
John Michael Sacher

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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"A PERFECT WAR:"
POLITICS AND PARTIES
IN LOUISIANA, 1824-1861
VOLUME I

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Department of History

by
John Michael Sacher
B.A., University of Notre Dame, 1992
M.A., Louisiana State University, May 1994
December 1999
To Mom and Dad
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of my faculty committee: Dr. William J. Cooper, Jr., Dr. Paul F. Paskoff, Dr. Charles Royster, and Dr. John Rodrique. As chairman of my committee, Dr. Cooper deserves special thanks for his patience, trenchant analysis, and valuable guidance. I would also like to thank the staff members of the Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections at Louisiana State University for their assistance.

Numerous friends have provided encouragement and, more significantly, joy during the supposedly solitary period of research and writing. At the risk of omitting names, I have declined to mention this group—you know who you are. However, I do wish to single out Amy who has patiently listened to innumerable discussions of Louisiana's antebellum politics and the pitfalls of dissertation research and writing. Her constant encouragement has not only made this project possible but also she has made the time spent working on it enjoyable.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to thank my family who have supported me in this dissertation and all my endeavors. I am sure that they will be most relieved never again to have to ask me how my dissertation is going or when it will be finished.
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My dissertation explores Louisiana’s political development from 1824 to 1861. Many antebellum state studies have been written, but none focus specifically on Louisiana. While sharing the rest of the South’s commitment to slavery and cotton, Louisiana possessed atypical attributes including: a unique ethnic composition, a sugar cane crop dependent upon a protective tariff, and the presence of New Orleans, the South’s foremost commercial city. Louisiana’s antebellum political situation resulted from the interaction of these distinctive traits with the characteristics that Louisiana shared in common with the rest of the United States.

The primary focus of this political narrative is the development of parties and the interaction between parties and the electorate. During the 1820s and 1830s, Louisianans moved from a political system based on personality and ethnicity to a distinct party system with Democrats competing against Whigs. These parties, which were evenly matched, battled until the Whig party collapsed in the 1850s. Subsequently, the nativist Know Nothing party rose and fell. And, in 1861, after an increase in tension over the slavery issue, Louisiana seceded from the Union.

Through its examination of Louisiana politics, my dissertation addresses several key historiographical questions. I investigate the relationship between state and federal parties and the role of individuals in party politics. I also explore the impact of both the ideology of republicanism and of the politics of slavery. Moreover, I probe the role played by ethnic diversity, which often overshadowed
partisan allegiance. Additionally, I analyze the differences and similarities among the parties' programs—especially concerning the value of governmental activism.

My dissertation also discusses the rise of Jacksonian democracy. Louisiana's 1812 constitution restricted voting and office-holding. Later constitutions, written in 1845 and 1852, adopted universal white male suffrage and decreased office-holding requirements. Furthermore, extensive campaigning provided an opportunity for voters and non-voters, including women, to participate in the political process. Despite these changes, elites continued to occupy the main positions of power. Though elites served in state government and as party leaders, I contend that political power remained in the hands of their constituents throughout the antebellum period.
CHAPTER ONE
THE EARLY STAGES OF PARTY DEVELOPMENT. 1824-1829

At first glance, antebellum Louisiana stood in stark contrast with the other southern states. The South was a region consisting primarily of rural American-born Protestants involved in the production of cotton. Thus, Louisiana's Creole and Catholic populations, its substantial foreign and northern immigration, its immense leading city New Orleans, and its large sugar cane crop combined to make it possibly the most un-southern of the southern states. A visitor to the state in 1848, worrying about Louisiana's dedication to the region, echoed this assessment.

New Orleans is almost free soil in their[sic] opinions. The population is one half Northern agents another one quarter or one third are Foreigners. The remnant are creoles who cannot comprehend their dangers until the negroes are being taken out of the fields...Louisiana will be the last if at all to strike for the defense of the South.1

While he succinctly captured many of Louisiana's unique characteristics, the visitor inaccurately assessed its southernness. Despite these differences, important similarities remained between Louisiana and the rest of the South. Staple crop agriculture predominated in the Pelican State with cotton joining sugar cane as the most important crops. Louisiana shared the rest of the South's commitment to the peculiar institution—in every antebellum census slaves composed more than 45 percent of the population. And, most importantly, Louisianans joined their fellow southerners in seceding

---

from the Union in early 1861. Perhaps the visitor would have been
more sanguine about Louisiana's loyalty to her region if he had heard
a West Feliciana Parish planter assert. "I consider the wealth &
prosperity of this state to rest principally upon the labors of
slaves...without our negroes we should be poor indeed." Another
planter added that "the slavery question is making strong deep and
abiding impressions on the minds of our southern...men. The injustice
of the North is uniting all parties."¹

Louisianans, along with other southerners, shared a commitment
not only to slavery but to the idea of republicanism. What
politicians and the electorate meant when they used the term
"republicanism," however, varied from politician to politician, place
to place, and over time. The main tenet of this belief involved an
almost obsessive fear that the people's liberty was constantly under
threat. This menace could come from aristocrats, military despots and
armies, federal or state government, banks, corporations, or even
large cities such as New Orleans. Concentrations of power could use
"intrigue" and "corruption" to usurp the sovereignty and liberty of
the people and reduce them to the status of slaves.² A Louisiana

¹Alexander Barrow to William S. Hamilton, January 25, 1830, William
S. Hamilton Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections,
LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (Hereinafter LLMVC) (first quote);
Maunsel White to Pierre Soulé, April 23, 1850, Maunsel White Papers,
Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
(Hereinafter SHC) (second quote).

²The literature on republicanism is voluminous. For a discussion of
the tenets of republicanism see Bernard Bailyn, Ideological Origins of
the American Revolution (Cambridge, 1967); and Gordon S. Wood, The
Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 (Chapel Hill, 1969). For
republicanism in antebellum politics see Harry L. Watson, Liberty and
Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America (New York, 1990); and Michael
congressman traced how this tragic progression worked: the passage of a protective tariff, leading to an increase in manufacturing establishments, and ultimately industry becoming "a monster." This series would conclude with the formation of a standing army "dangerous to the liberties of the people" to protect this "monster." The lawmaker maintained "this government is literally & emphatically sustained by public opinion and to keep it from Corruption & impurities the people should be enlightened." ⁴

In the years immediately following Louisiana's statehood, republicanism did not imply democracy, but as time progressed, the commitment to republicanism transformed itself into a devotion to Jacksonian democracy. The past and future met on a steamboat in 1825 in a conversation between former governor Thomas Bolling Robertson and future congressman John B. Dawson. Their exchange illustrates how the view of the people's proper political role would change over the course of the antebellum era. Discussing the governor's power to appoint local officials, Robertson argued that "the people...have no right to say who is to govern them. The constitution places the power in my hands...." He continued, "whenever I hear everybody speak well of a man I set him down as a damn rascal." This view may have enabled Robertson to capture the governor's office in 1820, but over time the


⁴Walter H. Overton to William S. Hamilton, January 7, 1832, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.
people would demand and receive a greater political voice. Dawson expressed the creed by which most Louisiana politicians would learn to live. Believing "popularity a fair test of merit." Dawson countered, "you should never disregard the people's will...Because the constitution enables you to play the Despot it does not follow you are to be one."\(^5\)

Louisiana politicians catered to the idea of the people as sovereigns in their deeds as well as in their words. The writing, in 1845 and 1852, of new constitutions which expanded suffrage, increased the number of elective positions, and reduced office-holding requirements resulted from politicians following the lead of the people. As a state legislator who disagreed with his constituents on whom to select as a United States senator affirmed, "It is better...not to contend with the people. I have no desire to set up my opinion in opposition to theirs." Those politicians who felt so bold as to challenge their constituents' will frequently found themselves out of office. Robertson left the governor's office in 1824 to take an appointive judicial position. In 1828, despite his ambition, he recognized that he could no longer successfully run for governor. By the end of the antebellum period, for Louisiana politicians "vox populi" did indeed serve as "vox dei."\(^6\)

\(^5\)John B. Dawson to William S. Hamilton, April 6, 1825, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.

Louisiana shared a commitment to republicanism with other states, but her ethnic heritage differed from the rest of the United States. French and Spanish colonists were the first Europeans to occupy the territory which would become Louisiana. The French settled the region in the early eighteenth century, founding Natchitoches in 1714 and New Orleans in 1718. The French king appointed the colony’s governor, and Roman Catholicism was established as the official religion. Louisiana’s population grew slowly and by the 1760s numbered only ten thousand people, half African slaves. As a result of France’s defeat in the Seven Years’ War, control of Louisiana was transferred to the Spanish in 1763. A Spanish king now named the governor and Catholicism remained the established religion. The colony maintained a commitment to slavery and began to grow faster, and by 1800 the population exceeded thirty thousand people.

Early in the nineteenth century, Napoleon re-obtained the territory for France. But, in 1803, fearing that he could not defend it and needing money for his European military campaigns, he agreed to sell Louisiana to the United States. From 1803 until 1812, the American government, under the auspices of territorial governor William Claiborne, ruled the territory. By 1810, Louisiana possessed well over the sixty thousand persons required for statehood. A constitutional convention met in New Orleans in November 1811, and on April 30, 1812, Louisiana officially entered the Union as the eighteenth state.

Statehood did not imply homogeneity. Throughout the antebellum period, Louisiana lacked cohesion in terms of both population and
geography. It included French-speaking Catholic sugar cane growers, English-speaking Protestant cotton planters, Spanish-speaking Catholic fishermen, cajuns on its bayous, and yeomen in its piney hills. Great disparities in population density existed in the state. In 1860, New Orleans, the greatest urban center of the antebellum South, possessed almost 150,000 whites, while seven parishes each contained less than two thousand white residents. Some areas, especially along the Mississippi River, had over 90 percent of their population enslaved, while in other areas less than one quarter of the population was held in bondage. One could find sections with a majority of Louisiana-born residents, a majority born elsewhere in the United States, or a majority foreign-born. Thus, in order to facilitate an understanding of antebellum Louisiana, I have divided it into four regions: the Florida Parishes, North Louisiana, Greater Orleans, and South Louisiana. (TABLE 1.1)

The Florida parishes were bordered by the Mississippi River on the west, the Pearl River on the east, Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas on the south, and the state of Mississippi on the north. This region, unlike the rest of Louisiana, was not included in the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. Instead, these parishes remained part of Spanish-owned West Florida until winning their independence in the 1810 West Florida Rebellion. But in 1812 when Louisiana became a state, this area was included within its boundaries. The region combined wealthy cotton plantation country in East Baton Rouge and the Felicianas with poorer piney woods in its eastern parishes. Anglo-Saxon Protestants predominated in the Florida Parishes—almost 90
TABLE 1.1
Louisiana's Regions

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percent of the families had English surnames, and Protestant churches accounted for over 85 percent of the church seating capacity. In 1820, these parishes contained approximately one-sixth of Louisiana’s population. The region’s relative population, however, declined in each of the succeeding censuses. As the state grew, most newcomers settled in either Greater Orleans or North Louisiana, and by 1860 the
Florida parishes contained less than one tenth of the state's population.\(^7\)

North Louisiana, the state's largest region, consisted of all of the parishes in the state north of the thirty-first parallel, except for Avoyelles. This section contained both important cotton country along the Mississippi and Red Rivers and less fertile piney hills and swamps between the two rivers. Like their counterparts in the Florida parishes, white North Louisianans were primarily Anglo-Saxon Protestants engaged in agriculture. Over 90 percent of North Louisiana's families had English last names, and Protestant churches contained over 90 percent of its church seats. And, if cotton were king in Louisiana, its palace was located in North Louisiana, which in 1850 produced three out of every four bales in the state.\(^3\)

Only sparsely settled when Louisiana obtained its statehood in 1812, North Louisiana's growth outpaced that of the rest of the state during the ensuing five decades. In 1824, only five of the state's twenty-eight parishes were in this region, but of the twenty new parishes created in the next thirty years, fifteen were in North Louisiana. Additionally, in 1820 the area contained approximately one-sixth of Louisiana's population, but by the Civil War, one-third


\(^3\) I have included Avoyelles Parish with South Louisiana because demographically it fits more into that region in terms of birthplace of its residents, their ethnicity, their religion, and the parish's sugar production. For another example of grouping Avoyelles Parishes with parishes in South Louisiana see Howard, *Political Tendencies*, 9.
of all Louisianans resided here. A significant portion of this growth resulted from people moving into North Louisiana from other states. In 1850, over half of the section's population had been born elsewhere in the Union. And, primarily because of the cotton parishes along the Mississippi River, in 1860 the zone contained four out of every nine slaves in Louisiana.

South Louisiana consisted of the area east of the Texas border, west of the Florida Parishes and Greater Orleans, and south of the thirty-first parallel plus Avoyelles Parish. The region contained both the South's foremost sugar-producing region in south central Louisiana and sparsely settled prairie in the southwestern corner of the state. South Louisiana offers a stark contrast to the state's Anglo-Saxon cotton-producing regions. Its main staple was sugar cane—in 1850 it produced four out of every five hogsheads in Louisiana. In addition, French heritage dominated—over 70 percent of its families in 1840 were of French extraction. Its settlers included refugees from French Canada—the Acadians or Cajuns—who had started arriving in large numbers in the 1760s. Moreover, Roman Catholicism pervaded these parishes with over three-fourths of the seating capacity in Catholic churches.

South Louisiana declined relatively in terms of total population during the antebellum period from 35 percent in 1820 to 28 percent in 1860. Even more significant than this decrease was the relative drop in its white population. In 1820, over one-third of the state's white population lived in South Louisiana, but by the Civil War this fraction had diminished to only about one-fifth. This reduction can
be explained by South Louisiana's failure to attract immigrants from either other states or abroad. Only about one out of every twenty newcomers settled there. In 1850, almost 90 percent of the section's residents were Louisiana natives, compared to approximately 33 percent in the rest of the state.

The smallest geographically, but perhaps the most important region of Louisiana was Greater Orleans which included Orleans and its surrounding parishes: Jefferson, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines. This region, and some would contend the entire state, revolved around the city of New Orleans, which Henry Clay called "the pivot" of Louisiana. The Crescent City served as one of the nation's most important entrepots and had no rival either commercially or in terms of population in the state. By 1860, almost half of Louisiana's white population lived in these four parishes. New Orleans split culturally, and at times physically, between its competing Creole and American populations. In the later antebellum period, an influx of immigrants, especially Irish, further changed the social and political complexion of the city. In 1850, over one-half of Greater Orleans population had been born outside of the United States.9

Because of New Orleans's commercial and political influence, it engendered resentment throughout the rest of the state. Discussing the propensity of the Crescent City's population to exaggerate its own importance, a legislator contended, "They had so long had the habit here in New Orleans of fancying themselves Louisiana, that they had

now come to think themselves the United States." New Orleans represented a concentration of power that, according to republican ideals, could present a threat to liberty. Many in the country parishes feared locating the state capital in such a large city and in the Constitution of 1845 had it removed from the corrupt colossus. They believed that "there is an influence brought to bear upon the minds of the members in a large town, which operates prejudicially to wise legislation." This corrupting influence extended to the city's voters. Contrasting campaign strategy in northern Louisiana and New Orleans, a politician observed that in the former, votes must be obtained "in a fair way," while in the latter, "there is an immense floating vote which can be & is every election bought & sold."\(^1\)

The Constitution of 1812 established the ground rules for politics in Louisiana. Even taking the conservative standards of the period into account, Perry H. Howard describes Louisiana's constitution as "ultra-conservative and ultra-aristocratic." Visiting Louisiana soon after the charter's adoption, a young lawyer extended the oxymoronic yet accurate observation that "the government is an Aristocratic Democracy." Restrictive suffrage and office-holding provisions contributed to this view of the document. Suffrage was limited to free white males, twenty-one years or older, with a residency requirement. Most importantly, only those who had paid a state tax or had purchased federal land could vote. The provision

\(^1\) Henry Huntington to James Taliaferro, June 2, 1848, James G. Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Franklin C. Wharton, "Seat of Government," 1830, Edward Clifton Wharton Family Papers, LLMVC (second quote); John Ray to John Moore, February 11, 1852, David Weeks and Family Papers, LLMVC (third quote).
which stipulated that, in gubernatorial contests, the legislature chose between the top two popular vote recipients further stifled democracy, as did a law granting it the power to cast the state's electoral votes in presidential elections. Requirements for officeholding were even more stringent than those for suffrage. Members of the General Assembly had greater restrictions on age and residency than voters. Additionally, they needed to own landed property worth at least $500 in the lower house and $1000 in the Senate. The most difficult requirements were reserved for those who aspired to the gubernatorial chair—thirty five years of age, six years in the Louisiana, and $5000 in landed property. Every four years, the House of Representatives was to be reapportioned based upon the number of qualified electors with fifty as the maximum number of members and without a representative being guaranteed to each parish. Composed of fourteen single member districts, the Senate was never to be reapportioned.11

Louisiana's first elected governor, W.C.C. Claiborne, described the constitution as "purely republican in principle, and tolerably well adapted to our local situation." The "local situation" in Louisiana meant the division between Americans and Creoles. The Creoles were people born in Louisiana of French or Spanish descent,

11Howard, Political Tendencies, 20; John C. Windship to William Plumer, Jr., March 20, 1814 in Everett S. Brown, ed. "Letters from Louisiana, 1813-1814," Mississippi Valley Historical Review (1924-25) XI, 574; For a copy of the Louisiana Constitution of 1812 see Cecil Morgan, ed., The First Constitution of the State of Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1975). The number of senate districts was expanded to seventeen when the Florida parishes joined the state a few months after the constitution was written.
while the Americans consisted of settlers from elsewhere in the United States. The third most prominent group, the foreign French, settlers from France or her colonies, most often aligned with the Creoles in opposition to the Americans. The division between these two opposing groups rested not only upon language, but upon political heritage and religion as well. For much of the early antebellum period, political loyalty centered on a candidate's ethnicity not on partisan allegiance. Especially in gubernatorial races, Americans generally cast their ballots for American candidates, while Creoles cast theirs for Creole candidates.

The explanation for the aristocratic nature of the constitution lies in this split between the Creoles and the Americans. In the

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12 The definition of "Creole" is contested. Fred Kniffen agrees that it "originally applied to the Louisiana-born of European descent." but since then it has lost its precision. Fred B. Kniffen, Louisiana: Its Land and People (Baton Rouge, 1968), 127. The third edition of Bennett H. Wall, ed., Louisiana: A History (Baton Rouge, 1997), lists several possible definitions of Creole including "To some it means native colonials of French or Spanish ancestry." For an antebellum definition see New Orleans Bee, July 21, 1835, (quoting the Louisiana Recorder) "In Louisiana, the term 'creole' is usually given and limited to the descendants of the French and Spanish colonists--often restricted to those of the French, seldom if ever extended to those of the Americans." I concur with Joseph Tregle that "Creole" should not include any connotation of class, wealth, or sophistication, and I admit that Tregle is correct in asserting that it can be used to portray a much broader group than my definition implies, but I contend that my definition a commonly accepted one. Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., "On that Word 'Creole' Again," Louisiana History, 23 (Spring 1982), 193-198.

13 W.C.C. Claiborne to Robert R. Livingston, January 26, 1812, in Dunbar Rowland, ed., Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, 1810-1816, (6 vols.; Jackson, MS, 1917), 6:40-41. For a series of letters discussing the propensity of voters in the 1830 gubernatorial campaign to support men in their own ethnic group regardless of party affiliation see Dr. R. Davidson to William S. Hamilton, February 4, 1830, April 9, 1830; W.L. Robeson to Hamilton, February 6, 1830, April 20, 1830, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.
period following the territory's purchase in 1803. Louisiana began a process of Americanization—the gradual movement from Creole to American control. Realizing their numerical superiority would erode over time, the Creoles concluded that the best way to cement their hold on the state would be to freeze political power in time, or at least slow the impact of this Americanization. Joseph Tregle asserts that "the vehicle chosen for this purpose was the Constitution of 1812." In his study of the development of the second American party system, Richard P. McCormick agrees that "The Louisiana constitution of 1812...was a product of the determination of the Creoles to secure and retain control of the government."¹

With the constitution limiting suffrage to property-holders and those who paid a state tax, only a fraction of the population possessed the ballot. The 1820 census lists Louisiana’s total population as 143,222 including 21,262 white males eighteen years or older. According to the 1821 census of voters, however, only 9,188 people possessed the franchise and fourteen of Louisiana’s nineteen parishes had less than 200 eligible voters. The most extreme example, Concordia Parish, which was entitled to both a representative and one of the state’s seventeen senators, had 105 eligible voters in 1821 and 123 in 1829. In the 1824 gubernatorial race, Concordia’s voters cast only 24 ballots, while in 1828 they cast 49. Similarly, St. Charles

Parish, which cast 51 and 77 votes respectively in these two contests. Contained 128 voters in 1821 and by 1829 this number had only grown to 132. This paucity of voters magnified the power of anyone who could control a bloc of votes.\textsuperscript{15}

During this period of Louisiana’s political development frequent mention is made of the importance of “men of influence” who dictated what their community thought and how it voted. In the words of a state senator, public opinion was like a stream:

The opinion of men hang upon one another. One man adopts the opinion of another on public measures without giving himself the trouble of forming one of his own. And finally the opinion of the few where there is no immediate opposition becomes the uniform opinion of the whole.

Important men and families controlled a significant portion of the votes in many of the parishes outside of New Orleans. Upon the death of Henry Thibodeaux, considered one of the "most influential men in the state," future United States Senator Alexander Porter worried about the two hundred voters on Bayou Lafourche "who are now from the loss of his salutary influence left exposed to the seductions of bad politicians." Porter also asserted that with certain men in Opelousas including Jacques Dupré, a fixture in the legislature and Louisiana’s largest cattle rancher, behind a candidate elections were "fixed" there. A legislative candidate, assessing his own prospects, complained that in Ascension Parish personal merit often had little weight when compared to "a Jacgast or Pierrot, supported by his uncles and cousins, [and] extended family connexions." This lament offered a

\textsuperscript{15}1821 census of voters in \textit{Louisiana House Journal, 1822}, 27-8; 1829 list never published but a copy appears in William S. Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.
sharp contrast from the prior year when the same man had been more optimistic because two members of the Martin family with "sufficient influence to make good on their word" had offered to guarantee his election.\textsuperscript{16}

While friends and neighbors possessed significant influence in antebellum Louisiana, the development of national parties added another element for voters to consider. As national politics increased in importance in Louisiana, the federal government controlled a greater number of patronage positions and consequently more leverage. Before his ascension to the presidency, Andrew Jackson complained of the "corrupting influence" of executive patronage in Louisiana. With patronage the power of friends of the national administration in New Orleans could be felt in the country parishes. In North Louisiana where it was "not uncommon for a few Demagog[sic] Zealots to produce a Wonderful[sic] effect," Martin Duralde, a stalwart New Orleans legislator and dispenser of federal patronage, "wielded all his immense influence with a zeal and adroitness almost super natural," in helping a loyal administration supporter win re-election to Congress.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{17} Andrew Jackson to David C. Ker, November 6, 1828, Andrew Jackson Papers, Library of Congress. (Hereinafter LC).
As with most other issues in antebellum Louisiana, the Creole-American split also affected influence. Requesting Senator Josiah Johnston's support for an appointment, a constituent opposing a "creole competitor." decried the John Quincy Adams administration's "rather extraordinary penchant...for that species of our population."

In consoling a losing a congressional candidate, an adviser claimed he had only lost in the Creole parishes where most were "governed by the influence of a few." Amongst the Acadians a "social aristocracy" ruled, according to historian Carl Brasseaux. and political campaigns were essentially personality contests among members of this elite group. Joseph Tregle agrees that Creoles submitted "their will and their ballots to the decision of those who were their respected leaders." Among these was Henry Thibodeaux, who, as "pere" to the people along Bayou Lafourche, served as the area's "undisputed arbiter of political power."

Not only did some Americans remain skeptical of the Creoles' ability to participate in a representative government because of their susceptibility to the power of influence but also because of their monarchical heritage. An American resident of South Louisiana argued that out of all the states, Louisiana remained "the most radically and essentially unfit for the form of government." Another agreed that Louisiana was in "her political infancy" and "the people are just getting rid of the prejudices created by national feelings and

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distinctions." Campaigning for Jackson in Louisiana, a friend of the General asserted that while Jackson could rely on three-fourths of the Americans, the Creoles opposed Jackson because they lacked American feeling and were ignorant of American principles of government.\(^{19}\)

Another reason that Americans doubted the Creoles' ability to participate in partisan politics involved allegations that they failed to connect state and national political contests. Porter contended that the Creoles "cannot understand... how any election but the main one should turn on the presidential question." The presence of Creoles in elective positions supports this contention. While electing Creole governors in 1816, 1828, 1830, and 1838, not a single Creole represented Louisiana in Congress during the first twenty-eight years of statehood. In Louisiana, the Creoles had used the Constitution of 1812 to perpetuate their hold on state government. In the 1820s, this determination remained an essential element in statewide elections, but it did not play as vital a role in national elections. Additionally, while the state elections occurred in July, when many Americans had left New Orleans because they feared diseases, presidential elections occurred in November. According to an American settler, that month served primarily as sugar cane harvesting season for Creoles, not as a time for politics.\(^{20}\)

\(^{19}\) John H. Johnston to Josiah S. Johnston, September 30, 1827, Johnston Papers, HSP; Nicholas Trist to Mrs. Randal, April 10, 1824, Trist Papers, SHC; David Kerr to Andrew Jackson, November 11, 1828, Jackson Papers, LC.

In 1812, despite the Creoles' efforts to use the constitution to control Louisiana, the people and the legislature selected the Virginia-born territorial governor William Claiborne to serve as the state's first governor. The War of 1812, and especially fear of a British invasion of Louisiana, dominated his administration. In November 1814, as an attack became imminent, the United States commander in the Southwest, General Andrew Jackson, arrived in New Orleans. Unsure of the loyalty of the New Orleans residents, especially the foreign French and Creoles, Jackson declared martial law in the city. On January 8, 1815, federal troops and state militias, including Louisiana's, routed the British invasion in the Battle of New Orleans. After the tremendous victory and ignoring an order from Federal District Judge Dominick Hall, Jackson continued to rule the Crescent City under martial law. Ultimately, when news of the peace treaty reached New Orleans, Jackson terminated martial law, but the judge punished him for his earlier impudence with a $1,000 fine.21

The victory restored the nation's confidence and made Andrew Jackson a national hero. Nearly every state passed resolutions praising his victory, and, as a Tennessee slaveholder, he had a special appeal in the South. Paradoxically, Louisiana contained some of Jackson's most ardent disciples and many of his fiercest detractors. Some Louisianans would never forget his role as their

University of Chicago, 1929), 136; Thomas Butler to Edward G.W. Butler, October 6, 1828, Butler Family Papers, LLMVC.

savior. The Corporation of New Orleans, in proclaiming Jackson "their deliverer" exclaimed that but for Jackson "a heap of ashes and scattered ruins would have been all that would have remained of New Orleans." More than twenty-five years after the battle, a resident of the city, on behalf of his wife, wrote Jackson soliciting "a lock of hair from the venerable and honored head of your excellency." In 1843, opposition to refunding Judge Hall's fine of Jackson caused a United States senator from Louisiana to lose his bid for re-election. Later, New Orleans renamed its central square "Jackson Square" and erected a statue to commemorate the hero. Many who fought alongside Jackson during the battle found it only a short step from military service under General Jackson to political allegiance to presidential candidate and Democratic party leader Andrew Jackson.  

While Jackson's name evoked reverence for some, others would only remember Jackson as the military despot who refused to yield to civilian authority. When Jackson ran for the presidency in 1828, a former Louisiana governor declared that he would rather support a man he disagreed with than one like Jackson, who "runs his sword through [the constitution]" when it stands in his way. That same year, the Argus reminded its French readers that Jackson had "called you TRAITORS" and had tried to have a French adversary shot for contesting martial law. In 1853, a longtime Jackson opponent wrote, "Twenty five years have I labored to destroy the malign influence of the arbitrary conduct of Andrew Jackson upon the republican institutions of my
country." He suggested that the statue honoring Jackson should include his horse trampling upon a volume labelled "Laws of the United States" and that in the foreground the constitution should appear "torn and violated."[1]

The first American party system, which involved the competition between Republicans and Federalists, never achieved a solid foothold in Louisiana. During Claiborne's term, the establishment of a new state government and fear of British invasion overshadowed partisan politics. By the 1816 presidential election, the Federalist Party, which never had more than a handful of proponents in Louisiana, had almost completely collapsed in the South. In both this and the subsequent presidential contest, Louisiana's legislature cast its electoral votes for the victorious Republican candidate. In neither the 1816 nor the 1820 gubernatorial election did national party politics play a role. Each of the elections revolved around the Creole-American split with Creole Jacques Villère and American Thomas Bolling Robertson succeeding Claiborne in the governor's office. During his administration, Villère attempted to achieve a balance between the two groups, but Robertson worked to augment the strength of Americans at the Creoles' expense.[2]

[1] Thomas Bolling Robertson to William Robertson, August 22, 1827, Walter Prichard Collection, LLMVC (first quote); New Orleans Argus, November 4, 1828, (Hereinafter all newspapers New Orleans unless otherwise specified); Henry Marston to Gales & Seaton, February 18, 1853, Henry Marston Family Papers, LLMVC (second quote).

With neither the governor, the legislature, nor the electorate associating themselves with a national party, Louisiana lacked any semblance of a true party system. This situation changed as the 1820s progressed. The presidential elections of 1824 and 1828 proved to be the catalysts for the growth of partisanship, and party division could be found in congressional, gubernatorial, and legislative elections as well. By the end of the decade, a large proportion of the electorate identified themselves as Jackson or Adams men, though the Creole-American division prevented the complete development of political parties. This cultural cleavage still often overshadowed partisan allegiances, especially in state-level campaigns. With ethnicity and party allegiance imperfectly corresponding, voters who called themselves "Jackson men" and supported Andrew Jackson for the presidency might vote against the "Jackson" candidate for the governor's office or Congress.

The 1824 presidential election served as one of the first important steps in the development of the Louisiana's political parties. This growth, nonetheless, remained incomplete, as the electorate failed to connect the national race to state contests. Though none of the previous presidential elections had generated much notice in Louisiana, the 1824 campaign witnessed an increased interest in presidential politics especially in New Orleans. The year included legislative and gubernatorial elections as well as the selection of presidential electors, but generally neither the politicians nor the people tied these state and national campaigns together. Instead, they chose to view the state races in terms of established Louisiana
ethnic divisions, and thus political party development in the state remained unfinished.  

In 1820, Republican James Monroe had run unopposed for the presidency. Since then his party had fractured, and in 1824 four candidates, all calling themselves Republicans, competed for the nation's highest office. Traditionally, a congressional caucus had selected the nominee, but without an opposition party, this method had come to be seen as too aristocratic. In February 1824, only 66 of the 291 congressmen gathered together and nominated Secretary of the Treasury William Crawford, a Georgian. The widespread condemnation of this caucus left the field open, and others quickly filled this breach. John Quincy Adams, the candidate of New England, ran on his record as secretary of state and as a champion of activist government, especially the tariff and internal improvements. Kentuckian Henry Clay portrayed himself as the candidate of the West and joined Adams as a proponent of a strong nationalistic program. Andrew Jackson emerged as the wildcard. Known primarily as the hero of the Battle of New Orleans and campaigning as an outsider with no specific program, Jackson proved immensely popular with the public.  

Of these four candidates, only William Crawford generated virtually no enthusiasm in Louisiana. His association with the

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25 For an excellent discussion of the 1824 presidential campaign in Louisiana, see Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 145-73.

aristocratic caucus had sealed his fate. John Quincy Adams's appeal rested upon his record as an experienced statesman, his pro-tariff stance, and upon settlers from New England residing in the Florida parishes. Clay and Jackson proved to be the strongest candidates in Louisiana. Part of their attraction rested on their claims as westerners—an important consideration since for the past twenty-four years Virginians had controlled the presidency. Clay joined Adams in championing an activist program, which was especially popular among the state's sugar cane planters who depended upon a tariff. When offered a choice between a Kentucky slaveholder and a New England blueblood, the people of Louisiana naturally gravitated to their fellow southerner. Clay also benefitted from the power wielded by his family connections in the state. His brother and one of his sons-in-law were prominent New Orleans businessmen. Meanwhile, another son-in-law Martin Duralde was an influential Louisiana legislator. Jackson profited from his status as the savior of Louisiana in the Battle of New Orleans and from his ambiguous stance on the tariff, which was favored in the sugar cane regions but disdained in cotton areas. His proponents portrayed him as the "CANDIDATE OF THE PEOPLE"

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27 *Louisiana Courier*, May 7, 1824; *Louisiana Gazette*, July 21, 1824.


and as a modern day George Washington—a military leader/statesman devoted to republican principles.

The most prominent political split in Louisiana in 1824 remained the division between Americans and Creoles, and many approached the presidential election from this already established division. The Creoles tended to gravitate toward Henry Clay because of their preponderance in the pro-tariff sugar cane-producing regions in South Louisiana and their leadership’s ties to Clay—especially Duralde. The Creoles also tended to oppose Jackson, because of the perception that many of his heavy-handed actions during his defense of New Orleans in 1814-15 were directed at them. The Americans primarily supported Jackson because they generally came from anti-tariff cotton regions and because they admired Jackson for his role in saving Louisiana. One of Jackson’s proponents at first observed a “lukewarmness” toward the general’s cause but later found that “A sense of their obligation to him who saved their liberty from impending danger is now gaining the ascendancy.”

Yet, Louisiana did not neatly divide between pro-Clay Creoles and pro-Jackson Americans. Some Creoles, including General Jean Plauché, the vice-president of a New Orleans pro-Jackson meeting, shared the devotion to Jackson because of his service to the state at the Battle of New Orleans. Similarly, some Americans, often despite

30 Louisiana Gazette, June 7, 1824.

31 Anthony W. Butler to Edward G.W. Butler, March 7, 1824, June 28, 1824, Butler Family Papers, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection, (Hereinafter HNO); John B. Dawson to William S. Hamilton, September 8, 1824, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.
their personal admiration for Old Hickory echoed the fear that a military chieftain would not be the proper person to elevate to the presidency. Governor Thomas Bolling Robertson, while disapproving of Clay’s tariff stance, preferred “a pure & unmixed republican administration” under Clay as opposed to the “Despot” Jackson. Additionally, both candidates had loyal friends in Louisiana, where personal ties frequently overshadowed all other considerations. The appeal of John Quincy Adams, though limited, further demonstrates the difficulty in assigning a one-to-one correspondence between the ethnic groups and the candidates.11

At this time, the legislature still had the power to select the state’s presidential electors. During the 1823 legislative session, a year prior to actual race, Clay’s friends attempted to place Louisiana’s electoral votes in his column by forcing an early vote. They introduced a bill to establish a legislative caucus in order to nominate Clay for the presidency and included a series of resolutions praising Jackson to confuse his supporters. Because many believed that the bill was brought forward prematurely, Clay partisans lacked the votes to pass it. Instead, they backed down and talk of the presidential campaign subsided for the rest of the year. The legislature that met in early 1824 witnessed an attempt to allow for

11Louisiana Gazette, June 8, 1824. For Americans wary of the placing political power in the hands of a military leader see Philemon Thomas to Henry Clay, April 30, 1825, in Hopkins, ed., Clay Papers, 4:313-14; T.G. Slocum to Josiah S. Johnston, December 8, 1824, Johnston Papers, HSP; Thomas Bolling Robertson to William Robertson, August 12, 1824, Prichard Collection, LLMVC. For pro-Clay Americans and pro-Jackson Creoles in legislature see Isaac L. Baker to Andrew Jackson, May 3, 1823, Jackson Papers, LC.
the popular election of presidential electors, but the measure failed. In the hyperbolic words of the St. Francisville Asylum, the vote was perhaps "the most ultra-aristocratic" decision in state history. Thus, the legislature that would be elected in July 1824 and would meet in November retained the power to select the state's presidential electors.\(^3\)

While failing to receive the right to vote for presidential electors, the people were not completely denied a voice in the selection process. The 1824 legislative elections gave the voters a chance to express their views on the presidency by voting for candidates pledged to one of the four contenders, but only in New Orleans and St. Francisville did the electorate take advantage of this opportunity. In New Orleans, an official Jackson ticket appeared, and Jackson supporters sent letters to all candidates soliciting their preference for president. Four of the six men on the Jackson ticket won, with the two weakest losing to Clay's two strongest men. In St. Francisville, where the presidential race was "the only political subject that occupies much public attention," not only did several of the candidates pledge their vote to a particular candidate, but, at the urging of the St. Francisville Asylum, the people wrote their choice for president on their ballots for legislators.\(^4\)

\(^3\)Tregle, *Louisiana in the Age of Jackson*, 147-8; Isaac L. Baker to Andrew Jackson, February 14, 1823, Jackson Papers, LC; St. Francisville Asylum, February 2, 1823, May 29, 1824.

\(^4\)James M. Bradford to Josiah S. Johnston, November 11, 1824, Johnston Papers, HSP; Anthony W. Butler to Edward G.W. Butler, 4 July 1824 Butler Family Papers, HNO; St. Francisville Asylum, July 3, 10, 1824. St. Francisville proved to be one of the few John Quincy Adams strongholds in Louisiana as he received 65 votes, Jackson—46, Clay—9,
Outside of New Orleans and St. Francisville, the legislative election and the presidential race were not intertwined. A newly elected state senator from Alexandria lamented that "the people in this District have no fixed opinion on the [presidential election]." Future congressman Walter Overton, a Rapides cotton planter, agreed that "the state generally has not been much excited." An Opelousas contributor to the Asylum contended that the election in his region had not focused on presidential politics. With newspapers providing the populace most of its political information, their absence outside of New Orleans and St. Francisville partially explains this apathy. While during 1824 New Orleans had five newspapers and St. Francisville had two. the rest of the state had only three. Without newspapers, these communities lacked an important link between the legislative and presidential races.\textsuperscript{35}

The 1824 legislative contests also provided voters an opportunity to punish the legislators who had voted against the bill providing for the popular selection of presidential electors. Both the Louisiana Gazette and the St. Francisville Asylum printed lists of the members who had opposed the change with the latter crusading against those who had committed this "political fraud." Of the fourteen men on the list only two were re-elected to the next legislature. This warning against trampling upon the people's

\textsuperscript{35} Isaac L. Baker to William S. Hamilton, June 15, 1824, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Charles T. Scott to Josiah S. Johnston, July 24, 1824. Walter H. Overton to Johnston, November 22, 1824, Johnston Papers, HSP; St. Francisville Asylum, July 24, 1824.
sovereignty read loud and clear in the capital, and the next session saw the passage of a law granting to the people what one legislative candidate termed their "usurped right" to choose presidential electors. Giving this power to the electorate proved to be a significant step in the development of political parties in Louisiana. Participation in presidential campaigns provided voters with a new link to the national party organizations.\(^\text{16}\)

While passing a bill granting voters the privilege of selecting presidential electors in future races, the legislature that met in November 1824 still had to cast Louisiana's votes in the present contest. The voice of the electorate regarding the presidential question remained unclear. The legislature divided among Clay, Jackson, and Adams supporters, and none of these groups possessed a majority. A plurality championed Clay, while Jackson's men ran a close second. Because of the narrow margin separating their candidates, both Clay and Jackson men feared that their opponents would use intrigue and corruption to wrest the electoral votes of the state from their favorite.\(^\text{17}\) The few members advocating Adams possessed the balance of power in Louisiana and were willing to make a deal in exchange for two of the state's five electoral votes. They

\(^{16}\) *Louisiana Gazette*, May 21, July 24, 1824; *St. Francisville Asylum*, May 29, 1824; Isaac L. Baker to Andrew Jackson, March 21, 1825, Jackson Papers, LC. While the *Asylum* targeted 14 men, the measure actually failed 17-10, and only 11 of the 14 the newspaper labelled opposed it, *Louisiana House Journal*, 1824, 31.

found the Jacksonian members willing to accept this compromise, and on November 22, 1824, with some Clay supporters absent, the legislature selected three Jackson electors and two Adams men. Legislators championing both Clay and Jackson considered this vote-trading as "improper" and "an abandonment of principle." Thus, the "intrigue" that Clay's proponents had feared had occurred, for they believed that this "dirty bargain" had undermined the will of the people.

The vote of the legislature, however, did not mark the end of the presidential controversy in Louisiana. Because no candidate won a majority of the nation's electoral votes, the names of the top three—Jackson, Adams, and Crawford respectively—were submitted to the House of Representatives with each state getting one vote. Jackson men asserted that Louisiana's delegation was obligated to support their candidate for two reasons. First, they argued that since Jackson had received the majority of the state's electoral votes, the representatives should not deviate from this preference. Second, they contended that this situation roughly paralleled the normal operation of a gubernatorial campaign in Louisiana where the legislature, selecting a governor from the top two vote-recipients, had always chosen the one with the highest total. According to this reasoning, the delegation should cast the state's votes for Jackson, who had received the greatest number of popular and electoral votes. Thus.

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39 Philemon Thomas to Henry Clay, April 30, 1825, in Hopkins, ed., Clay Papers, 4:313-14; David C. Ker to Andrew Jackson, November 23, 1824, Jackson Papers, LC; John Clay to Josiah S. Johnston, November 30, 1824, Johnston Papers, HSP.
many in Louisiana believed that, as the people in the state and the nation had spoken, it was required that Jackson be the choice. 40 Unfortunately for Jackson, however, he could count only one friend, his former aide-de-camp Edward Livingston, among Louisiana's three-member delegation. As early as September 1824, William Brent, the representative of the Third District and an ally of Henry Clay declared that Jackson could never get the state's vote. 41

Brent's prediction proved accurate. On February 9, 1825, Louisiana's congressmen cast their state's vote for John Quincy Adams, helping to elevate him to the presidency. Livingston supported Jackson, while Henry Gurley joined Brent in championing Adams. The Louisiana Gazette's editor reported the results in dramatic fashion—decrying the "shameful treachery unparalleled in history." outlining his paper in black in the traditional method of announcing the death of an important individual, and surrounding his columns on the election with numerous skulls and crossbones. The paper mourned the political deaths of Henry Clay, Gurley, and Brent—the men who had subverted the will of the people of Louisiana and the nation. A Jacksonian expressed his mortification at this "scandalous intrigue" and opined that the "unprincipled" Brent would never return to


Louisiana and that Gurley's overwhelmingly pro-Jackson district would punish his treason.42

The Jackson men's attacks on Gurley and Brent emphasized that the congressmen had subverted the will of their constituents and that this unrepugnitive corruption had threatened the people's liberty. Realizing the potency of the labels anti-republican and aristocratic, both men quickly responded. On March 12, a letter from Gurley appeared in the *Louisiana Gazette* contending that he had no certain information on the public feeling in Louisiana, but he did know that Clay had the most support in the legislature and that Clay men would support Adams before Jackson. Consequently, he had obeyed the will of the people of Louisiana. Perhaps sensing the firestorm that would accompany the receipt of the delegation's vote at home, Brent penned a letter on February 10—the day after the vote in the House and seventeen days before Louisiana received the results. He asserted that Jackson could not have won, and thus his vote expressed a desire to avoid a constitutional crisis and save the Union—a noble republican goal.43

While the 1824 presidential election contributed to an increase in the politicization of the state, the connection between state and national politics remained incomplete. Not only did the presidential issue fail to surface in many legislative races, but also it played almost no role in the July gubernatorial election and the three United

42*Louisiana Gazette*, February 28, 1825; Isaac L. Baker to Andrew Jackson, March 21, 1825, Jackson Papers, LC.

States Senate contests in 1824-25. Without established parties in the state, some thought it desirable to keep these campaigns separate. A legislator from the Florida parishes, John B. Dawson expressed his desire to remain aloof from the gubernatorial contest though he "lean[ed] on the French side" because he feared that if he expressed his opinion regarding the gubernatorial candidates, it might offend someone and thereby lose a vote for Jackson in the legislature. Instead of connecting the national race to the state campaign, Dawson continued to view the gubernatorial race in the traditional manner: a battle between the Creole and American populations.\(^4\)

Five men campaigned for the gubernatorial chair in 1824: two Creoles—the very wealthy Bernard Marigny and former-governor Jacques Villeré—and three Americans—United States Senator Henry Johnson, hero of the West Florida Rebellion Philemon Thomas, and former-Congressman Thomas Butler. The editor of Le Louisianien lamented that "We cannot conceal the fact that the two languages form two opinions in regard to the gubernatorial election." The Creoles argued that the Americans were violating an unwritten accord which stipulated that the office would rotate between the two populations, and according to this scenario, it was now the Creoles' turn. The Americans denied such an agreement existed, and that if it had, it violated the sovereignty of the people.\(^5\)

\(^4\) John B. Dawson to William S. Hamilton, May 26, 1824, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.

\(^5\) Louisiana Courier, June 11, 1824; Quote from Le Louisianien June 11, 1824, in Newton, "The Americanization of French of Louisiana," 124, 130.
The campaign involved little debate over specific policies, and instead focused on this ethnic split and on charging one’s opponents with being anti-republican. A letter from a Villeré supporter that appeared in the St. Francisville Asylum decried that in Louisiana “each class or tribe has notions, prejudices and opinions peculiar to itself.” and the best solution to this unfortunate situation involved electing Villeré. The author contended that Johnson would be governor of only the American party, while Villeré would be governor of all of Louisiana. Opponents on the same side of the ethnic divide accused one another of being dupes of the other ethnic group and being persuaded to run solely to divide their own group’s votes. The anger the Creole candidates displayed toward Johnson did not compare to their antipathy towards one another. Marigny even accused Villeré of the “unforgivable sin of trying to work with the Americans.”

Marigny’s massive wealth made him an easy target for being labelled an anti-republican royalist and “an aristocrat in disguise.” Others accused Johnson’s friends of assuming an unrepublican and “dictatorial tone, as if his merits were as paramount as his claims are arrogant.”

Henry Johnson won the July battle with a one thousand vote majority over his nearest competitor, Villeré, and with 43.6 percent

46 St. Francisville Asylum, July 3, 1824.
47 Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 114.
of the popular vote. In November, despite an effort to elevate Villeré past Johnson, the legislature in a forty-one to fifteen vote selected Johnson as the next governor. An examination of the popular vote indicates the importance of the Creole-American split and sectional preferences within the state. Combining the votes of the two Creole candidates and comparing this sum to the total that the three Americans received reveals that only sixty-eight votes out of over sixty-five hundred separated the two populations, yet the votes were not evenly distributed throughout the state. In only eight of the twenty-eight parishes which delivered official returns did the victorious ethnic group receive less than 70 percent of the vote, while in ten parishes over 90 percent of the vote went to one of the two ethnic groups. (SEE APPENDIX B)

While Johnson had significant backing throughout the state, the other candidates relied on one or two areas of strength. The voters of the Florida parishes refused to support either of the Creole contenders, casting only 4.7 percent of their ballots for Marigny or Villeré. In contrast, Philemon Thomas, a Florida parish resident, received four-fifths of his votes there. Like Thomas's results, Butler's small vote was geographically concentrated, with North Louisiana providing him almost two-thirds of his total. Neglected in North Louisiana and the Florida Parishes, Marigny won a plurality in Greater Orleans and performed competitively in South Louisiana. Villeré obtained the largest total in this Creole-majority region but received less than 30 percent of the vote elsewhere. Johnson captured over 50 percent of the vote in both the Florida Parishes and North
Louisiana, and his respectable minority in the other two zones can be partly attributed to his residency in South Louisiana and his fluency in French, both of which made him tolerable to Creole voters.48

In the three Senate elections surrounding the presidential election of 1824, no direct connection was made between national and state events. In the January 1824 election, Josiah S. Johnston defeated Edward Livingston with the Creole-American fight and state sectionalism the key issues. On one hand, the Creoles in the legislature generally supported Livingston both because his brother-in-law Auguste Davezac was a prominent New Orleans Creole legislator and because, according to rumor, a Creole had been promised Livingston’s vacated congressional seat upon his elevation to the Senate. On the other hand, the Americans, especially those outside of New Orleans, supported the Red River cotton-planter Johnston. With Livingston garnering the city support and Johnston the westerners, a struggle ensued over the votes of the Florida parish members. Livingston alleged that Johnston favored the maintenance of large Spanish land grants at the expense of American settlers and that he had supported the Orleans Navigation Company to the detriment of the Florida parishes. These allegations could not overcome the members’ antipathy toward New Orleans and Creoles, and Johnston was elected by a vote of twenty-nine to twenty-seven.50

48 Louisiana Senate Journal, 1824-25, 3.

50 Isaac L. Baker to William S. Hamilton, January 16, 1824, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, January 20, 1824, Johnston Papers, HSP. While no roll call vote was recorded Johnston stated that he had gotten all of the American votes with one exception—Josiah S. Johnston to [his wife], January 15, 1824, Johnston Papers, HSP;

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With Senator Henry Johnson's election to the governor's office in July 1824, the subsequent legislature had two United States Senate seats to fill in addition to its selection of presidential electors. Despite the timing of these two events, no evidence links the presidential and senate races. First, to fill the remainder of Governor Johnson's term, the legislators selected Dominique Bouligny, a New Orleans Creole who spoke no English. Bouligny's victory rested in part on a bargain between his men and Livingston's, who traded votes for Bouligny in November for votes for Livingston in January 1825 when he met Josiah Johnston in a rematch of their battle from the previous year. The election of Bouligny heightened the country versus city tension in the legislature, and, in promoting Johnston's candidacy, the Attakapas Gazette decried New Orleans's "greedy spirit of monopoly" in its attempt to control both Senate seats and thus three of Louisiana's five representatives in Washington. Even the city's own Louisiana Gazette expressed disbelief that the legislature would elect another senator from the Crescent City, though it advocated the Florida parishes' Philemon Thomas not Johnston.\footnote{St. Martinville Attakapas Gazette, November 17, 1824; Louisiana Gazette January 4, 1825; David C. Ker to Josiah S. Johnston, December 3, 1824, Johnston Papers, HSP; Louisiana Senate Journal, 1824-25, 11.}

Once again, proponents of both candidates viewed the votes of the Florida Parishes' legislators as pivotal. They exchanged allegations that their opponents supported the Spanish land grants over those of the American emigrant population. Also, as in the prior year, Johnston had to defend himself against charges that he opposed

\footnote{Louisiana Senate Journal, 1824, 13.}
any investigation into the corrupt Orleans Navigation Company which had defrauded many Floridians. An added complication came from the candidacy of Philemon Thomas, a resident of the Florida parishes and the hero of the West Florida Rebellion. Johnston's coterie believed that Livingston had tricked Thomas into running in order to take votes away from Johnston. If that had been the plan, it worked well but not well enough. On the first ballot Livingston received twenty-five votes, Johnston nineteen, and Thomas fifteen. To win, however, a candidate needed a majority not just a plurality. Realizing their candidate had no hope of victory, Thomas's men withdrew his candidacy on the second ballot, and thirteen of the fifteen pro-Thomas members switched to Johnston giving him the victory.51

The contests between Johnston and Livingston clearly demonstrate that Louisianans viewed the presidential race and state contests through different lenses. The opposing sides of the Creole-American cleavage exhibited no consistency in the two races. While the Creoles had been Clay's strongest backers in the presidential contest, in the Senate race, they generally voted for Livingston, Jackson's former aide. Correspondingly, Johnston, who had spent most of 1824 campaigning for Henry Clay in the northeastern states, received the vote of the American legislators who had been primarily pro-Jackson. Thus, the gubernatorial and senate races demonstrate

that, despite the increased interest in the 1824 presidential election, no strictly partisan lines had been established in Louisiana.\textsuperscript{53}

The 1826 congressional elections provide a further opportunity to assess the integration of national and state politics in Louisiana. With the three incumbents running, these elections offered the voters a chance to express their opinions on their delegation's role in electing Adams to the presidency. In the First District, Edward Livingston, who had supported Jackson in 1825, easily defeated his opponent with national politics not really an issue. The true test of the integration of national and state politics and the development of parties in Louisiana would come in Gurley and Brent's districts. These two races would give the voters a chance to render their judgement on the two men who allegedly betrayed the people's will by opposing Andrew Jackson in 1825.\textsuperscript{54}

In the Third District, John Brownson and Antoine Garrigues de Flaugeac opposed William Brent. Brent's anti-Jackson stance did not prove to be significant, as neither Garrigues nor Brownson was a Jackson partisan. The Jacksonians did not present a candidate because they feared that this would divide the opposition and ensure Brent's victory. Instead, they backed Brownson, who, though a supporter of Adams, pledged himself to stand by whomever received the state's

\textsuperscript{53}Isaac L. Baker to Josiah S. Johnston, October 5, 1826, Johnston Papers, HSP.

\textsuperscript{54}The three congressional districts included: First District--Greater Orleans and most of the sugar bowl; Second District--Florida parishes plus West Baton Rouge, Iberville, and Pointe Coupee; Third District--North Louisiana, Avoyelles, and the Attakapas country.
popular vote if the presidential contest again went to the House of Representatives. His two opponents declined to make such a pledge. Brownson's northern birth along with his failure to campaign contrasted with the Maryland-born Brent's well-managed campaign which included the wide distribution of bilingual pamphlets. As in the gubernatorial and senatorial contests in the middle 1820s, the American-Creole tension surfaced in this race. A Jackson partisan moaned that the Creoles could not be persuaded to vote for Brownson but hoped that Garrigues de Flaugeac and Brent would split this vote. This hope was dashed when, on the first day of the election, Garrigues declined in Brent's favor thus guaranteeing Brent's victory.\footnote{Isaac L. Baker to Josiah S. Johnston, September 25, 1825, October 5, 1825, November 9, 1825, January 16, 1826, Walter H. Overton to Johnston, August 2, 1826, John H. Johnston to Johnston, May 9, 1826, July 25, 1826, L.S. Hazelton to Johnston, May 24, 1826, Johnston Papers, HSP. Results from all three districts can be found in \textit{Louisiana Gazette}, November 7, 1826. Under the 1812 constitution, state elections in Louisiana lasted for three days in July and presidential elections for three days in November.}

In the Second District, William S. Hamilton, Gurley's chief opponent, made the representative's vote for Adams the centerpiece of his campaign. Hamilton wrote a public letter as "Jeremiah" contending that Gurley's presidential vote was the only noteworthy event to occur during his tenure in Congress. Others agreed that the Americans in the Florida parishes would not forget his violation of his constituent's instructions in supporting Adams over Jackson in the 1824 presidential contest. This argument dovetailed with the contention that "when a Yankee was to be served," the Connecticut-born Gurley, "forgot that he owed any obligation to the people of
Louisiana." Gurley's proponents responded to this line of attack by producing a January 1825 letter in which Gurley complained that, despite his best efforts, he had been unable to obtain the opinion of the people which when "clearly and fully expressed ought to be obeyed by the Representative" in selecting the president. Hamilton's supporters scoffed at this "sophistry" and asserted that legislature's vote, which Gurley had disobeyed, had expressed the people's will.55

For the first time in Louisiana history, congressional candidates, while not running under the banner of parties, at least explicitly recognized the connection to presidential politics. Alexander Barrow, a prominent planter, described the race as "between Adams(viz) Gurley & Jackson(viz) Hamilton," and he had "very little doubt of the triumph of Old Hickory." He also believed this election would "decide whether the friends of Jackson can with certainty count on the support of this state at the next presidential contest." One of Hamilton's advisers assured him that he would be "supported by every friend to General Jackson." And, Gurley in his recapitulation of the election referred to Hamilton's friends as "the Jackson party." Additionally, a Hamilton advocate alleged that the Adams administration had established newspapers in the state to support Gurley and Brent and oppose Livingston.57


57 Alexander Barrow to Edward G.W. Butler, July 1, 1826, Butler Family Papers, HNO; Alexander White to William S. Hamilton, May 21, 1826, P.K. Wagner to Hamilton, July 30, 1826, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Henry H. Gurley to Henry Clay, August 20, 1826, in Hopkins, ed., Clay Papers,
Gurley and Hamilton did not limit themselves to debating their allegiances to Adams and Jackson. They fought for the title of republican and offered contrasting points of view on the role of government. Hamilton, of course, alleged that Gurley's vote for Adams had been un-republican, and that he, as the people's representative, would support their voice even if they were so ungrateful as to choose another over their "saviour" Jackson. He campaigned as a Jeffersonian Republican in favor of states rights and strict construction of the United States Constitution and opposed to federally sponsored internal improvements. He also placed himself in the mold of Jackson, a veteran of the War of 1812 who had retired as an independent planter.

While Hamilton challenged the idea that "power is liberty," Gurley embraced this theory. He portrayed himself as a proponent of Louisiana's welfare who had encouraged federally sponsored internal improvements in the state. One of his supporters mocked Hamilton for opposing internal improvements in the very parishes where a Washington-New Orleans road would pass, and even one of Hamilton's supporters agreed that a circular he had published on these issues had hurt his candidacy. Gurley also reiterated his stance that he had acted as a republican in supporting Adams. Through the publication of letters, circulars, and newspaper articles, both candidates made extensive efforts to place their views before the electorate.

5:634-35.
exertions indicating that they accepted the republican ideal of the sovereignty of the people.  

When the results were tallied, Gurley had won re-election to the House with 52.5 percent of the vote. While some rejoiced that his majority presented "a very strong answer to the assertion so repeatedly made, that [he] violated the wishes of [his] constituents" in voting for Adams, his victory resulted from other causes. Gurley owed his election to East Baton Rouge and Iberville where he won by 402 votes, whereas in the district's other seven parishes he lost by 267. East Baton Rouge voters supported Gurley because he lived there. The administration's appointment of Creoles to key positions, including the post master of New Orleans, helped sway prominent Creoles in Iberville to put their influence behind Gurley. Many of Hamilton's friends chastised the parish's Creoles for their abandonment of him.  

Despite these defeats, Jacksonians in Louisiana eagerly awaited 1828 when they would have a chance to elevate their hero to the presidency. In that year, the state's voters confronted legislative, congressional, and gubernatorial races in July, in addition to their first opportunity to select presidential electors in November. With a national election coming on the heels of the state election, the


59 Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, August 31, 1826, Johnston Papers, HSP; Alexander White to William S. Hamilton, September 24, 1826, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.
opportunity existed for party leaders to connect these two contests. Attempts were made to attach party labels to the gubernatorial candidates and Louisiana became more committed to a two-party system. In the gubernatorial and legislative races, however, traditional prejudices prevented the complete assimilation of the state into the national political spectrum. Also, with the state elections in July and the presidential election not until four months later, combining the two remained difficult.

With a multiplicity of candidates, the gubernatorial race, as in 1824, focused on the American-Creole split. Even eighteen months prior to the election the "public mind" was "much distracted" about the governor's race and "at least fifteen [candidates] are talked of." United States Senator Josiah Johnston found himself among those being considered, especially because many deemed him the only electable American. He preferred the security of his Senate seat to the unpredictability of a gubernatorial campaign. Perhaps because he combined an American and French heritage, Henry S. Thibodeaux was considered the most prominent candidate, but his untimely death in October 1827 left the field wide open. Eventually, the canvass narrowed to Pierre Derbigny and Bernard Marigny on the Creole side, and Philemon Thomas and Thomas Butler on the American side. As in

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60 Henry Adams Bullard to Josiah S. Johnston, January 26, 1827, Johnston Papers, HSP. Letters soliciting Johnston to run as the only American who could win include Alexander White to Johnston, February 7, 1827, Walter H. Overton to Johnston, October 3, 1826, Alexander Porter to Johnston, April 14, 1826, Johnston Papers, HSP. Thibodeaux was born an Acadian but, orphaned at an early age, was raised by the influential Schuyler family in New York before moving to Louisiana in 1790, marrying an Acadian, and settling on Bayou Lafourche.
1824, both factions feared that a division of their votes would lead to the victory of the opposing ethnic group. A letter in the Baton Rouge Gazette suggested that a legislative caucus choose between Thomas and Butler with the weaker man dropping out of the race, but nothing came of this idea. Also, the Americans, in an unsuccessful further effort to divide the Creole votes, tried to persuade Martin Duralde to run.61

With the election of a president in the same year, the possibility of combining the two races was discussed but opinion divided on the subject. In the 1828 presidential contest, Andrew Jackson, campaigning mainly on the issue that a "corrupt bargain" had usurped the will of the people in 1824–25, opposed the incumbent John Quincy Adams. Because of Gurley and Brent's roles in the election of Adams over Jackson, this issue had particular resonance in Louisiana. In the gubernatorial contest, one candidate of each ethnic group could be associated with Adams (Derbigny and Thomas) and one of each with Jackson (Marigny and Butler). Running for re-election to Congress from the Third District, William Brent asserted that "the elections in July are very important" because "they will fix the votes of our state for the fall election." A leading proponent of Jackson's cause in the Third District alleged that the noise, violence, and intolerance of the administration men would lead many Americans to support Marigny for governor. An effort by Marigny's supporters to have the Jackson nominating convention which met in New Orleans in January 1828 to

61 For a discussion of Duralde's running see Montfort Wells to Josiah S. Johnston, December 15, 1826, Johnston Papers, HSP; Baton Rouge Gazette, March 15, 1828.
declare for a governor failed. "The convention determined to keep the Presidential & Governor's election separate, not to blend the questions."  

Despite attempts to connect the two races, most voters still viewed the gubernatorial and presidential campaigns as separate entities. The failed effort to have the Jackson convention nominate a candidate demonstrated that not everyone saw an advantage in connecting the two races. A Jackson advocate seemed confused as he discussed in the same letter an "Adams ticket" for the legislature but "American" and "French" candidates for governor. Another announced his determination to support Derbigny because "he does not come out as a party candidate. Nor is it necessary that he should." An adviser to gubernatorial candidate Thomas Butler avowed the "disposition of each [of the populations] to support their own countrymen" and predicted that "the Presidential question will not mingle in near so great a degree in the gubernatorial election as some imagine." A letter in the Louisiana Journal proclaimed, "Happily the presidential question does not enter into the canvass." The timing of the two elections also added a further obstacle to their connection. With the gubernatorial election in July and the presidential contest in

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William L. Brent to James G. Taliaferro, May 9, 1828, James G. Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC; Isaac L. Baker to Josiah S. Johnston, October 5, 1826, Alexander Porter to Johnston, January 24, 1828, Mr. Grima to Johnston, January 16, 1828, Johnston Papers, HSP; Isaac L. Baker to Andrew Jackson, April 21, 1827, Jackson Papers, LC.

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November, one campaign would end before the other reached its climax.\textsuperscript{53}

Also, despite the candidates' association with Adams or Jackson, only Bernard Marigny and Thomas Butler openly aligned themselves with a particular candidate, and even their attachments remained tenuous. Both Adams and Jackson supporters condemned Marigny's efforts to tie himself to Jackson as insincere and chastised "his lying pretensions to Jacksonism" which he used "only as far as answered his own purposes." Although his brother had served as Jackson's chief of staff, Butler hesitated to connect the two races. In the November 1827 address announcing his candidacy, his proponents declared. "We consider the mingling of the national politics with our gubernatorial election, as contrary to the true spirit of our constitution." By the election, however, the leaders of the Jackson party in New Orleans had endorsed Butler's candidacy, and he had openly aligned himself with the General's cause. Butler's friends believed that his defeat could be attributed to this belated embrace of Jackson and on his being "a little too careful." They asserted that "if he had come more boldly out in favor of Jackson it would have secured his election."\textsuperscript{54}


\textsuperscript{54}Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, January 24, 1828, Johnston Papers, HSP; Tregle, \textit{Louisiana in the Age of Jackson}, 219; Butler address in \textit{Baton Rouge Gazette}, November 3, 1827; \textit{Argus}, July 4, 1828; Caroline Bell to Edward G. W. Butler, August 3, 1828, Butler Family Papers, HNO.
The final results of the election revealed that, once again, the Creole-American split played a prominent role. Thomas and Butler, both from the Florida Parishes, understood that any chance of victory would depend on Creole votes. This realization led the latter to declare that he entertained "a high opinion of the patriotism and republicanism of the Creole French inhabitants." The former agreed that he opposed the "party feelings" which had led to the creation of an "illiberal distinction" between the two populations. Neither of these appeals proved effective as Pierre Derbigny captured 44.5 percent of the votes, while the other three candidates received from 16 to 22 percent. Unlike 1824, where the two ethnic groups received almost exactly the same number of votes, this time the Creole candidates earned 62.1 percent. One major differences occurred in North Louisiana where, mainly because of Derbigny's moderate stance on the ethnic division, the Creole percentage doubled. Additionally, in South Louisiana, without favorite-son Johnson running, the Creoles solidified their already strong hold. (SEE APPENDIX B)

Of the twenty-nine parishes which reported official results, twelve of them recorded a vote of over 90 percent to one of the two ethnic groups, while only eight reported a return of less than 70 percent for the victorious ethnic group. Also, as in 1824, the returns did not demonstrate geographic uniformity across the state. Thomas won just above 50 percent of the vote in the Florida parishes, but this sum represented over 75 percent of his total. Butler had more balanced support than in 1824, but two-thirds of his total came from Florida and North Louisiana. Marigny again performed best in
Greater Orleans and South Louisiana but elevated his total in North Louisiana as well. Derbigny's victory stemmed from his domination in South Louisiana and Greater Orleans. Even if he had received no other votes, his 1870 votes in South Louisiana would have elevated him to the governor's office.65

In the concurrent legislative elections, the winners were viewed in partisan terms—as Jackson or administration men—for the first time in Louisiana's history. A letter to the Louisiana Journal denounced the prevailing spirit which viewed all subjects "through the optics of party" and asserted that in legislative races, "the first.—nay the only question to be asked is—'Is he an Adams or Jackson man?'" As in 1824, the connection between the two elections was strongest in New Orleans, where a Jackson and an administration ticket contested for the legislature. Even in rural St. Mary Parish, however, the "friends of the administration" urged support of a pro-Adams ticket for governor, Congress, and the legislature. By all accounts. Adams men controlled both houses of the legislature, especially because of their triumph in New Orleans and the surrounding parishes of the First District where not a single Jackson man was elected.66

The congressional elections also terminated to the liking of the administration men. In the First District, Edward White ousted Jacksonian Edward Livingston partly because of White's "Jacksonian

65 Official election returns in Louisiana House Journal, 1828-29, 5-6.

friends" who voted for him because he was a friend to the Creoles and a Catholic. Others refused to support Livingston because he opposed the tariff on imported sugar cane and because he spent more time in New York than in Louisiana. In the Second District, Jackson supporters again failed to oust Henry Gurley. The loser Lafayette Saunders attributed his loss to his short residence in the state, and consequently the voters' unfamiliarity with him. Also, Gurley benefitted from his supporters' determination to keep the congressional and presidential contests separated. The Jacksonians could only console themselves with a victory in the Third District where Walter Overton, campaigning as a friend of Jackson and opponent of the tariff, triumphed over Gurley's partner in the 1824 betrayal, the "infamous scoundrel" William Brent, whose extended absences from the state further injured him.67

These victories led one administration man to exclaim, "Our elections in Louisiana have settled the Jackson question in this state." Also, they left St. Mary Parish sugar planter Alexander Porter exulting "we have preserved the government of this state from falling into evil hands for the next four years." Despite holding the non-partisan position of associate justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, Porter acted as a leader the administration's cause in

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Louisiana. and he cheerfully added that "the Jackson party in this state are humbled beyond measure." Less than ten days later, Porter admitted that "not a single one of our elections turned exclusively on [the presidential question]." Victorious Third District congressional candidate Walter H. Overton agreed that "in some parishes the Presidential question obtained, whilst in others personal considerations governed." Baker, too, believed that many Adams men voted for Overton, while some Jackson supporters had gone with Brent. Prior to the election, Gurley had wondered whether "little things [the congressional election]" were to be "mixed with great ones [the presidential campaign]."  

The 1828 presidential campaign gripped the state as none previously had. A state legislator rejoiced that "Never was so much anxiety, excitement, and impatience universally felt as in the present contest. It is a great novelty to witness its influence in this state." For the first time, Louisiana voters had the privilege of selecting the state's presidential electors. Perhaps more importantly, in January of 1828, Andrew Jackson returned to the field of his glory to celebrate the anniversary of his victory in the Battle of New Orleans. During the antebellum era, presidential candidates

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69 John H. Johnston to Josiah S. Johnston, August 21, 1828, Johnston Papers, HSP.
did not campaign, so Jackson ostensibly visited solely to participate in the anniversary ceremonies. Despite the payment of lip-service to the idea that Jackson’s visit had nothing to do with presidential politics, from the start Louisianans viewed it in no other terms. An administration-dominated legislature, not wanting to show disrespect toward the hero and anger its constituents, reluctantly invited Jackson, but they intentionally failed to provide an appropriation to pay for his visit.¹⁰

Not surprisingly, the verdict on the effect of Jackson’s visit depended upon which side of the partisan divide the judge fell. While a Jackson supporter claimed that “the celebration surpassed anything I’ve ever witnessed,” an Adams man asserted, “a poorer display I have never seen.” He explained how Jackson’s friends had sponsored a dinner for the General, but, even after decreasing the price, they failed to fill the subscription. The Crescent City newspapers, especially the Louisiana Courier and the Bee, feuded over the size and quality of the General’s reception. Taking advantage of the General’s visit, Old Hickory’s advocates held a nominating convention in New Orleans at which one hundred twenty delegates from twenty-seven parishes announced Jackson as their presidential candidate.¹¹

Partisans of both candidates seized on the idea that only their favorite could preserve republicanism in the nation. Adams supporters


from sixteen parishes assembled at Baton Rouge in November 1827 and produced an address to the voters of Louisiana which denied that "bribery and corruption" had elevated Adams to the presidency. More importantly, they attacked Jackson as a military despot and proclaimed that he had, after the Battle of New Orleans in 1815, "substituted...his will to that of the law" and "trampled upon the constitution." Despite their differences, former Governor Robertson announced for Adams maintaining that Adams unlike Jackson respected the Constitution. During the election, the Argus denounced Jackson's declaration of martial law in 1815, and pro-administration carriages had "Adams & the Constitution" painted on their sides.72

A Jackson meeting in Baton Rouge almost a year later viewed things in a completely opposite manner. It saw the contest as not between republicanism and military despotism but as "between Republicanism on the one hand, and of Aristocracy on the other." The delegates contrasted the "Farmer of Tennessee" Andrew Jackson, "a patriot of practical wisdom, republican virtue and simplicity" with John Quincy Adams "a notorious aristocrat" who held in contempt the idea of a republican system of government. Every pro-Jackson assembly repeated the charge that Adams's election in 1824 had violated the will of the people. Jackson proponents labelled him "incorruptible."

72Baton Rouge Gazette, December 8, 1827; Thomas Bolling Robertson to William Robertson, August 22, 1827, Prichard Collection, LLMVC; Argus, November 3, 1828; Caroline Bell to Edward G.W. Butler, November 7, 1828, Butler Family Papers, HNO.
and claimed the General's election would "save our country from the polluting grasp of intrigue and corruption."

The proper role of the federal government in the economic sector emerged as a key issue in the campaign. Adams and Clay were associated with the American System which envisioned an activist federal government harmonizing the country's diverse economic and sectional interests. A national bank, a protective tariff, and federally sponsored internal improvements were the chief instruments of this policy. While the bank received scarcely any mention in the state, the other two pillars had a stronger appeal in Louisiana than in other southern states. Louisiana sugar cane needed a protective tariff to compete against imports from the West Indies. And, Louisiana's extensive river and bayou system needed federal help in their development. The proponents of the administration in Louisiana never labelled themselves "National Republicans," preferring either "Adams men" or "Administration men," because of the strong association of "National Republicans" with the New England states. Whatever name they chose, these Louisianans did clearly adopt the party's economic nationalism and its American System.

The Argus boldly proclaimed its allegiance to the "AMERICAN SYSTEM" which contained "the very heart and soul of our nation's independence" and labelled its opponents as "the most short-sighted politicians in existence." While admitting that some southerners

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Baton Rouge Gazette, October 25, 1828; Edward G.W. Butler to Thomas Butler, February 16, 1828, Thomas Butler Papers, LLMVC; David Kerr to Andrew Jackson, November 6, 1828, Jackson Papers, LC; Louisiana Courier, November 9, 1827; November 3, 1828.
found the system's provisions unconstitutional, the Argus asserted
that "the most liberal construction should be put upon the letter of
the constitution." It also alleged that if Jackson won the November
election, the American System would be destroyed. Owning a large
sugar cane plantation and one hundred and fifty slaves. Alexander
Porter claimed the termination of the duty on sugar cane would lead
cane growers to turn to cotton which would cause an over-production of
that staple and lead to the ruin of all planters. In Louisiana, he
concluded that both sugar cane and cotton planters had a vested
interest in the protective tariff.\textsuperscript{14}

Others, however, celebrated the idea that Jackson's election
would destroy the American System and expressed disbelief that any
southerner could advocate the idea of broad construction. Congressman
Walter Overton considered the tariff "a tax on the Southern Planter"
and "oppressive to the cotton grower." A speaker at a pro-Jackson
meeting in Alexandria deplored the "injurious tendency" a tariff would
have on southern planters. Just emerging on Louisiana's political
scene, John Slidell, a lawyer who had emigrated from New York to New
Orleans, alleged the tariff would convert "the independent cultivators
of the soil into slavish tenants of the workhouse." Realizing the
popularity of the sugar cane tariff in certain areas, the Jackson
party repeatedly distinguished between a constitutional revenue tariff
and an unconstitutional protective tariff. Arguing for this strict
constructionist viewpoint, William S. Hamilton proclaimed that "our

\textsuperscript{14} Argus, June 1, 14, 1828; Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston,
July 2, 1826, Johnston Papers, HSP; Stephenson, \textit{Alexander Porter}, 28.
Federal government is one of limited powers, and can exercise no authority which is not granted in the constitution.\textsuperscript{75}

In the November election "there never was anything seen like the exertion on both sides." In New Orleans, "the administration party had hacks running to take all they could find to the polls." In bold print, the Argus reminded "FRENCHMEN" that Jackson "banished all Frenchmen after the war," threatened to have their countryman Louaillier shot, and called them "TRAITORS [and] mistrusted you all." The pro-Jackson Louisiana Courier countered with "REMEMBER OLD HICKORY ON THE PLAINS OF CHALMETTE" and implored its readers to support the slave-holding Jackson. "A MAN OF THE SOUTH," over Adams, the proponent of northern manufacturing. Louisianans responded to the frenzy surrounding the contest and came to the polls at their highest rate ever. While 63.6 percent of those eligible voted in the July gubernatorial election, in November, turnout exceeded 75 percent in the state and, in the Florida parishes, reached an astounding 91 percent. (TABLE 1.2)\textsuperscript{76}

Andrew Jackson triumphed nationally, and, despite the efforts of the administration party. Louisiana remained true to her savior, as Jackson won the state 4,605 to 4,066. The Florida Parishes, "the

\textsuperscript{75} Walter H. Overton to William S. Hamilton, September 10, 1828. Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Overton to Josiah S. Johnston, September 30, 1828. Johnston Papers, HSP; Louisiana Courier, November 9, 12, 1827; Slidell quotation from Louisiana Courier, June 13, 1843 quoting Louisiana Advertiser May 1827; Hamilton speech written for John B. Dawson to deliver. July 1829, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.

\textsuperscript{76} Caroline Bell to Edward G.W. Butler, August 3, 1828, November 7, 1828. Butler Family Papers, HNO; Argus. November 4, 1828; Louisiana Courier, November 3, 1828.
TABLE 1.2

Turnout in 1828 Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JULY</th>
<th>NOVEMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GUBERNATORIAL</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH LA</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORLEANS</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH LA</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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|        | 63.6 | 75.3 |

backbone of the Jackson party." gave over three-quarters of its votes to the General. He also won a large majority in North Louisiana and lost a very close contest in Greater Orleans. Adams supporters did have some reason to be sanguine with the results in Louisiana. In comparison to the rest of the South, where Jackson received over 80 percent of the vote. Adams's 47 percent in Louisiana appeared very respectable. Undoubtedly. Adams's relatively strong showing stemmed from the attraction of the American System in the Pelican State. He won not only in Greater Orleans but also in pro-tariff South Louisiana which gave him two-thirds of its votes. (SEE APPENDIX A)77

One month after the presidential campaign, the legislature, which had been elected in July, gathered in New Orleans. One of its most important tasks was the election of a United States senator. The Senate election of January 1829 combined the prominent themes of this early party period in Louisiana: partisan preferences, the growing power of the voice of the people, and ethnic prejudices. The legislature divided between Adams and Jackson partisans, but the vote

77William J. Cooper, Jr., The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856 (Baton Rouge, 1978), 5-11; Unidentified newspaper clipping, March 20, 1830, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.
did not simply follow these lines. While the Jackson men united behind former Congressman Edward Livingston, the Adams men, who had a majority, failed to agree upon a candidate. The Creoles wanted to re-elect Dominique Bouligny, while the Americans supported former Senator and Governor Henry Johnson. Despite fears that a division between Bouligny and Johnson might allow Livingston to triumph, both men refused to yield. A further complication for the administration men stemmed from an effort, especially in the Third Congressional District, to have the people instruct their legislators to vote for the pro-Jackson Livingston. Rapides Representative John H. Johnston planned to vote for Henry Johnson until receiving instructions from his constituents to vote for Livingston. He realized the risk in opposing the people's will and changed his preference accordingly. Recognizing this danger to their aspirant's chances, Johnson proponents circulated counter instructions supporting their candidate.

