives hoped for a new party to replace the American Party and nominate a presidential candidate in 1860. Hoping for a broad conservative coalition, Brown in Terre Haute got far ahead of the game when he placed Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky on his paper’s masthead in early April 1858. Henry Clay was a Kentuckian and he had brokered several compromises, perhaps another Kentuckian could do the same. Brown outlined Crittenden’s stances on many issues including the Lecompton Constitution, a constitution that so many members of the anti-Democratic opposition hated. Few other conservatives shared Brown’s

⁴³ Lewis Jordan to William H. English, September 26, 1858, English Papers Box 2 Folder 10; *Marshall County Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), November 18, 1858; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), November 13, 1856; Wickre, “Indiana’s Southern Senator, 230.

⁴⁴ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), November 18, 1858.

enthusiasm. Though Gregg in New Albany pledged to support the Kentuckian if he was nominated, he never placed Crittenden's name on his newspaper. The more hopeful Brown pushed the Senator as a way to salve the disunion sentiments.⁴⁵

Despite Brown's optimism, Douglas emerged as an early conservative choice. He opposed the Lecompton Constitution and could seemingly placate the South. Though many expected him to run for the presidency as a Democrat, others again suggested he jettison all party names. Several northerners suggested that Douglas should head up a new "People's Party" in order to put partisanship aside and launch a "conservative" bid. If he could unite all conservatives in every party regardless of section he could garner just enough votes to win. The idea gained traction. Republicans, Democrats, Americans, and others urged Douglas not to run as a Democrat and instead to run as a candidate all northern voters could unite around to "shake off the fetters of convention." Though Douglas had rejected the idea almost three years earlier, some Americans and Republicans held out hope. They waited to see if he heeded their advice.⁴⁶

As 1859 drew to a close, some Democrats were crestfallen about their chances in Indiana. If the national party nominated someone other than Douglas, they predicted a Republican victory in Indiana. One Douglas man warned his colleagues of the danger, noting Republican optimism for the 1860 race. He lamented: "Take the republican party as it now is, concentrating and accumulating in its strength, and all will be lost to us in Indiana . . . The chuckle is upon their faces." Another suggested a practical solution. His recommended his party should send delegates to the national convention pledged to support Douglas. Some Kentucky Democrats agreed. George Sanders of eastern Kentucky was especially adamant about Douglas. He believed a southern Democrat jeopardized their chances in every northern state in 1860 and urged other

⁴⁵ *Terre Haute Daily Union* (Terre Haute, IN) March 30, 1858.

⁴⁶ *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), July 1, 1858; D.A. Farley to John G. Davis, November 7, 1859, Davis Papers Box 3 Folder 16.

Democrats to consider Douglas at the upcoming convention. Though he might oppose the Lecompton Constitution, Sanders argued, at least the Illinoisan was still in the party of Jackson.⁴⁷

An Indiana Democrat declared the Little Giant a conservative and warned the non-conservative southern members were costing the entire party support, “Many of the southern Democrats have acted even worse than the Republicans and by their foolish impudence are preventing many conservative men from joining the Democratic Party.” When Joseph Lane of Oregon seemed to deny the right of popular sovereignty and pitched himself as a strong candidate for the Democratic nomination, a Douglas supporting Indiana newspaper warned, “no man who does not stand fair and square upon the Cincinnati platform, need ever hope of receiving the support of the true conservative Democracy.” To these Democrats, Douglas’s appeal was his conservatism. He had proved his conservative credentials when he stood against the Lecompton Constitution and he was the only non-sectional candidate, a candidate who could potentially win in the North and South.⁴⁸

There were several problems for Douglas supporters in the Hoosier state and across the North. The first was their calculation that Douglas could win the presidency with a coalition of free and slave states. While popular in the North, his stand against the Lecompton Constitution cost him many southern allies. A Democratic candidate for Congress in Georgia denounced him while an editor called opposition to Douglas, “The almost undivided sentiment of the southern Democracy.” The once strong alliance between Democrats in the North and South was crumbling. Before 1858 ended, some southern newspapers, enraged at his stance, categorized Northern Democrats who opposed the administration, the proslavery constitution, or the

⁴⁷ John Cowgill to John G. Davis, November 7, 1859, and Basil Meek to John G. Davis, November 29, 1859 in the Davis Papers Box 3 Folders 16-17; George N. Sanders to J. H. Harney, February 4, 1860, Sanders Family Papers Folder 13, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

⁴⁸ M.P. Mulhallen to John G. Davis, January 1, 1860, Davis Papers Box 4 Folder 1; *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), December 31, 1859.

following English Bill as “Northern Douglas Democrats.” Some southern Democrats declared Douglas a traitor to the party and the principles of popular sovereignty. He faced hopeless odds in every southern state. Should Douglas win election, it was just as likely to split the Union.⁴⁹

There was a great doubt that Douglas had enough northern support for the nomination. Another challenge came from Buchanan and his men. Douglas supporters feared the sitting president planned to scuttle the Illinoisan’s nomination at the convention. Buchanan was not happy with Douglas and still maintained some power within the Democratic Party, especially the party’s southern wing. One Democratic county convention in southern Indiana recognized the need for Douglas supporters at the national convention and threw out all local Democrats who supported Bright and Buchanan. Once they dispensed with the Buchanan men, delegates elected Douglas supporters to the national convention in Charleston, South Carolina, in hopes of pushing the Illinois Senator across the finish line. Douglas needed these delegates; after he stood against the Lecompton Constitution he was sure to face a difficult road to the nomination.⁵⁰

Since most northerners rejected every candidate who supported the Lecompton Constitution, Republicans surmised their number one opponent was Douglas. Late in 1859, a Chicago newspaper predicted a nomination for William H. Seward as the Republican candidate. Seward, a United State Senator from New York, had garnered much support in the Northeast. However, western Republicans balked at the New Yorker. Though they were nominally outside the party, the editors of the *Daily Journal* in Evansville called a Seward led ticket an “irrepressible conflict ticket,” sure to bring on a civil war if it happened. The Senator had spoken

⁴⁹ *Weekly North Carolina Standard* (Raleigh, NC), February 17, 1858; *Yazoo Democrat* (Yazoo City, MS), September 17, 1859, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn98021556/1859-09-17/ed-1/seq-2/>; *Richmond Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), August 30, 1859, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024735/1859-08-30/ed-1/seq-2/>.

⁵⁰ Bill Stinson to John G. Davis, November 7, 1859 and William M. Dailley to John G. Davis, December 16, 1859 in the Davis Papers Box 3 Folder 16; Childers, *The Failure of Popular Sovereignty*, 274.

of an inevitable conflict between the free labor North and the slave society South, provoking outrage in the southern states. Seward faced a tough election in Indiana if he won the nomination, making his road to the White House a bumpy one. As 1859 turned into 1860 the field was still wide open. With a national convention scheduled to meet in Chicago in the summer, there was a little time to pick a favorite.⁵¹

With names piling up for the potential nominee, opposition newspapers took stock of the situation. Several endorsed candidates for the Republican nomination. In one survey, the editors of the *Daily Journal* noted the many conservative newspapers in the state. The former American Party editor had recently sold the *Journal* and the new editors were much more Republican leaning. They believed a few supported Seward for president while several others supported the longtime Missouri Whig Edward Bates. John McLean won a few hearts in the conservative press along with Salmon P. Chase of Ohio. Calling the press an “indicator of the drift of the public mind,” the editor confidently stated, “we are safe in saying that Mr. Bates is the first choice of a large majority of the Opposition papers in this State . . .” They never mentioned Lincoln. The editors resoundingly supported the Missourian saying, “Give us Edward Bates at Chicago, and Southern Indiana will tell a tale next November that will cause the heart of every opponent of Lecomptonism to leap with joy.” Bates opposed the Lecompton Constitution and certainly had the conservative bona fides due to his home and his political heritage.⁵²

Bates garnered a following outside southern Indiana. In Greencastle, Republicans held a mass meeting where they selected delegates to the state convention in Indianapolis. The meeting progressed smoothly as the members introduced several resolutions. They called for Congress to accept Kansas with the new free state constitution and they called for non-interference with

⁵¹ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), November 14, 1859.

⁵² *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), April 13 and March 24, 1860.

slavery in the South. One delegate proposed a resolution backing Bates as the first choice for a presidential nominee. The next resolution committed their representatives at the upcoming state convention to support Bates for president. Although one attendee objected and asked if Bates was even a true Republican, another member noted how he had emancipated his slaves saying he “had shown his faith by his works.” The motions passed. Support for Bates was increasing everyday. Bates was a man who could secure free soil while keeping the South in the Union.⁵³

The Republican delegates met in Indianapolis. The state convention passed off rather quietly without much dissension. Delegates passed a platform that swore off any interference with slavery while pledging to ratify Kansas’s new state constitution. Delegates then nominated Henry S. Lane for governor and Oliver P. Morton for lieutenant governor. The nomination was a boon for conservatives as Lane was a former Whig with a long record in the party. Delegates left those selected for the national convention without instructions on their preferred candidate. Indiana Republicans were still without a clear favorite and the proceedings reflected the confusion: “The names of Bates, Chase, Lincoln, Trumbull, Seward, C. M. Clay, Cameron, Wade, Pennington and perhaps others were freely mentioned in private circles in connection with the Presidency, but it would be the merest guess work to hazard an opinion as to whose friends were the most numerous.” With a swelling of support, the convention had worked; most anti-Lecompton men sided with the Republicans.⁵⁴

Despite their indecision on the presidential candidate, the convention pleased most conservatives. The editors at the *Daily Journal* praised the southern members at the Republican state convention saying, “the conservative Oppositionists of Southern Indiana have succeeded in bringing the more radical portions of the party in other parts of the State, to the ground of good

⁵³ *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), January 25, 1860.

⁵⁴ *Rushville Weekly Republican* (Rushville, IN), February 29, 1860.

sense and nationality.” When the local Democratic editor accused the party of going back on its older principles, the editors responded, “we thank our neighbor for so effectively vindicating the conservatism of our platform and candidates.” According to the two conservative editors the 1856 national platform was not conservative, while the 1860 state platform the Republicans drafted in Indiana was a platform they could stand behind. The party was finally a conservative party.⁵⁵

There was one man nearly every conservative Republican rejected, Seward. In yet another article promoting Bates, the *Journal* once again decried a Seward nomination. The New York Senator promised free soil, however, he his election guaranteed disunion: “would it be necessary to irritate the South, a great majority of whom are just as loyal to the Union as we of the North, when there is no occasion for so doing?” In a letter to the former American editor of the *Reveille* in southern Indiana, a conservative writer from Kentucky identified Seward with the abolitionist wing of the party. A few Republicans tried to defend Seward before the convention. A Republican from Terre Haute refuted the story that Seward had originated the irrepressible conflict expression, however the defense never caught on. As the Indiana delegates journeyed to Chicago, few in Indiana supported Seward. His nomination could provoke secession. Bates also proved problematic due his Know-Nothing affiliation and the many German voters in the state. Both were out and no one in the state knew who could win the nomination.⁵⁶

The delegates met on May 16. They first drafted a party platform; it was very similar to the Indiana platform. Delegates included a plank calling for the admission of Kansas under the free state constitution and a plank that swore off any interference with the domestic institutions of individual states. The Indiana delegation then looked for a candidate who could unite all

⁵⁵ *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 29, 1860.

⁵⁶ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), May 9, 1860; *Indiana Reveille* (Vevay, IN), April 25, 1860; *Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN). January 25, 1860.

Republicans in the state, they found Lincoln. Lincoln had rejected the Know-Nothings and was conservative enough to attract voters worried about the Union due to his southern origins. Lane himself helped rally delegates to Lincoln's side. After the Illinois delegation put Lincoln's name forward, former Whig Caleb B. Smith of Indiana, chairman of the Indiana delegation, seconded the nomination. In every subsequent round of balloting, the entire Indiana delegation voted for the Illinoisan. Once Lincoln won the nomination, Smith gave a lengthy speech in order to salve Seward's wounded ego. While he praised the New Yorker, Smith cited Lincoln as the best chance for the party to win Indiana saying, "every western heart will throb with joy when the name of Lincoln shall be presented to them as the candidate of the Republican party." Indiana Republicans had their man: Lincoln.⁵⁷

The Democrats faced a much more difficult task at their convention in late April. Delegates gathered in Charleston, South Carolina, tensions were already running high. After delegates finally convened, the simmering animosity boiled over. The Indiana delegation joined other northern delegations on most votes. When the platform committee proposed a plank denying territories the right to abolish slavery, several members in the Indiana delegation signed a minority report affirming the Cincinnati platform of 1856 and self-determination in the territories. The convention rejected the report. Southerners, hoping to stave off a Douglas nomination, pushed a resolution affirming the nominees should receive a two-thirds majority. The Hoosiers voted against it each time. When a Missouri delegate put Douglas's name before the convention, all thirteen Indiana delegates voted for him. They had supported Douglas at the

⁵⁷ *Proceedings of the Republican national convention held at Chicago, May 16, 17 and 18, 1860* (Albany: Weed Parsons and Company, 1860), 79-82, 108, 110-16; Gregory A. Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Political Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861," (PhD diss., University of Houston, 2010), 324-25.

state convention. In every subsequent vote, the delegation held firm, Douglas was their choice. After ten days the convention adjourned and agreed to meet in Baltimore.⁵⁸

For some Democrats in the Hoosier State, the rejection proved decisive. A few warned that if southerners controlled the platform committee when they reconvened in Baltimore, they risked losing many members of their own party. One Democrat predicted the defection of nearly every man in his county if the national party adopted a pro-southern platform. As he described the situation, “The Democrats here will not support any man, even Judge Douglas himself, on a southern platform.” If any party adopted a platform that accepted the Lecompton Constitution, it meant defeat. Although many northern Democrats pressed for Douglas, southerners were unmoved. Their rejection of Douglas later played into the hands of the Republicans.⁵⁹

When delegates reconvened in Baltimore, they met without the most ardent southern Democrats. After a lengthy process, the convention finally nominated Senator Douglas as their candidate. Most Indiana delegates voted for Douglas as they did at the Charleston convention, giving their fellow westerner crucial support. Paris C. Dunning, former governor of Indiana, noted in a speech at the convention that the Indiana delegates voted for Douglas fifty-eight times during the two meetings. After some additional southerners left the main convention, they convened at a different location and nominated Vice President John C. Breckinridge as their candidate. With the Democratic Party formally split, both sides presented a weak front to their political opponents. Their split party made for a rather difficult campaign in Indiana.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ John G. Parkhurst, *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, held in 1860, at Charleston and Baltimore* (Cleveland: Nevins' Print Plain Dealer Job Office, 1860), 37-38, 71, 73-83; Holt, *The Election of 1860*, 57, 59-66.

⁵⁹ John R. Miller to John G. Davis, May 12, 1860, Davis Papers Box 4 Folder 1; Quitt, *Stephen A. Douglas and Antebellum Democracy*, 143.

⁶⁰ Parkhurst, *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention*, 166; Quitt, *Stephen A. Douglas and Antebellum Democracy*, 143-44; Holt, *The Election of 1860*, 119-130.

Most politicians placed a premium on the conservative vote. Outside the northwestern states, a Kentucky newspaper editor agreed that conservatives were the deciding votes saying, “The more we enquire into the condition of things in Indiana and Illinois, the more we are convinced that the votes of those States in the vastly important election soon to take place depend upon the conservative men who have not united themselves with either the Republican or the Democratic party.” Douglas agreed. In his acceptance letter, the Illinois Senator claimed he was a man whom all conservatives could rally around. To explain why, he reiterated his belief in the Union. With renewed vigor, all parties launched their campaign to win the conservative vote in Indiana. They had to prove their candidate could ensure free territories and unite all conservatives behind him. Out of the gate, there were two candidates who faced a difficult path.⁶¹

Conservatives had a fourth option for president. Hoping to unite conservatives in slave and free states the Constitutional Union Party, formed in early 1860, nominated John Bell of Tennessee as their candidate. Many supporters were former Whigs and former American Party members seeking an alternative to the Republicans and Democrats. Bell was a former Whig and some hoped he could draw enough conservative men to support him or at least send the election into the United States House. To balance out the ticket, the new party looked for a northern man. The party’s Vice Presidential candidate was Edward Everett, yet another longtime Whig. The Constitutional Union Party was a forlorn hope in some western states, yet the party offered many former Americans and older Whigs an alternative should they want it.⁶²

⁶¹ *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), September 29, 1860; Parkhurst, *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, held in 1860*, 182-85.

⁶² Matthew Mason, *Apostle of Union: A Political Biography of Edward Everett* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 250, 252-53, 236-37; *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 21, 1860; *Indiana Reveille* (Vevay, IN), July 11, 1860; A. James Fuller, “The Last True Whig: John Bell and the Politics of

One reason made the Constitutional Union Party unattractive to Fillmore men and other conservatives in Indiana. Bell never explicitly rejected slavery extension. In the national platform, the party never enshrined an explicit promise to limit slavery or reject the Lecompton Constitution. Before the Constitutional Union state convention a Lincoln supporter estimated that nine in ten of those who supported Fillmore in the previous election had already joined with Republicans. Thinking the Fillmore men had mostly gone to the Republican Party, one Bell supporter in southern Indiana appealed to Breckinridge and Douglas men to compromise, support Bell for president, and defeat the Republican Lincoln. A local Douglas Democrat found the letter insulting, asking the Bell man to support his candidate. There was one more option for conservatives other than Lincoln and Douglas.⁶³

If conservatives wanted to avoid any possibility of southern secession, they could have voted for Breckinridge. The same man who had toured the state only four years earlier promised to keep the Union together. Though they left the convention rather than support Douglas, Breckinridge Democrats reached out to their one time allies and other northern conservatives in states such as Indiana. Supporters held Breckinridge celebrations in Evansville late in the campaign to show their support for the Vice President. They echoed the antiparty sentiments and encouraged all conservatives regardless of party to unite behind their man saying, “and to whose support we invite the Union loving and conservative men to rally.” If the Kentuckian could pick off enough conservatives, he could deprive Douglas of some votes in the Electoral College or even win the state outright. At least his supporters believed it was possible.⁶⁴

Compromise in 1860,” in *The Election of 1860 Reconsidered*, ed. A. James Fuller (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2013), 118, 127, 132-33.

⁶³ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 16 and August 21, 1860; *Jasper Weekly Courier* (Jasper, IN), August 8, 1860; *Indiana State Guard* (Indianapolis, IN), September 4, 1860.

⁶⁴ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 3, 1860; *Indiana State Guard* (Indianapolis, IN), July 17, 1860.

Breckinridge men rallied around Bright, English, and others who had supported the Lecompton Constitution. They knew their man had the support of the South and urged Douglas to drop out of the race. They portrayed Breckinridge as a non-sectional candidate who could win parts of the North and South, even echoing Republican charges against Douglas. By characterizing him as a sectional candidate: “It should be remembered that Mr. Lincoln had more Southern States and votes represented in the convention that nominated him than had Mr. Douglas when he was nominated. Then which of these two is the most sectional candidate?” After the Democrats extended a brief olive branch to the Douglas men, Breckinridge supporters attacked their Illinois rival. In a long list, a Breckinridge newspaper editor warned: “Because, he and they are sectional in their objects and action, and deadly hostile to one-half of the Union.” Despite the appeals, there was one reason why most Indiana conservatives eyed the Kentucky born candidate with suspicion.⁶⁵

Though Breckinridge denied it throughout the campaign, Indiana voters expected the man raised around slavery to support slave extension. Republicans along with Douglas Democrats attacked the southerner, warning voters a Breckinridge victory equaled more slave states. One Douglas man asked readers, “Which do they prefer—the slave code, and slave-trade candidates . . .” A German conservative in southern Indiana threw his support behind Lincoln due to Breckinridge. The newborn Republican feared a Breckinridge victory guaranteed slavery in the West. Another conservative Republican credited the Breckinridge platform for its candor calling it in favor of “the unlimited extension of slavery.” With his many surrogates in the South citing him as a proslavery man, his opponents had plenty to fuel their attacks. Douglas and Lincoln

⁶⁵ *Indiana State Guard* (Indianapolis, IN), August 4, 1860; *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), October 27, 1860.

men agreed on this point: Breckinridge was a tool of the slave power and slavery expansion was unacceptable.⁶⁶

Worse, they labeled the Vice President a disunionist, a point made when several of his enemies published a circular for voters in the Old Northwest. In the circular, the author traced the history of the secessionist movements to the nullification crisis of 1832 and 1833. According to the author, Breckinridge and his running mate were part of a grand plot to provoke southern secession, a plot only a Douglas victory could stop. The break in the Democratic Party was a conspiracy designed solely to allow a Republican to win the presidency and sunder the Union. The author noted “The Nashville *Patriot* from which the foregoing history of the times is selected, has traced with a masterly hand the inception, progress, and development, down to the secession from the Democratic National Convention at Charleston, of the ‘conspiracy to break up the Union.’” The Douglas Democrat labeled Breckinridge an outright secessionist saying “That speech pledges Mr. Breckinridge as fully as R. Barnwell Rhett, or William L. Yancey is pledged to resistance.” Another Douglas man called the Breckinridge ticket a disunion ticket asking all Breckinridge backers why they supported such a man.⁶⁷

According to most northern Republicans and Democrats, there were only two serious candidates in the field. Bell was sure to lose and a Breckinridge win meant more slave states. That left two candidates to seriously vie for the western conservative vote, Douglas and Lincoln. Each had to prove they could deliver Kansas as a free state. Republicans pointed to a plank on the national platform to show their antislavery credentials. A northern Indiana Republican reiterated the platform saying, “the Republicans are opposed to the further extension of slavery . . .” Thomas Corwin, a Congressman from Ohio spoke at a Republican mass meeting in

⁶⁶ *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), July 14, 1860; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 21, 1860.

⁶⁷ *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), March 7, 1860; *The Conspiracy to Break Up the Union. The Plot and Its Development. Breckinridge and Lane the Candidates of a Disunion Party* (Washington, 1860), 11-12.

Indianapolis reassuring all listeners a victory for his party ensured a free Kansas. The former Whig declared Lincoln the only man to guarantee a Kansas without slavery. Douglas Democrats had a tough task to prove the Illinois Senator's support for the free state people in Kansas.⁶⁸

Unlike the Republican convention, the Baltimore convention passed a rather neutral platform on slavery leaving Douglas supporters without a ready instrument to defend their man. Republicans heaped on their accusations calling the Senator a tool of the slave power. The Republican editor in Richmond, Indiana, who previously backed Frémont in 1856, charged Douglas with subservience to slave owners. After relating the history of Douglas and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Republican asserted: "Where in the history of the public men of this country is to be found an instance of such base subserviency [sic] of the slave power." The Indiana Republican echoed Salmon Chase who argued that Douglas "has done as much as any other man for the slave power." Douglas men struggled to refute the Republican charges.⁶⁹

Still, they tried. The Douglas men pointed to their candidate's stance against the Lecompton Constitution and asked all Hoosiers to support "the man who for three years has successfully encountered, and has beaten back, the slave-codeites, who has stripped them of the mask under which they had hidden disunion, and compelled them to avow their purpose to precipitate the cotton States into a revolution, having for its object the dismemberment of the Union." Another Democrat praised Douglas for his stand on popular sovereignty, something the South had tried to subvert. The South ruined a good idea. Popular sovereignty as proposed by Douglas was conservative: "Non-intervention was the banner under which all conservative men

⁶⁸ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), September 6, 1860; *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), May 24, 1860.

⁶⁹ *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), July 7 and August 20, 1860; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), September 6, 1860; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), July 26, 1860; *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), August 30, 1860.

could unite.” Douglas had already dealt with the proslavery forces and won, he would surely stand up to them again.⁷⁰

While they defended the Republican Party from charges of abolitionism, conservative Republicans focused on assuring voters that Lincoln was the least radical candidate in the race. “His honest dealings with the South as well as the North will do away with the feelings of jealousy, and we may say hatred, which now exists between the two sections; and will draw the people once more together as a band of brothers, ignorant of sectional strife and differing only on national questions.” Some newspapers published letters from the South advertising the South’s acceptance of Lincoln. “It may seem strange to you but it is nevertheless true that the South looks to the election by the people and would prefer him to Douglas. Southern men have confidence in his honesty, fairness and conservatism.” The national conventions gave conservative Republicans a way to portray the Democratic candidates as sectional.⁷¹

Just as Breckinridge supporters in Indiana noted the limited southern presence at the Republican National Convention, conservative Republicans used the few southern Republican delegates as evidence that Lincoln was a national candidate. Former American Party politician, Richard W. Thompson reminded listeners that the Republican convention had southern delegates. Calling the convention, “a triumph of conservatism,” Thompson pronounced Lincoln as fully acceptable to the South and proof to that the party was conservative: “But the southern disunionists were mortified at the nomination of Mr. Lincoln, because they did not want to see Northern sectionalism giving away to conservative sentiment.” To men like Thompson, the Republicans had demonstrated their conservatism when they nominated Lincoln at their

⁷⁰ *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), October 27, 1860; *Jasper Weekly Courier* (Jasper, IN), May 30, 1860.

⁷¹ *New Albany Daily Tribune* (New Albany, IN), August 15 and August 31, 1860; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), September 6, 1860.

convention, a meeting that, unlike the Democratic conventions had delegates from both sections.⁷²

The split in the Democratic Party gave Republicans, especially conservative newcomers, a way to attack the Douglas men as radical sectionalists. They cited the southern walkout at the Democratic national convention as a reason that Douglas was not the conservative candidate in the field. In an appeal to other conservatives Thompson reviewed the split in the Democratic party and declared the Illinois Senator a northern sectional candidate who could provoke southern secession. “Thus you see we have a Democratic candidate for the North.” The conservative editors of the *Daily Journal* in Evansville, Indiana, agreed. The editors quoted one Ohio Democrat who called the Baltimore convention sectional and said Douglas was not the real candidate. “He is not the candidate of the Democracy of the whole United States, but was nominated by a disrupted Convention, whose elements were almost as *sectional* as those of the Convention at Chicago.” The former American Party editor in New Albany likewise labeled Douglas a “sectional candidate” in the field. The South had already walked out on Douglas once, a Douglas victory meant southern secession.⁷³

The split Democratic conventions also allowed conservative Republicans to characterize Breckinridge as a sectional radical. In his diatribe against Douglas, Thompson turned to the southerners. He labeled the Vice President a radical: “I have shown you that Mr. Douglas is a sectional candidate. Mr. Breckinridge is equally a sectional candidate, for the reason that there were no Northern States represented in the Convention that nominated him . . . Therefore it was exclusively a southern convention.” Similar to his views on Douglas, Thompson feared an end to the Union if Breckinridge were to be elected. Some even went a step further and called

⁷² *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 20, 1860.

⁷³ *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 20 and July 7, 1860; *New Albany Daily Tribune* (New Albany, IN), July 16, 1860.

