A history of the Know-nothing party in Tennessee.

Murry Bryant Measamer
University of Tennessee

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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Murry Bryant Measamer entitled "A history of the Know-nothing party in Tennessee." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Education.

Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)
To the Committee on Graduate Study:

I submit herewith a thesis by Mr. Avery Bryant Measeer, "A History of the Know-Nothing Party in Tennessee." I recommend that this thesis be accepted for twelve quarter hours credit in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education.

At the request of the Committee on Graduate Study, I have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance.

Frank B. Ward

S. J. Fields

Margaret E. Haver

Accepted by the Committee

Chairman
A HISTORY OF
THE KNOW-NOTHING PARTY IN
TENNESSEE

A THESIS
Submitted to the Graduate Committee
of the University of Tennessee
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in Education

MURRY BEYAIT MEASALER

June 1931
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This study is intended to acquaint the reader with the chief facts regarding a state-wide secret political order to which approximately half the population of Tennessee once gave its support. It is not the purpose of the writer to defend this movement, neither is it his purpose to condemn. An earnest effort has been made, however, to present a clear and concise account of its nature, the issues concerned, and the political activities involved.

The writer has been forced to rely almost entirely upon the files of contemporary newspapers as the chief sources of information. As in the case of most secret orders one would naturally assume that records were made of the organization of local lodges or councils, and that minutes were kept of subsequent meetings. If any of these exist, however, they are so securely hidden as to have completely escaped the searches of the writer. The newspapers contained numerous documents, such as constitutions, rituals, platforms, letters, speeches and detailed accounts of political campaigns. These have been of invaluable aid throughout the study. It should be borne in mind that they were partisan in nature, and therefore not always entirely reliable in their accounts. It has been the aim of the writer to present the views of the press of each party, and then, where necessary, to supplement such evidence with conclusions of his own. If such conclusions have been based
upon false premises, or have been inaccurately drawn, it is hoped that the reader will bear patiently, and consider the difficulties under which the evidence was assimilated.

The writer wishes to acknowledge his deep appreciation and sincere gratitude to Professor Philip M. Hamer, and Professor Marguerite B. Hamer for their efficient guidance, and constructive criticisms, without which this work could not have been completed. Furthermore, he desires to express his thanks to Miss Laura Luttrell, of the Lawson McGhee Library, and to the staff of the University of Tennessee Library, for their enthusiastic cooperation in finding material, and for the countless courtesies which they so freely extended from time to time. To the staff of the Carnegie Library in Nashville, he wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness for the use of old newspaper files, which have been of invaluable aid in this study. Valuable material was also found in the State Library and in the Vanderbilt University Library in Nashville.
CHAPTER I
THE BEGINNINGS OF NATIVISM

A brief survey of the origin, nature and growth of the American or "Know-Nothing" party in the United States is essential to an understanding of the history of that party in the state of Tennessee.

(Prior to the year 1837, the rapid influx of foreigners into the United States had caused American citizens no little alarm.) Since 1825, the number of immigrants arriving each year had increased from 10,199 to 79,340. Of this number 28,508 were Irish and 23,740 were Germans. In general, the Germans spread out over practically all the northern states, but great numbers of Irish settled in and around the cities of New York, Boston, Baltimore and Philadelphia. As a rule, from the religious point of view, the Germans were free thinkers. Politically, they were extremely radical. Some favored the abolition of the presidency and of the United States Senate, some advocated government ownership of railroads, while many favored the abolition of Sunday laws. To such radical political and religious reforms, American citizens objected. Owing to the somewhat narrow confines of the Irish settlements, the Irish increased in number more rapidly than the native population. Many of them were poor and had large families to support. Some were ill when they arrived, while others, unaccustomed to the climate,

2. Edward Channing, History of the United States, VI, 128.
soon became ill. Consequently, pauperism was frequent and
oftimes the state was forced to care for them. In 1837, the
mayor of New York City complained that the streets were filled
with wandering crowds of immigrants, who were clustered in the
city, unaccustomed to the climate, without work, food, clothing
or shelter, certain of nothing but poverty and death. Many,
due largely to the new environment and unfavorable conditions,
developed criminal tendencies. Such citizens of course were
undesirable.

The Irishman had little aptitude for politics. To
them the Democratic party seemed to be the poor man's party.
This really appeared to be the case in the North. Shrewd Demo-
cratic politicians succeeded in rounding up great "masses of
Irishmen - many of whom were doubtless recent arrivals" who had
no legal right to vote - led them to the ballot box and saw to
it that they voted the right ticket. Against such conditions,
certain American citizens, particularly the Whigs, protested.
They demanded that the naturalization laws be so modified that
foreigners would be forced to reside within the United States
twenty-one years before exercising the franchise.

Practically all the Irish were faithful and devout
Roman Catholics. The concentration of so many Irish Catholics

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3. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 130.
in certain definite areas aroused the jealousy of Protestants,
who as a result were led to believe many things that were false,
and to exaggerate many things that were true. The existence
of two widely divergent religious bodies within the same com-
munities, proved a source of constant irritation to the peace
and harmony of the people.

Before the close of the year 1837, bitter feeling
began to crystallize into definite action. Early in the year,
a large group of native American citizens met in Germantown,
Pennsylvania, for the purpose of considering the situation.
At this meeting, a "Preamble and Constitution was drawn up and
unanimously adopted." This document summarized existing con-
ditions of that day, relative to foreign influence, and demand-
ed that the evils be remedied by a repeal of the naturalization
law. A meeting was held in New York City, where similar steps
were taken. In Washington, the American Association of the
United States was formed. Citizens of other towns organized
similar bodies, giving them the name of Native American Repub-
lican Associations. In almost every case, a declaration of prin-
ciples was drawn up and adopted. Several of these associations
fused with the Whigs, especially in New York and Philadelphia.
This caused the Democrats of these cities no little concern.

Sentiment against Catholics and foreigners increased

10. Ibid.
11. John Bach Mc Lester, History of the People of the United
States, VII, 369.
12. Ibid.
in practically every great center of population, and many demonstrations followed. In 1841, a meeting was held in Louisiana and a local Native American party was perfected. At about the same time, the Constitutional Convention of the state of Pennsylvania met. Here "an attempt was made to secure an amendment forbidding foreigners who came to Pennsylvania after July Fourth, 1841, to hold any public office in the Commonwealth." Shortly after these evidences of hostility to foreigners, six hundred citizens of Sutton and Millville, Massachusetts, drew up a memorial and sent it to Congress. This memorial requested Congress to inquire into the causes of the great influx of foreigners, and to investigate the report which had been circulated regarding a foreign conspiracy against the United States. Furthermore, it was stated that the moral and social conditions of the immigrants would tend to increase crime and pauperism. Another memorial objected particularly to Catholics, not to the religion of that body, but to their tendency to combine religious with political belief. This document referred especially to the plot of the Leopold Foundation "to build up the power of Rome in the United States by encouraging the emigration of Roman Catholics from Europe, and by establishing missions in the various states." These memorials were evidence of the increasing sentiment against the foreigners. In spite of the excitement which prevailed, the

movement was neither powerful nor general enough to crystallize into a strong national party at this time.

Meanwhile, in the public schools, Catholic and Protestant children were thrown together, and the same religious exercises were conducted for both. The Protestants, of course, were in the majority, and their Bible was used. There are many important differences between the Catholic and Protestant versions of the Bible, and consequently the Catholics objected to their children attending Protestant exercises. In Philadelphia, the Bishop made a formal protest to the Board of Education, which responded by making a regulation that no child would be forced to listen to a version of the Bible to which it, or its parents objected. In the following year, a director in Kensington commanded a principal to stop reading the Bible before the school. To this she objected. As soon as the citizens of the town learned of the occurrence, a riot ensued. The news spread rapidly to the nearby city of Philadelphia, and both the native Americans and the Catholics were aroused. At a subsequent election, the Irish Catholics attacked the natives and drove them from the polls. Days of intermittent rioting followed, during which a number of people were killed or injured. After about two months of this "Reign of Terror," the state militia on July 7, 1844 was called out to put an end to the trouble. A few weeks later, the Native Americans met in Kensington and declared the principles of the party in the following terms: that natives only should make the laws of their country; that foreigners should not be
naturalized prior to a residence of twenty-one years; that natives only should hold office; and that the union of Church and State should be opposed, and "the march of exclusive privileges resisted."

The effect of these riots was wide spread. The Democratic convention of the State of Indiana protested against the attempt to array the foreigner against the native voter, and it seems that from this time forth the Democrats took a stand against Native Americanism while the Whigs were more in sympathy with the movement.

During the ten years immediately following these events, other issues of national and international scope tended to crowd the doctrines of Native Americanism from the political arena. Chief among these were the question of the annexation of Texas, the Mexican War, the Oregon boundary dispute, the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, and the discovery of gold in California.

Following 1848, however, new phases of the situation began to appear on the political horizon which gave new impetus to the movement of Native Americanism. Three of these will be discussed in the present chapter, as they bear particularly upon the growth of the party generally. Those which relate to the rise of the American party in Tennessee, will be reserved for a subsequent chapter.

18. Ibid.
The first of these phases is found in the fact that great hordes of immigrants began to pour into the United States immediately following the "revolutionary movements of 1848 in Europe." These people, coming from many countries of Europe, some of which had just gone through a period of political and social unrest, brought with them many new ideas and customs which in many cases were unwelcome in America. They flocked in great numbers to the large cities, where the foreign element was already large. Instead of acquiring American ideals, manners and customs, they tended, in such a situation, to perpetuate the old. There were a number of foreign papers published in the cities of the North which were available to the immigrant. These kept them ignorant of American ways. Frequently the new arrivals were political exiles from the country of their birth, or had fled to escape service in the army. These often began to establish political clubs, in which radical, religious, political and socialistic doctrines were disseminated. Under such conditions tendencies developed to which American citizens objected. The South, in particular, objected to the extreme anti-slavery doctrines of these groups.

The second factor lies in the increased animosity between Catholics and Protestants. The foreign newspapers were

strongly pro-Catholic; likewise, numerous Protestant organs bitterly opposed the Catholics, as they deemed their doctrines dangerous heresies. Lecturers purporting to expose the corrupt practices and doctrines of the Catholic church spoke in many quarters, and frequent riots followed. In New York, an imminently Catholic Bishop preached a sermon on "the Decline of Protestantism." Protestant divines responded in like manner. It was also in New York that disputes arose, between certain Roman Catholic congregations and their bishops, regarding the title to church property. The law specified that such property should be held by lay trustees. The Pope and his representative maintained, however, that it should be controlled by the bishops and archbishops. Immediately the cry arose that the pope at Rome was attempting to control the property of American citizens. Similar controversies, which frequently resulted in riots, occurred in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and other cities.

The third, and most important factor in the rise of the American organization is found in the decline of the old Whig party. The Whig national convention convened at Baltimore on June 16, 1852, for the purpose of selecting candidates for the offices of President and Vice-President. As soon as the balloting for the nominees began, it became evident that definite lines of cleavage existed within the party, as the 133 votes of the leading candidate, Millard Fillmore, were

all from the South with the exception of sixteen. All of Webster's twenty-nine votes were from the North. General Winfield Scott was finally nominated on the fifty-third ballot, even though southern leaders objected to his alleged free-soil tendencies.

Scott faced a most difficult task as he prepared to enter the campaign. When he came to write his letter of acceptance of the nomination, it was necessary for him to make some statement relative to his policies. In doing this he found himself between the extremes of northern free-soilism and southern pro-slavery agitation. The letter which he wrote was merely an acceptance of the nomination, "with resolutions attached." This did not please the extreme southerners, as they wished an unequivocal guarantee of slavery.

Many southern Whigs refused to support Scott, when he failed to take a positive stand in favor of slavery. William G. Brownlow, the "Fighting Parson" and editor of the Knoxville Whig, had other reasons for opposing him. He charged that Scott showed his disrespect for religion, that he made intemperate use of intoxicating beverages, and that he was in sympathy with the Roman Catholic church. Furthermore, he insisted that Scott had indorsed the heresies of Nativism, and had favored the extension of the term of naturalization, and that he had denounced the adopted citizens as "idle drones upon American society."

25. Ibid., p. 257.
It is interesting to note that Brownlow, himself, later became a rabid nativist.

Many of the foreign born believed the reports that Scott was not favorable toward them, and in turn became hostile toward him. In order to win them back, he made a speaking tour through the western states where he could meet the foreign citizens face to face and give the lie to the charge. Even though Scott made numerous speeches on this tour, he was unable to conciliate these citizens.

In the face of the anti-slavery and nativist charges, the Whigs met an overwhelming defeat. Scott lost every state in the South with the exception of Tennessee and Kentucky, which he won by small margins. Thus a crushing blow was given to the hopes of the Whig party. Furthermore, when the Congressional elections of 1853 were held, the Whigs of the South lost ground in every state except Kentucky. Hence, the fact that the Whig party in the South was crushed, was no longer in doubt.

The final blow to the old party came in 1854, with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, which automatically repealed the Missouri Compromise and provided that any state or states made up out of the territories should exercise their own choice with regard to slavery. Southern Whig leaders at first took a definite stand in favor of the bill, while northern leaders tended to oppose it. Later, William Cullom, Representative

29. Ibid., p. 277.
from Tennessee in the House of Representatives, regretted the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. In his speech before the House, April 11, 1854, he stated that according to his opinion the great measure which had pacified the nation for thirty-four years should not be "trampled under foot for mere party purposes"; furthermore, "a repudiation of this compromise now, would mean a repudiation of the plighted honor of the South." John Bell, Senator from Tennessee, opposed the bill on similar grounds. He admitted that the constitutionality of the Missouri Compromise was in doubt, yet he seriously questioned the advisibility of repealing the measure which had so completely settled the slavery question as had this compromise.

In a speech before the Senate, he spoke as follows:

Sir, I believe that there is a better feeling prevailing at the North towards the South than formerly; but would it not be wise on the part of the South to do nothing to reverse the current of that better feeling, unless urged by some great necessity in vindication of its rights.

Since Bell had already been mentioned as the outstanding Whig prospect for the presidential campaign of 1856, it was charged that he was here making a bid for popularity in the North.

The situation was complex. Stephen A. Douglas, a northern man, had introduced the Kansas-Nebraska bill. Many southern Whigs voted for it, as though respecting a northern

32. Ibid., p. 414.
concession to their wishes; yet northern Whigs opposed it. Soon 
after the passage of the bill, Whigs at the South came to realize 
that they had embarked upon a course which might prove detrimental 
to the slavery interests of the South. They realized that they 
could no longer act with the northern wing of their party. Cole 
states that "the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill was the 
death blow to the National Whig party"; that northern Whigs re-
pudiated "all further connection with the Whigs of the South."

He continues:

Mary of the northern conservatives, the "silver-grey" 
Whigs of New York and the nationalists of the other 
states, who have been warm and devoted friends of 
the South, now recognize that the day of compromises 
was ended by the Nebraska movement; they were forced 
by the character of the issue to abandon their southern 
friends, often to unite with the Sewardites.

The Whigs were now fully cognizant of the fact that 
their party could no longer function as a national unit. In 
proof of this the Union and American copied from a Whig paper:

"It is a fact" says the Baltimore Argus, "that the 
national Whig party is dead. There is no longer 
an effort made to keep up its distinct organization. 
Throughout New England the mass of those who once 
constituted the triumphant Whig party, have united 
with the abolitionists.... In other sections whig-
gery is emerging in Know-Nothings, and those who 
once claimed to have all the decency and all the in-
telligence now write themselves down as Know-No-
things."

This was the case in both the North and the South. Whig leaders

34. Cole, op. cit., p. 305.
35. Baltimore Argus, in Daily Union and American (Nashville), 
July 25, 1854.
saw in nativism an issue on which it was felt that a powerful national party could be built. It should be pointed out, however, that the northern wing of the party was still free-soil in tendencies, while the southern wing favored the extension of slavery in the territories.

In the meantime, native American societies had increased in number and in membership. Chief among these were the "Order of United Americans," "American Republicans," "Sons of America," and "United American Mechanics." The principles and methods of these were similar in many respects. During 1852 and 1853, these four combined, in the state of New York, to form a nucleus for a secret organization strong enough to do effective political work. This new society became known as the "Order of the Star Spangled Banner." At first, its members cast their votes for candidates of other parties, who were approved by its secret councils. By 1854, however, it was strong enough to place a candidate in the field and prove a serious threat to the Democratic candidate in the state of New York. In 1855, it elected a governor, in that state.

The rise of the order to power was swift. In New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Baltimore, and New Orleans, victories were reported in 1854. In the same year, two states,

Massachusetts and Delaware elected Know-Nothing governors.
Within three years after its organization, state councils were established in thirty-five different states and territories of the United States.

The ex-Whigs, within the order, doubtless realized that their southern wing still favored the extension of slavery in the territories, while the northern wing opposed it. In order to avoid this troublesome issue which had proved such a destructive factor to their old Whig party, they proposed that the existing laws on the subject of slavery be maintained.

At this point the question naturally arises: what was the nature of this society which sprang so suddenly into promise and threatened to become a dominant factor in national politics? Unlike most secret orders, there were no benefits nor insurance policies to entice members to join. Neither were there initiation fees. It was secret in nature, with oaths, signs, and passwords. The most common password was, "Have you seen Sam?" From this password, the nickname "Sam" was derived, and frequently applied to the order. The original derivation of the word is not certain, but the following explanation appeared in a contemporary newspaper:

38. Ibid.
41. Knoxville Register, May 10, 1855.
 Everybody has read of the peregrination in this country, recently, of an eccentric individual whom the newspapers denominate Sam. ... A few days ago we asked a prominent Know-Nothing ... to explain the mystery.... Whether he has done so in good faith or not, we cannot say; but here is his explanation.... Sam, he said, takes his name from the initial letters of the following formula:

**SEPTENTIONALIS AMERICAE MAGISTER;**

that is to say S. A. M. means Master of North America.

In spite of this explanation, there were many conjectures regarding the nature, or the identity of "Sam."

There were three degrees, or ranks of membership.

Anyone might become a member of the order by taking the oath of the first degree. This was the lowest rank. All members were first required to take this oath before they were eligible for the higher degrees. Those who wished to qualify for office in the order, were required to take the oath of the second degree. The highest rank was reached by taking the oath of the third degree. Third degree members, only, were deemed eligible to hold public office.

There were no open canvasses for membership. It was only through private conversations that new members were solicited. Each individual Know-Nothing would seek out a particular friend, and proceed to discuss Know-Nothing principles with him. By careful direction of the conversation, the Know-Nothing would lead his prospect to express an opinion regarding

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42. Scisco, op. cit., p. 100; see Appendix "B" for the Ritual of the order.
the order. If favorable, he would then propose that together, they seek admission through a friend of his, who was acquainted with the methods of the Know-Nothings. Eventually, a new member would be led into the presence of "Sam."

All membership of the order was organized under the National Council of the United States. Then at the head of each state system was a grand council, each subordinate to the national Council. "Under these were the local councils, which were designated by numbers. Both state and local systems "existed by virtue of a charter granted under the authority of the Grand Council." They elected their own officers and enacted their own laws subject always to the written constitutions of the order. In the states, the grand council was "composed of three delegates from each council." This body, in general, directed the work of the order within the borders of the state. In both the grand council, and in the local councils, the presiding officer was either the president or the vice-president. In addition to his duties as presiding officer, the president provided for the organization of new councils, and supervised the recruiting of the order. Delegates from the grand councils of the states composed the National Council. Its relation to the state councils was analogous to the relation between the state, and local councils. This body was at the head of

43. Schmeckbier, op. cit., p. 10.
the Know-Nothing system, and owed its existence to a written constitution adopted by a general convention.

The proceedings of the society were even more secret than those of the average secret order. The members were obligated not to reveal their membership and the existence of the local councils. The time and place for meeting were also kept secret. When meetings were called, small pieces of white paper, of a size and shape previously agreed upon, would be scattered around so that all the members could see them. To any question regarding the society, a member would invariably reply, "I don't know." The following conversation was published shortly after a Philadelphia election, as typical of conversations between members and non-members at that time:

"Morning Jones; well, we got badly licked yesterday; what the plague could have been the cause of it?"
"Don't know."
"I hope you didn't vote against us did you?"
"Don't know."
"What? don't know how you voted?"
"Don't know."
"Morning friend Smith, fine morning."
"Don't know."
"The De-you don't, do you not know that this is a very fine, pleasant morning - a glorious morning?"
"Don't know."
"Why bless me, are you one of the Know-Nothings too?"
"Don't know."
"You don't know-well, what the h- do you know?"
"Don't know."

After receiving the same exasperating reply to any and all

45. Ibid. See Appendix "A" for text of constitution.
46. True Whig (Nashville), July 29, 1854.
questions, one would naturally suspect that his friend belonged to the order. Yet a degree of uncertainty existed, which naturally tended to provoke curiosity. This characteristic response to any and all inquiries was responsible for the name Know-Nothing, which became the popular name for that order, or party. After secret machinery was discarded, however, the Know-Nothings chose to call their organization the American party."

