

## Documents

### THE LETTERS OF GODLOVE S. ORTH, HOOSIER AMERICAN

Edited by J. HERMAN SCHAUINGER

The year 1850 introduced to the people of the United States a decade of extravagant prosperity—a prosperity led by the rapid expansion in transportation facilities. This decade was to witness the glory of the steamships on the Mississippi River, the grace and speed of the American clipper ships on the oceans, the splendid adventure of the stagecoaches and the Pony Express on the western plains, but was finally to concede the superiority of the railroads as a transportation system.

At the same time the attention of the people began to be centered on one overwhelming national issue, as the dark cloud known as the slavery question suddenly reappeared on the horizon and slowly but terribly spread over the country. The territorial problem, raised by the cession of vast lands to the United States by its defeated neighbor, Mexico, seemed to have been settled by the Compromise of 1850. Men with vision, men who glimpsed the destiny of a nation united by iron rails from coast to coast, began to look for the best route for such a railway. In December, 1853, the Gadsen purchase was made, and the stage seemed set for Congress to authorize the shorter southern route from New Orleans to San Diego. However, a month later, in January, 1854, not only the play, but also the stage and scenery were junked, as Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois introduced his bill to organize the Territory of Nebraska. Out of this bill there came the Kansas-Nebraska Act. From that act came violence, bloodshed, and "Bleeding Kansas" where no law and order prevailed, fanatics were given a crusade, radicals were engendered from conservatives, and new political parties with new leaders were created.

Eighteen hundred fifty-four was an eventful year! The Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed, land offices were opened in Kansas, and the fight for control of that territory was on. The negro, Anthony Burns, caused a riot in Boston. Two new political parties, the Republicans and the "Know Nothing," caught and held the attention of politicians and people.

In the meantime, the Whig party ceased to exist and the Democrat party began to disintegrate.

The Whig party—conceived in opposition to Andrew Jackson, born with more fathers than it could recognize and existing in spite of them, compromising whenever possible, and even allowing soldiers in the house to sit at the head of the table instead of the old fathers—finally was brought to an early grave, choked to death, it has been said, attempting to swallow the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Taking little time to mourn, its followers looked about for a new party. A few joined the Democrats, others united with the Free Soilers, some found their way into the new Republican party, but a larger number were absorbed into the more popular “Know Nothing” party.

This party owed its genesis to a secret society, the Order of the Star Spangled Banner, founded on native American principles and especially pledged to an opposition to Roman Catholics, Irish immigrants, and German radicals. As a secret society, it lured thousands into its ranks and obtained its name from the answer of members to all questions about the order: “I know nothing.” Practical politicians recognized its value, old Whig leaders were soon high in its councils, and by May, 1854, the party in a half dozen states astonished the nation by electing unknown candidates. Its greatest victory was obtained in Massachusetts, where it swept the state elections.

The next year the party was important enough to call a national convention, which met in June at Philadelphia. There the Southerners gained control of the American party, as it was then called, and pro-slavery resolutions were adopted. This split the party, so its destruction was swift and certain. The Council of Indiana and other states separated from the national order and denounced slavery and secrecy. Members soon made haste to publish their withdrawal from the party. Although it finally nominated a presidential candidate for the elections of 1856, only one state, Maryland, supported the nominee, ex-President Millard Fillmore. It had failed, as had the other fusion parties, to organize a national party. The field was left to the Republicans, and the men of these various parties found in that party the answer to their demands.

Orth was an anti-slavery Whig, who realized the impotence of the Whig party, and was eager to have it fuse

with other parties opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Then, as the Know Nothing movement gained momentum, he was one of those who joined its ranks, and soon rose to the high position of president of the Council in Indiana for 1854-1855. After its downfall he joined the Peoples party and then helped organize the Republican party in Indiana.

His letters are filled with references to the order. In a letter dated February 5, 1855, he remarked that the Whig party could not then be revitalized. As may be seen there are very noticeable gaps in these letters to Colfax—one from 1849 to 1854, and one from 1855 to 1860. It is difficult to believe that Orth discontinued his correspondence with Colfax during these times, especially during the latter period, when both were engaged in the very interesting task of organizing the Republican party in Indiana. It is possible that not all the Orth letters to Colfax are with the Orth Collection at the Indiana State Library, but some still may be with Colfax collections in other depositories. A third group of Orth letters will be published in a subsequent issue. See the December, 1942, issue of this publication for the first group of Orth letters.

Office In La Fayette Ins. Co. January 28th 1851.  
Friends Pratt & Usher,

I have just learned that both our Members from this County are prevented on account of sickness from attending to their duties in your House.

The La Fayette Ins. Co. has a bill pending before you asking for an increase of their Capital to \$300,000, and as we are at present unrepresented you will confer a favor on me by attending to its passage in the shape as introduced by Mr. Patterson.<sup>1</sup>

We are very anxious to have this increase of Capital in order to meet the demands of our rapidly extending business. Since the 1st of May last I have personally established agencies in the State of Michigan, the City & State of New York all the New England States, and in the five British provinces of North America. From the enclosed "annual Circular" you will see that our Company in point of responsibility is second to none in the Union and our desire is to establish an Institution that will be a credit to our State as well as profitable to the Stockholders.

