

# INDIANA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY

Volume XLVIII

JUNE, 1952

Number 2

---

## Thurlow Weed's Network: Whig Party Organization in 1840

Robert G. Gunderson\*

On the evening of November 24, 1839, Thurlow Weed left his editorial sanctum at the Albany *Evening Journal* and set out for the Democratic Whig National Convention in Harrisburg. His early departure was in response to an urgent appeal from one of his henchmen who reported, "The Clay and Harrison men are at loggerheads, and by a judicious course [they] may be united upon Genl [Winfield] Scott."<sup>1</sup> Stopping over at the Astor House in New York en route, Weed intercepted several New England delegates eager to co-operate in his machinations against Henry Clay. "Thurlow is going to make a desperate push to induce Clay to stand aside," Horace Greeley reported confidentially. "He and the other 'Scott conspirators' entertain little doubt that the nomination of S will be carried."<sup>2</sup>

Weed's opposition to the Mill Boy's candidacy was prompted largely by political expediency. To Weed, politics was the science of the possible and availability was his basic axiom. In choosing his presidential favorite, he hoped to please a diverse and conglomerate army of abolitionists, anti-Masons, and National Republicans in western New York; bankers, merchants, and manufacturers in New York City; and opportunistic state officials in Albany. Millard Fillmore accurately reflected Weed's troubles, as well as those of the Whig party, when he asked: "Into what crucible can we throw this heterogeneous mass . . . so as to melt them down into one mass of

---

\* Robert G. Gunderson is an associate professor of speech at Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. This paper was read at the session on "Party Politics, 1830-1840," at the forty-fifth annual meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association at Chicago, Illinois, on April 18, 1952.

<sup>1</sup> M. Bradley to Thurlow Weed, November 16, 1839, Thurlow Weed Papers, Manuscripts Division, University of Rochester Library, Rochester, New York.

<sup>2</sup> Horace Greeley to O. A. Bowe, November 25, 1839, Horace Greeley Papers, Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library.

pure Whigs of undoubted good mettle?"<sup>3</sup> It was evident to Weed that this process of amalgamation required the rejection of Clay and the acceptance of a noncommittal military hero. As one of his advisers put it: "The General's lips must be hermetically sealed, and our shouts and hurras must be long and loud."<sup>4</sup>

Though Weed failed at Harrisburg in his promotion of Scott, he obviously was not displeased with the nomination of General William Henry Harrison, whose opinions were sufficiently ambiguous to permit the kind of campaign he hoped for. "Our candidate stands upon elevated and enviable ground," Weed observed enthusiastically. "He has been embroiled in none of the vexing questions which Van Burenism has generated."<sup>5</sup> Better still, as Lucy Kenney predicted, "[He] can be elected."<sup>6</sup> Consequently, Weed easily reconciled himself and joined Francis Granger in exclaiming, "We are now in the field . . . 'Huzza for old Tippecanoe.'"<sup>7</sup>

Having insured party unity by the selection of their ticket (not to mention their refusal to prepare a platform), delegates at Harrisburg turned to plan a party organization of unprecedented refinement. State conventions were scheduled in each state for the week of February 22, and presidential electors in the several states were made responsible for encouraging local campaign activities. A huge national convention of Whig young men was planned for Baltimore in May.<sup>8</sup> As Millard Fillmore phrased it in a letter to Weed, "The steam must be kept up."<sup>9</sup> No hut or hovel was too remote to be included in the Whig network, which envious Democrats described as "a stupendous system. . . . commencing in the smallest subdivisions of localities, and successively combining and centralizing itself till it ascended, through town, county, and State, to the central and controlling head which remained in perpetual ses-

<sup>3</sup> Millard Fillmore to G. W. Patterson, February 6, 1839, Frank H. Severance (ed.), *Millard Fillmore Papers*, in the *Publications* of the Buffalo Historical Society (Buffalo, New York, 1879- ), X and XI (1907), XI, 185.

<sup>4</sup> M. Bradley to Weed, August 29, 1839, Thurlow Weed Papers.

<sup>5</sup> Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Memoir of Thurlow Weed* (2 vols., Boston, 1884), II, 78.

<sup>6</sup> Lucy Kenney, *Address to the People of the United States* (n.p., n.d.), 11.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Granger to Weed, December 9, 1839, Gideon and Francis Granger Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

<sup>8</sup> *Proceedings of the Democratic Whig National Convention* (Harrisburg, 1839), Fourth Day, December 7, 1839.

