Innocents at War: Si Klegg’s Civil War

A CYCLONE IN CAMP.

Hinman’s book was about the dirty, miserable, and joyful minutiae of soldier life in the Union army.

Mr. Owen Goes to Washington

Indiana’s Infidel Congressman

Locals refer to southwestern Indiana as “The Pocket,” but politicians know this region by a more ominous name: “The Bloody Eighth.” The counties that fan north and east from the confluence of the Ohio and Wabash Rivers anchor Indiana’s present-day Eighth Congressional District. In recent decades, candidates for national office in this district have waged savage partisan battles only for winners to find themselves retired in the next election by voters little enamored with incumbents. As a result, Indiana’s Eighth is a swing district in an overwhelmingly Republican state. Rough-and-tumble elections have characterized Pocket politics since the 1820s when it was then the heart of Indiana’s First Congressional District. During the 1840s, local voters alternated between Democratic and Whig Representatives in fairly rapid succession. For a time in this decade of political ferment, Democrat Robert Dale Owen represented the people of what might be called Indiana’s “Bloody First.”

Owen won election to the House in 1843 following a successful career in the Indiana General Assembly during the late 1830s. Owen’s political success in a district known for its fickle electorate indicates where he stood on the major issues that concerned the 28th and 29th Congresses. His tenure in office

coincided with disputes between the United States and England over land claims in the Pacific Northwest, the annexation of Texas, debates over slavery's westward expansion, as well as long-standing matters of internal improvements and government fiscal policy. On each of these issues, Owen voted as a fairly moderate western Democrat. When Democrat James K. Polk won the White House in 1844, Owen found himself in the mainstream of his party.

At first glance, Owen's political career is notable primarily for his close adherence to the Democratic status quo of the day. Moreover, Owen might be considered a rather unremarkable politician in an era when more colorful personalities haunted Congress. Owen could easily disappear into the nation's tumultuous political seas of the 1840s only remembered today, if at all, for his integral role in creating the Smithsonian Institution toward the end of his time in the House. However, Owen's contemporaries knew more about him than simply his record of mainstream Democratic positions. Owen arguably stood out like few other Democratic politicians of his day because his life before elected office was so unlike his peers. Owen had a past, and pasts—in the 1840s just as now—could exalt or crush political fortunes.

> Owen's election to Congress attracted national attention because it occurred at a moment in American life when faith was an intensely bipartisan concern.

Clues to Owen's past and how it shadowed his reputation appeared during his first campaign in 1836 for a seat in the Indiana General Assembly. A Whig newspaper in Massachusetts succinctly reported the results: "Robert Dale Owen, another precious Infidel, has been elected to the Legislature of Indiana, through the influence of Van Buren's friends in that State." Whig editors and operatives in Indiana similarly characterized Owen's candidacy. Americans used the term "infidel" in the early nineteenth century to describe anyone who criticized, especially in public ways, widely accepted Christian beliefs along with the moral principles and social institutions deemed necessary to their survival. To contemporary observers, Owen wasn't an ordinary infidel. Rather, many would have known him as an infidel operative at the center of an expanding network of associations and newspapers dedicated to a belief that traditional religion stood on a shaky intellectual and moral foundation that was about to crumble under the force of free inquiry. Infidel Owen's election to state and, eventually, national offices activated long-standing anxieties that anti-Christian ideas had broad popular consent in the United States.

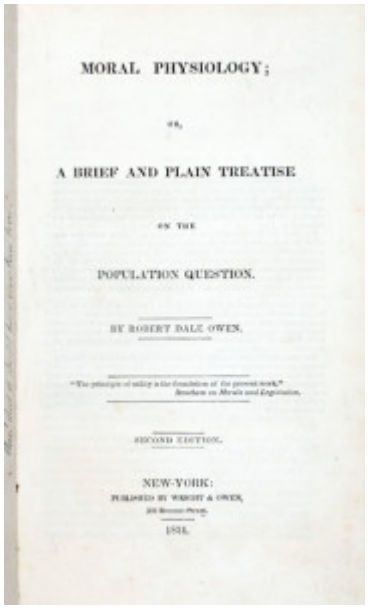
Owen's election to Congress attracted national attention because it occurred at a moment in American life when faith was an intensely bipartisan concern. Nearly all political observers in the 1840s agreed that Congressman Owen held provocative religious opinions. Partisans from across the political spectrum drew lessons from Owen's political career to guide their respective parties toward future electoral victories in a society undergoing fundamental religious

and economic changes. Ultimately, Whigs and Democrats in the 1840s responded to Owen's tenure in Washington by developing ideas of religious liberty suitable to their powerful constituencies. Although Owen eventually served only two terms in Congress, his relatively brief career raised questions about religion's place in American political life that remain unresolved in the twenty-first century.

By the time Owen ran for state office in Indiana, he had ensured his reputation as one of the nation's most prominent infidels. In 1825, Owen had helped his Scottish industrialist father, Robert Owen, establish a socialist utopian community in New Harmony, Indiana, bringing Robert Dale Owen to the Pocket. The New Harmony community collapsed by 1829, but before its demise Robert Dale took steps that ensured his later infamy.

Most importantly, he co-edited the *New Harmony Gazette* with Frances Wright, another Scottish émigré. Owen and Wright doubted many of their era's most deeply entrenched social, political, and religious values, and their newspaper became an outlet for such views. Under Owen and Wright's guidance, the *New Harmony Gazette* even outlived the community, albeit as the *Free Enquirer* published in New York. During the 1830s, the *Free Enquirer* was the most important journal in the United States devoted to undermining the power of revealed religion in American life, especially Christianity in all of its forms. Owen and Wright also publicized efforts by people in towns and cities—from the east coast to the Midwest—to form societies of "free enquirers" and "moral philanthropists." By organizing lectures and debates critical of Christian teachings and social influences, these various associations were localized expressions of the religious opinions that Owen and Wright gave continental reach in the pages of the *Free Enquirer.* Indeed, under their editorship, 1,000 issues of the *Free Enquirer* appeared every week, and local subscription agents worked in eighteen of the republic's twenty-four states, the Florida Territory, and the British province of Lower Canada.

Owen and Wright took other steps to advance their views on religion. They published or imported controversial books by leading anti-Christian authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They also established New York's Hall of Science, a prominent venue in the city for free inquiry discussions and lectures. Finally, Owen was a supporter of the Workingman's Movement, a birth control theorist, and a critic of existing marriage laws and customs.



MORAL PHYSIOLOGY;

OR,

A BRIEF AND PLAIN TREATISE

ON THE

POPULATION QUESTION.

BY ROBERT DALE OWEN.

SECOND EDITION.

NEW-YORK:
PUBLISHED BY WRIGHT & OWEN,

1831.

Title page, Moral Physiology; or, A Brief and Plain Treatise on the Population Question, by Robert Dale Owen (New York, 1831). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Aware of his reputation, Owen devised ways to improve his electability. He presented himself as a different person upon returning to Indiana from New York in 1833. Although New Harmony was a place of failed designs for Owen's extended family, it held promise in light of his immediate concerns. He had recently married Mary Jane Robinson, the daughter of a New York merchant. Robinson was one of the female infidels who so vexed pious commentators in the 1830s. With her father's approval, she attended Frances Wright's lectures and events at the Hall of Science, where she first met Owen. Back in New Harmony, the newlywed Owen devoted his attention to managing and increasing the property value of his land in town. With this ambition he championed internal improvements, an issue with strong bipartisan support in Indiana. Once Owen entered politics, voters in and around New Harmony were familiar enough with Owen to know that Whig characterizations of his past were not entirely consistent with his current political concerns in the late 1830s. Finally, toward the end of his tenure as an Indiana Assemblyman, Owen distanced himself from his earlier life in terms that anticipated his moderate stance as a Congressman. "In that fresh and sanguine season," Owen reflected, "the warm conviction of what ought to be, often precludes the calm observation of what is." However, with maturity, Owen confessed, "One becomes less confident in one's own wisdom and more deferring to usage and experience."

Although Owen expressed few fixed opinions of a radical nature during his first run for Congress, equivocation wasn't valued in the prevailing political culture. By the late 1830s, Whig partisans had successfully portrayed themselves as the party of traditional Protestant propriety and their Democratic opponents as the party of subversive infidels. The outlines of this development are fairly well known to historians of the period. Less noted is the extent to which political observers of the day understood infidelity as

more than the subject of vague political threats embodied in general references to Owen or Frances Wright. Rather, they believed that infidels were a real political force with evolving partisan aims, as evidenced in Owen's move from infidel promoter to politician. Owen's candidacy seemed to confirm why the prevailing partisan labels were useful. Democratic writers, especially supporters of the party's more radical positions, celebrated Owen's political ambition because they hoped that he would champion policies to undermine the economic and moral foundations of Whig appeal. Conservative Democrats viewed his entrance into national politics ambivalently. Of course, Whig writers challenged the outcome that radical Democrats desired. They insisted that elected office would afford Owen an opportunity to advance harmful reforms under the cover of popular sovereignty. Ultimately, partisans who responded to Owen's pursuit of national office had every reason to prevent Owen from escaping his past, to describe him as beholden to views on religion and society set earlier in his life. As a result, Owen's actions and writings from New Harmony's early days and from New York defined him in public opinion for the rest of his life.

The past's grip became instantly evident once Owen started his campaign for Congress. Critics outside of the state anointed Owen "the acknowledged leader of the Loco Foco party in Indiana" and "a declared candidate of the Loco Foco party for Congress in Indiana." No label conjured the subversive elements within the Democratic Party more than "Loco Foco." This name originally applied to a radical faction of New York Democrats critical of all monopolizing arrangements of state and financial power, especially banks, with strong support from the city's working men. During a fractious meeting at Tammany Hall in 1834, the radical Democrats lit "loco foco" matches after their moderate Democratic opponents extinguished the lights in an attempt to derail their movement. By the late 1830s, Whig partisans conveniently described all Democrats as Loco Focos. Whigs enhanced their claims by identifying Owen as the party's leader in waiting.

Owen's brand of Loco Focoism, his critics insisted, was especially hostile to Christianity. In public addresses, Owen had denigrated "the Bible as a book of 'marvels and mysteries,' and 'imaginary adventurers,' the invention of 'ignorant men.'" Owen's opponents also reminded readers that he did not view Jesus as the divine son of God but as "a Democratic Reformer." Jesus's mere mortality was the source of his greatest influence in the world, Owen seemed to suggest, for his life provided a model for improving society, not a guide to transcendent truths. By diminishing Jesus's true nature in order to exalt him, Owen's ideas offered troubling "signs of the times, from which the people may take warning, before it is too late."

Negative characterizations of Owen's Loco Focoism were not altogether wrong. Earlier in his life, Owen had championed economic views compatible with Loco Foco positions. William Leggett, the leading Loco Foco journalist and intellectual, explained the relationship between the movement's economic positions and religion, a connection that gave all candidates, regardless of

their beliefs, an equal right to seek political office. Although Leggett did not share Owen's religious opinions, he did argue for "perfect free trade in religion—of leaving it to manage its own concerns, in its own way, without government protection, regulation, or interference, of any kind or degree whatever." As a result, Leggett insisted that a respected "divine" and an avowed "infidel" were equally entitled to elected positions. Although Owen would never carry the Loco Foco standard in Congress, his positions were close enough to those of leading Loco Focos that the term became a convenient badge of scorn that Whigs applied to Owen and the Democratic Party more broadly.

