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Partisan Politics in Centre County Pennsylvania Before and During the Civil War

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ABSTRACT

One of the most surprising aspects of the Civil War was the lack of unity found within the North following the Civil War. This thesis aims to provide a more thorough understanding of why the Democratic and Republican rivalry persisted throughout the unprecedented crisis of secession and civil war. Studies of the individual parties and their ideologies have been conducted by historians such as Eric Foner, Jennifer L. Weber, and Arnold Shankman; this thesis seeks to build on those studies by examining how the parties' respective ideologies fueled the rivalry and made unity impossible. First, it explores the birth of the Republican Party in Centre County and how it was able to challenge the Democratic Party by taking a more moderate stance by minimizing anti-slavery rhetoric and stressing free labor and protectionism. Next it explains how the patriotic sentiment following the bombing of Fort Sumter actually fueled the rivalry, despite hopes it could bring about a bi-partisan solution to the war, because of the competing partisan and ideological definitions of what constituted being a "patriot." Finally, this thesis examines how the party newspapers intensified this rivalry by spreading party ideology and using emotional appeals to strengthen their reader's commitment to the respective party, as well as increasing their opposition to the other party.

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Chapter 1: Antebellum Centre County and the Republican Ascendancy

Introduction

The Civil War Era saw some of the most bitter and divisive partisan politics in the history of America. For a decade preceding the war, a rift between the North and the South was steadily growing wider, largely over the issue of slavery. The first shots fired at Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861 demonstrated unequivocally that the differences between the North and the South had grown too large to be settled peacefully. However, this did not bring an end to partisan politics in the North, where strong party lines drawn between the Democratic Party and the recently formed Republican Party persisted.

To gain a deeper understanding of how these partisan politics operated on a more local level, the first chapter of this paper will explore the development of the partisan system that divided the North during the 1850s. The following chapter will then explore the ways in which the parties exploited Centre County's patriotism to achieve partisan goals, while the third chapter studies the crucial role that the party newspapers had in the partisan politics of Centre County.

As the famous Whig politician John J. Crittenden stated, with its 127 electoral votes, Pennsylvania was "more than any other state, the arbiter of our nation's politics."¹ Furthermore, it was not a guaranteed win for either party. The state went Democratic in 1856, which helped

¹ James. L. Houston, *The Panic of 1857 and the Coming of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1987), 232.

secure the presidential election for James Buchanan. As a result, Republicans viewed Pennsylvania as a key state in the election of 1860.

One of the defining features of Pennsylvania politics was the influence of its iron industry. Centre County lay at the heart of Pennsylvania's iron and coal reserves, making it a prime subject for study. As the iron industry grew, large tracts of timber were torn down in order to feed the furnaces. This opened large amounts of fertile land, which were quickly turned into productive farmland. As Douglass Whitehead notes, "different interests of trade-oriented Bellefonte clashed with the numerous self-sufficient farmers in Centre County."² This conflict began to form along party lines, as the farmers supported the Democrats, while the young Republican Party gained support of the traders.³ A unique feature of the partisan politics in Centre County was the distinct political character of the local parties compared to that of the national parties. The Republicans of Centre County were much more moderate than the party at large, while the Democrats turned Centre County into one of the strongest centers of Copperheadism.

Birth of the Republican Party

The fierce debates over the proposed Kansas-Nebraska Act cleared the way for the rise of the Republican Party. This act, proposed by the Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, provided for Kansas and Nebraska to organize as territories and resolve the question of slavery through popular sovereignty. Residents of the territory would have voted on whether to enter the Union as a slave or free state. Douglas had hoped that this would bring an end to the

² Douglass Whitehead, "The Duty to Which We Owe Our Common Country' Bellefonte, Pennsylvania and Its Militia on the Eve of the Civil War" (Master's Thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, 1994) 30.

³ Whitehead, "The Duty to Which We Owe Our Common Country" 1-3.

fierce sectional debate over the extension of slavery, which had plagued the nation for years. However, once passed by the Senate on March 3, 1854, the bill only intensified sectional tensions.⁴ Many Northerners believed that the bill, which repealed the Missouri Compromise, upset the delicate balance of power between the North and the South. Furthermore, the bill enraged the anti-slavery factions all over the North, and they began to band together as “Anti-Nebraska” men. It was these men who formed the core of the Republican Party, which began to grow over the next few years.

The desire for a new party came to fruition as small local movements, made up of former Whigs, Free Soilers, and Democrats, called for the formation of a party “based solely on the opposition to the expansion of slavery.” Their meetings took place all over the North following the passing of the Kansas Nebraska Act.⁵ With the strong nativist sentiment sweeping over Centre County at this time, the furor over the Kansas Nebraska Act was not strong enough to create a new party in Centre County for another two years. It was not until August 25, 1856 that the first Republican mass meeting was held in Centre County. At this meeting the Republicans endorsed the Republican presidential nominee J.C. Frémont and vice presidential nominee W.L. Dayton.⁶ The Republicans arrived in Centre County just in time for the 1856 elections.

Strength of the Know Nothings and the Need for Fusion

The Republican Party was not alone in challenging the Democratic Party in the elections of 1856. The American Party, commonly referred to as the Know Nothings, rivaled the Republican Party in an attempt to replace the Whigs as the main opposition party to the

⁴ William S. Myers, *The Republican Party: A History* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968), 43-44.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John Blair Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties* (Bellefonte: J.B. Lippincott & Co. Press, 1883) 197.

Democrats. Only when the Republicans fused with, and eventually absorbed, the Know Nothing Party, were they able to achieve a majority. The American Party was a nativist movement that began as a secret organization in 1850 or 1851. At the center of the Know Nothings' beliefs was the idea that Protestantism was the cornerstone of American life, as it encouraged the individualism of American society. Protestants, they pointed out, were free to interpret the Bible how they saw fit, and most denominations chose their own minister. To them, this mirrored the democratic style of life in America.

The Know Nothing Party also had strong anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic views. Testament to the strength of the Know Nothings' anti-immigrant beliefs can be found in the diary of John Holahan. Holahan, whose father was an Irishman, recalled both the Know Nothings' presence and the nativist bigotry he and his family endured:

At this time father and we children were under a lash of bigotry, under the guise of Americanism, or what is better known as Know-Nothingism. Though Father, contrary to all precedent, was a staunch Whig, whilst all Irishmen claimed by retrograding Democracy, yet the narrow minds of village politicians failed to comprehend his disapproval of a religious persecution or war against foreigners who had chosen America as their home by choice, whilst the persecutors claimed it was by chance. I and my brothers were bullied and beaten, Father and Mother almost ostracized by the bigots.⁷

The fear of immigrants in Centre County came from the supposed political threat they posed. Many Know Nothings claimed that immigrants voted in blocks for the Democratic Party, often to gain political favor. "Americans should rule America," they insisted.⁸ The Know Nothings reasoned that those who were not born in the United States, could not possibly understand its values and systems, and therefore were a threat to them. Additionally, they believed that immigrants led to an increase in both crime and pauperism. According to Know

⁷ John Federick Holahan, *The Civil War Diary of John Federick Holahan*, The Pennsylvania Room at The Centre County Library and Historical Museum.

⁸ Wammen F. Hewitt, "The Know Nothing Party of Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 2.2 (1935): 70, *Pennsylvania State University Open Journals System*, Online (accessed on September 17, 2014).

Nothings, the immigrants were the worst of European society. There were even claims that European governments sent over their poor and criminals. “From the refuge of the oppressed, we have come to be the great Botany Bay of the world,” claimed one nativist journal.⁹ The Know Nothing Party pushed for stricter naturalization laws, requiring immigrants to wait twenty-one years before being naturalized as a citizen.

One reason for this strong fear of immigrants was that Pennsylvania had been on the receiving end of a large wave of Irish and German immigration between 1845 and 1855.¹⁰ Although Centre County had a total of 797 foreign born in 1850, totaling only 3.4 percent of the population, the increase of immigration in neighboring counties was enough of a threat to worry the citizens of Centre County.¹¹ Not only did the increasing presence of immigrants incite ethnic tension, it also inflamed religious tension throughout the county and state, as many of these immigrants were members of the Roman Catholic Church.

Part of the anti-Catholic sentiment came from the long-standing prejudices between Protestants and Catholics. However, Protestants’ main objection was political rather than religious. Nativists believed that Catholics were a threat to the core beliefs of American society and democracy because they were under the influence of the Pope and the priests. “We have no fighting to do with the Roman Catholic Religion by itself, and separated from other issues. But when it over-steps its legitimate field; when it rudely and lawlessly grasps the scepter of State, and would make State a thing of it, we protest and wage war upon it.”¹² To the Know Nothings, the fact that Catholics were discouraged from reading the Bible on their own demonstrated a lack

⁹ Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings & the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 106-109.

¹⁰ James L. Houston, “The Demise of the Pennsylvania American Party, 1845 - 1858,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 109 .4 (1985): 473, *Pennsylvania State University Open Journals System*, Online (accessed on September 17, 2014).

¹¹ Historical Census Browser, 2004, The University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/>. (accessed on October 20, 2014).

¹² “A Matter Which We Wish to be Understood,” *The Democratic Whig*, August 23, 1854: 1.

of individuality and freedom of thought. Furthermore, they charged that Catholics held disproportionate political power because priests controlled parishioners' votes, giving Catholic leaders the power to determine elections.¹³

One reason the Know Nothings saw some success in replacing the Whigs in Centre County was their support of temperance. The Protestant citizens of Centre County were challenging what they believed to be the moral wrongs of society, and atop the list was the sale and consumption of alcohol. In September of 1853, before the Know Nothings showed their strength, a temperance meeting known as "The Big Tent" came to different townships throughout the county.¹⁴ There were at least two more county temperance meetings in 1854 before the county voted in the October elections, by 2438 to 1871, to prohibit the sale of liquor.¹⁵ A letter written by a group of Centre County Protestants to a "Liquor Selling Church Member from some of his Brethren," also shows the importance of the temperance cause: "no professed Christian can engage at the present day in this trade without bringing a terrible reproach upon our beloved Zion."¹⁶ Many of the recently arrived immigrants opposed temperance, which made the anti-immigrant aspect of the Know Nothing Party even more appealing to the voters of Centre County.

The Know Nothings' opposition to the spread of slavery allowed them to challenge the Republican Party as the successor to the Whig Party, which was then the party of most of the county's anti-slavery men. Although Know Nothing leaders originally wanted to ignore the slavery question, it became an integral part of northern Know Nothings' agenda. This eventually

¹³ Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery* 104 - 105; William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party: 1852 - 1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 93 - 97.

¹⁴ Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 93 - 95.

¹⁵ "County Temperance Meeting," *The Democratic Whig*. March 01, 1854: 1; "Temperance Meeting," *The Democratic Whig*, April 19, 1854: 1; Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 94.

¹⁶ "Letter to a Liquor Selling Church Member from some of his Brethren," *The Democratic Whig*, March 08, 1854: 1.

caused the party to split into Northern and Southern factions as they argued over including opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act in their platform. The anti-slavery beliefs of the Northern Know Nothings were an expression of their Protestant morals. As Tyler Anbinder notes, Protestant ministers had been pointing to “Rum, Romanism, and Slavery,” as the three evils plaguing American society.¹⁷

Due to the Know Nothings’ tremendous success in the elections of 1854 and 1855, it was vital that the Republicans fuse with them. The Know Nothing Party hardly seemed a political force at the beginning of 1854, when it still operated more as a secret fraternal organization than a political party, with its members often belonging to other political parties. Know Nothings were instructed to say they “knew nothing” if asked about the organization, making them even more difficult to identify.¹⁸ In the 1854 elections, the Know Nothings revealed themselves as a party capable of challenging the Democrats. Word of the Know Nothing Party in Centre County first began to spread in July of 1854, although it may have had a presence in the county before then, and it was reported to have upwards of 250 members in Bellefonte alone.¹⁹ Later that summer, the county’s Whig paper observed, “there are so many anxious inquiries who seem desirous to get in, but can’t.”²⁰ The brewing interest in the Know Nothing Party in Centre County was reflected in the fall elections.