While increased partisanship and the people's instructions played a role in the election, the Creole-American conflict could not be kept at bay. As the election approached, supposedly Bouligny and Johnson worked out a tacit understanding whereby whoever received fewer votes on the first ballot would withdraw in favor of the other. Despite falling two votes behind Bouligny, Johnson, to whom "office-holding was an obsession," stubbornly refused to abandon the race. On the fifth ballot, several of Bouligny's followers switched to Livingston, assuring his victory. This defeat resulted in a series of bitter recriminations between the two ethnic groups of the Adams party. Even an American member of the party blamed Johnson's ambition...
and contended that by refusing to yield to Bouligny. "Johnson has cut his own throat." And, for the next five years, Johnson's name would disappear from the lexicon of Louisiana politics.\textsuperscript{73}

By 1829, Louisiana had taken important steps toward the formation of popularly based political parties integrated into a national party system. First, the electorate, though only a small percentage of the total population, had become much more active and powerful. The 1824 law granting it the right to select the state's presidential electors had helped spur this change, and over three quarters of the eligible voters had taken advantage of this opportunity in 1828. In what would be the first salvo in a long battle, the \textit{Baton Rouge Gazette} in 1827 announced its advocacy of constitutional changes that included expanding the electorate and making more offices elective. Additionally, while previously only ethnicity had classified legislators, now, politicians, the press, and the electorate had begun to view them by their allegiance to national leaders—either pro-Jackson or pro-administration. Furthermore, in 1828, for the first time, all three congressional races had tied to national politics with each race having a Jackson and an Adams candidate.\textsuperscript{79}


\textsuperscript{79}\textit{Baton Rouge Gazette}, August 11, 1827.
As the 1820s came to a close, the partisan picture in Louisiana remained clouded. Both parties had reason to be confident as they looked forward to 1832 and another combination of gubernatorial and presidential races. On one hand, supporters of Adams and the American System could proudly claim the governor's office, a majority in the legislature, and two of Louisiana's three congressional seats. On the other hand, Andrew Jackson's victory in the presidential contest and the legislature's selection of a pro-Jackson senator helped Jacksonians remain optimistic. Traditional patterns and prejudices still persisted, however. In the 1828 gubernatorial race, the electorate split not only between Adams and Jackson candidates but subdivided between Creole and American proponents. Thus, because of this division, the race involved candidates from the following groups: Creole-Adams, Creole-Jackson, American-Adams, and American-Jackson. The 1829 senate race also demonstrated that, while the legislature may have divided between Adams and Jackson supporters, strict party discipline could not be assumed. The Adams legislators could not put aside their ethnic differences to unite behind a single candidate, which led to the victory of the minority Jackson party's nominee. Until partisan allegiance could overcome the sharp differences between the American and Creole populations, party development in Louisiana would remain incomplete.
CHAPTER TWO
TWO-PARTY POLITICS IN LOUISIANA. 1829-1836

Entering the 1830s, party formation in Louisiana remained incomplete. Ethnicity, state sectionalism, and personality overshadowed partisan attachment for many Louisianans. Voters often supported candidates who stood on their side of the Creole-American divide regardless of party. Louisianans preferred aspirants from their section of the state, and voters living outside New Orleans remained suspicious of nominees from the city. Additionally, Louisiana parties were incompletely integrated into a national party system. Louisianans aligned themselves with Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, or Henry Clay but declined to call themselves Democrats or National Republicans and frequently failed to perceive any connection between state and national races. These elements limited party growth and partisan attachment in Louisiana, and state level races often witnessed a multiplicity of candidates divided not by party but by ethnicity and/or residency.

By 1836, however, party structure in Louisiana had become more complete, and the state's political parties had become more fully integrated into the national party system, dividing almost evenly between the Democratic and Whig parties. With an increase in partisan organization, most races had only two candidates, one from each party. The Whigs and Democrats differed primarily in their stances on the American System—a national bank, federally sponsored internal improvements, and a protective tariff. In Louisiana, Whigs generally supported these measures, while Democrats, following President Andrew Jackson's lead, opposed most aspects of the system, only making an
exception for a tariff on sugar cane, one of the state's primary staples. Though the American System involved national issues, the intensity of partisan disagreement over its policies made it a topic even in state contests.

While attitudes toward the American System shaped party development in Louisiana, ethnicity, regionalism, personality, states rights, republicanism, and slavery remained important. Creole-American tension and sectional rivalry persisted, but in most cases operated within the party system. For instance, voters might prefer a Creole Whig over an American Whig or a Florida parish Democrat over a New Orleans Democrat. When an ethnic group or region considered itself snubbed by the party leadership, these feelings could override party loyalty. Personal rivalry, especially among the leaders of the Jackson party, further undermined party solidarity. Louisiana also contained a small contingent of states rights men who shared the Democrats' hostility to the American System but joined the Whigs in opposition to Jackson's executive tyranny. The parties based their claims on the electorate not only on economic issues, but on their ability to protect republicanism. By 1836, partisans also battled over who could best guard a more tangible southern asset—slavery. From this period until the Civil War, both Louisiana parties portrayed themselves as the best defenders of slavery and contended that the peculiar institution would be unsafe in the hands of their opponents.

Party organization among Louisiana Jacksonians began with the Andrew Jackson's defeat of John Quincy Adams in the 1828 presidential election. For the first time, his supporters would receive the
patronage of the federal government in Louisiana. For more than ten years, Beverly Chew had served as the Collector of Customs, the most prestigious patronage post in Louisiana. Jackson partisans demanded "an early example ought to be made of this man." An Adams supporter, Chew had committed the unforgivable sin of blaspheming the traditional January 8 celebration in honor of Jackson's victory at the Battle of New Orleans. In an angry epistle, a New Orleans Jacksonian alleged that Chew, a church vestryman, had refused to raise his church's flag or to ring its bells because Chew believed that he "could not celebrate that glorious victory without honoring the chief who achieved it." The correspondent suggested that Jackson replace Chew with Martin Gordon whose appointment would be "almost as painful to the coalition as your election" because of the prominent pro-Jackson role Gordon had played in the 1828 presidential contest. Jackson concurred and quickly relieved Chew of his post and appointed Gordon in his place.¹

In the wake of Jackson's victory, Gordon, a New Orleans businessman, brilliantly maneuvered himself into the position of the administration's chief representative in Louisiana. After the election, Gordon followed Jackson to Washington and convinced the president of his loyalty. Upon returning to Louisiana, Gordon received the appointment as Collector, and his New Orleans associates received the other prime Louisiana patronage posts. Gordon's rise to

¹David C. Ker to Andrew Jackson, November 15, 1828, Andrew Jackson Papers, Library of Congress (Hereinafter LC); Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., Louisiana in the Age of Jackson: A Clash of Cultures and Personalities (Baton Rouge, 1999), 229-33.
the top of Louisiana's Jackson party was somewhat surprising. Unlike most of Jackson's closest allies in the state, Gordon had not served alongside the General in the Battle of New Orleans, not even meeting Jackson until 1827. Aware of the importance of linking himself to Jackson, Gordon and his friends created a fictitious history between the two men. They portrayed Gordon as a valiant defender of the ramparts at the Battle of New Orleans, and later even alleged that Gordon, at a young age, had earned Jackson's lifelong friendship by coming to the aid of an out-numbered Jackson in a hotel lobby brawl.¹

The administration's patronage policy angered three important groups in Louisiana: Adams proponents, the Creole population, and residents of the Florida Parishes. Obviously Jackson chose not to include those who had advanced Adams's cause in his patronage plans. Seemingly unaware that his support of Adams could have angered Jackson, Judge Alexander Porter complained that "silly fools" had persuaded a man he had befriended twenty years before, when they both lived in Tennessee, to turn against him. In a more public display, friends of Chew staged a meeting to protest his ouster and, according to Gordon, to keep partisan excitement alive.² The Creoles were kept

¹ For a list of other Jackson appointments in New Orleans see Tregie, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 233. Letter of introduction from John Grymes to Andrew Jackson, November 3, 1827, Jackson Papers, LC. During the battle, Gordon left New Orleans for the safer confines of Cincinnati--New Orleans Argus, May 20, 1829. (Hereinafter all papers New Orleans unless otherwise noted). For brawl story see J.M. Whitaker, Sketches of Life and Character in Louisiana (New Orleans, 1847).

² Alexander Porter to Jesse B. Harrison, December 24, 1829, Burton Norvell Harrison and Family Papers, LC; Wendell H. Stephenson, Alexander Porter: Whig Planter of Old Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1934), 9-10; Martin Gordon to Andrew Jackson, December 10, 1829, Jackson Papers, LC.
from the public trough because the parishes where they predominated
had backed Adams in November. Jackson received advice from Louisiana
which asserted that "The French parishes alone have given majorities
against you. These people are entirely ignorant of the principles of
our government." With neither the Adams men nor the Creoles offering
Jackson much electoral support, their absence from patronage positions
was not startling.

Much more astonishing, however, was the omission of men from the
Florida Parishes among the key patronage posts. Considered "the
backbone of the Jackson party," the Florida Parishes were "run mad
about Genl. Jackson." The region's residents had loyally voted for
Jackson in the 1828 election and felt that they deserved to be
rewarded for this fealty. They knew where to place the blame for
their exclusion: Martin Gordon. Writing to Jackson, a Florida Parish
partisan lamented that despite "the noisy clamors of New Orleans...it
was the silent work of modest and noiseless Patriotism in Florida that
gave us the victory." While aware of the role that the Florida
Parishes played in Jackson's election, Gordon wished to concentrate
power in New Orleans generally, and in his own hands specifically. He

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4 David C. Ker to Andrew Jackson, November 11, 1828, Jackson Papers, LC.

5 Unidentified newspaper clipping, March 20, 1830 (1st quote) in
William S. Hamilton Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley
Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, (Hereinafter LLMVC);
T.J. Pew to Josiah S. Johnston, January 31, 1830 (2nd quote), Josiah
Stoddard Johnston Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania,
(Hereinafter HSP).

6 John B. Dawson to Andrew Jackson, May 26, 1829, quoted in Tregle,
Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 234-5.

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decided on a plan whereby, in the guise of giving into the Florida Parishes' patronage demands, he would actually diminish their political clout even further.

Correctly sensing that one of the region's leading Jacksonians, William S. Hamilton, desired to run for Congress in 1830, Gordon attempted to have him removed from the state. Gordon arranged for Hamilton to receive a federal patronage post requiring him to move to Mississippi. Gordon intended to have one of his allies, Eleazer Ripley, a northern-born New Orleanian, run for Congress in Hamilton's place further cementing Gordon's hold on the Louisiana Jackson party. Realizing that "it appeared strange that [the Surveyor General's] office should be given to a person [Hamilton] who had never sought it," Hamilton and his friends saw through Gordon's subterfuge. They also stressed that "Florida should be represented at Washington" and disparaged the "Yankee" Ripley's efforts to maneuver his way into Congress despite not even living in the district. Hamilton declined the office, and he and his allies learned to beware of the gifts offered by Gordon.¹

The competition for control of Louisiana politics took a strange turn on October 6, 1829, when Governor Derbigny died from injuries sustained in a carriage accident. The state constitution had no provision for a lieutenant governor instead stipulating that upon the

¹Alexander Barrow to William S. Hamilton, October 28, 1829, (1st quote) Lafayette Saunders to Hamilton, November 4, 1829, (2nd quote) Hamilton to Saunders December 14, 1829, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC. The Second Congressional District included the Florida Parish region plus the parishes of Iberville, Pointe Coupee, and West Baton Rouge but did not include Orleans Parish.
governor's death, the president of the Senate would ascend to the position. Though this provision may have seemed straightforward to the constitution's framers, in practice it proved a "source of great deal of confusion" and "a singular predicament." The constitution failed to indicate whether the president of the senate actually became the governor or whether he simply acted as governor while serving as president of the senate. The senate decided that the office transferred not to the man but to the position. According to this interpretation, the governorship, until the regularly scheduled 1832 election, would rotate each year when the Senate elected a new president.⁹

Upon Derbigny's death, Arnaud Beauvais, the acting president of the Senate, became governor. When the legislature reassembled in January 1830, however, the senate elected Jacques Dupré as its new president, and he replaced Beauvais as governor. Realizing the absurdity of this gubernatorial merry-go-round, the legislature scheduled a new election for July 1830 despite the absence of any constitutional sanction for such an event. Thus, two years earlier than anyone had anticipated, the Jackson party and its opponents, most commonly called either the Clay or Adams party, were forced to don their political armor and return to battle. The 1830 gubernatorial battle proved that in Louisiana: (1) political organization had

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¹See Article III, Section 17 of 1812 constitution in Constitutions of the State of Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1930), 86; Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, November 15, 1829, Johnston Papers, HSP (first quote); Isaac L. Baker to William S. Hamilton, October 16, 1829, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Argus, October 8, 1829 (second quote).

⁹Baton Rouge Gazette, October 17, 1829; Argus, October 13, 1829.
advanced but remained incomplete, (2) state sectionalism continued to exist, and (3) the split between Americans and Creoles continued to undermine party development.¹⁰

As in previous gubernatorial elections, a multitude of candidates emerged. And four months prior to the July election, the Baton Rouge Gazette still listed as many as eleven men vying for the position. Despite realizing that victory could best be achieved by uniting on a single candidate, neither party possessed an effective mechanism for designating a nominee. At the July election, four different aspirants, two allied with Jackson and two with the opposition, received over five percent of the vote. An exasperated Clay partisan recognized both parties' organizational difficulties when he declared, "Our hope is in the divisions of the Jackson party, for if they were to unite upon one, they could elect him....Fortunately they are as yet more disunited than we are."¹¹

In their effort to unite on a candidate, opponents of the administration benefitted from Henry Clay's visit to Louisiana in February 1830. With "Henry the 1st" in New Orleans, Jacksonians worried that "whomever he advocates will be elected." While in the state, Clay attended the legislature and spoke to his supporters there in an effort to help coordinate their efforts. During this time, two

¹⁰Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, January 13, 1830, Johnston Papers, HSP; Argus, January 18, 1830; Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 238-45.

of Clay's closest Louisiana allies. Senator Johnston and Clay's son-in-law Martin Duralde withdrew from the race in favor of Creole Andre Bienvenu Roman. Roman, a wealthy, St. James Parish sugar planter had served for a total of ten years in the legislature including four as Speaker of the House. Despite Clay's efforts some Clay partisans still clung to other candidates, including interim Governor Arnaud Beauvais who received 17.8 percent of the vote.\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to benefitting from Clay's appearance in Louisiana, Roman's Creole heritage also helped him. Many Creoles had been disappointed in the Jackson administration's patronage policy, which had completely ignored them. As a result, the Creoles were determined to hold on to the reins of government at the state level and thus opposed to Martin Gordon—the proscriptive policy's architect. While the 1830 election, like the 1828 contest, saw two Creoles battle two Americans, there was an important difference. In 1828, each party had a Creole and an American candidate. In 1830, both Creoles—Beauvais and Roman—were proponents of Henry Clay, and the two Americans were both Jacksonians.

The Martin Gordon-authored appointment policy of the Jackson administration had not only offended Louisiana Creoles, but had angered residents of the Florida Parishes as well. In January, the Florida Parishes' William S. Hamilton announced his bid for the governor's office. If Gordon had not wanted Hamilton as a congressman, he certainly did not approve of his gubernatorial bid.

Following the announcement of Hamilton's candidacy, Gordon and his New Orleans cronies countered by declaring Congressman William H. Overton, a Red River cotton planter, their choice for the office. They suggested to Hamilton that he withdraw from the race, and in exchange they would support him for the United States senate seat which be chosen during the upcoming legislative session. Receiving favorable reports about his candidacy throughout the country parishes and doubting the Gordon's sincerity, Hamilton declined the offer and decided to stay in the race.\textsuperscript{13}

Gordon's clique had nominated Overton without even consulting him. Writing to Hamilton, Overton asserted that the most important goal should be for the party to offer only one candidate, and to achieve this goal he would be willing to withdraw in favor of Hamilton if necessary. Aware of the anger which Gordon's policies had produced in the country parishes, Overton understood the difficulty of campaigning as Gordon's hand-picked candidate. Many voters living outside of New Orleans resented that "dictators" meeting at "Castle Gordon" had taken it upon themselves to select the party's candidate.\textsuperscript{14} Antipathy toward Gordon's heavy-handed policies resulted in a surge of support for Hamilton. He received letters contending that "Your being opposed by old Martin Gordon would only make me stick more closely to you" and "I should like to see a country candidate succeed...if for no other reason than it would surely disappoint a

\textsuperscript{13}Peter K. Wagner to William S. Hamilton, January 21, 1830, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.

\textsuperscript{14}Walter H. Overton to William S. Hamilton, March 5, 1830; W.L. Robeson to Hamilton, April 20, 1830, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.
certain New Orleans Set." After assessing his prospects, Overton withdrew from the race and announced for Hamilton.15

While Overton may have given his support to Hamilton, Gordon and his New Orleans faction still did not welcome the idea of a governor from the Florida Parishes. Ultimately both sides agreed that the calling of a statewide nominating convention would offer the best chance to reduce the field to a single Jackson candidate. In response to the call for a convention, local meetings occurred in many of the Florida Parishes and New Orleans. The remainder of the state, perhaps because of the short-notice, did not respond as enthusiastically.

Meeting in Donaldsonville in early May, the first statewide nominating convention in Louisiana's history proved a total failure as less than ten delegates from four parishes attended. Recognizing that they could not adequately claim to represent the entire Jackson party in Louisiana, they did not offer a nomination, though Hamilton's supporters informed him that he had been the unanimous choice of the few delegates present.16 After the convention, all of Hamilton's opponents within the party withdrew except for David Randall, a state senator from Ascension. Some Hamilton supporters actually welcomed Randall's candidacy and spoke of the "danger" of his resigning from

15 Isaac L. Baker to William S. Hamilton, April 18, 1830, Robert Haile to Hamilton, January 27, 1830, Gilbert C. Russell to Hamilton, April 13, 1830, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.

16 E. A. McConnel to William Hamilton, May 6, 1830, John T. MacNeil to Hamilton, May 6, 1830, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Baton Rouge Gazette, May 15, 1830; Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 243-4. In 1830, Donaldsonville, in Ascension Parish, served as the state capital. Legislators had moved it from New Orleans in 1829 but moved it back to the city in 1831.
the field. Like Roman, Randall lived in South Louisiana, where Hamilton anticipated little support. Hamilton's men hoped Randall's candidacy would cause "terrible havoc on Roman's party" in that region.17

Though Randall and interim Governor Arnaud Beauvais would receive votes, the contest primarily became a battle between the Jacksonian Hamilton and the Clay partisan Roman. Observers disagreed on whether party would be the most important variable in determining the victor. On one hand, newspapers such as the Baton Rouge Gazette "deprecate[d] the idea that the question of Jackson and Adams, Coalition and Combination, or any other National Watchword should influence and decide our local elections." On the other hand, a Baton Rouge resident asserted that "The vote of our parish will be divided by Adams Clay & Co. vs. Jackson..." These conflicting views of the political situation demonstrate that, while party identification had become an critical element in voting decisions, its influence was not total.18

As in previous contests, tension between Americans and Creoles and sectionalism intermixed with and sometimes overshadowed partisan differences. Demonstrating the importance of all three variables, the Florida Gazette asserted that voters should support a Floridian, a Jackson man, and an American—characteristics which described Hamilton. Mocking this claim, the New Orleans Argus countered with

17 W. James to William S. Hamilton, June 25, 1830, Robert Williams to Hamilton, May 29, 1830, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.

18 Baton Rouge Gazette, May 6, 1830; Montgomery Sloan to William S. Hamilton, February 10, 1830, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.
its advocacy of a Creole, a Clay man, and a resident of the Mississippi River parishes—an accurate description of Andre B. Roman. For some voters, ethnicity did not complement but overrode partisan concerns. Hamilton received advice that French Jackson men would "vote for a French Adams candidate in preference to an American Jackson man" and that Americans were determined not to vote for a French candidate.¹⁹

Differing not only in ethnicity and section, Roman and Hamilton also offered voters divergent views on the American System, especially the tariff. The Clay party cheered Hamilton's candidacy, for they believed that his "ultra feelings" made him "the most odious man in the state." In labelling Hamilton as an "ultra," the Clay party meant that Hamilton's opposition to internal improvement projects and to all protective tariffs, including the one on sugar cane, were too extreme for Louisianans and would guarantee his defeat.²⁰ Hamilton countered that, while he objected to protective tariffs, he did not challenge the constitutionality of a revenue duty on sugar cane and that he did not oppose internal improvements generally, only monopolies. Despite these avowals, some of Hamilton's friends admitted that the perception that Hamilton opposed the sugar cane duty was hurting him. Worried that the voters did not understand Hamilton's tariff views, an anxious

¹⁹St. Francisville Florida Gazette in Argus, April 13, 1830; Dr. R. Davidson to William S. Hamilton, February 4, 1830, W.L. Robeson to Hamilton, April 20, 1830, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.

²⁰Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, March 10, 1830, T.J. Pew to Johnston, January 31, 1830, Johnston Papers, HSP; David Bannister Morgan to William S. Hamilton, November 24, 1830, David Bannister Morgan Letter, LLMVC.
partisan a week prior to the election pleaded with Hamilton to "write me anything about the tariff which if published would benefit you." In an effort to cloak Hamilton's views, others advised the candidate not to issue any circulars because their publication would give "your Enemies all kinds of chances to tear you to pieces...without securing any corresponding advantage."\(^{21}\)

Other topics which surfaced in the 1830 gubernatorial contest involved the towering image of Jackson in Louisiana and the candidates' commitments to republicanism. Hamilton supporters charged that in 1815 Roman had opposed the awarding of a sword to General Jackson and wondered whether any friend of Jackson could vote for him after such an insult. Stressing the importance of having a governor "on terms of intimacy and cordiality with the Executive of the Union," they compared Roman's "general hostility" toward Jackson with the "ardent reciprocity of attachment" that existed between Hamilton and the General.\(^{22}\) The Jackson party further charged Roman, a wealthy St. James Parish sugar planter who owned more than fifty slaves, with being "a rank aristocrat" who "treats the poor with contempt." Hamilton supporters added that Roman had pledged all state offices to his relations and Creole connections. On the defensive, pro-Roman

\(^{21}\)W. James to William S. Hamilton, June 25, 1830 (first quote), John J. Burk to Hamilton, April 1, 1830, Isaac L. Baker to Hamilton, February 2, 1830 (second quote), Hamilton Papers, LLMVC. For Hamilton's view of the tariff see William S. Hamilton, Writings, 1830, Hamilton Papers.

\(^{22}\)On the issue of the sword to Jackson see Louisiana Advertiser, January 20, 29, 1830 and Charles Bullard to William S. Hamilton, May 1, 1830, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Louisiana Advertiser, July 2, 1830.
newspapers denied Roman had made any pledges and proclaimed his "independence and truly republican principles."[1]

Roman triumphed in the July election, capturing 43.8 percent of the vote with Hamilton in second with 32.1 percent. The vote of Louisiana continued to be divided along sectional lines. Hamilton captured over two-thirds of the vote in both the Florida Parishes and North Louisiana where his American ethnicity, hostility to the tariff, and association with Andrew Jackson had their strongest impact. He faltered in Greater Orleans, where Gordon's faction never embraced his candidacy even after Overton's withdrawal and the Donaldsonville convention. Writing to President Jackson, a member of the Gordon's Custom House coalition assured him that "Your friends are as true as steel," and that the party had only lost because it had offered candidates who "were not our choice." Hamilton also suffered in South Louisiana for not only did Roman and Randall live there, but this sugar cane-producing region had the most reason to object to Hamilton's anti-tariff stance. As in the previous two gubernatorial races, South Louisiana proved the difference. Casting more votes than the Florida Parishes and North Louisiana combined, its hostility toward Hamilton could not be overcome.[2] (SEE APPENDIX B)

Not only could the Clay party claim the governor's office, but it captured all three of Louisiana's congressional seats as well.

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Incumbent Edward Douglass White, a sugar planter and law partner of Alexander Porter, popular among members of both parties, ran unopposed in the First District. In the Third District, Henry Adams Bullard carefully assembled the support of influential Creoles and capitalized on a mistake of his opponent, who while serving in the legislature voted against a measure which would have increased the district's representation.  Even the overwhelmingly pro-Jackson Second District elevated Clay partisan Philemon Thomas to Congress. As the Hero of the 1810 West Florida Rebellion, Thomas had a loyal following in the region. During the campaign, he stressed his commitment to internal improvements and a fair tariff. To entice Jacksonians, Thomas promised to support the people's choice for president if the election went to the House of Representatives. More importantly, Thomas benefitted from divisions within the Jackson party. Gordon continued to push the candidacy of Eleazer Ripley, but the residents of the Florida Parishes balked at Ripley's fictitious residency in the district and nominated Lafayette Saunders. With neither Ripley nor Saunders willing to yield, Thomas easily won the seat.

The 1830 gubernatorial and congressional contests proved that the Jackson party in Louisiana continued to have difficulty in transferring the popularity of its hero to its candidates for state office. According to Alexander Porter, a Clay leader in Louisiana,
"Many Jackson men who bear the name, & avow it, are not so in their hearts." The Louisiana Advertiser, a Jackson party organ, agreed that "something besides an adherence to names is necessary" for the success of the party. The events of the next two years continued to demonstrate that. While Andrew Jackson clearly possessed more popularity than Henry Clay in Louisiana, the Clay party's program had a strong resonance with the state's voters. The Clay party won Louisiana's next three United States Senate contests and held onto all three congressional seats in 1832, while Jackson easily triumphed over Clay in the 1832 presidential election.

In 1830, Henry Clay expressed unrestrained delight at the standing ovation he received when he met with the Louisiana legislature and pronounced his surprise at the allure his American System had in Louisiana. The most important element of Clay's program for Louisianaans involved a protective tariff on sugar cane. Pro-tariff sentiment in Louisiana could be described as "so general and so strong," because by 1829 sugar cane had eclipsed cotton as the state's most valuable crop. While in 1820 the sugar cane crop had been valued at slightly over two million dollars and the cotton crop at almost seven million dollars, by the end of the decade these numbers had been reversed. In 1829, the value of cane products in Louisiana exceeded six million dollars, while cotton's total had slumped to approximately two million dollars. Additionally, the number of sugar estates in

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Louisiana had surged from 193 in 1824 to 691 in 1830, and the number of slaves in the sugar region had increased over 86 percent in the decade. Sugar cane growers in Louisiana relied on a tariff on imported cane to remain competitive with imports from the West Indies. Politicians from both parties agreed that ending the tariff on sugar cane would lead to total ruin in Louisiana, and that the attempt to repeal the duty on sugar had "goaded the people almost to madness." Governor Roman argued that the sugar cane industry "cannot succeed in Louisiana, unless the protection hitherto afforded is continued." These sentiments were not limited to Clay partisans. The Jackson-appointed district attorney in New Orleans, John Slidell hoped that declining sugar cane prices would "secure us from any attempt to reduce the duties on sugar." Even a call for an anti-tariff convention specifically exempted the duty on sugar from discussion.

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30 Roman address in Louisiana House Journal, 10th leg, 1st sess., 54; John Slidell to C.C. Cambreleng, December 6, 1829, John Slidell Letter, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection (Hereinafter HNO); Louisiana Advertiser, August 31, 1831.
Tariff advocates stressed the importance of the maintenance of the duty on cane for not only the state's sugar cane region but also for the rest of the South. They convinced Henry Clay that "all parts of the Union would partake of the distress which would certainly inflicted upon them" if sugar cane protection was removed. Senator Johnston, in a report to the secretary of the treasury, warned that a decline in the sugar cane duty would lead to a corresponding decrease in the price of slaves throughout the South, possibly cutting their value in half. Additionally, protectionists claimed that if Louisiana produced less sugar cane, the state would produce more cotton thus further lowering that staple's already decreasing price. Armed with this argument, Johnston felt confident discussing the value of the sugar cane tariff even at a public dinner in the predominantly cotton-producing Rapides Parish.  

While in Louisiana the pro-tariff forces may have swept the field, the rest of the South viewed all protective tariffs, including the one on sugar cane, as anathema. The southern wing of the Jackson party branded protective tariffs as unconstitutional, arguing that the Constitution only sanctioned revenue tariffs. Furthermore, they viewed tariffs as a tax on the southern cotton grower to provide relief for northern industry. Despite this southern animosity toward the tariff, in 1828, Congress passed a tariff containing the highest duties of the antebellum era. While most southerners decried the

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1 Henry Clay to unknown, February 16, 1831, Colton, The Works of Henry Clay, 4:293; Louisiana Courier, November 15, 1830; Johnston's Report to the Secretary of Treasury in Bee, February 4, 1831; Johnston's speech in Rapides in Niles Weekly Register, June 11, 1831, XL, 258-60.
tariff of 1828 and labelled it the "Tariff of Abominations." Many in Louisiana celebrated the bill for its protection of sugar cane. With only seven dissenting votes, the Louisiana legislature instructed the state's senators to oppose any change of the measure.11

In 1832, in an effort to achieve a compromise between tariff advocates and opponents, Congress passed a new tariff which lowered duties. Reaction in the South varied. Because the tariff reduced the sugar cane duty by one-half cent, two of Louisiana's three congressman voted against it as too mild.13 If Louisiana represented one end of the spectrum of southern reaction to the tariff, South Carolina represented the other. This hotbed of anti-protection declared the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 unconstitutional and nullified them. South Carolinians led by Vice-President John C. Calhoun argued that because the states had created the national government, the states' authority superseded the federal government's limited powers. This philosophy of states rights had considerable allure in much of the South, but in Louisiana proponents of this principle were an isolated minority. The doctrine had little appeal in Louisiana for two reasons (1) the importance of the sugar cane tariff and (2) the vehement opposition of the state's hero, President Andrew Jackson, to nullification. As a

11 Martin Duralde to Henry Clay, March 18, 1830, in Hopkins, ed., Clay Papers, 8:182-83. For a copy of the legislature's pro-tariff declaration, see Louisiana Legislature to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, March 6, 1830, Johnston Papers, HSP; For the South and the tariff and subsequent nullification controversy see Richard Ellis, Union at Risk: Jacksonian Democracy, States' Rights, and the Nullification Controversy (New York, 1987); William W. Freehling, Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836 (New York, 1965).

13 Bee, July 11, 1832.
Clay partisan derisively observed, Louisiana Jacksonians' stance regarding nullification would echo the stance of the "God of their Idolatry." In December 1832, Jackson issued the Nullification Proclamation, his reaction to South Carolina's actions. Written by former Louisiana senator and current Secretary of State Edward Livingston, the document branded South Carolina's actions as treasonous and threatened federal military intervention.

In the nullification controversy, Louisianans quickly lined up on the side of the president in his battle against South Carolina. Both the Clay party and the Jackson party in Louisiana expressed their contempt for the South Carolina nullifiers. In his 1831 inaugural address, Governor Roman railed against demagogues who talked of disunion, and in 1833 he adamantly declared, "Such doctrines find no advocates in Louisiana." Writing to the president, Jackson's New Orleans cotton factor asserted that "Your proclamation was hailed here by all parties with the greatest enthusiasm," and the Louisiana Advertiser offered copies of it for sale. To demonstrate their opposition to South Carolina's course, Louisianans held public meetings throughout the state. In New Orleans, even before Jackson's proclamation, an anti-nullification gathering eschewed moderation and endorsed a resolution to compel South Carolina "immediately [with] sword in hand." A meeting in St. Landry Parish added that the

34 Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, December 6, 1832, Johnston Papers, HSP.

unconstitutional actions of South Carolina "involv[ed] the entire overthrow, and destruction of our Union."^{16}

The few Louisianans who sympathized with South Carolina's stance realized the importance of keeping silent if they wished to continue their political careers. Not surprisingly, these men were primarily found in the Florida Parishes—a region of Louisiana similar to the rest of the South in terms of ethnicity, religion, and agriculture. Even members of an anti-nullification meeting in this region declared that they were not advocates of the tariff and sympathized with the South Carolinians who "had suffered grievously" from the oppressive duties. Among the most prominent of these Louisiana states rights men were former gubernatorial candidate William S. Hamilton and state legislator Alexander Barrow. Barrow hoped that the appearance of a states rights newspaper would lead the people of Florida to "the true faith" but such a newspaper never materialized. Perhaps Barrow hoped for a replacement for the Florida Gazette which two months prior to his comments had changed from condemning all tariffs to accepting the duty on sugar cane. States rights men in Louisiana faced a double difficulty. Not only did the importance of sugar cane in the state lead many to champion the tariff, but also because of Louisianans' adoration of President Jackson, few would openly challenge his views. After being "denounced as a nullifier" because he did not "laud the

^{16} Maunsel White to Andrew Jackson, January 12, 1833, Jackson Papers, LC; Louisiana Advertiser, December 28, 1832; Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, June 27, 1832, Johnston Papers, HSP; Carl Kohn to Samuel Kohn, July 5, 1832, February 1, 1833, Kohn Letter Book, HNO; Louisiana Courier, January 29, 30, 1833; Baton Rouge Gazette, January 26, 1833.
[nullification] proclamation & pronounce General Jackson to be immaculate." Barrow declared that he "would be hung for treason" before taking up arms against South Carolina.\textsuperscript{37}

Both sides in the debate over the tariff and nullification appealed to the ideals of republicanism, contending that an adherence to the competing views would lead to the end of the republic and the rise of a military dictatorship. On one hand, for the anti-protectionists the passage of a tariff would cause the country to change from agriculture to manufacturing. This transformation would create large manufacturing enterprises, or "monsters," requiring a standing army to protect them and to suppress the people's liberties.\textsuperscript{38} On the other hand, an anti-nullification meeting in St. Landry Parish resolved that an acceptance of South Carolina's view of the Union would result in the division of the United States into twenty-four countries, each with a standing army protecting its borders. To maintain these armies, the people would have to be heavily taxed "and finally a military despotism would arise on the free republican institutions of our country." A gathering in New

\textsuperscript{37}Account of St. Helena Parish anti-nullification meeting in Louisiana Courier, January 30, 1833; Alexander Barrow to William S. Hamilton, December 9, 1831 (first quote), February 19, 1833 (second quote), Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Description of St. Francisville Florida Gazette's change in Louisiana Courier, October 21, 1831.

\textsuperscript{38}Walter H. Overton to William S. Hamilton, January 7, 1832, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.
Orleans concurred that nullification would lead from disunion to anarchy and eventually to the dissolution of republican government.\(^{30}\)

Though the overwhelming majority of Jacksonians in Louisiana dutifully lined up behind Old Hickory in his battle with South Carolina and advocated a sugar cane tariff, these actions did not signal their acceptance of Henry Clay’s American System.\(^{40}\) Most Louisiana Jacksonians realized that opposition to the protection of sugar cane would mean political suicide in the state. Thus, the Jackson party in Louisiana tried to maintain its commitment both to the southern opposition to protection and to one of its state’s staples. Contending that they only opposed unconstitutional protective tariffs, Jacksonians argued that the sugar cane duty was not a protectionist measure but a constitutional revenue tariff which had existed prior to Louisiana’s entrance to the Union. Without a hint of irony, the editor of the *Louisiana Courier* claimed that "the sugar duty...ought not to be considered in connection with the tariff." Voters often found the distinction between protection and revenue tariffs unclear, and Clay partisans in Louisiana repeatedly exploited the electorate’s confusion. They branded tariff opponents as nullifiers and asserted that the success of Jackson candidates

\(^{39}\) *Louisiana Courier*, January 29, 1833 (quoting the resolutions of an anti-nullification meeting from the *Opelousas Gazette*); *Bee*, June 29, 1832.

\(^{40}\) *Bee*, June 21, 1832; *Louisiana Advertiser*, November 14, 1831; *Louisiana Courier*, October 21, 1831.

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would mean the end of the sugar cane duty and consequently the destruction of the state's cane industry.\(^4^1\)

The debate over the protective tariff had entered into both of Louisiana's 1831 United States Senate contests. With the expiration of Josiah Stoddard Johnston's term and with Edward Livingston's appointment as Jackson's secretary of state, the Louisiana legislature had the opportunity to fill two seats. In both contests, the Jackson party made an issue of their opponents' pro-tariff records. The Clay candidates did not attempt to hide their pro-tariff stances and instead wore them as badges of honor. They countered the Jacksonian attacks with the contention that given a choice the Jackson party would rather have a low tariff and a destitute Louisiana than have a protectionist tariff and a flourishing Louisiana.\(^4^2\)

In January, Clay partisan Johnston ran for re-election against John B. Dawson, a Florida Parish Jacksonian. The pro-administration newspapers attacked Johnston's tariff policy, contending that it aided New England weavers more than Louisiana sugar planters.\(^4^3\) Despite the Jackson party's majority in the legislature, Johnston easily triumphed over Dawson on the first ballot. Johnston's victory stemmed from three causes. First, approving of his conduct as senator, many Jacksonians voted for him aside from party considerations. Second, Florida Parish Jacksonians had pushed for a nominee from their region, and some legislators from other sections "bolted the track" because

\(^{4^1}\) *Louisiana Courier*, September 7, 1831.

\(^{4^2}\) *Louisiana Courier*, May 19, 1831; *Bee* January 10, 1831.

\(^{4^3}\) *Louisiana Advertiser*, January 1, 8, 1830.
they found a nominee from this anti-tariff region "a hard chicken to swallow." Third, some Creole members, remembering their snub for patronage positions, would not vote for a candidate associated to the administration.44

When President Jackson selected his former aide-de-camp Edward Livingston as his secretary of state, the legislature received a second opportunity to elect a senator in 1831. Since Livingston's resignation occurred between legislative sessions, Governor Roman legally could have appointed a senator to fill the vacancy. Instead, after being reminded that he owed his election to Jacksonians who had crossed party lines to vote for him, Roman called a special session of the legislature to select a new senator and to respond to the Nat Turner slave revolt in Virginia. The Clay party put forward sugar planter George Waggaman, an attorney currently serving as Louisiana secretary of state. The Jackson party countered with New Orleans lawyer Henry Carleton, whose most important asset was his marriage to Livingston's sister.45

In the months preceding the election, the Jackson party tried once again to awaken Louisianans to the danger of the Clay party's protective tariff doctrines. Opponents of protection hoped to arouse

44John H. Johnston to Josiah S. Johnston, January 8, 11, 1831, T.J. Pew to Johnston, January 10, 1831, Johnston Papers, HSP; Robert Haile to William S. Hamilton, January 19, 1830[1], Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Louisiana Courier, December 3, 1830, January 11, 1831. For Florida Parishes' desire to have one of their own in the Senate see James M. Bradford to David B. Morgan, August 25, 1830, Sol Wexler Collection, Louisiana State Museum.

the state by calling for a Free Trade meeting in New Orleans to select
delegates to a national free trade convention. They acted in vain.
Clay party leader Judge Porter predicted that "No meeting of that kind
speaks at all the sentiments of the state." His prognosis proved
accurate as protectionists and not free traders controlled the
assembly. In his opening address, the protectionist chairman
denounced the men who had called the meeting as nullifiers and
"temporarily" recessed the meeting for one hundred years.46

The breakdown of the free trade gathering presaged the problems
that the anti-protection Jacksonians would have in the November senate
contest. Clay partisans feared that with the election occurring
during the sugar cane rolling season, some of their strongest pro-
tariff advocates would miss the vote. Great exertions were made to
ensure their attendance, and the Clay party stressed the importance of
uniting behind Waggaman, "the candidate of the party." The Jackson
party emphasized the need for Louisiana to have at least one pro-
administration representative in Washington and promoted Carleton as a
man who could separate the sugar cane duty from protection of
manufacturing. They caucused in an attempt to unite behind Carleton,
but with only a minority of their members in attendance, the caucus
"broke up in confusion." Waggaman won on the first ballot not only
because of his party's pro-tariff stance, but also because he received
support from Jacksonians who resented the nepotism in Livingston's
attempt to pass the seat to his brother-in-law. With possibly as many

46 Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, September 2, 1831, Johnston Papers, HSP; Baton Rouge Gazette, October 1, 8, 1831.
as ten pro-Jackson legislators voting for Waggaman, the pro-Jackson Louisiana Advertiser expressed its disappointment the party's "pretended friends" had again let them down. 47

In addition to gaining control of both of the Louisiana's senate seats, the Clay party retained all three congressional seats in 1832. With even the pro-administration Bee admitting that no one was "rash enough to enter the field against our worthy representative," Edward Douglass White again won an uncontested election in the First District. 48 In the Third District, Henry Adams Bullard stressed his commitment to a national bank and asserted that a reduction in the sugar cane duty "would be ruinous" to Louisiana. Put forth as "the champion of Jacksonism," Lafayette Parish's Alexander Mouton, the first Creole to contend for Congress in Louisiana, campaigned against Bullard. To counteract the threat posed by Mouton among the district's Creole population, Bullard allied himself with the wealthy and influential Jacques Dupré and held onto his seat. 49

In the Second District, incumbent Philemon Thomas reiterated his pro-tariff, pro-internal improvement platform of 1830 and added a commitment to a national bank. The Clinton Olive Branch repeated

47 Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, October 29, 1831, December 1, 1831, J. Simone to Johnston, November 10, 1831, Johnston Papers, HSP; Porter to John Ker, December 12, 1831, Ker Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina (Hereinafter SHC); Louisiana Courier, May 19, 1831, October 17, 21, 1831; Louisiana Advertiser, November 17, 1831.

48 Bee, May 25, 1832.

49 Henry Adams Bullard circular (1832) in James G. Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC, Thomas Curry to Josiah S. Johnston, May 6, 1832, Johnston Papers, HSP; Louisiana Advertiser, March 29, 1832.
Thomas's 1830 claim that presidential politics should have nothing to do with the election as Thomas would support the people's choice for president in the House of Representatives. His opponent, Eleazer Ripley, argued that while the tariff may be legal it was also "an oppressive tax" which should be lowered and asserted the unconstitutionality of both federally sponsored internal improvements and a national bank. Though the Florida Parishes was the state's strongest Jackson region, Thomas narrowly defeated Ripley. Even a Clay partisan realized that Thomas's victory had more to do with his personal popularity than with the candidates' opinions regarding governmental activism. Thomas's long residency in the region coupled with his participation in the 1810 West Florida Rebellion led pro-administration papers to admit that he could never be defeated in the region. Additionally, Ripley simply possessed too many negatives to win—his association with Martin Gordon, his questionable residency claims, and his angering prominent Jackson men in the district all worked against him.50

Thus, entering the 1832 presidential contest, the Clay party and its program clearly held the upper hand in Louisiana with the governor and the entire congressional delegation all Clay partisans. This contest, however, demonstrated the unparalleled popularity of the Andrew Jackson in the state. In the election, Henry Clay armed with

50 Philemon Thomas to his constituents in Baton Rouge Gazette, May 5, 1832; Clinton Olive Branch quoted in Baton Rouge Gazette, June 16, 1832; Nicholas Baylies, Eleazer Wheelock Ripley of the War of 1812 (Des Moines, 1890), 104-108; (quote on 105); Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, August 3, 1832; Baton Rouge Gazette, May 18, 1833; Bee, August 14, 1832.
his American System challenged the incumbent Andrew Jackson. Even Clay’s strongest partisans acknowledged the futility of challenging Jackson in Louisiana and only made a half-hearted effort. While the Clay party’s attempts to employ the American System had succeeded in state races, against Old Hickory they were casually brushed aside. Defeatism pervaded the Clay campaign, and Jackson swept to an easy victory, though the total vote in Louisiana was greatly reduced because of the presence of a devastating cholera epidemic in New Orleans and its environs during the election.

The failed Free Trade meeting of September, 1831, had provided some of the first sparks of the presidential campaign. The meeting’s protectionist chairman, a legislator from Baton Rouge, took the opportunity to attack Andrew Jackson as well as free-traders. Trying to associate Jackson with free-traders, he alleged that the meeting had been called "to prop up the remaining popularity of Andrew Jackson in this state." While admitting that he had previously supported the General, the chairman asserted that Jackson’s recent conduct, especially his decision to run for a second term, had driven supporters from his ranks. Baton Rouge Jacksonians and Clayites held meetings to address the chairman’s remarks. The former called for the legislator’s resignation and celebrated Andrew Jackson, while the

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latter praised the chairman's course and condemned Jackson's actions as president.\textsuperscript{52}

The initial enthusiasm of this anti-Jackson meeting quickly disappeared. Even a year prior to the presidential election. Clay partisans despaired of his chances in Louisiana. Senator Johnston received letters from some of Clay's most loyal supporters indicating that it was "a hopeless business to persist in running [Clay] any longer!!" and that unfortunately we "have no other choice but to hang to Mr. Clay." In New Orleans, two pro-Clay newspapers, the Bee and the Mercantile Advertiser, defected to the opposition. The perceived inevitability of Jackson's election had Clay party leaders wondering not how their candidate could win but who would be Jackson's vice-president.\textsuperscript{53} After achieving so many victories, why did Clay partisans in Louisiana give up the election almost by default?

Clayites' despondency has two explanations. First, they sensed that Clay would not win the vote of the rest of the South nor the national contest. Thus, their efforts would be in vain. Second, because of Jackson's role in the Battle of New Orleans, supporters of Clay in Louisiana realized that they did not challenge a man but a demigod.\textsuperscript{54}

While Clay partisans approached the election with apprehension, Jacksonians viewed the contest as a chance to show that their party represented the majority of the state. They quickly called for a New

\textsuperscript{52} Baton Rouge Gazette, October 8, 22, 1831.

\textsuperscript{53} Thomas Curry to Josiah S. Johnston, November 15, 1831, Alexander Porter to Johnston, December 1, 1831, March 26, 1832, Johnston Papers, HSP.

\textsuperscript{54} Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 253–4, 264.
Orleans convention to choose their electoral ticket. Learning from their disastrous attempt at a gubernatorial convention in 1830, this time the Jackson leadership created more auspicious conditions. They held the assembly in New Orleans in January, the city's busiest time of year. More importantly, the gathering occurred during the legislative session, and the party allowed pro-Jackson legislators to serve as delegates for parishes with no other representation. As a result, forty-two delegates (twenty-five members of the legislature and seventeen selected in parish meetings) representing "nearly every parish" attended the convention, and a Clay party leader jealously admitted that the "Jackson party was confident of success."^5

As in 1828, Jacksonians in Louisiana returned to the theme that Jackson, because of his services in the Battle of New Orleans, was the state's savior. The first resolution of a pro-Jackson meeting declared that Louisiana owed Jackson "a special debt of gratitude." A call for another meeting urged the party to come out and support the "Victor of New Orleans." The Louisiana Courier concurred that the "sons of Louisiana" would show that they "have not forgotten the services that Jackson rendered them in times of peril." On the opening day of the election, headlines in the Louisiana Advertiser screamed "Remember OLD HICKORY on the Plains of Chalmette ON THE GLORIOUS EIGHTH JANUARY, 1815." Four years earlier, Jackson's opponents had replied to these arguments by portraying him as a military despot who would run roughshod over the Constitution. For

^5Louisiana Advertiser, January 13, 1832; Thomas Curry to Josiah S. Johnston, January 26, 1832, Johnston Papers, HSP.
the majority of Louisianans. events had belied this claim and instead had shown that his performance in this battle had been "but a preface to a more important work." In 1832 pro-Clay newspapers offered no counter to this appeal.56

The Jackson party claimed that Jackson's actions as president, particularly his veto of the bill to recharter the second Bank of the United States, had followed the same noble course that he had pursued in the Battle of New Orleans. In 1832, two years prior to the charter's scheduled termination, Clay partisans pushed through Congress a bill to recharter the national bank, an institution which Jackson had denounced. In Louisiana, few questioned its constitutionality, and, following the instructions of the legislature, all five of the state's representatives in Washington voted for the bill. In his study of Louisiana banking, George D. Green finds a favorable attitude toward the national bank in the state among prominent Jacksonians. Some, including Martin Gordon, had even served as directors of the New Orleans branch. Additionally, staunch Jacksonians such as former gubernatorial candidate Thomas Butler and former congressman Walter H. Overton desired its recharter in some form.57 Thus, Jackson's opponents believed that they had placed the

56 Louisiana Courier, October 8, 24 (third quote), November 3, 1832; Louisiana Advertiser, January 13 (first quote), November 5, 1832 (fourth quote); Bee, October 31, 1832 (second quote).

president in a no-win situation. On one hand, he could veto a bill popular with much of the electorate. On the other hand, he could approve the recharter, after announcing his opposition to the institution, and break his word. Clay supporters hoped that either course would severely damage his popularity.\textsuperscript{58}

Delighting in Jackson's predicament regarding the recharter of the bank, a Louisiana Clay partisan only expressed the caveat that "It is true that [Jackson] gets out of dilemmas better than other people."\textsuperscript{59} Jackson's actions quickly proved the accuracy of this assessment. Understanding the electorate much better than his opponents, Jackson vetoed the bill in a message that the partisan press in Louisiana labelled the "Second Declaration of the Rights of the People." While previously there had been no outcry against the Bank of the United States in Louisiana, once Jackson declared the institution "a monster" dangerous to the people's liberties, Jacksonians suddenly realized that they had foolishly allowed this threat to republicanism to exist in their midst. With the zeal of new converts, they acted quickly and spiritedly. The veto message was published, and meetings were held in which Jackson was praised for his defeat of this anti-republican institution "dangerous to the liberties and properties of this Union." With his veto message "as impregnable as the lines of the battleground of the 8th of January 1815,"

\textsuperscript{58} Thomas Curry to Josiah S. Johnston, January 26, 1832, Johnston Papers, HSP.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
Jacksonians claimed that their hero had saved the Union a second time.\

Like its use of the bank recharter, the Clay party’s attempt to employ another plank of the American System—the sugar cane tariff—against Jackson also backfired. Having successfully exploited their association with the protection of sugar cane to win every state race since 1828, Clay partisans now tried unsuccessfully to wield it against Jackson. With Jackson’s approval of the tariff of 1832, which had only slightly reduced the sugar cane duty, the Jackson party in Louisiana contended that he had placed sugar cane on a stable basis; he had provided equal protection to agriculture, manufacturing, and commerce; and most importantly that he had demonstrated his commitment to the Union in supporting this measure. Jacksonians argued that the tariff question had been settled equitably and that the "ultra-tariffists," with their insistence that rates on imported sugar cane not be reduced, threatened the Union. While in prior state elections, advocates of the American System had grouped anti-tariff Jacksonians with the nullifiers, now the Jackson party in Louisiana turned the tables and contended that the "ultra-tariffists" and the nullifiers of South Carolina had formed an unholy alliance in opposition to Jackson and to the Union.61

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60 *Louisiana Courier*, July 25, October 8, 22, 1832; *Bee*, July 26, August 18, October 9, 15 (first quote), November 3, 1832; *Louisiana Advertiser*, October 16, 1832 (second quote); Tregle calls the bank war "an imported disagreement in Louisiana," Tregle, *Louisiana in the Age of Jackson*, 258.

61 *Bee*, September 8, October 24, 27, 1832.
When the election commenced, however, neither the bank, the tariff, nor Jackson's role in the Battle of New Orleans were foremost in most Louisianans' thoughts. Instead, the state's populace was "rather looking to the cholera than to the presidential election." The people had reason to fear this scourge, and the disease struck New Orleans just prior to the election. Governor Roman described cholera's effect in New Orleans as "more fatal than in any of the cities of the union," and approximately ten percent of the Crescent City's population died in the two weeks surrounding the election. Businesses closed, political meetings were cancelled, and partisan newspapers curtailed the number of printings per week. Because of this tragedy, many voters stayed home and the total vote decreased by twenty-four percent from the 1828 presidential contest. (SEE APPENDIX A)

Andrew Jackson once again demonstrated his tremendous popularity in Louisiana and throughout the nation. Nationally, he easily triumphed in the electoral college, and he won 61.6 percent of the vote in Louisiana. Voters in the Florida Parishes and North Louisiana continued their overwhelming support of Old Hickory as he received approximately three-quarters of their votes. Additionally, Jackson, unlike in 1828, captured the vote of Greater Orleans, though receiving

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61 Walter H. Overton to Josiah S. Johnston, October 16, 1832, Johnston Papers, HSP.

62 For a description of the ravages of cholera in New Orleans see Theodore Clapp, Autobiographical Sketches and Recollections during a Thirty-Five Years Residence in New Orleans (Boston, 1857), 120-129; Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 263-4; Annual message of Governor Roman, Louisiana House Journal, 11th leg., 1st sess., 2; Bee, November 3, 6, 1832.
fewer votes than he had in 1828. Only South Louisiana, with its
dependence on the sugar cane duty, favored Clay. While the presence
of cholera made no difference in the Jackson's capture of Louisiana's
electoral votes, it undoubtedly exaggerated his victory. The total
vote decreased dramatically in Clay's two strongest regions--South
Louisiana and Greater Orleans, but the Florida Parishes saw only a ten
percent decline and the number of voters in North Louisiana actually
increased from 1828 to 1832.

While the 1832 presidential election had again demonstrated the
invincibility of Andrew Jackson in Louisiana, the question of whether
the Jackson party could transfer this popularity to other candidates
remained. Clay partisans feared that the indifference on the
presidential question would allow their enemies to gain control of the
state government, and the Jackson press wondered what state was
represented in Washington by Johnston, Waggaman, White, Thomas, and
Bullard, for it certainly could not be the pro-Jackson Louisiana.®

The first opportunity to test relative party strength came sooner than
expected when six months after the presidential election, Senator
Johnston died in a steamboat explosion on the Red River. Governor
Roman called for the legislature to fill the remainder Johnston's term
in December 1833. Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Alexander Porter
adroitly lined up members of the legislature behind his candidacy
months prior to the scheduled session. Fearing the election of this
pro-bank, "thorough going opponent of the administration," the Jackson
party tried to unite behind a single candidate, but as in previous

® Bee, November 15, 1832.
contests, party organization crumbled. The night before the election, the Jackson party changed their nominee from Walter Overton to Joseph Walker because of a belief that he would be more likely to attract the Creole vote. The switch may have aided their cause, but Porter won with a majority of two votes.\(^5\)

Once again, despite its claim to represent the majority of Louisianans, the Jackson party had failed to elect its candidate. Clay men celebrated the loss of faith that the result had produced among the overconfident Jacksonians. In the game of political musical chairs following Porter's election, Governor Roman appointed Congressman Henry Adams Bullard to Porter's vacated state supreme court position, and Clay supporter Rice Garland won Bullard's seat without Democratic opposition.\(^6\) Perhaps sensing that national party leaders might be questioning his leadership, Martin Gordon immediately sent a series of letters to Washington defending his conduct in the senatorial contest. He lashed out at his opponents both outside and within the party. Calling Porter "an Alien in every sense of the word," Gordon falsely accused the Irish-born Porter of not being a United States citizen. He railed against "the monied influence" of New Orleans banks and chastised national party leaders for depositing federal monies in two New Orleans banks which had used their financial

\(^{5}\)Nicholas P. Trist to wife, December 26, 1833, Nicholas Trist Papers, SHC (quote); Alexander Porter to John Ker, July 8, 1833, Alexander Porter Letter, LLMVC; Alexander Porter to Ker, October 6, 1833, December 20, 1833, James Porter to Ker, December 15, 1833, Ker Family Papers, SHC. For the importance of the bank issue in the senate contest see Stephenson, Alexander Porter, 29-30.

\(^{6}\)Henry Adams Bullard to Daniel Webster, March 8, 1834, Daniel Webster Papers, LC.
leverage against the Jackson party. He attacked the directors of one as "violent enemies of Andrew Jackson" and the other as "the corrupt machine of which Henry Clay is the sole director." Gordon further attributed Walker’s loss to "Traitors in our Ranks," singling out Federal District Attorney John Slidell for vituperation because of his alleged betrayal of the party.\(^6^7\)

Seeing enemies everywhere, Gordon failed to realize that his own actions more than anyone else’s had jeopardized the success of his party. Joseph Tregle contends that a possibly unbalanced Gordon had come to believe "he was the Jackson party in Louisiana" and that the party’s triumph in the 1832 presidential campaign had "emboldened [Gordon] to bid for the complete mastery of his Jacksonian colleagues."\(^6^8\) "Making himself daily more obnoxious." Gordon arranged to have John Slidell dismissed as Federal District Attorney. Caught off-guard, Slidell at first tried to repair the rift with Gordon, but, after realizing the impossibility of this effort, joined Gordon in a competition to enlist the support of national party leaders—particularly President Jackson and Vice President Martin Van Buren.\(^6^9\)

\(^{67}\) Martin Gordon to Andrew Jackson, December 13, 1833, (quotes regarding the banks), December 14, 1833, (alien and traitor quotes) Gordon to F.P. Blair, December 16, 1833, Gordon to William B. Lewis, December 16, 1833, all in Jackson Papers, LC.

\(^{68}\) Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., "The Political Apprenticeship of John Slidell," *Journal of Southern History* XXVI (February 1960), 57-70. (quote p. 62.)

\(^{69}\) Carl Kohn to Samuel Kohn, April 17, 1833, Kohn Letter Book, HNO (quote); John Slidell to Martin Gordon, December 13, 1832, Slidell to Andrew Jackson, January 7, 1833, Slidell Letter Book, Manuscripts Department, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana; Slidell to Martin Van Buren, March 27, 1833, Van Buren Papers, LC; Jackson to Gordon, April 9, 1833, Jackson Papers, LC.
Gordon shrewdly used a two-pronged attack to out-maneuver Slidell in the contest for the backing of the national party leadership. First, he gained Jackson's ear before Slidell could present his side of the story. He labelled Slidell a nullifier and an associate of South Carolinian John C. Calhoun—the leader of the nullification movement and Jackson's sworn enemy. Second, Gordon sent a one thousand dollar donation to a Jackson ally in Washington. An emotional Jackson recognized that "these friends of mine mean to pay back...the thousand dollar fine imposed on me at New Orleans [in 1815]." Slidell valiantly fought back. He had his supporters, including some of Jackson's closest friends, send a petition to the president, and Slidell went to New York to explain the situation to Van Buren in person. Jackson, however, was the type of man who once his mind had been made up nothing Slidell or anyone else did could change it. Slidell lost his position, and Gordon at least temporarily remained the master of Louisiana's Jackson party.⁷⁰

Gordon had succeeded in his attempt to control the Jackson party, and Senator Porter would assert that in Washington enemies of Gordon were considered enemies of the president and that Slidell would never be forgiven. Gordon's victory would soon prove pyrrhic, and Slidell's name not Gordon's has come to be equated with Louisiana's antebellum Democratic party. If Gordon wished to continue to have the confidence of the national party's leadership, he needed to produce results, and his alienation of much of his own party in Louisiana made

⁷⁰Tregle, "The Political Apprenticeship of Slidell," 66-7; Francis Blair to Gordon, April 11, 1833, quoted in ibid., 66; John Slidell to Martin Van Buren, March 27, 1833, Van Buren Papers, LC.
this achievement almost impossible. Porter's victory in the 1833 senate contest demonstrated that the Jackson party would not automatically line up behind a Gordon nominee, and the subsequent defeat of Gordon's hand-picked candidate in the 1834 gubernatorial contest would signal the end of Gordon's tenure as undisputed chieftain of Louisiana's Jackson party.  

In 1834, Louisianans would witness the state's first truly partisan gubernatorial campaign with each party having a single candidate. Gordon and the Jackson party, which would become known as the Democratic party by the election, hoisted John B. Dawson's name atop their newspapers as early as 1831. Realizing after the 1830 governor's race that he could not afford to alienate the party's stronghold, the Florida Parishes, Gordon and his associates selected Dawson, a very popular Florida Parish judge as their choice. Their opponents, who would be called Whigs by election day, acknowledged the potency of the combination of Gordon and the Florida Parishes. Whig leaders recognized the necessity of running their most popular man even if not their most capable and concluded "no one else but [Congressman Edward Douglass] White has any chance with Dawson." A sugar planter and former law partner of Alexander Porter, White had demonstrated his popularity as twice the Democrats had declined to oppose him for Congress. At White's urging the party waited until

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71 Alexander Porter to Jesse B. Harrison, June 1, 1834, Burton N. Harrison and Family Papers, LC.

72 Louisiana Advertiser, November 21, 1831; For 1834 gubernatorial campaign see Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 276-95.
after his victory in the 1832 congressional race to announce officially his name as a candidate.  

With Dawson and White prominently before the public more than two years prior to the election, other men were reluctant to come forward. The break between Slidell and Gordon did briefly lead to the appearance of a third candidate—New Orleans Mayor Denis Prieur. The Slidell faction hoped that the popular Prieur could take the Creole vote from the two American candidates. Gordon, however, designed a clever stratagem to ensure Prieur’s withdrawal from the race. In April 1834, two months prior to the gubernatorial election, Prieur faced re-election as New Orleans mayor. When Prieur entered the gubernatorial canvass, Gordon and his allies placed a candidate in opposition to Prieur for the mayoralty. Preferring the security of the mayor’s office, Prieur withdrew from the governor’s race, and Gordon’s candidate withdrew from the mayor’s race. Thus, the contest remained a battle between Dawson and White.  

White remained in Washington lamenting that despite his inclination to canvass he lacked the knowledge or instincts to do so, but his partisans in Louisiana proved very adept at campaigning. Instead of attacking Dawson directly, they aimed most of their barbs at Martin Gordon. They labelled Dawson the candidate of the "custom house cabal" which already controlling national politics in the state,  

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71 Alexander Porter to Josiah S. Johnston, March 18, 1832, May 9, 1832, Johnston Papers, HSP; Edward Douglass White to George W. Boyd, June 2, 1832, Edward Douglass White Letter, LLMVC.

now wished to control state level politics, too. Words such as "despotic control," "coterie," "cabal," "dictate," and "faction" filled their columns. They argued that if Dawson were to win the governor's race, Martin Gordon would rule the state with Dawson as his puppet. Pro-Dawson newspapers complained that White partisans saw Dawson and Gordon as twins, and insisted that a separation must be made between Gordon advocating Dawson's election and Gordon controlling Dawson. White advocates found no need for such distinctions and continued campaigning as if Gordon and Dawson were the same man.  

If White partisans found their bogeyman in Martin Gordon, Dawson proponents found theirs in recently elected United States Senator Alexander Porter. The pro-White Louisiana Advertiser realized the similar nature of the attacks on Porter and Gordon and alleged that in attacking Porter, Dawson men "find their truest model in Martin Gordon." Dawsonites accused White of being "a passive instrument" or "a pet and slave" in the control of Porter's aristocratic junto. The papers contrasted Porter and White's aristocratic contempt for the common people with Dawson's championship of democracy. Dawsonites gained political capital from a White advocate's condescending remark that whiskey drinkers favored Dawson, and they contended the race was a contest of "DEMOCRACY versus ARISTOCRACY." White proponents did not

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75 Edward Douglass White to George W. Boyd, January 28, 1834, Antebellum Letter Collection, HNO; Louisiana Advertiser, January 15, 28, April 2, 9, June 2, 1834; Louisiana Courier, October 15, 1833.

76 Louisiana Advertiser, May 19, 1834; For a discussion of Porter's role in the election see Stephenson, Alexander Porter, 81-87.
allow Dawsonites sole claim as the party of the people as they compared the simple tastes of White with the elaborate trappings of Dawson whom they accused of "foppery" and "dandyism." 77

The Democrats' charges of aristocracy reached a crescendo after Whig Henry Johnson entered the race for White's vacated First District congressional seat. Having placed Johnson in political exile since his refusal to withdraw from the 1829 senate race had led to Edward Livingston's victory, the party in April 1834 welcomed the former governor back into its fold. With the election less than three months away, the Whigs needed a congressional candidate and Johnson's popularity in the region overcame their five-year old grudge. For Dawsonites, the appearance of Johnson provided all the proof they needed that an aristocratic conspiracy existed. They charged that Porter and Johnson, members of Louisiana's 1812 constitutional convention, had written aristocratic provisions into the document to allow themselves to monopolize the offices of the state. Since the constitution's inception, Porter, currently a United States senator, had served in the state legislature and as a state Supreme Court justice for twelve years, while Johnson had been governor, senator, and now wished to be a representative. They had added the three-term congressman White to their aristocratic inner circle which intended to rotate state offices among themselves. 78

77Bee, June 19 (first quote), 28, July 1, 1834; New Orleans Daily News, April 24 (second quote), June 24, 1834 (3rd quote); Plaquemine Iberville Gazette quoted in St. Francisville Phoenix, September 21, 1833 (fourth quote).

78New Orleans Daily News, April 17, May 21, 1834; Bee, June 29, 1834.
While voters may not have accepted this sinister view of Porter and Johnson's role in the 1812 convention, debate over the constitution did offer them a tangible choice. Labelling the document aristocratic, Dawsonites championed constitutional reform, particularly the removal of a tax-paying requirement which thwarted universal suffrage. They also hoped to reduce the governor's patronage powers by expanding the number of elective offices, perhaps even including the judiciary. They charged that their opponents, especially the aristocratic Porter, felt that the poor deserved no choice in their government. White and the Whigs did have a different constitutional vision, as a pro-White platform celebrated their candidate's opposition to "a premature change in our state constitution." Porter admitted that he believed that the property basis was the proper one for suffrage, and the pro-White Louisiana Advertiser asserted that suffrage was extended far enough already. 79

In addition to debate over the state constitution, national issues also played a role in the gubernatorial campaign. As in previous contests, the debate over the tariff proved central. White partisans alleged that Dawson had nullification propensities, and the Democrats were forced once again to explain how they distinguished between the sugar cane duty and protective tariffs. Dawsonites countered with an attack on White for his vote for the compromise tariff of 1833 which lowered the duty on imported sugar cane. They alleged that White had betrayed his constituents and had voted on the

79 Bee, May 13, 1834; New Orleans Daily News, April 21, 1834; Louisiana Advertiser, July 2, 7 (platform quote), 1834; Alexander Porter to Jesse B. Harrison, June 1, 1834, Harrison and Family Papers, LC.
same side as the nullifiers. White partisans adroitly parried this blow with their contention that White had advocated compromise to save the Union and that he had taken the same position on the bill as the Democrats' idol President Jackson. When combined with White's residency in the sugar region, these arguments helped provide him with an overwhelming victory in the sugar cane producing parishes.80

The two candidates also offered contrasting views on the other two planks of the American System—a national bank and internal improvements. White supporters compared their candidate's championship of these measures with Dawson's antagonism. Dawsonites explained how their nominee's opposition stemmed from his desire to protect the people's republican liberties. Echoing the words of President Jackson, they branded the bank a "monster of corruption" attempting to establish a "moneyed aristocracy." Federally-sponsored internal improvements joined the bank in threatening to shackle the limbs of republican freemen. Dawsonites alleged that the only legislators who voted for these projects were speculators and those whose local area benefitted from them.81

The debate over the value of the American System demonstrates the importance of national issues in the campaign. During the battle between White and Dawson, the Henry Clay-led opposition to President Jackson assumed the name Whigs. The origins of the southern Whig party have engendered much debate among historians. Generally these

80 Louisiana Advertiser, January 1, February 12, 1834; St. Martinsville Attakapas Gazette in New Orleans Bee, February 22, 1834.
scholars fall into one of two schools: those who emphasize the party's states rights origins, and those who stress its economic antecedents—specifically debate over the Bank of the United States and the tariff. Arthur C. Cole has defined the Whig party in the South as a combination of National Republicans, states rights men, and alienated Democrats. The relative weight of each of these components varied in each state, but in most of the South the states rights wing predominated with the National Republican element often reduced to a voiceless minority primarily because its American System had little appeal in the region.\textsuperscript{82}

Though Louisiana's Whig party possessed the same components as other southern Whig organizations—National Republicans, states rights advocates, and disaffected Democrats—the formation of the Whig party did not lead to an elaborate redrawing of party lines in the state. In Louisiana, the attraction of Henry Clay's program had led his supporters to dominate state politics, and these men saw no reason to overhaul their platform to gain more adherents. In their studies of Louisiana Whiggery, Leslie Norton and William H. Adams stress the importance of economic origins in the party's birth, and Charles Sellers has even asserted that Louisiana's Whig party simply represented "National Republicanism continued under a new name." This conclusion rings true with two caveats. First, while Louisianans had

\textsuperscript{82}Arthur C. Cole, \textit{The Whig Party in the South} (Washington, 1913), 1-38; Charles G. Sellers, Jr., "Who Were the Southern Whigs?" \textit{American Historical Review}, LIX (1954), 335-346; William J. Cooper, Jr., \textit{The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856} (Baton Rouge, 1978), 43-58. By 1834, the national bank issue involved discussion over the constitutionality of the institution and debate over the president's right to remove federal funds from it.
been lukewarm in calling themselves National Republicans. preferring to label themselves the Clay party, they gladly accepted the title of Whigs. Not fully integrated into the national party system during the life span of the National Republican party, Louisianaans preferred the attachment to strong personalities such as Clay or Jackson to partisan labels. Also, with the National Republican party being an overwhelmingly northern organization, Louisiana’s voters had been wary of the name.31

Second, Sellers's pronouncement ignores the Louisiana Whig party's states rights minority. Henry Robertson has demonstrated that in the Florida Parishes the nationalist Whigs had to enter into a coalition with states rights men to hope to achieve victory. States rights advocates opposed to the executive tyranny of the president they referred to as "Andrew the 1st" joined the Whigs. The two groups did not agree on most issues, but they could agree to unite in opposition to Jackson's assumption of too much power in the executive branch. In contrast to the rest of the South, where the National Republican wing remained silent partners in a states rights Whig coalition, in Louisiana the opposite situation prevailed. Former congressman Henry Adams Bullard’s description of his successor and fellow Whig Rice Garland demonstrates this distinction. He cheerfully related that Garland though born in Virginia is "not of the hair splitting state rights party" but a proponent of internal improvements.

and a national bank. States rights men did join the Louisiana Whig party, but in Louisiana, they entered into the coalition not as dominant but as minority partners.  

The 1834 congressional elections which occurred simultaneously with the gubernatorial race demonstrate the prominence of the American System in the origins of the Louisiana Whig party. Across the state, even in the Florida Parishes, Whig candidates loudly proclaimed their allegiance to the tenets of the American System, and none mentioned states rights. Three months prior to the election, the New Orleans Whig organ, the Louisiana Advertiser lamented the absence of an anti-administration, pro-tariff, pro-internal improvement, pro-bank candidate for White's vacant First District seat. To fill this gap, the party welcomed former Governor Henry Johnson back and he faced two Democrats divided over the constitutionality of a national bank. The relative importance of economic policy in the formation of the Whig party can be seen in the Second District, which included the states rights Florida Parishes. The popular Philemon Thomas, now sixty-seven years old, declined to run for re-election, and four men challenged for his position. Even here, the Whig nominee stressed his commitment to the tariff and the Bank of the United States, with positions on the bank serving as the main difference between the two strongest

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84 Henry O. Robertson, "The Emergence of the Whig Party in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1834-1840," Louisiana History 33 (Summer 1992), 283-316; Henry Adams Bullard to Daniel Webster, March 8, 1834, Daniel Webster Papers, LC.
candidates. A similar situation prevailed in the Third District, where a pro-bank Whig opposed and anti-bank Democrat.\textsuperscript{85}

The July elections proved once again that the proponents of the American System, whether labelled the Clay party, National Republicans, or Whigs, held the upper hand in Louisiana. The Whigs had to be satisfied with their employment of economic issues which led to capturing the governor’s office, winning two of the three congressional races, and achieving a majority in the legislature. Obtaining 57.3 percent of the vote, White won a convincing victory in the gubernatorial contest. As in previous contests, the Whigs’ allure proved strongest in Greater Orleans and the South Louisiana with White winning almost two-thirds of the vote in the former and over three-fourths in the latter. The performance of White and the Whig congressional candidates demonstrate the absence of a Whig appeal to states rights men. In the states rights Florida Parishes, White won less than one-fifth the vote, and the Whigs lost their only congressional race because of weak support in this region.\textsuperscript{86} (SEE APPENDIX B)

Not only did the election witness the entrance of the Whig party into Louisiana politics, but it also marked the termination of Martin Gordon’s reign as undisputed master of the Louisiana Democratic party. Gordon’s autocratic policies had alienated members of both parties.

\textsuperscript{85} First District—Louisiana Advertiser, April 8, 1834; Bee, June 28, 1834; Second District—Baton Rouge Gazette, April 5, May 3, 1834; Bee, August 13, 1834; Third District—St. Martinsville Attakapas Gazette, July 5, 1834.

\textsuperscript{86} Bee, July 14, 17, 1834; Louisiana Advertiser, July 14, 17, 1834.
Once again, his choice for a state office had been defeated, and his opponents had even effectively used Gordon's association with Dawson against the candidate. More importantly, in the midst of the campaign, the news that the United States Senate had rejected Gordon's re-appointment as Collector of Customs reached the state. Gordon's opponents both outside and within the party celebrated this announcement which effectively ended Gordon's stranglehold on the Democratic party.87

The growing assimilation of Louisiana political parties into the national parties resulted in the partial suppression of the Anglo-Creole split. In his study of relationship between American and Creoles, Lewis Newton declares that in the 1834 canvass, "Only the faintest echoes of the old distinctions" remained from this division which had dominated prior gubernatorial campaigns. After Prieur's resignation from the contest, the race did not have a Creole candidate. While both candidates portrayed themselves as the better friend of the Creoles, they also deprecated any attempts to distinguish between the two populations. Each party counted Creoles and Americans among its members, and with the strengths of the Whigs and the Democrats being approximately equal, any alienation of either of the major ethnic groups could prove costly. For the rest of the

87 For an example of a Jacksonian alienated by Gordon's policies see Carl Kohn to Samuel Kohn, April 17, 1833, Carl Kohn Letter Book, HNO. Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 292-4.
antebellum period, candidates would be labelled first and foremost as partisans, but ethnicity could never be entirely ignored.\(^8\)

The subsequent legislative session confirmed that while partisan politics had overshadowed ethnic tensions, the Creole-American rivalry could overcome partisan loyalty in races where the candidates represented different ethnic groups. In January 1835, a Whig legislature elected Democrat Charles Gayarré to the United States Senate. Senator Porter could not control his anger at the "petty divisions" in the Whig party which prevented it from uniting on a nominee and contributed to the "disastrous" election of Gayarré. A lawyer and state legislator from New Orleans, Gayarré, a self-described "staunch friend...of the present administration," opposed federally sponsored internal improvements and the bank.\(^9\) In an attempt to explain the defeat, an exasperated Whig informed a friend that Louisiana politics contained "an element unknown in other states...'creolism'" which undermined party loyalty. Gayarré agreed that the "personal devotion of three Whig friends" and not partisanship had secured his election.\(^10\)

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\(^9\) Alexander Porter to John Ker, January 13, 1835, February 20, 1835, Ker Family Papers, SHC; Gayarré’s self-description in Louisiana Courier, January 28, 1835.

\(^10\) "Creolism" quote in Henry Adams Bullard to Amos Lawrence, February 28, 1835, Amos Lawrence Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Charles Gayarré, Letter to the Editor of the Washington Union (New Orleans, 1854), 4.
Because of illness, Gayarré never took his seat in the senate, instead he temporarily retired from Louisiana politics and spent the next eight years convalescing and doing historical research in France. By the time of the new election in January 1836, the Democrats had gained control of the legislature. In an effort to capture Democratic votes, the Whigs nominated Alexander Barrow a states rights Whig from the Florida Parishes. Barrow had previously been labelled a "nullifier" and had left the Democratic party because of the "man worship" of Andrew Jackson. The ploy proved unsuccessful, however, as on the second ballot, Barrow lost to Democrat Robert Carter Nicholas, a sugar planter from Terrebonne Parish.91

The presidential election of 1836 provided the Whigs and Democrats their first opportunity to challenge each other in a national campaign. In 1835, a national Democratic convention nominated Vice President Martin Van Buren, a New Yorker who had the blessing of President Jackson. The Whigs, both because they realized that they were the country's minority party and because their party represented a coalition of groups which could agree to oppose the Democrats but on little else, did not hold a national convention. Instead, Whig state conventions endorsed three separate candidates: Daniel Webster and William Henry Harrison in the North and Hugh Lawson White in the South. The candidacy of White, a Tennessean and former Jackson party stalwart, represented the Whigs' attempt to make inroads

into the Democrats' solid grip on southern voters, especially states rights men.\(^9\)

The southern Whigs' strategy involved an attempt to capitalize on White's southern birth, especially in contrast to the New Yorker Van Buren. By the mid-1830s, primarily because of the rise of an organized abolitionist movement in the North, tensions between the sections had increased. The movement's actions involved sending antislavery petitions to Congress, mailing abolitionist tracts to southern states, and attempting to end slavery in the nation's capital. Southern Whigs urged voters to consider these attacks and ask themselves whether their region would be safer with a Tennessee slaveholder in the White House or with Van Buren. According to their argument, Van Buren magnified the misfortune of his northern birth with voting for Negro suffrage in New York, opposing slavery in Missouri, and advocating abolition in the District of Columbia.\(^9\)

Louisianans in the 1830s were as sensitive as their fellow southerners to threats to slavery.\(^9\) Some presumably recollected the Pointe Coupee conspiracy of 1795 which had concluded with the beheading of more than fifteen slaves, and many more remembered an

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\(^9\) For a discussion of the presidential campaign in the South see Cooper, The South and the Politics of Slavery, 74-97.

