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THE LANSING STATE REPUBLICAN'S
COVERAGE OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN FROM 1860 TO 1865

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THE LANSING STATE REPUBLICAN'S COVERAGE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN FROM 1860 TO 1865

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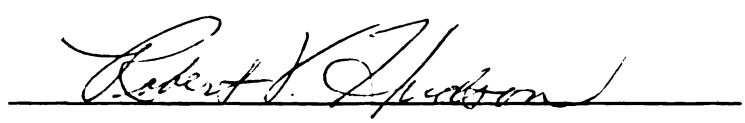

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ABSTRACT

THE LANSING STATE REPUBLICAN'S
COVERAGE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

FROM 1860 TO 1865

By

Sheila O'Brien Schimpf

The Lansing State Republican was founded in 1855 by the same men who founded the Republican Party the year before. It attracted loyal, dedicated Republican editors who wrote educated editorials supporting the candidacy of Abraham Lincoln, his Administration, his reelection, and finally, in mourning his death.

These editorials caught the eye of Historian Carl Sandburg in researching his biography of Lincoln. Sandburg lavished praise upon the editor of the Lansing country weekly, and mistakenly identified him as Isaac M. Cravath. This thesis shows the Lincoln reelection editorials were written not by Cravath but by Theodore Foster.

This thesis studies the editorials in the Lansing State Republican during key points of Lincoln's presidential career, especially his two campaigns. It concluded that the Lansing State Republican was well written and consistently Republican in its loyalties.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In slightly more than 200 years of growth to its position of power and influence today, American journalism has passed through few periods more significant than the Civil War. This thesis is a study of one local newspaper during that crucial time.

This chapter will begin by looking at the importance of the Civil War itself and the lack of serious research on this particular newspaper. It will include a selected search of the literature on books about Abraham Lincoln and his relationship with the press, Civil War newsmen, local histories of the newspaper, and the state of the press in general. It will include a brief description of the methods used in this research.

In 1847, when the Michigan legislature voted to move the capital from Detroit to Lansing, Lansing was still a wilderness. The first state census, taken in 1845, counted 88 persons living in Lansing Township; the city did not yet exist. The area was heavily forested and served by such poor roads that weeks would go by with no mail service.[1] But the memory of the British occupation of Detroit in the War of 1812 was still vivid in the minds of enough legislators to encourage their vote in favor of a spot far from the Canadian border. Another group wanted to be out of the city and back into the country. A third group was

in favor of a more central location, more accessible to northern and western parts of the state. The three factions combined to move the capital 85 miles northwest to Lansing.

The effect on the Indian trails and swamps of the township was dramatic. In five years, by 1850, the population had grown to 1,239.[2] A flurry of building activity was set off. By 1855 the capital had a weekly newspaper, the Michigan State Journal. Founded six years before, in 1848, as the Free Press,[3] it had changed its name soon after, under the firm Peck and Harmon. George Peck was a vocal and visible leader in the Democratic Party. In 1855, the paper was edited by Jonathon Palmer Thompson, a Harvard law graduate.[4]

That was a critical year in Lansing newspaper history. It was the year the Republicans were strong enough to start their own paper, the Lansing State Republican. The Republican Party had been founded the previous summer in Jackson, Michigan. The grassroots movement had spread far enough and fast enough by November to elect the state's first Republican governor, Kinsley S. Bingham. So 1855 was also a critical year in the history of the Republican Party in Michigan. Republicans came into Lansing from all over the state. One of those was Henry Barns of Detroit, a newspaper editor who had been active in the grassroots movement which shaped the Republican Party the year before.

Barns came to Lansing to found a Republican newspaper to support Governor Bingham and his Republican policies.

Barns founded the paper and returned to Detroit. He was followed by a succession of Republican editors who strongly supported the Republican Party, both statewide and nationally.

Nationally, the Republicans' time came in 1860 with the election of Abraham Lincoln. The Lansing State Republican strongly supported the election of Lincoln from the moment he was nominated, and it never wavered. During the dark and frightening days of the Civil War, Lansing State Republican leaders supported Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, his suspension of the writ of Habeas Corpus, his Gettysburg Address, his reelection, and his personal character and honesty.

This thesis is a study of the Lansing State Republican editors' support of Lincoln throughout the Civil War. It was a period of extreme importance in journalism history. Historian Edwin Emery has said, "The War Between the States affected all aspects of journalism."[5] Like all newspaper editors during the Civil War, the Lansing editors faced extreme opposition in the Copperhead press. The Michigan State Journal remained staunchly Democratic, opposing the Republicans and Lincoln. The Lansing editors had to deal with hatred and bigotry among its readers, a phenomenon Emery says is common when

countrymen fight each other. The liberalness and experimentation which gave rise to the Republican Party, the willingness to agitate for women's rights, temperance, and universal suffrage all suffered during the Civil War.[6] The relationship between government and the press changed, especially in freedom of speech. The Lansing editors were faced with Republican cabinet officials abridging the right to criticize and the right of the public to know in order to preserve the secrecy required to conduct military operations.

Despite the significance of the time, the number of precedents set, and even the high drama and excitement present, no serious academic study of the Lansing State Republican during the Civil War has ever been completed. The newspaper itself has published several historical articles and two major histories, on the occasions of its 75 anniversary and its 100th anniversary. While factual and popular, these writings do not attempt to place the Lansing editors in the context of national history. A complete history of the newspaper has never been attempted. The newspaper recently celebrated its 125th anniversary, an event unmarked by any further study originating from the newspaper itself. This is an appropriate time to update and legitimize earlier studies.

In addition to these reasons for attempting Civil War research on the Lansing newspaper, a claim by

historian Carl Sandburg about the Lansing State Republican bears further investigation. In his history Abraham Lincoln, The War Years, Sandburg refers repeatedly to newspaper editorials about Lincoln. Sandburg claims Lincoln's renomination in 1864 rested not on professional politicians or big city journalists, but on the great warmth the public felt for its first Republican President. And, Sandburg wrote, that public opinion was reflected and molded by country weeklies. He selects the Lansing State Republican as an example, and quotes two editorials at length, citing paragraph after paragraph of support of Lincoln. Sandburg claims the Lansing weekly editor knew American voters and its President better than big city journalists.[7] It was a position attractive to Sandburg in a romantic, picturesque style.

Review of Literature

Any review of the literature on the Lansing newspaper's coverage of Abraham Lincoln begins with Carl Sandburg's Abraham Lincoln. Sandburg is alone in his generous praise of the Lansing State Republican. He is, in fact, the only major historian to have singled out the paper for attention. The researcher looking for insight on the paper elsewhere reaches a dead end.

Lincoln and his reelection, however, are at the opposite extreme in terms of information available. Lincoln

has been a popular subject for authors analyzing the press and the presidency. Books abound in this category of Lincoln and the newspapers of his day.

One of the best of these histories is Robert S. Harper's Lincoln and the Press, a 1951 book of analysis and excerpts of newspapers at the time. Harper does not mention the Lansing newspaper. He does write that dissension within the ranks of the Republican Party was the only serious threat to Lincoln's renomination in 1864. At the same time the Lansing editor ran his long philosophical support of Lincoln's renomination, John W. Forney began to campaign for the renomination of Lincoln in his Philadelphia Press and his Washington Chronicle. Forney has been called the leading Republican editor of Philadelphia and Washington during the Civil War by journalism historian Frank Luther Mott.[8] Harper details the growing movement against Lincoln during the election year, culminating in Horace Greeley's letter of August 18 to a group of New York Republicans seeking to replace Lincoln. "Mr. Lincoln is already beaten," Greeley wrote. "He cannot be elected. And we must have another ticket to save us from utter overthrow."[9]

After Sherman captured Atlanta early in September, serious national newspaper opposition to Lincoln faded. Greeley began to support Lincoln. Harper claims the change in Greeley was due to Lincoln's offer of a cabinet

post in his second administration.[10] Likewise, Harper says James Gordon Bennett, whose support of Lincoln was weak and riddled with criticism of his war policy, became a loyal Lincoln supporter after Lincoln offered him the French ambassadorship.[11] Whatever the reason, soon these newspapers were running editorials similar to ones found in Lansing the year before.

Another major work on Lincoln and the press was Herbert Mitgang's Lincoln As They Saw Him, a 1956 book that was mostly a compilation of newspaper excerpts about Lincoln, with short introductions by Mitgang. Mitgang reissued his book in 1971, retitled Abraham Lincoln, a Press Portrait. Neither book mentions the Lansing State Republican. Just a few days after the Lansing newspaper ran its editorial supporting the renomination of Lincoln, the Copperhead New York Daily News ran an editorial which Mitgang reprinted: "By whom and when was Abraham Lincoln made dictator in this country?"[12] The Mitgang book is an irreplaceable reference source for any newspaper study of the Lincoln years. It offers exact quotes from other newspapers of the time objectively presented.

A second category in the literature of the time deals with Civil War histories of war correspondents that have generous chapters devoted specifically to newspaper coverage of the president. Four books fall into this category, but none of them mentions the Lansing State Republican.

J. Cutler Andrews published The North Reports the Civil War in 1955, to tell the story of the reporters who collected, wrote and sent in the news from the battlefields.[13] Since the Lansing State Republican had no war correspondents, it was not mentioned by name. In 1956, Emmet Crozier published Yankee Reporters 1861-1865, another history of Civil War battlefield correspondents. Crozier does mention twice the Wide-Awakes, a Lincoln campaign group.[14] The Wide-Awakes were active in the 1860 campaign, and frequently appeared in notices in the pages of the Lansing State Republican. Crozier speaks of them as a nationally organized campaign group.

Another history of war correspondents is Louis M. Starr's Bohemian Brigade,[15] published in 1954. In 1953, Bernard Weisberger published Reporters for the Union.[16] Both books are concerned with battles and the men who covered them.

Although the Lansing State Republican has been ignored by most major historians, the newspaper has been described in local histories by Mrs. Franc Adams, Samuel Durant, J.P. Edmonds and Albert Cowles.

Mrs. Adams' book, Pioneer History of Ingham County[17] (1923), was compiled from historical reminiscences presented at meetings of the Ingham County Pioneer and Historical Society. It was designed to give a positive image to the early settlers in Lansing. Samuel Durant's History of

Ingham and Eaton Counties is a factual summary of the area's past. It includes two and a half columns on the Lansing State Republican, mostly concerned with rapid succession of editors and publishers in the paper's early years.[18] The Durant book is reliable and concise, a neat outline of the paper's history for quick reference.

Early Lansing History,[19] a 1944 work by J.P. Edmonds, is a narrative of the city's past including architectural information and anecdotes. It details the streets named after Hosmer and Kerr, two of the earliest names associated with the Lansing State Republican.

An Account of Ingham County from Its Organization by Frank N. Turner, M.D., is a highly unreliable work that was published in 1924. In addition to erring in dating the founding of the Republican Party (see Chapter II), Turner also needlessly questions the politics of the State Republican's opposition, the Michigan State Journal. "There does not appear to be competent testimony as to the politics of the paper, even though papers of that period were strongly political but it seems reasonable to infer that the paper was in accord with the Democratic party..."[20] There can be no doubt that the Michigan State Journal was Democratic. Its Democratic existence was the major reason Henry Barns came from Detroit to found the Lansing State Republican. Turner, then, is inaccurate and useless as a reference.

Another local reference is Albert Cowles' Past and Present of the City of Lansing and Ingham County, Michigan, a 1905 work that confines its history of the newspaper to a listing of its editors.

The Lansing State Journal, successor to the Lansing State Republican, has published two histories of its early days which are helpful to students of the Civil War. In 1930, the paper published its 75th anniversary edition, later printed as a book, Lansing and its Yesterdays.[21] It used a personal, narrative style that blended a storyteller's style with historical fact to make a popular history of the paper. It is useful background information. In 1955, the paper published its centennial issue,[22] with several pages devoted to Civil War policies and editors. It is accurate, factual, and valuable for chronological narrative.

The Lansing State Republican itself is on microfilm at the Michigan State Library.

Method

This type of project requires several historical research methods described by Louis Gottschalk in Understanding History and Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff in The Modern Researcher. Gottschalk describes the four bare essentials of historical method:

1. collection of the surviving objects and of the printed, written, and oral materials that may be relevant;

2. the exclusion of those materials (or parts thereof) that are unauthentic;

3. the extraction from the authentic material of testimony that is credible;

4. the organization of that reliable testimony into a meaningful narrative or exposition.[23]

In this study, the only surviving printed material that was a primary source was the Lansing State Republican itself, now on microfilm. Secondary sources were utilized, including some with inaccurate information. The problem became one of verification, as Barzun and Graff define it.[24] Some collation[25] was done to determine the inaccuracy of statements in a local history about the dates of the founding of the Republican Party. Some external analysis, as Gottschalk classifies the problem of authenticity of authorship,[26] was required in the question of Carl Sandburg's statement that Isaac M. Cravath wrote the editorials in support of Lincoln's renomination and election. This problem was discovered by collation, putting different printed sources together to determine that Cravath could not have been the editor at that time. It then became a question of more reading, searching through the back issues until the editorial columns themselves explained that

Cravath had been absent from his post for some time and Theodore Foster had been writing. It then became a question of comparing literary styles. Foster frequently resorted to enumeration, a style present in editorials attributed to him, as well as in the editorials Sandburg attributed to Cravath. It became safe to assume, then, that Sandburg had missed the explanatory note describing Cravath's absence, and that Foster had indeed written the editorials.

The Civil War Press

A better understanding of the Lansing State Republican can be obtained by first understanding the state of the American newspaper in general at the beginning of the Civil War.

Emery described the standard paper as six columns wide, eight pages long, with few pictures and headlines limited to one column in size. He called the typical paper of the period drab by modern standards, but noted that the readability and makeup had improved since the first penny papers. "As a whole," Emery summarized, "the press was strong and prosperous."[27]

Newspapers of the day were still heavily influenced by an overpowering personality. Horace Greeley, Henry Raymond and James Gordon Bennett had set a national

pattern. It was possible for one person to take over a newspaper and control it. Greeley, Raymond and Bennett, three New York editors, were widely read in Washington D.C., and enjoyed an influence far beyond their geographic limitations. Starr's Bohemian Brigade, a history of Civil War correspondents, is invaluable in understanding the New York influence.

