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THE KNOW-NOTHINGS AND DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION IN HARRISON COUNTY

by Larry McClellan

As the election of 1855 neared, Democrats in East Texas raised full-cry against a new enemy, the secret and nativistic American (Know-Nothing) Party. Though Americans denied charges of religious intolerance, called themselves Unionists working to heal sectionalism, and strove to trace origins to Washington, Jefferson, and Jackson, Democrats jeered them as bigots, belabored the commingling of abolitionists and Know-Nothings in the North, and linked them to the Alien and Sedition Acts and the Hartford Convention.¹ Former governor J.P. Henderson, speaking in Marshall, vilified the Know-Nothings as a party based on the concentration of power in the federal government at the expense of state's rights.² Americanism, fumed R.W. Loughery, editor of the *Marshall Texas Republican*, was "federalism in its most odious form."³ Democrats in Harrison County pledged uncompromising resistance to secrecy, oaths, intolerance, and political proscription.⁴ Know-Nothings, Democrats scoffed, were disappointed office seekers, Whigs, abolitionists, and disaffected Democrats joined in fragile alliance.⁵ They were the "old, wrinkled caste of prostitutes of party, with no more pretension to piety than an unrepentant Magdalen."⁶ The election was a "fair contest between intolerance, federalism, concealment, and deception ... and open-handed, free-hearted, and straight-forward Republicanism."⁷ So argued the *Texas Republican*. But despite the contumely, the Democrats lost Harrison County.

In May 1854 newspapers had first reported the existence in Texas of a mysterious group called Know-Nothings because members answered "I don't know" to questions about politics.⁸ Surprised by early Know-Nothing victories in San Antonio and Galveston, Democrats in Texas were ill-prepared to oust the intruders. Having lacked a powerful adversary, the party had never organized properly, candidates paying little heed to state conventions and announcing for office through the press. As a result, politics in Texas centered on personalities rather than parties. Democrats, reacting vigorously to the new threat, called urgently for formal organization and the establishment of the convention system. At the same time, they linked the American Party to Northern abolitionism, thus stigmatizing Know-Nothings as enemies of the South.

Organization and victory, though, were not easily achieved, and a study of the conflict in just one county can serve as an example of similar struggles throughout Texas. Harrison County is appropriate for several reasons. First was the unusual strength of the Americans. Know-Nothings carried the county in the state elections of 1855 and 1856 and for some time controlled city offices in Marshall, the largest town in the county and the stronghold of Know-Nothing power in East Texas. Second was the high quality of political leaders. Calling Harrison County home were several men who were either well-known political figures or who were to become prominent. Among the Know-Nothings was L.D. Evans, who won a seat in Congress in 1855 and served as

chief justice of the Texas Supreme Court in his later years. Democratic champions included Pendleton Murrah, governor from 1863 to 1865, and L.T. Wigfall, a pro-Southern extremist and United States Senator during the critical period just before the Civil War. Third was the presence of both Democratic and Know-Nothing newspapers. The Marshall *Texas Republican* spoke for the Democrats and the Marshall *Meridian* and later the Harrison *Flag* for the Know-Nothings.⁹ Unfortunately, issues of the *Meridian* were not preserved and issues of the *Flag* are not available for the period of greatest Know-Nothing activity. Consequently, the capable but biased and vituperative editor of the *Texas Republican*, state's rights Democrat R.W. Loughery, serves as the primary source detailing the battle between Democrats and Know-Nothings. Loughery welcomed a fight, recognizing that highly-emotional political issues were a newspaper's lifeblood. "What is a paper without politics?" Loughery asked, but a "perfectly wishy-washy affair devoid of interest or merit."¹⁰

Loughery first mentioned the Know-Nothings in June 1854, reporting that a secret group originating in New York "some months ago" had "spread with astonishing rapidity."¹¹ Four months later Loughery wrote that the American Party was a secret organization "calculated to work mischief," opposing the rights of immigrants and Roman Catholics to vote or hold office. In the North, Loughery claimed, the party was made up of Whigs and freesoilers, and in the South Know-Nothings gained strength from "the order thieves in the cities" where anti-foreign passions were "acted upon by bad men."¹² Loughery charged early in 1855 that abolitionism had triumphed in the Know-Nothing councils, one proof being that abolitionist papers had ceased criticism.¹³ Another proof was that the Americans had elected to office William H. Seward, an abolitionist whom Loughery called the most dangerous man in the Union.¹⁴

Thus early and briskly Loughery opposed the American Party. Too, he unerringly singled out the theme that Democrats found most efficacious in battling the Americans: the blending of Know-Nothings with abolitionists in the North, by association identifying Know-Nothings in Texas as enemies of state's rights and the South.