1811 revolt involving more than five hundred slaves in the parishes up the Mississippi River from New Orleans in which more than sixty slaves died. By the 1830s, fears of slave insurrection in Louisiana had not diminished but perhaps had increased. According to the 1830 census, slaves outnumbered whites in Louisiana for the first time. Governor Dupré, in his annual message of 1831, warned that this disparity threatened the state's peace and security and urged lawmakers to restrict the entry of new slaves into the state. The legislators failed to heed his advice, but, later that year, Nat Turner's revolt in Virginia "reminded the Citizens of Louisiana of their defenseless situation." Governor Roman called a special session of the legislature in November 1831 with the dual purpose of responding to the revolt and electing a United States senator. Roman repeated Dupré's warnings regarding the inequality between Louisiana's white and black populations, and this time the legislators responded with the passage of an act to outlaw the importation of slaves for sale into Louisiana.95

A year prior to the 1836 presidential election, fears of slave insurrection in Louisiana received a new impetus. While Louisianans followed congressional debates over antislavery petitions and the mailing of abolitionist tracts, a rumored slave conspiracy in neighboring Mississippi further heightened their anxiety. In the

95Dupré address in Louisiana House Journal, 10th leg., 1st sess., 10-11; Nathan Morse to Andrew Jackson, October 11, 1831, Jackson Papers, LC (quote); Judith Kelleher Schafer, "The Immediate Impact of Nat Turner's Insurrection on New Orleans," Louisiana History (1982), 159-78; Roman address in Louisiana House Journal, 10th leg., Extra Sess., 2-3; The ban on the importation of slaves into Louisiana was repealed in 1834.
panic following the uncovering of the alleged Murrell conspiracy, many whites and slaves were lynched. This hysteria quickly crossed the border into Louisiana and resulted in the formation of vigilance committees and in the arrest and punishment of suspicious strangers. The New Orleans city government, in its Report of a Conspiracy to Incite a Rebellion Throughout the Slave States claimed that southerners needed to worry both about northern abolitionists and "an organized horde of reckless and blood-thirsty barbarians, who prowl throughout our own communities." A month later, New Orleanians formed the Louisiana Constitutional and Anti-Fanatical Society to combat the "misguided fanatics" of the North by forming vigilance committees, enlightening northerners, and enforcing current laws more strictly.

In the midst of this tense anti-abolitionist, anti-northern atmosphere, the presidential campaign began in Louisiana. While most southern Whigs celebrated White's state-rights heritage and his connection to Andrew Jackson, Louisiana Whigs, with their stronger attachment to the American System, found little to praise in the anti-tariff, anti-internal improvement, anti-bank White. Whig former Senator Waggaman claimed that White had always opposed any measures beneficial to Louisiana. The only exception to this anti-White feeling occurred in the Florida Parishes, where a diarist expressed

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96 For meetings see Bee, August 10, 19, 1835; True American, August 6, 8, 17, 1835; Louisiana Courier, August 15, September 29, 1835; For arrests and punishments see Bee, September 11, 21, 1835; True American, August 10, 1835.

97 Hackett, "The Days of this Republic Will Be Numbered," 140-42. (Quote from Report of a Conspiracy... on p. 142); Constitution of the Louisiana Constitutional and Anti-Fanatical Society (New Orleans, 1835).
his satisfaction at voting for the "states rights" White over the "strong government" Van Buren. To appease this minority, the Whigs placed the vocal states-rights proponent Alexander Barrow on their slate of presidential electors. Most Louisiana Whigs, however, preferred not to celebrate White but to attack Martin Van Buren. Only days before the election, the largest New Orleans White gathering chose to call itself the "Great Anti-Van Buren Meeting"—stressing its opposition to the Democrat candidate over its support for White. Concurring with this emphasis, the Commercial Bulletin urged its readers to vote for the "Anti-Van Buren Electoral Ticket" without mentioning White's name.

Because of their distaste for White's doctrines, Louisiana Whigs faced a difficult chore in campaigning for him. For most of them, White had only two positives: he lived South of the Mason-Dixon line and he was not Martin Van Buren. The Whigs capitalized on both these traits, and the introduction of slavery into the campaign proved a godsend for them. They embraced the issue of whether White or Van Buren would best protect slavery with an eagerness bordering on desperation, and it quickly became the focal point of their campaign. Louisiana Whigs found common ground with their fellow southern partisans in realizing the importance of protecting slavery and its force as a campaign weapon. "Our interests," according to Senator


Porter, "imperatively require a Slave holding president." Whigs attacked Van Buren, alleging he possessed "a decided opposition to the institution of slavery." On the eve of the election, an anti-Van Buren meeting declared that Van Buren's election would imperil the South's domestic institutions.  

Louisiana Democratic leaders recognized the potency of these charges and worried about the effect they would have on their party's voters. A year before the election, a New Orleanian wrote Van Buren on "the all important subject of Abolitionism" and urged him to "come out immediately and declare your sentiments" as "delay will create suspicions which might be very hard to eradicate." In New Orleans, the Bee and the Louisiana Courier led the defense of Van Buren and published more than thirty editorials explaining his stance. And, beginning in June, every issue of the two newspapers included a statement from Van Buren declaring his opposition to ending slavery in the District of Columbia and to interfering with it in the southern states.  

White's candidacy proved doubly difficult for Louisiana Democrats to counter. Like their Whig counterparts, they were sensitive to the slavery issue. Unlike most Whigs, however, many Democrats admired White's anti-bank, anti-tariff, states rights doctrines. Former senatorial and congressional candidate Joseph Alexander Porter to Jesse B. Harrison, January 12, 1836, Harrison and Family Papers, LC; Commercial Bulletin, October 31, 1836; True American, October 27, 1836.  

William Christy to Martin Van Buren, September 24, 1835, Van Buren Papers, LC (quote); Hackett, "The Days of this Republic will be Numbered," 147-49.
Walker touched on both these issues in a letter to Senator Gayarré. Worried that "prejudice against northern men is such I fear it will be impossible to overcome it," Walker added that "The success of White could not (by me at least) be considered an evil." Walker lamented that White's candidacy had produced "a division in our ranks" and the Bee and Courier echoed this concern, particularly after Democrat James W. Breedlove, Gordon's replacement as Collector of Customs, announced for White. The only concurrent state election, to fill a vacant state senate seat, provided justification for these fears as a White-Democrat opposed a Van Buren-Democrat. The mixed partisan loyalties inspired by the senate race led to a tie between White and Van Buren in Livingston parish—the only time in the antebellum period the parish did not have a democratic majority.

Throughout the South, Democrats turned the tables on the Whigs by alleging that a vote for White and not a vote for Van Buren was a vote for abolitionism. They challenged the Whigs to explain the following: if Van Buren was an abolitionist, then why were almost all northern abolitionists members of the Whig party? Also, they repeatedly contended that White had no chance to win the election and that the Whigs were using him take southern votes from Van Buren and to have the election thrown into the House of Representatives where

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102 Joseph Walker to Charles Gayarré, November 15, 1835, Charles Gayarré Collection, LLMVC (quote); Bee, July 2, 1835, March 30, 1836; Louisiana Courier, July 17, 1835.

103 Bee, November 14, 1836.

104 Cooper, The South and the Politics of Slavery, 94–5; Bee, June 27, July 18, 1836; Louisiana Courier, September 13, 1836.
Whig congressmen would elevate William Henry Harrison to the presidency. Thus, White simply served as a decoy for Harrison. According to the Democrats, a ballot cast for White was a ballot cast for Harrison, an imbecile whose abolitionist tendencies were further compounded by his advocacy of selling whites into slavery.\textsuperscript{105}

Though fears regarding slavery proved the paramount election topic in Louisiana, other issues surfaced as well. Both sides claimed the mantle as champions of democracy and republicanism and accused their opponents of trying to usurp the people's choice. Whigs charged that Jackson's selection of Van Buren as his successor represented executive dictation destroying the freedom of election. They added that Van Buren's caucus nomination signalled the triumph of corrupt party organization over the people.\textsuperscript{106} Democrats countered by reminding the electorate that a vote for White would place the election in the House of Representatives where, as in the 1824 elevation of Adams over Jackson, the people's choice would be defeated. They alleged that they had uncovered the sinister hand of Senator Porter behind this wicked plot. Also, in 1836 and throughout the antebellum period, Democrats portrayed themselves as the party of the people and accused the Whigs of aristocracy.\textsuperscript{107}

While slavery dominated Louisianan's political discourse in 1836, the American System was not completely neglected. Though

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\item \textsuperscript{105} Bee, August 26, September 26, October 19, 27, 1836; Louisiana Courier, November 2, 1836.
\item \textsuperscript{106} L'Echo, October 16, 1836; True American, October 2, 1836.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Louisiana Courier, October 26, November 7, 1836; Bee, September 28, 1836.
\end{itemize}
admiring White's anti-bank and anti-internal improvement stance. Louisiana Democrats maintained that White had sacrificed these views because of his unquenchable ambition. Even if White had not changed his stance, the rest of the Whig party, including William Henry Harrison, favored the American System. Louisiana Democrats claimed that Harrison was the only Whig with a chance of winning and therefore considered his advocacy of internal improvements and a national bank fair game for attack. Democratic editors stressed that a vote for Van Buren was a vote against the "all-corrupting, all-enslaving BANK and its Minions!" With the anti-bank states rights wing predominating in most southern Whig parties, this argument had strong southern potential for the Democrats. In Louisiana, however, Whigs gladly accepted the label of the party of the American System. The Whig Commercial Bulletin claimed that Harrison with his broad construction ideas was indeed the party's best candidate. After the election, the Democratic Bee alleged that if Harrison had won the national bank would have been recharted. Whigs in New Orleans may have agreed with this sentiment, for they gave "Harrison's decoy" a narrow victory in the city.

Despite White's victory in New Orleans, Van Buren triumphed both nationally and in Louisiana where he narrowly edged White 3,842 to 3,583. With only 7,425 people voting, a 31.2 percent decline from the 1834 gubernatorial election, clearly many Louisianans had found both

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108 Bee, May 10, July 27, October 19, 1836; Louisiana Courier, November 7, 1836 (quote).

109 True American, September 17, 1836; Commercial Bulletin, October 19, 1836; Bee, December 6, 1836.
the northern and the anti-American System candidate unpalatable. For those who did exercise their suffrage, the battle between Whigs and Democrats echoed the contest between Jackson and Clay in 1832. Sixteen of the twenty-three parishes which voted for Jackson in 1832 went for Van Buren, and all but one of the nine Clay parishes cast a majority for White. The combination of the National Republican origins of Louisiana Whiggery and the emphasis on slavery can be seen in the results of the pro-tariff sugar region of South Louisiana where White captured 59.9 percent of the vote. In the states rights Florida Parishes, White failed to win a single parish, but his 32.4 percent of the vote there was greater than any previous pro-American System gubernatorial or presidential candidate. (SEE APPENDIX A)

In Louisiana, the 1836 presidential election inaugurated what William Cooper has termed "the politics of slavery," which designates the interaction among "the institution of slavery, southern parties and politicians, the southern political structure, and the values of southern white society." From 1836 until the civil war, every presidential race in Louisiana and even some state contests would include a debate over which party best protected the South's peculiar institution. The labelling of the opposition candidate as an abolitionist or a tool of the abolitionists became standard campaign operating procedure. From this election onward, partisan newspapers would prominently display candidates' proslavery quotations for months at a time. Almost every national issue, even those such as internal
improvements or banking without a direct tie to slavery, would be viewed in terms of the slave question.\footnote{Cooper, The South and the Politics of Slavery, xi.}

The 1834 gubernatorial and 1836 presidential campaign inaugurated a change in Louisiana politicians' use of republicanism. Prior to 1836 campaign, candidates had seen menaces to the republic in almost every national issue including: the tariff, the national bank, and internal improvements. After the introduction of the politics of slavery into Louisianans' world in 1836, threats to the republic from the national level came primarily from threats to slavery. The 1834 gubernatorial campaign had transformed the use of republicanism in political discourse at the state level. This campaign had highlighted another obstacle to Louisianans achieving their maximum amount of liberty—the 1812 constitution. This aristocratic document denied many Louisianans political rights, and republicanism became increasingly intertwined a movement to amend this charter. This change rested partly on the emergence of Jacksonian democracy—the idea that all adult white males should enjoy equal political rights. In state campaigns, republicanism became a synonym for Jacksonian democracy, and Louisiana politicians, particularly Democrats, would make a commitment to removing this antiquated, unrepulican blot on the state's political record a staple of their rhetoric.

The 1836 presidential campaign not only included the introduction of the politics of slavery into Louisiana, but along with the 1834 governor's race, demonstrated the maturation of Louisiana's political parties. Because of the state's unique demographics,
however. politicians had to remain aware of factors other than party membership. Ethnicity prevailed in the 1835 senate race, as a Whig legislature elected Charles Gayarré, a Creole Democrat, and it again proved pivotal in the 1837 senate contest. Devastated by Van Buren's victory, Senator Porter resigned, and with the Democrats controlling the legislature, the Whigs did not offer a candidate to succeed him. Instead, two Democrats, former federal District Attorney John Slidell, an American New Orleanian, and Alexander Mouton, a Creole from Lafayette Parish, competed for the post. Slidell received the majority of Democratic votes, but lost the race, as eighteen of the twenty-five Whigs backed the Creole Mouton. Not only did ethnicity affect politics, but also personal rivalry played a role. Democratic efforts to win both the 1833 senate race and the 1834 gubernatorial campaign were hampered by tension between Slidell and Martin Gordon.¹¹

Though characteristics such as American-Creole split, personal animus, and regionalism never disappeared from Louisiana politics, from the 1830s onward they would always be viewed from within the prism of party politics. Richard P. McCormick, in his study of the rise of the second American party system, asserts correctly that "After 1836 [Louisiana] politics came increasingly under the domination of the major parties." Louisianans had changed from attachment to a national leader such as Clay or Jackson to allegiance to a political party. Joseph Tregle agrees that by the mid-1830s

¹¹Alexander Porter to John Ker, December 1, 1836, Ker Family Papers, SHC; John Slidell to Martin Van Buren, January 12, 1837, Van Buren Papers, LC.
Louisianans no longer based their political decisions on personality, but now emphasized whether a candidate was a Whig or a Democrat. In Louisiana, Whigs and the Democrats primarily divided over economic issues such as those involved in the American System, and states rights played a much smaller role than in the rest of the South. By the mid-1830s, Louisiana voters considered supporting one's party a normal condition and straying from partisan boundaries as a deviation.\textsuperscript{112}

CHAPTER THREE
THE TRIUMPH OF DEMOCRATS AND JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY, 1837-1845

By 1837, Louisiana's Whig and Democratic parties had developed identities based on their attitudes toward the American System. Whigs championed it, while Democrats deplored it. Though divided by this national question, Louisiana parties had not yet offered the electorate distinct alternatives on state level issues such as government aid to banks and internal improvement companies or revision of the state's 1812 constitution. The Panic of 1837, a national economic downturn, would serve as a catalyst for an increasing divergence between the two parties on state fiscal policy, with Democrats generally viewing state involvement in the economy as pernicious and Whigs perceiving it as beneficial. With Louisiana's government heavily in debt for its prodigal policies towards banks and railroads, a backlash against state aid ensued. When the state's voters called for a constitutional convention in 1844, Democrats took advantage of this opportunity to include articles mandating the state government's withdrawal from the economic sector in Louisiana's 1845 constitution.

Delegates to the constitutional convention not only changed the state's economic policies but also included ideas articles expressing a commitment to Jacksonian democracy. They rewrote some of the more aristocratic and outmoded features of the 1812 charter by removing property qualifications for suffrage and office-holding. As with the economic situation, the Democratic party benefitted from its association with constitutional revision and its advocacy of greater democracy. The expansion of the electorate was part of an overall
trend of the inclusion of more people in Louisiana's political process. This increased participation was most visible in the presidential campaigns of 1840 and 1844, which mobilized the entire state to a level that earlier campaigns had not approached. A seemingly endless round of barbecues, parades, and meetings incorporated voters and non-voters alike. Women, a group which previously had almost no role in Louisiana political culture, attended rallies, held their own meetings, and even addressed gatherings of both sexes.

The incorporation of more people in the political process and debate over state economic policy did not replace but added further complexity to political issues already discussed in Louisiana politics. Disagreement over the American System, division between Americans and Creoles, state sectionalism, the politics of slavery, argument over which party best protected liberty, and the enduring image of Andrew Jackson continued to play roles in the state. Between 1837 and 1845, Whigs continued to advocate, and Democrats to oppose, a protective tariff and a national bank. Both parties remained sensitive to the feelings of the Creole population, particularly in gubernatorial races. Whigs and Democrats claimed to be the best shields for the people's liberty. Presidential and gubernatorial campaigns featured accusations of abolitionism. A United States senator would lose his position because of his stance on a fine assessed General Jackson almost thirty years earlier. Thus, by 1845, new issues had entered Louisianans' political spectrum and intertwined...
with older ones—a combination that altered the state’s political climate.

The first opportunity for Louisiana’s Democrats and Whigs, previously divided primarily on national matters, to incorporate state issues in their debates came in the 1838 gubernatorial, congressional, and legislative campaigns. In these races, the Democratic party portrayed itself as committed to reform in the state banking system and to a revision of the 1812 constitution, particularly the abolition of the property or tax-paying requirement for voting. The inclusion of these new planks did not signal the elimination of traditional Louisiana issues, such as ethnicity and the country parishes versus New Orleans, but interacted with them. Additionally, the 1838 races witnessed the use of the politics of slavery for the first time on a state level. In 1836, Louisianans had accused the competing presidential candidates of infidelity to the South’s peculiar institution, and in 1838, Louisianans charged their instate opponents of being unreliable protectors of slavery.

The 1838 gubernatorial campaign season began with a Democratic convention in New Orleans in late January. At its opening delegates from less than ten of the states thirty-two parishes were present. Even after allowing members of the legislature from the unrepresented parishes to be seated, the convention still contained delegates from only fourteen parishes. In a close 24-17 vote, the convention nominated Creole Denis Prieur, who had served ten years as New Orleans mayor, as its gubernatorial candidate over John B. Dawson, the Democrats’ 1834 nominee. The selection of a New Orleans candidate by
a New Orleans convention with over one-third of its delegates from the
Crescent City proved unpopular in some sections of the state.
Complaining that the "aristocracy of New Orleans" had intrigued to
place the party "under the heel of city boots," the Democratic St.
Francisville Louisiana Chronicle claimed that "the country in full
representation never would so vote as to leave a remote chance of
augmenting the already too great power of New Orleans." Having
previously advocated Dawson's candidacy, the newspaper transferred its
support not to Prieur but to Whig Henry Johnson. The Democratic New
Orleans Bee concurred that the convention had been unrepresentative
and alleged that the decision of many of the country parishes not to
send delegates indicated a desire that the gubernatorial race be non-
partisan. The Bee advocated the candidacy of Whig former governor
Andre Bienvenu Roman, while continuing to advance the cause of
Democratic legislative and congressional candidates.

If the Democratic party could be chastised for holding a poorly
attended nominating convention, the Whig party could be faulted for
not holding one at all. Instead, two former governors, the American
Johnson and the Creole Roman, competed for the support of their fellow
party leaders. After a struggle which lasted the first four months of
1838, Roman's proponents carried the field. They persuasively argued

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1 For proceedings of the convention see New Orleans Louisiana
Courier, January 29, 1838 and Clinton Louisianaian, February 2, 1838; St.
Francisville Louisiana Chronicle, February 10, 1838 (quote). (Hereinafter
all newspapers from New Orleans unless otherwise specified.)

2 Bee, January 30, May 17, 1838. In advocating a Whig for governor
and Democrats for the legislature and Congress, the Bee represented a
temporary anomaly in the highly partisan world of antebellum Louisiana
newspapers. It would be sold and would become the Whigs' chief organ.
that the Americans and Creoles had a tacit agreement to rotate the gubernatorial office between the two populations. Thus, with Edward Douglass White, an American, currently governor, his successor should be a Creole, especially if the Whigs wished to have Creole support in the 1840 presidential contest. After receiving a letter from seventeen Whig legislators requesting that he retire from the race because of this ethnic rotation, Roman's greater popularity, and the danger of dividing Whig votes, Johnson withdrew and endorsed Roman's candidacy. Most likely, Johnson remembered how his persistence in remaining in the 1829 Senate race against the party leadership's wishes had led to five years in party purgatory. He also correctly surmised that withdrawing from this race would make him the Whigs' leading gubernatorial candidate in 1842.

In the early months of 1838, the legislature's debate over reform of the state banking system overshadowed the gubernatorial canvass. Louisiana had chartered banks as early as 1804, and by 1831 the state possessed four banks capitalized at nine million dollars. With President Jackson's veto of the bill to recharter the Bank of the United States and his withdrawal of federal funds from the institution, the Louisiana legislature went on an extended spree of bank chartering in the 1830s. Between 1831 and 1836, the legislature chartered twelve banks having a total capital of forty-six million dollars.

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1 Bee, January 30, May 12, July 2, 1838; Baton Rouge Gazette, May 19, 1838; Henry Adams Bulard to James G. Taliaferro, April 2, 1838, James G. Taliaferro Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; (Hereinafter LLMVC) For a Whig who believed that Johnson was more popular see Alexander Porter to Jesse Burton Harrison, July 7, 1837[8], Burton Norvel Harrison and Family Papers, Library of Congress. (Hereinafter LC)
dollars. Describing the 1835-1836 legislative session, in which six of these charters were approved, an observer accurately recounted "a great indisposition on the part of the members to do anything but make banks," and a historian titles his chapter on this period, "Wild Banking."* 

Debate over these measures did not follow partisan lines but has been described as "a massive tug-of-war" between city and country legislators. Some residents outside of New Orleans characterized this bank-chartering binge as "a folly," "a curse," or "the joke."5 Most country legislators, however, struggled not to eliminate Louisiana banks but to have branches established in their parishes and worried that New Orleans banks had no money to spare for country customers. One commentator recounted a rumor that the legislature was to establish a bank with a capital of ten million dollars and a branch in every parish. "The members of the legislature," according to another critic of these log-rolling tactics, "are operated on by the promises of branches to be established in their different parishes so that Avoyelles is to have one & probably Catahoula another." Though every bank had its headquarters in New Orleans, the charters provided for

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5Green, *Finance and Economic Development*, 30 (first quote); George Kelso to Josiah S. Johnston, February 11, 1831, Josiah Stoddard Johnston Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (second quote), (Hereinafter HSP); Alexander Barrow to William S. Hamilton, February 19, 1833, William S. Hamilton Papers, LLMVC (third quote); H. Dopson to Jacob Bieller, April 15, 1835, Alonzo Snyder Papers, LLMVC (fourth quote).
forty-six branches in twenty-six separate towns, with thirty-six of these branches actually opening in the wealthiest agricultural areas.6

The legislature’s ardor for internal improvements, especially railroads, equalled its passion for banks. While the state was blessed with an extensive river system, this method of travel too often proved unreliable. In the 1820s, Louisianans complained about the length of time for mail delivery, and the difficulty legislators had in communicating with their constituents. According to a congressional candidate, "Our citizens are very impatient to feel...the benefical[sic] effects of internal improvements....[T]hey want something here."7 As with bank bills, railroad charters received bipartisan support with every legislator wanting a railroad to pass through his district. Between 1831 and 1837, the legislature chartered twenty-three railroads, fifteen of these rural lines. Describing this railroad frenzy, historian Merl Reed contends, "deals, conflict of interest, and parochial jealousy were the order of the day" and that this policy "scattered the state's energy into meaningless activity."8

6Green, Finance and Economic Development, 30-1; W. T. Palfrey to Boyd Smith, June 8, 1834, David Weeks Papers, LLMVC; George Kelso to Josiah S. Johnston, February 11, 1831; Thomas Butler to Johnston, February 23, 1832, Johnston Papers, HSP (quote).


The nationwide Panic of 1837 helped bring an end to the Louisiana legislature's unconditional approval of banks and railroads. Throughout 1837 and 1838, commentators complained of the scarcity of money and the stagnation of business in New Orleans as banks suspended specie payment. By the end of the decade, Louisiana's banking and railroad systems would both be on the verge of collapse. The bursting of the speculative bubble resulted in a fifteen year struggle to determine the best way to control banking and internal improvement practices. Unlike previous discussions, the debate now took the form of a partisan contest. The Democrats criticized the legislature for doing little else the past eight years other than granting and amending charters and wasting the tax-payers' money by backing these schemes with state bonds. They argued that the best solution for avoiding liberty-threatening consolidations of power was for the state to outlaw banks and monopolies and remove government support from all private commercial endeavors. Also, Democrats believed that the legislature should more strictly enforce the charters of those corporations currently in existence and that corporations should be treated as individuals without the benefit of special legislation.

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9 Henry W. Huntington to William Mercer, April 4, 1837, William N. Mercer Papers, Manuscripts Department, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana (Hereinafter TU); F. Wharton to L. Wharton, December 1, 1837, Edward Clifton Wharton Family Papers, LLMVC; George Fennell to Samuel Fennell, March 1838, George Fennell Letter, Historic New Orleans Collection; Edwin A. Davis, ed., Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana, 1836-1846 as Reflected in the Diary of Bennet H. Barrow (New York, 1943), March 3, 1838, p. 108. (Hereinafter Barrow Diary)
Thus, if a business violated a law, it should be punished and, if necessary, its charter revoked.\textsuperscript{10}

The Whigs proposed a more positive role for the state government—government aid and investment in both banks and railroads. They maintained that forcing banks to resume specie payments would hurt the entire state as the banks pressured rural customers to repay loans. The Whigs argued that given time the banks would resume payment and the economy would recover. They added that the main culprit in the financial crisis was the federal government's decision to remove itself from banking: Andrew Jackson's veto of the bill to recharter the Bank of the United States and his removal of federal deposits from the institution. In their view, the Louisiana legislature should learn from Jackson's mistakes and not repeat them by rashly withdrawing the government from the state's financial system.\textsuperscript{11}

During the Panic of 1837, most Louisiana banks called in loans and suspended specie payments in violation of their charters, and many railroads stopped construction. Governor White focused on the deteriorating financial situation in his message to the legislature which met in December 1837 asserting that Louisiana was in a "state of financial embarrassment that is without comparison." White primarily blamed the distress on the absence of a national bank, but also

\textsuperscript{10} Clinton L\textit{ouisianian}, March 9, 1838; Edward G.W. Butler to Thomas Butler, September 9, 1837, Thomas Butler Papers, LLMVC.

\textsuperscript{11} Bee. February 16, 1838. For the best examples of Democratic and Whig views on banking and internal improvements see the constitutions of 1845 and 1852 respectively.
advocated an alteration in state banking policy. Heeding the governor's suggestion, legislators, after three months of debate, passed a bank reform act. Reaction to the measure varied, with the New Orleans financial community's organ, the Whig Commercial Bulletin, urging Governor White to veto and Democratic newspapers imploring him to sign the bank bill. Though Governor White had suggested bank reform in his opening address to the legislature, he vetoed the measure. White contended that the bill was unconstitutional because it violated the sanctity of the contracts between the government and the banks, and he charged its proponents with "agrarianism"—a country parish bias against New Orleans and its commercial system. White's opponents held an anti-veto meeting where they alleged that the governor had prostituted himself to the corrupt and aristocratic New Orleans bank clique because he needed its support in his bid for the First District congressional seat which Henry Johnson had vacated to run for governor.

Following White's veto, Louisiana Democrats and Whigs, who in prior races had battled over the expediency and constitutionality of a national bank, now clashed over state banking policy as well. Though the bank reform bill had been a bipartisan measure, the Democrats eagerly embraced it and attacked White's veto in their legislative, congressional, and gubernatorial campaigns. White's congressional opponent, John Slidell, repeatedly criticized the governor for his

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12 Louisiana House Journal, 13th leg., 2nd sess., 2; Commercial Bulletin, February 15, 24, March 2, 1838; Bee, February 26, 1838.

13 Commercial Bulletin, March 3, 5, 1838; Anti-Veto meeting in Bee, March 6, 1838; Clinton Louisianian, March 9, April 20, 1838.
veto which went against the wishes of the majority of voters. Immediately following the publication of an obscure state representative's speech in the legislature attacking White's veto, Second District Democrats nominated him for Congress. Additionally, Democratic legislative candidates pledged themselves to support banking reform, and, in the governor's race, the Democratic Louisiana Courier frequently attacked Roman for his refusal to take a stance on the bank bill.

More divided over state banking policy, the Whigs tried to distance themselves from the issue. They argued that Louisiana's financial woes were not specific to Louisiana but were part of a national problem which demanded a national solution—the re-establishment of the Bank of the United States. Whig candidates ran with vague pledges such as the necessity for "wholesome and proper regulations" regarding state banking, while asserting that Democrats wished to eliminate all banks. At the same time, they adamantly declared themselves in favor of a national bank. Two of the Whigs' three congressional candidates made the rechartering of a national bank a principal plank in their campaigns. Even in the gubernatorial

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14 The speech took up five columns of the Clinton Louisianaian, March 23, 1838. His nomination appeared in ibid., March 30, 1838.

15 Louisiana Courier, June 2, 9, 1838; Clinton Louisianaian, April 13, June 22, 1838.

16 Franklin Planters' Banner, December 10, 1837; Alexander Porter to John Ker, June 28, 1837, Ker Family Papers, SHC; John Lobdell to the Electors of the Parish of West Feliciana, 1838 Broadside, Turnbull-Allain Family Papers, LLMVC (quote); Baton Rouge Gazette, March 31, 1838; Clinton Louisianaian, May 4, June 15, 1838; Louisiana Advertiser in Bee, May 4, 1838.
canvass, the Whig *True American* described the contest between Roman and Prieur as "a question of *bank* or *no bank*." While equivocating on the state bank reform debate, Roman boldly championed the national bank, reminding voters that he was a Whig before a party by that name existed. As early as the 1824 presidential contest, he had backed Henry Clay and the aims of the American System.¹⁷

Democrats not only campaigned against the bank aristocracy within the state, but also continued their assaults on the national bank. Led by John Slidell, the Democrats incorporated the politics of slavery, which both sides had used in the 1836 presidential campaign, in their attack on this institution. While serving in the legislature, Slidell introduced a bill to instruct Louisiana's representatives in Washington to oppose any act calling for the chartering of a national bank because the institution would be allied with northern abolitionists. He argued that a national bank would be based in the northeast, a region which "has exhibited such hostility to [southern] institutions" and that therefore it was "not advisable and...very dangerous." Slidell's argument had some appeal as the measure passed the Whig-controlled house by one vote before failing in the senate.¹⁸

¹⁷Edward Douglass White, address to legislature, *Louisiana House Journal* 13th leg., 2nd sess., 4-5; Thomas W. Chinn to the Voters of the Second Congressional District in Clinton *Loujianian*, June 15, 1838; In the Third District, Whig Rice Garland ran unopposed in 1838 and did not make a statement of his views; *True American*, July 2, 1838; *Commercial Bulletin*, June 1, 1838.

Following the introduction of Slidell's bill, New Orleans Democrats held a convention that resolved to oppose a national bank both because of its unconstitutionality and because men outside the South would control southern institutions. Louisiana Democrats soon extended Slidell's argument. They contended that because all abolitionists were pro-bank men, and all pro-bank men were Whigs, therefore all Whigs were abolitionists. Despite its flawed logic, their argument succeeded in putting Louisiana Whigs on the defensive. Having gained publicity for introducing this concept into the legislature, Slidell continued to employ it in his congressional contest against Governor White. In the Second District, Democrats labelled Whig candidate and national bank champion Thomas W. Chinn, "a political brother of the New England abolitionists." Even Whig legislative candidates found themselves forced to explain how an assertion that they adhered to the nationalistic doctrines of Massachusetts Whig Daniel Webster did not make them abolitionists. In a letter discussing his political views, Roman belittled the Democratic charges, stating "I am not an abolitionist because it has pleased a crazy man to say so."

The Whigs proved less inclined to employ abolitionist charges, but did use them against Slidell and Prieur. In the First District contest, they questioned the northern-born Slidell's commitment to the

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19 Democratic Convention in Louisiana Courier, January 25, 1838; Bee, April 24, 1838; Louisiana Courier, May 24, June 7, 1838.

20 Clinton Louisianaian, May 4, 1838 (first quote); John Lobdell to the Electors of the Parish of West Feliciana, 1838 Broadside, Turnbull-Allain Family Papers, LLMVC; Commercial Bulletin, June 1, 1838 (second quote).
South. In the gubernatorial race, Democrat Denis Prieur proved particularly vulnerable. An unmarried man, Prieur lived with a free woman of color in New Orleans. Possessing a sense of discretion in racial and sexual matters, Whig newspapers were reluctant to broach this subject, but by the end of the campaign season they referred to it, albeit most often in a cryptic manner. Instead of mentioning Prieur's domestic situation directly, the True American worried about the possibility of a bad example being set in high places, and mentioned a "taint of abolitionism or amalgamation" without specifying any details. Safely outside of New Orleans, the Baton Rouge Gazette mocked Prieur for having a family but not being married, and then openly acknowledged his involvement in an interracial relationship and tied it to fears of abolition.21

Not only did the Democrats label their opponents abolitionists, but they also portrayed them as aristocrats. In the governor's race, the Democrats emphasized that their party had nominated Prieur at a convention, while Roman's candidacy stemmed from "WHIG DICTATION." Johnson's withdrawal from the canvass at the behest of a legislative clique bolstered their case, and they especially denounced the assumption that Johnson could "give" his votes to Roman. They also questioned whether Roman succeeding his successor violated the spirit of rotation in office and wondered if the Whigs felt that only Johnson, White, and Roman were capable of leading the state.22

21 Louisiana Courier, June 28, 1838; True American, July 3, 1838; Baton Rouge Gazette, June 22, 1838.

22 Louisiana Courier, May 2, 15, 1838; Donaldsonville Advocate in Louisiana Courier, June 1, 1838.
Democrats' charges of Whig aristocracy coincided with their opposition to banks, as they alleged that corrupt Whig bank directors expected the masses to submit to their will. Democratic newspapers also contrasted the parties' campaign styles. On one hand, Prieur "The Friend of the People," toured the state meeting the electorate until illness forced him to return to New Orleans. On the other hand, Roman, an aristocratic planter, only met with gentlemen and expected them to deliver votes in their parishes. Similarly, party newspapers contended that their congressional candidate spoke to the yeomen and mechanics, while his opponent stood for the rich and well born. 23

Democrats claimed that their leading principle was opposition to consolidations of power and privilege, and consequently they not only fought monopolies but challenged the ultimate symbol of Louisiana aristocracy, the Constitution of 1812. As in 1834, Democrats proudly claimed that if elected they would increase the size of the state's electorate by eliminating the property requirement for suffrage. Both Democratic congressional candidates pledged themselves to suffrage expansion, while their Whig opponents remained silent upon the issue. 24 The same situation prevailed in legislative races. In Ouachita Parish, a planter-lawyer with no political experience, Solomon Weathersbee Downs, defeated a three-term Whig state senator by advancing the cause of universal suffrage. Downs would soon become the chief legislative spokesman for constitutional revision. The Clinton *Louisianian* and the Democratic candidates who addressed the

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23 *Louisiana Courier*, May 31, June 22, 1838; *Bee*, May 10, 1838.
24 *Bee*, June 14, 27, 1838; Clinton *Louisianian*, May 18, 1838.
voters through its columns advocated universal suffrage. The only Whig to use the *Louisianian'*s columns did not mention suffrage, and the newspaper branded him an opponent of any expansion of the electorate. If publicly Whigs attempted to maintain that suffrage should not be an issue, privately, retired Whig Senator Alexander Porter confessed that he "fear[ed] that men are not capable of self-government."

The absence of a Whig stance on universal suffrage did not hurt the party too much, for it achieved an overwhelming victory. Whigs won the governor's race, all three congressional seats, and control of the legislature. Roman defeated Prieur in all four of the state's regions. In North Louisiana and the Florida Parishes, two areas which usually supported Democrats, unfamiliarity with Prieur and antipathy toward a New Orleans candidate contributed to Roman's victory. South Louisiana voted for Roman, one of its favorite-sons, and continued its support for the party of the pro-tariff American System. Roman even won Prieur's home region of Greater Orleans by one vote. The Whig party's alliance with the commercial sector enabled Roman to overcome Prieur's personal popularity in the Crescent City. (SEE APPENDIX B)

Democrats knew exactly where to place the blame for their defeat: the corrupt banking system in the state and the friends of a national bank. Whigs owed their legislative majority to commercial New Orleans where the party won all eight seats contested. The

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Clinton *Louisianian* claimed that even in the Florida Parishes "so great was the bank mania" that Whigs would vote for a pro-bank horse thief before voting for an anti-bank angel. The *Louisiana Courier* condemned "Bank influence" which had purchased votes and the cancellation of Prieur's state tour for the defeat. Defeated congressional candidate John Slidell maintained that former Democratic chief Martin Gordon and his son, who were both involved in Louisiana banking had deserted the party. Writing to the *National Intelligencer*, A Louisiana Whig concurred that the party had won by fighting "openly and boldly under the banner of 'a National Bank and sound currency.'"^{26}

Having used their commitment to a national bank to sweep the 1838 state elections, Louisiana Whigs hoped to elect a Whig president in 1840 who would recharter such an institution. Thus, Henry Clay, the founder of the American System, was their first choice for the post. In preparation for the 1840 presidential contest, Clay modified his nationalist stance to prove more attractive to southern Whigs. For Louisiana Whigs this step was unnecessary. They not only announced their support for Clay, but reaffirmed their commitment to his American System, especially the national bank. The *New Orleans Bee*, by 1840 a Whig newspaper, acknowledged that while elsewhere Whigs did not advocate a bank, Whigs of Louisiana, "known for their

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^{26}Clinton *Louisianian*, July 20, 1838 (first quote); *Louisiana Courier*, July 25, 1838; John Slidell to Martin Van Buren, April 20, 1839, Martin Van Buren Papers, LC; Washington *National Intelligencer*, July 17, 1838 (second quote).
undisguised and shrinking advocacy of such an institution," used the issue to distinguish between their party and Democrats.  

In 1839, for the first time, the national Whig party held a convention to select a presidential nominee. In March 1838, Louisiana Whigs chose delegates to represent the state at the forthcoming convention and instructed them to support Henry Clay. The Whig party's choice of delegates reveals its commitment to a national bank. The delegates included long-time national bank champion Alexander Porter and George M. Graham, a self-described "Adams and Clay Whig." Only Graham actually attended the 1839 Harrisburg Convention, and on every ballot he cast Louisiana's votes for Clay. Despite having the backing of Louisiana and the rest of the South, Clay lost the nomination to William Henry Harrison, one of the trio of Whig candidates from 1836. Clay failed because Whigs believed he had too many enemies and was associated too closely with the American System, which not all Whigs embraced. With Harrison being connected with no particular policies and with the convention not issuing a platform, each state's Whig party could campaign in any manner it saw fit. In Louisiana, Clay's failure to capture the nomination caused "feelings of sorrow and disappointment" for the editor of the Bee, and Alexander

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27 For Louisiana Whig meeting in favor of Clay see Commercial Bulletin, February 6, 1838; Bee, August 19, 1840; For Clay moving away from economic nationalism and toward the South see William J. Cooper, Jr., The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856 (Baton Rouge, 1978), 121-125.
Porter, reduced to tears, complained that with Harrison atop the ticket, the party deserved to lose.  

Democrats did not face such surprises with their party’s nomination as no one seriously contested President Martin Van Buren’s bid for re-election. In Louisiana, the battle between the supporters of Van Buren and Harrison involved three main points: which candidate best protected the South and slavery, the constitutionality and expediency of a national bank, and which party best represented the people. The 1840 campaign, however, remains famous not for the substance of its debates but for its spectacle—log cabins, hard cider, victory balls, parades, and festivals. Louisiana did not lack in this aspect of the campaign, and Porter even predicted such occurrences a year prior to the election, warning that "our political contests have accustomed the public mind to such exaggeration that nothing will awaken its attention on any subject but the strongest kind of stimulus."  

Throughout the South, partisans waged an unrelenting war over whether Van Buren or Harrison would best protect slavery from northern fanatics. Upon hearing of Harrison’s nomination, the editor of the Bee immediately recognized the potency of such barbs, worrying that "General Harrison should be popular in this latitude, but we have now

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29 Alexander Porter to Jesse B. Harrison, November 6, 1839, Burton N. Harrison and Family Papers, LC (quote).
to consume so much time in defending him from suspicion of abolitionism." He knew the perfect method for relieving this pressure, "I will go to work to show Van Buren's connection with abolitionists and try to put the locofocos on their defense." Charges of abolitionism had played a role in the 1836 presidential campaign and in the 1838 state elections, but those races compared to the 1840 campaign neither in terms of the number of accusations of abolitionist tendencies nor in the animosity of the attacks. Throughout much of the summer and fall, both Democrat and Whig newspapers published stories virtually every day on what the Bee described as the "all absorbing question of SLAVERY!"\(^{10}\)

Within a week of Harrison's nomination, the Bee was already defending his record on slavery. The Democrats' main allegations against Harrison were that he had belonged to an abolition society, he had moved from the slave to the free states, he advocated the selling of white men into slavery, and he was in favor of emancipation. Even if Harrison was not an abolitionist, Democrats charged that his closest political allies were and without their support he would have never received the Whig nomination. Louisiana Democrats explained that the southern Whigs' distrust of Harrison had led them to vote repeatedly against Harrison and for Clay at the national convention. Only the unrelenting support of New England abolitionists had secured Harrison's victory over this solid southern opposition.\(^{11}\)

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\(^{10}\) Alexander Bullitt to John J. Crittenden, March 9, 1838, John J. Crittenden Papers, LC (first quote); Bee, June 12, 1840. (second quote)

\(^{11}\) Bee, January 4, 1840; Louisiana Courier, January 16, 20, 25, February 12, May 12, 1840.
Democrats claimed that Harrison’s nomination sent the wrong message to the nation’s black population. The Louisiana Courier merged the charges of abolitionism and selling whites into slavery and explained that if Harrison had his way, a free Negro could buy a white man and inflict lashes upon his back. Writing from Washington, Louisiana’s Democratic Senator Robert C. Nicholas provided more damaging evidence against the Harrison movement. Nicholas explained that he had witnessed a disturbing scene in the nation’s capital—a parade of free blacks in favor of Harrison’s victory. The party claimed that Louisianans had to fear the reactions of slaves as well as free blacks. Warning of the slave insurrections which would follow a Whig victory, the Louisiana Courier advised Louisiana’s planters that a Whig vote could lead to the "inundations of your rich plains with the blood of thousands."  

Regarding slavery, Louisiana Whigs adopted the policy suggested by the editor of the Bee—a good offense is the best defense. While defending the southern-born Harrison as "the uncompromising advocate of Southern Rights" and decrying Democratic slanders against the general, the partisan press spent more time assailing Van Buren’s record on abolition. Whigs transformed the Democrats’ characterization of Van Buren as a "Northern man with Southern principles" to one of a "Northern man without principles," especially principles regarding the South’s peculiar institution. They charged Van Buren with being an abolitionist, opposing the admission of

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12 For Washington procession see Louisiana Courier, May 11, July 17, 1840; For insurrection scare see ibid., June 12 (quote), November 14, 1840.
Missouri as a slave state, admitting congressional power to eliminate slavery in Washington, D.C., and voting for negro suffrage while in the New York legislature. The Whig Central Committee of New Orleans reminded Louisiana's electors that at the same time they voted, black men in New York enfranchised by Martin Van Buren were casting their ballots. ³³

While accusations of abolition produced the greatest number of campaign articles, the debate over national and state banking occupied a prominent position as well. Democrats attacked Whigs as corrupt "Federal-Bank-o-crats" whose support had been purchased by the national bank. Throughout the campaign, Democrat meetings passed resolutions praising Van Buren's Independent Treasury policy, which attempted to divorce the federal government entirely from the nation's banking system. These meetings blamed the nation's financial distress not on Van Buren but on Whig speculators and the remnants of the Bank of the United States. They ridiculed the idea of rechartering the institution as a "Whig panacea." ³⁴ Campaigning for the July 1840 state elections, Democrats lambasted the Whig-controlled legislature's continued refusal to enact any legislation regulating state banks. Since Governor White's veto of the 1838 bank bill, no bank measure had

³³Commercial Bulletin, February 3, 1840 (quote); Bee, June 12, 17, 1840.

³⁴Louisiana Courier, March 23 (second quote), June 18, 1840 (first quote); F.L. Bosworth to Jacob Bieller, July 15, 1839, Alonzo Snyder Papers, LLMVC; For Democrats' anti-bank, pro-Independent Treasury resolutions see Resolutions of Democratic Association of West Feliciana, 1840, in Henry A. Lyons Papers, LLMVC; Fourth of July Speech, 1840, William S. Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Louisiana Courier, February 27, March 16, October 30, 1840.
passed, and the Democrats campaigned under the banner of state bank reform. In New Orleans, they charged that the Whig legislative ticket was composed entirely of bank directors who would continue to avoid the problem.3

Louisiana Whigs held a polar opposite view of the nation's financial situation. Blaming Van Buren's policies for the nation's fiscal problems, they offered an easy solution: vote for Harrison and a national bank. A Whig address charged Van Buren with undertaking a "war on currency" leading to "universal confusion and distress." In a letter declining his renomination to Congress, Thomas W. Chinn contrasted the prosperity of the country under a national bank to the current situation with "commerce prostrated [and] credit ruined." Alexander Porter agreed that Van Buren's policies had led to pecuniary distress and in an open letter urged the Whig leadership in Rapides Parish to campaign on this issue.3 Whigs even answered criticism of the Whig legislature's failure to enact bank legislation with the assertion that if the Democrats had not crushed the Bank of the United States then there would not be a state banking problem. They added that restrictions on Louisiana banks would only lead to a flood of

3 "Louisiana Courier, June 26, July 3, 1840; Shreveport Caddo Free Press, April 30, 1840.

3 "Commercial Bulletin, March 4, 1840; Whig address in Bee, June 17, 1840; Letter of Thomas W. Chinn to Hon. Thomas Gibbs Morgan, President of the whig convention of the Second Congressional District... (Washington, 1840), 4-6 (quote p. 5); Alexander Porter to Whig Committee of Rapides, May 9, 1840, in Bee, May 30, 1840."
currency from banks in other states because of the lack of national oversight in the absence of the Bank of the United States.17

For both parties, the battle over a national bank directly connected to the contest over which candidate best protected the republic, or conversely which party most jeopardized the people's freedom. The Whigs warned the electorate, "Your liberties are in danger!" and the Democrats readily agreed that voters needed to decide if they were "FREEMEN OR SLAVES!" The two parties disagreed, however, on precisely what threatened the people's liberties.38 Democrats contended that the battle-lines were drawn between their party and the bank aristocrats. They asserted that the nation had always been divided between democratic champions of the people and federalist bank men who, in arguing for a national bank, perverted the meaning of the Constitution to promote the welfare of a few at the expense of the many. They mocked the Whig party's attempt to claim the mantle of the party of the people by having "BANK MEN who live in MARBLE PALACES" erect log cabins to deceive the honest working men. If elected, these men would re-establish a national bank and destroy the people's liberty.39

If the Democrats warned of what might happen with a Harrison victory, the Whigs pointed to what had already happened under the rule of Martin Van Buren and his minions who were "grinding the people

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17Bee, January 25, 1840; Commercial Bulletin, July 8, 1840.
38Bee, June 12, 1840 (first quote); Louisiana Courier, July 1, 1840 (second quote).
39Louisiana Courier, July 1, September 24, October 16, 1840.
under the name of Democrats or friends of the people." If Democrats called Whigs "aristocrats," Whigs termed Democrats "monarchists." According to the Whigs' principal argument, President Van Buren, in the tradition of tyrannical kings, was attempting to unite the purse and the sword of the country in his hands. Whigs warned that already he had captured the purse with his Independent Treasury scheme, which they claimed was only "independent" in that sense that it was removed from the people's control. And, they seized upon the secretary of war's plan to reorganize the militia system as an effort by Van Buren to create a two-hundred thousand man standing army answerable only to him. Whigs alleged that with purse and sword together, Van Buren would have "a union, which has never yet failed, to overthrow public liberty—a union which constitutes the very definition of despotic power."4

Known as the "Log Cabin and Hard Cider Campaign," the presidential election of 1840 is remembered more for its hoopla than for arguments over slavery, banking, or threats to liberty. Observing the enthusiasm in Baltimore, Alexander Porter exclaimed, "I could not have imagined...the excitement which prevails on the Presidential election." He remained disappointed, however, that "It is only in

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40 R.F. McGuire, Diary (typescript), 1839, p. 16, LLMVC (quote); Charges of monarchy in Bee, March 7, June 30, 1840; Baton Rouge Gazette, October 3, 1840.

41 Whig newspapers throughout the campaign abounded with these charges. For creation of standing army see Alexandria Red River Whig, April 25, 1840; Bee, June 4, 30, 1840; For allegations of uniting purse and sword see Letter of Thomas W. Chinn to the Honorable Thomas Gibbs Morgan..., 10; Commercial Bulletin, October 12, 1840; Bee, March 7, October 28, 1840; Baton Rouge Gazette, October 3, 1840 (quote).
Louisiana that I fear we are not so active as we should be." Perhaps because his first-choice, Henry Clay, had been denied the nomination, Porter's depiction of the 1840 canvass in Louisiana was overly critical. The campaign season in Louisiana had all of the thrills—log cabins, a never-ending succession of meetings, parades, and community-wide participation—that were present in the rest of the nation. The Commercial Bulletin more accurately described 1840 as "The Year of Conventions" which culminated in huge statewide Whig convention in Baton Rouge in October. The newspaper proclaimed that, in Louisiana, "Every citizen seems to have turned politician." In 1840, "every citizen" included the entire community not just voters. For the first time, women had an active role in the canvass, and the Baton Rouge Gazette observed that the "political mania" had extended even to children.42

In Louisiana, the campaign season began, as it had twelve years earlier, with a visit from Andrew Jackson to commemorate his victory in the Battle of New Orleans. As Jackson's arrival approached, New Orleans was "all excitement" and business in the Crescent City stopped. As in 1828, the coming of Old Hickory inspired party wrangling. The Bee labelled it "a party maneuver," while the Louisiana Courier denigrated the Whig-controlled legislature's refusal to treat Jackson as an official guest of state. When Jackson actually arrived, however, partisan debate receded, and, instead of party strife, parades and celebration moved to the forefront. Even a Whig

42Alexander Porter to William T. Palfrey, June 18, 1840, Palfrey Family Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Commercial Bulletin, October 6, 1840 (second quote); Baton Rouge Gazette, June 20, 1840 (third quote).
could declare "The glorious 8th, a day... doubly dear to all Louisianans." A diarist described Louisiana's obsession with Jackson as "man worship in all its glory." The whole community participated, including women as well as men. Women waved handkerchiefs from balconies as the veterans paraded past, and the diarist recounts one man even bringing his wife up to the stage to kiss Old Hickory.

Women may have started 1840 in their traditional role as handkerchief-wavers, passively participating in a political celebration, but, by the end of the presidential campaign, they had assumed and been recognized as having an active political role for the first time in Louisiana history. Prior to 1840, newspaper accounts of political gatherings never mentioned the presence of women, and when politicians did acknowledge women, it was not to invite them into the political arena. For example, the toasts at an 1834 political gathering included the patronizing, "Woman! Lovely Woman!! The ornament of man in his happier hours, and solace when smitten with sudden calamity." In 1840, this dismissive attitude toward the political role of women changed dramatically. As part of the total political involvement of the "Log Cabin and Hard Cider" campaign,

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4 F.M. Weld and Company to J.G. Weld, January 6, 1840, Weld Company Correspondence, LLMVC (first quote); Bee, November 16, 1839 (second quote); Louisiana Courier, February 27, 1840; Samuel J. Peters, Jr., diary, January 8, 1840, LLMVC. (third quote)

"Davis, ed., Barrow Diary, January 1840, p. 178 (quote); Descriptions of celebration in Commercial Bulletin, January 10, 1840; Louisiana Courier, January 9, 1840."
women were addressed in the partisan press and attended political celebrations.\textsuperscript{45} Not only did descriptions of political meetings include mention of the number of women present, but they had a partisan role for the first time. One orator even boldly proclaimed, "the ladies all are Whigs." The Democrats justly objected to this claim, but unarguably the Whig party made a greater effort to include women. Women had their greatest role at the October state Whig convention held in Baton Rouge, and in the parish meetings leading up to this event.\textsuperscript{46} Each parish sent a delegation which included women, and they competed in the making of political banners. These banners echoed the themes that male politicians discussed, such as "The South will maintain her rights," and the final address of the convention was aimed directly at the women present. The Baton Rouge Gazette even printed correspondence between the city’s Tippecanoe Club and Miss Nicholson who had presented a banner. Later that month, the Bee alluded to another political role for women when it included an article from a New England newspaper showing how a loyal Whig girl had shunned her Democratic fiancé until he agreed to vote for a Whig candidate who won the subsequent election by a single vote. While none of these activities were progenitors of a women’s rights movement in Louisiana,

\textsuperscript{45}Louisiana Advertiser, August 5, 1834; For the role of women in the campaign and their association with the Whig party see Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 135-139; Elizabeth R. Varon, "Tippecanoe and the Ladies, Too: White Women and Party Politics in Antebellum Virginia," Journal of American History 82 (September 1995), 494-521.

\textsuperscript{46}Commercial Bulletin, June 26, 1840 (quote); Louisiana Courier, November 2, 1840.
they did show that women had begun to have a political role in the state.\textsuperscript{47}

Though not all of Louisiana's women were Whigs, enough of its voters were Whigs to triumph in the July elections and to place Louisiana in Harrison's column in November. In July, the Whig party achieved a narrow three vote majority for the upcoming legislature and retained two of three congressional seats. In November, Harrison defeated Van Buren 11,296 to 7,616. After the presidential contest, the \textit{Bee} hailed New Orleans as the "WHIG CITY," and this label could have applied equally well in the legislative elections where the Whigs captured all eight of New Orleans's seats. Both parties had bound the state races to the national contest. The phrase "Harrison and Reform" topped the Whig legislative ticket, and the Whig \textit{Bee} repeatedly reminded New Orleans voters of the importance of the upcoming legislature having a Whig majority. This body would elect a United States senator, and to recharter a national bank it was imperative that the Senate have a Whig majority. In the congressional races, Edward White easily held onto his seat, and Whig John Moore narrowly won the seat vacated by Rice Garland's appointment to the Louisiana supreme court.\textsuperscript{48}(SEE APPENDIX A)

The Democrats put a positive spin on the state results. They had reduced the Whigs' majority in the legislature and gained a congressional seat after losing races in all three districts in 1838. The Democrats even had a majority of five legislators in the country

\textsuperscript{47}\textit{Baton Rouge Gazette}, October 3, 10, 1840; \textit{Bee}, October 27, 1840.

\textsuperscript{48}\textit{Bee}, November 6, 1840.
parishes. They perhaps even consoled themselves that political power in the state was slowly shifting from the city. Four of the five parishes created in the 1830s were in North Louisiana, and the region's vote total had more than tripled from 1832 to 1840. In the 1824 gubernatorial race, only 11.7 percent of the ballots cast came from North Louisiana, but by 1840 this percentage had nearly doubled to 21.1 percent. If the Democrats waited long enough, possibly the regions outside Greater Orleans and South Louisiana would grow enough to enable the party to capture the state. As politicians, however, Democrats did not have the patience to wait for North Louisiana's growth to elevate them into control of the state, so they looked for a method to obtain greater support from other regions to win Louisiana's 1842 gubernatorial race.

In an attempt to make inroads into the Whig-dominated sugar parishes, the Democrats chose their 1842 gubernatorial candidate from South Louisiana. The February 1840 convention, which appointed delegates to the national presidential convention, nominated Alexander Mouton, a Creole from Lafayette Parish. A United States senator, Mouton had previously served in the Louisiana legislature. The Democrats reiterated their commitment to Mouton in a January 1842 New Orleans convention which, for the first time, included a party platform. Mixing national and state topics, the platform included opposition to a national bank and congressional interference with slavery as well as a desire to reform the state banking system and amend the state constitution. These latter two issues along with the

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division between the American and Creole populations became the primary topics in the gubernatorial campaign. 49

While declining to establish a platform, the Whigs, in a March 1841 state convention attended by delegates from almost every parish, rewarded Henry Johnson for his withdrawal from the 1838 race and nominated him as their gubernatorial candidate. With Johnson having served as a delegate to the 1812 constitutional convention, as a state legislator, as governor, and as a congressman, the Whigs considered him one of Louisiana's greatest statesmen. 50 The Democrats, however, viewed Johnson's experience as a liability not an asset. They charged Johnson, Governor Roman, and Congressman White with being an unholy triumvirate that desired to rotate the state's most important offices among themselves. Also, with the Democrats championing revision of the aristocratic 1812 constitution, Johnson's association with the document made him even less acceptable to them as governor. 51

Although the Democrats had addressed constitutional revision in both the 1834 and 1838 governor's races, in 1842 they made it the focal point of their campaign. In July, along with voting for a governor, legislators, and congressmen, the electorate would have the opportunity to vote for or against the calling of a constitutional convention. The 1812 constitution had created a byzantine method for

49 Louisiana Courier, February 27, 1840; Baton Rouge Gazette, January 22, 1842.

50 Bee, March 10, May 11, 1842; Madison Parish Richmond Compiler, March 15, 1842; Baton Rouge Gazette, June 25, 1842.

51 Commercial Bulletin, February 3, 1842; Bee, June 14, 1842; Louisiana Courier, (extra) July 4, 1842.
amendment which involved both houses of the legislature passing a convention bill detailing the specific amendments to be made, the governor signing the bill, and a majority of the state’s eligible voters approving the measure. This same procedure had to occur in consecutive years for a convention to be called. Any missed step, and the entire process had to begin anew. Led by Solomon W. Downs, efforts were made in the late 1830s to amend the constitution, and twice a convention bill passed the house only to be defeated in the senate. Finally in 1842, Governor Roman signed a convention bill which included amendments providing for universal white male suffrage, popular election of the governor, an increase in the number of elective offices, and reapportionment. In July, the electorate would be given its first opportunity to express its opinion on revision.51

Calling constitutional reform a "great and all-absorbing question," Democrats portrayed themselves as its champions, and the Whigs as its enemy. Not only did the party include a plank in its platform advocating revision, but in a well-publicized speech in Clinton, Mouton attacked the 1812 constitution as oppressive and tyrannical and contended that it treated freemen as slaves. He asserted that the best way to rescue the state from the aristocratic clique, which had long ruled, would be the implementation of "free suffrage" to its full extent. In meetings throughout the state, Democrats passed resolutions declaring their commitment to

51 While Louisiana voters had previously voted for governor, technically the legislators selected from the top two vote-getters. In every election, they had picked the people’s first-choice; Ted Ferguson, "The Louisiana Constitution of 1845," (Master’s thesis, Louisiana State University, 1948).
constitutional change, and in New Orleans they distributed a pro-
convention pamphlet. In addition to the expansion of suffrage,
Democrats urged the direct election of the governor, making more
offices elective, and reapportioning the legislature, while charging
the Whigs with opposing any change in the constitution.53

Though a Democrat meeting in St. Francisville asserted that
"revision of the state constitution will furnish a line of demarcation
between the parties," and Democrats alleged that Henry Johnson had
called the people "too ignorant to judge" whom should represent them,
Johnson and the Whig party challenged these declarations. A Whig
newspaper claimed that both parties favored constitutional change, and
Johnson maintained that he personally favored revision. He insisted,
however, that constitutional change was a legislative not a
gubernatorial issue. In Ouachita Parish, the Whig challenging Solomon
W. Downs, the Democratic champion of constitutional revision, tried to
explain to voters that the parties agreed on universal suffrage and
contended that the only difference between Downs and himself was their
attitudes toward a national bank.54

Despite these Whig protests, the parties unquestionably differed
in their respective stances on constitutional revision. While Mouton

53 *Louisiana Courier,* November 16 (quote), 19, 27, December 1, 1841;
*Bee,* June 24, 1842; *Remarks on the Propriety of Calling a Convention to
Amend the Constitution of the State of Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1841).

54 St. Francisville *Democrat,* December 3, 1841; *Louisiana Courier,*
December 18, 1841; *Madison Parish Richmond Compiler,* May 31, 1842; *Baton
Rouge Gazette,* June 25, 1842; For accusation about Johnson see Henry
Johnson to William Johnson, July 18, 1842, William Johnson Papers,
Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Hereinafter MDAH); Isaiah
Garrett to Mr. Underwood, May 13, 1842, Isaiah Garrett and Family Papers,
LLMVC.
boldly endorsed reform, a Whig recognized that Johnson suffered because of his half-hearted embrace of the convention question. Additionally, some Whigs tried to avoid the argument altogether by explaining that the voters and not the parties should decide if the constitution needed revision. Other Whigs went further and opposed the measure completely. Contending that Mouton and the Democrats wanted to make all offices elective, even the judiciary, the Whigs warned voters that the Democratic remedy of constitutional change could hurt more than it helped. The Baton Rouge Gazette urged the electorate to oppose universal suffrage because it would give "the greatest vagabond" the right to vote. Privately, retired Senator Porter agreed that "the great cause of evil is universal suffrage." The mixed message sent by Whigs contrasted sharply with the Democrats' one voice in favor of a convention.55

As in the 1838 gubernatorial race, Louisiana's financial situation, especially its banking problems, overshadowed much of the campaign. In both 1838 and 1842, the main issue involved what should be done with banks that had illegally suspended specie payments. Since the Panic of 1837 when, in violation of their charters, all Louisiana banks had suspended specie payment, the legislature had debated bank reform. In 1838, it passed a bill which Governor White vetoed. Because the banks had resumed specie payment, the issue was avoided in the 1839 session, but when the banks suspended payment

55 Madison Parish Richmond Compiler, February 8, 1842; Bee, June 16, 17, 1842; Baton Rouge Gazette, June 25, July 2, 1842 (first quote); Henry Adams Bullard to James G. Taliaferro, July 22, 1842, Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC; Alexander Porter to Isaac Morse, 1842, in Edward C. Morse, Blood of an Englishman (Abilene, Texas, 1943), 117 (second quote).
again in January 1840, the legislature resumed debate on what to do. In both the 1840 and 1841 sessions, disagreement amongst legislators prevented the passage of any bill. By December 1841, the situation compelled action as the economic uncertainty "was crippling the commercial life of the state."  

In 1842, the legislature passed, and Governor Roman signed "The Louisiana Bank Act of 1842." This bill reflected a bipartisan agreement that something needed to be done about the banking crisis. Voting on the measure did not split along party lines, but with a Whig governor and with the Whigs having a legislative majority, the act was associated with that party. In the short run, the bill proved disastrous, and in New Orleans, one of the effects was a two-day riot. The Whigs continued to blame the state's dire financial straits on the absence of a national bank, but many voters had grown tired of this refrain. Democrats, including Mouton, crusaded against the injustice of the state's banking aristocracy and contended that with Whigs controlling the presidency, the governor's office, and the legislature the fault must lie with their party.  

Not only did the Democrats brand Johnson as opposed to constitutional change and blame him for the state's financial crisis, they also denigrated his attachment to Louisiana and Louisianans. Democrats claimed that the Virginia-born Johnson looked down upon  

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57 Opelousas Gazette, July 2, 1842; Louisiana Courier, July 4, 1842; Bee, July 4, 1842.
Louisiana’s Creole population, while Mouton served as its leader. They attributed a quote to Johnson in which he supposedly said that he did not care what the Creoles did in the election because he could win without their votes. Ridiculing the Democrats’ use of the "Creole hobby," Whigs denied the quote and pointed out that Johnson had lived in Louisiana for more than forty years, and that in 1838 he had withdrawn from the race to allow Roman, a Creole, to become governor. Despite these Whig efforts, after the election, Johnson admitted that "the Creole question...operated powerfully in several [F]rench parishes," and, for the first time, a Democratic gubernatorial candidate won the predominantly Creole South Louisiana region.\textsuperscript{58}

In addition to winning South Louisiana, Mouton defeated Johnson 9,650 to 8,221 in the state. One Whig succinctly attributed Johnson’s loss to "Creolism, the Bank question & the convention question." Johnson agreed that these three causes, along with the accusation that he, White, and Roman had tried to rotate the state’s offices among themselves, had led to his defeat. Louisiana Whigs assured national leaders that the result was attributable to local causes and did not signal a diminishment of the party’s popularity in the state. Though losing the governor’s race, the Whigs maintained their majority in the legislature and won two of the three congressional races. As in 1840, New Orleans proved the key to Whig control of the legislature. Evidently, either voters in the commercial city did not entirely blame the Whigs for the financial crisis or they feared the Democratic

\textsuperscript{58}Opelousas Gazette, June 11, 1842; \textit{Bee}, May 4, July 4, 1842; \textit{Louisiana Courier}, July 2, 1842; Henry Johnson to William Johnson, July 18, 1842, William Johnson Papers, MDAH (quote).
solution, as Whigs swept the eleven legislative seats in the city. Additionally, Johnson won 54.9 percent of the votes in Greater Orleans, and the region's voters opposed a constitutional convention.\(^9\) (SEE APPENDIX B)

The rest of the state did not share Greater Orleans's animosity toward a new charter as 76.9 percent voted in favor of the measure, including over ninety percent in the Florida Parishes and North Louisiana. A new constitution with universal suffrage proved so popular in North Louisiana that it was later alleged that by 1842 the area had already stopped enforcing the property requirement for voting. Even in South Louisiana, a Whig stronghold, two-thirds voted for the convention. These overwhelming pro-convention percentages undoubtedly exaggerate the appeal of constitutional revision. According to the law, the convention had to be approved by over one-half of eligible voters, so simply by not voting, one cast his vote against the charter.\(^6\) (TABLE 3.1)

Whigs could confidently assert that despite Mouton's victory and the overwhelming demand for a constitutional convention, their party remained strong by pointing to Louisiana's four United States Senate elections in the early 1840s. In the 1830s, Whigs had not

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\(^9\) Henry Adams Bullard to James G. Taliaferro, July 22, 1842, Taliaferro Papers (quote); Henry Johnson to William Johnson, July 18, 1842, Johnson Papers, MDAH; Henry Clay to John Crittenden, July 21, 1842, Crittenden Papers, LC; Election results in Bee, July 12, 19, 21, 1842.

\(^6\) Constitutions of the State of Louisiana, Art. VII, Sec. 1, p. 562; For North Louisianaans voting despite not meeting qualifications see Proceedings and Debates of the Convention which Assembled at the City of New Orleans, January 14, 1844[sic] (New Orleans, 1845), 446, 448, 456. (Hereinafter Debates)
consistently supported their party's nominee for the Senate, but in each year from 1841 to 1844 a Whig legislature elected a Whig senator. In 1841, with Democratic Senator Nicholas’s term expiring, the Whigs offered Alexander Barrow as their candidate, while the Democrats countered with the incumbent. Perhaps fearing party defections, the Whig party selected Barrow, a former Democratic states-rights proponent, and he defeated Nicholas by six votes on the first ballot.61 When Senator Mouton resigned in 1842 in order to campaign for governor, the Whigs again turned to a former Democrat, New Orleanian Charles M. Conrad, who had left the party after Jackson’s bank veto and his withdrawal of funds from the institution. Conrad ran virtually unopposed, gaining thirty-five votes with his closest competitor receiving nine.62

Having only been elected to fill the remainder of Mouton’s term, Conrad hoped for re-election to a full six-year term in 1843. During his brief senatorial career, however, Conrad undermined his own

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62 *Louisiana Senate Journal*, 16th leg., 1st sess., 60; *Baton Rouge Gazette*, March 12, 1842.
chances by blaspheming Louisiana's savior, Andrew Jackson. In 1842, Congress debated remitting the fine which Judge Hall which levied on Jackson in 1815 for his refusal to remove New Orleans from martial law. Conrad's vote against this measure raised the ire of both Democrats and Whigs in Louisiana, and friends of Jackson swore they would defeat his re-election. A minority, Democrats in the legislature could not elect one of their own, so they announced that they would back retired Whig leader Alexander Porter who easily defeated Conrad on the first ballot. Democrats had voted for Porter partially because they felt that illness would soon compel him to resign his seat, and perhaps enable them to fill it with a member of their party. They had correctly predicted that sickness would force Porter to resign, but they had underestimated his political savvy. Porter carefully timed his resignation for a period when the Whigs controlled the legislature and when the disruptive Conrad was absent in Europe. In January 1844, the Whigs elected perennial candidate Henry Johnson to the Senate, as a reward for his loyal service to the party.

Control of the legislature in 1842 proved doubly important for the Whigs, for not only did this body have to power to elect a United

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61Edward G.W. Butler to Andrew Jackson, July 17, 1842, James W. Breedlove to Jackson, July 18, 1842, October 20, 1842, January 27, 1843, Jean B. Plauché to Jackson, November 2, 1842, Andrew Jackson Papers, LC; New Orleans Jeffersonian, May 30, 1842; Daily Picayune, January 10, 1843.

62Henry D. Piere to Andrew Jackson, January 9, 1843, Jackson Papers, LC; John Slidell to Martin Van Buren, February 2, 1844, Van Buren Papers, LC; Alexander Porter to John J. Crittenden, December 2, 1843, Crittenden Papers, LC; For the importance of any Whig senator but Conrad see Alexander Porter to Walter L. Brashear, February 2, 1844, Brashear-Lawrence Papers, SHC.
States senator but also, with the addition of a fourth congressional seat in Louisiana, it was vested with the authority to redistrict the state. Using what an opponent called "the strictest gerrymandering principles," Whig legislators hoped their party would have majorities in every district but the third. In July 1843, Louisiana voters went the polls to fill the redistricted congressional seats until the regularly scheduled 1844 election. Anticipating victories in three of the races, Whigs were stunned when the Democrats, who had never captured more than one of Louisiana's three districts, won all four contests. 65

Negative reaction to the gerrymander contributed to the result, but anger over Conrad's course regarding Jackson's fine, and party attitudes toward constitutional change were probably more significant. Resenting the rebuke that Conrad had given to their hero, Louisianans were appalled when the Whigs considered running him as a candidate in the First District. Though Conrad withdrew, Democrat John Slidell continued to campaign against this traitor to Louisiana, and he easily won the race. 66 Throughout the state, Democrats benefitted from the

65 Alexander Walker to Martin Van Buren, August 6, 1843, Van Buren Papers, LC (quote); Thomas Curry to John Liddell, June 2, 1843, Moses and St. John R. Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC; The redistricting plan was: First District—Orleans Parish below Canal Street and the parishes of Plaquemines and St. Bernard; Second District—Orleans Parish above Canal Street and the parishes of Jefferson, St. John, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Lafourche, and Terrebonne; Third District—Florida Parishes plus the parishes of Carroll, Madison, Tensas, Concordia, Catahoula, Avoyelles, Pointe Coupee, Iberville, and West Baton Rouge; Fourth District—the rest of North Louisiana plus the parishes of St. Martin, St. Mary, Lafayette, St. Landry, and Calcasieu; Baton Rouge Gazette, August 12, 1843; Daily Tropic, November 24, 1843.

66 John Slidell to Andrew Jackson, July 12, 1843, John Claiborne to Jackson, July 5, 1843, Jackson Papers, LC.
congressional election coinciding with the second vote on whether to call a constitutional convention. They continued adamantly to demand change, while Whigs remained lukewarm. With the constitutional matter requiring not a majority of the ballots cast but of all eligible voters, staying away from the polls was equivalent to voting against the measure. Many Whigs chose this option and some even reportedly left the state to defeat the convention call. Thus, realizing the importance of each pro-convention vote, Democratic turnout probably exceeded that of Whigs and aided in winning close races.67 (TABLE 3.1)

With a majority of the electorate voting in favor of a convention, the constitution-making process in Louisiana finally came to fruition in 1844.68 In July, an election for convention members was held and in August the body met in the small town of Jackson in East Feliciana Parish. Despite the payment of lip-service to the idea of a non-partisan convention, Whig and Democratic parish meetings nominated candidates and offered the voters a choice of programs. The electorate played a significant role as the campaign generated an unprecedented number of candidates' letters to voters. These letters detailing aspirants' views on revision filled newspaper columns. Both parties also modified their original planks to cater to the voters'

67 Jeremiah Y. Dashiell to James K. Polk, July 27, 1844, in Herbert Weaver and Wayne Cutler, eds., Correspondence of James K. Polk (Knoxville, Tenn., 1969-1996); 7:405-407.

68 For a discussion of the 1845 constitution see Judith K. Schafer, "Reform or Experiment? The Louisiana Constitution of 1845," in Warren M. Billings and Edward F. Haas, eds., In Search of Fundamental Law: Louisiana's Constitutions, 1812-1974 (Lafayette, La., 1993), 21-36; For a view with a greater emphasis on partisanship see Ferguson, "The Louisiana Constitution of 1845."

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dictates. Within the convention, however, the parties did divide on several important measures, particularly those regarding the extent of democracy, apportionment, and views toward corporations. Though partisan rivalry shaped much of the convention, hostility between the country parishes and New Orleans also played a key role with the country parishes insisting that the city's power be restricted.

Though at least one candidate "[did] not consider [the convention] a proper subject for the interference of Party Conventions," most partisans disagreed. With the election for members of the constitutional convention coinciding with the July legislative and congressional elections, Democratic and Whig parish meetings nominated convention slates at the same time they chose men for those offices. While agreeing on the need for universal white male suffrage, reapportionment, and the increase in the number of elective offices, the parties did offer the voters a choice of programs. The Democrats favored more sweeping changes including having only minimal residency requirements for voters, making all offices including the judiciary elective, abolishing the state banking system, and making it illegal for the state to go into debt. They also reminded voters that they had long advocated revision, especially universal suffrage, while the Whigs had continually tried to maintain restricted access to the ballot.69 Charging Democrats with wanting to fashion radical changes such as an elective judiciary, Whigs alleged their opponents sought to

69 James Dunlap to Alonzo Snyder, November 18, 1843, Snyder Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Louisiana Democratic Association Address, 1844, John A. Quitman Papers, LLMVC; Louisiana Courier, January 12, February 10, March 1, April 2, 1844.
destroy and not to amend the constitution. In contrast, their party would protect the people from this anarchy by minimizing changes in the 1812 charter. A few Whigs even claimed that the convention only had the power to make the specific changes mentioned in the bill calling for the convention. The party also wanted longer residency requirements, fewer elective offices, and fewer restrictions on business than the Democrats.  

In this campaign, the Louisiana electorate played a greater role than it had in any previous contest. In prior races, candidates had issued circulars and written letters to their constituents but not to the extent witnessed in the convention election. In New Orleans, the resolutions of a Democratic convention included a list of the specific changes that the party recommended, and at least one country newspaper analyzed the 1812 constitution section by section. In Madison Parish, in response to a list of questions printed in the Richmond Compiler, seven candidates wrote letters detailing their views. Only one competitor did not publish a letter, insisting that he had articulated his position at a parish court meeting. This explanation apparently proved unconvincing to the electorate, for, in the subsequent week's issue, he answered the questions. In St. Landry Parish, the same situation prevailed. The Opelousas Gazette included an inquiry into the nominees' positions on several key matters, and

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70 Opelousas Gazette, January 20, 29, 1844; Vidalia Concordia Intelligencer, September 30, October 21, 1843; Baton Rouge Gazette, January 20, March 19, 1844; Bee, May 23, June 1, 1844.

