

ANTISLAVERY AS PRAGMATIC POLITICS: THE FORMATION OF THE
REPUBLICAN PARTY IN THE WESTERN RESERVE, 1854 - 1856

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ABSTRACT

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During 1854, the introduction of the Douglas Bill and, subsequently, the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act shattered the brief interlude of sectional peace that had prevailed since the celebrated Compromise of 1850. Scholars have explored in voluminous detail the profound changes in national politics that resulted from the enactment of this legislation. Unfortunately, few historians have examined the consequences of the renewal of the slavery issue within local northern communities. The Western Reserve represents a classic example of such oversight. Relying exclusively upon the region's reputation for radicalism and abolitionism, commentators have attempted to explain the Reserve's adverse reaction to the Nebraska affair by citing the inhabitants' hatred for slavery and their determination to prevent its expansion into the western territories. Without question, this superficial analysis is partially accurate, for the majority of Reserve citizens viewed the slave society of the South as an aggressive and expansive foe. At the same time, by failing to look beyond these stereotypes, analysts have ignored a vital dimension of mid-nineteenth century Reserve political protest.

Indisputably, the Western Reserve served as a vanguard for the political antislavery movement between 1854 and 1856. The region's

penchant for radicalism resulted not only from the moral sentiments of the citizenry but also from a fierce power struggle that had thrown the usually stable Reserve political system into a state of crisis by the first weeks of 1854. Since the 1820's, the political power in north-eastern Ohio had been concentrated in the hands of a small, homogeneous group of politicians and editors who were affiliated initially with the National Republicans and, later, with the Whigs. During the tumultuous presidential campaign of 1848, a disgruntled faction of Whigs bolted and formed the Reserve's Free Soil Party. Six years of division weakened both groups, and, in 1853, the Democratic Party, previously an impotent organization within the Reserve, captured a plurality of the vote in seven of the twelve counties. By the beginning of 1854, Reserve Free Soil and Whig politicians at last recognized their precarious position and vowed to suppress their new rival.

The renewal of the sectional controversy provided the old Reserve elite with the ideal mechanism with which they could restore their eroded power. Sharing with their constituents a firm belief in the treacherous intentions of Southerners, the Reserve's Free Soil and Whig officials were also acutely aware of the potential value of the Nebraska question as a political issue. Consequently, leaders from both parties engineered much of the anti-Nebraska protest within the Western Reserve. Attributing to the Democratic Pierce Administration full responsibility for the Douglas measure, Whig and Free Soil politicians, with the assistance of their allied newspaper editors, deftly converted the anger that Reserve inhabitants harbored for this Bill into hostility toward the local Democratic forces. Initially, leaders in both camps, although they frequently cooperated during the protest, retained independent organizations. However, after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Free Soil and Whig

decision-makers became convinced that the slaveholders and their Democratic allies could be halted only by a unified party. Abandoning their old affiliations, partisans established chapters of a new "Republican" Party in most communities within the Reserve.

The Republican Party in northeastern Ohio began as a heterogeneous coalition of dissidents who were united only in their hostility to the extension of slavery. Anxious to placate all elements within their party, Reserve Republican officials constructed the 1855 and 1856 campaigns around antislavery, the only principle that all factions within their constituency held in common. This blend of radical antislavery and political expediency proved to be a profitable combination for the Reserve's old political elite. The power of this group within state party circles was substantially enhanced in 1855 when the antislavery opportunist, Salmon Chase, backed by widespread support within the Reserve, was elected Ohio's first Republican governor. In 1856, the stature of the region's party leaders within the national Republican hierarchy increased after Western Reserve had supplied presidential candidate John C. Fremont with his margin of victory in Ohio.

The influence of Reserve Republicans steadily declined between 1856 and the Civil War as a new breed of moderate politicians rose to positions of prominence in the national party. Nevertheless, the old Reserve political elite had, within the brief span of two years, achieved their primary goals. By 1856, the new party had routed their Democratic adversaries within all Reserve counties, and the energetic Republican politicians had constructed the stable local organizations that enabled them to retain political preeminence in northeastern Ohio for many decades.

PREFACE

Prior to the Civil War, astute observers from all sections of the United States were aware of the scope and the intensity of antislavery sentiment in Ohio's Western Reserve. Southern politicians and editors cursed the inhabitants and classified them as abolitionists. Prominent figures in northern antislavery circles often toured the Reserve and praised the transplanted Yankees for their righteous convictions and their firm dedication to the cause of human freedom. Modern historians have tended to accept without scrutiny the contemporary characterizations of the Western Reserve as a bastion of radical antislavery agitation. Remarkably, the area has been the subject of little serious research. In particular, political developments within the Reserve during the decade before the War have not been adequately chronicled.

This thesis will attempt, in part, to remedy this deficiency. Primary attention will be given to the most important activity within the Reserve; the formation of the Republican Party between 1854 and 1856. Born amidst the turmoil of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the new party served as the vehicle through which the disgruntled opponents of the Pierce Administration, regardless of the depth of their commitment to the principle of antislavery, converted their discontent into concrete political action. During the course of this work, the dominant characteristics of the infant Republican Party in northeastern Ohio will be identified, and the degree to which Reserve Republicans conformed to the ubiquitous stereotype of "radical" will be determined.

Since the Western Reserve encompassed an extensive territory that included twelve counties and five congressional districts, an accurate analysis of party development might appear to be a formidable task.

Actually, the nature of politics within the Reserve greatly facilitated research. The political realm, like the general society, was highly structured and orderly. Government was the special province of a class that consisted almost exclusively of lawyers and editors. Farmers, though comprising the bulk of the Reserve's population, seldom sought office and generally remained content to grant or to withhold support for the local "professional" politician. Thus, crucial decisions were most often made by the elite at the top of the political hierarchy. In this thesis, extensive coverage will be allotted to the leaders who forged the programs and implemented the policies of the new party.

Although all regions within the Reserve will be analyzed in this work, special emphasis will be placed upon the eastern counties. Home of the more prestigious newspapers and legendary figures such as Joshua Giddings and Benjamin Wade, these areas, and specifically Ashtabula and Cuyahoga counties, were the battlegrounds upon which most of the power struggles within the fledgling party took place. In addition, Mahoning County will receive more emphasis than its size and its political significance might perhaps justify. Unlike many Reserve counties, Mahoning was characterized by an almost even distribution of Republican and Democratic adherents. A product of the close and bitter partisan strife, the party in this county differed significantly from those in the more homogeneous Republican subdivisions to the north and west.

With several important exceptions, Reserve politicians failed to leave behind collections of correspondence, but virtually all of the most prominent Whig, Free Soil, Democratic, and Republican newspapers remain extant. Valuable depositories for all aspects of Reserve life during the 1850's, these journals served as the major sources for the research represented in this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT	ii
PREFACE	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
CHAPTER	
I. POLITICS AND ANTISLAVERY IN OHIO'S WESTERN RESERVE, 1795 - 1853	1
II. NEBRASKA POLITICS, ROOTS OF A NEW PARTY, JANUARY - MAY, 1854	14
III. GENESIS: THE MOVEMENT TOWARD FUSION, JUNE - OCTOBER, 1854 .	34
IV. NATIVISM, ANTISLAVERY, AND THE RESERVE REPUBLICANS, 1855 . .	55
V. THE ATTAINMENT OF MATURITY: RESERVE REPUBLICANS AND PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS, 1856	75
VI. RADICALISM, POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY, AND THE RESERVE REPUBLICAN PARTY	90
APPENDIX A. THE WESTERN RESERVE	97
APPENDIX B. RESERVE FOREIGN BORN AND FREE BLACKS	98
APPENDIX C. 1853 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN THE WESTERN RESERVE . .	99
APPENDIX D. WESTERN RESERVE CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS IN 1854	100
APPENDIX E. BALLOTING FOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE, TWENTIETH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT CONVENTION	101
APPENDIX F. 1854 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION RESULTS	102
APPENDIX G. 1855 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION RESULTS	103
APPENDIX H. 1856 CONGRESSIONAL AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS .	104
NOTE ON SOURCES	105
BIBLIOGRAPHY	107

CHAPTER I

POLITICS AND ANTISLAVERY IN OHIO'S WESTERN
RESERVE, 1795 - 1853

The densely populated and heavily industrialized centers that today occupy much of the land within the Western Reserve bear only a slight resemblance to the predominately agricultural communities whose sons played such decisive roles in pre-Civil War politics. The origins of the Western Reserve can be traced to 1795 when the state of Connecticut sold approximately three million acres of its western lands to thirty five speculators incorporated as the Connecticut Land Company.¹ This enormous tract extended from Pennsylvania to a line 120 miles west of the border and from the 41^o latitude to the shore of Lake Erie.² Several groups of settlers accompanied the first parties of surveyors into the area during the late 1790's, but few permanent communities were established prior to the War of 1812. By the summer of 1817, thousands of New Englanders, suffering from the effects of the economic depression that prevailed in the East, flocked into the Reserve.³

¹David Lindsey, Ohio's Western Reserve, The Story of Its Place Names (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1955), p. 3.

²See Appendix A.

³Harlan H. Hatcher, The Western Reserve: The Story of New Connecticut in Ohio (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1966), p. 72.

Through the 1840's, the area enjoyed a steady increase in population. By 1850, the exodus from the northeastern states had ceased, and the majority of Reserve settlements had attained levels of population that would persist until the Civil War.

When compared to its counterparts in other portions of the Old Northwest, the settlement pattern of the Western Reserve was quite atypical. By the time of the apex of the mass migrations in the second decade of the nineteenth century, speculators, having long since acquired rights to the land from the original company, had surveyed the entire region and prepared all habitable land for immediate sale.⁴ As a result, all portions of the Reserve were settled almost simultaneously. By 1850, the interior counties, as well as those adjacent to the Pennsylvania border and to Lake Erie, had each attained between twenty and thirty thousand inhabitants.

During this formative stage, the Western Reserve remained predominantly rural. Moderate urban concentrations did spring up at Cleveland and, to a lesser extent, at Sandusky as a result of employment opportunities generated by railroads, canals, and harbors. Nevertheless, throughout the pre-War era, most citizens dwelt on isolated homesteads or in compact villages that were deliberately patterned after New England antecedents.

The population of the Western Reserve was remarkably homogeneous. The vast majority of the inhabitants were New Englanders who either had migrated directly from their native habitat or had moved on to northeastern Ohio after initial stops in New York and northern

⁴Ibid., p. 62.

Pennsylvania.⁵ These immigrants incorporated their values, religion, architecture, and political orientation into their new surroundings. Though not exactly a reproduction of Connecticut society, the Western Reserve retained a distinct Yankee flavor unparalleled by any other region of the American West.

Cultural uniformity within the Reserve was greatly facilitated by the absence of competing groups. Early in the nineteenth century, Ohio experienced heavy migration from Virginia, Kentucky, and other slave states. With few exceptions, these newcomers ignored the northeastern quadrant and settled within the hilly terrain of southern Ohio.⁶ Non-Yankee Pennsylvanians, including a large number of Germans, also arrived in Ohio during this era, but they concentrated their settlements in the east-central portion of the state, especially in Columbiana, Stark, Jefferson, and Carroll counties, all just south of the Reserve.⁷ The foreign-born remained a distinct minority within the Reserve. By 1850, they accounted for more than 10% of the population only in the partially industrialized counties of Cuyahoga, Lorain, and Erie.⁸ For the most part, the villages of the Reserve were immune from the bitter nativist upheavals that plagued Cincinnati and several other portions of the state throughout the 1840's and the 1850's.

⁵William C. Cochran, The Western Reserve and the Fugitive Slave Law: A Prelude to the Civil War (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1920), pp. 54 - 78.

⁶Ibid., p. 54.

⁷Ibid.

⁸See Appendix B.

Despite the widespread contemporary belief that the Western Reserve was a haven for fugitive slaves, an infinitesimal number of free blacks resided within the region in 1850. Employment for blacks on railroads and on the docks was available on a limited basis in several urban centers, but in no county did the black population exceed 1%. Most counties contained less than 100 blacks. Compared to other sections of the state, overt racial hostility and fears of amalgamation were not rampant in the Reserve.

The homogeneity of the population and the broad consensus regarding values facilitated the development of a stable, orderly, and prosperous society. Agriculture served as the economic foundation of practically every community. The majority of the inhabitants were sturdy yeoman farmers. A sufficient number of artisans, mechanics, and professional men resided in the nearby villages. Except for foreign immigrants drawn to Cleveland for employment in fledgling industries, the Reserve lacked what is commonly defined as a working class.

Although subject to the economic fluctuations that were prominent features of nineteenth century America, the Western Reserve generally remained one of the more prosperous regions of Ohio.⁹ The Yankee stress upon the value of work, combined with the lack of class conflict, enabled the economic system of northeastern Ohio to function smoothly. In addition, the Reserve inhabitants, retaining the New England emphasis upon education, were among the more literate groups of pioneers

⁹Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 49.

in the West.¹⁰ Over a span of only three decades, the area had grown into a source of envy for its less endowed neighbors.

By the eve of the Civil War, the Western Reserve had become well known throughout the nation. Widespread notoriety was not the result of the economic or social attributes of the region but rather of its association in the public mind with the radical antislavery movement. Slavery had captured the attention of Reserve Yankees during the era of the Great Revival. The brand of the Congregationalist religion practiced by most inhabitants mandated that salvation could best be attained through vocal and relentless assault upon fortresses of evil.¹¹ Removed from everyday life and readily perceived as a blot on Christianity, American slavery became an excellent target for religious crusades.¹² During the 1830's, itinerant preachers, many advocates of abolitionism, reinforced the concept that slavery was immoral during their extensive travels throughout the Western Reserve. By 1840, many men occupying positions of leadership, including politicians such as Joshua Giddings and Benjamin Wade, opposed slavery on religious grounds and accepted the contention that the federal government was in the clutches of slaveholding conspirators who were determined to expand their institution.¹³

During the three decades prior to 1860, the Western Reserve's reputation as a hotbed of abolitionism increased. In 1834, the

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹James B. Stewart, Joshua R. Giddings and the Tactics of Radical Politics (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1970), pp. 25 - 27.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Louis Filler, The Crusade Against Slavery, 1830 - 1860 (New York: Harper Company, 1960), p. 103.

rebellious faction of antislavery zealots from the Lane Seminary in Cincinnati relocated at Oberlin College in Lorain County. To the chagrin of many Northerners, the school admitted free blacks on an equal status with white students. During the 1840's, Reserve politicians consistently identified efforts at national expansion as plots of the "slave power", and most citizens, sharing their leaders analyses of the intentions of Southerners, opposed the acquisition of the territory acquired during the Mexican War.

All other factors aside, the reaction of the Western Reserve to the fugitive slave ordinances accounted for the area's image as a citadel for antislavery agitation. The region's Democratic newspapers frequently bemoaned the impropriety of such legislation while Whig and Free Soil journals ridiculed the acts and openly advocated defiance and obstruction. The uniformity of opposition to these measures was so intense that even Benjamin Wade, a cautious conservative on most social issues, shocked his colleagues during a speech in the United States Senate by denouncing the fugitive laws and by vowing, if the opportunity arose, to personally violate them.¹⁴

When subjected to a closer examination, the commitment of the Western Reserve to radical antislavery was not as solid as contemporaries believed. During the 1840's and the 1850's, few fugitives were reclaimed within the Reserve. The region's reputation for radicalism might well have persuaded some owners to abandon the hunt for runaways who had successfully reached northern Ohio. More likely, the cost of financing expeditions so far to the north convinced both masters and

¹⁴Congressional Globe, Appendix, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, March 3, 1854, p. 309.

federal agents to restrict their slave catching to the more accessible and less hostile southern parts of the state. The miniscule black population of the Reserve also indicates that many of those slaves fortunate enough to enter the area were quickly passed on into Canada. The citizens of the Reserve, although they vociferously defended the rights of blacks in the abstract, did not want them for neighbors. Most inhabitants supported voluntary colonization schemes and other plans that were devised to prevent escaped or manumitted slaves from migrating into the North.¹⁵ Regardless of the actual strength of antislavery sentiment in northeastern Ohio, on the eve of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the area was widely perceived as an abolitionist stronghold.

Just as the region had acquired a national reputation for its hostility to slavery, so too was the Western Reserve recognized as the mortal enemy of the Democratic Party. In no other area outside of New England had voters so consistently rebuked the party of Jackson. In the elections of 1824 and 1828, John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay captured heavy majorities throughout the Reserve. Undoubtedly, the region's farmers perceived the "American System" of Clay, with its stress upon improvements in railroads, harbors, and canals, to be an attractive alternative to the policies advocated by the Democrats.¹⁶ Also, the conservative yeomen found National Republican fiscal and banking programs to be much more palatable than those of the Jacksonians. When the Whigs replaced the National Republicans as the dominant anti-Jacksonian force during the mid-1830's, the inhabitants of northeastern Ohio readily

¹⁵Filler, Crusade Against Slavery, pp. 224 - 225.

¹⁶Stewart, Joshua Giddings, p. 10.

transferred their allegiance to the new party. Within a few years, the Western Reserve became one of the country's more stable and dependable Whig regions.¹⁷

For over twenty years, Whiggery and antislavery coexisted in an awkward alliance within the Reserve. During the early 1840's, the Liberty Party became established within the region, but it initially offered only a token challenge to Whig hegemony.¹⁸ During the Mexican War, the weak Liberty Party organizations were substantially enhanced by the addition of a disgruntled faction of intensely antislavery Whigs who had bolted from their parent organization.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the majority of Reserve Whigs remained within the party and crushed their new adversaries in congressional elections.²⁰ Adamant in their support of Whig economic policy and confident that their party would select a northern candidate who would overcome the Democracy in 1848, Reserve partisans during the mid-1840's as yet saw no irreconcilable contradiction between their antislavery sentiment and their political connection.

An important turning point in the political history of north-eastern Ohio occurred during the presidential campaign of 1848. Desperate for victory, the national Whigs chose as their nominee the popular war hero, Zachery Taylor. The selection of a slaveholder proved

¹⁷Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁸Theodore Clarke Smith, The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1897), p. 42.

¹⁹Stewart, Joshua Giddings, p. 84.

²⁰Ibid., p. 97.

to be totally unacceptable to antislavery elements throughout the North. In the Western Reserve, the Taylor nomination prompted a serious split within Whig ranks. A sizeable faction, headed by prominent legislator Joshua Giddings, aligned with the Liberty Party and supported, albeit with little enthusiasm, the national Free Soil candidate, Martin Van Buren.²¹ A significant portion of Whigs, including Judge Benjamin Wade, grudgingly remained loyal to Taylor.²² This rift in the Whig ranks proved to be permanent. The impact of the schism became readily apparent in 1852 when Reserve Free Soil support for John P. Hale doomed Winfield Scott's bid in Ohio.

By 1854, the Reserve's once proud Whig machine, like so many of its counterparts throughout the North, lay shattered. Deprived of their reliable political organization, old partisans entered one of two mutually hostile camps. By the early 1850's, the Free Soilers were clearly the more healthy remnant of the old Reserve Whig Party. Since 1848, the faction had made steady strides on all levels of government. Until the resounding Democratic state victory of 1853, the Reserve Free Soilers held the balance of power in the Ohio legislature.²³ In 1854, two out of the four Free Soilers in the national House of Representatives came from districts within the Reserve.

²¹Ibid., p. 156.

²²Hans Louis Trefousse, Benjamin Franklin Wade, Radical Republican from Ohio (New York: Twayne Publishing Company, 1963), p. 57.

²³Ibid., p. 64; Eugene H. Roseboom, The Civil War Era, 1850 - 1873, in Carl Wittke, ed., The History of the State of Ohio, vol. IV (Columbus: The Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society, 1944), p. 261. By 1853, groups previously identified by the label "Free Soil" were now known by the designation "Free Democrat" or "Independent Democrat" in many

The eminent head of the region's Free Soilers was the irrepressible Joshua R. Giddings. The oldest member of Congress, Giddings had established a national reputation in the House of Representatives as champion of human rights and as a proponent of antislavery agitation. Heir to the tradition of John Quincy Adams, the old veteran was destined to play a leading role in the organization of the northern resistance to the South.