As a state wide political organization, the secret order was seriously handicapped. For votes, the officials seemed to depend largely on the pledges made by members on their initiation into the order. There was slight opportunity to secure votes outside the councils, since principles and policies were kept secret. There were no platforms of principles as in the case of regular political parties; no central committees, with sub-committees throughout the state or nation to see that every community was efficiently canvassed. This organization had been effective in the cities, where all members could be easily and quickly reached. It will be seen, however, that when the time arrived to bring the widely scattered councils of an entire state to function as a unit through secret channels, serious difficulties were encountered. Hence, the Know-Nothing political order in Tennessee will be studied, not as a stable and established political party; but as an

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47. Schmackbier, op. cit., p. 9; James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States, II, 56.
unadjusted organization seeking by means of constant changes, to adapt itself to new situations.
CHAPTER II
RISE OF THE KNOW-NOTHING PARTY IN TENNESSEE

During the period between July 1, 1854 and May 1, 1855, the Know-Nothing order made its first appearance in Tennessee and quickly grew by leaps and bounds until its lodges existed in virtually every county of the state.

It appears absurd that an organization prescribing Catholics and denouncing foreigners should gain a foothold in Tennessee, in view of the fact that there were only three Catholic churches in the state in 1850, with accommodations for only 1,300 people. Furthermore, the total foreign-born population of the state, during the same year, amounted to a bare 5,740. Hence, there seems little justification for such a movement.

In spite of this situation, however, factors appeared which proved to be powerful as motivating forces of the new order. In the first place, Tennessee Whigs realized that their party was divided over the Kansas-Nebraska act, which gave the people in the territories of Kansas and Nebraska the right to regulate slavery in their own way, "subject only to the Constitution of the United States." Some regarded this measure as an effective remedy for slavery troubles in the territories, while others deemed it a menace to the welfare

2. True Whig, July 3, 1854.
of the entire South. It was considered a menace by virtue of the fact that a steady stream of northerners poured daily into the territories, while southerners who made their way there were relatively few. In view of this situation, it was seen that new states admitted from the Kansas-Nebraska territory would present free-soil constitutions, and in this manner increase the voting power of the North in both houses of Congress. Furthermore, Tennessee Whigs protested against the free-soil platforms of the northern wing of their party. Regarding the platform of the New York Whigs, the True Whig wrote:

What we object to most in this platform, is not the opposition it avows to the principles of the Nebraska bill.... But it is the determined hostility it expresses to the extension of slavery and the admission of new slave states into the Union - the spirit in short, of unyielding hatred to slavery itself, as it exists in the Southern States of this Union. That is the prominent feeling that pervades almost every resolution in the series. And to that idea and that feeling it is the duty of the Southern Whigs, independent of party and all other considerations to oppose a stern and manly resistance.

In the face of these facts, it soon became obvious to Tennessee Whigs that their party could no longer function as a national unit.

A second important factor which gave impetus to the growth of Tennessee Know-Nothingism lay in the fact

3. True Whig. October 4, 1854.
4. Ibid.
a major portion of the foreigners were opposed to slavery. These flocked in great numbers to the industrial centers of the North, where they could secure work, and at the same time avoid competition with cheap slave labor. To this increase in the abolitionistic population of the North, many southerners objected. A Tennessee writer complained through the columns of the True Whig:

"Foreigners upon their arrival in the United States, are taught that slave labor is cheaper than free labor, and that to work by the side of a slave, or for the same wages, sinks them to the degraded level of a slave. Besides, he is taught, from national jealousy and hatred, to oppose slavery — yet in their own Fatherland, themselves may be bondmen, without many of the comforts or conveniences of slavery."

In the third place, it was claimed the 3,000,000 foreign born Americans already held the balance of power between the North and the South in national elections. Not only did they control presidential elections, but by the increase in the population of each state, had secured more seats for the North, and in this manner had strengthened the control of Congress by that section.

In the fourth place, thousands of abolitionistic foreigners migrated to western lands. Here they bitterly

5. Ibid., February 28, 1855.
6. Ibid., May 3, 1855.
opposed the institution of slavery and favored free-soil constitutions. Many southerners feared that the number of free states would be increased to the extent that they would have the power to amend the Constitution so as to abolish slavery in the states. In anticipation of such a possibility, Felix K. Zollicoffer inquired:

How long will it be, before this annual accretion of a half million population to the North, will give to them that constitutional majority which will enable them, in accordance with that instrument itself to change the Constitution of the United-States, so as to abolish slavery in all the Southern States, and totally strip them of political power?

This question, as propounded by Zollicoffer was typical of Whig sentiment throughout the state.

In the face of these conditions, Tennessee Whigs turned their attention to the principles of Native Americanism. As a remedy, many of them became members of this secret order, yet sought to retain their affiliation with the old Whig party.) An article in the True Whig was characteristic of their attitude:

Let the Whigs stand to their old organization. Let them maintain their identity and distinctiveness as Whigs. Let them adhere strictly to all the cardinal doctrines of their old faith. But in addition to this let them incorporate into that faith the simple principles of Native Americanism.

7. Daily Union and American, September 12, 1855.
8. True Whig, February 4, 1855.
The exact date when the Know-Nothing order first appeared in Tennessee has not been definitely determined. This is due in a large measure to the fact that all Know-Nothingings had been sworn to profound secrecy regarding their membership in the order and the existence of the councils. The Know-Nothings kept these oaths so well that newspapers were able to publish little concerning their activities. Consequently the organization of the "Midnight conclave" was enshrouded in mysterious secrecy. It is probable that the "Fighting Parson," William G. Brownlow, militant editor of the Knoxville Whig was responsible for the organization of the first council in Tennessee. On October 7, 1854, a long editorial appeared in that paper, in which the editor expressed the desire to become a member of the order. He prayed "for the silent scourge to reach every town and hamlet until the country was saved from the foreign influence and demagoguery of Democracy." Brownlow also stated that he "sent out of the state for a representative to help organize a council in Knoxville." This council consisted of fifteen charter members, with Brownlow as one of the group. Within a few weeks, the membership of this body increased to two hundred. Then in a very short while the number of councils within the state reached nineteen, with a total membership of 2,000.

10. Ibid.
There is evidence to indicate that there were other councils in Tennessee even at the time when on October 7, 1854 Brownlow expressed a desire to become a Know-Nothing. At an earlier date, in the vicinity of Nashville, there were hushed whispers of a hidden organization, the power of which was unknown. Sensational and spooky stories were circulated relative to the order, until many doubtless came to view it as existing in the realm of the supernatural. The feverish excitement and morbid curiosity which prevailed was characterized in a measure, by the following story:

Have We a Know-Nothing Society Among Us? How can we answer this question after listening to the tale of a poor fellow who has been watching for the last week, and all to no purpose? He acknowledges himself as ignorant now as when he commenced watching. He says, however, that something strange is evidently going on in the city, or near it, and he don't know which. On Tuesday night last he thought he had them. He says about nine o'clock he discovered four men talking near the post office, and at once determined to watch them. In a few minutes they left, passing along the west side of the square, until they reached Main street and up La Fayette to Royal. By this time the number had increased to forty or fifty. Our watchman followed on—says as this strange crowd passed along the principal streets he saw men coming to them from all the

11. It is quite possible that Brownlow was a Know-Nothing even before he made the above statement. By means of this editorial, he probably hoped to boost the Know-Nothing cause, and at the same time throw non-members off the track as regards the existence of a local council.

12. True Whig, September 9, 1854.
corners. After passing down Royal street they moved down Baltimore street and passed out of the city. By this time their number had increased to about two-hundred. Although it was nearly twelve o'clock, and our friend much fatigued from previous watchings, he resolved to see them out. They passed on down into Forked Deer bottom, and made a halt at a large cypress tree, around which they all gathered. After a signal by one who seemed to be the leader, he went up the tree with the ease and rapidity of a squirrel, and the vast company one after another, followed in the same way. Our friend says he thought he had found their place of meeting sure; that he expected they had carried up poles and made a house in the top of that large tree; so he concluded to creep up near the tree, in hearing distance. But lo! and behold! as he was approaching, they pulled up the tree by its roots and vanished out of sight! leaving our disappointed friend solitary and alone, a mile from town at the solitary hour of midnight. He says they must have heard him coming.

There were other stories tending to kindle the imagination, and to arouse a desire in the hearts of the individual to become a part of that mysterious society which seemed to be sweeping the country like a mighty storm.

The first visible and tangible evidence of this society was seen in the Nashville municipal election September 30, 1854. Heretofore, such elections had always been preceded by enthusiastic mass meetings held two or three times each week for a month prior to the election. The election day now quietly approached with no such demonstrations. Heretofore, numerous individuals had loudly proclaimed their desire to sacrifice themselves in service to their fellow man. These were now conspicuous by their absence.
Hereofore, feverish excitement had prevailed on election day. Hacks and omnibuses could be seen dashing from place to place, while their drivers yelled lustily at prospective customers. Grangeries had been "thrown open to the dear people," who scrambled in utter confusion in their efforts to get their share of the free boozes before the supply was exhausted. On such days, whiskey bottles had doubtless been flashed until their owners sank to the street, victims of the fiery fluid, or turned upon each other in rough and tumble fights. No such "disagreeable sights and scenes" now greeted the onlooker's eye. Instead, an air of mystery and quietness pervaded every corner of the city. It was rumored abroad that the Know-Nothings were organized in large numbers and had already selected their candidates. No names were before the people as candidates for the various offices, hence, no one seemed to know how to proceed, and as a result many did not vote at all. Finally, when the hour for voting arrived, men quietly marched up to the polls, selected ballots and proceeded to vote. According to the True Whig, the election closed with the following results:

The Mayor elect was not, at any time, publicly before the voters of the city as a candidate. On the morning of the election, however, tickets with his name upon them were deposited at various ward polls; and, though there was apparently no effort made to induce people to vote

13. Ibid., October 2, 1854.
them, the result exhibits for Mr. Shapard the enormous majority of 230, out of 1,471 votes cast. We are not authorized to attribute this result to any particular cause; but we say that, from all the circumstances, it is shrewdly suspected, and by many confidentially believed, that the election throughout is a victory of the "Know-Nothings," as they are called.

It was rumored that Shapard, the new mayor, was not only a Know-Nothing but a Democrat as well. To this statement the Democratic organ issued a flat denial. "The principles of Know-Nothingism are contrary to the principles of Democracy," argued that journal, "hence no one can be a Democrat and a Know-Nothing at the same time."

This election was in a measure typical of later elections in other towns throughout Tennessee. At Clarksville, about fifty miles northwest of Nashville, an election was held during the first week of January, 1855. Four candidates, two Whigs and two Democrats, were placed in nomination for mayor, each on a ticket with six other names for aldermen. One of these candidates, a Democrat, had been mayor for six years. On election day, the voters marched up to the table, "where the tickets" mentioned "were exposed," and pretended to search diligently "for a ticket to suit them," and finally after considerable

deliberation proceeded to vote. Imagine the surprise of the
election officials to learn, when the vote was counted, that
the names of neither the new mayor nor the new aldermen had
appeared on any of the tickets. According to a newspaper
report, men were dumbfounded, they stared at each other in
open mouthed wonder and amazement. There had never been a
similar occurrence in the history of the town, and there ap-
peared no solution to the mystery. In an attempt to solve
the problem, "several men who, because they" didn't seem to
"know anything else .... were taken from a grocery store on
a writ of Habeas-corpus and closely questioned, but to no
purpose. They didn't know a thing." Hence, it seems, anoth-
er victory was scored by the Know-Nothings.

From the little town of Lawrenceburg, in the south-
er part of Middle Tennessee, the Union and American received

the following most interesting letter:

Lawrenceburg, Jan. 15, 1855.

Dear Union and American:—

I drop you a few lines in haste, to
inform you that we had an election for Corpora-
tion Magistrate here, on Saturday last, which re-
sulted in a complete Know-Nothing triumph. Tin-
non, (Know-Nothing,) received 33 votes; Evans, 12
votes; McAlester, 1 vote, and what made the matter
worse, the only damned Irish Catholic in the town
voted with them.

15. True Whig, January 9, 1855.
16. Ibid.
There is little reason to doubt the genuineness of this letter, in view of the fact that the Union and American opposed the Know-Nothings and evidently wished to suppress rather than advertise the successes of the new order.

No more surprising results were reported than those which came from the little East Tennessee village of Loudon, a few miles west of Knoxville. Here a ticket was distributed, as was the custom, among the voters who came to the polls. "Each man voted and went about his business," while everything passed off as "serenely as the 'setting Sun on a Summer's eve.'" To the astonishment of everyone, however, when the vote was counted out, it was seen that another ticket had been "elected by an overwhelming majority. The foremost candidates of the opposition received but eight votes," and everyone denied any knowledge of the method by which the result was achieved.

Thus the Know-Nothings first appeared in the larger centers of population, and rapidly increased in number until they were strong enough to carry city elections. From these points of vantage, organizers rode out to the

18. True Whig, January 16, 1856.
smaller towns, managed to secure a nucleus of trusted members and organized councils. This process of growth continued until there were 345 councils within the state with a total membership of approximately 100,000, consisting of both Whigs and Democrats. By October, 1854, interest in the new movement had become so great that a state council was organized.

In spite of the wholesale entry of Whigs into this order, there was a certain element of their old party that insisted upon retaining their identity as Whigs. They called themselves "Old line Whigs," or "Clay Whigs." Chief among these was ex-Governor and Senator James C. Jones, who wrote that he was opposed to the election of foreigners to office, and that he could easily conform to the principles of Americanism in that respect. On the other hand, he vigorously objected to the proscription of the members of the Catholic church, or of any other church. He emphatically stated:

I will proscribe no denomination. The Constitution makes no proscription. I shall not go outside of or beyond the Constitution.

The Constitution declares there shall be no religious test. Such a discrimination is at war with the spirit and genius of our institutions. There are but few Catholics in our State, but I could cite you to many in this small number, who are native born.... Will you say that

19. Daily Union and American, June 1, 1855.
21. True Whig, June 5, 1855.
these shall be excluded from honor and office, because of their religion? Will you impose taxes and burdens on them, and yet say to them they shall not participate in them?

State Senator John R. Nelson, an old line Whig of Knox County, likewise refused to take a stand in opposition to a religious organization. He vehemently denounced the new order:

Knoxville, July 5, 1855.

... As to the opinion I entertain of the Know-Nothings, I think some of them may be honest but misled. I think it the most dangerous of all infernal tampering with the Constitution, and the rights of free men. I am not a master of language sufficiently strong to express my abhorrence to the trick.

Among other prominent Whigs who did not join the Know-Nothings were J. W. Stone, candidate for the legislature in Henderson county; R. W. Haywood, candidate for the legislature in Davidson county; and Dr. A. Benton, former Whig senator from Dyer county. There were many other old line Whigs, variously estimated from 1,500 to 3,000 who never supported Know-Nothingism.

On the other hand, there were a number of Democrats who entered the order. Some were doubtless attracted by the air of mystery and secrecy within the councils. Others objected to the progressive policies of Governor Andrew Johnson. It was pointed out that in 1842, he had proposed to redistrict the state in such a way that the white voters only would be

22. Daily Union and American, July 29, 1855.
considered in the apportionment of representatives. The Democrats of Middle and West Tennessee objected to this plan, since, under such an arrangement, their slaves would not be considered in the apportionment. Among those who bolted from the support of Johnson was Dr. T. A. Anderson, who wrote:

I have studied the Progressive Democracy of Governor Johnson well, and I assure you it is rotten with political leprosy, blood, body and bones!

There is no evidence to indicate just how many of these bolters entered the Know-Nothing lodges. The concern evidenced by Democratic organs, however, indicates that the number was indeed large.

Alarmed at the strength of this secret political organization, Democratic newspapers warned fellow members that it was a political party in opposition to Democratic principles. They pointed out that it was merely a Whig trick, by which the Whigs hoped to entice Democrats away from their own party, and induce them to enter the new, but disguised Whig party. Even before the Nashville election, the Bedford Yeoman wrote:

Any reflecting man must see that a Democrat who suffers himself to be betrayed into this

23. Temple, Notable Men of Tennessee, p. 388.
absurd course of argument, is very rapidly, though unconsciously turning himself into a donkey. We have no doubt but that a few Democrats will be caught in this trap notwithstanding the fact, that the Know-Nothings have uniformly opposed the Democratic candidates for Mayoralities in every city where they have been organized. To these Democrats who want to try the experiment, we have only to say: "Go in Lemons and get squeezed."

Within a few weeks, the Union and American issued a similar warning:

We invite the attention of those green democrats, who haven't an eye in their heads to see the trap laid for them by the Whig managers of this know-nothing movement. Have they ever heard of a democrat being elected to office by the new party? We don't remember an instance of the kind. Know-Nothingism is the "old impostor with a new name."

From that time forth, the Democratic organs were bitter enemies of Tennessee Know-Nothings. The Union and American at Nashville led the attack through two of the most bitter political campaigns ever waged on Tennessee soil. There was no other Democratic organ in Nashville, but the Union and American was ably assisted by the Memphis Appeal, the Murfreesboro News, the McMinnville Enterprise, the Bedford Yeoman, and by papers of other Tennessee towns.

In opposition to these, the True Whig and the Daily Gazette appeared in Nashville. In Knoxville the Register consistently supported Know-Nothing principles. Here the "Virus-lent" Brownlow praised the new order through the columns of

his Knoxville Whig as the salvation of the Union, while at the same time, he heaped invective upon the heads of any one who dared oppose his views. In Memphis, the
Enquirer was an effective defender of Know-Nothing prin-
ciples. The editors of these organs, with the exception of Brownlow, did not admit any affiliation with the order. This does not mean, however, that they were not members, since all degree men had sworn not to reveal their connec-
tion with the order.

The newspapers of each party published pamphlets, speeches and other material in behalf of the cause which they sponsored. William G. Brownlow of Knoxville wrote Americanism Contrasted with Foreignism, Romanism, and Bogus Democracy, in which he denounced the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church. This work had wide circulation, and was considered of great value to the cause of Nativism.

It should be borne in mind that the organs of each party had the bias of a partisan press. Each parried for the advantage, and sought to picture its opponent in the most unfavorable light. Under such conditions, editors did not scruple to tell half a truth as though it were the whole truth, if thereby a purpose could be served. In view of this fact, all evidence should be carefully weighed, before it is accepted as truth. This is particularly true
as regards newspaper disputes and political issues.

Bitter controversies raged. The old Whig-Democratic dispute over the slavery question was revived. Whigs evidently hoped by becoming Know-Nothings to dodge this issue. In this they were destined to be disappointed in view of the fact that when northern Whigs joined the Know-Nothing order, they took with them their anti-slavery sentiments, while southern Whigs remained pro-slavery in sentiment. Realizing this, the Democratic newspapers in Tennessee bitterly assailed the Know-Nothings on the ground of free-soilism. In view of this fact, it was argued, Know-Nothings was no more a national unit than had been the old Whig party. In response to this attack, the Know-Nothings endeavored to prove that the abolitionists of the North were not in sympathy with the Nativistic movement. They pointed out that the central purpose of the Know-Nothings was to avoid discussion of all such questions as might tend to destroy the peace and safety of the Union. Slavery was classed as such a question. The Democrats, however, were able to cite specific instances in which northern Know-Nothings had favored free-soil measures. In this controversy,

27. Ibid., November 4, 1854.
28. True Whig, October 18, 1854.
29. Daily Union and American, loc. cit.
the Whig organs were forced to defend an issue. In that respect, they were at a decided disadvantage, by virtue of the fact that the accusations of the Democrats were in a measure true.

In Middle and West Tennessee, this controversy had quite an appeal, since there were numerous slave owners, who feared any political organization which endangered the status of their slave property. In East Tennessee, the high hills and winding valleys were not adapted to the use of slaves. Hence, there was little incentive to defend the institution of slavery. Here, a majority of the people professed a desire to avoid the discussion of any question which threatened the peace of the country. They professed a desire to avoid either extreme, and in this manner to preserve the Union intact. There were still many Democrats in East Tennessee, and many Know-Nothings in Middle and West Tennessee; however, East Tennessee was more favorable toward the "Political Religious Organization," than any other portion of the state.

Such was the situation when the time approached to prepare for the coming gubernatorial campaign. The Democrats remembered their recent defeats in the municipal elections, and doubtless wondered if the Know-Nothings would nominate their candidate in a secret conclave, and march to victory without entering into an open campaign.
If the Democrats had any such fears, they were soon to be dispelled. Before the close of the year 1854, Meredith P. Gentry was mentioned as a prospective Know-No-
ing candidate for governor.) Sentiment in his behalf continued to grow. Whig newspapers were filled with praise for him. The following, from Brownlow's Whig is typical:

Nashville Jan. 23, 1855.