The date of the entry of the Know-Nothings into Harrison County is unknown, but possibly a lodge existed before the county election of 1854. J.M. Clayton, elected school trustee in August, wrote a letter to the *Texas Republican* favoring nativism and advocating the American Party.¹⁵ Conceivably, Clayton had been supported by a Know-Nothing chapter. At the least, his letter documents the existence of Know-Nothing sentiment.

Posing as a river improvement convention, the Texas Grand Council of the American Party met June 11, 1855, in Washington-on-the-Brazos. Their most important actions were the nominations of candidates for state offices and for the United States Congress. The choice for governor was D.C. Dickson of Grimes County, at that time lieutenant governor in the administration of E.M. Pease. Dickson's opposition to the state system of internal improvements – a plan calling for the state to build, own, and operate railroads – appealed to many Texans and probably helped him gain the nomination.¹⁶

As the congressional candidate for the eastern district, the convention chose Lemuel Dale Evans. Evans, a lawyer from Harrison County, had arrived in Texas in 1843. No stranger to politics, he had represented Fannin County in the Annexation Convention in 1845. By 1850 he was a district judge living in Marshall.¹⁷ Evans had been a strong contender in the governor's race in 1853, particularly in East Texas.¹⁸

Democrats, learning of the Know-Nothing meeting, hastily called a state convention for June 16 in which they nominated E.M. Pease for a second term as governor. Pease waived his support of the unpopular state system, promising to cooperate with the people.¹⁹ Although selecting a congressional candidate for the western district, the convention made no nomination for the east. Denouncing all secret political factions, Democrats condemned Know-Nothings as enemies of the government. Secrecy, they declared, was the only issue, an issue determined by the American Party's "midnight caucus."²⁰

Democrats in East Texas sought a candidate to oppose Evans, but calls for a convention met with little interest.²¹ Three Democrats, George W. Chilton, John T. Mills, and Matthias Ward announced for Congress, but Chilton and Mills yielded to Ward after "consulting with friends."²² Mills withdrew "more than willingly" to avoid confusion.²³ Chilton, placing priority on defeating the Know-Nothings, said that the party had to be driven "back to the dens of abolitionism."²⁴

Evans, speaking in Marshall, denied membership in the Know-Nothings. Loughery countered by arguing that a "good source" had declared that Evans had been a member of the Marshall council but had withdrawn in order to state truthfully that he was not a member of any secret society.²⁵ The source to which Loughery referred was Josiah Marshall, the editor of the *Meridian*, who had switched from the Whigs to the Know-Nothings. In a letter published in the *Texas Republican*, Marshall wrote that he did not say that Evans' name could be found on the Know-Nothing roll but had said that he had no doubt of Evans' membership.²⁶

Six weeks after the state Know-Nothing convention, Democrats in Harrison County took the first of several steps toward thorough organization and eventual triumph. Meeting in July, they swore uncompromising opposition to the Americans, charged that the greatest victories of the Know-Nothings had occurred in the "hot beds" of freesoilers and abolitionists, requested an alliance with the Whigs, and upheld state's rights, stating that the Union was secondary to the rights it was to protect.²⁷ As candidates to the state legislature, the convention nominated E.B. Blalock, Pendleton Murrah, and J.S. Anderson. Murrah said in his acceptance speech that Know-Nothings boasted of having 800 of the county's 1100 votes, but that the real strength of the party was unknown because of its secrecy.²⁸ Another of the nominees, Anderson, had entered the meeting amid shouts of "Know-Nothing." He had belonged to the order, he admitted, but had left it because he felt that the party was not in the best interests of the country.²⁹

The same day as the Democratic meeting, Know-Nothings also selected

candidates for the state legislature: W.A. Tarlton, formerly a Union Whig; Nathan Smith, an ex-Union Democrat; and A.D. Burress, an ex-state's rights Democrat.³⁰ Several "abler men," Loughery claimed, had been passed over because they had been Whigs, and Know-Nothings in Marshall were trying to avoid the opprobrium of Whiggery.³¹

In a letter published in the *Texas Republican*, Burress illustrated the Know-Nothing attempt to avoid nativism and deal with state topics. Like most East Texans, he opposed the state plan for internal improvements, criticizing it as a tax-raising idea "fraught with mischief." He also opposed the building of railroads by outsiders, wanting counties to construct their own.³²

Always the steady-going Democrat, Loughery supported his party's candidates in all races. Though disliking Pease's policies, Loughery favored him over Dickson. All Democrats, Loughery wrote, had to unite behind Pease to insure victory.³³ Loughery disregarded state issues, saying that the only goal was victory over the Know-Nothings.³⁴ Dickson, Loughery declared, "has proved unmindful and ungrateful for the high honors which have been conferred upon him... . He deserves the repudiation and rebuke which he is destined to receive at the hands of the people."³⁵