The second political faction within the Reserve retained at least nominal ties to the national Whig Party. In comparison with the Free Soilers, their fortunes had slipped drastically since 1848. In particular, the old line Whigs suffered from Scott's poor showing in the 1852 election and from Free Soiler Samuel Lewis' victory in five Reserve counties during the 1853 gubernatorial contest.²⁴ Ambitious politicians sensing that this faction was on the verge of extinction, began to look upon the region's Free Soil Party as the best vehicle for both personal advancement and the establishment of resistance to the Democrats.²⁵

One of the few Reserve politicians who retained ties with the national Whigs until 1854 was Benjamin Wade. A renowned lawyer and highly respected judge, Wade provided the region's old line Whigs with solid leadership. An outspoken critic of alliance between the national government and the "slave power", Wade nevertheless remained within the

sections of the North. The Western Reserve was a notable exception to this trend. Few Free Soilers in this region would accept any title that contained the word "Democrat" within it. As a result, the Free Soil Party retained its original name in most portions of northeastern Ohio. For the sake of clarity and convenience, the term "Free Soiler" will hereafter be uniformly applied to all groups, regardless of contemporary nomenclature.

²⁴Frederick J. Blue, The Free Soilers: Third Party Politics, 1848 - 1854 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 272.

²⁵Ibid.

framework of his party where he was in a favorable position to promote economic measures that he cherished as deeply as antislavery agitation.

The distinction between the two Reserve factions was actually one of degree rather than of substance. Unlike the development of the movement elsewhere, most of the Reserve's Free Soilers were ex-Whigs. The 1853 Free Soil platform in Ohio mentioned free trade and other somewhat radical measures, but few Reserve Free Soilers were emotionally committed to issues other than those that related to slavery.²⁶ Since old line Whigs opposed the extension of slavery, the underlying principles of both groups were not vastly different. In the early months of 1854, Free Soilers and old line Whigs still retained separate identities and competed for the spoils of office, yet no irreconcilable obstacles blocked their paths toward a union.

From 1848 to 1854, relations between the two groups were inconsistent. In 1851, the Free Soil element from the Reserve, exercising their power in the Ohio legislature, acquiesced to the nomination of Benjamin Wade as a compromise candidate for the United States Senate.²⁷ This type of cooperation between the camps was unusual, for Reserve Free Soilers and Whigs continued to run separate slates of candidates in many elections. Several of the most bitter contests were waged in the 1848 and 1852 congressional campaigns between the Free Soiler Giddings and challengers supported by the political organs of

²⁶ Roseboom, The Civil War Era, p. 275.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 261.

Benjamin Wade.²⁸ The rivalry between Giddings and Wade paralleled, in a sense, the split between Reserve Whigs and Free Soilers. The former law partners, both residents of the Ashtabula County town of Jefferson, were in substantial agreement upon the fundamental issues that confronted the North. The rift between them emanated from a personal feud and from differences in style and in emphasis. Giddings, obsessed by moral convictions and by a strong sense of duty, served as a driving force behind the political antislavery movement in Washington. The more practical Wade combined firm opposition to the "slave power" with concern for a wide variety of other issues. Like the two political parties that they represented, Giddings and Wade were separated by differences that were largely superficial.

In January, 1854, the two factions once again prepared to vie for the political supremacy of the Western Reserve. The Democratic sweep in 1853 had, for the first time in several decades, given indications that that party, buttressed by national and state patronage, could at last make significant inroads into this hostile region. Actually, the Democratic task was still quite formidable. Except for Cleveland and the extreme western and southern counties, Free Soilers and old line Whigs outnumbered Democrats by substantial majorities. Both camps recognized that their worst political enemy was not the Democratic Party but rather their continued division. Nonetheless, during the first days of the new year, neither faction appeared ready to enter into coalition with its rival.

²⁸Ibid., p. 271; Stewart, Joshua Giddings, pp. 58 - 214.

As Reserve politicians struggled to resolve this dilemma, the federal government began to consider the disposition of the extensive territory of Nebraska. In the course of this process, the bill proposed by Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas attained near unanimous approval in the South and the formal endorsement of the Democratic Administration. Seen by antislavery elements as a plot to extend slavery into the territories under the guise of the principle of popular sovereignty, it precipitated one of the largest and most intense reactions in national history. In the Western Reserve, the Douglas Bill did much more than arouse the antislavery sentiment of the population. The measure served as the catalyst that led to the rebirth of the old political coalition and to the formation of a successful party that, despite enormous shifts in policy and philosophy, has endured into the modern era.

Chapter II

NEBRASKA POLITICS, ROOTS OF A NEW PARTY,

JANUARY - May, 1854

"This Western Reserve has a world-wide reputation for being addicted to isms and one ideas. It has obtained this reputation from the character of its leading men who have figured in its politics, such as Giddings, Wade, Vaughn, and Briggs. Whenever a new measure is proposed in Congress or Conventions, the public can always 'look to the Reserve' for either commendation or condemnation meetings, and Cleveland to furnish the detonating powder for these too often premature explosions."

Cleveland Plain Dealer, February 3, 1854

In January, 1854, many Democrats believed that their party was on the threshold of an era of great prosperity. Democratic majorities were substantial in both houses of the national legislature. During his tenure as chief executive, Franklin Pierce had pursued a cautious domestic policy that helped to foster cooperation between the northern and southern branches of his party. Most importantly, many Democrats from every section had rallied to the support of the Compromise of 1850. So often a divisive force in the past, the slavery question did not now loom as an obstacle to party unity.

In Ohio, Democratic fortunes had increased dramatically as a result of the 1852 and 1853 elections. By 1854, over 70% of the members of the Ohio General Assembly were adherents of the party of Jackson.²⁹

²⁹Plain Dealer (Cleveland), January 5, 1854, p. 2.

In addition, Ohioans had in 1853 chosen as their governor the Democrat William Medill over Free Soiler Samuel Lewis and the hapless Whig candidate Nelson Barrere.³⁰ Effective party organization and the ready availability of liberal amounts of federal patronage promised the Democrats a long and profitable reign within the state.

The Western Reserve was also affected by the Democratic surge. In 1852, voters in three of the five congressional districts within the Reserve elected Democratic representatives. Medill, capitalizing upon the presence of two other candidates, carried the region by little over 1,000 votes and captured a plurality in seven of the twelve Reserve counties.³¹ The Democratic gains were directly related to the rift between Free Soilers and old line Whigs. Only in Portage County did Medill poll more than the combined total of the Lewis-Barrere vote. Nevertheless, Democratic inroads into the region, coupled with the unabated division of the opponents, gave strong indications that the Reserve's traditional hostility toward Democracy was drawing to an abrupt conclusion.

In the course of the national experience, several parties, although in possession of enormous advantages, have suffered dramatic setbacks. No other political misfortune can rival the collapse of the Democratic Party throughout the North during 1854. Beginning with no serious liabilities, in less than one year, northern Democrats endured a series of staggering electoral defeats at the hands of a remarkable

³⁰Roseboom, The Civil War Era, p. 276.

³¹National Era (Washington), November 3, 1853, p. 174; See also Appendix C.

and heterogeneous coalition.³² Long the country's nemesis, slavery precipitated this drastic decline in Democratic power. Exhausted by years of sectional strife, many Americans, especially those who resided within the North, sincerely believed that the Compromise of 1850 had eliminated the peculiar institution as a viable issue. The Douglas Bill shattered the brief interlude of sectional peace. In theory, this measure enabled the inhabitants of Nebraska and Kansas to determine whether their territories would enter the union as free or slave states. Fearful that the Administration would abuse the concept of popular sovereignty, antislavery forces looked upon this Bill as a well-conceived plot that would extend slavery beyond the boundaries agreed upon during previous compromises. By bringing the debate over the extension of slavery back into the halls of Congress, the proponents of the measure helped to inaugurate a new era of sectional controversy.

Reaction to Douglas Bill throughout the North was prompt and extensive. Individuals and groups with little else in common expressed their mutual dissatisfaction by attending the protest meetings that were held in many northern cities, villages, and hamlets during the first months of 1854. Party men of both Free Soil and Whig persuasion, hoping to convert the widespread discontent into political gain, were in the forefront of the resistance. Many antislavery advocates, interpreting

³²David M. Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848 - 1861 (New York: Harper and Row Company, 1976), p. 175; In the 33rd Congress (1853 - 1855), Democrats controlled 162 seats in the House of Representatives, 91 of these from non-slaveholding states. In the 34th Congress (1855 - 1857), Democrats held only 86 total seats. 66 out of the 91 free state seats were lost in the 1854 election.

the measure to be evidence of another southern plot, added their voices to the protest. Nativists, eager to help defeat the proposal of the Democratic "foreign" Party, participated in the meetings. Some northern Democrats, angered by the Pierce Administration's apparent ties to the South, disavowed the Bill. Sentiment against the measure grew constantly throughout the spring, and, by the time that the Douglas Bill passed through the House of Representatives as the Kansas-Nebraska Act on May 22, opposition to this legislation was rampant in many regions of the North and the Midwest.³³

In Ohio, the Douglas Bill came as an unwelcome gift to the Democratic party, a group that was already in the throes of a mild controversy. During the first days of January, 1854, the Ohio State Democratic convention met at Columbus and, by a vote of 197 to 27, endorsed the national party platform first developed at the Baltimore convention in 1852.³⁴ With Ohio now safely under Democratic control, party leaders undoubtedly felt that the amount of federal patronage allotted to them would depend upon the establishment of a close and cordial relationship with the Pierce Administration. Sure that the lucrative rewards of membership in a victorious party would keep Ohio's antislavery Democrats in the ranks, state officials gambled that the few distinctly proslavery principles in the Baltimore platform, including acceptance of the fugitive slave laws and a pledge to suppress abolitionist agitation, would not produce an excessive amount of resentment.³⁵

³³Roseboom, The Civil War Era, pp. 280 - 292.

³⁴Ibid., p. 278; Forest City Democrat (Cleveland), January 9, 1854, p. 2.

³⁵National Era, January 19, 1854, p. 10.

As Democrats across the state grappled with the propriety of their convention's actions, word of the Douglas Bill reached Ohio. Whether weakened by internal division or incapable of offering enthusiastic support for a basically proslavery measure, Ohio's Democrats never mobilized into an organization capable of dealing with the Bill's myriad critics. Handicapped by substantial defections and by the intensity of the opposition, Ohio Democrats who remained loyal to the national administration were kept on the defensive throughout 1854. Despite being in possession of key state offices, the party was unable to stem the tide of discontent that swept over Ohio as a result of the Kansas-Nebraska legislation.³⁶

Destined to become one of the strongholds of Anti-Nebraska agitation, the Western Reserve was initially quite lethargic in its response to the Douglas Bill. Early in January, editors, particularly those in the Free Soil camp, interpreted the machinations of Douglas and the Democrats as a plot to spread slavery into lands where it was legally prohibited by the Missouri Compromise.³⁷ Surprised that the measure had not yet aroused the resentment of the North, these journalists called upon the Reserve to engage in protests that would set a proper example for the rest of the free states.³⁸ Despite this encouragement, protest meetings did not proliferate in Reserve communities until the final week of January. The beginning of massive popular reaction to the

³⁶Roseboom, The Civil War Era, pp. 277 - 278.

³⁷Forest City Democrat, January 13, 1854, p. 2; Mahoning Free Democrat (Youngstown), January 18, 1854, p. 2.

³⁸Forest City Democrat, January 25, 1854, p. 2; Mahoning Free Democrat, February 1, 1854, p. 2.

Douglas Bill coincided with the famous "Appeal of Independent Democrats". Issued from Washington on January 14, this document was written by Ohio Senator Salmon P. Chase and signed by the six Free Soil members of the House, including Reserve Representatives Joshua Giddings and Edward Wade.³⁹ Senator Benjamin Wade subsequently endorsed its contents. In the "Appeal", the authors denied the national character of slavery, reaffirmed what they considered to be the sacred pledges contained in the Missouri Compromise, and vowed to safeguard the West for northern labor.⁴⁰ Within a short time, this bold statement became the manifesto for the anti-extension mass movement that was slowly evolving in many communities throughout the North and the West.

Jolted by the Appeal and by reports sent from Washington in which the details of Douglas' legislation were outlined, the inhabitants of the Reserve continued to demonstrate against the measure throughout the winter and the spring of 1854. Petitions had for decades been the traditional protest mechanism within northeastern Ohio. Although a few communities now engaged in this practice, the public meeting became the primary outlet through which residents expressed their discontent over Pierce, Douglas, and Nebraska. Occasionally, hamlets such as Lowellville (Mahoning County) and Bloomingville (Erie County) hosted small gatherings for dissenters from the immediate vicinity.⁴¹ More often,

³⁹Blue, The Free Soilers, p. 280.

⁴⁰Congressional Globe, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, January 30, 1854, pp. 280 - 281.

⁴¹Mahoning Free Democrat, February 15, 1854, p. 2; National Era March 2, 1854, p. 35.

mass rallies, featuring local dignitaries or prominent guest speakers, were held at Jefferson, Canfield, Warren, Ravenna, Cleveland, and at other county seats.⁴²

In most cases, meetings were advertised as nonpartisan events open to any citizen who wished to express his disgust with the southern domination of the national government. The organizers, aware that Reserve inhabitants were especially sensitive to the slavery question, patterned their protest meetings along the lines of previously successful antislavery rallies. For this reason, anti-Nebraska gatherings were frequently held in churches, often in those in which the congregations were most vociferously opposed to slavery.⁴³ Speakers stressed the popular themes of morality and duty and portrayed those who would extend slavery past its present borders as foes of Christianity. Anxious to attract as many followers as possible, the coordinators of these events purposely excluded all reference to Reserve political parties.

In the traditional interpretations, the northern resistance to the Douglas Bill has usually been portrayed as a spontaneous, grass roots movement, but the protest generated within the Western Reserve did not conform to this popular stereotype. Anti-Nebraska demonstrations were organized and executed by the newspaper editors and by the politicians. National celebrities and lower echelon political figures propagandized against the Douglas Bill in letters to local and regional

⁴²Mahoning Free Democrat, February 22, 1854, p. 2, March 8, 1854, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel (Jefferson), February 2, 1854, p. 4.

⁴³Mahoning Free Democrat, February 8, 1854, p. 3.

papers. Editors of Free Soil and Whig journals advertised the protest meetings, and many chose to issue highly emotional editorials in which they urged the inhabitants to demonstrate their displeasure with the Democratic proposal. The special committees which arranged and conducted the actual meetings did not consist of ordinary citizens but rather of party functionaries who had always been active in public affairs. Like so many other events within the Reserve, the demonstrations were closely controlled by the political elite.

Although resistance to the Douglas Bill was allegedly nonpartisan, the majority of those who engaged in public protest were members of the Free Soil and Whig parties. By March, virtually all Reserve Free Soil and Whig journals had expressed opposition to the measure.⁴⁴ In general, Free Soilers, supported by newspapers such as the Cleveland Forest City Democrat and the Jefferson Ashtabula Sentinel, were more adamant in their denunciations than were the more cautious Whigs. Undoubtedly, both groups were already beginning to recognize that the Douglas Bill held enormous potential as a campaign weapon.

The ranks of the protesters were enhanced by the addition of a portion of the Reserve Democratic forces. Following the lead of Joseph Cable, the distinguished editor of the Sandusky Daily Mirror, some Democratic leaders questioned the propriety of the measure and noted the excessive influence of the South within the Pierce Administration.⁴⁵ In several counties, including Mahoning, Portage, and others in which the Democratic Party was relatively strong, local units

⁴⁴ Ashtabula Sentinel, March 2, 1854, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Ibid., February 23, 1854, p. 3; Mahoning Free Democrat, February 1, 1854, p. 2.

convened and remonstrated against the Douglas Bill⁴⁶. With one exception, no Democratic journal endorsed the measure without qualification. Only the prestigious Cleveland Plain Dealer, whose editor had acquired the patronage position of postmaster, offered enthusiastic support for Senator Douglas' proposal.⁴⁷

The anti-Nebraska forces also received assistance from the small German population of the Reserve. Like their counterparts in Pennsylvania and in southern Ohio, the Reserve Germans broke with the Democratic Party early in the spring.⁴⁸ The immigrants' distaste for slavery and their fear that Homestead legislation might be jeopardized by the spread of that institution accounted for their involvement in anti-Nebraska agitation.⁴⁹

Reserve dissidents participated in the state anti-Nebraska convention held at Columbus in late March. Except for reaffirming opposition to the Douglas Bill and to the extension of slavery, this gathering enacted no controversial resolutions.⁵⁰ Although the moderate tenor of the proceedings undoubtedly dismayed the liberal Reserve contingent, even the most radical Reserve Free Soil papers were satisfied

⁴⁶Ashtabula Sentinel, March 9, 1854, p. 5; Mahoning Free Democrat, February 22, 1854, p. 3, March 1, 1854, p. 2.

⁴⁷Plain Dealer, May 19, 1854, p. 2.

⁴⁸Forest City Democrat, February 20, 1854, p. 2, February 23, 1854, p. 3.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Roseboom, The Civil War Era, p. 282; Stewart, Joshua Giddings, p. 228; Joseph P. Smith, ed., History of the Republican Party in Ohio, 2 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1898), I, p. 13.

with the cooperation displayed by the delegates from all political parties.⁵¹ Leaders in the movement recognized that popular reaction to the Douglas Bill had exceeded their expectations in practically every area of the North. While the Congress debated the measure well into the spring, Reserve politicians continued to devise ways through which this popular indignation could best be converted into advantage for their parties.

The anti-Nebraska movement was far from homogeneous in its early stages. Although northern opposition to the extension of slavery was nearly universal, a wide variety of grievances prompted the many distinct factions to engage in active protest. Extant accounts from Western Reserve newspapers and from the speeches delivered at the protest meetings make it possible to identify five separate reasons for popular resistance to the Douglas Bill in northeastern Ohio. First, the majority of Reserve residents feared that the measure would abrogate the Missouri Compromise. In small gatherings and in county conventions, speakers assailed the "slave power" and their northern "doughface" congressional allies for tampering with an agreement that had attained the stature of a sacred covenant in the minds of many Americans.⁵² Old line Whigs and a few Reserve Democrats, unwilling to endorse any policy other than simple non-extension of slavery, based their entire commitment to the anti-Nebraska cause upon the issue of the Compromise violation.⁵³ The region's Free Soilers, never having conceded the right of slavery to exist south of the

⁵¹Ashtabula Sentinel, March 30, 1854, p. 4.

⁵²Forest City Democrat, January 13, 1854, p. 2; Mahoning Free Democrat, January 25, 1854, p. 2, February 28, 1854, p. 2.

⁵³Mahoning Free Democrat, March 1, 1854, p. 3.

36° 30' line, nevertheless demanded that the South honor the previous agreements.⁵⁴ Perceiving the Compromise issue to be the one argument capable of attracting a diverse group of followers, protest organizers constantly referred to it throughout the spring of 1854.

Second, a small group of anti-Nebraska dissidents, in sharp contrast to the non-extensionists, cited the immoral nature of the proposal as the basis for their opposition to the Douglas measure. Drawing their primary strength from the radical Free Soilers of Ashtabula County, this contingent emphasized the inherent evil of slavery and the incompatibility of that institution with the American Declaration of Independence.⁵⁵ Although they were led by the indefatigable Congressman Joshua Giddings, the moralists remained a distinct minority within the anti-Nebraska movement. Many Reserve inhabitants shared this faction's evaluation of slavery, but most protesters, not anxious to become branded as abolitionists, decided to stress the more practical shortcomings of the proposed legislation.

Besides viewing the measure as a violation of the Missouri Compromise and as an immoral act, Reserve citizens also saw in the Douglas Bill many other indications of treachery. Belief in the existence of a southern conspiracy was widespread in the Western Reserve. Interpreting Franklin Pierce's condescension to the whims of the South as favors now paid in return for southern support in the last election, editors and politicians theorized that the national government was controlled by a cabal of southern slave owners and their northern

⁵⁴Ashtabula Sentinel, February 9, 1854, p. 4.

⁵⁵Ibid., February 23, 1854, p. 4; Forest City Democrat, February 21, 1854, p. 2.

Democratic lackies.⁵⁶ In the view of these men, not only did the usurpers intend to extend slavery into the territories, they also were determined to thrust the country into foreign wars in order to acquire Cuba and several other areas of Latin America in which the institution of slavery could be sustained.⁵⁷ Appalled by the schemes of the conspirators and cognizant of a growing sense of northern solidarity, Reserve orators exhorted their followers to recognize the intentions of the Pierce Administration and to reject outright any further compromises with the proslavery forces.⁵⁸

Fourth, Reserve dissidents were also convinced that truly representative governments could never be established under the provisions contained in the Douglas proposal. In February, the Free Soil journals predicted that, should the Bill be passed, slavery would immediately become institutionalized in the western territories through the auspices of the national government.⁵⁹ Charging that fair elections under the supervision of federally appointed territorial governments could never take place, these papers labelled the Administration's version of popular sovereignty as a sham and a farce.⁶⁰ Noting that proponents

⁵⁶Mahoning Free Democrat, January 18, 1854, p. 2, February 22, 1854, p. 2; Forest City Democrat, February 7, 1854, p. 2.