71 Louisiana Courier, January 12, 1844; St Francisville Democrat, December 3, 1841.
seven dutifully replied in the following weeks. Discussing campaigning, one aspirant wrote, "I am so worn down that I can hardly write this letter," while another explained that despite his disdain for canvassing he would do so at his friends' insistence.\(^7\)

Not only did the parties respond to the questions presented in newspapers, but as the campaign progressed, they modified their stances on several key issues with the positions of the Whigs and the Democrats coming closer together as the election neared. After receiving the candidates' responses, the Richmond Compiler observed that "there is a general concurrence of public sentiment" in regard to most of the changes. Fearing being branded as radicals, most Democrats dropped their demand for an elective judiciary. More significantly, all but the most conservative Whigs acknowledged that the convention was not limited to making only the changes prescribed in the bill which passed the legislature but had full power to rewrite the constitution. This shift in Whig views clearly illustrates the increasing power of the electorate, for the 1812 constitution explicitly stated that any amendment must appear in the convention bill. Thus, the Whigs who objected to wholesale revision unquestionably read the law correctly, but in an effort to gain control of the convention, they agreed to accept a more liberal interpretation.\(^8\)

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\(^7\)Madison Parish Richmond Compiler, February-June 1844; Opelousas Gazette, June 15, 22, 29, 1844; Henry W. Huntington to Moses Liddell, June 17, 1844, Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC (quote); Edward G.W. Butler to Thomas Butler, June 5, 1844, Thomas Butler Papers, LLMVC.

\(^8\)Madison Parish Richmond Compiler, May 31, 1844; John Moore to Charles M. Conrad, December 13, 1843, David Weeks Papers, LLMVC.
The July election for constitutional convention delegates overshadowed the concurrent legislative and congressional races. A Whig declared it "by far the most important thing that will come before the people for years" and the Democratic *Louisiana Courier* agreed. While over twenty-five letters from convention candidates appeared in the newspapers, few letters from either legislative or congressional nominees were published. Preferring to channel its energy into the convention contest, the Whig party did not offer a candidate to oppose Slidell in the First District, and in the Third, declinations by Thomas Butler and the venerable Philemon Thomas left Democrat John B. Dawson unopposed as well. The Whigs did obtain one congressional seat, as Bannon G. Thibodeaux defeated incumbent Alcee Labranche in the Second District, and the party's nominee lost a close race to Isaac Morse in the Fourth. The Whigs also won control of the legislature. Because of their long association with constitutional change, however, the Democrats prevailed in the most significant battle by electing a majority of their delegates to the constitutional convention.

Gathering in Jackson in August, the seventy-seven convention members included forty-two Democrats, thirty-two Whigs, and three of unknown affiliation. Immediately, the delegates assumed a power to rewrite the entire constitution. On this measure and many others, the parties concurred, with one delegate proclaiming "We came here as

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*Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliaferro, September 18, 1843, Taliaferro Papers, LLMC (quote); Louisiana Courier, February 21, April 2, May 8, 1844.*

*Baton Rouge Gazette, May 25, June 10, 1844; Bee, August 17, 1844.*
Louisianians, not as partisans." Whigs even expressed relief that though their party did not control the convention, the body had a majority of non-radical delegates with its composition guaranteeing that the judiciary would not be made elective and that the state would not repudiate its debt. The delegates symbolically expressed their commitment to removing the aristocratic provisions of the 1812 constitution by changing the preamble from "We, the representatives of the people" to "We, the people of the State of Louisiana." Whigs and Democrats concurred on eliminating the property qualification for suffrage which "by universal consent [was] denounced and abandoned." Additionally, popular election of the governor, election of parish officers other than judges, and the prohibition of state aid to corporations engendered very little opposition.

While the two parties' positions had become more closely aligned, an examination of the votes of the convention demonstrate that differences still remained. Democrats exceeded Whigs in their commitment to Jacksonian democracy—making suffrage and office-holding as broad as possible. Democrat Solomon W. Downs, the Ouachita Parish legislator responsible for initially championing the convention bill in the legislature, directed the "radical" contingent in favor of the lowest possible residency requirements and making all offices elective. Desiring to keep the 1812 constitution intact, Whig former

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76 Debates, 63 (quote); C. G. Forshey to John Liddell, 14 July 184[4], Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC; Opelousas St. Landry Whig, February 6, 1845.

77 For an article-by-article comparison of the constitutions of 1812 and 1845 see Constitutions of the State of Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1930). The respective preambles appear on p. 7; Debates, 64.
Governor Andre B. Roman, who believed "most of the states have extended too far the elective franchise," represented the other extreme. On six major votes regarding residency requirements and placing power closer to people, the Democrats and Whigs consistently opposed one another. On these bills, the index of party disagreement—the absolute value of the difference between the Democratic and Whig percentages on each measure—averaged fifty-three percent.\(^7^8\) (TABLE 3.2)

Partisan conflict, however, was not limited to conflicts over democracy. The Democratic Louisiana Courier had proclaimed that the most important issue in the convention involved divorcing the state from direct involvement in the economy, especially banking. State government involvement in the economy had proved disastrous. By 1843, the state was responsible for 1.2 million dollars in bank bonds, and the treasury had defaulted on interest payments on state bonds totalling 1.273 million dollars. Democrats and Whigs agreed that the state should no longer purchase or guarantee bonds in corporations but disagreed on whether banks should be outlawed entirely and whether the state should be allowed to go into debt. The index of party disagreement on the prohibition of banks in Louisiana was forty-six percent and on the permitting of a state debt of up to one hundred thousand dollars was fifty-eight percent. While the Democratic

TABLE 3.2

1845 Constitutional Convention

Index of Partisan Disagreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Whig Percent</th>
<th>Democrat Percent</th>
<th>Index of Party Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elective Judiciary</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against two years voter residency</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective Secretary of State</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elect governor with plurality</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five year residency for legislators</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of property in apportionment</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Index of Party Disagreement 53

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Whig Percent</th>
<th>Democrat Percent</th>
<th>Index of Party Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prohibition of banks</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorize debt of $100,000</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Whig Percent</th>
<th>Democrat Percent</th>
<th>Index of Party Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vote on constitution</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit voters on new constitution</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move capital away from New Orleans</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population basis in senate</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PARTY PARTICIPATION BY REGION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Whigs</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLORIDA</td>
<td>2 (84.6%)</td>
<td>11 (15.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH LA</td>
<td>8 (50.0%)</td>
<td>8 (50.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORLEANS</td>
<td>18 (58.1%)</td>
<td>13 (41.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH LA</td>
<td>4 (28.6%)</td>
<td>10 (71.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32 (43.2%) 42 (56.8%)
majority succeeded in outlawing banks, a united Whig effort led by Roman succeeded in legalizing a limited state debt.  

Wrangling between Whigs and Democrats persisted even as the convention came to a close. Ninety-seven percent of the Democrats voted in favor of the constitution as a whole, but only fifty-five percent of the Whigs concurred. Roman voted against the measure arguing that voters had not believed that the 1812 constitution would be put down entirely and that the delegates had set aside every conservative principle. Having voted in favor the constitution, the delegates had to decide on who should approve the constitution. The parties differed on whether this group should include those men who were currently disfranchised but would be granted the right to vote under the new constitution. Again, the parties sharply diverged. Eighty-six percent of the Whigs wanted to restrict the ballot to those who could vote under the old constitution, but this measure failed as only thirteen percent of the Democrats agreed. Consequently, men who would receive the right to vote in the constitution of 1845 were allowed to cast their votes on the charter.

Though tension between Democrats and Whigs played a role in the convention, animosity between the country parishes and New Orleans often overcame party affiliation. Throughout the debates, delegates much more frequently referred to the conflicting interests of the country and city than they did controversies between Democrats and Whigs. State sectionalism and partisan affiliation did overlap as

79 Louisiana Courier, May 8, 14, 1844; Schafer, "Reform or Experiment?" 35.
Whig delegates primarily came from South Louisiana and Greater Orleans. The country parishes had long resented New Orleans. This indignation had even led to the capital being briefly moved from the Crescent City to Donaldsonville in the early 1830s before a want of accommodations soon forced its return to New Orleans. Fear of the corrupting influence of the city contributed to the legislature's decision to locate the constitutional convention in the distinctly non-urban setting of Jackson. Within two weeks, however, the delegates after a "desperate struggle" succumbed to the siren song of the city and agreed to adjourn to meet in New Orleans in 1845.  

Relocation to New Orleans seemed only to heighten country members' "near-paranoid fear of the Crescent City," particularly regarding its corruption and intrigue. And, they exhibited a determination to place as many constraints as possible on the city. They almost unanimously agreed to move the capital out of New Orleans but could not agree on where to place it. A cynical observer claimed that the ideal solution would be to build a steamboat large enough to hold both houses and have it travel throughout the state. In lieu of choosing a location for the capital, the country delegates instead passed an article prohibiting the capital from being located within sixty miles of New Orleans.  

80 Hilary B. Cenas to Margaret O. Pierce, August 22, 1844, Cenas Family Papers, Louisiana State Museum. 

81 Schafer, "Reform or Experiment?" 27; Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliaferro, September 24, 1845, Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC. The subsequent legislature passed a bill moving the state capitol to Baton Rouge where it remained for the rest of the antebellum period.
The most vexing issue in the convention proved to be the apportionment of seats in the house and senate. In apportioning the legislature, the country delegates feared that, under the new less restrictive suffrage provisions, the city with its overwhelming white population, would control Louisiana. While basing representation in the lower house on qualified electors, in the senate they used total population with each slave counting the same as a white person. More importantly, the delegates arbitrarily limited Orleans Parish to one-eighth of the senators and one-fifth of the lower house. New Orleans delegates complained that "Restrictions, upon restrictions, have been piled upon her" and pleaded unsuccessfully that the interest of the city and the state were indivisible. Not only was the index of partisan disagreement lower on these measures, but much of it can be easily explained, as the areas around New Orleans had elected more Whigs than Democrats to the convention.\(^2\)

In November 1845, the electorate overwhelming voted in favor of the new constitution 12,277 to 1,395 as every parish passed the constitution which included universal suffrage, a greater number of elective offices, the government's divorce from the economy, and the multiple restrictions on New Orleans. Even in Greater Orleans, the region stigmatized by many of the constitution's provisions, the charter because of its democratic features passed with over eighty percent of the voters in favor. This vote, however, did not signal universal delight in the measure. A diarist tersely recorded,

\(^{2}\)\textit{Debates}, 154, 162, 611 (first quote); M. Prescott to John Moore, April 1, April 10, 1845, \textit{Weeks Papers}.  

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"accepting the new constitution, a poor one at that." Though the 1845 constitution was not an ideal document, voters preferred it to the antiquated 1812 charter, or as a Whig explained, "I may yet vote for it, as I would take a leaky boat, when in the power of pirates."

Between the constitutional convention's adjournment in August and its reconvening in January, Louisiana's parties battled one another in the 1844 presidential election. The state had been preparing for the contest for several years. Upon President Harrison's death in 1841, Vice President John Tyler had ascended to the nation's highest office. Soon a break ensued between the states'-rights Tyler and the nationalistic Henry Clay that resulted in Tyler being read out of the Whig party. Louisiana's Whigs did not have to debate over which man to support in this struggle. Clay's personal connections along with the appeal of his American System had made him for years the their first choice for the presidency. Even in "the heart of the great cotton-growing region" Rapides Parish, a Clay Club maintained that Tyler's departure from the American System had hurt the South.

In the winter of 1842-1843 and in early 1844, Clay travelled to Louisiana for personal and business reasons and to attend dinners and balls given in his honor. A Louisiana Whig described his visit as

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81 Davis, ed., Barrow Diary, November 3, 1845, p. 375-6 (first quote); Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliaferro, June 23, 1845, James G. Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC (second quote).

"enough to convince us all of his being the greatest man in the
world," and the longest entry a woman's diary recounted trekking
through the mud to see Clay. In contrast, to the excitement which
Clay engendered, Whigs viewed Tyler as a traitor or, according to
Porter, "a juggling mountebank." Louisiana's Whig party formally
endorsed Clay's candidacy at a February 1844 convention in New
Orleans. Resolutions recommended a national bank and celebrated Clay
as the champion of a protective tariff on sugar cane. A national Whig
nominating convention concurred, and Clay was unanimously selected as
the party's presidential candidate.  

Democrats throughout the nation and in Louisiana faced a greater
difficulty in agreeing upon a candidate. Former president Martin Van
Buren was the decided favorite, but his candidacy foundered on the
shoals of his opposition to Texas annexation. Texas, which had
achieved independence from Mexico in 1836, desired inclusion in the
United States. With only the Sabine River separating Louisiana from
Texas, "Texas Fever" gripped the state. A Louisianan warned Van Buren
that the state's entire Democratic party and many of its Whigs
demanded annexation and urged him to write a letter in favor of the
measure.  

Van Buren, however, joined Clay in declaring that Texas

85 F.D. Richardson to John Liddell, January 1, 1843, Liddell Papers,
LLMVC (first quote); Ellen McCollam, diary, January 16, 1844, LLMVC;
Alexander Porter to John J. Crittenden, July 21, 1842, Crittenden Papers,
LC (second quote); Bee, February 24, 1844; Baton Rouge Gazette, March 23,
1844; St. Francisville Louisiana Chronicle, May 6, 1843.

86 Alexander Walker to Martin Van Buren, April 25, 1844, Van Buren
Papers, LC (first quote); James F. Winston, "Louisiana and the Annexation
of Texas," Louisiana Historical Quarterly XIX (January 1936), 89-118; and
Thomas E. Redard, "The Election of 1844 in Louisiana: A New Look at the
annexation should not be an issue in the presidential contest. Many southerners shared the view of a New Orleans Democrat that the Texas question "has killed Clay and Van [B]uren in the South." Reacting to Van Buren's public letter on Texas, Solomon W. Downs, designated a North Louisiana delegate to the national convention and a Van Buren presidential elector, resigned these posts in protest of Van Buren's abandonment of the South.\footnote{William G. Austen to John C. Calhoun, May 16, 1844, (quote) in Robert L. Meriwether, et al., eds., The Papers of John C. Calhoun 18 vols. (Columbia, SC, 1959- ), 18:516-7; Jean B. Plauché to Andrew Jackson, June 2, 1844, Jackson Papers, LC; Speech of S.W. Downs...on the Annexation of Texas (New Orleans, 1844), 3-4; For a Whig woman fearing that Texas would doom Clay's candidacy see Dell Upton, ed., Madeline: Love and Survival in Antebellum New Orleans (Athens, Ga., 1996), May 6, 1844, p. 92; Cooper, The South and the Politics of Slavery, 189-219.}

Hoping that public opinion regarding Van Buren's letter would subside, the *Louisiana Courier* explained that it was only a question of time before Van Buren, as president, would annex Texas. An angry writer disagreed and declared that the Democratic party's commitment to measures and not men mandated dropping Van Buren from the ticket. Tyler's pro-Texas Secretary of State John C. Calhoun, a South Carolinian state-rights champion emerged as the choice of some disgruntled Democrats. Even prior to Van Buren's anti-annexation letter, Louisianans had strongly considered Calhoun as a candidate. In 1842, pro-Calhoun newspapers were established in New Orleans and Natchitoches, and party leaders considered him a viable alternative to Van Buren. In January 1844, the Louisiana convention to select
delegates to the national convention named Calhoun as its second choice behind Van Buren. 88

When Van Buren declined to come out in favor of Texas annexation, the Calhoun movement blossomed. In Louisiana, support of Calhoun's candidacy was based more on Texas than on an adherence to the South Carolinian's states rights doctrines. A non-partisan Calhoun for president meeting "connected with all absorbing question of the reannexation of Texas," was held in New Orleans and the Morning Herald dropped Van Buren's name and endorsed Calhoun's candidacy. The question of Texas annexation disrupted the national convention, and Van Buren was unable to achieve the two-thirds vote necessary for the nomination. Because of northern opposition and his withdrawal from partisan consideration, Calhoun had no chance, but Louisiana's delegation gave him five of his six votes on the first ballot. A number of aspirants took turns in the lead, until on the ninth ballot, the party nominated a dark horse—Tennessean James K. Polk's staunch advocate of Texas annexation. 89

Louisiana Democrats celebrated when their party dropped Van Buren in favor of Polk and Texas. In New Orleans, a Democrat claimed that "Democracy has risen a hundred percent in this market within the last hundred days." Meetings throughout the state praised Polk and


passed pro-annexation resolutions. A delighted partisan wrote the
candidate that in Louisiana all Democrats and many Whigs interested in
the Texas question had welcomed the news of his nomination. Having
been absent from the state since illness had forced him to resign from
the Senate eight years earlier, Charles Gayarré, now running for the
state legislature, concurred that the state almost unanimously favored
annexation, and he made it the keystone of his campaign.  

For Louisianans, Texas annexation was inextricably bound with
slavery. A diarist made the connection explicit when he wrote, "The
main question is slavery & anti-slavery & Texas." Democrats contended
that the acquisition of Texas would provide the South with new slave
states and would help maintain the region's strength in Washington.
They added that if the United States did not annex Texas then Great
Britain would obtain it, abolish slavery there, and then use it as a
base to menace southern slavery with Louisiana being the first state
that would be threatened. Others charged that Henry Clay's opposition
to Texas annexation stemmed from his unquenchable ambition, contending
that Clay had sold himself to northern abolitionists and had agreed to
destroy southern slaveholders in order to fulfill his lifelong dream
of becoming president.  

90 W.F. Vason to Henry Marshall, September 13, 1844, Marshall-Furman
Papers, LLMVC (quote); Louisiana Courier, June 24, 26, August 1, October
1844; For more pro-annexation meetings see Speech of S.W. Downs...on the
Annexation of Texas (1844); R.R. Barrow, Au Comite Central Democratique
de la Pariosse Ascension (1844).

91 Davis, ed., Barrow Diary, June 20, 1844, p. 330, October 2, 1844,
p. 340 (quote); Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliáferro, November 7,
1844, Taliáferro Papers, LLMVC; Jean B. Plauché to Andrew Jackson, June
2, 1844, Jackson Papers, LC; Louisiana Courier, June 27, September 17,
1844.
The Texas annexation question proved extremely difficult for Louisiana Whigs. Some partisans valiantly struggled to explain how Clay's position on Texas annexation protected the South better than Polk's stance. They distributed copies of the anti-annexation speech of Thomas Hart Benton, a prominent Democratic senator from Missouri, and published a letter from Senator Barrow in which he explained that annexation would lead to an unjust war with Mexico and possibly England and France. Other Whigs joined Barrow in claiming that the introduction of competition from Texas would decrease the value of Louisiana's sugar and cotton plantations and its stock and grazing business. Unswayed, Democrats responded to Barrow's letter by demanding his resignation for betraying his constituents. In areas where Whigs did not think that Barrow's argument would work, they tried a different course. They claimed that the Whig party and Clay were in favor of Texas annexation "if compatible with the honor of the country and the stability of the Union." Democrats accused the Whigs of western Louisiana of issuing a "garbled edition" of Clay's anti-annexation letter which implied that Clay actually favored the acquisition of Texas. A correspondent from that area asserted that Whig legislative candidates had come out in favor of Texas, and that

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92 Address of Mr. Barrow, of Louisiana, to His Constituents upon the Annexation of Texas, (Washington, 1844); J. J. Sanford to James G. Taliaferro, June 13, 1844, Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC; James McFarlane to James K. Polk, November 11, 1844, Polk Correspondence 8:305-306; For anti-Barrow meetings see Louisiana Courier, June 24, 1844; Speech of S.W. Downs... on the annexation of Texas, 57.
the Whigs' Fourth District congressional nominee had been "compelled to shout 'huzza' for Texas." 93

Opposition to Texas annexation, however, did not mean that Whigs forfeited the title as the party that best protected slavery. Accusations of antislavery sentiments among presidential contenders had become so routine that a Whig newspaper could refer to Democratic charges as "The Old Story." Before Polk's nomination, Whig newspapers had reprinted earlier stories of Van Buren's votes opposing Missouri statehood and favoring Negro suffrage. 94 When the race was reduced to two southern slaveholders, Clay and Polk, abolition charges became less frequent but did not vanish as both sides accused their opponents of an alliance with abolitionists. Appearing in both the New Orleans Bee and the Baton Rouge Gazette, an article entitled "Coalition of Locofocos and Abolitionists: People of the South Read!!" warned readers that while Democrats in the South slandered Clay as opposed to slavery, their northern brethren joined with abolitionists in attacking Clay as a cruel southern slaveholder. 95

As in 1840, Louisiana Whigs campaigned not only as defenders of slavery but also as the party of the American System. Whigs castigated the Democrats' use of Texas annexation as a "humbug"

93 W.F. Vason to Henry Marshall, September 13, 1844, Marshall-Furman Papers, LLMVC; Baton Rouge Gazette, October 12, 1844 (first quote); Louisiana Courier, August 31, 1844 (second quote).

94 Bee, August 24, 1844 (quote); Louisiana Courier, February 12, 28, 1844.

95 Bee, October 2, 1844; Baton Rouge Gazette, October 19, 1844.
designed to distract voters from more important issues. While still portraying a national bank as the best way to maintain a sound currency, Louisiana Whigs decreased their use of the term "bank" and instead emphasized their commitment to a stable currency. This switch probably occurred because of the increasing antipathy toward banks in the state, an enmity which would soon result in the outlawing of banks in the 1845 constitution. In this campaign, Louisiana Whigs placed more emphasis on the tariff—"the great rock of our strength." In 1842, Congress had passed a compromise tariff which preserved a duty on sugar. Whigs contrasted Henry Clay's protection of the sugar cane industry with Polk's ruinous free trade doctrines, especially his declaration that the sugar cane tariff only benefitted a few nabobs.

In South Louisiana, the St. Landry Whig pleaded "SUGAR PLANTERS REMEMBER" that Polk opposed the sugar cane duty and reminded its non-cane growing readers that the tariff was beneficial to the whole country.

Though preferring to debate Texas annexation, Louisiana Democrats acknowledged the American System as a campaign issue. Democratic Congressman John Slidell recognized the potency of the tariff issue and implored Polk to make a declaration in favor of a revenue sugar cane duty. A West Feliciana Democrat, however, urged Polk to continue his free trade doctrines observing that as cotton prices went down and the price of goods went up, people had come to

96 Baton Rouge Gazette, July 20, September 14, 1844.

97 Baton Rouge Gazette, October 12, 1844 (first quote); Opelousas St. Landry Whig, September 26 (second quote), October 3, 1844; Bee, June 8, September 27, 1844.
blame the Tariff of 1842 and its protectionist doctrines. Gayarré complained the tariff only existed to drain money from the South to the North. Democrats also claimed to see through Whig subterfuge regarding a national bank. The Louisiana Courier reminded its readers that despite the Whigs' silence on the issue, everyone knew that "The Bank is the beginning and the end of Whig principles," and the Democratic State Convention declared, "A National Bank is a National Curse." The newspaper added that a national bank would establish branches in Louisiana negating any restrictions that the new constitution placed on state banks. Democrats wore badges informing Louisianans that they could have Polk, and the Republic without the Bank, or Clay, and the Bank without the Republic.98

In 1844, both Louisiana parties sought to outdo the spectacular aspects of the 1840 race. In a year with elections to the legislature, Congress, and the constitutional convention, in addition to the presidential contest, Louisianans were inundated with political pamphlets, letters, pole raisings, barbecues, banners, badges, and meetings. According to a North Louisianan, the "intense excitement ...penetrated the remotest regions [of the state]." The presidential race culminated with both parties holding statewide conventions in Baton Rouge in the weeks preceding the presidential election. Hyperbole proved the order of the day with the Whigs boasting over twelve thousand in attendance at their gathering doubling the

98 John Slidell to James K. Polk, June 1, 1844, Polk Correspondence 7:179; Collin S. Tarpley to Polk, October 26, 1844, ibid., 8:231-232; Louisiana Courier, January 12 (second quote), April 16, August 16, September 14, 24 (first quote), October 1, 21, 1844.
Democrats own extravagant claim of six thousand at their convention. As in 1840, participation in these political events extended beyond the electorate with women playing a role and with children wearing partisan badges.99

If women had made a slight foray into Louisiana's political culture in the Log Cabin and Hard Cider Campaign, they extended their role in 1844. As in 1840, women played a more prominent part in the Whig party, and Clay won a mock election in the Ladies' Cabin of a steamboat, sixteen to five. In her diary for 1844, a New Orleans woman recounted avidly reading partisan newspapers, painting a partisan illustration, debating politics with male associates, and attending a torchlight procession. The "Whig Ladies of East and West Baton Rouge" held their own meeting in preparation for the statewide Baton Rouge convention and, in the manner of men's political meetings, they elected a chairperson, appointed a secretary, established a committee, passed resolutions, and had the proceedings printed in the party newspaper. These resolutions announced a competition among the parishes for the best banner at the convention and for the parish which had the greatest representation.100

Whig observers counted as many as two thousand ladies at the October convention, including a delegation from Iberville Parish that had a plan for obtaining votes. Wearing badges bearing the motto,

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99 Zenas Preston Diary, 1844, LC; For Catahoula Parish preparations for Whig events see Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliaferro, August-October 1844, Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC; Debates, 757 (quote).

100 Bee, May 7, 1844; Upton, ed., Madeline, 75-202; Baton Rouge Gazette, September 7, 1844.
"Clay or no Husband," the women apparently agreed with an earlier newspaper article which contended that women controlled one-half the state's votes. No longer related to passive participation, a woman addressed a statewide convention for the first time. Mary Gayle, the grand-daughter of the aged Philemon Thomas who was serving as president of the Whig convention, proclaimed "the principles and policies of the Whig party to be the true principles and policy of the Federal Constitution."101

The Democratic party again denied that all ladies were Whigs. As in 1840, women, had a less pronounced role in the party. No Democratic women's meetings were held nor did a woman address the assembly at the party's state convention. The party did, however, specifically invite women to its gatherings and sometimes listed the number in attendance. If denied an overt role, Rowena McGimsey, "a thorough going Democrat" gave herself a partisan function. She joined her husband, a Democratic doctor, on his rounds and made several converts to the Democratic faith. A letter from her husband to Polk even indicates that women had adopted one of the less attractive features of antebellum politics. The doctor explains how, while debating politics with several other females, his wife quieted a Whig lady braggart by offering to bet a house-servant on the election's outcome.102

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101 Convention proceedings in Bee, October 9, 1844; Baton Rouge Gazette, October 9, 1844 (quote).
102 John W.P. McGimsey to James K. Polk, September 27, 1844 (quote), November 1, 1844, Polk Papers, LC; For a woman betting on Texas annexation see Upton, ed., Madeline, April 30, 1844, p. 91.
The Whig woman made the right decision in declining to accept the wager, for Polk and Texas triumphed in the United States and in Louisiana where Polk out-polled Clay, 13,782 to 13,083. As in prior races, the Democrats performed best in the Florida Parishes and North Louisiana, receiving over fifty-five percent of the vote in each region. Clay and the sugar tariff had their greatest appeal in South Louisiana where he received 56.7 percent of the ballots. Polk's victory rested on Greater Orleans where the Democrats triumphed in a presidential election for the first time. Traditionally elections in this section had inspired charges of fraud from both sides, but none of the previous irregularities equalled the John Slidell-orchestrated "Plaquemines Frauds" of 1844. Six weeks before the election Congressman Slidell was in New York, but after expressing the desire that "I shall not feel satisfied with myself were I absent from my post on the day of the battle," returned to Louisiana. Slidell's "post" turned out to be a steamboat that shuttled Democrats with questionable voting qualifications from New Orleans to Democratic-controlled Plaquemines Parish where they voted without objection. Polk won Plaquemines Parish, which had cast only 290 ballots in the 1840 election, by an astounding 1,007 to 37 margin, enabling him to win Louisiana. Whigs cried fraud, and the state legislature investigated, but the results stood.103 (SEE APPENDIX A)

103 His political acumen steadily improving, Slidell found a loophole in the 1812 constitution which allowed voting anywhere in the county (not parish) of Orleans, (counties were larger administrative districts primarily used to describe state senate regions) which included Plaquemines Parish; John Slidell to James Buchanan, September 22, 1844, James Buchanan Papers, HSP (quote); A.B. Roman to Henry Clay, December 2, 1844 in Clay Papers, 10:169-70; Ursin Bouligny, Jr., to Clay, December
With Polk's election in 1844 and more importantly with the ratification of the constitution in 1845, Louisiana Democrats had reason to be sanguine. A partisan declared, "I can safely assert that democratic views and feelings predominate throughout Louisiana." In addition, the party controlled the governor's office and three of the four congressional seats. Perhaps, the only negative for Democrats was the declination of an invitation for Jackson and Polk to visit the state after the election.\(^{104}\) In contrast, the Whig party in Louisiana had reached a low point. Not only had it lost several elections, but its future appeared bleak as the men newly enfranchised seemed more likely to join the Democrats, who had championed constitutional change, than the Whigs, who had been lukewarm. Additionally, the most prominent Louisiana Whig, Alexander Porter, died soon after resigning his Senate seat in 1844. The Whigs' best hope would be that the Democrats would find holding power and making policy more difficult than challenging the Whigs.

In 1836, Democrats and Whigs in Louisiana had divided primarily over national policy, particularly the American System. In subsequent years, while retaining their differences on national issues, the two parties' differences regarding state policy became more apparent with Democrats preferring greater democracy and less government involvement in the economy than Whigs. In the 1845 constitution, Democratic ideas

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6, 1844 in ibid., 10:173; Journal of the Special Committee Appointed by the House of Representatives of Louisiana to Investigate the Frauds Perpetrated in the State, During the Last Presidential Election (New Orleans, 1845).

\(^{104}\) Peleg B. Phelps to James K. Polk, July 17, 1844 (quote); Polk to Felix Bosworth, December 31, 1844, Polk Papers, LC.
concerning the role of the state prevailed. Fears regarding concentrations of power had been reduced. A larger proportion of the state was eligible to vote and to hold office. The capital would so be moved beyond the corrupting influence of New Orleans. And, the state had divorced itself from the business sector—prohibiting state aid to business, outlawing banking, and making incorporation virtually impossible.

In Louisiana from 1838 to 1845, not only did Democrats prevail but so did Jacksonian democracy. The period saw an expansion of the politically active portion of Louisiana's populace. The 1845 constitution formally instituted this change. It allowed for universal white male suffrage, removed property qualifications for office, and increased the number of elective positions. Other changes occurred not in law but in practice. Children wore party badges and the disfranchised participated alongside the enfranchised at mammoth political conventions. Previously denied any political role, women were now specifically included in party gatherings, occasionally even addressing the crowds. The ideas of the political culture had crossed gender lines with women holding their own meetings, betting on elections, and voting in mock elections. If in the 1830s, Louisiana's political universe consisted almost exclusively of white male property-holders, by 1845, it had expanded far beyond this minority.
In November 1845, Louisianans began living under their new constitution. Initially, Democrats benefitted from their association with the document, but in less than a decade, the charter would become their party's albatross. Although the constitution had clearly improved upon the state's original charter, many of its fiscal provisions, written in reaction to the economic downturn of the 1830s, proved ill-suited for an improving economy, and Whigs exploited this flaw. Additionally, despite the document being considerably more democratic than its predecessor, the people of Louisiana soon felt that it was not democratic enough. Since the Democrats had written the 1845 constitution, desire for change profited their opponents—the Whigs. By the early 1850s, the Whig party had used its advocacy of constitutional revision to gain control of both the legislature and a new 1852 constitutional convention.

If reaction to the 1845 constitution shaped state politics, the increasing sectional controversy over slavery dominated Louisianans' discussion of national politics. In the 1848 and 1852 presidential elections, differences over the American System moved to the background as the parties' stances on the Wilmot Proviso and the Compromise of 1850 moved to the foreground. Discussion of a national bank and federally sponsored internal improvements disappeared from party newspapers, and even debate over Louisiana Whigs' pillar, the protective tariff, decreased. Instead, each party claimed that its candidate best protected slavery and that its adversaries were either abolitionists or allied with abolitionists. Despite growing talk of secession in other southern states, Louisianans continued to stress the value of the Union, and
opponents to the Compromise measures found themselves in the minority and condemned by both parties.

Not only did debate over the American System decrease in importance but two other campaign staples, connection to Andrew Jackson and the Creole-American split, also received less emphasis. As memories of the Battle of New Orleans and French rule in Louisiana faded, politicians talked less of these topics, but they did not disappear from campaigns. Though Creole-American tension received less stress, ethnicity still remained an issue. The debate now centered on the parties' attitudes towards immigrants. A nativist candidate competed in the 1846 gubernatorial election, and accusations of nativism surfaced in most campaigns during the period. With both the Democratic and Whig parties still courting immigrant voters, neither one openly identified themselves with nativism.

The first partisan battle following the November 1845 constitutional ratification came in January 1846. The charter called for an election of a new slate of state officers including the entire legislature, a governor, and, for the first time, a lieutenant governor. The proximity of ratification and the election truncated the campaign season. Instead of having a year or more to debate the candidates, the parties only officially had slightly more than two months to canvass the state. Foreseeing the difficulties that this narrow time frame would cause for campaigning, and correctly anticipating the passage of the constitution, both parties nominated their candidates and started canvassing prior to the official call for an election. Even with this advanced preparation, the campaign season was briefer than usual.
In July 1845, the Democrats held a statewide convention in Baton Rouge. Partisan newspapers had discussed three possible gubernatorial candidates: Joseph Walker, president of the constitutional convention, Isaac Johnson, a popular judge from the Florida parishes, and Trasimond Landry, an Ascension Parish sugar planter. Prior to convention, Landry withdrew his name from consideration for governor, and instead announced his desire to be nominated as lieutenant governor. At the convention, neither the advocates of Johnson nor of Walker would yield. After four hours of debate, Johnson attained a slim 71–61 decision. With their choice receiving most of his support from the North Louisiana, Walker's disgruntled friends maintained that Johnson had only won because representatives from three northwestern parishes had failed to arrive at the convention. The selection of a candidate for lieutenant governor was less acrimonious as the delegates unanimously chose Landry.¹

Two weeks after the Democrats met in Baton Rouge, the Whigs held their own convention in the same city. Their convention also had nearly full attendance with only eight parishes missing. Demonstrating the Whigs' continued failure to obtain support in the Florida parishes, three of the missing parishes were from this region even though the convention was held there. Though similar to the Democrats in terms of location and attendance, the Whigs differed in their lack of division over their nominees. For their gubernatorial candidate, the Whigs unanimously chose William DeBuys, a New Orleans Creole who had held multiple state offices. They also did not split over their choice of Edward Sparrow, a Carroll

¹New Orleans Louisiana Courier, July 8, 12, 15, 16, 1845; Baton Rouge Gazette, July 19, 1845. (Hereinafter all newspapers from New Orleans unless otherwise indicated)
Parish planter and lawyer, as the party's nominee for lieutenant governor.  

The Democrats attempted to run a single issue campaign. They repeatedly reminded voters that their party had long advocated constitutional revision and that they had controlled the constitutional convention. Thus, if the people trusted Democrats to write the constitution, they should trust the party to put it into operation. Making this connection explicit, a New Orleans Democratic meeting resolved that "the recent Convention to amend the Constitution of the State was the work of the democracy, and that justice and fair dealing require that they should be allowed to carry the new Constitution into effect."  

Democrats argued that Whigs had opposed the call of the convention and had voted against reforms there. They contended that only the tireless work of Democrats had enabled the convention to take place and electing Whigs to office now would nullify its work. A Democratic legislative candidate warned voters that improvements would be "defeated" if the government fell into "impure hands." Even if individual Whigs such as DeBuys and Sparrow favored constitutional change, the majority of their party did not. And, regardless of the Whig candidates' personal  

1Opelousas St. Landry Whig, July 17, 1845; Baton Rouge Gazette, July 12, 19, 26, 1845; Commercial Bulletin, July 23, 1845.  

1Louisiana Courier, July 23, August 6, September 23, December 23, 1845 (quote).
views, everyone who had voted against ratification supported the Whig
nominees.  

Recognizing the effectiveness of the Democrats' association with
the popular new constitution, the Whig party tried to identify itself
with the document as well. Under the Whigs' revisionist interpretation,
the constitution was not a partisan measure but a joint effort of Whigs
and Democrats. The editor of the Baton Rouge Gazette even argued that
while the Democrats claimed authorship of the charter, the document's
positive attributes stemmed from an alliance of Whigs and conservative
Democrats who had limited the radical designs of most Democrats. DeBuys
and Sparrow directly addressed the constitutional issue in a circular
which claimed that they both had "cheerfully co-operated with a majority
of their fellow citizens in calling the late Convention" and had voted
for its adoption. The pro-constitution circular asserted that the
"excellence of most of its provisions" overshadowed its few defects. The
Whigs also tried to turn the tables on the Democrats by spreading a rumor
that Landry, the Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor, had opposed
the constitution.  

Despite these attempts to campaign on the constitutional question,
most Whigs realized that their best plan involved moving the focus of the

4Terence Carriere "To the Voters of the Parish of St. Tammany,"
University (quote) (Hereinafter DU); Louisiana Courier, August 13, 1845,
January 12, 1846.

5Baton Rouge Gazette, August 16, 1845; Bee, November 1, 1845; "To
the People of Louisiana from William DeBuys and Edward Sparrow," December
18, 1845 in Alonzo Snyder Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley
Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (quote) (Hereinafter
LLMVC); Louisiana Courier, November 24, 1845.
campaign away from the new charter. DeBuys and Sparrow’s circular not only discussed the charter but also addressed the economy, internal improvements, education, and, most importantly, the tariff. They attributed "the general prosperity of our People at this time" to the virtues of the Whig-authored 1842 tariff, which benefitted both sugar cane planters and cotton growers. The independent New Orleans Weekly Delta labelled Sparrow, "a tariff protection man to the hub," and the Whigs gladly assumed this title. They alleged that since the parties had settled the constitutional question, the tariff was the primary issue dividing them. The Whigs contrasted their united front in favor of protection with the Democrats who offered a "mongrel" ticket including the anti-tariff Johnson and the pro-tariff sugar-planter Landry whose views were at a variance with North Louisiana Democrats.6

The Democrats tried to keep the campaign focused on their authorship of the 1845 constitution but recognized that they must address the tariff question. As in prior contests, Democrats claimed they supported a revenue tariff for sugar cane but opposed protection. Considered one of the Democrats’ foremost orators, New Orleans lawyer Pierre Soulé carried his fiery style throughout the state on Johnson’s behalf maintaining that the tariff "devour[ed] the substance of the people." Soulé also connected the tariff to a national bank asserting that the Whigs championed both of these oppressive measures. The Louisiana Courier repeated this connection between the tariff and the

6"To the People of Louisiana...," December 18, 1845, in Alonzo Snyder Papers, LLMVC; Baton Rouge Gazette, November 15, 29, 1845; New Orleans Weekly Delta, December 8, 1845 (quote); Bee, November 18, December 19, 1845.
bank. It mocked the Whigs' connection of "every thing happy and fortunate to the tariff," observing that previously they had attributed all beneficial occurrences to the national bank. In his speeches, Johnson, the Democrats' nominee, emphasized the parties' differences over the national bank and the tariff in addition to their contrasting constitutional stances.7

If the Whigs could not win the campaign on policy, they hoped to achieve victory based on DeBuys's superior qualifications and his Creole lineage. DeBuys had served as a legislator, speaker of the house, postmaster, and state treasurer. In contrast, Johnson lacked extensive political experience, having served only a single term in the legislature more than ten years before. Since 1839, Johnson had served in a non-elective judicial position in the Florida Parishes. The Whigs also hoped to capitalize on the historic Anglo-Creole split. They asserted that because he was a Creole, DeBuys had a greater attachment to the state than Johnson, who, though born in Louisiana, was not of Creole heritage. The Whigs hoped that DeBuys's Creole birth would benefit him, and they tried to bolster this support with the assertion that the Democrats had criticized DeBuys simply for being a Creole. The Democrats recognized the historic potency of this argument and denied attacking DeBuys. Johnson even tried to court the Creole vote by speaking a few words of French at an Iberville Parish Democratic meeting.8

7Louisiana Courier, August 19 (second quote), October 10 (Soule quote), October 24, December 29, 1845; Arthur Freeman, "The Early Career of Pierre Soule," Louisiana Historical Quarterly (1936).

8Qualifications-Baton Rouge Gazette, July 5, 1845; Bee, January 13, 1845; Creole argument-Baton Rouge Gazette, July 5, 26, 1845; Louisiana Courier, July 26, September 13, 1845, January 13, 1846.
Ethnicity entered the gubernatorial campaign in another form as well. For the first time in Louisiana history, a third party entered the race for the governor's office. Advocating a revision of naturalization laws, a Native American Party based in New Orleans nominated Charles Derbigny for governor. The party had little effect itself, as Derbigny received only 2.5 percent of the votes, with over half of his votes coming in Greater Orleans. Even so, the party did serve as a catalyst for a debate between the Whigs and Democrats over naturalization. Many Whigs agreed with the doctrines of the Native Americans. Immigrants tended to vote for Democrats, and every Whig knew the story of the Plaquemines frauds—how illegal immigrant voting in Plaquemines Parish had cost Clay Louisiana's electoral votes in 1844. Many Whigs agreed with the St. Landry Whig's proclamation, "Our naturalization laws must be altered." The Whigs, however, saw the existence of a party dedicated to nativism as a movement which could only take votes from their party. The Bee argued that it did not object to efforts to keep the franchise pure but asserted that it must be done within the framework of the two party system.

Not only did the Whigs prefer to keep nativism within a two party system, but they also wished to keep it in the background of the campaign. While the Whig party contained a nativist element, it hoped to garner votes from naturalized citizens, and it ran an Irish immigrant for lieutenant governor. Thus, many Whigs preferred to downplay the role of nativism in their party. Sensing Whig apprehension over nativism as

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9Baton Rouge Gazette, September 6, 27, 1845; Opelousas St. Landry Whig, November 28, 1844 (quote); Bee, October 2, December 6, 1845, January 19, 1846.
a campaign topic. Democrats cheerfully threw fuel onto this fire by introducing it into the campaign repeatedly. They claimed that DeBuys had been elected vice-president of an 1841 nativist convention, and that in 1835 he had advocated the censure of Whig Governor White for promoting too many naturalized citizens to office. The Whigs denied that DeBuys had been a member of the Native American convention and claimed that more Democrats than Whigs had voted to censure White. On the eve of the election, New Orleans Whigs responded in kind. In the Crescent City, they circulated pamphlets attributing anti-Irish quotes to Johnson.10

The candidates of both parties took their message throughout the state. After the narrow split at the state convention, the Democrats especially felt the need to placate the entire state party. Prior to the convention, Isaac Johnson had worried about jealousy within the party and reminded a Democratic editor that "We must canvass in harmony...& then by harmony triumph." The close race between Johnson and Walker at the convention disrupted Democratic harmony. In an effort to retain party accord, Johnson travelled to Walker's plantation in Rapides Parish and met amicably with him before they both attended an Alexandria Democratic meeting. The Whigs also campaigned throughout the state, with one Whig pleasantly surprised with the enthusiasm that South Louisiana displayed for Sparrow, a North Louisiana resident.11

10 *Louisiana Courier*, October 14, December 11, 1845, January 19, 1846; *Bee*, January 12, 17, 1846.

11 Isaac Johnson to John F.H. Claiborne, May 18, 1845, John F.H. Claiborne Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (quote) (Hereinafter MDAH); *Louisiana Courier*, October 24, 1845; *Baton Rouge Gazette*, November 15, 1845; *Bee*, September 10, November 14, 1845; Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliaferro, August 21, 1845, James G. Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC.
After the campaigning had ended, the voters agreed with the Democrats' contention that the party which wrote the constitution should put it into effect, and Johnson and Landry carried the election. Despite his own legislative victory, a Whig complained, "Our defeat throughout the state will be overwhelming." This assessment proved accurate as for the first time, the Democrats controlled the governor's office, the senate, and the house of representatives at the same time. Unlike previous races, the legislative contests did not occupy much space in the partisan press. Democratic candidates for the legislature undoubtedly echoed the contention that their party should be allowed to enact the 1845 constitution. With the legislature having the power to pass laws, this argument applied in these races perhaps even to a greater extent than it did in the gubernatorial contest.12

The Democrats again achieved their greatest margin of victory in the Florida Parishes and North Louisiana where Johnson obtained over sixty percent of the ballots. Whigs had pinned their hopes on South Louisiana and especially Greater Orleans, DeBuys's home. Prior to the election, a North Louisiana Whig had optimistically observed that though the 1845 constitution restricted the size of the New Orleans legislative delegation, it had not curtailed its vote for governor. Anticipating a backlash against restrictions on the city, he predicted that a New Orleans fire would burn up Johnson's chances. Even Greater Orleans, however, opted for Johnson over its native son. Whigs blamed their loss

12Duncan F. Kenner to William J. Minor, January 22, 1846, Duncan F. Kenner Papers, LLMVC (quote). For a Democrat reminding voters of the importance of selecting Democrats to put the constitution into practice see Terence Carriere, "To the Voters of the Parish of St. Tammany," Soulé Papers, DU.
in New Orleans on bad weather, bad luck, and the impact of the Native American candidate. More likely, voters in the Crescent City, many of whom did not own property, probably welcomed the removal of a property qualification for voting even more than the residents of the rest of the state.13 (SEE APPENDIX B)

The Democrats had won the election despite party leader John Slidell's absence from the state. Congressman Slidell, at the behest of his close friend Secretary of State James Buchanan, had resigned his seat in the House of Representatives and accepted a mission to Mexico in an attempt to avert a war between the two countries over the annexation of Texas by the United States. Although Slidell worried that his opponents would make political capital out of his abandonment of his seat, the election to fill this vacancy instead reinforced Slidell's power within the party and the state. Slidell hand-picked his successor, Emile La Sere, a wealthy, trilingual New Orleans merchant who had been Slidell's associate in the Plaquemines frauds. After the Democrats nominated La Sere, the Whigs, recognizing the futility of running their own candidate in the heavily Democratic district, declined to contest the election officially, and instead supported a disgruntled Democrat. La Sere achieved an overwhelming victory in the election which occurred two weeks prior to the gubernatorial contest.14

13 Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliaferro, September 24, 1845, Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC.

14 John Slidell to James Buchanan, October 23, 1845, James Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Hereinafter HSP); Louisiana Courier, December 16, 17, 24, 27, 1845; Bee, January 6, 1846; A.L. Diket, "Slidell's Right Hand: Emile La Sere," Louisiana History IV (1963), 177-205.
A similar situation prevailed in the 1846 senate contest to replace Whig Alexander Barrow whose term would end in 1847. Possessing a clear majority, the Democrats again realized the value in connecting the race to the new constitution. The party caucus selected Solomon W. Downs, the north Louisianan who had achieved statewide fame for his championship of constitutional reform. Realizing that a candidate from their party had no chance, the Whigs threw their support behind John R. Grymes a moderate New Orleans Democrat. They hoped that they could persuade enough New Orleans Democrats to place city loyalty ahead of party loyalty. As in the election to replace Slidell, the Whigs failed in their attempt to divide the Democrats, and Downs easily won the election. Barrow died in 1847 shortly before his term ended, and after Downs and Slidell declined to be considered, the Democrats selected Pierre Soulé to fill the last two months of Barrow's lame duck term before Downs would take the seat.  

State issues, especially the new constitution, had dominated the 1846 gubernatorial campaign with the tariff the only national topic debated. During the rest of 1846, the tariff remained a prominent issue. The national Democratic party, which controlled both the legislative and executive branches, passed the non-protectionist Walker tariff which significantly lowered the duties on imported sugar. Louisiana's Democratic representatives voted for the bill, and the Louisiana Courier celebrated it as a victory for free trade. Louisiana Whigs had a different reaction. Estimating that the 1846 tariff lowered duties by

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15 W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, February 15, 17, 1846, W.W. Pugh Family Papers, Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin (Hereinafter UT); James K. Greer, "Louisiana Politics, 1845-1861," Louisiana Historical Quarterly XII (July 1929), 420.
almost seventy percent, one planter speculated that many sugar cane growers might turn to cotton, and another observed, "the new tariff bill has fallen like a thunderbolt here."  

Louisianans would soon receive another thunderbolt from Washington. In the 1846 gubernatorial election, the parties' positions on slavery received no mention. In the months following the election, slavery would leap back into Louisianans' political debate and would remain there for the rest of the antebellum period. The Mexican War proved the catalyst for the rise of the slavery issue. In 1846, despite Slidell's efforts at negotiation, war with Mexico erupted in May. In August, David Wilmot, a relatively unknown Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania, introduced a measure into the House of Representatives declaring that slavery could never exist on any land obtained from Mexico. Known as the Wilmot Proviso, this measure would never become law, but it would sharply increase sectional tension and fuel political debate for the next fifteen years. In Louisiana and the rest of the South, both Whigs and Democrats attacked the measure as anti-southern. Among extreme southern rights men, talk of secession increased, but in Louisiana this group amounted to no more than a handful.  

The Mexican War not only led to the Wilmot Proviso but also produced a Louisiana military hero. After defeating the Mexican army in

several battles. General Zachary Taylor, who resided in East Baton Rouge Parish, became a national hero. Many in Louisiana viewed Taylor's prominence as a possible springboard to the presidency, and a non-partisan Taylor movement developed in the state. Though Whigs predominated in the movement, prominent Democrats such as former Senator Robert C. Nicholas, state legislator Maunsel White, and New Orleans banker Jacob Barker all backed Taylor's candidacy. In April 1847, the Commercial Bulletin placed his name at the head of their columns, and three months later, the Rough and Ready, a Taylor newspaper, was established in Iberville Parish. It nominated Taylor for the presidency, and to emphasize its non-partisanship, endorsed Democratic General William O. Butler for the vice-presidency. The Taylor boom increased in December and January when Taylor, on his return from Mexico, was feted in New Orleans and Baton Rouge.  

Louisiana Democrats eyed the non-partisan Taylor movement with suspicion, especially during the 1847 congressional campaign season. In the Third and Fourth districts, where the Whig party was weak, the Whigs made no nominations, and instead Taylor candidates opposed Democrats. In the Second District, a Whig stronghold, however, Whigs made no mention of Taylor, and made a regular Whig nomination. The Democratic Louisiana Courier labelled the nomination of Taylor candidates as Whig trickery and

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18 Commercial Bulletin, April 1847; Maunsel White to George McWhorter, September 20, 1847, Maunsel White Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina (Hereinafter SHC); Frances Parke Butler to Col. Edward G.W. Butler, July 26, 1847, Butler Family Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection (Hereinafter HNO); Incidents in the Life of Jacob Barker of New Orleans, Louisiana (Washington, 1855), 227-8; Bee, December 1, 6, 1848; Baton Rouge Gazette, December 11, 1847.
urged voters not to be beguiled. Democrats questioned the sincerity of Taylor candidates and repeatedly pointed to the Second District where an independent convention had nominated Jacob Barker, a Taylor Democrat. If the Whigs professed loyalty to Taylor was sincere, the *Louisiana Courier* claimed that then they should support Barker over the Whig nominee who had made no commitment to the general. Regardless of their opponents' label, Democrats fared well, only losing to the regular Whig nominee in the Second District. The Alexandria *Western Democrat* 's description of the Fourth District results, "Old Rough and Ready's honored name...could not save them," applied equally well in the First and Third Districts.¹⁹

Though the 1847 congressional campaign produced no change in the composition of Louisiana's delegation, it did spawn a new method of campaigning in the state. Congressional nominees had toured the state before but never in the manner of the race in the Fourth District. Democratic incumbent Isaac Morse describes travelling more than twelve hundred miles during the campaign. More significantly, he traversed many of these miles in the company of his Whig opponent. According to Morse, "we agreed upon a program, and made appointments to speak every day for some six weeks, making each day at least one, and sometimes two or more, speeches." Never before had opposing candidates canvassed together, but after 1847 this method of campaigning became standard in Louisiana. Throughout the 1848 presidential race, Whigs and Democrats crossed the state together engaging in debates in front of large crowds. The process

¹⁹*Baton Rouge Gazette*, June 5, September 11, 1847; *Louisiana Courier*, July 2, 21, August 4, 19, September 10, October 25, November 11, 1847; *Alexandria Western Democrat* quoted in *ibid.*, November 15, 1847.
culminated in what one partisan newspaper described as "an Eight Hours' Cannonade between the Great Guns of Whiggery and Democracy" held in Baton Rouge in September before an audience of several thousand people including a significant number of women who followed the debate as closely as the men. 20

If 1847 had seen a rise in non-partisanship in Louisiana, the first month of 1848 would provide a lesson in the importance of strictly drawing partisan lines. In the legislative elections which coincided with the 1847 congressional races, the Whigs achieved a slim two vote majority in the forthcoming session. One of the first acts of this legislature involved the selection of a United States senator. With one Whig legislator pledged to vote for a Democrat the race was a dead heat, and both Whig and Democratic newspapers stressed the need for party unity. The capital was rife with rumors of under-handed tactics, and after witnessing "the open and undisguised efforts at corruption, intrigue, and management," one aspirant left the city in disgust. Each party held a caucus two days prior to the election with the Whigs choosing Ascension Parish sugar planter Duncan F. Kenner and the Democrats selecting party chieftain John Slidell. 21

20 Franklin Planters' Banner, October 28, 1847; Isaac Morse Diary quoted in Edward C. Morse, Blood of an Englishman (Abilene, Tex., 1943), 118-9. For debates in 1848 see Vidalia Concordia Intelligencer, November 4, 1848; Louisiana Courier, August 14, September 7, November 6, 1848; New Orleans Weekly Delta, September 11, 1848 (quote); Balie Peyton to John J. Crittenden, August 29, 1848, Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress (Hereinafter LC).

21 Vidalia Concordia Intelligencer, January 8, 1848; Baton Rouge Gazette, November 20, 1847; Commercial Bulletin, January 24, 1848; James M. Elam to James E. Elam, January 23, 1848, James Elam Letter Book, LLMVC (quote).
Believing that he had secured the commitments of two Whigs, Slidell anticipated winning a narrow victory. On the first two ballots, however, he and Kenner deadlocked at sixty-four votes apiece. One Whig voted for Slidell, another Whig was mysteriously absent, and Taylor Democrat Maunsel White, refusing to cast a ballot for the anti-Taylor Slidell, wasted his vote on fellow Taylor Democrat Robert C. Nicholas. Following the second ballot, the legislature adjourned, and the parties re-caucused with the Democrats switching their nominee from Slidell to Pierre Soulé. On the subsequent ballot, Soulé defeated Kenner with four Whigs voting for the Democrat. This result caused an uproar in the Whig party which included allegations of vote buying, a scuffle on the house floor, and an official investigation. The Whig "traitors" defended their vote by arguing that a Whig could not win, and Senator Soulé was preferable to Senator Slidell.22

The outcome shook up the Democratic party, too. Slidell maintained that only party loyalty prevented him from defeating Soulé's election. Having maneuvered for over a year to capture the post, he confessed that he was "not a little annoyed at the result" and complained that Soulé had reaped the benefit of his exertions. A Whig less charitably observed that "Slidell is disgusted at the election of Soulé when he was at the expense of bribing two members of the Legislature to elect him." This contest contributed to a growing enmity between the two Democratic

leaders which would disrupt Louisiana's Democratic party for the rest of the antebellum period.  

Surprisingly, the same Whig newspapers which chastised partisans for abandoning the Whig party in the senatorial contest trumpeted the call for a non-partisan Taylor convention in February. Delegates from more than three-quarters of Louisiana's parishes met on February 22, the anniversary of the birth of George Washington another military hero and president. Only the impassibility of the Red River prevented greater attendance. The meeting nominated Taylor for president "without regard to party distinctions" but did not express an opinion on the vice-presidency. Stressing that "the people have nominated Genl. Taylor," delegates opposed the calling of a national convention. Despite professions of non-partisanship, Whigs predominated at the meeting and of the twelve Taylor electors chosen (six electors and six substitutes) only one, Robert C. Nicholas, was a Democrat.  

Not all Louisiana Whigs celebrated the non-partisan nomination of Taylor. Sergeant S. Prentiss complained, "I have, I repeat, no confidence in the independent no-partyism, which has lately exploded in [New Orleans]." While many Whigs, including Prentiss, respected Taylor, they preferred the candidacy of the party's traditional standard-bearer Henry Clay. Comparing the candidates, Prentiss asserted that Clay was

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23 John Slidell to James Buchanan, February 4, 1848, James Buchanan Papers, HSP; Balie Peyton to John J. Crittenden, October 21, 1848, Crittenden Papers, LC; Louis M. Sears, John Slidell (Durham, NC, 1925), 77-79.  

24 Baton Rouge Gazette, February 26, 1848; Commercial Bulletin, February 24, 1848 (first quote); A.T. Burnley to John J. Crittenden, December 12, 1847, Crittenden Papers, LC (second quote).
"a thousand times better fitted than Gen. Taylor, for the first office in the nation." Clay had only lost the 1844 election in the state because of the Plaquemines frauds, and these Whigs saw no reason to abandon him or their party label in 1848. Clay Whigs called for a March convention to select delegates to the national Whig convention. Both Clay and Taylor Whigs attended, and, in an effort to maintain harmony, the platform did not pledge the state's votes to a particular candidate. At the June national convention, the Whig party chose Taylor over Clay as its candidate for the presidency and balanced the ticket by selecting New Yorker Millard Fillmore for the vice-presidency. Louisiana Whigs celebrated Taylor's nomination with a "Monster Ratification Meeting" in New Orleans with as many as fifteen thousand people in attendance.\textsuperscript{15}

The \textit{Bee} contended that the March state Whig convention had ended Taylor no-partyism in Louisiana. If it had not, then the national convention certainly did. Taylor Democrat Jacob Barker held a non-partisan ratification meeting simultaneously with the "Monster Ratification Meeting." While thousands attended the latter only fourteen people attended Barker's meeting. Shortly after Taylor's Whig nomination, Robert Nicholas, the only Democratic Taylor elector, announced that he maintained his advocacy of Taylor. But, citing his disgust with the partisan nature of the campaign, he resigned his post as elector. Though Democrats such as Barker and Maunsel White continued

their zealous championship of Taylor. most others returned to the party fold. and White admitted that he "most deeply regretted" the contest becoming partisan. By November, party newspapers would find Taylor Democrats an endangered species in Louisiana.\(^6\)

Louisiana Democrats held their own convention on March 15, the anniversary of the birthday of Andrew Jackson. Like their Whig counterparts, they did not pledge their delegates to a particular candidate at the national convention. Instead, the convention passed resolutions in favor of the 1846 tariff and condemning the Wilmot Proviso as "an attack on the constitutional rights of the slaveholding states." Slidell, a member of the delegation to the national convention, had earlier written that "our party here is unanimous in favor of a presidential candidate from a free state opposed to the Wilmot Proviso." If this description were accurate, then Louisiana Democrats had their wish granted as the party nominated Michigan's Lewis Cass and passed a resolution condemning the Wilmot Proviso. The Democrats balanced the ticket with General William O. Butler, a Kentuckian who had served in the Mexican War and alongside Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans. A northern Democrat attending a New Orleans ratification meeting informed Cass that "you would think that [Louisianans] would not have supported any one than yourself."\(^7\)

\(^6\)Bee, March 15, 1848; Description of Barker meeting in New Orleans Weekly Delta, November 20, 1848; Louisiana Courier, July 6, September 5, 7, 1848; New Orleans Weekly Delta, July 17, 1848; Maunsels White to unknown, October 17, 1848, Maunsel White Papers, SHC (quote).

\(^7\)Louisiana Courier, March 16 (first quote), May 31, 1848; John Slidell to James Buchanan, November 13, 1847, Buchanan Papers, HSP (second quote); Stephen A. Douglas to Lewis Cass, June 13, 1848, in Robert Johannsen, ed., The Letters of Stephen A. Douglas (Champaign,
The nomination of Whig and Democratic candidates and the failure of Taylor’s non-partisan campaign demonstrates the strength of party commitment in the antebellum United States including Louisiana. The independent Taylor movement had begun auspiciously, and in December of 1847, a Democrat observed without animus that “I don’t know a man in this Parish (a democratic one) of both parties that won’t vote for [Taylor].” Antebellum voters, however, viewed the world through their attachment to the Whig or Democratic party, and it was easier to have Taylor conform to this dichotomy than to dissolve party lines. As the Louisiana Courier explained, “Party politics...are as essential to the vitality of the republic, as is the unchecked circulation of the blood to that of the animal body.” More importantly, the protection of the South’s peculiar institution required that the South have northern allies in Congress which an independent candidate would not have. The turmoil surrounding the Wilmot Proviso heightened this need, and southerners were unwilling to risk campaigning outside the bounds of party even to elect a southern slaveholder such as Taylor.28

The 1848 presidential campaign illustrates the magnitude of the slavery issue in Louisiana, where debate over the candidates’ commitment to defense of the institution dwarfed all other topics. Both Whigs and Democrats acknowledged that protecting slavery was paramount. In March, a Democratic meeting in Sabine Parish had resolved that “we regard all

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Ill., 1961), 160-1 (third quote); Leslie Chase to Franklin Pierce, June 11, 1848, Franklin Pierce Papers, LC.


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who would endanger the union of the States by agitating the slave
question as enemies to the country and her interests." A Baton Rouge
Whig meeting agreed that all attempts to excite passions against the
South were "dangerous to the Union, and injurious to the public good."
A Taylor Democrat concurred that "It has long been my opinion that the
old issues would all fall away before the new absorbing one of North &
South." During the eight hour debate in Baton Rouge, every speaker
regardless of partisan persuasion stressed the importance of the
candidates’ stances on slavery, and accusations of unfaithfulness to the
South filled the columns of partisan newspapers throughout the fall.²⁹

Of course, the parties disagreed over which candidate’s election
most threatened slavery in the South. The Democrats concentrated their
venom on the Whig vice-presidential candidate Millard Fillmore. Arguing
that northern Whigs were antislavery and in favor of the Wilmot Proviso,
Democrats reminded voters that they could not vote for Taylor without
voting for Fillmore, an "avowed and notorious abolitionist." Democratic
orators denied they slandered Fillmore with this label because they
possessed evidence that Fillmore proudly called himself an abolitionist.
The publication of a pamphlet detailing Fillmore’s long anti-slavery
congressional career highlighted their anti-Fillmore campaign. This
document, which the Louisiana Courier claimed struck the Whigs ranks like
"a twenty inch shell," inaugurated a pamphlet war. The Whig party
violently denounced it in their own pamphlet, The Crisis, which the

²⁹Louisiana Courier, March 13, 1848 (first quote); Baton Rouge
Gazette, August 5, 1848 (second quote); Maunsel White to Henry M. Hyams,
August 7, 1848, Maunsel White Papers, SHC (third quote); New Orleans
Weekly Delta, September 11, 1848.
Democrats followed with another tract repeating that "Fillmore is in favor of every measure of the anti-slavery party."  

At first glance, Taylor, a Louisiana slaveholder, appeared immune to attacks regarding his loyalty to the South. In the emotionally charged atmosphere of the 1848 campaign, however, even these credentials did not preclude Democrats from challenging his willingness to protect slavery. They emphasized Taylor's statements which stressed his unwillingness to use the veto power. While the northerner Cass had pledged to veto the Wilmot Proviso, Taylor the southerner had refused to issue such a pledge. The Democrats presented a scenario where a northern Whig-controlled Congress would pass the Wilmot Proviso and Taylor, because of his scruples regarding the use of the veto power, would sign the document though he might personally oppose it. They also attacked Taylor for his refusal to make his opinion known on any subject. Democrats asserted that the only stand which Taylor had taken was his refusal to run as party candidate. Taylor had violated this pledge, and they speculated that a man unreliable in one instance could be unreliable in all instances.

While finding the southern slaveholder Taylor unsound on the slavery issue, Louisiana Democrats avowed that the South could not be in safer hands than those of Lewis Cass. They proudly quoted Cass's declaration that "the principle [the Wilmot Proviso] involves should be

30*Louisiana Courier*, June 14 (first quote), July 1, 29, August 4 (second quote), September 4, November 7, 1848; *Mr. Fillmore's Views on Slavery: Answer to 'The Crisis'*, New Orleans, 1848), 2 (third quote).

31*Louisiana Courier*, June 30, July 14, September 5, 30, 1848; *Facts to the People of Louisiana on the Presidential Question: Contradictory Letters of General Zachary Taylor* (New Orleans, 1848).
kept out of the national government." The *Louisiana Courier* published nearly as many articles defending Cass's loyalty to the South as articles condemning Fillmore's abolitionist tendencies. Starting on July 6, and periodically thereafter, the newspaper published seven pro-slavery quotes attributed to Cass including his pledge to veto the Wilmot Proviso. According to Democrats, this pledge to protect the South contrasted sharply with Fillmore's advocacy of the measure and Taylor's willingness to sign it.\(^2\)

Not surprisingly, Whigs disagreed with Democrats' contention that Lewis Cass would protect slavery. Whigs reminded Louisiana voters that while Cass might oppose the Wilmot Proviso in 1848, previously he had advocated the measure. A Taylor supporter found Cass's views on slavery "radically unsound," and a meeting in Catahoula Parish condemned Cass as a "sectional and exclusively Northern man with Northern prejudices." The Whigs alleged that Democrats had produced two campaign biographies of Cass—a southern version declaring Cass's opposition to the Wilmot Proviso, and a northern one asserting that he championed the measure.\(^3\)

Whig attacks reached a crescendo after the northern Free Soil party, which adopted the Wilmot Proviso as the main plank of its platform, nominated Martin Van Buren for the presidency. In the words of Louisiana Whigs, Cass and Van Buren became twins. In 1836 and 1840,
Van Buren had campaigned as a northern Democrat with southern principles, but in 1848 he revealed his true anti-southern principles. In 1848, Cass echoed Van Buren's slogan that he was a northern Democrat with southern principles. Whigs contended that just as Van Buren's avowal of fealty to the South eventually proved false, so would Cass's declaration. They argued that the contest had become sectional with the only true options being the southerner Taylor and slavery or the northerner Van Buren and the Wilmot Proviso. Thus, a vote for Cass would be a vote for Van Buren and his abolitionist friends.

For Whigs, their candidates unquestionably better protected slavery than the Democratic nominees. According to their logic, Zachary Taylor did not need to make pledges regarding his political stances. His residency in Louisiana and his ownership of slaves rendered absurd any attempts to taint him with abolitionism. Whigs observed that while southern Democrats claimed that Taylor would not protect the South, northern Democrats decried him for being a slaveholder. The Whig party placed Zachary Taylor in a class with two other southern military heroes who had ascended to the presidency—George Washington and Andrew Jackson. These men had protected their section as president and so would Taylor.

With their belief in the self-explanatory nature of Taylor's loyalty to the South, Whigs concentrated on defending Millard Fillmore.

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34 Bee, August 25, 1848; Commercial Bulletin, October 14, 28, 1848. The Free Soil party actually held a meeting in Louisiana, and though a Louisianan assured Van Buren that "thousands" shared his opinions, only six members attended the meeting. Alexander Walker to Martin Van Buren, August 28, 1848, Martin Van Buren Papers, LC; New Orleans Weekly Delta, August 21, 1848; Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliaferro, August 2, 1848, Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC.

35 Bee, September 15, 1848; Baton Rouge Gazette, November 4, 1848.
from charges of abolitionism. The yeoman exertions of Sergeant S. Prentiss helped allay fears regarding Fillmore’s commitment to the South. Prentiss, one of the antebellum South’s greatest orators had moved from Mississippi to New Orleans in 1845. He had campaigned for the Whigs in Louisiana in the previous two presidential races, and in 1848 he devoted his energy to demonstrating the slanderous nature of the Democratic accusations of abolitionism against Fillmore. Prentiss, who had served alongside Fillmore in Congress, proclaimed him "as good a friend of the South as any north of Mason’s and Dixon’s line." Prentiss’s strenuous efforts to remove the taint of abolitionism from Fillmore included swimming across a river to attend a rally, engaging in a physical confrontation, and making numerous speeches which ultimately rendered the orator hoarse and contributed to an illness from which he would never recover. While other Whigs might not have equalled Prentiss’s labors, the party did devote much of the space in its newspapers columns to denouncing Democratic allegations as falsehoods and contending that no man was safer for the South than Fillmore.36

Although slavery dominated political discourse in the contest, the traditional debate over the value of the American System did not disappear completely. The Democratic party told voters that the Whigs had hidden their principles behind Taylor’s military glory. Democrats wondered why the Whigs no longer talked of internal improvements, a national bank, and a tariff. They asserted that in an effort to delude

36Prentiss, A Memoir of S.S. Prentiss, 2:451-5; Sergeant S. Prentiss to George Prentiss, October 17, 1848, in ibid., 2:455 (quote); Dallas C. Dickey, Sergeant S. Prentiss: Whig Orator of the Old South (Baton Rouge, 1945); Baton Rouge Gazette, August 26, September 2, 9, 1848; Commercial Bulletin, July 22, August 3, 5, 1848.
voters, the Whigs had temporarily removed these issues from view, but if Taylor would win the race, the Whigs would quickly try to institute them. and with his unwillingness to use the veto, Taylor would sign the measures. The Democrats claimed that in contrast they had openly avowed their positions at the June Democratic ratification meeting which passed resolutions in favor of the tariff of 1846 and against a national bank and federally sponsored internal improvements.  

Louisiana Whigs suppressed debate over the American System in their campaign for Taylor for three main reasons. First, Taylor’s position on the Whig program remained unclear, and his declaration that he was a Whig but not an ultra Whig did little to clarify this attitude. Second, the Whigs hoped to garner support from Taylor Democrats, and emphasizing the traditional differences between the parties undermined this goal. For instance, Maunsel White, Louisiana’s leading Taylor Democrat, disagreed with most Louisiana Whigs on the value of the 1846 tariff. While most Whigs condemned the measure, White believed "the tariff as it now stands seems to work well enough." Third, the party felt that stressing Taylor’s loyalty to the South over Cass’s fealty to the region provided a winning strategy which would only be disrupted by discussion of the American System.  

While avoiding extensive debate on the American System, some Louisiana Whigs could not resist addressing the tariff of 1846 which had...
lowered duties on imported sugar. The *Commercial Bulletin* asked if the electorate could vote for Cass who favored the tariff which "is at this moment breaking down the interest and prosperity of Louisiana." A Louisiana sugar planter expressed the wish that Taylor’s election "may bring about...a heavier duty required on foreign importations." and the *Rough and Ready*, a Whig pamphlet, maintained that Taylor’s election would lead to an increase in the tariff. Whigs called for a return to the more protective 1842 tariff, and the *Commercial Bulletin* argued that the state’s sugar planters owed the former congressman Millard Fillmore a debt of gratitude for his advocacy of that measure.30

In the final two months of the campaign, Louisiana Whigs added another element to the campaign. Whigs decided that if the Democrats wanted to attack Fillmore’s congressional record, then William O. Butler’s legislative career was fair game for examination as well. According to Louisiana Whigs, an analysis of Butler’s speeches revealed that he had condemned the conduct of Louisiana Creoles for their role in the Battle of New Orleans. In the 1843 congressional debate over refunding Jackson’s fine, Butler, who had served under Jackson during the battle, allegedly called Creoles cowards and traitors. Louisiana Whigs published a pamphlet, *A Defence of the Creoles of Louisiana and Andrew Jackson vs. the calumnies of William O. Butler*, that included excerpts from Butler’s speeches. Democrats, who in their ratification meeting called Butler "an old and beloved friend of Louisiana," charged that

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30 *Commercial Bulletin*, July 17 (first quote), August 10, September 30, 1848; *Louisiana Courier*, September 22, 1848; Moses Liddell to John Liddell, November 12, 1848, Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC (second quote).
Whigs had deliberately misquoted Butler and maintained that Creoles would not be misled by this insult to their intelligence.40

Whether this tactic gained Taylor any votes is questionable, but on November 5, 1848, the nation selected Zachary Taylor as its twelfth president. If the Louisianan did well across the United States, he proved equally popular in his home state, where he received 54.6 percent of the vote. The candidacy of a favorite son, however, did not alter Louisiana's voting patterns significantly. Though Taylor, a resident of the Florida Parishes, received a higher percentage of the vote in that region than any previous Whig candidate, he still could not capture this traditionally Democratic region. The same situation prevailed in North Louisiana where Taylor outperformed previous Whig candidates but did not defeat Cass. Not surprisingly, Old Rough and Ready did best in Greater Orleans and South Louisiana, traditionally the Whigs' two strongest sections. Taylor's best results came in South Louisiana where he received almost two-thirds of the votes cast. This pro-tariff, Creole region with its high slave population continued its championship of the Whig cause. (SEE APPENDIX A)

Following the presidential race, Louisiana voters barely had a chance to catch their breath before entering into another campaign. A governor and four congressmen would be elected the following November, and a month after Taylor's victory, lists of possible candidates began to appear in party newspapers. A cholera scare and flooding of the

40St. Martinville Creole, October 14, 1848; Franklin Planters' Banner, October 5, 1848; Commercial Bulletin, September 26, October 10, 1848; New Orleans Weekly Delta, June 12, 1848 (quote); Louisiana Courier, October 7, 9, 12, 1848.
Mississippi River tempered some of the spirit in early 1849, but in May both the Democrats and the Whigs held nominating conventions. Partially as a reward to North Louisiana, which had loyally supported the Democratic party but had never had candidate from its region nominated for governor, the Democrats chose Joseph Walker. A Rapides Parish cotton planter. Walker had narrowly lost the party's nomination four years before. The party platform opposed banks, tariffs, monopolies, and the Wilmot Proviso, while announcing its support for a constitutional amendment to make the judiciary elective. The Whigs looked to Edward Sparrow who had run for lieutenant governor in 1846, but on the first day of the convention, a delegate read a letter from Sparrow declining consideration. Instead, the Whigs selected Alexander Declouet, a Creole lawyer from St. Martin Parish. A member urged the body to pass a resolution in favor of the elective judiciary but the measure was defeated.4

Each party looked to its most recent victory in Louisiana for encouragement in the gubernatorial campaign. For the Whigs, Zachary Taylor's triumph provided inspiration, and a Whig newspaper urged voters to "Stand by the President" by voting for Declouet. Whig meetings passed resolutions praising Taylor in addition to those supporting their candidate. When Democrats attempted to exploit the forty year-old Declouet's relative inexperience, the Whigs invoked Old Rough and Ready's name in response. During the campaign a Democratic orator derisively

41 New Orleans Weekly Delta, December 11, 1848; Louisiana Courier, December 8, 1848; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, May 16, 1849; Bee, May 16, 1849; Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliaferro, January 30, 1849, Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC.

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asked. "Who is General Declouet?" Declouet, who had only served two brief terms in the state senate, had a quick retort. He compared himself to Taylor. Declouet asserted that like Taylor, he did not have an extensive legislative background, but like Taylor, his principles and honesty would enable him to govern the state effectively.42

For the Democrats, their victory in the 1846 gubernatorial election provided them with a blueprint for success. In that election, Democrats had defeated the Whigs by campaigning as champions of the 1845 constitution. In 1849, they deemed this lesson more germane than Taylor's 1848 triumph. Their nominee provided a direct link to the charter, for Walker had served as the president of the constitutional convention. Advancing democratic reforms had proved effective for the Democrats in the 1842 and 1846 gubernatorial campaigns, and in 1849 Democrats continued along this path. In addition to running Walker, the party's resolutions condemning banks and monopolies referred to the outlawing of these measures in the 1845 constitution. Democrats claimed that they wished to make the constitution even more democratic by making the judiciary elective.43

The debate over making the judiciary elective dominated political discourse in the 1849 race with both Democrats and Whigs calling themselves champions of the measure. The Democrats campaigned throughout the state telling voters that their platform called for a constitutional amendment to make the judiciary elective, while the Whigs remained...

42 Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, September 5, October 31 1849 (quote); New Orleans Weekly Delta, July 16, 1849; Moses Liddell to John Liddell, August 19, 1849, Liddell Papers, LLMVC.

43 Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, May 16, 1849.
silent. They charged Declouet not only with opposition to an elective judiciary but also with having fought against many other democratic reforms. When Democrats charged the Whigs with resisting the measure. Whigs not only claimed that they welcomed the change, but they falsely asserted that they had advocated it before the Democrats did. Whig newspapers claimed that Declouet, like many Democrats, had changed his mind on an elective judiciary, and the Whig candidate for lieutenant governor denied that it could be considered a partisan topic.  

The parties' reaction to the elective judiciary illustrates the power of the electorate in antebellum Louisiana politics. Prior to the 1844 constitutional convention, voters had deemed an elective judiciary too radical, and the Democratic party retreated from its advocacy of the measure. In 1844 and 1845, the Whigs parlayed their opposition to the election of judges into a competitive minority in the convention. Furthermore, they considered the absence of a clause providing for this change one of their victories at the convention. With the voters having changed their mind about the issue, however, the Democrats returned to the topic and the Whigs, who feared being branded as undemocratic, followed in lock-step. With voters adamantly demanding this alteration, the Franklin Planters' Banner correctly argued "neither party would dare retreat from it."  