Despite the efforts of Loughery and other Democrats, Know-Nothings carried Harrison County by large majorities, Evans defeating Ward by a vote of 673 to 393. By the slimmest of margins Evans won the Eastern district, his election to Congress being the capstone of Know-Nothing triumphs in Texas.³⁶ To prevent future losses, Loughery urged immediate organization and increased circulation of Democratic papers.³⁷ The defeat, he stressed, "will teach the party to be more active and industrious for the future."³⁸

Nettled by the Know-Nothing victory, Democrats scheduled a rally and barbecue for October with Senator T.J. Rusk as the honored guest.³⁹ In addition, they called for a meeting at the courthouse in Marshall to organize for the presidential campaign and to appoint delegates to the state convention.⁴⁰ Realizing that they had several candidates for district attorney to one for the Know-Nothings, Democrats also scheduled a meeting at Henderson.⁴¹ Originally, the convention was to have met in Harrison County, but in marked overstatement Loughery pronounced the county to be "almost entirely free from political agitation."⁴² Democrats in Marshall chose delegates to the Henderson convention and appointed a committee to report the names of candidates suitable for county offices.⁴³

Having written in April that Harrison County lacked political activity, Loughery lamented in June that Democrats seemed to be organized everywhere but in Harrison County. Obviously, Democratic organization was necessary, he wrote, as Know-Nothings were plentiful. One proof of their strength was that they had raised \$1600 "without any display of excitement – without scarcely an effort" to establish the *Harrison Flag*.⁴⁴

Overshadowed by the approaching presidential election, the state elections of 1856, held the first Monday in August, caused little excitement. Although Know-Nothing candidates were defeated statewide, William Sted-

man of Henderson, nominee for attorney general, and William A. Tarlton of Marshall, candidate for treasurer, both carried Harrison County.⁴⁵

In the election of county officials, taking place at the same time as the state election, four Democrats, one Know-Nothing, and another probable Know-Nothing entered the contests for commissioners. Returns suggest the election of three Democrats and one Know-Nothing.⁴⁶ In races for other county offices, Loughery said that T.A. Harris, the president of the Marshall Know-Nothing council, and J.M. Curtis, an active member, were defeated. Another Know-Nothing, Loughery wrote, was beaten because his foreign-sounding name had caused nativists to vote against him.⁴⁷ Democrats had supported convention nominees, but whether or not Know-Nothings had chosen a ticket is not known. The wide difference between votes: e.g. for county clerk E.C. Beasley-809, Jesse Witt-214, indicates that Know-Nothings did not support a nominee but that Beasley drew votes from both parties.⁴⁸

Know-Nothings bustled about in anticipation of the presidential election. The Fillmore American Club of Marshall invited free discussion at a barbecue held September 15.⁴⁹ Following a three-hour speech by a Know-Nothing, Democrats asked for L.T. Wigfall. Denied, they went downtown to listen to Wigfall for two hours.⁵⁰ A good attendance of Marshall Know-Nothings heard out-of-staters speak for Fillmore on October 2. Then Wigfall met the Know-Nothings in debate.⁵¹ On October 10 and 11, Know-Nothing activities in Marshall drew an attendance of about 1200. A large procession with banners and flags preceded the festivities. B.H. Epperson, a former Whig, spoke for the Know-Nothings. A second Know-Nothing speaker reminded the sharp-tongued Loughery of "a small steamer with a diminutive engine, burning green cottonwood and running about one mile an hour."⁵²

Democrats were not idle, either. A meeting in Marshall on July 5 unanimously adopted a resolution approving James Buchanan and John C. Breckinridge and the platform of the national convention. Meeting again in August, Democrats decided to sponsor a debate and barbecue. The convention also voted to precede the barbecue with numerous meetings in Marshall and surrounding areas: Cook's store, Whitehorn's, Lagrone's, and Brown's schoolhouse.⁵³

Large delegations from Upshur, Cass, and Panola counties arrived in Marshall on November 1. Democrats in a playful mood attempted to raise a pole 150 feet long flying the flags of Buchanan and Breckinridge, but the pole snapped. Disappointed celebrants lashed the shaft to a building. During a night filled with high-jinks, Know-Nothings decorated the doors of houses, attached black crepe to the flag of the Democratic candidates, dug a grave where the flagpole was to have stood, put Buchanan's name over the grave, and surrounded it with a fence.⁵⁴