⁵⁷Ashtabula Sentinel, April 6, 1854, p. 4, May 11, 1854, p. 4; Leader (Cleveland), May 9, 1854, p. 2.

⁵⁸Forest City Democrat, February 21, 1854, p. 2; Mahoning Free Democrat, April 19, 1854, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, February 23, 1854, p. 4.

⁵⁹Forest City Democrat, February 21, 1854, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, March 2, 1854, p. 4.

⁶⁰Ibid.

of the measure were determined to push the legislation through before the next round of congressional elections, anti-Nebraska adherents also insinuated that the hypocritical Democrats had blatantly disregarded voter preference, the very principle upon which the Douglas Bill had been based.⁶¹

Finally, Reserve inhabitants rose up to challenge the Douglas Bill because the measure contained a distinct threat to the free labor society of the North. Just as slavery had been an instrumental force in the development of a southern culture, the presence of independent farmers and free workingmen had helped to forge a viable northern ideology.⁶² The expectation that western lands would always be available for free white farmers and laborers was an intricate component of the northern belief system.⁶³ Some of the most intense rhetoric levelled against the Pierce Democrats centered around the theme of free labor.⁶⁴ Keenly aware that Northerners would never dwell in a region in which free labor was degraded and in which large black populations resided, the Reserve politicians recognized the absolute necessity of foiling any scheme that might result in the extension of slavery.

The sole Administration organ in northeastern Ohio, the Cleveland Plain Dealer, defended the Douglas Bill from its inception in January until its final passage in late May. Denying the allegation that the

⁶¹Leader, May 13, 1854, p. 2.

⁶²Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, p. 11.

⁶³Mahoning Free Democrat, March 1, 1854, p. 2, March 8, 1854, p. 2.

⁶⁴Forest City Democrat, January 25, 1854, pp. 1 - 2, February 20, 1854, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, February 23, 1854, p. 4; Leader, May 12, 1854, p. 2.

measure was a mere proslavery ploy, the editors depicted the application of popular sovereignty as a democratic technique that was perfectly in harmony with the country's proud tradition.⁶⁵ Hostile to the "abolitionism of Greeley and Giddings and Garrison", the Plain Dealer contended that the Douglas Bill would not only provide the ultimate solution to the slavery question but would also once and for all crush the antislavery radicalism that placed such a severe strain upon the national union.⁶⁶

Elsewhere in the Western Reserve, Democratic editors were much less enthusiastic in their support for the Administration's Nebraska policy. In Canfield, J. B. Woodruff, editor of the Republican Sentinel, was compelled to relinquish control of the paper after his hard line support for the Douglas measure failed to meet with the approval of the Mahoning County Democrats.⁶⁷ His successor, J. M. Webb, expressed dislike for the Bill and for the violation of the Missouri Compromise, but he denied that the measure was a test of party unity and cautioned Democrats to beware of the entreaties of the opportunistic Whigs and Free Soilers.⁶⁸ In his April 18 address in the national House of Representatives, Summit County Democrat George Bliss offered similar sentiments. Opposed to the Bill because it violated the Compromise and reopened the slavery question, Bliss nevertheless professed his devotion to the party and argued that the measure must not be considered as a kind of loyalty

⁶⁵Plain Dealer, May 19, 1854, p. 2.

⁶⁶Ibid., May 23, 1854, p. 2; Forest City Democrat, March 1, 1854, p. 2.

⁶⁷Republican Sentinel (Canfield), February 17, 1854, p. 2.

⁶⁸Ibid., May 5, 1854, p. 2.

examination.⁶⁹ Many Reserve Democrats pursued a policy in line with the one suggested by Webb and Bliss. Although several local chapters issued proclamations against the Bill and a few individuals actually joined the anti-Nebraska coalition, most Democrats simply remained politically inactive during the first half of 1854.

By the time that the Douglas Bill had become law in late May, the Western Reserve had asserted itself as a leader in the anti-Nebraska movement. The intense anti-extensionist sentiment found within the region was carried throughout the state and the nation by politicians who held elective offices. In Ohio, the political power of the Reserve Free Soilers had been seriously undermined by the resounding Democratic victory of 1853. Throughout the spring of 1854, the heavily Democratic Ohio Legislature failed to react to the controversy that was engulfing the state. In early May, Dr. J. J. Elwell, the Free Soil representative from Ashtabula County, finally offered a resolution in the Ohio House that labelled the Nebraska Bill wrong in principle and dangerous to northern liberty.⁷⁰ The proposal passed by a vote of 39 to 29. However, this minor victory marked the only success for the anti-Nebraska forces in the Ohio legislature. Any satisfaction derived from the resolution could not compensate for a major defeat. In March, despite support from the Reserve, Salmon Chase, now anathema to the victorious Ohio Democrats,

⁶⁹Congressional Globe, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, Appendix, April 18, 1854, pp. 502 - 505; Bliss represented the 18th Ohio Congressional District which included Summit, Portage, and Stark counties.

⁷⁰Leader, May 4, 1854, p. 2.

lost his Senate seat in the next Congress. His replacement, Democrat George Pugh, was a pedestrian politician who subsequently endorsed the Douglas Bill.⁷¹

Though anti-Nebraska forces had been ineffective within the Ohio state government, the attention in the Reserve was focused upon Washington where Congress was engaged in a furious struggle over Kansas and Nebraska. Many of the more prominent leaders of the anti-Nebraska coalition, including Joshua Giddings, Benjamin Wade, and Edward Wade, were products of the Reserve. In addition, the inhabitants of northeastern Ohio were also constituents of Senator Chase, perhaps the most vociferous critic of the Douglas measure. Virtually every Reserve Free Soil and Whig officeholder stood in opposition to the extension of slavery into the western territories. This unanimity would have profound ramifications for Western Reserve politics during the latter half of 1854. As early as March, the Ashtabula Sentinel, the mouthpiece of Giddings, praised old foe Benjamin Wade for his consistent fight against the Pierce Administration.⁷² Confronted by such a powerful common enemy, the old factions were at last coming to the realization that some form of cooperation would be required if the Democrats were to be defeated.

Esteemed at home and respected in many areas of the North, the Reserve national politicians occupied positions of leadership within the anti-Nebraska forces. With the assistance of Gamaliel Bailey, the editor of the National Era, the Reserve contingent sent back to northeastern Ohio and to other antislavery regions detailed accounts of

⁷¹National Era, March 2, 1854, p. 35.

⁷²Ashtabula Sentinel, March 9, 1854, p. 5.

the proposed legislation.⁷³ Frequently reprinted in the Reserve newspapers, this correspondence undoubtedly contributed significantly to the growth of the anti-Nebraska resistance.

Reserve figures performed their most valuable service on the floors of the House and the Senate. Chase and Benjamin Wade, along with Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, organized and directed the opposition to the Douglas Bill in the Senate. Giddings and Edward Wade performed a similar function within the House. All were aware of their minority status and of the high probability of failure, yet these Congressmen advertised their cause by provoking numerous confrontations with Southerners and Administration Democrats.

In the Senate, the flamboyant Chase lashed out at the proponents of the Douglas Bill and campaigned unsuccessfully for a series of amendments that would have modified the most flagrant aspects of the measure.⁷⁴ During the course of the session, Chase received enthusiastic assistance from an unexpected source, his colleague Benjamin Wade. Disgusted over the failure of the southern members of his party to abide by the Missouri Compromise, the old Reserve Whig became a valued acquisition in the ranks of the anti-Nebraska coalition.⁷⁵ Openly vindictive, Wade supported the Chase amendments and delivered forceful speeches in which he denounced the treachery and "dictatorial demeanor"

⁷³Ibid., May 4, 1854, p. 4; Benjamin Wade to Milton Sutliff, Washington, April 21, 1854, in Milton Sutliff Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society.

⁷⁴Congressional Globe, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, Appendix, March 2, 1854, pp. 280, 299 - 300.

⁷⁵Trefousse, Benjamin Wade, pp. 90 - 91; Congressional Globe, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, Appendix, February 6, 1854, pp. 337 - 339.

of Southerners and their northern allies.⁷⁶ Arguing that "...slavery must now become general, or it must cease to be at all", Wade, the undisputed leader of the Reserve Whigs, demonstrated that his faction had now assumed sentiments on the slavery issue identical with those long held by the Reserve Free Soilers.⁷⁷

In the House of Representatives, Joshua Giddings and Edward Wade consistently rebuked the Administration's Nebraska proposals. As usual, Giddings placed special emphasis upon morality and depicted the Douglas measure as both criminal and sinful.⁷⁸ Wade, copying the more practical tactics of his older brother Benjamin, charged that the Administration had based its policy of popular sovereignty upon outright lies, and he accused Southerners of waging a war against the cherished institutions of the North.⁷⁹ With the exception of George Bliss, the other Democratic representatives from the Reserve maintained public silence throughout the course of the grand debate.

In the Senate, the Kansas-Nebraska legislation passed by a comfortable margin on March 3, but, after a prolonged and bitter struggle, members of the House approved the proposal on May 22 by a vote of only 113 to 100. Only four of the Democratic representatives from Ohio supported the measure. On the final ballot, no Reserve legislator cast an affirmative vote for the Douglas Bill. Ironically hailed by its

⁷⁶Congressional Globe, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, Appendix, March 2, 1854, pp. 299 - 300.

⁷⁷Ibid., May 25, 1854, p. 764.

⁷⁸Ibid., May 16, 1854, p. 986; Stewart, Joshua Giddings, p. 227.

⁷⁹Congressional Globe, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, Appendix, May 8, 1854, pp. 661 - 662, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, May 18, 1854, p. 1210.

supporters as a brilliant maneuver that would crush any further sectional agitation, the Kansas-Nebraska Act accelerated tensions between the North and the South and hastened the arrival of civil war. In the Western Reserve, the passage of this legislation virtually guaranteed that the slavery question would once again dominate the politics of the region. Branded as a tool of the South, the Democratic Party in northeastern Ohio would soon find itself on the verge of total obliteration.

In a period of only five months, the relatively tranquil political climate of the North was drastically transformed by the reintroduction of the slavery question. Explanations for the extensive and broad based resistance to the Douglas Bill varied by region. In the Western Reserve, much of the success of the anti-Nebraska coalition can be attributed to a pair of factors. First, slavery was a highly emotional issue that affected the public in much the same manner that communism did during the 1950's. Perceiving the peculiar institution to be the antithesis of their way of life, many Northerners reacted in an excessive fashion to any arrangement that threatened to extend slavery beyond its southern borders. Popular indignation to the Douglas Bill in northeastern Ohio was compounded by the fact that so many had looked upon the 1850 Compromise as the ultimate barrier to southern encroachment upon the rights of free labor. Confused and bitter when the issue again surfaced, the sturdy Reserve population provided a vast reservoir of discontent that was quickly exploited by the region's astute politicians.

The Western Reserve's highly trained class of professional politicians were not hypocrites who manipulated their followers during the spring of 1854. An analysis of the private correspondence of the region's most prominent men indicates that their indignation over the

Douglas Bill was real and intense and that these sentiments were acquired long before the issue began to exhibit political potential.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the Reserve Free Soil and Whig parties were still highly competitive in 1854. Having just suffered some ignominious defeats at the hands of the Democrats in 1853, both factions eagerly sought an issue upon which they could rebuild the strength of their parties. An enormously unpopular proposal directly tied to their Democratic enemies, the Nebraska business became the foundation upon which Free Soilers and Whigs hoped to return to prominence.

With few exceptions, Reserve Free Soilers and Whigs, although they cooperated within the anti-Nebraska movement, retained separate identities and organizations prior to the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Just as this legislation contributed to revolutionary developments on the national scene, so too did the Act precipitate a dramatic event in the history of Western Reserve politics. During the summer of 1854, as the issue of slavery replaced all others in the political arena, the Free Soil and Whig parties gradually moved toward a fusion. Out of the turmoil and strife of the Douglas Bill had come the genesis of the Republican Party in northeastern Ohio.

⁸⁰Benjamin Wade to Milton Sutliff, Washington, January 9, 1854, in Sutliff Papers; Joshua Giddings to Grotius Giddings, Washington, January 22, 1854 and February 5, 1854, in Joshua R. Giddings Papers, Ohio Historical Society.

CHAPTER III

GENESIS: THE MOVEMENT TOWARD FUSION,

JUNE - OCTOBER, 1854

During the summer and fall of 1854, northern Democrats were heavily penalized for their inability to detect the political sentiments of their constituents. Hardly the villains depicted in anti-Nebraska propaganda, most of these politicians sincerely believed that the Kansas-Nebraska legislation would eradicate the last vestiges of sectional tensions. The Democrats greatly miscalculated the depth of the fear and suspicion that separated the North from the South. Convinced of the existence of a monolithic and hostile "slave power", many northerners automatically interpreted as conspiracy any cooperation between the northern Democrats and their southern counterparts. Eager to capitalize upon this impression, the anti-Nebraska press continually stressed the alliance between Pierce Democrats and Southerners. By late May, citizens in many communities throughout the North perceived administration Democrats to be inexorably linked to the South.

After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, dissident forces throughout the North renewed their scathing attacks against the Pierce Administration. Many northern politicians and editors suggested that the only remaining public issue was the choice between freedom and slavery, and they urged their followers to establish the party organizations and machinery necessary to overcome the might of the "slavocracy".⁸¹

⁸¹Leader, May 25, 1854, p. 2, May 30, 1854, p. 2.

Recognizing the opportunity to challenge the national Administration, Free Soilers, Whigs, Nativists, and disgruntled Democrats entered the new party.⁸² During the summer of 1854, the fusionists met at the local, regional, and state convocations that would eventually be hailed as the birthplaces of the Republican Party. In these gatherings, labelled by contemporaries as "peoples", "anti-Nebraska", "fusionist", or less frequently "Republican" conventions, delegates issued resolutions that condemned the abrogation of the Missouri Compromise, demanded the repeal of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and pledged resistance to any further extension of slavery.⁸³ In addition, the coalitionists challenged Pierce Democrats in the fall congressional, state, and local elections. By the middle of November, the extent of popular dissatisfaction with the Nebraska legislation had become graphically clear in most regions of the North. United only by the principle of the non-extension of slavery, the anti-Nebraska dissidents had scored overwhelming victories on all levels of government.

The anti-Nebraska forces were more successful in Ohio than in any other state. At a convention held in Columbus during July, Free Soilers and Whigs successfully merged with smaller numbers of antislavery Democrats. Supporting a full slate of state and congressional candidates, the Ohio coalition routed the Pierce Democrats in the October elections. Voters in every congressional district elected an anti-Nebraska

⁸²Potter, The Impending Crisis, p. 175; George H Mayer, The Republican Party, 1854 - 1856 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 26 - 28; Roseboom, The Civil War Era, pp. 280 - 292.

⁸³Mayer, Republican Party, p. 29; Roseboom, The Civil War Era, pp. 282 - 292.

representative. The state offices of Supreme Judge and Commissioner of Public Works went to the new party by substantial majorities.⁸⁴

The Western Reserve was intimately involved in the Ohio fusionist movement. Undoubtedly confident that they would secure positions of leadership in any merger, many Reserve Free Soilers had advocated the establishment of a distinctly northern antislavery party as early as March, 1854.⁸⁵ Prior to the House of Representative's approval of the Douglas Bill, Reserve politicians also had attended a Washington meeting in which Gamaliel Bailey proposed that old political ties be extinguished and that a new party, one that would be dedicated to human rights, be established.⁸⁶ Most of the region's politicians were already well aware that a successful merger between Reserve Free Soilers and Whigs would result in almost certain victory at the polls.

The Democratic victories in the 1853 election had convinced many Reserve partisans that their old parties could no longer function successfully, but the Kansas-Nebraska Act prompted even the most recalcitrant loyalists to abandon their outdated organizations. With the cherished western territories threatened by the introduction of the institution of slavery, Reserve Free Soilers and Whigs resolved to put aside all divisive issues and to merge into a new organization. Immediately after the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Reserve's national figures initiated the first and highly symbolic steps toward this union. Benjamin Wade had long been infuriated by the failure of the Southern Whigs to

⁸⁴Roseboom, The Civil War Era, pp. 295 - 296.

⁸⁵Ashtabula Sentinel, March 2, 1854, p. 4; Mahoning Free Democrat, March 29, 1854, p. 2.

⁸⁶Blue, The Free Soilers, p. 282.

abide by the Missouri Compromise. Three days after the passage of the Act, he announced his final break with the national Whig Party, and he stated that he would welcome a new organization that would be dedicated to the maintenance of northern rights.⁸⁷ During the same week, Joshua Giddings advised his constituents to form an opposition party and to unite with those of similar sentiments in Ohio and in other regions of North.⁸⁸

During the last days of May and the first weeks of June, Reserve journalists followed the example of these leaders and campaigned vigorously for a fusion of the diverse factions within the anti-Nebraska movement. Often resorting to exaggeration and to the distortion of facts, these editors argued that the South had become a virtual enemy to all northern adherents of the free labor system.⁸⁹ Echoing the cry that slavery and freedom had finally entered upon a collision course, Reserve journalists implored all "true sons" of the North to affiliate immediately with the one organization that would be capable of confronting the Democrats.⁹⁰

While the prominent Reserve public figures and the newspaper editors sought to capture public support for a new party, the career politicians prepared to stage a new series of public meetings in all sections of the Western Reserve. The anti-Nebraska gatherings of the past winter and spring had proven to be remarkably effective political

⁸⁷Trefousse, Benjamin Wade, p. 91.

⁸⁸Giddings to Readers, Ashtabula Sentinel, May 25, 1854, p. 4.

⁸⁹Mahoning Free Democrat, May 31, 1854, p. 2; Leader, May 24, 1854, p. 2.

⁹⁰Leader, May 25, 1854, p. 2, June 8, 1854, p. 2.

devices. Aware of the value of these convocations, the Reserve politicians trusted that the nucleus of their new party could be recruited during well-organized and highly publicized summer rallies.⁹¹

In the Western Reserve, the new party grew at a rate that exceeded the expectations of its most optimistic members. Late in May, the Reserve Democrats noted that Whigs and Free Soilers in some localities had already merged into a single organization.⁹² By the middle of June, the vast majority of Reserve newspapers, including the old line Whig organ, the Cleveland Herald, called for a general realignment of the region's political parties.⁹³ On June 8, Bailey stated in the National Era that the dissolution of the Whigs in Ohio was imminent, and that Chase, Wade, and practically every other Ohio antislavery politician had expressed a desire to participate in the fusion movement.⁹⁴

During June and July, Reserve residents indicated their approval for the merger between Whigs and Free Soilers by their participation in the public meetings. Like their immediate predecessors, these gatherings were held in communities in every county in the Western Reserve.⁹⁵ Generally, attendance at these events was large, and the crowds warmly applauded speakers who called for the establishment of a separate antislavery party. Encouraged by the response to fusion, the

⁹¹Ibid., July 6, 1854, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, June 15, 1854, p. 4.

⁹²Republican Sentinel, May 26, 1854, p. 2.

⁹³Ashtabula Sentinel, June 1, 1854, p. 4.

⁹⁴National Era, June 8, 1854, p. 92.

⁹⁵Leader, July 6, 1854, p. 2; Republican Sentinel, July 7, 1854, p. 2.

organizers arranged a climactic convocation at Ravenna on the fourth of July. Over five thousand citizens attended this gala celebration, and they listened attentively as speakers representing all the old political factions repudiated past allegiances and called for unanimous resistance to the machinations of the Pierce Administration.⁹⁶ Having laid the foundations for their party, Reserve fusionists eagerly awaited the state convention scheduled to meet in Columbus on July 13.

After nearly a decade of intense and often ruthless competition, Reserve Free Soilers and Whigs suddenly reunited during the summer of 1854. This abrupt alteration in Reserve politics can be attributed to two factors. First, the inhabitants' fears of southern conspiracy had become magnified out of all proportion. Large segments of the Reserve population believed that the nation was in a state of crisis and that the northern way of life was being jeopardized by the proponents of slavery. Reserve leaders shared many of the largely irrational beliefs of their constituents. Editorials and speeches were filled with references to the despotism of the South and to the tyranny of the national government.⁹⁷ Such propaganda was not mere rhetoric. Most Reserve politicians looked upon the Pierce Democrats and Southerners as real enemies, and they willingly cooperated with anyone who professed similar sentiments.