Breckinridge a disunionist, and a “fire-eater.” Like Douglas, Breckinridge was unacceptable to the North, sure to represent southern interests, and bring disunion. In many ways, the conservative Republican rhetoric against Douglas and Breckinridge in 1860 echoed the American Party’s rhetoric against the Republican and Democratic Parties in 1856, which they described as northern and southern parties. In 1860 according to many conservative Republican converts, Douglas was for the North, Breckinridge for the South, and the Republicans were national.⁷⁴

When southerners still threatened secession if a Republican won the election, one American convert to the Republican Party finally had enough. He scolded the South saying,

We are told that if Mr. Lincoln is elected to preside over the destinies of this land at the coming November election, that he will be prevented by Southern force from taking possession of the government . . . But has any northern man ever said, that in the event of the election of either Breckinridge, Douglas, or Bell, that the one elected shall not take his seat. No such word has been uttered by Republicans.

The combination of reassurances of their conservatism coupled with southern reactions to Lincoln moved one former American even further into the Republican camp.⁷⁵

With a crowded field, Republicans slowly won over the conservatives. In southern Indiana near the old state capital of Corydon, several Republicans bragged that many old Whigs were now in the Republican fold. The “strength” of the party was among the “Old Whigs” who were now the core of Republican support in that part of the state. In Morgan County where State Representative Alexander B. Conduitt bragged about his support among the Whigs four years earlier, the embattled Democrat begged English to send him a speech from a Whig politician connecting the Republican Party to abolitionism. He wrote to his old colleague saying, “It is and

⁷⁴ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), July 13, 1860, August 20 and August 21, 1860; *Weekly Reveille* (Vevay, IN), June 4, 1856.

⁷⁵ *New Albany Daily Tribune* (New Albany, IN), September 4, 1860.

has been one of my especial objects to convince my old whig friends that old time abolitionism and modern Republicanism are identical . . . There are thousands of such in the country who would probably see stronger arguments in an old whig document bearing upon the questions than in a hundred democratic speeches or essays.” Even among the Democratic faithful, there were signs of panic.⁷⁶

There was one accusation against Republicans Douglas men never let go. Through the campaign, they trotted out their racist arguments. Republicans once again defended their party and Lincoln. One pointed his finger towards the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party in Massachusetts had conferred citizenship and the vote on African Americans, at least in his account. At a speech in Bloomington, a southern Indiana town, Morton blamed the Democrats and former President Martin Van Buren for African American suffrage. It was the Democrats who wanted racial equality rather than Republicans. He specifically cited New York asking, “When were negroes first allowed to vote there? Years and years ago, before the Republican Party had power. Who was in favor of it, Martin Van Buren, the bosom friend of Jackson . . .” Republicans then turned the accusation back on the Douglas men.⁷⁷

One Douglas man gave the Republicans even more political capital. Archibald Dixon, former governor of Kentucky, stumped for Douglas in southern Indiana and defended popular sovereignty. The local Republican newspaper pounced. The editors alleged the Douglas man wanted slavery all over the continent, in free states or in the western territories. They praised the Republican Party for its stance against slave extension and to “preserve the Territories for the use of free white men . . .” Another Republican agreed and touted his party as the defender of white

⁷⁶ Thomas C. Slaughter et. al. to Henry S. Lane, March 6, 1860, Henry Smith Lane Papers Box 2 Folder 6, IHS; Alexander B. Conduitt to William H. English, May 28, 1860, English Papers Box 2 Folder 14.

⁷⁷ *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), September 20, 1860; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), July 25, 1860; Stephen Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 38-40, 230.

supremacy in the West saying, “Of course there will be no ‘nigger equality’ where there are no ‘niggers,’ and as the Republican Party propose to save the Territories for free white men, while the Democracy leave the way open for their introduction . . .” The contest for these Republicans had devolved into who could preserve white supremacy in the Territories and keep the Union together. They answered Lincoln. In their defense of their own party, Republicans revealed why many of them wanted free soil in the West.⁷⁸

As the election approached, the results were a foregone conclusion to most political observers. Even Douglas’s late campaign swing through the southern states, though frequently greeted with enthusiastic crowds, failed to garner more support for the Little Giant. One Democrat even hoped that in defeat conservatives would rally around politicians in the northwest saying, “we may raise our standard in the North west and defend our principles and many of our Southern Brethren will rally with us and altho (sic) defeat is certain, we will have a nucleus around which we can and will rally the conservative men of the South East West.” The lack of support in the South among southern Democrats, coupled with numerous conservatives joining with Republicans across the North gave Lincoln enough votes in the few key states to win the presidency. The five free states that went for the Democratic candidates in 1856, switched to the Republican Lincoln. Though the split in the Democratic Party helped him to a certain extent, he still had enough votes in the Electoral College to win outright.⁷⁹

In Indiana’s state and local elections, Republicans won big. The governor’s seat went to Lane, though he later resigned and successfully ran for the United States Senate in early 1861. Once Lane resigned, Morton ascended to the governorship. Republicans won majorities in the Indiana General Assembly while their candidates won nearly every congressional seat. Even in

⁷⁸ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 8, 1860; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), September 20, 1860.

⁷⁹ J.B. Clay to John G. Davis, June 18, 1860, Davis Papers Box 4 Folder 6; Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 144.

the few districts that remained in Democratic hands, Democrats were lucky to win those seats. Republicans cut severely into the margins of victory even in the First and Second Congressional Districts, giving them hope for a future sweep. In southern Indiana, though Democrats did much better than in the northern and central parts of the state, Lincoln improved on Frémont's numbers from 1856. As Peek noted, these were areas Americans had scored big four years earlier. The process repeated throughout many free states as Republicans swept to power.⁸⁰

Despite Republican reassurances to southerners that Lincoln never intended to touch the institution of slavery "where it existed," most in the deep southern states did not believe the new party in power or the new president. Even before the year was out, South Carolinians entered into a convention where delegates drafted an ordinance of secession and proclaimed, as the *Charleston Mercury* famously noted, "The Union is Dissolved." As 1860 turned into 1861 six more states in the deep South left the Union, and many believed that several more slave states joined them in the new Confederate States of America. It seemed that despite the best efforts among northern conservatives, the Union was gone with war between the two sections likely to follow.⁸¹

Outside events and Republican assurances that their party was conservative proved a winning combination in 1860. The Buchanan administration's attempt to force slavery into Kansas pushed numerous conservatives in Indiana and other western states into the Republican Party. In 1860, the split among Democrats left both Democratic presidential candidates vulnerable to accusations of sectionalism. The split convinced many remaining conservatives that Republican rhetoric was true and that Republicans were the only conservative party in the

⁸⁰ *Indiana State Guard* (Indianapolis, IN), October 20, 1860; *Jasper Weekly Courier* (Jasper, IN), October 24, 1860; *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), October 20, 1860; Peek, "Upland Southerners, Indiana Political Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War, 1816-1861," 232-33.

⁸¹ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 235.

field. Lincoln was the lone candidate who could both preserve white supremacy in the western territories while holding the Union together. Conservatives in the state shifted their votes and Lincoln won the presidency.

Southern secession dissolved the Union, and the results were sure to bring rapid change to society and government. Though numerous northern conservatives hoped a peaceful separation could be achieved, the nation eventually headed into war. Once the war commenced, the changes conservatives feared were different than before the war. Secession had already sundered the Union. As the war took a turn towards one for emancipation, conservatives feared the prospect of massive social changes and the term conservative took on new meanings.

Chapter 4: Clinging to the Republican Party: Emancipation and Indiana Conservatives

During the 1864 gubernatorial election campaign, Governor Oliver P. Morton debated his Democratic challenger Joseph E. McDonald in a southern Indiana town. Most expected a close election and any mistake could doom either candidate. After several questions McDonald moved in for the kill. The former Congressman asked if Morton supported article thirteen in the state constitution which required him to remove any African Americans in Indiana, including Union veterans. Morton dodged the question. He assured the crowd “he would enforce any and every law in the statue book when called upon to do so.” In a close race Morton could not afford to answer the question directly. Republicans and Democrats expected conservatives to decide the election and calls to remove article thirteen in the state constitution, which conservatives supported, could upend the contest. The fight over African American equality or even settlement in the Hoosier State had to wait.¹

Before the 1850s, Indiana conservatives, along with many other Hoosiers in both political parties, wanted tariffs and internal improvements to further transportation while fostering American manufacturing. They also fought to preserve white supremacy through Indian removal and restrictions on African American settlement. The policies were means to an end. They were ways to strengthen the Union and preserve their ideal society, a society with white supremacy. When the United States conquered Mexican lands, western conservatives wanted to recreate their society in the new territories while keeping the Union intact. They only differed on ways to fund the internal improvements and the price of the tariff. After President James Buchanan supported the proslavery Lecompton Constitution, most conservatives abandoned the Democratic Party.

¹ *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), August 31, 1864; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 18, 1864.

Thinking the Republican Party was the best vehicle to bring in the territories as free states while keeping the Union intact, conservatives helped push Abraham Lincoln into the White House.

Two years later, Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. For plenty of Hoosier conservatives, an end to slavery meant an end to white supremacy. They feared a stream of African Americans heading north, winning their citizenship, and the vote. Therefore, many conservatives backed Democrats in the 1862 elections. To win them back, Republicans defended emancipation and arming African Americans as war measures, silenced the more radical voices in the party, backed conservative Republican candidates, and assured conservatives that white supremacy was safe. The 1864 election in Indiana devolved into a contest over which party could defend white supremacy and preserve the Union. Republicans reassured conservatives during the 1864 campaign, that although slavery was ending, there were many safeguards in place to protect white supremacy. The strategy, coupled with a successful campaign that linked Democrats to the rebels, worked. Republicans swept to victory ensuring another term for Lincoln while the party dominated the state elections. Enough conservatives accepted a Union without slavery as long as they could keep white supremacy at home.

The Republican Party in Indiana was representative of the party in the West. Once Lincoln incorporated emancipation as a war goal the numerous conservatives in the region bolted for the Democrats. Republicans fought back. They disavowed racial equality and slowly won those conservatives over. Their efforts presaged those of the national party. Indiana Republicans had to win back nervous conservative voters terrified about the imagined threat of hordes of African Americans venturing north. The national party had to win those same conservative voters throughout other western states and in some border states. Both parties guaranteed white supremacy. However, Republicans argued the Peace Democrats wanted a permanently split

Union. Republicans were conservative. They could save the Union and defend white supremacy. In their conventions and campaigns, western Republicans set the road map for the national party in 1864.

Gary Gallagher and others have pointed out that many if not most northerners went to war to fight for the Union rather than ending slavery. When the South refused to surrender, northerners accepted emancipation as a war measure. Most western conservatives fit that mold. They went to war for the Union alone and those that went to war reluctantly freed slaves they encountered in the South. Even Lincoln's reelection in 1864 was largely due to racist appeals. Though James Oakes argued Republicans set out to destroy slavery, many western Republicans with their War Democrat allies simply fell into emancipation. Westerners were the critical voters in the presidential election and most Republicans promised western conservatives they could keep white supremacy. Though Lincoln and his party put slavery on the road to extinction, they did so while promising westerners white supremacy.²

After seven states left the Union, Hoosiers, like most residents in the free states, called for compromise. They believed a successful compromise, like those in previous decades, could restore the Union and avert a dreadful conflict. To salve the crisis, Republicans assured southerners that the new president and his party accepted slavery where it existed. The new Governor-elect, Henry S. Lane, penned a letter to a friendly Kentucky newspaper editor assuring him Republicans fully supported slavery in the southern states. The editor praised Lane for his stance. He then published the letter for proslavery readers as an example of northern good will towards the South and its peculiar institution. Though well intentioned, southerners in the newly

² Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2-6; James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 47-48; Kristopher A. Teters, *Practical Liberators: Union Officers in the Western Theater during the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 2-7.

minted Confederate States of America needed more than one letter to heal the sectional rift. A few politicians in Washington thought they had the solution.³

To lure the seceded states back into the Union, representatives in Washington proposed a constitutional amendment to permanently protect slavery. Southerners had long clamored for new federal safeguards on slavery and a new amendment to make the institution legally invulnerable. Most Indiana politicians supported the move. Congressman David S. Kilgore backed it in a passionate speech as the best hope for compromise. It was a win for each section. Kansas and other western territories would enter the Union as free states, something northern voters wanted, while the amendment protected slavery in the South. When several ultra Republicans opposed the compromise Kilgore declared, “If the Republicans to-day [sic] have changed their ground, and claim now the right to invade the sovereignty of the States, and interfere with the institution of slavery . . . then I am no Republican.” Kilgore was not alone. As Congress prepared to vote on it, the amendment looked like an acceptable compromise for most northerners and enough southerners.⁴

Just as Americans divided over slavery, Republicans divided over the amendment. It split Indiana’s delegation in the United States House of Representatives along geographic lines. Southern and central Indiana Republicans joined their Democratic colleagues and voted for the amendment. In spite of Kilgore’s passionate speech, three Northern Indiana Republicans demurred on the amendment. They voted against it despite support for the compromise at home and pressure from most of their colleagues. Even without their votes, enough congressmen in

³ *Randolph County Journal* (Winchester, IN), March 7, 1861; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), February 28, 1861; James Flanagan to Henry S. Lane, December 17, 1860, Henry S. Lane Papers Box 2 Folder 7, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, IN (hereinafter cited as IHS).

⁴ *Randolph County Journal* (Winchester, IN), March 21, 1861; Daniel W. Crofts, *Lincoln and the Politics of Slavery: The Other Thirteenth Amendment and the Struggle to Save the Union* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 1-6, 215-20.

both houses voted for the compromise amendment. With Lincoln's signature, Congress sent the amendment to the states for ratification in early March 1861. Before enough states could ratify the new addition to the Constitution time for compromise ran out.⁵

After compromise broke down, the pace of events accelerated. Confederates seized federal properties in the South, though a few held out. After South Carolina seceded, United States soldiers holed up in Charleston Harbor. Needing supplies, the commander sent a desperate letter to the president begging for support. Lincoln sent needed supplies and informed Confederate forces. The new president had effectively cornered the rebels. They could allow the resupply mission and look weak or intervene and start the war. Confederate forces chose the latter. On April 12, 1861, they opened fire on the beleaguered garrison inside the fort. The men responded as best they could. Outnumbered and outgunned Anderson requested a truce two days later and surrendered the fort. The Confederates had fired first and Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to suppress the rebellion. Four more slave states left the Union, four remained, and the long feared civil war commenced.⁶

Support for compromise in the North disappeared quickly and Virginians joined their northern neighbors in a rush to avenge Ft. Sumter. After the General Assembly elected Lane to the United States Senate, Oliver P. Morton, the unsuccessful 1856 gubernatorial candidate replaced him as governor. Morton enthusiastically responded to Lincoln's call for volunteers. He wired Washington and assured the president his state could meet its quota of soldiers in the coming months. Morton had every reason for confidence. Outraged at the attack on Ft. Sumter, men flocked to army recruiters where they signed enlistment papers. Over twelve thousand men

⁵ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States*, 36th Cong., 2nd sess., February 28, 1861, 426-27; Russell McClintock. *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 182-86.

⁶ McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War*, 119-20, 200-02, 204, 248-53.

volunteered for service. After the call went out, Morton offered the president twenty thousand infantry soldiers for military service. The rush of patriotism spread to the general public. Children raised flags in the public schools and women sewed regimental banners for the new recruits as a patriotic fervor encompassed the state.⁷

As volunteers entered the army, Lincoln and many of his fellow Republicans promised a limited war. The President vowed to put down the rebellion and preserve the Union. He failed to mention slavery though he had criticized it in the past. Despite pressure from the many abolitionists in the Republican Party, the political risk was too great. Lincoln feared losing Unionists in the border slave states such as Kentucky where any move towards emancipation could push the proslavery residents into the Confederacy. Unlike the majority of slaveowners in seceded states, loyal slave owners believed the Union offered the best protection for slavery. Losing their support meant losing four additional states along with their manpower to the Confederacy. Abolitionism was highly unpopular in northern states and Lincoln had to walk a fine line between the members of his own party who wanted to end the institution and conservatives who merely wanted to preserve the Union.⁸

Most in Indiana agreed with Lincoln. They wanted a limited war to preserve the Union, a Union with slavery. Although the General Assembly never voted on the proposed Thirteenth Amendment, legislators were clear about their stance on emancipation. A Republican state senator introduced a joint resolution respecting the right of slave owners to keep and own slaves.

⁷ *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), January 3 and May 23, 1861; W.H.H. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana* vol. IV (Indianapolis: Samuel M. Douglass, 1866), 2-62, 87; Stephen D. Engle, *Gathering to Save a Nation: Lincoln and the Union's War Governors* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 10-11, 63; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 1965), 126.

⁸ Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 50; Michael D. Robinson, *A Union Indivisible: Secession and the Politics of Slavery in the Border South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 5-12, 192, 204

The resolution pledged “...nor is it the intention of the State of Indiana that any portion of her resources of either men or money shall ever be employed . . . in any aggression upon the institution of slavery, or any constitutional right belonging to any of the States.” Every Republican in the state senate agreed and the resolution passed. The Union army should leave slavery alone when it ventured south.⁹

Republicans across Indiana denied any abolitionist intentions. When a northern Indiana Democrat labeled Lincoln and his party abolitionists fighting a war to end slavery, the local Republican newspaper editor denied the charges. Although the editor wanted southerners to end slavery, he did not want to end it “by the sword.” Other conservative Republicans agreed. Former Whig Richard W. Thompson denounced any calls for emancipation saying: “The men of the North are sound and conservative...” He assured southerners the Union army respected the South’s “domestic institutions” as he toured the state and encouraged his neighbors to sign on to the war effort. The former Whig emerged as a leading conservative Republican and the party welcomed his backing.¹⁰

The pledge for a limited war brought most northerners on board. In the patriotic fervor, Democrats rallied to the cause. Stephen A. Douglas pledged his loyalty to the Union in several meetings with Lincoln as the two former rivals put aside their old differences for the sake of the country. Prior to his death, Douglas returned to Illinois and spoke against the rebellion. Indiana Democrats followed his example. Most had supported Douglas for president in 1860 and his word still carried weight in most party circles. Democratic newspaper editors counseled their male readers to join the army urging all to put aside partisan bickering for a time. After a

⁹ *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), May 3, 1861; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), May 9, 1861 (quote); Crofts, *Lincoln and the Politics of Slavery*, 250.

¹⁰ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), May 2 and May 16, 1861; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), May 2, 1861.

bruising presidential campaign in 1860 when Democrats and Republicans hurled vicious epithets at each other, the attack on Ft. Sumter united northerners across party lines.¹¹

Even southern sympathizers abandoned their calls for compromise. Former congressman William Hayden English urged his neighbors to support the Union during the crisis. Daniel W. Voorhees swore fealty to the Union and supplied blankets to an infantry company formed in Terre Haute, Indiana, to signal his dedication. Voorhees had narrowly won Indiana's Seventh Congressional district in 1860 after fellow Democrat John G. Davis declined another term. Indiana Republicans praised English yet some suspected Voorhees. Other Democrats defended the new Congressman saying he was a "Union man, heart and soul . . ." Senator Jesse Bright never escaped Republican suspicions despite his efforts to lay low. The Indiana politician still owned slaves in Kentucky and spent more time at his farm than in Indiana or Washington.¹²

Democrats in the General Assembly showed their support for the Union in unanimous fashion. A Democrat in the House introduced a joint resolution affirming support for the Union and echoing the antiparty sentiment among Republicans. "That we call upon all good citizens, irrespective of party, to rally in solid phalanx to the rescue of their common country, pledging their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors to redeem it from the danger of which it has been placed in the hands of traitors." Every Democrat present in the House voted for the resolution. After a Union meeting in New York where speakers avoided any talk about abolitionism, one Indiana Democrat praised the meeting as evidence the coming conflict was

¹¹ *Indiana State Guard* (Indianapolis, IN), May 25, 1861; Martin H. Quitt, *Stephen A. Douglas and Antebellum Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 181-84.

¹² *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), April 29, 1861; *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), May 16, 1861; *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), May 4, 1861 (quote); John J. Wickre, "Indiana's Southern Senator: Jesse Bright and the Hoosier Democracy." (Ph.D diss., University of Kentucky, 2013), 259-60.

merely “to uphold an imperiled government.” The time for parties seemed to be over, at least during the present crisis.¹³

Despite their enthusiasm to quash the rebellion some Indiana Democrats expressed reservations. Shortly before Ft. Sumter, a correspondent for northern newspapers reported events in Montgomery, Alabama, the first Confederate capital: “You may depend upon it that Mr. Lincoln has a task before him, the moment he attempts coercion or reconstruction.” Conservative Democrats also made it clear that their support for the administration was conditional. After a minister in northern Indiana preached a sermon against slavery, one Democrat asked: “What are we Fighting For?” Although he opposed the rebellion he feared Republican motives and asked if the conflict was a “war to aid Abolitionism more than to defend the government.” Fears among Democrats slowly grew in the following months.¹⁴

The president’s actions in mid April 1861 presented the first problem for Indiana conservatives. Southern sympathizers in Maryland, a loyal slave state, resisted Lincoln’s call for volunteers and threatened secession. Possible sabotage presented another problem. Union officials expected pro-Confederate Marylanders to cut the vital rail lines into Washington and starve the city into submission. Lincoln took action. The president suspended habeas corpus, arrested several known Confederate sympathizers, and imprisoned them without charge. The arrests effectively quashed the secession movement in the state. The Old Line state remained in the Union and Lincoln averted a greater crisis for his administration.¹⁵

¹³ *Shelby Volunteer* (Shelbyville, IN), October 2, 1862; *Indiana State Guard* (Indianapolis, IN), May 18, 1861 (quote).

¹⁴ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), May 1, 1861; *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), June 20, 1861 (quote).

¹⁵ Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln’s Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 31-33.

Lincoln's measures in Maryland alarmed some northerners. A partisan divide over the arrests drove the first wedge between Republicans with those Democrats who supported the harsh measures and other Democrats who felt the moves more extreme. Republicans and several Democrats dutifully supported the president's actions as a necessary wartime measure. The arrested men openly sympathized with the Confederacy; they deserved their punishment. Some Republicans even used Andrew Jackson's suspension of habeas corpus before the Battle of New Orleans to justify the arrests. The editor of the *Sentinel* initially held his pen when Lincoln suspended the writ. The arrests helped the Union war effort. Although the army frequently released those who were falsely arrested, these arrests in Maryland were some of the earliest. As several Maryland legislators languished in prison the good feelings among conservative Democrats did not last long. The discontented rumblings against Lincoln grew louder.¹⁶

As the arrests piled up Democrats protested. First, they denied any comparison between Jackson's arrests and Lincoln's in 1861. Jackson had declared martial law before the Battle of New Orleans. Civil law was still in force in Maryland when Union forces imprisoned the secessionists. The arrests were unconstitutional and illegal. In Huntington County, Indiana, local Democrats met in June 1861 denouncing the Republican Party and Lincoln. In several resolutions, they condemned the suspension of habeas corpus and shutting down newspapers as an attack on the Constitution. In Johnson County just south of Indianapolis, former Congressmen Davis and Thomas A. Hendricks spoke against Lincoln. The two Democrats attracted a large audience and condemned Lincoln for stepping on the Constitution. At a Terre Haute meeting, Democrats voiced their opposition to the Lincoln administration's excesses. The crackdown on

¹⁶ *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), May 15, 1861; *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), July 4, 1861; William A. Blair, *With Malice Toward Some: Treason and Loyalty in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 41-48.

dissent was more than some northerners could bear. Lincoln had promised a limited war with limited goals. The Constitution seemed under attack only a few months into the war.¹⁷

The criticism garnered a response. Angry Republicans called any opposition to the war treason. In their minds those opposed to the Lincoln Administration opposed the war. Anyone who spoke against the Lincoln administration sympathized with the Confederacy. In their eyes, opposition further weakened the war effort. After Confederate armies won the First Battle of Bull Run, one southern Indiana newspaper editor attributed the loss to traitors in the North. The traitors had tipped off the rebels and due to these “machinations” defeated the Union army. The editor of the *Daily Journal* in Evansville, Indiana, launched an investigation to root out the “traitors in our midst.” In the Democratic *Evansville Gazette* the Republican found a letter signed “A. Democrat” that castigated the Lincoln Administration and defended the Democratic Party. The letter was yet another example of dissent and any dissent weakened the war effort. Fears about treason in the North gained traction during the summer.¹⁸

Those fears turned violent in late summer. After the arrests in Maryland, Democrats in east central Wayne County, Indiana, called for a mass meeting to discuss the war. After the meeting convened, a large and hostile crowd gathered outside. Republicans in the crowd heckled the speakers, accused the Democrats of secessionist leanings, and called for no further Democratic meetings in the county until the war ended. Despite the vocal opposition to the meeting, Democratic editors reminded their readers that Wayne County was the home of

¹⁷ *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), July 4, 1861; *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), August 22, 1861; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 28 and August 29, 1861.

¹⁸ *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), July 29, 1861.

Governor Morton and a Republican stronghold. Amidst strong opposition to their party, subsequent events gave the state's Democrats the boost they needed.¹⁹

Despite Republican assurances, determined Confederate resistance called for more aggressive measures. Though the Confederacy rejected African Americans for military service, the army used slave labor to construct fortifications, drive wagon trains, and perform other menial tasks. In late 1861 General Benjamin Butler reasoned he could confiscate these slaves as contraband of war. The Union general freed several slaves near Fort Monroe, Virginia. As more escaped to Union lines Congress passed the Confiscation Act of 1861, which allowed Union commanders to prevent the return of escaped slaves who had been used to serve the Confederate military. Since the measure gave officers leeway, some Union commanders took the act a step further. In late August John C. Frémont proclaimed freedom for all slaves of rebel owners in Missouri. The order applied to all slaves owned by Confederate sympathizer whether the Confederate army used them or not. Lincoln rescinded the order rather than risk losing support in the other loyal slaves states, however the actions unnerved conservatives who feared a slow march towards emancipation.²⁰

From the start, Indiana conservatives opposed confiscation. They agreed with those in the border states who called it the first step towards emancipation even though it only freed those slaves used for Confederate service while returning all others. When representatives in Washington voted on the Confiscation Act in August 1861, the lone Hoosier Democrat present for the vote in the House of Representatives opposed it. The act was too radical for their taste. Some conservative Republicans agreed. Two from southern Indiana congressional districts

¹⁹ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 28, 1861; Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 164-70.