W. G. Brownlow:-

I take this occasion to say to you, that we are actively at work in Davidson county. We are all for Hon. Meredith P. Gentry, for Governor. He has been with us all the week. Everything is right. We all know the "pass," and Gentry can "give it," in such style that the most ignorant of "Sam!"s" friends will understand it! He can get a larger vote in Davidson county than any Whig in the State.

I am pleased to see your course in favor of Gentry. We wish him to make his own course in the coming contest, and to run without a convention, laying down his own platform. We believe he can beat Johnson about ten thousand votes, and that he is about the only man who can.

There were other letters, and editorials which favored the candidacy of Gentry upon his own platform.

Such was the sentiment when Gentry made the following formal announcement of his candidacy. It was published in the various Know-Nothing newspapers of the state.

30. Ibid., December 20, 1854.
32. True Whig, February 16, 1855.
To the people of Tennessee.
Hillside, Bedford, co., Feb. 12, 1855.

Fellow citizens:—Grateful for the gracious sentiments expressed for me in the newspapers, and in private letters, I deem it my duty to respond by respectfully announcing that I am a candidate for the office of Governor of Tennessee at the next election.

Why did Gentry enter the campaign without the formality of a convention, and a published platform of principles? For this action, there were several probable reasons. It was customary for the Know-Nothings to select all candidates for political offices in secret meetings of the order. There is little reason to doubt that Gentry was selected in that manner. The Know-Nothings probably felt that the use of regular party methods would destroy the charm of the secret political organization. The Democratic organ gave other reasons.

It was thought advisable that Gentry should announce himself as a candidate, and say nothing about whiggery in his announcement. It was argued that, if he were regularly nominated by the Whig party, there would be an end of all hope of getting Democratic votes. ...Democrats could not have been blinded in any other way. They are wretchedly poor puppies who cannot see through the trick.

There may be some truth in this statement, since there were many Democrats in the Know-Nothing order. In any event, the Democrats used every opportunity to denounce Know-

33. Daily Union and American, February 16, 1855.
Nothingism as a Whig trick.

Meredith P. Gentry was born in North Carolina in 1809, the son of a planter. In 1813, his father "moved to Tennessee and settled in Williamson County." Gentry was not privileged to attend school after the age of fourteen, but made a study of history, poetry, and general literature while working on his father's farm. He studied law, but did not develop the practice to any great extent. In 1835, he was elected to the legislature, where he served until 1839. While a member of that body, he aided in securing the passage of an act, under which the state gave aid in the building of macadam roads. He was elected to Congress in 1839, and served with distinction until 1853 when he objected to the nomination of General Winfield Scott on the ground that Scott was unfriendly to the compromise measures of 1850. In a speech before Congress regarding his position, he said:

"What shall I do? Why, I am very much troubled about it. It is a painful idea to contemplate. It is exceedingly painful for a man to stand as I stand, and who has stood as I have stood, to be separated from his party, and be brought in antagonism with those with whom he has associated; and therefore I have been recurring to my early reading of poetry to find some consolation, and I have determined to adopt the advice Cato gave to his son:

34. Temple, op. cit., pp. 239-240.
"My son, thou oft hast seen
Thy sire engaged in a corrupted state
Wrestling with vice and faction; now
thou seest me
Spent, overpowered, despairing of success;
Let me advise thee to retreat betimes
To thy paternal seat, the Sabine field
Where the great Censor toiled with his
own hands,
And all our frugal ancestors were blest
In humble virtues and a rural life.
There live, retired and pray for the
peace of Rome."

"I will go home.... In a sequestered valley in
the State of Tennessee, there is a smiling farm,
with bubbling fountains covered with rich pastur-
age and fat flocks, and all that is needful for
the occupation and enjoyment of a man of uncor-
rupted tastes. I will go there and pray for
'Rome.'"

 Upon the expiration of his term, Gentry retired to his home
in Bedford county, where he remained until 1855, when he
joined the Know-Nothings. A contemporary writer described
Gentry as one of the greatest orators in Congress, a man of
unusual ability and dignity. He was not of an aggressively
ambitious nature, however, and has been described as lazy.
It was also asserted by some that he was an habitual drunk-

ard.

The leading Whig newspapers of the state immediate-
ly announced their willingness to support Gentry. Ratifica-
tion meetings were held throughout the state, and a majority
of the counties endorsed his candidacy.

35. Ibid., p. 242.
There was some sentiment among old line Whigs and Know-Nothings in favor of a convention, however; but only in a few areas was it of sufficient force to be of any significance. Against the candidacy of Gentry without a convention, the Sommerville Reporter protested:

Mr. Gentry should not be allowed to take the field without the say so of the people of Tennessee. For a half-dozen know-nothing presses to take him up and say he shall be the candidate not only of the know-nothing party, but also the whig party of Tennessee, should not be recognized or tolerated by the gallant whig band of the State.

The Dandridge Herald also disliked Gentry, and argued that a convention should still be held. These protests were published in the Democratic organs, but they are doubtless authentic, as later developments indicated much dissatisfaction among Know-Nothings as well as old line Whigs.

The Know-Nothings attempted to refute these arguments. They pointed out that the question of a convention had been discussed at an earlier date, and that all such protests should have been registered at that time. Furthermore, plans were "now definitely shaping for the

37. Dandridge Herald, in ibid.
canvass and a convention might prove embarrassing to the leaders of the party."

Aroused by the early activities of the Know-Nothings, Democrats, representing fifty-five counties, met in convention on March 27. From the very beginning, they assailed the Know-Nothing order as an organization, designed in opposition to the American traditions of religious freedom, and self determination within the respective states. A series of resolutions embodying these views was adopted.

Resolved. That the American democracy place their trust in the intelligence, patriotism and the discriminating justice of the American people; and we regard this as a distinctive feature of our political creed, which we are proud to maintain before the world as the great moral element in a form of government springing from and upheld by the popular will; and we contrast it with the creed and practice of Federalism, under whatever name or form, which seeks to palsy the will of the constituent, and which conceives no imposture too monstrous for the popular credulity.

Resolved. That the democratic party has never hesitated or feared to make an open and candid declaration of its creed and principles, that we regard all secret political clubs as at war

36. True Whig, April 23, 1855. Other than in the state council and the newspapers, there was no central organization for the dissemination of political doctrines. The council could act only through local councils, and such proceedings were necessarily secret. No method was provided to reach areas where no local councils existed other than through newspapers, and many in the backwoods sections seldom saw a paper. Neither was there a platform other than the constitution of the secret order.

with the genius and spirit of our Republican Institutions; that the secret oath bound political club, commonly called the "Know-Nothings," in its attempts to abridge the rights of conscience and create religious tests in the selection of men for office, is violative of the Constitution and dangerous to the public liberty; that it is but a weak invention of the enemies of the democratic party; and that we will fight this secret enemy with the same energy and ardor which in times past has enabled us to defeat and drive from the field open and undisguised foes.

Resolved, That the democratic party reaffirm those noble truths which are stated in our declaration of rights: "That all men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience: that no man can of right be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship, or to maintain any minister against his consent: that no human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience: and that no preference shall ever be given, by Law, to any religious establishment or mode of worship. That no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under this state."

Resolved, That Congress has the power under the Constitution to establish an uniform rule of naturalization, but it has no power or authority under that instrument to prescribe the qualification of voters or to restrain the immigration of foreigners: that these powers are reserved to the States, and can alone be exercised by them: and the doctrine which assumes this authority for the federal government is of dangerous tendency and is in direct violation of the sovereignty of the States.

Resolved, That the democratic party recognize as one of its cardinals the right and capacity of the people to determine the nature and character of their own institutions in the formation of their State Constitutions; that this great principle was clearly established by the Compromise measures of
1850, and was carried into practice by the passage of the bill creating territorial governments for Kansas and Nebraska.

Resolved, That Franklin Pierce, President of the United States, has been faithful and true to the declarations made in his Inaugural Address: that the leading measures of his administration have been able, enlightened and patriotic, and deserve, as they receive, our cordial and earnest support: that the honor of our flag and the rights of our citizens abroad have been, whenever and wherever assailed, promptly vindicated and protected: that he has maintained and respected the constitutional rights of every section of the Union, repelling with the whole power of his administration every attack made by Northern Fanaticism upon the rights and institutions of the Southern States.

This platform, filled with denunciations of Know-Nothings, characterized the position of Democrats throughout the life of the Know-Nothing political order. (Rather than emphasize principles and policies, they launched bitter attacks upon the enemy.) Following the passage of resolutions, committees, and sub-committees were appointed to supervise the canvass in every part of the state. A very important function of that body was to recruit the Democratic ranks and to prevent the Democrats joining the Know-Nothings. A resolution was offered that Andrew Johnson be declared the nominee of the Convention by acclamation. This resolution was unanimously adopted.

40. Ibid.
"The Democrats sent a copy of the resolutions to Governor Johnson, and notified him of the fact that he had been renominated for the office of governor. In his reply, he endorsed the platform in the following words:

The resolutions adopted by the convention re-affirming democratic principles long cherished, and approving of the leading measures of the great democratic party, meet with my cordial approbation and will receive my uncompromising support.

Immediately following Johnson's acceptance of the nomination, a new issue appeared. A committee, representing the "State Temperance Convention," submitted the following questions to the two candidates: first, "Are you in favor of a law prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage? Secondly, Will you, if elected, recommend in your message to the Legislature, the passage of such a law at an early period in the session?"

Such a law had been passed at an earlier date in Maine, and was commonly known as the "Maine Liquor Law." Temperance leaders obviously hoped to secure the passage of a similar law in Tennessee, and wished to learn the position each candidate would assume in regard to it.

41. True Whig, April 4, 1855.
42. Ibid., April 27, 1855.
Within a few days Gentry sent the following reply:

I will recommend the enactment of a law prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors in small quantities, except license shall have been obtained for that privilege — which license shall be issued by the clerk of the County Court, only in cases where application shall be made for the same in writing, signed by the person applying, and by a majority of the qualified voters of the civil district in which he proposes to retail the spirituous liquors.

Here Gentry took a definite stand in favor of a license law. His reply, however, did not please the temperance committee, in view of the fact that they desired a more effective law than that outlined.

Governor Johnson was more deliberate in his reply. He waited until April 20, on which date he sent the following note to the committee:

I understand you as asking me directly whether I am for or against a law commonly denominated the "Maine Liquor Law." If this is the interrogatory which you have propounded to me, I answer directly and explicitly that I am not in favor of the "Maine Liquor Law" as the mode by which the excessive use and sale of intoxicating liquors are to be prohibited as a beverage.

43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
Here Governor Johnson was very definite in declaring his opposition to the Maine Liquor Law. The tone of his reply indicated that he probably favored a less drastic law, by which the sale of intoxicating liquors as a beverage might be prohibited. Yet he did not commit himself to any definite policy, other than that of opposition to the Maine Liquor Law. He was still in position to favor a less drastic law if circumstances demanded. Needless to say, his reply was unsatisfactory to the committee. Doubtless each candidate sought to take a stand on that issue which would win the favor of a majority of the voters.

While the candidates fenced for position on the various issues, the newspaper war raged. With increased fury, the Daily Union and American continued to denounce the secret order as a spectral menace to religious liberty. Realizing the probable effect of this attack, the True Whig explained that no religious test for office holding, could be given in Tennessee, since the state constitution expressly forbade such procedure. 46

The second issue around which controversy raged with increasing force, was the slavery problem. On this question, Tennessee Know-Nothings, had been forced to maintain their position in the face of free-soil tendencies of their northern brethren.

Such was the rise of the Know-Nothing order in the

46. Ibid., April 20-27, Passim.
state of Tennessee. Within a few short months it had appeared, and had swept swiftly, but silently to power in many cities and towns of the state. It had gained rapidly in strength until by May 1, 1855, its membership had reached, according to various estimates, from 75,000 to 100,000, recruited from the ranks of both Whigs and Democrats. So completely veiled were its proceedings, and so well did the members of the order keep their pledges of secrecy that no one knew whom to trust. Hence, Democrats were afraid to confide in many of their own members when the time approached for the gubernatorial campaign to open.
CHAPTER III

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1855

The gubernatorial campaign of 1855 in Tennessee was characterized throughout by bitterness and invective. At its beginning, Know-Nothing strength was at its height, and it appeared that the forces of Democracy would be submerged in the onward flow of Native Americanism. However, before the campaign had closed, it became obvious that Know-Nothingism was a premature growth, unadjusted to the age, and destined to fall under the onslaughts of a more stable foe.

Before the opening of the canvass, Johnson and Gentry met and arranged a schedule of speaking dates. This schedule was published by the important newspapers of both parties. The first encounter was to be held at Murfreesboro; then the candidates were to swing westward, following a course near the southern border of the state until the western counties were reached. Here they were to double back and follow a zig-zag course across the state from west to east, near the Kentucky line. On reaching the northeast corner of the state, they were to turn back, and proceed in a southwesterly direction.

1. Appendix "D," schedule of speaking dates.
until Chattanooga was reached. Here the final discussion was to be held. By this plan, the candidates hoped to be able to reach a majority of the voters.

The schedule arranged, the speakers met on May 1, in their first encounter, at Murfreesboro, in the Know-Nothing county of Rutherford. On that day, practically the entire population of the surrounding country laid down their work to journey to the little country town to witness this battle of the giants. From every direction they came. Some jolted along in hacks and carriages, some jogged leisurely along on horseback, while others left old Dobbin at home to rest, and trudged expectantly on, "swapping gossip," or arguing politics with great gusto. All were doubtless filled with unbounded curiosity to witness a forensic struggle between the representative of a secret order, and the governor of their state. At Murfreesboro, feverish excitement prevailed as the hour for the speaking approached. Lawyers, merchants, doctors, farmers and newspaper men "rubbed elbows" indiscriminately. Many of these had doubtless read, or heard of Know-Nothing riots in other states; hence, pockets bulging with concealed weapons were not uncommon.

In the early afternoon, this vast multitude gathered around the improvised platform, from which the two candidates were to speak. Thunders of applause, and shouts of delight greeted the Governor as he rose to make the first speech. It was expected that he would defend the policies of his past administration, and outline his plans for the future. Instead, however, he launched a bitter attack upon his opponent and the order which he represented. He characterized Gentry as a deserter from, and a traitor to his party. He based this accusation on the fact that while in Congress, Gentry had promised either to reform his party or destroy it. Now, argued Johnson, Gentry was marching forth as the champion of a secret order to destroy his old party.

In the second place, he assailed Gentry as the proponent of a liquor law, radical in its very nature. In the third place, he accused Gentry of favoring Federal assumption of state debts, while the lands owned by the states were held as security. Such a plan, argued Johnson, would give the Federal government too much authority within the states. The Governor then turned from Gentry to an attack upon the party or order which he represented. This,

5. True Whig, May 3, 1858.
he assailed on the basis of slavery. Northern Know-Nothing-ism, he declared, was analogous to Abolitionism. He pointed out that the great bulk of the foreign population resided in the North, and that there was not sufficient number in Tennessee to cause alarm. Furthermore, he argued, foreigners had made great contributions to American civilization and did not deserve the treatment proposed by the Know-Nothings. Governor Johnson poured bitter invective upon the heads of the Know-Nothings for proscribing a religious organization. Thus, he argued, in making war upon one branch of Christ's church, they made war upon all, and hence, were in league with the Devil himself. With characteristic bitterness, he concluded:

The Devil, his Satanic Majesty, the Prince of Darkness, who presides over the secret conclave held in Pandemonium, makes war upon all branches of Christ's Church. The Know-Nothings advocate and defend none, but make war upon one of the Churches and thus far, BECOME THE ALLIES OF THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS....

A denomination like this, to set up as the guardians of the religion and morals of the country! A denomination bound together by secret and terrible oaths, the first of which, on the very initiation, FIXES AND REQUIRES THEM TO CARRY A LIE IN THEIR MOUTHS!

Show me the dimensions of a Know-Nothing, and I will show you a HUGE REPTILE, upon whose neck the FOOT OF EVERY HONEST MAN ought to be placed.

6. Ibid., May 15, 1855.
"Under this terrible denunciation the audience became pale with rage and as still as death, waiting to see what next would happen." When the Governor compared the Know-Nothings to a huge reptile upon which the foot of every honest man ought to be placed, many voices were heard to cry: "It's a lie, it's a lie." Instantly the cocking of pistols was heard" on all sides, "followed by ominous silence. Men ceased to breathe. Their hearts stopped beating." For a short time, Johnson calmly gazed "on the fearful scene he had evoked," then deliberately, and without the slightest hesitation, "resumed his speech. All danger was now gone. At the critical moment," the slightest move might "have produced a scene of blood and death."

The Governor's speech ended, Colonel Gentry rose from his seat, where he had been forced to sit in the hot sun, "crowded in such a manner that he was unable to get a breath of fresh air." As he took the stand, he was greeted with a wild outburst of applause, then the crowd settled down for the speech. He stated that the audience should appreciate his position on this occasion, as the speech of his competitor had been prepared, with great

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deliberation, in the privacy of his home. He had expected the Governor to defend his administration, and discuss the policies of his party. Instead, however, he had followed a far different course. Hence, a satisfactory answer would be difficult without adequate preparation.

Under the circumstances, however, he would endeavor to do his best. Gentry admitted that he had quarreled with his friends, the Whigs, and that he had quarreled with his friends, the Democrats; but now, he appeared, neither as a Whig nor as a Democrat, but as the representative of a party in which all quarrels could be forgotten, with a platform upon which all true Americans could unite, that of Native Americanism. He proposed:

To unite the whole family of Tennesseans upon one purpose – to turn my competitor out of office by acclamation. I care not what you call me, or with what party you place me, I want the vote of all parties – of the entire population. I want the vote of the Whigs and Democrats, of Know-Nothings, and Know-Somethings, and Temperance men, and if the boys who love their dram don't vote for me, they have very little sympathy for a poor fellow who has suffered sorely on their account.

The appeal to "the boys who love their dram," was later used by certain Democrats to show that Gentry was not in sympathy with the temperance movement. As regards the temperance

8. True Whig, May 3, 1855.
9. Ibid.
issue in general, Gentry stated that he had discussed it with Johnson, and found that they both "occupied substantially the same ground in that respect."

Then Gentry turned to a defense of his own party. First he declared that he had no desire to banish honest and intelligent foreigners from the United States, but rather welcomed such to come and enjoy its blessings. However, they should not "assume to understand our government well enough to take care of it."

Hence, "in order that foreigners may have that schooling in our principles and institutions which we are subjected to before we are admitted to the enjoyment of the elective franchise, and which our sons are subjected to," the period of naturalization should be extended to twenty-one years. In the second place, he declared, the people of the Roman Catholic faith looked to the Pope as the source of all power, and sought ultimately to unify Church and State with the Pope as the supreme head of all. He continued:

The Know-Nothings instead of looking to a union of Church and State, fear such a result might follow here, as elsewhere, and it is the very thing they wish to prevent. The tenets of the Catholic faith are dangerous to Republicanism, and incompatible

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
with our institutions, and it is therefore legitimate and right to make the issue that they shall not be elevated to office.

For these reasons, Gentry asserted, there was a very clear distinction between opposition to the Catholics, and opposition to any other branch of Christ's church.

Gentry's speech was characterized by none of the bitter invective and denunciation which was so obvious in that of Johnson. He spoke in a dignified and eloquent manner, his speech "abounding in withering sarcasm." His defense of Know-Nothingism was not so vigorous as had been expected. In this, his supporters were disappointed. They had hoped that he would rise to great heights of oratorical denunciation and virtually drive his opponent from the field.

If contemporary Know-Nothing newspapers can be believed, he did completely overwhelm Johnson. It was clear, however, that these organs wished to portray Gentry as a conquering hero, in order to encourage party members. Hence, that source of information is not entirely reliable in this regard. An interesting account is found in the more recent writings of Oliver P. Temple who supported the Know-Nothings, lived for a while in Knoxville, and served at one time as an officer of the Lawson McGhee Library. The situation is best characterized in his words, written years after the death of
the Know-Nothing order:

The result, therefore, of this first debate was unfavorable to Gentry. His friends went away disappointed and discouraged. They never quite recovered from this feeling. It was believed at the time that if he had boldly identified himself with the new order, had repelled in the strongest language and with an indignant spirit the venomous attacks of Johnson, he would have been triumphantly elected. With Johnson's fearful arraignment of the secret order and oath bound party, and the apparently half hearted defense made of it by Gentry, its friends became despondent and timid all over the State. On the other hand, Johnson's daring assaults had filled his friends with the highest courage and enthusiasm. Nor was this all. At the first appearance of the order, many Democrats had hastened to join it, some because they approved of its principles, and some because they thought it would become a highway to power. But when Andrew Johnson began thundering his terrible denunciations against it, calling on all honest men to come out of the midnight dens of this wicked party, Democrats all over the State commenced hurriedly tumbling out of the order, so great was their haste to escape odium.

The truth of these statements will appear obvious to the reader as this study continues.