The Know Nothings exerted great influence over the 1854 elections, even if they did not contest them openly. The Know Nothings supported James Pollock, a Whig, for governor and Henry S. Mott, a Democrat, for canal commissioner. They also nominated their own candidate,

¹⁷ Abinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 106.

¹⁸ William E. Gienapp, “Nativism and the Creation of a Republican Majority in the North Before the Civil War,” *The Journal of American History* 72.3 (1985): 529 - 559. *JSTOR*, Online (accessed on September 15, 2014)

¹⁹ “The Know Nothings,” *The Democratic Whig*, August 02, 1854: 1; Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 197.

²⁰ “The Know Nothings,” *The Democratic Whig*, August 02, 1854: 1.

Baird, for supreme judge.²¹ The *Democratic Whig*, just weeks before the election, ran an article questioning whether Pollock and Mott were members of the Know Nothing Party, however, the secrecy of the party makes it difficult to determine. In the case of Pollock, Democrats charged he was a Know Nothing. Although the Whig Party disputed these claims, this may have been a campaign trick to win the Democrats the Catholic and immigrant vote. Regardless, Pollock won the race with a 2774 to 2113 majority in Centre County, almost certainly with the help of the Know Nothing vote.²²

Mott's case is much more straightforward. He openly denied charges that he was a member and even asserted that he opposed them. It seems that the only reason the Know Nothing Party supported him was because the Whig candidate, George Dairse, was born in Scotland.²³ Mott won the election and was completely dominant in Centre County, carrying every township and winning by a total of 4,181 votes to Darsie's 391 votes.²⁴ When one compares the results of this race with other races in the county, the influence of the Know Nothing Party becomes evident. In Harris Township for example, Bigler, the Democratic candidate for governor, lost to the Whig and Know Nothing candidate by a count of 296 votes to 72. However, in the race for canal commissioner Mott received an overwhelming majority in the same township, winning 342 votes compared to Dairse's 31 votes.²⁵ Mott's overwhelming victory when other Democrats in the township did so poorly suggests the Know Nothings refused to vote for a foreign born candidate.

²¹ Hewitt, "The Know Nothing Party of Pennsylvania," 76.

²² *Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Election Returns 1854*, The Wilkes University Election Statistics Project, Dr. Harold E. Cox, Director, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/index.html> (accessed on August 17, 2014); "The Election Returns of Centre Co, for 1854 - Official," *The Democratic Whig*, August 02, 1854: 2.

²³ Hewitt, "The Know Nothing Party of Pennsylvania," 76.

²⁴ "The Election Returns of Centre Co, for 1854 - Official," *The Democratic Whig*, August 02, 1854: 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

The race for supreme judge further demonstrates the prominence of the Know Nothings. In the statewide election, Black was elected, but Baird won Centre County.²⁶ Know Nothings had overtaken the Whigs as the opposition to the Democratic Party. Pollock, who was supported by the American Party, was the only Whig candidate to carry a majority in the county. However, the other two Whig candidates who did not have the support of the Know Nothings failed to receive even 45 votes in a single township.²⁷ The appearance of the American Party, seemingly out of nowhere, scared the Centre County Democrats, so much so that they required each member to pledge that he was not a Know Nothing during their county convention on August 28, 1855. The Democrats' fears were borne out at the spring election of 1855, when the Know Nothings saw their entire ticket elected in all counties except Haines, where the Democratic candidate for justice of the peace won only by a narrow margin.²⁸ By the time the Republican Party had reached Centre County, the Know Nothings had already risen to the challenge of taking on the Democrats by themselves.

Turning of the Tides

The 1856 presidential election revealed that the Republicans still had a way to go in seriously challenging the Democratic Party. The election was between the Democratic candidate, James Buchanan; the Republican candidate, John. C. Frémont; and the Know-Nothing candidate, Millard Fillmore. As an anti-slavery party, the Republicans focused their campaign

²⁶ Hewitt, "The Know Nothing Party of Pennsylvania," 76; "The Election Returns of Centre Co, for 1854 - Official," *The Democratic Whig*, August 02, 1854: 2.

²⁷ "The Election Returns of Centre Co, for 1854 - Official," *The Democratic Whig*, August 02, 1854: 2.

²⁸ Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 93-95.

on slavery. They argued that a vote for Buchanan was a vote for slavery, while a vote for Frémont was a vote for freedom.²⁹

The Democrats responded quickly and effectively by stating that the election was actually a choice between “Buchanan and Union, and Frémont and Disunion.”³⁰ The Democrats not only portrayed the Republicans as sectional agitators, but also as racial agitators, claiming they supported equality between the races

The Republicans attacked slavery by tapping into the northern fear of the Slave Power. The idea of the Slave Power was created and popularized by the Ohio anti-slavery leader, Salmon P. Chase. He argued that the founding fathers opposed slavery but feared the federal government did not have the power to abolish it. Instead, they attempted to limit slavery and intended for it to die out naturally. According to Chase, the Slave Power consisted of 350,000 slaveholders from the South who dominated both political and social life. That dominance allowed the slaveholders to deny the opportunity of social advancement to the poor whites, even barring them from office. The Slave Power used the three-fifths clause to increase their power in the Electoral College and in Congress to control the major parties.³¹ The plantation owners, having seized control of the Democratic Party, led the nation down a path that was the antithesis of what the founding fathers had intended. Instead of a nation of free men, they were working towards a nation of slaves.³²

Republicans also claimed that the expansion of slavery would come at the expense of the white laborer. If slavery were allowed into the territories, it would close them off to the white

²⁹ John F. Coleman, *The Disruption of the Pennsylvania Democracy: 1848 - 1860* (Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1975), 93.

³⁰ “Eli K. Price,” *The Democratic Watchman*, August 27, 1856: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on August 19, 2014).

³¹ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 87-89.

³² Andrew Wallace Crandall, *The Early History of the Republican Party, 1854 - 1856* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1960), 81.

working class, as they could not compete with slave labor. While this argument would eventually prove successful for the Republican Party, it fell on deaf ears for the moment. The *Democratic Watchman* accurately states the shortcoming of the Republican Party in the 1856 election: “the real purpose of the agitators cannot be concealed. Excitement on the slavery question is the very life-blood of their fanatical organization. Take this away and there remains to them few minor and kindred topics, by the agitation of which they can hope to secure position and notoriety.”³³

The Know Nothings’ formidable performance in the previous two elections obliged the Republicans to fuse with the American Party. Initially, Pennsylvania Know Nothings and Republicans only agreed to a fusion ticket in the statewide elections. Although the Northern Know Nothings opposed the spread of slavery and the Kansas Nebraska Act, they still refused to work with someone they viewed as an abolitionist, such as Frémont. Other members of the American Party still thought it was against their principles to work with a sectional party such as the Republicans. Some Republicans, for their part, had qualms about fusing with the Know Nothings. Many Radical Republicans, who stressed the moral wrongs of slavery, thought that it would divert attention from the issue. Furthermore, there were those within the Republican Party who believed Know Nothings rejected one of the most basic principles of democracy, political equality.³⁴

Opposition to the Union ticket in the November election came from American Party leaders in Philadelphia, but Americans throughout the rest of the state favored fusion. The *Hanover Spectator*, a Know Nothing paper, called for a mass meeting of “citizens of York and

³³ “To the People of the United States,” The *Democratic Watchman*, September 24, 1856: 1, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed August 16, 2014).

³⁴ Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 240-243.

Adams counties opposed to the corrupt policy of the National Administration and the election of James Buchanan - who are opposed to the *extension of slavery into free territory* and in favor of the Union State and County Tickets.”³⁵ The paper emphasized opposition to the extension of slavery as an attempt to persuade Republicans to join the fusion cause. However, the *Democratic Watchman* took this opportunity to claim that “[a]bolition ideas are boldly proclaimed by the Fillmore and Donelson papers.”³⁶ The *Watchman* wanted to lure the more conservative, pro-southern Know Nothings away from a potential fusion ticket, or even to the Democrats’ side.

A Union Ticket was created in which each voter could cast their vote for Fillmore or Frémont on the ticket, and at the end of the election, if the Union Ticket won, the electoral vote would be split proportionally between the two candidates. If the state’s electoral votes could give either candidate a majority, then they would go to that candidate. The Union Party platform also suggested some attempt at greater cooperation, as the ticket showed nativist demands when it denounced “foreign influence of every kind,” as well as the “pandering of any party to foreign influence.”³⁷

However, the Democrats’ attempts at fracturing the Union Ticket were successful. Factions of the American Party refused to participate and created a straight Fillmore ticket in addition to the Union Ticket. The *Independent Republican*, from Montrose, Pennsylvania in Lancaster County, attempted to clear up “some misapprehension” that “may still exist as to the nature and operation of the plan by which the friends of Frémont and Fillmore are to vote.”

³⁵ The article in the Hanover Spectator is reprinted in the *Democratic Watchman*, which tells us that the Hanover Spectre is a Know Nothing Paper. “Fusion of Abolitionism and Know Thingism,” *The Democratic Watchman*, September 10, 1856: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (August 19, 2014).

³⁶ Andrew J. Donelson was Fillmore’s running mate; *Ibid*.

³⁷ Gienapp, “Nativism and the Creation of a Republican Majority in the North Before the Civil War,” 544.

After explaining the terms of the fusion, it then reiterated that the plan required “no more sacrifice” for men of either party.³⁸

The results of the Presidential Election of 1856 showed the failure of fusion and the weakness of the Republican Party’s anti-slavery appeal. Buchanan not only won the presidency but carried Pennsylvania and Centre County. Within Centre County, Buchanan received 2895 votes. The Union Ticket received a total of 1790 votes, 1400 of which went to Fillmore, while only 390, just 6.3% of the total votes cast in Centre County, went to Frémont.³⁹ That Fillmore votes made up such an overwhelming majority of the Union Ticket demonstrates how the Republican Party was much weaker than the American Party within Centre County.

However, the Panic of 1857 pumped new life into the Republican Party. This allowed economic issues to enter the political discourse, to appeal to potential voters on an issue besides slavery, as well as to establish common economic ground upon which they could unite. This shift to problems in the Northern economy was especially important in Centre County, because the panic hurt the iron industries of Pennsylvania worse than any other section of the nation, especially from October 1857 until March 1858. In 1856 the Pennsylvania iron industry produced 883,000 tons. Output declined each of the next two years, decreasing by 85,000 tons in 1857 and 93,000 tons in 1858.⁴⁰ Proponents of protectionism commonly blamed the panic, and the hard times that accompanied it, on the low tariff of 1857.⁴¹ The low tariff, they argued, made it impossible for local industries to keep up with cheap foreign imports from Europe, and as a

³⁸ “The Union Electoral Ticket,” *The Independent Republican*, September 24, 1856: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed August 16, 2014).

³⁹ “Pennsylvania Election,” *The Democratic Watchman*, November 19, 1856: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed August 19, 2014).

⁴⁰ Houston, *The Panic of 1857*, 29.

⁴¹ Malcolm Moos, *The Republicans: A History of Their Party* (New York: Random House Press, 1956), 55-56.

result wages had to be lowered or jobs had to be cut in order for American industries to compete.⁴²

Pennsylvanians cried out for a protective tariff. Although many Republicans had already supported a protective tariff as former Whigs, the importance of Pennsylvania in future elections meant that it became an important part of Republican rhetoric. The editor of the *Central Press*, the organ of the Republican Party in Centre County, wrote that “[t]he district wants a tariff man—not a theoretical tariff advocate, but a man who will remember the sufferings of his constituents.”⁴³ The Republican Party was made up of disgruntled members of numerous other parties that came together to oppose the expansion of slavery into the territories. Until this point, Republicans had no consensus on economic issues, dividing largely by their previous political affiliations. However, with the rise in protectionism across the North, especially in Pennsylvania, Republicans could unite economically.