> The nation's information system radiated from a small area bordering City Hall park, the busiest part of New York. Here were esconced those titans of newspaperdom, Greeley, Raymond, Bennett. Here were published the only eight-page dailies in the United States. Here alone, Senators and solons found they must call on the press; the mountain would not go to Mahomet. In Washington, Harper's Weekly observed, the people 'actually look to the New York papers for news of their own city.' The Times, Tribune, and Herald maintained daily home delivery there. In Philadelphia, the Inquirer complained that this trio 'literally carries New York over every railway, sets it down at every station, and extends it everywhere.'... In Cincinnati, Murat Halstead recalled, he would get the New York papers off the 1:00 a.m. train, then run to the office to slice them up for waiting printers so the Commercial could go to press. From the Herald or From the Tribune at the head of an article in such journals left no reader in doubt; the practice of reprinting from these two was so common that New York was taken for granted.[28]

The Lansing State Republican followed this practice routinely. Regular reprints from New York papers filled the front pages and half the second, and the third or

fourth pages occasionally. Andrews' book, The North Reports the Civil War, includes further descriptions of the newspapers of the Civil War days. He, too, concentrates on New York, explaining that by 1861, that city was conceded to be the "hub of American newspaperdom."[29]

Newspaper editors in the 1860s were politically involved. For example, Raymond took part in writing the 1856 platform for the Republican Party, actively participated in the 1860 convention, and was chairman of the Republican National Committee by 1863.[30] In his book, News From the Capital, F.B. Marbut traces the history of Washington reporting since the Jefferson Administration. He provides a concise summary of the problems American newspapers faced going into the Civil War and offers this explanation:

> Those peculiar conditions were largely the outgrowth of the close political association of the average newspaper and the party structure which built the civilian government and the armed forces. Since Washington's administration the American press had stood on its constitutionally protected freedom to denounce, sometimes with imperfect regard for truth or responsibility, leaders of the opposition. Newspaper copy, whether on the editorial page or in the news columns, was highly opinionated.[31]

This was an accurate description of the Lansing State Republican, going into the war and throughout its duration.

Some smaller papers were owned by political parties. There is no evidence to show that the Lansing State Republican

was owned or financially controlled by the Republican Party; editorials in the paper proclaim the paper's financial independence. Yet in every way, the Lansing editor was a loyal Republican servant, much like the one described by Weisberger in Reporters for the Union:

> An important lever in the ruling political machine of every State was a loyal editor, for whom the spoils of victory were printing contracts, special advertising, or legislative tips on which to speculate.[32]

Such were the loyal editors the Lansing State Republican attracted.

Footnotes

[1]J.P. Edmonds, Early Lansing History (Lansing: Franklin DeKleine Company, 1944), p. 89.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Albert E. Cowles, Past and Present of the City of Lansing and Ingham County, Michigan (Lansing: Michigan Historical Publishing Association, 1905), p. 111.

[4]The State Journal, Lansing and Its Yesterdays (Lansing: The State Journal, 1930), p. 22.

[5]Edwin Emery, The Press and America (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978), p. 165.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln, the War Years vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939), p. 590.

[8]Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism (New York: Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 347.

[9]Robert S. Harper, Lincoln and the Press (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1951), p. 309.

[10]Ibid., p. 314.

[11]Ibid., p. 320.

[12]Herbert Mitgang, ed., Lincoln As They Saw Him (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1956), p. 379. Also, Abraham Lincoln, A Press Portrait (Chicago: Quandrangle Books, 1971).

[13]J. Cutler Andrews, The North Reports the Civil War (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955), p. vii.

[14]Emmet Crozier, Yankee Reporters, 1861-1865 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 18, p. 44.

[15]Louis M. Starr, Bohemian Brigade, Civil War Newsmen in Action (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954).

[16]Bernard Weisberger, Reporters for the Union (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953).

[17]Mrs. Franc L. Adams, Pioneer History of Ingham County (Lansing: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck, Crawford Company, 1923).

[18]Samuel W. Durant, History of Ingham and Eaton Counties, Michigan (Philadelphia: D.W. Ensign & Co., 1880), p. 159.

[19]J.P. Edmonds, Early Lansing History (Lansing: Franklin DeKleine Company, 1944).

[20]Frank J. Turner, M.D., An Account of Ingham County from Its Organization (Lansing: National Historical Association, Inc., 1924), p. 363.

[21]Lansing and Its Yesterdays (Lansing: The State Journal Company, 1930).

[22]Lansing State Journal, 28 April 1955.

[23]Louis Gottschalk, Understanding History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 28.

[24]Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Gaff, The Modern Researcher (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1970), p. 102.

[25]Ibid., p. 103.

[26]Gottschalk, Understanding History, p. 138.

[27]Emery, Press and America, p. 160.

[28]Louis M. Starr, Bohemian Brigade (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), pp. 11-12.

[29]Andrews, The North Reports the Civil War, p. 8.

[30]Emery, Press and America, pp. 166-167.

[31]F.B. Marbut, News from the Capital (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 111.

[32]Bernard A. Weisberger, Reporters for the Union (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1953), p. 9.

CHAPTER II

UNDER THE OAKS

Introduction

Across the country in the days preceding the Civil War, small town weeklies were a common enterprise. The Lansing State Republican, however, was an uncommon country weekly. This chapter describes the founding of the paper, and the major political event leading up to the birth of the Lansing State Republican: the formation of the Republican Party. It shows that the same men who creatively formed a new political party started and edited the Lansing State Republican for many years. They made the difference in one country weekly.

The Political Stage

By early 1854, opposition to the Democrats' pro-slavery policies was beginning to coalesce in Michigan. Many of the strong newspapers throughout the state had Whig editors, but the Whig party itself was not strong enough to win control in Washington. The Kansas-Nebraska act had enraged abolitionists, and they began searching for political clout. Free-Soilers had been attempting a coalition for years, but only met with success in 1854, when the other small parties were willing to forfeit their

identity, form a new party with a new name, and fight the Democrats.

Journalists played an important role in the formation of the Republican Party. These were the decades of a partisan press, and news columns unabashedly promoted one party or another. The more the Whig and abolitionist editors decried the Democrats and urged unity, the more the Detroit Free Press defended the Administration and its policies. The Free Press, under the ownership of Wilbur F. Storey since early 1853, was one of the largest, strongest papers in the area. It had the effect of unifying its opposition by fulfilling Storey's belief that a newspaper should "thunder its own sentiments and opinions on every occasion."[1]

In opposition to Storey's paper, Whig and abolitionist editors thundered their own opinions to promote a steady number of local, regional and statewide political rallies. They campaigned steadily for the cause until the mass meeting was held under the oaks in Jackson on July 6. Some of these influential editors working for the formation of the Republican Party found their way into Lansing before the Civil War was over to edit the Lansing State Republican. The life of the paper is inextricably linked to the life of the Republican Party. Both espoused the same philosophy, enjoyed the same supporters, and grew from the same small cadre of futuristic thinkers.

The Original Republicans

These thinkers worked at a grassroots level, organizing and leading small political rallies, urging ratification of all anti-Democratic groups.

The first Republican editor in Lansing was Henry Barns, the paper's founder. Barns had been working in Detroit toward the founding of the Republican Party as publisher of the Detroit Tribune. Early in 1854, when the Kansas-Nebraska bill was under discussion, East Coast Whig editors sent out a national opinion poll to Whig editors, soliciting their comments and solutions to the slavery issue. In February, Whig editors met in Jackson, and Henry Barns chaired the meeting. Barns and the other editors decided to support the formation of a new political party that would draw together all the anti-slavery groups.

The editors selected a three-man committee, including Barns, to attend a Free Democratic State Convention and present their resolution. Barns' Detroit Tribune office was the scene for another meeting of editors a few days later.[2]

Another Lansing editor, DeWitt C. Leach, headed one small rally of the Free Democrats in Jackson February 22, 1854. Leach was appointed Temporary Chairman.[3] Leach was also one of seven men to issue the call for a mass state convention and the founding of the Republican Party.

When the Republicans won the Governor's office in the fall, Leach was appointed state librarian by Governor Kinsley S. Bingham and moved to Lansing from Genesee County in 1855. He became secretary to the Governor and a correspondent for a Detroit newspaper. In June 1855, he became editor of the Lansing State Republican and held that post for more than a year until he ran for Congress in 1856. Leach was a congressman for four years, and then switched back to journalism. He published the Traverse City newspaper for about 15 years, and then the Springfield (Mo.) Patriot Advertiser.[4]

While Leach was editor of the State Republican, Rufus Hosmer was co-editor. When Leach left for Congress, Hosmer became its editor. Hosmer is generally credited with working behind the scenes at the birth of the Republican Party. Hosmer, who was born in Massachusetts, was the grandchild of two American Revolution officers. He graduated from Harvard University with honors in 1834, at age eighteen, and then studied law at the Dane Law School in Cambridge. In 1838 he moved to Pontiac, Michigan, and began to practice law.[5] In 1855, his partnership with George A. Fitch was awarded the state printing contract.[6] Hosmer, who weighed 300 pounds at his death in 1866, was known as one of Lansing's great bon vivants, despite the Republican Party's aversion to alcohol. He has been called "one of the most noted newspaper wits of the day."[7]

In 1854 Hosmer was made president of the last Whig convention ever held in Michigan, and he delivered the convention solidly to the Republicans.[8] About this time he was editor of the Detroit Advertiser.

Hosmer became associated with the Lansing State Republican directly after its founder, Henry Barns, left Lansing and returned to Detroit. Barns had a reputation as a newspaper founder. He had come to Lansing to start a Republican voice, and after two weeks, having accomplished that, he returned to Detroit.

The Meeting Itself

When July 6 finally arrived, anti-slavery forces across the state converged on Jackson. More than 3,000 people eventually crowded around the speaker. When the day was over, the convention had agreed on the name, "Republican," selected candidates for the fall election, and passed a declaration of rights which at least one historian has said, "has never been surpassed as a declaration of principles by which the people entrust their affairs to government."[9] The spirit of the day, which had been organized, supported, promoted, and then analyzed in print by newspapers, was captured in the monument to the convention:

> HERE, UNDER THE OAKS, JULY 6, 1854, WAS BORN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, DESTINED IN THE THROES OF CIVIL STRIFE TO ABOLISH SLAVERY, VINDICATE DEMOCRACY, AND PERPETUATE THE UNION.

As a footnote to the first Republican convention, students of the period can still read a major error that remains uncorrected on local history shelves of state libraries. In Frank N. Turner's An Account of Ingham County from its Organization, Turner states:

> A word about the name--Republican. There was no Republican Party in 1855. History tells us that this party had its birth under "The Oaks" at Jackson, Michigan, in 1856.... The paper must have borne another name until after the party was formed and then was rechristened in honor of the new party.[10]

The first issue of the paper, one of two printed by Henry Barns, the Tribune publisher who helped organize Whig editors into the call for the convention, is clearly labeled, "Republican."[11]

Founding of the Lansing State Republican

That first issue of the paper was dated April 28, 1855. Kinsley S. Bingham had been elected the state's first Republican governor the preceding fall. In Detroit Henry Barns knew that Lansing must have a Republican newspaper. Bingham needed an official organ for party support. Lansing already had one newspaper, the Michigan State Journal,

strongly Democratic in politics. So Barns packed his type and made the trip to Lansing by stagecoach with his son as apprentice.

Barns was a colorful country editor. The Lansing paper was the eighth he started.[12] Born in England in 1815, he was a close friend of Lincoln's secretary of state, William H. Seward, and a long-time correspondent of Horace Greeley. As the founder of the Detroit Evening Tribune, Barns had made a name for himself as a political thinker. Barns arrived in Lansing on Tuesday, April 24, 1855, and put out his first edition on Saturday, April 28.

> Barns probably had no sincere desire to become a permanent resident of the straggling community of less than 2,000 persons which, by a freak of legislative whimsy, had been made Michigan's capital city. He merely, as the state's and the party's most experienced newspaper founder, felt himself to be the 'chosen instrument' upon whom devolved the duty of creating a publication which, by prevailing custom, would print party propaganda without fear of an editorial stab in the back.[13]

After two editions, Barns sold out and went back to Detroit. A loyal and vocal Republican, Barns acted out his philosophical beliefs and not his pocketbook. Barns had no political financial support.[14] In his first editorial in the Lansing State Republican, titled "Introductory," Barns proclaimed:

> Without executive patronage, of consequence, established and maintained as The Republican is and will be, by our own resources, with the generous support of the public alone to depend upon to remunerate us for our expenses and our labor, we hope to be an efficient private in the ranks of the cause we are engaged in, the spread of Republican principles, and the maintenance of an honest, economical, and faithful administration of the State and National Government.[15]

Although Barns stayed for only two weeks, he fulfilled his role; he established a weekly paper in Lansing with strong Republican idealism. Little change can be noted in the editorials in the years following Barns. The paper adhered to his Introductory in every way:

> The Republican enters the ranks to do battle with the host of Republicans, who last year organized and rallied and triumphed over the slaves to slavery and the opponents of freedom and personal and state equality. For such an organization as was then effected, we had labored for years. We are satisfied with its principles or platform--we are satisfied with its success, at the polls, in the Executive Departments, and the legislature. In all that was promised, in all that ought to have been expected, it has met its pledges and satisfied the public expectation. It is deserving the sustaining support of all who desire honesty and faithfullness in the administration of State affairs, and the maintenance of the integrity of the State true to the Republican principles of the Constitution of the Union. It will receive our cordial support so long as it is faithful to its principles, to its organization, in its firm adherence

> to State Rights, the cause of Republican freedom, and unwavering opposition to the extension of slavery.[16]

Following Barns a rapid succession of editors came to work for an equally rapid succession of publishers. Barns had sold the paper when he lost the state printing contract to Rufus Hosmer and George Fitch. Hosmer became editor and Fitch proprietor when the partnership bought out Barns. By the fifth issue Herman E. Hascall was publisher. In August, 1857, Hosmer & Kerr took over as publishers. John A. Kerr was the city's second mayor, one of the more colorful figures in Lansing's early history. Then, as publishers, came John A. Kerr & Co.; Bingham, George, and Co.; and W.S. George & Co. Hosmer, the editor, died in 1861, and his place in the publishing chair was taken by George Jerome of Detroit, a silent partner. Hosmer had shared the editor's chair with DeWitt C. Leach from June 19, 1855, to August 26, 1856.

C.B. Stebbins was the next editor, and worked for a year, when Hosmer took over again. On May 1, 1861, Isaac M. Cravath became editor, but he enlisted in the cavalry in October and was replaced for a few months by Stephen D. Bingham. Early the following year George I. Parsons took over for about a year until Cravath came back from the Army. Cravath became sick and was replaced by Theodore Foster, who was the editor until December 27, 1865. He was

followed by Bingham who this time took over and gave the paper some consistency, holding the job until 1873.[17]

Although the editors' names changed frequently for the first ten years' of the paper's existence, the same names kept appearing in rotation. A small devoted group of Republicans kept the paper running.