But we need a larger capital and we trust there may be no im-

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander L. Patterson, at this time a member of the state House of Representatives from Tippecanoe County, introduced on January 20, 1851, House Bill No. 168, which authorized the Lafayette Insurance Company to increase its capital stock. See *Journal of the House of Representatives of Indiana, 1850-1851*, p. 248.

pediment thrown in our way as there can be no substantial reason why we should not have this increase.

You may use this letter & the facts therein stated in such a way as you may deem advisable to accomplish the object our Company has in view. . . .

P.S. You will see by reference to the original Charter that our stockholders are individually liable for *all* the debts & obligations of the Company, and I can safely say that our stockholders in point of wealth & integrity compare favorably with the best Citizens of the State.

[Orth to Pratt, June 2, 1851. Partnership business.]

[Orth to Pratt, August 27, 1851. Same; concerning a bill.]

[Orth to Pratt, November 21, 1851. Same.]

Friend Colfax—

La Fayette Ind. July 4—1854—

If the weather were not so excessively hot I would write you a long letter. The signs of the times are propitious and augur well for the Friends of Freedom & Temperance.

As you will doubtless attend the Gathering of the People at Inds on the 13th inst. my object in writing is to request you to bring Mrs Colfax with you this far and let her rusticate at "Oak-Dale" with Mrs O, while you and I go to the Convention<sup>2</sup>— Be here if possible by the 11th or even a day sooner, and we will go next day to be on hand in time.

*The Whigs must control that convention—without SEEMING to do so. . . .*

Friend Colfax:—

La Fayette Ind. Augt 19—1854—

I was glad to learn thro, our mutual friend George, that Mrs C. contemplates a visit to La Fayette and would spend some time at our house. I need not assure that Mrs O & myself will be very happy to have her come and make OakDale her home until after the Campaign, when her liege lord will be relieved from the toils of the contest, and return crowned with the laurels of Victory!<sup>3</sup>

An hour ago however I met Dr. Darning who says he wrote you yesterday that it would not be advisable for Mrs C. to visit La Fayette at present on account of the Cholera &c. When I told the Dr. that the calculation was for Mrs C. to spend most, if not all, of her time with us in the Country, he said "Write Brother Colfax and say to him, in my opinion it would be perfectly safe for his Lady to come & stay at OakDale." My object therefore in writing now, is to add the last opinion of the Dr. and to say that we trust Mrs C. will not fail to come as contemplated. . . .

Friend Colfax—

La Fayette Sep 25/54.

Our Central Com: will send you an invitation to Oxford to address our Citizens on next tuesday night— I have written to Parker

<sup>2</sup> Orth married Mary A. Ayers of Lafayette on August 28, 1850; his first wife died in 1849.

<sup>3</sup> Colfax was running for Congress, and was elected as a representative to the Thirty-Fourth Congress, 1855-1857.

to make no appointment for you on that day— Mrs C. has gone to Inds. but will return to OakDale on Saturday.

I leave in the morning (in company with Dr. McFarland) and shall do what we can to aid the good cause in the Counties of Porter, LaPorte, St. Joe, Elkhart, Marshall, Fulton & Cass—

I will send my carriage to Oxford for you, on Monday—& perhaps Mrs C & Mrs O. will go along to escort you to OakDale. I regret I shall not be at home during your visit—but you must make yourself at home—

I was on the eve of making arrangements to visit Slaughter's District, when I recd. the invitation to go North. Slaughter needs help and I have succeeded in getting H. S. Ellsworth<sup>4</sup> to go down this week.

The work goes bravely on—and a glorious victory awaits the friends of Freedom Temperance and our *Native Land*<sup>5</sup>. . . .

P.S. You must not fail to attend on Tuesday as the notices will be given today—

Dear Colfax—

La Fayette Oct 14, 1854—

Having doubtless ere this received the congratulations of your immediate neighbors & friends upon the glorious result of last Tuesday it is now proper to receive those of your friends at a distance, but who feel quite as lively an interest in that result.<sup>6</sup>

The verdict of the people in the states of Inda, Ohio & Penna. is not easily misunderstood.<sup>7</sup> It shows a deep seated feeling in favor of Human Freedom that demagogues cannot quench—and it shows also a fine determination that hereafter none but Americans in principle as well as by birth, shall rule America—

It now behooves those who are clothed with authority, to exercise it with such prudence & moderation as not to impair the confidence which the people have so generously re[a]ssured— Let this be done and all will be well for a long & glorious future . . . .

Friend Colfax—

La Fayette Nov 7/54

I have intended for the last few days to write to you but have been & still am very busily engaged— I sold my farm—moved to town—and am reconstructing my Law business— I hope in a day or two to write you fully. . . .