The near universal support for a protective tariff allowed the Republicans to turn the protectionist sentiment into an anti-slavery issue. Republicans now stressed the principles of free labor, and by doing so, they stressed opposition to slavery in economic terms. The notion of a society based upon the free labor of the average man and the “dignity and opportunities which it offered,”⁴⁴ was one of the fundamental ideas of Republicans. This attached a positive aspect to the Republicans’ anti-slavery agenda, one that would attract voters who may not have had interest in a party focused on abolition.

Republicans also connected the protective tariff to their struggle against the Slave Power. The southern plantation owners were traditionally against tariffs. A high tariff meant that they

⁴² Houston, *The Panic of 1857*, 29.

⁴³ “The Election,” *The Central Press*, October 08, 1958: 2 *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection* Online (accessed on August 7, 2014)

⁴⁴ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 11

may need to buy from expensive American manufactures instead of cheap European ones. A protective tariff also created the threat of other countries imposing a tariff on American goods, which would have damaged the South's cotton exports. Republicans argued that the Democratic Congressmen opposing the tariff were representing the planters instead of their constituents. "It is time that Pennsylvania mechanics should be represented by statesmen who will eschew negro dogmas, and discuss plain politics for the benefit of the people,"⁴⁵ wrote the *Central Press*. According to Republicans, Pennsylvania mechanics needed politicians who served their interests, not the interests of the slaveholders in the South. Although Republicans had made similar charges in the past, the severe unemployment that now plagued the state made the threat real.⁴⁶ In these ways, the Centre County Republicans were able to turn the rise of protectionism, caused by the Panic of 1857, into a cohesive, economic policy that incorporated the fundamental ideals of the Republican Party and the practical economic concerns of the people of Pennsylvania. The emphasis on protectionism and the discussion of slavery strictly in terms of free labor revealed the more conservative nature of the Republican Party in Centre County compared to the more radical abolitionists among Republicans across the North.

Furthermore, developments in Kansas also improved Republican prospects. The passing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act gave birth to the Republican Party, and the utter failure of the act increased sectional tension enough to allow Republicans to gain critical momentum in the years prior to the 1860 presidential election. By the time that Buchanan took office after his 1856 victory, the situation in Kansas had grown chaotic. A proslavery Constitution was adopted at a convention in the city of Lecompton despite a free soil majority and few slaves in the territory.

⁴⁵ "The Election" The *Central Press*, October 08, 1958: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on August 7, 2014).

⁴⁶ Houston, *The Panic of 1857*, 137.

This was thanks to the vote of “border ruffians,” pro-slavery Missourians who crossed over into Kansas to vote to bring it into the Union as a slave state.⁴⁷ Widespread violence broke out in the territory between the two sides.

President Buchanan made his stance on Kansas clear. When he took office, the Lecompton government had already been legally established; therefore, he saw it as his duty to protect it. Buchanan did not want to lose the support of Southern Democrats by supporting a free Kansas, but by refusing to do so, he opened himself up to Republican’s criticism. They claimed he was acting on behalf of the slave owners who wished to make Kansas a slave state despite the obvious wishes of the people. This became a major weakness for Buchanan as Republicans constantly attacked him, claiming he was not invested in the interest of the nation, but rather in the interest of the slave owners. Republicans took this further, arguing that he was even willing to sacrifice the laboring classes for the planters’ benefit. Once again, the Republicans found a way to attack the Democrats as the Slave Power.

Despite the Republicans’ ability to create a more unified and coherent appeal, they were thoroughly defeated in the elections of 1857. This was in part due to the breakdown of fusion with the Know Nothings. At the 1857 Union state convention, David Wilmot, a Republican, was selected as the candidate for governor. Wilmot gained national recognition in 1846, sponsoring the Wilmot Proviso, which would have excluded slavery from all territories acquired in the Mexican War. Wilmot was one of the first to attack slavery on political grounds, ensuring that there would be an anti-slavery focus on the campaign from his name alone.⁴⁸ Although the Know Nothings did receive two of the remaining three spots on the ticket, they were dissatisfied

⁴⁷ Kenneth M. Stamp, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 145.

⁴⁸ Jonathan H. Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery & the Politics of Free Soil: 1824-1854* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 131-135; Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 255.

with the selection of Wilmot and nominated their own candidate for governor, Isaac Hazlehurst. Hazlehurst did not show well when compared to Wilmot. In Centre County, he received only 35 votes, compared to Wilmot's 2145 votes.⁴⁹ This prompted Know Nothings to be more open to working with Republicans in the next year, when the new People's Party would win over the majority of the Fillmore Union voters.⁵⁰ In the race for the Pennsylvania Governor, the Democratic candidate, William T. Packer, beat out the Republican nominee by over 40,000 votes.⁵¹ Although the Republicans had seen a series of turnarounds, they occurred too late in the year to allow them to win the 1857 election.

The absorption of Fillmore voters into the Republican Party can be explained ideologically. The large wave of immigration, which fueled the Know Nothings' success, reached its peak in 1854, and as it slowly tapered off, so did enthusiasm for nativism. In fact, the Centre County foreign born population was slightly lower in 1860 than it was in 1850. Combined with the explosion of protectionism, nativism was no longer at the top of the political agenda. Nativist sentiment did not just disappear; in 1858, when Republicans and Know Nothings formed a new party, dubbed the People's Party, the platform included nativist planks, such as stricter enforcement of immigration laws and a ban on the immigration of criminals.⁵²

Despite these minor concessions, by 1860 the Know Nothing Party had become almost indistinguishable from the Republican Party. The *Centre Democrat*, the Know Nothing paper in Centre County, shifted its focus from nativism to protectionism. "The leading question in the

⁴⁹ *Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Election Returns 1857*, The Wilkes University Election Statistics Project, Dr. Harold E. Cox, Director, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/index.html> (accessed on August 18, 2014).

⁵⁰ Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 174-175, 261-263.

⁵¹ "The Elections," *The Central Press*, October 15, 1858: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed August 17, 2014).

⁵² Houston, "The Demise of the Pennsylvania American Party," 496-497.

campaign, and the one which most interests the working man is the Tariff,”⁵³ wrote the editor of the paper prior to the Election of 1860. When nativism was mentioned, it was paired with an appeal to protectionism. “We have not at any time attempted to show that we are the ‘particular friend’ of the foreign born citizen, but we have attempted to show that it is the interest of every citizen of the United States, native and foreign, to vote for the protective tariff.”⁵⁴ The Know Nothings also attempted to distance themselves from their earlier nativist views, writing, “You slander, and willfully slander, the American Party, when you assert that its object was to deprive the foreign born *citizens* of the right to vote. It is false and you know it.”⁵⁵ According to the editor, the Know Nothings were never enemies of foreign born citizens, only immigrants without full citizenship. The American Party had been so far absorbed that there was often no mention of the American or Know Nothing Party, only of the Republican Party. Clearly, nativism was no longer a viable political force. As James L. Houston wrote, “Anti-Catholicism and xenophobia were strong enough to shatter the two-party system in 1854 but too weak to serve as a means to forge a new anti-Democratic organization.”⁵⁶

The Republicans take Power

With the widening of the Republican ideology, and the absorption of the large majority of Know Nothings into the Republican led People’s Party, the Republicans’ fortunes changed. Although the county went heavily Democratic in the previous year, the entire Republican ticket

⁵³ The Tariff Party,” *The Centre Democrat*, September, 20, 1860: 2.

⁵⁴ *The Centre Democrat*, September, 20, 1860: 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Houston, “The Demise of the Pennsylvania American Party,” 496-497.

was elected in the October Elections of 1858.⁵⁷ The Congressional elections of Pennsylvania were being watched nationally, as Pennsylvania was sure to be a key state in the approaching Presidential Election of 1860.⁵⁸ The Republican candidate for Congress, James T. Hale, is particularly interesting. A brief study of the life and career of Hale reveals that his rise to political success in many ways mirrors and embodies the rise of the Republican Party as a whole, not only in Centre County, but on state and national levels as well. James T. Hale was born on October 14, 1810 in Bradford County, Pennsylvania. He fit perfectly into the Republican vision of a free labor society, where each man was free to rise to the maximum of his potential through the virtue of labor. As a child, Hale worked on his family farm, only attending school intermittently. He grew up to study law under his uncle, and by 1851 he was appointed president judge of the Pennsylvania 25th Court District by Governor Johnston.⁵⁹

Hale only served on the bench for a few years before returning to his private practice and becoming part owner of vast timber and coal reserves across Cambria, Centre, and Clearfield counties. Hoping to maximize his investment, Hale also became involved with the Tyrone and Clearfield Railroad Company and was appointed president upon its creation on May 5, 1856. The line that he created became an essential feeder to the Pennsylvania Central railroad, connecting Centre County and its industries to the major trade routes of Pennsylvania.⁶⁰ Hale successfully elevated himself from his humble beginnings working on his parent's farm to a successful lawyer and industrialist. He provided the perfect example of the social mobility in a free labor society which the Republicans believed in so strongly.

⁵⁷ "The Elections" The *Central Press*, October 15, 1858: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on August 17, 2014).

⁵⁸ Houston, *The Panic of 1857*, 139.

⁵⁹ Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 97, 197.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 97, 198.

Judge Hale, like many of the time, switched to the Republican Party after the demise of the Whig Party, and was opposed to the extension of slavery. Democrats attacked him on this point, claiming that he held “extremely sectional views” and was a “dangerous representative.” The Republicans replied that Hale was “no abolitionist.” Although he was opposed to the expansion of slavery, he also opposed “any legislative interference with slavery where it now exists.”⁶¹ The Republicans were hoping to minimize the agitation of proslavery Democrats.

The Republicans of Centre County adroitly exploited economic issues. Despite the attacks by Democrats, Judge Hale’s protectionist record helped him overcome them in a region with a large iron industry and history of protectionist sentiment. The Republican Party advanced a policy for a high protective tariff as a means to support not only American industry, but also the American laboring class. Hale was an attractive candidate to the members of the dying Know Nothing Party as well. For one, he was a leading proponent of temperance, a major plank of the Know Nothing Party. As John Blair Linn, a Centre County historian, tells us, “he was a persistent and persevering friend of the temperance cause and the first to advocate publicly the passage of laws to prevent the manufacture and sale of liquor as a beverage.”⁶² Hale was also moderate on the question of slavery, only opposing its extension to the territories, which also helped draw in the Know Nothings, who took a more conservative views on slavery.

Hale proved to be the right candidate for the Republicans as he beat out his opponent Allison White to win the election with an overall majority of 100 votes within Centre County.⁶³ Although few knew it at the time, the Republican Party had established itself as the second major party in the American political system. This became more evident when Centre County voters

⁶¹ “The last Issue,” *The Central Press*, October 01, 1858: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed August 19, 2014).

⁶² Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 198.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 100.

helped to vote Bellefonte native Andrew Curtin governor in October, then did the same for Lincoln in the presidential election the following November. When Lincoln was elected without carrying a single Southern state, secession soon followed. Shortly after that came war.

However, this did not only bring about Civil War, but intensified the battle between the Democratic Party and the newly established Republican Party. As the Civil War further strained the previous rifts between them, it also created new ones as well, such as questions over Civil Liberties and the president's war powers. The following two chapters will further explore these new and old points of contention between the parties by examining closely how the partisan rivalry persisted throughout the crisis of secession and Civil War

Chapter 2: Patriotism and Partisanship

The outbreak of the Civil War stirred up feelings of patriotism, which Republicans and Democrats in Centre County were quick to incorporate into their rivalry. Both parties sought to save the nation from civil war, and were briefly willing to put partisan differences aside to accomplish this. However, each party developed their own contrasting idea of what it meant to be a patriot and it soon became apparent that patriotic sentiment only fueled the partisan rivalry, rather than bringing it to an end.