Second, the union of the Reserve Free Soil and Whig parties was in many ways a simple and long overdue political maneuver. The 1853 state election had made the ramifications of division abundantly clear. With neither party able to control the region individually, politicians in

⁹⁶Leader, July 6, 1854, p. 2.

⁹⁷Ashtabula Sentinel, June 1, 1854, p. 4, July 13, 1854, p. 4; National Era, June 22, 1854, p. 99; Leader, July 10, 1854, p. 2.

both camps realized that some form of merger had become mandatory. In this sense, the Kansas-Nebraska legislation was a godsend to Reserve fusionists. Since virtually all Reserve Free Soilers and Whigs could accept the principle of non-extension, the Democratic sponsors of the Douglas Bill had unwittingly provided their foes with the perfect issue upon which they might base a new organization. During June and July, the advocates of fusion not only lashed out at slaveholders but also exhorted the Reserve populace to build strong local organizations that would be capable of effective political action.⁹⁸ Clearly, the leaders of the movement in northeastern Ohio expected practical politics to be an intricate component of their crusade.

Having organized the party at the local level, Reserve fusionists prepared for the July state convention. Late in June, the region's politicians and editors, acting with the approval of the Reserve's national figures, circulated the formal calls for the Ohio convention.⁹⁹ Responding to these appeals, fusion politicians in every county held preliminary meetings in which they selected delegates for the Columbus convention. The resolutions that were formulated at these gatherings generally reflected the sentiments of the Reserve anti-Nebraska forces. Invariably, the Pierce Administration and Southerners were condemned as tyrants and traitors. Partisans vowed never again to enter into compromises with the slaveholders.¹⁰⁰ By July, 1854, the tactics employed

⁹⁸ Mahoning Free Democrat, June 7, 1854, p. 2; Leader, May 30, 1854, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, June 1, 1854, p. 4.

⁹⁹ National Era, June 22, 1854, p. 99; Leader, June 27, 1854, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Leader, June 27, 1854, p. 2; Mahoning Free Democrat, July 5, 1854, p. 2.

by the Reserve political elite had produced the desired results. Slavery had once again become established as the only political issue of consequence within northeastern Ohio.

Party leaders realized that their new organization would flounder if the state convention were not successful. Many Reserve inhabitants probably shared the Democratic contention that the heterogeneous factions within the anti-Nebraska movement would be unable to merge into a viable political party. The composition of the delegations at the state convention seemed to indicate that cooperation would indeed be minimal. Seventy-two of Ohio's eighty-eight counties sent representatives to the gathering, and over a fourth of the delegates had previously identified themselves as Democrats. A plurality of the representatives were old line Whigs from the southern and central portions of the state, and the vast majority of the members in the Reserve contingent were Free Soilers or unusually liberal Whigs.¹⁰¹

Affairs at the July convention encouraged the skeptics and dismayed the Democratic opposition. All factions had concluded that a merger, even though it might be distasteful, had become an absolute political necessity. During the proceedings, leaders from all camps pursued the path of moderation. Afraid to alienate any one faction, the presiding officers refused to entertain suggestions for a name for the new party. Speakers purposely avoided potentially antagonistic commentary, and they continually referred to the noncontroversial principles contained within the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.¹⁰² The

¹⁰¹Leader, July 15, 1854, p. 2; Herald (Cleveland), July 15, 1854, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, July 20, 1854, p. 4.

¹⁰²Joseph Smith, Republican Party, p. 22.

convention's resolutions lacked originality and offended neither the most conservative nor the most radical factions.¹⁰³

The candidates selected for the two available state offices, Judge of the Supreme Court and Commissioner of Public Works, were also moderates. The party's nominee for the office of Judge, Joseph Swan from Franklin County, had previously been an antislavery Democrat.¹⁰⁴ Jacob Blickensderfer, a Tuscarawas County civil engineer, was selected for the Public Works post because of his qualifications for that position and, more importantly, because of his mildly antislavery views.¹⁰⁵ When screening names for the nominations, the convention committees carefully avoided radical Free Soilers, extremely conservative Whigs, and any others who were unacceptable to the majority of the delegates.

Immediately after the state convention, the Cleveland Plain Dealer confidently predicted that the harmony displayed at Columbus would not persist. Stating that Stark County's Benjamin Leiter was the only prominent former Democrat at the convention, the paper argued that northeastern Ohio Democrats would shun association with the "mongrel" fusionists. The Cleveland journal also noted that the Columbus platform was notably devoid of reference to the fugitive slave law, the status of slavery in the Capital, and other issues dear to the Reserve Free Soiler "abolitionists".¹⁰⁶ Elsewhere in the Reserve, Democratic editors were less optimistic. Fearing a permanent union between Reserve Whigs

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰⁴Leader, July 19, 1854, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., July 18, 1854, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶Plain Dealer, July 14, 1854, p. 2.

and Free Soilers, these journalists described the state fusion movement as an elaborate trick designed exclusively to defeat the Ohio Democratic Party.¹⁰⁷

The initial Whig and Free Soil response to the Columbus convention undoubtedly intensified the anxiety of their Democratic opponents. Despite the fact that strong antislavery principles were not included in the Ohio platform, the state ticket and the convention resolutions were endorsed by both Free Soil and Whig factions. Writing from Washington, Giddings classified the resolutions as tame and conservative, yet he promised enthusiastic support for the state ticket and for the new party.¹⁰⁸ Benjamin Wade did not object to the affairs that had transpired at the convention, and he exhorted all Reserve citizens to "rally to one great party of Liberty-loving men".¹⁰⁹ The Free Soil journals showed no disappointment with the results of the convention. Even the most radical organs stated that it was proper to give the nominations to members of the older parties.¹¹⁰ These journals rationalized their acceptance of the Columbus proceedings by proclaiming that traditional antislavery principles could still be found underneath the ambiguously worded state platform.¹¹¹

Although they had entered into the new party with much less enthusiasm than the Free Soilers, Reserve Whigs nevertheless endorsed the

¹⁰⁷Republican Sentinel, July 7, 1854, p. 2, July 21, 1854, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸Giddings to Readers, Ashtabula Sentinel, July 27, 1854, p. 2; Stewart, Joshua Giddings, p. 229.

¹⁰⁹Benjamin Wade to Darius Lyman, Washington, June 9, 1854, in Ashtabula Sentinel, August 10, 1854, p. 2.

¹¹⁰Mahoning Free Democrat, July 19, 1854, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, August 3, 1854, p. 4.

¹¹¹Ibid.

Columbus convention. On July 15, the Cleveland Herald expressed support for the state ticket.¹¹² Later in the same month, this paper enumerated the reasons that compelled the Reserve's old line Whigs to abandon their parent organization. Stating that such issues as embargoes, tariffs, and banks were still vitally important, the editor of the Herald asserted that southern treachery had precipitated a state of emergency that required every citizen's immediate and undivided attention. Unable to correct this outrage alone, Whigs felt obligated to align with all those who shared a proper respect for northern rights.¹¹³

The reaction of Reserve Free Soilers and Whigs to the state convention conclusively proved that both factions were determined to forge a strong party capable of inflicting great damage upon their Democratic adversaries. On the surface, the July convention marked a crisis in which the antislavery principles shared by many Reserve residents were sacrificed to the less radical majority. The adept ability of Reserve politicians to combine practical politics with antislavery sentiment was clearly illustrated by the manner in which the region responded to this apparent setback. Unlike the inflexible Garrisonians, the men of the Reserve were advocates of the political variety of antislavery. While the Garrisonian abolitionists interpreted compromise as a betrayal of principle, Reserve residents perceived it to be a valuable tool that could, if properly utilized, often advance the cause. Even Joshua Giddings, the politician most sensitive to questions of morality, frequently surrendered nonessential details in order to secure the basic elements of a principle. Operating within the confines of this

¹¹²Herald, July 15, 1854, p. 2.

¹¹³Ibid., July 25, 1854, p. 2.

philosophy, the Reserve elite accepted the proceedings of the July convention without consternation. Convinced that their brand of antislavery could exist within the new organization's platform, the fusionists did not experience any pangs of conscience as they looked forward to electoral success.

After the state convention, the confident Reserve politicians campaigned with an intensity not matched since the schism in 1848. Throughout northeastern Ohio, the new party continued to attract enormous numbers of recruits during July and August. On August 10, Bailey predicted in the National Era that antislavery sentiment and enthusiasm for the new organization were so intense in the Western Reserve that the Democrats would surely be crushed in the fall elections.¹¹⁴ Although the new party had already attracted an impressive following, Reserve politicians, like the delegates at the state convention, had still neglected to adopt a formal name for their organization. In Mahoning County, the Mahoning Free Democrat listed "Republican" above the state ticket on the masthead.¹¹⁵ A few other communities opted for this label, but designations such as "anti-Nebraska", "fusionist", and "friends of freedom" were more common. Regardless of differences in terminology, party adherents in every region of the Reserve recognized their counterparts as brethren, and they closely monitored the movement's progress in neighboring counties.

While local politicians and editors were laying the foundations for the new party, the Reserve national figures enthusiastically promoted

¹¹⁴ National Era, August 10, 1854, p. 128.

¹¹⁵ Mahoning Free Democrat, August 2, 1854, p. 2.

the organization. Soon after the July convention, Giddings dispatched a letter to his constituents in which he condoned the merger without qualification.¹¹⁶ During the congressional recess, Benjamin Wade toured almost every county of the Reserve and delivered numerous speeches in which he cited both the perfidy of the South and the need for a separate northern party.¹¹⁷

Reserve figures made even more significant contributions to the fusion movement in other regions of the North. In late July, Giddings journeyed to New England and stressed the need for a new party in addresses to large audiences in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.¹¹⁸ In September and October, Giddings and Chase traveled to Illinois where they urged the citizens to repudiate Douglas and to consider a northern party as an alternative to rule by slaveholders.¹¹⁹ In 1854, Giddings and the Western Reserve had again become important symbols of unyielding resistance to the latest southern encroachment upon the northern way of life.

As the election drew near, the fusionist politicians held conventions in every county and congressional district within the Reserve. At these gatherings, the participants selected nominees for local offices and adopted resolutions in which they outlined the basic tenets of the new party.¹²⁰ Delegates in every county accepted the non-extension

¹¹⁶Giddings to the People of the Twentieth Congressional District of Ohio, in Ashtabula Sentinel, July 24, 1854, p. 2.

¹¹⁷Trefousse, Benjamin Wade, p. 92; Mahoning Free Democrat, September 20, 1854, p. 2.

¹¹⁸Ashtabula Sentinel, July 13, 1854, p. 4.

¹¹⁹Leader, October 16, 1854, p. 2.

¹²⁰Ibid., August 19, 1854, p. 2, September 8, 1854, p. 2.

principles that were formulated at the state convention. At many of the local meetings, party members also attached much more radical proposals to the Columbus resolutions. For example, at the Cuyahoga County convention, party chieftains drew up resolutions that called for the repeal of the fugitive slave laws and for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia.¹²¹ The repeal of the fugitive laws was also a prominent component in the platform adopted at the Eighteenth Congressional District convention held at Ravenna in early September.¹²² Although they cooperated with less radical groups in other parts of the state and the nation, Reserve partisans were certainly among the most progressive members of the fledgling Republican Party.

Reserve fusionists nominated candidates for all available state and local offices, but they devoted much of their energy and most of their resources to the region's five congressional contests. Early in the summer, party leaders determined to rid the Reserve of all Democratic politicians who were likely to remain loyal to the Pierce Administration. The three Reserve Democratic congressmen, although they had all repudiated the Douglas Bill, were labelled by fusion journals as untrustworthy men who would never vote to repeal the infamous legislation.¹²³ Almost simultaneously, the small contingent of antislavery Democrats who had participated in the anti-Nebraska coalition during the spring returned to their former organization. Fusion organs charged that the defectors

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ashtabula Sentinel, June 1, 1854, p. 4, September 14, 1854, P. 4; Roseboom, The Civil War Era, p. 294.

were abandoning their principles for the sake of political patronage.¹²⁴ Actually, the disgruntled Democrats left the movement after the Whig and Free Soil elite failed to grant them a representative portion of the nominations for local office.¹²⁵ By September, the political alignments within the Western Reserve began to assume an identifiable shape. The Democratic Party, again as strong as it had been during the previous year, hoped to fragment the anti-Nebraska movement and to add to the gains first acquired from the 1853 election. The fusionists, consisting now almost exclusively of old Whigs and Free Soilers, were determined to extract vengeance for the Kansas-Nebraska Act and to inflict a massive defeat upon their common foe.

In the conventions held in the five congressional districts during August and September, fusion delegates selected as their nominees Free Soilers Edward Wade, Joshua Giddings, and Philemon Bliss, antislavery Democrat Benjamin Leiter, and conservative Whig John Sherman.¹²⁶ With adherents of the new party more numerous than Democrats in almost every county of the Reserve, fusion leaders realized that they must maintain unity at all costs. Generally, these astute politicians engaged in remarkably successful maneuvers that kept internal dissension at a minimum. In the Thirteenth District that encompassed the more conservative western counties, party leaders arranged for the nomination of the bland non-extensionist John Sherman.¹²⁷ This candidate's distinctly

¹²⁴Mahoning Free Democrat, August 9, 1854, p. 2.

¹²⁵Republican Sentinel, September 29, 1854, p. 2.

¹²⁶Leader, August 10, 1854, p. 2; National Era, September 7, 1854, p. 143; See Appendix D.

¹²⁷Filler, Crusade Against Slavery, pp. 256 - 257.

conservative demeanor attracted a large following. In the much more radical Nineteenth District, the popular Edward Wade, strongly supported by the Free Soil faction, was renominated by a large margin.¹²⁸ Significantly, the Cleveland Herald, long a dedicated rival of Wade, condescended to his nomination and placed his name prominently on the masthead.¹²⁹ In many other communities throughout northeastern Ohio, Free Soil and Whig politicians and editors graciously endorsed old opponents and instructed their followers to support the entire ticket.

Despite such widespread cooperation, rivalry between the Reserve Free Soil and Whig factions did not completely disappear during the summer of 1854. In Geauga County, the Free Soilers, the faction that already controlled over 60% of the local vote, hesitated for several weeks before they reluctantly accepted a union with the Whig minority.¹³⁰ Opposed to the radical Free Soiler Philemon Bliss, nativists in the Fourteenth District, with the assistance of the Reserve's major Know-Nothing organ, the Cleveland Express, falsely accused the candidate of being married to a Catholic and of contributing extensive sums of money to the Roman Church.¹³¹ In the Eighteenth District, many Portage County Whigs and Free Soilers temporarily balked at the nomination of Benjamin Leiter, one of the few former Democrats who remained within the fusion movement.¹³² These incidents annoyed the fusion leaders who recognized

¹²⁸Leader, July 20, 1854, p. 2.

¹²⁹Herald, July 15, 1854, p. 2.

¹³⁰Leader, September 15, 1854, p. 2.

¹³¹Ibid., August 31, 1854, p. 2.

¹³²Ibid., September 29, 1854, p. 2.

that only Pierce Democrats benefited from such disunity. Nevertheless, these cases were relatively minor, and they did not threaten to dissolve the new party within the affected congressional districts.

The only major challenge to the successful merger between Reserve Whigs and Free Soilers occurred in the Twentieth District where the two factions had long been engaged in bitter strife. Weeks before the mid-August district convention, the Democratic press predicted that Congressman Joshua Giddings would face stern opposition from his Whig enemies and from a practical group of Free Soilers who feared that the renomination of the controversial figure would impede the cause of fusion within the region.¹³³ At the nominating convention held at Johnston in Trumbull County on August 15, Whigs failed to offer a viable candidate, but Trumbull Free Soilers pushed for the selection of either of two party veterans, Milton Sutliff and John Hutchins. Despite controlling only a minority of the total vote on the first ballot, Giddings' delegates eventually lifted their favorite to victory over Hutchins by a vote of 43 to 40.¹³⁴ Giddings' organ, the Ashtabula Sentinel, minimized the significance of the close election. Noting that the contestants were all capable men who embraced sound republican principles, the paper stated that honest and open competition within the party was desirable and emphasized that a spirit of harmony had prevailed during and after the convention.¹³⁵

¹³³Republican Sentinel, July 7, 1854, p. 2, August 11, 1854, p. 2.

¹³⁴Stewart, Joshua Giddings, p. 229; Western Reserve Chronicle (Warren), August 16, 1854, p. 2; See also Appendix E.

¹³⁵Ashtabula Sentinel, August 10, 1854, p. 4, August 17, 1854, p. 4; Western Reserve Chronicle, August 16, 1854, p. 2.

Although Benjamin Wade had reached at least a public reconciliation with Giddings earlier in the summer, many former Whigs within the Twentieth District were dismayed by the incumbent's triumph. On August 17, the Conneaut Reporter, the paper established by Benjamin Wade in 1844 to compete with the Ashtabula Sentinel, noted Giddings' renomination but declined to offer any comment.¹³⁶ Significantly, the paper never formally endorsed Giddings nor did it ever place his name next to those of the party's other nominees on the masthead.¹³⁷ Perhaps the best indication of Reserve Whig reaction to Giddings' renomination can be found in the August 17 issue of the Cleveland Herald. The major old line Whig organ on the Reserve referred to the Twentieth District convention with only the following: "Joshua R. Giddings has been nominated for re-election in his district. His majority was two".¹³⁸

Despite the magnitude of the Giddings' affair, even this event did not promise to tarnish the new party's fortunes in the fall elections. Giddings possessed ardent supporters in numbers that more than compensated for his detractors. Also, his opponent, Ashtabula Democrat Eusebius Lee, was an inexperienced newcomer who had committed political suicide by endorsing Douglas' version of popular sovereignty and the escapades of the Pierce Administration.¹³⁹ By the eve of the October election, the Reserve elite had masterfully resurrected the old political coalition.

¹³⁶Reporter (Conneaut), August 17, 1854, p. 2.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Herald, August 17, 1854, p. 2.

¹³⁹Mahoning Free Democrat, September 13, 1854, p. 2.

Reports from every locality within the Reserve gave strong indication that the upcoming election would result in an overwhelming victory.

The optimism of the fusionists was well founded. On October 10, Reserve voters repudiated the Democratic party in the most lopsided contest since the Jackson debacles of the 1820's.¹⁴⁰ The administration Democrats were routed in all five congressional elections, and, in many regions, the fusionists swept all local offices.¹⁴¹ Regardless of their previous affiliations, the fledgling Republicans attributed their triumph to the strong antislavery beliefs of the voters and to the massive contempt that Reserve residents felt for the national Administration.¹⁴² Conversely, the region's Democratic papers denied that the Nebraska issue had caused their ill fortunes.¹⁴³ The Plain Dealer insinuated that defeat had resulted from an "unholy alliance" of unprincipled nativists and abolitionists who had united for the exclusive purpose of destroying the Democratic Party.¹⁴⁴

The Democratic charges were partially valid. The Reserve fusion party was controlled by the region's most prominent professional politicians. Since the July convention, this elite never concealed its intentions to strike out at all Pierce Democrats. Also, radical Free Soilers had cooperated with nativists during the 1854 campaign. Just prior to the election in Cleveland, the usually tolerant Cleveland

¹⁴⁰See Appendix F.

¹⁴¹Leader, October 11, 1854, p. 2, October 13, 1854, p. 2.

¹⁴²Ashtabula Sentinel, October 26, 1854, p. 4.

¹⁴³Republican Sentinel, October 13, 1854, p. 2.

¹⁴⁴Plain Dealer, October 13, 1854, p. 2.

Leader, in an effort to appease the city's Protestant German population, stated that "Roman Popery" and American slavery were allied and that every Catholic intended to vote for the Democratic ticket.¹⁴⁵ In several other communities throughout the Western Reserve, nativists were comfortably settled within the fusion party.

Although they had detected examples of inconsistencies within the camp of their opponents, Reserve Democrats badly miscalculated the primary reason for their own precipitous decline. In southern Ohio and in a few other areas of the North, the fusionist victories were the direct result of extensive nativist support. This was certainly not the case within northeastern Ohio. Enraged by the Nebraska affair, by the Pierce Administration, and by allegedly conspiratorial Southerners, Reserve voters used the election to reaffirm their devotion to northern values, especially to the system of free labor that was devoid of the stigma of slavery. The editors of the fusion journals were accurate when they unanimously attributed electoral success to antislavery rather than to nativism.¹⁴⁶ As the events of 1855 would soon confirm, the typical Reserve citizen valued the ideology of free labor and antislavery much more than he did the precepts of the Know-Nothing Order.

Rejoicing in their triumph, most of the victors could not immediately grasp the revolutionary developments that had transpired during the latter half of 1854. By the fall election, the old Free Soil and Whig organizations had disappeared, and the partisans of both

¹⁴⁵Leader, October 9, 1854, p. 2.