Footnotes

[1]Detroit Free Press, 28 May 1857, quoted by Justin E. Walsh, "To Print the News and Raise Hell: Wilbur F. Storey's Chicago Times," Journalism Quarterly 40 (Autumn 1963):499.

[2]William Stocking, Under the Oaks (Detroit: The Detroit Tribune, 1904), p. 26.

[3]Ibid., p. 23.

[4]Samuel W. Durant, History of Ingham and Eaton Counties, Michigan (Philadelphia: D.W. Ensign & Co., 1880), p. 159.

[5]Ibid., pp. 112-113.

[6]Ibid., p. 159.

[7]Stocking, Under the Oaks, p. 52.

[8]Ibid., p. 59.

[9]Kent Sagendorph, "Achievement Under the Oaks," Your Freedom Festival Program Book (Jackson: Under the Oaks Centennial, Inc., 1954), p. 30.

[10]Frank N. Turner, M.D., An Account of Ingham County from its Organization (Lansing: National Historical Association, Inc., 1924), p. 107.

[11]Lansing State Republican, 28 April 1855.

[12]Lansing State Journal, 28 April 1955.

[13]Ibid.

[14]The State Journal Co., Lansing and Its Yesterdays (Lansing: The State Journal Co., 1930), p. 27.

[15]Lansing State Republican, 28 April 1855.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Albert E. Cowles, Past and Present of the City of Lansing and Ingham County, Michigan (Lansing: Michigan Historical Publishing Association, 1905), pp. 112-113.

CHAPTER III

THE CIVIL WAR IN LANSING

The Lansing State Republican remained true to the Union throughout the Civil War. It was a loyal Republican voice in Lansing, a full supporter of Lincoln. This chapter explains how Lincoln was the paper's second choice for President, how the paper vigorously campaigned for Lincoln once he had the nomination, and how favorably the paper wrote about the Emancipation Proclamation and the Writ of Habeas Corpus. It is a study in Republicanism.

The Paper and Its Editors

When 1860 began, the Lansing State Republican was a weekly, published every Tuesday morning early in the year, and every Wednesday morning as summer came. It was a four-page paper that followed a predictable format. The first page was filled with transcripts of speeches, often those of William H. Seward, the Republican's choice for president. The first page sometimes carried official state news, such as records of the sale of state properties. Sometimes there were dispatches from one of the many exchange papers the Republican editors subscribed to.

The second page was the editorial page. The paper's masthead filled the top of the first column, and in 1860 it invariably read: Lansing State Republican, Hosmer & Kerr.

Rufus Hosmer, the Massachusetts grandchild of two officers in the Revolutionary Army, was a lawyer who had graduated from Harvard University and the Dane Law School. He had practiced law for some years in Pontiac until he moved to Lansing in 1857. Hosmer edited the paper from 1855, when Henry Barns moved back to Detroit, until his death in 1861. He had a reputation as an able political and literary writer, and was known throughout the state as an entertaining storyteller.[1] John Kerr became co-owner of the paper in 1857 and mayor in 1860. He and Hosmer were partners in producing the paper as well as in producing gourmet feasts renown for their liberal use of alcohol. This flew in the face of their espousal of the Republican Party and its temperance doctrine.

Before the Republican convention was held in 1860, the second page of the Republican started with a local editorial: a personal view of national politics, state government, the agricultural college, or the competition, the Democratic Michigan State Journal. Sometimes there were two or three locally written articles followed by a letter or two from a local resident traveling through the south or in Europe, commenting on the political situation. Then came dispatches from more exchange newspapers, usually shorter and more to the point than the ones appearing on the first page.

The third page contained advertisements as well as two columns of news briefs: announcements of meetings and of local businesses opening, police news, deaths, and engagement notices.

The fourth page contained more advertisements and occasionally another reprint from an exchange paper.

Little local news was printed in the pages of the Lansing State Republican in 1860, sometimes as little as three and a half columns in four pages.

The Republican had a widespread, loyal following. Its editors were influential politically in the Republican Party statewide, but even on a more mechanical level, the Republican was respected.

> The model newspaper of the entire state in 1860 was the State Republican published in Lansing and edited and owned by W.S. George & Co., Mr. Van Buren being one of the partners. The paper was the prize package in the profession, to the office force, because of its most excellent mechanical appearance; it was printed on an extra quality of paper and very ably edited; it came from a cylinder press and its pages were smoothly printed and its type a perfect letter.[2]

The Lansing State Republican, then, went into the Civil War period as a respected country weekly, ably edited and well-established. It had made a place for itself in its Republican mid-Michigan circulation area.

The Election of 1860

As founding members of the Republican Party, the party opposed to slavery, the editors of the State Republican summed up the political conflict facing the nation in 1860 neatly: protection versus restriction of slavery in the territories.[3] It confidently predicted on Valentine's Day a victory in November:

> The Republican Party, which had its birth in our own beautiful peninsula, has grown to be a giant, whose arms already embrace fifteen States, while the justness of its principles, its native vigor, and cohesive strength foreshadow the truth that the high places of power are soon to pass into its possession.[4]

The Republican preferred William H. Seward as its candidate for President, citing his far seeing statesmanship and ability. The newspaper aggressively campaigned for its man, ridiculing Horace Greeley's early choice.

> The New York Tribune is out in a long article favoring the nomination of Mr. (Edward) Bates of Missouri for the Presidency. Of course the Tribune has a right to its peculiar views upon this question, as upon every other, but to our mind, nothing could result from such a course but disaster to the party.[5]

Hosmer viewed politics strictly through the eye of a loyal Republican. Protection of the party's chances to win in November was paramount in Lansing. Hosmer and the

men who followed him, proud to have been in on the founding of a national movement, wanted to win the White House in November. They viewed the party possessively as their party. They used news columns to promote Seward; on March 13, for example, the paper carried the transcript of Seward's speech to the Senate on the admission of Kansas. The speech ran seven columns.

When the Chicago convention failed to end in the nomination of Seward, the Republican swallowed its pride. Under the usual weekly masthead, "Lansing State Republican Hosmer & Kerr," they ran a new campaign banner on May 23, bearing the words, "Lincoln, Hamlin, Union and Victory." The banner appeared in every issue until the election. Hosmer explained:

> Today we fling to the breeze the Republican banner of 1860, inscribed with LINCOLN, HAMLIN, UNION AND VICTORY. The thunders of joy that hail our flag, as it floats proudly out, reverberate to the remotest corner of the Republic. Beneath its ample folds, Michigan strikes hands with Missouri, New York with Kentucky, Virginia with California, Main with Texas.[6]

The exuberant Hosmer was only slightly slowed by the thought that his first candidate lost out. He never thought to justify to his readers the fact that Seward's name had been found frequently in his column, and Lincoln's name, never. A true party man, eager for the good of the party, he announced his switch in allegiance.

> It is true that in the nomination made, the Republicans of Michigan have not obtained their first choice--the man whom they love and delight to honor--the patriot and statesman, William H. Seward of New York. But, while they were warm and ardent in his support, they bow as cheerfully as does that great statesman, to the will of the majority of the Convention, with an abiding faith that the welfare of the party has had its due weight in the choice that has been made.[7]

Indeed, Hosmer had turned the defeat of Seward's candidacy at the convention into another opportunity to compliment his favorite, now out of the running, but not out of Hosmer's high regard. Hosmer then extolled the virtues of Lincoln, a man he called the great giant, and again used the opportunity to favorably mention Seward.

> In the nomination of Mr. Lincoln, we have a leader whose principles are firmly and truly republican. He is a man of the Seward stripe, and adheres as firmly to the doctrines of the Fathers of the Republic, and of Republicanism. Abraham Lincoln is a man of unbounded personal popularity in the section of the country where he is best known. He has sprung from the laboring classes, and is emphatically the people's candidate. Illinois is wild with excitement over his nomination.[8]

This editorial support for the Lincoln nomination contains the major arguments the paper would present again and again until the election. Lincoln was a man of principle, of Republican principles. He was a man of the working class, and understood the people. The people,

in turn, recognized his value and enthusiastically supported him.

Each week, Hosmer chose something for his capital audience to read that was favorable to Lincoln. Column after column was filled with pieces Hosmer wrote as well as excerpts he reprinted from Chicago, New York, and other papers. Less often, he printed something Lincoln himself had written. For example, the May 30 issue carries a long reprint from the Chicago Press and Tribune, describing in detail Lincoln's frame, gait, dress, features, hair, head, personal habits, and speech. In a separate item, Hosmer reprinted the one paragraph answer Lincoln gave to the committee which delivered the nomination to his door, officially requesting him to be the Republican candidate. Some of this disparity is due to Lincoln's own style. Writers of the day commonly used long, flowery descriptions to praise Lincoln's skills in brevity, conciseness, and wit. On June 13, Hosmer did reprint an entire speech Lincoln delivered in February, filling seven columns of the Republican with Lincoln's ideas on the constitution and territorial questions such as slavery.

Hosmer also started to display prominently meeting notices for the Lincoln Wide Awakes of Lansing, the local Lincoln campaign workers. Hosmer even found some words from the enemy, Democratic candidate Stephen Douglas, and used the quote more than once in Lincoln's behalf:

> Stephen Douglas on Lincoln, summer 1858: "Mr. Lincoln is one of those peculiar men that has performed with admirable skill in every occupation he ever attempted."[9]

Lincoln's working man background was a plus and a minus for editorial writers of the day. On one hand, they delighted in his everyday appeal to millions of working class voters. They told the readers that Lincoln was one of them. They could trust his honest upbringing. But on the other hand, they felt obligated to justify some of the lesser jobs Lincoln held in his youth. On August 1, for example, Hosmer wrote a lengthy defense of Lincoln's self-educated past:

> Certain classes of newspapers, ignorant of the true nature and principle of Republican institutions, such for instances as Canadians, Locofocos, English Aristocrats and Tories, are filled with consternation, because the Republican Party of the United States is running a candidate for the Presidency who more than once took a flat boat from Indiana, down the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans, loaded with pork, beef, and corn, sold the cargo and footed it back-- a man who once split rails, and made worm fence, a man who kept a country store, a man, in short, who whatever he is now, was once poor, humble and obscure. These false reasoners argue that because Abraham Lincoln once did all these things for a livelihood, that he is only fit to do them now. In this consists their fallacy.[10]

Hosmer then stated that the people of the United States can be even more proud of Lincoln because he raised himself

through his personal discipline from such humble beginnings to the level of statesman.

Only a week later, Hosmer was hammering away at the rail splitter detractors again. In a similar lengthy editorial, Hosmer tried to answer the question in his headline: "Why He Split Rails." Hosmer began with Lincoln's father, Thomas, "that most forlorn and wretched of all objects on earth, a poor white man in a community of slaves."[11]

> To tell a Michigan household that Abraham Lincoln's parents were poor would excite there neither wonder nor pity, but when it is explained that to be poor in Kentucky forty years ago meant to be deprived of schools, of books, of knowledge of their use, of the means of grace, and of religious instruction, of the privilege of meeting neighbors in social intercourse, and of access to the house of God, they can understand that then and there, to be poor meant to be wretched.[12]

Because negro slaves could be bought to do the manual labor, a poor white man like Lincoln had little chance at day labor. But because rail-splitting required great strength and more skill than some slaves had, the poor white man could sell himself to do something valuable. Thus Hosmer turned a potentially damaging part of Lincoln's past into a plus. The farther down Lincoln was at the beginning, the farther he had to pull himself to be the Republican candidate for President. But not only was

Lincoln a man of heroic quality; he was modest about it.

> He never put himself forward, but when he became a legislator, a lawyer, and finally a statesman and an orator, it was in every instance at the repeated and urgent call of those about him, who knew more of his strength and resources, than he was himself ready to believe.[13]

Hosmer, educated in the law, at least once lowered himself to the level of some of his readers, honest farmers who believed in folk wisdom. Although Hosmer could argue that Lincoln was the best thinker, the best statesman, and had the best legislative record for the job, Hosmer couldn't stop himself from making one foolish claim.

> Lincoln has a long head. It takes a good head to tell what has happened, but it requires a better and longer head to tell with certainty and accuracy, what is going to happen. Abraham Lincoln is the proprietor of one of those heads which works both ways.[14]

Hannibal Hamlin, Lincoln's running mate, was occasionally mentioned in Hosmer's longer, more general editorials on the Republican ticket. In Hosmer's eyes, Hamlin had been blessed by the convention and was worthy of support.

At home, the campaign took a nasty turn. Hosmer was faced with a local disturbance which occupied his attention and the columns of his paper for several issues

that summer. The problem first appeared in the June 20 issue in a letter to the editor, signed simply "WIDE-AWAKE." An anonymous Lincoln campaign worker recounted an anti-Lincoln demonstration which took place the evening before during a Wide-Awake torchlight procession down Washington Avenue. First, an effigy of Lincoln, made from materials provided by the pro-slavery firm of Thayer & Harrison, was hanged, disrupting the procession of Lincoln supporters. Harvey Hunter, a grocer, was the leader of the effigy hangers. "Let the Republicans of this vicinity place their mark on this hound," the anonymous writer thundered. He recounted how Republicans had been verbally abused.

In the same issue, Hosmer's editorial praised the same Wide-Awake torchlight procession as a "glorious meeting." Stephen D. Bingham, who had edited the paper in 1856, and would take over again in 1861, presided at the Wide-Awakes' parade. The meeting was addressed by I.M. Cravath, who would take over the paper when Hosmer died the following April.

Hosmer's strategy in running the anonymous letter was political. The letter, probably written by Cravath, Bingham, or Hosmer, had been strategically coupled with a favorable account of a night "when the heart beats strong" for greater effect. He may have believed that to officially ignore the disruptive antics of the anti-Lincoln Locofocos was best, and might discourage further attacks; he may

also have believed that the public had a right to know what had happened. His "glorious meeting" editorial made the political rally into another positive campaign piece for the Republican Party. It left an impression with the reader that was unsullied by the violence and controversy of the effigy hanging.

The next week, however, was a different story. New deeds, in fact, made the Locofocos impossible to ignore. They were no longer content to hang an effigy of Lincoln by light of a bonfire. Instead, they had taken the fire and turned it against a building owned by William Pinckney, the probate judge. In a scathing editorial June 27, Hosmer addressed political opponents on a local level.

The Locofocos had rallied the previous Saturday, when word of the Democrats' nominations in Baltimore reached Lansing. George W. Peck, editor of the Democratic competition, addressed the crowd. He told them he had one rule which he applied to all Black Republicans. "I hate them all," Hosmer quoted him as saying, "and my advice to you is to hate them."

In his own style, Hosmer recounted the events of the night for his Republican readers, who could not have been present.