²⁰ Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 169-71, 174-81; Teters, *Practical Liberators: Union Officers in the Western Theater during the Civil War*, 8-11, 16.

joined their Democratic colleagues and cast dissenting votes. Passed despite opposition, the law gave Union commanders a basic guideline for dealing with fugitive slaves. Although Republicans were still united against the Confederacy, confiscation, like the proslavery Constitutional Amendment passed in early 1861, divided party members. The vote showed a clear gulf between conservatives and more radical Republicans in Congress. In Indiana the gulf was far wider.²¹

At first, a few conservative Democrats praised Lincoln for limiting the Confiscation Act and rescinding Frémont's order in Missouri and restoring some slaves to their owners. The editor of the *Sentinel* lauded Lincoln after the President countermanded Frémont's proclamation in Missouri. The Democrat later accepted the Confiscation Act as a necessary war measure. In his eyes the measure was only temporary. Several western Union officers implemented the Confiscation Act gradually, encouraging slaves to remain with their masters. Republicans could point to these officers as an example for a conservative approach to the war. Although the editor still supported the war effort, permanent emancipation was a clear breaking point for him and other conservatives in both parties.²²

Lincoln moved closer to that breaking point a few months later. In late February 1862, to solve the slavery issue, the president recommended compensated emancipation for loyal slaveowners after they voluntarily freed their slaves, a seemingly effective compromise to end the institution. While Lincoln hoped Unionist slaveowners supported his plan, his message acknowledged that Congress could not confiscate the property of those loyal to the United States, including slaves. Although conservatives in the Democratic Party scoffed at the plan as

²¹ U.S. Congress, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States 37th Cong.*, 1st sess., August 3, 1861, 234-35; Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 175.

²² *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), September 25, 1861; Teters, *Practical Liberators*, 16-18. Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 176-79.

unrealistic they still praised Lincoln's "conservatism" because compensated emancipation meant loyal slaveowners voluntarily gave up their slaves, a far better proposition than outright confiscation.²³

Events on the battlefield made the Union far more desperate and some called for more extreme measures. In April 1862, Confederate forces inflicted heavy casualties on Union troops at the battle of Shiloh. Though the Union won the battle, losses at Shiloh stalled Ulysses S. Grant's drive down the Mississippi River, a key strategy for Union victory. In Virginia, McClellan won several early successes in his drive to the Confederate capital at Richmond, then tasted defeat after defeat. Robert E. Lee pushed the Union army back to where it started. The defeats in Virginia and Grant's stalled drive down the Mississippi stunned the northern public and dashed any remaining hopes for a short war. Criticism among conservatives in both parties grew louder following the stalemate.²⁴

Despite the war the Indiana Constitution mandated state elections every two years. Adding to the drama, the General Assembly needed to elect a new senator in the coming session. That July, Democrats descended on Indianapolis, drafted a party platform, and nominated candidates for the coming elections. They pledged support for the Union and their own political party calling it the "conservative party," while they condemned Lincoln's plans for compensated emancipation in the loyal slave states. They resolutely opposed, "the taxation of the white man for the purchase of negroes anywhere..." Democrats feared Lincoln's call for emancipation and warned the move "will leave to the country but little hope of the speedy restoration of Union or peace." A few weeks after the meeting, Lincoln took that very step.²⁵

²³ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), March 10, 1862; Robinson, *A Union Indivisible*, 205-06.

²⁴ Gallagher, *The Union War*, 76-77, 133.

²⁵ *Shelby Volunteer* (Shelbyville, IN), September 25, 1862.

Shortly after Indiana Democrats announced their platform and candidates for office, Lincoln shared the Emancipation Proclamation with his cabinet then waited for a Union victory. After the army finally scored a win at the Battle of Antietam, Lincoln formally announced the proclamation on September 22, 1862. If the rebels in the seceded states continued their resistance after January 1, 1863, the proclamation would go into effect. Unlike the multiple policies Union generals enacted during 1861 and early 1862, the proclamation ensured one uniform policy towards slaves. As an olive branch to loyal slaveowners, the proclamation only applied in seceded states. Lincoln exempted slaves in the border states and federally controlled territories including lands retaken during the war. The Emancipation Proclamation changed the war into a war for emancipation. It also brought a new challenge for Republicans in northern states.²⁶

Well before Lincoln announced his decision Democrats traveled Indiana to warn voters that emancipated slaves were coming north and settle in their state. With greater numbers they could make greater demands for citizenship or even the vote. If they ever gained the right to vote, white supremacy was over. In Evansville, Thomas A. Hendricks warned that former slaves could compete with whites for jobs after gaining their freedom. An Indianapolis Democrat stoked greater fears. If Lincoln emancipated slaves in the South the president might resettle them in northern states and step over Article Thirteen in the state constitution. “May not Indiana and Illinois be compelled to allow negroes to make their homes in those States? May not all provisions of State Constitutions be overridden by a simple proclamation of the President?” The message Democrats pitched was clear: emancipation threatened white supremacy.²⁷

Democrats ridiculed the proclamation as useless and detrimental to the war effort. If it only applied to slaves behind enemy lines the measure carried little weight. “It can have no more

²⁶ Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 230-31, 240-49.

²⁷ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 10 1862; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), September 26, 1862.

influence in freeing the slaves in the districts where the national authority does not extend, than did the blast of King James against tobacco in stopping the use of the weed. It will not add one volunteer to the army of the Union, for the Abolitionists have as much repugnance to enlisting in the war, as has the rabid dog to water.” Emancipation made Union victory impossible and permanent disunion inevitable. After one Republican congressman supported emancipation, Democrats called their opponent a disunionist and claimed “he was not in favor of restoring the old Union as it was and letting the South come back with their slaves.” Republicans wanted a different Union than Democrats, a Union without slavery.²⁸

Sensing an opportunity, Democrats reached out to conservative Republicans. They even sprinkled in some anti-eastern appeals. “Do you profess to be a conservative Republican? Opposed to waging war for the sole benefit of the slaves of the South...Are you opposed to the present system of National Taxation that imposes the burdens of the war upon the West and enriches the East...?” Several Democrats divided the Republican Party into radical and conservative wings then declared their party a haven, a natural home for their brother conservatives. “The conservative Republicans support the ticket that favors the conducting of the war for the purpose of restoring the Union...taxing the East and West equally...and let slavery take care of itself...the conservatives have no other organization than the Democracy...” When a Republican newspaper editor spoke against the proclamation, Democrats flaunted the news and urged everyone to read what a “conservative Republican” thought of Lincoln’s decision.²⁹

Indiana Democrats were not alone. Their brethren throughout the West voiced their opposition to emancipation. Party members in Wisconsin reiterated their support for the

²⁸ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), September 24, 1862; *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), October 9, 1862.

²⁹ *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), October 9, 1862; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 7, 1862.

Constitution with slavery intact. “The Constitution was a compact of compromises, and in no instance so wisely and generously so than in relation to the institution of slavery. And had the several States of Union abided in their polities by that necessary and magnanimous spirit of compromise, the Union would now be undisturbed...” Democrats pressed several older politicians into service. Amos Kendall spoke against Lincoln and emancipation. Kendall defended slavery as a biblically ordained institution in several letters published across the North. As Postmaster General under Jackson, Kendall ordered his postmasters to censor abolitionist mail to southern slaveowners. This veteran of the Democratic victories of previous decades reminded party supporters of their links to the Jackson Administration.³⁰

Indiana Democrats noted the outrage against the proclamation among slaveowners in the border states. They published the many harangues and criticisms in Kentucky newspapers. The *Sentinel* published criticisms printed in the *Louisville Journal* and the *Louisville Democrat* as evidence that Kentuckians were planning to leave the Union cause. Towards the end of September, Democrats in Indianapolis had plenty of speeches and publications against the Emancipation Proclamation. They published a speech from New York Governor Horatio Seymour, an analysis of the reasons why the Crittenden Compromise failed in 1860, and a speech about an antebellum Republican conspiracy to “dissolve the Union.” Democratic publishers offered to sell the pamphlets in bulk to anyone willing to buy them. The party faithful could hand out these speeches from several leading Democrats at a discount price.³¹

They also played up the African American refugees coming north. After Congress passed the Confiscation Acts and Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation, the numbers of refugees moving north increased. The dislocated former slaves taxed the government’s supply

³⁰ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), September 29 and September 25 and September 26, 1862.

³¹ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), September 26, 1862 and September 27, 1862.

system. The federal government had to deal with these new arrivals while at the same time supplying massive armies in the field. To alleviate the crowding problems around cities and armies in the South, the government resettled some former slaves further north. On railcars, by foot, or covered wagon, they went through several cities such as Cairo, Illinois, or St. Louis, important supply depots for the Union army, too close for many Indiana conservatives. The influx of African Americans alarmed northerners who saw them as hordes coming north to use up resources and live off the government.³²

Indiana Democrats jumped on the refugee issue. They warned African Americans always competed with white laborers for jobs, depressed wages, and eventually created a racially mixed society: “What does it matter with them how many poor white men in the North may be compelled to labor for a mere pittance in competition with their sable protégés.” Indiana newspapers published accounts from Illinois newspapers about the freed slaves living in Cairo. They rejected Republican assurances and expected the new arrivals to stay in Illinois. Speaking about Republicans, a newspaper man lamented: “No one of them, however, has suggested a plan by which they may be got rid of, after they once get a foothold here.” The refugees fit into Democratic propaganda. Those in Illinois were just the first in a massive wave coming north.³³

The Emancipation Proclamation, the suspension of habeas corpus, and the crack down on dissent in the North gave Democrats an effective argument in their campaigns. Like Republicans, they wanted to preserve the Union. However, they wanted the old Union with both slavery and white supremacy intact. They pledged themselves as the chief defenders of the Constitution against the radical changes Republicans allegedly wanted. “We place ourselves on the Constitution as it is, and will go forth to the ballot-box pleading before the people for the

³² Leslie A. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 74-85.

³³ *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), July 24, 1862; *Daily State Sentinel*, October 17, 1862.

Government as it was founded by our fathers...” With their opposition to the proclamation, Democrats framed themselves as the chief defenders of white supremacy. Republicans had to respond.³⁴

The 1862 campaign caught most Republicans napping. Lincoln himself stayed in Washington and attended to the war while his party bore the brunt of the campaign season. Although Republicans mounted a massive effort in 1860, local Republicans in Indiana faced Democrats without much national help. The patriotic fervor in the North further hampered their efforts. Most expected Democrats to rally to the flag and avoid partisan squabbles while the nation faced its greatest challenge. The President contributed to his party’s weakness in another way. Since Lincoln announced the proclamation in late September 1862, there was little time to prepare an effective defense against Democratic attacks. Indiana held state elections on the second Tuesday in October. Republicans had a mere three weeks after the announcement to prepare their arguments.³⁵

A few Republican newspapers in the state recognized the danger and attacked some Democrats as disloyal traitors. They linked the opposition party to the Confederacy, disunion, and treason. John D. Defrees, the editor of the Indianapolis *Journal*, alleged Simon B. Buckner, the Confederate General captured at Fort Donelson had endorsed Democratic candidates while in Union custody. In the fanciful story, the captured general urged Union soldiers to “go home and vote the Democratic ticket.” Republicans further cited a convention in southern Indiana where delegates allegedly demanded the state redraw its borders further north so the southern counties

³⁴ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), September 29, 1862.

³⁵ Mark E. Neely Jr., *Lincoln and the Democrats: The Politics of Opposition in the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 46-56.

could join Kentucky. Although Republicans fabricated these stories, Jesse Bright a former Indiana senator gave a reasonable link between their opposition and treason.³⁶

Republicans had a useful scapegoat for the elections; he was an old foe. Senator Bright kept a low profile after the war started, so low that some questioned if they could remove him from the Senate. He had a good reason to keep his name out of the newspapers. Shortly before the Confederates attacked Ft. Sumter, Bright wrote a letter of introduction for an arms dealer. The Indianan addressed the letter to the “President of the Confederation of States” in an obvious sign of sympathy for the Confederacy. Union forces discovered the letter in August 1861. Six months later, the Senate expelled Bright for treason. The disgraced former Senator went home as other Democrats distanced themselves from the once powerful party leader.³⁷

Republicans never let their opponents forget Bright’s treason. They tied those Democrats who spoke out against the war to the former senator. The disgraced senator was useful tool to link antiwar Democrats to the Confederacy. After former Congressman Davis spoke in southern Indiana against the Conscription Act and the suspension of habeas corpus, the local Republican editor labeled Davis a traitor in the Bright tradition, no better than Aaron Burr and Benedict Arnold. Another Republican warned his readers to vote for Republicans in the General Assembly and reminded them about the election for United States Senator in the coming year. If Democrats won a majority it meant another term for the expelled senator. Bright was a traitor. When former Congressman Hendricks toured the state before the election speaking against the Lincoln administration, a Republican in Terre Haute linked the outspoken Democrat to Bright’s supposed

³⁶ *Indianapolis Daily Journal* (Indianapolis, IN), October 3, 1862; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 5, 1862; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), October 9, 1862.

³⁷ Wickre, “Indiana’s Southern Senator,” 259-64.

scheme for a northwest confederacy. According to Republicans, those Democrats who spoke out against the war were no better than the traitor Bright.³⁸

The Emancipation Proclamation presented Republicans with a greater problem. Some anticipated the move before Lincoln formally made his announcement, and they welcomed it. In east central Indiana, the many abolitionists there celebrated the proclamation and called for African- American enlistment. A local newspaper editor wrote on African American soldiers in the American Revolution and accurately predicted their future use against the Confederacy. Defrees in Indianapolis and the editor of the *Palladium* in Richmond both pushed emancipation on moral grounds calling the move beneficial to the Union war effort. Their rather liberal views were rare in the state where few sympathized with African Americans. Republican partisans in other areas, particularly southern Indiana, adopted a more subdued defense.³⁹

Most Hoosier Republicans defended emancipation as a military necessity. Ending slavery weakened the Confederacy; a weakened Confederacy meant a shorter war. During his visit to Washington, Governor Morton called the proclamation a “stratagem of war...If we mean to preserve the Union intact...and if the slave is used in any way as a weapon of warfare, is it not a most unreasonable act to deprive the enemy of that weapon at the earliest practicable moment.” Several Republicans and Democrats met in Pike County in southern Indiana where they formed a “Union convention.” The nonpartisan meeting endorsed Lincoln’s actions to preserve the Union, including the Confiscation Act: “Resolved, That as the people of the Southern Confederacy regard negroes as property that we will not dissent from this declaration, but seize and use them as such in putting down this rebellion in any way we may think proper.” The delegates at the

³⁸ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 10, 1862; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), September 11, 1862; *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), August 7, 1862.

³⁹ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), September 12, 1862.

convention agreed with confiscation and freeing slaves, as long as the Union used them to defeat the Confederacy. The delegates never mentioned slaves in loyal slave states.⁴⁰

Republicans in the state tried several defenses against this racist fear mongering. After Hendricks warned locals about African American migration in Evansville, the local Republican newspaper editor reassured his readers that even if emancipation happened, climate confined African Americans to the South: white supremacy in the North was safe. He supported his claim with a racist argument. Since they originated in tropical climates, African Americans were not physically suited to colder temperatures found in the North. He noted that several escaped slaves suffered ill health in Canada, left that northern country, and returned to the warmer climates in the South. Although Republicans supported emancipation they still needed conservative voters who worried about losing white supremacy.⁴¹

Republicans sent their more conservative members around the state to reassure conservative voters. Former Governor Wright traveled the state speaking for Republican candidates. Wright argued that War Democrats in Washington had voted for the tax, the tariff, and the confiscation acts. They were equally responsible for the unpopular legislation. Wright assured listeners the Emancipation Proclamation was a war measure alone. The Government should use every effort to save the Union, even if those efforts resulted in a Union without slavery. Republicans praised Democrats who stuck with Lincoln and “who are cordially acting with the Union movement, discarding party, for the time being, for the good of the country . . .” One Republican listed every Democrat the editor considered loyal to the Lincoln administration,

⁴⁰ *Indianapolis Daily Journal* (Indianapolis, IN), October 10 and October 1, 1862.

⁴¹ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 10, 1862.

and in his view, the Union itself. For Republicans these Democrats exhibited an antiparty spirit that placed the Union above partisan squabbles. They were loyal and true patriots.⁴²

Other Democrats chided those loyal to the Lincoln administration and declared them abolitionists. “Joe Wright and Dave Gooding, and Seacrist, and Delana Williamson, and all of that class profess to be simon pure Democrats. What do they think of the President’s emancipation proclamation? Is that part of the contract they made in their alliance with the Republicans?” The divide within the once tight Indiana Democratic Party ended several political relationships. One of the *Sentinel*’s publishers had been a critical ally of former Governor Wright for years before the war and endorsed him in every major election. Wright’s continued support for Lincoln and the Republicans created a rift that broke apart their political association permanently.⁴³

The Republican efforts were useless. Democrats scored major victories in the fall elections. They captured three seats in the federal House of Representatives, raising their number to five out of eleven in the Indiana delegation. Votes against the Confiscation Act in 1861 did not save one Republican congressman in the southern part of the state. who lost his seat despite his stance. Victorious in southern Indiana Democrats counted greater successes north of the National Road. They won several northern Indiana districts with narrow majorities and pushed other Republicans to the brink. Schuyler Colfax edged out his opponent with a majority under one percent. Republicans lost their advantage in the Indiana House and Senate as well. The losses in the General Assembly hurt Republicans on two fronts. Democratic majorities could block legislation and hamper the war effort in the state; and they could replace Wright in the United

⁴²*Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), October 2, 1862; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), October 9, 1862; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 1 and October 1, 1862.

⁴³*Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), September 24, 1862; James Elder to Governor Joseph A. Wright, June 9, 1856, Joseph A. Wright Papers Box 1 Folder 11, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, IN.

States Senate with a Democrat hostile to the Lincoln administration. The vote totals were devastating. Collectively Democratic congressional candidates won over fifty-two percent of the vote, a total nearly matched by the Democratic candidate for secretary of state. Just two years earlier, Lane won the governorship with a margin over three percent; Lincoln won the state with a margin of almost nine percent. Democrats on average peeled off six percent of the vote to win. After their defeat, Republicans were on the ropes.⁴⁴

Discontent with the seemingly stalemated war, conservative defections over the recent Emancipation Proclamation, fears of losing white supremacy, a lethargic party organization, and Democratic energy turned the election into a disaster for the Republicans. Depressed turnout further hurt the party as many supporters stayed at home or were off fighting on the front lines. Almost twenty thousand fewer Republicans voted for secretary of state in 1862 than turned out for the gubernatorial election two years earlier. While Lincoln's party mourned, Democrats touted their victories. They listed their successes in northern states calling them a "Conservative pyramid" against the Lincoln administration. With their majorities Democrats pledged to stop the mountains of African Americans Democrats claimed were coming north and slow down the Lincoln administration. Democrats were excited. In two years Lincoln faced a presidential election; the results in 1862 hinted at a future defeat for the president.⁴⁵

The results terrified Republicans. One especially nervous observer feared an alliance between the western and southern states against the East. He was not alone in his prediction. In 1863, James A. Thomas, a captured Confederate soldier who was imprisoned in Indiana wrote home to his Unionist father in Kentucky. In his letter, he jubilantly predicted western revolt.

⁴⁴ *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), October 11 and November 6 and October 30, 1862; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), November 5, 1862.

⁴⁵ *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), October 30, 1862; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 21, 1862; *Shelby Volunteer* (Shelbyville, IN), November 20, 1862; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), November 5, 1862; Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 234-35.

Although he listed other states among a future western uprising, the Confederate singled out Illinois and Indiana as particularly troublesome for Lincoln. “The Democrats will rule both states and the presence of troops will be required to keep them under. They openly denounce Lincoln and swear he shall not get another man or dollar from them. They declare that they will resist the draft and it reminds me much of the opening scenes of this grand tragedy in our own state.”

Although the Confederate’s conclusion was premature, the possibility of a western revolt alarmed Republicans across the country.⁴⁶

Hoosier Republicans had their own ideas about why their party lost. One Republican blamed the failure on Lincoln and Morton. The president and governor appointed too many Democrats to patronage jobs after their wins in 1860. He had a point. Lincoln promoted numerous Democrats to commands in the army to shore up support for the war and Morton appointed a Democrat to a high political position. After Congress expelled Bright from the United States Senate, Morton chose a Democrat--former Governor Wright--to serve out the term over several qualified Republicans. Though Wright was popular, called himself a Unionist during his term, and supported Republican candidates in 1862, some Republicans were furious. They worked hard to propel Lincoln and Morton into power. Both should have appointed loyal Republicans to high positions.⁴⁷

When Morton called the General Assembly to order in 1863, Democrats pushed their own agenda forward. They introduced a bill that shifted command over the state militia to a board rather than vesting it with the governor. The tactic failed. Republicans left Indianapolis and Democrats never gained a quorum for a vote. Undaunted, Democrats continued their efforts to hurt Morton. They wanted Morton to call a special session to pass an appropriations bill to

⁴⁶ Thomas C. Slaughter to Henry S. Lane, December 24, 1862, Lane Papers Box 2 Folder 13.

⁴⁷ John S. Davis to Henry S. Lane, October 26, 1862, Lane Papers Box 2 Folder 13; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), April 9, 1862.

fund the Indiana war effort; they could then pass their original legislation and shift command of the militia. He refused. Morton borrowed money, asked the Lincoln administration for assistance, and kept the Indiana soldiers equipped. Democrats sued to block Morton and the Indiana Supreme Court recommended the governor call a special session of the General Assembly. He refused. The governor outflanked the Democrats. He kept control of the militia while keeping the soldier's supplied.⁴⁸

The 1863 General Assembly session offered dire warnings to Republicans. Although Democrats could never muster enough support to strengthen the ban on African American settlement, numerous citizens petitioned their legislators for such a law. The state Senate received two petitions calling for removal and entered them into the minutes. Residents in two Indiana counties signed petitions against African American soldiers calling the war a white man's war for a white government. The appeals proved opposition to African American settlement and enlistment existed outside the inner circles of the Democratic Party. If Republicans wanted to make a comeback, they had to both paint Democrats as traitors, and reassure voters that white supremacy in the state was secure.⁴⁹

Over the next two years Democrats played into their foes' hand. As the Union sustained losses on the battlefield, casualties piled up, opposition to the war intensified and some states had trouble meeting their monthly recruitment quotas. Union officials feared a manpower shortage if qualified men stayed at home; manpower shortages meant a likely defeat. In March 1863, Congress passed the Enrollment Act and established a military draft. All men aged 18-35 were

⁴⁸ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), March 23, 1863; Engle, *Gathering to Save a Nation*, 270, 303; A. James Fuller, *Oliver P. Morton and the Politics of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2017), 130-34.

⁴⁹ *Journal of the Indiana State Senate, During the Forty-Third Session of the General Assembly, Commencing Thursday, January 8, 1863* (Indianapolis: Joseph J. Bingham, 1863), 103, 260; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, During the Forty-Third Session of the General Assembly, Commencing Thursday January 8, 1863* (Indianapolis: Joseph J. Bingham, 1863), 536-37.

subject to conscription with stiff penalties for those who refused. Although the government wanted all able-bodied men to serve, there were exceptions to this rule. In addition to the age limit, wealthier men could pay for a substitute, and some could obtain a medical deferment. To speed the induction process, the provost marshals in each state set up draft boards with medical staff to ensure that all inductees were healthy enough to fight. Opposition to the Enrollment Act grew through the spring, and exploded in the summer.⁵⁰

The draft pushed many in the state into the opposition ranks. Once again the Confederate POW Thomas wrote home to his parents about some of their relatives north of the Ohio River. The escaped prisoner briefly encountered them before Union forces recaptured him on his way back to Confederate lines. He goaded his Unionist father in Kentucky: “Consequently I find them all opposed to this ‘abolition war’ firm in their belief that the South can never be conquered and that this government is fast tending to military despotism where one man will sway the power and where right and justice will not be respected.” Few hid their opposition to the draft. Thomas noted several acquaintances in west central Terre Haute, Indiana, who publicly flaunted their opposition to the war without reprisal.⁵¹

Congress added a new obstacle to Republican success the same year. Numerous Union generals considered arming former slaves throughout 1862 when escaped slaves made it to their lines. At first the Union discouraged African American volunteers in the South and in northern states. Dropping enthusiasm in the North, high casualties, and fewer white recruits changed minds. Congress passed the Militia Act in 1862 and Union generals recruited former slaves for military service. After Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, the Union accepted more African American volunteers for service, often recruiting former slaves for the

⁵⁰ Weber, *Copperheads*, 87-92.

⁵¹ James A. Thomas to his Father, August 26, 1863, Letters 1861-1864, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.

army. The new recruits angered conservatives. Military service inevitably produced greater social changes. If Republicans wanted success in Indiana they had to convince citizens that their actions were justified in conservative terms. Their party only wanted to save the Union rather than end white supremacy at home.⁵²

Although opponents to Lincoln and the war frequently held public meetings, northerners feared rumored secret societies. There was a precedent for their fears. Southerners formed the Knights of the Golden Circle (KGC) before the war and stories about the organization continued through 1861. Lincoln supporters feared the organization and attributed much dissent to the secret society. Two Union army deserters claimed the KGC influenced them to desert and the story spread through newspapers like wildfire. In their worst nightmares Republicans believed the KGC would overthrow Morton with armed recruits or push for a western confederacy allied with the Confederate States. Though the organization failed to gain any traction, Republicans looked on stories about the KGC as real and a present danger. However there were other organizations and societies poised to deal tangible blows to the Union war effort.⁵³

Democrats organized protection societies to resist the draft and defend against Republican violence. Unlike the KGC, some members of these protective societies were open about their organization. One southern Indiana woman noted, “some of the copperheads talk more boldly.” In late 1863 and early 1864, Lincoln opponents formed the Order of American Knights then the Order of the Sons of Liberty. Members claimed they stood for their rights, for the old Union against Republican radicalism. The Provost General reported a conspiracy in southern Orange and Daviess Counties between the order and Confederate guerillas that apparently fizzled due to a loss in secrecy. Harrison H. Dodd formed a local organization in

⁵² Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 215-17, 249-53

⁵³ Weber, *Copperheads*, 25, 80; Stephen E. Towne, *Surveillance and Spies in the Civil War: Exposing Confederate Conspiracies in America's Heartland* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015), 18-20.

Indianapolis and traveled the state speaking against the war. In fiery speeches he urged resistance to the draft, Governor Morton, and the Lincoln administration. Alarmed by his words, a federal provost marshal arrested the malcontent after a speech in September 1863. The army eventually released Dodd who went on to plan more than just speeches.⁵⁴

Republicans answered the Democratic protection societies with their own organizations. Although northerners formed Union leagues in 1861, the leagues claimed nonpartisanship. They admitted Democrats and Republicans into their ranks. They often held their meetings in public rather than in secret and took public oaths to support the Constitution of the United States and Indiana. Though the leagues stressed nonpartisanship, Republicans joined in greater numbers. The clubs supported Lincoln after he issued the Emancipation Proclamation as a necessary means to defend the Union. Their emphasis on nonpartisanship lessened after 1862. Members believed all loyal men should join, and they criticized those who did not sign up. Slowly the leagues painted Democrats as opponents; the Democratic Party was the party of treason and the Confederacy.⁵⁵

Democrats labeled the leagues a dark cabal with sinister intentions. The leagues met in secret, proving they had something to hide. “But the idea of a man skulking like a thief up a dark stairway and into a carefully guarded back room, and there take an oath, of no binding effect in law or equity...is simply ridiculous.” Opponents published secret signs and passwords attributed to the league while calling them, “a Republican organization...run in the darkness of cellars and garrets.” Since the leagues held a few meetings in secret and criticized non-Republicans,

⁵⁴ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), March 30, 1863; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 12, 1863. Terrell, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Indiana* vol. I, 290-91; Michael B. Murphy, *The Kimberlins Go To War: A Union Family in Copperhead Country* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2016), 72; Weber, *Copperheads*, 128-29; Towne, *Surveillance and Spies in the Civil War*, 103-04.