The next day Democratic speakers, most importantly Wigfall, shared the platform with Josiah Marshall and Gil McKay. both Know-Nothings from Marshall. McKay, Loughery wrote, was the superior speaker among Know-Nothings in Harrison County – intelligent, forceful, and direct.⁵⁵ Marshall, former editor of the *Meridian*, spoke in favor of the Know-Nothing presi-

dential candidate, charging that Buchanan was an abolitionist and his supporters fire-eaters and disunionists. For two days speeches continued, and when the meeting was over Loughery jubilantly announced the "dawning of a political millennium" in which the sun had broken through for the first time in fifteen months. Know-Nothings, Loughery averred, had heard the "thrilling tocsin of defeat."⁵⁶

Though the Know-Nothings had carried Harrison County in 1855 and in the state elections of 1856, Democrats won the presidential election by sixty votes. "This is indeed a glorious triumph," Loughery wrote, "and one of which the Democratic party may well feel proud." The county had been "disenthralled, redeemed, regenerated."⁵⁷ He attributed the victory primarily to the voting of state's rights Whigs.⁵⁸ Know-Nothings, however, continued to carry Marshall, but by only five votes. Statewide, Buchanan defeated Fillmore by a two-to-one margin.

Encouraged by the result of the presidential election, Democrats met two weeks later to select party officers and to organize a Democratic club. At the convention held November 15, Democrats in Harrison County organized properly for the first time. After electing a chairman, members stated that a Democratic victory was necessary "to preserve the ascendancy of those principles over Know-Nothingism and Federalism," and passed the following resolutions:

1. Each precinct was to form a Democratic club.
2. The clubs were to meet the first Saturday of each month.
3. A committee was to study the need for a reading room.
4. A committee of correspondence was to be established to communicate with other Democratic clubs throughout the state.
5. Each precinct was to establish a vigilance committee to organize the Democratic clubs.

Officers elected for the year were W.R.D. Ward, president; L.T. Wigfall, C.M. Adams, and Joseph Taylor, committee of correspondence; and R.W. Loughery, secretary and member of the reading room committee. Vice presidents were elected for each of the ten precincts. In the November 22 issue of the *Texas Republican*, Loughery reported fully the actions of the convention, naming approximately 100 men who had been placed in some position in the Democratic organization.⁵⁹

Less than a month after the national contest, Marshall elected city officials. Loughery requested a convention to nominate Democratic candidates unless "opposition to the movement is manifested by members of the party who may regard it as in expedient and impolitic." He wrote that there was much dissatisfaction with the incumbent administration, controlled by the Know-Nothings, and specified the failures of leadership: curtailing trade by alienating town from country; levying oppressive taxes, city taxes being higher than state and county taxes combined; not publishing a list of expenditures; and keeping secret the value of assessed property, amounts collected, and the condition of the treasury. If the Democrats could win in Marshall, Loughery said, the Know-Nothings would lose the entire county. "For a man to come out

for office in this county, and to be recognized as a Democrat," Loughery complained, "has been hitherto considered sufficient to ensure defeat; insomuch as we have quietly permitted the Know-Nothings to monopolize nearly all of the offices."⁶⁰

The Know-Nothings made no nominations for city offices; nevertheless, their entire ticket was elected.⁶¹ The vote of 172 stood in contrast to the 455 ballots cast in the presidential election only a few weeks before. Obviously the Democrats, though finally organized, had not been sufficiently concerned about a local election to turn out in large numbers. Loughery's brag that Know-Nothings had heard "the thrilling tocsin of defeat" had proved premature. Nevertheless, he commented that they might not have another occasion to boast.⁶²

Rapid deterioration of the American Party on both national and state levels followed their defeat in the presidential election. The party disintegrated in Texas, riddled by defections and stunned by failure. Former Know-Nothings flooded Democratic papers with letters stating essentially the same theme: Americans, deserting nativism, were waging war against the South.⁶³ Reacting to accusations of disloyalty to state and section, many Know-Nothings deserted the party. In Marshall, for example, unhappy Know-Nothings claimed disillusionment with the "abolitionist" American Party and sought to join the Democrats.⁶⁴ Finally, at the state convention in 1858, delegates resolved that "the doors of the great temple of Democracy" be opened to "all repentant sinners" and invited recreants to return, confessing, to be "readmitted to the fold of the faithful."⁶⁵ At a special night session, Know-Nothings seeking entry adopted the sectional views of the regular Democrats, reinforcing the Democratic self-image as bastion of state's rights and protector of Southern institutions.