<sup>9</sup> Fillmore to Weed, April 4, 1840, *Millard Fillmore Papers*, in the *Publications* of the Buffalo Historical Society, XI, 209.

sion and incessant activity, in the federal capital itself."<sup>10</sup> The spinning of Weed's net was thus begun at Harrisburg, and no time was lost in beginning the process of vote ensnarement.

At ratification meetings in January, Whigs took up their log-cabin and hard-cider rallying cry—the unintended contribution of an unsuspecting Democratic correspondent for the *Baltimore Republican*.<sup>11</sup> Thomas Elder and Richard S. Elliott, Whig leaders in Pennsylvania, designed the first log-cabin transparency, and noted cynically that "passion and prejudice properly aroused and directed, would do about as well as principle and reason in a party contest."<sup>12</sup> Soon the welkin rang with shouts for cabins, coons, and cider—symbols of a resurgent Whiggery.

Directing the hard-cider enthusiasm was an executive committee in Washington with offices in two rooms of the Washington City Hall. Representative Rice Garland of Louisiana was chairman of this committee, and Representative John C. Clark of New York, a "warm friend" of Weed's, was secretary. All members were Congressmen: John Bell of Tennessee, John M. Botts of Virginia, Thomas Corwin of Ohio, Moses H. Grinnell of New York, Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts, and Truman Smith of Connecticut. This group was responsible for a staff which, according to the *Washington Globe*, consisted of government clerks and employees. Congressional franks were used to avoid postage, and the *Globe* charged that even Capitol wagons and horses were used to make deliveries. Gideon Welles, Postmaster of Hartford, Connecticut, in a complaint about the abuse of the franking privilege, maintained that "thirty percent of all the mail coming in to Hartford originated in Washington." Thomas Ritchie, editor of the *Richmond Enquirer*, proclaimed that the committee was cheating "our honest voters . . . by humbugs and misrepresentations—by handbills and caricatures, and pamphlets and speeches . . . scattered broadcast."<sup>13</sup> It was thus through the varied activities of this committee that the Whig campaign in the several states received direction and co-ordination.

The executive committee combined the mailing rosters of

<sup>10</sup> "The Late Election," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (43 vols., Washington or New York, 1837-1859), VIII (1840), 395-96.

<sup>11</sup> *Baltimore Republican*, December 11, 1839; *National Intelligencer*, January 14, 1840.

<sup>12</sup> Richard S. Elliott, *Notes Taken in Sixty Years* (St. Louis, 1883), 121.

<sup>13</sup> Washington, D.C., *Globe*, August 11, 1840; Richard S. West, *Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Navy Department* (Indianapolis, 1943), 59; *Richmond Enquirer*, May 8, 1840.

Whig Congressmen into a master list which was used, according to Democratic testimony, "to make every single paper of the tons of electioneering documents . . . tell directly upon a point where it would . . . operate with effect."<sup>14</sup> Partisans on the committee's master list were mailed copies of Charles Ogle's diatribe "On the Regal Splendor of the President's Palace" in which Martin Van Buren was damned for installing a bath tub in the White House; Tom Corwin's devastating "Reply to Crary" in which the Michigan Locofoco was caricatured "on the eve of some desperate enterprise, such as giving an order to shoulder arms"; and a pamphlet entitled "The Contrast" which gave voters the choice of "Harrison and Prosperity or Van Buren and Ruin." Under Millard Fillmore's frank, the committee distributed the log-cabin lithographs which found their way to the mastheads of most Whig papers. In addition, Democrats accused the committee of publishing a spurious edition of Van Buren's biography, financing hundreds of paid agents, buying votes, and "transporting vagabonds and perjured hirelings" to hard-cider conventions.<sup>15</sup>

As the campaign reached its climax, the executive committee issued a directive to the "Central Whig Committee" of each county in the country. In addition to the usual last-minute exhortations, the directive contained specific advice for the final phases of the canvass. It was, in a sense, a testimonial to the meticulous nature of the Whig organization. Complete poll lists were urged for each precinct, with voters listed as "good, bad, or doubtful." Vigilance committees were suggested to persuade doubtful voters and to get out the vote. Conveyances were to be furnished the aged and infirm. "Urge every friend of Republican Institutions to go to the polls," said the directive; "not one vote should be lost." Then, in a final admonition mailed to every precinct committeeman, the executive committee concluded, "Let us entreat you, as you value your rights and liberties, to lose no time in effecting . . . [these measures for victory]."<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the executive committee, there was a personal campaign committee headed by Colonel Charles S. Todd, editor of the Cincinnati *Republican*, to advise Harrison and to

<sup>14</sup> "The Late Election," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, VIII, 395-96.