As the Democratic Party's standard bearer in the late 1830s, Martin Van Buren developed an Owen problem once the Indianan's political ambitions gained national attention. Conservative New York Democrats decried the pernicious influence of "foreign agrarians," Owen among them, "who are now the immediate friends of Van Buren, and the recipients of his political favors." Whig papers proclaimed that issues beyond banking and land policy connected Van Buren and Owen. According to one view, Van Buren's positions were activated by "the leven brought to this country principally by the disaffected 'radicals' of Great Britain, and first infused into this community through the 'Hall of Science' and next through Tammany Hall, and now boldly partaken of by the chief Magistrate of the Union." Another Whig editor asked rhetorically, "how many open and avowed infidels are there, who in other portions of the country are leaders and head-men in the ranks of the party." Owen stood first among the Democratic leaders, but Abner Kneeland and George Chapman joined him. Kneeland was a candidate in Iowa territorial politics who had emigrated from Massachusetts after serving jail time for a blasphemy conviction. Chapman was a Democratic newspaper editor in Indiana and the former editor of the infidel *Boston Investigator* who supposedly toasted, "Christianity and the Banks—both on their last legs" during a Thomas Paine birthday celebration in Boston. "Verily is not a party, as well as an individual, known by the company it keeps," concluded Whig opinion.

Owen's record in state politics also gave Whigs fodder for attacking him and his party. In 1838 the General Assembly revised and expanded Indiana's already liberal divorce statute. Under the law, either partner could seek divorce for specified causes including adultery, "matrimonial incapacity," a husband's habitual drunkenness or "barbarity," and also the broadly worded phrase "any other cause or causes." Indiana thus became firmly ensconced in the national imagination as the state where marriages ended quickly and easily. Owen participated in the revision of Indiana's statute, which reflected opinions he expressed during his New York days in support of women's property rights and against overly strict divorce laws.

“Alas! That it should have ever been born!” lithograph by Pendleton, frontispiece for Moral Physiology, by Robert Dale Owen (New York, 1831). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Critics looked to Owen’s writings in New York and his support for Indiana’s divorce laws as proof that he endorsed a view of marriage with dangerous consequences. One especially polemic writer argued that Owen’s concept of marriage amounted to “legalized prostitution.” Once couples could end their marriage for reasons of “impatience, caprice or disgust,” it seemed certain that many would so proceed merely a month or a day after their weddings. Marriage would no longer serve as a God-ordained covenant but rather a cover for licentious behavior, the critic warned. If Owen’s view of marriage had social consequences, then, other opponents argued, Owen was morally unfit for public office. Owen’s “irreligious notions,” his view of marriage chief among them, were essential to his “democratic creed.” Whigs warned that many voters might actually elect Owen and others of his ilk, but such a person could not effectively steward the nation’s interests. After all, “What regard can he be expected to pay to moral obligations, who believes himself bound only by convenience in the most important of all human relations?”

Whig portrayals of Owen as a leading voice for efforts to widen access to divorce conveniently overlapped with Whig opposition to Democratic banking policies. Drawing ideas from hard-money theorists in the early 1830s, President Van Buren proposed the creation of an independent treasury or “subtreasury” following the Panic of 1837. This plan called for the complete disentanglement of the federal government and private banks, what supporters called the “separation of bank and state.” Whigs and conservative democrats strongly opposed this plan, with some turning this proposed “divorce” in government fiscal policy to powerful rhetorical ends. It was no coincidence, according to this view, that a president controlled by Owen and his supporters would accept a policy that would unleash chaos in the nation’s economy just as sweeping rights to personal divorce would undermine the culture at large. Van Buren’s Sub-Treasury plan threatened to destroy business by discouraging personal industry. Yet the long-term consequences were even greater. Whigs asserted that Van Buren’s Sub-Treasury plan was apiece with his larger goal of consolidating all power in his hands. “Thus ‘a divorce’ of the Government from the people is

sought that there may be a union of the purse and sword." There was a direct line, so Whigs argued, connecting Owen's idea of divorce to the destabilization of the nation's "Republican Institutions."

Once the votes were tallied in 1839, it became clear that Owen's past undid his first run for Congress. George H. Proffit, a formidable Whig candidate, handily defeated Owen in the wake of an organized campaign by Proffit's supporters to remind local voters that the Democrat had once been New York's leading infidel. Whigs outside of Indiana also recognized the larger significance of Owen's loss. A New Hampshire editor celebrated the "noble triumph of principle" over a "political party, which had supported for Congress a man who has delivered Sunday evening lectures on the 'Non-existence of the Soul'—at six pence a head." For other Whig editors, Owen's loss taught clear political lessons about congressional elections more generally. A New York Whig newspaper recounted Owen's ties to the city's anti-Christian and labor activists; thus the defeat of "Owen, of Fanny Wright and Eli Moore odor" provided consolation for a larger number of Whig setbacks in the West.

Owen's defeat also suggested how Whigs might reverse their losses in future elections. One Whig editor found it remarkable that "Fanny-Wright men" who "would vote for [Owen] on account of his well known infidel principles" never combined with "the whole 'democratic' strength" to bring Owen victory. This editor credited sensible Democratic voters and "the virtuous and intelligent women" of Owen's district who "used their influence with their husbands, brothers, and sons" for preventing such an alliance. Whig observers concerned with Owen's political ambitions thus took his loss in 1839 as an opportunity to assess their party's future prospects.

Looking ahead, Whigs had good reason for optimism in 1839. Democrats faced external opponents and internecine clashes. President Van Buren could not escape blame for the economy's failure to fully recover from losses caused by the Panic of 1837. Discontent with Van Buren redounded to the Whigs. Continued economic troubles intensified factionalism within the Democratic Party on issues such as slavery and banking. And as at least one Whig editor believed, Owen's defeat suggested that religious issues could divide Democratic votes. Whig observers believed they could exploit Democratic weaknesses in order to win control of Congress and the presidency in 1840. Owen's initial run for the House thus proved useful to a Whig opposition strategy focused on depicting Democrats as the party of dangerous ideas about markets and morality.

By concentrating their attention on Owen as the embodiment of Democratic infidelity, Whigs borrowed an opposition tactic from an earlier period of partisan conflict. Federalists in the early 1800s attacked Republican officeholders, especially President Jefferson and members of his Cabinet, by tying them to a cast of familiar deist editors and organizers, people such as the Irish émigré Denis Driscol and Elihu Palmer, an erstwhile Presbyterian minister. Similar to earlier Federalist aims, Whigs highlighted Owen's political ambitions in order to ground their rhetoric. Rather than proffering

only unsubstantiated charges of Democratic infidelity, savvy Whig partisans by 1840 provided a genealogy for the Democratic Party of their day with an important line started by Owen and the infidel community he helped build over a decade earlier.

From a Whig perspective, the fickle voters of Indiana's First had miraculously contained Democracy's moral threat to the republic, but the nation still needed a stronger bulwark. Whigs included Owen's candidacy as one among many reasons why the people should give them control of Congress and the presidency. Whig responses to Owen's failed bid for Congress in 1839 thus prefigured their larger religious campaign in the elections of 1840. In the presidential election that fall, Whigs cloaked their candidate, William Henry Harrison, and their party in the garb of Protestant moral propriety against their infidel Democratic opponents. Whigs won their first congressional majority and the White House in that election.

Owen's fortunes improved along with those of the Democratic Party. He entered Congress in 1843 as part of a larger wave that returned Democrats to national power, gaining them a House majority in the 1842 elections followed by a congressional majority and the presidency in 1844. Since his time in Washington marked a retreat from his radical past, he adopted positions that alienated former allies but, presumably, improved his electability. For instance, in 1845 Owen supported allocating federal lands in Indiana for canal construction. According to the *Working Man's Advocate*, Owen's vote contradicted his earlier support for protection of free public lands to assist the property-less. "Mr. Owen must now be classed among the enemies of the Equal Rights of Man," charged editor George Henry Evans. "I can only look upon Mr. Owen's vote in favor of Land-Selling," Evans concluded, "as I would upon a direct vote in favor of Serfdom or any other form of Slavery." To critics such as Evans, Congressman Owen had betrayed his reform principles. Anyone with market interests in Owen's district viewed him differently. By funneling government largesse into southwest Indiana, Owen expected climbing support when he sought re-election in 1847.

On the contrary, Owen lost reelection to a third term in Congress. This outcome surprised political observers across the nation. It caused a "Dewey defeats Truman" blunder for many papers that misreported an Owen victory. Whig Elisha Embree won the election, in part, by resurrecting Owen's infidel past. According to one account, Embree "took the stump and read to the people from his newspapers and pamphlets, the religious views of Mr. Owen, as formerly communicated by him." George D. Prentice, editor of the prominent Whig newspaper the *Louisville Journal*, praised Embree for achieving "a moral as well as a political triumph."

"The Death of Locofocoism," lithograph by David Claypoole Johnston, published by James Fisher (Boston, ca. 1840). Courtesy of the Political Cartoon Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Click image to enlarge in new window.

Partisans farther afield explained Owen's defeat with an eye on larger developments taking place in American life. Beginning in the early 1840s, immigration to the United States increased spectacularly; within a few years, several hundred thousand immigrants arrived annually. Between 1845 and 1854, the United States' immigrant population grew by almost 3 million. Migrants were principally Irish and German, and increasingly Catholic and impoverished. For political commentators—Whig and Democrat like—willing to take an expansive view, the rise and fall of Owen's political fortunes offered lessons for addressing the republic's changing religious demographics.

Increasingly during the 1840s, nativism colored Whig impressions of American politics. They traced their nativist views to recent books such as Lyman Beecher's *A Plea for the West*, published in 1835. Although principally an anti-Catholic work, Beecher was fundamentally concerned with the problem of consent, in particular the conditions that imposed necessary restraints on choice. These restraints operated tacitly on individuals based on their upbringing and cultural inheritance. Beecher, then in Ohio, compared his new home in the West to his native New England. Early New Englanders "were few in number, compact in territory, homogenous in origin, language, manners, and doctrines; and were coerced to unity by common perils and necessities." Shared experiences—strengthened by the powerful tethers of faith, family relations, and culture—allowed individuals, so Beecher believed, to make choices toward a common good. To the contrary, westerners, Beecher argued, were a "population … assembled from all the states of the Union, and from all the nations of Europe, and is rushing in like the waters of the flood, demanding for its moral preservation the immediate and universal action of those institutions which discipline the mind, and arm the conscience and the heart."

Beecher's contemporaries described the consequences of religious infidelity in similar terms yet with greater urgency. Infidelity was a foreign threat that had already planted roots in American soil much to the detriment of the

nation’s republican institutions. Since Owen embodied the infidel threat, his defeat in 1847 was a nativist victory worth noting.

According to a Connecticut Whig paper, the Embree-Owen contest of 1847 would have inspired little interest had it merely concerned “two Native American republicans, the one calling himself a whig and the other a democrat.” However, the election was nothing of the sort. Owen was the most recent agent in a long line of British-born radicals, beginning with Thomas Paine, whose “imported patriotism” actually produced “discontent, disorder and disregard for good government” while unsettling the established “habits of our people.” Despite the harm posed by Owen and other infidels, Americans had no choice but to accept them, their ideas, and their political ambitions. “It is quite bad enough to have these pestilent intermeddlers in our midst, and to be obliged to tolerate their impudence as private and unofficial brawlers,” the editor lamented, “but to make legislators and rulers out of such material” degraded “national character.” Votes cast by an electorate of sound morals and faith were the only hope. Whigs, and respectable Americans regardless of party, were “greatly gratified in seeing an English radical of the infidel and Fanny Wright school fail to find American Jacobins enough to elect him to the national legislature, over a citizen of the soil, a *christian* and a man of character.”

Owen’s defeat thus suggested how Whigs might translate nativist anxiety into electoral success. Along the way, they could limit Catholic political power while still upholding principles of religious liberty. After all, foreign-born infidels were free to believe as they pleased but voters were equally entitled to deny them political power. The same could be argued for foreign-born Catholics. By challenging Owen as a partisan infidel, his opponents contributed ideas and methods that helped transform nativism into an organized political movement determined to curtail voting privileges for even naturalized immigrants, culminating in the advent of the Know-Nothing Party in the 1850s.