That the Know-Nothings embraced the views of state's rights, pro-Southern Democrats is not surprising. Like the Democrats, a large majority of Know-Nothings came from the lower South.⁶⁶ And like their Democratic counterparts, Know-Nothing leaders were generally old-line Texans of education and refinement. They were professional men: doctors, lawyers, teachers. Most were middle-aged, Southern-born, holders of real and personal property, and slaveowners.⁶⁷

One of the state's most important Know-Nothings, J.S. Ford, editor of the *Texas State Times*, the leading Know-Nothing journal in the state, announced in May 1857 that duty to the South forced his withdrawal from the Know-Nothings and reaffiliation with the Democrats.⁶⁸ Assuming editorial leadership, the *Harrison Flag* broadcast the need for a state convention to be held at Fairfield.⁶⁹ Know-Nothings in Harrison County, in their first open meeting, confirmed Fairfield as the site and selected delegates to attend, instructing them to support Sam Houston for governor.⁷⁰ Loughery, present at the meeting, acidly commented that the convention was an "exhibition in political depravity" in which members "openly boasted of trickery, scheming, and wire pulling."⁷¹ Most counties, though, were unable to initiate sufficient

interest, and plans for the meeting in Fairfield fell victim to waning strength and enthusiasm, no convention being held.

As the election for governor neared, residents of Harrison County wrangled over the choice of a candidate. Both Democrats and Know-Nothings signed a letter published in the Harrison *Flag* supporting William T. Scott, a Harrison County planter and member of the Texas senate. But Scott, Loughery wrote, could not gain the support of the state Democratic convention because he had backed Dickson in 1855.⁷² Friends of Scott rebutted through an article published in the Henderson *Democrat*, arguing that Scott had led the fight against Whigs and Know-Nothings. Loughery's opposition to Scott was based on "well understood" personal reasons.⁷³ In reply, Loughery dismissed the author of the letter as seeking to divide the Democratic vote. The issues, Loughery said, were Scott's Know-Nothing membership, his comments during the election in 1855, and his voting a mixed ticket.⁷⁴ At the Democratic state convention, H.R. Runnels received the nomination for governor, his opponent being the Unionist and former Know-Nothing Sam Houston, running as an Independent.

L.D. Evans had returned to Marshall by April 1857 to prepare for reelection.⁷⁵ Evans announced from Washington that he had left the Know-Nothings and wished to rejoin the Democrats. The Democrats, though, were not eager to receive him. Should the "long suffering Democracy of Texas have bowels of compassion for all his sins?" the Dallas *Herald* asked. Charles De Morse, editor of the Clarksville *Standard*, denounced Evans as "the gay deceiver who lured the Democracy to its undoing but two years since; when his seductive tales, not quite correct, secured their confidence only to be betrayed. The sweet mouthed Lemuel with his mellifluous smile has run his course. His political sands are run out. . . ."⁷⁶

Democrats meeting in Tyler selected J.H. Reagan to oppose Evans.⁷⁷ In Harrison County, Democrats nominated W.T. Scott, Pendleton Murrah, and L.T. Wigfall for the senate, but Murrah, who was present, withdrew, and Scott, who was not present, declined by a letter he had written earlier. Then Wigfall, called one of Texas' brightest sons, distinguished for "preaching . . . Democracy in its purity," was nominated by acclamation.⁷⁸ For representatives the convention unanimously chose Murrah, Eli T. Craig, and W.F. Baldwin. Loughery, the secretary of the meeting, believed the candidates to be the best available – all men of superior speaking ability who could express Democratic ideas forcefully.⁷⁹

Harrison County Know-Nothings met five days after the Democrats. Giving each member one vote meant that Marshall would control the convention. Know-Nothings chose J.F. Taylor to oppose Wigfall, and Josiah Marshall, R.B. Gatlin, and C.C. Johnson to oppose Murrah, Craig, and Baldwin.⁸⁰

Excitement swept Marshall when the two candidates for governor, Houston and Runnels, visited the city. Nearing town on the morning of June 12, they were ceremoniously escorted to the courthouse. After being welcomed by Josiah Marshall, Houston spoke briefly. During the afternoon he

was to speak two more hours. Then, following a dinner break, Runnels was to speak for two-and-a-half hours, Houston concluding the debate by speaking for another half hour. Houston said that he had started out on a lion hunt but found himself beset by dogs and puppies. He denounced his opponents, blamed a corrupt legislature for wanting to steal the public lands and protested the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Loughery complimented Houston's commanding presence, clear and melodious voice, distinct articulation, and precise style, but ridiculed Houston's speech as "twaddle and egotism" that created only nausea among his followers.⁸¹

When Runnels, a notoriously poor speaker, was reportedly too ill to reply, the cry went up for Wigfall. The issue, he responded, was Houston's attempt to destroy the Democratic Party. Wigfall allied Houston with opponents of Southerners and conservative Northerners, singling out for special censure Houston's vote for Fillmore, whom Wigfall called an abolitionist and enemy of Democracy.⁸²