On the day of this debate, Tennessee Know-Nothingism was apparently at high tide. Prior to that time, the march of nativism had been onward, as the members of the order were confident of their power. Gentry's dignified oratory probably appealed to the more intellectual, but in the eyes of the average voter, he had been completely
crushed beneath the violence of the Governor's attack.
To the many slave owners, northern Know-Nothingism had
been pictured as analogous to the night specter of abo-
lationism descending upon the South to rob them of their
slave property. Finally, Know-Nothingism had been made
to appear as a threat to freedom of religion in general.

In order to clear up these questions in the
minds of the people, and at the same time to present a
working basis for the leaders of their organization, the
Know-Nothings met in Nashville on May 7, and drew up a
definite platform of principles. (This platform opposed
any agitation of all sectional issues) The reference
here to slavery is clear. Secondly, it encouraged the
immigration of intelligent (foreigners, but (denied that
they should be given the (rights of franchise) until they
had lived within the United States long enough to become
acquainted with American principles. In the third place,
the platform declared that all men should be allowed to
"worship God according to the dictates of their own con-
science," but (denied the right of "any foreign Prince,
Pope or Potentate to interfere with the affairs of our
people.") Through this platform, the Know-Nothings hoped
to convince the people that there was no ground for John-
son's violent denunciations of their order. With regard
to the platform, the True Whig wrote:

12. True Whig, in Knoxville Register, May 17, 1855; see Ap-
pendix "C," state platform, 1855.
If there is one single "treasonable" sentiment, or the least resemblance of religious intolerance manifest in the whole document, we confess we are not sufficiently "astute" to perceive it.

A later article in the Knoxville Register expressed astonishment "at the material comprising this organization."

The writer continued:

I have been led to regard them as the factionists of the old parties - men of no standing - entitled to no respect. But I have discovered my mistake. The first men of the State, the most conservative politicians of both parties, the best of the land were holding convention in broad daylight!

According to the Register, out of 500 delegates present at the convention, 200 were Democrats.

This convention marks a distinct point of transition from the Know-Nothing secret order to the Know-Nothing or American political party. Heretofore, even the political plans of the order had evidently been made in secret. No platforms of principles had previously been published to the world. (Now we find a regular convention meeting and formulating a platform just as any other political party. It retained, however, all the vestiges of a secret order as regards other matters. Oaths were still administered to new members, and all proceedings of the councils were veiled in secrecy.

13. Knoxville Register, May 24, 1855.
Of even greater significance to the status of Know-Nothingism as an organization, were the proceedings of the National Council at Philadelphia in June. Here a platform was adopted, in which it was agreed that a measure of the secrecy should be abolished, that the members of the order might announce their membership, and proclaim their principles to the world. It was recommended that "there be no concealment of the places of meeting of subordinate councils." Nothing was said, however, as regards secrecy within the councils. With this act, Know-Nothingism assumed the role of a political party, but at the same time, retained the vestiges of a secret order.

In the second place, a majority of the southern delegates favored a plank by which Catholics might be admitted to membership in the order. (Know-Nothings opposition to Catholics in Tennessee had never been of great consequence, as many old line Whigs had objected, and as in the case of Jones, had protested against such proscription. Furthermore, the issue had already been the ground for the murderous assaults upon the order by Governor Johnson. This plank was rejected. In the third place, [northern delegates waged

15. From their first political activities, Tennessee Know-Nothings had referred to their organization as the American party. Here the National Council used that name in their platform, and it became the official name for the party. Democrats, however, continued to use the name Know-Nothing. The use of either term, in the remainder of this study, is intended to refer to the same organization.
a bitter fight to include an anti-slavery plank in the platform. To such a commitment, southern delegates vigorously objected. Finally, a platform that ignored the question of slavery was proposed, the twelfth section of which held the old Whig and Democratic parties responsible for the bitter anti-slavery agitation which had torn the country. It declared that the best policy was to "abide by and maintain the existing laws upon the subject of slavery." Furthermore, this section asserted, Congress had no right to legislate upon this question in the territories. In spite of northern opposition, this platform was adopted. The belligerent northern delegates, representing twelve states, immediately left the council.

The action of the northern delegates was accepted by Tennessee Democrats as final proof of the statement that Know-Nothingism at the North was synonymous with abolitionism. In triumph, the Union and American wrote:

We wonder if the Know-Nothings will now confess that we were right all the time when we told them that the order North was abolition? Are they now convinced, or must they wait for some further demonstration? Let them now hold up the mirror before their own party, and look for its nationality."

The secession of northern delegates justified the Union and

17. Daily Union and American, June 22, 1855.
American in the statement that the Know-Nothing could
now lay no claim to nationality. In a "Speech on Know-
Nothingism," ex-Governor A. V. Brown reemphasized the
18
fact:

The attempt to nationalize this Know-Nothing party was a failure. All sensible men now
see it, and all candid ones must admit it. So evident was the fact that whole entire
States withdrew and gave up the attempt. They fell back upon their respective State
organizations, as the Know-Nothing of Ten-
19
nese will have to do, content with being
a mere State faction, without aspiring to
become a national party.

Doubtless realizing their plight, the Know-No-
things of Tennessee said little about nationality. In-
stead, their press rejoiced over the fact that the order
had been purged of its abolition element. The True Whig
19
wrote:

The American press of the whole South rejoic-
es that the National American Party has been
thoroughly purged of Abolition agitation, by
the adoption of a sound conservative platform,
and the consequent withdrawal of the Abolition
delegates from the National Council at Phila-
delphia.

Thus, the Know-Nothing press virtually admitted the fact
that their political order was only a sectional one as re-
gards the dominant issue of the day.

18. Ibid., July 18, 1855.
19. True Whig, June 22, 1855.
In the face of this situation, and in view of Governor Johnson's apparent triumph over Gentry in the opening debate of the campaign, withdrawals from the Know-Nothing order became common. So frequent were they that standard forms of withdrawal were drawn up. The following method was reputed to have been used:

A member wishing to withdraw is presented with an affidavit, to which he is required to put his name, in which there is a denial of ever having belonged to the order. The object of which is to suppress the idea that members are leaving the order; as that thing is being done very rapidly in Bedford county, and as his Majesty has assumed so much power to himself, it has bade members who wish to leave, just to consider themselves released without troubling him for a withdrawal.

The Union and American continued to publish similar accounts, while Know-Nothing organs urged their members to remain true to their political order. As indicated by Temple, Johnson's fearful arraignment of the order was doubtless responsible for numerous withdrawals. This is evidenced by the fact, that as the speakers proceeded through Middle and West Tennessee, withdrawal reports were published regarding the areas just visited. It is probable, of course, that some of these were exaggerated, as the Union and American wished to play up Johnson's apparent victories, and thus discourage the Know-Nothings.

20. Daily Union and American, June 14, 1855.
After the debate at Murfreesboro, the speeches of the candidates followed much the same course, with only slight variations. As they entered the slave holding counties of West Tennessee, Johnson arraigned Gentry as the proponent of anti-slavery measures. It was pointed out that while in Congress, Gentry had voted for the anti-slavery, as well as the pro-slavery measures of the Compromise of 1850. To this attack Gentry responded:

When one of the Southern bills was to be brought up, the Northern men generally—especially all the politicians, would retire from the hall, or fail to be present, and thus let Southern men pass it; and when a Northern bill was to be passed, the Southern men would generally, almost in a body, withdraw, and let the Northern men vote it through. But there was one exception to this system of wholesale "dodging." I voted for the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia: and I believe I was the only member of Congress, North or South, the only one from Tennessee, who stood up all the time and voted for every one of the Compromise measures.

Johnson also pointed out that Gentry had at one time voted for the reception by the House, of an anti-slavery petition. Neither did Gentry deny this charge. He replied that he had always favored the right of petition as a constitutional right of all the people, regardless of the nature of the petition. He further stated that a member could vote to

21. True Slig, June 4, 1855.
receive a petition without obligating himself to vote for a measure in response to it.

While still in West Tennessee, Gentry pointed out that when representatives in Congress were apportioned among the several states, Johnson had proposed that within the state of Tennessee, they be apportioned without any regard to the slave population. This was known as Johnson's "Free Basis" Resolution. It had been made on the ground that the Tennessee constitution did not recognize slaves as "persons," but as property. Furthermore, the Know-Nothing organs pointed out, Johnson had proposed to amend the Constitution of the United States to permit the election of the President by the direct vote of the people. The Knoxville Register voiced the following objections:

In the Southern States three fifths of the slave population are represented under the electoral system; but if Gov. Johnson's plan is adopted and the people vote directly for President, without the intervention of electors, as under the present arrangement, the South will of course lose the weight and benefit of the three fifths vote.

Gentry appealed to the slave owners, by pointing out that the increasing hordes of foreigners in the territories

22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Knoxville Register, June 21, 1855.
Johnson said very little about his free basis plan among the slave owners of West Tennessee. In fact, it was not until he reached East Tennessee, that he felt free to discuss it. Here he found himself in that part of the state which would profit by his plan. According to a Know-No-thing paper:

Gov. Johnson charged that his competitor had evaded the Free Basis Resolution he had the honor to introduce in the Senate of the extra session of the Legislature, on the fifth of October 1842. It involved a great principle, he said, and which concerned the rights and interests of the masses. It was obvious why his competitor dodged an issue here which he gladly met in Fayette county...... The resolution he had offered, of which he was PROUD, as the friend of the people and the poor man, which had been voted down by the lordly slave holders of Middle and West Tennessee, was in these words:

Resolved, by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, that the basis to be observed in laying off the State in Congressional Districts, shall be the voting population without any regard to the three fifths of negro population.

Gov. Johnson contended that the honest working man of Campbell county was borne down by the aristocratic man of Middle and West Tennessee, and his fair daughter and virtuous wife, under the law advocated by his competitor were weighed in the balance against the Negro benches of the proud slave holder!

Following these utterances at Jacksboro and other places, Know-Nothing papers throughout the state attempted to

25. True Whig, July 16, 1855.
show by them, that Johnson was trying to stir up the
seeds of abolitionism in East Tennessee, and array
the people of the East against those of the West. Ap-
parently, what the True Whig and other Middle and West
Tennessee papers hoped to do, by emphasizing Johnson’s
free basis, was to prejudice the people in that part
of the state against him.

On entering the Know-Nothing counties of
East Tennessee, reports indicate that Governor Johnson
became less bitter in his denunciation of the Know-No-
things, while Gentry became more bold. The following
from the Register is typical of Know-Nothing accounts:

The Governor made pretty much the same
speech here he has made throughout the
State, so far as I have learned, with
the very palpable exception that he has
greatly softened down of late in his de-
unciation of the American party. Here
he wholly left off those bitter vitupera-
tions.

This same paper pointed out that at Carthage, Gentry
proudly acknowledged "himself as a member, and can-
didate of the Know-Nothing party." In spite of this an-
nouncement, and in spite of Gentry’s rather vigorous
attack upon Johnson’s free basis plan, the Know-Nothings
of East Tennessee were not entirely satisfied with his

26. Knoxville Register, June 21, 1856.
methods. At Clinton, Temple and Brownlow called on
him and suggested that he use a more vigorous method.
He should treat Johnson as Johnson had treated him.
According to Temple, Gentry was indignant. With quiet
dignity he responded:

I know gentlemen; you want me to commence
by denouncing Johnson as a scoundrel, and
growing stronger in denunciation until I
reach the grand climax. Let me say that
I think I know how to act as a gentleman,
and what the rules of honorable debate a-
mong gentlemen require. I cannot degrade
my manhood, even if my competitor does do
so; no, not even to secure my election.
If you wish me to get down to the level of
my competitor, I beg you to hunt another to
take my place, and let me retire at least
with my own self respect and with unsullied
honor.

The contestants continued their canvass from
county to county until they reached Jonesboro. Here
Gentry complained of being unwell. He spoke as usual,
however. At Greenville and Newport, he managed to
speak, but when Dandridge was reached he was unable to
take the stand. Here his place was supplied by N. G.
Taylor. On the next day the candidates were supposed
to speak in Knoxville. Gentry, however, was so weak
that he was unable to continue, and on the advice of
his physicians, he decided to abandon the campaign.

He immediately requested Governor Johnson that they both discontinue further speaking. The Governor replied to this request in the following letter to Gentry:

I was requested this morning by Col. John Williams, to visit you at your sick room; and upon doing so, I understand you to express the desire, in view of your serious indisposition, that the canvass in which we have been engaged should terminate at this place. I have to say, that however solicitous I may be to continue the canvass, and notwithstanding the urgent solicitation of friends that I should fill the remaining appointments, I am constrained by a sense of proper courtesy to an opponent to yield to your desire.

As regards the speaking at Knoxville, an explanation was deemed necessary. It was agreed that one of Gentry's friends should make a statement to the people in his behalf, while Johnson should speak a few words for himself. Temple wrote in his biographical sketch of Johnson that the Governor did not live up to this agreement, neither as regards his speech at Knoxville nor the remainder of the canvass. Temple wrote:

I was requested by Mr. Gentry to represent him, and to present to the people his deep regret at being unable to make any more speeches. This I did in a little speech not exceeding three minutes. We supposed

that Johnson would not much exceed my time. This was the spirit of the agreement. Instead he made almost a regular speech. He spoke from fifteen to twenty-five minutes upon matters manifestly covered by his agreement. I was indignant, but nothing could be done to stop him.

Temple further stated that Johnson proceeded to visit all his remaining appointments. On arriving at the various towns where he and Gentry were scheduled to speak, he gathered his friends about him, and told them in substance, that he was bound by an agreement not to make a speech to them, but if he were permitted to speak he would say "So and so." Then he would go over the grounds covered in the canvass. Furthermore, wrote Temple, the Governor gained a wide reputation for magnanimity, as a result of giving up his appointments. The fact, however, that he violated the spirit of his agreement with Gentry, "was only heard by a few." Whether Johnson really did violate the spirit of his agreement with Gentry is not definitely settled. Temple gave no authority for his statements, and it is evident that he did not accompany the Governor, or he would have mentioned the fact. Nothing papers made similar statements. The Democratic press, however, emphatically denied any implication that Governor Johnson continued the canvass. Hence, we have

30. Ibid., loc. cit.
only conflicting reports of partisan presses and leaders regarding his actions in this matter.

While the canvass was at white heat, Protestant leaders assumed various attitudes toward Know-Nothingism. According to the Union and American, the Presbyterian Critic, stated that there was no demand for a great national movement against the Catholic church, and objected strenuously against the efforts of unprincipled politicians to array the Protestants against the Catholics.

To the Know-Nothing party, the Critic made the following objections:

It is violating the very principal of religious liberty, which it proposes to conserve.

.... We object again to the American party, that it is condensing the Catholic and Foreign element in our population into a political body, distinct from the mass of our citizens, armed with all their power to do mischief, and animated by all that hostility which is natural to men suffering under an ostracism of their religion and birth....

Now, to say the least of it the most manly and honest policy, is to prohibit the entry of Catholics and Foreigners altogether into the country, and to the rights of citizenship, rather than invite them to come and then begin to annoy them by a whole series of political disabilities. We object in the last place, .... to the principles of the organization adopted by the American or Know-Nothing party.

The writer here referred particularly to the oath bound nature of the organization, and characterized it as un-

31. Presbyterian Critic (Memphis), in Daily Union and American, July 1, 1856.
necessary, dangerous, and hostile to the best interests of republican liberty.

The Union and American obviously seized every opportunity to copy articles from church papers, or print letters from churchmen, if they reflected unfavorably upon the Know-Nothings. On July 11, a letter was published, reputed to have been written by a Primitive Baptist. The writer reported that the officials of his church had excluded one of their members from membership for joining the Know-Nothings. According to the same letter, William G. Brownlow had criticized this action in the following terms:

That same church has expelled members for joining the Sons of Temperance, and the Free Masons; and in 1852, expelled one of its members for signifying his intention to vote for Gen. Scott, because Scott was said to be favorable to the Catholics.

This same Hard Shell Church now will not commune with Missionary Baptists, or with any other Christian denomination, more intolerant than even the Catholics, they believe there is no salvation "out of that one congregation," their members may get drunk, lie, cheat, swear, and steal, mormon like, take up with the wives of their neighbors, and if they will only stand aloof from know-nothings, they are not deficient in the necessary christian grace.

32 Daily Union and American, July 11, 1856.
The writer then turned from the words of Brownlow to an attack upon their author, in an equally effective and not bitter manner:

Why does he make the above charges? For no other cause than the exclusion of one of our members for joining this secret midnight conclave: will he charge all those that oppose this order with lying, stealing, swearing &c? If so he had better begin at home: there are many members of the Methodist Church in West Tennessee ready and willing to join these Hard-Shell Baptists, in putting down the secret political combination. Methodism in West Tennessee, as regards Know-Nothingism, is quite different to W. G. B.'s Methodism.

It was a well known fact at the time that Brownlow was bitterly opposed to the Catholics. He had written editorial after editorial in opposition to them. It is also a significant fact that he was a retired Methodist minister, and as such, he probably considered it his Christian duty to expose what he considered the heresies of the Roman Catholic church.

It is not entirely correct to assume that Brownlow's position on Know-Nothingism was wholly characteristic of that of Tennessee Methodism in general. Reverend J. B. McFerrin, editor of the Nashville Christian Advocate, refused to allow his paper to be drawn into a political controversy. Before the campaign was well under

33. Ibid.
way, he took a very definite stand regarding the matter.

He wrote:

Know-Nothings. — We have several written documents in reference to the association called "Know-Nothings." We, of course, decline from publication, as we do not and cannot allow our columns to be filled up with political questions. The morality of this question, at present, cannot be discussed without entering into its political bearings; and to fill our sheet with politics, would be to counteract the purposes for which our journal was established. As citizens of the United States, and of the various States, Christians have equal rights with other citizens, but as members of the Church or in Church capacity, we think Christians should stand aloof from politics: so should religious journals. As a citizen, we claim rights and privileges equal to any citizen of our country, but as the editor of a religious journal and Church paper, we know no part in politics.

This position was maintained by McFerrin until the close of the campaign. There were two phases of the situation, however, upon which the editor could not maintain silence.

In the first place, he openly espoused the cause of temperance. Shortly after the opening of the campaign, McFerrin wrote an article favoring the "Maine Liquor Law."

It will be remembered that Governor Johnson, in his reply to the temperance committee, had opposed such a law. McFerrin was now attacked for using his paper against Democracy. In no uncertain terms he explained:

34. Nashville Christian Advocate, May 3, 1865.
35. Ibid., May 17, 1865.
36. Ibid., July 19, 1865.
Temperance has been a part of the creed of the Methodists since their first organization - a condition of membership since the day that Mr. Wesley framed the rules of his first Societies. Drunkenness, and drinking liquor as a beverage, has ever been in contravention of Methodist law. But lo! In the middle of the nineteenth century when all the world is awake, and efforts are being made to arrest the progress of the evil; and when any member of any church in the land would be degraded, in his own estimation, if he were even a common drinker; we think it marvelous that anyone, claiming to be a Christian, should be offended that a minister of Christ should advocate strongly those enactments which would restrain evil and put an end to the vice.

Again McFerrin was branded as a Know-Nothing, when he unequivocally assailed Catholicism. To such criticisms he replied:

It is noised about that man, because they advocate Protestant Christianity, and oppose Romanism, and the movement of the Jesuits, have therefore become partisans in politics, and are identified with political measures; yea, they are branded as political jugglers, and unworthy the confidence and patronage of honest men. Now, all this is unfair. We, for instance, have labored for years to advance the cause of Protestant Christianity and we have opposed Romanism, and warned the world against its influence. Its doctrines and usages, institutions and priesthood, we have regarded as dangerous, subversive of the doctrines of the Bible and a pure Christianity. This we have done through the pulpit and through the press. And now, because we pursue the even tenor of our way - the course we have been following for years - are we to be branded and denounced as party politicians; proscribed and

37. Ibid.
declared as unworthy the esteem and confidence of honest men? Is the liberty of speech to be restrained, the freedom of the press to be curtailed, because the speaker is a minister, or the writer a preacher of the gospel? .... Is he to be anathematized as a political gladiator?

The fact that the Methodists continually assailed the Catholics furnished grounds for the belief that they were sympathetic with the Know-Nothings, even though they were following a traditional policy at the time.

Later, the report was circulated that the Methodist Publishing House was in the hands of the Know-Nothings. Once more McFerrin’s pen flashed:

We have heard that it has been asserted, that the Methodist Publishing House in this city, had identified itself with one of the present political parties in Tennessee, and because of this assumed fact, it has been denounced by some calling themselves members of the Methodist Church. How this cannot surely be true; no Methodist of intelligence would be guilty of such a preposterous and absurd act. How is it? well, first it was industriously circulated that those having charge of the Publishing House had proscribed Southern men and Southern mechanics; that Yankees, foreigners, and Roman Catholics were employed to the exclusion of Tennesseans. The falsehood had hardly died away till another report was circulated, that the Book Concern was an American institution; that its agents, editors, clerks, and printers, all were laboring to promote the claims of the American party; and indeed, that the establishment was employed in

38. Ibid., August 8, 1855.
publishing and circulating Know-Nothing documents. The thing is too absurd - to contemptible to need contradiction with men of intelligence.