¹⁴⁶Ashtabula Sentinel, October 19, 1854, p. 4, November 2, 1854 p. 4; National Era, October 19, 1854, p. 106.

groups had flocked into the new party that would soon officially adopt the name of "Republican". After a decade in which they had permitted internal strife to erode their power, the Reserve elite was again firmly in control of the decision-making apparatus. Aided by the explosive Nebraska issue, these career politicians had engineered the construction of the fusion party with relative ease. Although they were bolstered by initial success, the leaders who sought to make the Republican Party a permanent institution in northeastern Ohio were still confronted with a formidable obstacle. Consisting of members who were united only in their opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the new party remained an unstable coalition that lacked specific programs and policies. During the crucial year of 1855, the Reserve elite would labor to shape a party ideology that conformed to the basic tenets of the majority of the Reserve's citizens.

CHAPTER IV

NATIVISM, ANTISLAVERY, AND RESERVE

REPUBLICANS, 1855

During the first half of 1855, victorious fusionists in most sections of the North adopted the official designation "Republican", and they sought to combine the diverse local and state groups into a strong sectional political party. Before these visionaries could accomplish such a lofty objective, they first were obliged to settle the competition between the antislavery and nativist factions within their movement. The anti-Catholic and anti-foreign adherents of the Know-Nothing Order had participated extensively in the anti-Nebraska movement during the 1854 campaign. Anxious to secure assistance in the struggle with the Pierce Democrats, antislavery leaders had frequently welcomed them as allies. As a result of this strange union, in many northern localities, it was virtually impossible to determine whether fusionist electoral success had resulted from bigotry or from Nebraska.¹⁴⁷

In Ohio, a majority of the partisans of the new Republican Party were also members of the Know-Nothing Order. Generally, this sect secured its recruits from the former Whigs who resided in the central and southern portions of the state. Ohio Know-Nothings saw no contradiction between nativism and the Nebraska question, and their leaders consistently pledged to work for at least the restoration of the Missouri Compromise.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷Mayer, Republican Party, p. 30; Republican Sentinel, October 20, 1854, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸Roseboom, The Civil War Era, p. 298.

The remainder of the Ohio Republican Party consisted of former Democrats, Free Soilers, and substantial numbers of the state's German population. This group repudiated the policies of the Know-Nothings and demanded that the new party remain dedicated exclusively to antislavery principles.¹⁴⁹ Throughout the first half of 1855, Ohio nativist and antislavery factions engaged in a bitter struggle for control of the new party.

With isolated exceptions, Know-Nothingism never attained significant popularity within the Western Reserve. The region's foreign population had remained relatively small, and the restrictive dogma of the sect contrasted sharply with the popular Free Soil ideology that called for support and encouragement to immigrants.¹⁵⁰ Most importantly, the vast majority of the political leaders shunned Know-Nothingism and all other varieties of nativist philosophy. Although it had argued that nativists had been responsible for the defeat of the Democrats in most portions of the state in 1854, the Plain Dealer recognized that neither Senator Benjamin Wade nor any of the five men elected to Congress from districts within the Reserve were members of the Order.¹⁵¹ In addition, the Reserve's two most prestigious Republican papers, the Cleveland Leader and the Ashtabula Sentinel, consistently expressed their contempt for all proscriptive societies.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ashtabula Sentinel, May 3, 1855, p. 4; Republican Sentinel, March 16, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁵¹Plain Dealer, October 13, 1854, p. 2.

¹⁵²Roseboom, The Civil War Era, p. 300; Leader, January 22, 1855, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, March 8, 1855, p. 4.

Early in 1855, Reserve party leaders recognized that the secret society jeopardized the new party's commitment to antislavery. Aware of the strength of the Order throughout the state and dismayed that chapters had actually been established in Cleveland and in Portage and Mahoning Counties, party propagandists embarked upon a massive campaign that was designed to discredit nativists within the Reserve and to weaken the clout of the Know-Nothing organizations in state party circles. In early January, Joshua Giddings entered into a debate in Congress with Augustus R. Sellers, an avowed Know-Nothing representative from Maryland. By resorting to this technique, the veteran Ashtabula legislator intended to force the Know-Nothings to clarify publicly their position on Kansas and Nebraska. Receiving an unsatisfactory response from Sellers, Giddings insinuated that members of the sect could not be trusted on the slavery issue.¹⁵³

Following the lead of Giddings, the Ashtabula Sentinel and the Leader began to offer liberal criticism of secret sects. Throughout the winter, William C. Howells, editor of the Jefferson paper, chastised the nativists for their inexcusable behavior toward immigrants, and he stressed that members of the secret society were actually proslavery men who intended to sabotage the state Republican convention.¹⁵⁴ John Vaughn, chief editor of the Cleveland Leader, also published scathing editorials in which he accused the Know-Nothings of harboring proslavery sentiments.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Congressional Globe, 33rd Congress, 2nd Session, January 4, 1855, pp. 183 - 184; Ashtabula Sentinel, January 18, 1855, p. 6.

¹⁵⁴ Ashtabula Sentinel, March 8, 1855, p. 4, May 3, 1855, p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ Leader, January 22, 1855, p. 2, March 27, 1855, p. 2, June 4, 1855, p. 2.

The two Reserve journals received assistance from the National Era's Gamaliel Bailey who also questioned whether Ohio Know-Nothings were loyal to the principles adopted at the July, 1854, Columbus convention.¹⁵⁶

During the spring of 1855, Republicans from central and southern Ohio attempted to arrange a formal merger between the new party and the state's Know-Nothings.¹⁵⁷ Reserve Republicans rejected all such overtures, and they vowed never to condone any political maneuver that would undermine the party's commitment to antislavery.¹⁵⁸ The Leader and the Sentinel continued to insist that the extension of slavery was the only significant political issue. Both journals warned that any compromise between the Know-Nothings and Ohio Republicans might well encourage Reserve citizens to form, once again, an independent antislavery party.¹⁵⁹

With the Kansas-Nebraska Act nearly a year old and with the 1854 election long since past, Reserve leaders realized that it would be quite difficult to retain slavery as the major principle of their party. These policy-makers received a major boon on March 30, 1855, when a proslavery legislature was chosen in Kansas in a highly contested and hotly disputed election. The Leader and the Sentinel immediately proclaimed that the slaveholders had attained power through means of illegal and fraudulent elections.¹⁶⁰ In April, 1855, both papers began to feature extensive

¹⁵⁶National Era, January 25, 1855, p. 14.

¹⁵⁷Leader, April 16, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., June 22, 1855, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, May 3, 1855, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹Ashtabula Sentinel, June 14, 1855, p. 4; Leader, April 16, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰Leader, April 20, 1855, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, April 12, 1855, p. 4.

coverage of the events within Kansas. These biased and occasionally erroneous accounts were valuable propagandist devices for the Reserve Republicans.¹⁶¹ By convincing their constituents that the Kansas-Nebraska legislation had indeed produced the expected abuse of popular sovereignty, party leaders successfully kept the attention of the Western Reserve attached to the question of slavery during the spring and summer of 1855.

While they were securing the allegiance of their followers by placing heavy emphasis upon Kansas, Reserve politicians endeavored to overcome the challenge of the nativists. The chief political prize available during 1855 was the office of governor. If the Republican Party were to persist in a form palatable to Reserve inhabitants, party leaders realized that the gubernatorial nominee would have to possess impeccable antislavery credentials. In the spring of 1855, Salmon P. Chase appeared to many observers to be the only candidate who possessed both the necessary qualifications and a genuine chance to defeat the Democratic incumbent, William Medill. The opportunistic Chase had alienated the majority of the Reserve's political luminaries during his illustrious public career, and most of the region's former Free Soil and Whig organs initially opposed his candidacy.¹⁶² On March 1, Giddings, convinced that the Know-Nothing threat could be neutralized only by the

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Reporter (Conneaut), February 8, 1855, p. 2, March 1, 1855, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, January 18, 1855, p. 4, February 1, 1855, p. 4; While advancing in the realm of Ohio politics, Salmon Chase deftly juggled party allegiances and political principles. For an analysis of this figure's previous career, see Roseboom, The Civil War Era, cf. and Blue, Free Soilers, cf.

selection of an antislavery zealot, formally endorsed Chase.¹⁶³ In April, the Ashtabula Sentinel acknowledged that the cause of antislavery could best be served by the election of Chase.¹⁶⁴ Support for the former Senator increased rapidly during the month of May, and by June, most of the Republican newspapers within the Western Reserve had enthusiastically called for his nomination.¹⁶⁵

By the middle of June, Reserve Republicans began to look forward to the summer convention and to the fall campaign. Not only did the candidacy of Chase appear to be strong, but the political power of the Reserve antislavery leaders had also been substantially enhanced by the rift at the national Know-Nothing convention and by the failure of the Ohio Council to nominate an independent ticket.¹⁶⁶ Most importantly, although veteran politicians expected a fierce struggle with the nativists at the Columbus convention, most of the pockets of nativism in northeastern Ohio had totally disintegrated by the start of the summer.

¹⁶³Giddings to Readers, Ashtabula Sentinel, March 1, 1855, p. 4; Chase was certainly not an antislavery zealot of the stature of a Joshua Giddings. However, during the debate on the Douglas Bill, Chase, hoping to capitalize upon popular distaste for the proposal within Ohio, attained widespread distinction for his uncompromising antislavery stance in the Senate. In 1855, many of those Ohioans who harbored antislavery convictions perceived Chase to be a staunch protector of northern rights. Although he must have doubted Chase's sincerity, Giddings felt compelled to strive for his selection as the only alternative to absorption by the Know-Nothings.

¹⁶⁴Ashtabula Sentinel, April 5, 1855, p. 4, April 19, 1855, p. 4.

¹⁶⁵On June 14, 1855, the National Era listed all of the Ohio newspapers that had formally endorsed Chase. The Western Reserve papers included on that list were as follows: Ashtabula Sentinel, Western Reserve Chronicle, True American (Youngstown), Summit Beacon (Akron), Portage County Democrat (Ravenna), Leader, Painesville Telegraph.

¹⁶⁶In June, 1855, the Know-Nothings held their national convention at Philadelphia. Joining several other northern delegations, the Ohio contingent repudiated a distinctly proslavery plank that had been placed

The story of Know-Nothingism in Cuyahoga, Portage, and Mahoning Counties comprises one of the more bizarre chapters in the annals of northeastern Ohio. During the mid-1850's, Cuyahoga County attained distinction as the largest and most persistent nativist stronghold in the Western Reserve. By 1850, the foreign born, most of whom were Irish and German, represented 30% of the population of the county, and many of these immigrants settled in the burgeoning industrial center of Cleveland.¹⁶⁷ These newcomers quickly earned the contempt of the old Yankees who perceived foreigners to be menaces to public order and recruits for the hated Jacksonians. In 1854, Cleveland was the only location in the Western Reserve where nativism had been a political issue.

During the winter of 1855, the citizens of Cleveland were divided into a variety of mutually hostile groups. The fusion party had been inactive since its victory in October, 1854. Many of the city's former Whigs were now active members in the flourishing local chapters of the anti-foreign and anti-Catholic Know-Nothing Order. Other fusionists, while they shared the Know-Nothings' hostility toward Catholics, feared that the sect would drive the Protestant Germans back to the Democratic Party. These pragmatists organized the Know-Somethings, a secret society that admitted naturalized Protestants and that called for many fewer restrictions against non-Catholic foreigners.¹⁶⁸

in the platform by the conservative majority. During the same month, delegates at the Ohio Know-Nothing convention deferred to the Republicans and refused to make separate nominations for the state offices. Capitalizing upon this opportunity, Reserve antislavery leaders portrayed the Know-Nothings as a weak and indecisive sect. Leader, June 25, 1855, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, June 14, 1855, p. 4

¹⁶⁷See Appendix A.

¹⁶⁸Leader, January 22, 1855, p. 2, April 17, 1855, p. 2.

Although somewhat sympathetic to the goals of the Know-Somethings, Cleveland's antislavery contingent, through its mouthpiece, the Leader, consistently denounced all secret, proscriptive organizations.¹⁶⁹ The Democrats vigorously condemned all intolerant groups.¹⁷⁰ Unsure of their status within the community, approximately one thousand foreigners established their own secret organization, the Sag Nichts (Say-Nothings) and prepared to counteract the prejudicial measures of either of the city's two nativist orders.¹⁷¹

After an acrimonious campaign, a "peoples" ticket, consisting of a rather strange combination of Know-Nothings, Know-Somethings, and antislavery advocates, defeated the Democrats in the municipal elections held on April 3.¹⁷² During May, the Know-Nothings grew impatient with their partners and attempted to wrest control of the local Republican Party away from the Know-Somethings and the antislavery faction.¹⁷³ The sect failed to obtain its objective, for the popularity of nativism declined steadily within Cleveland during the late spring. The Know-Nothings were discredited by the turmoil at their national convention and by the indecisiveness of the delegates at the state gathering. At the same time, the less dedicated Know-Somethings lost much of their fervor for nativism and began to espouse antislavery principles. Most of

¹⁶⁹Ibid., March 27, 1855, p. 2, May 15, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰Plain Dealer, January 5, 1855, p. 2, April 28, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁷¹Leader, March 15, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁷²Ibid., March 27, 1855, p. 2, April 4, 1855, p. 2; True American (Youngstown), April 11, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁷³Leader, May 5, 1855, p. 2; D. A. G. (unidentified) to Bailey, Cleveland, May 19, 1855, in National Era, May 31, 1855, p. 85.

the members of this group were absorbed by the antislavery faction, and this coalition easily retained control of the local party.¹⁷⁴ Tensions between native Americans and foreigners remained quite high, but, by June, 1855, the Know-Nothing threat to the fusion movement in Cuyahoga County had been at least temporarily suppressed.

The nativists derived much of their strength in Cuyahoga County from the more conservative elements of the population. In Portage and Mahoning Counties, usually liberal Free Soil editors and politicians were attracted to the secret societies. During the winter of 1855, the Ravenna Portage County Democrat, formerly a Free Soil organ, consistently lashed out at "foreignism" and pledged resistance to the encroachments of "ecclesiasticalism".¹⁷⁵ Seeing no contradiction between the Order and the Republican Party, Portage nativists vociferously condemned the crusade that Giddings, the Leader, and the Sentinel were waging against their organization.¹⁷⁶ Further, repeating the sentiments often expressed by southwestern Ohio Know-Nothings, they called upon Reserve zealots to place less emphasis upon antislavery and more stress upon the maintenance of Republican Party unity.¹⁷⁷

Just as it had done in Cleveland, nativism in Portage County experienced a precipitous and inexplicable decline early in the summer of 1855. Undoubtedly, Portage nativists were dismayed by the distinct proslavery stance taken by the southern wing of the Know-Nothing Party at

¹⁷⁴Leader, June 25, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵Portage County Democrat (Ravenna), May 9, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., May 30, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., May 23, 1855, p. 2.

the Philadelphia national convention. Also, by late spring, the residents were again active in the Republican Party, an organization that had been dormant in most communities since the last election. By the first of July, Know-Nothingism had all but vanished in this region. Verbal attacks against foreigners and Catholics appeared less frequently on the pages of the Portage County Democrat. Most significantly, this paper disdained the American Party, pledged undivided loyalty to Republican principles, and enthusiastically called for the nomination of Salmon P. Chase.¹⁷⁸

The nativist organization in Mahoning County was certainly the most unusual of its kind within the Western Reserve. D. S. Elliott, editor of the society's organ, the True American, had previously published the Mahoning Free Democrat, a Free Soil paper that rivaled the Ashtabula Sentinel in its devotion to radical antislavery.¹⁷⁹ Elliott and Mahoning's Free Soilers had been the dominant forces behind the fusion movement in 1854. Ironically, they had relied exclusively upon radical antislavery for their campaign issue, and they had not injected nativism into the Mahoning elections.

In the first issue of the True American published on February 14, 1855, Elliott outlined the principles upon which the county's nativist chapter would be based. The opportunistic editor thus made the only serious attempt within the Western Reserve to rationalize nativism with antislavery and free labor ideology. Angry that the Leader and the

¹⁷⁸The American Party was the political subsidiary of the Know-Nothing Order. Prior to the July Republican convention, this party was inactive within Ohio; Portage County Democrat, July 18, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹During the 1854 anti-Nebraska movement, Elliott was one of the first Reserve editors to call for the abolition of the old parties, for the exclusion of slavery from all federal territory, and, if necessary, for disunion.

Sentinel were such bitter foes of Americanism, Elliott theorized that nativists, by assaulting the foreigners who propped up the "slave-controlled Democracy", were actually among the most dedicated antislavery warriors.¹⁸⁰ Conceding that it was indeed unfortunate that enlightened Protestant foreigners must be penalized because of the Catholics, the editor nonetheless insisted that the Republican Party could never succeed until all immigrants were disenfranchised.¹⁸¹

Enthusiasm for nativism also waned within Mahoning County during the late spring. Even at the height of his fervor for Americanism, Elliott devoted ample space in his paper to the suspicious Kansas election and to other alleged machinations of the "slave power".¹⁸² On May 9, 1855, Elliott publicly admitted that he now questioned whether Americanism was consistent with Republican principles. On the same day, he formally proposed that Chase be chosen as the Republican gubernatorial nominee.¹⁸³

During June, most of the Mahoning Free Soilers who had experimented with nativism had also become disenchanted with secret societies, and they began to participate in regular Republican meetings. By July, this party had returned to approximately the same level of strength that it had enjoyed in the fall of 1854, and nativism had completely disappeared within Mahoning County.

Know-Nothingism did not flourish in the vast majority of Western Reserve communities. In most counties, immigrants made up less than 10%

¹⁸⁰True American, February 14, 1855, p. 2, February 21, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁸¹Ibid., March 14, 1855, p. 1.

¹⁸²Ibid., April 18, 1855, p. 2, April 25, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁸³Ibid., May 9, 1855, p. 2.

of the population. Friction between people from different cultural groups was much less severe in northeastern Ohio than it was in the more heterogeneous southwestern portion of the state.

In the three counties in which the Know-Nothings temporarily rose to some prominence, nativist sentiment was grounded upon more practical motives than dislike for alien cultures. In 1855, Portage and Mahoning Counties contained relatively small foreign populations, but in each county, Republican and Democratic forces were evenly matched. Since most immigrants chose to enter the Democratic Party, the fusionists perceived any increase in the number of foreign newcomers to be a serious political threat. In Cuyahoga County, although prejudice against the substantial foreign population in Cleveland accounted for much of the nativists' activity, Republican leaders undoubtedly feared that a new influx of immigrants would greatly fortify the local organizations of their Democratic opponents. In general, fusionists in counties in which political battles were closely contested tended to exhibit much less tolerance for foreigners than did their counterparts in Ashtabula and in other areas where the Republican Party had no viable Democratic opposition.

Even in those few regions within the Reserve where the Know-Nothings attained a measure of popularity, Republicans eventually repudiated nativism when it interfered with antislavery. During the early summer of 1855, as the movement to nominate Chase gathered momentum and as the events transpired in Kansas, Reserve inhabitants who had participated in the 1854 anti-Nebraska movement accepted Giddings' contention that the party must unite solely around the principle of antislavery. Now perceiving Know-Nothing philosophy to be a distinct threat, Reserve Republicans shared the sentiments of the former nativist editor of the

Portage County Democrat who declared on July 25 "...if the 'American' Party as it is called, shall be arrayed against the great Republican uprising of the people, let it perish as it deserves".¹⁸⁴

In 1855, Ohio Republicans had once again scheduled their state convention for July 13, the anniversary of the passage of the fabled Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The Reserve's antislavery Republicans, although they had successfully overcome the challenge of the nativists within their home region, braced themselves for a major confrontation with the more numerous Know-Nothings. The failure of the state Know-Nothing Council to make independent nominations troubled the Reserve's antislavery politicians and editors. Aware of the strength of the sect in the central and southern portions of Ohio, these party leaders expected Know-Nothings to attempt to capture control of the Republican convention.¹⁸⁵ On the eve of this gathering, Reserve delegates were determined to prevent the nativists from undermining the distinctly antislavery foundations of the party.

Reserve Republicans enjoyed one of their greatest victories at the 1855 convention. Salmon Chase received the gubernatorial nomination by a wide majority on the first ballot. The convention's resolutions were remarkably similar to those enacted in 1854, and the platform contained absolutely no mention of nativist principles.¹⁸⁶ Know-Nothings

¹⁸⁴Portage County Democrat, July 25, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵Leader, May 5, 1855, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, June 14, 1855, p. 4; D. A. G. to Bailey, Cleveland, May 19, 1855, in National Era, May 31, 1855, p. 85.