<sup>15</sup> Washington, D.C., *Globe*, March 30 and October 26, 1840; Charles M. Thompson, *The Illinois Whigs before 1846* (Urbana, Illinois, 1915), 70; *National Intelligencer*, September 1, 1840; *Investigator and Expositor* (1 vol., Troy, Ohio, 1839-1840), May 1, 1840.

<sup>16</sup> Executive Committee Directive, published in *Investigator and Expositor*, October 1, 1840.

handle his troublesome correspondence. Called "the conscience-keeping committee," this group attempted to shield Old Tip from embarrassing questions—an operation which led Democrats to dub Harrison "General Mum," and to ridicule him as "A Man in an Iron Cage."<sup>17</sup>

State Whig organizations were no less active than the national committees. The party network was probably more tightly knit in New York and Ohio than in most other states, though ostensibly the whole nation was swarming with party organizers. In the Empire State, William L. Marcy observed that "all the Whig devils it seems are let loose . . . [upon us]." New York Whigs had the advantage of controlling state offices, and Governor William H. Seward, with Weed's careful counsel, made effective use of the patronage. "Applications for office are my chief correspondence," Seward confessed. The New York governor was quite properly impressed by Weed's "magic influence." "How much I am indebted to you!" he exclaimed in a letter shortly after his election. "You are a wonderful being—a mystery—but to me a guardian spirit, whose gentle influences seem to prepare the very atmosphere I breathe with grateful odors."<sup>18</sup>

From his Albany command post, Weed, "the Jolly Drummer," kept a painstaking watch on all party workers from senators to precinct captains. His worrisome correspondence included "heartburning and jealousy" over the appointment of surrogate in Troy, troubles with abolitionists in Utica, and rivalries between anti-Masons in the West and conservatives in New York City. "We have hired a shrewd sensible man to distribute . . . our papers,"—so ran a typical field report from his outpost in Syracuse.<sup>19</sup> It was Weed who promoted the Baltimore ratification convention, established a nation-wide campaign paper, and collected party funds from businessmen

<sup>17</sup> Assisting Colonel Todd were John C. Wright, editor of the *Cincinnati Gazette*, Major David Gwynne, O. M. Spencer, and H. E. Spencer. Harrison to James Lyons, June 1, 1840, reprinted in *Niles' National Register* (Washington, Baltimore, or Philadelphia, 1837-1849), LVIII (June 20, 1840), 247; see also the *Albany Rough-Hewer*, April 16 and July 2, 1840.

<sup>18</sup> W. L. Marcy to A. C. Flagg, August 28, 1840, Azariah C. Flagg Papers, Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library; W. H. Seward to Weed, November 21, 1838, Thurlow Weed Papers. Over one hundred packets of applications collected during his four-year term of office are preserved in the Manuscripts Division, University of Rochester Library, William H. Seward Papers. Seward to Weed, January 10, [1839], Thurlow Weed Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Weed to Seward, December 6, [1838], William H. Seward Papers; S. P. Lyman to Weed, September 15, 1839, Thurlow Weed Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress; E. W. Leavenworth to Weed [August 22, 1840], Thurlow Weed Papers, University of Rochester Library.

in New York City. His close attention to the day-to-day details of politics made him the axis of the organization network in New York, if not in the entire nation.