Patriotism can be defined as the loyalty people felt towards their county, and their identification with it.⁶⁴ At the onset of the Civil War, American patriotism and nationalism were based on what historians like Melinda Lawson refer to as the “American Idea.”⁶⁵ Its roots traced back to the Revolution. When the thirteen colonies overthrew the rule of the English monarchy, they saw it as a rejection of European aristocracy as a whole. They saw themselves as a unique nation, tied together by “love respect and consent,” and with representative government at its foundation.⁶⁶ Personal freedom and protection of rights were the most important aspects of this new society that was built upon individualism, opportunity and democracy. The possibility for self-improvement and social progress was what formed the bonds of loyalty that Americans felt to their country. The commitment to the “American Idea” led the parties to believe that bi-partisanship was in the best interest of themselves and the union. Yet at the same time, the

⁶⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (London, UK.: Cornell University Press, 1983) 137-138.

⁶⁵ Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North*, (Lawrence Ka.: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

parties sought to take advantage of this heightened patriotism by redefining it to reinforce their partisan agendas.

From Secession to Civil War

When South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20, 1860, a wave of patriotism flooded Centre County. “Never has there been an hour in which the citizens of these free states should have stood more manfully around the flag which symbolizes their principles and their history than they should in this period of trial,” wrote the *Centre Democrat*.⁶⁷ For a moment, it seemed as if the partisan differences could be put aside in order to save the Union. The *Central Press* argued against the formation of military units along party lines, stating that there was a place for politics and the battlefield was not one of them. “If war will come, let us be prepared for it as citizens of a common country, devoted to common interests, rallying under its common standard, not as members of political parties.”⁶⁸ The *Democratic Watchman* issued a similar message: “Let us be up and doing, and above all, let us be united. Let the American Union be the altar upon which we will sacrifice all our difference of opinion upon subjects of minor importance.”⁶⁹

The most tangible result of the call for bi-partisanship was the reaction to the Crittenden Compromise. In December 1860, John J. Crittenden of Kentucky proposed a series of amendments to the Constitution, which would have guaranteed that all current slave states remain as such and that all territory north of the Missouri Compromise line would be free. Any

⁶⁷ “Stand by the Old Flag,” *The Centre Democrat*, January 10, 1861: 2.

⁶⁸ “Political Military Companies,” *The Central Press*, January 10, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on October 8, 2014).

⁶⁹ “Can the People do Nothing,” *The Democratic Watchman*, January 10, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper*, Online (accessed on October 8, 2014).

territory formed below the line would use popular sovereignty to determine if it would be a free or slave state. These resolutions were debated and revised by a committee of congressmen from the Border States, including Judge James T. Hale, the local congressman from Bellefonte.⁷⁰

The Centre County Republicans met in Bellefonte to debate the Crittenden plan as well as an alternative proposition, the Chicago Platform, which was supported by Lincoln. The Chicago Platform took a hard stance on secession, asserting that no state had the right to remove themselves from the Union. “As long as they claim the right to dissolve the Union whenever they get into a pout, they are nothing but outlaws and should be treated as such,” wrote the Central Press, in defense of the Chicago Platform.⁷¹ Despite the support of the Central Press, only thirty-one out of a few hundred delegates supported the Chicago Platform, while the Crittenden Compromise was “indorsed with great enthusiasm,” demonstrating the conservatism of the local Republican Party.⁷² Centre County Republicans were not willing to take a hard stance against the southern secessionists even though it was backed by the national administration.⁷³

The Crittenden Compromise received bi-partisan support within Centre County. “We can assure JUDGE HALE, that his course upon this question meets with the approbation of at least four fifths of his constituents without respect to party,” wrote the Democratic Watchman in support of the Republican Congressman.⁷⁴ On February 15, 1861, the delegates of the recent Democratic Convention were recalled and approved the Crittenden Compromise. They made

⁷⁰ Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) 14; Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 104.

⁷¹ “Down with Concession,” *The Central Press*, January 10, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on October 19, 2014).

⁷² Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 104.

⁷³ Douglass Whitehead observed the conservative nature of Centre County Republicans: “This independent, conservative attitude descended from the original difficulties of the local Republican leaders in forming the “People Party” coalition. The Republicans had to minimize the anti-southern and anti-slavery rhetoric of the national platform to attract sufficient voters.”

⁷⁴ “The News from Washington - The Proposition of the Border States,” *The Democratic Watchman*, January 10, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on October 8, 2014).

clear their view that civil war should not be considered until all constitutional means of reconciliation were attempted, stating “when the people of the North shall have fulfilled their obligations to the Constitution and the South, then and not till then will it be proper to take into consideration the question of the right and propriety of coercion.”⁷⁵ Although the compromise would be narrowly defeated in the Senate just prior to Lincoln’s inauguration, it became a cornerstone of peace rhetoric.

Despite the promising signs, the threat of secession was not enough to stem the tide of partisanship in Centre County. Although they had been attempting to reach a bipartisan solution, Republicans and Democrats had been putting their own partisan twist on secession since the start of the crisis when South Carolina seceded. To the Republicans, the secession cries of the South validated their belief in the Slave Power conspiracy. “The Federal Government has been entirely at their service since the inauguration of pauper Pierce, and it is simply because it is just about passing out of their hands, that they now raise their impious hands, and threaten demolition of this great Republican Fabric.”⁷⁶ According to the editor of the *Central Press*, the secession cries also revealed the true nature of the Democratic Party: “It is the Democratic Party first and the Union afterwards. Their action is governed by self and not by patriotism. They would be the willing supporters of the meanest despotism on the face of the earth if it would only secure to them position and luxurious leisure.”⁷⁷ Statements such as these reinforced the longstanding Republican idea that the Democratic Party was working for the slave aristocracy in order to gain political patronage.

⁷⁵ Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 104.

⁷⁶ “The Savage South,” *The Central Press*, November 15, 1860: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on October 19, 2014).

⁷⁷ “After the Battle,” *The Central Press*, November 22, 1860: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on October 19, 2014).

The Democrats of Centre County viewed the crisis as a result of the sectional agitation upon which the Republican Party was built. “However we may regard the hasty action of disunion leaders, it cannot be concealed that the present excited state of public mind in the Southern States is the legitimate result of the aggressive spirit and policy of Northern fanatics.”⁷⁸ Even so, the constitutional election of any man to the office of president could not justify secession to the Centre County Democrats. “While we concede that the principles of the party whose candidate, Abraham Lincoln, was, and the expressed sentiments of its leaders are antagonistic to Southern Institutions, and insulting in the highest degree to our Southern brethren, we think that before performing any hostile act, they should at least wait until those principles have been enacted,” wrote the Democratic Watchman.⁷⁹

Both of the parties used the secession crisis to strengthen their partisan accusations. Republicans had long claimed that the Democratic Party was nothing more than a tool for the slave holding aristocracy in the South, which sought to gain control of the national government to suit the interest of the slaveholders. Once the slaveholders had lost control of the government, they resorted to secession. The Democrats had claimed that the Republicans were demagogues, encouraging sectional tension in order to gain political power, and that the secession of the south was a result of that agitation. Both parties used the southern threat of secession for partisan advantage, but patriotic sentiment in Centre County had yet to reach its peak.

⁷⁸ “Secession in the South,” The *Democratic Watchman*, November 15, 1860: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on October 19, 2014).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

The Bombing of Fort Sumter and the Peak of Patriotism

With the arrival of news of the attack on Fort Sumter, Centre County exploded with a renewed sense of patriotism. People crowded around the telegraph office, desperate to hear the latest. In the following weeks, flags sprung up all over Bellefonte and even on the Catholic Church.⁸⁰ Following the attack, the mood in Bellefonte was electric:

On Monday evening the streets presented a scene of animation only equaled by that of the political excitement of the late campaign. The war news was the all-absorbing topic, and was discussed with an interest and determination which showed the most perfect unanimity in favor of the maintenance of the Union and enforcement of the laws.⁸¹

With the excitement came renewed calls for a hiatus in partisan rivalries. This time, however, the patriotism of Centre County citizens was strong enough to bring partisanship to a halt, if only for a brief time. As John Blair Linn notes, “discord ceased in Centre County and was succeeded by intense enthusiasm in support of the Union.”⁸² The *Berichter*, another Democratic paper strongly opposed to Lincoln, was now “for the Government, and knows no party until the Union is restored as of old.”⁸³ The differences and ill feelings between Democrats and Republicans had not disappeared, but the parties were willing to put them aside to save the Union. “Much as we loath the miscalled Republican Party as such, earnestly as we shall strive to

⁸⁰ The *Democratic Watchman*, April 25, 1861: 1, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on October 19, 2014).

⁸¹ “The Southern Rebellion - How the News was Received in Bellefonte - War Preparations,” The *Central Press*, April 18, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on November 7, 2014).

⁸² Although impossible to give an exact date, partisanship returned in force to Centre County by late 1862, around the time of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

⁸³ “Penn’s Valley,” The *Central Press*, April 25, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (November 8, 2014).

drive it from power at the earliest constitutional opportunity - yet we shall cordially sustain the Government in this hour of peril," wrote the Democratic Watchman.⁸⁴

The events in Centre County reflected what was happening throughout the rest of Pennsylvania. In a study of Indiana County, Pennsylvania, W. Wayne Smith observed the same reaction to the outbreak of civil war. In his view, citizens there were able to overcome the great differences that had been fracturing the nation because they shared a common belief in law and order. The very foundations of government were threatened if secession were to be tolerated.⁸⁵ In Indiana County, as in Bellefonte after the arrival of the news about the war, Pennsylvanians were concerned about the rule of law.

With the wide-ranging support for the war, President Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers was received with enthusiasm. One of the local militia units, the Bellefonte Fencibles, immediately volunteered their services to the nation, and was soon on the way to assemble at Harrisburg. On Wednesday April 18, 1861, a meeting at the county courthouse attempted to meet the President's call. Judge James T. Hale gave a patriotic speech to increase volunteer enlistment, urging that it was the "solemn duty of every man who feels that law and order is better than disorder and anarchy, who loves his country and her happy institutions to rally as one man to her defense." Hale also declared that the people of Centre County stood fully in support of law and order and that secession was nothing but another term for rebellion.⁸⁶

After the war broke out, the patriotic feeling that had begun after the election of 1860 reached new heights. As a result, Democrats and Republicans were willing to put aside partisan differences in order to preserve the Union and law and order. By demonstrating a willingness to

⁸⁴ "The War Commenced," *The Democratic Watchman*, April 18, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*. Online (October 8, 2014).

⁸⁵ W. Wayne Smith, *The Price of Patriotism: Indiana County, Pennsylvania and the Civil War* (Shippensburg: Burd Street Press, 1998), 4.

⁸⁶ Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 105.

work together, the two parties sought to portray themselves as patriots. In a speech at a Union meeting, Daniel S. Dickinson called for bi-partisanship repeatedly. “I shall not adopt your political principles if you are an opponent of mine - as many of you are - and I don’t ask you to adopt mine, but I ask you to go with me in a great common duty, which concerns us all alike: to shield our Government,” he began. “Let them think there is a party to help them and they will fight forever.” Democrats and Republicans must stand united against the secessionist if they hoped to bring a quick end to the war.⁸⁷ Dickinson gave voice to the complex nature of bi-partisanship in Centre County during this interval.

The partisan rivalry was too embedded into politics for anything more than rhetorical calls for united action. At the Union meeting, Dickinson’s stance on “bi-partisanship” was a highly partisan one. Rather than ignoring political differences, he pointed out how the Republicans were copying heavily from the “great Union speeches of our democratic leaders,” which is evidence of the fact that “the Democrats were always right and the Republicans always wrong.” If the Republicans had published speeches like the Democrats and not the “narrow minded, sectional tirades of abolitionists,” civil war could have been avoided. Republicans, Dickinson asserted in conclusion, must “leave off voting with such a party at once,” and “come over to our party.”⁸⁸ To Dickinson, bi-partisanship meant that the Republicans would temporarily abandon their party to support the Democrats. This contradiction reveals the true nature of bi-partisanship in Centre County during this period, that it was mainly a rhetorical sentiment, made to portray the party as patriotic.