> It is not always, not often, that good advice is so well followed as in the case of Mr. Peck, for during the evening his counsel was made practical by his hearers, in a way that the most fastidious could find

> no fault with. They went to work and burned up a dwelling house belonging to Hon. William H. Pinckney, the Judge of Probate of Ingham County, to show their hate. There was nothing in particular to provoke such an act, except that the Judge is a Black Republican. Politics aside, he probably has not an enemy in the world and few men are to be found in the community who are more kind and charitable. But hate, like all other passions, must have its course.[15]

Hosmer says in the light of day the Locofocos realized they had picked a poor subject for their violence, since Pinckney could well afford the loss. So, the following night, Monday, they struck again.

> They entered the blacksmith shop of Mr. Buner, a German Republican of the First Ward, cut his bellows to pieces, destroyed his tools, such as could be destroyed, and broke up a couple of wagons which he had ironed off. This was to show their hate, and make practical the inculcations which they had received from their public speakers.[16]

In the July 11 issue, Hosmer reported that two men confessed to burning Pinckney's building. (In this issue Hosmer refers to the building burned as a store, although, in June, he had called it a dwelling house.) Hosmer says the two were among the crowd that hanged the effigy of Lincoln earlier in the summer. The same issue on page three carries the news that the two men were stricken from the roll of the Torrent Hose Co. No. 1 for disorderly

conduct. Hosmer delighted in the obvious pun: "These boys," he wrote, "are the two who performed duties as 'firemen' on Judge Pinckney's building." The two fled from police and were still at large. One was captured in Milwaukee, Hosmer reported in the July 25 issue, but the second was still being sought. Hosmer used the arrest as an opportunity to attack the political opposition once again.

> This affair, and the secret causes which led to it, bid fair now to come out, and whatever the facts may be, it is certain that active Locofocos have felt exceedingly sensitive upon the subject, and placed every obstacle in the way of the capture of the culprits, and have used all means to facilitate their flight.[17]

On August 1 Hosmer closed the issue of Pinckney's fire. First he brought out into the open claims by the Democrats, both in the opposition press and in small groups, that the fire was set by Judge Pinckney himself or by fellow Republicans in order to have something to lay at the feet of the Democrats. He denied the claim, and presented his proof.

> Last week, Warner went to Mason jail, sent there upon his own confession, that he burned the store in company with one Hans, both of whom, when the scheme was concocted, were carrying rails to the Douglas bonfire. These two informed one Burton, who had been engaged at the house of a Locofoco, in getting

> up the effigy of Lincoln, on the night of the Republican ratification, what they were about to do, and he, true to his instincts, said, "good-- go ahead." This Burton became suddenly missing, having left this city, in the stage, in a space secured in another name-- that of a prominent Locofoco.[18]

Hosmer triumphantly concludes that the Locofocos burned the building. This incident illustrates the emotions present in Lansing in the election of 1860. The campaign was a personal one to Hosmer on the Republican side, and Peck on the Democratic side. Each marshalled his forces and waged a strategic campaign in Lansing that mirrored the struggle going on in the nation.

As the campaign entered the final weeks, Hosmer never let up his fight. Even in reporting an abundant harvest for the summer, he found a way to work his Republicanism into print: "Plentiful living this good Lincoln and Hamlin year."[19] His final plea appeared in the October 31 issue: "Let every Republican vote a straight ticket, and if there is to be splitting, let it be done by Locofocos."[20]

And then, Wednesday morning, November 7, Hosmer let his emotions soar into words:

> The result we have so long confidently expected is no longer a matter of doubt. That man of commanding talent, incorruptible integrity, thrilling eloquence, lofty patriotism, and pure personal character, Abraham Lincoln

> of Illinois, is, by a clear vote of the Freemen of this Nation, elected to be their President for four years from the 4th of March next.[21]

Hosmer recognized the threat to the country posed by slavery and its supporters. But he believed Lincoln could hold the country together: "The Union! They can no more overturn its foundations than they can upheave the pyramids of Egypt."[22]

Rufus Hosmer died April 20, less than two months after the inauguration of Lincoln. His obituary appeared in the April 24 issue, the last edition to bear the Hosmer & Kerr banner at the top of the second page.

> As a writer he had no superior in this State. His abilities, both natural and acquired, were of a superior order. The style of his composition was strong, terse and vigorous--manly and bold in the utterance of the felt sentiments of the soul. No one ever accused him of hypocrisy or fear.[23]

Lincoln had remembered the loyalty and ability of the country editor. Hosmer had received an appointment as Consul General to Frankfort-on-the-Maine. His appointment had been confirmed by the Senate, and he received his commission only a few days before his death. He was 44.

Isaac M. Cravath took over as editor with the May 1 issue, and edited the paper until he volunteered in October to lead Company G, 12th Michigan Infantry to war.

Cravath, 34 years old, joined the men at Niles, and was ordered to St. Louis, Missouri, in March. Cravath's company fought in the battle of Shiloh, April 6 and 7. The company sustained heavy losses. Cravath resigned his commission September 13, 1862, for health reasons.[24]

While Cravath was gone, Stephen Bingham edited the paper, but early in 1862, George I. Parsons took over. Parsons was a lawyer from New York who had moved to Michigan in 1836, and to Lansing in 1850. He was Ingham County Prosecutor from 1856 to 1860, and Lansing city attorney in 1861-62 while he was editor of the paper.[25]

The Emancipation Proclamation

George Parsons, another lawyer, was in control of the Republican when Horace Greeley published his editorial, the "Prayer of Twenty Millions," August 20, 1862. Framed as a letter addressed to Abraham Lincoln, the editorial appeared in the New York Tribune, and appealed to Lincoln to free the slaves in land held by Union troops. Lincoln's reply first appeared in the National Intelligencer on August 23. It appeared in the Republican on September 3, with an explanation from Parsons. Parsons first urged his readers to read the President's letter, calling it refreshing. Then he declared emancipation was on the way.

> Slavery is the cause of the rebellion, and the only way to a permanent peace is to remove forever the entire cause. The President's letter is remarkable in many respects. Neither Mr. Greeley, in reply to whom the letter was written, nor the people for whose edification it was undoubtedly intended, expected any response from the Chief Magistrate of the nation, to the letter of a private individual upon a political topic. Yet the nation is glad that the President has written it. It brings him nearer to the people. It is remarkable for its brevity, its distinctiveness, its clearness, its simplicity, and its honesty.[26]

Parsons was repeating a party line familiar to readers of the Republican since Henry Barns had issued the first number. It made no difference whether Barns, Hosmer, Bingham, Cravath, or Parsons was writing the editorials. They were identical in principle: anti-slavery, pro-Republican Party and, since Lincoln won the nomination at the convention, pro-Lincoln.

When Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863, Parsons dropped any pretense of a detached, lawyer's approach and let his feelings fill the editorial columns of the Republican.

> The blow is struck! The great deed is done! The chains are broken which held more than three millions of men and women in bondage more cruel than any other ever tolerated on the earth.[27]

Parsons mistakenly thought the end of slavery would be the immediate end of the war. He described how the news would spread through the enslaved race.

> They are henceforth forever free, and soon the glad tidings shall spread from plantation to plantation; and from cabin to cabin throughout the entire land of bondage, and be echoed and re-echoed from hill top to valley, proclaiming the year of jubilee to the long downtrodden and oppressed.[28]

This came from a man who lived all of his life in New York and Michigan, who most probably never owned a slave.

In the spring, Captain Cravath returned to take over the editor's chair at the Republican. Little is known about Cravath's education, except that he was raised on a farm and became a clerk in the Auditor General's office in 1855 at the age of 29. He was, apparently, not a lawyer. As he had done when he became editor of the paper the first time, Cravath appealed to his readers for help.

> We shall spare no pain to make the Republican interesting and useful, and having ourselves, no share in its ownership, we ask our readers to join us in efforts to extend its circulation and make it remunerative to its proprietors.[29]

The paper was still owned by John Kerr.

As the months passed, theoretical debate over the long term effects of the Emancipation Proclamation continued. By November, Cravath felt it necessary to argue against those who pessimistically looked into the future.

> They seem to themselves to descry millions of negroes, idle, lazy, insolent, insubordinate, wandering from place to place, unwilling to work, defying all laws and ordinances, incapable of improvement, and only kept from open violence by an army of policemen or soldiers.[30]

Cravath objected to such a picture, pointing to the present condition of the negroes as well as to their past condition. This time he used a rhetorical question device not often used in the editorial columns of the Republican.

> The negro has never been an aggressor upon the white man. The black race possessed two thirds of Africa for 6,000 years and never made a single hostile demonstration on the white nations. When the two nations first came in contact in northern Africa, were the blacks endeavoring to subjugate the white people? No! For most of the time during the last 300 years, blacks have been sold as slaves in the markets of Egypt.
>
> About 300 years since, the whites commenced enslaving the Negroes of Western Africa. What did the latter do? Did they kill off the crew of every vessel that visited their coast? No.[31]

This technique is rarely used in the editorial columns of the Republican. Perhaps Cravath felt the questions would make a personal impression on the reader.

The signing of the Emancipation Proclamation was a joyful, long-waited event to the editors of the Lansing State Republican. They supported the President, saw no drawbacks in the plan, and championed the cause of the abolitionists in the editorial columns.

The Writ of Habeas Corpus

Another controversy that arose during the Civil War was the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus by several of Lincoln's Cabinet officials. It stretched the loyalty of many editors, who believed no cause, not even suppression of rebellion, allowed such widespread executive powers. No moral dilemma existed in the pages of the Lansing State Republican.

It was secret arrests ordered by Secretaries Seward and Stanton that had been questioned loudly in Congress as well as by newspapers across the country. The constitution in Article I guaranteed the writ of habeas corpus "unless when in cases of rebellion or invasion the public safety may require it." But to many, a practical interpretation of those words had never been made.

To George Parsons, at the height of the habeas corpus crisis, in February 1863, there was no question. If such secret arrests were deemed necessary by a Republican President, then they must be necessary. It upset Parsons that the President's detractors had arraigned and found him guilty of cruelty.

> It would have been better for these gentlemen had they, with less of prejudice and more candor, considered the situation of the country, and the perils which threaten it; had they considered the necessity, which has

> given rise to the acts of which they complain; and above all, had they consulted their patriotism rather than their partizanship (sic), before making these broad and bitter charges against the Administration. They should have remembered the country is engaged in a civil war, brought about by a rebellion, having for its object the entire overthrow of the Government, and the establishment of another in its place...In a case like this, extreme and otherwise unwarranted measure may, nay must be resorted to.[32]

In June, Cravath was still standing on the side of Lincoln. This time the paper used two and half columns for a letter from Lincoln in response to criticisms from the Albany Regency, which had condemned Lincoln for suspending the writ of habeas corpus.

Even in the habeas corpus crisis, whether it was by writing editorials or reprinting editorials written by other newspapers, the Lansing editors supported Lincoln. He was a Republican, they were Republicans; he was opposed to slavery, they were opposed to slavery; he was trying to put down the rebellion, they supported the end of the rebellion. Cravath himself explained the paper's affinity for Lincoln when he took over the paper the second time, on April 1, 1863:

> Confident that neither the Republican party nor our Republican Government have performed their mission, and believing their principles co-incident, we shall labor to the best of

> our ability for the success of one and the perpetuity of the other. Believing that the important measures adopted by the National Administration for the purpose of putting down the slaveholders' rebellion, to be just and righteous, we shall, as did our able predecessor, give them our earnest and hearty support.

And so, in another crisis of the day, the Lansing State Republican editors stayed true to their original Republicanism. Their party loyalty superseded any lingering doubts about the constitutionality of the act. They were able to argue persuasively and convincingly that the Republicans had acted correctly.

Conclusion

The Lansing State Republican remained true to the Union throughout the entire Civil War. Indeed, the paper was one of the staunch supporters of Lincoln and his war policy. When the other Lansing weekly had turned Copperhead, the Republican continued to argue on behalf of loyalty. Its editors equated Republicanism, or membership in the Republican Party, with support of Lincoln and his determination to keep the army fighting until the South was defeated. The paper initially supported Seward for President, yet once the party had decided on Lincoln, editorial columns in Lansing never wavered. Full and warm

support of Lincoln was the rule every week. The paper repeatedly and thoroughly analyzed national presidential politics. Once Lincoln was elected, the paper continued to promote the President and his policies, especially the Emancipation Proclamation. The editors of the paper were strong abolitionists, and they had believed in the abolition of slavery years before Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Their support of Lincoln did not waver even at the height of the habeas corpus crisis in 1863, when newspapers around the country were criticizing the President for arresting citizens secretly, holding them in prisons, and sometimes trying them in military courts.

Footnotes

[1]Samuel W. Durant, History of Ingham and Eaton Counties, Michigan. (Philadelphia: D.W. Ensign & Co., 1880), p. 113.

[2]John W. Fitzgerald, "Early Country Newspapers Published in Michigan," Michigan History Magazine IX (January 1295): 65-66.

[3]Lansing State Republican, 14 February 1860.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., 28 February 1860.

[6]Ibid., 23 May 1860.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., 13 June 1860.

[10]Ibid., 1 August 1860.

[11]Ibid., 8 August 1860.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., 22 August 1860.

[15]Ibid., 27 June 1860.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., 25 July 1860.

[18]Ibid., 1 August 1860.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., 31 October 1860.

[21]Ibid., 7 November 1860.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid., 24 April 1861.

[24]Durant, History of Ingham and Eaton Counties, pp. 556-557. See also Michigan Military Establishment, Descriptive Roll, Twelfth Infantry, p. 39.

[25]Ibid., p. 114.

[26]Lansing State Republican, 3 September 1862.

[27]Ibid., 7 January 1863.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., 1 April 1863.

[30]Ibid., 11 November 1863.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid., 11 February 1863.

CHAPTER IV

THE CIVIL WAR COMES TO A CLOSE

As 1863 drew to a close, the editors of the Lansing State Republican reflected the weariness in the country toward the war. It had gone on too long, it had cost too much money, and it had taken too many lives. Gone was the jubilant feeling that the Republican Party had in 1860. Then the Presidency had come within their grasp for the first time. They were confident. They had taken the White House, they could take the Rebels.

But by 1863 inflation was a serious problem. The draft was meeting resistance. And worst of all, they had been disappointed in their candidate, Abraham Lincoln. He was an honest man, even his detractors admitted. But swift victory had eluded him. He had had trouble finding a winning general. His changes in command were seen by many as a sign of weakness. His cabinet was judged inferior. He had the reputation of a slow thinker; he needed too much time to make a decision. The country had given him three years and many politicians and editorial writers were suggesting that was enough.