<sup>4</sup> Could this have been Henry W. Ellsworth (1814-1864) who served as *charge d'affaires* to Sweden and Norway from 1845 to 1849 and who then resumed the practice of law at Lafayette?

<sup>5</sup> The anti-slavery men were not adverse to receiving support from the temperance movement; the "native land" friends referred to the nativist movement.

<sup>6</sup> Orth is referring to Colfax's election to Congress.

<sup>7</sup> In the elections of 1854, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania were called October states, as they held the elections in that month. In Indiana all the congressmen but two were Anti-Nebraskans. In Ohio the Anti-Nebraskans sent a solid delegation to Congress. In Pennsylvania the Whigs, Know-Nothings, and Free Soil Democrats elected a Whig governor, and sent fifteen Anti-Nebraska Whigs, five Anti-Nebraska Democrats, and a Native American to Congress.

My dear Colfax:—

OakDale—Wed night—

I received your letter of the 16th this afternoon and to a friend so candid as yourself I cannot speak save in the language of unreserved frankness— That my name should be associated with so exalted a position as that of U. S. S. is to me certainly a matter of sincere gratification, and I trust that (whether success or defeat be my lot) I shall ever retain a warm & lasting remembrance of the efforts of those, who are now enlisted in my behalf— Let this suffice.

Since the 13th July I have been frequently approached on the Senator question—by personal friends in several parts of the State, but thus far have studiously avoided a discussion of the matter except with one or two confidential friends— The election resulting as it has, I do not consider it improper to talk about it at least when spoken to—

In the first place, the Senate from present appearances will be a tie, if we count the hold-overs at 15 dem. & 10 Whig— But of the 15—I feel pretty well assured that Cutshaw<sup>8</sup> of Washington & perhaps Hooks<sup>9</sup> of Ripley will go with the People— This was understood to be their position during the Campaign—

But suppose it be a *tie* will they take the responsibility of a postponement? You may reply “they did so once before” True but the Legislature met annually and besides they had the excuse (lame one I grant it.) of having the popular vote on their side— But it’s useless to conjecture— If they have the power and will exercise it—we shall, two years hence, beat them worse than now.

The next Legislature will have to elect a Senator—a State Printer—a *State Agent*—and may (if they see proper) erect a special Bank Department, and thus make a good office for some one—

I agree with you as to the fusion—and if we have those four officers to elect (and the Speaker) makes 5.) it will be well (if necessary.) to give the Anti N. [Nebraskan] Democrats 2, the Free-soilers one or two & the Whigs one or two— Riley<sup>10</sup> I regret to say is defeated by that mass of moral putridity Walpole—or he would do well for Speaker. Sol: Meredith<sup>11</sup> will want the place—and if he does we *must use* him. Parker is the only man I have to fear—(at least so I think now.) Marshall is not formidable & Dick Thom[p]son—is rather too much of a National Whig to have strength among Fusionists. If Sol’s heart is on the Speakership his election will hurt Parker, besides Sol’s influence could be had for Senator in exchange

<sup>8</sup> Townsend Cutshaw was a member of the state Senate from Washington County, 1853-1856. See *Journal of the Senate of Indiana, 1853-1854*, p. 4; *ibid.*, 1855-1856, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> This was probably Luther Shook of Ripley County who served in the state Senate, 1853-1856.

<sup>10</sup> Reuben Riley, of Hancock County, the father of James W. Riley, served in the Indiana House of Representatives from 1845 to 1846. Thomas D. Walpole was the representative from Hancock County, 1855-1856.

<sup>11</sup> Solomon Meredith was a member of the state House of Representatives from Wayne County at this time. He was long a prominent figure in that county. See *Indianapolis Sentinel*, October 22, 1875.

for Speaker votes— I may be wrong in this conjecture—but think of it— Test,<sup>12</sup> if he remembers old scores, ought to be for me—we are personally quite friendly—and unless he can make something by going against me he will not do it. I believe I can safely rely on Stanton (the other Rep from Wayne.) especially if Julian<sup>13</sup> has no show—and as to the Senator Burke<sup>14</sup>—he & I are very friendly and I dont see how he could possibly be found against me.

In reference to this White Water region I shall sound Holloway tomorrow—and if he is (as he ought to be.) for me—I shall make large inroads on Parker— The delegation from Jefferson (so soon as Marshall is out of the way) will be for me. Clark & Floyd delegation will be secured by Patterson and Thomasson<sup>15</sup> for me.

In the center of the State I cannot safely calculate on anything as yet—but I think I have secured Geo. Dunn's influence— Parker & Suit will be for me— Dr. Thomas<sup>16</sup> of Monticello is warmly so—and of course our 2 Reps & Senators.

Bearss<sup>17</sup> is elected and is warmly enlisted in my behalf—Is in fact the first person who broached the matter to me.