Evans and Reagan, candidates for Congress, both spoke in Marshall. Loughery, not surprisingly, dismissed Evan's speech as "transparent humbug."⁸³ In speeches across East Texas, Evans claimed status as a Buchanan-like Democrat divorced from caucuses or cliques.⁸⁴ His most important point was his assertion that Southern Democrats were controlled by demagogues intent on dividing the party. Reagan and Runnels, Evans said, backed extreme measures, including the reopening of the African slave trade.⁸⁵

Reagan, shying away from denunciations of men, tried to deal with principles. Preaching state's rights, he opposed the federalism put forward by Whigs and Know-Nothings. Acknowledging the right of secession, he recognized that it would be accompanied by violence.⁸⁶ Stating that Know-Nothings still lurked abroad, he spoke against religious tests in politics, proscription of foreigners, and secret political organizations.⁸⁷

When the vote was in, Democrats in Harrison County rejoiced. In the county's largest turnout until that time, smaller boxes overrode Marshall's vote for Independent or American candidates, giving the Democrats a clean sweep. Know-Nothing strength in Marshall was best indicated by the votes for the senate and legislature. Know-Nothing candidates averaged 212 votes; Democrats, 205. Wigfall, whose opponent was said to be one of the most popular men in the county, was elected to the senate by a majority of ten. Having won Harrison County by 280 votes in 1855, Evans lost it by forty in 1857.⁸⁸ His epitaph had been written months earlier:

Alas, poor Lem'—here he lies,
No body laughs, no body cries,
Where he has gone, and how he fares,
No body knows, and no body cares.⁸⁹

A gratified Loughery announced the election to be the death blow to Know-Nothings in Harrison County.⁹⁰ This time, he was correct. Except for verbal sparring, the battle between the Democrats and the Know-Nothings was over.

Emerging from the contest for Harrison County was a well-organized

group of pro-Southern state's righters devoted to the convention system of choosing candidates. Similar organization took place all across Texas as did thorough organization on the state level. When the Democrats met at the state convention in 1858, only one regular Democrat was opposed, and even though a few Democrats protested the politicization of judicial positions, most accepted the pronouncement of J.H. Reagan that "Democrats must learn to surrender their private judgments to the judgment of the party."⁹¹

That voters placed sectional issues over state issues was articulated by Loughery in his discussion of the governor's election of 1855. Three-fourths of the voters, he claimed, had disagreed with Pease's politics but had voted for him because the election transcended state issues, being linked to larger issues embracing the entire South.⁹² W.B. Ochiltree of Nacogdoches, the ex-leader of the Whig faction in Texas and advocate of Americanism, gave considerable punch to the Democratic argument when he deserted the Know-Nothings for the Democrats, saying that views against foreigners must be subordinated to views against abolitionists.⁹³ In a letter to the *Texas Republican* a former Whig and ex-president of a Know-Nothing council voiced the pro-Southern convictions of most Americans. When joining the Know-Nothings, he wrote, he had believed that the party would crush abolitionism in the North and unify the South. But abolitionism had triumphed, and slavery being the only question pending, he would vote with the Democrats.⁹⁴

Thus, as streams of propaganda rolling from conservative presses promoted sectionalism by instigating a marked self-consciousness, transient Whigs and Know-Nothings vowed allegiance to the South and leagued with the Democrats. Unionism and the Constitution as expressed by Houston and Evans fell victim to state's rights and the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions as extolled by Runnels and Reagan.⁹⁵ The combative Loughery had seized upon ready-made and incendiary issues, crying against secrecy, anti-foreignism, anti-Catholicism, federalism, and abolitionism. The Democrats of Harrison County – incited by constant pleas for organization, provoked by outpourings against the abolitionism of Northern Know-Nothings, fortified by Know-Nothings who had found the lures of secrecy and nativism fleeting – rose from the defeat of 1855 to beat down a strong antagonist and stand victorious in 1857 and beyond.

NOTES

¹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 30, 1855; March 10, 1855. The Hartford Convention recommended constitutional amendments which would weaken the power of the Southern states, including abolishing the three-fifths compromise by which slaves could be counted for congressional representation.

²*Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 4, 1855; May 19, 1855.

³*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 7, 1855.

⁴*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 28, 1855.

⁵T.J. Rusk in *Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 14, 1855; George H. Chilton in *Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 7, 1855; J.P. Henderson in *Texas Republican* (Marshall), May 19, 1855.

⁶*Texas Republican* (Marshall), March 27, 1855.