The editors of the Lansing State Republican led the consistent supporters of Lincoln in Michigan. They never turned their backs on him, but their support, solid and strong, was no longer joyful. It was a serious decision. They weighed it carefully. In the end they determined

that the country should stick with the same leader it had. But there were no frivolous editorials in late 1863 and in 1864, the campaign year. There were none of the rail-splitter editorials that had filled the paper during Lincoln's first campaign. It was as if two different men had been running for office, one young and untried but full of promise; the other, old and familiar, a man who had disappointed his followers.

In November 1863, the Lansing editor reprinted Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and commented on the appropriateness of the monument, without a word on the appropriateness of the remarks. In October 1863 and February 1864, in lengthy editorials, the same editor explained why his readers should vote for Lincoln. He used careful, thoughtful sentences. Lincoln was elected in November, and assassinated the following April. All events were thoroughly covered by the Lansing State Republican. As the war progressed more and more favorably for the North, and finally, as Lincoln was martyred, the emotion came back in the editorial columns of the newspaper.

The Paper and Its Editors

In 1863-64, the Lansing State Republican was a weekly, published every Wednesday morning. It was a seven column

paper with frequent advertising supplements until July 20, 1864, when it expanded to eight columns. At that time the subscription price also increased to $2 a year. The first page had two or three columns of advertising on the left side, including a directory of local businesses. Such ads typically would merely say, for instance, that George I. Parsons, attorney and counsellor at law and solicitor in chancery, had an office in Lansing. The rest of the front page, four to six columns, was devoted to reprints from other papers, speeches delivered in Washington, or pending legislation. No local news appeared on the first page.

The second page started with a one-column masthead, Lansing State Republican. In the issues after April 1, 1863, the next line read "I.M. Cravath, editor." But after Cravath's illness, that line was dropped in December and not replaced by any other. In the summer of 1864, a new type-face was purchased by the paper, and an eagle was added to the top of the first column on the second page. The eagle carried banners saying John A. Kerr and Co. Kerr had owned the paper since 1857. The second page had at least two columns of local comment, two or three columns of news reprinted from elsewhere, including correspondence, and one or two columns of legal advertising or notices. The third page had an additional column or two of shorter local items and five or six columns of advertising. The fourth page had one column of advice helpful to farmers reprinted

from a book and more advertising.

It was consistently organized, and easy to read. The reprints from other newspapers were always in smaller type than the local comment.

The paper was edited by Isaac M. Cravath from April 1, 1863, when George Parsons resigned, until Cravath's illness, in August. When Cravath left, N.B. Jones and Theodore Foster shared the editing job until December 16, 1863, when the paper announced Foster would take over the editor's job.

Cravath, back from a short stint as Captain in the 12th Michigan Infantry, had edited the paper before he enlisted in October 1861. He had fought in the battle of Shiloh, April 6 and 7, 1862, and he resigned from the Army September 13, 1862, because of ill health. Little is known of his early life. Cravath had been brought up on a farm, and was a Free Soil Democrat before the Republican Party was formed in 1854. He became a clerk in the Auditor General's office in 1855, the same year another editor of the Lansing State Republican started to work there, Stephen D. Bingham. Cravath was elected state Senator in 1870 and died in 1872, at the age of 46. He had no monetary interest in the paper.

When he became sick, in August 1863, he was replaced by N.B. Jones, foreman in the Republican office. His name, however, remained on the masthead. Theodore Foster contributed one editorial a week to the paper until December,

when he took over the editor's job. Foster had been born in Foster, Rhode Island, in 1812. He went to Dexter, Michigan, in 1829 to live with his brother, Samuel. In 1841 he became the editor of the Signal of Liberty, an abolitionist paper, at Ann Arbor. After editing the paper for six years, he edited the Free Democrat in Detroit. In 1855 Governor Bingham, the state's first Republican governor, appointed Foster a building commissioner at the Michigan State Reform School for Boys in Lansing. When it was completed in 1856, Foster became superintendent. He held that job for four years, and later stayed on the Board of Control. He was city clerk in Lansing (1861-1862), deputy collector (1863-1864), and editor of the Lansing State Republican. He died of consumption at the end of 1865.

> He was equally modest and earnest, constitutionally conservative. He was from deep moral conviction, thoroughly radical. Naturally very sensitive to misappreciation and opposition and obloquy, he yet delighted in defending and promoting every where, as opportunity offered whatever seemed to him to be truest and best, no matter what were the odds against him. He was a man of quick perceptions, strong memory, and philosophic habits of thought, with fine logical powers of reasoning. He was also a close student and much addicted to literary occupations.[1]

Foster's work as an early abolitionist has received attention. Characterized as a pioneer Michigan abolitionist,

Foster and his Ann Arbor paper were said to be a strong influence in persuading men to consider abolition and liberty party doctrines. "Foster...was a tolerant and peaceful man who disliked quarreling and bickering."[2] He was, another early historian wrote, a man of "more than usual ability and of a literary turn of mind."[3]

While he was editor of the Lansing State Republican, the paper ran long, thoughtful editorials on issues, rather than petty attacks on personalities. It also interspersed local items with frequent news from the Boys Reform School. These ranged from announcements that the public could take chairs in need of recaning to the school workshop to morality tales of how the boys came to be in the Reform School. Foster put a strongly moralistic tone into many articles in his paper. In the spring of 1864 the paper carried a campaign against alcohol. In the issue of March 16, Foster wrote the story of Obadiah Sheldon's death from a fall after drinking. The next seven issues of the paper carried sermons and summaries of sermons heard in Lansing churches on the merits of temperance.

About this time, Lansing had eleven churches for a population of nearly 4,000. Five hotels served the itinerant legislators, and two mills, three tanneries, two breweries, and three iron foundries employed many of the year-long residents. The people in Lansing were prosperous and self-satisfied. One writer, in the Michigan State

Gazetter for 1863, commented on the city's future:

> Its situation, in the center of a fine farming district, is such that it cannot fail to become a place of considerable commercial importance, and when its contemplated railroad connections are completed it will undoubtedly take rank as one of the first cities of the State.[4]

The Lansing State Republican was a country weekly that attracted educated, dedicated men as editors. They saw an opportunity to get their views into print, an opportunity to influence voters, and they took it. They made the Lansing State Republican in 1864 a paper with a purpose in a city with a bright future.

Gettysburg Address

On November 19, 1863, Lansing editors knew, one of the most significant stories of the year was taking place in Gettysburg: the dedication of the battlefield as a war memorial. Edward Everett spoke for two hours, yet few papers quoted much of his speech. Lincoln's remarks, a total of ten sentences, were reprinted in their entirety in many papers. Readers around the country had this opportunity to judge the Gettysburg Address themselves, not because editors were aware of its classic potential, but because the length fit into their editorial columns.

The comments on Lincoln's speech varied from paper to paper, depending on the editor's politics. Thus the Chicago Times characterized the speech as "the silly, flat, and dish-wattery utterances." The Harrisburg Patriot and Union, near Gettysburg, said, "We pass over the silly remarks of the President." On the other extreme, the Springfield Republican called the speech "a perfect gem," and the Chicago Tribune boldly predicted, "The dedicatory remarks of President Lincoln will live among the annals of man."[5]

Nothing so dramatic appeared in the Lansing State Republican. Under the dual editorship of Foster and Jones in November, the paper factually described the dedication ceremonies, reprinted the President's address, and made a few comments. The coverage in the November 25 issue included the following:

> After music and prayer, the oration was delivered by Hon. Edward Everett, and it is reported to have been an able effort, the speaker occupying over two hours in its delivery.
>
> After the close of all the ceremonies, the Marshal of the day introduced President Lincoln to the vast assemblage, who was greeted with great applause, at the cessation of which he spoke as follows:

There followed 33 lines of agate type, the complete Gettysburg address, with applause noted. (Whether or not there actually was any applause is an historical argument.) Then Foster, without commenting on what the President said, wrote

his own Gettysburg dedication:

> The sacred spot is now solemnly dedicated as the final earthly resting place of the noble, brave and patriotic heroes who sacrificed their lives upon the altar of freedom at the ever to be remembered battle whose name the cemetery bears....
>
> When this cruel war shall be over, every person who is able will embrace the first opportunity to gaze upon the mounds which cover the dead there interred, and look around upon the hills, valleys and mountains in close proximity to the spot where the desperate struggle in which they lost their lives ensued. And who could ever do so without being moved to tears at the recollection of some loved one who freely and voluntarily offered up his life to vouchsafe to us forever the precious boon of freedom, and who there sleeps, but of whom be it said,
>
> 'Awake not his slumber, tread lightly around
> 'Tis the grave of a freeman, 'Tis Liberty's mound.'[6]

The Reelection of Lincoln

A major editorial written on behalf of Lincoln by Theodore Foster appeared in the Republican a year before the election, October 7, 1863. It ran almost two columns and defended Lincoln on many levels. For example, Foster began by examining Lincoln's background.

> Mr. Lincoln is the only President we have ever had who may be said to be from the working class of people....This familiarity with the pursuits and feeling of the great laboring class of his countrymen,

> has doubtlessly given him some advantage in conducting public affairs over those Presidents who like J.Q. Adams and Jefferson were educated among books, and associated exclusively with those who never worked for their living with their hands.

This practical education Lincoln had leads to the second major point Foster makes: Lincoln's speeches and writings.

> His messages and letters abound with Saxon words and phrases, to the exclusion, in a great degree, of those of Latin origin. The Saxon words being in common use, and mostly of one syllable, Mr. Lincoln's style is plain, simple, blunt, forcible, emphatic, direct, easily understood, and carries the conviction to the mind of the reader that he means just that thing which he says, and nothing else.

Foster says that this easily understood style accounts for some of Lincoln's popularity. The people can read Lincoln's speeches and letters, and understand that he is a man of good sense and patriotism. Foster then advances arguments on Lincoln's behalf based on the President's good morals, his intellect, will, strong good sense, gift of prophecy, firmness, emancipation history, mildness and clemency. True to its Republican history, the Lansing State Republican in October 1863 once again spoke out strongly for the Republican candidate even if this time its support was tempered with wishful thinking.

> There may be those in the nation who would have conducted us through

> our national struggle in less time, and with more ability, than Lincoln; but if the experiment were tried, we should probably find, that where there was one man who would do better, there would be at least half a million who would do worse.[7]

This was the harshest criticism of Lincoln the editors of the Lansing State Republican had written. For the first time, an editor of the loyal weekly had admitted that a Republican president was not the perfect President, or the perfect candidate. Foster would later repeat this approach: Lincoln may have been helpless, but the times were difficult and few could have done better.

The next major political statement on the presidential campaign came in February. By then Foster had taken over the title as well as the writing. The editorial ran almost a column, and methodically listed the reasons why Lincoln should be renominated. It was a style new to this subject, enumeration, but one that Foster was to use again and again.

Foster admitted to his readers that it was early in the year to pick a candidate for President, but he felt an editorial supporting Lincoln was appropriate because several state legislatures and metropolitan papers had already picked a candidate.

> The great war not yet finished--work of reconstruction, of equal importance, scarcely begun--the future of four millions of colored people, either free or soon to be freed--the ultimate destiny of unpardoned rebels--the uncertainities which may grow out of

> the financial state of the country--and many other important matters, all admonish us that we need, in the Presidential chair, the wisest, most reliable, and best man we can find. After carefully surveying the necessities of the nation, and the men who might possibly meet them best as the national executive, we are fully persuaded, that the American people cannot do better than to reelect ABRAHAM LINCOLN for the next four years.

Foster then listed four reasons: Lincoln will be an unselfish President, a safe president, a popular President, and the person needed to carry out the policy he himself had begun.

> 1. He will be an unselfish President. We mean, by this, that he will have at heart, as a consideration paramount to all others, a sincere desire for the welfare and prosperity of his whole country; and this desire will be a controlling one in determining the course he will pursue. The first step towards doing well for one's country, is to have the will to do it good; and where that will is wanting, how much are we to expect? Of the truly patriotic kind of Presidents we may name Washington, Jefferson, and J.Q. Adams; and we mention those in contrast with such as Van Buren, Fillmore, Pierce and Buchanan, men with whom party or personal influences were superior to those of a higher nature.

In this editorial, Foster broadened his sights beyond the Republican Party. For the first time, the Lansing State Republican chose a Presidential candidate and listed

reasons other than his party membership as a good reason to vote for him. Here, in item one, Foster wrote that patriotic presidents, and Lincoln is one, are not like other presidents who act solely on the basis of party or personal reasons. This is a major change in line of attack. Foster himself managed to transcend party boundaries in arguing for Lincoln.

> 2. He will be a safe President. He will be safe, inasmuch as he will not be given to rash and sudden determination in important affairs. He will be safe so far as choosing new counsellors is concerned. The pertinacity--we might almost say obstinacy--with which he has adhered to Halleck, Stanton, Seward and Chase, not only against the clamor of their enemies, but against the wishes of many of his own warm friends, is a guaranty that he will be safe so far as following any wild theory, either of his own or other people, is concerned. He is no theorizer at all. When called upon for a plan of reconstruction, he rejected all theories and made one entirely practical, and, at the same time, give public notice that he should not adhere even to that, if any better should be discovered.

Again, Foster declined to stoop to petty party politics, or even attack the opposition by name. He kept his arguments broad in scope.

> 3. He will be a popular President. We mean by this, that there will be for him, among the masses of the people, a feeling of confidence and enthusiasm, growing out of his personal history as one of toiling millions of the nation, who had a

> heartfelt interest in their welfare and in that of his whole country.... In this respect, Mr. Lincoln will stand with his contemporaries and with posterity, in a position not inferior to that of Washington.
>
> 4. Mr. Lincoln is needed in the Executive Chair, to carry out and perfect the policy that has been already begun. It is far better that those who approve that policy should continue him to office, than that they should intrust its completion to another workman, who might alter the original plans, or be careless or faithless in carrying them out. Besides, it is no more than justice to Mr. Lincoln,....He has borne patiently the obloquy and reproach which the war has been conducted; now let him have a chance to achieve what credit he may with mankind, in the administration of civil affairs.[8]

Foster wished he might live to see four more years of a Lincoln Administration that would end the war, free all people, reconstruct the southern states, and restore the Union. Foster died eight months after Lincoln.

During the rest of the spring, few editorials were written concerning Presidential politics. On March 2 Foster reprinted a sketch of "Old Abe," written by Harriet Stowe. On March 16, he declared the beginning of the end of the war was at hand, and that skies had brightened further when Chase declined to be a candidate for presidency. Also on March 16 he objected to Democratic claims made in the opposition State Journal that "Republican Pets" had vandalized the chair shop of A.B. Stuart.