⁵⁵ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), July 10, 1863; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), May 7, 1863; Adam I. P. Smith, *No Party Now: Politics in the Civil War North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 68, 73, 84.

opponents concocted wild speculation about their purpose. One Democrat expected Morton to arm the leagues, seize polling places in future elections, and establish a dictatorship in the state. Criticism of the Union Leagues only increased Republican suspicions.⁵⁶

The growing opposition to the war allowed Republicans a chance to portray their opponents as traitors. If Democrats won, it meant an end to the Union. In late 1863 the party of Lincoln stepped up their attacks and extended their vitriol to anyone who spoke against the President, Morton, and the Emancipation Proclamation. In the east central part of the state several leveled the charge of treason against George Y. Atkison of Greenfield, Indiana, a former member of the state House of Representative. In 1862, the former Whig sparked controversy at the Union Party convention in Hancock County when he introduced an amendment to a resolution reaffirming the party's opposition to abolition and any changes to slavery in the southern states. The other delegates voted the measure down, and Atkison left the party drawing condemnation. The politician eventually wrote a letter defending his actions and denying any accusations of treason.⁵⁷

Several Union soldiers took out their anger on Democratic newspapers. In east central Indiana, they torched the office of the *Richmond Jeffersonian*, a vocal critic of Lincoln and the war effort, and then destroyed the printing presses. Though the owner escaped serious injury, authorities made few arrests. A mob incident rather than sanctioned military action, the destruction frightened dissenters in other cities. The military placed guards around the *Sentinel's* office in Indianapolis, at the editor's request, in order to stop a similar incident. The threats and burnings resembled events in the border states where Union authorities frequently shut down

⁵⁶ *Shelby Volunteer* (Shelbyville, IN), March 26 and April 2 and June 11, 1863; *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), April 20, 1863.

⁵⁷ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), February 29, 1864; William E. Henry ed. *Legislative and State Manual of Indiana for 1903* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Buford, 1903), 164.

newspapers, disenfranchised voters, implemented loyalty oaths, and threatened any critics or Confederate sympathizers. Democrats called the events tyranny, yet the clampdowns on dissent continued.⁵⁸

Republican arguments for emancipation and arming African Americans gained traction in mid-1863. At one Union mass meeting, attendees heartily endorsed arming former slaves and any free African Americans “we firmly believe that by doing so it will weaken the rebel power and strengthen the Union cause . . .” Soldiers wrote to numerous Republican newspapers endorsing the idea. Some of Indiana’s representatives in Washington slowly warmed to the idea. In one of his last speeches on the floor of the House of Representatives in Washington, the defeated Congressman Dunn said “put arms in the hands of these men, and let them, if they will, shoot down the rebels . . .” Dunn was no radical, yet preserving the Union trumped any fears about arming African Americans.⁵⁹

Republicans and their Democratic allies extended the same argument to emancipation. Emancipation meant a weaker Confederacy; a weaker Confederacy meant a quick conclusion to the war. At a Union meeting in Newburg in southern Indiana, one delegate pitched emancipation as the key to ending the war. “Take out the great base of the Southern power, the 4,000,000 of slaves, arm them and set them at work and the rebellion is at an end.” Emancipating slaves also prevented any possibility that the Confederate government could use them as soldiers. Republicans published rumors that the Confederacy wanted to impress slaves into the military as a desperate measure. Since the Confederacy already used slaves to construct fortifications, using them as soldiers was only a short step further. Emancipation prevented the possibility and

⁵⁸ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), March 17 and March 23, 1863; William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Border States: Preserving the Union* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 1-10, 109, 277-78.

⁵⁹ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN) May 8 and June 26, 1863; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 12, 1863.

ultimately shortened the war. A Unionist in Nashville, Tennessee, spoke for many Republicans. “Why is it perfectly conservative to kill slave-owners, and yet radical to emancipate the slave?” They were willing to sacrifice slavery if it meant saving the Union.⁶⁰

Some Republicans questioned who were the real radicals bent on destroying the Union. A southern Indiana Republican warned readers that Democrats placed slavery above saving the Union. “Acting with these men...are a multitude of people whom better things might have been expected...but who have unfortunately come under the strange fanaticism of thinking that the preservation of slavery is a more sacred duty than any other...” Democrats were the radicals. Their party placed slavery over saving the Union, a radical notion. Republican momentum grew as both parties geared up for the coming election. However, 1864 was the real test. Lincoln, Morton, and every Republican in the United States House of Representatives faced election that year. Could the party make a full comeback?⁶¹

Democrats were confident heading into the election and most expected conservatives to vote for their party. A meeting in late 1863 boosted their optimism. Self-styled conservatives from Indiana joined others from across the nation in Cincinnati, Ohio, to nominate a candidate for president in the 1864 election. Delegates at the 1863 meeting hoped to unite “Conservative elements of the country in the coming Election,” and dubbed their organization the Conservative Union National Committee. Former Whigs, Democrats, and conservative Republicans mingled together for the meeting before they settled on a choice for president. The convention declared McClellan, “the only Standard Bearer around whom Conservative People, without regard to former party predilections can rally in the approaching contest.” The former general could attract

⁶⁰ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 7 and February 24, 1863; *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), February 15, 1863; Adam I. P. Smith, *The Stormy Present: Conservatism and the Problem of Slavery in Northern Politics, 1846-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 196-97.

⁶¹ *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), November 18, 1863; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), October 8, 1863; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), May 7, 1863.

Democrats along with conservative Republicans. With conservatives united, McClellan could defeat Lincoln.⁶²

For 1864, Indiana Democrats repeated much of their 1862 campaign rhetoric. They called for all conservatives to join them in a grand coalition against the radical Republican Party and the seemingly endless war that had stalled out in front of Atlanta and Richmond. Delegates to Democratic conventions in every congressional district in the state condemned abolitionists and the federal government “interfering with the rights or established institutions of any of the States...” Lincoln’s opposition also objected to the Republican’s pressure on the remaining slave states in the Union. One Democrat in the third congressional district declared: “A war for negro freedom is a war for white slavery, because we can only obtain freedom for negroes by losing our own.” According to the Democrats, emancipation meant a permanently severed Union.⁶³

Democrats seized on the implications of several events in the summer of 1864 that increased racial fears among white northerners. After emancipation and the arming of African Americans, Democrats warned civil equality was next. When a debate broke out on suffrage for African Americans in the Montana Territories, Democrats across the North depicted the issue as a sign of things to come. In a joint statement, those in Congress signed an address that claimed arming African Americans was merely a pretext for suffrage and that suffrage meant an end to white supremacy. Another controversy in Washington reverberated in the northern states. After Congress finally passed a law granting equal pay to African American soldiers, Indiana Democrats cited the act as another move towards civil equality with one saying “the negro soldier is declared the equal of the white in every respect...” Those at another meeting made their

⁶² *Paper of the Meeting of the Conservative Union National Committee* (N. P. Cincinnati, 1863) Copy in the John B Bruner Papers, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

⁶³ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), January 18, 1864; John C. Waugh, *Reelecting Lincoln: The Battle for the 1864 Presidency* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1997), 170-71, 203.

sentiments on race clear. “That this is a white man’s government, founded by and for white men; and that we never will submit to being placed upon an equality with the African race.” For 1864, Democrats entrenched behind white supremacy.⁶⁴

Because Lincoln had used the powers of the presidency to threaten slavery in the South and put it on the path to extinction, Democrats called for limits on the federal government and presidential power. It was the federal government that shut down newspapers in Indiana and elsewhere. It was the federal army that arrested perceived copperheads. When the Democrats in Sullivan County, Indiana, nominated Congressman Voorhees for another term in the United States House of Representatives, they praised him for standing up to “the encroachments of Federal and centralized power . . .” A second term for Lincoln ensured a, “centralized despotism...State lines are to be obliterated and the Federal Government is to usurp the control and direction of the domestic policy and institutions of the States.” Powerful state governments could stop Lincoln and the Republicans. A limited federal government meant limited social change. Limiting the federal government was a means to an end rather than an end.⁶⁵

Democrats met in Chicago in late August and nominated McClellan for president. They added Ohio to the ticket Congressman George Pendleton as Vice President. Despite his failure to win the war in 1862, Democrats hoped enough northerners still had a soft spot for the former “young Napoleon.” Convention delegates had almost rejected McClellan in the early balloting. Some slave state Democrats believed the former general was too overzealous after Congress passed the Confiscation Acts in 1861 and 1862. With the debate over, the delegates passed a platform that called for an end to the conflict and “a convention of the States, or other peaceable means, to the end that, at the earliest practicable moment, peace may be restored on the basis of

⁶⁴ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), January 18 and July 26 and August 16, 1864; *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), May 12, 1864; *Shelby Volunteer* (Shelbyville, IN), May 5, 1864.

⁶⁵ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), June 11, 1864; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), March 7, 1864

the Federal Union of the States.” Democrats trusted the states to resolve the conflict through a compromise. An announcement at their convention added to their conservative credentials.⁶⁶

The Conservative Union convention met in the same city a few days earlier. Composed of many Democrats and old Whigs, attendees hoped to lend their support to McClellan and Democrats throughout the North. Delegates chose former Postmaster General Amos Kendall as their president and called for all conservatives to unite behind the Democratic ticket. Building on their meeting the previous year, the self-styled conservatives endorsed McClellan for president and condemned the Lincoln administration for its policies. A delegation attended the Democratic Convention and announced their decision. The convention accepted the conservative endorsement with enthusiasm. The secretary entered the decision into the minutes and Democrats touted the conservative endorsement. To thunderous applause, they declared their party the only conservative party in the race. Of course Republicans contested the claim.⁶⁷

Democrats broke from the convention and set out to sweep the field. They first recycled the Douglas campaign from 1860. Republican policies threatened white supremacy and lose the Union in the process: “No man can read the Republican journals or hear the Republican orators of to day [sic] without hearing the proof that they all prefer abolition to Union, prefer abolition and a long war even to peace.” One Democrat published a fictitious Republican prayer: “May the blessings of emancipation extend throughout our unhappy land, and the illustrious, sweet scented Samba nestle in the bosom of every abolition woman . . .” They defended McClellan as a strong unionist, just the man to bring the nation together. Through a peace platform that rolled back

⁶⁶ *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held In 1864 at Chicago* (Chicago: The Times Steam Book and Job Printing House, 1864), 20-21

⁶⁷ *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held In 1864*, 20-21.

emancipation and guaranteed an end to the war, Democrats claimed they were the true defenders of the Union.⁶⁸

To win back conservatives, Republicans had to convince them that white supremacy would survive the eventual end of slavery and a Democratic win meant a permanently severed Union. Indiana Republicans first renamed their party the Union Party and emphasized the many former Whigs and war Democrats in their ranks. Republicans nominated former Governor Wright as the president of the state convention, and Thompson, the old American Party stalwart, announced the party platform. In their platform, the convention denounced draft dodging and called for a united front against the Democrats. Delegates praised the Emancipation Proclamation and African American soldiers as necessary war measures. With an eye to the conservative vote, astute delegates omitted a push for African American suffrage or any calls to amend the state constitution and allow, at least officially, African American settlement in the state. The convention was a sign of things to come for the 1864 Republican campaign.⁶⁹

The delegates then turned to their endorsement for president. They first chose representatives to attend the national convention and support a nominee in Baltimore later that year. If Indiana Republicans wanted to change horses midstream and go with a more radical candidate for president they had several choices. Discontent with Lincoln among abolitionists in the party bubbled under the surface throughout his first term. Lincoln had moved slowly on emancipation before 1863 and slavery was still legal in the loyal border states. A few radicals suggested potential alternatives for a run against Lincoln during the national convention. With

⁶⁸ *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), September 8 and September 22, 1864; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), November 4, 1864.

⁶⁹ *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), March 2, 1864; *Richmond Palladium (Weekly)* (Richmond, IN), March 2 and March 9, 1864.

Confederate armies still in the field a strong contender could challenge the embattled president and seize the Republican standard. Two men stood out.⁷⁰

Abolitionists loved John C. Frémont. The former general inaugurated emancipation when he freed slaves within Missouri, at least until Lincoln rescinded the order a few days later. Never successful on the battlefield, Frémont remained without a command after 1862 and the once celebrated Pathfinder waited for an assignment that never came. In his semi-retirement he remained a darling to abolitionists. German Americans praised Frémont as well. His actions in St. Louis during 1861 won him much respect among the immigrants there. In March 1864, German immigrants in Missouri held a convention where they passed resolutions praising the general. They called for a national mass Frémont convention in order to nominate their hero for president as a radical alternative to Lincoln. Democrats picked up on this groundswell among the German community. They gleefully reported all the developments and hoped for a split in the Republican Party.⁷¹

Another challenger emerged late in 1863. Former Ohio Governor Salmon P. Chase led the Treasury Department during Lincoln's first term; he was never content with the position and looked for a higher office. Chase was a formidable foe for the president. Experienced in politics, a favorite among abolitionists, and well known throughout the North, the Secretary of the Treasury could draw on ready support if he wanted the Republican nomination. Supporters fanned out in 1864 to drum up support for their preferred candidate. In Ohio, Chase's home state, backers nearly stifled a pro-Lincoln resolution among Republicans in the state legislature. Chase men then infiltrated the state convention. If they could siphon enough support, Ohio Republicans they could send delegates to the national convention friendly to the temperamental Treasury

⁷⁰ Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 296-98.

⁷¹ *Shelby Volunteer* (Shelbyville, IN), March 10, 1864; Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 176-80, 298-99.

Secretary. In the midst of a civil war, Lincoln faced a difficult road to another term. Two strong challengers for his party's nomination made it rockier.⁷²

The two prospective challengers gained a few supporters among Indianans. The editor of the Indianapolis *Gazette* supported Chase or Frémont for the nomination and supporters asked for time at the state convention to make their case. Main party members called them ultras or radicals and did their best to sideline the rebels. Rumors flew in February 1864 about a new circular making the rounds in Washington, a circular written by a committee friendly to Chase. The writer proposed Chase for the nomination, a sure bet for president over the unpopular Lincoln. Some Republicans suspected one supporter was none other than George Washington Julian from eastern Indiana. Julian denied the charges though others favored the Treasury Secretary over Lincoln.⁷³

Despite the growing discontent with the president, Lincoln supporters had little to fear in Indiana. Among Republican leaders in the state, the president was the only choice for the nomination. Delegates at the state convention chose pro-Lincoln delegates for the national convention; no one mentioned Chase, Frémont, or any other challenger. The platform committee drafted pro-Lincoln resolutions in their final report and they praised Lincoln's leadership in the national crisis. The resolution supporting Lincoln was firm: "That, as western men, we unconditionally endorse the administration of Abraham Lincoln, and we are in favor of his re-nomination to the Presidency." With their delegates pledged, Indiana Republicans supported

⁷² *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), March 5, 1864; Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 297.

⁷³ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), February 24 and March 2 and March 16 and March 23, 1864; *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), February 29, 1864; *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), March 2, 1864. March 23, 1864.

Lincoln at the national convention in Baltimore. Few of the major newspaper editors disagreed. Lincoln was a conservative candidate, more likely to win than Frémont or Chase.⁷⁴

There were a small number of holdouts. Numerous Germans in the state initially supported Frémont for the nomination. In May, supporters gathered in Evansville where they held a convention for the former general. The local German newspaper covered the event and local Republicans frantically sought a translated account for publication. The paper noted Frémont was the “first choice” among those in attendance for his military service, although they overlooked his many failures. Lincoln supporters likely choked on the news. A split in the party meant sure defeat. A few sentences down the account contained some good news for Lincoln men. Those at the meeting pledged to support whomever the party nominated at the national convention rather than risk a Democratic president. The local pro-Lincoln newspaper applauded the decision: “Let the friends of Fremont go into the Baltimore Convention, do the best they can for their champion, and if they fail to nominate him, support heartily whoever is chosen.” Republicans desperately needed a united party going into the election. A national meeting made a united party seemingly much more difficult.⁷⁵

Party unity seemed a distant wish in late May. Radicals, ultras, and other Republicans, gathered in Cleveland, Ohio, for a convention to discuss Lincoln’s prospects in the upcoming election. A few Indiana supporters joined them. They criticized Lincoln for his delays on emancipation, his weak reconstruction plans, and his failed military policies that left thousands dead. Delegates nominated Frémont for president and John Cochran from New York for vice president. A few days later Frémont accepted the nomination in a widely published letter. The long feared split in the Republican Party had apparently happened. As the national convention

⁷⁴ *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), March 2, 1864.

⁷⁵ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), May 12, 1864; *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), August 25, 1864.

approached, loyal Lincoln Republicans had to work hard to make sure few followed the Pathfinder.⁷⁶

One group watched the developments with glee. Indiana Democrats cheered the Frémont and Chase men throughout the campaign. A split in the Republican Party could push a Democrat into the White House, a man friendly to a negotiated settlement with the South. One boasted: “There is no longer any doubt that there will be two abolition candidates in the field for President this year.” When Frémont supporters held their convention in Cleveland, most Democrats interpreted the meeting as the clear sign that a split in their rival party was imminent. When Chase had pulled out earlier in the year, Democrats predicted a boost for Frémont.. “It is said positively that the Chase men, who are to assemble here on the 6th, will ratify the nomination of Fremont.” Even after Chase withdrew his name and Frémont declared his support for Lincoln, Democrats held out hope for a last minute challenge against Lincoln.⁷⁷

Another complication threatened Republican unity that summer; it was a long simmering complication that divided radicals and conservatives in the party. As Union armies pushed through the seceded states they drove most elected officials into exile. The United States government replaced them with loyal southern Unionists or at least those who took a loyalty oath. Tennessee was a testing ground for this policy. The army drove Confederates out of the state capital, installed a military governor who removed any public official unwilling to take the loyalty oath, and disenfranchised any remaining Confederate sympathizers. The Union repeated the process in other states and the army ensured compliance. Republicans in Washington then

⁷⁶ *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), June 23, 1864; *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), June 1, 1864; *Evansville Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), June 8, 1864.

⁷⁷ *Shelby Volunteer* (Shelbyville, IN), March 10, 1864; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), June 8, 1864.

asked a valid question. Should they allow these Unionists to establish state governments, serve in public office, or send representatives to Washington? The question vexed those in the North.⁷⁸

Lincoln offered his own plan for the rebellious states. He first issued a Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction for all those who took an oath to the United States and accepted abolition. If the loyal residents equaled ten percent of their state's total population counted in the 1860 census they could create a state government. The relatively lenient measures ended there. Before the United States government recognized them or permitted representation in Washington, the loyal men had to live with emancipation or their efforts were in vain. Far reaching on slavery, Lincoln equivocated on some issues rather than confronting them head on in his plan. He left out calls for African American suffrage or equality under the law leaving those issues for another fight. Most Indiana Republicans backed the plan.⁷⁹

With his relatively lenient plan, the president incensed the radicals in his party. They called the reconstruction plan far too soft on traitors. They wanted harsher punishments for the many Confederates in open rebellion against the United States and protections for the freed slaves. The newly instituted ironclad oath, a pledge that a person had never supported the Confederacy in exchange for some rights in Union occupied territories pacified a few radicals in Congress. Still, others demanded harsher measures. In contrast to Lincoln's plan, Ohio Senator Benjamin Wade and Maryland Representative Henry W. Davis proposed their own plan for reconstruction. It required a majority of white males to support the federal government. Those who took the ironclad oath could vote on delegates for a constitutional convention. Once assembled the delegates then drafted a new state constitution, prohibit slavery, and send

⁷⁸ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 43-48.

⁷⁹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 35-37.

representatives to Washington. The plan fell short on rights for African Americans in the South, yet it satisfied most radicals.⁸⁰

The only major defector in Indiana over Reconstruction was Julian, who backed the Wade-Davis Bill over Lincoln's reconstruction plan as a necessary means to secure real freedom for the former slaves. He and his few allies attacked those hostile to the radical bill as proslavery sympathizers. Fed up with the congressman, General Solomon Meredith challenged Julian for the Republican nomination in the Fourth Congressional District. A much more moderate Republican, Meredith preached support for the president's reconstruction plan. Julian supporters savaged him. They called him a traitor to the country willing to restore Confederates into the Union with their slaves. Tensions between the two finally exploded that summer. At a raucous district convention, Julian won enough delegates and bested the general while Meredith supporters charged the victor with scheming and wire pulling. The triumphant congressman then expressed support for Lincoln; he needed every Republican vote in the district. Despite his appeals, the sniping between Meredith and Julian, or at least their supporters, continued throughout the summer. Even in the state's most radical district, a Republican needed the conservative vote. Attention soon turned to Maryland.⁸¹

The party held its national convention in Baltimore, Maryland, a border state. Following the lead of numerous state Republican Party conventions, delegates retitled the national party the Union Party, nominated a war Democrat for Vice President, and vowed to continue the war until the Confederates surrendered. While they approved emancipation and termed slavery a great evil, the delegates never mentioned citizenship, voting rights, or other rights for the newly emancipated slaves. They purposefully pushed more radical voices to the side as part of an effort

⁸⁰ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 60-61.

⁸¹ *Randolph County Journal* (Winchester, IN), April 1, 1864; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), June 29, 1864, July 20 and August 16, 1864.

to win conservatives in western states. When the convention nominated a candidate for president, Indiana delegates cast their votes for Lincoln. The convention then turned to the vice presidential nomination. C.M. Allen, an Indiana delegate, nominated Andrew Johnson. Johnson was a Tennessee Democrat and his nomination was an obvious appeal to conservative Republicans and war Democrats. With their nomination of Johnson and a watered down party platform, national Republicans, like those in Indiana showed they were far more concerned about losing conservatives rather than radicals.⁸²

Once the national convention nominated Lincoln, most Frémont supporters fell in line. A radical German doctor opened a newspaper in Buffalo, Indiana, one month after the convention ended. Most Lincoln men expected the radical to endorse Frémont for president. The doctor surprised everyone when he backed Lincoln. George Wilkes, a prominent Frémont supporter of New York, switched his support to Lincoln later that month and Republican newspapers printed his decision for Frémont men in their own state. The Lincoln men assured the potential defectors that staying home or voting for Frémont meant a vote for McClellan and joining “the ranks of copperheadism.” Despite their limited concerns about defections within the party, Republicans in the state felt confident the few radicals still backed Lincoln.⁸³

Only a few diehards remained in August. Frémont men held a convention in Indianapolis late that month. The conventioners assembled at the local Masonic Hall where they first endorsed the resolutions adopted at the Cleveland convention then criticized the administration. Delegates railed against the arrests in the border states, closing newspaper offices, and the continued war. They endorsed Frémont for president then repudiated Lincoln. Democrats

⁸² *Wabash Weekly Express* (Terre Haute, IN), June 15, 1864; Gallagher, *The Union War*, 52; D.F. Murphy, *Proceedings of the National Union Convention Held in Baltimore, MD. June 7th and 8th 1864* (New York: Baker & Godwin, 1864), 57-69, 72.

⁸³ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), July 14, 1864; *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), August 3, 1864.

published the proceedings declaring the Republican Party split. They were wrong. The meeting drew little Republican attention outside those discontented with the Lincoln administration. Frémont later threw in the towel and endorsed Lincoln. If Republicans in the state wanted a radical candidate, they had two choices. However, the majority stuck with Lincoln throughout the campaign.⁸⁴

Lincoln's plan for Reconstruction won out as well. The Wade-Davis Bill passed both houses of Congress in July. Before it passed, the vote revealed a sharp divide among Indiana Republicans. Julian and Orth, both from central Indiana districts, voted for it in the House. Two of their colleagues abstained rather than cast a negative vote. Over in the Senate, Lane joined his Democratic rival and demurred on the bill. Opponents on most issues, both men voted against it. Congress sent the bill to the president. With a simple signature, he could impose harsher restrictions on the rebellious states. Lincoln pocketed the bill and it expired. With his pocket veto, the president upset radicals in his own party though he pleased conservatives.⁸⁵

With few radicals in the state, Hoosier Republicans could focus on conservatives. Some found a way to turn the charges of abolitionism and emancipation back on the Democrats through McClellan. While the general ordered his soldiers to return escaped slaves, the army in other locations declared escaped slaves contraband of war. Confiscations happened when McClellan was still general in chief of all United States forces. Since McClellan was the general in chief of the army, these emancipations happened under his watch. One Indiana Republican even called McClellan the "first emancipator of the country." The charge was a stretch since McClellan urged his subordinates to return escaped slaves to their owners when he held

⁸⁴ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 26, 1864; Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 308-09.

⁸⁵ U.S. Congress, *Journal Of The House Of Representatives of the United States*, 38th Cong., 1st sess. May 4, 1864, 625-26; U.S. Congress, *Journal of the United States Senate*, 38th Cong., 1st sess., July 4, 1864, 726; Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 301-02, 310.

command. Other Republicans noted the former general's many failures on the battlefield, arguing that the general's ineptitude rather than Lincoln's failures prolonged the war.⁸⁶

Republicans and their Democratic allies in Indiana built on their arguments honed in 1863. They frequently sent out the old conservative stalwarts Wright and Thompson to drum up support among other conservatives. Wright spoke to a crowd in Rockville, Indiana, the same area where the escaped Confederate prisoner reported copperheads the previous year. In his speech Wright supported emancipation and even called for a constitutional amendment to permanently end slavery. The former Whig Thompson supported Republican candidates in southern Indiana. Thompson was the provost marshal in the state and could make speaking engagements as he traveled for his military duties. Both conservatives accepted emancipation and a Union without slavery.⁸⁷

When emancipation raised questions about African American rights and citizenship, Republicans assured voters that these questions were years off, white supremacy remained in force since citizenship did not guarantee the vote. A few claimed former slaves were not ready for citizenship at all. One Republican in Indianapolis circulated his views on the subject: "It is thus evident, that they must be trained and civilized before they are permitted (if ever) to take part in the Government." Southern Indiana Republicans dutifully printed the circular. Extending suffrage to African Americans might open up other possibilities, possibilities this Republican dreaded when he said "there should be no administrative power invested in them, for we must bear in mind, that when they so far become citizens as to be entitled to vote, they become at the same time eligible to office . . ." Although he could imagine a Union without slavery, he could

⁸⁶ *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), February 24, 1864; Neely Jr., *Lincoln and the Democrats*, 126.