During the late canvass, press men in this establishment, as an accommodation, and for a fair consideration in money, did print some documents for both the American, and the Democratic Parties, as the editors attached to each of these Parties will certify.

Various reports were received regarding the part played by ministers and other churchmen in the campaign. The general trend of the opinion seemed to indicate that ministers in particular should take no part in politics. This was too much for McFerrin. With characteristic fervor he wrote:

That men of sense, who make any pretensions to veracity and common decency, should sanction or give countenance to slanders circulated, for the purpose of traducing the Church of Christ, are injuring a body of Christians, is rather too bad at this period of the World's history. The Methodists are not to take part in politics; and of course, if they have no rights here, neither have the Presbyterians, nor the Baptists, nor the members of any other Church, upon the same principle; so the affairs of State must be handed over to the ungodly world of infidels and unbelievers. Is a man to be disfranchised because he is a Christian or a Methodist? Because he is a worshipper of God, must he be gagged and denied the right of suffrage? well, really, things are assuming a high position in "this land of the free and home of the

39. Ibid.
brave." But what have the Methodists done — what have the preachers done? Well, we don’t know exactly what all of them have been doing in the recent election. We do know that the Methodist Church as a Church, has never attempted to meddle with political or State questions, we do know, that as a body, they have always been divided in politics, and every man has voted as he pleased, without any restraint, or the interference of his brethren. It often happens that the Bishops and their ministerial brethren differ in politics; that the pastor and the members of his charge take sides very different when they come to the ballot box.

It appears that this is the best characterization of the position of Methodists in general. The Bishop, ministers and editors doubtless realized that many of their members belonged to each party. Hence, any political agitation on their part would in all probability have caused division among their own group. In view of this fact, it behooved them to maintain at least the appearance of neutrality. There were doubtless cases in which overzealous and indiscreet ministers sided openly with one or the other of the political parties, more frequently the Know-Nothings. It is probable that from their congregations came many of the protests received by McFerrin.

Finally the election day came and passed. Governor Andrew Johnson received a total vote of 67,499, while Gentry trailed with 65,342. Thus Johnson received a majority of 2,157. This majority was just 104 votes.

40. Appendix, "VIII," Election returns by counties.
less than that which he received in 1853. In the congressional contest the Know-Nothings were more successful.) Out of ten delegates, they elected six, as follows: W. H. Sneed to represent the Second District, Samuel H. Smith the Third, Charles Ready the Fifth, Felix K. Zollicoffer the Eighth, Emmerson Etheridge the Ninth, and Thomas Rivers the Tenth. The Democrats elected A. G. Watkins to represent the First District, John H. Savage the Fourth, George W. Jones the Sixth, 41 and John V. Wright the Seventh. Both the Know-Nothings and the Democrats claimed victories in the state legislature. This dispute was not settled until October, when that body was organized.

(In general, former Democratic counties voted a Democratic ticket in this election, while former Whig counties returned a majority in favor of the Know-Nothing candidate.) The greatest increase in Know-Nothing strength was in Knox and the surrounding counties. It is obvious from the vote, that in this area, many former Democrats joined the Know-Nothing lodges, or at least voted that ticket in the election. To balance this, there was quite an increase in the Democratic vote in the counties of the eastern portion

41. *Daily Union and American*, August 9, 1855.
of Middle Tennessee.} These counties lie about midway between the chief Know-Nothing centers of Knoxville and Nashville. It is quite probable that the Know-Nothings had greater difficulty in reaching these more distant regions for the organization of councils.

In this area, it appears that many former Whigs were now persuaded to vote a Democratic ticket. A study of the vote by counties indicates that the increase of Democratic votes in that portion of the state just about balanced the Know-Nothing gains around Knoxville.

In other portions of the state there was little change from the Democratic-Whig vote of 1853.

The Know-Nothings offered several reasons for their defeat. In the first place, as has been previously mentioned, it was felt that Gentry was not violent enough in his denunciation of Johnson. Secondly, in two Congressional districts, those of Ethridge and of Cullom, the candidates had virtually ignored the Know-Nothing issues, and had devoted most of their time to discussions of their votes, while in Congress, on the Kansas-Nebraska bill. As a result they had lost these two districts. Not only in these, but in other

42. Appendix, "H"; a comparison of maps "II and III will indicate the extent to which former Whig counties became Know-Nothing, in 1855.
districts, candidates had allowed the doctrines of
Native Americanism to be crowded out of the discus-
sion in favor of other troublesome questions.

In the third place, they argued that the efforts of
the Democrats to connect Gentry with the Maine Liquor
Law, had fooled many honest Whigs into voting against
him. In addition to these reasons for Gentry's de-
feat, William G. Brownlow offered his own solution to
the problem. He said:

Well, Gentleman, Johnson is again Governor
of Tennessee; but if he could be mortified,
he would have the mortification to know that
he is the governor with a majority of the le-
gal native votes of the state cast in oppo-
sition to him. We all committed one capital
blunder in the late canvass, and that alone
defeated Gentry, and elected Johnson. We
copied from the book of pardons a list of
FORTY-SEVEN names of culprits out of our
State prison by Johnson some for negro steal-
ing, some for counterfeiting, housebreaking,
rape, and other Democratic measures—more
pardons than all his illustrious predecessors,
ever granted. In copying this list, we said
to the voters of the state that Johnson had
spoken his honest sentiments when he said he
preferred being among a clan of Burrell's men,
to being found in a Know-Nothing council; and
in the same breath we assured him that if Gen-
try was elected, he would let all such rascals
stay in prison as long as the courts of the
country decreed they should. And while thou-
sands of honorable, highminded men voted for

43. True Whig, August 25, 1855.
44. Ibid.
45. W. G. Brownlow, Americanism Contrasted with Foreignism,
Romanism, and Bogus Democracy, p. 13.
Johnson, under the lash of party, or because they were blinded by his glaring demerits, it is not to be disguised that all the petit larceny and penitentiary men in the state voted for him. There never was a time in Tennessee when there were not 5,000 voters who either had been stealing, or intended to steal! These would naturally look to where they would find a friend, in the event of their being overtaken by justice. In the person of Andrew Johnson, they felt assured of a friend in deed, because a friend in need. He had publicly told them that he preferred the company of Tarrell men to the society of the most respectable lawyers, doctors, preachers, farmers and mechanics in the state, who met in certain councils.

There were other factors, however, which were chiefly responsible for the defeat of the Know-Nothings. In the first place, the stand of northern Know-Nothings upon the question of slavery caused Tennessee slave holders to become suspicious of that party. They doubtless realized that such a division within the ranks of a party destroyed its claim to nationality. They wished to ally themselves with a national organisation which promised protection to their slave property. Secondly, many old line Whigs and Democrats objected to the proscription of Roman Catholics. In the third place, the secret, oath bound nature of the order was subject to attack. This, together with the proscription of Catholics furnished Johnson fuel for his bitter denunciations until the close of the campaign. In the fourth place, the
secret order did not provide for committees, and other machinery, essential to an efficient political organization of the state. When the campaign opened, there was no platform to hold up before the people as an index to the policies of the order. At the convention of May 7, there was an attempt to remedy these defects. At that time, however, the campaign was already under way. To organize then was like planning a house after the foundation had been laid. The Know-Nothings were beaten. Doubtless many Democrats heaved a sigh of relief when the news was confirmed that they were once more victorious after such a bitter and violent campaign.
CHAPTER IV

ATTEMPTS AT REORGANIZATION

During the three or four months following their defeat in 1855, Tennessee Know-Nothings sought to reorganize their forces and to control state legislation.

In securing an effective reorganization of their forces, the leaders of the party were face to face with a difficult and discouraging situation. It was now clear that as a party they could lay no claim to nationalism, since a large number of northern delegates had so bitterly objected to the pro-slavery plank in the Philadelphia platform of June 1855, and had finally withdrawn from the council. Furthermore, the Democrats now virtually controlled every state in the South with the exception of Kentucky and Maryland. Between northern free-soilism and southern Democratic control, the prospects for future success were indeed dark.

So discouraging was the situation in the entire South that there was some sentiment in favor of a

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southern sectional party. Those in favor of this scheme proposed that there be a fusion of "Southern Whigs, Democrats and Know-Nothings, with Hon. Alexander H. Stephens as the head for the new party." The Know-Nothings of Tennessee likewise opposed the movement. In opposition to such a plan the True Whig wrote:

To the organization of a "southern party," under existing circumstances, we take this early occasion to express our unequivocal dissent. It should only be contemplated as a last, doubtful desperate resort, to stave off or repeal the threatened calamity of dissolution — as an "extreme medicine" of the Republic. — There is no exigency now calling for such a hazardous remedy.

The Democratic organ at Nashville considered Stephens too erratic for a political leader, and frowned upon the proposition as untimely. Democrats of Tennessee were not likely to desert the party with which they had just been successful in an important state election.

Tennessee Democrats were jubilant over their victory and proceeded to hold celebrations in a number of towns. Shortly after the election, an unruly mob marched through the streets of Knoxville, stopped in front of Parson Brownlow's home, and groaned and sang for his special benefit. According to his own statement

2. True Whig, August 20, 1855.
Brownlow took no offense at this, since he realized that soon many of the degraded creatures now before him would need the pardoning power of their governor.

In spite of the discouraging circumstances and the jubilant demonstrations of the Democrats, the knights of the secret conclave affirmed that victory was theirs. In support of this statement, they argued that they had elected a majority in both houses of the legislature and a majority of the "congressional delegation." Furthermore, they argued, Gentry had reduced Governor Johnson's majority by a small margin.

With these facts in view, the Know-Nothings began to hold mass meetings in centers of population throughout the state. The evident purposes of these meetings were to revive the spirit of the American party and to select delegates to the state convention. In Nashville, a "GRAND AMERICAN MASS MEETING" was held on August 25. The speakers rejoiced over the "DRAWN BATTLE," and after the choosing of delegates, the members went away happy. On September 1, a great throng met

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6. True Whig, August 14, 1855.
7. Ibid., September 12, 1855.
8. Ibid., August 29, 1855.
at Temperance Hall, Knoxville. Such speakers as William G. Brownlow, ex-Governor Campbell, and Samuel R. Rogers inspired the members to a greater faith in Native Americanism. Resolutions embodying Native American principles were passed, and delegates to the state convention were appointed.

In these public meetings, there was no semblance of the secrecy to which old line Whigs and other opponents of Nativism had objected. For since there was much objection to oath-bound secrecy of the Know-Nothing political order among the old line Whigs, many Know-Nothings sought to purge the order of the undesirable practice. Furthermore, the National Council, meeting in Philadelphia, had so constructed the platform that members were permitted to announce their membership, and to tell where their councils were held. In reply to the vigorous attacks by Rev. A. B. Longstreet, President of Mississippi University, and others, Brownlow stated that "all the secrecy in the new order of Know-Nothings had been set aside by the act of the National Council which created it." In spite of this assertion, the Democrats claimed that the meetings of the council were

9. Ibid., September 12, 1855.
10. Brownlow, op. cit., p. 34.
still held behind closed doors, and that oaths were administered to new members. This was doubtless true, in view of the fact that the Know-Nothings themselves began to make speeches and to write articles favoring more open procedure. Early in September, a long article in the True Whig proposed that the feature of special secrecy and the "attendant machinery of specific obligations" be abolished, and that the order be merged into the American party. Three specific reasons were offered for this change. In the first place, the American party was strong enough to protect its members from the persecutions of any political organization. Secondly, the machinery of the order was too unwieldy to be of effective service in the thinly settled areas of the state. It was a practical impossibility to organize lodges in every community in such a way that one would be within reach of every citizen. Very few people cared to vote the ticket of a party when they knew nothing of the inner workings of that organization. Third, many Americans were unwilling that their rights to participate in the management of the political affairs of their country should depend

11. Daily Union and American, October 12, 1855.
upon their knowledge of the practices of a secret or-
12
ganization. The True Whig argued that some who were
not third degree members of the order were proscribed
from political preferment by article VI, Section III,
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of the Know-Nothing constitution, which expressly
stated that all officers and delegates must be full
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degree members of the order. As a remedy for this
defect, it was suggested that each council resolve it-
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self into a political club, similar to clubs and asso-
ciations maintained by regular political parties.

Such were the sentiments of many Know-Nothing,
when the state council of the American party met at the
old Representative Hall in the Nashville Court House.
Representatives were present from practically every
county in the state. After some debate, it was re-
solved that in the first place the nomination of "can-
didates for President and Vice-President ought to be
postponed to the first Wednesday in June next." In the
second place, that the principles and platforms "adopt-
ed by the National Council at Philadelphia" be approved:
and finally, "that this convention recommend to the Ameri-
can party the calling of a National Convention to nomi-
nate candidates for President and Vice-President." To

12. True Whig, September 4, 1855.
13. Appendix "A."
14. Ibid.
15. True Whig, loc. cit.
that convention, Andrew J. Donelson and T. A. R. Nelson
were chosen as delegates. If the council made any
move to abolish secrecy within the councils, the reports
examined do not reveal it. The Democrats insisted that
"the meeting was held under the same guards against the
intrusions of persons not members of the order which
had heretofore been used. There were sentinels at the
door to keep out all who could not give the sign or
password."

Meanwhile, the new legislature was already in
session at the state capitol. This body convened on the
first day of October, and proceeded at once to its or-
ganization. In the Senate there were twelve Democrats,
twelve Know-Nothings, and two Whigs. The two Whigs,
however, voted with the Know-Nothings to give that body
a majority. On the first ballot, E. S. Cheatham, Know-
Nothing, was elected Speaker, and H. R. Walker, also a
Know-Nothing, was elected Clerk. Greater difficulty
was experienced in the organization of the House. Here
there were thirty-six Know-Nothings, thirty-six Democrats
and one Whig. M. J. Galloway, the only Whig in the

16. Ibid., October 12, 1855.
17. Daily Union and American, October 12, 1855.
18. Knoxville Register, October 11, 1855; Senate Journal,
1855-1856, pp. 3-4.
House, voted with the Know-Nothings, yet he resented the implication that he was a member of that party. Ex-Governor Neill S. Brown, a Know-Nothing, and D. S. Donelson, Democrat, were nominated for the office of Speaker. After these names were placed before the House, there remained as voters thirty-six Know-Nothings and thirty-five Democrats. The matter of securing a majority would have been very simple had each of the candidates done one of three things: voted for each other, voted each for himself or left the room. Governor Brown's name was called before that of Donelson, and rather than vote in either manner mentioned, he cast his vote for a fellow Know-Nothing. Naturally, when Donelson's name was called, he did not wish to make Governor Brown Speaker, so he voted for a Democrat. The ballot stood thirty-six for Brown, and thirty-five for Donelson, while Brown of Madison, and Cloud had one vote each. Governor Brown had a plurality, but not a majority. The voting continued until the forty-fifth ballot, the Know-Nothings voting in a body for Governor Brown, while the Democrats voted in like manner for Donelson. At one time, the Democrats shifted over and voted in a body for Cloud, but could not elect him. Neither candidate at any time had a majority. It was now seen
that the balloting would continue indefinitely unless a
change were made; so after some debate, the House passed
the following resolution:

Be it resolved, That the House will proceed
immediately to the election of a Speaker,
viva voce; and if, after the roll shall have
been called three times, no member shall
have a majority of the whole number of votes,
the roll shall then be called, and the member
who shall then receive the largest number of
votes, shall be declared to be chosen Speaker.

The roll was called three times, with the vote standing
as on previous occasions. After the forty-ninth ballot,
Governor Brown had his usual thirty-six votes and Donelson
thirty-five. Neither of course had a majority, but it was
clear that Governor Brown had a greater number of votes
than any opponent. Furthermore, his vote was decidedly
above the majority of a quorum; therefore, he was declared
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elected. The Democrats criticized Governor Brown severely,
declaring that in reality he had been instrumental in
his own election, in view of the fact that he had cast the
deciding vote in favor of the resolution which made his
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election possible. This accusation on the part of the
Democrats was in a measure true; yet, had the resolution

22. Ibid.
23. Daily Union and American, October 11, 1855.
been defeated, the balloting might have continued indefinitely, with great expense to the state. In the first place, it seems that Brown should not have voted at all, since by so doing he would have placed his opponent under obligation, from the standpoint of courtesy, to do likewise. Had he done this, Governor Brown might have been elected on the first ballot.

Thus the Know-Nothings of Tennessee reorganized their party on its original platform, and virtually secured control of the legislature.
CHAPTER V

THE DECLINE OF KNOW-NOTHINGISM

On January 1, 1856, a situation existed which proved an outstanding factor in the downfall of Tennessee Know-Nothingism. By this time, the gulf between the northern and southern wings of the party had assumed vast proportions, since the councils of several northern states had already repudiated the twelfth section of the Philadelphia platform of June 1855. This section declared that Congress should not have the power to legislate upon the subject of slavery in the territories of the United States. The free-soil Know-Nothings then openly demanded that Congress prohibit slavery in the territories. The Nashville Daily Gazette, a Know-Nothing organ, virtually admitted that this situation existed. On the other hand, the Know-Nothings of the lower South insisted that Congress had no right to legislate on slavery in the territories. Furthermore, they repudiated the doctrine of "squatter sovereignty," which gave the people of the territories the right either

1. Appendix "D."
2. Daily Union and American, January 3, February 8, and March 2, 1856.
to prohibit or to permit slavery. Between these two extremes, were the Americans of the border states of the South, who realized that such dissension meant defeat. They also realized that any war between the North and the South would be fought on their own soil. Consequently, they sought to unite the opposing factions by avoiding the troublesome issue altogether.

There were other factors which tended to hinder rather than aid the progress of the party. In the first place, the secret oath-bound nature of the order had been vigorously assailed, and was still open to attack, in spite of Know-Nothing efforts to prove that all such proceedings had been abolished. Secondly, opposition to the Roman Catholic church had proven a very unpopular feature of the party in many parts of Tennessee.

Such were the conditions when the state convention of the Know-Nothing party met at Nashville, in the Hall of the House of Representatives. This meeting was held on the twelfth day of February, with the express purpose of appointing electors for the state at large, and for the adoption of resolutions to present

to the National Council. William Cocke, chairman of the convention, announced that the approaching campaign should be waged on the original nativist principles, since foreigners were filling the halls of Congress, and sapping the very foundation of southern strength. Furthermore, it was his opinion that the Whigs had met defeat in 1852 as a result of the foreign vote in the North. Resolutions were adopted that, in the first place, denied that Congress should have the power to legislate upon the subject of slavery. In this regard, the Philadelphia platform should be strictly observed. Secondly, the delegates to the national convention to be held in Philadelphia on the 22nd of February, should be instructed to endeavor to secure the repeal of ceremonial initiation, and secrecy. In the third place, the Bible should never be excluded as a text book from the common schools. Finally, it was resolved that an executive committee be appointed to correspond and advise the members of the American party in all parts of the State. Furthermore, it was recommended that a committee of three be appointed in each county to correspond with the executive committee. It may be remembered that in 1855,

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6. Ibid., February 14, 1866.
the Know-Nothings considered the poor organization of the party as largely responsible for their defeat. Following the passage of resolutions, the convention chose electors. T. A. R. Nelson of Washington county and John S. Brien of Davidson were chosen for the state at large. For assistants, Horace Maynard was selected for East Tennessee, A. M. Looney for Middle Tennessee, and Harvey Brown for West Tennessee. Before adjournment, the members from the Seventh and Eighth Congressional Districts announced their delegates to the national convention.

Preliminary to the meeting of the national Know-Nothing convention, the National Council convened in Philadelphia, on February 21, for the purpose of adopting a platform which would be acceptable to each of the three divisions of the party. After a heated debate, a platform, which neither approved nor condemned slavery, was adopted. Extreme southern men complained that this step was a trap devised by the northern men to cut out the twelfth section, regarding slavery, and deprive them of a platform. The northern delegates were likewise displeased. They insisted that slavery in the territories should be openly denounced. Finally, in

7. Knoxville Whig, February 21, 1856; Daily Gazette, February 13, 1856; Republican Banner (Nashville), February 13, 1856; Nashville Patriot, February 14, 1856; Appendix "E," State platform 1856.
spite of the violent opposition, the new platform was
adopted 108 to seventy-seven. The members of the
Ohio delegation became furious. The "Fighting Parson,"
William G. Brownlow of Tennessee, declared that "he could
lick any five of them," and that "five of the Tennessee
delegation could kick the entire Ohio delegation all
around the hall." This disturbance was in itself
evidence of the increasing discord in Know-Nothing
ranks. Among the nine Tennessee delegates favoring
the new platform were William G. Brownlow, Felix K.
Zollicoffer, and Andrew J. Donelson. T. A. R. Nelson
was one of the three who voted against it. Nelson
later wrote that he had voted against the new platform
because of the fact that he had not been permitted to ex-
amine it. He had suspected that Danenhower of Illinois,
who had introduced the platform, was either a free-soiler
or an abolitionist. Nelson wrote that after the adjourn-
ment of the Council, he had carefully studied the new plat-
form, and although he did not consider it as good as the
old one, he could support it if Fillmore were nominated.