> The manner in which the transaction is referred to by the Journal, is perfectly characteristic. The same imagination which can see our soldiers as so many 'bulldogs' and 'Hell Hounds,' destroying 'our Southern brethren,' would very naturally conceive of them at home as so many pet dogs under the care of Republicans who are now supposed to be rubbing their ears and preparing to set them on to 'the unterrified' Copperheads. The figure of speech, it will be seen, is exactly the same, The soldiers are to be thought of, and spoken of, in all cases, as so many dogs.[9]

A little of the old Republican chauvinism surfaced March 23 when Foster urged Republican voters to register. On April 6 he reprinted a biographical sketch of Grant on the first page, accompanied by a local editorial on the second page. Foster explained that the sketch, which had originally run in the National Intelligencer, was the best he had read. He regretted the lack of a sketch written by a talented and philosophic historian such as Gibbon or Alison, but admitted few such biographies are written during the life of the subject. Then, Foster attacks Grant himself.

> ...the General does not belong to the highest class of great men. These have so great a fund of mental power and energy that they could be almost equally great in any direction to which they might turn their attention; and would become distinguished in many walks of life. The second class of great men are great in only one or two things, and in other respects,

> they may be as powerless and inefficient as ordinary men. According to the biography before us, if General Grant is to belong to either class, it must be the latter.

Foster describes Grant's West Point days as unremarkable. He says Grant does not write or play sports.

> He has no irrepressible energies in any direction; he has no ambition, like Columbus to discover a world, or, like Alexander, to conquer one; he has no aspiration, like Luther or Wilberforce, to labor for its improvement and reformation; nor, as a merely selfish man, does he strive to rise to the summit of political distinction among its friends and countrymen.

Foster concedes Grant is a good military talent, and thus, only a member of the second class of great men.[10]

The year 1864 saw three major political conventions. At the Cleveland convention, which began May 31, Fremont was chosen by independent radicals as a candidate for president. At the Baltimore convention, which began June 7, Lincoln was chosen by the Republicans, and at the Chicago convention, which began August 29, the Democrats chose McClellan.

Fremont had been the choice of the Republican Party in 1856, the first year the Republicans had nominated a candidate. Foster had to swallow a bitter pill when the news of Fremont's nomination by another group and acceptance made it to Lansing. First Foster described the people who attended the radical convention.

> First there were the old fashioned ultra abolitionists....All this class are opposed to Lincoln, because they want a candidate more radically anti-slavery. The second division was composed of German supporters of Fremont, largely from Missouri, while the remainder were a species of War Democrat, most from New York.

Foster then recounted the nomination of Fremont and Cochrane as president and vice president. He noted that the resolutions passed at the convention are all patriotic and worthy of support except for one, which would distribute the land of the rebels among the soldiers. Foster summarized:

> We know very well that the prize of the Presidency has great attractions for all eminent men who think they can reach it; but Gen. Fremont must be aware that he can never be elected to that place, unless it be by the votes of a large part of the present Republican party. This party give him a warm and generous support in 1856, believing him to be something more than a mere politician. They voted him as a true patriot and as the representative of principles dear to them and to him. Since then he has not gained in the estimation of the mass of those who then supported him, but has rather lost. Yet there are many who retain their attachment to him; and would prefer him to any other candidate. Now what is he to do?

In Foster's mind, Fremont had only one choice: he should follow the example set by Chase and withdraw from the race. Fremont should then support the candidate chosen by the Baltimore (Republican) convention.[11]

When the Baltimore convention met later that month and renominated Lincoln, Foster immediately put a campaign banner at the top of the second page, and continued to use it every issue until the November election. "For President," it read, "Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois. For Vice President Andrew Johnson, of Tennessee." Unlike the convention of radicals which met in Cleveland, Foster wrote, the convention in Baltimore was special.

> The National Convention, which met at Baltimore on the seventh of June, was one of the most remarkable and imposing assemblages that ever met in the United States. Every State and every Territory, however distant or unsettled, had its full representation in that body; and all those men, most of whom never met before, unanimously agreed in the nomination of Lincoln and Johnson as President and Vice President of the United States. This unanimity of action was most remarkable, whether the delegates be regarded as patriotic men, met to consult and act together for the good of their common country, or whether they be considered, as represented by the Copperheads, as a mere set of selfish officeholders and seekers.

Foster wrote on that day in June 1864 that the Republican Convention had selected a man who was also the choice of the American people, excluding the Rebels, their friends, and a small class of malcontents. He then listed Johnson's qualifications and predicted that the ticket's prospects were "hopeful and cheering in the highest degree." He

repeated his belief that Fremont had no chance to win.[12]

On July 6, 1864, Foster reprinted on the front page the official nomination of Lincoln and Lincoln's acceptance. No comment accompanied it. In the same issue, however, Foster departed from his usual thorough, complete approach and used a local movement as an opportunity to praise his candidate for president, Abraham Lincoln. The reference to Lincoln, in such an offhand, brief manner, is almost unique in Foster's writings on the 1864 campaign. The opportunity presented itself in the early closing movement, which had come to Lansing that summer. Shopkeepers had agreed to close their businesses earlier than usual to allow themselves and their clerks more free time.

> It is by the improvement of these leisure hours, that self-made men rise in the world above their fellows. There were thousands of printers who had better opportunities than Franklin, who yet lived and died mere typesetters--there were thousands who split rails at the same time with Abraham Lincoln, and are only railsplitters today.[13]

Foster more commonly limited his pro-Lincoln remarks to serious defenses of the President. On July 27, 1864, he supported the President's draft of 500,000 more men. He used the enumeration technique to list the reasons why Lincoln deserved "a careful and candid consideration from every citizen."

> 1. It is entirely useless to discuss the question who is responsible for the necessity of

> this call, and whether it might not have been prevented. The necessity is upon us. Suppose the Republicans can prove to their entire satisfaction, that had it not been for the utter imbecility, not to say treachery, of Buchanan, the rebellion might have been nipped in the bud by the energy of General Scott; and suppose the Democrats think they can show that if the war had been properly conducted by Lincoln it might have been ended before this time; and suppose both these propositions to be true, their truth does not alter the actual state of things. The war was not prevented by Buchanan, and it is not yet finished by Lincoln; and our duty and our true policy is to drop all discussions on the errors of the past, whether real or imaginary, and consider how we may best meet unitedly the demand our country makes on us to-day.

Here Foster restated the reasoning first found in his editorial of October 7, 1863, supporting the renomination of Lincoln. Although he refuses to defend Lincoln's management of the war, he continues to defend Lincoln. He seemed to know better than to pretend Lincoln was a panacea for a troubled nation. He preferred to take a realistic approach and accept the state of the war. He continued his enumeration, stating that the new enrollment law is more practical than militia would have been, that the striking out of the $300 commutation clause was just, that the draft will be carried out, and the draft is generous, providing about one dollar a day to the men.[14]

A week later, Foster supported the city's plan to raise enough money to pay men to volunteer for the draft.

He urged voters to attend a meeting to discuss ways in which to raise the money. At the meeting, Foster reported on August 10, S.D. Bingham, former editor of the Republican, had offered a resolution to pay each recruit $100.

In that same issue of August 10, a good example of Foster's style of writing is in an editorial he wrote on the word "Copperhead."

> We despise the practice of calling an opponent by opprobrious epithets, or nicknames. They have no argument in them. They show a want of it in the party that uses them. They beget a bad feeling in the persons to whom they are applied. Every editor who is a gentleman will not use them in his writings.
>
> But we do not object to the use of new words to express things newly discovered...We have had Whigs, Democrats, Republicans, Anti-masons-- These are not words of reproach. They designate classes of men, holding and acting out peculiar opinions.
>
> So the word "Copperhead" has come into use to designate a peculiar class of men, who have recently appeared in the world. We frequently use it in this sense, and not as an unmeaning but slang term of reproach.

Four years into a war that had caused havoc and destruction, Foster felt a necessity to explain his use of a term he used to describe one faction of the enemy. Copperheads, he explains, do not believe in prosecuting the war. Again, reverting to his enumeration technique, Foster lists the types of Copperheads:

> 1. Those who would make peace with the rebels by acknowledging the

> independence of the Southern Confederacy...
> 2. Those who would make peace with the rebels by establishing an armistice...
> 3. Those who oppose enlistments...
> 4. Those who vote against supplies of men and money in Congress...
> 5. Those who make threats of resisting the draft...
> 6. Those who claim that every State has a right to secede...

In this long winded roundabout piece of writing on August 10, Foster eventually concludes that Copperheads are not rebels or traitors. As is his habit, Foster painstakingly presents the whole of his argument as slowly as Lincoln fought the war, until he justifiably draws his conclusion.

> The Copperhead does not himself directly plot the ruin of his country; but he does all in his power to screen those who work for its destruction from the just punishment which their infamous crimes deserve.[15]

Foster's sense of honor and justice appeared very strong in all his editorials. On August 24, in one of his most straight-forward defenses of the president, he critized the Wade and Davis protest. Foster tells his readers that before Congress adjourned on the Fourth of July, it presented to the president for signature a bill for the reconstruction of the South.

> We liked the provisions of the bill generally, thought them to be judicious, and we yet hope to

> see them substantially adopted as the basis of reconstruction.
>
> But the President was unwilling to sign the bill...he issued a proclamation, which we published in the Republican at the time. In this document, he assigns, as his reasons for not signing it, that by doing so, he would inflexibly commit himself to one single plan of restoration, which he did not wish to do...

Foster praised the President for issuing a proclamation, so "plain people" everywhere could read for themselves what the President was thinking. But Henry Winter Davis, chairman of the House Committee on Rebellious States, and Benjamin Franklin Wade, Chairman of the Senate Committee, took the opposite position. Wade and Davis, the authors of the bill, wanted reconstruction to be handled by Congress. Wade and Davis criticized the President for his veto in their Wade-Davis Manifesto, accusing the president of "executive usurpation" of the legislative function. They requested the President to confine himself to his own sphere, the executive level. In Lansing, Foster defended Lincoln:

> We are unable to see wherein the President has usurped, or proposed to usurp, any power not rightfully belonging to him. That he has a constitutional power to withhold his signature from any act of Congress, thereby preventing its becoming law, unless passed again by a two-thirds vote, is what no one denies. This power he has exercised...The publication of this document will damage its authors far more than it will the President...[16]

On a less philosophic note, Foster noted the following week that Democrats met in Syracuse and demonstrated against Lincoln by carrying banners which read, "Lincoln demands blood! Provost marshals beware!" and "Crush the tyrant Lincoln before he crushes you." Foster quoted a Syracuse speaker who denounced Lincoln as the biggest kind of tyrant, and then, in an uncharacteristically short argument defended Lincoln.

> The fact that such sentiments can be openly expressed and approved, is the best of all arguments against the alleged oppression and tyranny of the Lincoln government.[17]

On September 7, Foster printed the results of the Chicago convention held August 29 to 31 which nominated McClellan as the candidate of the Democratic party, and George H. Pendleton of New York as the vice presidential candidate. Foster, using his enumeration technique, noted several good things about the Democrats' meeting.

> 1. In so large a meeting called on purpose to save the country, there was only one public man of first-class standing or talent, and that was Gov. (T.H.) Seymour.
>
> 2. There was not a speech made which bears any of the marks of a statesman, or proposes any practical or efficient plan for remedying our national troubles....

Foster's enumeration continued: no comment was made by the Democrats on the conduct of the rebels, no plan was advanced for peace, the platform is the "tamest and

weakest thing of its kind," and there was much criticism of its own candidate voiced at the convention. But most importantly, Foster noted, the convention was caught in a logical impossibility:

> 8. There was a glaring inconsistency in a convention denouncing arbitrary arrests, emancipation, disregard of State rights, and military interference in election, as ascribed in practice to Lincoln, and nominating another for the same place who had done precisely the same thing. But this consideration will not avail much with many. What is reason or consistency to one who has already determined in his own mind that Lincoln is an old tyrant, and he will vote for the devil himself if he only can be the successful candidate against him?[18]

Political commentary in the Lansing State Republican became more pointed after the Democrats nominated a candidate. Foster explained six weeks before the election that the elements in the Presidential contest had taken distinct shape. His enumeration this time took the formal shape of an outline, with Roman numerals from I to III, one for each major candidate, and subdivisions under Lincoln's heading from one to five. Foster immediately dispensed with Fremont, Roman numeral I, as "already out of the arena." Foster criticized the Democrats, Roman numeral II, for their inconsistency in having a peace platform and a war candidate.

> The great doctrine of the Chicago platform, reduced to a single sentence, is this: CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES NOW. The great doctrine in McClellan's acceptance of the Platform is this: GO ON WITH THE WAR TILL THE REBELS RETURN TO THE UNION. Now here is an

> antagonism between the Platform and its candidate so complete that none can be greater. No man can be in favor of immediate peace and a continuance of the war at the same time...Here then, we have literally a house divided against itself; and we have high authority for believing that such a house cannot stand long...

After this witty observation, Foster concluded that McClellan will carry several states on the strength of the anti-Lincoln vote and the war vote. That is, that McClellan has improved his chances by favoring the war effort. But in the end, Foster wrote, Lincoln could depend on re-election because of five influences:

> 1. There is the confidence which we have in his principles and character, growing out of his four years' experience as President...
> 2. The religious feeling of the country has largely sustained the war thus far, and five-sixths of the religious men and clergy in the community will vote for Mr. Lincoln...
> 3. The anti-slavery feeling of the nation will concentrate for Mr. Lincoln with great unanimity and force...Mr. Lincoln, however slow in his steps, is fully committed to the great final step of constitutional prohibition...
> 4. A large majority of soldiers in the army will vote for Mr. Lincoln...
> 5. All the successes of our armies, whether they be large or small, between this and the day of the election, will inure to the support of Mr. Lincoln, because, they will strengthen the popular conviction that the war policy he pursues is not only right, but will be crowned with speedy success...

Foster confidently predicted Lincoln would beat McClellan: "Our enemies are strong; but the influences

that work for us are stronger still."[19]

With the election in sight, Foster's political writings became more traditional. His writing became more direct, although still lengthy. Still enumerating reasons why voters should choose Lincoln, Foster reverted to editorials that could have been written by the typical partisan Republican editor. On September 28, he wrote a special editorial directed at the soldiers, warning that if they were tempted to vote for McClellan, "do not forget the company he keeps!" Foster detailed vice presidential candidate Pendleton's views on secession, and asked the soldiers if they wanted a secessionist in line for the Presidency. It was a direct, easy-to-follow campaign argument: "Is that the kind of Vice President you want? That is just the one you will get by voting for McClellan."[20]

September and October were filled with local party meetings, and so was the Republican. Foster duly reported that the Republican meetings were well-attended and presented interesting speakers. The Democrats, Foster charged, first violated the Chicago platform by forming a McClellan Club, a candidate opposed to peace. But then, he gloated the next week, he had been in error. No McClellan Club had been formed: not enough members had shown any interest.[21]

On October 12, Foster, the moralizer, took an uncustomary view when it came to voting. He presented a hypothetical example of a voter faced with the choice of an

upstanding, churchgoing, hardworking Democrat or a lazy, drinking Republican. Foster's choice was in line with Republican editors since the paper had been founded: Choose the Republican, for no matter what his individual morals, he still belonged to the party with the best political policy.