Sam Brenton<sup>18</sup> has been written to, by our 2 Methodist Clergymen & several of the laity—and urged to have his district right, and if Bishop Ames takes any part in the matter it will be for me—at least so he assured Mrs. O's father—who is Anti N. [Nebraskan] Demo & Methodist.

I think I can calculate on Harris<sup>19</sup> of Elkhart—and if Howe is elected in LaGrange, a line from you will be sufficient to fix him—

You were right when you say no time should be lost—and so soon as I have a complete list of the members I can write you more definitely.

What you say of Temperance shall be *strictly observed*—and in doing so I but live up to my own convictions of right— The social

<sup>12</sup> Charles H. Test and Thomas Stanton, both of Wayne County, served as members of the Indiana House of Representatives in 1855.

<sup>13</sup> George W. Julian (1817-1899) served in the state House of Representatives in 1845 from Wayne County. He was a prominent member of the Free Soil party until 1856, when he was a delegate to the Republican National Convention and chairman of the committee on organization.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis Burke, of Wayne County, served in the Indiana Senate, 1841-1844, 1855-1858.

<sup>15</sup> William P. Thomasson represented Harrison County in the state House of Representatives from 1818 to 1820.

<sup>16</sup> James H. Thomas, of White County, served in the Indiana House of Representatives in the session of 1855.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel R. Bearss, representing Wabash and Miami counties, was a Whig member of the state Senate in 1855.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Brenton of Fort Wayne had also been elected to the Thirty-Fourth Congress.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas G. Harris was a member of the state Senate from 1853 to 1855 and represented Elkhart and La Grange counties. John B. Howe represented La Grange, Noble, Steuben, and De Kalb counties in the state House of Representatives, 1840-1841.

glass—with me for many years—yea for life—has been like Angels' visits.

As to the order<sup>20</sup>—I have made arrangements since the election, for our Secy—to visit as many Counties as possible (as especially those not fully organized.) and push on the work with as much energy as possible— Now is the time to enlist many—who were pledged to old party associations and could not go with us— Our G. C.<sup>21</sup> meets in Nov—I will be present and shall do what I can to carry out your suggestions. They meet my hearty approval. . . .  
[In the margin appears this endorsement: G. L. Orth, Lafayette Ia., Oct 20th, /54.]

My dear Colfax:—

Friday night—Nov 10/ 54.

I owe you an apology for my long silence— I give it to you and of its sufficiency you must be the judge. I sold my farm recently—and had to make all the arrangements for disposing of my stock &c—moving to town—attending Convention—reconstructing my Law Firm & settling a seven years partnership—and this evening returned from a business trip to Oxford—wet, cold, and fatigued— On Tuesday morning I leave with Mrs 18 [Orth] for Cinti.<sup>22</sup> whither I wish you to write me fully, directing your letter to the care of the "Woodruff House." Of course all these personal professional matters have prevented me from bestowing much time to politics— At Indianapolis nothing very definite was said or done, everything being in rather a chaotic state. I found that 23-1-9-22-21-9 [Parker] is not as strong as was anticipated— 10-1-20-13-21 [Wayne] County is not for him because 8-21-9-21-16-12-19-7 [Meredith] is in the field and will get that delegation—though, being elected to the Legislature our State Constitution disqualifies him. Whether the members will disregard it and elect him remains to be seen—I could not hear of any other County being for him. 7-21-13-9-20 [Henry] County will go first for 21-3-3-12-18-19 [Elliott]<sup>23</sup>— and after him I am assured by my old friend 8-24-9-23-7-20 [Murphy]—their delegation will go for me— At least he says I have many friends there who will interest themselves in bringing about such a result. 19-21-16-19 [Test] says that he is warmly disposed toward me, and told me, that his County man, being out of the way, he will be for me— He ought to be, in consideration of old chores— He took special pains to introduce me to the members in the adjoining counties with whom I was not acquainted— 8-1-9-14-7-1-3-3. [Marshall] has some friends and in a quarter too, not anticipated by me. For instance 7-18-10-1-9-16 [Howard] County—with whose representative you are acquainted and to

<sup>20</sup> This probably refers to the Know Nothing Society.

<sup>21</sup> G.C. probably stands for Grand Council.

<sup>22</sup> Professor John D. Barnhart worked out Orth's code. Orth may have slipped in writing down the numerals; for instance, in the word 19-21-16-19 he probably intended 14 for 16, which would make it Test and not Tedt.

<sup>23</sup> Jehu T. Elliott, from Henry County, was a member of the Indiana Senate from 1839 to 1842. Eli Murphey, also of Henry County, served in the Senate from 1845 to 1848.

whom a letter from you would be of service. He is a candidate for Speaker—this fact may be of service to you.

But M is not strong—he was not at Inds. and his health is represented as being quite delicate—19-7-10-8-23-14-18-13's [Thompson] name was not mentioned tho' his County was not strongly represented there— The member from Sullivan will vote with us, as his pledge had a "proviso" to it.— The Whig from Clay who was elected by the old Lines is unpledged to them & the probability is will go with us.