It is not wholly correct to say that this platfrom

8. New York Herald, February 22, 1856; Nelson Scrap Book,
   II, pp. 141-142, in Lawson McGhee Library.
9. Knoxville Register, February 23, 1856.
11. Knoxville Register, June 12, 1856.
ignored the question of slavery. Section VII provided that the native born and naturalized citizens in the territories should be allowed "to frame their constitutions and laws and to regulate their domestic and social affairs in their own mode," subject of course "to the provisions of the Federal Constitution, with the right of admission into the Union whenever" the population should be sufficient. Furthermore, it was provided that none but those who were citizens of the United States according to the constitution, and who had a fixed residence in any such Territory, should take part in the formation of a government, "or in the enactment of laws for said Territory or State." Although slavery is not mentioned either in this, or in any other section of the platform, it is obvious that slavery was, at the same time, a domestic and a social problem, and was covered by the platform. Hence, the northern leader could claim that the platform said nothing about slavery; while the southerner might argue that it embodied all the provisions of the Kansas-Nebraska act. Therefore, one may conclude that this platform was the result of an effort to pacify the contending elements of the party.

The secret, oath bound nature of the order was changed at this meeting. Permission was granted to the state councils to abolish the obligations of the first, second, and third degrees, and substitute a pledge of honor. Thus members were no longer bound to secrecy, unless it were the will of the state council. Following the publication of this platform, there is little evidence to indicate that Tennessee Know-Nothings practiced secrecy to any greater extent than did any other political party.

The words of the platform were somewhat ambiguous concerning the Catholic issue. The word Catholic was not mentioned in the document, yet it was declared that no one should be eligible to office, who recognized "any allegiance or obligation of any description to any foreign prince, potentate or power," or who refused to "recognize the Federal and State Constitutions as paramount to all other laws, as rules of political action."

In the Philadelphia platform of June 1856, "resistance to the aggressive policy and corrupting tendencies of the Roman Catholic Church" had been declared. As previously mentioned, old line Whigs had objected to any

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14. Appendix "F."
15. Ibid.
proscription of a religious organization. It is obvious that here an attempt was made to soften the language of the new platform, in an attempt to win these conservative objectors. Even though the name of the Catholic church was not mentioned in the platform, there was ample provision to permit an attack on that church. This is particularly true, since the Know-Nothings argued that the Catholics owed allegiance to the Pope at Rome.

The Democratic organ at Nashville continued its traditional policy of publishing to the world these objectionable tendencies of the Know-Nothing party. Consequently, on learning the nature of this new platform, that journal gleefully explained:

The word slavery does not occur in the document; nor is there the remotest reference to the question, though in importance it is above and beyond all others, affecting not only the repose and prosperity of the Union, but its very existence.

This organ rejoiced in the discord and disorder which seemed to reign triumphant in the National Council. It was further indicated that the free-soil wing of the party was evidently in the majority.

16. Ibid.
17. Daily Union and American, March 2, 1856.
18. Ibid., February 23, 1856.
To this the Know-Nothing's replied that the platform of their party was almost identical with the Kansas-Nebraska act on the issue of slavery; that the only difference lay in the fact that the Know-Nothing platform denied that un-naturalized foreigners should be allowed to vote, while the Kansas-Nebraska act did not. In defense of the platform, Parson Brownlow of the Knoxville Whig wrote:

Turn ... to the 7th section, and it will be seen that this section instead of precluding any opinion on the question of slavery, announces the doctrine that the citizens of the United States permanently residing in the territories have a "right to frame their constitutions and laws, and to regulate their domestic affairs in their own mode, subject only to the provisions of the Federal Constitution."

In this, and in every respect, the work of the National Council was well received by Tennessee Know-Nothing's.

On February 23, immediately following the adjournment of the National Council, the delegates of the Know-Nothing party met in Philadelphia for the purpose of nominating candidates for President and Vice-President. There, in the national convention, the free-soil element of the party made a desperate effort to put aside the

new platform, on the ground that the National Council had no authority to adopt a platform for the convention. Furthermore, they refused to nominate any one for President or Vice-President who was not in favor of preventing the introduction of slavery north of 36° 30'. This of course, meant the restoration of the Missouri Compromise line, which prohibited slavery in any of the territories north of 36° 30'. After a bitter debate, the movement was defeated and the platform of the Council adopted.

Following the defeat of their measure, about two dozen northern delegates left the hall. The convention then proceeded to the business of choosing candidates for the offices of President and Vice-President. Ex-President, Millard Fillmore, was nominated as candidate for the office of President, while Andrew J. Donelson, a former Democrat and native of Tennessee, was nominated for the office of Vice-President. Although the convention ended its work harmoniously, the withdrawal of northern delegates tended to widen the gulf, which already existed between the northern and southern wings of the party.

As was to be expected, Tennessee Democrats

immediately assailed the ticket as entirely unsatisfactory to the South. The *Memphis Appeal* pointed out that in 1838, Fillmore had expressed anti-slavery sentiments. It was also declared that while he was President, he had neglected the southern wing of the party in an effort to "reconcile ... the free-soil and abolition portion north." Andrew J. Donelson was branded as a deserter from his party. It was further declared that the two candidates were bitter enemies, in view of the fact that in 1851 while Fillmore was President, Donelson had characterized him as:

"A BITTER PILL ... A VERY BITTER PILL ... TO THE SOUTH IN 1848; and they took him only for the sake of General Taylor; and since then he has done literally nothing specially to commend himself to Southern favor. It is true, he signed the fugitive law; but it would have been stark madness ... utter lunacy ... in him, or in any other President, to have refused that signature... With the single exception of that act, HIS ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN ONE LONG, SAD, TEDIOUS FAILURE AND BLUNDER."

The Know-Nothings denied the charge that Fillmore and Donelson were enemies. The *Gazette* explained that shortly after the expiration of his term as President, Fillmore paid Donelson a visit at the Hermitage. There, it was asserted, Donelson apologized for his hasty remarks.

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and the two men became fast friends. The Patriot pointed out that Donelson had left the Democratic party only when President Pierce proved untrue to the institutions of the South.

These same organs joyously received the news of the nomination of Fillmore, and vigorously defended him against the assaults of the enemy. The Patriot exclaimed: "Our frame is filled with delight as we write! What a glorious ticket!! What an invincible ticket!!! Fillmore the Model President, the able conservative Fillmore." The Nashville Republican Banner praised both candidates as "standard bearers around whom may consistently rally all sound conservative men both North and South who have at heart the preservation of American nationality." The Gazette pointed out that Fillmore had not neglected the southern wing of his party in order to reconcile the free-soilers, but had always stood on a broad nationalist

Almost three and one-half months after the nomination of Fillmore and Donelson, the delegates of the Democratic party assembled in convention at Cincinnati

25. Daily Gazette, in Knoxville Register, April 3, 1856.
27. Republican Banner, in Knoxville Register, March 6, 1856.
and nominated James A. Buchanan as their candidate for the Presidency. That body adopted a platform with the Kansas-Nebraska act as the chief plank. This platform emphatically declared that the people of the territories should be permitted to regulate the institution of slavery on the basis of the will of a majority of the voters.

Furthermore, it was resolved:

That we recognize the right of the people of all the Territories, including Kansas and Nebraska, acting through the legally and fairly expressed will of a majority of actual residents, and whenever the number of their inhabitants justifies it, to form a constitution, with or without domestic slavery, and be admitted into the Union upon the terms of perfect equality with the other States.

The Know-Nothings insisted that this party was too weak in the North to oppose the Black Republicans; that the only way to defeat these free-soilers of the North, was for the people of the South to unite upon the Know-Nothing candidates.

Shortly after the nomination of Buchanan, the Republicans met at Philadelphia June 17. Here John C. Fremont was placed in nomination for the Presidency, on a platform which declared that Congress should prohibit

slavery in the territories and that Kansas should be
admitted as a free state. This party was composed of
the free-soil element of the old Whig party, and
stood in uncompromising opposition to the extension
of slavery in the territories. Know-Nothings of
the North, who desired a free-soil plank in their
platform, joined this organization.

When the candidates of the three parties
were fairly before the people, the campaign had as-
sumed a three cornered aspect. At the one extreme
stood John C. Fremont, who demanded that Congress pro-
hibit slavery in the territories. At the other extreme
stood Buchanan, who favored "squatter sovereignty,"
and as a result had the support of the pro-slavery
agitators of the South. The Know-Nothings insisted
that between these two extremes stood Fillmore, who
wished to avoid the agitation of the slavery question,
and wage the battle on the original nativistic issues.

Before the nomination of the Democratic and
Republican candidates there had been a revival of na-
tivistic interest. The Gazette urged the leaders of
the party to fight the enemy on the original issues.

32. Ibid.
33. Daily Gazette, April 13, 1856.
raised by the American organization. The "nigger question" was characterized as "a trap set by the opposition," that should be carefully avoided. Furthermore, it was urged that only the native born should have the right to govern. In a few days, this same paper pointed out that thousands of Germans and Irish were migrating to western Texas. These industrious foreigners were bitterly opposed to the institution of slavery. It was estimated that if such rapid immigration continued, free-soil voters would be increased to the extent that western Texas would probably be admitted as a free state within ten years. Hence, it was urged, a Know-Nothing victory was essential to the preservation of southern institutions.

Here appears an inconsistency in the argument of the Know-Nothings. They declared that the American people should avoid controversy over purely sectional issues and unite upon the great national principles of Nativism; yet, in support of Nativism, they argued that

34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., April 13, and 17, 1856. The growth of the foreign born population of Texas was not as great as the Gazette report seems to indicate. In 1850 the native white population was 136,938, while that of foreign birth was 17,620. The census report of 1860 shows 378,227 native; foreign born 43,422. These figures show an increase of 161% in native born population within ten years, while the foreign born shows an increase of only 143% during the same period. (U. S. Census Reports 1850 and 1860.)
the foreigner was a menace to the sectional institution of slavery. Thus, the would-be nationalistic Know-Nothings, proceeded to inject a sectional issue into the campaign. In the face of the increasing foreign population in the West, it was urged that the forces of the party should be thoroughly reorganized in every part of the state, in order that victory might be certain. In a letter to the American Central Committee at Nashville, the Gazette wrote:

That part of the State most in need of your patriotic attentions and strenuous efforts, is the northern portion of West Tennessee. It was there that we were "slaughtered" last year, simply because American questions were not thoroughly discussed before the people. Let speakers in abundance be called out, or sent there — and don't forget to scatter American documents broadcast throughout Etheridge's district. Gentlemen of the committee, a great deal depends on your exertions. .... Give every man something to do — every man something to read — every man something to hear. American principles cannot be discussed too much, and should be pressed home upon every voter in the State. So hurry up the documents — the speakers — the electors.

Other organs urged that no effort should be spared to lead the people of Tennessee to a proper understanding of the true nature of the foreign menace.

Meanwhile, the Know-Nothings learned that

36. Ibid., April 13, 1856.
their chosen electors, T. A. R. Nelson and John S. Brien, were unable to serve in that capacity. In a letter to the Executive Committee, Nelson wrote that "Causes of a private and professional character" made it impossible for him to make the canvass. Brien sent a similar communication. To meet this emergency, the committee appointed ex-Governor Neill S. Brown and Horace Maynard in their stead. This choice was enthusiastically received by Know-Nothing organs.

The statement of the Register is typical:

It is enough to say, that the ticket is as strong a one as could have been selected. Of Gov. Brown's Character as a speaker, every citizen in the State is well informed. Mr. Maynard is less widely known, yet he will make himself known, by his speeches, as one of the most able and skillful debaters in the State. The Democrat, whose fortune it may be to encounter him, is sure to come off limping.

The candidates were now before the people, and mass meetings became the order of the day. On June 26, Nashville was the scene of great excitement. The streets were crowded with horse drawn vehicles of every description, as the people poured in from the country and near

37. Knoxville Register, June 12, 1856.
38. Ibid., May 15, 1856.
39. Ibid., June 26, 1856.
by towns. At nightfall, they crowded themselves into
the old market house, to listen to the speeches of
elector Neill S. Brown, and Edwin H. Ewing. Ewing
spoke first, and in the words of the Gazette, dealt
"out ponderous blows on the heads of the anties and
on that of their candidate." Elector Brown followed
with a speech which caused "the anties to feel as if
a heavy chill had fallen on them." To the delight
of the Know-Nothings and the disgust of the Democrats,
he compared Buchanan to "an old, deaf, wry-necked,
knock-kneed man." It is possible that many of the
Know-Nothings thought, as they jolted along the country
road that night, that a new and brighter day was dawning
for Tennessee nativism. At about the same time a
lively scene was enacted at Wartrace. Here, following
the ratification of the platform, Buchanan was hanged
in effigy.

In the meantime, the Democrats were not idle.
In East Tennessee, Knoxville became the center of activities,
of both Democrats and Know-Nothings. Here a

41. Daily Union and American, June 23, 1856.
42. Ibid., June 27, 1856.
great throng came together on June 20, consisting chiefly of Democrats, with here and there an old line Whig. Evidently the meeting was conducted in honor of the latter group, since speeches were made by several of their number. Col. John R. Nelson, who was considered the "original Whig of Knox County," was called for. With reference to his general appearance and remarks, the Union and American wrote:

His venerable appearance, his frankness and earnestness of manner, at once secured him audience. He said but little; the sum of his entire speech is embodied in the conclusion of his remarks, pronounced with all the emphasis of his nature: "I cannot and will not, fellow citizens, so help me God, support or act in complicity with the Know-Nothing party. No, never, never, never." Col. Nelson announced his determination to support Buchanan and Breckinridge, with all his ability.

Col. John Crosier, another old line Whig, took the stand, and asserted that there existed, in reality, only two parties, "the Abolition and anti-Abolition." He supported the Democratic party on the ground, that the Democrats were bitterly opposed to abolitionism, while the Know-Nothings were silent concerning the issue. If the constitutional rights of the southerners to their slave property were to be preserved, he said, "old party associations must be forgotten, for the time

43. Ibid.
being, and every man, no matter by what party name designated, should take his position in that party which has had the boldness to place itself in open, undisguised hostility to this growing, monstrous hydra of abolitionism in the North. William G. Swan, mayor of Knoxville, and an old Clay Whig, likewise opposed the Know-Nothings. He thought that the South should favor the Democratic ticket, as every additional Know-Nothing state would only weaken this party, and make a House election more likely. He feared that such an event would place Fremont in the Presidential chair, since a greater number of states favored him than either of the other candidates.

There were other prominent Whigs in Tennessee whose positions were uncertain. Chief among these were ex-Governor James G. Jones, and Senator John Bell. Overtures were made to each by the members of both parties, but for some time neither made a move to ally himself with either organization.

Early in the campaign, Jones wrote a letter to his constituents stating his position at that time. He indicated that it was his plan to await future

44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
developments before making any decision with regard to the candidate for whom he should vote, that he would wait until the Democratic candidates were before the people. Then, according to his own statement, he would cast his vote "for that man and with that party which" he should "think most likely to protect the Constitution, preserve the Union, and drive back the hordes of Northern vandals who seek to usurp our rights, and finally to possess themselves of the citadel of liberty."

Jones also announced that he would not join the American party, neither would he join the Democratic party. He would, however, vote with the party which satisfied him that it would "best preserve the honor of the country, and protect" the rights of the people.

Jones was silent regarding his position until August 9, when he made his famous speech before the Senate of the United States, in which he pointed out that the Democratic party was the only party with a claim to nationality. In that speech, he regretted the complexity of the political situation, and the dissension with which the country was torn. As regards the

46. Ibid., April 27, 1856.
platform submitted by the Democratic party, he dissented much from it, but agreed with the main principle, which provided that new states be admitted into the Union with or without slavery, according to the will of a majority of the people. In view of this fact, he announced his decision to support the Democratic nominees for President and Vice-President, as this course seemed to be the only means of averting the dangers of sectionalism.

Jones then carefully reviewed the platforms of the three parties, and pointed out that the true position of an old line Whig was, at that time, with the Democratic party.

The organs of each party tried to locate Senator John Bell as a member of its own organization. The Union and American quoted from a speech which he had made in 1854 opposing the restriction of immigration, on the ground that it would tend to antagonize foreign voters against the South. This speech was made before the Senate in 1854. In a later speech in Knoxville, September 22, 1855, Bell declared that he was not a member of the Know-Nothing order, but that

48. Ibid.
49. Daily Union and American, July 13, 1856.
he was wholly in favor of the principles of Nativism. Here Bell denied that the Know-Nothing policy was prescriptive. All they proposed to do was to refuse to vote for Catholics and naturalized citizens for public office. There had been no attempt, according to Bell, to secure a constitutional amendment by which either group would be excluded from office. Bell took little or no part in the campaign until Jones made his famous speech before the Senate. Then Bell announced his decision to support the Know-Nothing candidates. Each great leader entered actively into the campaign, and played an important part in its prosecution from that time forth.

According to the Union and American, not only old line Whigs, but many Know-Nothings wrote letters announcing their alliance with the Democratic party in this campaign. Many of these letters declared that Know-Nothings was identical with Black-Republicanism; that the only difference between these two parties lay in the fact that the Republicans were open and honest in their abolitionism, while the Know-Nothings concealed

50. Knoxville Register, September 25, 1856.
51. Daily Gazette, August 22, 1856.
52. Daily Union and American, June 1 - October 1, passim.
their true colors in order to win the South. Other letters were in the form of protests against Fillmore's tendency to denounce the Kansas-Nebraska act. They declared that if this act were repealed, it would mean the restoration of the Missouri Compromise, and the subsequent admission of Kansas as a free state.

This charge against Fillmore was not entirely without foundation. It was reported that while speaking in Rochester, New York, sometime after his nomination, Fillmore said:

I have no hesitation in saying, what most of you know already, that I was decidedly opposed to the disturbance of that compromise. Good faith, as well as the peace of the country seems to require that a compromise which has stood for more than thirty years should not be wantonly disturbed. These were my sentiments then, fully and freely expressed, verbally and in writing, to all my friends North and South, who solicited my opinion.

The repeal seems to have been a Pandora's box, out of which has issued all the political evils that now afflict the country, scarcely leaving a hope behind, and many I perceive, are ready to attribute all these to our Southern brethren. But is this just ("No, no") But it must be borne in mind, that the measure originated with a Northern Senator, was sustained and sanctioned by a Northern President. I do not recollect that ever a

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53. Ibid., September 13, 1856.
54. Ibid., August 14, 1856.
petition from Southern States solicited this repeal; and how could Southern members of Congress refuse a boon thus offered by the North to the South.

Whether or not Fillmore actually uttered these words, it is now certain; in any case, Know-Nothings never denied them.

Tennessee Democrats, under the efficient leadership of Governor Johnson and James C. Jones, further declared that Fillmore was a free-soiler, and therefore, wholly unsatisfactory to the South. In proof of this contention Democratic organs quoted from northern free-soil newspapers which supported him. An article from the Commercial Advertiser of New York described him as a better anti-slavery man than Fremont. It was argued "that the only vote or public act of Mr. Fillmore that can be perverted into a seeming favoring of slavery was the signing of the Fugitive Slave Law." Furthermore, it was insisted, that to have opposed this measure would have been stark madness. Then came an attack from another angle. The Democrats, pointed out that while Fillmore was a member of Congress, he voted to receive a petition which favored an amendment to the naturalization laws permitting negroes to become citizens. In

55. Daily Union and American, June 3, 1856.
support of this action, Fillmore insisted that he favored the right of petition under all circumstances, that he never opposed the reception of a petition whatever its nature. The Democrats insisted that he did vote against the reception of a petition which favored the repeal of the Bankrupt law. Fillmore did not deny the accusation by the Democrats with regard to this petition, but indicated that he had voted for the Bankrupt law itself, and could not consistently vote to receive a petition favoring its repeal. In spite of Fillmore's explanation, the Democrats maintained that he favored an amendment by which negroes might become citizens, since he voted to receive a petition asking for such a change.