¹⁸⁶Joseph Smith, The Republican Party, p. 36; Plain Dealer, July 14, 1855, p. 2; Republican Sentinel, July 20, 1855, p. 2; National Era, July 19, 1855, p. 114.

were awarded all places on the state ticket beneath Chase, but the faction had clearly failed to remove antislavery as the guiding principle behind the Republican Party.¹⁸⁷

Reserve delegates were primarily responsible for the tenor of the proceedings. Voting with near unanimity, the northeastern Ohio contingent overpowered the poorly organized and dispirited nativists.¹⁸⁸ Joshua Giddings, a master in the art of convention management, guided the Chase candidacy through the few obstacles erected by the die-hard Know-Nothings.¹⁸⁹ Though many of the Reserve delegates would have preferred a stronger antislavery platform, the radical minority had, under the circumstances, successfully accomplished its objective.¹⁹⁰

Reserve Democrats immediately recognized that their opponents had attained an important triumph at the Columbus convention. On July 16, the Plain Dealer flatly stated that the selection of Chase was intolerable and that the Reserve radicals intended to form a purely northern party that would inevitably provoke disunionism.¹⁹¹ Another Democratic journal, the Canfield Republican Sentinel, noted that the Reserve Free Soilers had miraculously forced the state's Know-Nothings to subscribe to the dangerous

¹⁸⁷Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, p. 255; Stewart, Joshua Giddings, p. 233.

¹⁸⁸Despite their numerical superiority, Ohio Know-Nothings entered the Columbus convention in disarray. Many were disgusted with the behavior of southern delegates at the Philadelphia convention. Quite a few abandoned nativism and cast their votes for Chase and for the platform resolutions; True American, July 18, 1855, p. 2; National Era, July 26, 1855, p. 123.

¹⁸⁹National Era, July 26, 1855, p. 123; Plain Dealer, July 14, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰Ashtabula Sentinel, July 19, 1855, p. 4.

¹⁹¹Plain Dealer, July 16, 1855, p. 2.

antislavery ideology.¹⁹² Dismayed that the expected rift between antislavery adherents and nativists had not materialized, Reserve Democrats vowed to defeat the strange combination of "abolitionists and nativists".¹⁹³

Republican papers within the Reserve unanimously endorsed the proceedings at the state convention. The more conservative journals, those under the control of the former Whigs and nativists, magnanimously called for the election of Chase and the entire state ticket.¹⁹⁴ Following the example of Giddings, the old Free Soil papers expressed satisfaction with the events that had transpired in Columbus.¹⁹⁵ Ignoring the platform, the Leader argued that the selection of Chase virtually guaranteed that the issue of slavery would continue to dominate the affairs of the Republican Party.¹⁹⁶ The Ashtabula Sentinel, disappointed that the new platform had not contained a stronger denunciation of the Pierce Administration, nevertheless boldly stated that the nomination of Chase more than compensated for any deficiencies in the party resolutions.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹²Most Ohio Know-Nothings did accept the results of the convention and remained within the Republican Party. A small group of nativist extremists selected the venerable ex-governor Allen Trimble to run against Medill and Chase as a nominee of the American Party. Support for this third party was largely confined to the central and southern portions of Ohio. In 1855, the American Party was virtually impotent within the Western Reserve; Republican Sentinel, July 20, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁹³Plain Dealer, July 16, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴True American, July 25, 1855, p. 2; Reporter, July 19, 1855, p. 2; Portage County Democrat, July 18, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁹⁵Giddings to Readers, Ashtabula Sentinel, July 19, 1855, p. 4.

¹⁹⁶Leader, July 17, 1855, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷Ashtabula Sentinel, July 19, 1855, p. 4.

By late July, 1855, the Republican Party within the Western Reserve had withstood the challenge of the Know-Nothing movement. The region's nativists, always more concerned with political spoils than with proscriptive ideologies, had accepted Chase and had reaffirmed the antislavery foundations of the party. Convinced that their organization had attained the status of a permanent institution, Reserve party leaders once again focused their attention upon their Democratic opponents and upon the upcoming fall elections.

Despite their dedication to principles that most Americans considered to be extreme and radical, Reserve politicians had always exhibited a remarkable capacity for political compromise. During the late summer of 1855, party leaders enthusiastically campaigned not only for Chase but also for the eight candidates on the state ticket who were all professed members of the Know-Nothing Order. Incensed by Democratic charges that the Republicans were hypocrites, Sentinel editor Howells defended the ticket, and he argued that the Republicans must accept all men who pledged to support the platform, regardless of their past affiliations.¹⁹⁸ Clearly, the ability to rationalize inconsistencies between principles and policies was one of the Reserve Republican Party's most valuable assets.

Although party strategists and editors attempted to recreate the highly emotional atmosphere that had characterized the anti-Nebraska demonstrations, the 1855 campaign was generally more tranquil than that of the previous year. No national offices were at stake in the Ohio election, and, more importantly, the rank and file of both major parties

¹⁹⁸Ibid., August 23, 1855, p. 4.

might well have been alienated by the power struggles and political maneuvers that dominated state politics during the first half of 1855. Nonetheless, Reserve Republican leaders attempted to recapture the impressive followings that had carried them to resounding victories in 1854. In editorials and in speeches, the politicians and editors chronicled the events within Kansas, and they consistently attributed all misfortunes of the Free State forces in that territory to the machinations of the Administration.¹⁹⁹ In an effort to keep enthusiasm for the Chase candidacy at a maximum level, Republican editors linked Democratic Governor Medill directly to Franklin Pierce, and they stated emphatically that a vote for Medill could only be interpreted as an endorsement of all the treacheries carried out by the Pierce regime.²⁰⁰ Finally, Reserve politicians reminded their supporters that the threat from the advocates of slavery had not diminished and that the sacred rights of the North would continue to be imperiled until the power of the "Slave Democracy" was irreparably shattered.²⁰¹

During the final days of the campaign, both Democratic and Republican leaders resorted to slander, gross exaggerations, and lies. On October 1, the Plain Dealer published a flagrantly racist editorial in which it accused Chase of advocating social and political equality for blacks, amalgamation, and disunion.²⁰² As the election drew near, the

¹⁹⁹Leader, August 13, 1855, p. 2, August 21, 1855, p. 2, September 7, 1855, p. 2.

²⁰⁰Ibid., August 8, 1855, p. 2, August 31, 1855, p. 2, September 20, 1855, p. 2; True American, October 3, 1855, p. 2.

²⁰¹True American, October 3, 1855, p. 2; Leader, September 8, 1855, p. 2.

²⁰²Plain Dealer, October 1, 1855, p. 2.

Republican Leader also practiced irresponsible journalism. This paper portrayed the Pierce Democrats as "totally depraved" tyrants whose very presence in public office threatened basic American liberties.²⁰³ In the most bizarre accusation of the campaign, the Leader further charged that Know-Nothings were present in abundant numbers within the Democratic ranks.²⁰⁴ As such emotional rhetoric and unsubstantiated charges indicate, partisans in both camps expected a close contest and vigorously sought to acquire the allegiance of all possible voters.

On October 9, Ohioans selected Salmon Chase as their governor by a plurality of over 15,000 votes, and they elected each of the eight other Republican candidates on the state ticket by majorities of approximately 40,000.²⁰⁵ In the Western Reserve, residents in all counties cast a plurality of their votes for Chase. All Republican candidates for the state legislature were victorious in northeastern Ohio.²⁰⁶

Although they had captured all state offices and the vast majority of local positions, Republicans within the Reserve looked upon the election results with mixed emotions. The new party had not been able to duplicate the overwhelming margins that the anti-Nebraska protesters had forged during 1854. Democratic strength had increased in seven of the twelve Reserve counties. The fusionists suffered a serious decline in Cuyahoga and less severe losses in Portage and Mahoning Counties. Unquestionably, the internal strife between nativists and the antislavery

²⁰³Leader, October 4, 1855, p. 2.

²⁰⁴Ibid., October 5, 1855, p. 2.

²⁰⁵See Appendix G.

²⁰⁶True American, October 31, 1855, p. 2.

contingent precipitated these setbacks, but the Republicans also floundered in four counties in which nativism never attained much prominence. Conversely, citizens in Ashtabula and in other counties in which Free Soil sentiment had traditionally been strong cast more votes for the Republicans in 1855 than they did for the anti-Nebraska coalitionists in 1854.

The 1856 election confused and confounded the Reserve's Republican press. The Portage County Democrat labelled the outcome as a great triumph that was attained in spite of serious internal divisions.²⁰⁷ At the other extreme, the Cleveland Leader, having seen party strength in its home county decline by nearly 2,000, suggested that the Republican showing was "mortifying" and "humiliating".²⁰⁸ The Ashtabula Sentinel offered a more reasonable analysis of the contest. Describing the election as a little disappointing, the paper still noted that voters within the Reserve had provided the margin that carried Chase to his illustrious victory.²⁰⁹

Though they had only secured a few local offices, the Reserve Democrats interpreted the 1855 election as the beginning of the end for the Ohio Republicans. Arguing that statewide support for the opposition had been cut in half within a year and that Republican strength in the Reserve had been drastically overestimated, the Democratic organs confidently predicted that the people would repudiate the antislavery

²⁰⁷Portage County Democrat, October 17, 1855, p. 2.

²⁰⁸Leader, October 12, 1855, p. 2, October 17, 1855, p. 2.

²⁰⁹Ashtabula Sentinel, October 18, 1855, p. 4.

fanatics during the important 1856 congressional and presidential elections.²¹⁰

The optimism displayed by the Democrats would soon prove to be unfounded. Although they were harassed by doubts in the aftermath of the October election, Reserve Republicans actually made tremendous progress during 1855. At the beginning of the year, the Reserve political elite had attempted to create a viable party out of the heterogeneous group of anti-Nebraska dissidents. At that time, the infant organization lacked specific policies and a sense of direction. During the course of the year, politicians and editors shaped the young party around the old Free Soil principles of antislavery and toleration for Protestant immigrants. Inevitably, the Reserve's very few staunch nativists and the extremely conservative Whigs withdrew from the Republicans and aligned with the enfeebled American Party. Their departure, coupled with the return of prodigal Democrats to their original party, accounted for the numerical losses suffered by the Republicans in some counties within the Reserve. In the long run, the defection of those elements which could not abide by the party's formal principles would strengthen the Reserve Republicans. By the conclusion of 1855, the Reserve party had become a permanent organization with distinct principles and goals. Firmly in control of the political affairs within the Western Reserve, Republican leaders now determined to deliver the final blow to the hated Pierce Democrats during the presidential year of 1856.

²¹⁰Plain Dealer, October 12, 1855, p. 2; Republican Sentinel, October 12, 1855, p. 2, October 19, 1855, p. 2.

CHAPTER V

THE ATTAINMENT OF MATURITY: RESERVE REPUBLICANS
AND PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS, 1856

On January 14, 1856, Salmon P. Chase delivered his inaugural address at the Statehouse in Columbus before a huge throng of jubilant supporters. Ohio Republicans had ample reason to celebrate. Within two years, the party had captured the office of governor, placed majorities in both branches of the Ohio legislature, and boosted the morale of their brethren throughout the North by registering an impressive triumph in the 1855 election.²¹¹ Having attained the political power that they so ardently sought, party leaders perceived themselves to be the vanguard that would reform the state in accordance with sound principles and lead northern Republicans to victory in the upcoming presidential contest.

In Salmon Chase, Republicans had chosen a governor who was capable of providing them with the quality leadership that was so essential to the attainment of their lofty goals. During his first weeks in office, the wily professional developed a program that combined economic conservatism with antislavery radicalism.²¹² Chase supported the tax law enacted by the legislature, and he bestowed tacit approval upon a new

²¹¹During the 52nd legislative session, there were 29 Republicans and 6 Democrats in the Ohio Senate, and there were 78 Republicans and 34 Democrats in the Ohio House.

²¹²Roseboom, The Civil War Era, pp. 314 - 315; Republican Sentinel, January 18, 1856, p. 3.

banking bill that was subject to an October referendum.²¹³ The Democratic press chided him for his subservience to the state's powerful financial interests, but the new governor realized that most members of the Ohio Republican Party, including the vociferous Reserve antislavery advocates, were essentially conservative on economic issues.²¹⁴ In particular, Chase, by pursuing a cautious economic policy, placated the central and southern Ohio Republicans who had formerly been very conservative Whigs. This strategy undoubtedly prevented the wholesale defection of that faction to Millard Fillmore and the American Party later in the summer.

Although he adjusted his economic policy to conform with the wishes of the majority of Republican legislators, Chase was adamant on the issue of slavery. In his inaugural oration, he stated that the official position of the government of Ohio must always remain as opposition to any further extension of slavery.²¹⁵ In an address to the Ohio General Assembly on February 14, the Governor called that body's attention to the "invasion" of Kansas, and he asked that Ohioans provide all possible aid to the Free Staters in that beleaguered territory.²¹⁶

Throughout the winter and spring of 1856, the largely Republican Ohio legislature responded to Chase's pleas and passed a series of distinctly antislavery resolutions and laws. In March, the Ohio House

²¹³Ibid. This banking proposal was subsequently rejected by Ohio voters in the fall election.

²¹⁴Republican Sentinel, February 1, 1856, p. 2.

²¹⁵Chase Inaugural Address, in Mahoning County Register (Youngstown), January 24, 1856, pp. 1 - 2.

²¹⁶Chase to Ohio General Assembly, in Mahoning County Register, February 14, 1856, p. 2; Charles Robinson to Chase, Lawrence, Kansas, February 22, 1856, in American Historical Society, Diary and Correspondence of Salmon P. Chase (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), reprinted by Da Capo Press, New York, 1971, pp. 475 - 476.

adopted five radical resolutions which called for the admission of Kansas as a free state, repudiated that territory's reigning proslavery legislature, and charged the federal government with the obligation to protect the inhabitants from the "border ruffians".²¹⁷ The General Assembly also made more substantive contributions to antislavery when legislators issued a denunciation of the fugitive slave law and enacted habeus corpus and personal liberty laws that were designed to hinder potential slave catchers.²¹⁸

The state legislature reinforced the power of the antislavery forces within the national Republican hierarchy when, on February 28, 1856, members voted to return Benjamin Wade to his seat in the United States Senate. Wade secured another term by virtue of a lopsided 102 - 36 victory over challenger David Tod, a Mahoning County Democrat.²¹⁹ This election had been delayed for over two weeks when the Republican caucus, consisting of many members from the nativist faction of the party, balked at the renomination of the incumbent. Badgered by intense pressure from Chase and from almost all of the state's Republican papers, the former Know-Nothings again yielded to the demands of the party's antislavery leaders.²²⁰ The renomination of Wade permanently removed any power that the nativist branch of the party might still have possessed.

²¹⁷National Era, April 10, 1856, p. 60; Roseboom, The Civil War Era, pp. 314 - 315.

²¹⁸Ashtabula Sentinel, March 27, 1856, p. 4; Roseboom, The Civil War Era, pp. 314 - 315.

²¹⁹Joseph Smith, Republican Party, p. 42.

²²⁰Trefousse, Benjamin Wade, pp. 98 - 99; Mahoning County Register, January 31, 1856, p. 2; National Era, March 6, 1856, p. 39.

By the middle of 1856, antislavery politicians who had supported Chase had been installed in the more important party offices throughout Ohio. Most former nativists reluctantly acquiesced to political reality and remained within the organization. The most recalcitrant conservatives, concentrated exclusively within the southern regions of the state, eventually settled in Ohio's ineffectual American party.

In the Western Reserve, the antislavery programs of Chase and the legislature were applauded, but, during the first days of the new year, public attention was focused upon the prolonged Speakership contest in the United States House of Representatives. Since the opening of the thirty-fourth Congress in December, 1855, the large nativist contingent and the antislavery forces had been locked in a bitter struggle over the selection of a Speaker.²²¹ By early January, Reserve antislavery leaders, already enraged by Ohio nativists' hesitation to endorse Wade and by Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Ford's open flirtation with the American Party, vowed to prevent the nativists from acquiring control of the national legislature.²²² Accordingly, the region's representatives, Giddings,

²²¹Ashtabula Sentinel, December 27, 1855, p. 4; Republican Sentinel, January 11, 1856, p. 2. According to the custom of the era, elections were held one year in advance of the next session of Congress. Therefore, the impact of the 1854 anti-Nebraska uprising was not felt until the new Congress assembled during December, 1855. The 34th Congress which convened during that month contained a majority of men who had run for office as anti-Nebraska dissidents. Divided into antislavery and nativist factions, members of this group quarrelled among themselves as often as they fought with the Democrats. Political alignments within Congress were so unstable at this time that the Congressional Globe, perhaps in a gesture of despair, failed to list the party affiliations of the representatives.

²²²In January, Ford made remarks in his inaugural address and in several other speeches that provoked antislavery advocates to label him as a hypocrite, a liar, and a traitor to the cause of antislavery. Leader, January 11, 1856, p. 2; Mahoning County Register, January 24, 1856, p. 2; Joshua Giddings to Joseph A. Giddings, Washington, January 12, 1856, in Giddings Papers.

Edward Wade, Bliss, Leiter, and Sherman, consistently supported the antislavery Republicans' nominee, Massachusetts Representative Nathaniel Banks.²²³ After nine weeks and numerous ballots, Banks was finally elected by a small margin after Giddings and other manipulators within the antislavery camp had successfully moved that a plurality rule be utilized in the voting for Speaker.²²⁴ Despite their less than impressive victory, Western Reserve organs hailed the selection of Banks as a glorious triumph.²²⁵ Writing to his constituents, the optimistic Giddings interpreted the election as the end of the southern domination of the national government.²²⁶ By March, 1856, confident Reserve Republicans began to channel all of their resources to their final objective, the defeat of the Democratic administration and the election of a Republican president.

²²³Congressional Globe, 34th Congress, 1st Session, December 24, 1855, p. 74, January 3, 1856, p. 141, January 9, 1856, p. 176. Ironically, Banks, like virtually every other Massachusetts representative who was elected on the anti-Nebraska ticket during 1854, was a member of the Know-Nothing Order. However, in contrast to members of the sect in most other places, the Massachusetts nativists were notoriously radical antislavery advocates. Antislavery leaders in Ohio recognized this fact, and even the most radical journals pronounced Banks an acceptable candidate for Speaker. See William Howells' evaluation of "proper" and unacceptable Know-Nothings in Ashtabula Sentinel, February 21, 1856, p. 4.

²²⁴Leader, February 4, 1856, p. 2; Congressional Globe, 34th Congress, 1st Session, December 15, 1855, p. 27, December 24, 1855, p. 78; Joshua R. Giddings, History of the Rebellion: Its Authors and Causes (New York: Follett, Foster, and Co., 1864), pp. 388 - 389.

²²⁵Leader, February 4, 1856, p. 2; Mahoning County Register, February 7, 1856, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, February 7, 1856, p. 5.

²²⁶Giddings to the People of the 20th Congressional District of Ohio, in Ashtabula Sentinel, February 21, 1856, p. 4.

During the first half of 1856, Reserve party leaders attempted to persuade their counterparts in other northern states that Republican fortunes in the presidential race could best be served by the selection of a staunch antislavery candidate. Since the 1855 Ohio election, the Leader and the Ashtabula Sentinel had consistently extolled the qualifications of Salmon Chase.²²⁷ At a preliminary convention held at Pittsburgh in February, an Ohio delegation that included many politicians from the Reserve actively sought presidential delegates for the Ohio governor.²²⁸ Chase's candidacy was further strengthened by the proceedings at the Ohio Republican convention in late May. In addition to the familiar antislavery resolutions, the participants at this gathering voted to include a clause within the state platform that invited all citizens, native or foreign born, to join the Republican Party.²²⁹ Convinced that the warring factions within the party in Ohio had finally been united, Chase supporters portrayed their candidate as a resolute leader who could bring similar harmony to the national organization.

During June, a majority of the country's Republicans who had assembled at Philadelphia for the national convention repudiated Chase and exhibited little enthusiasm for the Reserve's brand of Republicanism. Although it mentioned the outrages in Kansas, the convention's platform was, in essence, a moderate non-extensionist document that contrasted

²²⁷Leader, March 20, 1856, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, April 17, 1856, p. 4.

²²⁸Roseboom, The Civil War Era, p. 316; Joseph Smith, Republican Party, p. 49.