Though the elective judiciary issue dominated political debate, Louisianans continued to bang the traditional drums of ethnicity and ties

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4 Bee, June 12, July 10, 1849; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, June 27, October 3, 1849.

45 Franklin Planters' Banner, February 14, 1850.
to Andrew Jackson. The Whigs took advantage of Declouet's Creole heritage and charged Democrats with slurring him as "the Gumbo and Frog Candidate." Trying to capture votes from both Creoles and Americans, the Whigs added that Declouet spoke both French and English, while Plauché, the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, could not speak English and therefore could not preside over the senate. The Democrats continued to campaign on the coattails of Andrew Jackson. With fewer and fewer voters having memories of the Battle of New Orleans, the party did not employ its connection to the victory as much as it had in the past. In choosing Plauché, a veteran of the battle and in passing a resolution celebrating Jackson's victory, the Democrats did hope to inspire some nostalgia for the great triumph.\(^{46}\)

With over one-quarter of the state's population foreign-born including more than half the population in Greater Orleans, immigration continued to grow in importance in Louisiana politics. The Democrats portrayed themselves as the friends of naturalized citizens and the Whigs as their enemies. They reminded naturalized citizens that many of them owed their vote to the 1845 constitution, which had given the right to vote to propertyless white males—a category which included many New Orleans immigrants. In the weeks immediately preceding the election, the Whigs of New Orleans went on the offensive in trying to gain immigrant votes. They repeatedly charged that Walker, after losing a United States Senate contest to Alexander Porter in 1833, called his opponent "a damned Irishman." Asking "Which of the candidates is the Friend of the

\(^{46}\) Franklin Planters' Banner, October 18, 1849 (quote); Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, October 3, 1849; Bee, October 1, 1849.
Naturalized Citizen?" Whigs circulated copies of Walker's legislative votes which they contended proved that Walker had long opposed immigrants.47

The 1849 election demonstrated Louisiana's voters increasing involvement in the political process. In the 1848 presidential election, many voters had cast their ballots because Taylor lived in the state, but more people voted in the 1849 contest and the concurrent congressional elections than had in any prior race including Taylor's presidential bid. Turnout exceeded eighty percent in each of the state's regions. The result was close, but the voters apparently agreed with the Democrats that the 1846 gubernatorial contest provided the more appropriate yardstick, and Walker won with 51.6 percent of the vote. Walker achieved his greatest majorities in the Florida Parishes and North Louisiana where he received slightly less than sixty percent of the vote. The Whigs continued to dominate South Louisiana with Greater Orleans remaining the most evenly balanced region. (SEE APPENDIX B)

In addition, the Democrats captured three of the four congressional seats contested. Since the 1843 redistricting, the Democrats had dominated the First, Third, and Fourth Districts with the Whigs controlling the Second District. In 1849, the parties continued their sectional division in these contests. With the Whigs' stranglehold on the sugar cane-producing Second District, the Democrats attempted to enlist ambitious former Whig governor Henry Johnson in an effort to disrupt the Whigs. Johnson declined their offer, and Whigs Charles M.

Conrad easily defeated an independent Democrats. In the First and Third Districts, the Whigs' cause was as hopeless as the Democrats' chances were in the Second, and they only made token nominations. Only in the Fourth District, which included portions of Democratic North Louisiana and Whig South Louisiana, did the parties have a competitive campaign, with the Democratic incumbent winning a slim majority.\(^8\)

At the national level, conflict between the North and the South over slavery continued to increase. A Louisianan worried that "News from Washington is gloomy. Dissolution of the Union is threatened." Southerners in favor of uniting against northern depredations called a regional convention to be held in Nashville in the summer of 1850. Both outgoing Governor Johnson and the recently elected Walker favored Louisiana's participation in the meeting. Sensing constitutional objections to this southern assembly, Johnson made the controversial statement, "It is far better to be lawless than to live under lawless rule." In his inaugural address, Walker concurred that antislavery agitation was "about to reach a crisis," and that Louisiana must be "prepared to make common cause with our neighbors." Following Walker's suggestion, the Democratic-controlled senate passed a bill calling for the election of delegates to Nashville. In the house, the Whigs had a majority, and members of the party attacked the convention bill as unconstitutional. With the Whigs' announced opposition to the

\(^8\) Henry Johnson to John F.H. Claiborne, June 1, 1849, John F.H. Claiborne Papers, MDAH; Daily Picayune, November 11, 14, 1849.
convention, the measure never came to a vote, and Louisiana did not send delegates to Nashville. 49

While some southerners sought a regional solution to northern attacks on slavery, others looked to Washington to reduce sectional tensions. In Congress, Henry Clay attempted to end sectional controversy by introducing a series of measures known as the Compromise of 1850. President Taylor opposed the Compromise, but after his death in 1850, pro-Compromise Vice-President Millard Fillmore succeeded to the presidency. Southerners had decried Fillmore's commitment to the South in the campaign of 1848, but as president, he made many of them re-think their opinion of him. Even Louisiana Democrat John Slidell admitted that Fillmore's ascension to the presidency improved chances of settling sectional differences. Initially, Clay's Compromise bill, consisting of a number of separate measures bound together, failed. Later, when shrewdly introduced by Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas as individual bills, Congress passed the measures, which Fillmore signed. 50

The controversy surrounding the Compromise of 1850 disrupted Louisiana's political parties. Louisiana's delegation to Washington consisted of five Democrats and one Whig. The state's two Democratic senators played prominent roles in the debate with Senator Downs championing the Compromise and Senator Soulé leading the attack against


50 John Slidell to James Buchanan, July 13, 1850, Buchanan Papers, HSP; David M. Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861 (New York, 1976), 90-120.
it. In the House, only two of Louisiana’s four congressmen voted on the Compromise. In August, Whig Charles M. Conrad vacated his seat to become Fillmore’s secretary of war, and Third District Democrat John Harmanson was absent from the capitol because of a severe illness which would lead to his death in October. Like Soulé, Isaac Morse, representing the Fourth District, forcefully voiced his opposition to the measures. First District congressman Emile La Sere voted like Morse but remained silent on the Compromise.51

Though the state’s delegation had not given the Compromise of 1850 its endorsement, Louisiana Whigs, and most Louisiana Democrats, praised it as a solution to the nation’s sectional problems. A Carroll Parish cotton planter asserted, "I am content with the compromise arrangement. In my humble opinion the South has obtained a triumph." In the Second District, the Whigs passed resolutions endorsing the measures and selected a pro-Compromise candidate to succeed Conrad. The district’s Democrats divided over the Compromise and made no nomination, but some persisted in voting for Whig Henry Johnson. Whigs cheered Senator Downs’s support of the measure, and Whig newspapers praised the action of their partisan enemy, calling him "a patriot, a representative, and a statesman." Most Democrats joined in the celebration of Downs and, along with Whigs, greeted his return to the state with a one hundred gun salute. To thank Downs for his devotion to the South and the Union, pro-compromisers held a giant bipartisan Union Meeting in New Orleans and

smaller gatherings throughout the state. Between seven and eight thousand people attended the Crescent City assembly, and prominent members of both parties, including Democratic Governor Walker, made speeches in favor of Downs's course.\footnote{Hiram B. Tibbetts to John C. Tibbetts, 1850, John C. Tibbetts Correspondence, LLMVC (first quote); Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, September 21, 1850 (second quote); Franklin Planters' Banner, October 17, 1850; Daily Picayune, September 13, 1850; Bee, May 30, November 21, 28, 1850; Joseph Fitch to J.G. Weld, November 20, 1850, Weld Company Correspondence, LLMVC; John Liddell to Moses Liddell, May 7, 1851, Liddell Papers LLMVC; Greer, "Louisiana Politics, 1845-1861" 573-89.}

If some Louisiana Democrats celebrated the Compromise and Downs, others felt that the Compromise measures favored the North. Congressman Morse called it "a suicidal step for the South" and wondered how it could be called a compromise when one side gave up everything, and the other side gave up nothing. In the Senate, Pierre Soulé delivered one of the strongest anti-Compromise speeches and later asserted that submission to the oppressive measures would bring "dishonor, disgrace, and ruin to the South." The breach between Louisiana's Democratic Senators split the state's Democratic party. Already disliking Soulé for stealing his Senate seat, Slidell charged him with "produce[d] fatal dissensions in our party," for his opposition to the Compromise, and another objected to Soulé's "several inflammatory... speeches." Only one Louisiana newspaper openly supported Soulé's actions, and the Southern Rights meeting held to celebrate his return to the state paled in comparison to the Union meeting. The almost universal hostility toward Soulé's course eventually forced his advocates to publish a pamphlet explaining that he
and Downs differed only in degree and that their votes on the compromise had actually been very similar.\textsuperscript{53}

Support for the Compromise of 1850 among southern Whigs and among some southern Democrats contributed to the formation of Union parties in three southern states: Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. In these states, Whig parties had ceased to be competitive, and an alliance with pro-Compromise Democrats appeared to be a method to obtain power. Formed in 1850, Union parties accepted the compromise as a final settlement and eschewed traditional party labels. Because of the complex interaction of state and national politics, all attempts to form a Louisiana Union party failed. A Louisiana Whig "thought it bad policy to try to establish a compromise party," and the Bee preferred "maintaining distinctive and well-understood political landmarks." Louisiana Whigs considered the establishment of a Union party "bad policy" because in their state, the Whig party was not a non-competitive minority. The Whig party's program had popularity in New Orleans and especially in the sugar cane growing parishes, and the Whigs had been competitive in every statewide election.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{53} Morse Diary, 1850, in Morse, Blood of an Englishman, 123 (first quote); Soulé speech quote in Bee, December 2, 1850 (second quote); John Slidell to James Buchanan, December 16, 1850, Buchanan Papers, HSP (third quote); Mr. Soulé's Speech at Opelousas, Louisiana Delivered on the 6th of September 1851 (New Orleans, 1851); Pierre Soulé to John F.H. Claiborne, September 24, 1850, Claiborne Papers, MDAH; Thoughts on the Slavery Question and the Clay Compromise, with the Final Action of the Louisiana Delegation in Congress, Thereon (New Orleans, 1851); Greer, "Louisiana Politics, 1845-1861," 574-78.

\textsuperscript{54} Adams, Whig Party of Louisiana, 223; John Ray to John Moore 11 February 1852, Weeks Papers (first quote); Bee, December 6, 1851 (second quote); For a discussion of Union parties in the South see Cooper, South and the Politics of Slavery, 304-20; Arthur C. Cole, The Whig Party in the South (Washington, 1913), 183-203; J. Mills Thornton, Politics and
In Louisiana, not only did the Whigs benefit from their stance on the Compromise of 1850, but also they used their advocacy of revision of the Democratic-authored 1845 constitution to maintain a strong position in the state. William H. Adams, in *The Whig Party of Louisiana*, argues that "the adoption of the new [1845] constitution would ultimately mean the [Whig] party's demise." The charter, however, actually provided the Whigs with an opportunity to reinvigorate their party. Much of the support for the 1845 constitution had stemmed from disgust with the constitution of 1812 and not from enthusiasm for the new document. While an improvement, the constitution of 1845, "still contained features that were unsuitable to the political and economic milieu of antebellum Louisiana."5

Arguing that "virtually all agree some change is necessary," the Whigs repeatedly called for a convention to write a new constitution in the late 1840s and early 1850s. In February of 1850, the Whig-controlled house passed a bill authorizing the formation of a constitutional convention, but the Democratic senate defeated the bill by ten votes. By 1850, the public attitude had turned against the 1845 constitution and, consequently, in favor of the Whigs. The commercial interests of New Orleans detested the "absurd" constitution's severe restrictions which had "shackle[d] and fetter[ed]" business. At the same time,

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residents of northern Louisiana complained that voting restrictions in
the 1845 constitution, especially those regarding state and parish
residence, were still too severe. Whigs complained that many of the
provisions of the 1845 constitution originated from "temporary
excitement" and consequently possessed "a degree of ultraism." As the
party advocating a revision of the constitution, the Whigs benefitted
from the widespread desire for change.\textsuperscript{56}

In the 1851 congressional and legislative campaigns, the Whigs
exploited both national and state issues. At their state convention,
they wrote a party platform which presented their party as the author of
the Compromise of 1850 and the protector of southern interests. The
platform also called for a constitutional convention to write a new state
charter that would be more democratic and more responsive to the needs
of business interests. In New Orleans, the Whig party called upon
prominent businessmen, including lawyer Judah P. Benjamin and railroad
promoter James Robb, to inconvenience themselves temporarily and run for
the legislature to advance the commercial prosperity of the state. In
contrast, because of internal disagreements over the merits of the
Compromise of 1850 and the need for constitutional revision, the
Democratic party declined to issue a party platform. Democratic Governor
Walker, who had served as president of the 1845 constitutional
convention, steadfastly opposed a convention and could not "see any good
ground in what has passed...for a change of our organic law." The \textit{Daily

\textsuperscript{56}See, February 11, 1850, May 20, 1851 (first quote); George D.
Green, \textit{Finance and Economic Development in the Old South: Louisiana
Banking 1804-1861} (Stanford, 1972), 131-3; \textit{Daily Picayune}, February 21,
1850, March 8, 1850; \textit{Commercial Bulletin}, March 22, 1852 (second quote);
Vidalia \textit{Concordia Intelligencer}, February 7, 1852 (third quote).
Picavune more correctly described pro-convention sentiment as "nearly unanimous," and the Whigs used their advocacy of the Compromise and constitutional revision to sweep to their largest legislative majority.\(^5\)

Additionally, the party captured a second congressional seat for the first time since prior to the failed gerrymander of 1843. The Whigs used their pro-Compromise stance to add a victory in the Fourth District to their traditional control of the sugar cane-growing Second District. In the Fourth District, the respective platforms revealed the differences between the two parties. Democrats claimed only the South made any compromises in 1850, while Whigs asserted that the Compromise of 1850 settled the nation's most dangerous questions. Whig John Moore attacked incumbent Democrat Isaac Morse for his opposition to the Compromise. Calling Morse a secessionist, Whigs contended, "the question in this district is whether the doctrines of Gen. Downs or Pierre Soulé shall be sustained." Fearing that Morse would lose the election, Democrats sent the pro-Compromise Downs to the district to stump for him and to try to heal divisions within the party. Despite Downs's effort, Moore defeated Morse. Moore's friends celebrated his victory as "a triumph over disunion."\(^5\)

\(^5\)G.B. Duncan, et al. to James Robb, October 10, 1851; George Peabody to Robb, January 5, 1852; James Robb Papers, HNO; John Slidell to James Buchanan, December 16, 1850, November 17, 1851, Buchanan Papers, HSP; Address of Jacob Barker Delivered before the Members of the Jefferson Club (New Orleans, 1852), 4; Bee, October 9, 1851; Louisiana House Journal, 1st sess., 4th leg., 10-11 (Walker quote).

\(^5\)Franklin Planters' Banner, September 6, 20, October 4 (first quote), 18, 1851; Bee, August 6, October 9, November 13, 1851; Moses Liddell to Mary Liddell, November 17, 1851, Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC; John H. Dinkgrave to John Moore, November 28, 1851 (second quote), Samuel Clark to Moore, December 31, 1851, Weeks Papers. LLMVC.
Having added a congressman to Louisiana's delegation in Washington, the Whig party hoped that its control of the 1852 legislature would allow it to add a senator as well. Four years after the scandal surrounding the 1848 Senate election, when a Whig majority legislature elected Democrat Pierre Soulé, Whig newspapers swore that they would not allow the repeat of such a disgraceful event. A number of Whigs aspired to the office, but the party caucus united behind Judah P. Benjamin, a New Orleans legislator who had been elected as an advocate of commercial reform. The Democrats nominated the pro-Compromise incumbent Solomon W. Downs. They hoped to obtain the votes of several Whig legislators who either had pledged their vote to Downs because of his stance on the Compromise or who represented Democratic constituencies. Their efforts, however, proved in vain. Three Whigs crossed party lines, but Benjamin defeated Downs on the first ballot.\(^5\)

The Whigs also employed their legislative majority to pass a bill allowing the state's voters to decide on whether to call a constitutional convention. Newspapers throughout the state advocated a constitutional convention at the beginning of 1852. The New Orleans _Commercial Bulletin_ deemed "a new constitution absolutely necessary, and the Franklin Planters' Banner pronounced the 1845 constitution as "unworthy of the genius of our people." The Plaquemine _Southern Sentinel_ argued that "the

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\(^5\) Randell Hunt to F.D. Richardson, December 1, 1851, F.D. Richardson Papers, SHC; For Whig pledged to Downs see B.H. Payne to John Moore, January 22, 1852, Weeks Papers, LLMVC; For controversy over a Whig reneging on pledge to Downs see S.W. Downs to John Liddell, November 8, 1851, E. Warren Moise to Liddell, November 25, 1851, and John Liddell to unknown, December 10, 1851, all in Liddell Papers, LLMVC; For opinion that Downs's nomination actually hurt the Democratic party see Pierre Soulé to Isaac Morse, February 1, 1852, in Morse, _Blood of an Englishman_, 129-30.
expression throughout the state seems to us almost universal in behalf of a new constitution." Despite Governor Walker's opposition, most Democrats acceded to the people's demands, and the convention bill easily passed with seventy-six votes in favor and only seven against.

The January meeting of the legislature inaugurated what one Louisianan described as a "perfect war of politics throughout the year" including municipal, statewide, and national contests. The initial battle between the Democrats and Whigs occurred in the New Orleans municipal elections on March 22. Leaders of both parties acknowledged the importance of this campaign as a litmus test of their relative strengths. Democratic stalwart John Slidell contended that "if we succeed we shall carry the state in November." Speaking at a Whig ratification meeting the night before the city elections, Senator-elect Benjamin concurred in the magnitude of the New Orleans elections and in their connection to the national contest. Additionally, the preamble to the resolutions adopted by this Whig gathering emphasized that the success of the Whig party in the city election "will insure a Whig Convention, a Whig Constitution, a Whig legislature, and the vote of the state for a Whig president."

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60 Commercial Bulletin, February 20, 1852; Daily Picayune, January 21, 23, 1852; Franklin Planters’ Banner, April 10, 1852; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, January 24, 1852; Vidalia Concordia Intelligencer, January 24, 1852.

61 William C. Carr to John Moore, July 13, 1852, Weeks Papers, LLMVC; John Slidell to James Buchanan, March 19, 1852, Buchanan Papers, HSP (first quote); Pierce Butler, Judah P. Benjamin (Philadelphia, 1907), 103; Whig meeting preamble in Commercial Bulletin, March 22, 1852 (second quote).
Before 1852, the New Orleans municipal elections had not been contested on strictly partisan grounds, and party leaders had not placed much stress on them as harbingers of statewide races. Instead, political conflict in the Crescent City had revolved around Creole-American tension. From 1836 to 1852 animosity among the city's ethnic groups had led to the physical separation of the city into three virtually autonomous municipalities. In February 1852 the legislature mandated consolidation, calling a March election to unify the city under a single board of aldermen. Prior to 1852, ethnicity and personality had shaped New Orleans elections, but with consolidation, the historic Creole-American contest took on more the form of partisan politics. Leon C. Soulé, in his study of New Orleans politics, asserts that consolidation saw "the emergence of the political party as the dominant factor in municipal politics." Democrats and Whigs agreed with this assessment and placed a greater emphasis on the municipal contests than in prior years.\(^6\)

At first glance, the municipal campaign appeared to be an unqualified Whig triumph: the party captured the mayoralty, treasurer, comptroller, and elected a majority of the Board of Aldermen. Upon further examination, however, the election had exposed chinks in the party's armor. With partisan attachments in the city not solidified, a third-party movement emerged despite the best efforts of both Whig and Democratic newspapers to dissuade their members from straying from the fold. Writing in his diary, a prominent Whig observed that "Mr. James

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Robb got up an independent ticket with a view to injure (it is said) the Whig party....The Whigs will not forget it though [the independent's] efforts prove[d] of little use." Robb, a Whig state senator and Louisiana's most prominent railroad promoter, represented a faction that considered commercial advancement more important than partisan affiliation. Claiming to represent the business community, the independent reform movement's success is difficult to gauge, for though they elected seven of the city's twelve aldermen, all of their victorious candidates were also either Whig or Democratic nominees.\(^{63}\)

A month after the city election, in a referendum marred by poor turnout, Louisiana voters called for a constitutional convention. Only voters in the Florida Parishes, fearing that the capital might be moved back from Baton Rouge to New Orleans, cast a majority against the measure. Discussing the selection of delegates to the convention, the Daily Picayune state, "The interest in these questions is not mixed up with ordinary electioneering." The people and the parties disagreed with this sentiment and instead concurred with the Plaquemine Southern Sentinel that "electing delegates irrespective of their politics...is a moral impossibility." The Whigs benefitted from their party's unified position in favor of a convention. In the 1851 legislative campaign, the Whigs had declared in favor an elective judiciary, free banking, state aid to internal improvement companies, and public education. Party newspapers also reminded voters that the Democrats were responsible for

\(^{63}\)Samuel J. Peters, Jr., Diary, March 23, 1852, LLMVC; Harry H. Evans, "James Robb, Banker and Pioneer Railroad Builder of Antebellum Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly XXIII (January 1940), 191-3; Daily Delta, March 12, 1852; Commercial Bulletin, March 8, 1852; Louisiana Courier, March 13, 1852; Daily Picayune, March 20, 24, 1852.
the "the miserable edifice" of the 1845 constitution which "hung like an incubus upon the state's prosperity." 64

Because of their party's split on the necessity of a new constitution, Democrats had campaigned in 1851 without a platform. Some Democrats believed that the commercial restrictions in the 1845 constitution should remain in place, while others echoed Whig calls for reforms designed to facilitate commerce. The Louisiana Courier warned voters that the Whig call for an elective judiciary was simply a trick with the party's real goal being to remove restrictions on state spending and plunge Louisiana into debt. The newspaper asserted that in the 1845 constitutional convention the Whigs had opposed almost every democratic reform, and yet now they tried to convince the electorate that they were the party of democracy. Democrats stressed that the 1845 document included an amending process that could be used to make it more democratic without removing restrictions on government involvement in the economy and without calling an expensive convention. 65

In the June election, voters chose the Whigs' united front in favor of a convention over the Democrats' mixed message. The Commercial Bulletin called the Whig triumph "unparalleled," as the party captured a majority of approximately 30 to 40 of the 125 seats contested. A Democratic newspaper admitted that the absence of a pro-convention plank had hurt the party, and W.W. Pugh, a Democratic delegate, lamented that the results left his party in a position where it could "only object to

64 Baton Rouge Gazette, April 17, 1852; Daily Picayune, May 12, 1852; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, May 1, 1852; Commercial Bulletin, April 24, 1852.

65 Louisiana Courier, June 1, 5, 1852.
disagreeable measures. without having the power to interpose any obstacle." The Whigs' victory was particularly impressive in commercial New Orleans which had the most to complain about the anti-business provisions of the 1845 constitution. In the Crescent City, Whigs captured twenty-six of the twenty-seven seats.\(^{66}\)

The convention assembled on July 5, 1852, with the Whigs employing their overwhelming majority to write a constitution based on their platform of positive government: state aid to business and internal improvements, more liberal banking laws, and public education. The succeeded in legalizing state government purchase of stock in internal improvement projects, an article which Pugh saw as the "one great and controlling desire of the whigs of New Orleans" and decried as "graft...solely for the promotion...of speculators." They also passed measures that raised the maximum state debt from one hundred thousand to eight million dollars, permitted free banking—the formation of banks with either general or special laws—and removed limits on the life of corporations and monopolies. Not only Whigs found these measures attractive, for the constitution passed by an overwhelming 98-8 vote. Many of the delegates probably agreed with R.A. Hargis's assessment. "I vote yes, not because I like the new Constitution in all of its details, but because I like it better than the constitution of 1845."\(^{67}\)

\(^{66}\)Commercial Bulletin, June 15, 16 (quote) 1852; W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, July 5, 1852, Pugh Family Papers, UT.

\(^{67}\)W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, July 11, 1852 (second quote) and July 28, 1852 (first quote), Pugh Family Papers, UT; Journal of the Convention to Form a New Constitution for the State of Louisiana (New Orleans, 1852). Text of the constitution, 91-9, vote on constitution, 98-9; (Hargis quote on p. 100); Everard, "Louisiana's 'Whig' Constitution
The 1852 constitutional convention possessed a far greater spirit of cooperation than the 1845 assembly. The index of disagreement in the approving the constitution was only twenty-five percent with both parties voting strongly in favor of passage. The elective judiciary, which had engendered so much animosity seven years earlier, passed with the only arguments over the length of terms and the number of districts. Also, the duration of the convention indicated less partisan controversy or at least less debate than the 1845 convention. In 1844 and 1845, delegates met for over 140 days, while in 1852 revision took only 27 days. In his study of the process, Wayne Everard cites the bipartisanship of the convention as evidence that the label "Whig constitution" is a misnomer. Though Everard exaggerates the extent of the partisan cooperation, he does accurately portray the parties in the 1852 constitutional convention as less antagonistic than in 1845.68

Whig papers were ecstatic about the proposed constitution, and the Baton Rouge Gazette exclaimed that the Whigs "now have it in our power to place Louisiana beyond the reach of Locofocoism and to retain its government in our hands for years to come." The electorate still had to ratify the constitution, and Democratic opposition to the document soon developed over an issue which had nothing to do with the Whigs' primary goals. The charter included an article which based representation in both houses of the legislature upon total population, with slaves counting the same as free people. Thus, a parish with one thousand

Revisited," 37-51.

whites and nine thousand slaves would have the same number of legislators as one with ten thousand whites and no slaves. In the antebellum period, no other southern state used this basis of representation in both houses of the legislature. 52

Residents of parishes, including Orleans, which had low concentrations of slaves objected to this measure which would create a nobility of planters and, according to one delegate, would "place the African and white man on a level." Opposed to ratification, the Louisiana Courier asserted that "no white man can accept [the constitution] without being faithless to his race." In seizing total population in their opposition to the constitution, Democrats acted disingenuously because the charter merely extended to both houses the method of apportionment that the 1845 constitution, which had been written by Democrats, had used for the senate. Additionally, with an index of partisan disagreement of less than twenty percent, total population did not pass solely as a partisan measure. Instead, it emerged as a sectional compromise among the parishes with high slave concentrations, parishes with few slaves, and New Orleans. The Whig delegates from Orleans Parish supported this measure by a vote of 16 to 10 because they feared that any other method would include a limit on the number of legislators from the city, while the total population method did not place a ceiling on the size of any parish's delegation. Some delegates from parishes with low concentrations of slaves supported the compromise because, for the first time in Louisiana history, a

52 Baton Rouge Gazette, July 10, 1852; Donald E. Fehrenbacher, Constitutions and Constitutionalism in the Slaveholding South (Athens, Ga., 1989), 12-3.
constitution guaranteed each parish a representative in the legislature. 70

Pro-constitution Whig newspapers argued that voters should accept the new constitution with one objectionable article rather than remain under the present one with its “many odious clauses.” The commercially-oriented Democratic Daily Delta concurred that “the choice is between the old and new Constitution. It is not, whether you entirely approve both, but which do you prefer.” John Slidell possessed a different opinion. He argued that all of the necessary changes could have been quickly attained through an amendment process and would be made the next year even if voters rejected the constitution. The electorate apparently disagreed with Slidell’s assessment. On November 2, Louisianans accepted the 1852 constitution by a vote of 19,286 to 16,004. In no region did the pro-constitution vote exceed sixty percent, but only voters in North Louisiana rejected the measure. Their vote reflected the strength of the anti-constitution Democratic party there and the region’s fear of the influence of New Orleans. 71 (TABLE 4.1)

In 1852, the meeting of a constitutional convention and debate over the charter’s ratification occurred simultaneously with a heated presidential campaign. Four years earlier, Louisiana Whigs had spent a significant amount of the presidential canvass defending their northern-born vice-presidential candidate Millard Fillmore from attacks regarding

70 Journal of the Convention, 65 (vote on total population), 100 (quote); Louisiana Courier, October 30, 1852. Whigs voted 51-19 and Democrats 25-22 in favor of total population.

71 Baton Rouge Gazette, August 14, 1852 (first quote); Daily Delta, November 2, 1852 (second quote); Bee, November 24, 1852; Slidell letter in Louisiana Courier, October 14, 1852.
his loyalty to the South. By 1852, Fillmore had emerged as the first choice of Whigs in Louisiana. One proclaimed, "There had not been a better President since the days of Madison." and another agreed that "Fillmore is our strongest man." His conduct as president had removed most doubts about his principles. Fillmore had named Louisiana Whig Charles M. Conrad as secretary of war, but more importantly he had embraced the Compromise of 1850 and enforced its Fugitive Slave Act. Because of the president's association with the Compromise, Louisiana Democratic kingpin John Slidell acknowledged that "if Fillmore be the Whig candidate we shall have a very even and doubtful contest in this state."  

Even prior to the Whigs' March nominating convention, partisan newspapers had hoisted Fillmore's name to their mastheads. Unlike in 1848, when the party divided between proponents of Henry Clay and Zachary Taylor, in 1852, the Whigs united in favor of Fillmore. By 1852, Clay was seventy-four years old and ill, and most Louisiana Whigs agreed with

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E.B. Carr to John Moore, April 9, 1852 (first quote); John Ray to Moore, February 11, 1852, Weeks Papers, LLMVC (second quote); John Slidell to James Buchanan, May 22, 1852, Buchanan Papers, HSP (third quote).
the sentiment. "Clay would be my man now, but I suppose his day is past."
Nationally, two other candidates were spoken of: Daniel Webster of
Massachusetts and General Winfield Scott. Webster's candidacy had some
popularity in Louisiana because of his championship of the Compromise of
1850. Discussing Webster's prospects, however, a Louisianan accurately
described Whig opinion. "Webster cannot get half the vote in the slave
states that Fillmore would but is probably stronger than General
Scott." 13

Despite his birth in Virginia, Scott's candidacy had very little
support in the South including Louisiana. Taylor's presidency had left
Louisiana Whigs skeptical about war heroes and friends of New York free-
soiler William Seward—two categories into which Scott fit. His silence
on the Compromise of 1850 also contributed to their distaste for him, and
one went so far as to contend that the nomination of Scott would
"annihilate the Whig party here." While demonstrating to the North their
strong disapproval of Scott's candidacy, they had to leave the door open
if Scott became the national nominee. An editorial in the Whig Bee
demonstrates the difficulty of their position:

> The Bee has never said that no Southern Whig can or should
> support Genl. SCOTT...What we have said, once, twice, and
> twenty times was that Southern Whigs would not and could not
> support Genl. Scott unless his opinions touching Slavery and
> the Compromise should be distinctly known, and should accord
> with the South.

At the March nominating convention, Whigs made their commitment to
Fillmore explicit. The state platform announced that Louisiana endorsed
13W. Bledsoe to John Moore, May 3, 1852 (first quote), A.J. Sandidge
to Moore, March 4, 1852 (second quote), E.B. Carr to Moore, April 9,
1852, all in Weeks Papers, LLMVC; Daily Picayune, January 1, May 21,
1852;
Millard Fillmore for the presidency and John C. Crittenden of Kentucky for the vice presidency. The platform also declared the Compromise of 1850 the final settlement of the nation's sectional problems.\textsuperscript{74}

At the June national convention held in Baltimore, southern Whigs won the battle over the platform, which accepted the Compromise of 1850, but lost a protracted contest over the nominee as Winfield Scott received the nomination on the fifty-third ballot. Not surprisingly, Louisiana Whigs reacted unenthusiastically. A Whig legislator complained that Scott's "most disastrous" nomination "will be death" to the state's Whig party. Writing about Scott, the Plaquemine Southern Sentinel declared "that [Scott] has previously been distrusted by southern Whigs...cannot be denied." and the Commercial Bulletin, describing its own editorial position, reported that it was "not a volunteer recruit under the standard of General SCOTT." Speaking at a ratification meeting, Senator-elect Benjamin added that he had opposed Scott's nomination but had changed his mind with the candidate's acceptance of the party platform. Two of the six Whig electors reacted more extremely and resigned their positions in protest of the nomination.\textsuperscript{75}

While Louisiana Whigs had entered the 1852 presidential campaign united, the state's Democrats realized they needed to heal ruptures within their party to reaffirm their ascendancy in the state. In

\textsuperscript{74}William H. Sparks to John Moore, May 17, 1852, Weeks Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Bee, March 18, 1852 (second quote).

\textsuperscript{75}William E. Gienapp, "The Whig Party, the Compromise of 1850, and the Nomination of Winfield Scott," Presidential Studies Quarterly XIV (Summer 1984), 399-415; F.D. Richardson to Moses Liddell, June 28, 1852, Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, June 26, 1852 (second quote); Commercial Bulletin, June 23, 1852 (third quote); Butler, Judah P. Benjamin, 104.
January. Slidell worried that "a very great majority of our party approve of the compromise; yet those who were opposed are sufficiently numerous to make our defeat certain in any contest when their support shall be withheld." He realized that before challenging the Whigs, the Democrats must put their own house in order and hoped that the state convention would provide the party this opportunity. At the convention, Louisiana Democrats remained sundered. Slidell's wing favored his friend Pennsylvanian James Buchanan, while Soulé's faction preferred Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas. Though Douglas and Soulé disagreed over the merits of the Compromise of 1850, Soulé supported him partially to counter Slidell's championship of Buchanan. A third group led by Senator Downs, whom Slidell believed had reneged on a commitment to Buchanan, advocated a return to 1848 presidential candidate Lewis Cass.\(^7\)

To retain party harmony at the March convention, the members did not express a preference for the presidency and sent an unpledged delegation to the national convention. Louisiana Democrats agreed to abide by the choice of the national party as long as it endorsed the Compromise of 1850. At the Baltimore national convention, Democrats returned to their winning strategy of 1844, when they nominated the dark horse James K. Polk. Instead of nominating one of the prominent candidates, the party turned to the obscure governor of New Hampshire Franklin Pierce and sanctioned the Compromise of 1850. Heeding calls for

---

party unity. All factions of the Louisiana Democratic party joined together and endorsed the nominee. Soulé called Pierce "a man of great merit." and Slidell declared that he would "heartily support Pierce." At the June ratification meeting, Slidell stressed the necessity of restoring "the ancient discipline of the Democracy."^{77}

Louisiana Democrats quickly realized that their best tactic to win the election was to attack Scott as an opponent of slavery. Letters to John F.H. Claiborne, an editor of the Louisiana Courier, indicate the unanimity in favor of this strategy. Writing from Washington, a Louisiana Congressman urged that "it would be most prudent, not to attack the Whigs as a Party...but confine our attacks...upon Scott's free-soil and abolition tendencies." Slidell echoed this viewpoint. "Our true policy," according to Slidell. "will not be to attack the whigs as a party, but confine ourselves to commentaries upon Scott's political heresies & the character of his original & confidential supporters."

Slidell's rival Pierre Soulé congratulated Claiborne for adopting this course but implored him to be even more aggressive.^{78}

Louisiana's Democratic editors did not need to do much research to challenge Scott on his loyalty to slavery. They simply could pick up copies of Whig newspapers from earlier in the year. Preparing for a

^{77} John Slidell to James Buchanan, April 15, June 23, 1852 (second quote), Buchanan Papers, HSP; Address of Jacob Barker delivered before the Members of the Jefferson Club (New Orleans, 1852); Pierre Soulé to Charles Gayarré, August 2, 1852, Charles E.A. Gayarré Collection, LLMVC (first quote); Slidell's speech at the ratification meeting in New Orleans Weekly Delta, June 13, 1852 (third quote).

^{78} A.G. Penn to John F.H. Claiborne, June 25, 1852 (first quote); John Slidell to Claiborne, July 6, 1852 (second quote), Pierre Soulé to Claiborne, August 15, 1852 (third quote), all in John F.H. Claiborne Papers, MDAH.
debate in South Louisiana. a Democrat obtained pre-convention quotes from Whigs questioning Scott's fidelity to the region. Everyday during the campaign season, the Louisiana Courier prominently displayed an anti-Scott quote from a May edition of the Whig Commercial Bulletin. Also. Democrats made immense political capital from the defection of two Whig electors. One of the Whig electors not only resigned from the Scott ticket but endorsed Pierce and made speech in the candidate's behalf. Allegations of partisans crossing party lines appeared in almost every antebellum race, but these prominent defections lent credence to reports of widespread desertions from the Whig ranks and forced the Whigs to spend valuable time countering them. The Louisiana Courier even asserted that the backbone of the Whig party, sugar planters, had defected in favor of Pierce.75

While questioning Scott's loyalty to the South, Democrats celebrated Franklin Pierce's commitment to slavery. They cited letters detailing Pierce's faithfulness to the Compromise and claimed that with Pierce's election, "the rights of the South would be safe." Below its anti-Scott quotes, the Louisiana Courier included a quote from Pierce accepting the pro-Compromise Democratic platform. A Democratic orator stressed that a southern slaveholding state, Virginia, had introduced Pierce's name at the national convention. If Virginia felt confident in Pierce's stance regarding slavery, then so should Louisiana. According to Democratic newspapers, not only had Virginia declared Pierce sound,

75James Muggah essay for debate, September 20, 1852, Muggah Family Papers, HNO; W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, July 5, 7, 12, 1852, Pugh Family Papers, UT; Louisiana Courier, July through November, 1852; Daily Delta, October 31, 1852.
but Louisiana Whig Judah P. Benjamin had called him "true to the South."  

During the fall campaign season, Louisiana Whigs suddenly discovered that Scott was more loyal to the South than they previously had believed. Regarding Winfield Scott's attitude toward slavery, Whigs stressed the theme that Scott and not southern Whigs had changed their positions. Earlier anti-Scott editorials and speeches could be dismissed because they spoke only of a General Scott silent on the compromise issue. In contrast, the new Winfield Scott, who had accepted the Whig platform, was no longer a friend of the free-soil Whigs but instead a champion of the Compromise and, therefore, of the South. For Whigs, a re-examination of Scott's writings revealed that he opposed interference with the South's peculiar institution. Whig planter Joseph Moore admitted that he had initially opposed Scott, but "on hearing of his nomination, I examined myself the grounds upon which were based the charges of faithlessness to the South." After this scrutiny, he "found that the conclusion drawn from them is entirely erroneous." Whigs also reminded Louisiana voters that since 1850 their party had united in favor of the Compromise, while the state's Democrats had divided on the measure.  

Louisiana Whigs did more than defend Scott. They attacked the northerner Pierce's fidelity to the South calling him a free-soiler and

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80 James Muggah essay, September 20, 1852, Muggah Family Papers, HNO (first quote); Louisiana Courier, July 14, 30 (second quote), 1852.

81 Baton Rouge Gazette, July 3, 31, 1852; Joseph Moore to John Moore, August 21, 1852, Weeks Papers, LLMVC.
alleging that he was "tinctured with abolitionism." While perhaps Scott possessed free soil friends, the Baton Rouge Gazette boldly stated that southerners did not have to worry about Pierce's friends, they had to worry about Pierce. The newspaper unequivocally declared "Franklin Pierce Hates and Deplores Slavery." During the campaign, Whig newspapers carried quotations beneath their mastheads contrasting the candidates' stances on slavery. Attributed to Pierce, the first two quotes included, "I consider slavery a social evil" and "I loathe [the fugitive slave law]." In third quote, Scott counters, "I am dead for the Constitution—dead for the Union—dead for the Compromise."82

In addition to trading accusations of infidelity to slavery, Louisiana Democrats and Whigs charged each other with hostility towards immigrants. Against Pierce, the Whigs employed nativism and its brother in bigotry, anti-Catholicism. Regarding the banning of Catholic office-holding in Pierce's home state of New Hampshire, the Whigs charged, "When religious liberty needed a champion General Pierce was found—wanting."

In a further effort to deter Irish voters from choosing Pierce, Whigs labelled him an anglophile. Louisiana Whigs, however, faced the same dilemma they had in the slavery debate. As with the slavery issue, the Democrats brought forward quotes attacking Scott as a nativist from Whig newspapers earlier in the year. In this instance, they asserted that

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82Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, September 11, 1852; October 1852; Bee, October 1852; Abner L. Duncan to John Moore, September 2, 1852, Weeks Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Baton Rouge Gazette, July 31, August 14 (second quote), 1852.
Scott, a nativist, desired that naturalized citizens never receive the right to vote.12

Unlike in most other southern states where the traditional debate over the American System had disappeared, in Louisiana, the Whigs still stressed two planks: a tariff and federally sponsored internal improvements. The Whig platform maintained a commitment to a tariff to protect against "the competition of half-paid[,] half-fed foreign paupers" and to government aid to internal improvements. A Whig editor declared, "If you want your rivers and harbors improved vote for SCOTT," while another partisan claimed that, though the Democrats hoped no one knew Pierce, his views opposing federal aid to internal improvements would soon become known to all. In these arguments, the Democrats concurred with the Whigs. Pierce did favor the lower tariff of 1846 because it benefitted the whole country, particularly the South. Their candidate also justly rejected federal expenditures for internal improvements because they were both unconstitutional and wasteful.14

Discussion of immigrants and tariffs did not challenge the hold that slavery had on voters' minds, and on the same day that Louisiana Whigs celebrated the passage of the new constitution, Pierce defeated Scott in the state and across the nation. According to the Bee, Louisiana Whigs were "barely beaten" and had "not been routed...and

12Bee, August 17, 1852 (quote); Baton Rouge Gazette, October 30, 1852; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, September 11, 18, 1852; Louisiana Courier, July 24, 1852.

14For a discussion of the absence of traditional Whig measures in southern platforms of 1852 see Cole, Whig Party in the South, 219-221; Baton Rouge Gazette, March 20, 1852 (first quote); West Baton Rouge Capitolian Vis-A-Vis, October 27, 1852 (second quote); A.F. Rightor to Andrew McCollam, June 20, 1852, Andrew McCollam Papers, SHC.
shattered into fragments." This description, however, did not apply to the national Whig party as Scott only won four states. In most southern states, fears regarding the Whigs' position on slavery proved devastating to the party's chances. In Louisiana, however, Scott won the historically Whig South Louisiana and lost a close race in New Orleans. He even made a respectable showing in North Louisiana and the Florida Parishes. 85 (SEE APPENDIX A)

Whigs, with their constitution ratified, and Democrats, with their victory in the presidential contest, could both look optimistically to the state elections scheduled for December 27, 1852. Regarding state issues, Louisiana parties had come full circle from November 1845 to November 1852. In the former year, the voters had just passed a Democratic-authored constitution, while in the latter year, the electorate had approved a Whig-authored charter. The Whigs hoped to further the parallel and emulate the Democrats' domination of the ensuing elections. The Democrats still maintained that their party favored democracy more than the Whigs, and hoped that their success in the past three gubernatorial campaigns would continue their reign in the state.

While the state situation may have appeared similar in 1845 and 1852, the national political climate had changed dramatically. Though always a force in presidential politics, slavery had increased in importance, and southern firebrands openly talked of disunion. In 1845, the Democrats combined their authorship of the constitution with possession of the presidency. In 1852, Whigs faced a more precarious situation as they combined their constitution with a party sharply

85 Bee, November 12, 1852.
divided over slavery. The national electorate had just repudiated the Whig nominee, and in many southern states the Whig party had collapsed. Louisiana Democrats hoped and Louisiana Whigs feared that this disease could spread to their state.

In the wake of the pair of November 1852 contests, Louisiana Democrats and Whigs appeared more similar than ever before. Regarding national issues, both of the state's parties championed slavery and the Compromise of 1850. The ratification of the Constitution of 1852 settled state differences as well. At the same time, traditional partisan distinctions had also receded. Political campaigns engendered less debate over the American System and the towering figure of Andrew Jackson than ever before. The ethnicity issue had moved from tension between Americans and Creoles to a debate over the political rights of immigrants. Louisiana Democrats and Whigs had not yet adjusted to this new political world, and with an election less than two months away, they would have to make quick decisions on how best to adapt.
"A PERFECT WAR:"
POLITICS AND PARTIES
IN LOUISIANA, 1824-1861

VOLUME II

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
The Department of History

by
John Michael Sacher
B.A., University of Notre Dame, 1992
M.A., Louisiana State University, May 1994
December 1999

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CHAPTER FIVE
PARTIES. CAMPAIGNS. GOVERNMENT. AND JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY

During the antebeilum period, the political process in Louisiana did not remain static. The provisions of the 1812 constitution reflected a distrust of the common people. It created a small electorate with sharply proscribed powers, granting most power to the governor. Wealth and age restrictions limited access to these positions. Most people remained separate from the government which neither collected many taxes nor spent much money. If many Louisianaans were isolated from their state government, the state was almost as isolated from national politics. Political campaigns revolved around ethnicity and personality more than policy or party. But, even in the early years of statehood, the government did have democratic elements: aspirants to office recognized the necessity of campaigning; the majority of eligible voters went to the polls on election day; and the tax rate was progressive.

The ideals of Jacksonian democracy transformed the state. Louisiana's subsequent antebeilum constitutions, the charters of 1845 and 1852, transferred more power to more people. The electorate expanded as did the number of elective positions. Reduced qualifications for office opened the campaign field to more participants, and candidates' unceasing efforts to get their message to every voter illustrated their commitment to the people. Political parties served as the engines for this transformation, and Louisiana developed a remarkably balanced party system. The parties held conventions, nominated candidates, organized campaigns, and published newspapers. As the early period contained democratic elements, the
party era retained vestiges of less-democratic elements. Despite the removal of property requirements for office, wealthy men continued to dominate the legislature. Also, partisan practice did not always match the democratic ideal, and party members often charged that their opponents' corruption had thwarted the will of the people.

The development of political parties represents perhaps the greatest change in Louisiana politics between the state's entrance into the Union in 1812 and its secession in 1861. In 1812, Louisianans based allegiance to a particular candidate on what language he spoke and where he lived. Less than twenty-five years later, Louisianans would see themselves first and foremost as partisans: Democrats, Whigs, and, in the 1850s, Know Nothings. Yet, the importance of regionalism did not disappear, and the parties did not receive equal support across the entire state. To examine the regional strength of Louisiana political parties, the period from 1824 to 1861 can be divided into four phases: (1) 1824-1832—an era characterized by non-partisan contests, (2) 1834-1844—Whigs and Democrats during the period of restrictive suffrage, (3) 1846-1852—Whigs and Democrats with universal white male suffrage, (4) 1855-1860—Democrats and different opponents after the decline of the Whigs.

The pre-party era from 1824 to 1832 was characterized by the absence of partisan nominations, a multiplicity of candidates, extreme regional variations in support, and the importance of ethnicity as a campaign topic. In the absence of an organized nominating process, four or more candidates received votes in each of the three gubernatorial races during this period. Moreover, Louisianans did not
connect state contests to national contests, especially with gubernatorial elections in July and presidential elections in November. During this period, candidates would often obtain the overwhelming majority of their votes in a single region. For example, Philemon Thomas ran for governor in both 1824 and 1828. Considered the founding father of the Florida Parishes, Thomas, in 1828, received 50.2 percent of his home region's votes which represented 78.5 percent of his total. Outside of this section, Thomas garnered only 4.7 percent of the ballots cast and finished fourth in the race. In 1830, another resident of the Florida Parishes, William S. Hamilton, suffered a similar fate. While winning over two-thirds the votes in the Florida Parishes and North Louisiana, Hamilton secured only 12.8 percent of the votes in Greater Orleans and 11.6 percent in South Louisiana, dooming his candidacy. (SEE APPENDIX B)

The sectional voting pattern revealed in the votes of both Thomas and Hamilton illustrates the importance of ethnicity and personality during the pre-party period. In the three gubernatorial campaigns during this period, Democrats did not face Whigs. Louisianans did not identify themselves with parties; instead, Creoles opposed Americans. In the Florida Parishes, an American stronghold, Creole gubernatorial candidates' total never exceeded 30.9 percent of the votes. At the same time, the Creoles dominated South Louisiana, receiving at least 65.5 percent of the ballots in each of the contests. From 1824 to 1832, a small population combined with a property requirement for voting kept vote totals low and made personal
relationships extremely important. Especially at a parish level, the support of a few key men and their families often ensured victory.

From 1834 to 1844, Louisiana campaigns and elections changed into competitive battles between Democrats and Whigs. The parties divided the six major statewide elections: the Whigs won two of the three gubernatorial races, and the Democrats captured two of the three presidential contests. Overall, the Whigs received 51.9 percent of the ballots and prevailed in 110 parishes with the Democrats obtaining 105 parishes in these six party battles. The results in terms of total votes, elections, and parishes captured conveys the impression of a balance in the state. This overall symmetry, however, hid a series of uncompetitive regional and parish contests. Of the 217 total parish contests, 134 (61.7 percent) saw one party receive over sixty percent of the votes, and in 71 (32.7 percent), the victorious party garnered over seventy percent. Parishes tended to support the same party repeatedly. Of the forty-five parishes which had returns for at least one of these contests, thirty-one (68.9 percent) backed either the Whigs or Democrats at least 80 percent of the time.¹

(TABLES 5.1, 5.2, 5.3)

Louisiana Whigs received their most vigorous backing in South Louisiana with its pro-tariff sugar cane growers. The electorate in South Louisiana gave 60.3 percent of its votes to Whig candidates, who won the region in five of the six contests—only in the 1842

¹For the purposes of this section, parishes won refers to those in which a party's candidate received the majority of votes in presidential and gubernatorial elections. Legislative and congressional elections have not been included.
### TABLE 5.1

**Votes by Region**

#### 1834-1844

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>WHIG Votes</th>
<th>DEM Votes</th>
<th>WHIG %</th>
<th>DEM %</th>
<th>PERCENT OF WHIG</th>
<th>PERCENT OF DEM</th>
<th>PERCENT OF TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLORIDA</td>
<td>6519</td>
<td>10064</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NORTH LA</td>
<td>10472</td>
<td>11618</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORLEANS</td>
<td>12477</td>
<td>11093</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH LA</td>
<td>20488</td>
<td>13499</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Votes | 49959 | 46274 | 51.9% | 48.1% |

#### 1845-1852

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>WHIG Votes</th>
<th>DEM Votes</th>
<th>WHIG %</th>
<th>DEM %</th>
<th>PERCENT OF WHIG</th>
<th>PERCENT OF DEM</th>
<th>PERCENT OF TOTAL</th>
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<td>FLORIDA</td>
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<td>9.7%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>NORTH LA</td>
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<td>24727</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORLEANS</td>
<td>26728</td>
<td>28837</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH LA</td>
<td>25825</td>
<td>19728</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

| Total Votes | 79363 | 83484 | 48.7% | 48.1% |

#### 1855-1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>OPP Votes</th>
<th>DEM Votes</th>
<th>OPP %</th>
<th>DEM %</th>
<th>PERCENT OF OPP</th>
<th>PERCENT OF DEM</th>
<th>PERCENT OF TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>NORTH LA</td>
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<td>16299</td>
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<td>28993</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
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</table>

| Total Votes | 83923 | 93257 | 47.4% | 48.1% |
### Table 5.2

Parish Results

#### 1834–1844

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Whig Parishes</th>
<th>% Whig</th>
<th>Democrat Parishes</th>
<th>% Democrat</th>
<th>Total Parishes</th>
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<td>Florida</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
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<td>62.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>70.3</td>
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<td>29.7</td>
<td>42.3</td>
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Total Parishes: 215

#### 1845–1852

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Whig Parishes</th>
<th>% Whig</th>
<th>Democrat Parishes</th>
<th>% Democrat</th>
<th>Total Parishes</th>
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<td>72</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>49.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orleans</td>
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<td>35.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South LA</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Total Parishes: 231

#### 1855–1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Opposition Parishes</th>
<th>% Opposition</th>
<th>Democrat Parishes</th>
<th>% Democrat</th>
<th>Total Parishes</th>
</tr>
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<td>North LA</td>
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<td>86.3</td>
<td>46.9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>50.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South LA</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Parishes: 192

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TABLE 5.3
Parishes in which Democrats Won a Given Percent of Elections²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>PARISHES</th>
<th>0-19</th>
<th>20-39</th>
<th>40-59</th>
<th>60-79</th>
<th>80-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLORIDA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH LA</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORLEANS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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1845-1852

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1855-1860

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²Example: From 1834 to 1844 in 3 of the 7 Florida Parishes, Democrats won between 60 and 79 percent of the contests, and in 4 the party won between 80 and 100 percent of the races.
gubernatorial race did Democrat Alexander Mouton, a native of South
Louisiana's Lafayette Parish, narrowly edge his Whig competitor.
Whigs won 70.3 percent of South Louisiana's parishes in the six
elections. South Louisiana also supplied the Whigs a disproportionate
amount of their statewide support. The region accounted for 35.3
percent of the total votes cast in Louisiana from 1834 to 1844 but
provided the Whig party with 41 percent of its votes. In terms of
parish results, 42.3 percent of the state's contests occurred in the
region, but the Whigs won 58.2 percent of their victories here, and in
nine of South Louisiana's seventeen parishes, Democrats won less than
twenty percent of the elections from 1834 to 1844.

If between 1834 and 1844 South Louisiana represented one extreme
of partisan allegiance, the Florida Parishes represented the other.
Democratic candidates captured every election but one in this region—
in the 1838 gubernatorial contest. New Orleans Democrat Denis Prieur
lost in the Florida Parishes probably because of a bias against
candidates from the city. In the other five races, the Whigs suffered
defeat in thirty-one of the thirty-five parishes. During this period.
Democrats received 60.7 percent of the ballots cast in the Florida
Parishes and never lost in three of the region's seven parishes.
Casting 17.2 percent of the total ballots in the state, the area gave
Democrats 21.8 percent of their total votes. Though the region
provided less than one-fifth of the total parish returns, it accounted
for almost one-third of the Democrats' victories.

The other two regions, Greater Orleans and North Louisiana,
provided more competitive arenas. In North Louisiana, Democrats
captured 52.6 percent of the votes but evenly split the six elections with the Whigs. The Whigs benefitted from their dominance in the heavily slave parishes along the Mississippi River—triumphing in all eleven contests in Concordia, Tensas, and Madison Parishes. Outside of these three, they lost 72.9 percent of the parishes. In Greater Orleans, the Whigs triumphed in four of the six races and garnered 52.9 percent of the ballots. Greater Orleans gave the parties extremely balanced support. Accounting for 24.5 percent of the state's votes, the section gave Whigs 25.0 percent of their votes and provided Democrats with 24.0 percent of their ballots.

In the subsequent period, from 1846 to 1852, the small Whig majority in Louisiana disappeared. The Democratic proportion of Louisiana's electorate grew from 48.1 percent to 51.3 percent, and this seemingly minor increase had a profound effect on election results. Whig candidates lost all three gubernatorial contests, and one of the two presidential battles, only gaining Louisiana's electoral votes for native-son Zachary Taylor in 1848. The Democrats triumphed in 145 of the 232 parish battles (62.5 percent) in the five elections. In 23 of the 48 parishes (47.9 percent), the Democrats swept every gubernatorial and presidential race from 1846 to 1852. Although the Whig party became a minority, it was not without support, and Whig candidates received 48.7 percent of Louisiana's votes. While competitive in many parish races (in 53 percent of the parishes involved in these elections, the winning candidate received less than 60 percent of the votes), by the end of 1852, the Whigs were a minority party in Louisiana.
From 1846 to 1852, the Whig party's strength became increasingly concentrated in South Louisiana. Whig nominees received 56.7 percent of South Louisiana's votes, and it was the only region which gave them a majority. South Louisiana continued to provide the Whig party a disproportionate amount of its support. The section accounted for 28 percent of Louisiana's votes and 35.5 percent of its parish contests but furnished the Whig party with 32.5 percent of its votes and fifty-four of its eighty-six (62.8 percent) parish victories. Conversely, in eight of South Louisiana's seventeen parishes, the Democratic party won less than 20 percent of the contests during this period. In contrast, the Democrats won less than 20 percent of the votes in only two of Louisiana's other thirty-one parishes.

Outside South Louisiana, while the Whigs may have won some races and remained competitive in most parishes, they clearly had been reduced to a minority party. In the five elections from 1846 to 1852, Democrats captured 78.5 percent of the parishes in the other three regions. This total includes 91.4 percent of the contests in the Florida Parishes where the Whigs mustered three victories in St. Tammany Parish but none in the other six parishes. A similar situation prevailed in North Louisiana where the minimal Whig support remained highly concentrated. As in the earlier period, Whigs relied on Concordia, Tensas, and Madison Parishes. These parishes, when combined with Morehouse Parish, supplied a Whig majority in seventeen of their twenty contests. In the other sixteen parishes of North Louisiana, the Democratic party dominated—triumphing in sixty-nine of seventy-four parish elections (93.2 percent). North Louisiana and the
Florida Parishes, which accounted for 55.8 percent of the state's parish contests, provided Whigs with only 29.1 percent of their victories. and in twenty of their twenty-seven parishes Democrats won 80 percent or more of the elections. Greater Orleans continued as the state's most balanced region. The Democrats' voting support did rise from 47.1 percent to 51.9 percent in this section.

After 1852, with the disappearance of the Whig party, analyzing Louisiana's voting patterns becomes more complicated. In the 1855 governor's race and the 1856 presidential election, Democrats faced Know Nothing opponents. In 1859, however, an anomalous Opposition party including renegade Democrats and former Know Nothings challenged the regular Democrats. In the 1860 presidential election, Louisiana voters picked among two Democrats and a Constitutional Unionist. Despite the confusing nature of these races, some conclusions can be drawn. The regular Democrats, a group most closely linked to Senator John Slidell, controlled the state. Their candidates triumphed in all four of the elections. Slidell Democrats won 76.6 percent of the parish battles, including a remarkable forty-six of the forty-eight parishes in the 1859 gubernatorial election.

With the collapse of the Whigs and the rise of the Know Nothings, sectional voting patterns did not mirror the Whig-Democratic pattern of earlier periods. South Louisiana, where the Whig party had received its strongest backing, switched its allegiance to the

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³For 1860, Democratic victories include those parishes where the Slidell-supported Democrat John C. Breckinridge won a plurality of the votes. The three parishes where Democrat Stephen A. Douglas captured a plurality are included with the Opposition.
Democrats. The Democrats had only captured South Louisiana for favorite-son Alexander Mouton in 1842, but they received a majority of its votes in the first three elections of this period—including over 60 percent in two of the elections—and achieved a plurality in the 1860 presidential race. Religion provides the best explanation for the region's switch to the Democracy. The Know Nothings' anti-Catholic proclivity did not resound well in South Louisiana which, according to the 1850 census, had 76.4 percent of its church seating capacity in Catholic churches. Faced with a choice between their old opponents and the Know Nothings, many South Louisianans chose the former, and the Democrats obtained 52.6 percent of the region's ballots.  

If the opposition to the Democrats foundered in South Louisiana, it flourished in Greater Orleans. The Know Nothings' anti-immigrant message played well among the American-born in this region which in 1850 contained 89.9 percent of the state's foreign-born population. In New Orleans, the Know Nothings left little to chance. They combined their opposition to immigrants with threats and violence which dissuaded many Democrats from coming to the polls. The Democratic party lost all four elections in the region and received only 36.7 percent of Greater Orleans's votes—the lowest total any party received in any region during the antebellum era. In 1856, Democrats received only 29.9 percent of the votes in Greater Orleans, and in 1860 their presidential candidate garnered just 25.0 percent of its ballots. The region accounted for 25.1 percent of Louisiana's

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4Seventh Census. 1850. 489-91.
votes during this period but provided the Democrats' opposition with 33.5 percent of its support.

In North Louisiana and the Florida Parishes, voting patterns did not change significantly. The two sections continued their loyal allegiance to the regular Democratic party. Democratic candidates triumphed in both these regions in all four elections. Furthermore, they captured 57.5 percent of the votes and ninety of the one hundred and eight parishes (83.3 percent) in these six years. In sixteen of the twenty-seven parishes in North Louisiana and the Florida Parishes, Democrats swept all four contests, and the party won at least one election in each of the parishes. The opposition particularly suffered in North Louisiana. The parishes of this region held 41.7 percent of the elections in the four races, yet North Louisiana supplied the opposition with only 24.4 percent of its total support.

In addition to examining partisan allegiance on a regional basis, party support can be examined on economic and social bases. Louisiana Whigs have been depicted as aristocratic planters and Democrats as small farmers and laborers.\(^5\) This portrayal is too simplistic, though it has some merit. Leaders of all of antebellum Louisiana's political parties were wealthy men. The Whig leadership did include prominent planters such as Alexander Porter and Andre B. Roman. But, Democratic chieftains from John B. Dawson and Martin Gordon in the 1830s to John Slidell and Thomas Overton Moore in the 1850s also numbered among the richest Louisiana. Conversely, no

party could win elections in Louisiana relying solely on the votes of planters. Democrats may have called themselves the party of the people, but Whigs and Know Nothings did not abdicate their claim to this title. Their candidates campaigned for and received the votes of all classes of citizens just as the Democrats did.

A division of Louisiana’s parishes into groups based on the percentage of slaves in their population reveals that the higher the concentration of slaves the greater the likelihood of a parish voting for Whig candidates. The Whigs captured 58.4 percent of the races contested in the parishes with the highest slave concentrations, and these twelve parishes accounted for 37.2 percent of the party’s victories. But, more importantly, this categorization also demonstrates that a one-to-one correspondence between slave percentage and Whig vote certainly did not exist. Even among these heavily slave parishes. Whigs lost 41.6 percent of the contests between 1834 and 1852. Additionally, four of the these twelve parishes voted for Democrats in at least 80 percent of the elections. As slave concentration decreased, so did the Whig vote. But, even in the parishes with less than 40 percent of their population enslaved, Whigs managed to win 30 percent of the races, and two of these parishes voted for Whig candidates over 80 percent of the time.5 (TABLE 5.4)

Louisiana’s antebellum agricultural production also belies the idea that the presence of staple crops equated to Whig victory. The parishes which produced the largest amount of cotton actually voted in

5The data for variables such as slave concentration, cotton, sugar cane, and church seating come from Seventh Census, 1850, 481, 484, 486, 488-91.
TABLE 5.4
Parish Results Based on a Given Variable

### Slave Percentage

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<td>37.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>55.1-68.5%</td>
<td>12 55 55 50.0</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>22.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>41.7-54.1%</td>
<td>12 41 74 35.7</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.1-38.8%</td>
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<td>25.8</td>
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### Sugar Cane Production

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<th>Percent of Whig Votes</th>
<th>Percent of Dem. Votes</th>
<th>Over 80% Whig</th>
<th>Over 80% Dem.</th>
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### Cotton Production

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<td>36.7</td>
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### Catholic Church Seating Capacity

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<th>% of Seats in Catholic Churches</th>
<th># of Par. Whig Dem. Whig %</th>
<th>Percent of Whig Votes</th>
<th>Percent of Dem. Votes</th>
<th>Over 80% Whig</th>
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<td>40-86%</td>
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<td>6-29%</td>
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<td>16.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>21 45 130 25.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>53.3</td>
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\(^7\)Election data from presidential and gubernatorial races, 1834-52.
favor of the Democratic party in 64 percent of the elections. In fact, the Whig party received its greatest support in those parishes which produced the least, not the most cotton. Whigs captured 74.1 percent of the races in this group. The parishes which had a yield of less than 100 bales of cotton accounted for over half of the parishes won by Whig candidates between 1834 and 1852. The parishes which produced the least cotton had a Whig tendency, however, not because they produced very little cotton but more likely because they produced a large quantity of sugar cane. Of the thirteen parishes with the lowest cotton production, eight of them were among Louisiana's top ten sugar cane parishes.

The presence of sugar cane, like that of slaves, can be associated with Whig victories. The ten parishes which accounted for the most hogsheads of sugar cane voted for Whig candidates in 72.1 percent of the gubernatorial and presidential elections between 1834 and 1852. As the amount of sugar cane decreased the Democratic vote increased. In sharp contrast to Whig victories in the sugar cane areas, the sixteen parishes which produced no sugar cane returned Democratic majorities in 75 percent of these races. As with the presence of slaves, the presence or absence of sugar cane does not explain every parish's voting pattern. For instance, at the mouth of the Mississippi River, Plaquemines Parish produced 16,835 one-thousand pound hogsheads of sugar, the fifth largest amount in Louisiana, yet returned a Democratic majority in all eleven elections from 1834 to 1852. Conversely, Morehouse and Madison Parishes, which produced no sugar cane, voted for Whig candidates in fourteen of the fifteen
contests. On an individual level, Thomas Overton Moore, elected as a Democratic governor in 1859, cultivated the largest sugar plantation in Rapides Parish, and he was one of the top fifteen producers in the state.8

Louisiana's parishes did not split solely in terms of crops or slaves but they also divided religiously. Catholics predominated in South Louisiana, but in North Louisiana, the majority of parishes did not have any Catholic churches. Generally, the greater the percentage of a parish's church seats in Catholic churches, the more likely a parish would vote for Whig nominees. The eight parishes which had Catholic churches but no Protestant churches voted in favor of the Whigs 64.3 percent of the time. In contrast, the twenty-one parishes without a Catholic church returned Democratic majorities in 74.3 percent of the elections, and fifteen voted for Democrats in at least 80 percent of the elections. Like agricultural production, Catholicism did not precisely equate to Whiggery. Democrats captured 38.7 percent of the races in parishes with only Catholic churches, and four of the twenty-one parishes without Catholic churches supported Whig candidates in over 80 percent of the elections.

Factors such as the presence of sugar cane, cotton, Catholic churches, and the number of slaves undoubtedly influenced voting patterns, but they cannot entirely explain why antebellum Louisianans supported a particular party. Examining these variables demonstrates the presence of general trends but they fail to account for all

8For Moore's crop see P.A. Champomier, Statement of the Sugar Crop Made in Louisiana in 1858-59 (New Orleans, 1859), 1.
partisanship. Though the proportion of slaves in the population indicates a tendency to vote Whig, in each of the groupings at least one parish voted Democratic and at least one voted Whig in over 80 percent of the contests. This caveat applies to each of the variables examined. In each division of each of the four variables at least one parish voted for each of the parties over 80 percent of the time. A closer look at the voting behavior of four North Louisiana parishes—Ouachita, Morehouse, Carroll, and Madison—buttresses the contention that other local forces such as personality must also have shaped contests.

In 1844, the legislature split Ouachita Parish into two separate parishes: leaving one with the name Ouachita and Designating the other one Morehouse. By 1850, Ouachita Parish had a total population of 5,008 including 2,708 slaves (54.1 percent); produced 3,486 bales of cotton and no sugar cane; had no Catholic churches; had a Protestant church seating capacity of 300 people; and had livestock valued at $140,745. Its neighbor to the north, Morehouse Parish, had a population of 3,913 including 2,006 slaves (51.3 percent); produced 3,303 bales of cotton and no sugar cane; had no Catholic churches; had a Protestant church seating capacity of 300 people; and had livestock valued at $131,760. Despite their exceedingly similar characteristics, the two parishes had opposite voting patterns. Between its formation in 1844 and 1852, Morehouse Parish participated in six contests—three presidential and three gubernatorial—and it had backed the Whig candidate in every race. Its voters had cast 61.7 percent of their ballots for Whigs. In these same six party battles,
the Ouachita Parish electorate had never returned a majority for the Whig candidate and had given the Democratic party 5% percent of its votes.\(^5\)

Located next to one another along the Mississippi River in North Louisiana. Carroll and Madison Parishes, both of which had once been part of Concordia Parish, exhibit a parallel pattern. In 1850, they possessed almost the exact same total population: 8,789 (Carroll) to 8,773 (Madison). Both parishes had high concentrations of slaves (73.3 and 83.3 percent respectively): numbered fifth and sixth in terms of cotton produced in the state (15,544 and 12,771 bales): and had strikingly similar livestock value ($252,982 to $237,500) and total farm value ($2,712,382 to $2,666,046). Like Morehouse and Ouachita Parishes, however, their statistical resemblance did not lead to a correspondence in party loyalties. In the six elections from 1844 to 1852, five times Carroll Parish returned Democratic majorities and five times Madison returned Whig majorities.\(^6\)

The voting pattern of these four parishes underscores the complexity of politics in antebellum Louisiana and warns against simple explanations of voting behavior. If parishes with the same characteristics could vote in a manner completely opposite of each other, then undoubtedly voters did not just count the number of slaves, measure crop production, or calculate church seating capacity when deciding how to vote. The narrowness of party triumphs also shows the danger of broad generalizations of voting patterns. Of the

\(^5\)Seventh Census. 1850, 475-91.

\(^6\)ibid.
449 parishes races between 1834 and 1852, in 206 of them (45.5 percent), the victorious party received less than sixty percent of the votes. So, even within parishes voters disagreed over which party to support, and the data does not exist to examine either voting or demographic factors at sub-parish levels.

Another explanation of antebellum voting behavior emphasizes the role of personality within the parishes. As late as 1858, thirty-five of Louisiana's forty-eight parishes possessed less than one thousand voters. Extended families, close friends, business partners, or settlers who had travelled together from another state could control enough votes to change the political complexion of a parish. For example, in Carroll Parish, the settlement of Tennessee Democrats probably contributed to its Democratic bent. The influence of the prominent Mouton family helped make Lafayette Parish a Democratic island in the Whig sea of South Louisiana sugar cane parishes.

Throughout his study of Louisiana during the early Jacksonian period, Joseph G. Tregle stresses the role of personality, bloc voting, and the presence of "strong men" who "reputedly could marshal hundreds of voters to march to their command."¹¹

Just as Louisiana's parishes and regions did not provide the state's parties with equal support, they did not themselves receive equal representation in the state legislature. Apportionment methods changed, but the writers of all three antebellum constitutions kept a

¹¹Tennessee Democrats in Carroll Parish see Felix Bosworth to James K. Polk, June 12, 1844, June 15, 1844, Polk Papers, Library of Congress; Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., Louisiana in the Age of Jackson: A Clash of Cultures and Personalities (Baton Rouge, 1999), quote on p. 70.
wary eye on New Orleans because they feared its corruption could be contagious. By basing apportionment on qualified voters and/or total population, they successfully ensured that Greater Orleans’s representation would never equal its share of Louisiana’s white population. During the antebellum era, North Louisiana made the greatest strides in apportionment. In 1830, the region had the least seats (17.9 percent), but by 1860 its expanding white population and extensive slaveholdings combined with changes in apportionment had enabled it to elect more legislators than any other section of Louisiana.

Contradicting itself, the 1812 constitution stipulated "equal and uniform" representation in the entire legislature while making senate seats "which shall forever remain indivisible." The constitution called for the lower house to be reapportioned on the basis of qualified electors every four years, and this process occurred on schedule until 1826. After that year's redistricting, the legislature failed to pass an apportionment bill for the next fifteen years. The 1845 constitution kept the number of voters as the basis of apportionment in the lower house but for the Senate changed the method to total population with slaves counting the equivalent of white people. The 1852 constitution again altered the apportionment method, making total population the basis in both houses and guaranteeing each parish a representative. Surprisingly, despite these varied apportionment methods, regional representation in
Louisiana remained fairly proportional throughout the antebellum era."

In 1830, South Louisiana had more than twice as many representatives as any other section. The section elected twenty-nine of the state's sixty-seven legislators, and its representation closely corresponded to its share of the total population, white population, and electorate. Restricted to three of the seventeen senate seats, Greater Orleans at first glance appeared to suffer from the constitution's provisions. In 1830, it possessed 29.9 percent of the Louisiana's total population and 27.7 percent of its white population, yet only 19.4 percent of the state's legislators represented the region. In terms of eligible voters, however, Greater Orleans's representation was correct, for because of property and residency requirements it possessed only 19.9 percent of the electorate. Both the Florida Parishes which elected thirteen legislators and North Louisiana which chose twelve had representation that corresponded to their fractions of Louisiana's population and voters. (TABLE 5.5)

With the legislators unable to pass an apportionment bill in the 1830s, the regions elected exactly the same number of legislators in 1840 that they had in 1830. Although Louisiana's white population had expanded 77.6 percent in the decade, apportionment still closely corresponded to an estimate of qualified voters taken in 1841. South Louisiana continued to elect the most representatives, and its 43.3 percent of the seats precisely equaled its proportion of Louisiana's population.

For a comparison of apportionment methods see Constitutions of the State of Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1930), 33-7; Emmett Asseff, Legislative Apportionment in Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1950), 10-30.
TABLE 5.5

Legislative Apportionment by Region

1830 Legislature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
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<th>% of White</th>
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1840 Legislature

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1850 Legislature

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1860 Legislature

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</table>


\[1] Senate seats which overlap regions are counted as .5 for each region.
electorate. Greater Orleans’s white and total population had increased at a rate higher than the rest of the state. In 1840 42.4 percent of the state’s white population and 34.3 percent of its total population lived in the region. Because of suffrage requirements, these percentages continued to exceed Greater Orleans’s share of the electorate (23.3 percent) which came fairly close to its 19.4 percent of the seats.

Between 1840 and 1850, Louisianans ratified a new constitution which like the 1812 constitution uses qualified voters as the basis for representation in the lower house but made total population the basis for the senate. In 1850, South Louisiana continued to possess the largest percentages of total population and voters and consequently elected the most representatives, though its proportion declined from 43.3 percent to 35.1 percent. The Florida Parishes still elected thirteen representatives but since the legislature had almost doubled in size, the region’s proportion had been sliced nearly in half. This reduction reflected the section’s relatively slow growth. The 1845 constitution easing of suffrage requirements aided Greater Orleans as its percentage of Louisiana’s voters increased from 23.3 percent to 32.1 percent. Both because of the inclusion of slaves in the basis for senate representation and a cap on the number of senators from New Orleans, the section’s fraction of the seats persisted in lagging slightly behind its proportions of white and total population and voters. North Louisiana benefitted from: the liberalization of suffrage, population growth, and the use of total population as the senate’s apportionment method. The section’s
proportion of the legislature grew from 17.9 percent in 1840 to 26.7 percent in 1850.

In 1852, the electorate approved another constitution which again changed the method of apportionment in the Louisiana legislature. Both houses would be apportioned according to total population with each parish guaranteed a representative in the lower house. The distribution of seats in the 1860 legislature corresponded to the total population figures of the 1860 census and also closely paralleled the number of voters in each region. Using this method, North Louisiana replaced South Louisiana as the region with the most seats. In 1830, North Louisiana had only 13.7 percent of Louisiana’s population and 13.1 percent of its voters. By 1860, the region held 33.8 percent of the population and 35.8 percent of the electorate. Apportionment reflected this growth, and North Louisianans elected 33.1 percent of the representatives in 1860. South Louisiana elected 31.2 percent of the legislators which equaled its percentage of the voters and slightly exceeded its proportion of the total population. Greater Orleans’s white population still surpassed its share of the total population, voters, and legislators, and the Florida Parishes continued to straggle behind in all areas.

The sections of the state not only struggled against each other for seats during apportionment debates, but also competed to have men from their regions nominated for elective offices. Prior to the development of organized parties, several prominent regional candidates would oppose one another at elections. After parties formed and backed a single nominee for office, partisan devotion
overshadowed competing regional claims. Following nominating conventions, partisans stressed party loyalty over any other claims of allegiance. In 1845, a candidate for lieutenant governor articulated this partisan sentiment declaring that "he who would let his feeling of personal attachment influence more than his regard for his party. is not...a true Whig." "True" Democrats shared this party-first attitude, and by the end of the antebellum era, Louisianans lived in what a West Baton Rouge newspaper derisively termed as "An Age of Party Spirit." Most Louisianans would agree with this description but would probably disagree with the editor's negative attitude toward the development of parties.¹

The nomination and election process changed substantially during the antebellum period. The Creole majority at the 1812 constitutional convention placed state elections in a three day period in July in order to keep Louisiana elections separate from national contests which were held in November and to reduce the power of the American vote. Fleeing from diseases such as cholera and yellow fever, many Americans left their Louisiana homes during the summer months, particularly if they resided in New Orleans. In contrast, Creoles, who were believed to be resistant to disease, remained in the state year-round, and thus July elections would help them maintain control of the state. Addressing the difficulty of keeping people in the state for July elections, the Whig party in 1840 passed a resolution imploring "every true whig" to "remain in his parish or district until

¹Opelousas St. Landry Whig, August 21, 1845 (first quote); West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, May 3, 1856 (second quote).

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after the July elections. and return before November next [for a presidential election]." 15

Ultimately, both of the Creole framers' goals succumbed to the pressures of Jacksonian democracy. By the middle of the 1830s, Louisianans had become enmeshed in the national party system with Whigs and Democrats replacing Americans and Creoles as the main divisions in the state. The migration of Americans from other states also eventually overcame any Creole stratagems to maintain power. These newcomers, along with many native Louisianans, objected to the lack of democracy in the 1812 charter. Although Creoles had made amendment of the 1812 constitution difficult, after years of trying, detractors of the instrument in 1844 succeeded in calling a constitutional convention. The resulting document, the Constitution of 1845, articulated the transformations in Louisiana's political climate. The charter provided for periodic redistricting of both houses to reflect changes in population, and all subsequent state elections were moved to a single day in November to coincide with national contests. 16

With the development of political parties in Louisiana, the nominating process changed. In the 1820s, prior to the maturation of Louisiana's political parties, prominent men, or more likely a group of men, sent letters to newspapers suggesting nominees for office. A field of perhaps ten to fifteen men would be whittled down by private

15 Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 55-9; Baton Rouge Gazette, May 30. 1840 (quote).