Democrats situated Owen’s defeat in the same political landscape as their Whig opponents. In fact, Democrats had good reason to claim Owen as their own once he left Congress. By the 1840s, Democrats identified themselves as the party of a certain idea of religious liberty, one in which faith was incompatible with reform institutions and instances of government preference for one religious opinion over another were suspect. As a result, the Democratic Party proved popular with Protestant groups skeptical of evangelical calls for improvement, as well as communities such as Catholics and Jews who stood to gain little from the Protestant cultural order of the day. In light of the Democrats’ religious constituencies, defending Owen against Whig attacks helped them further their image as defenders of basic religious liberties and freedom of conscience. As one Democratic partisan declared, Owen’s earlier religious positions were ultimately irrelevant, as “Freedom of religious opinion must be tolerated.” By attacking Owen, Whigs betrayed their “undying attachment to Church and State.”

Following Owen’s defeat, Democratic editors defended his political record and, with even greater zeal, his character. Although Owen denied such fundamental

Christian beliefs as the Trinity, his religious opinions did not detract from his ability to govern. Democratic supporters emphasized Owen's conduct over his beliefs. "He regards a just life and pure motives, with honest conduct at all times, as of more value than empty 'professions.'" Whigs may have achieved short-term political gain by making Owen's religious opinions a political issue, but this strategy was ultimately unsustainable, for it was "antagonistic to the spirit of freedom" that animated the Republic.

Once the Democratic Party accommodated an infidel in its ranks, the door was open to attract other religious outsiders and immigrants. Assuming that future Archbishop of New York John Hughes expressed the general opinion of Catholic immigrants in the United States, it becomes clear why his fellow believers found a home in the Democratic Party. In a debate defending his faith and foreign birth against doubts about his allegiance to the United States, Hughes declared, "I am an American citizen—not by *chance*,—but by *choice*." Choosing one's allegiance, in this calculation, ensured civic virtue. The ultimate expression of this view from the Democratic perspective, one that elevates this position to one of nearly religious import, appears in Secretary of State Lewis Cass's opinion from the late 1850s that naturalized and native-born United States citizens were fundamentally equal. According to Cass, "The moment a foreigner becomes naturalized, his allegiance to his native country is severed forever. He experiences a new political birth." For Cass, immigrants expressed their political free will by becoming citizens.

"Funeral of Loco Focoism," lithograph by Edward Williams Clay, published by John Childs (New York, 1841). Courtesy of the Political Cartoon Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Click image to enlarge in new window.

In the end, Owen's congressional career helped Democratic partisans articulate a political philosophy designed to win votes in an era of rising Catholic immigration. For Owen's supporters, the "spirit of freedom" entailed a notion of choice exalted in Democratic thought, but one at odds with nativist assumptions about consent. Democratic writers were less inclined than their Whig counterparts to believe that a free person's ability to express informed consent, and thereby participate in self-government, was determined by a

specific faith, ancestry, culture, or tradition. Of course in the public realm, this concept of choice was fundamentally the privilege of free white men. However, it was also essential to broader Democratic positions on freedom of conscience, immigration, and citizenship. From this perspective, not only was Robert Dale Owen qualified for political life despite his foreign birth and anti-Christian opinions, any free white man, regardless of religious opinions, qualified for the same.

Public interest in Owen's religious opinions revived with his return to national political life in the 1850s. Between 1853 and 1858, Owen was United States Minister to Naples, an appointment he received from President Franklin Pierce. During his time abroad, rumors spread in the American press that Owen was a Catholic convert. Owen denied these rumors after returning to the United States while affirming his respect for all religions when sincerely held. Regarding his personal beliefs, Owen tantalized the curious by announcing his forthcoming book about his religious opinions. *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World* appeared in 1859.

In the company of Brazil's Minister to Naples and members of the Neapolitan royal family, Owen witnessed "certain physical movements without material agency." So began *Footfalls,* Owen's investigation into spiritualism, or what he described as the "great question whether agencies from another phase of existence ever intervene here, and operate, for good or evil, on mankind." For Owen, contemporary spiritualists attempted to conjure phenomena that were better explained by turning to psychological, natural, and, most importantly, historical inquiry. Owen devoted *Footfalls* to compiling and analyzing past accounts and explanations of spiritual interaction with the natural world. He considered a dizzying variety of evidence that past observers mistook for instances of hallucination, dreams, poltergeists, haunting, and demonic possession to authenticate spiritualist claims. Owen concluded *Footfalls* certain that spiritualist claims withstood tests of reason and historical investigation.

Owen's defense of spiritualism bemused American writers. It seemed like a shocking transformation within the mind of one of the nation's leading infidels. A reviewer of *Footfalls* in the *Saturday Evening Post* mockingly wondered what had happened to Owen's view that "the world was completely disenchanted," that "all the fairy wells fitted with patent pumps," and "all the apparitions referred to indigestion." On the contrary, by joining "the Spiritualistic ranks" Owen sparked "a decided 'bull' movement in the Spiritualistic market." At least in this instance, Owen's life exhibited the wide latitude available for personal religious choices at mid-century, preferences met without cautious toleration or unalloyed praise. Rather, such latitude was a routine feature of life in a religiously diverse society best confronted with humor, not fear.

Robert Dale Owen. Courtesy of W.H. Bass Photo Co. Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

Congressional candidates inspired by the spirit of Robert Dale Owen in the twenty-first century would likely face considerable challenges, whether running in Indiana's Eighth or virtually any other district. The 113th United States Congress elected in 2012 was remarkable for its religious diversity, with members from some religious communities represented for the first time. Hawaiian voters were largely responsible for this development. They elected the first Hindu to Congress, who filled a House seat vacated by Mazzie K. Hirono to become the Senate's first Buddhist. Outside the Hawaii delegation, two other Buddhists won re-election to the House in 2012 as did two Muslims, joining a body in which Jews are also fairly well-represented. Nevertheless, Congress remained majority Christian, with Catholics the largest single denomination. All of this according to "Faith on the Hill: The Religious Composition of the 113th Congress," a recent report by the Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Project.

Of the many fascinating details in the Pew report, one stands out in particular. The center classifies only two percent of Congress as "nones." The beliefs of these members are difficult to pin down. Some refuse to specify, one claims humanism, and Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth of Illinois is listed as a deist in some sources, a label she hasn't actively denied. "Nones," as defined in another Pew study, include atheists and agnostics but also adults who understand themselves as spiritual but not interested in joining a specific religious community. What nones share in common is a sense that organized religion has no special claim to morality while, at the same time, it has become too intertwined with money and politics in pursuit of power. As the Pew report notes, nones are likely the most underrepresented group in Congress. Nones, according to recent surveys, comprise twenty percent of the adult population in the United States. Their numbers are also growing quickly, especially for people under the age of thirty. Other indications suggest that

their opinions on religion are relatively fixed, which means they are more likely to remain nones throughout their lives.

Although not a perfect fit, a comparison of today's nones to the early republic's infidels illuminates larger themes about the relationship between American religion and politics, past, present, and future. Throughout American history, religious positions viewed as overly critical of traditional faith claims or institutions consistently cross a threshold of acceptable opinion in terms of electability. Exploring moments when this threshold is breached, as with Owen's election, or broadened reveals much about historical changes in the relationship between religious belief and public life. The political successes of Catholics and, to a lesser extent, Mormons—groups despised as strongly as infidels in the nineteenth century and even later—emphasize this point. However, if the nones continue their "rise," as the Pew Research Center puts it, the United States could be on the verge of more polarizing battles over a range of religious and moral issues, especially since nones are most passionate about issues that indicate organized religion's influence on society, and they currently identify overwhelmingly with one political party, the Democrats. Perhaps the spirits of late religious controversies are determined to rap in the Capitol for years to come.

Further Reading:

Richard William Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen: A Biography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1940) remains the most thorough biography of Robert Dale Owen, especially concerning his political career. For excellent overviews of the relationship between partisan politics and religion in the antebellum United States, see Daniel Walker Howe, "The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North During the Second Party System," *Journal of American History* 77 (1991): 1216-1239, and Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1997). For readers interested in exploring the Pew Research Center data about contemporary religion and politics, see "Faith on the Hill: The Religious Composition of the 113th Congress."

Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s*(New York, 1992).

Val Nolan Jr., "Indiana: Birthplace of Migratory Divorce," *Indiana Law Journal* 26 (1951): 515-527.

Eric R. Schlereth, *An Age of Infidels: The Politics of Religious Controversy in the Early United States* (Philadelphia, 2013).

Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York, 2005).

This article originally appeared in issue 15.3 (Spring, 2015).

Eric R. Schlereth is associate professor of history at the University of Texas at Dallas and the author of *An Age of Infidels: The Politics of Religious Controversy in the Early United States* (2013).

What We Talk about When We Talk about Democracy

Presented as part of the special Politics Issue

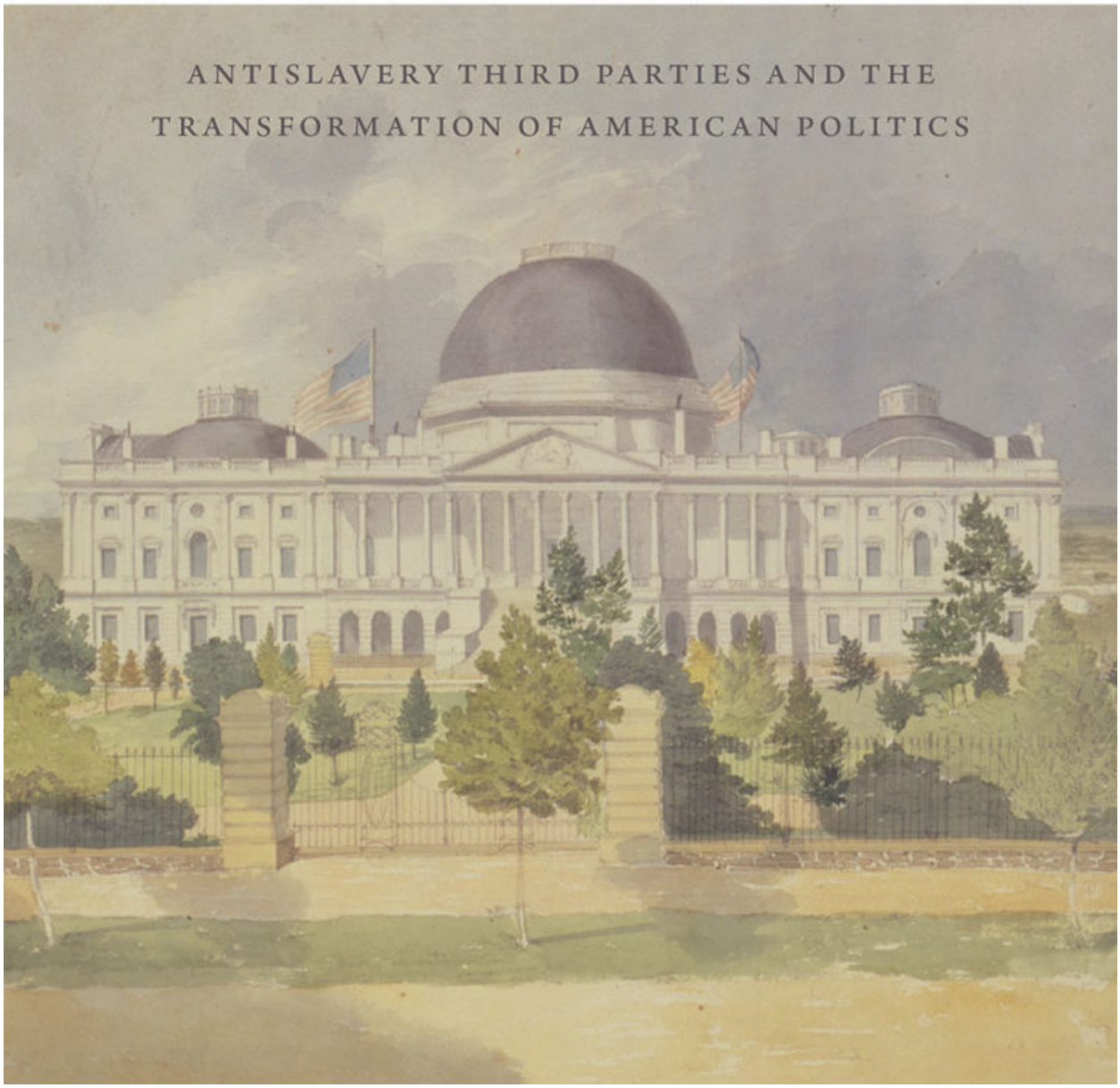
We ought to be asking ourselves what kind of democracy we want and what kind of democracy a particular leader or movement is offering.