⁸⁷ *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), July 14, 1864; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 1, 1864; *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), August 24, 1864.

not imagine a Union where African Americans exercised the franchise or served in public office.⁸⁸

During the 1864 campaign, some Republicans freely attached the conservative name to Democrats. Since Democrats called themselves conservative over the previous few years to deflect Republican charges of treason, the Democratic Party and conservatism were almost synonymous. One Republican asked how Democrats opposed to the war could call their actions conservative. In a widely republished article, a Missouri Republican argued: “Radicalism rests upon unconditional Unionism – conservatism upon rebel sympathy and rebel affiliation...Conservatism and treason will be almost synonymous.” Other Republicans called Democratic pretensions to conservatism preposterous and merely a cover word for treason. In a letter to the *Daily Journal*, Union soldiers called those who opposed the war traitors “under the guise of conservatism.” As the election entered the home stretch, Republicans promoted their party with conservative arguments.⁸⁹

When Democrats charged Republicans with radicalism and pushing for equality between the races, Republicans shot back that a Democratic victory meant an end to the war, and an end to the Union. Republicans noted the split between the peace and war wings within the Democratic Party and charged that both wanted the Union permanently severed. “In other words, one wing is for disunion, if Jefferson Davis desires it, and the other is for the Union on some kind of basis which will suit the rebels...” In the eastern town of Centerville, Morton called the war a defensive war to preserve the Union and he warned that if Democrats withdrew Union armies for a peace conference: “It would bring us the complete dissolution of the Union.”

⁸⁸ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), June 29, 1864.

⁸⁹ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), July 22, 1864; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), June 2, 1864; Matthew E. Stanley, *The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 290

Nothing less than the Union was at stake in the election. Once again the Governor failed to mention anything about citizenship, the vote, or an effort to repeal Article Thirteen in the state constitution. Another Republican called the Democratic platform that year a clear “disunion platform.” Peace with the Confederacy meant two countries. With their conservatives appeals and their attacks on Democrats as disunions, Republicans sent a message. They supported white supremacy and the Union.⁹⁰

Late in the presidential campaign, discoveries stoked fears about Democrats. Army officials allegedly found numerous documents in Voorhees’s office that purported to encourage him to raise an army of western men to help the South. Voorhees denied it yet Republicans connected the papers to a much larger plot to hurt the Union. Dodd, the Order of the Sons of Liberty leader in the Indianapolis area, found himself in deeper trouble. The Union military confiscated weapons in Dodd’s office after an informant tipped off the provost marshal. Dodd planned to attack the local prison camp in Indianapolis, free the imprisoned Confederate soldiers, and lead an uprising in the western states. Republicans immediately seized on the news as evidence of treason and tied all Democratic candidates to the Sons of Liberty. The subsequent treason trials of several other copperhead leaders in Indianapolis kept the conspiracies in the public mind right up to the election. Democrats were traitors willing to attack polling places or rise up against the Union.⁹¹

The final blow for Democrats in Indiana landed on the battlefield. Going into the 1864 elections, Republicans, or Union Party men, received some welcome news. Although Grant was bogged down in a prolonged siege outside Petersburg, Virginia, and some northerners criticized

⁹⁰ *Weekly Wabash Express*, (Terre Haute, IN), June 22 and June 29, 1864; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), July 13, 1864.

⁹¹ *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), August 24, 1864; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), August 24, 1864; Weber, *Copperheads*, 148-49, 151; Towne, *Surveillance and Spies in the Civil War*, 263-66; Fuller, *Oliver P. Morton and the Politics of the Civil War ad Reconstruction*, 173.

the Grant as a “butcher,” Lee’s army was suffering. Union forces also turned back a Confederate raid that threatened Washington dealing that Confederate army a lethal injury. William T. Sherman brought more welcomed news. Sherman’s armies captured Atlanta, Georgia, on September 2, 1864. The rebel rail center was a prize and its capture invigorated the North. The dual successes on the battlefields and the capture of Mobile Bay in Alabama in August sapped much of the Democratic strength. The Union looked sure to win with Lincoln at the helm.⁹²

Still there were fears about a Democratic victory. A few Indianans placed Republican success on the soldier vote. At the front, John D. Kidd of the 120th Indiana noted the upcoming furloughs and wanted to know if the Indiana soldiers had made it home in August 1864. Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton cooperated with northern governors to ensure soldiers returned home in time to vote. The army furloughed so many Union soldiers that Kidd’s father wondered if there were enough men at the front to keep the Confederates at bay. Like many of his fellow soldiers, Kidd detested any draft resisters and those opposed to the war while soldiers were in the field, calling the southern sympathizers, or “butternuts,” traitors to the country. Democrats in the army suffered for their support. Their fellow soldiers employed intimidation and peer pressure to persuade their comrades into changing their vote for Lincoln.⁹³

Draft dodging angered soldiers and, ironically, some Democrats predicted a backlash against the party if members resisted the draft. Though he did not agree with the draft and opposed the Lincoln administration one southern Indiana Democrat wrote to former Congressman English and warned him of the consequences. He called it “worse than folly to resist the draft.” Democrats in the Indiana General Assembly further antagonized soldiers. Their

⁹² Gallagher, *The Union War*, 91; Weber, *Copperheads*, 180-82.

⁹³ John D. Kidd to Sarah M. Kidd, August 11, 1864 and John D. Kidd to Sarah M. Kidd, September 16, 1864 and John D. Kidd to Sarah M. Kidd, September 27, 1864, in Kidd Family Papers Box 1 Folder 3, IHS; Jonathan W. White, *Emancipation the Union Army and the Reelection of Abraham Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 1-3, 5-8, 103-11, 113-17.

attempts to shift executive powers in war matters to other officials and limit Morton's powers hurt their standing in the army. Even worse, when Democrats held majorities in the General Assembly, Morton found other means to fund the Indiana war effort and they failed to limit any of his powers. A full year before the 1864 elections, English's friend believed the Democrats "gave the Republicans more capital than their full stock previously." Later events proved him a true prophet when Hoosiers went to the polls.⁹⁴

The elections were anti-climactic. Republicans dominated the state elections. Though most elections in the state were close the party mounted a successful comeback. Morton won a second term as governor and Republicans won several state offices they lost in 1862. They won five of Indiana's eleven Congressional Districts and regained their majorities in both houses of the Indiana General Assembly. Republicans even took back the southern Third District, which Democrats won only two years earlier. The news got even better. Voters in the northern Tenth and Eleventh districts elected Republicans to replace their Democratic representatives. Indiana's elections were no different than those across the North. Republicans won in most northern states, a good omen for Lincoln's chances in November.⁹⁵

Though it was a little closer than 1860, Lincoln won Indiana's electoral votes on his way to victory. The president won the state with a seven percent majority, a larger majority than Governor Morton. Lincoln carried a few counties that Democratic congressmen won earlier in the year including several in southern Indiana where the president maintained a healthy level of support. Numerous Democrats likely crossed party lines at the presidential level after voting for Democrats in the state and local elections. Republicans in the state were correct. Frémont

⁹⁴Frederick W. Matthis to William H. English, March 6, 1863, William H. English Papers Box 2 Folder 16, IHS; Engle, *Gathering to Save a Nation*, 270, 302-03; Fuller, *Oliver P. Morton*, 131-34.

⁹⁵*Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 31, 1864; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), November 10, 1864; Fuller, *Oliver P. Morton*, 173-75.

supporters never amounted to much and the party could concentrate on retaining conservatives. Returning soldiers likely added to the total, though Morton and Lincoln had enough votes to without them. Though the election was close, victories on battlefields, soldiers returning home to vote, and their conservative campaign pushed Lincoln and his party to victory.⁹⁶

Two years after Democrats successfully convinced northerners that white supremacy was under assault, Republicans returned to power in Indiana and throughout the North. They backed Lincoln over more radical candidates for president, supported Lincoln's more conservative plan to reintegrate southern states into the Union, and assured conservative voters that white supremacy in the state was safe. African Americans would never exercise the vote, enjoy other civil rights, or even legally settle in the state. Democrats also played into Republican hands. Their opposition looked like a clear and present danger to the survival of the Union at a time when the Union war effort took a turn for the better. With Democrats undermining the Union and white supremacy secure, enough conservatives backed Republican candidates. Conservatives accepted a Union without slavery; they rejected a Union without white supremacy. Republicans assured them a victory for Lincoln meant a victory for the Union only. White supremacy was secure

Republicans rehashed their argument from 1860. They could save the Union and preserve white supremacy. Democrats argued the almost exact same thing. Though they pledged to stop or slow down emancipation in the South, Democrats pledged their party could save the Union and keep white supremacy intact. Before the war, both parties pledged to keep the Union together and preserve white supremacy in the western territories, in 1864 they made the same promise in their home state. Believing conservatives were the decisive voter, politicians in both parties went

⁹⁶ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), November 30, 1864; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), December 8, 1864, November 15, 1860; Fuller, *Oliver P. Morton*, 173-75.

all in. Their platforms were conservative, or more precisely, western conservative. Unfortunately for Republicans, they made too many promises. They had to keep up their end of the bargain if they wanted to keep conservatives.

After the election was over the Republican editor of the *Weekly Wabash Express* in Terre Haute celebrated the victory and predicted success in the war. “Like a lance of fire, have the thunderbolts of war have descended upon the misguided and deluded people of the South, until within their rear and front, their circumscribed dominions are fringed with lines of blue, and battlements of steel.” When the editor observed the Republicans victories in Indiana, he made one request. “One of the first duties imperiously incumbent upon the Legislature which is soon to assemble in this State, is to take the necessary steps to amend the 13th article of the State Constitution.” Although Lincoln and the Republicans prevailed the law still officially forbade African American settlement and many Hoosiers wanted the old state constitution intact. If Republicans took up the cause and repealed Article Thirteen, they were in for a fight.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), November 23, 1864.

Chapter 5: Conservative flight

On a summer day in 1868, Union veterans from across the nation gathered in Indianapolis for a convention. The battle hardened men belonged to a national veterans' organization founded two years earlier called the White Union Boys in Blue. The new organization formed chapters throughout Indiana. After only a few years the society spread beyond the state. It grew larger and members held state and national conventions drawing thousands of former soldiers who discussed their memories of the war. Members in this new order welcomed all veterans except one particular group; they had expressly banned African Americans. At the Indianapolis convention, they put their racism on display. Delegates condemned a new Republican plan to fund schools for African American children in the state, and they denounced impartial suffrage. These men were Republicans and Democrats and they were adamant, they wanted white supremacy preserved. Although a Republican president led the Union to victory three years earlier, the meeting showed just how tenuously Republicans clung to political power. Any threat to white supremacy in the state could seriously damage or cripple the party.¹

In 1862, Hoosier conservatives, angered at Abraham Lincoln for issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, backed Democrats. Their defections coupled with Republican missteps nearly hobbled Lincoln and his party during the Civil War. Learning from their mistakes, Republicans quickly regained the upper hand. Two years later, they dampened down their more radical voices, painted Democrats as rebels, avoided questions about the fate of newly freed slaves in the South, and assured voters emancipation meant an end to slavery rather than

¹ *Union White Boys in Blue: Constitution and Proceedings of the Soldiers' And Sailors' Convention, Held At Indianapolis, Indiana, On Wednesday, Eighth Day of April, 1868.* (Indianapolis: Sentinel Printing and Binding Establishment, 1868), 9-11.

social equality for African Americans. Indiana Republicans adopted the same strategy and avoided questions about African American settlement in the state, citizenship for the freemen, or suffrage. Their strategy worked. Conservatives returned, propelled Lincoln into his second term, and guaranteed Republican majorities in most northern states.

Keeping the conservatives proved a challenge for Republicans. They had promised them a Union with white supremacy intact, but Reconstruction threatened to end it. To keep them, Indiana Republicans, particularly those in the southern and central parts of the state, weakened civil rights legislation at home, sidelined their more radical members, backed conservative national candidates, and labeled Democrats as radicals. They assured conservatives that white supremacy was safe; there was no need to back the traitorous Democrats. The amity between Republicans and conservatives ended in 1870. That year a Republican dominated Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment. African American men could vote throughout the country for the first time. Outraged conservatives slowly left the Republican Party. Alarmed at the defections, the national party slowly backed off Reconstruction in 1872, one year before the depression in 1873.

Historians usually attribute Republican success after the Civil War to anger towards ex-Confederates, the connections between the Democratic Party and the Confederacy, or party loyalty. The Republican Party's pledge to keep white supremacy should garner more attention. Historians often cite Republican attempts to portray themselves as conservative in 1856, 1860, and 1864. However, their run towards conservatism continued well after the war ended. As Leslie Schwalm noted, northerners were terrified about African Americans moving north in great numbers and Republicans had to allay these fears. At every step they explained Reconstruction as necessary to keep the former slaves in the South, and to ensure ex-Confederates never rose

again. They were winning at the ballot box and passing civil rights legislation, yet the party kept bending to retain conservatives. As Matthew Stanley argued, westerners downplayed the emancipation legacy of the Civil War and played up their fight for the Union. Republican appeals to conservatives played an early role in this process. While Mark Summers and others argued that Reconstruction accomplished a great deal, the success happened while Republicans played up their own allegiance to conservatism.²

After staggering defeats in 1864, Indiana Democrats knew they had to win back conservatives. Most conservatives were those war Democrats and conservative Republicans that pushed Lincoln into the White House in 1864, and they could tip the balance of power in the state. It was a difficult task for the once powerful party. The Democrats' perceived association with the Confederacy and Republican efforts to downplay their own radicalism on racial issues kept enough conservatives in the Republican column. Democrats needed something to peel off enough conservative voters. National Republicans seemingly delivered a possible divisive issue in January 1865. Congress, in a close vote, passed a Constitutional Amendment that abolished slavery. Before it entered law, three-fourths of the state legislatures in the Union had to ratify the amendment. Ratification seemed a tailor made for Democrats. They could use it to drive a wedge between Republicans and racist conservative voters wary of losing white supremacy. With

² Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Perennial, 1988), 523-26; Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 189, 211-12; Brian Matthew Jordan, *Marching Home: Union Veterans and Their Unending Civil War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015), 71-72; Leslie A. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 5; Andrew L. Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction: The Liberal Republicans in the Civil War Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), xii-xiii; Matthew E. Stanley, *The Loyal West: Civil War and Reunion in Middle America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 33-46; Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 4-5.

skilled political maneuvers, a few ambitious Democrats hoped they could win enough conservative Republicans in state legislatures to defeat the amendment altogether.³

Indiana Democrats geared up for a battle against ratification. With a minority in the state House of Representatives and just a two-seat majority in the state Senate, they needed party unity or a few conservative Republican defections to defeat the amendment. Before the debates started, Democrats took their cause to the public. They recycled the same arguments they used against emancipation, namely, if the government ended slavery, African Americans were bound to come north. Not everyone heeded the warning. A Republican newspaper editor in Evansville lampooned the racist fear mongering in a farcical article. He depicted Democrats huddled in terror over the newly emancipated slaves asking God to keep the slaves in the South: “Lord don’t let the nigger come North, lest they become our equals; and in much mercy don’t abolish slavery, lest they become our superiors.” If Democrats could pick off conservative Republicans with their racial fear mongering, they could still defeat the amendment.⁴

Once the General Assembly took up the amendment, Republican legislators moved quickly for ratification. All Republicans in the House supported the amendment and five Democrats joined them. The five defectors represented northern districts where the many antislavery constituents, who vastly outnumbered their conservative neighbors, could make reelection almost impossible should they vote against it. The vote in the Senate was closer. With a narrow minority, Republicans needed help. Surprisingly, they got it. Two Democrats from antislavery districts voted for ratification and their votes were just enough to push it through. After Indiana ratified the amendment, newspapers followed the debates in other state legislatures

³ James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 481.

⁴ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), January 10 and January 27, 1865; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 17, 1865.

State by state, they counted down the number needed for ratification. Enough states ratified the amendment and Secretary of State William Seward certified it in December 1865, making slavery illegal in the United States.⁵

Though the vote in the State Senate was close, the Thirteenth Amendment legally ended an institution on its last legs. The war had practically destroyed slavery and ending it only indirectly affected non-slave states. Even with slavery prohibited in the South, Indiana could still restrict suffrage and public education to whites only. Conservatives could take further comfort in the supreme law of the state. Article Thirteen in the State Constitution remained in force and authorities would remove any African American migrants brave enough to settle in the state. Hoping for a wedge issue, Democrats pushed the doom and gloom scenarios on the public in order to rebound from their losses in 1864. Their strategy failed. The fight over ratification never prompted the conservative exodus Democrats hoped for. Even worse, the party lost cohesion and the amendment passed. After Indiana ratified the amendment, Democrats looked for another issue to regain the initiative. They seemingly found one when Republicans turned to Article Thirteen in their own state constitution.⁶

Most Indiana Republicans recognized the political danger with Article Thirteen. They avoided the subject during the 1864 campaign and showed little inclination to bring it up again. Despite the danger, a few of them rebelled. In the Indiana House, William W. Higgins, a northern Indiana Republican, offered a solution. Rather than amend the state constitution, a lengthy process, Higgins proposed a bill to repeal the 1852 enforcement act. The act fined African Americans caught residing in the state and any white employers who dared to hire them.

⁵ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), January 6 and February 11 and February 13, 1865; *Hendricks County Union* (Plainfield, IN), February 16, 1865; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana During the Forty-Fourth Session of the General Assembly, Commencing Thursday, January 5, 1865* (Indianapolis: W.R. Holloway, State Printer, 1865), 395-97; Oakes, *Freedom National*, 484-85.

⁶ Oakes, *Freedom National*, 374-90.

Republican D. R. Van Buskirk introduced a similar bill in the state Senate. Van Buskirk, a Christian minister from central Indiana who served as a chaplain for the 134th Indiana infantry, urged his colleagues to overturn the act. Democrats sprang to action. They moved to reject the bills outright and maintain a solid resistance to repeal. Unable to gain enough votes, the House tabled Higgins's bill while the Senate tabled Van Buskirk's. Repeal had to wait.⁷

Others outside the General Assembly urged repeal. The 1864 Western Yearly Meeting of Friends of Southern and Western Indiana and Eastern Illinois were among those who disagreed with the ban. The friends, or Quakers, drafted a memorial to the Indiana Senate and House and called on the General Assembly to repeal Article Thirteen and the 1852 enforcement act.

Therefore we recommend to the General Assembly of the State of Indiana, that justice, humanity, and respect to the civil and religious rights of all men, demand the passage of a joint resolution, striking from the Constitution of our State, the 13th article thereof, and that all laws rendering Indians and negroes incompetent witnesses in courts of justice, ought, in accordance with the spirit of the age, to be repealed during the present session of this General Assembly, and that the act entitled at [sic] act to enforce the 13th article of the Constitution, approved June the 18th, 1852, ought to be repealed.

The memorial recommended schools for African American children if local citizens objected to their presence in common schools—education was important for Quakers. Republicans in both bodies presented the memorial during the 1865 session, and, even with a majority in the House and near majority in the Senate, they tabled it.⁸

⁷ *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), November 23, 1865; *The Prairie Chieftain* (Monticello, IN), April 22, 1851; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), January 10, 1852; Lewis A. Harding ed., *History of Decatur County Indiana: Its People, Industries and Institutions* (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Company, Inc., 1915), 259-60; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana During the Forty-Fourth Session of the General Assembly*, (Indianapolis: W.R. Holloway State Printer, 1865), 384, 851; *Journal of the Indiana State Senate, During the Forty-Fourth Session of the General Assembly, Commencing Thursday, January 5, 1865* (Indianapolis: W.R. Holloway, State Printer, 1865), 403, 451.

⁸ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, 1865*, 758-59; *Journal of the Indiana State Senate, 1865*, 92.

Despite their failures on these civil rights bills, Republicans seemingly had an edge over Democrats that ensured their political dominance. The Civil War was going very well. Ulysses S. Grant was on the offensive. Union forces under his command captured Richmond, Virginia, in April 1865. After the Confederate capital fell, General Robert E. Lee surrendered his army a few days later. William T. Sherman cornered another Confederate army in North Carolina while Confederate President Jefferson Davis was on the run. Northerners celebrated their achievements then turned their literary guns each other. One Union soldier wrote home and noted the disgust his fellow soldiers shared for copperheads back in Indiana saying soldiers were “aching to be at home, in order to go for the copperheads...” The letter was an ominous warning and portended doom for the Democratic Party. A Republican president led the nation to victory, and Democrats had dogged him at every turn.⁹

Amidst their celebration a shock hit on April 14. John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln at Ford’s theater. The President died the next day. When the news reached Indiana, Republicans and some Democrats went into public mourning. The extensive railroad network in the North literally brought the pain close to home. On its way to Illinois, Lincoln’s funeral train passed through Indianapolis where mourners viewed the deceased President one last time. Privately some Democrats feared the worst. One Democrat predicted a “long night of gloom” and a military despotism shortly after the assassination. “We are to have an oligarchy of wealth and a nation of paupers, the sequence to the combination must be serfdom and slavery, sooner or later.” Indiana Democrats, like many southerners, feared a vengeful Republican Congress with a vengeful new President. As it turned out, their prediction was wrong.¹⁰

⁹ *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), April 6, 1865.

¹⁰ W.D. Latshaw to John G. Davis, May 12, 1865 John G. Davis Papers Box 4 Folder 15, Indiana Historical Society Indianapolis, IN (hereinafter cited as IHS).

While the nation mourned Lincoln there were signs Indiana Democrats could still use racism to draw off conservative voters. In Evansville, southern Indiana's largest city, authorities charged five African Americans with rape and the attempted murder of a German Catholic woman. After authorities took the men into custody, residents circulated a paper and urged readers to take matters into their own hands. They did. A riot broke out in the city and the mob burned down the home of one African American resident. The accused suffered a worse fate. Rioters broke into the city jail and murdered two of the men in custody. According to one source, the mob walked past a white man charged with raping a nine-year-old girl and exclusively targeted the African Americans. For weeks after the lynching, the killers flaunted their involvement while local authorities took no action.¹¹

The riot and murders in Evansville were not isolated incidents. Governor Oliver Morton sent Lieutenant Governor Conrad Baker and others to investigate the matter and recommend a response. The investigators confirmed the murders and uncovered other troubling news. Several white citizens had threatened any business owner who employed African Americans. They also circulated papers warning African Americans to leave the state, and then threatened violence against any who remained. Baker estimated the hostile residents had forced all African Americans, including military veterans, to leave nearby Warrick County. Several even left Indiana for Kentucky, a state where slavery remained intact at the time. One dismayed investigator recommended two regiments of militia to quell the racial violence in southern Indiana and restore order. Amidst the horrors going on in southern Indiana, repealing Article Thirteen was undoubtedly a difficult path.¹²

¹¹ James G. Jones to Oliver P. Morton, August 2, 1865 and Conrad Baker to Oliver P. Morton, August 9, 1865, in the Conrad Baker Papers Box 1 Folder 7, IHS; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 21, 1865.

¹² James G. Jones to Oliver P. Morton, August 2, 1865, Alnah Johnson to Oliver P. Morton, August 8 1865, Conrad Baker to Oliver P. Morton, August 9, 1865, in the Conrad Baker Papers Box 1 Folder 7.

Regardless of the difficulty, Morton called a special session of the General Assembly for the fall of 1865. Most observers predicted a fierce contest over repeal. Before the special session, conservatives, primarily in the Democratic Party, warned against repealing the exclusion law. Most appropriated the same argument they used against emancipation in 1862 and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment; the newly freed slaves were sure to come north. Even if they stayed in the South, once freed, they could not support themselves without government aid and “every man who executes a note, deed, mortgage, or valuable paper of any kind helps pay for the support of idle and worthless negroes.” Economic support for African Americans was only the start. Republicans wanted suffrage for these potential supporters and suffrage meant equality with whites. Using a strong centralized government the Republican Party planned to step over state laws and overturn every suffrage qualification in the country.¹³

Democrats held conventions across the state to address Article Thirteen. In Clinton County, Indiana, in the west central part of the state, delegates at the Democratic convention endorsed the prohibition against African American settlement. “That we are in favor of enforcing the provision of the Constitution of Indiana, which prohibits negroes moving into this State, and also prohibits their employment,” read one resolution passed at the meeting. At a southeastern Indiana rally, Democrats warned Germans at a rally that Republicans wanted to elevate African Americans to their equals through the vote. These were issues Democrats could run on and likely win. Republicans brought radical change to society and Democrats stood against them as a conservative wall. One confident editor predicted the nation was sure to elect a “conservative

¹³ *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), October 5, 1865; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), September 9, 1865.

Congress” the next year “and place the country all right.” Though buoyant, Democrats still needed conservative Republican votes in order to win.¹⁴

There were more ominous signs for Republicans if they had any thoughts about impartial suffrage. Should the General Assembly overturn Article Thirteen, suffrage for African Americans was out of the question. Many Hoosiers rejected the idea outright and opposition crossed party lines. In southern Indiana, a group of veterans gathered in Gibson County for a convention. They endorsed President Andrew Johnson, denounced slavery, and lamented the fallen Lincoln. The former soldiers then expressed their support for exclusive white male suffrage. One resolution forcefully stated, “Resolved, That we are opposed to any alteration, of our State Constitution giving Negroes and Mulattoes the right of suffrage, or placing them upon them a greater social or political equality with ourselves than they now enjoy under the laws of the State...” Opposed to slavery yet opposed to impartial suffrage, veterans who fought for the Union could easily make their way into the Democratic Party over racial issues. An alliance between conservative Republicans and Democrats was certainly possible.¹⁵

When the General Assembly convened, Governor Morton laid out his agenda. He called for a Soldiers’ relief fund, a soldiers’ and seamen’s home for wounded volunteers, and a reformed financial system. Both seemed like lofty goals sure to make it through the Assembly. Then the governor turned to civil rights. Morton wanted to legalize African American testimony in court cases against whites and fund a public school system for African American children. He passed on any explicit call to repeal Article Thirteen or extend the franchise and left those issues to allies in the Assembly. Although he punted on repeal and suffrage, other Republicans

¹⁴ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), October 9, 1865; *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), October 13, 1865; *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), October 26, 1865.

¹⁵ *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 16, 1865.

embraced the issues. Going into the session the question remained, could Republicans unify on the measures he recommended.¹⁶

Republican leaders in the House took up a joint resolution amending Article Thirteen in the session's first days. If they could pick off some Democrats, they could start the process to strike out the article altogether. Their push to ensure rights for African Americans went even further. Agreeing with Morton's suggestions, several representatives backed another measure permitting African Americans to testify in court cases against white residents. Others introduced a bill to fund schools for African American children. Like Morton, they left suffrage for another day. As legislators argued over each bill, political observers speculated on the outcome. One bold Republican correspondent predicted the House could easily pass all the measures in short order. However he offered no prediction on the results in the Senate since the parties were almost evenly split. He was a little over confident. Republicans held a majority in the House. However if a few defected, their measures faced an uncertain fate before they ever made it to the Senate.¹⁷

Republicans moved against Article Thirteen first. A Republican state representative introduced the bill. In his motion, the Republican noted the many thousand African Americans veterans who fought in the war. He argued they had earned their right to settle in the state as loyal defenders of the Union. Democrats immediately opposed the measure. Democratic Representative Samuel H. Buskirk, who hailed from Monroe County, in the South of the state, warned about an invasion of former slaves. When the vote came, the House passed the resolution. Only three southern Indiana Republicans defected on the final vote, the party held together. Then the Senate took up the measure. With the House bill waiting, the Senators never

¹⁶ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, During the Called Session of the General Assembly, Commencing Monday, November 13, 1865* (Indianapolis: W.R. Holloway, State Printer, 1865), 26-31, 34-35, 36-40.