On October 19, Foster advised his fellow Republicans to spare no effort to make the county meetings as effective as possible: have a fire warming the room, have the lights burning--"Much more of success depends upon these little things than is generally believed."

Usually philosophical and literary, Foster was carried away by the campaign only once in the long campaign year. On October 26 he allowed himself a quick joke.

> The way to make a great man--The Copperheads of Detroit have got a banner on which McClellan is painted eight feet high. It is a great consolation to them to find one way to make a great man of him.[22]

By October 26, it was clear to Foster that Lincoln would be reelected. Foster had begun to worry about a Republican Congress being elected. He urged Union men to leave nothing undone in voting.[23]

Election day was late in 1864. On November 2, almost a week before the votes were counted, Foster enumerated for his readers six lies the Copperheads were spreading. His conclusion: "Believe nothing that comes from a Democratic source."[24] The same day he ran a more traditional civic

minded editorial, "Pause and Think before You Vote." It could have been the prototype for pre-election editorials written to this day, or a composite of every election editorial since 1789; but Foster, ever the bookish one, had a sense of history.

> Never since the organization of this Government have such momentous issues had to be decided by the ballot box as will be decided in the contest on Tuesday next. Never before has the main issue in a Presidential contest been that of the very life and existence of the nation itself...If the Union party is successful, rebellion will be put down, our national sins blotted out, and the great underlying and sustaining principle of our Government, LIBERTY AND FREEDOM TO ALL, be firmly established, never again to be assailed, and we remain a nation blessed and favored by God's Providence, and receiving divine sanction, without which no nation can live and prosper.

For the first time, Foster admitted in print that some of his readers may have viewed his writing as melodramatic.

> Reader, you may think this overdrawn, but time will prove to you the truthfulness of the statement, if the so-called Democratic party succeeds.[25]

By Wednesday morning, November 9, Foster somehow had enough campaign results to proclaim: "Result of the Campaign! Lincoln and Johnson Elected! The Rebellion to be put down, and Slavery Destroyed!" By November 16, Foster had more complete returns, and allowed his enumeration to take him all the way to six conclusions on the Republican landslide.

1. We are to be <u>one</u> people...
2. We are to be <u>free</u> people...

> 3. The war will be prosecuted until the rebels sue for peace...
> 4. We shall have an unshaken national credit...
> 5. There will be a rising confidence, both among our own citizens and through all nations, in the stability and power of free institutions...
> 6. There will be a more broad and distinctly marked difference between traitors and patriots than ever before...

In the long editorial, Foster mentioned Lincoln by name twice, both times in recounting instances of discord evident earlier in the campaign: first, when Fremont fiercely denounced Lincoln, and second, when Beecher and his Independent "could not see in Mr. Lincoln the man for the hour and the place." In fact, Lincoln is referred to repeatedly as the Republican nominee, or the President.[26]

Beginning in October 1863, the Lansing State Republican began campaigning in print for the reelection of Abraham Lincoln. Theodore Foster, the editor, wrote long, thoughtful editorials urging the people to vote for Lincoln. In one sense, Foster was maintaining the loyal Republican tradition, so strong in Lansing. But in so doing, Foster explored new ground in explaining his reasons for selecting Lincoln again. It was a different campaign, and shallow Republican loyalty was not enough. Foster proved equal to the challenge with a pair of intelligent editorials in October 1863 and February 1864.

Carl Sandburg and the Lansing State Republican

Foster's long, thoughtful editorials caught the attention of Carl Sandburg when he was researching his biography of Abraham Lincoln. In The War Years, Sandburg wrote warmly of country editors. Sandburg wrote that country editors were Lincoln's only printed support during some weeks of the darkest months of his Presidency. Country editors, some for Lincoln and some against him, argued his strong points the way neighbors did around a hot stove in a grocery post office.

> One of these country weeklies, the Lansing (Michigan) State Republican, on February 10 of '64 in a long editorial presented the case for Lincoln's re-election more keenly and vividly than any of the metropolitan dailies. Its editor, I.M. Cravath, knew his politics and the Midwest American people. Cravath and his country paper were a sign that rural America was wiser to Lincoln's drift than many of the garrulous sophisticates of the big cities.[27]

On February 10, 1864, the Lansing State Republican used no editor's line under the masthead. No names appeared in conjunction with the editorials. Sandburg made an error here, however, which arose out of the use of an editor's credit line in the paper the previous October. Sandburg quotes the October editorial next.

> Four months earlier Editor Cravath had urged that Lincoln's "mild and moderate course" had advantages over "a stern and severe one."[28]

Sandburg here is quoting from the October 7, 1863, editorial. In October, the Republican was still using the line "I.M. Cravath, editor" at the top of the second page. Yet on December 16, 1863, the Republican ran a notice that Sandburg must have missed:

> The Gentleman employed by us as editor of the Republican, Mr. Cravath, has been absent from his post since the last of August on account of severe illness, and the editorial management of the paper has been under the charge of Mr. N.B. Jones, foreman of this office, who has been kindly assisted by the contribution of an article each week from Mr. Theodore Foster. Owing to the press of business in the office, Mr. Jones is no longer able to edit the paper and hence we have secured the services of Mr. Theodore Foster as editor, who will so continue until the return of Mr. Cravath, or until other permanent arrangements shall be made. Mr. Foster will take charge of the paper next week.[29]

No notices were given between December 16, 1863, and the 1864 election identifying the editor. Yet it is clear that Cravath was not editing the paper October 7, and that such a major editorial, artfully written, could not have been written by the foreman of the shop; it was probably written by Theodore Foster, an experienced journalist who came to Lansing after working on papers in Detroit and Ann Arbor. Furthermore, the paper during the campaign year was filled with references to the Boys Reform School, one of Foster's

main interests in Lansing. He was the first Superintendent of the School, and continued on its Board after that. The style of the editorials is also similar throughout the entire year. Foster's continued use of enumeration, present in the February 10 editorial Sandburg singled out, make it clear that one person wrote the political editorials during the entire campaign.

In addition, the February 10 issue of the Lansing State Republican carries a letter from Cravath written while recuperating in Chicago. The letter, dated Feb. 3, is clearly labeled, "Letter from Mr. Cravath," as though word from the former editor was unusual. Cravath also indicates writing for the Republican is an unusual occupation for him:

> Months, long, monotonous, slow-footed, bringing wasting fever and weary days of suffering have passed by, and once more I take up my pen to address the readers of the Republican.

It seems unlikely Cravath had been writing any editorials.

Sandburg thoroughly analyzes the two major pro-Lincoln editorials Foster wrote in October 1863 and February 1864. He quotes freely, and comments:

> Cravath and his little one-horse weekly paper out in the tall grass had not been fooled by the Congressmen and Senators of his own State, nor by the adroit and miasmic Detroit Free Press, nor by any of the politicians and journals that wished to high heaven they could get Lincoln out of the White House. Never having seen Lincoln nor accepted the general small talk about Lincoln, Cravath had judged his President by letters, speeches, acts,

> decisions--not merely reading but studying and weighing the President's papers and the main important, undeniable facts of his life. This country editor, like others, had come to be somewhat haunted by the sad, scrawny, intricate character who sat at the helm in the storm center in Washington.[30]

Sandburg quotes the Lansing editor's praise of Lincoln's morals, working class background, and popularity. Sandburg notes that the Lansing editor and a contemporary London journalist credited Lincoln with the gift of prophecy. Foster wrote:

> Whatever deficiencies the President may have in some directions, he seems to have something of the prescience of the future, with which minds of the highest class are often gifted. Such minds, by the study of great principles, obtain a sort of calcium light, which throws its illumination far into the distant future, revealing the forms of things in their shadowy and undefined shape, which are not yet, but are to be![31]

Sandburg says after reading the Lansing paper's description of Lincoln, "To a mass of people for whom this Michigan country editor spoke had come a feeling of mystic and heroic quality in Lincoln."[32]

Historian Carl Sandburg lavished strong praise on the abilities of the Lansing State Republican editor, both in writing and in judgment. But Sandburg erred in naming the editor. No support can be found in the columns of the paper itself for Sandburg's reference to I.M. Cravath as editor

of the Lansing State Republican in October 1863 or February 1864, or as author of two eloquent pro-Lincoln editorials. Theodore Foster wrote both editorials, and it is his abilities which Sandburg so admired.

The Assassination of Lincoln

Lincoln was inaugurated in March 1865, and in April Lee's Army surrendered. Foster called it the greatest event of the war.

> The most important and stirring events, both military and political, may now be expected to succeed each other with rapidity; and it is a matter of general thankfullness with all loyal men that, in managing the affairs which will precede the re-construction of the States, we have in Abraham Lincoln a man at the head of the Executive department whose patriotism, firmness and practical sagacity can be more surely relied upon than any other public man in this country.[33]

It was as if, now that the war was apparently won, Lincoln deserved to be praised by name again. Foster could openly relish Lincoln's good points instead of constantly justifying his puzzling characteristics, such as his deliberation in carrying out the war. It may have given Foster some satisfaction in retrospect that this generous and total praise of the President should appear on April 12, 1865 in the Lansing State Republican. The paper had supported

Lincoln from his first nomination to the last days of his Presidency. It was praise uncluttered by the emotions of two days later when word of Lincoln's assassination reached Lansing.

First notice of the murder appeared in the April 19 paper. Heavy black column rules gave the paper a somber appearance. The Lincoln story was headlined, "The National Calamity," and Foster noted ironically that such a crime might have been expected by the enemy early in the war, but at the end of the war the calamity was "as unexpected as it was appalling." A very unemotional analysis of the situation followed in terms of the effect the assassination would have on reconstruction and on the permanence of the American system of government. On the third page of the same paper Foster recounted the "Proceedings in the City" followed the news. A meeting was held at the telegraph office Saturday morning, a natural gathering place for news. The townspeople agreed to distribute copies of the dispatches concerning the President's death, suspend business for the day, hold a public meeting at 3 p.m. and toll the church bells for two hours.

Then a committee of five was formed, including the editor of the Michigan State Journal, George Peck, and two Lansing State Republican editors, Stephen Bingham and DeWitt Leach. The committee was to draft a series of resolutions expressing the feelings of the community in the

face of the calamity. At the second meeting, Leach read the resolutions his committee had formed. The resolutions were straightfoward, and printed word for word in Foster's paper the following Wednesday. They included:

> Resolved, That while we are not called on this occasion to pass judgment on his political acts, we can as one man, heartily unite in praising his earnestness and singleness of purpose, his integrity of character, and his unquestioned patriotism. Resolved, That it is a source of sincere satisfaction to us, as American citizens, that amid all the arduous duties that have devolved on Mr. Lincoln; and amid all the bitterness of party strife, his integrity has remained unquestioned, and he dies as he had lived, esteemed by all as that noblest work of God, "an honest man."

A second meeting was held Sunday under the auspices of three Protestant Churches in Lansing, and eight resolutions were approved by the public. This meeting was chaired by Theodore Foster, Esq., himself. N.B. Jones, Lansing State Republican foreman, was secretary. These resolutions, accepted by the churchgoing citizens, were more religious in tone, acknowledging that there was one above Lincoln, that Lincoln had true christian characteristics, and that his death was permitted for the chastisement of sin. There was a brief description of Lincoln.

> Resolved, That we deem the death of President Abraham Lincoln as a lamentable and heart touching occurrence, and feel that in him, as Chief Magistrate of this great government, the country has suffered

> an irreparable loss, combining as he did magnanimity of heart, justice to all men, high or low, a devoted love for the perpetuity and welfare of the Union, and a love and reverence for the religion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And there was a threat of revenge:

> Resolved, That while we would extend a christian charity to all the erring sons of Adam, and cast its broad mantle over the foibles of men as far as consistent with the religion of our Savior, still we must ever esteem the crime of treason and rebellion against our government as one of the highest order, calling for the severest punishment known to the laws, and to which we can never, in the slightest degree, give shadow of countenance.[34]

The harshness of the reconstruction that was to be was foreshadowed in the Lansing State Republican's recounting of a tribute to Lincoln. The meeting chaired by Foster called for a day of fasting and prayer, and crepe-covered buildings for 30 days. All of this initial mourning was very formal, very businesslike, and very distant. Foster was dutifully recording the events, without stopping to record the feelings, his own or the townspeople's. It was as if the shock of Lincoln's death had temporarily drained Lansing Republicans of their feelings, so devoid of emotion is that first issue to appear after Lincoln's death. Foster, however, made good his initial omission.

The next issue was dated April 26 and contained every bit of information about Lincoln's assassination and funeral

that Foster could find, even dispatches that contradicted each other.

> They are the best history that can now be had of the transactions. The public interest is so intense and absorbing that it demands to know all that can be known. Nor is this interest without sufficient reason. Apart from the relations of the President to us as a people, and the immediate consequences growing out of his murder, his assassination, viewed in all its circumstances, has scarcely a parallel in the history of civilization....

Foster took several examples from history, such as Paul of Russia and Henry IV of France, and claimed they were not equal to the assassination of Lincoln.

> It is only when we go back 1900 years to the days of Julius Caesar, that we can find a fitting parallel for our national calamity. Caesar was the head of the Roman state, dictator for 120,000,000 of people who lived on an area just about the size of the U.S. He was slain in public in the Senate Chamber, by a company of assassins. But here the resemblance ends; for Caesar was accused of overthrowing the establishment forms of government by the military power of the nation; while President Lincoln has used our national power for perpetuating and defending the institutions handed down to us from our ancestors. The one lost his life by personal ambition, while the other fell a martyr for his country's liberties; for the President was really a victim of the slave power which formed the rebellion as much as the first private soldier who fell on the battlefield. Slavery killed them both...In their death, they are alike martyrs for their country, both being slain by its worst and greatest enemy, because they would defend its life and interests.[35]

Foster has learned to live with the dead Lincoln; he has found a formula to use in writing about Lincoln, one that was to become as familiar to his readers as the candidate Lincoln had been twice before. From then on, Lincoln was a martyr, a noble and honorable human being, the emancipator. Foster, two decades earlier, had devoted his full time to editing an abolitionist newspaper. His abolitionist tendencies never left him and rose to the surface in forwarding words to describe the dead Lincoln.