²²⁹Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, p. 255; Joseph Smith, Republican Party, pp. 61 - 62; Leader, May 31, 1856, p. 2.

sharply with the antislavery convictions of most of the Reserve delegates.²³⁰ Chase supporters, recognizing that their candidate was handicapped by his numerous political enemies and by his radical reputation, withdrew his name before the presidential balloting. Ohioan John McLean, the Supreme Court Justice who was popular among the more conservative elements of the party, emerged as a viable candidate, but neither he nor any other party veteran could attract enough support to prevent the nomination of John C. Fremont.²³¹ A career adventurer with ambiguous political views, Fremont had been courted during the spring of 1856 by practical Republicans who hoped to convert this "pathfinder's" reputation into electoral votes. His selection as the party's standard-bearer gave clear indication that most of the nation's Republicans did not yet believe that a purely antislavery party could compete with the incumbent Democratic Administration.

When news of Fremont's nomination reached northeastern Ohio, John Gray, Plain Dealer editor and Cleveland postmaster, confidently predicted that the Democratic party would experience a great revitalization throughout the Western Reserve. The prominent Democratic politician labelled Fremont as a southern sympathizer who harbored views that were anathema to the Reserve's "Free Soil radicals".²³² Indeed, the Leader and the Sentinel had earlier offered stern opposition to Fremont's candidacy. Objecting to Fremont's lack of experience and to his uncertain political sentiments, both papers had demanded that the national convention choose

²³⁰Leader, June 20, 1856, p. 2; Stewart, Joshua Giddings, p. 239.

²³¹Roseboom, The Civil War Era, pp. 317 - 318.

²³²Plain Dealer, June 25, 1856, p. 2.

a Republican stalwart who had already proven his devotion to the cause of antislavery.²³³

Gray and Reserve Democrats had once again underestimated the flexibility and the adaptability of their Republican opponents. In the weeks just prior to the national convention, the region's Republican press, confronted with the probability of Fremont's selection, promptly muted their criticism. Immediately after the convention had adjourned, Reserve Republican organs promised unyielding support for the new presidential nominee.²³⁴ The name of Fremont and his running mate, William Dayton of New Jersey, were placed on the mastheads of all Republican papers in northeastern Ohio.²³⁵ Fremont clubs were organized in most localities, and the Leader and the Sentinel, Fremont's foremost critics just a few weeks previously, published glorified biographies of the candidate and vigorously denied the myriad accusations that the Democratic press had levelled against him.²³⁶

Reserve papers also pronounced the Philadelphia platform to be a sound document that was perfectly harmonious with antislavery principles.²³⁷ Giddings, Benjamin Wade, and other national representatives joined with the local politicians and editors and pledged full support for the platform

²³³Leader, April 10, 1856, p. 2, April 26, 1856, p. 2, April 28 1856, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, May 1, 1856, p. 4, May 8, 1856, p. 4.

²³⁴Leader, June 19, 1856, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, June 26, 1856, p. 4; Mahoning County Register, June 26, 1856, p. 2.

²³⁵Ibid.

²³⁶Leader, June 27, 1856, p. 2, June 30, 1856, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, July 3, 1856, p. 4.

²³⁷Ashtabula Sentinel, June 26, 1856, p. 4; Leader, June 20, 1856, p. 2.

and the national ticket.²³⁸ By the first week in July, local Republican organizations throughout the Reserve had begun to campaign for a presidential candidate who, in the opinion of many political analysts, had not yet clarified his position upon the great issue of the day.

The 1856 electoral campaign within the Western Reserve degenerated into a vicious struggle characterized by rampant verbal assaults and occasional incidents of physical violence. Calm during the political year of 1855, Reserve inhabitants had become aroused by a series of events that had occurred in rapid sequence during the spring of 1856. Civil war had erupted within Kansas. While delivering one of his customary antislavery addresses, Joshua Giddings suffered a mild stroke on the floor of Congress. Most importantly, Charles Sumner had been bludgeoned at his desk in the Senate by Preston Brooks, a slaveholding representative from South Carolina. Reserve politicians and editors assigned responsibility for all of these episodes to the Pierce Administration and to the southern conspirators who had, in their opinion, usurped control of the national government.²³⁹ Prolific, scathing editorials on the incidents within Kansas and on the Sumner affair became prominent features of Reserve Republican papers throughout the spring and the summer of 1856.²⁴⁰ The

²³⁸Trefousse, Benjamin Wade, p. 104; Stewart, Joshua Giddings, p. 240; Giddings, History of the Rebellion, pp. 397 - 398.

²³⁹Leader, May 24, 1856, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, May 15, 1856, p. 4; John Sherman to William Sherman, Washington, June 29, 1856, in Rachel Sherman Thorndike, ed., The Sherman Letters: Correspondence Between General Sherman and Senator Sherman from 1837 to 1891 (New York: 1894), reprinted by Da Capo Press, New York, 1969, pp. 57 - 58.

²⁴⁰The best example can be found in Mahoning County Register, May 29, 1856, p. 2, "The bludgeon and the pistol, the cannon and the torch of destruction, are the most potent arguments with which the present Administration silences those who have the hardihood to oppose its behest." See also, Ashtabula Sentinel, May 29, 1856, p. 4.

Reserve's popular national figures also fanned the passions of their constituents. In the aftermath of the attack on Sumner, Benjamin Wade issued a defiant challenge to slaveholders from the floor of the Senate.²⁴¹ Giddings, after a brief period of recuperation, returned to his post and, much to the satisfaction of his supporters, continued to express his contempt for Southerners.²⁴²

Inspired by the propaganda in the press and by the bravado displayed by their leaders, Reserve citizens campaigned with vigor reminiscent of the 1854 anti-Nebraska protest. Throughout the summer and the early fall, large crowds attended rallies and meetings in all the prominent cities and villages of the Reserve.²⁴³ Significantly, Giddings, Benjamin Wade, and Edward Wade as well as other prominent Republican officeholders travelled extensively within northeastern Ohio and spoke at many of the political gatherings.²⁴⁴ Undoubtedly, party officials, acutely aware of the somewhat disappointing Republican showing within the Reserve during 1855, were determined to recapture the large majorities that the anti-Nebraska dissidents had forged in 1854.

While they were issuing their emotional appeals to the rank and file, Republican decision-makers were also selecting the principles upon which they intended to base their campaign. Party officials were disappointed when the Democrats chose James Buchanan as their presidential

²⁴¹Congressional Globe, 34th Congress, 1st Session, May 27, 1856, p. 1305.

²⁴²Stewart, Joshua Giddings, p. 238.

²⁴³Leader, August 7, 1856, p. 2, September 11, 1856, p. 2; Mahoning County Register, July 10, 1856, p. 2.

²⁴⁴Leader, September 11, 1856, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, October 2, 1856, p. 4; Mahoning County Register, September 25, 1856, p. 2.

nominee.²⁴⁵ Out of the country on a diplomatic assignment for several years, the Pennsylvanian was not intimately associated with the events that had divided the nation since the introduction of the Douglas Bill. Nevertheless, party strategists determined that Buchanan must assume the burdens created by his predecessor.²⁴⁶ During the tumultuous campaign, Reserve leaders simply diverted to the Democratic nominee the political venom that they had for so long directed at Pierce.

Throughout their brief career as members of the Republican Party, Reserve political leaders steadfastly combined the pursuit of public office with commitment to antislavery and free labor ideology. In 1856, the strategy developed by the Republican campaign managers reflected this revealing dichotomy. On the one hand, party leaders engaged in traditional political maneuvers that were designed exclusively to undermine and to discredit their opponents. For example, the Reserve Republican press continually defended Fremont against a constant stream of Democratic accusations.²⁴⁷ More importantly, Reserve editors, keenly aware of the sympathies of most of their readers, saturated the pages of their papers with sensational and biased accounts of warfare in Kansas and the latest developments relative to the Sumner-Brooks incident.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵The 1856 presidential contest was a three man race between Fremont, Buchanan, and the American Party candidate, former president Millard Fillmore. Like the American gubernatorial nominee in 1855, Fillmore had practically no supporters within the Western Reserve. The American Party captured a mere 1.6% of the Reserve vote in the November election.

²⁴⁶Leader, June 7, 1856, p. 2.

²⁴⁷Leader, July 11, 1856, p. 2; Mahoning County Register, August 14, 1856, p. 2, August 21, 1856, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, July 31, 1856, p. 4.

²⁴⁸Ashtabula Sentinel, July 17, 1856, p. 4, September 18, 1856, p. 4; Mahoning County Register, May 25, 1856, p. 2.

Occasionally, the astute Reserve citizen could detect amidst the deluge of political rhetoric the substantive principle of the Reserve Republican Party. Aside from mere personal ambition, party leaders were devoted to a northern belief system that glorified the concepts of individual freedom and free labor. On July 3, the editor of the Leader, infuriated by Democratic accusations in which members of his party were labelled as "Black Republicans" and Negro Worshippers", stated that the real issue was not the fate of blacks but rather whether "...free labor shall be prostrated by the invasion of slaves".²⁴⁹ Later in the same month, the Leader also noted that "...capital that is invested in human sinews is desperately attempting to wrest from Free Labor, from all men who work for their living, a broad domain of free territory rightfully the inheritance of labor".²⁵⁰ Despite the fact that the 1856 campaign was characterized by wild accusations, name calling, and appeals to men's baser instincts, poignant doctrinal exposes were common in Reserve newspapers.²⁵¹ Such statements indicate that radical antislavery within the Reserve was neither a simple political device nor an exotic hobby. Just as Southerners feared for the survival of their institutions, Reserve partisans were convinced that the outcome of the presidential election would have a profound impact upon their daily lives. Stirred by this apprehension and motivated by the quest for political spoils, Reserve party officials continued to campaign with furious intensity during the final months of the long contest.

²⁴⁹Leader, July 3, 1856, p. 2.

²⁵⁰Ibid., July 11, 1856, p. 2.

²⁵¹Ibid., July 30, 1856, p. 2; Ashtabula Sentinel, October 9, 1856, p. 1.

In Ohio, congressional and local elections preceded the November presidential contest. In these preliminary October elections, Republicans captured a slightly disappointing total of thirteen out of a possible twenty one seats in the national legislature.²⁵² In the Western Reserve, the party's performance was more impressive, and the 1856 victory margins were generally higher than those recorded in the state and local contests of 1855. Much of the personal rivalry that had hindered party unity in 1854 and 1855 had dissipated by the fall of 1856. All five incumbent congressmen easily attained renomination in the district conventions. Giddings, the veteran who had nearly been dethroned by his rivals in the Twentieth District during 1854, was awarded another nomination by acclamation.²⁵³ Secure in their positions within the Reserve Republican Party, all of these legislators routed their Democratic opponents in the fall elections.²⁵⁴

In the interval between the two elections, partisans in both camps accelerated their attempts to sway uncommitted voters. Leading the forces of the Administration, the Plain Dealer hurled slanderous epithets against Fremont and advised Democrats to watch for "hair-lipped" Germans at the polling places.²⁵⁵ The Republican press countered by praising the attributes of German Republicans, by documenting southern

²⁵²National Era, October 23, 1856, p. 170.

²⁵³Ashtabula Sentinel, August 21, 1856, p. 4; Mahoning County Register, August 21, 1856, p. 2; Leader, August 14, 1856, p. 2, September 19, 1856, p. 2.

²⁵⁴Ashtabula Sentinel, October 16, 1856, p. 4; See also Appendix H.

²⁵⁵Plain Dealer, October 4, 1856, p. 2, October 11, 1856, p. 2.

contempt for workingmen, and, above all, by stressing Democratic responsibility for Kansas.²⁵⁶

On November 4, American voters elected James Buchanan as their fifteenth president, and they returned a Democratic majority to the House of Representatives.²⁵⁷ Despite advance indications that the three vital states of Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois would fall under Democratic control, many Reserve Republicans had retained their characteristic optimism right up until election day.²⁵⁸ Stunned by their defeat, party leaders found consolation only in the knowledge that Ohio had remained within the Republican ranks. Specifically, voters within the Western Reserve were largely responsible for Fremont's triumph in their home state. The Republican ticket rolled up a majority of over 20,000 in the twelve Reserve counties, a figure that more than compensated for Fremont's 4,500 vote deficit in the other portions of Ohio.²⁵⁹

The 1856 presidential contest marked the first significant setback suffered by the Reserve's political elite since the formation of the Republican Party. Undaunted, party leaders derived additional resolve from this defeat. Immediately after the returns had been certified, the Reserve's Republican journals denounced the "southern sympathizers" who had undermined the Republican campaign in those northern states that were captured by Buchanan.²⁶⁰ Arguing that only four free states had been

²⁵⁶Leader, October 28, 1856, p. 2, November 3, 1856, p. 2; Mahoning County Register, October 23, 1856, p. 2.

²⁵⁷In the House of Representatives during the 35th Congress (1857 - 1859), there were 128 Democrats, 92 Republicans, and 14 Americans.

²⁵⁸Plain Dealer, October 16, 1856, p. 2; Leader, October 7, 1856, p. 2.

²⁵⁹See Appendix H.

²⁶⁰Leader, November 8, 1856, p. 2, November 15, 1856, p. 2.

carried by the Democrats, Reserve partisans and editors vowed to renew their crusade until the national government was liberated from the clutches of the slaveholders.²⁶¹ In words that best described the frustration as well as the reborn determination of Reserve Republicans, editor William Howells stated in the Ashtabula Sentinel on November 13, 1856: "Let Republicans steadily pursue their present course; keep up their organizations; carry every election they can; relax no effort; but fight every end of ground with slavery; and victory will come as surely as God is on the side of right".²⁶² For the next decade, Reserve political leaders, driven by fear of the South, by religious conviction, and by the lure of public office, would continue to promulgate the cause of antislavery before a troubled and weary nation.

²⁶¹Ibid., November 17, 1856, p. 2; Giddings to the People of the 20th Congressional District of Ohio, in Ashtabula Sentinel, November 20, 1856, pp. 4 - 5.

²⁶²Ashtabula Sentinel, November 13, 1856, p. 4.

CHAPTER VI

RADICALISM, POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY, AND THE
RESERVE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Significantly, the politicians and editors who dominated the public life of the Western Reserve had responded to the defeat of Fremont with a new spirit of defiance. Although they were dismayed that an opportunity to defeat the Democratic Administration had been squandered, Republican officials were fully aware that their organization had made tremendous progress in many northeastern Ohio communities within the brief span of two years. The feuding Whig and Free Soil factions had been combined into a strong political party. Democrats, who in 1853 had posed such a serious threat to the Reserve's entrenched political elite, had been repulsed by voters in all twelve counties by comfortable margins. The region's inhabitants, sharing fully the hopes and fears of the Republican hierarchy, had given their leaders a splendid vote of confidence by their overwhelming electoral support for the newcomer Fremont.

The Reserve Republican leaders, consisting of a small cadre of politicians and editors who had formerly been active in the Free Soil and Whig organizations, were primarily responsible for the impressive accomplishments of the young party. Effective propagandists and clever organizers, members of this elite proselytized the doctrine of political antislavery, and they skillfully constructed the local party units that carried the Republican candidates to victory on all levels of government.

In essence, the ability of Reserve Republican leaders to blend antislavery fervor with practical politics accounted for the party's

meteoric ascension within the Reserve. Politicians in the western world have long been plagued by discrepancies between morality and political expediency, but Reserve decision-makers were spared such a dilemma during the turbulent 1850's. Like the vast majority of their constituents, the Reserve political leaders were immersed in the ideology of free labor. In this belief system, the slave society of the South became an aggressive enemy that was constantly endeavoring to rob the northern citizenry of their God-given rights. Most Reserve inhabitants looked upon resistance to such a foe, especially in the form of attempts to preserve the western territories, as a sacred duty. Regardless of their own motivations, Reserve politicians could reasonably expect that a sizeable majority of their constituents would endorse any policy that purported to impede the designs of the "slave power".

Certain that a course which stressed resistance to slavery was both desirable and feasible, the Reserve elite emphasized antislavery above all else during the decisive years between 1854 and 1856. In 1854, decision-makers in both the Whig and Free Soil camps called upon their followers to forsake old party affiliations and beseeched them to merge into a new antislavery organization. During 1855, the most prominent Reserve politicians and editors waged a fierce and, ultimately, successful struggle against nativism, the sinister force that threatened to undermine the antislavery foundations of the Ohio Republican Party. Finally, in 1856, Reserve politicians and editors, convinced that victory was within their grasp, portrayed the highly suspect John C. Fremont as an ardent foe of slavery and as a staunch defender of free labor and the rights of the North.

At the 1856 Republican convention, Reserve partisans discovered that their philosophies were deemed unacceptable by the majority of the country's Republicans. In the years between the defeat of Fremont and the Civil War, the influence of the Reserve party leaders would decline further as the more moderate elements rose to positions of leadership within the national party hierarchy. The pragmatic Benjamin Wade remained one of the party's most gifted spokesmen, but the majority of Reserve Republicans, including the veteran Joshua Giddings, were relegated to political obscurity by a new breed of party officials who favored a much more cautious program of non-extension.

Despite such misfortune, Reserve politicians made significant contributions to the development of the Republican Party on the local, state, and national levels during the formative years of the mid-1850's. By constructing solid party organizations in the towns and villages, Reserve leaders insured themselves of loyal electoral support for many decades. By vigorously resisting the Know-Nothing movement during 1855, Reserve partisans prevented the assimilation of Ohio Republicans into the intolerant nativist organizations. By enthusiastically supporting the candidacy of Fremont in 1856, Reserve inhabitants made possible the adventurer's triumph in Ohio and, in the process, they provided the national Republican Party with an important moral victory in an otherwise disastrous political campaign. Finally, Reserve Republicans helped to keep intact the political antislavery movement. In state and national conventions during this era, Reserve leaders relentlessly condemned the machinations of Southerners, and they constantly reminded their northern brethren of their obligation to protect free labor society from encroachment by the slaveholders. Without question, the Reserve Republicans'

obsession with antislavery, a trait which they shared with other segments of the northern population, precluded sectional compromise and did nothing to impede the arrival of what virtually every northeastern Ohio politician described as the "irrepressible conflict";

For the past century, scholars have liberally applied the designation "radical" to Giddings, the Wades, and most other Reserve Republicans. Historians have assigned a wide variety of meanings to this frequently overworked term. Quite often, authors have portrayed Republican radicals as abolitionists, but such a description is completely inappropriate. During the 1850's, all members of the political antislavery movement, unlike the extremist Garrisonians, steadfastly denied that they intended to interfere with slavery within the borders of the southern states. Like their counterparts throughout the North, Reserve Republicans were dedicated exclusively to the prevention of the extension of slavery. Recognizing this distinction between abolitionists and advocates of political antislavery, Eric Foner has provided researchers with a more practical definition of radicalism. In his view, radicals consisted of those Republicans who persistently refused to compromise with the South over the issue of slavery.²⁶³ Under these terms, Reserve Republicans could safely be classified as radicals. During the mid-1850's, the Reserve party leaders did accept moderate platforms at state and national conventions, and they did support candidates whose views on the slavery question were not entirely acceptable. However, such essential political compromises were always made with their northern partners. On no occasion did any Reserve figure ever suggest that an accommodation could be reached

²⁶³Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, p. 104.

with the South on the vital topic of the fate of the western territories. Instead, Reserve politicians and their associates, the newspaper editors, constantly denounced slavery as an immoral institution and vowed to grasp from the hands of the slaveholding oligarchs the political power that, in their opinion, rightfully belonged to the free men of the North.

Racial attitudes have also been widely used as an index of radicalism. If modern egalitarian philosophy is utilized as the criterion, Reserve Republicans cannot be labeled as radicals. The small black population of the Reserve diminished the opportunity for displays of overt racial antagonism, but Reserve inhabitants shared many of the prejudices which were common to the typical midwesterner.²⁶⁴ A small but nevertheless important portion of the resistance to the Douglas Bill within north-eastern Ohio was based on the premise that the measure would "Africanize" the territories and convert them into "dumping grounds" for southern slaves.²⁶⁵ As late as the 1850's, prominent leaders, including Joshua Giddings, approved colonization schemes as long as such enterprises were kept strictly voluntary.²⁶⁶ Sensitive to Democratic accusations that linked the Republicans to blacks, the Reserve press stated in no uncertain terms that the crusade to save the western territories was being conducted exclusively for the benefit of northern white men and their posterity.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴Eugene H. Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery, Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), p. 34.

²⁶⁵Mahoning Free Democrat, March 1, 1854, p. 2.

²⁶⁶Berwanger, Frontier Against Slavery, p. 132; Leader, August 25, 1854, p. 2; Filler, Crusade Against Slavery, p. 225.

²⁶⁷Berwanger, Frontier Against Slavery, p. 130.