⁸⁷ “The Democratic Sentiment,” *The Democratic Watchman*, September 26, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on October 17, 2014).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

This explains why at the same time the parties were calling for bi-partisanship; they were denouncing the other as unpatriotic. The *Democratic Watchman* attacked Henry Johnson, the Republican candidate for senator, by claiming that he opted out of military service, choosing instead to stay in the safety of Centre County and partake in the “patriotic business of making stump political speeches for the purpose of inflaming the public mind on political issues.”⁸⁹ The parties exploited the opportunity for political gain by both appearing patriotic and making the other party appear unpatriotic.

In the early months of the war, the explosion of patriotism resulted in calls for bi-partisanship because there was a genuine belief that by overcoming partisan disagreements, the Union could be saved. However, the partisan rivalries were too strong to be completely forgotten. The Democratic and Republican parties were never able to unite, and patriotism began to affect politics in a different way. As the war progressed, the patriotism of Centre County began to reinforce partisanship, rather than bring it to an end. Citizens of Centre County slowly began believing that in order to save the Union, they must defeat the other party, rather than unite with them.

This shift began in late 1862, as many Democrats who had been willing to support the administration began to become alarmed with the Republican administration’s use of federal power, encroachment on civil liberties, and the announcement of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation issued on September 22, 1862.⁹⁰ Many took this as proof that emancipation had become a war aim. Suddenly, the Democratic claims that Republicans were more concerned

⁸⁹ “The Election Ticket,” *The Democratic Watchman*, September 26, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (October 17, 2014).

⁹⁰ Weber, *Copperheads*, 8.

with emancipation than the Union seemed much more real, and support for the war faded along with the desire for a bi-partisan effort to save the Union.

Once the peace faction began to grow, Centre County would become a bastion for Copperheadism.⁹¹ Even before the war started, the Democratic Watchman argued that war should only be resorted to after all constitutional means of reconciliation were met, and once Democrats started to believe that the Constitution was being violated, many of them retracted their support.⁹² Throughout the war, Centre County would go for the Democratic candidate in both the 1863 governor race and the 1864 presidential election.⁹³

While parties, especially the Republicans, continued to claim they were making bi-partisan efforts, they were chiefly doing so to make their own party look as if they were willing to sacrifice partisan differences, while the other was not. The Democrats now saw the Republican administration's expansion of federal power as well as its push for emancipation, as greater threats to the Union than the secession of the South. As Democrats began to speak out against the actions of the Republican administration, Republicans began to view the Democrats' opposition to war measures and emancipation as obstacles to saving the Union. Ultimately, Republicans and Democrats developed opposing ideas of what patriotism entailed.

Partisan Definitions of Patriotism

Republicans were split between a radical and moderate view of patriotism. To the radicals, the election of a Republican president meant "the principles of the Republican Party had become the principles of the nation." Furthermore, Radical Republicans believed that to deviate

⁹¹Arnold Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Anti-War Movement* (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1980), 18.

⁹²Weber, *Copperheads*, 8.

⁹³Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Anti-War Movement*, 137, 202.

from these principles was unpatriotic and disloyal. As Melinda Lawson notes, many moderate Republicans, including the Centre County Republicans, believed patriotism should be defined by wartime necessity, not principles. The moderate Republicans even ran under the “Union Party,” and their “sole doctrine was to save the Union. All leaders were committed, all measures enacted, toward that end and that end alone.”⁹⁴ Centre County Republicans began running under the “Union Party” name in 1863, but as early as 1861 in other states.⁹⁵ This did not mean that Centre County Republicans abandoned the principles that got them into office, but rather integrated them with war strategy.

The most notable example of Republicans combining their principles with military necessity was their stance on emancipation. Up until this point, Centre County Republicans did not speak of emancipation. Although opposed to slavery, the Centre County Republicans limited their discussion of slavery to the Slave Power and preventing its spread to the territories. This was unusual compared with the rest of the nation. Radical Republicans in congress, such as Zachariah Chandler and Lyman Trumbull, criticized Lincoln’s initial message regarding the war for not including any mention of slavery. However, once issued, the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was praised by Centre County Republicans. They countered Democratic claims that this represented a change in war aims, insisting, instead, that it was a strategic move. “The practical effects of this proclamation” the *Central Press* notes, “will be to cripple the rebels in their resources to carry on the war. The slaves of the South are the producers. Stop slave labor and you stop production, and when production ends, bankruptcy, want and ruin inevitably follow.”⁹⁶ Centre County Republicans also connected emancipation to their free labor beliefs. A

⁹⁴ Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, 77.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 78-79.

⁹⁶ “Practical Effects of the President’s Proclamation,” *The Central Press*, October 17, 1862: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (November 8, 2014).

free labor society and a slave society were incompatible, and the slaveholders sought to destroy the Union in order to save slavery. In the eyes of the Republicans, treason and support for slavery went hand in hand. “The supporters of slavery sought the sword to dismember and destroy the Union. They that flourished the sword must fall by the sword. Slavery and its concomitant treason, must be forced to yield to freedom and its companion, loyalty.”⁹⁷

Democrats who refused to accept these axioms and come over to the new “Union Party” were branded traitors. This allowed the Republicans to wave the flag of bi-partisanship, while still staying true to their party. This was Dickinson’s brand of bi-partisanship, but it proved much more successful for Republicans, as they had control of the federal government. Republicans made the argument that not supporting the Republican administration was equivalent to not supporting the federal government, and therefore not supporting the war effort. This gave them an advantage over the Democrats in claiming to the mantle of patriotism.

The Democrats of Centre County predictably rejected the Republican notion of patriotism. Alarmed by the expansion of federal power, and the insistence by Republicans that dissent from the administration was equivalent to treason, Democrats formed their own notions of patriotism. They began to see themselves as patriots defending the Constitution against the violations of what they considered an increasingly autocratic Republican administration that was destroying the fabric of American life.⁹⁸ The Democrats’ strong belief in states’ rights shaped their vision of patriotism. They believed that the Republicans were blatantly violating the Constitution when it came to the use of federal powers and civil liberties. Actions such as the suspension of habeas corpus, the declaration of martial law, and the various draft acts were seen

⁹⁷ “The Friends of Peace,” *The Central Press*, June 12, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (January 17, 2015).

⁹⁸ Weber, *Copperheads*, 8.

as violations of the Constitution and proof that Abraham Lincoln was, in the words of the *Democratic Watchman*, a “dictator of the military despotism which has been established upon the ruins of the once proud happy and free Republic of America.”⁹⁹

The Democrats’ racism also influenced their notion of patriotism. The Democrats had a strong belief that America was a nation of whites and that Republicans were betraying the nation by putting the interests of black people before the Union. “Mr. Lincoln could restore the Union any day he pleased by abandoning the free negro creed,” wrote the *Democratic Watchman*.¹⁰⁰ Thus, a large portion of what it meant to be a patriot had to do with preserving the government for white men, and was naturally at odds with the free labor vision of patriotism that the Republicans held. As Melinda Lawson notes, Democrats believed that the relationship between whites worked as a zero sum model.¹⁰¹ Any gain that blacks made resulted in a loss for white citizens. In the Democrat’s eyes, the election of any candidate who supported emancipation would reduce the “white laboring man to the despised and degraded condition of the black man.”¹⁰² After the initial period of bi-partisanship, Republicans and Democrats formed two mutually exclusive notions of patriotism that assured the partisan rivalry that existed before the war would continue throughout it. Despite sharp differences on patriotism, they shared one common creed, respect and idolization of the soldier.

⁹⁹ “The Dictator’s Orders,” *The Democratic Watchman*, October 3, 1862: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on October 14, 2014).

¹⁰⁰ “The Union as it was, or the Union as it is to be,” *The Democratic Watchman*, October 17, 1862: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on October 17, 2014).

¹⁰¹ Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, Pg. 93.

¹⁰² “Read! Read!! Read!!!” *The Democratic Watchman*, September 30, 1864: 1, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on March 28, 2015).

Soldiers and Partisan Politics

As the men of Centre County began to ship off to fight for the Union, they became some of the most exalted members of society. With all the talk of saving the Union, these were the men actually leaving their homes and sacrificing themselves and their families in order to do so. Centre County citizens showed their support for the troops by donating as much as \$300.00 to the families of soldiers.¹⁰³ Political affiliation aside, the men who were leaving were sons, brothers, and husbands of Centre County citizens. These men naturally came to be viewed as heroes and became idolized in Civil War society. Soldiers played an important role in patriotic rhetoric as the parties wanted to show that they had the support of the soldier and that their partisan agendas served the best interest of the soldier. Furthermore, the parties' interest in them increased when Pennsylvania passed a law allowing soldiers to vote for the first time just before the election of 1864.¹⁰⁴

With Democrats making up nearly all of the anti-war faction, it was easy for the Republicans to claim that they had the soldiers' best interest at heart. The Republicans often claimed that the obstacles the Copperheads presented on the home front were hurting the war effort, and therefore hurting the soldiers by protracting the war. This was expressed in the diary of Samuel Gramly:

As sure as one thinks or speaks anything favorable of the government in the act of crushing this unholy rebellion, he is hooted at or stigmatized as an Abolitionist-Negro-kisser, etc. by such men who all the while call themselves good Democrats-of-Union men, when at the same time they are with heart and soul assisting the cause of the Rebellion, inasmuch as they are opposing everything the Government needs in order to save our country.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 105.

¹⁰⁴ Oscar Osburn Winther, "The Soldier Vote in the Election of 1864," *New York History* 25.4 (1944): 441-442. *JSTOR*. Online (accessed March 03, 2014).

¹⁰⁵ Douglas Macneal, *The Centre County Regiment: The Story of the 148th*. (State College, Pa. The Centre County Historical Society, 2000), 91.

The simple fact that the Democrats opposed the war lost them the support of many of the soldiers. Even if the prospect of a negotiated peace meant the soldiers could return home, it also meant that all their sacrifice would have been in vain.

Even more important than the actual votes of soldiers was their voice. The soldiers believed that their experiences of war left them uniquely qualified in political matters, and as a result, their voice had a powerful impact.¹⁰⁶ The *Central Press* took full advantage of this by publishing letters written to the editor by soldiers. On October 24, 1862, one soldier not only declared the army's support for the Republicans, but reiterated the Republicans' practical justification for emancipation as well. "The unanimity which exists in the army among the soldiers in regard to slavery is remarkable. They say the first object of the war is the preservation of the Union, and anything and everything which is opposed to its success must perish," wrote the soldier.¹⁰⁷ Slavery fostered the rebellion, the soldier continued, and only by destroying slavery could the rebellion be ended. The letter counters many of the Democrats' criticisms on Republican policies.

The Democrats had long thought of Republicans as abolitionist agitators who were the cause of the Civil War. They had driven the South to secede. Therefore, once the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was issued, the Democrats viciously attacked the Republicans, claiming they cared more about the slaves than about the Union or the soldiers. "We are engaged in a most cruel, bloody and unnecessary war. A war that has been perverted from its original legitimate object, and is waged to attain an end wholly illegal, inhuman and unconstitutional." The changed war aims caused the soldiers to react in much the same way.

¹⁰⁶ Weber, *Copperheads*, 122.

¹⁰⁷ "Army Correspondence," *The Central Press*, October 24, 1862: 1, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online. (accessed on January 18, 2105).

“When I left home I went to fight for the Constitution and to put down the Rebellion. But it appears now that the object of the war is to make the niggers free and for that I [don’t] want to fight if I can help it,” John A. Miller, a member of the 148th Pennsylvania Volunteers, wrote to his wife.¹⁰⁸ Democrats routinely attacked the Republicans on this ground, claiming that they had betrayed the soldier by perverting the war aims to include abolition.