In addition to these attacks against the Know-Nothing candidate, the Democrats of Tennessee vigorously objected to the party on the ground of sectionalism. To the sorrow of Tennessee Know-Nothings, all such objections were based upon actual facts, as had been clearly demonstrated when many

56. Ibid., July 27, 1856.
57. Ibid., July 18, 1856.
northern delegates left the recent national convention at Philadelphia. Furthermore, during the month of June, at the regular meeting of the Fillmore National Club of the City of New York, it was resolved that the club go over to the Republican party, and thereafter be known as the "American Republican National Club of the City of New York." Actions of this sort were reported in other states until the strength of the northern Republicans appeared so great that southern Democrats, as had certain old line Whigs, insisted that if Tennessee and Kentucky cast their votes against Buchanan, no nominee would have a majority and the House of Representatives would elect the President. In such event the Republicans would control enough states to elect John C. Fremont, the free-soil candidate. In protest the Union and American wrote:

If Tennessee and Kentucky vote for Mr. Buchanan, of which no reasonable doubt can be entertained, his election by the people is absolutely certain. But every national patriot in these states should remember, that if the electoral votes of Tennessee and Kentucky should be cast against Mr. Buchanan, there is great danger that the election will be thrown into the House, in which

58. Ibid., June 23, 1856.
59. Ibid., October 29, 1856.
event the election of Fremont is placed beyond a reasonable doubt.

This became the "leading argument" of the Democrats, not only of Tennessee, but of the entire South. Many Whigs, and some Americans were evidently influenced by it, as they continued to join forces with the Democrats until the close of the campaign.

In reply to the bitter attack by the Democrats, the Know-Nothings of Tennessee launched a counter offensive. They realized the weakness of their position nationally on the slavery question, and refused to remain supinely on the defense as had been the case in 1855. With unbounded energy they assailed James A. Buchanan as an opponent of slavery. The Democrats challenged this position. To meet the challenge, the editor of the Gazette turned back twenty-five years in the pages of history, and triumphantly brought forth a single incident in support of the Know-Nothing argument. According to this organ, Buchanan in 1829, was a member of the House of Representatives. At that time, he voted for a resolution which provided for the appointment of a committee "to enquire into the expediency of providing,

by law, for the gradual abolition of slavery" within the District of Columbia in such a manner "that the interest of no individual shall be injured thereby."

The Gazette propounded this question: "Who was among the 104 voting for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia?" Answer, "James Buchanan."

The false argument is obvious. The resolution did not provide for the abolition of slavery, but merely for the appointment of a committee to study the situation. Furthermore, Know-Nothings argued that the Democratic nominee had opposed the admission of Missouri as a slave state in 1820. Other instances were cited in which Buchanan had proved himself unfriendly to the institution of slavery.

In an effort to win the old Clay Whigs, the Know-Nothings pointed out that in 1824, Buchanan had led Andrew Jackson to believe that Henry Clay had made a corrupt bargain with John Quincy Adams, in which he agreed to support Adams for the Presidency, in return for an appointment as Secretary of State. Furthermore, it was asserted, Buchanan had persuaded General Jackson to believe these charges for twenty years, and as a

result had prevented Henry Clay, the founder of the Whig party, from being President of the United States.

There is little evidence to indicate that this appeal had any influence on old line Whigs, for Jones, John R. Nelson, Crozier and others of prominence continued to oppose the Know-Nothings.

As the campaign continued, Buchanan was assailed as unfriendly toward the interests of the working man. The Know-Nothings pointed out that he had favored a monetary system which would reduce the cost of living that day laborers might be able to live on a wage of ten cents a day. Hence, the Know-Nothings dubbed Buchanan "Ten Cent Jimmy."

The Know-Nothings found occasion to attack the position of the Democrats on the Kansas-Nebraska act. The objectionable feature of this act lay in the following provision:

That every free white male inhabitant above the age of twenty-one years, who shall be an actual resident of said territory, and shall possess the qualifications hereinafter prescribed, shall be entitled to vote at the first election, and shall be eligible to any office within said territory; provided, that the right of suffrage and holding office shall shall be exercised only by citizens of the United

63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., Knoxville Register, June 12, 1856.
65. Daily Gazette, August 22, 1856.
States and those who shall have declared their intention to become such and shall have taken an oath to support the Constitution of the United States and the provisions of this act.

The Know-Nothings insisted that under this act, abolitionistic foreigners might enter Kansas and vote, or be elected to office shortly after their arrival; that soon they would sway the balance of power to the free-soilers, and make possible the admission of Kansas as a free state.

It appears that the arguments of the Know-Nothings had some influence upon the actions of the old line Whigs of East Tennessee. According to the Register, a number of them met in Knoxville September 10, and adopted a resolution in support of Fillmore and Donelson. At this meeting, delegates were appointed to attend a convention of old line Whigs, to be held in Baltimore.

On September 11, this convention met as previously arranged. That body likewise adopted resolutions favoring Fillmore and Donelson. It is doubtful if this movement had any appreciable effect in Tennessee as a whole, since many old line Whigs continued to support the Democratic nominee.

As was the custom during such campaigns, mass
meetings became frequent. In Knoxville, the Know-Nothings held a great demonstration which required days of preparation. Entertainment committees were appointed to look after people coming from great distances, particularly from other states. For three days, speaking and feasting were in order. Such men as William G. Brownlow, Horace Maynard, and W. H. Sneed, Representative in Congress, thrilled the crowds with their speeches. On the last day of the meeting, a sumptuous feast was served to a crowd estimated at approximately 20,000 people. Other meetings were reported in various parts of the state, by both the Know-Nothings and the Democrats, but the Know-Nothing meeting in Knoxville was characterized as the greatest ever held in Tennessee.

As the election day drew near, the Know-Nothings advanced the argument that no foreigner should be allowed to vote who had not been in the country six months after securing naturalization papers. A committee of lawyers, selected from each party, finally decided that six months residence was sufficient, whether preceding or following the issuance of naturalization papers.

69. Ibid., September 11, 1856.
Finally the election day, the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, arrived. The Know-Notings were overwhelmingly defeated by a majority of 71,460 votes. The greatest losses were suffered in the counties of southwest Tennessee, where ex-Governor James C. Jones made his home. While Jones remained a Whig, these counties voted the Whig and later the Know-Nothing ticket; but when he spoke to them in favor of Buchanan, many turned to the support of the Democratic nominees. In East Tennessee, Campbell and Claiborne counties in 1853 returned a Democratic majority; in 1855 a Know-Nothing, but in 1856 they shifted back to the Democrats. It is obvious that in 1855, many Democrats joined the Know-Nothing lodges, while in 1856 they returned to their old party. In general, the vote in the remainder of the counties varied little from that of 1856.

Nationally, the defeat was even more disastrous than in the state of Tennessee. Buchanan was elected with a safe majority. Fremont, the Republican candidate, was second, while Fillmore received the electoral votes of only one state, those of Maryland.

71. Appendix "H."
73. Map # 4.
The fact that the Know-Nothings of the North evidenced increasing free-soil tendencies, probably influenced the vote in Tennessee to a great extent. The Democrats saw their advantage and did not hesitate to capitalize it. They virtually ignored all other issues and assailed the Know-Nothings as free-soilers, and abolitionists of the deepest dye. In their efforts to counteract these charges, the Know-Nothings almost forgot to oppose the Catholics and the foreign born.

In the gubernatorial campaign of 1857, the issues of nativism were even less a factor than in the campaign of 1856. Robert Hatton became the candidate of the Know-Nothings, while Isham G. Harris was the candidate of the Democrats. The Know-Nothings nominated Hatton on a platform setting forth as its main policies, first an equal distribution of the public lands among the states, second a modification of the naturalization laws, third a law denying aliens the same suffrage rights as natives, and fourth a policy of non-interference with slavery in the territories by the Federal government. As the campaign progressed, Hatton proposed a state supported normal school. The purpose of

this school would be to train teachers for service within the state. This proposal became an important issue in the campaign.

(Most of the discussion centered about the land question, the Normal School and alien suffrage, as the Know-Nothings seldom mentioned Catholicism and immigration.) The Democrats endeavored to induce the Know-Nothings to defend these old issues, but they were unsuccessful. Catholicism and foreignism were no longer the cry. The Union and American gave the following characterization of their method:

They have quit telling us of the shiploads of paupers and criminals that flood our shores, making us a penal colony for Europe. They declare Know-Nothingsism to be an organization that has passed away, and that they will not discuss it.

In reply, American organs accused the Democratic press of misleading the people with reference to the nature of the organization of the American party. They asserted that many honest Whigs and Democrats who really favored American principles had been fooled into believing that the Know-Nothing party was still subject entirely to the secret conclave. The Republican Banner insisted that there was no difference between the organization of

75. Daily Union and American, July 18, 1857.
the American party and that of the old Whig party:

The American party of Tennessee is now organized, and has been in every canvas since 1856, upon the same basis upon which the Whig party was organized, and with the same forms, and none other, professedly used by the party which nominated General Harris. Yet our opponents, shrinking from the issues of the canvass, seek to again secure the votes of those old line Whigs by charging the American party with being a secret organization, with oaths, signs, grips, &c. The charge is false, by whomsoever made, and we are certain no intelligent man will believe it.

The writer has found practically no evidence to contradict these claims on the part of the Know-Nothings. After their defeat in 1856, little was said in the papers about the meeting of councils. It appears that everything resembling a secret order was a curse rather than a benefit to the party, and as a result the Know-Nothings completely abandoned their lodges. They made many denials of secrecy, similar to that quoted from the Banner. Yet, the memory remained in the minds of those who had objected until the close of the campaign, and furnished a convenient point of attack to the Democrats.

On election day, the Know-Nothings suffered their most disastrous defeat. Hatton was overwhelmed.

76. Republican Banner, July 31, 1857.
by a majority of 11,740. Even the Know-Nothing stronghold of East-Tennessee favored him with a small margin of its vote.

The Know-Nothings were now fully convinced that their party was dead, and many admitted it openly. The Nashville Patriot declared that the "recent elections in the South, had shown the depressing effects of the result of the last Presidential contest upon the popular mind of the South." That it had stimulated the democracy to renewed exertions to retain the power which they already held; and as a result, the members of the American party became so discouraged that many of them gave up the contest as a hopeless one. A correspondent of the Patriot was also very pessimistic regarding the future of the party. In a letter to this organ, he stated that it should disband and leave the Democrats to the spoils. To such a plan the editor objected:

We cannot agree with our correspondent in his opinion of the potency of the American party for good, nor in his suggestion that it should retire from the contest with sham Democracy. A vigilant, active, vigorous minority, unceasing in its opposition, is capable of doing the country a

77. Appendix "A."
78. Nashville Patriot, August 11, 1857.
79. Ibid., August 25, 1856.
vast deal of service, in exposing and preventing the majority from consummat-
ing wicked, mischievous, and corrupt projects, which, left to themselves, the sham Democracy would not scruple to do, as we have already ample evidence of in the political history of the na-
tion.

The opinion was general, however, that the Know-Nothing party, as such, should disband.

After the American, or Know-Nothing party had passed into history, those who had once rallied under its banner called themselves the "Opposition." During the Gubernatorial campaign of 1859, they had a candidate for Governor, but met with no better success than in 1857. Finally in 1860, they merged with the Constitutional Union party in support of John Bell for Presi-
dent.

(The chief cause contributing to the downfall of the American party in Tennessee was apparently the free-soil tendencies of that party at the North.) This situation became obvious at the meeting of the national convention in 1856. Here, a large group of the northern delegates withdrew because of the fact that a free-soil plank was not included in the platform. Later, when many of the Know-Nothings in that section joined the
Republican party, it became clear that the Know-No-
thing party was no longer national in scope. In view
of this situation, many Tennessee Whigs and Know-No-
things felt that the American party had little chance
to elect Fillmore. Consequently, they joined the Demo-
crats. Finally, when the Know-Nothings tried to arouse
enthusiasm over the original nativistic principles, it
was found that Nativism was dead, crowded out by the
more dominant issue of slavery which continued to
gather force until it engulfed the nation in a mighty
conflict.
APPENDIX A

CONSTITUTION OF THE ORDER

Article I. This organization shall be known by the name and title of The Grand Council of the United States of North America, and its jurisdiction and power shall extend to all the States, Districts and Territories of the United States of North America.

Article II. A person to become a member of any subordinate council must be twenty-one years of age; he must believe in the existence of a Supreme Being as the creator and preserver of the Universe; he must be a native born citizen; a Protestant born of Protestant parents; reared under Protestant influence, and not united in marriage with a Roman Catholic. Provided, nevertheless, that in this last respect, the State, District, or Territorial Council shall be authorized to so construct their respective constitutions as shall best promote the interest of the American cause in their several jurisdictions; and provided, moreover, that no member who may have a Roman Catholic wife shall be eligible to any office in this Order.

Article III. Sec. 1. The object of this organization shall be to resist the insidious policy of the Church of Rome, and other foreign influence against the institutions of the country by placing in all offices in the gift of the People, or by appointment, none but Native Born Protestant citizens.

Sec. 2. The Grand Council shall hold its Annual Meeting on the first Tuesday in the month of June, at such place as shall be designated by the Grand Council at the previous Annual Meeting, and it may adjourn from time to time. Special meetings shall be called by the President on the written request of five delegations representing five State Councils; provided, that sixty days notice shall be given to the State Councils previous to said meeting.

Sec. 3. The Grand Council shall be composed of 13 delegates, from each State, to be chosen by the State Councils; and each District or Territory, where a District or Territorial Council shall exist, shall be entitled to send five delegates, to be chosen from said Council; and when no District or Territorial Council shall exist, such District or

1. Daily Union and American, March 5, 1855.
Territory shall be entitled to send five delegates, if five or more subordinate Councils shall exist, in such District or Territory; provided, that in the nomination of candidates for President and Vice-President of the United States, each State shall have members in both Houses of Congress. In all sessions of the Grand Council, thirty-two delegates, representing thirteen States, Territories, or Districts, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Sec. 4. The Grand Council shall be vested with the following powers and privileges: It shall be the head of the Organization for the United States of North America, and shall fix and establish all signs, grips, passwords, and such other secret work as may seem to it necessary. It shall have power to decide upon all matters appertaining to national politics. It shall have the power to exact from the State Councils quarterly or annual statements as to the number of members under their jurisdictions, and in relation to all other matters necessary for its information. It shall have the power to State, Territorial or District Councils, and to grant dispensations for the formation of such bodies when five subordinate Councils shall have been put in operation in any State, Territory or District and application made. It shall have the power to determine upon a mode of punishment in case of any dereliction of duty on the part of its members or officers. It shall have the power to adopt esbalistic characters for the purpose of writing or telegraphing said characters to be communicated to the Presidents of the State Councils, and by them to the Presidents of the subordinate Councils. It shall have the power to adopt any and every measure it may deem necessary to secure the success of the organization; provided that nothing shall be done by the said Grand Council in violation of the constitution; and provided further, that in all political matters, its members may be instructed by the State Councils, and if so instructed, shall carry out such instructions of the State Councils which they represent until overruled by a majority of the Grand Council.

Article IV. The President shall always preside over the Grand Council when present, and in his absence the Vice-President shall preside, and in the absence of both, the Grand Council shall appoint a President pro tempore; and the presiding officer may at all times call a member to the chair, but such appointment shall not extend beyond one session of the Grand Council.

Article V. Sec. 1. The officers of the Grand Council shall be a President, Vice-President, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer, two Sentinels, and such other officers as the Grand Council may see fit to appoint from time to time, and the Secretaries and Sentinels may receive such compensation as the Grand Council shall determine.
Sec. 2. The duties of the several officers created by this Constitution shall be such as the work of this organization prescribes.

Article VI. Sec. 1. All officers provided for by this constitution, except the Sentinels, shall be elected annually by ballot. The President may appoint Sentinels from time to time, or otherwise.

Sec. 2. A majority of all the votes cast shall be requisite to an election to any office.

Sec. 3. All officers and delegates must be full degree members of this organization.

Sec. 4. All vacancies in the elective offices shall be filled by a vote of the Grand Council, and only for the unexpired term of the said vacancy.

Article VII. Sec. 1. The Grand Council shall entertain and decide all cases of appeal, and it shall establish a form of appeal.

Sec. 2. The Grand Council shall levy a tax upon the State, District or Territorial Councils, for the support of the Grand Council, to be paid in such manner and at such times as the Grand Council shall determine.

Article VIII. The Grand Council may alter or amend this Constitution, at any regular annual meeting, by a two-thirds vote of the members present; provided such amendment shall be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the Grand Council at its next succeeding annual meeting.

GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS

Rule 1. Each State, District or Territory, in which there may exist five or more Subordinate Councils working under dispensations from the Grand Council of the United States of North America, or under regular dispensations from some State, District or Territory, are duly empowered to establish themselves into a State, District or Territorial Council, and when so established, to form for themselves Constitutions and By-laws for their government, in pursuance of and in consonance with the Constitution of the Grand Council of the United States; provided, however, that all District or Territorial Constitutions shall be subject to the approval of the Grand Council of the United States.

Rule 2. All State, District, or Territorial Councils, when established, shall have full power and authority to establish all Subordinate Councils within their respective limits; and the Constitutions and By-Laws of all such Subordinate Councils must be approved by their respective State, District or Territorial Councils.

Rule 3. All State, District, or Territorial Councils,
when established and until the formation of Constitutions, shall work under the Constitution of the Grand Council of the United States.

Rule 4. In all cases where, for the convenience of the organization, two States or Territorial Councils may be established, the two Councils together shall be entitled to but thirteen delegates in the Grand Council of the United States - the proportioned number of delegates to depend on the number of members in the organization; provided, that no State shall be allowed to have more than one State Council without the consent of the Grand Council of the United States.

Rule 5. In any State, District or Territory where there may be more than one organization working on the same basis (to win "Lodges" and "Councils," the same shall be required to combine; the officers of each organization shall resign, and new officers be elected; and thereafter these bodies shall be known as State Councils and Subordinate Councils; and new charters shall be granted to them by the Grand Council.

Rule 6. It shall be considered a penal offense for any Brother not an officer of a Subordinate Council, to make use of the sign or summons adopted for public notification, except by direction of the President; or for the officers of a Council to post the same at any other time than from midnight to one hour before daybreak; and this rule shall be incorporated into the By-Laws of the State, District and Territorial Councils.

Rule 7. The determination of the necessity and mode of issuing the posters for public notification shall be entrusted to the judgment of the State, District, or Territorial Councils.

Rule 8. The respective State, District or Territorial Council shall be required to make statements of the number of members within their respective limits at the next annual meeting of this Grand Council, and annually thereafter, at the regular annual meeting.

Rule 9. The Grand Council of the United States shall pay from its treasury the necessary expenses of its members in attendance upon its sessions.

Rule 10. Each State, District and Territorial Council shall be taxed ten dollars per annum for each Subordinate Council under its jurisdiction; said tax to be paid in semi-annual installments of five dollars each, payable in the months of June and December.

Rule 11. The following shall be the key to determine
and ascertain the purport of any communication that may be addressed to the President of a State, District or Territorial Council by the President of the Grand Council, who is hereby instructed to communicate a knowledge of the same to said officers.

Rule 12. The clause of the article of the Constitution relative to belief in the Supreme Being is obligatory upon every State and Subordinate Council, as well as upon each individual member.

Pages 15 and 16 treat of "Special Votes," viz: SPECIAL VOTES

First. This Grand Council hereby grants to the State of Virginia two State Councils - the one to be located in Eastern and the other in Western Virginia, the Blue Ridge mountains being the geographical line between the two jurisdictions.

Second. The President shall have power, till the next session of the Grand Council, to grant dispensations for the formation of State, District or Territorial Councils, in form most agreeable to his own discretion, upon application being made.

Third. The delegates from the several States, Districts or Territories, who were elected for, or in attendance upon, this Grand Council, shall hold their seats for one year, and the State, District and Territorial Councils are hereby authorized to fill up their respective delegations; provided, that when there are two or more organizations in any one State, District or Territory, the delegation shall be chosen after their union, as provided for by the Constitution of the Grand Council.
APPENDIX B

RITUAL OF THE ORDER

OBLIGATION OF THE FIRST DEGREE

In the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses you do solemnly promise and swear that you will never betray any of the secrets of this society, nor communicate them even to proper candidates, except within a lawful council of the Order; that you will never permit any of the secrets of this society to be written, or in any other manner to be made legible except for the purpose of official instruction; that you will not vote nor give your influence for any man for any office in the gift of the People, unless he be an American-born citizen, in favor of Americans ruling America, nor if he be a Roman Catholic; that you will in all political matters, so far as this Order is concerned, comply with the will of the majority, though it may conflict with your personal preference, so long as it does not conflict with the Constitution of the United States of America or that of the state in which you reside; that you will not, under any circumstances whatever, knowingly recommend an unworthy person for initiation, nor suffer it to be done if in your power to prevent it; that you will not under any circumstances expose the name of any member of this Order, nor reveal the existence of such an association; that you will answer an imperative notice issued by the proper authority, obey the command of the state-council president or his deputy while assembled by such notice, and respond to the claim of a sign or a cry of the Order, unless it be physically impossible; and that you will acknowledge the State Council of ...... as the legislative head, the ruling authority and the supreme tribunal of the Order in the state of ...... acting under the jurisdiction of the National Council of the United States of North America, binding yourself in the penalty of excommunication from the Order, the forfeiture of all intercourse with its members, and being denounced in all the societies of the same as a willful traitor to your God and to your country.