16 Constitutions of the State of Louisiana, 36-9.
agreements or candidates withdrawing from the field because they believed that they could not win. Stubbornness and overly optimistic reports from friends unwilling to transmit bad news usually kept too many men in the race. Also, competitors might encourage a weak opponent to stay in the field if they felt that this aspirant would take votes from a chief rival. This irregular process did not easily allow for the reduction of the field and contributed to the multiplicity of candidates receiving votes in early elections. ¹⁷

Once parties became involved in the nominating process, it became more organized, and party conventions—state, district, and parish—formally nominated men for office. Describing the selection of candidates in 1836, the New Orleans Bee declared, "Some system of [party] discipline had now become absolutely essential for the welfare of democracy." By 1855, a Morehouse Parish Know Nothing could observe without surprise that "The Democrats have nominated everything from constable up." An acceptance of party nominations ultimately became a dependence upon them. For instance, despite pleas for non-partisanship, the election of delegates to constitutional conventions and to the judiciary became partisan because no other effective apparatus existed. Election post mortems demonstrate this emphasis on partisan organization. After losses or at the start of campaigns, partisan newspapers would stress that only a want of organization had prevented the victory of their candidates in the last election. This

¹⁷Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 74. Five men received votes in the 1824 gubernatorial election: 4 in 1828; and 4 in 1830.
lament inevitably would be accompanied by pleas for better organization in forthcoming contests.¹⁵

Even after parties developed, the initial step in campaigns remained the same. In the months, or sometimes more than a year, prior to an election, partisan newspapers or parish meetings would suggest men for office—usually a prominent partisan from the region that the newspaper served. Sometimes candidates preferred to have their name placed in front of the people as early as possible to dissuade other aspirants. Other hopefuls, though equally desirous of office, preferred to have their names held back hoping that the people would draft them as candidates. As more aspirants entered the field, debate would begin over where and when to hold a nominating convention. Parties generally chose to hold their gubernatorial conventions in Baton Rouge because of its central location, because many delegates distrusted New Orleans, and because, after 1847, it served as Louisiana’s capital. The site for congressional nominating conventions proved a much greater source of friction and could on occasion lead to two conventions of the same party meeting on different dates in different parishes.¹⁹

¹⁵New Orleans Bee, October 21, 1835 (first quote); J.D. Richardson to John Liddell, September 4, 1855, Liddell Family Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Louisiana State University (Hereinafter, LLMVC); For want of organization see William F. Weeks to John Moore, August 8, 1844, David Weeks Papers, LLMVC: New Orleans Louisiana Courier, July 11, 1840; and New Orleans Bee, October 9, 1851. Hereinafter all newspapers from New Orleans unless otherwise noted.

¹⁹For example, prior to the Democrats’ 1855 gubernatorial convention northern Louisiana interior parishes suggested Congressman John Sandidge of Caddo Parish, the northern Louisiana river parishes called for W.S. Parham of Madison Parish, the Florida Parishes urged Robert C. Wickliffe
The method of selecting parish delegates to a state or district convention varied depending on party organization within a parish and the perceived importance of an election. On one hand, sometimes parishes would send no delegates to a convention or would designate its legislators as delegates or grant their votes by proxy to another parish's delegation. On the other hand, some parishes practiced the democracy that all Louisiana politicians preached. These more organized parishes might even go to the extent of having ward meetings or holding ward elections to select men to the parish convention. The men elected to the parish convention would in turn vote for delegates to the district or state convention and possibly instruct them on which candidate to support there.

The operation of state and district conventions varied as well. In some years, a single candidate, especially a congressman running for re-election, would stand out and receive a unanimous vote on the first ballot. Or, perhaps party leaders would have worked out an agreement prior to the convention and only one name would be put forward. In other years, heated debate would ensue over how to allot votes to each parish and several ballots would be necessary in order to agree on a nominee. Usually after one person had received a majority of the votes, one more vote would be taken to make the choice.

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of West Feliciana Parish, and southwestern Louisiana championed former Governor Alexander Mouton of Lafayette Parish—Baton Rouge Democratic Advocate, April, May 1855; For a candidate’s desire to be nominated but not have "exclusive ground" taken for him prior to the convention see Isaac Johnson to John F.H. Claiborne, May 18, 1845, Claiborne Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS.

20Bee, August 6, 1851.
unanimous. On occasion, congressional nominating conventions would adjourn without making a nomination and reschedule a convention for later in the year. This occurrence could arise when delegates either had no specific instructions on whom to support or when they feared to deviate from instructions they had received. In these cases, parish conventions would reconvene in order to provide their delegates with further instructions before the convention met again.²

The conventions themselves represented a combination of dictation and democracy. Behind the scenes "wire-pulling" could reduce the field to a single candidate prior to the convention or could secure an aspirant enough votes that the delegates did not really have a choice. The opposing party and occasionally disgruntled members of the party itself made allegations such as this Whig editor's description of an 1852 Democratic convention: "Matters were 'cut and dried' and decided 'in chambers' before the meeting assembled."²² In contrast, other evidence such as the number of votes taken or the close nature of the selection indicate a more democratic process. Normally, parties printed fairly short synopses of their conventions in partisan newspapers. In 1845, however, St. Landry

²¹At the 1855 Democratic state convention, five men's names were put forward for governor. Robert Wickliffe won the nomination on the first ballot but with only 52.1 percent of the 215 votes. Eight men received votes for attorney general, and three ballots were necessary to nominate a superintendent of public education, Louisiana Courier, June 22, 1855. Other conventions see Clinton Louisianaan, February 2, 1838; Bee, March 10. 1841. For delegates not deviating from instructions in congressional nominating convention see John Ellis to Tom Ellis, August 20. 1855, Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC.

²²Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, May 22. 1852.
Parish Whigs, in an effort to refute charges that a few influential men had controlled the nominating process, published a more detailed version of their parish convention. The Whigs' report showed that representatives from each of the parish's twelve wards had cast votes for two senators, five representatives, one sheriff, and one parish clerk. Five men received votes for senate, twelve for the state house, and two each for sheriff and clerk. With each ward representing approximately seventy of St. Landry Parish's Whigs, this case demonstrates the level of democracy which could be achieved in conventions.  

After their nominations, Louisiana candidates began the arduous process of canvassing their districts. The lack of an adequate transportation network made campaigning difficult, but the demands of the voters made it necessary. From 1822 to 1860, the number of Louisianans eligible to vote increased from less than ten thousand to more than fifty thousand. To reach this expanded electorate, campaigning became more essential and more organized. Even in 1824, however, a concerned friend counseled an aspirant to the legislature, "I think it is advisable that you should visit the citizens of Bouef Prairie. Dear Creek, & Bayou Mason [precincts of his parish] prior to the election." Campaigning would be imperative since his opponent had already "taken the rounds." In 1840, the Bee hoped that the Whig state convention would only select candidates "who will mingle freely with the people...take the stump, traverse the different sections of

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Opelousas St. Landry Whig, August 28, 1845.
the state." adding that "this policy has every thing to recommend it." 14

By the 1840s and the 1850s, the willingness to campaign was an assumed condition of receiving a nomination. A Whig congressional convention required that its nominee pledge "to canvass the whole District. Parish by Parish. and cabin by cabin. and to use all honorable means to ensure his triumphant election." In 1852, a Whig newspaper declared. "It is by practice made absolutely necessary that the State should be thoroughly canvassed in order to ensure that success which is within our reach." A transplanted New Englander found the extent of campaigning worth commenting upon: "In political contests it is usual for men here who are prominent or well acquainted with the subject to take the stump...This practice of stump speaking is pursued even by the parish candidates for every office." Realizing the necessity of an active canvass, candidates whose personal or pecuniary interests prevented them from taking to the stump declined party nominations. To alleviate some of the financial burdens of campaigns, parties would solicit contributions from wealthy members to help sustain their nominee in the field. 15

14 G.W. Lovelace to James G. Taliaferro, June 5, 1824, James G. Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Bee, February 29, 1840 (second quote); For the importance of campaigning even in the 1820s see Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 76; Samuel C. Hyde, Jr.. Pistols and Politics: The Dilemma of Democracy in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1810–1899 (Baton Rouge, 1996), 62.

15 Daily Tropic, February 29, 1844 (first quote); West Baton Rouge Capitolian Vis-a-Vis, September 1, 1852 (second quote); T.V. Davis to Alonzo Snyder and T. Scott, April 24, 1844, Snyder Papers, LLMVC; F.M. Kent to Moody Kent, February 19, 1857, Kent Family Papers, LLMVC (third quote); For declinations because could not campaign see Maunsel White to David Shephen, March 27, 1849, Maunsel White Papers, Southern Historical
After party conventions, nominees and their fellow partisans went to great extremes to present their message to the voters. In his 1846 reelection bid, Isaac Morse, a Democratic congressman from Louisiana’s Fourth District, which stretched from the Arkansas border to the Gulf of Mexico, rode his pony over twelve hundred miles during a six-week tour of his district. Relatives and friends often worried about the toll that this travelling took on candidates. One nominee’s son wrote to his sister. "I am not sorry that [father] declined. It will save him a great deal of disagreeable riding and annoyance.”

Another candidate’s son worried of the "animosities and heart burners" that campaigning inflicted upon his father. Many candidates shared their relatives’ distaste for the strain of canvassing. In 1844, succumbing from hunger and claiming to be almost too weary to pick up his pen and write a letter, a Whig nominee for the constitutional convention considered withdrawing "from a laborious and thankless duty" but his friends persuaded him not to desert the party.²⁶

²⁶Isaac Morse Diary in Edward C. Morse, Blood of an Englishmen (Abilene, Texas, 1943) 118-9; Worries about illness see A.M. Lobdell to Lewis Stirling, June 3, 1838, Lewis Stirling Papers, LLMVC; Richard E. Butler to Anna Butler, June 10, 1844. Anna and Sarah Butler Correspondence. LLMVC (first quote); Robert Brashear to Fanny Brashear, August 20, 1836, Brashear-Lawrence Papers, SHC (second quote); Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliaferro, June 17, 1844, Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC (third quote).
Politicians often adopted ambitious speaking schedules. During his six-week journey in 1846, Morse and his adversary made at least one speech each day and sometimes two or more. In the weeks preceding the 1856 presidential election, a Know Nothing spoke at ten locations in three parishes over thirteen days. During the midst of the 1860 presidential campaign, the West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter published the correspondence among adherents of the three presidential candidates. Their letters are enlightening because the men disagreed not on the necessity of debating repeatedly before the people but only on the specific dates, places, and speaking arrangements. Canvassing seven parishes, the Breckinridge elector wanted to speak seventeen times in less than four weeks. Unable to keep this specific appointment schedule, the Bell proponent made a counter offer to debate nineteen times in twenty-six days. The Bell man published this correspondence in an effort to refute accusations that he had refused to appear before the people. Instead, he simply could not keep the other speaker's schedule but did wish to bring the people his message.

Generally, partisans' appointments consisted of speaking before the community for several hours. The candidates, however, did not rely solely on their oratorical skills and issue-oriented messages to attract crowds. Inevitably, the local party organized a barbecue to accompany campaign speeches. These rallies served a social as well as a political function. In sparsely settled sections of the state,

Broadside (1856), Ellis Papers, LLMVC; Morse, Blood of an Englishman, 118–9; West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, September 27, 1860.
barbecues provided not only an opportunity to meet candidates but to spend a day visiting with neighbors and seldom seen friends. Steamboats often brought loyalists from other parishes to add to the excitement. Most importantly, the parties treated those in attendance to free food and alcohol. In the twentieth century, a Baton Rouge resident recollecting the excitement of these gatherings wrote of the days of food preparation and added that at the event, "liquor was abundant and fully indulged in" and consequently a barbecue without a few fights [was] a dull affair indeed.\footnote{John McGrath Scrapbook, newspaper clipping from New Orleans \textit{State-Times}, December 3, 1920 (quote), LLMVC; For steamboat for $3 see A.F. Rightor to Andrew McCollam, June 28, 1852, Andrew McCollam Papers, SHC.}

Not only did the attendees receive free food and drink, but also the events provided an opportunity to mingle with the opposite sex. Barbecue announcements often included specific invitations to women, and frequently seats were reserved for them. Prior to political gatherings, women often cooked or made partisan banners. At the event, they joined men in listening to hours of speeches and, on rare occasions, addressed the gatherings. Orators praised women's devotion to their cause, and parties, especially the Whigs, claimed to have the support of a majority of Louisiana's women. To add to the social aspect of rallies, in many cases, dances followed the speeches and eating. While women most likely attended these barbecues with their male relatives, a Democratic diarist recounts his wife and her best friend going to a barbecue while he remained home.\footnote{Emile Watts to Neppie, October 8, 1852, William S. Hamilton Papers, LLMVC; Edwin A. Davis, ed., \textit{Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana, 1836-1844 as Reflected in the Diary of Bennet H. Barrow} (New}
Many Louisiana women took an active interest in political campaigns beyond their attendance at rallies. In 1846, Madaline Edwards wrote a poem for the Native American which urged women to "Be up electioneering." Despite women being denied access to the ballot. Edwards claimed that women could and should influence men's votes. Women closely followed politics. They read political newspapers, gambled on elections, discussed political topics, and referred to themselves as partisans. In the weeks preceding the 1838 election, a woman exclaimed, "I don't hear a word besides the election of our governor." Women’s letters also expressed preferences such as, "If my wish could control the election [Zachary Taylor] would be president." Living with President Taylor's family in Washington, Anna Butler anxiously awaited the returns from Louisiana's state elections and she attended Congress at every opportunity. Another woman accurately analyzed the importance of campaigning. "I think the election of a candidate," she argued, "does not depend on his merit or abilities but on his skill in electioneering."30

Many male politicians corresponded with their female relatives. In addition to discussing family topics, these letters also addressed political matters. Some women did more than read letters from men describing political events—they wrote back offering their opinions.

York. 1943), November 1, 1844, 342-3.

30 Dell Upton, ed., Madaline: Love and Survival in Antebellum New Orleans (Athens, Ga., 1994) (first quote); Rosella Parker to unknown, July 2, 1838, Brashear-Lawrence Papers, SHC (second quote); Sarah Gibson to Mrs. George L. Guion, November 1848, Gibson and Humphrey Papers, SHC (third quote); Anna Butler to Robert Butler, November 1849 to April 1850, Butler Family Papers, LLMVC; Eliza Taylor to Louisa Millard, July 7, 1844, Miles Taylor Papers, LLMVC (fourth quote).
Writing to her brother in 1828, Caroline Bell provided prescient political appraisal of state and national elections. She analyzed how ethnicity, bloc voting, the connection between state and national issues, and election day chicanery affected the outcome of both the gubernatorial and presidential races in Louisiana. In 1852, Mary Moore, the wife of a congressman, not only reported the content of several newspaper editorials regarding her husband's actions in Congress but also took the opportunity to render her judgment. Although the newspapers approved of Congressman Moore's performance, his wife criticized him for occupying "the very same ground [his] late congressional opponent took."

In the days following barbecues, partisan newspapers recorded the number of women and men in attendance. They spared no hyperbole in describing the events. On almost every occasion their own party's gatherings had the largest crowds ever seen in the parish or the state. Announced attendance figures gave the impression that a parish's entire population had turned out. Possibly, the greatest of all the state's antebellum gatherings took place during the 1844 presidential campaign when the Whigs claimed twelve thousand people, including two thousand women, attended a rally in Baton Rouge. In contrast, partisans portrayed their opponents' functions as suffering from disappointing attendance, and often added that even those few

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1 Carline Bell to Edward G.W. Butler, August 3, November 7, 1828, Butler Papers, HNO; Mary Moore to John Moore, May 13, 1852, Weeks Papers, LLMVC (quote).

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people present either had come only out of curiosity or were not eligible voters.\footnote{Bee, October 3, 1844; For party comparisons see Henry Marston, Diary, 1856. A supporter of Millard Fillmore's presidential aspirations. Marston records three to four thousand at a pro-Fillmore, Jackson barbecue, September 13, 1856; five to seven thousand at a pro-Fillmore, Baton Rouge torchlight procession, October 1, 1856; only one thousand ("Considered it a complete failing") at a Democratic barbecue which ended when a man was killed in a fight, October 8, 1856, Marston Papers, LLMVC. A.F. Pugh, Diary. A Breckinridge advocate, Pugh admits that a pro-John Bell meeting had a "fair sized meeting" but it was composed of "the lowest dregs of society," August 1, 1860, LLMVC.}

In trying to spark the electorate's interest, the parties did not limit themselves to barbecues. In 1844, a Democrat asserted, that his party was "reluc[t]ant to omit any means that may conduce to the success of our cause." and this message could apply to Louisiana parties throughout the antebellum era. Torchlight processions, parades, booming cannons, campaign songs, and the formation of countless clubs stimulated the populace. Especially in New Orleans, elaborate parades often accompanied by fireworks drew large crowds. Local party members also competed in pole raisings, such as in 1852, when Democrats in Alexandria built a 117 foot pole, only to have the competing Whig pole exceed it by 24 feet. While rarely openly encouraged by candidates and illegal during most of the period, gambling on elections also aroused interest in campaigns. Newspapers carried lists of possible bets based on the majority a candidate would obtain in Louisiana or the nation. A typical campaign tactic involved
asserting that one's opponents had boldly predicted victory but then refused to accept bets.\textsuperscript{13}

Regardless of the ambitious nature of a candidate's speaking schedule, he could not reach every voter in his district. Thus, in an attempt to have their message conveyed to the entire electorate, office-seekers did not limit themselves to speeches. Parties flooded Louisiana with pamphlets and circulars during campaign season hoping to get documents into every voter's hands. A Congressman described his mornings as running about Washington attending to his constituents' interests and his evenings as writing and sending documents to them. In 1844, the Whigs even tried to obtain complete voter lists in order to conduct a direct mail campaign in the remote areas in northern Louisiana. In 1851, the New Orleans \textit{Bee} called upon ward organizers to "learn the name, residence, and opinion of every voter," and to "stir up and arouse the lukewarm." Partisan newspapers printed extra editions and often included lengthy addresses from either the party or the candidate himself.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} J.Y. Daishel to Alonzo Snyder, April 24, 1844, Snyder Papers, LLMVC (quote); Alexandria pole raising in P.H. Deffenworth to James E. Elam, September 29, 1852, James Elam Letterbook, LLMVC; Baton Rouge pole raising see John W.P. McGimsey to Polk, September 27, 1844, LC; For betting on elections see John Smith to John Moore, November 19, 1851, LLMVC; M. Watson to Henry Marston, September 25, 1860, Marston Papers; Vidalia \textit{Concordia Intelligencer}, December 23, 1847 claims that of 40 men indicted for betting—38 had their cases postponed and the other 2 were acquitted.

\textsuperscript{14} L. Knox to John Perkins, June 6, 1855, Perkins Papers, SHC; Roland Jones to Anne N. Jones, January 25, 1854 in J.W. Cadenhead, Jr., ed., "The Correspondence of Congressman and Mrs. Roland Jones, between Shreveport, Louisiana and Washington, D.C. (December 1853—September 1854)" \textit{North Louisiana Historical Association Journal VI} (Winter 1975), 47; J.J. Sanford to James G. Taliaferro, May 7, August 19, 1844, Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC; \textit{Bee}, October 9, 1851 (quote).
Newspapers provided the lifeblood of antebellum Louisiana's parties and campaigns. In 1850 the state possessed thirty-four political newspapers which printed over eight million copies annually. By 1860 the number of political newspapers had doubled to sixty-eight. Outside New Orleans, and in the later period Baton Rouge, most newspapers were four-page weeklies almost exclusively devoted to politics. They included announcements of candidates, meetings, barbecues, and parades. Afterwards, they printed the proceedings of party meetings and the platforms of party conventions. During campaign season, prominent politicians used their columns to publish letters to their constituents. Editors pulled no punches in dealing with their adversaries, and the barbs hurled during a heated campaign season often led to duels. In 1843 in one of the most notorious examples, the editor of the Whig Baton Rouge Gazette mocked the courage of a Democratic congressman-elect. Insults were exchanged, and ultimately the two men resorted to a duel where the editor died from shotgun wounds.35

Election day culminated the campaign process. Prior to 1845, election day was actually three days beginning the first Monday in July. The 1845 constitution moved elections to a single day in November. Throughout the antebellum period, Louisianans selected congressmen, the entire house of representatives, and one-half the senate every two years. Each fourth year, they also voted for governor. Parish judges and election commissioners selected the

35Seventh Census, 1850, 487; Eighth Census, 1860, 321; Baton Rouge Gazette, August 12, 26, 1843.
number and location of polling places in a parish. Parties usually provided voters with ballots and often transported them to the polls where they submitted their ballot to poll commissioners. Commissioners matched the voter's name against a list of eligible voters, and if the name did not appear, the voter could produce a tax receipt or swear an oath attesting to his eligibility.  

Not limited to the campaign trail, the social aspects of politics continued on election day. Candidates and their allies often provided voters with free food and drink. This treating not only brought men to the polls but hopefully influenced their votes. Though illegal, this method of bribery was widely practiced and mostly tolerated. After the 1844 presidential election, a Whig complained that a reverend had persuaded drunken men to continue drinking "with the hope probably that with the utter loss of reason they might be caused to vote for [James K.] Polk." Following election day in the 1846 gubernatorial contest, a New Orleans laborer solemnly recorded in his diary, "attended the General elections...enjoyed myself very well and Rather to[o] Merrily for a man of my circumstances...I am hereby resolved to drink no ardent Spirits."  

Election day corruption was not limited to purchasing liquor for voters. Other charges included providing fraudulent tax receipts, starting false rumors about the presence of yellow fever, or printing bogus ballots to trick careless or illiterate voters. Charges and

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37 Henry W. Huntington to James G. Taliaferro, November 7, 1844, Taliaferro Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Walter Nichol, diary. January 19, 1846. SHC (second quote).
countercharges of fraud accompanied the results of many close elections in Louisiana with the presidential election of 1844 the most infamous example. In 1844 John Slidell, in what came to be known as the Plaquemines Frauds, transported immigrant voters from New Orleans to Plaquemines Parish. Their votes provided the margin of victory in Louisiana for James K. Polk over Henry Clay. Slidell’s tactics were a variation on a process so common that it had a name—colonizing. Colonizing consisted of a party in the week proceeding an election, recruiting the purchasable voters in a parish with promises of free meals and liquor. The "colonists" would be taken to a remote area and guarded until they could be led to the polls on election day. In close races, the votes of these twenty to thirty purchasable men could make a difference.\(^38\)

Historians have disagreed both on the number of Louisianans who had the right to vote and on the proportion that actually went to the polls on election day. All women, blacks, and children were excluded from the electorate as were many white males. Roger Shugg, the first historian to examine suffrage in the state, tried to prove that ante bellum Louisiana was an aristocracy of slaveholders. In his Marxist-influenced study Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, Shugg contends that the 1812 constitution barred two-thirds of Louisiana freemen from the polls, while actually 42.2 percent could vote in 1820.

\(^38\) Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 77; For Democrats alleging Whig corruption in 1844 see James G. Bryce to James K. Polk, November 15, 1844; Felix Bosworth to Polk, November 6, 1844, James McFarlane to Polk, November 11, 1844, Polk Papers, LC; For Whigs charging Democrats in same contest see Andre B. Roman to Henry Clay, December 2, 1844, Clay Papers, LC; For good descriptions of "colonizing" see Baton Rouge Weekly Morning Comet, November 2, 1856; McGrath Scrapbook, p. 33, LLMVC.
and 44.3 percent in the 1830. Outside Greater Orleans a higher
fraction of the population owned property, and 55.9 percent of adult
white males could vote in 1830. Shugg correctly disputes the idea
that the 1845 constitution provided for universal white male suffrage.
But, his claim that residency requirements "left the franchise in the
hands of two-fifths the adult freemen" is highly exaggerated. In
fact, 58.5 percent of adult white males could vote in 1850. Again,
outside Greater Orleans, where residency requirements had their
greatest impact, suffrage was more extensive, and 81.6 percent of
adult white men could vote.39 (TABLE 5.6)

Most historians of the period have correctly disagreed with
Shugg's assertions about voter eligibility, but they have
underestimated the turnout at Louisiana's elections. Turnout is
simply the ratio between the votes cast at a given election and the
total number of voters. While Shugg underestimated the size of the
electorate, most scholars of antebellum Louisiana politics have
overestimated it and compounded their error by miscounting the number
of ballots cast. Derek L.A. Hackett has persuasively demonstrated
that historians, while realizing Shugg's mistakes, have erroneously
contended that the number of voters in Louisiana equalled the number
of white males who were at least twenty-one years old. This
definition ignores the constitutional restrictions on voting which

39Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 122. 130 (quote).
TABLE 5.6

Voter Eligibility and Turnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White Males Over 18</th>
<th>Voters</th>
<th>Percent Eligible</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Estimated Turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>FLORIDA 3627</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>1372</td>
<td>67.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NORTH LA 3476</td>
<td>1520</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ORLEANS 8587</td>
<td>1817</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>1278</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOUTH LA 5572</td>
<td>3620</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>3138</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21262</strong></td>
<td><strong>8979</strong></td>
<td><strong>6560</strong></td>
<td><strong>73.1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>FLORIDA 3912</td>
<td>2222</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>1842</td>
<td>82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NORTH LA 3735</td>
<td>1748</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>1159</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ORLEANS 9471</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>1611</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOUTH LA 8842</td>
<td>5250</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>3698</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25960</strong></td>
<td><strong>11508</strong></td>
<td><strong>8310</strong></td>
<td><strong>72.2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>FLORIDA 5766</td>
<td>4111</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>4042</td>
<td>98.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NORTH LA 13801</td>
<td>11367</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>9881</td>
<td>86.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ORLEANS 39867</td>
<td>15165</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>12217</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOUTH LA 14643</td>
<td>12423</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>9762</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>73597</strong></td>
<td><strong>43065</strong></td>
<td><strong>35902</strong></td>
<td><strong>83.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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(TABLE 5.6 cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1860</th>
<th>1860 ESTIMATED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOTERS</td>
<td>VOTES</td>
<td>TURNOUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLORIDA</td>
<td>4644</td>
<td>4948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH LA</td>
<td>17945</td>
<td>18655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORLEANS</td>
<td>11859</td>
<td>13181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH LA</td>
<td>15626</td>
<td>13425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50074</td>
<td>50209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

include a tax-paying requirement (tantamount to property ownership) and residency restrictions.  

Though Hackett accurately addresses the problem of exaggerating the number of eligible voters, he undercounts the number of votes cast in five of the six elections between 1834 and 1842 because he relies on incomplete returns. In some elections, the results in the official journals of the legislature omit parishes that did not turn their vote counts into the secretary of state in time to be published. In the cases when parish vote totals are not extant, one cannot assume that no one in the parish voted in that election, but instead estimates of the votes should be included or eligible voters from that parish should be removed from computations of turnout. In 1840, the presidential election returns omit four parishes, but New Orleans newspapers indicated that each of them held elections. Hackett asserts that 77.5 percent of Louisiana's electorate participated.

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48 Derek L.A. Hackett, "'Vote Early! Beware of Fraud!' A Note on Voter Turnout in Presidential and Gubernatorial Elections in Louisiana, 1828-1844," Louisiana Studies XIV (Summer 1975), 179-88. Despite Hackett's work, historians continue to assert mistakenly that turnout in Louisiana was extremely low. For example Samuel C. Hyde claims a 39.4 percent turnout in 1840 and 43.0 percent in 1844, while the actual percentages nearly doubled these figures, Hyde, Pistols and Politics, 47-8.

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When the four missing parishes are included this figure increases to 82.5 percent.4

Louisiana's antebellum turnout, when adjusted for voting constraints and the absence of official returns, was actually high throughout the period and rose in almost every decade. According to the 1829 census of voters, 11,508 Louisianans possessed the franchise. The following year, in a governor's race, 8,310 (72.2 percent) exercised this right. The Florida Parishes had the highest turnout with 82.9 percent of the region's eligible voters casting ballots. In 1840, after the excitement of the Log Cabin and Hard Cider campaign, approximately 20,211 (82.4 percent) of the estimated 24,500 Louisianans eligible to vote went to the polls on election day. and again the Florida Parishes led the way with a turnout exceeding 80 percent.

In the spirit of Jacksonian democracy, the 1845 constitution removed property requirements for voting, and by 1850 Louisiana had 43,065 eligible voters. Turnout remained high. In the 1852 presidential election, 83.4 percent of the electorate cast ballots, and every region had a turnout of over 75 percent. Turnout remained highest in the Florida Parishes where over 95 percent of the voters exercised their suffrage right. According to the 1858 census of electors, Louisiana's electorate had increased to 50,036 people. One year later, when Democrat Thomas Overton Moore defeated an Opposition party candidate in Louisiana's least-competitive antebellum election, turnout dipped but only slightly to 82 percent. With the excitement

4Louisiana Courier, November 12, 1844; Bee, November 12, 1844.
of the 1860 presidential election, however, the electorate returned to the polls in record numbers with 50,509 Louisianans casting ballots, which exceeded the number of eligible voters in 1858.

Intensive campaigning over extensive areas and high turnout at elections contributes to a portrait of a democratic antebellum Louisiana. An examination of the slaveholdings, wealth, and occupations of the men that Louisianans elected to the state legislature, however, provides a different perspective. Though many Louisianans participated in the electoral process, elective positions were reserved for the select few. Property qualifications limited access to these posts prior to the writing of the 1845 constitution. After the ratification of the 1845 charter, property requirements for office-holding were eliminated. Yet, throughout the antebellum period, the electorate continued to elect to the statehouse a group that one European visitor characterized as "a very respectable class of men."42

The census did not begin to record the value of property holdings until 1850, but despite the absence of precise figures, the wealth of men who served in earlier years can be estimated. First, in order to meet requirements, all legislators had to hold property worth five hundred dollars to be elected to the House and one thousand dollars to be elected to the Senate. More importantly, the census did include an important barometer of wealth in the antebellum South—slaveholdings. In 1830, fifty-seven of the sixty-seven legislators

could be located in the census. Of these, only two did not own slaves. Twenty-nine (43.3 percent) owned between one and nineteen slaves. Twenty-six (45.6 percent) owned twenty or more with fifteen of these men having more than fifty slaves. An examination of the fifty-six members of the 1840 legislature who can be found in the census uncovers an even greater concentration of wealth. While the number of members without slaves increased from two to five, twenty-nine legislators (51.8 percent) owned more than twenty slaves. Ten of these men held more than 100 slaves. In 1830 and 1840, as suggested by its higher property requirements, the state Senate contained a higher percentage of large slaveholders than the House. In these two legislatures, only one of the thirty-one senators owned no slaves, while fifteen (48.4 percent) held fifty or more bondspeople. (TABLE 5.7)

The 1850 census began to list the real wealth of heads of households, and the 1860 census added a listing for personal property. In his study of antebellum southern legislators, Ralph Wooster finds that 49.4 percent of the members of the 1850 Louisiana legislature possessed at least five thousand dollars in real property, and in 1860, 68 percent did. In addition to their real property, 67 percent of the members owned at least five thousand dollars worth of personal property in 1860. Louisianans persisted in electing slaveholders, particularly owners of large slaveholdings, to office.4 In 1856.

4Ralph A. Wooster, The People in Power: Courthouse and Statehouse in the Lower South, 1850-1860 (Knoxville, 1969), 137; Wooster provides data on slaveholding in the 1850 and 1860 legislature but his placement of all members he could not find in the census in the no slave category undermines the usefulness of his charts. For instance, Wooster did not
TABLE 5.7
Slaveholding in the Legislature

1830 Legislature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Slaves</th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-49</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1840 Legislature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Slaves</th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1861 Secession Convention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Slaves</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-49</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

find any information (birthplace, occupation, age, etc.) on thirty-six legislators in 1850 yet assumes that these men owned no slaves.
twenty men who owned more than fifty slaves attended the session, and in 1860 seventeen of these large planters participated in the legislature. Wealthy planters had their greatest role at the 1861 secession convention. The mean slaveholding of the delegates exceeded sixty per person with forty members owning more than fifty and half of those owning more than one hundred slaves.44

With so many of Louisiana’s antebellum legislators owning slaves, the preponderance of planters and farmers in the state capitol is not astonishing. In 1827, the New Orleans Argus published a list of occupations represented in the legislature, and it found 65.7 percent of the members engaged in agricultural pursuits. In later sessions, planters did not control to this extent, but they continued to occupy approximately half of the seats. This figure actually underestimates their true influence since it only includes the occupation recorded in the census. Many legislators who listed their profession as lawyer or merchant undoubtedly engaged in large-scale agricultural operations as well. For example, the list of planters excludes such men as R.C. Downes, a representative in the 1856 legislature from Iberville Parish who appeared in the 1860 census as a lawyer but who owned seventy-eight slaves, and Zebulon Pike, a member


45While in historical scholarship the term planter connotes a person with twenty or more slaves and farmer a person owning fewer than twenty, it appears that census workers and legislators often used these terms synonymously. Therefore, I have grouped them together in my examination of the legislature.
of the secession convention from Concordia Parish, who is also listed as a lawyer despite owning sixty-seven slaves who produced 435 bales of cotton in 1860.46 (TABLE 5.8)

Like planters, lawyers also had a significant presence in the capitol. Approximately 20 to 25 percent of all legislators considered themselves primarily lawyers, but as with planters, this figure undoubtedly excludes men who listed themselves as planters or farmers but also practiced law. Perhaps because of the important legal issues involved, lawyers had a greater than usual presence at the secession convention where they occupied 32.3 percent of the seats. In the 1830s a traveller described the members as "principally planters and lawyers." and this description could have applied throughout the antebellum era. Their combined total was a majority in both houses in each of the legislatures examined, and they dominated the Senate. In each legislature analyzed, at least seventy-five percent of the senators were lawyers or planters, and in 1827 only the presence of two doctors prevented them from holding every seat in that body.47

With lawyers and planters occupying as much as seventy to eighty percent of the seats in the legislature, no other profession had a notable presence, though generally five percent of the legislators listed their occupation as doctor and another five percent as merchant. One of the most noticeable transformations during the antebellum period involved an increase in the number of members who

46Argus quoted in Baton Rouge Gazette, March 3, 1827; 1856 data from William F. Foster, Statistical Chart of the 44th Session of the Louisiana Legislature (New Orleans, 1856), W.W. Pugh and Family Papers, LLMVC.

47Featherstonaugh, Excursion through the Slave States, 1:265 (quote).
### TABLE 5.8

Occupations of Legislators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planters</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planters</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>4.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planters</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Doctors</td>
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<td>5.8</td>
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<td>Merchant</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Legislators who listed two occupations are included in both categories. Men who grew large quantities of staple crops, but who did not list an occupation are included with planters.
TABLE 5.8 cont.

1861 Secession Convention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planters</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were neither planters, lawyers, doctors, nor merchants. In 1827, the legislature did not include men of any other occupations. In the legislatures of 1850, 1860, and the 1861 secession convention, however, between ten and twenty percent of the members listed other professions. The elimination of property requirements for office-holding in the 1845 constitution probably helped elevate such men as an engraver, a carpenter, a brick mason, a cooper, a blacksmith, and a ferryman to the statehouse in 1850. In the House, the percentage of men from other occupations exceeded fifteen percent in 1860 and twenty percent in 1850, while it remained much lower in the more prestigious state senate.

Just as planting remained the most common career among legislators throughout the antebellum period, Louisiana remained their most common birthplace. In 1827, thirty-four of the sixty-six legislators were native sons. Though this percentage declined, Louisianans always made up the largest group in the capitol. That their highest proportion occurred in 1827 is not surprising. First, in that year the Creole-American split still overshadowed party politics, and many men campaigned, and others voted, with birthplace...
as an important consideration. Second, the growing influence of North Louisiana in the state capitol tended to reduce the percentage of Louisiana-born legislators as the period progressed. From 1830 to 1860, North Louisiana's proportion of seats increased from 17.9 percent to 33.1 percent. This region contained the state's largest percentage of residents born outside of Louisiana but within the United States. Thus, as North Louisiana's proportion grew, so did the number of legislators born in the South but not in Louisiana. From 1827 to 1860, the proportion of members born in the South outside of Louisiana increased from 19.7 percent to 39.8 percent.\(^5^9\) (TABLE 5.9)

The northern states and the border states each supplied about ten percent of Louisiana's legislators. The foreign-born membership fluctuated. In 1827, 12.1 percent of the legislators were born outside of the United States, reflecting both Louisiana's French heritage and the presence of refugees from Santo Domingo. In the mid-1850s, at the height of the anti-immigrant fervor created by the Know Nothing party, no foreign-born members sat in the House and only two in the Senate, and both of these had been elected in 1853. By 1860 and 1861, after the Know Nothing party had disappeared and the power of the anti-immigrant message had dissipated, this percentage had increased slightly with five naturalized citizens serving in the 1860 legislature and nine in the 1861 secession convention.\(^5^9\)

\(^49\) The South includes the states which seceded from the Union. The border states include the slave states which did not secede and Washington, D.C.; Seventh Census, 1850, 488.

\(^5^9\) For a foreigner realizing the impossibility of winning a race in 1855 see John Kingsbury Elgee to James Robb, June 14, 1855, James Robb Papers, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection.
TABLE 5.9

Birthplace of Legislators

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<th>Percent</th>
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<th></th>
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<td>Foreign</td>
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<td>5.1</td>
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</table>
Conclusive data regarding legislators' age and marital status are unavailable for much of the period. Throughout the antebellum era, members of the lower house only had to be twenty-one years old, but until the 1852 constitution removed age restrictions, state senators had to be at least twenty-seven. Apparently, most legislators had no trouble meeting these age requirements. In 1850, 1856, and 1860, the median age of members of each house was approximately forty with senators slightly older than representatives in each year. And, in each case, less than fifteen percent of the legislators were below the age of thirty. Marital status is less available, but in a survey of men serving in the capitol in 1856, 67.7 percent listed themselves as married, 28.8 percent as single, and 3.4 percent as widowers.\[^1\]

Thus, the typical Louisiana legislator was a married forty-year old planter or a lawyer. He owned slaves and had been born in the South, probably within Louisiana's borders. His profession and wealth stood him apart from the rest of his community. The elite status of

\[^1\] For median age in 1850 (39 in house, 42 in senate) and 1860 (41 in house, 43 in senate) see Wooster, *Politics and Power*, 19: For 1856 (37 in house, 40 in senate) see Foster, *Statistical Chart of the...Louisiana Legislature*. LLMVC.
members of the legislature raises the question of how these men continued to have a dominating presence after the onset of Jacksonian democracy—the introduction of universal white male suffrage and the reduction of office-holding requirements. There is an easy explanation. Whether because of deference or because the affluent have more time and money to devote to politics or because they have greater name recognition. American voters have continually elected prominent members of their community to public office. So, in that sense, the above-average wealth and social status of Louisiana's antebellum legislators seems more typical than extraordinary.

Also, both the willingness of candidates to campaign and the intensity of these campaigns demonstrates that prominent men did not rely on their wealth and stature to achieve office. Instead, a successful candidate would meet and treat the voters and would make every effort to portray himself as one of the people. The Commercial Bulletin acknowledged that "the democratic form of the government gives a consequence to the meanest citizen, about the time of the election." With candidates generally wealthier than those whose votes they solicited, stump speaking and treating served as a method to connect with the voters. Of course, with the relatively small number of people voting in a legislative contest, a prominent candidate probably already had contact with much of the electorate. Some voters were relatives through blood or marriage and others probably knew a candidate from business dealings or attendance at church services.52

52Commercial Bulletin, February 21, 1838 (quote).
Almost routinely, a candidate would couple his own claim as one of the people with accusations of aristocracy and snobbery against his opponent. In 1843, a congressional candidate who had retired from the canvass because of illness returned to the field to counter reports that he was "a nabob to proud to shake a poor man by the hand" and "that he hates poor people and will not permit one to live near him."

Louisiana Democrats, following the lead of their hero President Andrew Jackson, tried to establish their party as the party of the people engaged in a battle against silk-stocking Whig aristocrats. In 1849, the Democratic *Louisiana Courier* described a Whig nominee as a "rich [man] not wanting in ambition. [who] stands well with his order, the rich sugar planters of the state." Whigs did not forfeit the title of "party of the people" to the Democrats. In another campaign, the *Concordia Intelligencer* described a Whig candidate for the legislature as "a plain *bacon and greens man*" in contrast to "those aristocratic democrats who mingle with the people only during a canvass."[5]

In his 1855 novel *The Master's House*, Thomas Bangs Thorpe, a prominent Louisiana Whig who edited the *Concordia Intelligencer*, depicted this aspect of antebellum campaigns. In the novel, two candidates battle for a vacancy in the legislature: Mr. Moreton, a wealthy planter, and Duffy White, an illiterate yeoman. Recognizing the need to appear as one of the people, Moreton campaigns in an old carriage, wearing homespun clothes, and his overseer's hat. White's

supporters label their candidate "the poor man's friend" and the "pin[e]ly woods pony." They issue an extra edition of a newspaper accusing Moreton of refusing to shake hands with poor men, denying them seats at his table, and not allowing them in his presence unless they acted like slaves. Moreton attempts to combat the effect of these charges by treating the voters to liquor, barbecued beef, and biscuits on election day. Accurately portraying the solicitation of votes, Thorpe's novel departs from the reality of antebellum campaigns when the voters select White, the actual common man, and not Moreton, the upper class man parading as a commoner, to the legislature.54

Wealthy legislators did not rely solely on claims of attachment to the voters to gain office. In this era of Jacksonian democracy, Louisiana politicians practiced the democracy that they preached, and they continually allocated more power to the people. From 1824 to 1861, politicians expanded both the size of the electorate and the number of elective positions. In 1824, only property-owners possessed the right to vote, and even this group's power was circumscribed. These men directly elected only legislators and congressmen and expressed a preference for governor. The legislature chose the governor from the two candidates with the highest vote totals and cast the state's vote for president. The governor possessed vast patronage powers, and he appointed almost all of the other state officers from secretary of state to judges to parish sheriffs. By 1861, the onset of Jacksonian democracy had revolutionized the situation in Louisiana. An enlarged electorate included all white males who met a minimal

residency requirement. This broader electorate had broader powers. Voters now chose the governor directly and selected Louisiana’s presidential electors as well. Additionally, many offices which had been appointed by the governor now were elective including sheriffs, the attorney general, the state treasurer, and even judges.55

Additionally, the tax structure of Louisiana undoubtedly contributed to the legislators’ ability to maintain the support of the voters. Prior to 1848, Louisiana taxes were low, and planters and professionals paid the bulk of them. The state collected approximately fifty thousand dollars per year in property taxes. Each parish had a quota with Orleans Parish responsible for about thirty percent of this total. Other than the property tax, the rest of the tax rates affected only the most wealthy of Louisianans or those involved in commerce. Slaveholders paid one dollar per slave regardless of the slave’s age or value. Cows and horses were taxed but with owners of twenty-five or fewer cows and ten or fewer horses exempt, small farmers did not have to pay a levy for their animals. A luxury tax was also placed on the ownership of carriages, billiard tables, and stock in corporations. Professionals such as doctors, lawyers, merchants, retailers, tavern owners, peddlars, brokers, and auctioneers paid yearly licensing fees. A tax on gambling establishments and lotteries also contributed a significant sum to the state.56

55Tregle, Louisiana in the Age of Jackson, 57.


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All of these taxes did not add up to a tremendous sum of money. In 1833, the treasurer predicted total revenue of $307,000. With approximately 110,000 slaves in the state, the one dollar per slave levy proved the largest source of state income (35.8 percent). The $50,000 property tax represented 16.2 percent of total revenue but amounted to only $5.56 per white Louisianan. and this small levy was the only tax that many Louisianaans paid. Taxes on professions and on corporate stock contributed another $50,000 to the state. Gambling added to Louisiana's coffers with gaming licenses providing $53,000 to the government. Duties on auction sales amounted to another $30,000 in income with the remaining $14,000 split among various other sources.\(^57\) (TABLE 5.10)

Obviously, with the government receiving only a minimal revenue in the 1820s and 1830s, it did not spend much money either. In 1833, the state treasurer predicted expenses of $284,000 with most of this sum allocated to keeping the government functioning. The executive department budget, which included governmental salaries and the expenses of collecting taxes, accounted for $101,001 (35.6 percent), and $40,000 (14.1 percent) was slated to cover the operating costs of the legislature. Expenditures for schools, hospitals, and asylums amounted to another $87,000 (30.6 percent). The only other significant budget item, payments relating to the prosecution of criminals, was estimated to be $35,000 (12.3 percent).\(^58\)


\(^{58}\) ibid.
In 1848, Louisiana simplified its tax code. Now all property, including land, slaves, animals, carriages, and stocks in corporations, would be taxed at an ad valorem rate. Thus, instead of allocating property tax quotas to each parish and counting the number of slaves and horses, assessors would ascertain the total value of property owned and assign a tax based on this amount. This process seemingly made the tax system uniform and less progressive, but it continued to tax most Louisianans only insignificantly. In 1852, the

**TABLE 5.10**

Revenues and Expenditures

1833

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<th>REVENUES</th>
<th>EXPENSES</th>
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<td>Slave taxes</td>
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<td>Gaming licenses</td>
<td>53,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14,000</td>
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<td><strong>$307,000</strong></td>
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1858

<table>
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<th>REVENUES</th>
<th>EXPENSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amount</strong></td>
<td><strong>Percent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slave taxes</td>
<td>$440,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property taxes</td>
<td>730,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licenses</td>
<td>240,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swampland sales</td>
<td>355,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank loan</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>435,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>$2,500,000</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ad valorem rate was $1.10 per $1,000 of property and by 1856 it had only increased to $1.67 per $1,000. The tax burden did grow as Louisiana’s legislature, in an effort to improve the state’s deficient school system, instituted a poll tax of $1 on every white male twenty-one years or older and then a one percent mill tax. To develop public works, the legislature in the 1850s instituted another .25 percent mill tax with the proceeds earmarked for the state’s internal improvement fund. Certain professions and the owners of hotels, taverns, theaters, warehouses, and businesses also continued to have to pay a yearly licensing fee.5

Because of the state’s commitment to the development of schools and internal improvements, the tax burden of all Louisianans rose. By 1859, the state’s tax receipts had increased to over $2.5 million in taxes (more than eight times the 1833 amount), which equalled just over seven dollars per white person ($3.60 per total population). Possessing both valuable slaves and valuable land, slaveholders paid the greatest sums. For example, the 1,384 white residents of North Louisiana’s Concordia Parish, who owned 10,990 slaves, paid $42,733.25 in taxes or $30.88 per white person. In contrast, the white population of the same region’s Winn Parish which numbered 4,314 and owned 1,008 slaves paid only $4,379.20 in taxes or $1.02 per white person. Though not possessing a high concentration of slaves, Orleans Parish because its residents possessed expensive property and businesses also contributed a significant sum to the state. With only

36.3 percent of Louisiana's white population, the parish paid 40.2 percent of the taxes and 67.5 percent of the professional fees. 

An examination of the $2.5 million in revenue received by the Louisiana government in 1858 demonstrates the changes in Louisiana's tax system. Some sources were similar to 1833 budget. The tax on property excluding slaves contributed the largest proportion of revenue $730,000 (29.2 percent). The slave tax produced another $440,000 (17.6 percent) and licensing fees $240,000 (9.6 percent). Other significant revenue sources in 1858 did not exist twenty-five years earlier. Sales of swampland provided $355,000 (14.2 percent) and a bank loan that nearly equaled the entire 1833 budget furnished the state with another $300,000 (12 percent). 

Louisiana's expenditures reflected the state's dedication to schools and internal improvements. Whereas expenses associated with the legislature and salaries of public officials had been the largest budget items in the 1840s, by 1858, they occupied just 14.3 percent of the budget. This change did not mean that the amount of money spent on these administrative functions had decreased. Their totals had increased from $141,000 to $350,000, but their growth did not match the ballooning budget. Total expenditures expanded from $284,000 in 1833 to $2.4 million in 1858. Not appearing in the 1833 budget, internal improvements, including both aid to railroads and allocations for levees totalled $820,000 (33.4 percent) in the 1858 budget.

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61 ibid.
Education occupied the second largest expenditure, accounting for $5,000 (23.2 percent). The only other state expense which represented over five percent of the budget also tied to internal improvements. Interest on state bonds which had been issued to finance these projects accounted for about six percent of the expenditures.\footnote{\textit{ibid.}}

The tax structure, both before and after the ad valorem rate, demonstrates that the Louisiana legislature responded to its constituents. Although the tax burden increased during the period, it remained low for most Louisianans with the wealthy, especially slaveholders, continuing to bear the brunt of it. In 1852, the electorate expressed its desire to have better schools and a better transportation network by electing a Whig majority to the constitutional convention and then ratifying its work. Democrats controlled every subsequent legislature, but with the electorate having spoken, they continued to pledge Louisiana's tax dollars to institute the Whig program. Especially prior to the 1848 change to the ad valorem rate, slaveholders paid the majority of taxes. The one dollar levy per slave contributed the largest portion of Louisiana's revenue, even before their real estate and luxuries were taxed. After the institution of the ad valorem rate, the tax on slaves continued to represent one-half the property tax revenue outside of Orleans Parish.

Roger Shugg's study of suffrage and representation in antebellum Louisiana begins by claiming that "slaveholding Louisiana never pretended to be a democratic state" and concludes that "Louisiana was, \footnote{\textit{ibid.}}
truth to tell, a slave state policed by gentlemen, and the masses having no real voice in the government received from it no benefit.” Shugg entitles his chapter, “Government by Gentlemen,” and his title is literally accurate as Louisiana voters throughout the antebellum period elected prominent men to office. The chapter’s assertions that these men neglected the people and that the people did not have a voice in the government, however, cannot be sustained. The expansion of suffrage, the increase in the number of elective positions, the removal of restrictions for ascending to these posts, vigorous campaigning, and high turnout on election day demonstrate that Louisiana’s governing bodies, its political parties, and most importantly, its people did more than pay lip-service to the ideals of democracy.6

Between 1824 and 1861, the ideals of Jacksonian democracy triumphed in Louisiana. Whether Democrats, Whigs, or Know Nothings, party leaders stressed the importance of individual voters and committed themselves and their parties to getting their message to each one of them. At their best, parties not only provided voters with information, but also gave them a role at nominating conventions and a choice on election day. The onset of Jacksonian democracy did not cause deference and dictation to disappear. At their worst, political parties could thwart democracy. Leaders could rig nominating conventions, and purchasable voters could change results on election day. Overall, however, the development of parties, the

6Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 121-56; quotes on pp. 121 and 156.
writing of new constitutions, the regional breakdown of votes, the
apportionment of the legislature, the stress on the necessity of
campaigning, and the conduct of legislators demonstrates that during
the antebellum period Louisianans discarded most of the aristocratic
ideas of the 1812 constitution and embraced the tenets of Jacksonian
democracy.
CHAPTER SIX
THE RISE AND FALL OF THE LOUISIANA KNOW NOTHING PARTY. 1852-1856

The years following the passage of the 1852 constitution would witness many significant changes in Louisiana politics. The state's Whig party, which had appeared to be riding a wave of success, suddenly collapsed. A combination of the national Whig party's weakness and agreement on the Whig program of activist government in Louisiana contributed to the party's disappearance. In Louisiana and the rest of the United States, the Know Nothing party soon filled the role of chief opponent to the Democracy. This party capitalized on a rise of anti-immigrant sentiment. In Louisiana, the Know Nothings won several local races in 1854, narrowly lost the state's governorship in 1855, and fell just short of capturing the state's electoral votes for their presidential candidate in 1856. Like the Whigs, however, the national Know Nothing party could not hold together. And, as quickly as the party had arisen, it vanished almost as rapidly. Even after its national collapse, the Know Nothing party remained in control of New Orleans politics, but by 1857, the Democratic party dominated the rest of Louisiana.

Both the national Whig and Know Nothing parties disappeared because their northern and southern wings could not forge an agreement on the most important political topic of the 1850s--slavery. Prior to the 1850s, conflict over slavery had appeared in Louisiana political debate with partisans in presidential campaigns almost ritualistically accusing their enemies of being tainted by abolitionism. Slavery and abolitionism had always been one of several competing issues in political campaigns. Louisiana politicians combined discussion about
slavery with debates over tariffs, government’s role in the economy.
republicanism, ethnicity, and the extent of democracy. In the mid-
1850s, however, most of these subjects faded from political exchanges.
and slavery became the sole topic of political debate. Tension
between northerners and southerners contributed to the emergence of
the antislavery Republican party and led Louisianans to address
seriously for the first time the subject of secession from the Union.

In the aftermath of Franklin Pierce’s victory and the passage of
the state constitution on November 2, 1852, Louisiana politicians
entered upon their final campaign of 1852. Under the new
constitution, a full slate of state officers including a governor, a
lieutenant governor, and one hundred and twenty-nine legislators would
be elected on December 27. Both parties placed a positive spin on the
November results. The Democrats focused on their overwhelming success
in the presidential race, and the Louisiana Courier proudly quoted the
New York Tribune’s assertion that "the whig party [is] not merely
DISCOMFITED but ANNIHILATED," adding that Whig partisans "talk about
the re-organization of the whig party! Why, the whig party is dead!"
Despite the national rout of General Scott, many Louisiana Whigs
remained optimistic. Whig journals stressed that party members should
accent the great Whig constitutional victory not Scott’s defeat. Whig
newspapers urged, "Exult then in your triumph—you have a Constitution
which will soon go into operation" and reassured their readers that "the Whig party is at this day as strong as ever."!

Louisiana's Whig party faced two apparently contradictory difficulties: (1) the weakness of its national organization, and (2) its success at the state level. With Scott's resounding defeat, some questioned the national Whig party's viability, especially in the southern states. Throughout the South, including Louisiana, political parties presented themselves as the best defenders of slavery in the national arena. Winfield Scott's perceived unsoundness on the slavery question was a primary explanation for his disastrous performance in the region. While the Whig party's traditional appeals may have worked better in Louisiana than elsewhere in the South, Louisiana Whigs were as sensitive to the slavery issue as their sectional allies. They, too, feared that Free-Soilers had corrupted the northern wing of their party making it unreliable on the slavery issue. Aware that their fellow southerners had rebuked Scott and the Whig party as unsound regarding slavery, the state's Whig leaders realized that they faced an uphill battle to convince the rank-and-file to continue to rally around the name "Whig."

Unfortunately for Louisiana Whigs, the decline of the national Whig party occurred simultaneously with the disappearance of many prominent differences between the two parties at the state level. During the preceding two years, Whigs had used their advocacy of

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1New Orleans Louisiana Courier, November 30, 1852 (first quote); Baton Rouge Gazette, November 6, 1852 (second quote); New Orleans Bee, November 30, 1852 (third quote). (Hereinafter all newspapers from New Orleans unless otherwise specified.)
constitutional change to differentiate themselves from Democrats within the state, but this option was no longer available to them. Writing three years after the campaign, independent New Orleans politician Charles Gayarré asserted that in December 1852 the Whigs and Democrats "looked like twin brothers struggling for the love of...'popularity.'" Discussing the host of state constitutional revisions in this period, Michael Holt argues that this situation "was a classic case where political parties benefitted much more from the conflict over an issue than from its peaceful resolution." In Louisiana, this "peaceful resolution" occurred when the Democrats accepted the 1852 constitution and joined the Whigs in promoting a more activist government.¹

The Whigs' first opportunity to demonstrate that their party still possessed political vigor and differed from the Democrats came at the state nominating convention on November 29. The president of the convention declared that the Whigs were "a party which although apparently conquered was never subdued." Yet, despite his optimism, problems immediately surfaced. Twenty-six of Louisiana's forty-eight parishes, mainly from the northern regions, sent no delegates. The difficulties continued as the three most prominent candidates for governor declined consideration. Congressman John Moore instructed his proponents to withhold his name from consideration, and later an ally congratulated Moore on his failure to obtain the nomination. Another Whig celebrated his "narrow escape" from receiving the party's

nomination as lieutenant governor. The convention instead selected an
unspectacular but loyal partisan, state auditor Louis Bordelon, for
governor and nominated John Ray for lieutenant governor.¹

In contrast, the Democratic gathering two days later proceeded
smoothly. The party had stressed the importance of the country
parishes sending delegates, and as a result only six parishes had no
representation. Additionally, although in the months preceding the
convention as many as eighteen names had been put forward for
governor, by the time of the party gathering, the delegates no longer
divided on their choice.⁴ On the first ballot, they overwhelmingly
selected sugar planter Paul Hebert as the party’s gubernatorial
nominee. The nomination of Hebert was a brilliant political stroke.
Hebert had served as a state official, graduated first in his class at
West Point, fought in the Mexican War, acted a delegate to the 1852
constitutional convention, and possessed the additional benefit of
being of mixed Creole and American heritage. At the constitutional
convention, Hebert had signed the document but had voted against the
unpopular total population clause, which counted slaves for

¹Official Proceedings of the Whig convention in Bee, December 3,
1852; B. H. Payne to John Moore, December 11, 1852, W. F. Weeks to Moore,
January 4, 1853, David Weeks Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi
Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Louisiana State University
(Hereinafter LLMVC); F. D. Richardson to Moses Liddell, December 24, 1852,
Moses and St. John R. Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC (quote).

⁴For party organization see Solomon W. Downs to Alonzo Snyder,
November 20, 1852, Alonzo Snyder Papers, LLMVC; for multitude of
candidates see W. Wilson Matthews to Henry Lyons, August 26, 1852, Henry
Lyons Papers, LLMVC; McMillan to Isaac Morse, October 28, 1852, Morse
Family Papers, Library of Congress (Hereinafter LC); John Perkins to
Charles Gayarré, January 20, 1853, in Charles C. Jones, Autograph Letters
and Portraits of the Signers of the Constitution of the Confederate
States (Augusta, 1884).
representative purposes. Hebert argued against the measure, asserting that "the only true democratic basis of Representation" was the number of qualified electors. Also, learning from their mistake of November 1851, the Democrats issued a forceful party platform declaring that they stood in favor of free banking, internal improvements, public education, and amendment of the total population basis of representation. As the *Daily Delta* observed, the Democrats had "reversed positions with the Whigs. They have at last awoke to the necessity of laying down a platform of State Reform."

At the same time, the Whigs, who in the November 1851 elections had used a pro-Compromise of 1850 and strong pro-convention platform to catapult them to a large legislative majority, forgot this lesson and declined to define their program in 1852. While the *Bee* argued that "the Whigs established their platform two years ago, when locofocoism was afraid to open its lips," a more logical reason for the absence of a platform lay in party disagreement over the total population clause. If the party were to present a platform, it would have to take a stand on the constitution and thus, at least implicitly, on this constitutional issue. In some parts of the state, especially New Orleans, a plank supporting the clause would have meant political suicide, but formal objection to a clause in a constitution

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\(^{5}\) *Journal of the Convention to Form a New Constitution for the State of Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1852), 65-66, 100 (first quote, 66); For a description of Hebert's qualifications see Paul Hebert to John F.H. Claiborne, December 7, 1852, John F.H. Claiborne Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (Hereinafter MDAH); Democratic platform in *Louisiana Courier*, December 26, 1852; *Daily Delta*, December 4 (second quote), December 15, 1852.
which the Whigs wanted to take sole credit for would have caused political embarrassment for many other Whigs.  

While sidestepping the issue of representation, the Whigs proudly claimed the rest of the constitution as their own. They asserted that the constitution was the work of a Whig-controlled convention and had been resisted by the Democrats. According to the Bee's editor, the Whig party had carried this question against the opposition of the Democratic party including its current slate of candidates. He added that a Whig electoral defeat now "would be like beginning to build a house, and not finishing it." Furthermore, addressing the Democrats' pro-constitution platform, another Whig editor contended that the Democrats were "running Whig principles into the ground." Democrat John Slidell admitted that "popular will is in favor of a cooperation on the part of the state in public improvement" and that his party would "carry it out in a proper spirit." Another Democrat took a different view of partisan congruity. Focusing on the expansion of democracy in the charter, he asserted that Whigs "have paid us the compliment to adopt our views."  

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6 Bee, December 8, 1852 (quote); Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, December 18, 1852. For an example of the problems that the total population clause caused the Whigs see West Baton Rouge Capitolian Vis-A-Vis, December 22, 1852. This Whig newspaper feebly alleged that the clause was not a Whig measure but a Democratic trick just to get the constitution rejected. Every New Orleans paper regardless of political allegiance opposed the total population clause during this campaign.  

7 Bee, December 6, 20, 22, 23, 1852 (quote).  

8 West Baton Rouge Capitolian Vis-A-Vis, December 8, 1852 (first quote); John Slidell to James Robb, December 3, 1852, James Robb Papers, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection (Hereinafter HNO) (second quote); W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, July 11, 1852, Pugh Family Papers, Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin
By December both Louisiana parties had come to champion an activist government, and the Baton Rouge Gazette could proclaim that Louisiana was "whig to the back bone." Ironically, while the Whigs had been the primary advocates of these measures, they suffered more from this convergence of views. The Whigs had used these issues to revitalize their party after passage of the 1845 constitution and to suppress all talk of forming a Union party in 1850. But, as the measures lost their salience, the Whig party lost some of its vigorous backing, particularly in New Orleans. The city's delegation to the constitutional convention, including twenty-six Whigs and only one Democrat, demonstrated its strong support for the Whig program in July. By December, however, the Whigs could no longer use the same measures to distinguish between their party and the Democrats. But, the Democratic party had found a point on which to differentiate itself from the Whig party—formal opposition to the total population clause. 9

Having worked so hard for the passage of the constitution, many New Orleans Whigs wished to retire from the political scene and reap the benefits of their labors. The difficulties that the Whigs had in finding candidates in New Orleans where "it is asking a great deal of a man of business to absent himself during the busiest period of the year" illustrate this change in attitude. Not only did the party in 1852 have to settle for its fourth choice as gubernatorial candidate, but also three of its four New Orleans senate nominees and one of

(Hereinafter UT) (third quote).

9Baton Rouge Gazette, December 25, 1852.
their replacements declined their nominations. The Bee's editor declared, "it is no easy matter to find four capable gentlemen willing...to surrender the claims of their business avocations in the behests of party." James Robb, who had served as a Whig in the previous state senate, now viewed his political work as complete. Considered "first, last, and always a banker," Robb wanted to return to his business interests. After being assured by Slidell that his prospective Democratic opponent would support the new constitution, Robb rejected his Whig renomination for the senate.

The difficulty in finding men to accept a nomination for state office was not limited to the senate or to the Whig party. In an article entitled "The City of Declinations," the independent Daily Delta reported, "at least half the gentlemen who were originally nominated [in New Orleans] have declined." The Democrats, however, did not suffer as much as the Whigs did from this problem, for not only did they have fewer refusals, but also they handled their difficulties with greater political acumen. By discovering a man's interest in holding office before nominating him, the Democrats did not suffer the Whigs' ignominy of having to change their mastheads repeatedly when their formal nominees rejected the offer. In addition, the declinations hurt the Whig party more than the Democrats because of the political climate in which they occurred. At a time

10Daily Delta, December 7, 1852 (first quote); Bee, November 26, 1852 (second quote), December 3, 1852.

11Harry H. Evans, "James Robb, Banker and Pioneer Railroad Builder of Antebellum Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, (January 1940) XXIII, 243 (quote); John Slidell to James Robb, December 3, 1852, Robb Papers, HNO.
when the national Whig party was seen as teetering on the verge of collapse. Louisiana Whigs could not afford the presence of any sign that they were going to join this trend. In the state campaign, the party was attempting to do everything in its power to show both its members and its opponents that it still possessed political viability.

The results of the December 27 election confirmed the Whigs' worst nightmares as "Locofocoism...triumphed to its heart's content." Paul Hebert defeated Louis Bordelon in the race for governor, and, likewise, the Democrats triumphed in the battle for the other five statewide elective positions. Hebert captured fifty-three percent of the votes and won three of the Louisiana's four regions, only losing a close race in traditionally pro-Whig South Louisiana. Though Bordelon performed competitively, the legislative results devastated the Whigs. Their representation in the state legislature fell from between fifty-five and sixty percent to thirty-eight percent. Since the appearance of the Whig party in the mid-1830s, neither party had ever been reduced to such a minority presence in the state capitol. (SEE APPENDIX B)

The outcome in New Orleans provides the key to understanding the Whig defeat. Greater Orleans had cast only 4,244 of its 9,751 votes

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12 *Daily Delta*, December 7, December 16, 1852 (quote). For a Whig declination outside New Orleans see G. F. Connely to Andrew McCollam, December 14, 1852, Andrew McCollam Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (Hereinafter SHC)

13 *Franklin Planters' Banner*, February 17, 1853 (quote); Estimates of the Democrats' legislative majority appear in *Louisiana Courier*, January 6, 11, 1853; *Daily Delta*, January 6, 12, 1853.
in the governor's race. 43.3 percent, for Whig Louis Bordelon. The city's support of the Democratic party stands out even more when its legislative delegation is examined. With the Democrats capturing all four senate seats and nineteen of the parish's twenty-seven representatives, the Bee lamented that "the loss in New Orleans [was] too great to be overcome by our gains in the interior." This Democratic victory stands in stark contrast to preceding Whig triumphs in the city. In previous gubernatorial and presidential elections, the Whigs had only once before received less than 48.8 percent of the vote in New Orleans. In the preceding legislature, three of the city's four senators were Whigs as were eighteen of the city's twenty-five representatives. In 1852, the Whigs had swept the municipal elections and had overwhelmingly controlled the city's delegation to the constitutional convention. And, in November, the city had favored the adoption of the Whig constitution—5,463 to 3,832, and even Scott had performed respectably in the city garnering 49.4 percent of the vote.¹⁴

The Plaquemine Southern Sentinel commented, "It would take a man with a wise head to account correctly for the political vagaries of New Orleans." The Whigs' problems in New Orleans, however, were not so mysterious and were evident as early as the municipal elections of March 1852 when the Independent Reform Movement appeared. The actions of this group demonstrated that partisan attachments in the city, especially among Whigs, were not solidly fixed. Scott's defeat in the

¹⁴Bee, December 29, 1852, January 5, 1853 (quote). In 1846, the Whig gubernatorial nominee had received 46.1 percent of the vote.
presidential election reinforced the idea that men in New Orleans had lost some of their enthusiasm for the Whig party. Additionally, the Whigs' effort to win immigrant support alienated many of the party's traditional supporters. Furthermore, the Democrats' use of the total population issue especially hurt the Whigs in Orleans Parish which would suffer more than any other from its enactment. In 1850, the parish contained 39.8 percent of the state's white population but only 25.2 percent of its total population. The *Louisiana Courier* 's unceasing efforts to remind voters of this disparity and the avowal of Democrats to remove the total population clause helped ensure a solid Democratic turnout, which contrasted sharply with Whig apathy.15

The newspapers offered a broad spectrum of reactions to the Whig defeat. Comparison to the Whig national disaster in November could not be avoided, and, according to one Whig stalwart, "Nothing else could be expected so soon after the election of General Pierce." A partisan editor lamented,

> Similar to the sweeping current of destruction which swallowed up the Whigs on the 2nd of November last throughout nearly the entire country, is the flood which submerged them in the State. undoubtedly, on Monday last.

The Democratic *Louisiana Courier* concurred that the people had punished the Whigs for "their alliance with Sewardism in the national contest." The collapse of the Whig party throughout the nation left many Louisiana Whigs with the impression that the party was dead and this perception contributed to their reluctance to campaign actively.

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in December. Trying to put a more positive spin on the results, some Whigs insisted that the Democrats had won only by adopting Whig principles. The Baton Rouge Gazette chose to take this optimistic approach when assessing the Democratic victors. "so long as they will support that portion of their platform.[internal improvements and banks]...we are satisfied, believing as we do that a rose will smell as sweet by any other name."16

The Democrats' performance in the 1853 legislative session did not disappoint many Whigs. Possibly realizing that any alternative apportionment method would anger some portion of the state, enough Democrats objected to the repeal of the total population clause of the constitution to prevent any change in the measure. Also, a majority of Democrats united with the Whigs to forestall an effort to nullify Judah P. Benjamin's 1852 election to the United States Senate. Some Democrats had argued that, according to the constitution, the 1853 not the 1852 legislature possessed the right to elect a senator. With the Democrats now in the majority, this new senator would be a member of their party, but the party split over the expediency of this attempt. One legislator asserted it would place his party in "a disreputable position" but worried enough about his apparent agreement with the Whigs to have his speech published for his constituents. Others

16 W.F. Weeks to John Moore, January 4, 1853, Weeks Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, January 1, 1853 (second quote); Louisiana Courier, January 11, 1853 (third quote); Baton Rouge Gazette, January 1, 1853 (fourth quote).
probably feared the precedent that overturning the election of a senator would set for future legislatures, and the attempt failed."

More important than their refusal to overthrow Benjamin's election, the Democrats' enactment of an activist government program satisfied many Whigs. Although, prior to its ratification, a Democrat had expressed the fear that the Whig framers of the 1852 constitution "wanted banks to steal the money of the people, and...railroads to run away with it." the legislators did not act upon this apprehension. The state had not chartered a bank in sixteen years, but the 1853 legislature passed a general banking law which led to the creation of seven banks between 1853 and 1857. These banks more than doubled the state's banking capital. Democrats and Whigs alike advocated banking bills with the index of disagreement between the two parties on banking topics falling from 69.9 percent in 1850 to 40.3 percent in 1853. A country Whig newspaper expressed its satisfaction with the free banking laws, and a year later a Whig editor voiced his delight that the banking question had "swallowed up the support of both parties!"

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"William H. Adams, The Whig Party of Louisiana (Lafayette, La., 1973), 249-50; Speech of Mr. Wickliffe in the Senate of Louisiana...on a Joint Resolution to go into the Election for a Senator... (New Orleans, 1853), 3 (quote); Leslie M. Norton, "A History of the Whig Party in Louisiana," (Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1940), 357.

"Daily Delta, October 24, 1852 (first quote); George D. Green, Finance and Economic Development in the Old South: Louisiana Banking, 1804-1861 (Stanford, 1972), 23-27; Data for index of disagreement from Kirk Pilkington, "Interparty Conflict in the Louisiana House of Representatives, 1848-1854," (Unpublished seminar paper, University of Virginia, 1978), 27; Franklin Planters' Banner, May 5, 1853; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, February 11, 1854 (second quote)."
The Democratic party proved equally generous in its support of railroads. Like banks, railroads had suffered from the restrictive provisions of the 1845 constitution, and in 1852 Louisiana actually had less miles of track in use than ten years earlier. In 1853, however, legislators from New Orleans and the country parishes joined together to grant charters and to give state aid to railroads. The 1853 legislature inaugurated an era of railroad expansion in Louisiana which saw the state's railroad mileage quadruple over the rest of the decade. Its members pledged $3.8 million of state aid to four projects, though because of restrictive conditions the state actually only paid the railroads one-half this amount. Votes in the legislature on the three most important railroad projects indicate an index of partisan disagreement of only 17.9 percent. The combination of virtually unanimous Whig backing, and solid pro-railroad sentiment among Democrats made for easy passage as each railroad received at least 84.2 percent of the legislators' support.¹⁹

The action of prominent Democrats further demonstrates the bipartisan nature of Louisiana's commitment to state support of internal improvements. In 1846, James D.B. DeBow, a New Orleans Democrat and editor of the commercial journal De Bow's Review, spoke out against "the public crib" being pillaged by "the ruinous system of

pledging public faith for works more properly belonging to individual enterprise." By the end of 1852. DeBow had done an about-face and sounded Whiggish in asserting "with all the liberal appropriations by states in aid of railroads. I know of no instance in which the public weal or credit has suffered." Also, Democratic party leader John Slidell tried to help the state's railroad movement. In 1853, he joined the state's foremost railroad promoter, Whig James Robb, on an unsuccessful trip to England to obtain European buyers for Louisiana railroad bonds.

While Slidell may have enjoyed a harmonious relationship with some prominent Whigs, he had enemies within his own party. The tension between Slidell and Pierre Soulé, which had begun when the latter won the 1848 Senate contest and persisted as each championed a different contender for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1852, continued to divide the party. Slidell maintained that the Democrats' December victory was a triumph for Slidell-Democrats but a defeat for the Soulé faction which had "strenuously exerted [itself] to defeat two of our Senatorial ticket." Slidell confidently added that in a Democratic legislative caucus, he would out-poll Soulé "at least five to one." When President Pierce offered Slidell a Central American mission, Slidell shrewdly declined it because he realized the value of remaining in Louisiana. Senator Soulé, however, found the

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20 De Bow's Review, (May 1846) I, 436 (first quote), (May 1852) X, 498 (second quote); John Slidell to James Buchanan, May 27 and June 28, 1853, James Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Hereinafter HSP); Louis Sears, John Slidell (Durham, NC, 1925), 101-4.
offer of a post in Spain too attractive to pass up and resigned his Senate seat to accept the office.\footnote{John Slidell to William Marcy, March 10, 1853, William L. Marcy Papers, in Sears, \textit{John Slidell}, 99 (first quote); Slidell to James Buchanan, December 31, 1852 (second quote), February 13, March 30, 1853, Buchanan Papers, HSP.}

Slidell saw Soulé's resignation as an unexpected opportunity, and immediately set his sights on obtaining the vacated Senate seat. With the Democrats having an overwhelmingly majority in the legislature, the victor in the Democratic caucus would assuredly win the post. Perhaps realizing his mistake in providing his rival with such a fortuitous chance, Soulé attempted to defeat Slidell. Denying stories that he and Slidell had arranged Slidell's succession to his seat, Soulé declared in a New Orleans newspaper that "I am not, and cannot be, in favor of his election." In a transparent effort to challenge Slidell, Soulé's faction argued that the new senator should come from outside of New Orleans and suggested several names including former Senator Downs, Governor Hebert, and Lieutenant Governor W.W. Farmer. In the week prior to the caucus, Baton Rouge was rife with rumors and electioneering, and in the caucus, a bitter battle ensued. Through six ballots, Slidell and Hebert traded the lead, but then Hebert's supporters withdrew his name. Two ballots later, Slidell won the nomination, and easily defeated the Whig nominee.\footnote{W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, April 20, 1853, Pugh Family Papers, UT; George W. Morse to John Moore, April 23, 1853, Weeks Papers, LLMVC; \textit{Weekly Delta} April 24, 1853 (quote); James K. Greer, "Louisiana Politics, 1845-1861," \textit{Louisiana Historical Quarterly} (April 1930) XIII, 72-3.}

Slidell and Soulé would battle over control of Louisiana's Democratic party for the rest of the antebellum period with the former...
generally triumphing over the latter. A transplanted New Yorker.

Slidell had amassed a fortune in New Orleans and abetted his political rise by marrying into the city's Creole elite. Born in France, Soulé achieved a nationwide reputation as a lawyer and as an orator. Though they possessed some divergent political views, their battle rested more on personality than policy. While some Democrats, including a congressman who claimed that Slidell and Soulé "have no rights to make their enmities the test of political orthodoxy," sought to remain aloof from the power struggle, most partisans found they could not avoid taking sides. Slidell welcomed opposition, for according to his philosophy a politician could not have friends without having enemies. and he realized he had "very bitter enemies & hosts of staunch friends." His adversaries referred to him as "King Slidell," "an unscrupulous demagogue," "a Dictator." "the Van Buren of southern politicians," and "a wire puller...who moves the puppets on the public stage." His friends offered a counter assessment. They called Slidell a man who "in point of ability has few equals," and the "sharpest, and most sagacious politician in the United States." Obviously, Slidell did not have to worry about lacking opponents or allies either within or without the Louisiana Democratic party.

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24 John Perkins to John F.H. Claiborne, July 14, 1854 (first quote), John Slidell to Claiborne, November 21, 1857 (second quote), Claiborne Papers, MDAH; For Slidell's early years see Sears, John Slidell, 5-23.