In Ohio, the Whig organization was completed at a rousing convention in Columbus on February 22, when, according to enthusiastic accounts, over twenty-three thousand sloshed through the February mud to promote the first Buckeye president. The activity of Ohioans was evident in the anonymous letter of one Hard-Ciderite who disclosed that he had devoted the whole month of February to "aiding in the organization of Harrison and Tyler Clubs, attending Harrison meetings, writing Tippecanoe letters, or making log-cabin and hard-cider speeches." Elaborate efforts were made in Ohio to lure the support of repentant Jacksonians. Former Van Buren followers were organized into "Harrison Reform Clubs," and over seven thousand of this group met in Columbus at the height of the campaign to march to the chant of "Van, Van, Van—Van's a used-up man." It was thus not without reason that Sam Medary, Democratic editor of the *Ohio Statesman*, wrote President Van Buren that he had "never seen such a state of things as witnessed in Ohio at this time."<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, there was a high political fever throughout the entire West. As one frontier politician put it, "There is a constant gathering of the people by thousands for the purpose of warming each other for the fight." The pattern in each state was much the same, with presidential electors taking the lead in organizational activities. Abraham Lincoln, a Whig elector in Illinois, prepared a directive for county organizations which ordered local leaders to set up precinct committees, prepare poll lists, and report election prospects regularly. "Let no local interests divide you; but select candidates that can succeed," he warned. "Our plan of operations will of course be concealed from everyone except our good friends." In accordance with this directive, meetings were held in every county of the state, many of which Lincoln attended in his capacity as elector. The Michigan network described by John Van Fossan in a letter to Weed was similar to the one in Illinois. "I shall make arrangements to have a complete poll list of every town . . . by the 15th of October," Van Fossan promised. In Indiana, Richard W. Thompson, just beginning his political career, stumped the state as an elector promoting local organization and mak-

---

<sup>20</sup> *National Intelligencer*, April 3, 1840; S. Medary to Martin Van Buren, August 18, 1840, Martin Van Buren Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

ing the hills and valleys "resound with praises of 'Tippecanoe and Tyler, too!'"<sup>21</sup>

Southern Whigs, also, were organizing. From Kentucky, Robert P. Letcher, Whig candidate for governor, reported optimistically that he had finished the work in thirty-one counties by early May. "There is apparently real zeal and animation . . . in every place," he testified in a letter to Senator John J. Crittenden, who returned from Washington two months later to find a continuous round of barbecues, meetings, and conventions. "The Whigs . . . appear to be roused, or rousing themselves to the contest," the Kentucky Senator observed hopefully. In Louisiana, important state committees were meeting daily, and in the testimony of one observer, "politics had all but excluded the more prosaic pursuits of existence." In Maryland, Whig members of the state legislature met in March and established a state central committee to "superintend the elections and to adopt such measures as may be deemed useful in promoting the success of the party." Virginia Whigs distributed fifty thousand copies of their address to the people. Thomas Ritchie complained that in Virginia Whig electors were "travelling orators, who . . . traverse their districts, mount the stumps, abuse the Administration, puff the military chieftan, and gull the People." "Never," Ritchie concluded, "have I seen a Junto so fanatical, so desperate in their purposes or so reckless in their means."<sup>22</sup>

County committees worked assiduously to establish Tippecanoe clubs in every precinct. Eight thousand Whigs were said to have attended a ward meeting in Boston; in New York and Baltimore, every ward had a club, and many had log-cabin headquarters. The first cabin-raising took place in Governor Seward's home town of Auburn, and with Weed's encouragement cabin headquarters were soon being erected throughout the country. "Every paper we open," observed a Frankfort, Kentucky, editor, "contains animating descriptions of log-

<sup>21</sup> John Van Fossan to Weed, July 20 and 21, 1840, Thurlow Weed Papers, Library of Congress; *To the Young Whigs of Sangamon County*, (n.p., n.d.), James Cook Conkling Papers, Illinois State Historical Society, Springfield, Illinois; see also Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln* (2 vols., Boston, 1928), I, 273-74; Charles Roll, *Colonel Dick Thompson, the Persistent Whig* (Indianapolis, 1948), 39-40.

<sup>22</sup> R. P. Letcher to Crittenden, May 21, 1840, John J. Crittenden Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress; Crittenden to Maria K. Crittenden, July 22, 1840, in *ibid.*; Leslie M. Norton, "A History of the Whig Party in Louisiana" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Louisiana State University, 1940), 162; *National Intelligencer*, March 25, 1840; *Niles' National Register*, LVIII (March 7, 1840), 3; *Richmond Enquirer*, February 27, 1840; Thomas Ritchie to Van Buren, June 1, 1840, Martin Van Buren Papers.