A friend told me that 16-21-26-9-21-21-14 [Defrees] preferred M....., first—and in the event of his health being too delicate, he would use his influence for me. This, to me, is very unexpected—as I supposed I should be his 4th. choice at least. Do you know anything of his position?

I did not approach 6-1-9-9-20 [Barry] as he is not at all reliable. We are personally very friendly—and I am satisfied he will do nothing against me. A [man] stronger than he, is working warmly zealously and effectively for me. I refer to 11-9-1-10-26-18-9-16 [Crawford].<sup>24</sup> He is visiting several counties *officially*, and will continue to do so until the meeting of the Legislature. He writes to me very encouragingly—and from portions of the state too where I had but little to hope for.

3-1-13-21 [Lane] is also in the field, but I should think with little prospect of success— His Congressional record shows *darkly* against him in these Anti-Slavery times— He made nothing at the Convention, although extremely active. The truth is, the opposition are doing all in their power to increase the number of Candidates by promises which they never mean to perform, thereby hoping to create dissension and accomplish a victory.

They have not approached *me*, nor will they, for while at Indianapolis Col. 8-1-20 [May] confidentially informed an especial (Democratic.) friend of mine, that my defeat was determined upon by the old Liners and that they would spare no means to accomplish their object. They regarded me as the Prince of Ruin, who had done too much mischief to meet with any lenity. In this, they honor me overmuch! but I was confirmed in the belief that such is their intention, by a remark made at Oxford last night by a prominent Old Liner to a friend of mine. He said their mottoe was "Anybody but, 18-9-19-7 [Orth].

An hour or two since I received a letter from 19-7-18-8-1-14, [Thomas] representative from 10-7-12-19-21 [White] County—saying that after taking a pledge of secrecy which was exacted, he was informed that if he would consent to vote for an old-liner he could have

<sup>24</sup> There are three Crawfords to whom Orth might possibly be referring: George H. served in the state House of Representatives, 1832-1833, from Allen, Elkhart, La Grange, La Porte, and St. Joseph counties and represented La Porte County again in 1857; he was also a member of the Indiana Senate from 1836 to 1839 from De Kalb, Elkhart, La Grange, Noble, and Steuben counties. Robert H. Crawford, of Decatur County, was a member of the state House of Representatives, 1850-1851, and of the state Senate, 1851-1852. Thomas Crawford was a state representative for Jefferson County, 1820-1821.

\$500—that as he was a Democrat and represented a Democratic district he could do so with safety and sustain himself— This “Satan” further informed him—that the old-lines only needed 3 more to accomplish their object.

Our friend doubtless gives this an importance which it does not merit, but he is evidently alarmed and desires my advice & assistance in fixing the bribery beyond escape— He has taken a week for reflection before giving his answer to the tempter and in the meantime I shall send a prudent friend to see him—and act in concert, if necessary, to accomplish his object—

I will now give you a piece of news that will doubtless surprise you—

Your friend 8-21-9-9-12-26-12-21-3-16. [Merrifield]<sup>25</sup> has written a *confidential* letter to 6-18-20-16 [Boyd] Methodist Clergyman of this place—stating that he desired his advice for whom he should vote as between 7. 10. 21-3-3-14-10-18-9-19-7. [H. W. Ellsworth] and myself!!

The answer he received was pungent— He was told explicitly what 6-18-20-16. [Boyd] thought M’s duty to be under the circumstances, and expressed surprise that he should desire any advice on the subject—and further that if he had 20 votes they should all be given for me.

The difficulty in our county has all subsided or rather there never was any thereabout or apprehended—and 11-3-1-9-22 [Clark]<sup>26</sup> will be permitted to take his seat—

I think letters from you to 6-9-21-13-19-18-13 [Brenton] and Judge 23-21-19-19-12-19 [Pettit]<sup>27</sup> would be of service to the cause, and also to 16-24-13-13 [Dunn] of 11-1-14-14 [Cass]— but of this you can best judge. . . .

P.S. If you have not received my key this letter will be rather hard to manage.

Friend Colfax:—

Inds. Dec 1, 1854—

You see I have commenced writing you a letter, but it is a matter of much doubt whether I shall give you any interesting news. The “politicians” who are, and have for the last ten days, been congregating around the Capitol, can form no reliable opinion as to the action of the future— Each one is doubtless intent upon some bargain, intrigue or accident which may in some way or other ensue to his own, or the benefit of some friend. Suffice it to say all is chaos and confusion—and the opinions and plans of yesterday yield as rapidly to those of today—and they made those of the preceeding day yield to them.

Candidates for all the offices are multiplying, including those for Senator.

Marshal[1] is gaining ground (or rather he was up to 2 or 3 days

<sup>25</sup> George C. Merrifield, of St. Joseph County, served in the Indiana House of Representatives, 1855-1858.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas H. Clark represented Tippecanoe County in the state House of Representatives in 1855.