¹⁷ *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), November 23 and November 30, 1865; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, called session, 1865*, 480.

passed a joint resolution or even took a vote on repeal. An Illinois newspaper criticized the failure although one Indiana Republican predicted the state could never enforce the law again.¹⁸

Conservative Republicans continued to make their presence known. The House committee on education endorsed an amendment to the “act to provide for a general system of common schools.” Under the amendment, the state taxed African Americans along with their white neighbors to fund the public schools. Even though they proposed segregated schools, taxes collected from white citizens, under the bill, funded these new schools for African American children. Democrats on the committee issued a minority report and protested the move as an enticement to former slaves in the South: “Now that the institution of slavery is broken up, the negroes will of necessity flock to that section, State or country which holds the greatest inducements.” One Democrat introduced an amendment to the bill dividing the tax revenue. The addition segregated the education fund so money collected from white residents only went towards schools for white children. The amendment found support and four Republicans agreed to it. When the final bill came up for a vote the next day, it failed. The Senate never took up a similar measure. The Democrats in that body were too strong.¹⁹

Though Republicans largely failed to enact Morton’s ambitious agenda, one civil rights measure made it through. When the session ended African Americans could finally testify against whites in court. Although an achievement, it was incomplete. The act only applied to African Americans residing in the state before 1850 when the state adopted the second constitution. Most Republicans were disappointed. Democrats in the Senate successfully protected Article Thirteen along with the enforcement laws passed in 1852. The Republican

¹⁸ *Indianapolis Daily Herald* (Indianapolis, IN), April 16, 1866; *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), November 23 and November 30, 1865; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, called session 1865*, 276-77.

¹⁹ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, called session, 1865*, 145, 481-82, 510.

Party itself lost cohesion on several bills. Conservative Republicans such as T.T. Wright, Augustus Welch, Henry Groves, and Robert Boyd (only one hailed from a northern Indiana county) had altered and even defeated legislation that threatened white supremacy in the state. Although Morton had high hopes for meaningful change, the special session revealed fissures within the party. These fissures expanded over time.²⁰

Stung after their legislative defeats, Republicans regrouped. In the election year of 1866, the party needed to stay together. Once again, Republicans called their party the Union Party in an appeal to all “loyal men.” In a further display of unity, they placed Union veterans and former Democrats front and center in their campaign. At the state convention in March, former governor and one time Democrat Paris C. Dunning urged party unity. Initially, delegates obliged him. They passed a mild platform on racial issues. In a clear bid to keep conservative voters, the delegates never explicitly called for an expanded franchise or equal funding for public education. They left those battles for yet another day rather than risk defections. In one final appeal to veterans, delegates celebrated the Republican Party as the loyal party that won the war and saved the Union from traitors. They hoped to use the loyalty card once again and stem any possible defections.²¹

Although Indiana Republicans hoped to avoid discussions about race, national concerns made them unavoidable. After their surrender, numerous Confederates took the loyalty oath and expected to enjoy their old rights as United States citizens. Taking their newly printed pardons home, several entered politics and won election to state offices. With their large majorities in southern state legislatures, they enacted laws termed Black Codes. These peculiar laws

²⁰ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, called session, 1865*, 276-77; *Weekly Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), September 23, 1865; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), January and January 8, 1866; *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), December 9, 1865.

²¹ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), March 1, 1866.

established apprenticeship programs that kept the former slaves tied to certain areas, used those imprisoned as unpaid labor, and maintained racial restrictions on suffrage. Enraged at the new laws in the South, Republicans in Washington refused to seat those former Confederates elected to Congress. Despite their actions, white supremacy had returned in the South. After a hard fought war, some Republicans asked if the war was even over.²²

The political battles over Black Codes created a new fault line for Republicans throughout the North. The first wedge between conservative and more liberal Republicans emerged over one man. Andrew Johnson had been popular among northerners during the war. He remained in the United States Senate after Tennessee left the Union in 1861, the only senator from a seceded state to keep his seat. An impressed Lincoln appointed him military governor of his home state one year later. While governor, Johnson ended slavery in Tennessee. Hoping to win over skeptical northern and border state Democrats, Republicans placed the popular southerner on the national ticket in 1864, making him Lincoln's Vice President. After a few weeks on the job, Johnson assumed the presidency upon Lincoln's death. His early days as president alarmed few. The Tennessean initially spoke of retribution against the South as punishment for the war. Delighted, Republicans gave Johnson some leeway and expected the former tailor to agree with their plans for southern reconstruction.²³

They were soon disappointed. Johnson had his own plans for the South. A virulent racist, the president believed African Americans should leave governing to white men. According to Johnson, since those former Confederates elected to Congress won the popular vote, they should take their seats. Johnson extended another olive branch to the former rebels. The new president argued that each seceded state should reenter the Union after it ratified the Thirteenth

²² Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 72-79.

²³ Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 211-12, 299-300, 334.

Amendment. He extended forgiveness to individual southerners as well. When former Confederates applied to Johnson for a pardon, he readily granted them. Republicans excused him at first. They thought they could work with him or at least rein him in. Their opinion changed in early 1866. When Johnson vetoed the Freedmen's Bureau Bill and Civil Right's Bill and then refused to move against the Black Codes, Republicans in Congress responded. They overrode his vetoes, forcing the bills into law. A frustrated Johnson dug in and both sides drew battle lines.²⁴

Indiana's Representatives in Washington tackled reconstruction with their Congressional colleagues. Those in the House had been elected two years earlier when Republicans won most Congressional districts. After the speaker called for the vote in the House, all Indiana Republicans present voted for the bill and all Democrats present opposed. After Johnson vetoed the legislation, every Hoosier Republican present voted to override the veto. Schuyler Colfax, the Speaker of the House, joined in and voted to override the veto with his Republican colleagues. Votes in the Senate showed a similar party split. Henry S. Lane voted for the Civil Rights Bill, while Thomas A. Hendricks, the Democrat, voted against it. At least in Washington, Republicans supported radical legislation. Their colleagues back home faced a dilemma.²⁵

The battles between Johnson and the party in Washington divided Indiana Republicans. Some wanted to work with the southern-born president. Others were frustrated at Lincoln's supposed heir and the 1866 state platform reflected a party with internal divisions just waiting for a spark to split it apart. Delegates at the Republican state convention supported Johnson as president yet declared Congress the only authority to reconstruct the southern states. They further backed congressional Republicans for their stance against former Confederates and the southern

²⁴ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 183-84, 243-48.

²⁵ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), November 10, 1864; U.S. Congress, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States: 39th Cong., 1st sess.*, February 6, 1866, March 13, 1866, April 6, 1866, 239-40, 396-97, 528; U.S. Congress, *Journal of the Senate of the United States of America, 39th Cong., 1st sess.*, February 2, 1866, 131-32.

state governments, another blow against Johnson's plan for reconstruction. Still, delegates hoped for improved relations between both sides. Governor Dunning pleaded for unity saying, "now let us have no rebellion in the Republican Party." Still the party faithful faced a problem. If they publicly condemned Johnson they risked losing conservative members in the coming election. If they supported him, they could lose radicals.²⁶

Johnson's battles with the radicals in Washington were too much for most Indiana Republicans. They broke with the president after he vetoed the Civil Rights Bill calling him a traitor to the party and a traitor to the nation. Amidst the dispute, some conservative Republicans stuck with him. The editors of the *Richmond Palladium*, two former Whigs, supported Johnson over the radicals. They agreed with the president's lenient policies towards the South and opposed congressional legislation on the elective franchise. According to the old Whigs, the franchise was a state matter and Congress should leave it alone. They berated the radicals in their own party and eventually turned on George Washington Julian, a man they had supported on numerous occasions. Hoping to build a new movement, Johnson supporters called for a convention in Indianapolis and termed it: "The Friends of Lincoln and Johnson restoration policy." The hopeful conservatives set the convention date for May.²⁷

Johnson then committed a critical blunder. The optimistic Tennessean called for a convention in Philadelphia where he hoped to unite conservative Republicans, Democrats, and others in a push against his radical Republican enemies. A united front ensured his supporters a majority in Congress and stymie further efforts to reconstruct the South. Well before the meeting, rumors flew about the convention. Some expected former Confederates among the delegates, many fresh off the battlefields where they had killed northern men. The scheme

²⁶ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), March 1, 1866.

²⁷ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), April 16 and July 26, 1866; *Daily Herald* (Indianapolis, IN), May 15, 1866.

needed a skilled politician to balance the various factions for a coherent political party strong enough to pull in Democrats and pick off enough Republicans. Failure meant several more years of radical control in Congress and tough times for the president. Johnson allies sent out the notice. Confident, they expected a rising tide of support for the embattled president.²⁸

Once news about the meeting reached Indiana, numerous Johnson supporters abandoned the president. The editor of the Lafayette *Courier*, and a recent Johnson Republican, refused to work with peace Democrats or ex-Confederates. He lamented, “We had adhered to the failing fortunes of Mr. Johnson, so long as we could do so inside the Republican organization...” The former Confederates coupled with the peace Democrats were too much for the editor. A few remaining supporters pushed the Johnson State convention to July and set to work organizing enough delegates to justify a meeting. They placed an advertisement in the Democratic Indianapolis *Daily Herald* calling all supporters including those “opposed to negro suffrage in the District of Columbia and elsewhere...” The new organization had the potential to tear the Republican Party apart if it could attract enough supporters. Unfortunately, for them, they were losing allies fast.²⁹

The pro-Johnson convention met in Indianapolis on July 19th, and former Brigadier General Solomon Meredith served as president. Several speakers railed against the radical Republicans. They claimed most radicals were New Englanders out to hurt the West and enrich their own region. The unanimity ended when delegates drafted a platform. Rising before the convention, John L. Hanna offered several resolutions. Hanna had moved to Kansas during the 1850s where he joined the anti-slavery territorial legislature. He had returned to Indiana when Lincoln appointed him United States District Attorney for his state and turned into a staunch

²⁸ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 264.

²⁹ *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), July 17, 1866; *Indianapolis Daily Herald* (Indianapolis, IN), July 19, 1866.

Republican. Four years later, Johnson reappointed the former Kansan to another term. Hanna's resolutions shocked those in attendance. They disavowed the Philadelphia convention due to the many peace Democrats appointed as delegates whom Hanna called traitors. The convention rejected the resolutions without a vote then adopted a new slate. They expressed confidence in Johnson, support for his restoration policy, state control over suffrage, and payment of the national debt. The convention appointed several delegates to the national meeting in Philadelphia and then adjourned.³⁰

After the state convention broke up, the editors of the *Richmond Palladium* rejected Johnson and the Philadelphia convention. Although they "cared nothing for the veto of the Freedmen's Bureau Bill," they criticized the veto of the Civil Rights Bill and opposed any collusion with traitors in the proposed new political party. The two men stuck with the president through his vetoes of the Civil Rights Bill, supported his restoration plans, and opposed congressional interference with the vote. They only abandoned the president after he invited former Confederates to join with him in a new party. Near Lafayette in central Indiana, several Johnson men interrupted a local township meeting where they proposed resolutions in support of the president. Johnson opponents overwhelmingly voted them down. After the disastrous state convention, only a very few Johnson supporters remained.³¹

In August, the five delegates chosen at the state convention made their way to Philadelphia. Several served on committees and watched the developments hoping for a united front. Anti-Johnson Republicans at home called them a "speckled brood" and noted: "The convention is composed of about one-tenth fossilized Whigs and sore-head Republicans, three-

³⁰ *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), July 23, 1866; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), July 26, 1866; *History of Hendricks County, Indiana* (Chicago: Inter-State Publishing Co., 1885), 619-22

³¹ *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), August 16, 1866; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), July 26, 1866.

tenths McClellan War Democrats, three-tenths Vallandigham-Sons-of-Liberty Democrats, and three-tenths Southern Rebels.” Congressman David S. Kilgore, the same man who supported the original proslavery Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1861, was the most prominent Indiana Republican at the convention, and the Republican press in Indiana hammered him. Despite high hopes for unity, the convention was a failure. It produced little results and a new party never emerged. Inviting ex-Confederates was the breaking point for most Republicans. They hated their radical enemies in Congress, but they hated their former enemies on the battlefield even more.³²

The split between Johnson and congressional Republicans excited Democrats. As they gathered for their 1866 state convention they were joyful about their prospects. If they could pick off a few of those remaining Johnson Republicans through racist appeals, they could regain the initiative. Delegates to the state convention voiced their support for Article Thirteen in the state constitution, rejected temperance laws, opposed religious intolerance, and they endorsed President Johnson’s plan to return the seceded states to full membership in the Union. In a cross-party appeal they urged all “conservative men” in Indiana to join with them against the radicals. Democrats once again employed an antiparty call to whites in every party. As the convention adjourned, the time seemed ripe for a grand union between conservative Republicans and Democrats.³³

Radical Republicans had apparently given Democrats another gift. Though they had high hopes for their Civil Rights Bill, Republicans in Washington realized it was vulnerable to legal challenge. Only a constitutional amendment could ward off a negative court decision.

³² *The Proceedings of the National Union Convention Held at Philadelphia, August 14, 1866* (Washington: Resident Executive Committee, 1866), 7-9, 24-26; *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 16, 1866; Daniel W. Crofts, *Lincoln and the Politics of Slavery: The Other Thirteenth Amendment and the Struggle to Save the Union* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 215-17.

³³ *Daily Herald* (Indianapolis, IN), March 16, 1866.

Accordingly, Republicans drafted a new constitutional amendment in the spring of 1866. The amendment prevented ex-Confederates from holding office if they broke an oath to the country they took prior to the war, gave southern states less representation in Congress if they disenfranchised African American males, and guaranteed equal protection under the law. Republicans also placed a stipulation that a two-thirds vote in Congress could overturn these restrictions. After several adjustments, the amendment expressly clarified citizens as those born within the United States, including former slaves. Congress passed the amendment and Johnson promptly vetoed it. Supporters overrode the veto and sent the amendment to the states for ratification. Unlike the Thirteenth Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment as written, nullified state laws in Indiana. Reconstruction was no longer restricted to the South.³⁴

When Democrats called their policies conservative, they meant a specific set of policies to maintain white supremacy. Republicans had used constitutional amendments and brought about social change. Strong state governments could slow down or stop these changes. One Johnson Republican called the recent legislation a “war . . . to foist upon us a centralized despotism and degrade the white race to an equality with the negroes.” He then declared himself a conservative willing to work with the opposite party. Limits on the federal government were only a means to stop the drastic social changes. Through stronger state governments Democrats promised to conserve white supremacy. The problem for Democrats lay in their connections with the many ex-Confederates. While they claimed they were conservative, their southern members of the party cast the organization as radical.³⁵

Events in the South gave Republicans a counter argument. While Congress debated the Fourteenth Amendment, violence against southern African Americans intensified. In Memphis,

³⁴ Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 91-93.

³⁵ *Crawfordsville Review* (Crawfordsville, IN), June 23, 1866.

Tennessee, a riot broke out. For three days white residents rampaged through the city and massacred forty-six African Americans. Two months later another riot broke out in New Orleans, Louisiana. Several white residents, many of them ex-Confederates, massacred dozens of African Americans and several white allies assembled to finish drafting a new state constitution for Louisiana. The twin massacres rocked the nation. Even the editor of the *Daily Journal* in Evansville, a conservative on racial matters, condemned the violence in New Orleans. Rather than a defeated people, the ex-Confederates seemed triumphant. Most regained political power while subjugating their African American neighbors. Since the perpetrators were predominantly Democrats, northerners connected the events with the Democratic Party. With the violence in the South it was hard for Democrats to claim they were the conservative party, they were in fact radicals.³⁶

The ex-Confederate resurgence in the South was a political gift to Republicans. They linked their political opponents to the carnage. When Democrats declared themselves conservatives, Republicans challenged them head on. One editor asked: “What makes a rebel a conservative?” Democrats had supported the rebels during the Civil War, how dare they call themselves conservative. In several speeches Governor Morton called Democrats the true radical party. The South had descended into violence. Organizations roved the region terrorizing African Americans and their white allies, while ex-Confederates, traitors, had returned to power. According to Morton, Democrats were still the party of traitors just as they had been during the war. They favored voting rights for ex-Confederates and supported greater representation for

³⁶ *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), August 7, 1866; Stephen V. Ash, *A Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot that Shook The Nation One Year After the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013), 3-8.

southern states over their northern counterparts. The Confederacy seemed to rise again with the full-throated support of northern Democrats.³⁷

Painting Democrat as radical traitors was only part of the Republican argument. Republicans reassured voters that citizenship for African Americans under the new Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution did not guarantee the right to vote. P.S. Kennedy, speaking in central Indiana, defended Reconstruction and the Fourteenth Amendment as conservative measures against the ascendant ex-Confederates inciting violence in the South. Then the Republican went a step further. He assured his audience that citizenship did not guarantee the vote. Manumitted slaves were counted as citizens of North Carolina before the war, yet they could not vote. The law in Indiana still restricted the vote to white males and it remained unaffected. Women were citizens, yet state law refused them suffrage and few Republicans openly called for universal suffrage. By voting Republican conservatives could keep white supremacy without voting for the radical Democrats. In their campaign, Republicans had discovered the breaking point for most conservatives. Any move towards impartial suffrage could send the crucial voters into the Democratic camp.³⁸

The strategy worked. With Article Thirteen intact, their assurances about racial restrictions on the vote, and the violence in the South, Republicans cruised to victory. The party won majorities in the General Assembly including many seats in the southern and central parts of the state. With a Republican governor the party had total control over the state for the first time since 1862. The results held national implications. Republicans won eight Congressional seats although a Democrat narrowly won the Third Congressional District in southern Indiana. Republicans had ratified the Thirteenth Amendment and those in Washington supported

³⁷ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), August 2, 1866; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), September 20, 1866.

³⁸ *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), September 6, 1866.

congressional Reconstruction, yet they still held an edge at the ballot box. Republican congressional candidates won an aggregate of over twelve thousand more votes and in the state races won an average of fourteen thousand more votes than their Democratic opponents. Morton had won around twenty thousand votes four years earlier. Conservatives had no reason to fear in 1866. White supremacy in the state was intact and conservatives remained in the Republican Party.³⁹

Despite Republican assurances, Reconstruction hit home in early 1866. In Lafayette, an African American employee sued a hotel owner for his wages. He argued the owner owed several months back pay for his work. Counsel for the hotel owner argued the Thirteenth Article in the State Constitution forbade African American settlement in the state. Since the employee was in the state illegally, the suit was void. Undaunted, an attorney for the employee pointed to the Civil Rights Act. Though awaiting ratification, the attorney argued the recent legislation nullified Article Thirteen in the Indiana Constitution. The judge agreed. He ordered the hotel owner to restore the unpaid wages. The defeated hotel owner appealed his case to the circuit court. That judge confirmed the lower court's ruling. The magistrate pointed to the Fourteenth Amendment. Though he was an African American in the state illegally under the state constitution, the plaintiff was a citizen of the United States and qualified to bring a suit.⁴⁰

The case made it to the Indiana Supreme Court in November. Counsel again argued the plaintiff was illegally in the state and urged the court to dismiss the case outright. The justices disagreed. The court ruled the Civil Rights Bill nullified Article Thirteen in the State Constitution; the man was in the state legally. In the court's opinion, African Americans could settle in the state, bring suits against other parties, and work for white employers. The court then

³⁹ *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), November 5, 1866; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), November 8, 1866.

⁴⁰ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), April 19, 1866.

placed a caveat on its decision. In the opinion for the majority, the justices ruled the Civil Rights Bill only applied to citizenship. In their opinion, citizenship did not include suffrage. To soothe white supremacists, Republicans quickly pointed to the caveat when they announced the decision. Reconstruction had knocked down a law in Indiana. A few wondered how many more were at risk.⁴¹

The court's decision made Article Thirteen a moot point in the state; repeal was no longer a political liability for Republicans. In January 1867, the General Assembly convened for the regular session and they immediately took up a debate on Article Thirteen. With so many Republicans in the General Assembly they could pass legislation at will. This time repeal worked. Republicans promptly introduced legislation to repeal the 1852 Enforcement Act. Though Article Thirteen remained in the state constitution, repealing the enforcement act negated it altogether. The House failed to pass the bill the first time then left the issue up to its sister chamber. The Senate passed repeal twenty-six to sixteen. This time the party held together. On the final tally, only one southern Indiana Republican voted against it. The House passed repeal a few days later. Since the court decision struck down the law, the act was merely symbolic. It changed little. Racial prohibitions remained on voting and marriage.⁴²

The lawmakers then turned to ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. The mood turned ugly quickly. Indignant Democrats threatened to walk out or resign and Republicans vowed to fine them if their opponents followed through on their threat. With their majorities in both the House and the Senate, Republicans easily pushed ratification through. As predicted,

⁴¹ *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), November 8, 1866.

⁴² *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 13, 1867; *Daily Wabash Express* February 21, 1867; *Indianapolis Daily Herald* (Indianapolis, IN), November 2, 1866; *Journal of the Indiana State Senate, During the Forty-Fifth Session of the General Assembly, Commencing Thursday January 10, 1867* (Indianapolis: Alexander H. Connor; State Printer, 1867), 232-34. 664-65; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, During the Forty-Fifth Regular Session of the General Assembly, Commencing Thursday January 10, 1867* (Indianapolis: Alexander H. Conner; State Printer, 1867), 44, 50-51.

every Republican Senator voted for ratification while every Democrat voted against it. Their colleagues in the House ratified the amendment a few days later. Since court rulings and the Civil Rights Act had already granted some civil rights to African Americans in Indiana, the amendment was far less controversial than Democrats hoped. Republicans themselves had downplayed it as punishment for ex-Confederates rather than a measure for African American liberties in the previous year's elections. Their reasoning coupled with violence in the South convinced many that the amendment was a necessity. Contrary to Morton's wishes, the General Assembly failed to desegregate existing schools or fund separate schools. Despite the repeal of the enforcement act and the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, Morton and the Republicans could only go so far.⁴³

Republicans seemed to approach a precipice in 1867. In Washington, radical Republicans established new guidelines for the former Confederate states to reenter the Union under a new series of reconstruction acts. They required each state to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment. The new legislation also required southern states to enfranchise African American males. Democrats screamed. It was only a matter of time before Republicans enfranchised all African American males. One Democrat asked: "What do the Republicans hereabouts say to it? Are they in favor of the course indicated by Mr. Stevens? and will they hereafter vote for men who agree with him in his fanatical schemes of confiscation, negro suffrage, and the military rule of the South?" The issue was a thorny problem for Republicans. If they supported the new acts they played into Democratic warnings about equal suffrage. Indiana Democrats could use it as a wedge issue and win the conservative vote.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), January 17 and August 17, 1867.

⁴⁴ *Indianapolis Daily Herald* (Indianapolis, IN), May 2, 1867; *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), June 27, 1867; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 275-280.

Indiana Republicans assured conservatives the vote was off limits to African Americans. Suffrage for those in the South was only necessary due to the large number of ex-Confederates resisting Reconstruction. One Indiana Republican commented: “In consequence of their rejection of the amendment, negro suffrage was fastened upon them. It was deemed necessary to insure restoration to give the elective franchise to the blacks.” When voters in Ohio rejected African American suffrage in October 1867, most Indiana Republicans praised the results. They called the move unnecessary in Ohio. Since there were so many radicals, African Americans had to vote in order to balance them out. While Democrats called them hypocrites for supporting suffrage in the South and denying it in the North, Republicans insisted they still supported the ban on African American suffrage in Indiana.⁴⁵

The debates over African American suffrage stoked racist fires in Indiana and found traction among Union veterans. Despite their role in ending slavery, many soldiers retained their old racial prejudices. Union soldier John D. Kidd displayed his racism in a letter to his father. In April 1865 the Indiana soldier jocularly suggested that the newly freed slaves better recede to the sidelines once the Union troops leave the South: “For the southern men will shoot them like sheep.” Kidd was not alone. General William T. Sherman, the same man who conquered Atlanta, Georgia, then led his troops through South Carolina and North Carolina, considered freed slaves a burden if they could not serve his armies. He encouraged newly free slaves to stay near the plantations where they had served their white owners. When soldiers returned home their racism surfaced once again. Some joined lead the fight against African American citizenship and suffrage.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Terre-Haute Weekly Express* (Terre Haute, IN), April 17, 1867; *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), August 17, 1867; *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), October 16, 1867.

⁴⁶ Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 100-16; John D. Kidd to Samuel C. Kidd, April 29, 1865, Kidd Family Papers Box 1 Folder 4, IHS; Kristopher A. Teters, *Practical*

The former soldiers' racism found its way into a few veterans' organizations. Although many organizations for veterans welcomed or at least tolerated African American members, there were exceptions. Shortly after the war ended, several Union veterans, primarily Democrats, formed the Union White Boys in Blue. The organization expanded at a rapid pace well beyond Indiana and other western states. In contrast to other veterans' organizations, the "white boys" prohibited African American members. At their 1868 state convention in Indianapolis, members voiced opposition to the Freedmen's Bureau, radical reconstruction, and the education of African American children in the state. They endorsed Johnson despite his battles with Congress and vowed opposition to any further amendments to the Constitution, an obvious warning to Republicans in Washington. If members voted as a block, they could seriously hurt the Republican Party and push Democrats into state offices.⁴⁷

Aware of the many potential defectors, Republicans had to choose their presidential candidate carefully in 1868; they could ill afford to lose either conservatives or radicals. Bearing this in mind, Republicans lobbied for General Ulysses S. Grant. If there ever was a sure bet for president, it was Grant. He defeated the Confederate armies, pleased most Republican leaders in Congress, and kept out of further controversies between Johnson and radical Republicans. The president himself inadvertently magnified Grant in late 1866. When Grant accompanied Johnson on a tour through the North, crowds demanded to see the famous war hero rather than the southern born president. Grant's popularity and leadership experience provided a ready cover for his political inexperience and most Republican leaders settled on the general as their man.⁴⁸

Liberators: Union Officers in the Western Theater during the Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 133.

⁴⁷ *Union White Boys in Blue*, 9-11; Jordan, *Marching Home*, 73-83; Barbara A. Gannon, *The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 3-9.

⁴⁸ Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 97, 306-15.