On May 3, Foster attempted to eulogize Lincoln. He first noted that it was too early to draw a complete and accurate portrait of Lincoln. He quoted the New York Tribune and the New York Herald biographies of Lincoln. Foster then, in the most tender words he had found since the death of Lincoln, attempted to express some of the feelings he had felt.

> Mr. Lincoln, in common with all men who rise to distinction, had a remarkable strength of will, although it did not show itself, as in Sen. Jackson, by great oaths and violent and outrageous bursts of passion. He was slow in moving, but was persistent and unflinching in making progress towards the great ultimate results we had in view. He sometimes turned to the right hand and then again to the left, but it was only for a short time, and for the sole purpose of finding a better or shorter road towards the object on which his eye was fixed in the distance...

Foster predicts posterity will think more highly of Lincoln's intellect than his contemporaries. He praises Lincoln's ability to raise himself from nothing to the presidency and his ability to write clearly and succinctly.

> But it is chiefly for his virtues that those (who) come after Mr. Lincoln will reverence him. We need not dwell on these; they are known to all. His integrity or character as an honest man--that is, as one who meant to do as well as he could for his country--is now conceded by every respectable person. Not is this a small thing.[36]

This is the first full blown memorial to Lincoln that Foster wrote. It contained no resolutions passed by the citizens, no pat guarantees that the country would survive without Lincoln, and no threats of vengeance against the South. It was a simple tribute to a country editor's candidate turned President.

Conclusion

In the election of 1864, the editors of the Lansing State Republican chose Lincoln despite their disappointment with his inability to quickly end the war. The newspaper had backed Lincoln consistently since his nomination at the Republican convention in 1860, and frequently reaffirmed its support, chiefly in lengthy philosophical editorials which ran October 7, 1863, and February 10, 1864. The

paper maintained its role as the mouthpiece for local Republican leaders, and played a leading role in Lansing Republican circles.

The 1864 editorials differed slightly from the 1860 editorials, which had been more confident, joyful and enthusiastic. Some of this change can be attributed to the length of the war, but most of it is due to the 1864 editor, Theodore Foster. A church-going man and an abolitionist, with a reputation for literary pursuits, Foster brought a somber hand to the editorial columns of the Republican. His duty as a Republican leader and as an editor weighed heavily on his mind, and he wrote carefully constructed sentences of considerable length. He treated Lincoln respectfully, as "the President" or "Mr. Lincoln," and consistently referred to the need to reelect him so one man could finish the job. He was pleased when Lincoln was reelected; he had predicted the victory some time earlier. His grief and loss at Lincoln's death were contained in dutiful recountings of the proceedings of the times for two weeks, until finally, in the third issue published after Lincoln's death, he was able to express his loss in personal terms.

Throughout the campaign to reelect Lincoln, the election, and finally the assassination of Lincoln, Theodore Foster brought strong Republican editorials to his readers in Lansing. He consistently supported the

Republican President, and the depth of his emotions after Lincoln's death made it clear his reasoning was not based on blind Republican chauvinism.

Footnotes

[1]Frederick Clifton Pierce, Foster Genealogy (Chicago Press of W.B. Conkey Co., 1899), pp. 307-308.

[2]John E. Kephart, "A Pioneer Michigan Abolitionist," Michigan History 45 (March 1961): 35.

[3]C.B. Seymour, "Early Days in Old Washtenaw County," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Collections, 28 (Lansing: Robert Smith Printing Co., 1900), p. 394.

[4]Mrs. Franc L. Adams, compiler, Pioneer History of Ingham County (Lansing: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck, Crawford Company, 1923), p. 426.

[5]Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln, The War Years, 4 vols. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939), II: 469-476.

[6]Lansing State Republican, 25 November 1863.

[7]Ibid., 7 October 1863.

[8]Ibid., 10 February 1864.

[9]Ibid., 16 March 1864.

[10]Ibid., 6 April 1864.

[11]Ibid., 8 June 1864.

[12]Ibid., 15 June 1864.

[13]Ibid., 20 July 1864.

[14]Ibid., 27 July 1864.

[15]Ibid., 10 August 1864.

[16]Ibid., 24 August 1864.

[17]Ibid., 31 August 1864.

[18]Ibid., 7 September 1864.

[19]Ibid., 21 September 1864.

[20]Ibid., 28 September 1864.

[21]Ibid., 5 October 1864.

[22]Ibid., 26 October 1864.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., 2 November 1864.

[25]Ibid., 16 November 1864.

[26]Ibid., 16 November 1864.

[27]Sandburg, The War Years, II: 590.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Lansing State Republican, 16 December 1863.

[30]Sandburg, The War Years, II: 591.

[31]Lansing State Republican, 7 October 1863.

[32]Sandburg, The War Years, II: 592.

[33]Lansing State Republican, 12 April 1865.

[34]Ibid., 19 April 1865.

[35]Ibid., 26 April 1865.

[36]Ibid., 3 May 1865.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis is a local history of a country weekly and its editorial coverage of Abraham Lincoln. It was written in the historical descriptive method. Its purpose was to uncover the words of a time 115 years and more ago, and put meaning and life back into them. In doing so, this thesis makes several major points.

The Lansing State Republican and the Republican Party.

This thesis shows a strong relationship between the founding of the Republican Party and the founding of the weekly newspaper, the Lansing State Republican. It shows that the newspaper covered the Republican Party and its candidates loyally during the elections of 1860 and 1864, and never wavered in its support of Abraham Lincoln, even in the darkest hours of the Civil War.

The Republican Party was founded in 1854 in Jackson, Michigan, after a grassroots movement that was chiefly the work of newspaper editors. Many of those editors later edited the Lansing State Republican. The paper was founded less than a year after the Republican Party was founded, by a Detroit newspaper editor who saw a need in Lansing for a Republican voice to offset the Democratic Michigan State Journal. The paper, then, was founded with a specific purpose: to provide a loyal Republican viewpoint in the state's capital.

The Lansing State Republican and Abraham Lincoln's first election.

In 1860, in the weeks preceding the Republican convention, Rufus Hosmer, editor of the Lansing State Republican, supported the candidacy of William H. Seward. But when the convention chose Abraham Lincoln, Hosmer switched his support. From that moment on, the Lansing State Republican never hesitated in its full support for Lincoln. Lincoln received far more coverage in the Lansing State Republican than did the mayor of Lansing. National politics were personal struggles to the Republican's editors. In 1860, the editorials championed Lincoln's personal integrity, his Republicanism, his rise from the laboring class, and his widespread popularity as a sure sign of easy victory. Editorials cleverly and skillfully kept Lincoln before the readers almost every issue that summer.

The Lansing State Republican and Lincoln's Administration.

Once Lincoln was elected, the Lansing editors doggedly praised his policies, especially his Emancipation Proclamation. Strong abolitionist tendencies were part of the thinkers who started the Republican party and the Lansing newspaper. By 1863, these abolitionist feelings were ripe, and aching for legal recognition. Long philosophical editorials appeared, smoothing readers' uneasy feelings over a

future without slavery. Political reality had followed theory into Lansing, and the Lansing editors were justifiably self satisfied.

The editorials supporting Lincoln's Administration and its suspension of Habeas Corpus were less positive, less absolute. Still, the message was clear: if a Republican president felt such drastic measures were necessary, then they were necessary, and it would be best not to complain. It was blind loyalty on the editor's part.

The Lansing State Republican and Lincoln's reelection campaign.

The campaign to reelect Lincoln began in Lansing in October, 1863, more than a year before the election. The paper was then edited by Theodore Foster, a writer of ponderous style. For the next 13 months he filled the paper with long lists of reasons why voters should reelect Lincoln. Foster was more realistic than the 1860 editor, Rufus Hosmer. Foster admitted the flaws in Lincoln's leadership. His approach was that the country should stick with the same leader it had had. Part of this was Republican chauvinism; part of it was due to the weak opposition Lincoln faced; and part of it was due to Foster's personal integrity. He felt the country owed Abraham Lincoln another term to right the mess he had inherited with the first term.

The Lansing State Republican and Carl Sandburg.

But perhaps the most important part of Foster's reasoning in selecting Lincoln for a second term was Foster's historical perspective. He classed Lincoln in the same category as Washington, Jefferson and John Quincy Adams. It was this foresight which caught the attention of Carl Sandburg. In Abraham Lincoln, The War Years, Sandburg heaped lavish praise upon the Lansing newspaper for its astuteness in sticking to Lincoln when major metropolitan newspapers were sniping at the President. The paper always supported the Republican Party, and it continued to support it, even through the Civil War. Sandburg's claim that the Lansing newspaper presented the case for Lincoln's re-election more keenly and vividly than any of the metropolitan dailies is an overstatement. Sandburg's research also led him to believe that Isaac Cravath wrote the re-election of Lincoln editorials, when closer reading of the paper shows they were written by Theodore Foster. Cravath was the last name listed in the masthead as editor, but in December his name was taken off the page and an explanation was advanced that he was seriously ill in Chicago. Theodore Foster, with his unmistakable enumeration style, was responsible for the editorials through the 1864 campaign year, starting with the long one in October, 1863.

The Lansing State Republican, a loyal Republican country weekly.

Throughout the five years of Lincoln's national political life as a Republican candidate for President and then President, the Lansing State Republican covered the railsplitter loyally, personally, and at length. The Lansing editorials were locally written, based on logic, Republican chauvinism, and political savvy. They never critized Lincoln, except for some mild words in admission of his inability to end the war before his reelection campaign. Although the Lansing editorship changed hands several times during the Lincoln years, except for some personal writing styles the editorials in the Lansing State Republican remained aggressively pro-Lincoln every week.

Lansing State Republican and Contemporary Newspapers

Was the Lansing State Republican alone in its clear sighted support of Lincoln's reelection? Quite the opposite was true. Although Lincoln's detractors were numerous and vocal as the bloody battles of the Civil War began to add up, Lincoln supporters were fewer but well versed.

Sandburg himself repeats an editorial paragraph from the Chicago Tribune in March, 1864 which quotes an

Iowa farmer: "'Old Abe stands seventeen feet higher in Iowa than any other man in the United States.'"[1] Joseph Medill, an editor of the Chicago Tribune, had declared the previous December, "Old Abe has the inside track so completely that he will be nominated by acclamation when the convention meets."[2]

Harper's Weekly on March 5, 1864, published an election editorial favorable to Lincoln.

> It is the general conviction that he is no man's puppet; that he listens respectfully to his Cabinet and then acts from his own convictions; that by his calm and cheerful temperament, by his shrewd insight, his practical sagacity, his undaunted patience, his profound faith in the people and their cause, he is peculiarly fitted for his solemn and responsible office. Nor is it likely that the people who elected him when he was comparatively unknown will discard him because, in the fierce light of war which tried every quality and exposes every defect, he has steadily grown in popular love and confidence.[3]

Sandburg may have been thinking of the New York papers when he wrote that the Lansing State Republican presented the case for Lincoln's reelection "more keenly and vividly than any of the metropolitan dailies."[4] New York had 17 papers at the beginning of the Civil War. Throughout the four years of the war, only five can be described as somewhat loyal to Lincoln: the Times, the Evening Post, the Tribune, the Sun and the Commercial Advertiser.[5] Horace Greeley and James Gordon Bennett, in

the Tribune and the Herald, did not present the case for Lincoln's reelection keenly and vividly. In fact, both first spoke out against Lincoln's reelection.

Greeley was described as unenthusiastic about Lincoln's candidacy in 1864 until September when Lincoln may have offered him a post in his second Administration.[6] Earlier in the year, however, Greeley was clearly advocating the end of the Lincoln years in the White House.

> We freely admit Mr. Lincoln's merits; but we must insist that they are not such as to eclipse and obscure those of all the statesmen and soldiers who have aided in the great work of saving the country from disruption and overthrow. And, if others have done as well in their respective spheres, then we hold that the genius of our institutions, the salutary One Term principle, which has been established by the concurrence of each of our great parties, and by the action of the people, over-ruling either in turn, counsels the choices of another from among our eminent Unionists for President from after March 4, 1865.[7]

Bennett was more vitriolic in his early defamation of Lincoln. On May 20, 1864, he published a description of a Lincoln campaign rally.

> The Lincoln meeting at the Cooper Institute last Friday evening was one of the most disgraceful exhibitions of human depravity ever witnessed in this wicked world. It was a gathering of ghouls, vultures, hyenas and other feeders upon carrion, for the purposes of surfeiting themselves upon the slaughter of recent battles. We remember nothing like it in the history of politics. The great ghoul at

> Washington, who authorized the meeting, and the little ghouls and vultures who conducted it, have succeeded in completely disgusting the people of this country, and have damaged themselves irretrievably.[8]

In June, Bennett continued to belittle Lincoln, saying he had been tried and found wanting,[9] and had been a bad President, "an entirely incapable one."[10]

By election day, both Greeley and Bennett supported Lincoln. Henry Raymond, at the New York Times, followed a more consistent Republican course, supporting Lincoln throughout the War.[11]

In the Civil War newspapers, support for Lincoln was rarely as consistent as that found in the Lansing State Republican. Some major dailies were influenced heavily by the egos of the newspaper giants who controlled them. The Lansing State Republican, however, was not alone in its support for Lincoln. Pockets of support for Lincoln could be found in newspapers throughout the North.

The Lansing State Republican and Additional Research

This research has been limited by the time and the space constraints of a single researcher working on a single thesis. It has shown several areas which would be fruitful to future researchers.

1. The competition. No study has been done of the Democratic newspaper in Lansing, the Michigan State Journal. It was founded before the Lansing State Republican, edited by well-educated men, and campaigned for its position just as vigorously as the Republican paper.

2. Contemporary major papers. A more detailed comparison could be done, analyzing exactly what New York, Chicago and Washington newspapers wrote about Lincoln's reelection. Major newspaper histories of the period concentrate on three or four New York papers, and give them little space.

3. A complete history of the Lansing State Republican. Only by reading every issue of the paper over a period of time can a researcher find the small notices and innuendos that reveal what took place in a small town a century or more ago. The paper's past is disjointedly preserved in local histories which specialize in one area, such as civic boosterism. More thorough studies on limited periods, such as the Lincoln years, would add to the trustworthiness of the collected works.

Footnotes

[1]Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln, The War Years, vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1939), p. 588.

[2]John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Abraham Lincoln, A History, vol. 8 (New York: The Century Co., 1890), p. 323.

[3]Herbert Mitgang, ed., Lincoln as They Saw Him (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1956), p. 389.

[4]Sandburg, The War Years, p. 590.

[5]Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 339.

[6]Ibid., p. 343.

[7]Mitgang, Lincoln as They Saw Him, p. 384.

[8]New York Herald, 20 May 1864.

[9]Ibid., 10 June 1864.

[10]Ibid., 13 June 1864.

[11]Mott, American Journalism, p. 346.

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