<sup>27</sup> John Pettit (1817-1877) was a member of the state House of Representatives, 1838-1839, from Tippecanoe County.

ago.) and at the expense, thus far, of Parker, Meredith & Smith (Tom.)<sup>28</sup> The old line Whigs (Silver Greys)<sup>29</sup> will be clamorous for him—but his location & bad health are a heavy drawback, and it strikes me that their effort will have the effect of driving the A. N. Dems against him—

Thompson is here, and it is understood is not a candidate, tho doubtless awaiting the chapter of accidents. Of one thing I am most thoroughly convinced—if the election is not brought on within the first ten days of the Session, we shall have inextricable confusion and trouble—with what result God only Knows— *If we split—this will be the rock.*

I have thus far learned nothing to show that any one whom we might claim is in the least disaffected.

Judge Biddle is here, and has *volunteered* to come down in January and give me his assistance. He thinks Dunn is for Marshall! This is quite probable—

Blythe & Baker<sup>30</sup> of Evansville both voluntary offered their assistance—and would at any time do all in their power for me— Their Rept. will be for me— They think Judge Hall<sup>31</sup> will not present his name— They will both be on hand in January.

By the way when do you expect to come down and where will you *locate* during your stay? If at the Bates House I can procure a room for you in advance? For Hotel room is going to be very scarce this Winter.

Brenton wrote a letter to my wife's father in which he says that the 9 A. N. Dems. & Rept. from his Dist. will go for me to a man.

Dr. Marsh<sup>32</sup> (who is personally friendly) says that it is probable Smith of La-Grange will go for Julian.

I spoke to the boys here on Wednesday night—but think I cannot go to New Albany—for the reason that I am engaged in the trial of U.S. vs Waterhouse, who is indicted for harboring &c under the Fugitive Slave law. *Thompson is employed to assist the prosecution!*

Tom Dowling is a Candidate and relies upon the Old Lines & *National Whigs* to elect him— He counts upon the Whigs in Clay & Sullivan & slightly upon Dunn of Cass— One thing is certain if mischief can be done Tom is ready to do it—

I am in a great "quandary" as they say—and I need your advice.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Smith (1799-1876), from Ripley County, served in the Indiana House of Representatives, 1833-1836, and in the state Senate, 1836-1839.

<sup>29</sup> Silver Greys were followers of Millard Fillmore.

<sup>30</sup> James E. Blythe of Vanderburgh County was a member of the state House of Representatives, 1847-1848. John Harris Baker (1832-1915), a member of the state Senate in 1862, turned later to national politics and was active in the Republican party.

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Hall, from Gibson County, judge of the fourth circuit from 1832 to 1835, served in the House of Representatives, 1829-1831 and 1845-1846, and was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1850.

<sup>32</sup> Dr. Madison Marsh was a Democrat of De Kalb County.

You Know the position I hold among the *friends*.<sup>33</sup> At the last meeting of our S. C. in Sept. it was resolved that I should call a special meeting in January, if I deemed it conducive to the best interest of the order. Now the question is what shall I do?—and I must confess this gives me some trouble— If I call the meeting it will be attributed to improper and personal motives and if I dont, the same imputation will be made— My *personal* opinion is, that the S. C. even when convened should not take positive action on the Senator question tho they have the undoubted power, for fear of the charge of outside dictation—while others insist it is their duty to take this action, and they would be derelict if they did not. Of the result of that action, there can hardly be a doubt, but of its effect on the members, (and especially when *magnified* by adversaries) that is another question. Advantage will be taken of my *official position*, and used to my prejudice—whether I act one way or another or whether I act at all— God Knows that I would rather this moment withdraw my name forever than have any personal friend suppose that I had used my position in any way for my mere personal advancement—

In the language of the resolution of the last S. C. I “deem it necessary for the good of the order” that such meeting shall take place—and for several reasons. 1st. The new work will be ready for distribution. 2nd. A more through organization of the State must be had. 3rd. The proceedings of the N. C. [National Council?] must be communicated. 4th. Delegates to the next N. C. must be selected—none of which objects can be accomplished without a meeting.

Now then shall I act as though no Legislature were to convene—and trust to an approving conscience and the honest impartiality of my friends for the justification—or shall I refuse to act, from the fear of a wrong construction being placed upon my motives— Think fully & answer freely—

Saturday morning—

I shall leave for home this evening. Since writing the above, new matters (hourly springing up & I might add hourly changing & vanishing) have arisen—of which I might write you from home. . . .