Despite his popularity with northerners, a few influential Republicans rejected Grant. Horace Greeley, founder of the New York *Tribune*, labeled Grant a conservative, a man opposed to impartial suffrage in all states and Reconstruction in the South. For Greeley a conservative president guaranteed a return to power for the many ex-Confederates. Fortunately for the newspaper publisher, Greeley found a ready alternative. He proposed Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court Salmon P. Chase as a true radical candidate for the presidency. Chase was no stranger to Republican conversations. Due to his popularity among the more radical Republicans in the party, Chase nearly ran against Lincoln in 1864. Like them, he supported “impartial suffrage” and radical Reconstruction in the South. Greeley rejected notions that a Chase candidacy could split the party and confidently predicted a massive victory for the chief justice if he won the nomination. Though Republicans and Democrats across the nation rushed to label themselves conservative, Greeley used it as a pejorative in this instance. Grant intended to abandon the former slaves in the South and reject impartial suffrage in the North. For Greeley a conservative was hideous.⁴⁹

Numerous Republicans rejected Greeley’s optimistic predictions. Chase was too radical to win, especially in the western states. Shortly before the campaign started in 1868, several northern states had rejected “impartial suffrage.” A candidate who supported the issue could split the Republican Party, leaving the way open for a Democrat. One opponent of impartial suffrage summarized the many stances on the perilous issue. “Some of them regard negro suffrage as unwise and inexpedient under any circumstance; others think it endurable where it is the only resource to prevent the late rebel States from falling into the hands of the rebels who formerly controlled them.” Only a minority, a small minority, supported impartial suffrage.

⁴⁹ *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), January 21, 1868.

Chase would split the party and hand the country to Democrats. If Republicans wanted to unite all members, they should find someone else.⁵⁰

Some looked closer to Indiana for a suitable candidate. Before Grant entered the race, Colfax was a leading contender. Support grew in 1867. Although conservatives dominated the party in the state, northern Indianans supported the more radical Colfax. In his home congressional district, Republicans recommended Colfax for the presidency. A circular appeared in Indiana the same year. The unknown author listed “sixteen reasons why our republican party should not run Gen. Grant for president in 1868.” Grant was a Democrat and a traitor to the Republican Party. The general had served as the Secretary of War after Johnson terminated Stanton and never spoke directly against the president. The most damning argument against Grant was his leniency towards former Confederates and his vagueness towards the former slaves. “Because one hundred thousand graves and four millions of freedmen demand a republican president and vice president.” Colfax was a much more suitable and radical candidate, sure to make history. “Because Illinois gave us the immortal Lincoln, and Indiana offers our most available candidate.” Hoping to create a division in the Republican Party, some Democrats brandished the circular in newspapers and chastised Republicans for their criticism of the still popular Grant.⁵¹

Despite the circular and the many endorsements from his home congressional district, few Indiana Republicans supported the native son over Grant. When the General tossed his hat in the ring, the entire party accepted him. The circular was correct about Colfax. In contrast to the relatively unknown General, the Speaker had radical credentials. Colfax toed the party line at

⁵⁰ *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), January 21, 1868.

⁵¹ *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), March 18, 1867; *Indianapolis Daily Herald* (Indianapolis, IN), April 10 and August 31, 1867; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), October 3 and October 10, 1867; *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), July 2, 1868; Ovando J. Hollister, *Life of Schuyler Colfax* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 245, 282, 287-98, 317.

every turn in Washington and he could not compete with the far more popular Grant. He was from a northern Indiana district, a radical district compared with southern and central Indiana, a key reason why he could support radical legislation in Congress. If Indiana Republicans wanted a more radical candidate for the nomination, they could have supported one of their own. Instead, they fell in line behind Grant. At the Republican State convention, delegates offered a resolution endorsing Grant for President and Colfax for Vice President.⁵²

Grant's popularity assured him an easy nomination at the national convention. Richard H. Swift of Indiana made the first motion to nominate Grant for the Presidency. Delegates delayed the nomination and then Indiana Senator Henry S. Lane made another nomination. Both men jumped the gun and the convention decided to wait until the credentials committee reported. Grant's opposition disappeared quickly. Chase and Greeley dropped their opposition before the delegates convened, and no opponent mounted a serious challenge. The war hero sailed to victory. By far, he was the only man who could please conservatives and radicals in the party. With the top nominee decided, Republicans selected the General's running mate.⁵³

The Indiana delegation confidently proposed their favored candidate for the nomination. Senator Lane presented Colfax to the convention and recommended his nomination for vice president. In a tight race, Colfax faced Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio, Reuben F. Fenton of New York, James Speed of Kentucky, and John Andrew Jackson Creswell of Maryland. Every candidate brought positives and negatives to the ticket. Wade was a radical Republican in Congress and constant thorn in President Johnson's side. Fenton was Governor of New York and a former Democrat. Speed was the Former Attorney General and a friend of Lincoln. Creswell

⁵² *Indianapolis Daily Herald* (Indianapolis, IN), December 2, 1867; *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), February 21, 1868.

⁵³ *Proceedings of the National Union Republican Convention, held at Chicago, May 20 and 21* (Chicago: Evening Journal Print, 1868), 29-30

was a Senator and former Whig. Each man disappointed one or more factions in the party. Wade was too radical for conservatives, Fenton and Speed were too conservative for radicals, and Creswell had little support outside Maryland. There were still others looking for the nomination if delegates rejected the front-runners. The convention braced for a raucous nomination process.⁵⁴

In his recommendation, Lane pointed out a particular benefit to Colfax: “With Schuyler Colfax as our standard bearer, we shall carry Indiana—sometimes, slanderously (by evil-minded persons) called a doubtful state...with him we regard it absolutely certain.” The speaker was still popular in the northern parts of his home state and he was certainly the most well known Indiana politician at the time. After roll call, delegates cast their votes. Colfax started in fourth with one hundred and fifteen votes then slowly moved up the ladder. He climbed to second on the next ballot behind Wade. After the sixth ballot, the convention finally decided on the Speaker. Wade was far too radical and others were not radical enough. Colfax was in the middle, too radical to run as president and yet just enough to run as the vice presidential candidate.⁵⁵

Delegates delayed debate on a much more difficult issue when they drafted a platform. The metaphorical elephant in the room at the convention was impartial suffrage. Radical Republicans wanted it; conservatives feared a split the party. The National Council of the Union League of America convened before the Republican convention and recommended Republicans adopt the issue to guarantee “the right of suffrage to every American citizen impartially.” When the Nebraska delegation cast their votes for Grant, they noted their state was the first to adopt impartial suffrage. Creswell supporters cited his support for impartial suffrage in Maryland as a

⁵⁴ *Proceedings of the National Union Republican Convention*, 100.

⁵⁵ *Proceedings of the National Union Republican Convention*, 100, 118-32.

bonus he could bring to the ticket. After little debate, the radical push failed. Convention attendees left impartial suffrage off the platform, saving it for another day.⁵⁶

Democrats had a difficult time finding their candidate. The party had no clear choice going into the election year, and rival factions bitterly contested the nomination. Eventually, former New York Governor Horatio Seymour won the nomination after several ballots. New Yorkers had elected Seymour as their governor in 1862 and he was a potential presidential nominee at the 1864 convention. That year the popular governor declined the nomination and George B. McClellan eventually accepted. Seymour was a renowned politician among Democrats in the North. He criticized the Lincoln administration during the war. The former governor then supported Johnson after the war and an early end to Reconstruction keeping him in the national spotlight. Though he certainly threw all his energies into the race, few expected Seymour to beat the popular Grant.⁵⁷

The race in Indiana put Republicans on edge. With the Union White Boys in Blue, narrow elections in the past, and growing discontent within the Republican Party, the contest came down to the wire. Colfax himself doubted victory in his home state. In a letter to the Republican national committee, the Speaker divided the country into several sections and identified potential problem states. Among the Northwestern states, Colfax identified Indiana as the toughest fight. He predicted a close race and warned of a “sharply contested” election. A native son on the national ticket with a war hero at the top was not enough to ensure certain victory. Without Indiana Grant faced a rugged road to the White House rather than an easy glide.

⁵⁶ *Proceedings of the National Union Republican Convention*, 84-85, 89, 93, 108

⁵⁷ Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 140-45.

Nervous about the state, Republicans canvassed the state and then waited for the election returns.⁵⁸

Once again, their political brothers in the South made it difficult for northern Democrats to assume the conservative mantle. With the violence still going on, Democrats, due to their support for ending the army's presence in the South, appeared radical. Most Republican newspapers scoffed at the Democrats' pretensions to conservatism. The violence gave another way for Republicans to deflect charges of radicalism back on their opponents. When Democrats warned voters Republicans planned to grant suffrage to African Americans in the North as they had in the South, Republicans called it necessary to defeat the unrepentant rebels committing violence. Of course they denied any plans to extend the same privilege to African Americans in Indiana. The stories all added up. Democrats, especially those in the South were still traitors. They threatened violence and were a direct risk to the United States. According to Republicans, Democrats were not conservative.⁵⁹

The General won. Grant was still popular in the North for leading the Union war effort. Nearly every southern state went for Grant due to a new source of voters. African Americans, many voting for the first time thanks to the Reconstruction Acts, overwhelmingly supported the Republican war hero. Indiana Republicans celebrated the first native politician to win a national office since William Henry Harrison in 1840. They were a bit mistaken since Harrison and Colfax were born in other states and only migrated to Indiana later in life. At home, Hoosiers elected a Republican Governor and Republicans won majorities in the General Assembly once

⁵⁸ Schuyler Colfax to M. Cowdin, June 9, 1868, Colfax Papers Box 1 Folder 8, IHS.

⁵⁹ *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), June 10, 1868, October 7, 1868.

again. Now they could remake the state the way they wanted. With so much power they could wield broad control over Indiana and the national government.⁶⁰

The results should have alarmed Republicans. Grant only won Indiana with a two percent majority, a far narrower victory than Lincoln's almost nine percent majority in 1860 and his seven percent margin in 1864. Republicans in Indiana fared worse. Baker, the former Lieutenant Governor and Union veteran, won the Governor's office with a margin under one percent. Republicans lost another seat in the Congressional races leaving them with seven. Their majorities in the General Assembly suffered as well. On the opposite side, Democrats looked at the results with glee. Though defeated, they had closed the gap. A few more votes here and there and they could win again in Indiana. Radical Reconstruction had damaged the Republican Party. At the height of their success, there were troubling signs for Republicans and conservatives slowly dragged the state further towards Democrats.⁶¹

Shortly after the elections, Republicans had to confront the suffrage question. Supporters for an impartial suffrage pressured the party of Lincoln to do something and their calls grew louder. In February 1869, Republicans in Washington proposed a new constitutional amendment. It prohibited all racial restrictions on the franchise effectively nullifying the state constitution's restriction of the suffrage to white men. Unlike the earlier Civil Rights Act and other Congressional measures, the amendment struck down race based voting laws across the nation. With strong majorities, Republicans pushed the amendment through Congress. Indiana's Republican delegation assented in the House while the newly elected Senator Morton voted for the amendment in the Senate. Indiana Democrats in Washington vehemently opposed the bill

⁶⁰ *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), February 13, 1868; *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), October 29 and November 5, 1868; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), November 4, 1868.

⁶¹ *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), November 4, 1868; *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), November 21, 1868; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), November 30, 1864; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), December 8, 1864; *Crawfordsville Weekly Journal* (Crawfordsville, IN), November 15, 1860.

though they could mount a limited resistance. Congress then sent the amendment to the states for ratification. When the states debated the amendment, the real fight then began.⁶²

Before Congress passed the amendment Democrats in Indiana labeled it the “negro amendment.” With the General Assembly in session, Republicans could push ratification through if there was a quorum. Without any other way to oppose the amendment, every Democrat in the assembly resigned. The mass resignation caused a constitutional dilemma in the state. Without a quorum, legislation ground to a halt. Democrats explained their decision to the public as a last ditch measure. In a circular, the Indiana Democratic Party argued, “The democrats in the Indiana legislature considered the proposition an insult to the intelligence of our people, a fraud upon the voters, and desired the question to be submitted to the people at another election.” They called Republicans hypocrites who “asserted their opposition to negro suffrage and negro equality at the last election...” They called on all voters who believed in “the supremacy of white men in the administration of government” to join them. The General Assembly broke without ratifying the amendment. Governor Baker called for a special session of the General Assembly to take up the amendment.⁶³

Opposition to the amendment could unite conservatives in both parties, especially those in the southern part of the state. The Republican editor of the *Evansville Journal*, one of southern Indiana’s largest cities, demanded the amendment come before the people on an up or down vote. “Therefore in behalf of a large group of Republicans, who have never been in favor of negro suffrage, we protest against all attempts to force the amendment upon the people...” Since

⁶² Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 153-54; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), February 10, 1869; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States; Being the Third Session of the Fortieth Congress; Begun and Held at the City of Washington, December 7, 1868, in the Ninety-Third Year of the Independence of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), 411-12.

⁶³ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), February 1, 1869; *Plymouth Weekly Democrat* (Plymouth, IN), March 11, 1869.

voters had to elect a new slate of legislators for the special session, he urged readers to elect at least three Republicans opposed to ratification. On this issue, conservative Republicans could forget party loyalties, join with Democrats, and defeat ratification. The editor of the *Lafayette Courier* in west central Indiana predicted that four Republican state senators opposed the amendment and two representatives opposed it in the House. If enough defected, ratification would fail.⁶⁴

Other Republicans supported the amendment and according to Hoosier, an anonymous writer, expected Republicans to hold together and ratify the new amendment. Other Republicans felt the amendment should have gone farther. An editor in west central Indiana called it adequate though somewhat disappointing. He wanted an amendment that banned restrictions on property requirements, educational requirements, and creed. A vote to ratify the amendment was not a token measure. If enough states ratified it African Americans could exercise political power in Indiana through the vote. Ultimately Hoosier was right. Republicans had majorities in both houses and if they remained united, ratification was sure to pass.⁶⁵

Governor Baker called new elections to fill the seats in the upcoming called session. Every Democrat who had resigned from the previous term won reelection to the special session. Baker first had trouble assembling the legislators. Democrats demanded Republicans consider all other legislation before the amendment. Republicans refused. They believed Democrats planned to stall until the session ended. Then Democrats asked their Republican opponents to postpone the vote in the General Assembly and submit ratification to a popular vote. They pledged another mass resignation if Republicans refused. Even some opponents of ratification opposed a popular vote. The former Whig editor of the *Evansville Journal*, though opposed to the amendment,

⁶⁴ *Evansville Journal* (Evansville IN), March 9 and March 12, 1869.

⁶⁵ *Indiana American* (Brookeville, IN), April 9, 1869; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), March 4, 1869.

called the move dangerous. If successful, minorities would break up the assembly on future occasions stalling essential legislation. The stalemate continued into April.⁶⁶

Republicans finally agreed to carry on with other business and reserve the amendment for the end. Satisfied, enough Democrats agreed to sit through the session. As the legislators wrangled and argued over other bills, citizens petitioned the assembly. Citizens in Switzerland County, in southern Indiana, demanded the right to vote on the amendment. Citizens in Porter County, a northern Indiana county, supported the amendment and petitioned the General Assembly for its immediate passage. As the clock ticked down, the legislators passed other bills, filed the necessary paperwork, and finished up all other business. If Democrats could hold out long enough, ratification had to wait another year.⁶⁷

Other than the 15th Amendment, another contentious issue was education for African American children. The House had passed a bill in the regular session establishing schools if local officials found enough African American children to warrant at least one all African American school. The law still left numerous children out. Without a sufficient number, the bill called for the state to transport children to other areas with enough children to warrant a school. Some Republicans were unhappy with the bill. When it passed in the regular session, Jonathan Lamborn of northern Indiana voiced his dissent: “The bill literally shuts the door of our common schools to the black man, unless they are in sufficient numbers to have separate schools...” The Senate passed the bill during the special session, yet it was more conservative than hoped. Local commissioners counted children by race and divided funds between them. In a move to placate

⁶⁶ *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), April 10, 1869; *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), April 13, 1869; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1965), 242-44.

⁶⁷ *Journal of the Indiana State Senate, During the Special Session of the Forty-Sixth General Assembly, Commencing Thursday, April 8, 1869* (Indianapolis: Alexander H. Connor, State Printer, 1869), 20, 453; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana, During the Special Session of the General Assembly, Commencing Thursday, April 8, 1869* (Indianapolis: Alexander H. Connor, State Printer, 1869), 200-02.

conservatives, the process ensured schools and funding were separate. With African American education decided, the assembly took up the 15th Amendment.⁶⁸

As the session wound down, it looked as if the Democrats could win and prevent ratification. Nevertheless, Republicans tried as hard as they could to clear any pending legislation and proceed to ratification before the session ended. Despite their efforts, several bills remained as the session entered its final week. If the General Assembly took up the measures, the bill was dead. Instead, the Senate and the House dispensed with the bills and moved to ratification. Democrats complained. There was still business before the legislature and Republicans had agreed at the start to postpone a vote on ratification until the Assembly considered all legislation first. With a minority they could only watch as the Assembly took up ratification. Time for the session was nearly up.⁶⁹

On May 13th the Senate took up the amendment. Before Republicans could bring the bill to the floor or call for a vote, eleven Democrats resigned in an effort to deny quorum. To gain a quorum, Republicans counted several of their opponents as present and not voting. Only one Republican voted against ratification and the Senate sent it to the House. Democrats cried foul. Their rivals had pushed legislation aside, counted Democrats who resigned, and even counted those who had left the state house in order to gain a quorum. The whole affair was a sham in their view. A few Democrats remained in the Senate after ratification in order to put up some resistance at the final vote. After they lost, those opposed to the amendment shifted their efforts

⁶⁸ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the state of Indiana 1869*, 790-91; *Journal of the Indiana State Senate, 1869*, 20, 453

⁶⁹ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana 1869*, 510; *Journal of the Indiana State Senate 1869*, 20, 453; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), May 14, 1869.

into the House. If they could stall a vote in the House until the session ended, they could defeat Senate bill.⁷⁰

The House took up the bill the following day. After some debate, the representatives passed it fifty-four to none. Most Democrats left the assembly before the vote although three abstained. The assembly forwarded the bill to Governor Baker who signed it, whereupon Indiana had ratified the Fifteenth Amendment. Democrats were enraged. In their eyes, Republicans had passed the resolution without a quorum. The tortured and usual path to ratification even drew outside attention. The Democratic *Chicago Post* called it the “Indiana Revolution” and asked if the federal government should count Indiana’s vote during the ratification process. Democrats had a long time to wait for a chance to turn ratification into a campaign issue; they quickly geared up for the midterm elections in 1870.⁷¹

Indiana was the fourteenth state to ratify the Fifteenth Amendment and it needed fourteen more before it became law. On March 30, 1870, shortly after legislators in Iowa cast their votes for ratification, the Secretary of State certified the amendment. In one blow, racial restrictions on suffrage in Indiana disappeared. Terrified, one Democrat predicted revolutions in the country such as what happened “San Domingo or Hayti [sic].” Although African Americans comprised less than one percent of the state’s population and were unlikely to exercise much political power, Democrats resolved to make the upcoming elections a referendum on the

⁷⁰ *Journal of the Indiana State Senate 1869*, 474-76; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), May 14, 1869; *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), May 17, 1869.

⁷¹ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana 1869*, 604-05; *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), May 19, 1869; *Daily State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), May 19, 1869.

Fifteenth Amendment. Voters had their chance to voice their opinion on impartial suffrage and a few discontented Republicans could swing an election or two.⁷²

Indiana Republicans gathered in February 1870 for a state convention. If there was any discontent within the party, delegates concealed it. As a show of support for the amendment, Republicans from the southern Second Congressional District included several African Americans in their delegation. Other delegates applauded their inclusion. On the first day, they appointed Reverend W.T. Malone as a vice president and seated him on the convention platform. The platform committee then drafted nine resolutions. After the usual praise for Union veterans, calls for lower taxes, and pledges to pay the national debt, the platform committee included a ninth resolution. They praised Senator Morton for his role in pushing the Fifteenth Amendment through Congress towards its eventual ratification. In his keynote address, the Senator himself lauded the ratification. If there were opponents to the amendment in the party, they were silent, at least at the convention.⁷³

Republican newspapers in central and northern Indiana praised the convention. Reports about the meeting noted the “wild applause” for Malone as he took his seat on the platform. Some were tepid. Republicans meeting in southern Indiana’s Spencer County never mentioned the amendment or support for African Americans at their convention. One Republican turned the amendment on Democrats saying they were secretly supportive of African American suffrage as a way to win elections. A few Democratic newspapers put out an olive branch to African American readers. Seeking additional votes, the *Courier* in Evansville and the *Ledger* in New Albany labeled the Democratic Party the best hope for the new voters. According to these

⁷² *Indianapolis News* (Indianapolis, IN), March 31, 1870; Francis A. Walker, *A Compendium of the Ninth Census (June 1, 1870.) Compiled Pursuant to a Concurrent Resolution of Congress, and Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 8-12.

⁷³ *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), February 23, 1870.

Republican newspaper editors, Democrats were hypocrites. The party was courting the African American vote after opposing it the previous year.⁷⁴

Unfortunately, the cracks between conservatives and radicals in the Republican Party grew. In the Fourth Congressional District, Julian once again entered the congressional race. This time the former free-soiler ran into opposition. After the Fifteenth Amendment entered law, Julian had become a fault line between two factions in the party. Most conservatives hated Julian for his continual push for greater rights for African Americans. After Republicans in the General Assembly changed the boundaries of his district, his prospects soured quickly. As the *Palladium*'s editors noted, most Republicans in Franklin County, a rural county added to the district, were conservative and opposed Julian. Morton himself sought to derail his nomination. As a conservative alternative, Republican leaders supported Judge Jeremiah M. Wilson for the office. Wilson was the only Republican who could unite all the factions and beat the Democrat that fall. Many rank-and-file Republicans agreed. A one long-time Julian supporter urged the congressman to step aside and back Wilson saying, "Mr. Wilson will command the entire Republican vote of the party..." After raucous arguments, the conflict came to a head at the Republican congressional convention.⁷⁵

On April 18th the Republican Convention for the Fourth Congressional District met in Connersville, Indiana. Thinking a loss was on the horizon, Julian withdrew his name and backed Wilson. The convention was merely the beginning of Wilson's troubles. He was a conservative, yet he still needed the radical vote. Local Republicans defended the more conservative Wilson. In an effort to keep radical voters, they pointed to Lincoln and Grant. At first, voters considered

⁷⁴ *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), February 23, 1870; *Evansville Journal* (Evansville, IN), February 10 and February 24, 1870.

⁷⁵ *Indiana American* (Brookville, IN), February 4, 1870; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), March 8, 1870; Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 180-82.

them conservative yet Lincoln ended slavery and Grant supported the Fifteenth Amendment. “To the front rank of radicalism the whole party advanced, and so far as regards slavery and equal rights, there are no dividing lines in the Republican organization.” Regardless, Julian was out. Wilson was in and there was one less radical Republican up for election. Democrats did not defeat Julian; his own party did the deed.⁷⁶

The campaign between Wilson and his Democratic challenger was an example of Republican efforts that year. They had to keep conservatives and radicals happy. Wilson’s opponent was David Gooding, a former Republican who had backed Johnson and could win conservative voters. Rather than face each other in debates, Wilson canvassed alone. At one stop, the Republican concentrated on economic issues such as the debt, and then defended the Fifteenth Amendment before the night ended. Finally the two agreed to debate. Wilson used the occasion to shore up radical support. Since the party chose him over Julian, the conservative Republican had to keep radicals if he wanted to win. Wilson asked Gooding if he believed in “negro suffrage.” Gooding declared his opposition and Wilson noted his own support. After their one debate both braced for the election results.⁷⁷

Republicans in other parts of the state tried to smooth over the widening gap in the party. One predicted defeat if conservatives defected. “It is the hope of the Democracy to draw votes from the Republican Party – to reinforce the Democratic ranks from the more conservative element in the party opposed to them – by adhering to their opposition to negro suffrage...” Daniel W. Voorhees pitched himself to conservative Republicans in west central Indiana. Voorhees, had emerged as a leading Democrat in the state despite his copperhead past; he filled a leadership void after former Senator Jesse Bright moved to Kentucky. The former senator’s

⁷⁶ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), April 19, 1870.

⁷⁷ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), July 23 and August 6 and August 20, 1870.

support for the Confederacy made a return to Indiana problematic. Though Voorhees's racist appeals alarmed his opponents, some Republicans held out hope for a reunion with their discontented conservative wing: "We will not insult the intelligence and patriotism of the Republican voters of this District...that any of them can be induced to vote for Daniel W. Voorhees." Dissatisfaction with the Fifteenth Amendment presented a real danger to the Republican Party and members recognized it.⁷⁸

To address this threat, Republicans in central and southern Indiana pitched the recent amendment as a necessary defense against the traitors in the South. If the traitors returned to power, the war was for nothing. Republican and Universalist minister W.W. Curry contrasted the loyal African American men in the South with their traitorous white neighbors. "It was no less an act of justice to them, than of protection to the loyal whites, that they were given the right of suffrage, that by their numbers the votes of rebels might be overborne." The minister repeated the reasoning behind emancipation, the Reconstruction Acts, the Thirteenth Amendment, and the Fourteenth Amendment. Suffrage for African Americans was one more act to protect the United States from the same traitors who plunged it into war.⁷⁹

Republicans in the southern part of the state trotted out their old accusation of Democratic hypocrisy. They opposed impartial suffrage, yet sought African American votes after the Fifteenth Amendment became law. Republicans in Evansville even spread rumors about Democrats courting African Americans to run for public office. At the Vanderburgh County Republican convention in Evansville, Morton pointed a finger at Hendricks. According to Morton, Hendricks had supported suffrage for African Americans and only opposed it due to

⁷⁸ *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), February 22 and September 27, 1870; *Terre Haute Weekly Express* (Terre Haute, IN), March 9, 1870; John J. Wickre, "Indiana's Southern Senator: Jesse Bright and the Hoosier Democracy." (Phd diss., University of Kentucky, 2013), 267-68.

⁷⁹ Elmo Arnold Robinson, "Universalism in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 12 (1916): 170; *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), September 13, 1870.

Voorhees and other Indiana Democrats. The Democratic stalwart was only toeing the party line. Republicans were emphatic. Democrats wanted the African American votes just as equally if not more than Republicans. The Republicans waited to see if their rhetoric broke through.⁸⁰

When the election results came in, Democrats were closer than ever to winning absolute power in the state. In the state Senate, they swept most southern districts and came within two seats of the majority. The results in the House races shocked Republicans. Democrats won fifty-three seats giving them the majority for the next two years. They made impressive gains in northern Indiana and almost swept the southern districts. In Floyd County, the same county that sent African Americans to the Republican state convention, a Democrat took the Federal House seat. With a majority in the House and a two seat minority in the Senate, they could make life much more difficult for Governor Baker. An even greater surprise lay in the Congressional and statewide races.⁸¹

Republicans lost every major state office. Democrats won secretary of state, treasurer, auditor, attorney general, and school superintendent. The congressional races brought another bad showing for the once dominant party. Democrats won every southern district and a few in central Indiana moving their number in Congress up to five of eleven. In the east central Fourth Congressional District where Wilson beat Julian for the Republican nomination, the conservative Republican defeated his Democratic opponent by only four votes. Four votes the other way and a Democrat would have won the home district of Senator Morton. After they supported the Thirteenth Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment, and even passed a token repeal of the 1852 enforcement act, Republican support for the Fifteenth Amendment was too much for many Hoosier conservatives. They had either stayed home or voted Democrat. In the middle of the

⁸⁰ *Bloomington Progress* (Bloomington, IN), October 5, 1870; *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), April 11, 1870; *Daily Journal* (Evansville, IN), September 2, 1870.