#FeelTheBirney

COREY M. BROOKS

LIBERTY POWER

ANTISLAVERY THIRD PARTIES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN POLITICS



For Brooks, antebellum political abolitionists—not the Populists, not the Progressives—deserve to be remembered as “the most important third-party movement in American history.”

Black Work at the Polling Place

Presented as part of the special Politics Issue

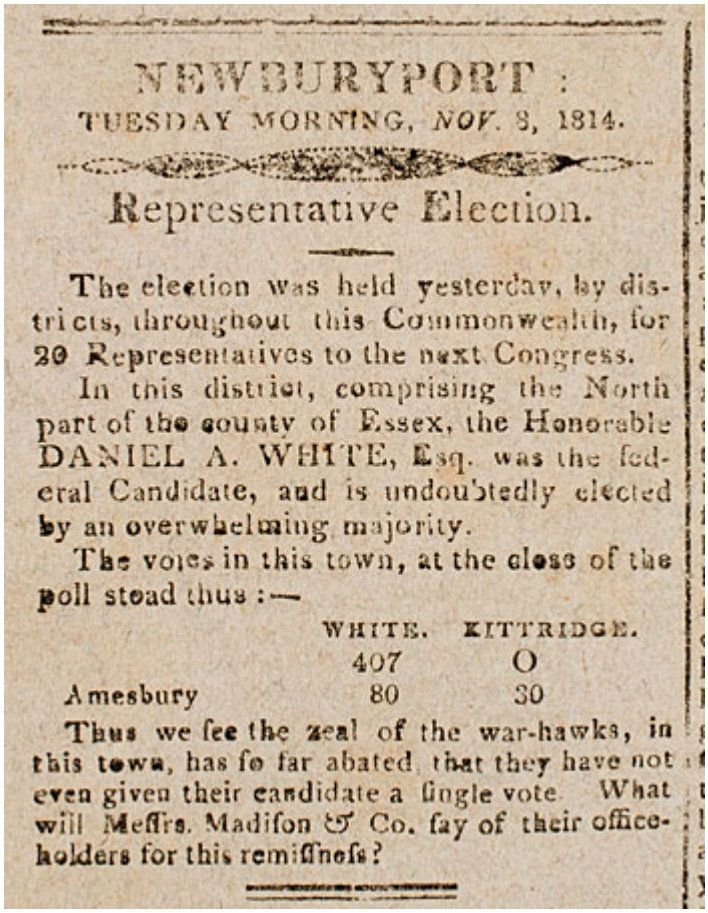
[The County Election] also parodies the men in the crowd, who are divided…by the moral valence of their characters…

The Glass Ballot Box and Political Transparency

In an election year where claims to transparency seem deeply opaque, Foutch

recalls the moment when the way to save democracy was clear as glass.

Finding a Lost Election



NEWBURYPORT :

TUESDAY MORNING, *NOV.* 8, 1814.

Representative Election.

The election was held yesterday, by districts, throughout this Commonwealth, for 20 Representatives to the next Congress.

In this district, comprising the North part of the county of Essex, the Honorable DANIEL A. WHITE, Esq. was the federal Candidate, and is undoubtedly elected by an overwhelming majority.

The votes in this town, at the close of the poll stood thus :—

	WHITE.	KITTRIDGE.
	407	O
Amesbury	80	30

Thus we see the zeal of the war-hawks, in this town, has so far abated, that they have not even given their candidate a single vote. What will Messrs. Madison & Co. say of their office-holders for this remissness?

Almost every child in the United States learns who John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, and Andrew Jackson were. They are five men out of a very select group of forty-three (at present count). And certainly many people are also familiar with the names of prominent figures such as John Marshall, Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay—men who were not president, but whose names have been passed down through history textbooks, public statues, and names on streets and schools. Less well known to the general public but appearing frequently in histories of early America are men like Artemas Ward, Timothy Pickering, and Asahel Sterns. These men were all members of the 14th Congress from the northeastern section of Massachusetts. They have their own pages on Wikipedia, and they appear in the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, maintained by the Office of History and Preservation of the House of Representatives and the Office of the Historian of the U.S. Senate. Most importantly for the purposes of this essay, they appear in the definitive reference book relied upon by scholars studying past congressional

elections—Michael Dubin's *United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997: The Official Results*—which offers vote totals for all elections to Congress up to 1997. But there is one man, and one election, that have been lost to history. This article tells the story of how Daniel White got elected to Congress in 1814, and how everybody forgot about it.

Most people who lived and died in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the United States left little to no trace in the historical record outside of family trees and brief mentions in contemporary newspaper obituaries. But there is also a broad middle ground in history—those who left behind some sort of recorded history that is somewhere in-between, traces that are not easily found through the Web, and instead require digging in archives that haven't yet been digitized. One of those people is Daniel Appleton White (or Daniel A. White, as contemporary newspapers referred to him), born in the late spring of 1776, just a few weeks before the formal Declaration of Independence, and who died in March of 1861, less than two weeks before the firing on Fort Sumter began the Civil War. There is some information on White that can be found relatively easily, from two memorials written on him—one by request of the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1863 and the other at the request of the Essex Institute in 1864 (there is also a collection of some of his papers in the Harvard University Archives). Yet, he is not sufficiently prominent to have earned his own page on Wikipedia, there are scarce traces of him in books published after 1900 (his one mention in *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* is a letter referenced in a bibliographical note), and he has no listing in the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. This would not be remarkable, except for the fact that in November of 1814, Daniel A. White was elected to the U.S. Congress from the Essex North District in Massachusetts.

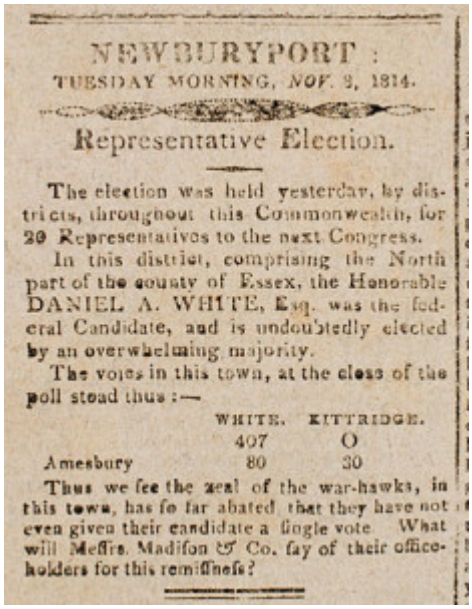
> Here is a mystery, which breaks down into several questions.

So here is a mystery, which breaks down into several questions. The first is, if Daniel A. White was elected to Congress in 1814, why is he not listed in the two definitive reference works on members of the U.S. Congress? The second is, if Daniel A. White didn't serve in Congress, then who did? The third is, if White didn't serve, then why not? The final question is, why are we only now discovering this fact, some 200 years after the original election?

What happened in November of 1814? Dubin's collection of data on U.S. congressional elections shows Jeremiah Nelson as the winner of the 1814 election in the Essex-North District. Nelson is listed as receiving 1,810 votes to 205 for Thomas Kitteridge. The *Biographical Directory* would seem to support this notion with their listing for Nelson: "elected as a Federalist to the Fourteenth and to the three succeeding Congresses and reelected as an Adams-Clay Federalist to the Eighteenth Congress (March 4, 1815-March 3, 1825)." But, if you were to confirm this with the information in the Abstract of Votes for Members of Congress held on microfilm at the Massachusetts Archives, you will

indeed find results for the November 1814 election showing returns of 1,810 versus 205 (with 5 scattering votes). The only problem is that Jeremiah Nelson didn't receive those 1,810 votes. Daniel A. White did.

Contemporary newspaper accounts make it clear that White was the Federalists' chosen candidate in the district in 1814. He was listed as a candidate for Congress from the Essex North District in the October 21, 1814, edition of the *Newburyport Herald and Country Gazette*, and references to him as a candidate continued to appear in that paper on a weekly basis throughout the fall. Other newspapers in the region refer to his candidacy as well: the *Columbian Centinel* of Boston, on October 26, October 29, and November 5; and *The Merrimack Intelligencer* of Haverhill, Mass., on November 5. Both his overwhelming victory on November 7 and his fervent Federalist views were apparent in a paragraph published in the *Herald and Country Gazette* the next day to accompany the Newburyport vote total in White's favor of 407-0: "Thus we see the zeal of the war-hawks, in this town, has so far abated, that they have not even given their candidate a single vote. What will Messrs. Madison & Co. say of their office-holders for this remissness?" The abstract of votes indicates that Republican candidate Thomas Kitteridge did, in fact, fail to receive a single vote from Newburyport, and that he met the same fate in Boxford, Hamilton, Topsfield, and South Reading. As can be seen from the election results compiled in the New Nation Votes database, in only two towns in the district did Kitteridge receive so much as a quarter of the vote: Methuen, where he was outpolled by White 101-55, and Amesbury, where Kitteridge received 30 votes to White's 80.



NEWBURYPORT:
TUESDAY MORNING, NOV. 8, 1814.

Representative Election.

The election was held yesterday, by districts, throughout this Commonwealth, for 20 Representatives to the next Congress.

In this district, comprising the North part of the county of Essex, the Honorable DANIEL A. WHITE, Esq. was the federal Candidate, and is undoubtedly elected by an overwhelming majority.

The votes in this town, at the close of the poll stood thus:—

	WHITE.	KITTRIDGE.
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Thus we see the zeal of the war-hawks, in this town, has so far abated that they have not even given their candidate a single vote. What will Messrs. Madison & Co. say of their office-holders for this remissness?

Newspaper listings of the results of the original election, from page 3 of The Newburyport Herald and Country Gazette, Nov. 8, 1814, Newburyport, Massachusetts. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Thus, it is clear that the absence of White from Dubin's book is an error. It

was Daniel White who received those 1,810 votes. But what about the*Biographical Directory*—the official government record of members of Congress? White's absence from that volume is easier to explain: Daniel A. White never served in Congress. The next mention of White in the *Newburyport Herald*, one of only two newspapers being published in the district at the time, is late in the following spring: "His Excellency has nominated to the Council, the Hon. DANIEL A. WHITE, Esq. of this town, (representative elect to the next Congress,) as Judge of Probate for the county of Essex, *vice* the venerable HOLTEN, resigned; and NATHANIEL LORD, 3rd, Esq. Register, of Probate, *vice* DANIEL NOVE Esq. deceased. The Hon. Mr. WHITE, we learn, has accepted the appointment" (June 6, 1815). Though Article I, Section 6, of the Constitution forbids any representative from being "appointed to any civil Office under the Authority of the United States," there is no specific mention of state offices, though it would certainly have been impractical and extremely difficult to fulfill both positions. While there is no precise mention in the newspapers of his resignation from his congressional seat, he clearly must have done so before June 27, 1815, when the *Newburyport Herald* printed the following: "NOTICE. The Federal Republicans of Newburyport, are requested to meet at the Town Hall this evening, PRECISELY at 7 oclock to make arrangements for the selection of a suitable person to represent this District in the Congress of the U. States."