My dear Colfax—

La Fayette—Feb 5/ 55—

I had intended writing to you long since—but really had nothing of importance to communicate— I returned from Inds on Saturday ev[en]ing & will go back in a day or two— Matters there stand in about the same way as when you left— Marshall’s friends claim they have enough to nominate him—yet they now appear to be unwilling to make any nomination before we know there is to be an election— In this they have changed their tactics and for what reason they of course know best—but still every one is at leave to draw his own inferences— My opinion is they have not the power to nominate & can not get that power but I may be mistaken—

If all the Anti-Marshall can be concentrated on another, and

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<sup>33</sup> Again, this is probably the Know Nothing party; Orth was president of the Indiana Know Nothing State Council, 1854-1855. S. C. probably means State Council.

if so whom is the question of the day—I see nothing to change the views we entertained when you were at the Capitol—

The free-soilers feel quite offish since the nominations for Agent & Printer and something must be done to reconcile them—

But will there be an election? This is a question that each man discusses & decides for himself—changes his decision almost daily—I believe there will be an election—after the 22nd. I have this opinion merely upon the supposition that the Old Liners will not be guilty of so foolish & fatal an act as to refuse— For this would, more than anything else to drive us together & Keep us together for the next campaign—nor will the Prest. Election swallow up this dereliction of duty as they confidentially hope—

Col Taylor of Chicago (formerly of W City.) came down with me —& said in a talk he had with M. G. Bright<sup>34</sup> Sat morning B. took the bold position that there should be no election— This is evidently the wish of the leaders at the Capitol—but I think wiser counsels will prevail.

If their State Cont. [Convention or Caucus] on the 22nd should take positive action in favor of postponement, it may drive the luke-warm men of the Senate to stand to their party.

Will you be down on the 22nd? There will be fun enough on hand to pay for the trip. Besides even if there should be no election, I want to see you in reference to the future action of ourselves & party— Will it not be necessary to organize an open Native American party in our State—as they are preparing to do in other States? Or what shall be done in the future— The “fusion” party is necessarily of temporary duration and the Whig Party cannot be galvanized into existance again.

If I had time I should write you more fully on this subject and may do so on my return to the Capitol— Address me there at Bates House. . . .

Dear Colfax:—

Inds. Feb 14th 1855.

The cauldron is still boiling—and the political witches are filling it with all sorts of clean & unclean things, and what the final issue will be no one seems able to divine.

The old lines in the Senate have determined to take no action until after the meeting of their Convention on the 22nd and if party drill, heretofore so potent, will be able to retain its power they will in all probability indefinitely postpone— Some 4 of their Senators are trembling in their shoes—and it will require an extra tightening of the screws—and strengthening of the cords to bind them to the observance of the behests of their leaders. Still they may succeed— They however anticipate trouble—and are feeling round with bold hands to see if Ml. [Marshall] and myself can be displaced to enable some more pliable man to fill the position.

If they had the assurance that a Natl. Whig—who didn't fuse,

<sup>34</sup> Michael G. Bright (1803-1881), though a Democrat in a Whig county, was chosen to represent Jefferson County at the state House of Representatives, 1838-1839.

don't fuse, and who is anti-Sam,<sup>35</sup> could command the necessary strength—they would, in my opinion, give him the old line vote—and elect him— Thus far they have been disappointed and I think will continue to be— They may take Mereh (but I much doubt it.) They are tampering with him strong this week—and as he is willing to lend them a listening ear and a believing spirit, he is of course keep filled to overflowing.

Our folks have a good deal of diversity of opinion among them as to the propriety of making a nomination at this time—some favoring—others disapproving— Last night they attempted to hold a caucus for that purpose but failed— They will attempt again tomorrow night—but will also fail I think.

I am decidedly opposed to the measure, regarding it as deliterious not only to the nominee but also to the Party—a mere trick of the enemy—and promising no good.

Ml. is here, look bad—feels disheartened and says he will go home this evening— His friends, tho still seemingly confident, have lost that ardor and enthusiasm which characterized their operations during the earlier part of the session— He has evidently lost ground and I should be much mistaken if he could now receive the nomination. Mh. is active as ever—and says he is gaining strength daily— His untiring energy is worth a good deal—and I am satisfied that he has more strength that he gets credit for— He professes to speak by authority of the Brights<sup>36</sup> & says he is the only man to whose election they will consent and really he is making some folks believe this is as true as gospel—

Parker tho at Washington, is very actively engaged in writing to the members, urging his claims with a good deal of importunity— His friends are not many, but they are very reliable and devoted— They will cling to him as long as there is any glimmer of hope—and if they leave him will in no event go to Marshall.

As for myself I see nothing to discourage, or to change matters from the position they occupied when you were here—and my friends profess to be encouraged.

To sum up the whole in a nutshell— The whole question, in all its phases, is about as uncertain as that other much mooted question of "Who struck Billy Patterson?"

I have called a meeting of the S. C. for the 6th of March— There will be matters of importance for their action—whether their action will be important and beneficial is another thing— I am in favor of the formation of an open American Party—upon a platform of principles acceptable to our people in Indiana—with a central organ

<sup>35</sup> Many people were lured into the ranks of the Know Nothing Society simply through curiosity and because of the fascination secret societies always hold for most of us. Many, then, joined "to see Sam," as a common expression went, that is, from curiosity to see what it was all about. Anti-Sam was anti-Know Nothing.