OBLIGATION OF THE SECOND DEGREE

You and each of you of your own free will and accord, in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, your left hand resting on your right breast and your right hand extended to the flag of your country, do solemnly and sincerely swear that you will not under any circumstances disclose in any manner, nor suffer it to be done by others if in your power to

1. Nashville True Whig, May 8, 1855; Scisco, Political Nativism in New York State, pp. 135-137.
prevent it, the name, signs, pass-words or other secrets of this degree, except in open council for the purpose of instruction; that you will in all things conform to all the rules and regulations of this Order, and to the constitution and by-laws of this or any other council to which you may be attached, so long as they do not conflict with the Constitution of the United States, nor that of the state in which you reside; that you will under all circumstances, if in your power so to do, attend to all regular signs or summons that may be thrown or sent to you by a brother of this or any other degree of this Order; that you will support in all political matters, for all political offices, members of this Order in preference to other persons; that if it may be done legally you will, when elected or appointed to any official station conferring on you the power to do so, remove all foreigners, aliens or Roman Catholics from office or place, and that you will in no case appoint such to any office or place in your gift. You do also promise and swear that this and all other obligations which you have previously taken in this Order shall ever be kept through life sacred and inviolate. All this you promise and declare as Americans to sustain and abide by, without any hesitation or mental reservation whatever. So help you God and keep you steadfast.

OBLIGATION OF THE THIRD DEGREE

You and each of you, of your own free will and accord, in the presence of Almighty God and these witnesses, with your hands joined in token of that fraternal affection which should ever bind together the states of this Union — forming a ring in token of your determination that, so far as your efforts can avail, this Union shall have no end — do solemnly and sincerely swear that you will not under any circumstances disclose in any manner, nor suffer it to be done by others if in your power to prevent it, the name, signs, pass-words or other secrets of this degree, except to those whom you may prove on trial to be brothers of the same degree, or in open council for the purpose of instruction; that you do hereby solemnly declare your devotion to the Union of these states; that in the discharge of your duties as American citizens, you will uphold, maintain and defend it; that you will discourage and denounce any and every attempt coming from any and every quarter which you believe to be designed or calculated to destroy or subvert it or to weaken its bonds, and that you will use your influence as far as in your power, in endeavoring to procure an amicable and equitable adjustment of all political discontent or differences which may threaten its injury or overthrow. You do further promise and swear that you will not vote for any one to fill any office of honor or profit or trust of a political character, whom you know or believe to be in favor of a dissolution of the Union of these states, or who is endeavoring to produce that result; that you will vote for and support for
all political offices Third or Union degree members of this Order in preference to all others; that if it may be done consistently with the constitution and laws of the land, you will when elected or appointed to any official station which may confer on you the power to do so, remove from office or place all persons whom you know or believe to be in favor of a dissolution of the Union, or who are endeavoring to produce that result; and that you will in no case appoint such persons to any political office or place whatever. All this you promise and swear upon your honor as American citizens and friends of the American Union, to sustain and abide by without any hesitation or mental reservation whatever. You also promise and swear that this and all other obligations which you have previously taken in this Order shall ever be kept sacred and inviolate. To all this you pledge your lives, your fortunes and your sacred honors. So help you God and keep you steadfast.
APPENDIX C

PLATFORM OF THE AMERICAN PARTY OF TENNESSEE 1855

We believe that AMERICAN LIBERTY is the richest inheritance ever committed to man, and, in proportion to its value, should be our vigilance and fidelity in its defense. We should guard with a jealous eye every assault upon its integrity, whether proceeding from faction within or interference without. We would regard the slightest diminution of or infringement upon this Liberty as the greatest calamity that could befall the human family. We hold that in its continued and ultimate triumph are involved the progress, the elevation and the happiness of the race. While it is eminently peculiar to Americans, it is yet the strongest bond between them and the remainder of mankind. The present generation of citizens and patriots will best show themselves worthy of this inheritance and of the glory won by their forefathers, by transmitting both unimpaired and uniminished to their posterity. For the purpose of preserving this possession among ourselves, as far as we can, of securing its safety forever, we pledge ourselves to each other and to the country, to stand by the following declaration of our principles and sentiments:

Resolved, That we esteem it the highest duty of American citizens to promote the permanence and prosperity of their country; and that, with this view, they should defend the principles of American Republicanism proclaimed by our fathers in the Revolution of 1776, and embodied in the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved, That, while no obstacle should be interposed to the immigration of honest and industrious foreigners, we will protest against the United States being made either a penal colony or a pauper establishment for the use of foreign nations: and we will, therefore, advocate the passage of such laws as will prevent the shipment to our shores of all foreign criminals and paupers, and demand of the governments conniving at their shipment immediate and ample satisfaction for the outrage.

Resolved, That the suffrages of the American people for political offices should not be given to any other than

1. The Knoxville Register, May 17, 1855;
2. Nashville Daily Gazette, May 10, 1855;
3. Daily Union and American, June 28, 1855.
those born on our soil, and reared and nurtured under the influence of our institutions.

Resolved, That no foreigner ought to be allowed to exercise the elective franchise till he shall have resided within the United States a sufficient length of time to enable him to become acquainted with the principles and imbued with the spirit of our institutions, and until he shall have become thoroughly identified with the great interests of our country.

Resolved, That we will maintain the vested rights of all persons, whether of native or foreign birth, and will at all times oppose the slightest interference with such rights.

Resolved, That the intelligence and virtue of the people are necessary to the right use and continuance of our liberties, civil and religious; hence the propriety and importance of promoting and fostering all means of moral and intellectual culture by some adequate and permanent provision for general education.

Resolved, That the Bible in the hands of every citizen is the only permanent basis of civil and religious liberty.

Resolved, That we acknowledge the right of all men to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience; that we will interfere in no wise with private judgment on religious subjects; and that we will oppose all union of Church and State, regardless of whatever sect or party may seek to bring about such union.

Resolved, That we will maintain and defend the Constitution as it stands, the Union as it exists, and the Rights of the States, without diminution, as guaranteed thereby; and we will oppose all who may assail them or either of them.

Resolved, That we recognize no law higher than the Constitution, and that the assumption of a right by any foreign Prince, Pope or Potentate to interfere with the affairs of our people, is at war with the peculiar liberty which we have justly denominated American.

Resolved, That we will ignore the agitation of all questions, of whatever character, based upon geographical distinctions or sectional interest.

Resolved, That we will support those who maintain our doctrines, and oppose those who oppose our doctrines; and we will use our utmost exertions to build up an "American Party," whose maxim shall be, AMERICANS SHALL GOVERN THEIR COUNTRY.
APPENDIX D

NATIONAL PLATFORM 1856

1 The acknowledgment of that Almighty Being, who
rules over the universe—who presides over the Coun-
cils of Nations—who conducts the affairs of men, and
who, in every step by which we have advanced to the char-
acter of an independent Nation has distinguished us by
some token of Providential agency.

2 The cultivation and development of a sentiment
of profoundly intense American feeling; of passionate
attachment to our country, its history and its institu-
tions; of admiration for the purer days of our National
existence; of veneration for the heroism that precipitat-
ated our Revolution; and of emulation of the virtues, wis-
dom and patriotism that framed our Constitution and first
successfully applied its provisions.

3 The maintenance of the union of these United States
and the paramount political good; or, to use the language
of Washington, "the primary object of patriotic desire."
And hence:
   First—Opposition to all attempts to weaken or subvert it.
   Second—Uncompromising antagonism to every principle of
   policy that endangers it.
   Third—The advocacy of an equitable adjustment of all po-
   litical differences which threaten its integrity or perpetuity.
   Fourth—The suppression of all tendencies to political di-
   vision, founded on "geographical discriminations, or on the
   belief that there is a real difference of interests and views"
   between the various sections of the Union.
   Fifth—The full recognition of the rights of the several
   States, as expressed and reserved in the Constitution; and a
   careful avoidance, by the General Government of all interfer-
   ence with their rights by legislative or executive action.

4 Obedience to the Constitution of these United States
as the supreme law of the land, sacredly obligatory upon all
its parts and members; and steadfast resistance to the spirit
of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pre-
texts. Aowing that in all doubtful or disputed points it
may only be legally ascertained and expounded by the judicial
power of the United States.

First—A habit of reverential obedience to the laws,
whether rational, State or municipal, until they are repealed
or declared unconstitutional by the proper authority.

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1. Schneckbier, History of the Know-Nothing Party in Maryland,
"Appendix," Daily Union and American, June 23, 1856.
Second- A tender and sacred regard for those acts of statesmanship which are to be contradistinguished from acts of ordinary legislation by the fact of their being of the nature of compacts and agreements; and so, to be considered a fixed and settled national policy.

5 A radical revision and modification of the laws regulating immigration, and the settlement of immigrants, offering the honest immigrant, who from love of liberty or hatred of oppression, seeks an asylum in the United States, a friendly reception and protection, but unqualifiedly condemning the transmission to our shores of felons and paupers.

6 The essential modification of the naturalization laws. The repeal by the Legislatures of the respective States of all State laws allowing foreigners not naturalized to vote. The repeal, without retrospective operation, of all acts of Congress making grants of land to unnaturalized foreigners, and allowing them to vote in their territories.

7 Hostility to the corrupt means by which the leaders of party have hitherto forced upon us our rulers and our political creeds.

Implacable enmity against the present demoralizing system of rewards for political subserviency, and of punishments for political independence.

Disgust for the wild hunt after office which characterizes the age.

These on the one hand. On the other--
Imitation of the practice of the purer days of the Republic, and admiration of the maxim that "office should seek the man, and not man the office," and of the rule that the just mode of ascertaining fitness for office is the capability, the faithfulness and the honesty of the incumbent candidate.

8 Resistance to the aggressive policy and corrupting tendencies of the Roman Catholic Church in our country by the advancement to all political stations—executive, legislative, judicial or diplomatic—of those only who do not hold civil allegiance, directly or indirectly, to any foreign power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, and who are Americans by birth, education and training, thus fulfilling the maxim, "Americans only shall govern America."

The protection of all citizens in the legal and proper exercise of their civil and religious rights and privileges; the maintenance of the right of every man to the full, unrestrained and peaceful enjoyment of his own religious opinions and worships, and a jealous resistance of all attempts, by any sect, denomination, or church to obtain an ascendancy over any other in the State, by means of any special privilege or exemption, by any political combination of its members, or by a division of their civil allegiance with any foreign power, potentate or ecclesiastic.

9 The reformation of the character of our National Legislature, by elevating to that dignified and responsible position
men of higher qualifications, purer morals, and more unsolitary, patriotic.

10 The restriction of executive patronage—especially in the matter of appointments to office—so far as it may be permitted by the Constitution, and consistent with public good.

11 The education of the youth of our country in schools provided by the State, which schools shall be common to all, without distinction of creed or party, and free from any influence or direction of a denominational or partisan character.

And, inasmuch as Christianity, by the Constitutions of nearly all the States; by the decisions of the most eminent judicial authorities, and by the consent of the people of America, is considered an element of our political system, and the Holy Bible is at once the source of Christianity and the depository and fountain of all civil and religious freedom, we oppose every attempt to exclude it from the schools thus established in the States.

12 The American party, having arisen upon the ruins, and in spite of the opposition of the Whig and Democratic parties, cannot be held in any manner responsible for the obnoxious acts or violated pledges of either. And the systematic agitation of the slavery question by those parties having elevated sectional hostility into a positive element of political power, and brought our institutions into peril, it has, therefore, become the imperative duty of the American party to interpose for the purpose of giving peace to the country and perpetuity to the Union. And as experience has shown it impossible to reconcile opinions so extreme as those which separate disputants, and as there can be no dishonor in submitting to the laws, the National Council has deemed it the best guarantee of common justice and of future peace to abide by and maintain the existing laws upon the subject of slavery, as a final and conclusive settlement of that subject, in fact and in substance.

And, regarding it the highest duty to avow their opinions upon a subject so important in distinct and unequivocal terms, it is hereby declared as the sense of this National Council that Congress possessed no power under the Constitution to legislate upon the subject of slavery in the States, where it does or may exist, or to exclude any State into the Union because its Constitution does or does not recognize the institution of slavery as a part of its social system, and expressly permitting any expression of opinion upon the power of Congress to establish or prohibit slavery in any territory, it is the sense of the National Council that Congress ought not to legislate upon the subject of slavery within the territory of the United States, and that any interference by Congress with slavery as it exists in the District of Columbia would be a violation of the spirit and intention of the compact by which the State of Maryland ceded the district to the United States, and a breach of the national faith.

13 The policy of the Government of the United States, in its relations with foreign governments, is to exact justice from
the strongest and to do justice to the weakest, restraining by all the power of the Government all its citizens from interfering with the internal concerns of nations with whom we are at peace.

14 This National Council declares that all principles of the order shall be henceforth everywhere openly avowed, and that each member shall be at liberty to make known the existence of the order, and the fact that he himself is a member, and it recommends that there be no concealment of the places of meeting of subordinate councils.
1. Resolved, That we re-affirm and proclaim the platform adopted by the Philadelphia Convention in June last, believing the principles therein set forth, necessary and proper for the best good of the whole country.

2. Resolved, That as regards the question of slavery, experience has shown that it is a subject upon which the American people have always differed. As ardent lovers of the Union, and of the peace and harmony of the country, we deprecate all agitation of the subject, as the worst foe to the perpetuity of the Republic. Always entertaining the most profound respect and regard for the compromises of the Constitution, and laws of the land, and feeling that all of our rights of liberty, religion and property are amply protected by them in all parts of our common country, as patriots, we will accord to them, as we have ever done, a patriot's obedience, asking nothing but what is right, and admitting to nothing that is wrong.

3. Resolved, That we will abide by and maintain the provisions of the Constitution of the United States, and the existing laws of Congress upon the subject as a final settlement thereof; and therefore, we will oppose any and all further agitation upon this question. In making this declaration, we deny that Congress possesses any power to legislate upon the subject of slavery in any way, and we equally deny to the people of the territories any such power until the formation of a State government, opposing the odious doctrine of squatter sovereignty, or in other words, the application by the people of the territories of Wilmot Provisoism.

4. Resolved, That our delegates to the National Convention, to be held in Philadelphia on the 22d of February, inst., be instructed to use their influence and procure the repeal of all ceremonial of initiation into the American party, and all obligations of secrecy or otherwise.

5. Resolved, That the education of the youth of our country is the best means of perpetuating its liberties, that the States should provide for that education by establishing common schools.

1. Daily Union and American, February 14, 1856.
through out their limits, and that the Protestant Bible, as their text book, should never be excluded from them.

6 Resolved, That this Convention, feeling justly indignant at the gross misrepresentations of their principles and motives by their opponents, and the organs and leaders of the opposition, recommended to their friends everywhere, in all future contest to maintain their positions with dignity and firmness, but to tolerate no longer in silence, any unjust war upon their rights as American freemen.

7 Resolved, That the present administration of the Federal Government, by the appointment of ultrasectional men to leading Cabinet and judicial offices—by its open interference with elections, and by its wholesale proscription of large masses of the American people for no other reason than their support of the time-honored doctrines of their fathers, has violated every principle which brought it into power. It has been vacillating and insincere, and has forfeited all claim to public confidence, and deserves the condemnation of all conscientious men. The first resolution endorses—re-affirms and proclaims—the Philadelphia platform, which platform expressly pretermitted any expression of opinion on the power of Congress to establish or abolish slavery in the Territories. Stick a pin there.
APPENDIX F

NATIONAL PLATFORM 1856

1. An humble acknowledgment to the Supreme Being for his protecting care vouchsafed to our fathers in their successful revolutionary struggle, and hitherto manifested to us, their descendant, in the preservation of liberties, the independence and the union of these States.

2. The perpetuation of the Federal Union, as the palladium of our civil and religious liberties, and the only sure bulwark of American independence.

3. Americans must rule America, and to this end, native-born citizens should be selected for all State and municipal offices, or government employment, in preference to all others; nevertheless,

4. Persons born of American parents residing temporarily abroad should be entitled to all the rights of native-born citizens; but

5. No person should be selected for political station (whether of native or foreign birth) who recognizes any allegiance or obligation of any description to any foreign prince, potentate or power, or who refuses to recognize the Federal and State Constitutions (each within its sphere) as paramount to all other laws as issues of political action.

The unqualified recognition and maintenance of the reserved rights of the several States, and the cultivation of harmony and fraternal good-will between the citizens of the several States, and to this end, non-interference by Congress with questions appertaining solely to the individual States, and non-intervention by each State with the affairs of any other State.

7. The recognition of the right of the native-born and naturalized citizens of the United States, permanently residing in any territory thereof, to frame their Constitution and laws, and to regulate their domestic and social affairs in their own mode, subject only to the provisions of the Federal Constitution, with the privilege of admission into the Union whenever they have the requisite population for one representative in Congress. Provided always, that none but those who are citizens of the United States.

under the Constitution and laws thereof, and who have a fixed residence in any such territory, ought to participate in the formation of the Constitution or in the enactment of laws for said territory or States.

8 An enforcement of the principle that no State or territory ought to admit others than citizens of the United States to the right of suffrage, or of holding political office.

9 A change in the laws of naturalization, making a continued residence of twenty-one years, of all not hereinafter provided for, and indispensable requisite for citizenship hereafter, and excluding all paupers and persons convicted of crimes, from landing upon our shores, but no interference with the vested rights of foreigners.

10 Opposition to any union between Church and State; no interference with religious faith or worship, and no test-oaths for office.

11 Free and thorough investigation into any and all alleged abuses of public functionaries, and a strict economy in public expenditures.

12 The maintenance and enforcement of all laws constitutionally enacted, until said laws shall be repealed, or shall be declared null and void by competent judicial authority.

13 Opposition to the reckless and unwise policy of the present administration in the general management of our National affairs, and more especially as shown in removing "Americans" by designation and conservative in principle from office, and placing foreigners and ultraists in their places; as shown in a truckling subserviency to the stronger and an insolent and cowardly bravado towards the weaker powers; as shown in reopening sectional agitation by the repeal of the Missouri-Compromise; as shown in granting to unnaturalized foreigners the right of suffrage in Kansas and Nebraska; as shown in its vacillating force of the Kansas-Nebraska question; as shown in the corruptions which pervade some of the departments of the Government; as shown in disgracing meritorious naval officers through prejudice or caprice; and as shown in the blunders and mismanagement of our foreign relations.

14 Therefore, to remedy existing evils, and prevent the disastrous consequences otherwise resulting therefrom, we would build up the "American party" upon the principle hereinbefore stated.

15 That each State Council should have authority to amend their several Constitutions so as to abolish the several degrees, and institute a pledge of honor instead of other obligations for fellowship and admission into the party.
16 A free and open discussion of all the political principles embraced in our platform.
APPENDIX G

LIST OF APPOINTMENTS ARRANGED BY GOVERNOR ANDREW JOHNSON AND HEREDITH P. GENTRY FOR THE CAMPAIGN OF 1855

Nashville--May 1
Woodbury--Wednesday " 2
McMinville--Thursday " 3
Manchester--Friday " 4
Winchester--Saturday " 5
Shelbyville--Monday " 7
Fayetteville--Wednesday " 9
Palaski--Friday 11
Louisburg--Saturday " 12
Columbia--Monday " 14
Centerville--Wednesday " 16
Perryville--Friday " 18
Lexington--Saturday " 19
Jackson--Monday " 21
Bolivar--Tuesday " 22
Sommerville--Wednesday " 25
Memphis--Thursday " 24
Covington--Saturday " 26
Ripley--Monday " 28
Brownsville--Tuesday " 29
Trenton--Thursday " 31
Dresden--Friday June 1
Huntingdon--Saturday " 2
Paris--Monday " 4
Dover--Wednesday " 6
Clarksville--Thursday " 7
Springfield--Saturday " 9
Nashville--Monday " 11
Franklin--Saturday " 16
Lebanon--Monday " 18
Gallatin--Tuesday " 19
LaFayette--Wednesday " 20
Carthage--Friday " 22
Smithville--Saturday " 23

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Daily Union and American (Nashville), 1854-1857. Files in the Nashville Public Library. This paper was one of the chief organs of the Democratic party in Tennessee during the period considered.

The following papers supported the Know-Nothing party:

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Republican Banner (Nashville), 1855-1857. Files in the Nashville Public Library.

True Whig (Nashville), 1854-1855. Files in the Nashville Public Library.

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Executive Documents, Twenty-fifth Congress, second session, II, 70.
"Facts for the People," pamphlet printed by the Daily Gazette (Nashville), 1856.


Scrap Book, Compiled by Thomas A.R. Nelson, II and III. A valuable collection of newspaper clippings relating chiefly to political activities during the years 1855-1856 and 1855-1856. This Scrap Book is now part of the C. M. McClung Historical Collection, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville.

Senate Journal, Tennessee Legislature, 1855-1856.

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