From the moment South Carolina seceded, Democrats and Republicans had a renewed sense of patriotism and were determined to save the nation from crisis. To many, this meant that a hiatus in partisan conflicts was necessary. However, not until the Civil War actually arrived was the patriotic sentiment strong enough to bring a pause to partisanship, and then only for a short amount of time. The political rivalry that formed between the Republicans and Democrats in the years just prior to civil war was set in stone. The stresses of Civil War only made it deeper, and the increase in patriotism reinforced partisanship, rather than bringing it to an end as many had hoped. Each party formulated visions of a “patriot” that were rooted in their partisan ideology. The next chapter will further explore how this partisanship worked during the Civil War by taking a close examination at one of its integral parts, the party papers.

¹⁰⁸ Macneal, *The Centre County Regiment*, 36.

Chapter 3: War of Words: The Central Press' and the Democratic Watchman's Role in the Partisan Politics of Civil War Era Centre County

Introduction

The final chapter studies the role and effect of the party papers on partisan politics within Centre County. As an invaluable tool of the parties, the papers help us to understand the ideologies of the Republican and Democratic parties in the county as well as reveal how the local parties fit into the national picture. In exchange for a loyal readership, the papers proselytized voters with party ideologies and used powerful emotional appeals to sway public opinion in favor of their respective party. They also helped to create a highly mobilized, motivated, and loyal voter base for the parties by promoting partisan organizations such as the Union League.

Role of Partisan Papers

By the mid 19th century, partisan newspapers had long been a major part of American political life. Before the 1830s, political newspapers were dependent on wealthy elites for funding and subscriptions, largely restricting readership to this narrow audience. Funding came in the form of government contracts that were awarded to loyal editors. Politicians also privately funded newspapers in return for the editor's support. This practice was revolutionized on September 3, 1833 when the first publication of the New York Sun hit the streets. Founded by Benjamin Henry Day, this was the first of a new generation of papers that came to be called the

"penny press" or "penny newspapers." Their low cost allowed them to be the first newspapers to reach a mass audience.¹⁰⁹

The commercial success of the penny papers allowed the editors to become more politically active as they were able to place responsibility in the hands of managing editors, leaving them free to seek political offices. This lent editors, such as the New York Tribune's Horace Greely, political influence not only through their editorials, but also through the various appointments they received.¹¹⁰ The editors of the Centre County partisan papers followed in the footsteps of newspapermen like Greely. Wien Forney, a co-owner of the Central Press, was the secretary of the Republican Party's Union State Central Committee.¹¹¹

The papers of Centre County had smaller, more local readerships, which meant they were more reliant on the local party for their subscription base. As a result, when the Central Press had financial troubles; the paper blamed it on the Republican Party's lack of support. "[W]e have exhausted our means for the welfare and success of the Republican Party; have spent time, money and labor for unscrupulous, ambitious, rotten hearted politicians who respect their pledged word with no more consideration than the swine would the pearls cast before them," the editor of the Central Press wrote. Although the paper fulfilled its end of the bargain, the politicians did not fulfill their promise to the editor, "whom politicians and office-seekers are first to visit and flatter with promises in order to engage and secure his influence and the benefit of his brains, and after succeeding in their election turn him the cold shoulder."¹¹² An implicit understanding prevailed between parties and party papers, and the politicians' failure to hold up

¹⁰⁹ William Huntzicker, *The Popular Press, 1833-1865* (Westport: Greenwood, 1999), 1-3.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹¹¹ "Address of the Union State Central Committee," *The Central Press*, November 4, 1864: 3, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online. (accessed on April 21, 2014).

¹¹² "Our Experience and Circumstances after six years of Newspaper Publishing," *The Central Press*, December 2, 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on April 19, 2014).

their end of the deal was threatening the survival of the paper, which in turn threatened the party.¹¹³

The Democratic Watchman was similarly dependent upon the Democratic Party. The editor of the Central Press attempted to shame its readers by noting the greater support the Democrats showed their paper: “The Democratic Party makes it a point to take good care of its party printers, and thus are they enabled to fight for their cause and do the service they are expected to render.” The editor also made supporting the party paper a part of the Republican and Democratic rivalry. The paper encouraged its readers to pay their dues, lest they appeared as if they were “fit only for the society of Copperheads.”¹¹⁴

The papers were responsible for putting party ideals into terms that were both catchy and easily comprehensible to Centre County voters. This went beyond laying out the beliefs of the respective parties; the papers also framed the issues facing Centre County in a way evocative of party ideology. The study of the ideologies circulated by each paper helps to identify how the local parties fit in among the state and national level parties.

The Central Press and Republican Ideology

The Republican Central Press was founded during the 1858 election season, when the Republican Party was gaining a stronghold in Centre County. Wein Forney founded the paper with J.G. Kurtz, who served as the paper’s editor and as a Republican speaker. Ideologically, the paper was aligned with the moderate Republicans, as opposed to the radical wing of the party.

¹¹³ Douglass Whitehead wrote that the *Central Press* would be an “essential instrument for Republican success,” within Centre County: Whitehead, “The Duty to Which We Owe Our Common Country,” 30.

¹¹⁴ “Our Experience and Circumstances after six years of Newspaper Publishing,” *The Central Press*, December 2, 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on April 19, 2014).

The two most prominent commitments in the Central Press were to free labor and the preservation of the Union. Free labor was one of the defining beliefs of the Republican Party, and it was important for the Central Press to stress its importance to the readers. The paper assured readers that it was “devoted to the interests of labor,” in one of its earliest issues.¹¹⁵ The Central Press was responsible for connecting issues like the Homestead Bill and Morrill Tariff Bill to the Party’s free labor ideology. Any citizen who “desire[d] to see the coal and ore fields of the Old Keystone developed” should have supported the Republican Party and its free labor ideology.¹¹⁶

Free labor was also intrinsically linked with the preservation of the Union because of the Republican belief in what historians have called the “American Idea.” This notion of American exceptionalism stated that the United States was a unique nation for offering the chance for self-improvement. By preserving the Union, Republicans believed they were showing that democratic government could sustain and preserve itself. “Embarrassed with our temporary divisions we may be, but even at that there can be no great loss of confidence, there should be no wavering in a great and noble purpose,” wrote the Central Press.¹¹⁷ The great purpose was to save the Union and continue the advancement of a free labor society, which they believed the rebellion threatened. The defeat of the North would represent the defeat of democracy and free society. The Confederacy, if allowed to survive, will be a slave society where the aristocratic plantation owners ruled at the expense of slaves and white laborers alike.

¹¹⁵ “Our Success,” The *Central Press*, October 8, 1858: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 24, 2014).

¹¹⁶ Hale vs. Fleming,” The *Central Press*, September 20, 1860: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on February 14, 2015).

¹¹⁷ “The Message and Cause of the Union,” The *Central Press*, December 12, 1862: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 26, 2014).

The Republican beliefs in free labor and preservation of the Union necessitated their support of the war and abolition. Republicans believed the only way to preserve the Union was by achieving victory on the battlefield. Despite the claims of many Peace Democrats, Republicans thought it was unlikely that the South would willingly re-enter the Union, even if their right to own slaves was guaranteed. As support for the war faded, it became crucial that the Central Press reminded Centre County Democrats that only through victory could the Union be restored. “DEMOCRATS! Be not deceived with the idea that the rebel leaders willingly consent to a restoration of the Union.”¹¹⁸

Republicans doubted the Union and slavery could co-exist and had no reason to believe sectional conflicts would not tear the Union apart once again. The Central Press presented the Republican argument against a negotiated peace in powerful, yet easily understandable terms: “Which shall go down---Slavery or the Government?”¹¹⁹ The article reprinted a speech given by then vice presidential nominee Andrew Johnson, in which he proclaimed:

Now is the time to settle this great question; and every man who has considered the difficulties we had to encounter in 1820, and in 1850 and in 1861, who loves his country, will say ‘Leave slavery out.’ Let the government be paramount and if the institution of slavery gets in the way of the great car of state, let slavery go and let the nation live.¹²⁰

As Johnson pointed out, the question of slavery was a corrosive sectional issue for over thirty years. What would prevent the issue from tearing the nation apart once again?

The Central Press also propagated the Slave Power conspiracy. The paper claimed that slaveholders’ inordinate political influence not only violated political freedom, but also disrupted free labor and subjugated the worker, who was central in Republican thought:

¹¹⁸ “A Southern Peace,” The *Central Press*, November 04, 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 19, 2014).

¹¹⁹ “Which shall go down---Slavery or the Government,” The *Central Press*, November 04, 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 19, 2014).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

The slave owner is a competitor in the labor market, against the free working man. He lives upon the labor of his slaves, and he regards with dislike the class which comes into the labor market to bid against him and labor he controls. This fact is notorious in the South. It has long attracted the attention of free white working men there, but they have been too weak to resist the powerful minority of slave holders.¹²¹

Republicans opposed slavery because it threatened their view of the North. A slave holding society within the same nation was a direct threat to the free labor society they envisioned.

As the mouthpiece for the more moderate Centre County Republican Party, the Central Press made little mention of emancipation before the proclamation, but once issued, the Central Press staunchly supported it. “Those who oppose its terms, are those who consider the institution of slavery of more important than the institution of liberty, and are consequently opposed to the union,” claimed the Central Press.¹²² Centre County Republicans did not support emancipation previously because it was too divisive an issue and, as historian Arnold Shankman points out, the “Democrats exploited prevalent racial antipathies.”¹²³ However, now that Lincoln issued the preliminary draft, the Central Press had to present it to Centre County voters in a positive light.

The Central Press accomplished this by stressing the political and strategic advantages of emancipation. “It adds a reserve force to the army of the Union, and makes three million of slaves three million of able-bodies recruits, who have only to see the Union banner to follow it with their lives. It takes away the labor that sustains the power of the South, and adds to the military power of the North.”¹²⁴ The Republicans insisted emancipation was a strategic move aimed at bringing an end to the rebellion and restoring the Union. Practical justifications were

¹²¹ “Free and Bond Labor,” *The Central Press*, December 09, 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 19, 2014).

¹²² “Proclamation of the President of the United States,” *The Central Press*, October 03, 1862: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 19, 2014).

¹²³ Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 82-83.

¹²⁴ “The Proclamation,” *The Central Press*, January 06, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 27, 2014).

not enough; the Central Press had to dispel the idea that the Republican Party supported racial equality.

This led the Republicans to develop a complicated view on race. Republicans, as Eric Foner explains, “recognized the essential humanity of the Negro, and demanded protection for certain basic rights which the Democrats denied him,” but were nevertheless “deeply flawed by an acceptance of many racial stereotypes.”¹²⁵ Although the free labor vision of radicals included both blacks and whites, many Centre County Republicans held views of free labor and social mobility that only applied to whites. The Central Press revealed the unique view of Centre County Republicans when they discussed the Homestead Bill, claiming that it would make “the public lands as homes for free white men” and “protect and bless the free labor of the country by giving every industrious and willing man an opportunity to make himself and his children independent and comfortable.”¹²⁶

The Central Press also defended the Republican administration's use of federal power in suppressing dissent, including the suspension of habeas corpus, the implementation of martial law, and the use of military trials. These incursions on civil liberties were used to remove the threat of what the Lincoln administration believed to be a formidable disloyal opposition within the North. Article 1, Section 9 of the Constitution states that the writ could be suspended “when in cases of rebellion and invasion the public safety may require it.”¹²⁷ However, it does not specify whether Congress or the president has that authority. Republicans argued that the necessity of quick response meant that the president was best suited for that responsibility and that it was implied in the president's war powers. The Central Press came to the defense of

¹²⁵ Foner, *Free Soil, Free labor Free Men*, 261.

¹²⁶ “The White Man's Party,” *The Central Press*, December 20, 1860: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on February 14, 2015).

¹²⁷ U.S. Const. art. I, § 9.