<sup>36</sup> The Brights were powerful Democrat politicians, who practically ran the party down to the Civil War. Jesse D. Bright of Madison and Graham N. Fitch of Logansport were elected to the United States Senate, 1855-1857.

here devoted exclusively to our cause with open State & County conventions—presenting open issues—and the order Kept as now, auxiliary to the Ant. Party—directing its public movements— What think you of the idea thus faintly Foreshadowed? I want your candid opinion. Merrifield goes home in the morning— He is a good reliable friend—

I suppose of course you will be down here on the 22nd to watch the movements of the old lines & see the policy they intend to pursue in future. . . .

Dear Colfax—

Inds. Feb 16, 1855.

Your letter is recd—Our folks had a caucus tonight & just adjourned (10 O'clock.) The object of the Marshall men was to force a nomination & Meredith's men joined them. I alone stood out, assisted by Parker's friends— No nomination was made—considerable feeling—a resolution passed to nominate on Wednesday next. This action would augur favorably—but still it is best to Keep cool—for as the saw runs, there is no telling who will be Governor until after the election.

I do wish you could be here at that time—and I know you will if in your power. . . .

Dear Colfax—

La Fayette Apl 6, 55.

I have just finished reading the Register of yesterday and perceive that in consequence of "the entire absence of organization" and the Sunday meeting of the Dutch, you have been beaten in your township election. If "Sam," were Kept alive & kicking this would not be, and I fear if he is not revived in your hearts you may have to chronicle similar victories throughout the glorious "9th District" hereafter, for by a letter received from La Porte tonight I learn the existence of a similar state of affairs in their town. Here we meet twice a week, initiate from 5 to 10 each night (last Saturday 19,) and we elected our ticket by more than 2 to 1, with a very heavy foreign vote against us.

*Eternal vigilance* is the price of liberty! You may depend upon it—the enemy is secretly organizing all over the State—and unless we are up and doing we shall be shorn of our strength and the "Forum" will entwine "wreaths" over more important contests—

Bro. Crawford paid me a business visit last night—and I made him promise to pass thru Northern Indiana—which he promised to do in two or three weeks. I hope the breatheen will give him a cordial welcome and relight the camp fires of the Revolution.

Did you receive my last letter? It contained some things which the vulgar eye ought not to see. . . .

Friend Colfax:—

Lafayette May 14 | 55

Altho extremely busy, I shall take time to drop you a line—

I suppose you have learned of our meeting at Inds on Wednesday the 31st inst. I trust you will meet with us & proceed in company with the rest of the delegates to the N.C. [National Convention]

I am waiting with much solicitude the reception of that promised letter in & by & through which it was to be made to appear

that you were, *plainly*, more AntiSlavery than I am. But I presume the "sober seconds thought" has prevailed & you have concluded to postpone indefinitely the attempt to perform this Herculean task. I cheerfully release you from the performance of this rash & indiscreet promise—in pursuance of the well Known rule of the Law—that no man shall be held to his promise if its execution is physically and morally impossible—

Hoping to hear from you soon *on other matters*. . . .

Friend Colfax—

La Fayette June 23 / 55

I have been looking anxiously for your promised letter, detailing the proceedings & inside feeling of the Cleveland Cont. but have looked in vain. I have no doubt however, that like myself, you have had your hands full of other matters— I gave an account of our stewardship to our brethren here & they unanimously approved of our course— I doubt not, such will be the feeling throughout the State, except the 1st & 2nd Congl District. Here there will be trouble, Gregg<sup>37</sup> has already pitched into you & me, and refuses to "follow our lead." I had a long letter from Col. Sigler who is not well pleased—and other 'croakers' will doubtless make themselves heard in due time. The meeting for the 13th may be premature, but since it is called we must do all we can to secure a large attendance, and we must endeavor to have wise counsel prevail.

We must not lose sight of the fact, that while there is a strong Anti-Slavery feeling in the State, there is also a strong American feeling—and both must be preserved & united if possible, else both go by the board—You will of course attend the S. C. on the 11th & see that your neighboring Counties are represented.

We have a wily and implacable enemy, who matches every step we take and who will take advantage of the first error we commit. Let us then be circumspect, cautious & *liberal* toward our brethren throughout the State and we can bind ourselves by cords so strong that the efforts of Old Liners will be utterly futile & abortive hereafter—Let me hear from you fully—I should write more, but have other letters on hand. . . .

Friend Pratt,

Lafayette Wednesday morning [1856]

I have only time to drop you a line.

The Republicans of Jasper & Pulaski have a meeting at Francisville on Saturday.

They wish you & myself to talk to them.

If you come down here on Friday evening & *stop at my house* we can go up by special train on Saturday morning and be back here in the evening. . . .

<sup>37</sup> James Madison Gregg (1806-1869) was a member of the state House of Representatives in 1863 from Hendricks County.