cabin raisings." These council houses served as attractive social centers, as well as meeting places and reading rooms. An advertisement for the Seventeenth Ward Tippecanoe Cabin in New York, for example, promised "a rousing meeting . . . [with] music, public speaking, *good singing, and hard cider*." The Cleveland cabin was open daily, and local committee members assured their fellow partisans that "the latchstring was always out." Though Temperance Whigs were inclined to call them "intelligence centers," it was obvious that the cabins were designed more for revelry than reading. Democrats self-righteously referred to them as "groggeries" and likened them to army barracks where "the vicious and depraved . . . were . . . debauched with liquor, stimulated with lying and inflammatory harangues, and with vulgar and ribald songs, and corrupted with money." "The log cabin!" exclaimed the *Washington Globe*, "a Federal trap, baited with hard cider to catch honest people's votes in."<sup>23</sup>

Whig activities were by no means limited to metropolitan areas. Guernsey County, Ohio, for example, reported a county committee of thirty-one members and Tippecanoe clubs in every township. Whigs in Miami and Delaware counties published their own campaign newspapers. In Louisiana, every parish in the state had its Tippecanoe club. Whigs in Washington County, Maryland, organized a well-knit group directed by the typical county committee of thirty-one members. Before the campaign was hardly under way in Virginia, leaders announced that seventeen communities had erected log-cabin headquarters. In Vermont, the Young Men's Whig Convention was "a second edition of the great outpouring for Harrison at the Capital of Ohio." Delegates arrived "on horse and foot, in sleighs and six-horse teams, with banners, music, mottoes, &c." The Whigs of Windsor County, Vermont, held "the largest convention ever assembled in the state."<sup>24</sup> Thus even in the rural areas, partisans of the Ohio General fabricated an effective party network.

Local Whig organizations were working units and not merely skeletal hierarchies, a fact which was demonstrated by the various Whig conventions. The Harrisonites of Wheeling,

<sup>23</sup> *Niles' National Register*, LVIII (June 20, 1840), 244; Frankfort *Campaign*, May 21, 1840; New York *Evening Post*, n.d., quoted in the *Washington, D.C., Globe*, June 12, 1840; Cleveland *Herald*, May 13, 1840; *Washington, D.C., Globe*, July 10, 1840.

<sup>24</sup> William G. Wolfe, *Stories of Guernsey County, Ohio* (Cambridge, Ohio, 1943), 125-29; *Investigator and Expositor*; *Harrison Flag*; Norton, "A History of the Whig Party in Louisiana," 158; *National Intelligencer*, September 2, and March 23, 1840; Henry H. Simms, *The Rise of the Whigs in Virginia, 1824-1840* (Richmond, 1929), 148.



Virginia, for example, were reputed to have entertained thirty thousand visitors at their huge gathering on September 3. To feed this horde, hospitable Wheelingites provided a public table with three hundred and sixty hams, twenty-six sheep, twenty calves, fifteen hundred pounds of beef, eight thousand pounds of bread, over one thousand pounds of cheese, and forty-five hundred pies. "Besides this," reported *Niles' Register*, "every Harrison house was abundantly supplied, and open throughout the day." Whigs of Fayette County, Ohio, displayed their party discipline by traveling in parade formation to the convention at Chillicothe. The marshal of the procession announced the various places of assembly along the line of march and issued orders that each man be provided "with three days' rations, equipage, &c." On their arrival at the convention grounds, they found that the local arrangements committee had provided over twenty thousand pounds of bread, two hundred bushels of potatoes, six hundred pounds of butter, twenty-two barrels of flour, seventy sheep, eighty slabs of bacon, twenty-one steers, and numerous other provisions. In addition, the *Scioto Gazette* claimed that "Colonel Henry Brush accommodated . . . upwards of twenty-five hundred persons" at his residence, and that other Whig families fed from two hundred to four hundred transients.<sup>25</sup> Whig logistics thus testified to the vigor of Whig organization.