Lincoln: “For suspending the writ under the authority given in the Constitution, the President has been denounced latterly as a tyrant worse than Austria, by the sympathizers with treason inhabiting the North.”¹²⁸

As the Overland Campaign, a series of costly battles in Virginia throughout May and June of 1864, progressed slowly with unprecedented casualties, it was crucial that the *Central Press* defended the administration.¹²⁹ On May 27, 1864, just weeks after Ulysses S. Grant’s army received heavy casualties at the Battle of the Wilderness, the editor argued that even Thomas Jefferson, the most famous strict constructionist, would have supported these actions: “A strict observance of the written law is doubtless a high duty of a good citizen, but it is not the highest. The laws of necessity, of self-preservation, of saving our country when in danger, are all of higher obligation.”¹³⁰

The use of a Jeffersonian defense is also significant because he played an important part in Republican thought. Republicans believed that in the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson dedicated the nation “to the inviolability of personal liberty.” In Republican eyes, the ideals laid out in the Declaration of Independence superseded the limits placed on federal government. Originally, Republicans used this as a way of justifying their anti-slavery agenda, despite the fact that the Constitution had forbidden them from abolishing slavery.¹³¹

¹²⁸ “The Proclamation,” *The Central Press* November 13, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on April 19, 2014).

¹²⁹ Alan R. Millet and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 230-232.

¹³⁰ “Arbitrary Arrests,” *The Central Press*, May 27, 1864: 1, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on April 15, 2014).

¹³¹ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Men, Free Labor*, 75.

The Democratic Watchman and Peace Democrats

The party organ for the Centre County Democratic Party, the Democratic Watchman, was one of the most radical Copperhead papers in the North. Peter Meek, in the summer of 1861, rented the Democratic Watchman with Pennsylvania Senator Cyrus T. Alexander and served as its junior editor. Meek did not hold this position long; the Democratic Watchman was charged with encouraging the rebels and as a result, Meek was forced to resign.¹³² However, his absence from the Democratic Watchman was brief. On July 10, 1862, the Democratic Watchman announced that Peter Meek had bought the paper from Alexander Saxton and would be serving as its new editor.¹³³ The pages of the Watchman were now at Meek's disposal in his crusade against Lincoln and Republicanism.

The Democratic Watchman played an important role in spreading the radical Copperheadism of Centre County Democrats. As early as July 1861, when many Democrats still supported war, the Democratic Watchman already began expressing doubts:

We are not among those who believe that the people of the North want war. That it would be their delight to enter into a long and bloody struggle, the existence of which may involve the destruction of our present form of government while the immeasurable evils that will consequently spring from it, will engage and disgust the attention of mankind for generations to come.¹³⁴

The Democratic Watchman showed signs of opposition to the war earlier than the national party and many within Centre County. By protesting the war in such a venomous manner so early on, the more radical Democrats of Centre County were labeled traitors and left themselves vulnerable to attack. On August 5, 1862, Meek was accosted on the streets by a

¹³² Jeffery Glossner, "Copperhead in Our Midst Peter Gray Meek and His Peculiar Place in Bellefonte Politics During the Civil War." (HIST 495, Pennsylvania State University), September 19, 2013.

¹³³ "Another Change," *The Democratic Watchman*, July 10, 1862: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on April 23, 2014).

¹³⁴ "Peace! Peace!!!" *The Democratic Watchman*, July 11, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 23, 2014).

group of young men because of his political principles.¹³⁵ Democrats were commonly attacked, ostracized, and arrested for their opposition to the war; this made it critical for the Watchman to present their opposition in a way that prevented them from being seen as traitors. The Democratic Watchman accomplished this by stressing their belief in the strict construction of the Constitution. They had long accused the Republican Party of being sectional and insisted that the only reason civil war was upon the nation was “the election of a President whose avowed principles were in direct antagonism to the written Constitution of our common country.”¹³⁶

While the Central Press defended the use of federal power and encroachment on civil liberties as a war measure, the Democratic Watchman fiercely opposed such measures and defended Democrats who were targeted. Meek was arrested five times during the Civil War because of his harsh criticisms in the Watchman.¹³⁷ With the civil liberties of Democrats being violated, the Democratic Watchman hoped to show the voters of Centre County just how egregious the Republicans’ alleged constitutional violations were. When Abraham Lincoln declared martial law and suspended the writ of habeas corpus, the Democratic Watchman published the order under the headline, “A Tyrant’s Order: A Military Despotism Established Upon the Ruins of the American Republic.”¹³⁸ Meek wanted to call out the injustice of the order and bring attention to the fact that it was the Republicans, not the Democrats, who were trampling the Constitution.

Centre County Democrats also believed the draft was unconstitutional, arguing it went beyond the federal government’s constitutional right to raise a federal army. The Democratic

¹³⁵ “Local Matters,” *The Democratic Watchman*, August 8, 1862: 3, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 24, 2014).

¹³⁶ “Miscellaneous,” *The Democratic Watchman*, February 6, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on March 25, 2014).

¹³⁷ Glossner, “Copperhead in Our Midst,” 14.

¹³⁸ “A Tyrant’s Order: A Military Despotism Established Upon the Ruins of the American Republic,” *The Democratic Watchman*, October 3, 1862: 1, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 22, 2014).

Watchman printed the decision of Judge Woodward, a member of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, when he declared the Conscription Act of March 3, 1863 unconstitutional in the case of Henry S. Kneedler vs. David M. Lane. Although the Watchman printed the dissenting opinion in a later edition, the Democratic Watchman left no doubt where it stood when it asked, “[o]n whose heads will be the blood of the murdered Americans that have been torn from their homes and butchered in a relentless, wicked war in which they had no interest.”¹³⁹ In another editorial, Meek implied his approval of draft resistance when he wrote, “[t]hat the people of the North will again submit to conscription, we do not for a moment believe.”¹⁴⁰ Meek was drafted in the summer of 1863, but paid the commutation fee rather than disobey the law. Just a few days after he was drafted, a warrant was issued for his arrest for the charge of inciting resistance to the draft.¹⁴¹

The Democratic Watchman also opposed emancipation on constitutional grounds. The paper contended that the power to abolish slavery lay with the individual states and therefore the federal government had no authority to do so. “Its [the Republican Party’s] essential element was hostility to the local institutions of the Southern States. The burden of its song at all times and in all places, was abolitionism - uncompromising hostility to slavery, as subject exclusively within the jurisdiction of States in which this party had no existence and consequently no rightful concern,” argued the Democratic Watchman.¹⁴² Since the Republicans did not represent any of the slave holding states, they had no authority over the institutions of those states.

¹³⁹ The *Democratic Watchman*, December 04, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 25, 2014).

¹⁴⁰ “500,000 More,” The *Democratic Watchman*, July 22, 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 25, 2014).

¹⁴¹ The *Democratic Watchman*, August 21, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 25, 2014).

¹⁴² “The Cause of the Rebellion,” The *Democratic Watchman*, December 09 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on April 10, 2014).

Centre County Democrats also fiercely opposed emancipation because of their views on race. The Democratic Watchman published shocking claims of white superiority to justify the Democrats' defense of slavery. With the Republicans and the Central Press claiming Democrats were tools for the Slave Power, it was crucial that the paper countered those claims. That is not to say the racist sentiments found within the pages of the Democratic Watchman were not sincere. One editorial read:

God Almighty has made the negro a different and inferior being, and therefore designed him for a different and inferior social position whenever and wherever in juxtaposition with the superior white man, and to attempt to reverse the eternal order, to force the white man down or the negro up to a common level, on impartial freedom, is a folly so superfluous, a crime so awful, and an impiety so gross and damnable, that posterity would be less amazed at the destruction of heaven itself, of a whole generation.¹⁴³

The Democratic Watchman presented the constitutional arguments of the Democrats in simple and easily understandable terms for its readers. The Watchman argued that the Republican administration was blatantly violating the Constitution. The declaration of martial law and suspension of habeas corpus were blatant violations of civil rights, the draft overstepped the limits of the federal government to raise an army, and the federal government had no right interfering with slavery, as it was a power left to the states. Additionally the Democratic Watchman provided a racial defense of slavery. The paper worked to counter the Republican claims that the Democratic Party was a party of traitors working for the benefit of southern slave owners, while simultaneously portraying the Republican Party as racial and sectional agitators responsible for the nation's woes.

¹⁴³ "The Most Unreasoning Delusion the World Ever Saw," *The Democratic Watchman*, February 06, 1863: 1, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 23, 2014).

The Papers' Service to the Party

The role of the party papers went far beyond spreading the party doctrine. In return for the loyal readership, the party supplied the paper with a mobilized and passionate voter base by employing a number of emotional appeals, advertising partisan functions, and encouraging citizens to become more politically involved. The papers played off the patriotism, fears, and worries of citizens to create an enthusiastic and passionate voter base.

The parties of Centre County sought to exploit patriotic and nationalist fears of the citizens, and the papers were instrumental tools in this task. One way they did this was by claiming the other party was causing the ruin and destruction of the Union. For the *Central Press* this meant portraying the Democrats as traitors. They claimed that Democrats gathered at secret meetings where they swore to “avoid the draft.”¹⁴⁴ At these meetings they were “discouraging all efforts to raise men for the army, and further, that in case a member should be forced into the army by draft, he is instructed to desert and go over to the enemy.”¹⁴⁵ This put the Democrats at odds with those in favor of full reunification of the Union. Furthermore, any Centre County citizens would likely have had friends or family who were fighting for or who had died for the Union. If Democrats were betraying the Union, they were betraying those family members and friends who were risking or sacrificing their lives for the Union.

Another way in which the papers proved to be invaluable tools was by dramatizing the common claims the parties made against each other. A common Democratic claim that the *Democratic Watchman* dramatized was that the Republicans were trampling the very essence of America, the Constitution. The *Democratic Watchman* compared Lincoln to Caesar, who

¹⁴⁴ “Disloyal Organizations,” *The Central Press*, March 04, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 23, 2014).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

brought about the destruction of the Roman Republic, which was the model for the American founders, just as Lincoln was bringing about the end of the American Republic. “Mr. Lincoln now has as much power as Caesar had when Brutus slew him,” wrote the Democratic Watchman. If the metaphor did not portray the point, Meek spelled it out: “If Mr. Lincoln has all these absolute powers, why delude ourselves with the idea that we are still living under the Republic?”¹⁴⁶ These appeals did not present reasoned arguments, but rather instilled fear in its readers by presenting striking and vivid images of Lincoln ruling with all the power of a Roman emperor.

The partisan papers took it a step further by appealing to the same patriotism and fear for the nation that the parties previously instilled. To save the nation from the gloomy fate the party organs predicted, the people had to act in support of the party. For the Republicans, this meant the promotion of the Union League. This group was founded to garner support for the war and loyalty to the North. The meetings were intended for the “UNION CITIZENS of Centre County, without distinction of party.”¹⁴⁷ Although the Union Leagues outside of Philadelphia had a “distinct partisan nature,” the Union League claimed to have no “distinction of party” and waved the flag of bi-partisanship just as the Republican-headed Union Party did.¹⁴⁸

The Central Press even published summaries of the meetings for those who could not attend, such as the resolutions agreed upon at the April 29th meeting. The first resolution was that the end of the rebellion and restoration of the whole nation should be the priority of every “good citizen,” implying Peace Democrats were “bad citizens.” This appeal spread the party

¹⁴⁶ “Mr. Lincoln Viewed as an Emperor,” The *Democratic Watchman*, July 31, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 28, 2014).

¹⁴⁷ “Union Meeting,” The *Central Press*, April 24, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on March 15 2014).