⁷*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 28, 1855.

⁸*Texas State Times* (Austin), May 26, 1854, cited by William Darrell Overdyke, *The Know-Nothing Party in the South* (Baton Rouge, 1950), p. 62.

⁹In December 1855, R.W. Loughery wrote that he had been using ink acquired from Josiah Marshall "late editor of the *Meridian*" for three months. *Texas Republican* (Marshall), December 15, 1855.

¹⁰*Texas Republican* (Marshall), November 18, 1854.

¹¹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 10, 1854.

¹²*Texas Republican* (Marshall), October 7, 1854.

¹³*Texas Republican* (Marshall), February 24, 1855.

¹⁴*Texas Republican* (Marshall), February 24, 1855.

¹⁵*Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 19, 1854; September 9, 1854.

¹⁶Overdyke, *Know-Nothing Party*, pp. 116-17; *Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 7, 1855.

¹⁷Microfilm copies of 1850 census, Texas, Harrison County.

¹⁸Election returns in the *Standard* (Clarksville), September 10, 1853.

¹⁹*Standard* (Clarksville), July 7, 1855; *Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 7, 1855.

²⁰Ernest William Winkler (ed.), *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas* (Austin, 1916), p. 64; *Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 28, 1855.

²¹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 30, 1855.

²²*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 30, 1855; July 7, 1855.

²³*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 7, 1855; *Standard* (Clarksville), July 21, 1855.

²⁴*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 7, 1855.

²⁵*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 30, 1855; July 28, 1855.

²⁶Letter from Marshall, *Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 4, 1855.

²⁷*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 28, 1855.

²⁸*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 28, 1855.

²⁹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 28, 1855.

³⁰*Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 4, 1855.

³¹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 4, 1855.

³²*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 28, 1855.

³³*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 30, 1855; July 14, 1855; July 21, 1855.

³⁴*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 14, 1855.

³⁵*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 14, 1855.

³⁶*Texas Republican* (Marshall), November 10, 1855. Evans carried the East by fewer than fifty votes from a total of 20,714. File number 2-13/324, Texas State Archives. The story of the election of 1855 is in Waymon Larry McClellan, "The Democratic-Know-Nothing Hurly Burly in Upper East Texas: 1855-1857," (unpublished Master's thesis, East Texas State University, 1971), pp. 32-67.

³⁷*Texas Republican* (Marshall), September 15, 1855.

³⁸*Texas Republican* (Marshall), November 24, 1855.

³⁹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), October 13, 1855.

⁴⁰*Texas Republican* (Marshall), November 3, 1855.

⁴¹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), April 26, 1856.

⁴²*Texas Republican* (Marshall), April 26, 1856.

⁴³*Texas Republican* (Marshall), April 26, 1856.

⁴⁴*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 7, 1856. The *Flag* carried on its masthead a picture of an eagle above a drawing of George Washington. The caption read "Americans Must Rule America."

⁴⁴Results ascertained from copies of election returns furnished by Texas State Librarian.

⁴⁵*Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 16, 1856; November 22, 1856.

⁴⁶*Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 9, 1856.

⁴⁷*Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 16, 1856.

⁴⁸*Texas Republican* (Marshall), September 12, 1856.

⁴⁹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), October 4, 1856.

⁵⁰*Texas Republican* (Marshall), October 11, 1856.

⁵¹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), October 13, 1856.

⁵²*Texas Republican* (Marshall), October 25, 1856.

⁵³*Texas Republican* (Marshall), November 8, 1856.

⁵⁴*Texas Republican* (Marshall), October 25, 1856; November 8, 1856.

⁵⁵*Texas Republican* (Marshall), November 8, 1856.

⁵⁶*Texas Republican* (Marshall), November 8, 1856. Statewide, Buchanan defeated Fillmore by a two-to-one margin.

⁵⁷*Texas Republican* (Marshall), November 8, 1856.

⁵⁸*Texas Republican* (Marshall), November 22, 1856.

⁵⁹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), December 6, 1856.

⁶⁰City officials elected for Marshall in 1856 were: mayor, S.J. Richardson; constable, J.M. Bailey; treasurer, A.H. Barrett; recorder, J. Mullins; aldermen, W. Fields, A. Wilson, G.W. Vivion, G. Gregg, and W. Taylor. *Texas Republican* (Marshall), December 13, 1856. In 1855 the following men had been elected to town offices: mayor, R.N. Stansbury; constable, J. Martin; treasurer, A.H. Barrett; recorder, A.A. Wilson; aldermen, G. Gregg, J. Witt, C. Hynson, E.P. Johnson, and W. Taylor. *Texas Republican* (Marshall), September 29, 1855.