In their network, Whigs did not neglect special interest groups: racial minorities, religious sects, and old soldiers. Though the party had a reputation for being antiforeign, a special effort was made in 1840 to appeal to the various racial groups, particularly the Germans. German Tippecanoe clubs had strong memberships in Cincinnati, Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia, and each boasted a German-language campaign paper. Francis J. Grund and Isaac Rand published campaign biographies which translated the glories of Tippecanoe into German. The shamrock decorated a log cabin at the Tippecanoe Battleground Celebration in Indiana, and Judge Jacob Burnet's Harrisburg speech was translated into Welsh. In Illinois, Whig leaders eagerly cultivated the Mormons. In appealing to Protestants, Horace Greeley attacked Robert Dale Owen, a Democratic elector in Indiana. "Whenever you find a bitter, blasphemous Atheist and enemy of Marriage, Morality, and the Social Order," Greeley proclaimed, "there you may be certain of one vote for Van Buren." Greeley also suggested

---

<sup>25</sup> *Niles' National Register*, LIX (September 19, 1840), 39; *Scioto Gazette*, August 27 and September 24, 1840.

that Protestant ministers be circularized with Locofoco Orestes Brownson's atheistic pamphlet on "The Laboring Classes," in hopes that it might alienate religious voters. Meanwhile, Seward and Weed wooed the Catholic vote in New York by hinting the possibility of state funds for parochial schools. "Their project is to alienate a portion of our vote," wrote T. D. James to Van Buren. "They would coalesce with the Devil himself, could he give them votes."<sup>26</sup>

To gain a wider working-class audience, state and county committees published inexpensive campaign newspapers which were financed and circulated by the faithful. Weed laid plans for Horace Greeley's *Log Cabin* at the Harrisburg convention, and by the conclusion of the canvass it had a circulation of over eighty thousand. While the *Log Cabin* was the most popular of the campaign papers, it was by no means without rivals. In Illinois, the state central committee, under the guidance of Lincoln, supported the *Old Soldier*. "Every Whig in the State must take it," Lincoln brusquely informed county committeemen, "[and] you must raise a fund . . . for extra copies . . . for distribution among . . . our opponents."<sup>27</sup> No lover of politics was in want for political commentary in 1840. Ohio alone had at least seventeen party publications, in addition to the regular Whig press. In Elyria, Ohio, *Old Tip's Broom* "swept out corruption"; in Cleveland, the *Axe* chopped vigorously at Locofoco officeholders; the *Harrisonian* of Athens, Georgia, was "touched with States' Rights Principles"; the *Spirit of '76* in Nashville, Tennessee, urged a restoration of republican government;<sup>28</sup> and the *Hard Cider Press* in Chicago "went for Harrison without a why or wherefore."

Whig editorial efforts were supplemented by stump oratory. For the first time, a presidential candidate abandoned the traditional Olympia of seclusion for the fervid clamor of the arena. In what his opponents damned as an unseemly exhibition, Harrison delivered twenty-three speeches in Ohio in support of his own candidacy. The executive committee financed John W. Bear, "the Buckeye Blacksmith," on a nationwide expedition in which he delivered 331 speeches. Webster

<sup>26</sup> Logansport *Telegraph*, June 13, 1840; Jacob Burnet, *Araeth y Barnwr Burnett, o dalaeth Ohio* (Washington, 1840); Thompson, *Illinois Whigs before 1846*, p. 78; New York *Log Cabin*, August 29, 1840; Greeley to Seward, September 30, 1840, William H. Seward Papers; A. C. Flagg to Van Buren, March 7, 1840; T. D. James to Van Buren, August 9, 1840, Martin Van Buren Papers.

<sup>27</sup> Springfield *Old Hickory*, February 17, 1840; see also Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln*, I, 273.

<sup>28</sup> *A Spirit of '76* was also published in Indianapolis by the Whigs.

campaigned in eight states; Sergeant Prentiss in nine; William C. Preston and John J. Crittenden in six; Ogden Hoffman and Hugh S. Legaré in five. Senator Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, stumping mainly in New York, spent only six nights at his home in Poughkeepsie from July until November.<sup>29</sup> Henry Clay testified that there was "a rabid appetite for public discussion," and Nathan Sargent recalled that there were "five thousand or more speakers . . . 'on the stump' . . . from one end of the country to the other, their services everywhere and all the time in demand."<sup>30</sup>