24 West Baton Rouge Capitolian Vis-a-Vis, November 23, 1853 (second quote); Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, April 23, 1853 (third quote); A. Oakley Hall, The Manhattener in New Orleans, (New York, 1851), 96 (fourth quote); London Times December 10, 1861 quoted in Eli Evans, Judah P. Benjamin, The Jewish Confederate (New York, 1988), 27 (fifth quote); Louisiana Courier, March 15, 1856 (sixth quote); Daily Crescent, February 7, 1856 (seventh quote), April, 20, 1856 (first quote).
If the Whigs hoped to exploit this Democratic division to return
to power, the 1853 elections disabused them of this notion. In March
1853, the Whigs suffered a tremendous defeat in the New Orleans
municipal races which had launched their early success in the previous
year. The new constitution scheduled state judicial elections for
April in an effort to separate them from partisan politics. Both
parties, however, offered tickets, and the election resulted in a
convincing Democratic triumph with Thomas Slidell, the brother of
Senator Slidell, winning the battle for Louisiana's highest judicial
post, chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court. The Democrats
also captured the four associate justice seats on the court. The
summer brought news of a Whig defeats in the rest of the country which
further disheartened the party faithful.25

At the Whig party's August convention to nominate candidates for
state treasurer, state auditor, and superintendent of public
education, efforts to regroup were thwarted as only seven of
Louisiana's forty-eight parishes sent delegates. The party had no
vitality left except in the Second Congressional District, the party's
traditional stronghold of the pro-tariff sugar parishes, which sent a
Whig to the House of Representatives in 1853. In the other three
districts, including the first where the Whigs did not nominate a
candidate, Democrats easily triumphed. Democratic candidates also
carried every state office contested, and the Whigs saw their already
small fraction of legislative seats became even smaller.26

26 ibid., 255-7.

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The congressional elections highlighted the split within the parties as much as the division between them. In the Second District, where Whigs predominated, partisans feuded over the method of voting at the nominating convention. The party divided between country and city members, with Theodore G. Hunt of the city winning the nomination after an acrimonious battle. Sectional division also entered into the Democrats' selection process in the Third District. Here, John Perkins of Carroll Parish based his claim for the nomination on the failure of the party to acknowledge the northern portion of the state. Perkins successfully argued that "it would be neither just nor sound policy for the party to nominate any one...except [someone from] North Louisiana." Perkins won the nomination, and the subsequent campaign demonstrated the Democrats' overwhelming majority in the district. While Perkins remained at home, his Whig opponent, who was better acquainted with most of the district, campaigned throughout the region. Despite the Whig's strenuous efforts, Perkins easily won the contest.

The most vitriolic intraparty dispute occurred among the Democrats of the First District. In this district, which included all of Greater Orleans except the portion of the Crescent City above Canal Street, Charles Gayarré ran an independent campaign against William

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John Moore to J. Aristide Landry, May 21, 1853, Landry to Moore, July 7, 1853, T.G. Hunt to Moore, December 16, 1853, all in Weeks Papers, LLMVC.

John Perkins to John F.H. Claiborne, May 14, 1853 (quote). October 20, 1853, Claiborne Papers, MDAH; For Whig Preston Pond's exertions see Henry Marston to James Perkins, August 28, 1853, Marston to John Buhler, September 3, 1853, Marston to George C. McWhorter, all in Henry Marston Papers, LLMVC.

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Dunbar, the regular Democratic party nominee. A lifelong Democrat.
Gayarre, a former United States senator and Louisiana secretary of
state, claimed that a John Slidell-led clique, not the voters, had
selected the obscure Dunbar. Thus, according to Gayarre, Dunbar's
nomination was not binding on the party as a whole. Dunbar's
subsequent victory did not end the battle between Gayarre and the
Democratic party but only added to the animosity. Gayarre had already
divorced himself from Soulé's wing of the party because he believed
that Soulé had stolen the Spanish mission from him. Now, Gayarre
distributed a pamphlet openly accusing Slidell's branch of the
Democracy of fraud. He expressed his surprise that the city could
cast more votes than in the preceding November despite the presence of
a devastating cholera epidemic earlier in the year. He attributed
Dunbar's victory to Democrats "spending immense sums of money" and
"multiplying five or six hundred stipendiaries...who voted as often as
it was thought proper by their chiefs." 29

Though Gayarre never specified who had illegally voted, all
readers of his pamphlet understood that immigrants provided the tools
for Slidell's schemes. Gayarre's charge automatically had credence.
Most politically-aware Louisianans were familiar with Slidell's

29 Address of Charles Gayarré to the People of the State on the Late
Frauds Perpetrated at the Election Held on the 7th November, 1853, in the
City of New Orleans (New Orleans, 1853), 8 (first quote), 13 (second
quote); For agreement on fraud charges see Samuel J. Peters, Jr., diary,
November 7, 1853, LLMC; For tension between Gayarré and Soulé see Edward
M. Socola, "Charles E.A. Gayarré, a Biography," (Ph.D. dissertation,
University of Pennsylvania, 1954), 113-126; Charles Gayarré to Evert A.
Duyckinck, November 26, 1854, in "Some Letters of Charles Etienne Gayarré
on Literature and Politics, 1854-1885." Louisiana Historical Quarterly
(April 1950) XXXIII, 225-6; and Edward G.W. Butler to John Perkins, July
22, 1855, John Perkins Papers, SHC.
complicity in the Plaquemines Frauds of 1844. when he arranged for the transport of Irish immigrants from New Orleans to Plaquemines Parish, where they cast spurious ballots. Complaining about the purchase of elections in New Orleans, a Baton Rouge newspaper asserted that "a dead foreigner is not dead. as long as his immigration papers can be found." The Bee protested the shameless corruption of the election, and the Plaquemine Southern Sentinel hyperbolically contended that the Democrats' foreign political vote "controls the political destinies of this country."

New Orleans served as a major port of entry for immigrants. In the 1830s, over 50,000 immigrants arrived in the Crescent City, and in the 1840s, this number increased to 161,657. In the first five years of the 1850s, immigration exploded with approximately 250,000 foreigners entering New Orleans. Though not all of these immigrants stayed in Louisiana, according to the 1850 census over one-quarter of the state's white population was foreign born. The immigrants were not evenly divided in the state. Almost ninety percent of them lived in Greater Orleans where over one-half the white population had emigrated to the United States. The other three regions presented a sharp contrast with over ninety percent of their population having been born in the United States. In 1850, Louisiana possessed the highest concentration of foreign born in the South. Despite

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Baton Rouge Weekly Comet, November 19, 1853 (first quote); Bee, November 9, 1853; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, December 10, 1853 (second quote).

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containing only 5.9 percent of the South's white population. Louisiana possessed 45.6 percent of the region's immigrant population.1

Perceived as unclean, drunken, criminal, and most importantly as dupes to scheming politicians, immigrants were not entirely welcome in Louisiana. The anti-immigrant diatribes of 1853 followed a long tradition of nativism in the state, and antebellum Louisiana has been called "a veritable hotbed of nativism." The opposition to immigrants in Louisiana surfaced as early as the 1830s. In the 1834 gubernatorial contest, Edward Douglass White, a man of Irish ancestry, achieved victory. In response to White's election and to a perception that he favored naturalized citizens in his appointment policy, nativists in New Orleans formed the Louisiana Native American Association which opposed the election of naturalized citizens and advocated a twenty-one year naturalization requirement. The following year, nativists established the True American, a New Orleans newspaper dedicated to their cause. In 1839, another nativist newspaper, the Native American, began publication, and a Florida parish diarist recorded, "the Native American cause appears to be on the increase." Its opponents countered with their own newspaper, the Anti-Native American. Tensions ran so high that the founder of the Louisiana Native American Association and his sons attacked the Anti-Native

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1William J. Bromwell History of Immigration to the United States. (New York, 1856); Seventh Census, 45, 61. For comparison by region within Louisiana see TABLE 1.1.
American's office with axes. The attackers were shot, but despite their wounds, they succeeded in shutting the newspaper down.\[32\]

As immigration increased in the 1840s, so did nativism. In 1841, nativists held a state convention in New Orleans. Louisiana's Senator Alexander Porter, himself a wealthy Irish sugarcane planter, complained that "the mass [of immigrants] who come are of the poorer & more ignorant classes." With this "mass of ignorance" serving as pawns for demagogues, he hoped that immigrants would be forced to wait fourteen years before receiving the right to vote. Additionally, opposition to immigrant voting contributed to Whig hostility to calling a constitutional convention which would eliminate the property-holding requirement for suffrage. At the 1845 constitutional convention, though unable to maintain the property requirement, conservative delegates succeeded in expanding the state residency requirement from one to two years, partially in an effort to limit immigrant voting.\[33\]

Throughout the decade, Whigs and Democrats accused their opponents with using fraudulent immigrant votes to win elections.


\[33\] Alexander Porter to John J. Crittenden, January 2, 1841, Crittenden Papers, LC.
These charges and countercharges culminated in the Plaquemines fraud allegations surrounding the 1844 presidential election. Illegally cast immigrant votes provided Polk's margin of victory in Louisiana, and led former Governor A.B. Roman to decry the system where "almost every foreigner who lands on our shores is manufactured into an American elector." These accusations of fraudulent immigrant voting contributed to nativists establishing a Native American party and running their own candidate, Charles Derbigny, for governor in 1846. After Derbigny finished a distant third in the balloting, receiving only 2.6 percent of the votes, the Native American party disappeared, but nativism did not.

Though immigrants generally favored the Democratic party and nativists primarily preferred the Whig party, nativism did not precisely parallel partisan lines. Both Whigs and Democrats joined nativist associations, and both parties appealed to immigrants in elections. Before Slidell organized the Plaquemines Frauds, New Orleans Whigs had skirted the election law by allowing Irish immigrants who had paid for cab licenses to vote in 1842. In the 1852 presidential election, both parties attempted to garner the immigrant vote with the Whigs making their greatest effort to shed their nativist label. To woo voters, they emphasized Scott's advocacy of granting citizenship to immigrants who joined the army. passed out

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campaign biographies in German, and stressed the conversion of Scott's daughter to Catholicism, but their appeals proved fruitless.

Although the Whig party had voluntarily forfeited its title as the nativist party in Louisiana in the 1852 campaign, the increase in hostility toward immigrants in following years appeared to provide a possible issue which the party could employ to differentiate itself from Democrats and return to power. More simply, the abandonment of nativist appeals in 1852 did not preclude a return to them later. The interaction between national and state politics must be examined to explain the inability of Louisiana Whigs to employ nativism to resurrect the party in the 1850s. The viability of political parties in the antebellum South was based upon their ability to defend the South and slavery in a national arena. The presidential election in November 1852 indicated that the Whig party had virtually ceased as an organized political force in most southern states. No longer trusting each other on the slavery issue, the southern and northern members of the Whig party began to look for other political parties.

In Louisiana the passage of the 1852 constitution marked the disappearance of the Whigs' most successful issue—advocacy of activist government—suddenly leaving the party as vulnerable in Louisiana as it was elsewhere in the South. The combination of the resolution of state issues and the weakness of the national party resulted in the sudden collapse of the Louisiana Whig party. From

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35 For Whig efforts to garner immigrant support in 1852 see Bee, August 17, 1852; Baton Rouge Gazette, October 30, 1852; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, September 11, 1852; Abner L. Duncan to John Moore, September 2, 1852, Weeks Papers, LLMVC.
control of the 1852 legislature and constitutional convention, the party quickly devolved into an uncompetitive minority unable to hold a successful statewide convention. By 1854, because of the disintegration of the national party and the Louisiana Democrats' adoption of the Whig program, even staunch partisan journals admitted that the Louisiana Whig party was dead.\(^{36}\)

With the Whig party throughout the nation moribund, nativists had to look elsewhere for a party, and the Know Nothing party soon filled the breach left by the Whigs' collapse. The Know Nothing party, also known as the American party, was a national organization dedicated to nativism and anti-Catholicism. The party blamed the nation's ills on the immigration of Catholics which had sharply increased in the 1840s and early 1850s. Its members charged that Catholics placed allegiance to the Pope over allegiance to the American government and were incapable of assimilating into the American political process. The party received the label Know Nothing because of its penchant for secrecy. When asked about the organization, its members responded, "I don't know." The order began in New York in 1853 and quickly spread to New England and then throughout the United States, including Louisiana.\(^{37}\)

\(^{36}\)Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, August 13, 1853; Bee, June 10, 1854; Adams, The Whig Party of Louisiana, 246-264.

\(^{37}\)For examinations of the national Know Nothing organization see Michael F. Holt, "The Antimasonic and Know Nothing Parties" in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., History of U.S. Political Parties (New York, 1973), 4 vols., 1:593-620; and Tyler Anbinder, Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s (New York, 1992), 20-74. The Know Nothing party also called itself the American party. For the sake of consistency, I will refer to them as the Know Nothings throughout the chapter.
Running on a platform of reform and nativism, the Know-Nothings, calling themselves the Reform Party, achieved a surprising victory in the 1854 New Orleans municipal elections in March and engaged in anti-Irish riots the following September. The party followed up on its success in the New Orleans election with victories in several races across the state in late 1854 and early 1855. Know Nothing candidates won local elections in East Feliciana, Union, Morehouse, Iberville, and St. Landry parishes. A Know Nothing also won a special election for the state legislature in East Baton Rouge Parish in November 1854. Additionally, the election of a Know Nothing candidate to the Louisiana supreme court in April 1855, demonstrated the party's growing statewide popularity.\textsuperscript{38}

In addition to anger over immigration, another element of the Know Nothings' appeal stemmed from their championship of reform. In Louisiana this issue dovetailed with the perception that the Democratic party had become an oligarchy. Many Louisianans believed that intrigue and corruption had contributed to Slidell's Senate victory in 1853, and that his money had purchased the fraudulent votes used to defeat Gayarre in his congressional race. After Gayarre's defeat, a Whig newspaper had lamented that Democracy had "descended to the oligarchy of a few," and a Democrat told Gayarre that he had voted for him because he "object[ed] to wearing the convention collar."

Complimenting his New Orleans friends on victory in the 1854 municipal elections, a Know Nothing from the Florida Parishes observed, "Where

Democracy Rules there is generally room for Reform." And, following the triumph, a Baton Rouge newspaper expressed delight that honest citizens of the Crescent City had finally broken through party corruption.\textsuperscript{39}

The portrait of the Louisiana Democratic party as an oligarchy received a further boost in 1854 when Gayarré published The School for Politics: A Dramatic Novel. Gayarré, angry with both the Soulé and Slidell wings of the Democracy, presented a satirical view of the election of a United States senator which roughly paralleled Slidell’s victory in the 1853 Senate contest. Gayarré’s depiction of scheming politicians who see political morality as "an obsolete idea" illustrates his disgust with the attitudes of Louisiana’s Democratic leaders. The politicians in The School for Politics ridicule the idea of democracy and treat the people with scorn. One aspirant declares, "the Science of politics...consists in buying or being bought, in using tools—or being used as such." Another politician describes the easiest path to victory—buying newspapers and packing party conventions. In the final scene, a character articulates Gayarré’s view of the current political situation in Louisiana: "Although our government is apparently, constitutionally, and on paper a democracy, in reality and in practice, it is an oligarchy."\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{39} Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, December 24, 1853 (first quote); James Aburton to Charles Gayarré, November 7 1853, Charles Gayarré Papers, LLMVC (second quote); Henry Marston to Payne & Harrison, March 21, 1854, Henry Marston Papers, LLMVC (third quote); West Baton Rouge Capitolian Vis-a-Vis, April 5, 19, 1854.

\textsuperscript{40} Charles Gayarré, The School for Politics: A Dramatic Novel (New York, 1854), quotes from pages 79, 121, and 124 respectively.
\end{footnotesize}
Though Gayarré publicly denied that his novel targeted any particular individuals or any political party, Louisiana readers easily identified his bulls-eye as John Slidell and the Democratic party. Referring to the 1853 congressional campaign, the Democratic Louisiana Courier claimed Gayarré’s novel represented merely the outcry of a spurned partisan. It alleged that he had "deserted and denounced [the party] when his own arrogance and vanity caused his defeat before a convention of political friends." Gayarré responded, "I have refused allegiance to a clique in the party, and not to the party itself." The distinction between Slidell and the Louisiana Democratic party, however, had disappeared, and the Bee could refer to Slidell as the "very incarnation of Democracy." Gayarré soon abandoned his charade of party loyalty and cast his lot with the Know Nothing party.41

Slidell's control of the Louisiana Democratic party encountered a test when he faced re-election to the Senate in January 1855. Slidell told a close friend that he believed his victory would be more gratifying if he remained outside of Louisiana during the contest. After his unexpected defeat in the 1848 Senate contest, Slidell had learned an important lesson and remained wary of leaving anything to chance. "Fully aware of the necessity of continued vigilance," Slidell asked John F.H. Claiborne, an editor of the Louisiana Courier.

41For denials that the novel attacked any party see ibid., 5; and Charles Gayarré to Evert A. Duyckinck, September 12, 1854, in "Some Letters of Charles Etienne Gayarré," 224; Louisiana Courier, October 4, 1854 (first quote); Charles Gayarré to the Editor of the Washington Union October 23, 1854 (New York, 1854), (second quote, p. 10); Bee, January 13, 1855 (third quote).
and James Robb, the Whig railroad promoter, to go to the statehouse in Baton Rouge to manage his campaign. Despite his expressed desire to stay in Washington, Slidell's inclination to micromanage the situation proved too great for him to overcome. Prior to the election, he returned to New Orleans, so that he could make it to Baton Rouge in less than a day if necessary. Slidell correctly feared that his enemies both outside and inside his party would try to combine in order to insure his defeat. His stratagems, however, proved superior to his enemies' plans, and he won both the Democratic nomination and the Senate contest on the first ballot. Despite all of his efforts and worrying, and apparently unaware of any irony, Slidell wrote to a friend, "There was really no doubt or trouble about my re-election."  

By 1855, most Louisiana opponents of Slidell outside of the Democratic party had accepted Know Nothings label. Some historians have contended that Know-Nothingism in the South was "Whiggery in disguise," and Louisiana Democrats labelled the Know Nothing party "a Whig Trick." This explanation is too simplistic. The bulk of the Know Nothing party did consist of former Whigs, both because many had a past affinity for nativism and because they found joining the Democratic party anathema. At the same time, however, the party in Louisiana was not simply a surrogate for the Whigs. Know Nothings

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42 John Slidell to John F.H. Claiborne, July 8, 1854, (first quote), October 31, 1854, December 16, 1854, January 29, 1855, Claiborne Papers, MDAH; Slidell to James Buchanan, October 18, 1854, January 6, 1855, March 5, 1855 (second quote), Buchanan Papers, HSP; Slidell to James Robb, November 5, 1854, Robb Papers, HNO; Louisiana Courier, January 19, 23, 1855. For opposition to Slidell see Charles Gayarré to Evert A. Duyckinck, December 26, 1854, "Some Letters of Charles Etienne Gayarré," 228; W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, January 16, 1855, Pugh Family Papers, UT.
proudly pointed out that they included four former Democrats on their state ticket in 1855 and that ex-Democratic Senator Charles Gayarré had enlisted in the party. Some Know Nothings even sarcastically rebutted Democratic charges by countering that the Democratic party was a Whig trick. Not only did some Democrats become Know Nothings, but some Whigs refused to join the Know Nothings and eventually entered the Democratic ranks instead. Senator Benjamin proved to be the Democrats' most significant Louisiana recruit. Both the defection of Democrats into the Know Nothing party and the presence of former Whigs in the Democratic party belie a one-to-one correspondence between Whigs and Know Nothings.43

One reason that some Louisiana Whigs proved reluctant to join the Know Nothing party involved its attitude toward Catholics. The national party opposed all immigrants, but specifically singled out Catholics who allegedly followed the dictates of the Pope over their elected political leaders in the United States. Louisiana Whigs had received their greatest support in South Louisiana, primarily because this sugar-cane growing region demanded a protective tariff. Catholic Creoles predominated in South Louisiana which had over three-fourths of its church accommodations in Catholic churches. These Catholic Creoles shared the Know Nothings' animosity toward immigrants who served as tools for the Democratic party but challenged the party's anti-Catholic stance. This issue proved more disruptive to the Know

43For a discussion of historians viewing Know-Nothingsm as a Whig disguise see Carriere, "The Know Nothing Movement in Louisiana," 1-4. For Democrats' accusations see ibid., 95-8; and J.D. Richardson to John Liddell, September 4, 1855, Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC; Pierce Butler, Judah P. Benjamin (Philadelphia, 1907), 151.
Nothing party in Louisiana than it did in any other southern state because Louisiana contained the region’s highest concentration of Catholics. According to the 1850 census, the state possessed 48.8 percent of the South’s Catholic church accommodations. Because of the presence of a significant numbers of Catholics in Louisiana, the state’s Know Nothings denounced the national organization’s anti-Catholic plank and instead stressed opposition to immigrants and to the Democratic oligarchy.44

The divergent attitudes of Louisiana and national Know Nothings regarding the proscription of Catholics climaxd at the 1855 national convention in Philadelphia. Louisiana’s delegation included a Catholic, former Democrat Charles Gayarré. The convention refused to seat him, and all but two of Louisiana’s other delegates boycotted the meeting in protest. The convention then proceeded to include an anti-Catholic plank in the party platform. Explaining his attempt to gain admission to the assembly, Gayarré stated that his goal had been "to tear the mask of hypocrisy" from the national party, and he believed that he had "rendered an immense service to [his] country" by forcing the convention to take a stance on Catholicism. Gayarré, who seemed to have a pamphlet prepared for every occasion, immediately published the speech that he had intended to give to the conference. Declaring that "Louisiana...cannot compromise away the Constitution of the

44Seventh Census, 137.
United States." he asserted that Louisiana would adopt the platform "save one rotten fragment of it."\textsuperscript{45}

Gayarré's pamphlet not only addressed Catholicism, but intertwined the religious issue with another topic important to Louisiana and the rest of the South—slavery. In the 1850s, tension between the North and the South over the expansion of slavery had increased, and Gayarré's pamphlet made a specific entreaty to southerners in the Know Nothing ranks. Appealing to this southern sensitivity regarding slavery, he compared "slaveholders enslaving negroes and Protestants enslaving Catholics" and alleged that the party sought to reduce Catholics to the level of "a white slave."

More importantly, he appealed to "Men of the South, you who are in the minority on so many questions in relation to the rights which you hold dearer than your lives." He asked if the federal government could unconstitutionally attack Catholics, what would stop it from attacking slavery next?\textsuperscript{46}

In the wake of the Philadelphia Know Nothing convention both state parties held conventions to prepare for the fall campaign to elect a governor and four congressmen. In June, the Democrats convened in Baton Rouge and resolved that they "had no sympathy" with the Know Nothings' "religious intolerance." The party, however,

\textsuperscript{45} Anbinder, \textit{Nativism and Slavery}, 167; Socola, "Charles E.A. Gayarré," 144-48; Charles Gayarré to James D.B. DeBow, June 17, 1855, James D.B. DeBow Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (Hereinafter DU) (first quote); Judge Gayarré's Address to the General Assembly of the Know Nothing Party Held in Philadelphia in May 1855, (New Orleans, 1855), 27 (second quote).

\textsuperscript{46} Judge Gayarré's Address..., quotes on p. 16, 19, 8 respectively.
concentrated more on slavery than on religion. The first six planks of its platform addressed the slavery question and pledged the party's opposition to tampering with slavery where it existed or in the territories. The unity on an activist government program in Louisiana, which had contributed to the Whig party's demise, was apparent as the Democratic platform possessed no planks regarding internal improvements, banks, tariffs, or constitutional revision. Though united on a platform, Democrats faced some division over their nominee for governor. Prior to the convention, north Louisiana Democrats had demanded that their section deserved the nomination. The convention, however, narrowly nominated Robert C. Wickliffe, a state senator from the Florida Parishes, who had served as president of the senate in the past session.⁴⁷

Know Nothings gathered in a state convention on July 4 to prepare for the November elections. The representatives affirmed the state delegation's withdrawal from the national convention. Following Gayarre's suggestion, they adopted the entire national platform except for the article proscribing Catholics. Declaring "America should be governed by Americans," they pledged themselves to changing the naturalization laws and to opposing the interference of foreigners in the voting process and the immigration of paupers and criminals. Demonstrating fidelity to the South, two of the ten planks of their platform pledged opposition to governmental interference with slavery. For governor, they nominated Charles Derbigny, a Catholic who had run

⁴⁷For North Louisiana's preference for a candidate from its section see W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, March 3, 1855. Pugh Family Papers, UT; Proceedings of the convention in Louisiana Courier, June 22, 1855.
for the post in 1846 as the Native American party candidate. In a further effort to distance themselves from the national party's proscriptive policy, they included three other Catholics on their state ticket.\(^4^\)

Despite the Louisiana Know Nothings' rejection of the national party's anti-Catholic plank, the state's Democratic party continued to make political capital out of it. Slidell delighted in the effect the action of the national convention would have in the Second Congressional District—the Catholic Creole region—and predicted that the Democrats would be able to capture many parishes which had previously supported Whig candidates.\(^4^\) Democrats made the national party's proscription of Catholics a linchpin of their 1855 gubernatorial and congressional campaigns. They engaged in a three pronged attack. First, they contended that the Louisiana party's rejection of the national plank was a lie. Second, they pointed out that regardless of the stance of Louisiana Know Nothings, the national party still proscribed Catholics. Third, and most effectively, they charged the Louisiana Know Nothing party with speaking out of both sides of its mouth. They alleged that in South Louisiana, Know Nothings preached their rejection of the national plank and celebrated the inclusion of Catholics on their ticket. In North Louisiana, however, where less than ten percent of church seating was in Catholic

\(^4^\) *Bee*, June 13, 1855.

\(^4^\) John Slidell to W.W. Pugh, July 23, 1855, Pugh Family Papers, UT; For a Know Nothing who left the party over the religious question see Jefferson McKinney to Jeptha McKinney, September 11, 1855, Jeptha McKinney Papers, LLMVC.
churches. the order embraced the anti-Catholic test and. and according Democrats. gave Derbigny the oxymoronic label "Protestant Catholic." They added that Know Nothings claimed Derbigny would rather have his children killed than educated as Catholics.  

Although Gayarre asserted that twenty thousand Know Nothings in Louisiana rejected the national platforms and "only fifty low bred scoundrels" accepted it. the Democratic charges were not entirely without merit. Outside of the predominately Catholic areas of the state--South Louisiana and Greater Orleans--some Louisiana nativists accepted the entire national platform. A Know Nothing meeting in Bienville Parish endorsed the national platform. and North Louisiana Know Nothings even offered a separate slate of state officers which included no Catholics. This ticket immediately fizzled. especially after its nominee for governor denounced it. Other Louisiana Know Nothings tried to compromise between the national and state party alleging that the national party only proscribed Roman Catholics and their papist doctrines. They contended that Creoles were Gallican Catholics who did not share the Roman Catholics' papist ideology, and therefore were welcomed in the party.

Despite a Louisiana Know Nothing's contention that the whole religious controversy "was a mole hill. made into a mountain by our

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50 Carriere, "The Know Nothing Movement in Louisiana," 131, 140-2; For Democrats claiming northern Louisiana Know Nothings advocated proscription of Catholics see Baton Rouge Democratic Advocate, September 13, 1855; For Catholic church seating see TABLE 1.1; Louisiana Courier, July 7, August 1, September 23 (quote), October 11, 24, 1855.

51 Charles Gayarré to James D.B. DeBow, June 17, 1855, DeBow Papers, DU; Carriere, "The Know Nothing Movement in Louisiana," 87, 140-2.
enemies." the accusation placed Louisiana Know Nothings on the defensive, and they were forced to expend much of their efforts in denying it. Denouncing the charge that Know Nothings opposed Catholics as an "infamous falsehood" former congressman John Moore, in an angry letter to the editor, impatiently explained that the party "utterly condemns any attempt to make religious belief a test for political office." Another Know Nothing admitted that reports of the Louisiana delegation's exclusion from the national convention had contributed to the party's defeat in a judicial election. And, the Bee acknowledged that the action of the Philadelphia convention had stemmed the Know Nothing's momentum in Louisiana and proved disastrous because the Democrats had seized "the Catholic question...[as] a God-send to them, and they have used it, or rather abused it."^{52}

If Louisiana Know Nothings divided over the presence of Catholics in their movement, they all agreed on opposition to immigrants. In Gayarré's *The School for Politics*, a character articulates the Know Nothing attitude. "I don't care how long they may have been naturalized, they can never become familiar with our institutions." During the 1855 campaign, a Know Nothing congressional candidate railed against "debased foreigners who are attempting to interfere with our government" and all partisans proclaimed that America must be ruled by Americans. Another candidate complained of "vast hords[sic]...composed chiefly of the rudest classes" who are

^{52}F.D. Richardson to John Liddell, September 12, 1855, Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC; John Moore to Thomas Johnson (editor of Franklin Planters' Banner), August 13, 1855, Weeks Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Thomas Ellis to E.P. Ellis, June 28, 1855, Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC; *Bee*, October 22, 1855 (second quote).
"uneducated, ignorant and prejudiced." Contending that immigrants drained the state treasury, a Know Nothing speaker asked the rhetorical question, "Who fill your parish prisons. your work-houses. your penitentiaries?"  

Throughout the campaign, the Know Nothings produced statistics to answer this question and to show the baneful effect of immigrants on Louisiana. Know Nothings asserted that foreigners were criminals, beggars, and burdens on society. Citing the 1850 census, the Bee contended that foreigners were ten times more likely to be paupers than were native-born Americans. A Know Nothing legislative candidate explained that the nation’s prison population contained foreigners at a rate six times more often than their percentage in the population would suggest. Additionally, according the Know Nothing press, out of the 13,759 patients treated by Charity Hospital in New Orleans in 1853, 12,333 were immigrants while only 1,534 were natives.  

The Know Nothings particularly decried immigrants’ pernicious influence on Louisiana politics. According to the Bee, immigrants cast almost one-half of the votes in New Orleans and in the 1852 presidential election had cast almost one-third of the votes in Louisiana, and consequently the foreign-born population provided the

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51Gayarre, The School for Politics, 44 (first quote); George Eustis, Jr., 1855 Speech, Papers of George Eustis, LC (second quote); Speech of Colonel Theodore G. Hunt at the Houma Barbecue, Parish of Terrebonne, on the 15th of September (New Orleans, 1855), 5-6 (third quote); "Address of Adolphus Olivier" in Opelousas Patriot, September 22, 1855 (fourth quote).

54Bee, August 31, September 22, 1855; "Address of Adolphus Olivier" in Opelousas Patriot, September 22, 1855; For a desire to close down Charity Hospital because too many Irish immigrants used it see Robert Wilson to James Robb, March 8, 1852, James Robb Papers, HNO.
balance of power in Louisiana elections. Assessing this situation, a Know Nothing congressional candidate employed a traditional republican argument to demonstrate what would happen if this trend continued. He contended that this flood of immigrants "threaten[ed] the overthrow of our American system of government" and eventually would lead to "the erection upon its ruins of monarchical establishments." He concluded that immigrants "cannot be politically incorporated with and assimilated with us." Raised in monarchical regimes, the immigrants could not understand American political traditions. Thus, they became "mere instruments and creatures of cunning wire-pullers." These wire-pullers, of course, were Democrats, and the nativists estimated that almost ninety percent of naturalized citizens supported that party and that Ireland and Germany "poured out their hosts to swell the throng" at Democratic meetings.  

The new topics of immigration and religious proscription joined the traditional issue of loyalty to slavery and the South in the campaign. As in prior campaigns, politicians regardless of party affiliation attacked their opponents' slavery credentials. Know Nothings charged that foreigners opposed slavery because they competed with slave labor and because they came from countries where slavery did not exist. They claimed that it was more than a coincidence that the northern states with the greatest abolitionist sentiment contained the greatest percentage of immigrants. Additionally, with, according to their estimates, eighty percent of the foreigners settling in the

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§§ Bee, July 21 (third quote), August 7, September 5. 28 (second quote), October 15, 1855; Speech of Theodore G. Hunt..., 6 (first quote); Gayarré, Address to the People of Louisiana, 30.
North, immigrants helped further the North's majority over the South in Congress. The Know Nothings added that the vehement opposition of abolitionist newspapers to their party validated their own slavery credentials.30

As the Democrats questioned the Know Nothings' attitude toward Catholics, they also doubted the party's fidelity to slavery. Alluding to the Know Nothings, Democratic Congressman John Perkins delivered a speech in May addressing how "certain disguised movements of Abolitionists of the North" were trying "to undermine the cherished institutions of the South." A former Know Nothing, while expressing his agreement with the party's opposition to foreigners, resigned from the organization partially because he feared that the party possessed a secret third degree "strongly connected with the principles of the northern abolitionists." Democrats seized on the allegation of a third degree in their assaults on Know Nothings. A Democratic newspaper contended that "Abolition is the backbone of the secret order," and another observed that the party was "nurtured and conceived in abolitionist hotbed" of Massachusetts. The charge that the northern wing of the order was "abolitionised" emerged as a staple of Democratic newspapers.37

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30Baton Rouge Democratic Advocate. September 13, 1855; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, October 20, November 3, 1855; Bee, May 24, July 27, August 17, 1855.

37Committee to John Perkins, June 5, 1855. John Perkins Papers, SHC (first quote); Jefferson McKinney to Jeptha McKinney, September 11, 1855, Jeptha McKinney Papers, LLMVC (second quote); Plaquemine Iberville Gazette quoted in Southern Sentinel, February 10, 1855 (third quote); Louisiana Courier, February 1, May 10, July 10, 14, September 21, October 21, 1855 (fourth quote).
By 1855, debate over slavery in Louisiana and throughout the United States meant debate over the Kansas-Nebraska Act. In 1854, Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas introduced a bill creating the Kansas and Nebraska territories out of a portion of the Louisiana Purchase. According to the terms of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, slavery should have been prohibited in this area. At the behest of southerners, Douglas, however, called for the explicit repeal of the Missouri Compromise and for these territories to be admitted under the basis of popular sovereignty. Though few believed that slavery could exist in either Kansas or Nebraska, southerners considered the incorporation of popular sovereignty into the bill a matter of honor and an opportunity to see if northerners could be trusted regarding slavery. The bill easily passed in the Senate and narrowly passed in the House with the chief opposition coming from northern Whigs who unanimously voted against it.58

In 1854, with a single exception, Louisiana's congressional delegation supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the state's legislature passed a resolution endorsing the measure. All four of Louisiana's Democratic representatives, including Senator Slidell and three congressman, voted for the measure, and the 1855 Democratic platform contained a plank celebrating the bill. The actions of the other two representatives, both elected as Whigs, shows the divergent paths of Louisiana Whiggery. Declaring the measure to be a southern

58 For the South and the Kansas Nebraska Act see William J. Cooper, Jr., The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856 (Baton Rouge, 1978), 346-59; David M. Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861 (New York, 1976), 199-224.
question. Senator Benjamin, who within two years would become a Democrat, voted for it. Congressman Theodore Hunt, however, contended that in 1820 the South had supported the Missouri Compromise, and he would continue to stand by it. Hunt, who in 1855 would run for re-election as a Know Nothing, voted against the Kansas-Nebraska Act because he felt slavery could not exist in the territory, and therefore the measure unnecessarily agitated the North, increased abolitionist sentiment, and consequently threatened the Union.  

During the 1855 campaign, Democrats used the vote on the Kansas-Nebraska Act to show that only their party could be trusted on the slavery question. In an effort to demonstrate that northern Whigs and Know Nothings were abolitionists, the Louisiana Courier printed the vote from the House of Representatives, which indicated that the only northerners who voted for the bill were Democrats. Democrats excoriated the Know Nothing's nomination of Hunt and alleged that Free-Soilers desired his election and that Hunt's position was "worthier of a New England than a Louisiana candidate." Know Nothings tried to brand the Democrats' charges as slanderous, but Hunt was clearly placed on the defensive. While maintaining that he had acted correctly in opposing the Kansas-Nebraska act and sticking to the Missouri Compromise, Hunt tried to save face by declaring that now that the Kansas-Nebraska Act had passed, he would not tolerate its repeal. Hunt faced a double dilemma. Not only did he have to

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For a discussion of the actions of Louisiana regarding the Kansas-Nebraska Act see Dolph W. McCleish, "Louisiana and the Kansas Question," (Master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1939), 21-30; Democratic platform in Louisiana Courier, June 22, 1855.
overcome the perception that he was unfaithful to the South. But, running in a predominantly Catholic district, he lost votes because of the religious question as well. These twin difficulties contributed to a Democrat being selected to represent the South Louisiana sugar cane-producing parishes for only the second time in the party's history.  

Hunt's loss in parishes which had previously cast majorities against Democratic candidates illustrates the confusing nature of party politics in Louisiana in 1855. On one hand, Know Nothings tried to emphasize that both traditional parties had disappeared and that their organization included both Whigs and Democrats. Describing the party, the Clinton American Patriot declared "there is no Whig and no Democrat known among them...the parties...having passed away," and the Bee contended that the party was composed of equal portions of Whigs and Democrats. The French-language Le Meschacebe contended that the Know Nothing state platform could have been the work of a Democratic or Whig convention. Arguing that "the Democratic party is there but democracy is not," Charles Gayarré proclaimed that "the occasion had arrived for the formation of a new party." To demonstrate the bipartisan nature of their party, the Know Nothings included three former Democrats on their state ticket, including their candidate for

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60 *Louisiana Courier*, July 22, September 6 (quote), December 1, 1855; *Weekly Delta*, September 30, 1855; *Speech of Theodore G. Hunt*, 4, 7.
lieutenant governor. Lewis Texada. Partisan newspapers also published
the names of Democrats who had switched to their party.³¹

On the other hand, the Democrats incorporated two different
attitudes regarding the status of Louisiana parties. In regions where
they had always been strong, they contended that only one party
remained. They labeled the Know Nothing party as Whigs led by a
different leader. With the national Whig party defunct, the Democrats
provid ed the only vehicle to protect the South. Democratic newspapers
asserted that many Know Nothings had come to this conclusion, and
throughout the campaign printed lists of Know Nothings who had
abandoned their party in favor of the Democracy.³² In areas such as
South Louisiana where the Whigs had predominated and where they could
exploit the Know Nothing's anti-Catholicism, the Democrats tried a
different tactic. In this region, they did not run Democrat
candidates but supported "Anti-Know Nothing" nominees instead. With
this stratagem, they hoped to attract Whigs who would not vote for a
Democratic but distrusted the Know Nothings.³³

³¹Clinton American Patriot, April 21, 1855 (first quote); Lucy (St.
        John the Baptist Parish) Le Meschacebe, July 15, 1855 (second quote):
        Bee, March 16, July 6, September 8, 1855; Charles Gayarré, Address to the
        People of Louisiana on the State of Parties (New Orleans, 1855), 8 (third
        quote).

³²"Phantom" to the editor, October 9, 1855, James Muggah Papers, HNO; for
        lists of Know Nothing defections to the Democracy see Louisiana
        Courier, July-November, 1855.

³³For Anti-Know Nothings in South Louisiana see Knight to W.W. Pugh,
        July 26, 1855, Pugh Family Papers, UT; Baton Rouge Democratic Advocate,
        August 23, September 6, 1855; Louisiana Courier, July 17, August 14, 25,
        September 10, 1855; Houma Ceres, August 16, 1855.
Charges of abolitionist tendencies, debate over immigration, and accusations of religious proscription dominated the 1855 campaign. The *Louisiana Courier* succinctly summed up the Democratic campaign strategy in its contention that Know Nothing principles were "hostility to foreigners, the Catholic religion, and slavery."

Previous Louisiana campaigns had experienced partisan divergence on a much wider range of topics. By 1855, however, Louisiana politicians, regardless of party affiliation, could agree on most issues. Almost everyone accepted the constitution of 1852 and its provisions regarding an activist state government. They also concurred on the charter's democratic provisions—universal white male suffrage with almost all offices elective. Furthermore, as memory of French and Spanish rule and of the Louisiana Purchase faded, debate over candidates' birthplaces became less and less common.⁶⁴

According to a country parish newspaper, the elections resulted in a "Grand Democratic Victory" and "the total annihilation of Know-Nothingism with all its proscriptive features." Receiving 53.7 percent of the votes, Wickliffe defeated Derbigny for governor, and Democrats won three of the four congressional seats. The Know Nothings best showing occurred in Greater Orleans and the Florida Parishes where Derbigny obtained 51.2 and 51.5 percent of the votes respectively. The party also elected George Eustis, Jr., to Congress in the New Orleans-dominated First District. Undoubtedly, the Democrats' accusations of anti-Catholicism hurt the Know Nothings. Not only did Theodore G. Hunt lose his race for re-election to

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⁶⁴ *Louisiana Courier*, May 24, 1855.
Congress in the Creole parishes, but the Democrats also achieved their greatest victory ever in South Louisiana with Wickliffe receiving 57.8 percent of the region's ballots. (SEE APPENDIX B)

A comparison of the support given to the Know Nothings' Catholic gubernatorial candidate Charles Derbigny and their Protestant Attorney General nominee Randall Hunt reveals some of that party's internal tension over Catholicism. In the twenty parishes of North Louisiana, some of which endorsed the national party's anti-Catholic platform, Derbigny's candidacy had engendered controversy. In this region, the Protestant Hunt's vote exceeded Derbigny's 6,736 to 6,205 (8.5 percent) including Claiborne and Union Parishes where Hunt out-polled Derbigny 1,365 to 1,075 (27.0 percent). In contrast, in the seventeen parishes of predominately Catholic South Louisiana the two candidates' support was almost identical (5,039 votes for Derbigny to 5,005 for Hunt). In all but one parish in this region, the two Know Nothings received within five votes of each other.

After the 1855 state contests, attention turned to the 1856 presidential contest. As he had in both 1848 and 1852, John Slidell supported his devoted friend, Pennsylvanian James Buchanan, for the Democratic nomination. Writing from Washington to an ally in Louisiana, Slidell referred to "endeavoring to secure Mr. Buchanan's nomination" as his "constant occupation." To another partisan, Slidell claimed Buchanan, a northerner who stood with the South on the slavery question, was "by far the strongest man in the [Democratic]

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65 Point Coupee Echo, Broadside, November 6, 1855, in William S. Hamilton Papers, LLMVC (quote); Election results Louisiana Courier, December 1, 1855.
convention. With Slidell in Washington, Soulé and his allies in Louisiana, who preferred Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, the author of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, sought to control the state's March nominating convention. Tension between Douglas and Buchanan delegates disrupted the convention from the beginning with acrimonious disputes over the time it should start, who would serve as chairman, and whether legislators could serve as delegates. According to Soulé, who attended the convention, opposition to the "Slidell clique" led the delegates to repudiate those who claimed to be Buchanan's "exclusive friends." Instead, they sent an unpledged delegation to the Cincinnati national convention. Delighting in the rebuff given to Slidell, Know Nothing journals celebrated the state convention as a Waterloo defeat for the "Napoleon of Louisiana."67

Soulé appeared to have achieved a triumph over Slidell, especially since Soulé had been selected as a delegate to the national convention, while Slidell had been rejected. Soulé declared that he did not oppose Buchanan himself just Slidell, but the chief Soulé organ in New Orleans openly advocated Douglas's nomination. Though not a delegate, Slidell attended the Cincinnati convention to work for Buchanan's nomination. Undoubtedly, he also strove to place Louisiana's delegation behind his friend. In Cincinnati, Slidell once again proved his political savvy. At his behest, the Louisiana

66 John Slidell to John F.H. Claiborne, June 22, 1856. Claiborne Papers, MDAH (first quote); Slidell to James A. McHatton, April 11, 1856. Benjamin Flanders Collection, LLMVC (second quote).

delegation decided to cast the state's vote as a unit, and they selected Buchanan with only Soulé dissenting. After Buchanan received the nomination, Louisiana newspapers expressed their amazement that "King Slidell" had recovered so spectacularly from his March defeat. Though earlier in the year, Slidell's name had been mentioned for the vice presidency, he denied any aspiration for the position. Instead, in an effort to restore party harmony at the convention, he spearheaded the nomination of John C. Breckinridge, a Kentucky slaveholder and ally of Douglas. Louisiana's delegation nominated Breckinridge, who was unanimously selected as the Democrats' candidate for the vice-presidency on the second ballot.\(^{68}\)

Emphasizing its commitment to Union over its aversion to immigrants and Catholics, the Know Nothing party selected as its nominee for the presidency former President Millard Fillmore, who in 1852 had contended for the Whig nomination. The national convention seated the Louisiana delegation, which included a Catholic, and resolved against religious tests for office and interference with religious practice. Louisiana Know Nothings, especially former Whigs, voiced their pleasure with Fillmore's nomination. His actions as president, particularly his support for the Compromise of 1850 and his enforcement of the Fugitive Slave law, had endeared him to southerners, and Louisiana Whigs had advocated his nomination for the presidency in 1852. Additionally, Louisianans had welcomed Fillmore

when he visited New Orleans in 1854, and on that occasion one expressed a sentiment which Louisiana Know Nothings would embrace as a battle-cry in 1856—"No purer Patriot now lives than Millard Fillmore." 69

According to Louisiana Know Nothings, Fillmore's behavior as president had proved the desirability of his returning to the White House in 1856. Throughout the campaign, whenever opponents challenged Fillmore's fidelity to the South, Know Nothings responded by referring to his conduct in office. The Bee concluded that Fillmore would "protect the South in her inherent rights" just as he had done in 1850, and each day during the campaign it published a quote from the deceased Whig statesman, Henry Clay, declaring that Fillmore "has been tried and found true, faithful, honest, and conscientious." And, when the Louisiana Courier attacked Fillmore, the Bee included a series of letters entitled, "The Courier vs. the Courier," which compared articles from that newspaper in 1852 to those in the present campaign. The Bee found it ironic that in 1852, the Louisiana Courier had praised Fillmore's "noble efforts to check abolitionism" as president but now tried to portray him as an abolitionist. 70

The nomination of Fillmore forestalled the attempt to reorganize a separate Louisiana Whig party in 1856. Declaring that "the prosperity and safety of this Union" depended upon its reorganization.

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69 Anbinder, Nativism and Slavery, 207-10; Henry Marston to Payne and Harrison, March 28, 1854, Marston Papers, LLMVC (quote); Louisiana Courier, February 27, 1856.

70 Shreveport South-Western, October 15, 1856; Bee, August-November 1856 (first quote), August 6, August 7, 1856.
the Whig Party of Louisiana did hold a meeting in New Orleans and selected delegates to a Whig convention in Baltimore. The national convention endorsed Fillmore's nomination, and for the remainder of the campaign the Know Nothing and Whig parties of Louisiana were virtually indistinguishable. Most Louisiana Whigs had championed Fillmore's unsuccessful bid for the party's nomination in 1852 and faced no difficulty in advocating his election to the presidency in 1856. A New Orleans Whig meeting even instructed those voters who still called themselves Whigs to vote for a Whig (Fillmore) over a Democrat (Buchanan) and professed that only Fillmore's victory could preserved the Union.71

While in the South, Buchanan faced Fillmore, in the northern states, a third candidate ran for the presidency—John C. Frémont, the nominee of the antislavery Republican party. Though Frémont did not appear on the ballot in Louisiana, his nomination shaped the race in the state, and James D.B. DeBow called the campaign a "time of peculiar peril." Southerners viewed Frémont's potential election as a threat to their section and their way of life. A Baton Rouge Democrat declared "we have to choose any one before Frémont" whose election would lead to "disunion and consequently to bloodshed." A Know Nothing pamphlet expressed a similar sentiment declaring Frémont "out of the question in the South, for all parties unite in detesting the principle which lays at the foundation of his political faith."

71Baton Rouge Weekly Morning Comet, September 7, 1856; Bee, July 8, 1856. For attempt to resuscitate Louisiana Whig party see "No. 2 (1856)," Letter to the Editor of the Commercial Bulletin, and Appointment, in Hennen-Jennings Papers, LLMVC; Louisiana Courier, October 15, 1856.
Lamenting the election of a Republican speaker of the House in February 1856, the only Louisiana Know Nothing in Congress worried that "abolitionism is getting too powerful in this country." 

With the entry of Frémont into the race, Louisiana Know Nothings and Democrats adopted the same campaign strategy. The Bee contended the South "must stand firmly by her rights." and a Democratic congressman concurred that it was "the duty of the people of the South to meet together irrespective of party association." The parties also agreed that only one candidate could prevent Frémont's election. The parties disagreed, however, on which candidate could best defeat the Republican nominee. On one hand, Know Nothings charged that Buchanan's candidacy was a red herring, and that "every Southern vote cast for Buchanan is virtually a vote in favor of Frémont." On the other hand. Democrats repeatedly warned Louisianans that Fillmore had no chance to win the race. Consequently, a vote for Fillmore would be a vote taken away from Buchanan and would be "practically a vote for the Black Republicans." 

Both Democrats and Know Nothings also labelled each other's candidate as an abolitionist. Democrats resurrected stories from the

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7 James D.B. DeBow to My Dear Sir, August 20, 1856, James D.B. DeBow Letter, HNO (first quote); F.M. Kent to Mrs. A.A. Means, August 11, 1856. Kent Family Papers, LLMVC (second quote); "Fillmore and Donelson," July 20, 1856, p. 8, Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC (third quote); George Eustis, Jr., to John Moore, February 5, 1856, Weeks Papers, LLMVC (fourth quote).

7 Bee, March 20, 1856 (first quote); John Perkins to Gentlemen, September 28, 1856, John Perkins Papers, SHC (second quote).

7 Bee, July 1, 16, 1856 (quote); Louisiana Courier, April 5 (second quote). June 14, 18, August 8, 1856.
1848 presidential campaign when Fillmore ran for the vice-presidency. As in that campaign, the Democrats produced an 1838 letter in which Fillmore had professed antislavery sentiments and argued that as a congressman, Fillmore was "quite as sectional as any of his Black Republican opponents of the present day." Additionally, they charged that in many northern states the Know Nothing party had fused with the Republicans. The Know Nothings mocked the Democrats' labelling of Buchanan as a northern man with southern principles. They compared him to Martin Van Buren, a candidate who had previously received this title, but in the end had turned out to be opposed to slavery. Know Nothings also alleged that northern and southern Democrats differed over slavery, with northerners possessing a free-soil opinion against the spread of slavery into the territories.\footnote{\textit{Louisiana Courier}, July 15 (quote), September 13, 28, 1856; "Fillmore and Donelson," July 20, 1856, Ellis Papers, LLMVC; \textit{Bee}, May 17, June 16, 1856.}

Charges of abolitionism and arguments over which candidate best protected southern interests had been a staple of presidential races in Louisiana for two decades. In a description which could have applied equally well to either party, the \textit{Bee} charged that "the slavery question has, for the last twenty years, been the theme on which the Locofoco chiefs of the South have harped." and later added that "in every presidential election, the South has been blindly drawn into the support of the Democracy by the cry of slavery." Since 1836, Whigs, Democrats, and now Know Nothings in Louisiana had branded
opposing presidential candidates as abolitionists or tools of abolitionists.\textsuperscript{76}

The 1856 campaign, however, presented a difference from previous races. Unlike prior campaigns where slavery was a campaign topic, in 1856 slavery was the campaign topic. The \textit{Louisiana Courier} termed slavery "the great and pervading issue." Other traditional issues disappeared from Louisiana's political discourse. In preceding elections, the candidates' ties to Louisiana, the tariff, the national bank, republicanism, and the Creole-American split had joined slavery in partisan debate. A decreased interest in these concerns when combined with the entry of the explicitly sectional Republican party into the campaign meant that by 1856 the slavery issue stood alone. Stumping for Buchanan in Maine, Louisiana Senator Benjamin expressed this sentiment when he declared "tariffs, free trade, United States Banks....and a thousand other issues of my early manhood. had all been settled by the people." In 1856, only one substantial issue remained in Louisianans' minds—which party best protected the South and slavery.\textsuperscript{77}

Additionally, the slavery debate in 1856 differed as Democrats' assessments of the national situation took on a more ominous tone. They combined allegations of abolitionist tendencies and opposition to Republican victory with threats of disunion. In his inaugural

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Bee}, September 9, (first quote), September 23, 1856 (second quote).

address. Governor Wickliffe argued that if Congress would decline the admission of a slave state, "the time for separation will have arrived." and a Democratic meeting in Caddo Parish concurred. A circular distributed by a Democratic congressman declared that the South only wanted security for its people and institutions, and "if such security cannot be had any longer within the Union, she will have to seek it—and in my judgment, the sooner, the better—out of the Union." Louisiana had never been a hotbed of secessionists, and Senator Soulé had been chastised for his disunionist course in 1850, but in 1856 for the first time all wings of the Louisiana Democratic party spoke openly of secession for the first time. Even the ever careful Senator Slidell got carried away with this theme and did not "hesitate to declare that if Frémont be elected, the Union cannot and ought not to be preserved." 

Fillmore supporters in Louisiana branded Democrats as traitorous disunionists who must be defeated. They especially seized on Slidell's statement. Calling it the "insane ebullition of heated partisanship." Know Nothings expressed disbelief that anyone in Louisiana shared its sentiment. The Know Nothings celebrated the defection of a Democratic legislator who had voted for Slidell for the Senate but did not adhere to Slidell's dire forecast. In charging the Democrats with disunionist sentiments, the Know Nothings even invoked the revered name of Democratic leader Andrew Jackson. In the 1830s.

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78 Wickliffe inaugural in Louisiana Courier, February 1, 1856 (first quote): Louisiana Courier, March 11, 1856; John Perkins to Gentlemen, September 28, 1856, John Perkins Papers, SHC (second quote); Daily Picayune, October 8, 1856 (third quote).
when South Carolina had threatened secession. President Jackson had boldly declared that the Union "must and shall be preserved." The Know Nothings argued that perhaps they were the more legitimate heirs of Jackson, especially with his ward and nephew Andrew Jackson Donelson as their vice-presidential candidate.\footnote{Daily Picayune, October 8, 1856 (first quote); Shreveport South-Western, October 15, 1856; Bee, September 23, 1856 (second quote).}

In contrasting themselves with Democrats, Fillmore men gladly assumed the mantle as the party which most respected and best protected the Union. Know Nothings downplayed their opposition to immigrants, and instead made Unionism the centerpiece of their campaign decrying the sectionalism of both Republicans and Democrats. They claimed that Fillmore represented a middle course between these two extremists—the only truly national candidate. A Know Nothing asserted that Fillmore knew "no North as against the South," and another wondered "without Mr. Fillmore, how are to suppress the sectional proclivity of north and south?" Emphasizing this Union theme, pro-Fillmore clubs in New Orleans called themselves the Constitution Club and Union Hussars. Presenting a banner on behalf of the women of Shreveport, a Know Nothing orator declared Fillmore to be the only candidate who could "restore harmony and discord to our divided land."\footnote{John Moore to Shreveport Committee, August 27, 1856, John Moore Papers, HNO (first quote); Glendy Burke to John J. Crittenden, August 10, 1856, John J. Crittenden Papers, LC (second quote); Carriere, "The Know Nothing Movement in Louisiana," 167-9, 181-2; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, September 27, 1856; Bee, June 23, July 8, September 1, 1856 (third quote).}
Though the Know Nothing party preferred to consider itself the party of the Union and the Constitution, Democrats charged it with being more anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic than pro-Union. A Democratic letter to the editor chastised the Know Nothings for “bickering about foreigners...and popery, when the whole country is convulsed on the momentous question of slavery.” Despite the Know Nothing party’s claim to the contrary, the Democrats warned Louisiana Creoles that the party wanted to proscribe them from political participation. As in 1855, this charge proved most effective in South Louisiana where voters who had actively supported Fillmore as a Whig, proved more reluctant to support him as a Know Nothing.8

Despite the party’s nativist origins and the charges of the Democrats, opposition to immigrants played only a minor role in the Know Nothings’ campaign strategy. And, more importantly, when they did discuss immigration, they discussed it in terms of its interaction with abolitionism. Know Nothings alleged that German newspapers throughout the country, including one in New Orleans, championed Frémont and claimed that immigrant voting would defeat slavery in the Kansas territory. The party also reminded voters that immigration added congressional seats in the North, and concluded that “abolitionism asks no better policy than the encouragement of foreign immigration.” Overall, however, the party downplayed this aspect of

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8Louisiana Courier, July 19, 1856.(quote)
its organization, instead preferring to distinguish itself from the Democrats by its fidelity to the Union.8

Democrats in Louisiana gained a valuable ally when Senator Benjamin officially joined their party. Elected as a Whig in 1852, Benjamin had refused to endorse either party in the 1855 campaign. In 1856, because of the Republican party threat to slavery. Benjamin felt he could no longer avoid making a partisan commitment, and in a speech on the Senate floor he pledged his allegiance to the Democratic party. In a letter expressing his willingness to stump for Buchanan, Benjamin echoed the fears of many Democrats:

public affairs have reached such a point that it is inconceivable that there can exist two parties now in the South. He who does not see that a vote for Fillmore is in reality a vote for Frémont is incredibly blind. Such is the feeling of old party prejudices that I verily believe that there are many old whigs who would see the Union dissolved sooner than vote for a Democrat.

Democrats urged other Whigs to follow Benjamin's example, and the Louisiana Courier celebrated his defection along with that of other prominent Louisiana Whigs including former gubernatorial candidate Alexander Declouet and the president of the 1852 constitutional convention Duncan Kenner.83

Know Nothings attacked Benjamin for his defection into the ranks of his lifelong enemy. They concluded that the ambitious Benjamin desired re-election to the Senate, and that he had selfishly concluded


83Judah P. Benjamin to John Perkins, July 2, 1856, John Perkins Papers. SHC (quote); Louisiana Courier, October 11, 28, 1856.
that his best chance involved allying with Slidell. The Bee alleged that the traitorous Benjamin had become "the blind dupe and victim of [Slidell's] seduction" and argued that Louisiana now only had one senator since a sycophantic Benjamin merely followed Slidell's footsteps. Another newspaper contended that a Senate seat would not quench Benjamin's insatiable ambition. It maintained that the foreign-born Benjamin sought the presidency and only the Democrats would alter the Constitution to allow a man born outside the United States to ascend to this office.84

While it is impossible to measure the effect of Benjamin upon the campaign in Louisiana, the candidate of his new party, James Buchanan did capture the state's electoral votes and won the national contest. Buchanan swept the South and divided the northern states with Frémont, while Know Nothing Millard Fillmore only received the electoral votes of Maryland. In Louisiana, Buchanan triumphed in three of the four regions and received 51.7 percent of the state's votes. The historically Democratic North Louisiana and Florida Parishes sided with him. In South Louisiana, the combination of animosity concerning the Know Nothings' religious proscription and sensitivity regarding slavery contributed to Buchanan receiving 60.6 percent of the region's vote—the greatest percentage ever received there by a Democratic presidential candidate. Only in Greater Orleans, where Know Nothing violence marred the election and forced many Democrats to stay away from the polls, did Buchanan suffer a

84 Bee, September 26. (quote), September 30, 1856; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, May 17, 1856.
tremendous defeat, which made the state race relatively close. (SEE APPENDIX A)

The election of 1856 marked the end of the Know Nothing as a national party and weakened it as Louisiana party. With the northern and southern wings of the party unable to come to an agreement regarding slavery, the party soon disappeared. The party's anti-immigrant stance never had much appeal in most of the South, and when southerners perceived that it could not serve as an effective vehicle to protect slavery, they quickly abandoned it. As the Know Nothing party disappeared nationally and regionally, it collapsed much of Louisiana. The New Orleans party organization, however, countered this trend. Fillmore had captured the Crescent City by over 3,500 votes, the largest majority ever given a presidential candidate in the city, and he won an astounding 70.1 percent of the vote in Greater Orleans. While disappearing in the rest of the state, the Know Nothings, preaching opposition to immigrants and using intimidation at the polls, continued to control New Orleans' municipal government until the Civil War.85

Though New Orleans remained a Know Nothing stronghold, Democracy reigned triumphant throughout the rest of Louisiana. Since 1852, the party had fought off two potent challenges—the ratification of a Whig constitution and the sudden popularity of the anti-immigrant Know Nothing party. In the former instance, Democrats simply adopted the popular Whig state program and let fissures in the national

organization destroy the Whigs. In the latter, Louisiana Democrats effectively employed their opponent's anti-Catholicism against them and again watched as sectional tension over slavery contributed to the defeat of an apparently formidable state competitor. By the end of 1856, the Democratic party held the White House, occupied Louisiana's governorship, possessed three of the state's four congressional seats, and dominated the state legislature.

Democracy controlled Louisiana, but this mastery did not guarantee harmony. Tension between John Slidell and Pierre Soulé divided the party, and without a common opponent, this animosity threatened to disrupt the organization. Also, the national Democratic party was not immune to the same sectional pressures which had destroyed the Whigs and the Know Nothings. Additionally, the antislavery Republican party had made a strong showing in the 1856 presidential campaign, and Louisianans split on how best to react to this organization. Some talked of secession while others favored the Union. If the Republicans could gain the electoral votes of a few more states, then they could capture the presidency. Then, Louisiana Democrats would be forced to decide whether they favored secession in practice or merely in their rhetoric.
CHAPTER SEVEN
DEMOCRATS AND DISUNION. 1857-1861

By 1857 the Democratic party controlled all of Louisiana except for New Orleans. Conversely, the Know Nothings dominated the Crescent City but had little influence in the country parishes. Within the city, Know Nothings used intimidation and violence to control access to the polls and ensure victory for their candidates. In most of the country parishes, Democrat candidates were unbeatable, but the absence of an organized opposition did not lead to harmony within Louisiana's Democratic party. Intraparty disputes replaced battles with Whigs and Know Nothings. Previously, Democrats had solved their problems in party caucuses and conventions but by the late 1850s, congressional contests and even a governor's race would see dissident Democrats rejecting the official party nominee and running their own candidates. Thus, disagreement within the Democracy resolved itself not in party meetings but on the campaign trail and at the polls.

In 1857 Louisiana Democrats attempted to use their control of the state legislature to gain command of New Orleans— the one area where they had almost no strength. They believed that their majority in the legislature could counteract the power of New Orleans Know Nothings. In 1856, the Democrats had succeeded in overturning the election of three Know Nothing senators from New Orleans and replacing them with Democrats. In March 1857, the legislature attempted to remove control of New Orleans elections from local Know Nothing officials. Following Governor Wickliffe's 1857 address, the legislature, citing the "unparalleled disorder" of New Orleans elections, passed a bill giving the state government power over city
elections. The bill established a central board of election including New Orleans's mayor but composed mainly of members from outside of the city. It also created a powerful post—superintendent of elections. Selected by the governor, the superintendent could appoint an unlimited number of deputies and had broad powers of arrest. The vote on the measure demonstrates its partisan nature—Democrats cast 94.7 percent of their ballots in favor of the measure, while every Know Nothing voted against it.¹

New Orleans Know Nothings immediately attacked the law, especially the unprecedented power given to the superintendent of elections. According to the Bee, "at least nine-tenths of the community are radically hostile to this monstrous bill." The Bee also warned Democrats that the passage of this onerous measure would backfire on them and actually further reduce their minimal backing in the city. In opposing the law, Know Nothings tried to capitalize on southerners' sensitivity to slavery and their own independence. One country Know Nothing newspaper accused legislators of "attempting to enslave the people of the city," and another asserted that under the bill New Orleans tax-payers would be only as free as Russian serfs. Within New Orleans, only the Democratic Louisiana Courier defended the

measure, arguing that threats and violence throughout the 1850s had kept the city's true Democratic majority away from the polls.¹

While in New Orleans Democrats hoped the election bill would ensure victory over the Know Nothings. outside the city intraparty squabbles overshadowed Know Nothing competition. Not surprisingly, the tension continued to involve the role of party chieftain John Slidell. Slidell and his allies attached themselves to the Buchanan administration and controlled the distribution of federal offices in Louisiana. His opponents within the Democratic party included two groups: partisans who resented Slidell's control of patronage in Louisiana, and a growing portion of the Democratic party, called the southern or states-rights faction, that felt that the Buchanan administration could not be trusted to protect the South and slavery. This latter group had begun to speak of secession from the Union as a possible remedy for the South. With the Slidell-directed patronage policy of the administration favoring more moderate Democrats, these two groups of adversaries frequently overlapped.³

With his ally Buchanan in the White House, Senator Slidell used federal patronage to enhance his power and to increase the administration's support in Louisiana. While in Washington, he

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¹New Orleans Bee, February 28 (quote), March 2, 1857; Houma Ceres, March 7, 1857; Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet, March 2, 1857; New Orleans Louisiana Courier, February 12, 26, March 8, 1857. (Hereinafter all newspapers from New Orleans unless otherwise specified)

³Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, October 14, 1857; Edward G.W. Butler to John Slidell, May 18, 1857, Butler Family Papers, Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection (Hereinafter HNO); W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, March 12, 1857, Pugh Family Papers, Barker History Center, University of Texas, Austin. (Hereinafter UT).
requested that Buchanan replace the New Orleans postmaster with a Slidell man, explaining that if no change were made then his ability to secure a pro-Buchanan legislature and elect a pro-Buchanan senator would be reduced. After securing the president's agreement to this change, Slidell returned to Louisiana in March to help his wing of the party. Arriving in New Orleans, Slidell soon left to visit the state's northern parishes. Closely following what one newspaper sarcastically termed "The Progress of the Mighty Pilgrim," his enemies charged that Slidell's North Louisiana travels had elaborate goals—to secure the reelection of the unpopular Thomas Green Davidson in the Third Congressional District, to obtain support for Fourth District congressman John Sandidge's election to the United States Senate, and to aid Sandidge's election to Congress; not to have him placed in the Senate. Instead, he claimed to have gone to the region in an to secure support for a North Louisiana railroad.4

In May animosity between Slidell and his enemies within the party subsided enough for the Democrats to hold a relatively harmonious state convention in Baton Rouge to nominate candidates for minor state offices—treasurer, auditor, and superintendent of public

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education. Close ballots over whether to allow proxies to vote and over which office to nominate first signalled some dissension as did the necessity of four and five ballots to make selections for state auditor and superintendent of public education respectively. No delegates, however, deserted the convention nor did any competing Democratic tickets emerge in the following months. The convention and ensuing parish ratification meetings declared their commitment both to the Democratic platform of 1856 because it protected slavery in the territories and to President Buchanan's administration.\(^5\)

While the state convention proceeded smoothly, the concurrent gathering of Democrats of the Third District to nominate a candidate for Congress illustrated the divisions within the party. After caucusing until midnight, the meeting adjourned without selecting a candidate, and the delegates agreed to reconvene the following month in Baton Rouge. The district's Democrats split into two camps—proponents of the incumbent, Slidell-backed Thomas Green Davidson, and advocates of Andrew S. Herron, a states-rights Democrat currently serving in the legislature. At the subsequent district convention, tension arose when two delegations—one pro-Davidson and one pro-Herron—claimed to represent the Democrats of St. Tammany Parish. When the convention decided to seat both groups, Herron's supporters bolted from the meeting, and Davidson easily received the nomination.\(^6\)

\(^5\)Proceedings of the state convention in *Louisiana Courier*, May 20, 1857; Post-convention parish meetings in *Louisiana Courier*, July 12, 18, August 7, August 18, 1857; Resolutions of [Assumption] Parish Convention, 1857, in Pugh Family Papers, UT.

\(^6\)*Louisiana Courier*, May 20, June 19, 1857.
In a district which the Democratic party had never lost and in the previous two contests had won by over one thousand votes, receiving the party's nomination had been tantamount to victory. Despite pleas for party unity, some Democrats refused to accept Davidson's nomination and argued that the convention had not represented the true feelings of the district. Calling Davidson "the pretended nominee for Congress," a St. Tammany Parish meeting urged a new gathering. Other parishes joined the anti-Davidson movement, and in September Democratic delegates from five of the district's sixteen parishes met in Baton Rouge and nominated Laurent J. Sigur, an Iberville Parish legislator. Though Herron, Davidson's original opponent, did not contend for this nomination, he endorsed Sigur and campaigned on his behalf.7

The split within the Democratic ranks shaped the campaign. Sigur Democrats listed a number of reasons to oppose Davidson. Some directed their challenges directly against Davidson's unfitness for office. In a campaign speech, Sigur accused his opponent of ignorance and of failing to understand the issues before Congress, particularly those involving slavery. Another dismissed him as an "old tub of quack and trite vulgarisms" whose presence in Washington embarrassed the South. Others reminded voters that Davidson had backed an independent Democrat in opposition to the party nominee in a judicial election earlier in the year. This defection had divided the

7Louisiana Courier, July 4, July 15 (quote), August 1, 7, 9, 11, September 2, 1857; Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet, October 13, 1857.
Democratic vote and contributed to a Know Nothing victory. They argued that Davidson’s previous disloyalty forfeited party fealty in this race. Even the pro-Davidson Louisiana Courier admitted that the candidate had made a “grave error” in this instance but urged voters to sustain him as the regular Democratic nominee.

Sigur supporters did not limit their attacks to Davidson’s qualifications but challenged the proslavery credentials of Davidson, President Buchanan, and the national Democratic party. Delegates to the meeting that nominated Sigur passed resolutions condemning the administration’s course in the territories as unfair to the South and asserted that, as a native of Louisiana, Sigur would protect states rights and southern interests. While Sigur’s birth in Louisiana may have helped him, Davidson’s birth in Mississippi certainly did not reduce his commitment to slavery. Davidson undoubtedly did not challenge the idea of states rights, and his opponents’ attempts to differentiate between the candidates’ positions regarding the South represented more a political tactic than an actual distinction.

Without any tangible measure separating the two wings, Sigur proponents seized this vague theme of commitment to the and slavery as a method to distinguish between the candidates. They used phrases such as southern rights, states rights, and fire-eating interchangeably, for their definitions were not as important as the

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8Sigur speech in Plaquemine Southern Sentinel (extra), September 14, 1857; Poem (1857) and James Moore to Tom Ellis, February 8, 1857, (first quote) in Ellis Family Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Louisiana State University (Hereinafter LLMVC); Louisiana Courier, August 1, 1857 (second quote).

9Louisiana Courier, September 3, 1857.
effect they had on voters. A pro-Sigur newspaper maintained that the
time had come for the formation of a southern party, and Herron
praised Sigur as a states-rights advocate. According to a newspaper
in his home parish. Sigur. a staunch defender of the South did not shy
away from but welcomed the label "fire-band." The national Harper's
Weekly viewed the candidates in terms of their contrasting stances on
sectional politics when it described the race as between Davidson, a
"Union Democrat." and Sigur, a "Secession Democratic candidate."[1]

Additionally. Sigur advocates attacked Davidson's association
with Senator Slidell. Alluding to Slidell's control of patronage in
Louisiana. Sigur Democrats derisively referred to Davidson as the
customhouse candidate and "a creature of oligarchy." A newspaper
advocating Sigur's bid alleged that in addition to campaigning for
Davidson during his spring tour of Louisiana. Slidell had spent
$30,000 on his fall campaign. Sigur partisans contended that unlike
Davidson, their candidate was not "a slave to a one-man interest or
power." While demagogues from outside the Third District had selected
Davidson, the people of the district had chosen Sigur. Declaring that
"the iron chain of oligarchy is broken," a Know Nothing newspaper
celebrated Sigur's nomination, and the New Orleans Bee agreed that the
Sigur-Democrats had acted "under the suspicion that their actions have

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[1] Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet, October 16, 1857; Plaquemine
Southern Sentinel, September 12, 1857 (first quote); Harper's Weekly,
December 5, 1857 (second quote).
been hitherto controlled by the despotic will of handful of leaders."

The Democratic division in the Third District contributed to a brief increase in Know Nothing optimism throughout Louisiana. Because portions of the party stronghold New Orleans were included in both the First and Second Congressional Districts. Know Nothings believed they had a chance in each of those races. In New Orleans, they hoped to capitalize on anger over the new oppressive election law to increase their majority over the city's Democrats and thus overcome Democratic majorities in the country parishes of these districts. While acknowledging the difficulty of winning in the Fourth District, they hoped that they could exploit the Davidson-Sigur split to win the traditionally Democratic Third District. Some Know Nothings even predicted that this Democratic division would weaken the entire state ticket and allow for their victory in the statewide contests.\(^1\)

In their 1856 campaign for Fillmore, Louisiana Know Nothings had presented themselves as a conservative Unionist party, but in 1857 the party developed what one historian has referred to as a "creeping sectionalism." The party joined southern rights Democrats in criticizing the Slidell Democrats for their support of what one Know Nothing congressional candidate derisively called "the Buchanan-Walker-Kansas Treachery"—referring to Buchanan's Kansas policy.

\(^1\) Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, September 12 (first quote), September 19, November 14, 1857; Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet, September 25, 1857 (second quote); West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, June 27, 1857 (third quote); Bee. July 15, 1857 (fourth quote).

\(^2\) Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet, June 7, 1857; Letter to the Editor. July 1857, in Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC.
particularly his refusal to recall the perceived antislavery Governor Robert J. Walker whom a Know Nothing meeting referred to as a second Benedict Arnold. Using flawed logic, Know Nothings made the following argument: (1) Louisiana Democrats championed Buchanan; (2) Buchanan appointed Governor Walker; (3) Walker opposed slavery; (4) therefore Louisiana Democrats supported Governor Walker and his antislavery policies. The party also claimed that they had detected a growing rift between the northern and southern wings of the Democratic party and announced that the Democracy could no longer be considered a national party.  

Slidell Democrats viewed the state and national situation differently. Unlike the pro-Sieur faction, they did not condemn Slidell but celebrated him. The Louisiana Courier proclaimed, "No man has ever done so much for the Democratic party of Louisiana as the Hon. John Slidell." They also branded their opponents as a "mixture of Disunionists and Know Nothings" and pronounced this combination "a dead failure." They praised Buchanan and separated him from the obnoxious Governor Walker. Democrats also continued to portray themselves as the only national party. According to the Louisiana Courier, the salvation of the nation and the preservation of slavery rested upon "a Southern union upon the Democratic platform in firm alliance with Northern Democrats standing on the same platform."

Writing to Slidell, a partisan scoffed at the states-rights Democrats' idea of peaceable secession declaring "dissolve this Union and civil

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war and its concomitant horrors will be the immediate and unavoidable result."

Know Nothings joined the Sigur Democrats of the Third District in attacking the influence of Senator Slidell. They chastised him as a behind the scenes wire-puller and added new charges of corruption. They contended that Slidell had profited from malfeasance in the administration of the Louisiana Swamp Land Fund. Also, they alleged that because of his northern birth and the lack of time that he had spent in Louisiana in the past few years, Slidell had no loyalty to the South. Earlier in the year, former Know Nothing Charles Gayarré had continued his personal crusade against the Slidell oligarchy. Writing *A Sketch of Andrew Jackson by Himself*, Gayarré used the words of the great Democratic president to attack Slidell. As in Gayarré's previous works, Slidell is never mentioned by name, but undoubtedly Louisiana readers grasped the allusion to the senator. Gayarré contended that in the 1830s Jackson saw threats to the Union coming from a national bank. In the 1850s, he would now see these evils in "the system of obtaining nominations through packed and bought up conventions, and of governing the people through an oligarchy of bankrupt politicians...[which] is fast undermining the institutions founded by our ancestors." For Louisianans, this oligarchy could only mean Slidell and his minions who ran the Democratic party.

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14 *Louisiana Courier*, June 20, (second quote), June 25, July 9, (first quote), August 21, 1857 (third quote); Edward G.W. Butler to John Slidell, May 18, 1857, Butler Family Papers, HNO (fourth quote).
pamphlet implied that if Jackson were alive, he would destroy Slidell as he had destroyed the Bank of the United States. 15

As in the 1856 presidential campaign, Know Nothings included opposition to immigrants in their rhetoric but did not make it the centerpiece of their campaign. They again contended that immigrants opposed the South and slavery. Gayarré also attempted to portray Jackson as giving sanction to nativism. In his biography, he cites an 1844 letter from Jackson complaining that the "monied aristocracy" of New Orleans used "foreign influence" to "crush the democracy." Gayarré praised Jackson's "keen eye" which had "denounced the existence in our bosom of a foreign influence." Yet, he observed that in the 1850s Louisiana Democrats continued to ignore Jackson's warnings by denying the presence of a pernicious foreign influence in the country. Democrats denounced the Know Nothings' association with nativism. Edward G.W. Butler, the source of the letters Gayarré used in his work on Jackson, declared that if Jackson were still living, he would consider Know Nothings contemptible because of their violent suppression of Democrats in New Orleans elections. 16

Slidell's role in the Democratic party and the conduct of the Buchanan administration dominated the campaign. The additional topics debated actually show the paucity of other issues available in

15 West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, October 10, 1857; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, October 14, 1857; Charles E.A. Gayarré, A Sketch of General Jackson by Himself (New Orleans, 1857), 17; Diket, John Slidell and the Community He Represented, 108.