⁶¹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), December 13, 1856.

⁶²See, for example, a letter containing ten signatures in the *Standard* (Clarksville), July 28, 1857.

⁶³*Texas Republican* (Marshall), July 12, 1856, quoting speech by M.J. Hall.

⁶⁴Francis Richard Lubbock, *Six Decades in Texas, or Memoirs of Francis Richard Lubbock, Governor of Texas in War Time, 1861-63*, ed. C.W. Raines (Austin, 1900), p. 233.

⁶⁵The slave states of the lower South populated East Texas, with Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi furnishing 51.8 percent of new families to 1860; Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Missouri added another 34.7 percent. The remaining 13.5 percent came primarily from Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, and the Carolinas. See Barnes F. Lathrop, *Migration into East Texas 1835-1860* (Austin, 1949), p. 34. The percentage of slaves increased at a greater rate than the percentage of whites in East Texas, indicating that ownership of slaves was becoming more widespread. Henderson County, for example, registered a 201 percent increase in the white population between 1850 and 1860, but showed a 1,277 percent increase in the number of slaves. Lathrop, *Migration*, pp. 25-26.

⁶⁶Ralph A. Wooster, "An Analysis of the Texas Know-Nothings," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXX (January, 1967), pp. 414-23.

⁶⁷John Salmon Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, ed. Stephen B. Oates (Austin, 1963), xxxi; Overdyke, *Know-Nothing Party*, p. 272. His jaunt in the Americans, Ford said, was just "one of those inconsiderate things men do sometimes." Ford, *Ford's Texas*, p. 211.

⁶⁸Overdyke, *Know-Nothing Party*, p. 272.

⁶⁹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), April 4, 1857.

⁷⁰*Texas Republican* (Marshall), April 4, 1857.

⁷¹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), March 14, 1857.

⁷²*Texas Republican* (Marshall), April 11, 1857, quoting the *Henderson Democrat*.

⁷³*Texas Republican* (Marshall), April 11, 1857.

⁷⁴*Texas Republican* (Marshall), April 25, 1857.

⁷⁶*Herald* (Dallas), June 7, 1856; *Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 29, 1857, quoting the *Clarksville Standard*.

⁷⁷*Texas Republican* (Marshall), March 7, 1857.

⁷⁸*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 13, 1857.

⁷⁹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 20, 1857.

⁸⁰*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 20, 1857.

⁸¹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 20, 1857. Speaking to the Senate in August, 1856, Houston said that "grave charges have been brought against a party of which I acknowledge myself to be a member....I am a member of the American Party because I am an American born and wish to live and breathe the same air and enjoy the same free institutions, shielded by the same *aegis*, and follow...the same eagle that has brought victory and joy to our country." Speech to the United States Senate, August 30, 1856, in Amelia W. Williams and Eugene C. Barker (eds.), *The Writings of Sam Houston, 1813-1863* (Austin, 1942), VI, p. 386.

⁸²*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 20, 1857.

⁸³*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 6, 1857.

⁸⁴*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 6, 1857.

⁸⁵*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 6, 1857; Lubbock, *Memoirs*, p. 218.

⁸⁶*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 20, 1857.

⁸⁷*Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 20, 1857; John H. Reagan, *Memoirs, with Special Reference to Secession and the Civil War*, ed. Walter Flavius McCaleb (New York, 1906), pp. 63-64.

⁸⁸Election results in *Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 15, 1857. The vote in Harrison County was as follows: governor, Runnels-601, Houston-556; congressman, Reagan-598, Evans-558; representatives, Baldwin-605, Gatlin-521; Murrah-595, Johnson-518; Craig-592, Wilson-511.

⁸⁹*Texas Republican* (Marshall), February 2, 1856, quoting the *Clarksville Standard*.

⁹⁰*Texas Republican* (Marshall), August 8, 1857.

⁹¹*Herald* (Dallas), August 14, 1858.

⁹²*Texas Republican* (Marshall), March 21, 1857.

⁹³Ochiltree's comments taken from the *Trinity Advocate*, quoted in the *Texas Republican* (Marshall), May 17, 1856.

⁹⁴*Texas Republican* (Marshall), September 8, 1855.

⁹⁵The state Democratic convention of 1857 unhesitatingly embraced Southern rights. The platform committee determined to avoid "embodying in their platform any opinion on questions of State policy." Winkler, *Platforms*, p. 72. Specific policies concerning the railroads and other state topics, Democrats feared, would fragment the party. *Texas Republican* (Marshall), June 13, 1857. The convention concluded that the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, which argued that states had the right to decide the constitutionality of acts passed by Congress, had "binding authority" on the party. Winkler, *Platforms*, p. 73.