¹⁴⁸ Melinda Lawson, “‘A Profound National Devotion’: The Civil War Union Leagues and the Construction of a New National Patriotism” *Civil War History* 48.4 (2002): 341. *Project Muse*, (accessed on April 19, 2014).

doctrine while also raising the stakes of the rivalry between Democrats and Republicans. The second supposedly non-partisan resolution was that Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, was “an honest man,” and that those present were grateful for Republican Governor, Andrew Curtin. The most important resolution was that those “endeavoring to prejudice the people against the President and his Cabinet,” are deserving of the “scorn and contempt of every good citizen.”¹⁴⁹ Those who attended the Union League meeting received an education in what it meant to be a good and loyal citizen; by printing the resolutions, the Central Press was spreading that education to all of Centre County. This was an active effort on their part to create a more mobilized, loyal, and indoctrinated electorate for the party. Melinda Lawson notes that, “[t]he Union League had to teach young, rich Americans where their allegiances must lie.”¹⁵⁰

The Central Press also published a copy of the speech given by guest speaker James Milliken, a successful businessman and one of the originators of the Union League, in yet another attempt to spread the party doctrine.¹⁵¹ “The duty of a citizen to his Government grows and increases with the perils that environ it,” Milliken reminded his audience. He asked them to imagine being the soldier who was risking his life for the Union only to have those at home question him. “Will such ingratitude not sting more keenly than the serpents tooth?” he asked. Milliken appealed to the concern for loved ones off fighting while shaming those who did not support the war when he asked if anyone would dare to tell a soldier upon his return home that, “‘while you were absent I done nothing’ or that, ‘I consorted and acted with the opposer of the war and the Government?’”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ “Union Meeting,” The *Central Press*, May 8, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on March 15 2014).

¹⁵⁰ Lawson, “A Profound National Devotion,” 347.

¹⁵¹ Linn, *The History of Centre and Clinton Counties*, 251.

¹⁵² “Speech of James Milliken ESQ,” The *Central Press*, May 8, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (March 15 2014).

The Democrats of Centre County also held partisan gatherings, though they did not have an auxiliary organization for these gatherings such as the Republicans' Union League.¹⁵³ Just as the Central Press advertised the Union League meeting, the Democratic Watchman advertised a "Mass Meeting" for all who were "in favor of the Constitution."¹⁵⁴ Once again, one of the parties was masquerading as bi-partisan while promoting partisan ideology.

At the meeting, John H. Orvis delivered a speech meant to incite and mobilize his audience. The Watchman reprinted the speech, in hopes of further indoctrinating and inciting Democrats who could not attend the meeting. Orvis blamed the abolitionists for the war when he stated, "we have shown that those Northern fanatics who forced this agitation [abolition] upon the country are justly responsible for all the evils we are now suffering."¹⁵⁵ Orvis used a tactic commonly employed by the Democratic Watchman, the exploitation of racial fears.

These Democratic meetings were accused of encouraging disloyalty. While often untrue, there was some substance to this claim. When defending the state's legal right to secession, Orvis showed his Copperhead origins when he approached the line between dissent and disloyalty:

Any people, when their government ceases to protect their rights, when it is so subverted from the true purposes of government as to oppress them, have the right to return to the fundamental principles, and if need be to destroy the government under which they lived, and to erect on its ruins another more conducive to their welfare. I hold that they have this right. I will not blame any for exercising it.¹⁵⁶

His speech agitated the peace sentiment and inflamed passions by reminding the audience of the revolutionary principles the founding fathers established in their break from Great Britain. Orvis

¹⁵³ While there were strong Democratic fraternal organizations such as the Knights of the Golden Circle and Order of American Knights, they did not have chapters in Pennsylvania, Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 17.

¹⁵⁴ "Mass Meeting," *The Democratic Watchman*, August 21, 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 27, 2014).

¹⁵⁵ "Speech of John H. Orvis, Esq.," *The Democratic Watchman*, September 04, 1863: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May, 18 2014).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

then applied them to the South's rebellion in an attempt to create sympathy for the Confederacy. However, this could be seen as foreshadowing what would have happened if the Republican administration continued violating the Constitution.

Just as the parties did, the partisan papers also exploited the patriotism of Centre County citizens. In an article titled "Centre County Awake!" the Central Press called to action the "Union loving men of our county."¹⁵⁷ The Central Press encouraged Centre County Republicans to be active at the polls in the election of 1864, when the Copperheads presented their greatest threat: "Is it a time to remain inactive when men who would sell their country for spoils are using every dishonorable means to bring about the destruction of our Government?" The article encouraged people to vote, reminding unionists that, "[y]our effort at the polls may seem little to you, but it counts, one vote, and adds to the aggregate strength that is to save the nation!" By 1864, patriotism was fueling partisan differences rather than bridging them. The implication was that if one was truly a patriot and wanted to save the Union, then they voted for the Union Party. Once again, the Republican Party used the "union" to cloak their partisan agenda as a bi-partisan effort to save the nation.

The paper did not stop at encouraging citizens to vote, but also encouraged them to convince those who are "ready to do right, but are not satisfied with right. They can be reasoned with, they will bear friendly discourse, and will not allow the onesided pleas of party to warp and twist their deliberate judgment."¹⁵⁸ The Central Press was trying to lure the War Democrats, who had become uncomfortable with the radical rhetoric of the Copperheads. If these Democrats did not come over to the Union Party, they would be labeled as partisans more

¹⁵⁷ "Centre County Awake," The *Central Press*, November 04, 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on April 1, 2014).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

concerned with the well being of the Democratic Party than with the Union. Although Pennsylvania went Republican in the 1864 presidential election, McClellan won a majority within Centre County.¹⁵⁹

The Democratic Watchman also utilized this type of desperate, one-last-chance-to-save-the-nation appeal and combined it with vivid and violent imagery. “This may be the last opportunity we will have of appealing to you on behalf of yourselves and of your broken, bleeding country,” the Watchman declared on the eve of the 1864 election. The language was carefully selected to portray the nation as one of the casualties of the war, which the Republicans started through their abolitionism. The paper also appealed to the American Idea and the proud history of the nation:

Your ballots on Tuesday next will decide whether the principles upon which our Republic was founded- whether the Government established by Washington served by the legislation of patriots and statesmen - shall be protected and perpetuated, or whether your rights, privileges, interests and prosperity together with the glorious remembrances that cling round the past history of our country shall be buried forever by the darkness of a despotism reared by Abolition fanaticism.¹⁶⁰

Once again, the language plays a key role in the appeal the paper was making. The paper was not just reminding readers to vote, but also reminded them that their vote was the only way to hold off the “darkness of despotism,” a phrase meant to spread fear. Even the phrase “Abolition fanaticism” is meant primarily to incite the audience and place blame for the war squarely in the hands of Republicans. The Democratic Watchman once again subtly appealed to the racist fears of those in Centre County when they warned that, “the fate of every white man in the North will be decided.”¹⁶¹ Democrats also exploited the racial fears of Centre County in much less subtle ways.

¹⁵⁹ Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 202.

¹⁶⁰ “To the Freemen of Centre County,” *The Democratic Watchman*, November 04, 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (April 1, 2014).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Racism may have been Meek's greatest tool. The *Watchman* had been exploiting racial fears and portraying the Republicans as fanatical agitators who put abolition before the nation since the Republican Party came to Centre County in 1856. The Democratic *Watchman* cultivated the racist sentiments in Centre County, which helps to explain the Centre County Republican Party's moderation and why it avoided the slavery question until the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. One of these appeals raised the specter of a newly liberated slave population moving north into Centre County communities. The influx of black labor, Democrats argued, would degrade white labor. One article meant to exaggerate and intensify the threats of black soldiers described the "bucking and gagging" of white men in Johnsville, Tennessee; "this is the sort of thing, working men of the North, that you are called on to perpetuate-- the degradation of the white laboring classes of the country below the level of the dusky, dirty, and ignorant pets of 'Abe and Andy.'" ¹⁶² Meek presented the freed black man as a threat to the white laborer.

These types of appeals were so effective that they compelled Republicans to respond. Their primary defense was to insist that emancipation was a strategic move aimed at weakening the rebellion. "It does not speak to the equalization of the races. It does not propose to elevate the negro to the eminence of the white man, or degrade the white man to the level of the negro. It simply proposes to rescue this government by destruction of rebellion," the *Central Press* wrote in response to the accusations of the Democrats. ¹⁶³ They wanted to remind their readership that emancipation was a means to an end. It was necessary in securing the Union, which outweighed objections to equality.

¹⁶² "White Men Gagged and Bucked by Negroes," *The Democratic Watchman*, October 28, 1864: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on April 20, 2014).

¹⁶³ "Proclamation of the President of the United States," *The Central Press*, October 03, 1862: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on April 20, 2014).

Within the Republican defense of emancipation, hints of their own racial biases are apparent. They essentially accepted the Democrats' assumption that the white man was above the black man and only argued that emancipation would do nothing to change or upset that hierarchy. Republicans also attempted to soften the blow of the Democrats' attacks by demonstrating their own racism. In an evaluation of the worth of the Confederacy, the *Central Press* claimed that the South consisted largely of "niggers and wild lands!" The *Central Press* continued by saying that, "[t]he bond of this nigger nation would not command ten cents on the dollar."¹⁶⁴ By demonstrating their own racism, Republicans hoped to avoid being seen in favor of racial equality. Republicans were, once again, willing to give way on equality to avoid isolating themselves from racist voters.

¹⁶⁴ "The Heptarch," *The Central Press*, April 4, 1861: 2, *Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection*, Online (accessed on May 28, 2014).

Conclusion

Centre County reveals the defining feature of the politics of the Civil War and the antebellum years preceding: their persistently partisan nature. When the Kansas-Nebraska Act was proposed in 1854, it brought about the death of the Whig Party and disrupted the two-party system. In its place, two parties arose as possible contenders with the Democratic Party, the Know Nothings and the Republicans. Fueled by nativism, the Know Nothing Party dominated Centre County politics throughout 1854 and 1855, but the enthusiastic support for nativism soon died out. The Republicans, who did not arrive in Centre County until 1856, were formed in opposition to Kansas-Nebraska. However, the voters of Centre County held powerful views of white supremacy, and anti-slavery views were more a political liability than an advantage. With the coming of the Panic of 1857, the Republican Party advocated a free labor ideology and was able to incorporate the overwhelming support of a protective tariff for this doctrine. This gave Republicans a much more attractive appeal, and in 1858 the party managed to elect James T. Hale to Congress.

By 1860, not only was the rivalry between the Democrats and Republicans established, but the threat of Civil War was looming over the nation as well. As a result, patriotism spread throughout Centre County, and Democrats and Republicans alike briefly put partisan differences aside. It was not until the attack on Fort Sumter that partisanship actually came to a halt. However, the attempt at a bi-partisan solution to the crisis failed, and by late 1862, with the Republican administration's incursion on civil liberties and the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, it became clear that the Republicans and Democrats had different ideas of what it meant to be a patriot. The conservative Republican Party of Centre County had not talked openly of emancipation until this point, but after it defended it passionately as a necessary measure to end the war and deemed it essential in achieving their free labor vision. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party began to see the Republicans as a greater threat to the nation than the

rebellion as the party viewed the suspension of civil liberties and emancipation as blatant violations of the Constitution.

The partisan battle between Democrats and Republicans persisted throughout the crisis of civil war, and one of the indispensable weapons in this battle was the party papers. Study of these party organs not only yields a further understanding of the ideology of the parties but sheds light on the way in which the parties contested each other. The parties and the papers made a trade: a loyal, subscription-paying readership in exchange for a mobilized and enthusiastic voter base. The papers published articles and editorials designed to attack the other party's ideology, whilst defending their own views. Furthermore, they helped mobilize the citizens of Centre County, not only by promoting partisan functions and organizations but also by using emotional appeals to exploit the fears of Centre County citizens in order to make them more loyal to their party.

Centre County, with its mix of agricultural land and the iron and coal industries, had a unique political environment. The Democrats, who gained their support from the farmers of Centre County, were some of the most outspoken peace men throughout the war. These men also held powerful views on race. The racist and outspoken nature of the Democrats likely influenced the relative conservatism of Centre County Republicans compared to the national party. Centre County Republicans focused on free labor and protectionism and minimized anti-slavery in order to attract the votes of the traders from Bellefonte and reduce the political liability that came along with being labeled an "abolitionist."

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