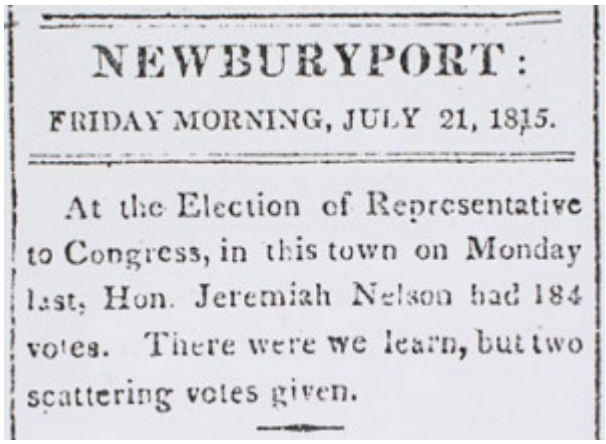
So, the answer to the first question is clear: while White may have won election to Congress, he resigned that seat in late spring or early summer of 1815, long before the Fourteenth Congress convened on December 4.

This bring us to the next question: who did serve as the Essex North Representative to the Fourteenth Congress? The answer, of course, is Jeremiah Nelson, the man listed in Dubin's book as having received White's votes and whom the *Biographical Directory* lists as the winner of the original election. Nelson, born in either 1768 or 1769, was a prominent Newburyport resident from 1793 until his death in 1838. He had already been a U.S. representative once, serving in the Ninth Congress from 1805 to 1807, defeating the same Thomas Kitteridge who would be White's opponent in 1806 (in fact, from 1800 to 1817, Kitteridge would be the Republicans' sacrificial lamb in every election, finishing second in every congressional election except 1812, when the Republicans offered no candidate). After his initial term in Congress, Nelson returned to Newburyport and was a town official in 1815 when he was announced as a candidate in the Newburyport newspaper on July 11: "At a meeting of Delegates from the following towns in Essex North District, viz. Dracut, Boxford, Bradford, Ipswich, Haverhill, Topsfield, Newburyport, Salisbury, Rowley, Andover and Newbury, holden at Hill's Tavern in Newbury, July 10th, 1815, it was *unanimously* voted to support the Hon. JEREMIAH NELSON at the Election to be made on Monday the 17th inst. as Representative of the said District in Congress, to fill the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of the Hon. DANIEL A. WHITE, appointed Judge of Probate."

The election was moving at an accelerated pace. There were less than six weeks between the announcement of White's appointment to the probate court and the

election of his successor. (In comparison, in 2013 in my own congressional district, Ed Markey was elected to the U.S. Senate on June 25, in a special election to replace John Kerry, and Katharine Clark was not elected to replace him until December 10).

There was almost no news about the election itself. Of the four newspapers in Essex County, one was a Republican paper (the *Essex Register*) that reported no news of the election at all. The other three were Federalist papers, yet each printed very little in the way of results. The only actual results were from the *Newburyport Herald*: "At the Election of Representative to Congress, in this town on Monday last, Hon. Jeremiah Nelson had 184 votes. There were we learn, but two scattering votes given" (July 21, 1815). The returns from the other two newspapers gave vague results, but little in the way of actual details. In fact, *the Salem Gazette* seemed fairly mystified by the entire proceeding: "Last Monday, we had understood, was to be the day for the election of a Member of Congress, instead of Hon. Mr. White, appointed Judge of Probate, and that the Hon. JEREMIAH NELSON was the federal (we presume there no other in this sterling district) candidate. If the election really took place, we believe it was the most silent and quiet one that has been known since our rulers first began to chain us to the fiery car of Bonaparte; for we have heard nothing of its result, and the election is not even mentioned in the Newburyport paper, which came out the day after" (July 21, 1815).



NEWBURYPORT:

FRIDAY MORNING, JULY 21, 1815.

At the Election of Representative to Congress, in this town on Monday last, Hon. Jeremiah Nelson had 184 votes. There were we learn, but two scattering votes given.

The newspaper article which lead to the discovery of the previously unknown special election, from page 3 of The Newburyport Herald and Commercial Gazette, July 21, 1815, Newburyport, Massachusetts. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Whatever the other towns may have provided in votes, it was clear that Jeremiah Nelson was now the Congressman-elect from the Essex North District. Since the session had not yet begun, it was Nelson who took his seat in December, and the election of White seemed to have been lost to history at this point. Adding to the disappearance of White's election was the almost total absence of news on the election to replace him. It is likely that there was little suspense, and thus little interest, in the special election. The Essex North District was so

one-sided that the last Federalist to receive less than 60 percent of the vote was when Nelson had run the first time, in 1804. No Republican had ever been elected from the Essex North District, or its predecessor, the Fourth Middle District. What's more, the election itself had not drawn much in the way of votes, if the results from Newburyport are any indication. While the 1812 and 1814 elections, which were mostly one-sided affairs, had received far fewer vote totals than the more competitive 1808 and 1810 elections, there was still a large drop in the vote total for Newburyport in the 1815 special election. From a high in 1808 of 880 votes, the total had dropped down to 408 in 1814. Yet, this was still more than double the number of votes in the special election, which only drew 184 total votes. In the 1814 congressional race there had only been 2,020 total votes in the district, while the given same towns had 5,299 votes in the governor's race in the same year. Aside from the matter of low voter interest, there was a much bigger story that was captivating the public's attention at the time. Nearly every issue of the area papers published, both before and after the election, were full of news about the scandal at Dartmoor Prison in England. Thousands of sailors captured during the War of 1812 were being held prisoner under appalling conditions at the prison on the bleak moors of Devonshire. In April 1815, rumors of an escape attempt led to British guards firing into a crowd of prisoners; the subsequent riot left seven American prisoners dead and thirty-one wounded. This incident was all anyone seemed to care about, and was much bigger news than an election in a lopsided district that could only have one result: the election of Jeremiah Nelson.

A year and a half later, in October 1816, as he was nearing 50, Nelson would decline to run again. As a result, for the first time in the district since 1794, the 1816 election required a second trial (Massachusetts law at the time, as with all of the New England states, required a majority for a winner to be declared in a congressional race). Even in 1794, the race had been between two Federalists. For the first time in living memory, there seemed to be some doubt that the district would send a Federalist to Congress. Yet this was not due to a more robust challenge from Thomas Kitteridge, who again came up short. The problem this time was a lack of unity among the Federalists. The district's lone Republican newspaper, the *Essex Register*, took what comfort it could in reporting that the Federalists "have got into a warm quarrel about [Nelson's] successor, and have two candidates in nomination, viz. Samuel L. Knapp, and Wm. B. Bannister, Esq'rs. Lawyers of Newburyport" (November 2, 1816). With the additional presence of Ebenezer Moseley, another Federalist, in the race, the *Merrimack Intelligencer* put it succinctly: "Owing to the want of unity in the federal party there will be no choice" (November 9, 1816). A second trial, held in January, had similar results, although Nelson received a scattering of votes. Apparently Nelson's name had been put back into nomination, according to the January 21, 1817, edition of the *Newburyport Herald and Commercial Gazette*, which claimed that "we are well assured that Mr. Nelson will serve if elected…" (January 24, 1817). After the second trial, the Federalists did indeed unite behind Nelson, and in the third trial, held in May, he again trounced Kitteridge and returned to Washington.

Nelson would stay in his seat for three more terms, never getting less than 70 percent of the vote. In 1824, he would step down again, and his replacement, John Varnum, would face the closest election in the district's history, receiving a small plurality of twenty-seven votes in the first election and only getting seven votes more than a majority in the second trial. The election of 1830 featured four candidates, and became the most drawn-out congressional election in U.S. history, not being resolved until over two years after the original election. After the tenth trial, poor Joseph Kitteridge (the son of the persistent Thomas) came closer to Congress than his father ever did, winning 49.01% of the vote, only 35 votes short of being elected. In the thirteenth trial, held on November 12, 1832, Jeremiah Nelson was once again summoned from retirement, and was elected to yet another term in Congress, serving half a term before returning to Newburyport and retiring for good in 1833 (having married late in life, Nelson left four fairly young children at his death in 1838).

Clearly, Jeremiah Nelson is well established in the history books, even if he is hardly a household name. So why, precisely, did Daniel Appleton White decline to serve in Congress?

The quick and easy answer is in those original newspaper articles: that he was appointed judge of probate in Essex County. White was an important enough figure at the time of his death in 1861 that James Walker, the recently retired president of Harvard University, published a memorial to him in 1863. And the pages of that memorial may hold the real reason behind White's decision: "From 1810 to 1815, Mr. White was a member of the Massachusetts Senate. In that day, for so young a man, this was a high political distinction; but it seems to have had few attractions in his view, except the prospect of serving the public. Indeed, in the beginning, there was one circumstance which made the appointment positively irksome: it drew him away from his family, when they stood most in need of his presence and care; and this apparently to but little purpose, as the government of the State had just passed into the hands of the Democratic party, leaving him in a helpless minority on all the great questions at issue."

The more likely explanation for White's decision, however, is simultaneously more prosaic and more personal: he wanted to spend more time with his family. White was a widower, who had been married for less than four years before his wife died in 1811, leaving him with two young daughters. White was understandably not pleased at the prospect of being away from his family as often as a career in Boston would require, a mere forty-three miles away from his home in Haverhill. From Haverhill to the District of Columbia is ten times that distance. At a time when it could take most of a day to travel from Haverhill to the Massachusetts State House, the trip to Washington could easily take more than a week.

Walker expanded on how White's disposition left him ill-suited to a career in politics: "But we must remember that public life, in itself considered, had no charms for him; and also that the cares and responsibilities of a lawyer in

large practice were positively distasteful. A few days after having been admitted to the Bar, he had written to a young friend, 'last week I took the attorney's oaths, and was admitted into a profession, the chicanery and drudgers of which I abhor, and fear I always shall.' Accordingly, we cannot wonder at his accepting a situation which was, beyond question, the most congenial to his nature and habits the law could afford."

This view of White's temperament does raise the question of why White would have allowed his name to be put forward as a congressional candidate in the first place. Given the overwhelming Federalist control of the district, he had to know he would be elected. Whether it was due to financial considerations, or the call of public service, White did run for Congress, and perhaps may have been relieved when he was appointed to a position that allowed him to stay in Essex County, much closer to his two daughters. It was the right decision for White, which George Briggs made clear in the memorial he presented at the Essex Institute: "This was the turning point in his life. It was singular, certainly, that a man at the age of thirty-nine, who had already attained marked professional and political distinction, and stood so high in the public favor and confidence, should retire both from the Bar, and from public life, when so wide a sphere of service and influence was open to him."

The slower rhythms of the probate court were clearly congenial to White, who served on the court for nearly forty years. When he retired in 1853, he had served on the court longer than any person in its history.

This is the point where White seems to have passed out of well-recorded history. He would receive a page in the *History of Newburyport Mass.*, published in 1909, which mentions his election to Congress. His absence from the *Biographical Directory* is not surprising; the directory doesn't mention those who were elected to Congress but didn't serve. His absence from Dubin's work on congressional elections is clearly an error, as his vote total is attributed to Jeremiah Nelson, who did serve, and whose special election seems to have been mostly lost to history.