It was obvious enough, particularly to the Democrats, that an unprecedented amount of money was necessary to finance such extensive political operations: the cabin-raising, the cider, the subsidized newspapers, and the itinerant orators, all of whom were mercenaries, said the *Globe*, "from DANIEL WEBSTER down to the TRAVELLING BEAR." "Where does the money come from?" shouted the Locofoco orators, suspecting "a huge corruption fund."<sup>31</sup> Vindictive Van Burenites were unaware, however, of the cash transaction in which Abbott Lawrence, operating through an intermediary, placed five thousand dollars at the disposal of the Cincinnati of North Bend. Weed boasted of collecting \$580.00 in New York City in less than two and one-half hours, and Edward Curtis testified to the "Jolly Drummer's" genius "with the flour speculators." In a complaint which labeled Philip Hone "a political liability" because of his archaic political ideas, Harman C. Westervelt admitted reluctantly that Hone's "purse had been a benefit to the party."<sup>32</sup> Merchants of Boston and New York were accused of giving Webster a gift of \$63,000.00, and with some justification a prominent Pennsylvania Democrat proclaimed that "Bank and Stock gamblers are the life of the opposition." Sam Medary concurred with this analysis in a letter to Van

<sup>29</sup> New York *Log Cabin*, December 5 and November 25, 1840; see also *The Life and Travels of John W. Bear*, "The Buckeye Blacksmith" (Baltimore, 1873).

<sup>30</sup> *Niles' National Register*, LVIII (July 25, 1840), 322; Nathan Sargent, *Public Men and Events* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1875), II, 108.

<sup>31</sup> Washington, D.C., *Globe*, August 19 and October 26, 1840.

<sup>32</sup> Charles MacAlester to Harrison, March 19, 1841, in the Benjamin Harrison Collection, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress; see also Harrison to Archibald Irwin, December 26, 1839, William Henry Harrison Papers, Manuscripts Division, Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio Library, Cincinnati. Weed to Seward, June 8, [1839?], William H. Seward Papers; Curtis to Weed, November 8, 1839, Thurlow Weed Papers, University of Rochester Library; Westervelt to Crittenden, March 26, 1841, John J. Crittenden Papers.

Buren. "Were it not for the secret influence of money," he wrote reassuringly, "there would be no contest at all."<sup>33</sup>

Despite Democratic charges, not all the money came from major capitalists. A substantial portion was raised by the local organizations on their own subscriptions. Samuel Lyman, for example, wrote Weed from Utica that all the money needed for the county campaign was pledged and that it might even be possible for them to aid their neighbors. Lincoln raised money by local subscription in Illinois,<sup>34</sup> and each delegate to the Baltimore Ratification Convention was assessed for the support of the Whig press. Thad Stevens worked out a system of rebates from canal contractors to support his operations in Pennsylvania,<sup>35</sup> and Weed assessed workers on the Erie Canal to help finance the *Log Cabin*.<sup>36</sup> Most speakers paid their own traveling expenses, though steamboat companies and railways often aided by giving special convention rates, and local Whig committees usually furnished a public table to help feed visitors. Candidates and party leaders, also, were forced to contribute substantial amounts. "I am saddled with an enormous postage," Old Tip complained to one of his correspondents, adding a not entirely facetious suggestion that Congress extend him the franking privilege.<sup>37</sup>

The fanfare of the canvass of 1840 has often served to obscure its significance, since many have tended to dismiss it as little more than a colorful political circus. The great commotion was in fact a testimonial to meticulous party organization—and a refutation to those who contend that political organizations were relatively undeveloped before the Civil War. Adopting a log-cabin vocabulary, Whig leaders in 1840 gave a belated acquiescence to the methods of the new democracy—much to the distress of antediluvian elements in the party who abhorred appealing to the mob—even when the appeal was designed to promote a conservative victory.

---

<sup>33</sup> *Kentucky Gazette*, January 16, 1840; Francis R. Shunk to Lewis Coryell, October 5, 1840, quoted in Henry R. Mueller, *The Whig Party in Pennsylvania* (New York, 1922), 311; S. Medary to Van Buren, August 18, 1840, Martin Van Buren Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Lyman to Weed, September 15, 1839, Thurlow Weed Papers, Library of Congress; Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln*, I, 273.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony B. Norton, *The Great Revolution of 1840* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1888), 117; Richard N. Current, *Old Thad Stevens, A Story of Ambition* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1942), 56.

<sup>36</sup> *Albany Rough-Hewer*, July 2, 1840; J. K. Kane to A. C. Flagg, September 20, 1840, Azariah C. Flagg Papers.

<sup>37</sup> Harrison to N. P. Tallmadge, July 22, 1840, Nathaniel P. Tallmadge Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin Library, Madison.