At the same time, Reserve Republicans, especially members of the political elite, occasionally demonstrated a more enlightened racial policy. Although they balked at proclaiming the black man a social equal, Reserve leaders asserted that he was entitled to the protection of the Constitution.²⁶⁸ The Western Reserve had steadfastly opposed the state's black exclusion laws, and Giddings, Benjamin Wade, and many other public officials had advocated black suffrage.²⁶⁹ The contempt of Reserve politicians for the fugitive slave laws has become legendary. More significant, perhaps, was the assistance that Giddings, the Wades, and lesser known leaders gave to free blacks who were attempting to reclaim their families from slavery.²⁷⁰ Because most inhabitants had little sympathy for the plight of blacks, such manifestations of kindness can not simply be dismissed as politicians attempting to secure votes. More likely, the members of the Reserve elite felt a strong obligation to provide for the victims of the pernicious institution of slavery, a people who were, in the words of Benjamin Wade, "...despised by all, repudiated by all, outcasts upon the face of the earth, without any fault of theirs that I know of".²⁷¹ Although such paternalism might justifiably incur the wrath

²⁶⁸Congressional Globe, 33rd Congress, 1st Session, February 6, 1854, p. 339, February 28, 1854, p. 504; Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, p. 291.

²⁶⁹Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, pp. 281 - 283; Berwanger, Frontier Against Slavery, p. 44.

²⁷⁰Ashtabula Sentinel, March 13, 1856, p. 4; True American June 27, 1855, p. 2; On several occasions during Congressional recesses, Giddings and the Wades presided at meetings in which funds were raised to aid local free blacks who were attempting to purchase the freedom of relatives who were still confined as slaves.

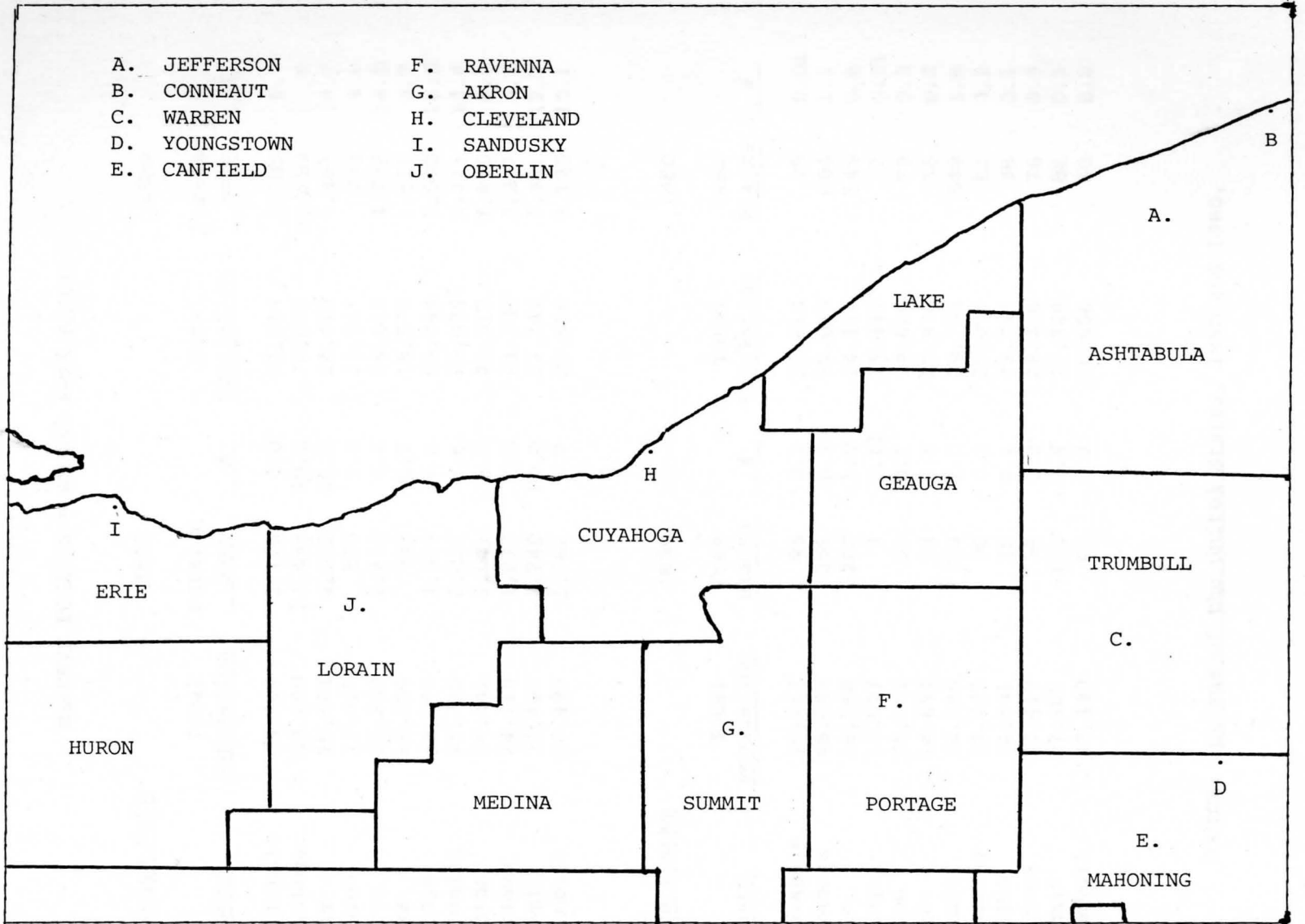
²⁷¹Congressional Globe, Appendix, 36th Congress, 1st Session, March 7, 1860, p. 154.

of modern man, such sentiments typified the racial thought of Reserve Republicans. In the world of the mid-nineteenth century, their position on race, like their stance in politics, was advanced and, indeed, radical.

In a final analysis, the accomplishments and the failures of the politicians and editors who forged the Republican Party have been obscured by the Western Reserve's reputation as a fortress of antislavery and abolitionism. To this day, esteemed scholars have accepted these stereotypes and have failed to subject Reserve politics to a meticulous examination. Such an oversight is most unfortunate, for the multi-talented founders of the region's Republican Party have much to offer historians who are seeking a more precise explanation for the revolutionary developments in national politics during the decade before the Civil War.

APPENDIX A

THE WESTERN RESERVE



APPENDIX B

RESERVE FOREIGN BORN AND FREE BLACKS

<u>Foreign Born</u>		1850		1860		
<u>County</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Foreign Born</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Foreign Born</u>	<u>%</u>
Ashtabula	28,767	1,120	4.0	31,814	1,793	5.7
Cuyahoga	48,099	14,495	30.0	78,033	28,809	37.0
Erie	18,568	4,052	21.0	24,474	6,463	24.7
Geauga	17,827	579	3.0	15,817	734	4.6
Huron	26,203	1,750	6.6	29,616	4,132	14.0
Lake	14,654	993	6.7	15,576	1,511	9.7
Lorain	26,086	3,619	13.8	29,744	5,030	16.9
Mahoning	23,735	2,033	8.6	25,894	3,221	12.4
Medina	24,441	2,041	8.3	22,517	1,816	8.0
Portage	24,419	1,832	7.5	24,208	2,207	9.1
Summit	27,485	2,740	10.0	27,344	3,481	12.7
Trumbull	30,490	1,761	5.7	30,656	3,120	10.1

<u>Free Blacks</u>		1850		1860		
<u>County</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Free Blacks</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Free Blacks</u>	<u>%</u>
Ashtabula	28,767	43	0.1	31,814	25	0.01
Cuyahoga	48,099	359	0.7	78,033	894	1.1
Erie	18,568	202	1.0	24,474	149	0.6
Geauga	17,827	7	0.01	15,817	7	0.01
Huron	26,203	39	0.1	29,616	79	0.2
Lake	14,654	38	0.2	15,576	36	0.2
Lorain	26,086	264	1.0	29,744	549	1.8
Mahoning	23,735	90	0.3	25,894	61	0.2
Medina	24,441	35	0.1	22,517	38	0.1
Portage	24,419	58	0.2	24,208	76	0.3
Summit	27,485	121	0.4	27,344	88	0.3
Trumbull	30,490	65	0.2	30,656	80	0.2

SOURCE: Census of the United States, 1850 and 1860.

APPENDIX C

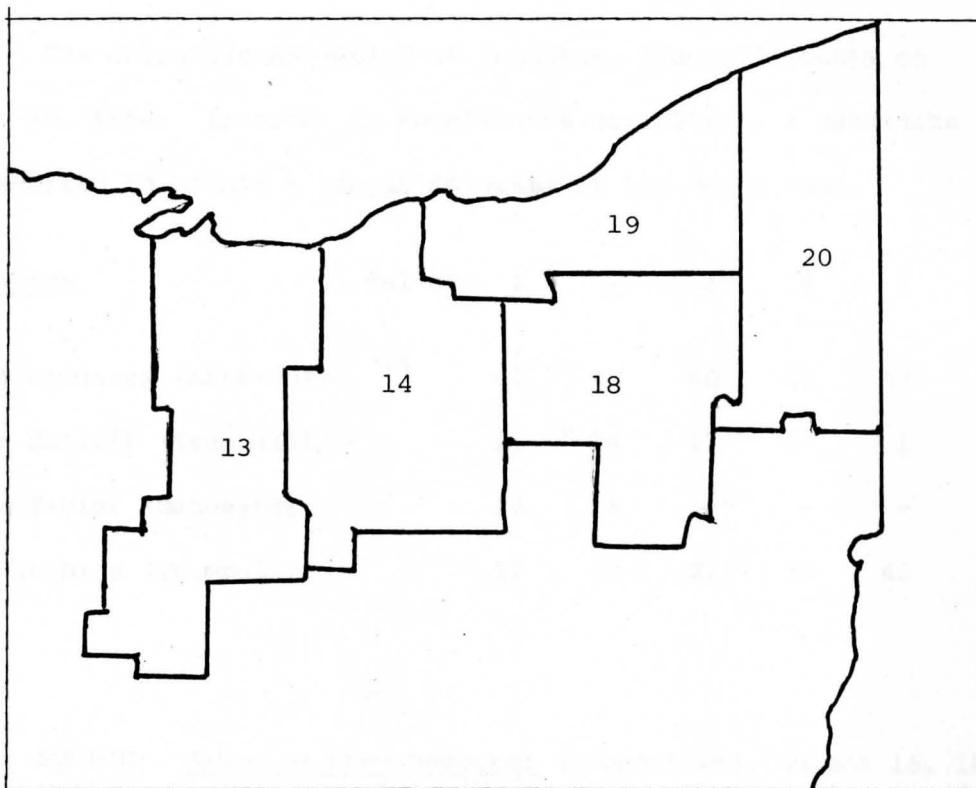
1853 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN THE WESTERN RESERVE

County	Free Soil		Whig		Democrat	
	Lewis	%	Barrere	%	Medill	%
Ashtabula	2,103	50.8	1,186	28.6	844	20.4
Cuyahoga	2,345	35.3	1,206	18.1	3,081	46.4
Erie	403	16.2	873	35.3	1,197	48.4
Geauga	1,322	54.8	586	24.3	503	20.8
Huron	1,277	31.2	1,108	27.0	1,705	41.6
Lake	1,016	55.0	393	21.2	437	23.6
Lorain	1,918	50.6	648	17.0	1,224	32.2
Mahoning	1,004	36.5	381	13.8	1,360	49.5
Medina	1,147	33.0	907	26.1	1,420	40.8
Portage	1,222	30.0	682	16.7	2,160	53.1
Summit	1,466	40.4	709	19.5	1,452	40.0
Trumbull	1,047	24.6	1,165	27.4	2,028	47.8
Totals	16,270	37.3	9,844	22.6	17,411	40.0

SOURCE: National Era (Washington), November 31, 1853, p. 174.

APPENDIX D

WESTERN RESERVE CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS IN 1854



<u>District</u>	<u>Counties</u>	<u>Anti-Nebraska</u>	<u>Candidates</u>	<u>Democrat</u>
13th	Erie, Huron, Morrow, Richland	John Sherman	William Lindsley	
14th	Lorain, Medina, Ashland, Wayne	Philemon Bliss	Harvey Johnson	
18th	Portage, Stark, Summit	Benjamin Leiter	Ebenezar Spalding	
19th	Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga	Edward Wade	Eli Wilder	
20th	Ashtabula, Mahoning, Trumbull	Joshua Giddings	Eusebius Lee	

APPENDIX E

BALLOTING FOR NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE, TWENTIETH
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT CONVENTION

The delegates assembled at Johnston, Trumbull County on August 15, 1854. In order to receive the nomination, a candidate was required to attain a simple majority of the votes cast.

<u>Candidates</u>	Ballots	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Joshua Giddings (Ashtabula)	40	40	40	42	43	
Milton Sutliff (Trumbull)	10	14	17	7	1	
Robert Taylor (Mahoning)	16	6	-	-	-	
John Hutchins (Trumbull)	17	24	27	35	40	

SOURCE: Mahoning Free Democrat (Youngstown), August 16, 1854, p. 3; Western Reserve Chronicle (Warren), August 16, 1854, p. 2.

APPENDIX F

1854 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION RESULTS

	<u>Anti-Nebraska</u>		<u>Democrat</u>	
	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
13th District	John Sherman		William Lindsley	
Erie	1,688	58.5	1,195	41.5
Huron	2,817	68.0	1,317	32.0
Morrow	1,852	57.6	1,359	42.4
Richland	2,260	54.0	1,923	46.0
	<u>8,617</u>	<u>59.7</u>	<u>5,794</u>	<u>40.3</u>
14th District	Philemon Bliss		Harvey Johnson	
Lorain	2,367	67.8	1,124	32.8
Medina	2,239	66.6	1,320	33.4
Ashland	1,600	50.7	1,553	49.3
Wayne	2,582	55.8	2,044	44.2
	<u>8,788</u>	<u>59.2</u>	<u>6,041</u>	<u>40.8</u>
18th District	Benjamin Leiter		Ebenezar Spalding	
Portage	2,779	64.0	1,560	36.0
Stark	3,578	61.0	2,269	39.0
Summit	2,381	66.0	1,224	34.0
	<u>8,738</u>	<u>63.3</u>	<u>5,053</u>	<u>36.7</u>
19th District	Edward Wade		Eli Wilder	
Cuyahoga	4,826	69.0	2,168	31.0
Geauga	1,626	75.0	540	25.0
Lake	1,247	75.6	401	24.4
	<u>7,699</u>	<u>71.2</u>	<u>3,109</u>	<u>28.8</u>
20th District	Joshua Giddings		Eusebius Lee	
Ashtabula	2,546	77.3	747	22.7
Trumbull	2,719	63.1	1,445	45.9
Mahoning	1,707	54.1	1,445	36.9
	<u>6,972</u>	<u>65.1</u>	<u>3,637</u>	<u>34.9</u>

SOURCE: Joseph Smith, History of the Republican Party in Ohio, I, p. 29.

APPENDIX G

1855 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION RESULTS

County	CHASE		MEDILL		TRIMBLE	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Ashtabula	3,772	76	845	17	341	7
Cuyahoga	3,945	53	3,073	41	463	6
Erie	1,564	57	1,123	41	68	2
Geauga	1,816	79	396	17	90	4
Huron	2,295	62	1,277	35	134	3
Lake	1,640	76	498	23	23	1
Lorain	2,693	74	895	25	24	1
Mahoning	1,592	51	1,492	47	60	2
Medina	2,032	57	1,511	42	15	1
Portage	2,660	59	1,862	41	10	0.2
Summit	2,242	62	1,215	37	158	4
Trumbull	3,109	67	1,474	32	31	1
Western Reserve	29,085	63	15,659	34	1,459	3
Ohio	146,643	48	131,592	43	24,250	8

	<u>Chase Margin (est.)</u>	<u>Fusion Gain or Loss</u>
Ashtabula	2,927	+ 640
Cuyahoga	873	-1,900
Erie	441	- 200
Geauga	1,420	+ 200
Huron	1,000	- 600
Lake	1,145	+ 250
Lorain	2,000	+ 640
Mahoning	100	- 124
Medina	525	- 350
Portage	798	- 390
Summit	1,027	- 200
Trumbull	902	+ 290

SOURCE: Summit Beacon (Akron), November 7, 1855, p. 2;
Republican Sentinel (Canfield), October 19, 1855, p. 2.

APPENDIX H

1856 CONGRESSIONAL AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS

Congressional

13th District	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>	14th District	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
John Sherman (R)	9,926	58.4	Philemon Bliss (R)	10,414	57.7
Herman Brumback (D)	7,065	41.6	Leander Firestone (D)	7,617	42.3
18th District			19th District		
Benjamin Leiter (R)	9,394	58.0	Edward Wade (R)	9,431	67.8
Samuel Lahm (D)	6,794	42.0	Richard Hilliard (D)	4,467	32.2
20th District					
Joshua Giddings (R)	9,567	66.6			
Matthew Birchard (D)	4,793	33.4			

Presidential

		<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
Ohio	Fremont	187,497	48.5
	Buchanan	170,874	44.2
	Fillmore	28,126	7.2

Western Reserve

	<u>Fremont</u>		<u>Buchanan</u>		<u>Fillmore</u>	
	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
Ashtabula	5,108	80.6	975	15.3	252	4.0
Cuyahoga	6,680	58.4	4,446	40.0	296	1.6
Erie	2,258	60.8	1,377	37.1	75	2.1
Geauga	2,694	80.9	575	17.2	58	1.9
Huron	3,468	66.3	1,709	32.6	54	1.1
Lake	2,371	78.0	628	19.3	39	2.7
Lorain	3,604	70.8	1,429	28.0	54	1.2
Mahoning	2,323	54.1	1,937	45.1	29	0.8
Medina	2,365	62.2	1,572	37.1	28	0.7
Portage	2,983	58.9	2,072	40.9	6	0.01
Summit	3,185	63.6	1,746	34.8	74	1.6
Trumbull	4,049	67.6	1,920	32.0	18	0.4
	<u>41,358</u>	<u>65.9</u>	<u>20,386</u>	<u>32.5</u>	<u>983</u>	<u>1.6</u>

SOURCE: Joseph Smith, History of the Republican Party in Ohio, I, p. 66; Mahoning County Register (Youngstown), December 4, 1856, p. 2.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Much of the correspondence of Reserve political leaders is not extant. The papers of three prominent Reserve citizens, Joel Blakeslee, Albert Gallatin Riddle, and Elisha Whittlesey, have been preserved at the Western Reserve Historical Society, but, unfortunately, these collections do not contain material relevant to Reserve politics during the mid-1850's. Housed in the Ohio Historical Society, the papers of Joshua R. Giddings yield surprisingly little information about political developments during this crucial era.

Newspapers have thus become indispensable sources for any examination of Western Reserve politics in the ante-bellum period. With the exception of the Cleveland daily papers (Plain Dealer, Leader, and Herald), all Reserve journals were published once a week. In almost every case, the editors were members of the small group of luminaries who directed the public life of Reserve communities. Under these circumstances, the newspapers usually functioned as organs for the local political parties. In the village of Jefferson, the Ashtabula Sentinel, a quite radical paper with a wide circulation throughout the Western Reserve, served as the mouthpiece for its corresponding editor, Joshua Giddings. At the other extreme, the influential Cleveland Plain Dealer, edited by postmaster John Gray, could always be expected to endorse the viewpoints of the Pierce Administration.

The Sentinel and the Plain Dealer were also two of the region's more stable newspapers. During the period between 1854 and 1856, many of the Reserve journals changed ownership, and several significantly altered their philosophies. The following chart contains a list of the Reserve

Republican papers that were utilized in this study. Where appropriate, name changes and fluctuations in political sentiment have been provided.

RESERVE REPUBLICAN NEWSPAPERS

Legend

Whig. W
 Free Soil FS
 Nativist. N
 Antislavery Republican. AR
 Moderate Republican MR

1854

1855

1856

Cuyahoga County

Cleveland

Forest City Democrat - Leader
 (FS) - (AR)
 Herald
 (W) - (MR)

Ashtabula County

Jefferson

Ashtabula Sentinel
 (FS) - (AR)

Conneaut

Reporter
 (W) - (MR)

Trumbull County

Warren

Western Reserve Chronicle
 (FS) - (AR)

Mahoning County

Youngstown

Mahoning Free Democrat - True American - Mahoning County Register
 (FS) - (AR) - (N) - (AR)

Portage County

Ravenna

Portage County Democrat
 (FS) - (AR) - (N) - (AR)

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 Cleveland Herald
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 Cleveland Plain Dealer
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 Youngstown Mahoning County Register
 Youngstown True American

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