All of that raises the final question: why was this election forgotten, and why is all of this finally now coming to light? The absence of the second election is notable primarily because it is also absent from the abstract of votes, kept in the original books at the Massachusetts Archives, but widely available on microfilm. It is, as far as is known, the only congressional election absent from these records. The only known data on the special election held in July of 1815 is from the scant reports in the local newspapers, only one of which contained any actual results. Regardless of why it was overlooked in 1815, it is not in the abstract, and since that has been the primary (and official) source for data on Massachusetts congressional elections, it is no surprise that it came to be lost to history. The existence of the election, however, has now come to light thanks to Philip Lampi and A New Nation Votes, an ongoing collaborative project between the American Antiquarian Society and Tufts University, with funding provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The primary claim to fame for ANNV has been the massive collection of election records all in one place and their subsequent ongoing digitization. Before this project, a historian seeking access to all of this data would have had to visit the archives of some two dozen states as well as scour the history of hundreds of eighteenth- and nineteenth- century newspapers. But Philip Lampi has done the scouring of those hundreds (and thousands) of newspapers himself, over the course of over forty years, collecting a massive amount of information that is uncovering mysteries like the election of Daniel A. White in November 1814.

While gathering data for Massachusetts elections in 1815, Lampi came upon a mention in the*Newburyport Herald* of a special election in which Jeremiah Nelson received 184 votes. With no special election for Congress on record in the state of Massachusetts in 1815, Mr. Lampi thought this odd, and called me. Looking together at the record in Dubin, checking our microfilm copy of the abstract of votes, and looking at the directory, it soon became apparent what had happened. It was clear that Daniel A. White had won the original election, that he had resigned his seat, and that Jeremiah Nelson had been elected to replace him.

The records for Jeremiah Nelson's election in 1815 amount to the votes from one town, and the fact of his election. Its absence from the abstract of votes held at the Massachusetts Archives is, as far is known, a singular omission. It is no longer, however, absent from history.

Further Reading

There were two memorials of Daniel A. White published shortly after his death, and these offer the most detail about his career. The first is Rev. James Walker's *Memoir of Hon. Daniel Appleton White*. *Prepared Agreeably to a Resolution of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston, 1863), available via Google Books. The second is George W. Briggs, *Memoir of Daniel Appleton White.Prepared by Request of the Essex Institute, and Read at the Meeting of January 11, 1864* (Salem, 1864), available via openlibrary.org. White also receives brief mention in John J. Currier's *History of Newburyport, Mass., 1764-1909, Volume II* (Newburyport, Mass., 1909).

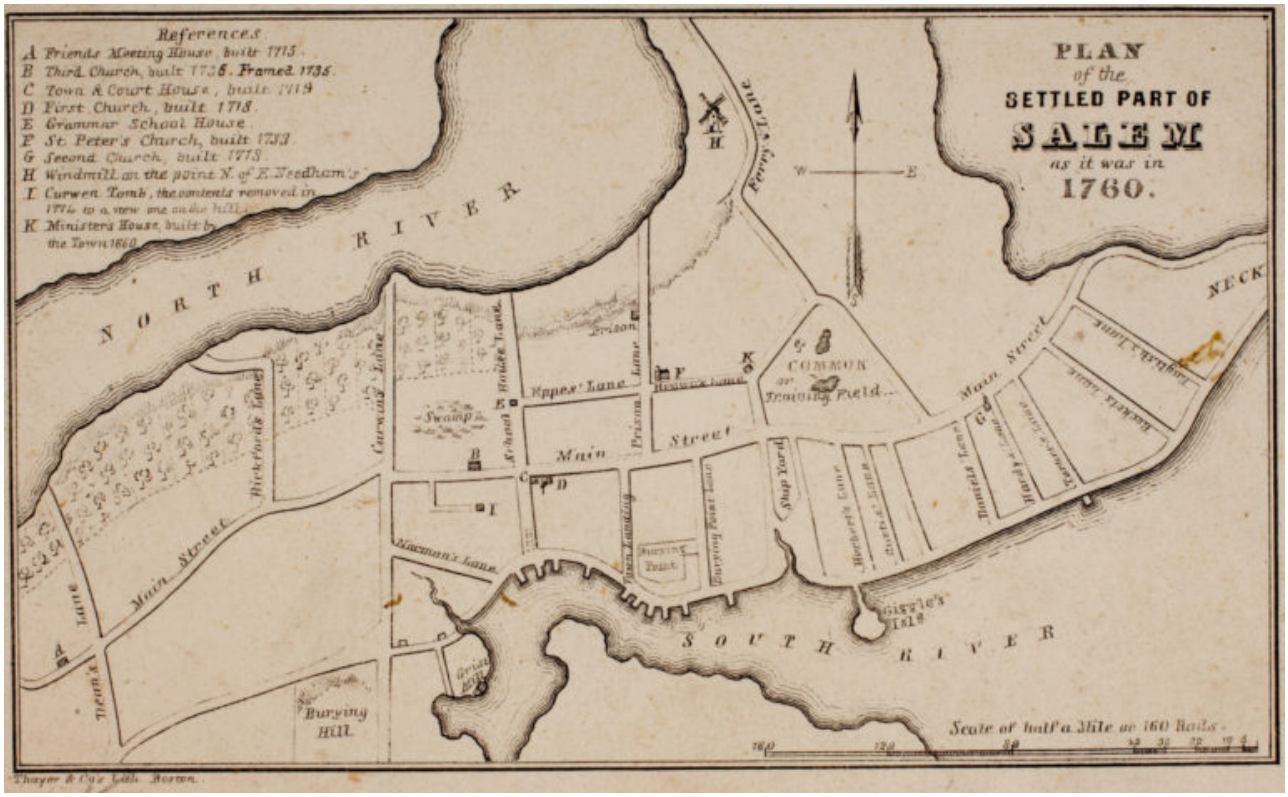
All of the newspapers referenced can be found at the American Antiquarian Society and are available through the America's Historical Newspapers project scanned by Readex.

This article originally appeared in issue 14.4 (Summer, 2014).

Erik Beck is the project coordinator for A New Nation Votes, a collaborative

project between the American Antiquarian Society and Tufts University, with funding provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities. After two years of data entry, Erik has spent the last four years overseeing the digitization of the Lampi collection, an example of which is highlighted in this article.

Salem Witchcraft in the Classroom

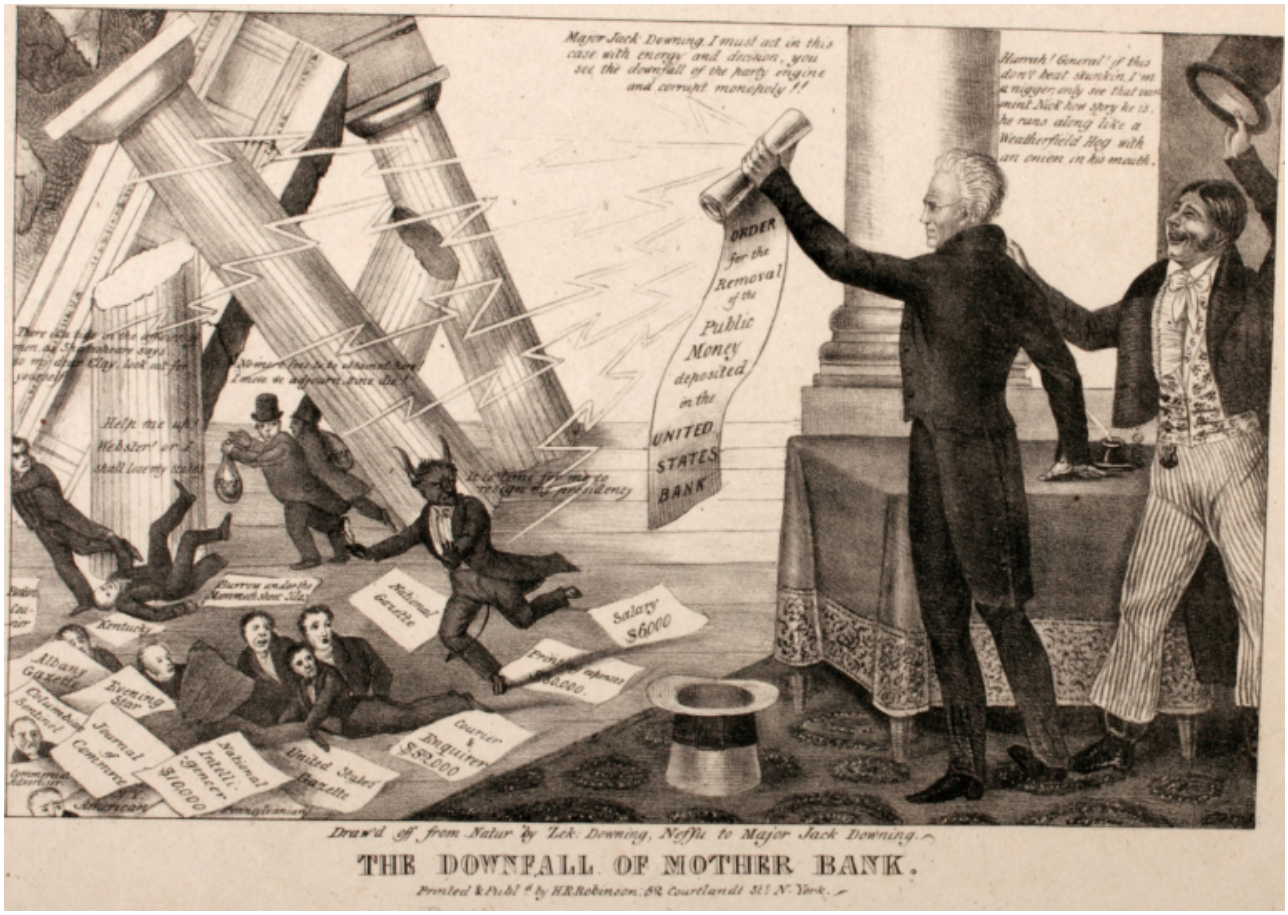


In the end, four papers stood out as making truly original contributions to scholarship on Salem witchcraft.

"They Did Eat Red Bread Like Mans Flesh"

Under the specter of witches’ meetings said to be aimed at destroying the village ministry, an unprecedented and momentous claim, the New England tradition of legal caution towards witchcraft accusations completely evaporated.

The Kingdom of Satan in America



Weaving the Wicked Web of Antebellum Religion and Politics

"Douglas is a cuning dog & the devil is on his side," wrote Abraham Smith to Abraham Lincoln in the summer of 1858. One month earlier, the Republican Party of Illinois had decided to run Lincoln for the Senate against Stephen A. Douglas, the incumbent Democrat. Smith, an Illinois farmer, encouraged Lincoln to take "the high ground" during the campaign. He called upon Lincoln to remind all who would hear that "the bible teaches the same that is taught by the declaration of Independence—by the Constitution of the U.S. and by the fathers of the republic." What others might view as separate strands of "religion" and "politics," or "church" and "state," Smith wove together tightly. For him, the Bible, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Founding Fathers constituted one holy garment. The Lincoln-Douglas struggle, moreover, was much more than just another political event that pitted two men against one another for a legislative position. The race signaled forces higher and lower, lighter and darker. "As I view the contest (tho we say it is between Douglass & Lincoln—) it is no less than a contest for the advancement of the kingdom of Heaven or the kingdom of Satan."

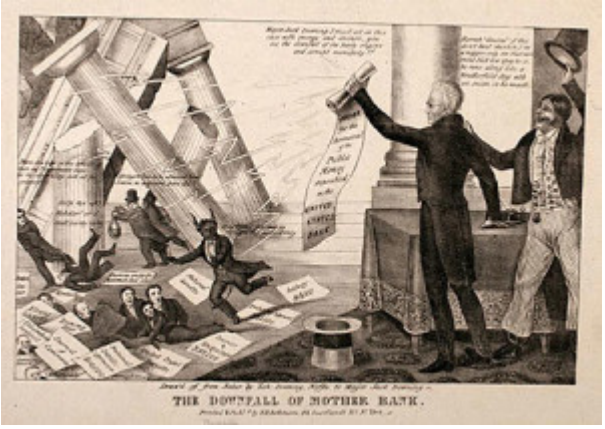
Publicly, Lincoln neither elevated nor lowered the electoral stakes to those realms. Before and after receiving Smith's letter, however, he did reference

Satan during the campaign. For Lincoln's campaign acceptance speech in June 1858, he borrowed from the Bible the line that came to serve as the speech's unofficial title: "A house divided against itself cannot stand." This was both a statement about the state of the Union and a warning of what could befall the United States if it failed to resolve the imbroglio over admitting new states as either free or slave. Lincoln and most of his audience knew "the house divided" reference well. Recorded in three of the Bible's gospel narratives, it began with Pharisees accusing Jesus of being in league with the "prince of devils." Jesus replied, "How can Satan cast out Satan? … if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand." On one hand, Lincoln used this biblical tale as a template for contemporary political divisions. On another veiled hand, the congressional aspirant lodged devils and concerns over devils within the rhetorical architecture of his allusion.

> Privately and publicly, implicitly and explicitly, aurally and textually, the kingdom of Satan seemed more than present. It appeared to be spinning the nation into chaos.

During the ensuing Lincoln-Douglas debates, Douglas pilloried Lincoln for his "House Divided" speech. Lincoln avoided mentioning or invoking Satan throughout the summer and fall. That was until the final debate. In Alton, Illinois, Lincoln quoted the "House Divided" speech and acknowledged that the words and spirit of it "have been extremely offensive to Judge Douglas." The Democrat, Lincoln exclaimed, "has warred upon them as Satan wars upon the Bible." According to the local newspaper, after Lincoln likened Douglas to the devil, the crowd erupted in "laughter."

In this political contest of 1858, Satan was woven into the fabric of political discussions in ways stark and subtle. Abraham Smith maintained that the electoral process manifested the war between the "kingdom of Heaven" and the "kingdom of Satan." Lincoln's most noteworthy speech was premised upon demonic discussions. When mapped onto the United States, the "house divided" line hinted at the presence of darkness in American political culture. When Lincoln later associated Douglas with Satan, it sounded like a joke to some. Privately and publicly, implicitly and explicitly, aurally and textually, the kingdom of Satan seemed more than present. It appeared to be spinning the nation into chaos.



"The Downfall of Mother Bank," lithograph, printed and published by Henry R. Robinson (New York, ca. 1833). Courtesy of the Political Cartoon Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Looking first at the devil broadly in antebellum society and then specifically at mentions of Satan in the governmental place Lincoln hoped to get in 1858—Congress—this essay suggests that Satan simultaneously tightened and troubled religion, politics, and the meshing of them in the antebellum age. At one level, Americans put Satan to work as a means to denounce their political opponents. In an era marked by political party chaos and reorganization, raising the devil was a means of political differentiation. It also transformed the stakes of debate. By tying otherworldly dimensions to this-worldly concerns through references to Satan and Satan's kingdom, Americans acknowledged that perhaps otherworldly forces were unmaking their this-worldly projects and programs.

Conjuring the devil rhetorically and visually signaled much more. Satan troubled senses of political and spiritual progress. The devil's past havoc both on the earth and beyond it suggested that the present and future United States was in deep and dark trouble. As Satan moved from the margins of American politics to its center by the time of national fracture in 1860-61, the nation's elected officials seemed to indicate that neither they, nor their God, were in control. "Manifest destiny," that widespread belief that heavenly providence shined upon the United States, had given way to the malevolent disruptions of the kingdom of Satan in America.

"Devils Dressed in Angels' Robes"

Satan and his minions could be seen, heard, and discussed widely in the decades before the Civil War. From the writings and artwork of reformers to the political prints and speeches of the era, the forces of radical evil were on the move. By the time of the Lincoln-Douglas debates and the ensuing Civil War, when Abraham Smith perceived a contest between the "kingdom of Heaven or the kingdom of Satan," it appeared to many Americans that Satan had set his cloven feet on the soil of the United States. Many Americans were not passive observers in Satan's rise. They conjured the dark prince into American domains through their writings, artwork, and speeches.

"Observe Two Dusty Foot-Travellers in the Old Pilgrim-Guise," lithograph (hand colored by a child) in A Visit to the Celestial City: Revised by the Committee of Publication of the American Sunday-School Union, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, printed by King and Baird (Philadelphia, 1844). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

At times, antebellum artistic culture seemed obsessed with darkness. The gothic stories of Edgar Allan Poe and the art of Thomas Cole embraced the dark sides of humanity and nature. Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville populated their novels and short stories with demonic characters and forces, while the revealed scriptures for the new Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the *Book of Mormon* and the *Book of Commandments*, included prominent roles for Satan and several antichrist characters both in the ancient past and for the American present.

Although antebellum reformers and reform organizations criticized some of these dramatic renderings of evil, they too conjured hell's angels for their own purposes. The number of reform organizations and their membership rolls swelled during the first half of the nineteenth century. So too did their invocations of the devil and the demonic. Temperance advocates, for instance, damned "demon liquor" and "demon rum." When businessman and reformer Lewis Tappan encouraged revivalist Charles Finney to carry the gospel to the notorious Five Points of New York City, he explained that Finney would be "rescuing from Satan one of his haunts."

Abolitionists and women and men formerly held in bondage energetically invoked demons, devils, Satan, and hell. When Frederick Douglass denounced the "religion of the South" in his autobiography, he wrote that it was "a mere covering for the most horrid crimes." This so-called religion was in fact "a dark shelter under, which the darkest, foulest, grossest, and most infernal deeds of slaveholders find the strongest protection." He concluded that in slavery "we have religion and robbery the allies of each other—devils dressed in angels' robes, and hell presenting the semblance of paradise." William Lloyd Garrison denounced the Constitution as an "agreement with hell" and then performed on a copy of it what happened to bodies in hell. He burned it.

“My singularity is that when I say that Freedom is of God, and Slavery is of the devil, I mean just what I say,” Garrison wrote on another occasion. In Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and popular theatrical adaptions of it, the forces of evil seemed hell bent on the destruction of African Americans’ lives, families, and faiths.

Satan and other renderings of the demonic played important roles in the visual culture of antebellum political discussions as well. One popular print from the early 1830s, “The Downfall of Mother Bank,” showcased President Andrew Jackson destroying the National Bank. In the middle of the melee, as Whig politicians cower amid tumbling pillars, one figure with darkened skin, horns, and a tail races away from Jackson. “It is time for me to resign my presidency,” this character exclaims so that viewers could recognize who this devil had been in his human disguise. It was none other than Nicholas Biddle, the president of the downfallen bank. Only through Jackson’s political heroism was Biddle exposed and exorcised.

Twenty years later, as antislavery forces were in the process of painting the peculiar institution as built upon hell, proslavery forces (or at least anti-antislavery contingents) struck back. In response to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, one artist pictured a “dream” wherein either Stowe was in hell, or hell had invaded the United States. This busy satirical print features a host of devils, beasts, serpents, and Medusa-type characters. At the center, a black man stands holding a flag emblazoned with the words “Women of England To the Rescue.” To his right and below, Stowe holds an illustrated copy of her novel. Devils harass her. They poke and prod her. One fixes a chain to her feet. They appear to be dragging her into an “under ground railway,” perhaps linking the secretive American route of liberation with the assumption that hell was a space under the ground.

“Observe two dusty foot travellers in the old pilgrim guise,” lithograph

frontispiece for A Visit to the Celestial City: Revised by the Committee of Publication of the American Sunday-School Union by Nathaniel Hawthorne (Philadelphia, ca. 1844). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Beyond the overt denunciation of Stowe and her novel, this “dream” disclosed several important elements in antebellum religion and politics. It tied biblical imagery to the past, present, and future through an overflowing abundance of violent evil. Devils carry pikes and battle flags. Others beat drums of war. A cannon fires at Stowe. From above, a many-headed dragon spews fire in its descent. The apocalypse of Revelations has been unleashed. Evil seemed to be coming from all temporal and geographical directions: under the ground, the sky above, the biblical past, and the prophesied future.

This “dream” signaled a change in American political culture. While references to demons and Satan had been a part of politics in the United States from its beginning, devils did more than move from margin to center. They overwhelmed the stage. In “The Downfall of Mother Bank,” the horned Nicholas Biddle was but one small character. By the 1850s, devils were unavoidable. The kingdom of Satan was present and abundant. It overflowed. It overran the confines of hell and poured itself upon Americans and into the United States. The kingdom of Satan wreaked aggressive violence; and, in the case of this anti-Stowe print, it appeared to perform valuable service. Demons chained the proslavery nemesis. Visual artists, moreover, were not the only ones dreaming of Satan in their midst. Elected officials were, as well, and they conjured the kingdom of Satan in the capital of their own kingdom: the halls of Congress.

The King of Hell in the Halls of Congress

As antebellum Americans incarnated the devil visually and rhetorically to address the central topics of their day, the nation’s leading politicians ushered Satan into their domain. They did so, in fact, with increased frequency. In the seventy years from the founding of the United States government under the Constitution to the severing of the union with the Civil War, Satan moved from a peripheral performer in governmental discussions to a star on the center stage. Demonic invocations showcased how the Senate and the House of Representatives served not only as hubs of national legislation and political discussion, but also as locales of religious debate and discussion. In the buildup to the Civil War, these political representatives voiced what Abraham Smith feared in his 1858 letter to Abraham Lincoln: the kingdom of Satan had arrived and was on the march.

The number of references to “Satan” in the congressional records suggests that vital changes had occurred in the realms of and connections between religion and politics. Before 1826, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives rarely uttered the word “Satan.” They did so only three times in the thirty-five years from 1790 to 1825. Then, from 1826 to 1849, the number of discrete mentions rose to thirty-nine. That number was equaled in the next

ten years. From 1850 to 1860, “Satan” was once again spoken thirty-nine times. Put another way, while congressmen used the word “Satan” once every decade in the early republic, they invoked him once every three to six months in the years before the Civil War. The king of hell seemed to find an audience in the antebellum congresses.

Congressional references to Satan had two main sources: the Bible and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667). When legislators used biblical texts related to Satan, they emphasized temptation and disruption. The serpent in the Garden, assumed to be Satan, helped cause the fall of humankind. The devil wreaked havoc on Job and his family. Satan appeared to Jesus and tempted him three times. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* was common reading for educated Americans. In it, Satan and his angelic co-conspirators failed to overthrow God and were then banished to hell. From there, Satan escaped and bedeviled God’s highest creation: Eve and Adam. Most often, Americans found political and religious meaning within *Paradise* Lost. It was a tale that linked this world with ones beyond it through narratives of treason that resulted in chaos, misery, and exile.

“A Galvanized Corpse,” lithograph printed and published by H.R. Robinson (New York and Washington, D.C., 1836). Courtesy of the Political Cartoon Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

The disruptive character of Satan matched the political party chaos of the antebellum age. In the late 1820s and early 1830s, the Republican Party, which had destroyed its Federalist rivals and dominated national politics, died. In its place, Andrew Jackson’s coalition of Democrats arose and in opposition to them a new alliance emerged called the Whig Party. Then in the 1850s, it fell to pieces. Rival parties developed, most notably the American Party (oftentimes called the Know Nothings) and then the new Republican Party to which Abraham Lincoln shifted his allegiances from the Whigs. The presidential elections of both 1824 and 1860 signaled the party confusion, as four main candidates vied with each one, rather than the typical two. Amid this political disarray, Satan seemed an apropos symbol.

Although congressmen referenced Satan more often in the 1830s and the 1850s, important differences marked the decades. In the 1830s, invocations of Satan primarily circulated around issues of executive and federal power. Satan was mentioned in terms of executive vetoes, the place of the U.S. Bank, tariffs, and nullification of federal laws by individual states. During the 1837 economic depression, for instance, Henry Wise of Virginia referenced a description "of Satan" from John Milton's *Paradise Regained* to denounce "the wicked intent of wedding the money in Government with the political power of the Executive." If "the people" did not "start back affrighted and appalled" by how Jackson and his presidential successor, Martin Van Buren, had devastated the nation financially through their economic machinations, then, once more quoting Milton, "God hath justly given the nation up / To thy delusions, justly, since they fell / Idolatrous!"

In the 1850s, however, one topic overshadowed the others, and it was an issue for which Congress had direct responsibility: slavery in the territories. Following the annexation of Texas (1845), the Mexican-American War (1846-1847), and the California Gold Rush (1848), Congress had to address western lands at a speed more rapid and a geographical range more expansive than ever before. As hundreds of thousands of people moved within the nation and from the world to the United States, congressmen had to determine how the territories would be organized, what they would be politically during their time as territories, and whether their proposed constitutions for statehood would be acceptable. In many ways, the political shape and fate of the western lands resided in the halls of Congress.

For some legislators, the only analogue they could find for the political complexity was in the various moments of chaos wrought by Satan. In 1848, as congressmen debated the organization of Oregon as a territory, Robert M.T. Hunter of Virginia fretted that if slavery were barred from the beginning, "All considerations of the general interest would be sacrificed and merged in the spirit of hate." This, he prophesied, would lead to a "civil war … not with arms, but under the forms of law." To comprehend this future, Hunter knew of nothing "parallel" from the past. "[W]e must leave the realms of history for those of fiction," he explained to his fellow congressmen. "We must turn to the gloomiest conception of Milton, who makes his Satan address 'old night and chaos,' and promise to extend their reign at the expense of light and life."

Six years later, when congressmen debated placing territorial decisions related to free or slave status with statehood within the hands of local residents with the proposed Kansas-Nebraska Act, Thomas Davis, an Irish-American Democrat from Rhode Island, saw in it the wicked design of slave holders. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, which would nullify the earlier Missouri Compromise that had forbidden slavery from these geographical regions, was to Davis simply a way for slavery to outflank freedom. It was akin to "Satan, entering Paradise, / 'At one slight bound high overleaped all bound.' … So slavery, at one bound, overleaps all rights, and subverts the whole foundation on which the moral universe stands. All is chaotic, 'without form and void.'"

“The Man what’s got the Whip Hand of ’em All. Van Humbug’s Cabinet of Curiosities,” lithograph attributed to David Claypoole Johnston, published by Moses Swett (Washington, D.C., 1837). Courtesy of the Political Cartoon Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Davis was far from the only congressman to voice the sense that “[a]ll is chaotic.” The rise of references to Satan helped heat the tensions of the era as Democrats, Whigs, and Republicans used Satan to describe and denounce their opponents. In 1850, Democrat John R. J. Daniel of North Carolina referred to the hopes of “free-soilism” to keep slavery from the West as “personified and likened to Satan tempting our Saviour on the Mount.” Two years later, Charles Sumner, a Whig who vehemently opposed slavery and became a leading Republican, condemned the new Fugitive Slave Clause of 1850 by asserting that the Founding Fathers opposed slavery and its Satanic resonances. “Our fathers did not say, with the apostate angel: ‘Evil, be thou my good!’ In another spirit they cried out to slavery, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan!'”

Beyond religiously dramatizing political differences and legislative possibilities, references to Satan also allowed congressmen to move in a number of temporal and geographical directions to make their points. The disruptiveness of Satan gave congressmen a usable analogy to make sense of the disrupted state of American politics. In their efforts to comprehend and categorize contemporary problems in this way, however, legislators seemed to acknowledge that the nation and its governance were spinning out of control. As congressmen relied on Satan to cross time and space, to connect this world to others, and to configure what was happening in the United States vis-à-vis the actions of nonhuman forces in the past and present, they put on display their own political fragility. When it came to Satan, nothing appeared to be stable: time, geography, the republic of the United States, or the kingdoms of heaven or hell. Invoking Satan did not engender order; it energized disorder.

For some congressmen, contemporary events seemed to burst the bounds of human history and categorization. In 1858, after proslavery forces in Kansas had engineered a proslavery constitution and submitted it to Congress, Henry Bennett of New York maintained, “The offer contained in this act has no precedent or parallel. The only thing resembling it occurred more than eighteen

hundred years ago.” At that time, “Satan tempted our Savior, and offered Him all the lands they beheld from the top of ‘an exceedingly high mountain,’ if He would fall down and worship him.” In the contemporary United States, Satan “made very much such an offer as this act makes to the people of Kansas, if they will fall down and worship slavery.”

Perhaps better than any other legislator, Jeremiah Clemens laid bare how efforts to harness Satan created their own kinds of chaos. A Democrat from Alabama who had fought in the Mexican-American War, Clemens took the floor in 1853 to discuss a resolution that called for Americans to participate in an international convention to discuss the fate of Cuba. Some southern whites had advocated annexation of the island. They viewed it, like the western lands, as another place within the nation’s manifest destiny, and these southerners wanted to make certain that American slavery would be part of the agenda. In his response, Clemens put to work such an abundance of analogies that it seemed an anarchy of explanation.

Clemens wanted nothing to do with another land grab, and in his adversarial speech, he roamed rapidly and wildly across space and time. “It is not in the book of Revelations that we are taught to covet the goods of our neighbors,” Clemens exclaimed, invoking and then rebuffing biblical prophecy as a means to determine what the United States should do in the future. Instead, Clemens looked backward to the Mosaic Decalogue and its “thou shalt not covet” refrain. To desire Cuba, Clemens insisted, would invariably lead to “a lawless spirit of war and conquest.” It would be “barbarism.” Searching for an historical analogy, Clemens maintained that if the American people sent troops there, they would be “[l]ike the Prophet of the East, who carried the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other.” Muslims and the Koran, however, simply manifested in the past the powers Satan wielded in the past, present, and potential future. Invading Cuba in the fashion of Muslims, Clemens concluded, “is a species of progress which Satan himself might fall in love.”

“Whig Bazaar,” hand colored lithograph by Edward Williams Clay, published by H.R. Robinson (New York, 1837). Courtesy of the Political Cartoon Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Clemens moved across time and space dramatically. He invoked Revelations and the Ten Commandments, Muslim history and contemporary American politics. Even more, Clemens suggested that Americans could outdo Satan, perhaps even tempt the devil. This manifest destiny was malevolent destruction. It was chaos and anarchy. This "progress" was the type "Satan himself might fall in love." Amid the abundance of imaginative crossings of space and time, Clemens maintained not only that supernatural evil could affect human communities, but also that contemporary nations could influence the supernatural figure of Satan.

While most legislators used Satan to discuss elements within the United States, at least one projected his consideration of human history onto the supernatural domains. John Pettit, a Democrat from Indiana, expressed horror that if the United States listened to antislavery forces and liberated the enslaved, the nation would devolve rapidly: "As soon as you equalize different races of men in one country so soon do you commence the work of annihilation and destruction." Pettit blamed the fall of ancient Rome on racial equality and maintained that such changes in the United States could wreak a "chaos on earth that was worse than the contention in Heaven." That "contention in Heaven" was when Satan led an army against God. Of the earlier supernatural squabble, Pettit guessed that racial difference drove that discord as well. "I would be hardly willing to doubt even upon the best authority which exists, that Satan himself was of a different race from the other inhabitants of Heaven with whom he warred." Whether on earth, heaven, or hell, Pettit concluded, "Races cannot, and will not, live together."

Satan seemed omnipresent, pulling congressmen from the past to the present, from heaven to hell. In one speech, Satan even moved from a poignant metaphor to a prime mover, and that speech was one of the most important in American history: Charles Sumner's "The Crime Against Kansas." During two days in May 1856, Senator Sumner explained to his colleagues that while most legislative business over "[t]ariffs, army bills, navy bills, land bills, are important," they and decisions made about them did not determine the overall well-being and functioning of "the State." Recent events in Kansas, however, were of a different order. The violence and political malevolence there had the potential to destroy the nation. The power behind the disorder was slavery, and the power behind it was Satan. "*One Idea* has been ever present," Sumner raged, "as the Satanic tempter—the motive power—the *causing cause*."

When Sumner linked the "Satanic tempter" to "the causing cause," the congressman gestured toward something much deeper than demonization of a political opponent. He lodged the legislative and territorial problems with nonhuman forces. Sumner placed into the hands of Satan the movement and momentum of the nation. While politicians may be the ones debating and making legislation and while border ruffians and antislavery activists in Kansas may be the ones shooting one another, the "motive power" came from an other-than-human figure: the Satanic tempter.

Sumner's speech drew attention then and later because of the events that

followed. During the speech, Sumner had lashed out at Stephen A. Douglas and Andrew Butler of South Carolina. Taking umbrage at the insults, Butler's nephew Preston Brooks, a member of the House of Representatives, proceeded to beat Sumner with a cane. Sumner was so injured that it took four years until he returned to the Senate. Brooks became a hero to many in the South, while the "caning of Charles Sumner" energized northern Republicans to establish themselves as the only "civilized" political party that could stop the violence of the Democrats.

The caning kept Sumner from the Senate, but it did nothing to contain Satan. Democratic congressmen hit back rhetorically. They predicted war and saw both the kingdoms of God and Satan working together to bring it. John Savage of Tennessee feared in 1856 that war was imminent. "Can it be, that, in the early morning of our national existence, the wrath of an offended Heaven is to be visited upon us?" Or were the threats from another supernatural force? "[M]ay we not believe that the prince of darkness, attacking our early weakness, as he did our first parents in the Garden of Eden, let loose this odious brood of the internal world, to destroy a Government whose progress to greatness will banish discord and tyranny from the world?" This "odious brood" had leaders, and Savage named them: William Henry Seward and Charles Sumner.

"A Representation of the Progress of Intemperance in New-England 1841," lithograph by J.H. Knowlton, published by J.H. Varney (Lowell, Massachusetts, 1841). Courtesy of the Political Cartoon Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Neither Savage, nor savage violence, had the last word when it came to Sumner or slavery. After a four-year absence after his beating, Sumner returned to Congress in the summer of 1860. Even as the nation crumbled, he held fast to his earlier position. "I oppose the essential Barbarism of Slavery," he told his colleagues in June 1860, "whether high or low, as Satan is still Satan." By the time of the Civil War, to hear "Satan" uttered in rapid succession in Congress was nothing new. The nation's political halls had become a throne room for the king of chaos.

Two years earlier in 1858, the kingdom of Satan had prevailed over the kingdom of Heaven, or at least that was how Abraham Smith would have interpreted Stephen A. Douglas's senatorial victory over Abraham Lincoln. Now in 1860, Lincoln defeated not only Douglas, but also two others who vied for the nation's top office. In early March 1861, Lincoln became president and in his inaugural address argued that the "better angels of our nature" could save the nation. A few weeks later, but before the Civil War unleashed a different set of angels within the nation, composer Jupiter Z. Hesser wrote to Lincoln with conditional exultation. "Victory is ours, if we show satan the allmighty sword of Justice." In political defeat and now victory, Lincoln was no stranger to statements about Satan. For his four years as president, the sword most certainly came. One hundred and fifty years after he was cut down, the nation still waits for almighty justice to banish from its midst the kingdom of Satan.

Further reading

W. Scott Poole, *Satan in America: The Devil We Know* (Berkeley, Calif., 2009); Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil* (New York, 1995); Edward J. Blum, "'The First Secessionist Was Satan': Secession and the Politics of Evil in Civil War America," *Civil War History* (September 2014): 234-269; Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, Conn., 1993); Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt* (Chicago, 2012).

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