⁸¹ *Terre Haute Daily Gazette* (Terre Haute, IN), November 4, 1870.

legislative session the following year, several Indiana politicians in Washington wrote to Will Cumback warning him: “Indiana will be the battlefield next election...” Worse news arrived later in the year.⁸²

After their losses in Indiana, western newspapers brought more bad news for the party faithful. Republicans had divided in Missouri over civil service reform, voting rights for ex-Confederates, and ending Reconstruction. The latter issues were especially prominent in a state with divided loyalties. Numerous Missourians fought for the Confederacy or fought their own guerilla campaign against the Union. Once Congress stripped ex-Confederates of their voting rights, most were on the outside looking in. Things changed in 1871. Sympathetic Republicans united with Democrats to elect a Liberal Republican governor opposed to the Grant administration. The splinter faction from the Republican Party believed in civil service reform, individual liberties, and free trade, policies that many Americans equated with the term liberal. They argued the United States government should restore voting rights to the ex-Confederates, enact free trade policies, and end the corruption in the government. The Liberal Republicans also found a way to attract conservatives. They believed in a limited centralized federal government. Hoping to prevent further changes to voting rights, many conservatives signed on. With conservative Republicans on one side, the bolt in Missouri added to the Republican Party’s problems and left it particularly vulnerable.⁸³

The split initially horrified Indiana Republicans. One asserted: “The action of the liberal Republicans in Missouri should be a warning sign.” One major defection happened in early 1872. Julian, disgruntled at the Grant administration for its failures to reform the South, joined

⁸² Schuyler Colfax et al. to Will Cumback, February 23, 1871, Cumback Papers Box 2, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN; *Terre Haute Weekly Express* (Terre Haute, IN), November 2, 1870.

⁸³ Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction*, xii-xiii, 11-20; Joshua A. Lynn, *Preserving the White Man’s Republic: Jacksonian Democracy, Race, and the Transformation of American Conservatism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), 10.

the bolters. The main Republican Party had kicked him out and he looked for a place in the new party. Other Republicans downplayed the liberal rebellion. The editor of the *Indiana American* collected several editorials and assured his readers that the defections were minor and short lived. President Grant was still popular in the North and sure to win another term. In 1871, Congress passed another Enforcement Act allowing the President to suspend Habeas Corpus as a measure against the Ku Klux Klan. Grant used his powers and weakened the violent organization, increasing his popularity in the North. A southern Indiana Republican called the German-born Carl Schurz and the other bolters traitors to the party. These dissenters were Democrats rather than Republicans at heart he said, though he predicted a few were willing return to the Republican Party after all.⁸⁴

Democrats had an opposite reaction. Most of them cheered the division amongst their rivals hoping for a fusion with the Liberal Republicans. The supposed best chance to beat Grant found support among many rank and file Democrats. In a letter to Congressman Voorhees, R.W. Clay of Olney, Illinois, urged the powerful Hoosier Democrat to back fusion. In his opinion, the combination was the only chance to defeat Grant. He begged Voorhees saying, "That U.S. Grant will be re-elected if a Democrat be run against him." Only a Liberal Republican with Democratic support could win in 1872. Party leaders agreed with Clay. They postponed their state convention hoping the split in their rival party grew larger. If Democrats could unite with Liberal Republicans, they could defeat the once invincible president.⁸⁵

Although they downplayed the renegades, Indiana Republicans took no chances. In its state convention, the party of Lincoln and Grant watered down its state platform. In a clear sign

⁸⁴ *Bloomington Progress* (Bloomington, IN), February 9, 1871; *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), November 4 and October 21, 1871; Blue, *No Taint of Compromise*, 182-83; Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 267-72.

⁸⁵ *Terre Haute Daily Gazette* (Terre Haute, IN), December 11, 1871; *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), February 22, 1872.

of growing conservative strength, delegates at the convention shifted the focus off of race. They trumpeted their platform on economic issues rather than civil rights. When they addressed civil rights, they included a meager provision calling for the government to enforce the laws of the country equally and “maintain the rights of all men before the law.” The shift on race made it to the selection committee. Two years after the party trumpeted an African American vice president at their convention, delegates passed over every African American when they chose the officers for the convention. With their watered down platform, Indiana Republicans avoided a massive bolt in their state.⁸⁶

The Liberal Republicans met in Cincinnati, Ohio. Julian, now well outside the regular Republican Party, headlined the Indiana delegation. Bitter at his former political allies, the Liberal Republicans were a safe place for the disgruntled politician. They first chose a presidential candidate who they hoped could draw Democrats and conservative Republicans. Charles Francis Adams was a strong contender. He had run on a national ticket in 1848. Schurz was another popular choice. Greeley eventually won the nomination. The party chose Missouri Governor Benjamin Gratz Brown as the vice presidential nominee. Brown had followed a political trajectory similar to other Liberal Republicans. He was first a Democrat, then a Republican, and then a Liberal Republican. He was also from the very state that birthed the liberal bolt. Delegates drafted a platform that accepted the Fifteenth Amendment, praised Civil War veterans, condemned tyrannical power, and called for a specie system to replace paper currency. In a letter to the convention, Greeley accepted the nomination. Though he still supported tariffs unlike the more free trade Liberal Republicans, he wanted an end to

⁸⁶ *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), February 23, 1872; *Terre Haute Daily Gazette* (Terre Haute, IN), June 13, 1872.

Reconstruction. When the convention broke, the Liberals waited on Democrats and hoped for fusion. They got their answer later in the year.⁸⁷

Indiana Democrats, at least among the party leaders, overwhelmingly supported fusion with the Liberals. They sent delegates to their own national convention in Baltimore, Maryland, with orders to support Greeley's nomination. For congressional races, Democrats nominated other Democrats with one notable exception. They nominated Julian for one at large congressional seat. In a letter to the convention, the longtime Republican said he was humbled by their decision, yet he declined the nomination. The party called for social service reform, restoration of voting rights for former Confederates, and condemned any attempt to nominate another presidential ticket at the Democratic convention. As a show of solidarity, most sympathetic newspapers placed Greeley's name on their masthead. The delegates chosen for the national convention agreed with the national party. They supported fusion with the Liberals. If anyone could defeat Grant, Greeley had the best chance. At least, that is what many Democrats said publicly.⁸⁸

On the campaign trail, Democrats praised Greeley as the one man who could unite Grant's opponents. They called their candidate conservative and liberal at the same time. In Terre Haute, Indiana, Hendricks spoke about the newspaper editor's cross party appeal. According to the gubernatorial candidate, Greeley was the candidate for "Liberal and Conservative Republicans, and the Democracy of the United States." According to Hendricks, Greeley, through his liberal and conservative approach was a cure for the nation's troubles. The Liberal Republican Party, along with its presidential candidate, decried Reconstruction while it

⁸⁷ Summers. *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 303-08; Blue, *No Taint of Compromise*, 182-83; Slap, *The Doom of Reconstruction*, 142-45; *Proceedings of the Liberal Republican Convention, in Cincinnati, May 1st, 2d, and 3d, 1872* (New York: Baker and Godwin Printers, 1872), 19-21, 28-32, 38-40.

⁸⁸ *Terre Haute Daily Gazette* (Terre Haute, IN), June 13, 1872.

called for universal amnesty for ex-Confederates. It also backed states' rights above a centralized national government. After citing all these problems, Hendricks pointed to corruption.

Corruption hurt the nation and was the Grant Administration's chief sin: "If you still want money to be lost before it reaches the Treasury, after being collected off the people, vote for Grant." The Indiana Democrat was a key ally in the state. If the coalition held, Grant faced a tough road to the presidency.⁸⁹

National Republicans in Washington gave the state parties a great assist in May 1872. After wrangling and mudslinging, Congress passed an Amnesty Bill for most remaining ex-Confederates. The bill restored voting rights to vote and to serve in public office. Only a few were exempted. The bill passed with overwhelming Republican support. When John Singleton Mosby, a former Confederate colonel and Republican, praised the amnesty bill and Grant, Republicans newspapers published his letter as proof the bill was popular in the South. In one stroke, Republicans removed a key piece of Greeley's platform. A Republican editor praised the move: "The passage of the amnesty bill knocks the most important plank out of the Democratic platform. Wherat [sic] the Liberals are much disgusted. Republicans in Indiana had little to fear as the elections approached." It was yet another sign the party was slowly retreating on Reconstruction.⁹⁰

Another factor helped Republicans alleviate racist fears in the state. After the General Assembly ratified the Fifteenth Amendment, few African Americans made the migration northward. By 1870, Indiana's African American population had doubled since the 1860 census. Though certainly greater, the number was far less than some residents feared. Even with the increase, African Americans numbered less than two percent of the population. Most Hoosiers

⁸⁹ *Terre Haute Daily Gazette* (Terre Haute, IN), August 8, 1872.

⁹⁰ *Daily Wabash Express* (Terre Haute, IN), January 16 and May 24, 1872; *Indianapolis Journal* (Indianapolis, IN), May 23, 1872.

outside the cities seldom lived near African Americans. Their numbers were so low that few communities needed a school for African American children. The paltry numbers were hardly the dreaded hordes Democrats predicted and the white population far outpaced them. Although they had the vote, African Americans lacked the numbers to bring about dramatic changes in the state. After all the dire warnings about ex-slaves flooding the northern states, the census told a much different tale.⁹¹

Division within the Democratic Party, a highly unpopular Greeley, and a more conservative message on Reconstruction brought Republicans back into power. They regained their majorities in the Indiana General Assembly and made a comeback in southern Indiana. Republicans dominated the congressional races and won ten of the thirteen districts. Amidst all the success, there was one dark cloud in the sky. Hendricks, a Democrat, won the governor's mansion with a margin of one percent. He did particularly well in southern and central Indiana where many districts sent Republicans to the General Assembly. Hendricks was popular in his home state and his popularity pushed him into the office. Despite their loss in the governor's race, Republican unity held. The party's success in the state portended disaster for Greeley in the presidential election.⁹²

Grant easily won reelection. In a landslide, the General garnered two-hundred eighty-six electoral votes and took over fifty-five percent of the popular vote. Even after they combined Democratic and Liberal Republican voters, the opposition was not enough. At home, Indiana followed the General. He dominated northern Indiana and did reasonably well in the southern part of the state. Although both presidential candidates received fewer votes than the gubernatorial contestants, Greeley suffered the most. Hendricks won over twenty-five thousand

⁹¹ Walker, *A Compendium of the Ninth Census*, 8-10.

⁹² *Indianapolis Journal* October 21, 1872; *Indianapolis News* (Indianapolis, IN), October 23, 1872; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), October 31, 1872.

more votes in the gubernatorial election than Greeley in the presidential election. The Liberal Republican also received fewer votes than Seymour only four years earlier. About four thousand or three percent fewer Indianans supported him. Because Democrats mistrusted Greeley, many stayed at home or voted for other candidates. In contrast, few Republicans abandoned their party and most remained with Grant. He received only about two thousand fewer votes than the Republican candidate for governor that year. The national Republican Party had followed the blueprint the Indiana Republican Party laid out for it. It softened much of its more radical beliefs and the party lured some bolters back.⁹³

Ironically, Indiana Democrats might have had a better candidate to challenge Grant for the presidency in their midst. Hendricks, the first Democrat to win the governorship since 1856, was popular outside his home state. The Indiana politician garnered a small following for his stance against Republicans during the war and his win in the governor's race. Though Democrats nominated Greeley, Hendricks was a rising star. His name rose higher after the presidential election when Greeley unexpectedly died before the Electoral College met that December. With a deceased candidate, electors cast their votes freely. They gave Brown of Missouri twenty-four votes while Julian won five Electoral College votes. The governor-elect of Indiana, Hendricks, finished with forty-two votes. Hendricks's second place finish demonstrated how high Democrats held the Hoosier politician. A few Democrats predicted a great future for him. Looking ahead to the next presidential contest, several party committees met after the election to nominate Hendricks for the presidency in 1876.⁹⁴

⁹³ Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 313-18; *Indianapolis Journal* (Indianapolis, IN), November 5, 1872. *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), November 28, 1872; *Jasper Weekly Courier* (Jasper, IN), November 8, 1872.

⁹⁴ *Indianapolis News* (Indianapolis, IN), December 3, 1872; *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), December 19 and December 26, 1872.

Republicans had won again. To take the sting out of the Liberal Republican message, they showed signs of backing off Reconstruction then watered down some of their radical initiatives. Democrats inadvertently gave the Republicans a great boost when they backed the deeply unpopular Greeley. Many Democratic voters never trusted the newspaper editor and, therefore, voted for someone else or stayed home. The combination alone assured another several years of Republican dominance. Yet, Republicans were slowly losing conservatives everywhere in Indiana and throughout the West. A Democrat had won the governor's mansion in the state on a platform that decried corruption. With the right candidate and a united party behind him, Democrats could win state elections in Indiana. If they had the right presidential candidate, they stood a good chance to win the state's Electoral College votes four years later.

When Grant took his second oath of office, Republicans felt relieved. After a hard fought campaign where they had to battle a serious threat in their own party while dealing with the problems in the South, they found a way to win. Grant was president and there were Republican majorities in Congress. When Grant settled into the White House again one Republican was exuberant saying, "The people have confidence in the man who has so safely conducted our ship of state . . . The ship of state again sails proudly out of harbor, and we feel safe with Four more years of Grant." That ship hit some dangerous rocks less than six months later. The economy suffered, Americans lost faith in their elected officials, and the war hero Grant became a shell of his former self. The new controversies and problems that hit the nation also sent western conservatives into the Democratic Party and finish off Reconstruction.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ *Saturday Evening Mail* (Terre Haute, IN), March 8, 1873.

Conclusion

Americans were unprepared for what happened next. Their pocketbooks took a hit later in 1873 when shocks to the international economy coupled with the Coinage Act of 1873 drastically reduced the money supply. An even greater crisis added to the panic among investors. After the Civil War, railroads had expanded at an exponential rate. The overexpansion sent prices falling, hurt investor confidence, and sent many railroads into bankruptcy. When railroad companies suffered the entire country suffered and thousands felt the strain. A correspondent for one Indiana newspaper reported on the situation in New York: “There is endless confusion, wild speculation, absurd proposals, loud threatenings, ominous prophecies.” The panic soon spread west. Numerous business owners around Indianapolis, unable to pay their creditors, divested much of their property. The company in charge of the sales took out an add noting the desperate situation for most of their clients. Since Republicans held political power in Washington, Americans blamed them.¹

The state parties geared up for the 1874 elections with a state convention where they traditionally adopted a platform, make speeches, and gin up the faithful for one more election. In the midst of a crisis, the economy loomed over the election. This time both parties held their conventions later in the year than in previous seasons. Already on the ropes, Republicans did their best to defend President Grant and their party. The state platform called for civil service reforms then praised the embattled President for his courageous leadership during the economic crisis. In a clear sign of things to come, the party left off any mention of African Americans or Reconstruction. With an almost non-existent stance towards African American rights in the South, the state platform was a continuation of the move away from the contentious issue.

¹ *Marshall County Republican*, (Plymouth, IN), October 2, 1873; *Indianapolis Journal* (Indianapolis, IN), October 23, 1873; Richard White, *The Republic for Which it Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 260-74.

Republicans seemingly had a choice. They could have a better chance at winning the elections in the state, or support an apparently endless Reconstruction in the South. In their state platform, they chose the former.²

Jubilant Democrats sensed an opportunity. In one election they could leverage the economic depression and the discontent over Reconstruction into a potent political message. In their convention, Indiana Democrats crafted a platform with a wide appeal. They praised Civil War veterans, attacked the Grant Administration for the economic depression, and called for a complete repeal of the state tax Republicans passed one year earlier. In a surprising turn, Democrats recognized African Americans in their platform calling for a “liberal system of education for the benefit of the negro as well as the white children of Indiana . . .” Unfortunately their newfound tolerance for African Americans only went so far. Though they wanted schools for all children in the state, they called for segregated schools. Still, for the first time in a Democratic platform, there were no appeals to strip African American males of their suffrage or for a new exclusion law. After two decades the Democratic Party in Indiana, at least their leadership, finally accepted reality. African Americans in the state were not going anywhere and they could vote.³

The election turned into a bloodbath for Republicans. Democrats swept to victory across the North as the party won stunning victories. In Indiana, the once weakened and almost non-existent party won eight seats in the congressional elections making five pickups. Congressman Michael C. Kerr, from the Third Congressional District, later won election to Speaker of the House of Representatives in Washington, a sign of the state’s continued political importance. In the Indiana General Assembly, Democrats won a six-seat majority in the House while missing

² *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), June 25, 1874.

³ *Richmond Palladium* (Richmond, IN), July 22, 1874.

out on a majority in the Senate by only one. Their success trickled down even further as the party swept the state offices. Secretary of state, treasurer, auditor, and superintendent of public schools fell to the Democrats. With a Democratic governor in office, the party had almost complete control for the first time since the 1850s. The depression and the unending Reconstruction had taken their toll. Republicans could only watch as they lost their once unbreakable lock on state politics. No appeals to conservatives or sidelining their radical members could stem the Democratic tide this time.⁴

After the catastrophic losses in the North, Republicans faced a growing crisis in the South. Emboldened by the Democratic victories in the North and the weakness of the Grant Administration, racist southerners ratcheted up the violence against African Americans. Murders and chaos consumed the region as ex-Confederates regained control in nearly every southern state. With turmoil in the North, Republicans in Washington were only willing to do so much. Still, there were those willing to help. Republicans in Congress came up with a possible solution in 1875. They drafted a new Civil Rights Act that guaranteed African Americans equal access to public places while ensuring African Americans could serve on juries. However, without a federal army to back it up, and several subsequent Supreme Court decisions, the act failed its intended beneficiaries. The watered down legislation in Washington mirrored the lackluster and often token legislation for civil rights in Indiana in the mid to late 1860s. The majority of northerners, including those in the Northeast, were tired of Reconstruction and ready to move on.⁵

⁴ *Indianapolis News* (Indianapolis, IN), October 24, 1874; Jacob Piatt Dunn ed., *Indiana and Indianans: A history of Aboriginal and Territorial Indiana and the Century of Statehood* vol. 2 (Chicago: The American Historical Society, 1919), 651; Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 324-25, 336-38, 347, 350.

⁵ Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 369-71.

The same year, a scandal broke that hurt Americans' faith in their own government. Politicians had profited from cozy relationships with several corporations including whisky distilleries. Several members in the Grant Administration had skimmed taxes for their own bank accounts. Democratic newspapers in Indiana brandished the news in long exposés directly connecting the ring to Grant and his administration. While Grant knew little about the corruption, members in his cabinet participated in the scheme. The economic depression, the turmoil in the South, the wariness of the northern public, and finally scandal in the Grant administration created a barrage of bad news for the general and Republicans. The news came at a horrible time for the party. Next year was a presidential election.⁶

One year later Republicans faced another gloomy campaign season. The rising Democratic tide meant the party of Lincoln could ill afford to lose any more voters if it wanted a shot at the presidency. Recognizing the danger, Indiana Republicans they lurched even further towards reconciliation with the South. The 1876 state platform avoided explicit references to African Americans. Long after they had talked of punishing ex-Confederates, delegates at the state convention preached reconciliation with their former enemies. The conciliatory sentiment went further up the party ladder. National Republicans openly talked about removing federal troops in the South and leaving their African American allies to fend for themselves. For President, the party endorsed Rutherford B. Hayes, former Governor of Ohio, Union veteran, and temperance man. Hayes believed Reconstruction had reached a conclusion. Although the party never explicitly promised to pull the remaining soldiers out of the South, there was little pressure to keep them there indefinitely.⁷

⁶ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), May 13, 1875; Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*, 372-75.

⁷ *Terre Haute Evening Gazette* (Terre Haute, IN), February 23, 1876; Michael F. Holt, *By One Vote: The Disputed Presidential Election of 1876* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 74-94, 104-16, 258.

Democrats held their convention two months later; the buoyant delegates could smell blood when they gathered in Indianapolis. With the wind at their backs, they knew they had a decent shot to dominate the state and possibly national politics. The platform stuck to one recurring theme, the economy. They lambasted Grant for the depression while holding the entire Republican Party guilty for the corruption in government. For the first time since the war ended, the delegates never mentioned Reconstruction or withdrawing the last soldiers in the South. For their presidential candidate, they nominated Hendricks, their favorite son and still popular governor. Hendricks likely faced an easy road if Democrats nominated the governor, the first Democrat to do so since James Buchanan. Once they nominated a slate of local candidates, several chosen delegates ventured to the national convention.⁸

This time around national Democrats chose a candidate for president with a good chance at winning. Once again, they looked to New York for their man and drafted Samuel J. Tilden. Unlike Greeley four years earlier, Tilden was popular among Democrats. The New Yorker supported the Civil War, at least early on, and had avoided any semblance of treason. Though he backed the war, he never joined the Republican Party or sided with Lincoln in public. Tilden backed Seymour for governor in 1862 and he supported McClellan for president in 1864. When the war ended, Tilden stayed around politics until New Yorkers elected him to the governor's office in 1874. He created a masterful campaign. Hoping to pick off Republican voters, Tilden called for reform and an end to Reconstruction. His call for reform resonated with Americans frustrated after the scandals in the Grant administration. Although disappointed, Hoosier

⁸ *Terre Haute Evening Gazette* (Terre Haute, IN), April 19, 1876.

Democrats praised the choice and quickly rallied around their man. With a popular opponent Republicans had to contend with a united opposition party in 1876.⁹

The election turned into a referendum on the economy and Reconstruction. Indiana Republicans waved the bloody shirt, called their party conservative, and pitched sectional reconciliation, the same strategy they followed in every previous election. Their efforts proved fruitless. This time, voters ignored them. While some Republicans retained their congressional seats, their victories were the exceptions rather than the rule. Democrats won the governor's mansion for another four years, the state Senate and nearly captured the House making their control almost complete. For the first time since 1862, Democrats showed consistency in Indiana. Their earlier victories were no fluke; the party was back and was a force in state politics. The combination of discontent with Reconstruction, corruption in the Grant Administration and a wrecked economy finally ended the lengthy Republican rule in the state. Sullen at their losses the party of Lincoln braced for the presidential election.¹⁰

For the first time in twenty years, a Democrat pulled it off: Tilden won Indiana. In the presidential election a majority of Hoosiers chose the Democrat Tilden over the Republican Hayes. Tilden's popularity among Democrats showed through at the polls. Over half a million more turned out for the former New York governor than for Greeley two years earlier. Hayes even lost in some northern counties while suffering devastating losses in southern and central Indiana. The results proved the wisdom of the Democrats' choice. In northern Marshall County, Greeley only managed just under fifty percent of the vote in 1872. Tilden won it in 1876 with fifty-six percent of the vote. For the first time since 1856, Indiana was in the Democratic column on election night. The Hoosier state was one of the last western states where Republicans won a

⁹ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), August 2, 1876; Holt, *By One Vote*, 96-106.

¹⁰ *Marshall County Republican* (Plymouth, IN), November 2, 1876; *Terre Haute Weekly Gazette* (Terre Haute, IN), November 16, 1876.

majority in the late 1850s. Eighteen years later it was the first western state where Republicans lost their majority. In the Hoosier state at least, Republican domination was officially over.¹¹

Conservatives were the critical component for victory in Indiana and Republicans knew it. Conservatives, including conservative Republicans, wanted white supremacy. Although they tolerated certain rights for African Americans, once legislation directly threatened white supremacy at home, conservatives bolted or threatened to leave the Republican Party. To keep them, Republicans in the Indiana General Assembly watered down legislation or defeated bills while conservative voters forced the Republican Party to nominate conservative candidates. After the Liberal Republicans entered the fray, regular Indiana Republicans were already conservative enough to minimize the damage and stem defections. When the national Republican Party softened their stance on Reconstruction in 1876, the party in Indiana was already well ahead of them.

Hayes won the disputed election and took the oath of office in March 1876. Reconstruction ended shortly after when the new president pulled the final army soldiers from the region. Ex-Confederates rose to power in the last three southern states and immediately disenfranchised African Americans. If anyone had watched elections in Indiana, they could have predicted the outcome. Conservatives, the key voting block in the state, were always on the verge of leaving the Republican Party. Republicans had to adjust to keep them and slowly ameliorated their efforts at Reconstruction. National Republicans followed suit. They adjusted their plans for Reconstruction to maintain power in Washington and finally abandoned the South to the

¹¹ *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis, IN), November 29, 1876; Holt, *By One Vote*, 74-94, 104-16, 258.

Democrats. In doing so they condemned their African American allies to almost a century of second class citizenship, violence, and terror.¹²

In the spring of 1881, Indiana voters were poised to take a long overdue step. Almost thirty years after residents overwhelmingly added Article Thirteen to the state constitution, the Indiana Supreme Court declared the exclusion law and restricted suffrage unconstitutional. The provision against male African American suffrage violated the Fifteenth Amendment in the national constitution and Section Thirteen violated the Fourteenth. The General Assembly called for a popular referendum and the amendments passed. Governor James D. Williams, a Democrat, certified the amendments and African Americans could legally migrate to Indiana and vote in the elections. Three decades after Hoosiers enshrined the exclusion into their second state constitution and nearly second decades after they banned African American suffrage into their first, they officially erased both laws. Residents finally eliminated on paper what the Reconstruction amendments eliminated in practice a decade earlier.¹³

At the same time the exclusion law fell, some newspapers were busy printing reports on the amendments alongside stories about a new and growing group of migrants to the state. As former Confederates escalated their violent campaigns in the South, many African Americans decided to migrate north. Amidst difficult economic times, poverty contributed to the growing mass heading towards northern states and proved almost as big an incentive to migrate as the violence. These Exodusters settled throughout the Hoosier state hoping for better opportunities and a fair chance. The new arrivals startled white residents. The sudden influx swelled the African American population and Democrats returned to their racial fear mongering. They

¹² Holt, *By One Vote*, 244-48.

¹³ Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880-1920* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1968), 6-7, 18-19; *Greencastle Banner* (Greencastle, IN), April 1, 1880.

attacked Republicans accusing them of encouraging the migrants to settle in Indiana. More African Americans they said meant more Republican votes. Although there was nothing they could do to prohibit the newcomers, racist whites maintained white supremacy in other ways with means often found new and inventive ways to keep the white supremacy they valued so much.¹⁴

¹⁴ *Indianapolis Leader* (Indianapolis, IN), April 17, 1880; *Terre Haute Weekly Gazette* (Terre Haute, IN), April 30, 1880; Nicole Etcheson, *A Generation at War: The Civil War Era in a Northern Community* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011, 241-46.

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