16 Gayarré, A Sketch of General Jackson, 17 (Jackson quote), 19 (Gayarré quote); West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, October 10, 1857; Edward G.W. Butler to James D.B. DeBow, March 13, 1857. Charles Gayarré Collection, LLMVC.
Louisiana. Legislative candidates of both parties addressed the topic of railroads. This debate fizzled as both sides spoke in favor of state aid in the development of internal improvements. Even in South Louisiana, where for the first time in over a decade the tariff on imported sugar reappeared as an issue, the parties did not differ substantially. In 1857 Congress had reduced the duty on imported sugar and Know Nothings attempted to use the votes of Louisiana Democrats in favor of this reduction against them. Louisiana Democrats in Congress, however, agreed on the importance of the tariff and had worked hard on its behalf. They contended that the resulting tariff was the highest that the sugar cane growers could have received and that the region should celebrate their efforts on behalf of the tariff.17

Despite their divisions, Louisiana Democrats emerged triumphant in the November election. Three months earlier, in a postscript to a list of Democratic difficulties, the Bee had acknowledged that Democrats had a way of solving their problems prior to election day and again that proved to be the case. The Democrats won all three statewide elections. They also triumphed in three of the four congressional battles. In the Third District, Davidson, the party's regular nominee received 42.9 percent of the vote with Sigur garnering only 21.7 percent and the Know Nothing candidate 35.3 percent. The Democrats also kept a majority in both branches of the legislature.

17Railroads--Henry Marston Diary, September 19, 1857, Henry Marston Papers, LLMVC; "Fellow Citizens," July 6, 1857, Bythell Haynes Letter, LLMVC; Tariff--Louisiana Courier, September 15, 16, October 2, 1857; Judah P. Benjamin to W.W. Pugh, January 8, 1857, W.W. Pugh Papers, UT.
They held 49 of the 87 house seats and 23 of the 32 senate seats. These numbers underestimate the breadth of the Democratic 1857 victory. Of the 9 Know Nothing senators, 7 were hold-overs from the prior term who had not faced re-election, and the Democrats won an astonishing 82.7 percent of the races held outside Greater Orleans. After its annihilation in this campaign, the Know Nothing party would never again enter a statewide race in Louisiana.\textsuperscript{18}

New Orleans and its surrounding area remained the only Know Nothing stronghold. If Democrats had hoped that the new election law would change this situation, they were disappointed. With Know Nothings challenging the statute in the state court system, the Democrats had refused to participate in the June municipal elections, and consequently the Know Nothings swept the races. Not wanting to waste their efforts, the Democrats waited until the court upheld the election law to nominate candidates for the November election. Since this decision occurred in October, the Democrats had very little time to choose standard bearers and to campaign. Even with the new election law, Know Nothings continued to practice intimidation, and their candidates triumphed in every New Orleans precinct. The party controlled 30 of the 33 legislative seats in Greater Orleans, and only one of the three Democrats had been elected. The other two had been appointed by the legislature in 1856 after it threw out Know Nothing votes. These Greater Orleans seats represented 62.5 percent of the Know Nothings' total legislative delegation. In both the First and

\textsuperscript{18}Bee, August 3, 1857; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, January 27, 1858; James K. Greer. "Louisiana Politics, 1845-1861," Louisiana Historical Quarterly (June 1930) XIII, 267.
Second Districts, the Know Nothing candidates left the city with a lead. Their candidate won in the former, but lost in the latter as Democratic majorities in the country parishes overcame the city vote.19

By 1858 outside of New Orleans, politicians of all stripes called themselves Democrats. In February, citing the lack of any partisan differences and asserting that "the Democratic party has swallowed up or destroyed all opposition," the two competing political newspapers in Iberville Parish merged into a single Democratic sheet. With everyone a Democrat, tensions were bound to arise within the party. The anti-Democratic Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet mocked the party as a collection of Unionists and secessionists, pro- and anti-administration men, those in favor of re-opening the slave trade and those against it. The following year, the Alexandria Red River Republican separated the Democratic party into seventeen different classifications. Even the Democratic Louisiana Courier, while celebrating the power of its party, worried about its prospects because of the divisions within the organization.20

Headed by John Slidell, the major faction within Louisiana Democratic party backed the Buchanan administration and ostracized their Democratic enemies, especially those who had advanced Sigar's candidacy. In fighting back, adversaries of Slidell within the

19 Soulé, Know Nothing Party in New Orleans, 91; Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, January 27, 1858.

20 Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel, February 27, 1858 (quote); West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, March 26, 1859; Louisiana Courier, May 4, 1859; Mary L. McLure, "The Presidential Election of 1860 in Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly IX (October 1926), 638.
Democratic party adopted a policy which had proved effective in interparty competition: they questioned the Slidell-supported Buchanan administration’s commitment to the South and slavery. Reminding its readers that "the question of slavery is no new thing," an editorial called slavery "the great turning point in American politics" and cited it as the most important issue dividing the Democratic party. Though Louisiana, unlike other southern states, did not have a long history of adamant states-rights proponents, Slidell’s adversaries saw fidelity to slavery as a possible method to distinguish between themselves and the Slidell faction. Although this course had failed in Sigur’s congressional bid, with sectionalism on the increase across the nation, they hoped it could prove more successful in the future. 21

This move had two potentially dangerous consequences. First, in challenging John Slidell’s power, Democrats risked banishment from the party’s patronage trough. At least one Democratic legislator attempted to have it both ways. Trying to explain an anti-party vote, he claimed to follow party lines on party questions such as elections for speaker of the house. But, when more important issues arose, which he broadly defined as those affecting the state, the parish, or individuals, he did not know a party. A second more serious repercussion involved the disunionist atmosphere that the opposition created. Throughout the antebellum period, extreme states-rights views in Louisiana had been subsumed within the Democratic party’s caucuses and conventions. Many Democrats rejected these opinions, and

21 Plaquemine Southern Sentinel, January 20, 27, 1858; "True Democrats," (1858) in Charles A. Brusle Papers, LLMVC (quote).
still others realized that an open avowal of them would give the opposing party an opportunity to brand Democrats as disunionists. For instance, in the 1851 legislative and congressional elections, the Whigs had successfully exploited Democratic division over the Compromise of 1850. In the late 1850s, without a competitive Whig party to take advantage of Democratic schisms, the party's states-rights faction became more outspoken. They took secessionist talk from party gatherings and brought it out in the open. and some Louisianans began to consider secession as a viable option if antislavery forces gained power in the nation. 22

In the late 1850s, states-rights Democrats in Louisiana made their presence most felt during legislative debates regarding slavery. First, in 1857, the legislature passed a bill banning the emancipation of slaves. Second, the following year it debated another measure calling for the selling into slavery of Louisiana's free people of color except for those born in the state or having special permission to remain. Third, later in the same session, a legislator introduced the more controversial African Apprentice Bill that called for 2,500 African apprentices to serve in Louisiana for at least fifteen years each. Despite the label "apprentice," opponents of the bill justly claimed it would unconstitutionally re-open of the African slave trade, which had been illegal in the United States for over fifty years. 23

22 F.L. Claiborne letter in Pointe Coupee Democrat, April 10, 1858.

Proclaiming the bill, "the only southern measure introduced during the session," its proponents charged its detractors with aiding the abolitionists. They also portrayed themselves as democrats because their proposal would make African labor affordable by all not just the rich. Legislators against the bill claimed that its passage would actually backfire and give northern abolitionists ammunition to attack the South. By a 46-21 vote, the bill passed the House, but the Senate postponed its consideration indefinitely, 15 to 13. The close margin in the Senate led to charges that the bill had failed only because of the machinations of Senator Slidell. Supposedly Slidell, who worried that the bill's passage would hurt President Buchanan and the Democratic party in the North, had telegraphed an ally in the Louisiana Senate and convinced him to switch his vote. Regardless of whether Slidell's influence had doomed the measure, the voting demonstrates the difficulties the Democrats had in acting as a unit. In the Senate, 8 Democrats voted in favor of the measure and 12 voted against it.\(^\text{1}\)

In 1858 not only did the Democrats divide amongst themselves in the legislature, but they remained impotent in New Orleans. Years of thuggery in the Crescent City climaxed in the 1858 mayoral campaign, which according to a country parish newspaper, placed New Orleans "in

\(^{1}\)Hendrix, "Efforts to Reopen the African Slave Trade in Louisiana." 97-123; F.L. Claiborne letter in Point Coupee Democrat, April 10, 1858; B.H. letter in West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, May 29, 1858; Daily True Delta, March 21, 1858, in Brusle Papers, LLMVC. Hendrix does not find any correlation between the vote and the Slidell-Soule split, and his vote tabulation is different than mine because he labels two New Orleans Know Nothings (Adams and Laidlaw) as Democrats.
a state of anarchy.” Without any regular Democratic party in the city, the opposition to the Know Nothings came from an independent party which sought to counter “years of disorder, outrage, and unchecked assassination.” With New Orleans’s legacy of election day violence, the independents established a Vigilance Committee which seized an arsenal and occupied Jackson Square. The Know Nothings organized a counterforce, and the city seemed on the verge of civil war. At the last moment, a compromise was reached and the election was peacefully held. Fearing bloodshed, most voters stayed away from the polls, and the Know Nothings easily triumphed.13

Paradoxically, the Democrats, who in 1858 suffered from so few partisans in New Orleans that they did not nominate candidates, may have had too many followers in the rest of the state. The 1859 senate race again demonstrated the difficulty that Louisiana Democrats had in uniting without the presence of a strong second party. Senator Benjamin desired to remain in Washington but his long association with the Whig party and its American System made many Democrats less than enthusiastic about his candidacy. Others challenged Benjamin not because of personal animus but because both he and Senator Slidell lived in New Orleans. These Democrats felt that North Louisiana deserved a senator. With the weak Know Nothings unlikely to nominate anyone, both Benjamin supporters and detractors believed that their candidate could use Know Nothing votes to win the contest.

13 Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel, June 5, 1858 (quote); John S. Kendall, “The Municipal Elections of 1858,” Louisiana Historical Quarterly V (1922), 357-76; Soule, Know Nothing Party in New Orleans, 92-105.
The Democratic party caucused in an effort to unite behind a candidate but after forty-two ballots, the gathering adjourned without agreeing on a nominee. Many regular Democrats, especially north Louisianans, backed Fourth District Congressman John Sandidge. The caucus reconvened and after another inconclusive ballot, the Sandidge men withdrew in disgust. The remaining Democrats nominated Benjamin. Some Democrats agreed to back Benjamin because they feared the victory of a states-rights candidate more than triumph of Benjamin—"a true Southern man" though "no fire-eater, alarmist, agitator, [or] sectionalist." The incumbent received enough Democratic support and five Know Nothing votes to lift him to a narrow victory. Benjamin's opposition knew immediately where to place the blame for his triumph—John Slidell who, according to their theory, had again used intrigue to elect a candidate against the wishes of the majority.26

Describing the Democrats' problems, the speaker of the house worried, "I have nothing pleasant to communicate, the [D]emocratic party as found here is completely disorganized by the Union of the K[now] Nothings and disaffected Democrats," and another Democratic legislator later publicly complained that the good of the state suffered because of the divisions within the party. The Louisiana Courier agreed that "the parties appear to be both split and mixed up together." In the early weeks of the session, this disorganization crippled the legislative process. Constitutionally required to pass

26Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel, December 4, 1858, January 29, 1859 (quote); David W. Magill to John Moore, January 23, 1859, Joseph T. Hawkins to Moore, January 27, 1859, David Weeks Papers, LLMVC; W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, January 23, 1859, Pugh Family Papers, UT; Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet, October 20, 1858, January 26, 1859.
an apportionment bill before any other legislation, the process dragged on for weeks. The debate eventually culminated in the Democratic lieutenant governor's resignation from his post as president of the state senate. He resigned because his party could not agree on the apportionment bill. His leaving further twisted allegiances in the capitol. The anti-Slidell Democrats and Know Nothings disingenuously expressed outrage at the affront given to the lieutenant governor, while the regular Democrats saw the whole affair as a further attempt to split the party.\(^7\)

The division between Slidell and anti-Slidell forces that disrupted the legislature had even more serious repercussions in the 1859 gubernatorial campaign. With no organized opposition to the Democracy, receiving the nomination at the May convention appeared to be equivalent to being named governor. The competing factions within the Democratic party scrambled to gain control of the convention, and a former Know Nothing predicted that there would be "a strong almost invincible array of Anti-Slidell forces." Sensing the party's disharmony and realizing the importance of controlling the convention, Slidell travelled from Washington to New Orleans in March and, as in 1857, made a tour of northern Louisiana. A northern Louisiana newspaper branded Slidell an autocrat and chief ruler of an "organization within the Democratic party" that used the party for its own selfish purposes picking its nominees as much as two years before

\(^7\)W.W. Pugh to Josephine N. Pugh, February 17, 1859 (first quote), February 26, 1859, Pugh Family Papers, UT; Letter from W.M. Kidd in Vernon Southern Times August 19, 1859; Louisiana Courier, January 26, 1859 (second quote).
each election. In New Orleans, Slidell's competitors blamed the Louisiana Club, an exclusive gentleman's club, for choosing the Democratic candidates as they sipped champagne, and then undemocratically dictated their choices to the rank and file of the party.  

New Orleans remained the Achilles heel of the Slidell Democrats—now referred to as Old Liners. In the city, Slidell's adversaries coalesced behind his long time nemesis Pierre Soule. Soule had not participated in the 1857 campaign because he had been in Mexico unsuccessfully fighting for a railroad contract against a company in which both Slidell and Benjamin had significant interests. Back in Louisiana. Soule called for an April 4 meeting at Odd Fellows Hall to take advantage of the Old Line Democrats' disorganization in the city. In a highly symbolic move, the delegates elected Maunsel White as president. In 1848, White, a Zachary Taylor Democrat, had wasted his ballot rather than vote for Slidell for the Senate. White's defection from party ranks had cost Slidell the seat which eventually went to Soule. After selecting White, the convention denounced the corruption of the administration and of John Slidell and resolved to stand behind the doctrine of states-rights and state sovereignty. Its members, referred to as New Liners, called upon Democrats, Whigs, and Know Nothings to reject dictation of nominees and to rally behind Andrew S.

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28 John A. Smith to John Moore, March 7, 1859, Weeks Papers, LLMVC (first quote); John Slidell to Edward G.W. Butler, March 21, 1859, Butler Family Papers, HNO; McLure, "Election of 1860," 615-19; For complaints about Slidell's interference in northern Louisiana races see Vernon Southern Times, July 15, August 19, 1859 (second quote); Louisiana Courier, April 6, 14, 17, 1859.
Herron for governor. By selecting Herron, a legislator from East Baton Rouge Parish, they hoped to win converts in the country parishes.

To demonstrate their independence from the Old Line Democrats, the New Liners called for a different date for the selection of Orleans Parish delegates to the state convention. By 1859 all Democrats in New Orleans voted for delegates by precinct in the same manner that they chose legislators. The state Democratic committee, controlled by Old Liners, had chosen May 16 as the date for this primary, but the Odd Fellows Hall meeting selected May 14 instead. New Liners hoped that by gaining control of the largest delegation to the state convention, they could defeat Slidell's designs. Efforts to compromise on a date failed, and elections were held on both dates. Thus, Orleans Parish sent two competing delegations to the Baton Rouge convention.

Slidell struck back at the Odd Fellows Hall traitors. He used his influence in the national administration to oust two Odd Fellow Democrats from their federally appointed positions. He informed President Buchanan that his journey to Louisiana had been successful—the Old Line Democrats would have a decided majority at the May convention and would "drive the Souléites for ever from our ranks."

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On May 25 the statewide Democratic convention sat competing sets of delegates from two smaller parishes. After hearing a speech by Slidell's ally Emile LaSere denouncing the Odd Fellows Hall meeting, it rejected the New Line delegates from Orleans Parish in favor of Slidell loyalists. Subsequently, Soulé and his states-rights allies withdrew, and the convention proceeded to endorse the Buchanan administration. Six candidates were put forward for governor, and friends of each dutifully read letters from each one condemning the Odd Fellows Hall meeting. On the sixteenth ballot, the delegates selected Thomas Overton Moore as their nominee for governor. The nomination of Moore, a Rapides Parish sugar planter who had served in both houses of the state legislature, helped assuage north Louisiana Democrats who felt they had not received their fair allocation of offices. Though not a delegate to the convention, Slidell had gone to Baton Rouge to make sure it resulted in the triumph of his branch of the party. He expressed his pleasure with the nominations and asserted that "Soulé is completely annihilated" as the entire state ticket consisted of "what they call here Slidell men."30

Soulé and the New Liners did not concede the race. They realized that their only hope for winning the state contest rested on combining with former Whigs and Know Nothings. Soulé tried to garner Know Nothing party support by publicly voting its ticket in the June New Orleans municipal elections. In September the New Liners held a

New Orleans convention and passed resolutions condemning the Buchanan administration and the Democrats' maladministration of the state government. To emphasize their condemnation of the corrupt Old Liners, they referred to themselves as Purificators. and to attract support from all parties, they labeled their ticket simply "The Opposition." Although only five parishes sent delegates and over half the total delegates were from Orleans Parish, they proceeded to nominate Thomas J. Wells for governor. Wells, who like Moore resided in Rapides Parish, accepted the nomination and declared that he would redeem the state from "the degenerating and corrupting misrule of Slidellism." The meeting's resolutions did not mention Slidell specifically but condemned partisans who "enriched themselves from the industry of an honest people" and decried the rewarding of partisanship instead of merit on both the national and state levels.31

With two Democratic candidates in the race, former Whigs and Know Nothings faced a dilemma over which side to take. On one hand, they had long detested John Slidell, but on the other hand, they did not like the Opposition's association with the doctrine of states rights which many Louisianans saw as a code phrase for secession. A Know Nothing newspaper hoped that its party could provide the balance of power in the election, but it could not decide which candidate to endorse. A former Whig expressed the predicament of Louisiana conservatives:

31 Baton Rouge Weekly Advocate, June 12, 1859; Convention proceedings in Daily Crescent, September 21, 1859, Daily Delta, September 14, 1859; Wells's acceptance in West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, October 22, 1859 (quote).
The first impulse (that is amongst us old Whigs) is to go against the perpetrator of the Plaquemines Fraud...but John Slidell is a safer man than Pierre Soulé...this is sober second thought. Having all my old prejudices and not merely prejudices, but real objections to Mr. Slidell, suddenly starting up before me. I was ready to exclaim 'Your hour has come!' but when I reflected that he was the representative of the Conservative branch of the Democracy in this state I paused and came to the conclusion to vote for Barrow [a Slidell Democrat running for state legislature] in order to secure defeat of the great Southern States Rights alias Dissolution of the Union. branch of the Democracy. For these fellows who are eternally preaching northern despotism. Southern oppression and peaceable withdrawal from the Union...I have a most sovereign detestation.

The conduct of the Know Nothing West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter further demonstrates its party's difficulties. In the spring, it had asserted that though it bitterly opposed Slidell and Buchanan, its antipathy toward the ultra secessionist wing of the Democracy was even greater. By September, however, the newspaper had reversed its stance and come out in favor of Wells.12

Old Line Democrats mocked the pretensions of the Opposition party. Slidell expressed his view that the separation of the party into two wings actually helped the Democrats because it removed men like Soulé from party caucuses, and he later added that Soulé's party existed only in his imagination. An Old Line Democratic newspaper warned partisans that the Opposition ticket consisted entirely of ex-Know Nothings hungry for office. To combat Wells's candidacy, the Democrats emphasized the necessity of party discipline and asserted that the independent candidates ran only to advance their personal

12Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet, April 27, 1859; Thomas Gibbs Morgan to Henry Marston, August 23, 1859, Henry Marston Papers, LLMVC (quote); West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, January 29, September 17, 1859; Vernon Southern Times, September 23, 1859.
interests. They also ridiculed the heterogeneous elements that faced them. Not only did the Opposition include both Know Nothings and Democrats but even its Democrats were divided—they preached state rights but at the national level endorsed Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, who held views on slavery in the territories which most southerners considered unsound.

The gubernatorial campaign became a referendum on Slidell's leadership of the Louisiana Democracy. Neither Moore nor Wells canvassed the state, and Moore even travelled to North Carolina for a month during the summer, while his patron Slidell remained in Louisiana. Wells charged that any corruption amongst the state's recent governors stemmed from Slidellism, and the Opposition objected to his one-man rule in Louisiana. Wells portrayed himself as the man who would redeem Louisiana from this misrule. The president of an Opposition mass meeting stated that they had gathered "to express their dissatisfaction of the course pursued by the clique dynasty and the members of the Custom-house," and the meeting proceeded to denounce Slidell, the Custom-house, and all who supported these men. During the campaign, Opposition newspapers printed a long article detailing Slidell's corruption from the 1844 Plaquemines Frauds to the present and alleged that he had placed the unqualified Moore on the

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[3] John Slidell to James Buchanan, September 28, 1859, Buchanan Papers, HSP; Louisiana Courier, April 22, May 20, October 1, November 1, 1859.
state ticket in exchange for the money necessary to bribe legislators to return Slidell to the Senate.\textsuperscript{14}

In the concurrent legislative races, the candidates' stances on what should be done when Slidell's Senate term expired emerged as the most divisive topic. New Liners complained of his dictatorial conduct and contended that he looked out for his own interests before Louisiana's. They charged that Slidell ruled Louisiana autocratically, not only designating men for patronage posts but for elective offices, too. By 1859, many Louisianans had come to see Slidell as all-powerful. According to the Sugar Planter, which opposed Slidell, no doubt existed about his reelection to the Senate. Even if a majority in the legislature opposed his election, the West Baton Rouge newspaper despaired that Slidell would find a way to purchase or influence enough legislators to obtain victory.\textsuperscript{15}

One purpose of Slidell's spring travels through North Louisiana had been to advance his own Senate candidacy. With Benjamin's victory earlier in the year, both senators still lived in New Orleans, and the country parishes continued to clamor for a fairer distribution of the state's Senate seats. Slidell's trip had mixed results. Even an Old Line Democratic newspaper resented his attempt to influence legislative races. It claimed that North Louisiana would "never, NEVER submit to Mr. Slidell's interference in their home affairs."

\textsuperscript{14}Greer, "Louisiana Politics," 458-9; Louisiana Courier, October 13, (quote), October 18, 1859; Alexandria American, October 22, 1859 quote in Daily Crescent, October 29, 1859.

\textsuperscript{15}West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, September 10, 1859.
Another replied that Slidell had proved loyal to the South and no northern Louisianans were superior to him in ability. An Opposition newspaper and a Ouachita Parish Democratic meeting called on candidates to pledge themselves to vote for a country Democrat to succeed Slidell. At the same time, Slidell advocates reminded north Louisianans that Slidell spent as much or more time in their region than he did in New Orleans. They also attacked the idea that geography should overshadow principles in picking a senator.13

Old Line Democrats agreed that legislative races should turn on the candidates' stances on the upcoming Senate election to fill Slidell's seat. A Democratic ratification meeting did not refer to policy issues but instead resolved that it had "unlimited confidence in the honor, talents, and patriotism of John Slidell." An Old Line newspaper asserted that Slidell had always been loyal to the party and that it belittled the intelligence of party members to portray him as having an unlimited influence over the party. It added that "Slidell seems to be the terror of the would-be-somebody politicians of the age" who attacked him because they do not "receive any aid politically or pecuniary from him." Old Liners also contended that accusations of Slidell's omnipotence were exaggerated as the state's last two governors had challenged his wing of the Democracy.17

13 Odom, "Political Career of Thomas Overton Moore," 18; Vernon Southern Times, July 15, (quote), July 22, August 19, 1859; Bossier Banner, December 16, 1859; Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet, August 11, 1859; Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel, August 27, 1859.

17 West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, September 10, 1859; Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel, September 24, 1859, January 7, 1860 (second quote); Louisiana Courier, November 2, 1859 (first quote).
The result of the 1859 campaign revealed that the discordant Opposition had not really challenged the Old Line forces. Moore achieved the largest margin of victory of any antebellum gubernatorial candidate, winning 62 percent of the vote. In the Florida Parishes, North Louisiana, and South Louisiana, he captured two-thirds of the votes. Moore's victory in 46 of the state's 48 parishes perhaps best exemplifies his dominance in the state. Not only did Moore win in every parish but Orleans and Terrebonne, but he beat Wells convincingly in most of them, achieving over sixty percent in 35 parishes. The Democrats also obtained a large majority in the legislature, winning 79 seats with the opposition holding 36 and with 10 independents. Only Greater Orleans continued its obstinate opposition to the Old Line Democrats. Prior to the election Slidell had complained of the difficulty in re-organizing the Democratic party in the Crescent City after years of terrorism and the controversy surrounding the Vigilance Committee of the prior year. The Old Lines' Crescent City organ ran a series of articles entitled, "The Rule of Blood," which described the city's recent history of violently suppressing Democratic votes. No matter, Greater Orleans gave 54.3 percent of its ballots to Wells, and Old Line Democrats lost 22 of the 27 legislative seats in the region. (SEE APPENDIX B)\(^\text{18}\)

The elections for Congress further exhibited the Old Line Democrats' dominance in the state. As in 1857, Democrats won three of the four races, losing only the First District. In that race, a Know

\(^{18}\)John Slidell to James Buchanan, July 3, 1859, Buchanan Papers, HSP; Legislative results in Vernon Southern Times, November 25, 1859; Louisiana Courier, October 25, 26, 28, 1859.
Nothing candidate defeated the Old Line Democratic nominee and a New Line Democrat. Old Line Democrats complained that if the New Liner had not entered the contest, the party would have won the district since the combined total of the two Democrats exceeded that of the Know Nothing victor. They also claimed that their candidates six-fold majority over the New Line candidate represented the relative strength of the two wings of the Democracy in New Orleans. Outside New Orleans, Old Line Democrats ran virtually unchallenged. In the Second District, the Old Liner captured 57 percent of the vote, including 72.3 percent outside New Orleans. In the Third and Fourth Districts their dominance was even greater with Old Liners obtaining 89.6 and 73.3 percent of the votes, respectively.39

The legislature which met following the November elections immediately focused on national issues, especially slavery and the upcoming 1860 presidential campaign. While the protection of slavery had long dominated Louisianans' discussion of national politics, John Brown's unsuccessful raid at Harper's Ferry in October, 1859, had heightened the already strained atmosphere. A radical abolitionist, Brown had attempted to incite a rebellion among southern slaves. For many Louisianans, Brown was not a lone madman but an example of what all abolitionists wished to do. The Louisiana Courier referred to his raid as the "bold and unscrupulous attempt of the Abolitionists to trample under foot the constitutional rights of slave owners," and added it showed "to what dastardly extremes the enemies of the South

39Greer, "Louisiana Politics," 459-60; Louisiana Courier, November 9, 19, 1859.
are to determined to resort." In his inaugural, Governor Moore
decried the wide-spread sympathy for Brown which existed in the North
and warned that this northern sentiment had contributed to a greater
distrust of that section in the South.40

With this tense sectional mood and with a presidential election
impending, Governor Moore did not limit his comments regarding
national events to condemning John Brown's raid, but also broached the
subject of secession. He sent a mixed message. He declared that
Louisiana "has never at any period of our national history
countenanced extreme opinions or violent measures," but added, "I am
sure, however, that Louisiana dearly as she loves the Union will never
separate herself from her sister slaveholding states." The House
Committee on Federal Relations issued a report agreeing with the
governor. The report said Louisiana "desires to see the union
perpetual" but "recognizes no higher duty than the protection of her
slave institutions." While not desiring an immediate gathering of
slave-holding states, the report urged the governor to call for an
election of delegates if such a conference were called.41

Though not specifically mentioned, this discussion of national
issues obviously referred to not only Brown's raid but the November
1860 presidential election and a fear that the antislavery Republican
party might capture the presidency. In the Senate, the majority Old
Line Democrats asserted that they knew of a candidate who could defeat

40Louisiana Courier, October 19, 21, 1859 (quote); Governor Moore

41Louisiana House Journal, 5th leg., 2nd sess., 20-22; Resolution of
the Republicans and protect southern interests. They passed a resolution endorsing party chieftain John Slidell for the presidency, and several Louisiana newspapers concurred with this resolution. Slidell denied any aspirations for the position but, after admitting his egotism, celebrated the endorsement as "a great tribute to my services to the democracy of Louisiana."\footnote{John Slidell to T.J. Semmes, March 23, 1860, T.J. Semmes Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, NC (Hereinafter DU); McLure, "Election of 1860," 686-87; Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel, March 24, 1860.}

The national Democrats had scheduled their presidential nominating convention to meet in Charleston, South Carolina in April, 1860. On March 5, Louisiana Democrats held a convention in Baton Rouge to select delegates. The Old Liners dominated, with New Liners only controlling the delegations from a handful of parishes. The delegates passed resolutions endorsing President Buchanan and asserting Slidell's qualifications for the presidency. They did not pledge their delegation to a particular candidate, but in two measures indirectly indicated their opposition to Stephen A. Douglas. With Buchanan not running for reelection, Douglas was considered the front-runner for the nomination. The Baton Rouge convention resolved that the delegation, which had an anti-Douglas majority, would cast its vote as a unit, ensuring that it would give no votes to Douglas. The delegates added that they supported the rule requiring a candidate to receive two-thirds of the votes to gain the nomination. This
provision would make the nomination of Douglas, who controlled a majority but not two-thirds of the delegates, very difficult.\textsuperscript{42}

Though not in Louisiana's delegation, Slidell went to Charleston to work against Douglas. Slidell had long detested Douglas because he was a key Democratic rival to Slidell's friend James Buchanan. In 1858 the relationship between Slidell and Douglas had taken a further downturn when Slidell travelled to Chicago in order to work against Douglas's reelection to the Senate. In Illinois, Slidell's name had been associated with false allegations that a Louisiana plantation in Douglas's custody was notorious for the maltreatment of its slaves. Slidell denied involvement in the affair, but the two politicians' enmity continued to increase as they accused each other of attempting to make political capital out of lies surrounding the story. In 1859, Harper's Weekly even accused Slidell of trying to provoke a duel with Douglas. Inaccurately contending that for Slidell duels were routine, the journal claimed that the Louisiana senator, unable to defeat Douglas politically, would seize this challenge as an opportunity to murder him.\textsuperscript{44}

No duel occurred, but Slidell unquestionably desired Douglas's political death. In Charleston, as in most Louisiana conventions where Slidell played a behind-the-scenes role, his name appeared in

\textsuperscript{42} McLure, "Election of 1860," 645-649. Slidell's control of Louisiana's Democracy is evidenced by the vote on call to strike out the pro-Slidell resolution, which failed 206-34. For Soulé's opposition to the two-thirds rule see Pierre Soulé to George Sanders, September 24, 1859, Pierre Soulé Papers, DU.

\textsuperscript{44} Diket, Senator Slidell and the Community He Represented, 145-156; Harper's Weekly, January 8, 1859, p. 18, col. 4.
rumors that surfaced regarding corruption and bribery of delegates. A journalist claimed that Buchanan had sent Slidell to South Carolina solely to defeat Douglas's nomination, and in his memoirs, a Louisiana delegate agreed with this assessment. At the convention, northern and southern Democrats battled over the party platform's stance on slavery. Though Slidell had held moderate sectional views throughout his career, his hostility to Douglas led him to join southern extremists in this contest. When the South failed to receive the guarantees regarding slavery in the territories that it desired, southern delegates withdrew from the convention and called for a regional convention to meet in Richmond. Louisiana's delegation, by a vote of 10 to 2, decided to join this exodus. Because of the two-thirds rule, the remaining delegates could not muster enough votes to nominate Douglas, and they adjourned to meet in Baltimore in June.45

Louisiana Democrats reconvened on June 4 in Baton Rouge to determine how to react to the Charleston convention. Both publicly and privately, Slidell called for an endorsement of the conduct of Louisiana's delegation and urged that it be recognized as a true representation of the feelings of Louisiana's Democrats. He believed that the "safety of the South can now only be secured by taking a bold & decided stand for the plain[,] explicit[,] unequivocal recognition of her rights by the Convention at Baltimore." The Daily Delta agreed that the southern Democracy must resist the tyranny of the northern

majority, and a New Orleans meeting praising the delegates' conduct declared, "in the Union if we can: out of the Union if we must." The June convention returned the same delegation to meet with the other seceding groups at Richmond later that month.45

A year earlier Soulé had predicted that if the Charleston convention broke up, the "days of Jacksonian enthusiasm would be revived" and "political blackleggism" would be defeated. So, when Louisiana's delegation withdrew from the convention, the Soulé wing of the Louisiana Democracy condemned its actions. The Daily True Delta blamed the South's defection on unprincipled schemers, including Slidell, who had long controlled the federal government. The newspaper alleged that these men feared that a Douglas nomination and victory would end their reign of corruption. These placemen, who subsisted on profit and patronage, threatened the Union by joining southern fire-eaters in abandoning the convention. Two days after the Slidell wing met in Baton Rouge, New Line Democrats held a Douglas Convention in Donaldsonville attended by 21 of the state's 48 parishes. They condemned the Charleston delegation's course as making personal preference paramount to party discipline. Then, they endorsed Douglas, and claiming to represent Louisiana's true

Democratic party sent a delegation to the national Democratic convention in Baltimore.47

An examination of Douglas's leading supporters in Louisiana illuminates the strange combination of national and Louisiana politics. Slidell's opposition to Douglas actually aided the Illinois senator's cause among some Louisiana Democrats even if they did not embrace his policy regarding slavery in the territories. At a New Orleans rally, former congressman Isaac Morse joined Soulé in condemning the secession of the state's delegation at Charleston and pronounced his opposition to anyone "identified with disorganization or disunion sentiments and designs." Ironically, ten years earlier, Morse and Soulé had themselves been called disunionists when they were the two members of Louisiana's congressional delegation most closely associated with opposition to the Compromise of 1850. In 1850, they had preached states rights and attacked the compromise which Douglas had championed. As a consequence, Soulé had been excoriated throughout Louisiana, and Morse had lost his seat in Congress.48

In the late 1850s, New Line Democrats in Louisiana had taken a strong states-rights position to distinguish themselves from Slidell's Old Liners. In 1857 Third District Democrats challenging the regular party nomination had adopted a militant southern stance as a method to attack Thomas Green Davidson. In 1859 Soulé's Opposition ticket had

47 Pierre Soulé to George Sanders, September 24, 1859, Soulé Papers, DU (quote); Daily True Delta, May 10, 1860 in Dumond, ed., Southern Editorials, 86-9; Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet, June 10, 1860.

48 For pro-Douglas, anti-squatter sovereignty view see Alexander F. Pugh, Diary, March 12, 1860, LLMVC; Morse address quoted in Caskey, Secession and Restoration, 4.
again expressed their adherence to states rights, and this opinion had
cost them among former Whigs. Though Slidell Democrats endorsed state
rights themselves, in the tense sectional atmosphere. Soulé and his
allies had hoped to use a call for states rights to portray their wing
of the party as more loyal to the South. Soulé's faction lacked
precision both in describing how the Old Liners' position regarding
states rights was lacking and in defining what their wing of the party
meant by the term. Some equated it with a desire for secession, and
others with a strong proslavery position in Congress. Primarily they
hoped that each voter would create a definition with which he agreed,
and thus elevate the New Liners to power.

After adopting states rights as a clarion call for years, Soulé
and his associates did a political somersault in the 1860 presidential
campaign. Never doctrinaire in their adherence to state rights, their
antipathy toward Slidell easily overcame their fidelity to the
measure. In this campaign, they decided that Old Liners had become
more vulnerable to charges that they threatened the Union than that
they did not protect the South. Since New Liners' main objective was
to gain control of the state and not to advance a clear-cut ideology,
they easily transformed their stance. Thus, because Slidell and the
Old Line Democrats took on a distinct southern rights position by
allying with the seceding delegates at Charleston, Soulé and his
allies decided to back the national Democrats and Douglas even if this
switch contradicted their arguments of the past decade.

Old Line Democrats attacked the Douglas convention referring to
it as an unauthorized assembly of dissatisfied politicians trying "to
barter away the rights of the South for the spoils of office." They did not let the New Liners' abandonment of states-rights philosophy go unnoticed. A Democratic newspaper contended that "never was the principle of 'States Rights' so thoroughly carried out" as when the Baton Rouge convention praised the seceding delegates. Yet, the Soulé faction which had long flaunted states rights as its "hobby" opposed a convention which carried out its own principles. The article concluded that this group "opposes everything indeed that does not emanate from the faction, or assist its adherents to office and power." Later, the same newspaper claimed that though Soulé used to be popular despite his disunion sympathies, his stock had now fallen because of his advocacy of Douglas and his new role as a "Union shrieker."46

The Richmond convention met on June 12. and its members recessed to journey to Baltimore to give northern Democrats a second chance to adopt a pro-southern stance on slavery in the territories. Thus, delegations representing both wings of Louisiana's Democratic party attended the Baltimore convention. The convention sat the anti-Slidell group which joined the other delegates in nominating Stephen A. Douglas for the presidency. The southern delegations that had seceded at Charleston, including Louisiana's Slidell group, rejected this choice and nominated Kentuckian John C. Breckinridge. Speaking to the Baltimore convention, Pierre Soulé berated those who had left declaring that they had abandoned the Democratic party—the only

46Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel, June 2. (second quote), July 7, (first quote); September 29, 1860.
organization left in the country which could preserve the Union—and that this withdrawal could only lead to disunion. He later added that their bolt from the Democratic party would not help southerners but would result in the election of an antislavery Republican. Another Louisiana Douglas proponent agreed and chastised Breckinridge men arguing that the South's woes could be blamed on their breakup of the national Democratic party (the only group which could defeat the Republicans), and southern legislators who had repeatedly yielded southern rights, especially Louisiana's two pro-Breckinridge senators.  

Breckinridge and Douglas faced a two other candidates—Republican nominee Abraham Lincoln who did not run in Louisiana and Tennessee Senator John Bell. In May, the newly formed Constitutional Union party nominated Bell, calling him the only non-sectional candidate in the race. With the Democracy divided and with no other national party, Constitutional Unionists in Louisiana met on July 4 and called for all patriots to rally around the Constitution and Bell's candidacy. Much of Bell's support in Louisiana came from former Whigs who had long opposed the Democrats and preached adherence to the Union over states rights. One observed, "I can hear of but one old Whig who will support Breckinridge, but there is a good number of Democrats who will support Bell." These former Whigs, who had long detested Slidell and the Democrats, portrayed themselves not only as

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50 Waldo W. Braden, ed., "'Secession Means Disunion': A Speech by Pierre Soulé," Louisiana History VI (Winter 1965), 77-82; Bee, September 1, 1860; Maunsel White to James D.B. DeBow, December 10, 1860, James D.B. DeBow Papers, DU.

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defenders of the Union but also as representing the people against corrupt party leaders. A North Louisiana Bell supporter proclaimed that conservative men of his region embraced Bell's cause because they feared that a vote for Breckinridge could only plunge the South into revolution.58

Breckinridge supporters, who included Slide and Governor Moore, stressed that neither Bell nor Douglas stood a chance, and thus the election was a contest between their candidate and Lincoln. Slide believed Douglas had been nominated by a bogus convention and would not get a single electoral vote. His candidacy would only split the Democrats and ensure Lincoln's victory. Another called Douglas a traitor to the South and the Democratic party claiming he fought "the battle of the Black Republicans.... If he is a democrat, God save us from such Democrats." Congressman Davidson added that he had found it difficult to distinguish between the doctrines of Douglas and of Lincoln, and a Breckinridge elector asserted that Douglas's National Democratic platform was neither national nor democratic.59

Breckinridge Democrats also contended that only they protected southern institutions. They published The Challenge, a pamphlet that claimed Bell had voted with the abolitionists in Congress on the issue

58 Bee, July 3, 1860; Fred D. Tunnard Speech, July 4, 1860, LLMVC; John King to John Moore, September 7, 1860, John Moore Papers, HNO; For pro-Bell Whigs see unknown to Henry Marston, September 26 (quote), George A Freret to Marston, August 16, 1860, M. Watson to Marston, September 25, 1860, Henry Marston Papers, LLMVC.

59 For Moore's support of Breckinridge see Joseph P. Horner to Thomas O. Moore, October 8, 1860, Thomas O. Moore Papers, LLMVC; John Slide to Edward G.W. Butler, August 25, 1860, Edward G.W. Butler Papers, DU; Diket, Senator John Slide and the Community He Represented, 220-1; B. Haynes to W.W. Pugh, October 13, 1860, Pugh Family Papers, UT (quote).
of slavery in the territories. They also said that Bell’s candidacy only created a division in the South that would prevent the region from presenting a united front to the North. Constitutional Unionists realized the potential of this attack on their commitment to slavery. A former Whig senator acknowledged the difficulty in opposing Breckinridge because it “looks like consorting with the enemies of the South, giving them aid and comfort.” A Constitutional Unionist newspaper disparaged the Democrats’ “eternal agitation of the slavery question,” contending that they had relied on charges of abolition in presidential campaigns for more than thirty years. While these accusations had often been undeserved, they had never been more unmerited than in 1860. They called absurd the idea that Bell, one of the largest slaveholders in the South, opposed slavery.52

In the strained sectional climate of 1860, both Breckinridge and Bell proponents staked a claim to the Constitution but in different ways. Breckinridge supporters argued that the North threatened southern rights guaranteed in the Constitution, and that in order to save the ideals of the Constitution, the South might have to abandon the Union. A Breckinridge meeting resolved that “We will not surrender the rights guaranteed to us by the constitution.” Slidell wrote a public letter explaining the evolution of his position. When

52M. Gillis to John Liddell, August 6, 1860, Liddell Papers, LLMVC; Charles M. Conrad to John J. Crittenden, April 19, 1860, Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress (quote); Thomas Green Davidson to the People in Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel (Extra), August 25, 1860; The Challenge (1860) in St. Martin Family Papers, Manuscript Department, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana (Hereinafter TU); B.B. Simmes letter in Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel, July 7, August 11, 1860; Bee, July 20, August 5, 20, 29, 1860.
he first entered the Senate, he felt "the Union had no more devoted worshiper[sic] at its shrine than I." but he had now arrived at the conclusion that "unless some great. and...unexpected revolution shall take place in the sentiment of the people of the free States, we can not with safety and honor continue the connection much longer."**

In contrast, Bell supporters believed that the Constitution provided the South with protection within the Union. They attached themselves to the Constitution by identifying themselves as the Constitutional Union party and naming two of their New Orleans clubs the Union Guards and the Constitution Club. A Bell meeting passed a resolution in favor of the "Constitution. the Union. and Enforcement of the Laws." Constitutional Unionists also reminded voters that in 1856. Democrats had pledged their support to Buchanan claiming that only he could save the Union. Using this rationale. these same men should now support Bell. They called Breckinridge a sectional candidate and branded his supporters disunionists, adding that even if not all Breckinridge advocates were disunionists. all disunionists certainly were Breckinridge men.**

Despite the presence of three candidates in the race and the realization that the fate of the Union might hang in the balance at this election, the results roughly paralleled recent Louisiana contests. In an election in which over fifty thousand Louisianans participated. Breckinridge, the candidate of the Old Line Democrats,

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**Caskey, *Secession and Restoration*. 8 (first quote); *Weekly Delta*. October 6, 1860 (second quote).

**Bee. July 6, 16, August 3, 17. 1860.**
captured the state's electoral votes although he received only 44.9 percent of the votes. Bell finished second with 40 percent, and Douglas followed with 15.1 percent. As in all recent races, the Slidell candidate, in this case Breckinridge, performed best outside of Greater Orleans. He triumphed in North and South Louisiana and the Florida Parishes with an average of 51.9 percent of the vote. Furthermore, he achieved a plurality or majority in 37 of Louisiana's 49 parishes. While Slidell exhibited his ability to return a majority in the country parishes, he again failed at securing the vote of New Orleans. In Greater Orleans, Breckinridge finished third with only 25 percent of the vote. Bell, who won 9 parishes, led in this region with 47.9 percent, and the Soulé-supported Douglas received 27.1 percent of the vote in Greater Orleans. Competitive in the Crescent City, Douglas faltered in the country parishes, garnering only 10.8 percent of the vote in the other three regions. The electoral votes of Louisiana and the rest of the South, however, proved irrelevant to the national outcome. Abraham Lincoln, who had not even appeared on southern ballots, gained the electoral votes of enough northern states to attain the presidency without southern help. (SEE APPENDIX A)

After Lincoln's election, discussion over the steps necessary to respond to a Republican victory moved from theory to reality. In Louisiana, this debate involved the question of whether the state should secede immediately or whether Louisiana should meet with other southern states to decide what action to take. Fearing Lincoln's election, a Breckinridge Democrat had asked:

What are we to do? Shall we remain quiet and wait to see him inaugurated, and develop his plan and policy or shall...
we anticipate what it will be. And act at once to take steps for our self-preservation? What shall these steps be? Shall we have a Southern Convention of the slave states or will each state act by itself? These are important questions.

For some the choice was straightforward, and one firebrand declared that "The people of the City of New Orleans and of the state of Louisiana...are almost unanimous in their determination not to live under the government of a Black Republican Administration." Another wrote in his diary, "all the talk now is disunion." and a third equated the probability of Louisiana's secession "from this union with its rotten Yankey[sic] government" to the likelihood of the sun rising each morning.56

Slidell accurately assessed the situation. He felt that Louisiana was "not prepared to take the initiative in any measure of resistance." and he personally preferred a conference of southern states to secession. He recognized, however, that "a very large minority, perhaps even a majority of the people in Louisiana" did not share his convictions" and instead favored more immediate action. Slidell also realized that Louisianans did not have a complete freedom of action in choosing their course. He knew that "other states will move & the rest will follow with greater or lesser alacrity--Louisiana will not be the last to do so." Sensing the electorate's growing secessionist attitude, Slidell, ever the

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56 B. Haynes to W.W. Pugh, October 13, 1860, Pugh Family Papers, UT (first quote); Henry L. Webb to E.C. Wharton, December 10, 1860, Edward C. Wharton Papers, LLMVC (second quote); Alexander F. Pugh, Diary, November 18, 1860, LLMVC (third quote); J.M Gaulden to Dear Friend, November 5, 1860, William W. Garig and Family Papers, LLMVC (fourth quote).
practical politician, did not openly express his support for a regional conference but instead endorsed secession. Ten days after composing this letter, he wrote to President Buchanan. "Louisiana will act with her sister states of the South." and continued. "I see no probability of preserving the Union. nor indeed do I consider it desirable to do so if we could." Senator Benjamin, himself a moderate, concurred that "the wild torrent of passion" engulfing the South "can no more be checked by human effort...than a prairie fire by a gardener's watering pot." The day before penning this letter, Benjamin, in a public letter, had added to this excitement by agreeing with Slidell that since the interests of the South were no longer safe in the Union, secession was demanded.57

Like Louisiana's two senators, Governor Moore privately opposed immediate secession. Prior to the Lincoln's election, he had expressed the conservative opinion that even if the Republican triumphed, he would not favor secession and added. "I do not think the people of Louisiana will ultimately decide in favor of that course." After Lincoln's victory, however, Moore sensed that his prior views were at a variance with Louisiana's secessionist climate. Consequently, he "deem[ed] it wise to fall in line with popular opinion" and advocate secession. He urged the necessity of keeping his previous anti-secession opinion secret. He added. "Were Slidell

or I to plead for rational thought at these times our positions would be worth nil to us."58

Thus, the governor abandoned his stance against rash behavior he held during the presidential campaign and acted quickly. He called a special session of the legislature to meet in December. Addressing that body, Governor Moore emphatically called for disunion. Declaring that "the Northern mind is poisoned against us," he asserted, "I do not think it comports with the honor and self-respect of Louisiana, as a slaveholding State, to live under the Government of a Black Republican President." The legislature heeded Moore's suggestion and passed a bill calling for a special convention to decide the state's course. On December 12, Moore signed the bill which scheduled an election for delegates for January 7, 1861 and slated the convention to meet two weeks later.59

No partisan nominations were made during the brief campaign season. Instead, the race involved a contest between secessionists and cooperationists. The secessionists favored immediately joining South Carolina, which had seceded on December 20, outside the Union. The cooperationists included everyone not in the first group, and thus they did not possess a unified viewpoint. A New Orleans newspaper


described the difficulty in using the term "cooperationist" since "with some it means delay, with some conference with other states, with some it means submissionist." Most cooperationists desired Louisiana to act with the other states of the South in seceding or remaining in the Union. Because of the lack of party nominations and the short time for canvass, in many parishes candidates either ran unopposed or faced opponents who advocated the same position.⁶⁰

In addition to secessionists and cooperationists, the state also possessed some Unionists, but they were a small group which, realizing the difficulty in winning seats in the convention merged themselves with the cooperationists. Blaming Lincoln's election on the southern withdrawal from the Democratic convention, a Louisiana legislator claimed that the Republican would be impotent against an anti-Republican majority in Congress. This Douglas Democrat added that Lincoln's election though sectional was constitutional and therefore did not necessitate secession. Hoping that the slavery question could be settled forever, an East Feliciana Parish Unionist believed that "the election of Lincoln could be made a blessing to the country." but this sentiment was not widely shared. In New Orleans, a secessionist exclaimed, "the Union men at any price now stand in such a minority that they don't even speak of it." By December 1, all New Orleans newspapers acknowledged the need for, at the very least, a convention of southern states.⁶¹

⁶⁰Daily Crescent, January 5, 1861. (quote)

⁶¹Edward Delony to the People of East Feliciana in Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet. November 14, 1860; R.J. Bowman to Alexander K. Farrar, December 14, 1860. Alexander K. Farrar Papers, LLMVC (first quote); M.
Secessionists decreed their course the only way to protect the South and its institutions from the antislavery Republicans of the North. The Pointe Coupee Democrat asked its readers why they should remain under the rule of a government that strangled business and oppressed the state's energy. The heretofore conservative Bee agreed that "The North and South are heterogeneous and are better apart... We are doomed if we proclaim not our political independence." To sway cooperationists, a Madison Parish secessionist explained that the election of secessionists was important to show the North that the southern threat was real, and the Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel agreed that the North would only give in to southern demands after secession not before it. Prominent New Orleans Presbyterian minister Benjamin M. Palmer preached a sermon proclaiming divine sanction for secession. According to Palmer, the Republican victory already ended the Union because it made the Constitution an "engine of oppression" and since the Union could not be saved, he urged southerners to secede and therefore "save the inestimable blessing it enshrines." Most New Orleans newspapers reprinted the sermon, and as many as fifty thousand copies were distributed in the Crescent City alone. After examining the document, Senator Slidell announced that he had "never read anything with more pleasure."62

62 Pointe Coupee Democrat, November 24, 1860; Bee, December 14, 1860 (first quote); James Foster to John Foster, January 7, 1861, James Foster Family Papers, LLMVC; Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel, December 1, 1860; Benjamin M. Palmer, The South: Her Peril and her Duty. A Discourse delivered in the First Presbyterian Church, New Orleans, on Thursday, November 29, 1860 (New Orleans, 1860), quotes 12, 16; Haskell Monroe.
Secessionists stigmatized all cooperationists regardless of their actual stance as submissionists. In the weeks preceding the convention, the New Orleans Daily Delta and the Baton Rouge Daily Advocate did not distinguish among the opponents of immediate secession. A New Orleans secessionist described the cooperationists as "all such Abolitionists. Black Republicans. Union shriekers. Knee benders. traitors. &c that we have among us." Senator Benjamin warned of the "widespread ruin, degradation and dishonor" which would result "from tame submission" that cooperationists advocated. Others agreed that secession had become a matter of honor for the South. Discussing these allegations, a cooperationist wrote to Governor Moore that he and others had to hide their true feelings and come out in favor of secession because they feared punishment after Louisiana seceded.61

Louisiana cooperationists faced a difficult task. Branded as submissionists, they had to explain how their position protected the South and Louisiana better than secession did. In addressing this charge, some cooperationists demonstrated that the two groups differed only on means, not on the result. Asserting that his enemies had twisted his words, a cooperationist claimed, "I am no submissionist, or Unionist in that sense of the word; I am in favor of Louisiana

According to this definition, the only difference between secessionists and cooperators involved the phrase, "with the neighboring States" or as the platform of the Friends of United Southern Action iterated, it was not against secession but against "separate and hasty state action." Pierre Soulé, the most prominent cooperationist, expressed a similar attitude in arguing for a southern convention. Asserting "I am no submissionist." Soulé admitted that having "to choose between ignominy or revolution. I am for revolution!" But, like many other cooperationists, Soulé believed that if secession should occur, it should be in conjunction with the other slave states.⁶¹

Other cooperationists denied that the choice rested solely on when secession should occur. After listening to a fiery secessionist sermon, a church member complained that the preacher and others had forgotten the close bonds that existed between the South and the North. Claiming that separate secession looked very foolish, another cooperationist urged, "if we have common cause why not combine before....Let the whole South propose the conditions on which she is willing to remain in the Union." The Baton Rouge Weekly Gazette and Comet agreed that "there are remedies yet left us within the Union." The Sugar Planter appealed both to readers' patriotism and to their

economic interests. Reminding them that Lincoln's election had been constitutional, it urged them to stay in the Union as long as the South's rights were protected. The newspaper added that membership in a confederacy of southern states would put an end to the protective tariff on sugar cane which southern Louisiana growers required to remain economically competitive.

The January 7 election resulted in a triumph for the secessionists. They captured 52.7 percent of the popular vote and 29 of Louisiana's 48 parishes. More significantly, they secured at least 80 of the 130 seats at the convention, and a secessionist joyfully declared "we have all made up our minds to secede[sic] from the Union." As Slidell predicted, events beyond the borders of Louisiana had affected the debate in the state. By the time of the January election, South Carolina had seceded, and four other states had already elected secessionist-controlled state conventions. Once one state seceded, the probability of others joining increased substantially. For many cooperation no longer meant staying in the Union but now meant leaving it, and within two weeks a cooperationist would admit that "the strongest Union men have abandoned all hope of reconciliation & are calmly awaiting the crash of collision." A secessionist delegate claimed he would have preferred to cooperate

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55 Mrs. L.J. Stanton to Governor Moore, December 14, 1860, in Putzell, *Cui Bono*, 94-5; Mattie to My Dear Sister, [January 1861], W.W. Pugh Papers, UT (first quote); West Baton Rouge Sugar Planter, December 1, December 8, 1860; Baton Rouge *Weekly Gazette and Comet*, December 25, 1860 (second quote).
with other states but as they have decided to act separately Louisiana must join them. (TABLE 7.1)^

TABLE 7.1

Vote for Delegates to the Secession Convention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Secessionist</th>
<th>Cooperationist</th>
<th>Secession Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLORIDA</td>
<td>1522</td>
<td>2130</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH LA</td>
<td>8205</td>
<td>6178</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORLEANS</td>
<td>5056</td>
<td>4944</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH LA</td>
<td>6140</td>
<td>5556</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20923</td>
<td>18808</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The election did not follow the results of the November presidential race. Despite its importance, twenty percent fewer voters participated in the January contest. This absenteeism probably did not indicate a repressed Unionist sentiment, but instead stemmed from the lack of competitive races in many parishes—in 18 parishes the winner received over 75 percent of the vote. The vote of New Orleans shocked many observers. Because of the Crescent City's commercial ties to the North and Greater Orleans's repudiation of Breckinridge in the presidential contest, much of the cooperationists' hope rested in this region. Instead, Orleans Parish joined Madison Parish as the only two of the twelve parishes that had gone against

^66 John S. Foster to James Foster, January 11, 1861, John Foster Papers, LLMVC (first quote); E.J. Ellis to Brother, January 22, 1861, Ellis Papers, LLMVC (second quote); Dew, "Who Won the Secession Election in Louisiana?" 23; The most extensive investigation of the convention lists 80 members as secessionists, 44 as cooperationists, and 6 as doubtful, Ralph Wooster, "The Louisiana Secession Convention," Louisiana Historical Quarterly XXXIV (April 1951), 105; Edward G.W. Butler letter in Plaquemine Gazette and Sentinel, December 29, 1860; For realization that once one state left others would follow see M. Gillis to John Liddell, November 9, 1860, Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC.
Breckinridge in November to vote in favor of secessionist candidates in January. In Greater Orleans, the secessionists won 20 of the 25 seats contested, and a cooperationist lamented, "New Orleans after a conservative career of so long a time has at last disgraced herself by voting secession."67

The city's vote revealed the conditional nature of Unionism not only within New Orleans but throughout Louisiana. Describing the crowd at a secessionist Southern Rights Association gathering, an observer saw "all shades of politics" as people of "all avocations, occupations, ages &c stood together in defense of southern rights." Obviously, Lincoln's election was the most significant change which had affected secession sentiment in Louisiana. Labelling Breckinridge supporters as disunionists did not equal tolerance for a Republican president. As early as the day after the election, according to a New Orleans secessionist, Bell and Douglas men no longer "roll[ed] their eyes with such holy horror...at the names of secession." Most people probably agreed with the Weekly Delta on the impossibility of viewing Lincoln's election as anything other than a display of northern animosity. In December, the Bee, which had supported Bell, declared the Union severed and called New Orleans "the hotbed of secession."68

67 Roland, "Louisiana and Secession," 393-4; For lack of competition see A.F. Pugh, Diary, January 7, 1861, LLMVC; For a race by race comparison see Charles B. Dew, "The Long Lost Returns: The Candidates and Their Totals in Louisiana's Secession Election," Louisiana History, X (Fall 1969), 353-69; E.J. Ellis to E.P. Ellis, January 10, 1861, Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC (quote). In contrast, in the presidential election, only 3 parishes gave a candidate over 75 percent.

68 M. Gillis to John Liddell, November 24, 1860, Liddell Family Papers, LLMVC (first quote); J.M. Gaulden to Dear Friend, November 5, 1860, William W. Garig and Family Papers, LLMVC (second quote); Greer.
In addition to Lincoln's election, four other stimuli contributed to the change in sentiment in New Orleans. First, at the special meeting of the legislature, Governor Moore adamantly called for secession. Although he based his stance on the idea that a secessionist majority already existed in the state, his speech probably swayed some Louisianans who favored cooperation. Second, Reverend Palmers's widely-publicized secessionist sermon helped shape opinions not only in the Crescent City but throughout Louisiana. Third, with South Carolina having already seceded and four other states having already elected secessionist conventions, the southern climate had changed dramatically in the two months before the January vote. Fourth, Slidell-supported candidates had never fared well in New Orleans, and many New Line Democrats and Know Nothings probably refused to vote for Breckinridge because Slidell championed his candidacy. With the January race not an openly partisan contest, this anti-Slidell logic no longer applied. This combination of forces combined to produce a secessionist victory in New Orleans.

After the election, even the conservative *Daily Picayune* admitted that there was "no Union party left in Louisiana," and a diarist tersely concluded, "Cooperation is dead." The state convention met in Baton Rouge on January 24 with the result a foregone conclusion.

"Louisiana Politics," 628-32; *Bee*, December 22, 1860 (third quote). Prominent businessman and former Whig state senator James Robb recognized the conditional nature of New Orleans Unionism and left Louisiana for the North in the summer of 1860, James Robb to unknown, August 9, 1860, James Robb Papers, HNO.

With five other southern states having seceded by that date, for many Louisianans cooperation now meant secession. The secessionists elected Alexander Mouton, a former Senator and governor, as president of the convention. On the first day, a delegate read a letter signed by Louisiana's entire congressional delegation that declared "the time for argument has passed, that of action has arrived...we recommend immediate and unqualified secession." The delegates agreed. The last hope of cooperation within the Union—a call to send delegates to a Nashville convention—failed 106 to 24, showing that cooperation was a dead letter in Louisiana. On its third day, the convention overwhelmingly adopted a secession ordinance, 113 to 17, and subsequently all but 7 delegates signed the document. The pro-secession vote easily exceeded the number of the number of secessionist delegates present. A cooperationist offered an explanation for why he and others had voted for this cause. He unenthusiastically explained, "similar action having already been taken by her neighbors, Louisiana of necessity followed."  

After the vote, Mouton declared the connection between Louisiana and the United States dissolved, and pronounced the state, "a free, sovereign, and independent power." Then, as Governor Moore entered the chamber, a large banner depicting an eight foot pelican feeding her young was brought out to replace the American flag. A priest blessed the banner, military music played, and cannons boomed.

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70 Daily Picayune, January 9, 1861 (first quote); A.F. Pugh, Diary, January 8, 1861 (second quote); Roland, "Louisiana and Secession," 396-7; Official Journal of the Convention of the State of Louisiana (New Orleans, 1861); Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction, 8 (third quote).
Delegates entered their reasons for voting in favor of secession upon the official record and retained their pens as keepsakes of the historic moment. Subsequently, the convention recessed to reconvene in New Orleans where the streets were decorated with flags and transparencies, and fireworks exploded as secessionists paraded through the city. Upon reconvening, the convention selected representatives attend a conference of seceding states meeting in February in Montgomery, Alabama. And, on March 21, 1861, they transferred Louisiana's loyalty to the nation established in Montgomery—the Confederate States of America.71

In New Orleans, the delegates ratified the Louisiana Constitution of 1861, the state's fourth constitution in fifty years. The writing of the new charter took almost no time, for the convention adopted the 1852 constitution almost word for word, only deleting any mention of the federal government. Having revised their constitution twice in the preceding sixteen years, Louisianans saw no need for changes in their organic law. Jacksonian democracy had reached its limits with universal white male suffrage and all major offices being elective. Railroad fever had not dissipated during the 1850s, so activist government also went unchallenged. So, despite having an

71Roland, "Louisiana and Secession." 396-7; Official Journal of the Convention of the State of Louisiana; For a delegate's description of the events see series of letters from Lemuel Conner to Fanny Conner in Lemuel P. Conner Papers (Four January and two February letters at HNO, three March letters at LLMVC). For best description of events following secession vote see letter of January 25, 1861, HNO.
opportunity to rewrite the entire charter. the Louisiana delegates merely altered a few words.72

An overwhelming majority of the delegates agreed on the constitution and on secession. and these men expressed their intolerance for any who continued to object to their actions. The treatment of James G. Taliaferro, a delegate from Catahoula Parish who spearheaded the minimal opposition to secession, reveals their hostility. A former Whig. Taliaferro authored a protest which claimed secession would lead to anarchy and war which would destroy Louisiana. According to the protest, southern rights would be better protected within the Union than in a weak confederacy. The majority not only disagreed with his dour assessment but refused to include it in the official record of the convention. After this rejection, Taliaferro returned to Catahoula where he owned the Harrisonburg Independent. the only newspaper in the state which still opposed withdrawal from the Union. In response. secessionists immediately began raising funds to establish a newspaper in his parish to combat what they saw as his malign influence.73

As secessionists suppressed Taliaferro's protest. they also tried to hide the vote totals from the January election for delegates to the secession convention. Their 52.3 percent majority hardly

72 The 1861 constitution does not even merit a separate section in Warren M. Billings and Edward F. Haas. ed., In Search of Fundamental Law: Louisiana's Constitutions, 1812-1974 (Lafayette. La., 1993).

73 James G. Taliaferro's Protest. James G. Taliaferro Papers. LLMVC. For efforts to challenge his newspaper see Henry Peck to John Liddell. February 18, 1861, and L.P. Blockson to Liddell. March 5, 1861. Liddell Family Papers. LLMVC.
represented a mandate for withdrawal from the Union. Although this vote undoubtedly underestimated secession sentiment because many races were uncontested and because as other states seceded many cooperationists would become secessionists, it could prove embarrassing. Cooperationist newspapers demanded the official returns, but none appeared for months and then only semi-official results were published in the Daily Delta. These results slightly exaggerated the secessionist vote, crediting them with 54.2 percent of the ballots. The official returns would not be published for over one hundred years. Also, unlike in 1845 and 1852, the delegates also refused to allow the electorate to vote on the new constitution, justifiably contending that the only true issue—secession—had been thoroughly discussed prior to the January 7 election.  

Louisiana secessionists wanted the state to appear as unified as possible because, like most Louisianans, they realized the frightful consequences of their actions. After reading Lincoln's March 4 inaugural, a Concordia Parish delegate wrote to his wife from the Louisiana convention, "This is war...It is now necessary for the Southern Confederacy to make every preparation for a most desperate conflict." Addressing a militia unit after Louisiana had seceded, Senator Benjamin regretted that he spoke "in the belief that our independence is not to be maintained without the shedding of blood." Even cooperationists recognized the need to defend their homeland after Louisiana seceded. After the election of delegates to the

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74 Dew, "Who Won the Secession Election in Louisiana?" 23; A.F. Pugh, Diary, January 7, 1861. LLMVC.
secession convention, a cooperationist admitted. "If it comes to the worst, as southerners we must fight to the last man." Before Louisiana had officially seceded, Governor Moore, despite his earlier moderation, had already ordered the seizure of the United States arsenal at Baton Rouge and taken control of a pair of forts on the Mississippi River below New Orleans. Additionally, he had loaned arms and ammunition to Mississippi which had left the Union prior to Louisiana. 75

The secession of Louisiana raises the question of how a state which had always lagged behind the rest of the South in terms of secessionist rhetoric suddenly abandoned the Union in 1861. One historian has called it "perhaps the least likely state of the Deep South to attempt to break from the Union." and another agrees that "[a]t the beginning of the secession movement, Louisiana was without doubt the most conservative of the Gulf States." Unquestionably, throughout the majority of the antebellum period Louisiana had never welcomed threats to dissolve the Union. Very few Louisianans had embraced South Carolina's attempt at nullification the 1830s, and the state legislature had emphatically declared that it considered the doctrine to be treasonous. The Whig party in Louisiana did not share

75Lemuel P. Conner to Fanny Conner, March 4, 1861, Conner Papers, LLMVC (first quote); Benjamin speech in Daily Crescent, February 23, 1861 (second quote); E.J. Ellis to E.P. Ellis, January 10, 1861, Ellis Family Papers, LLMVC (third quote); Odom, "Political Career of Thomas Overton Moore." 25-7. For a cooperationist delegate who soon joined the army see David Pierson to William H. Pierson, David Pierson Letter, April 22, 1861, LLMVC; For belief that war would not occur see M. Gillis to John Liddell, March 9, March 15, 1861, Liddell Papers, LLMVC.

76Roland, "Louisiana and Secession," 389 (first quote); Caskey, Secession and Restoration, 16 (second quote).
the state-rights proclivity of its southern neighbors and instead embraced the more nationalist ideas of Henry Clay. The presence of sugar cane meant that some Louisianans welcomed national activism, at least in the form of a tariff. In 1851, after Isaac Morse and Pierre Soulé spoke out against the Compromise of 1850, the Louisiana electorate punished both men and their party. In 1856, Millard Fillmore, running as more of a Unionist than a Know Nothing almost captured the state’s electoral vote. Even in 1860, the combined total of Bell and Douglas votes exceeded that of Breckinridge by more than ten percent.

By the end of 1860 conditions had changed significantly. Slavery, which for years had been a topic in campaigns, completely overshadowed all other issues. In earlier campaigns, the extent of democracy, the Creole-American split, state activism, and tariffs could eclipse slavery or at least join it as topics of debate. Additionally, the presence of a vibrant two party system throughout most of the antebellum period helped suppress disunionist talk in two ways: it gave conservatives an electoral opportunity to punish the fire-brands, and it subsumed most fire-eating talk within the Democratic party. With the disappearance of campaign debate over many non-slavery issues and the absence of any organized opposition to the Democrats in the late 1850s, the protection of southern rights emerged as a way for disaffected Democrats to challenge the regular party.

Also, the rise of Jacksonian democracy contributed to secession. By 1860, politicians felt a need to cater to voters in a way that was unnecessary in the 1820s. In the 1820s, a Louisiana governor could
claim that the people of Louisiana should have no voice in government and with only property-holder voting, many of the people indeed did not have a voice in the political process. The elimination of property requirements for suffrage in the 1845 constitution and the reduction of residency restrictions in the 1852 charter along with the increase in the number of elective offices in both these documents gave the people a voice they did not have in the 1820s. By 1860, Senators Slidell and Benjamin and Governor Moore did not have the option of ignoring public opinion. With universal white male suffrage, more people had a vote and therefore a voice in Louisiana politics. Recognizing this change, both senators and the governor publicly championed secession despite their personal preferences for a less drastic approach.  

When examining secession in Louisiana, one must be wary of equating the earlier rejection of secessionist talk with a lack of commitment to the South and slavery. Louisiana's Unionism was always a conditional Unionism. Although most Louisianans may have opposed secession during the majority of the antebellum period, they did not believe that it was unconstitutional. Louisianans questioned the right or need to secede at various times, but because they felt it was unnecessary at that time, not because they felt it was illegal. If they believed that the best protection for the state, the South, and slavery no longer rested in the Union, then secession could occur. Until the election of the Republican Abraham Lincoln, Louisianans

Governor Thomas Bolling Robertson in John B. Dawson to William S. Hamilton, April 4, 1825, Hamilton Papers, LLMVC.
feared the fire-eaters' secessionist solution more than the problems they faced by remaining in the Union. Lincoln's election, however, convinced a majority of Louisianans for the first time that their state and its institutions would be better off outside rather than inside the Union. With this catalyst, Louisiana acted quickly and in a most southern manner, seceding just a month after fire-eating South Carolina.
EPILOGUE

On the night of October 12, 1861, in Charleston, South Carolina, John Slidell, along with his wife and family, boarded the *Theodora*, a small ship designed to slip through the Union naval blockade. After Louisiana's secession in January, Slidell had resigned from the Senate and then accepted a diplomatic post from the newly formed government of the Confederate States of America. He was embarking on the first leg of a journey to France to represent the nascent nation at the court of Napoleon III. As the ship carefully made its way out to sea, Slidell, always a meticulous planner, could be confident that the training he had received during his lengthy Louisiana political career would help guide him in his post.

Born in New York, Slidell arrived in Louisiana in 1819 and within a decade entered the state's political arena. His early political experiences provided him more with invaluable lessons than with victories. This period of Louisiana's political development emphasized personal relationships and ethnicity over partisanship. In 1828 Slidell made an unsuccessful bid for Congress, but for his efforts on behalf of the state's hero Andrew Jackson in the concurrent presidential contest, he received an appointment as a federal district attorney. In this patronage post, Slidell learned the importance of back room politics and manipulation from a master, fellow Democrat Martin Gordon. At first Slidell and Gordon were allies in the Jackson party, but Gordon would soon view Slidell as a threat to his control of the state. Using his close ties to the national administration, Gordon had Slidell ousted from his post in 1833. The 1830s also
provided Slidell with the lesson that many Louisianans, whether Creole or American, voted on the basis of ethnicity regardless of party affiliation. In 1835 Slidell's marriage into New Orleans's Creole elite provided him with a link to that ethnic group. In 1837 this connection proved to be insufficient as Slidell lost a contest for the United States Senate because several Creole legislators preferred a French-speaking candidate.

In 1838 Slidell waged another unsuccessful campaign for Congress. In this race, he discovered that Louisiana politicians could gain valuable political capital by attacking their opponent's fidelity to slavery. The 1836 presidential campaign had introduced Louisianans to the potency of charging one's opponent with abolitionist tendencies. Two years later, Slidell employed these allegations in a state contest for the first time. Slidell lost, but his assertions had gained his campaign publicity. After the mid-1830s, in almost every race, whether for president, governor, or Congress, Louisiana politicians would routinely accuse their opponent or his party of possessing antislavery sentiments.

Although Slidell suffered these early setbacks, from this period onward his career was primarily a success. More than any other Louisiana politician, Slidell capitalized on the growing importance of political parties in the state. Elected to Congress in 1842, Slidell stressed that allegiance to the Democratic party transcended any other commitment. A single-vote defeat in a 1848 Senate contest provided Slidell with the last reminder that political victory required unceasing vigilance. Armed with this final lesson, Slidell and his
chosen candidates would never lose a Louisiana race in the 1850s. From 1853 to 1861, he served in the United States Senate and ruled the Louisiana Democratic party. Employing the power of party loyalty, Slidell supposedly hand-picked governors, United States senators, and even a president. His enemies spoke his name with trepidation, and they, along with his friends, considered Slidell omnipotent. He deftly wielded the patronage of the federal government and his own wealth to maintain party discipline and tolerated no challenge to his rule.

Slidell’s success involved a blend of dictation and democracy. While apparently in control of the Louisiana political situation, Slidell, and the rest of the state’s politicians, realized that they often did not lead but followed the people. Recognizing the growth of Jacksonian democracy, they tailored their stances to meet the electorate’s views. A southern Democrat, Slidell, nonetheless realized the importance of a sugar cane tariff for Louisiana, and he along with most of the state’s other Democrats championed this exception to free trade doctrine. Despite its long battle against activist government, his Democratic party espoused state aid to railroads after the electorate ratified the 1852 constitution. Slidell also sent voluminous documents from Washington to his Louisiana constituents and travelled throughout the state to meet them. Most significantly, after a long career as a moderate on the sectional issue between the North and the South, Slidell reluctantly embraced the secession movement when he perceived that a majority of Louisianaans favored it.
As the *Theodora* sailed into the Atlantic Ocean on its way to Havana, the man who best personified Louisianans' antebellum political world could not have realized that he would never see his adopted state again. The combination of the issues which Slidell had deftly employed for so many years: the politics of slavery, partisan commitment, and the rise of Jacksonian democracy had thrust his state and the entire Union into a terrible war.
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**UNPUBLISHED SOURCES**


## APPENDIX A
### PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Vice President</th>
<th>Florida</th>
<th>North LA</th>
<th>Orleans</th>
<th>South LA</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>Jackson-D</td>
<td>Adams-NR</td>
<td>1552-76.8</td>
<td>841-68.2</td>
<td>856-49.2</td>
<td>1356-36.9</td>
<td>4605-53.1</td>
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<td>1832</td>
<td>Jackson-D</td>
<td>Clay-NR</td>
<td>1468-79.1</td>
<td>991-73.6</td>
<td>621-60.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>Van Buren-D</td>
<td>White-W</td>
<td>1404-67.5</td>
<td>722-49.2</td>
<td>760-50.8</td>
<td>956-40.1</td>
<td>3842-51.7</td>
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<td>Van Buren-D</td>
<td>Harrison-W</td>
<td>1683-51.4</td>
<td>1767-44.2</td>
<td>2175-40.9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Polk-D</td>
<td>Clay-W</td>
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<td>4106-52.7</td>
<td>3698-43.3</td>
<td>13782-51.3</td>
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<td>1848</td>
<td>Cass-D</td>
<td>Taylor-W</td>
<td>1865-51.9</td>
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<td>5678-46.3</td>
<td>3460-35.9</td>
<td>15379-45.4</td>
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<td>Pierce-D</td>
<td>Scott-W</td>
<td>2279-56.4</td>
<td>5560-56.3</td>
<td>6278-51.4</td>
<td>4530-46.4</td>
<td>18647-51.9</td>
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<td>1856</td>
<td>Buchanan-D</td>
<td>Fillmore-KN</td>
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<td>8909-58.2</td>
<td>3118-29.9</td>
<td>7596-60.6</td>
<td>22164-51.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>Breckinridge-D</td>
<td>Bell-CU</td>
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<td>10333-54.5</td>
<td>3301-25.0</td>
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<td>Douglas-D</td>
<td>1930-39.0</td>
<td>7143-37.7</td>
<td>6310-47.9</td>
<td>4822-35.9</td>
<td>20205-40.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY**
- D - Democrat
- NR - National Republican
- W - Whig
- KN - Know Nothing
- CU - Constitutional Union

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## APPENDIX B

### GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FLORIDA</th>
<th>NORTH LA</th>
<th>ORLEANS</th>
<th>SOUTH LA</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>1824 Butler</td>
<td>53-3.9</td>
<td>118-15.3</td>
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<td>1824 Johnson</td>
<td>1064-77.6</td>
<td>439-56.9</td>
<td>270-21.1</td>
<td>1054-33.6</td>
<td>2827-43.1</td>
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<td>1824 Villere</td>
<td>50-3.6</td>
<td>168-21.8</td>
<td>360-28.2</td>
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<td>1830-27.9</td>
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<td>1824 Thomas</td>
<td>191-13.9</td>
<td>10-1.3</td>
<td>14-1.1</td>
<td>21-0.7</td>
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<td>1824 Marigny</td>
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<td>631-49.4</td>
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<td>1828 Derbigny</td>
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<td>343-32.9</td>
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1859
Moore-D  2870-64.8  10681-65.3  4011-45.7  7892-68.7  25454-62.0  
Wells-O  1556-35.2  5672-34.7  4761-54.3  3598-31.3  15587-38.0

KEY
D - Democrat
W - Whig
KN- Know Nothing
O - Opposition
VITA

John Michael Sacher was born in Miami, Florida, in 1970. He grew up there and graduated from Miami Palmetto Senior High School in 1988. Subsequently, he attended the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. In 1992, he completed his bachelor of arts in history and graduated with highest honors from the university. In August of 1992, he enrolled in Louisiana State University on a Board of Regents fellowship. In 1994, he received a master's degree from L.S.U. While working on his dissertation, he remained at L.S.U. as a teaching assistant, an instructor, and on a dissertation fellowship. He is a member of both Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi honor societies. He will receive his degree of Doctor of Philosophy in history in December 1999.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: John Michael Sacher

Major Field: History

Title of Dissertation: "A Perfect War:" Politics and Parties in Louisiana, 1824-1861

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Paul F. Perrott

June 8, 1999

Date of Examination: