Loyalty and Disloyalty in Urban America

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Introduction:

The decades before the American Civil War would be a period of great change for America’s two largest cities, New York City and Philadelphia. At the turn of the 19th century, New York City was still socially homogenous, with few immigrants and a uniform, simple economy. But, as its economic and social power grew with the development of new industries and the growth of interstate commerce, immigration to the city skyrocketed. Immigrants flooded the physically expanding city from New England, from the countryside of upstate New York, and from overseas, to the point where by 1860 it had 813,660 residents. Thus, by 1860 New York City was America’s financial and social capital, the “capital of capital” as historian John Strausbaugh put it. 1 1860 Philadelphia had a population of 565,529, behind only London, Paris, and New York City. Like New York City and most northern metropolises, its immigrants were primarily Irish and German (16.7 and 7.5 percent in Philadelphia, respectively.) However, unlike New York City, it had a vibrant native-born citizenry, whether anti-slavery heirs of the City of Brotherly Love’s Quaker founders, members of its 400 churches and nearly one thousand organized lodges, clubs, and benefit associations, or Southern businessmen moving North for greater economic opportunities. 2 For these long-time Philadelphia residents, the Civil War, and the resulting political and social changes to their city, would be a time of reckoning for their long-held beliefs.

As national centers of commerce and society, New York City and Philadelphia are crucial to understanding the national
political and ideological changes and movements that occurred during the Civil War. Throughout the war, both cities would serve as microcosms for the political and ideological changes that befell the rest of the Union. In the historical memory and common knowledge of New York City and Philadelphia during the war, the two cities have acquired contrasting perceptions. New York City, in large part thanks to its well-documented draft riots, is perceived as a disloyal, racist city. Philadelphia, in large part thanks to its colonial legacy and lack of similar riots or anti-Lincoln actions, is perceived as a loyal and pro-war city. In reality, however, the truth about each city’s loyalty and disloyalty is somewhere between the reputations given to them by the passage of time. Neither New York City nor Philadelphia fit into the perfect picture of the “loyal city” or “disloyal city” that they have been placed into by popular memory. Both cities faced pitched electoral clashes that could have easily taken their cities in different political directions, and no political outcome in either city was preordained.

Comparatively studying New York City and Philadelphia revealed the fascinating differences with which politically active citizens, especially elected officials and party leaders, positioned themselves in relation to the war effort. Yet, one facet that united political actors divided by different viewpoints and residing in different cities was their use of definitions of loyalty and disloyalty. Analyzing either city through definitions of loyalty and disloyalty is a rare historiographical occurrence; nevertheless, conceptions of loyalty and disloyalty are crucial for this study. In a conflict as divisive as the Civil War, both cities were split between many vocal factions that argued they were the only ones truly loyal to the nation while their opponents were just disloyal agitators. They also sought to control and alter situations when the disloyalty label was directed at them. Thus, this work will be a critical reinterpretation of how we, now over 155 years since the end of the Civil War, see those who practiced politics in New
York City and Philadelphia during the conflict. Even those actors already given some scholarly treatment deserve to be recontextualized within the framework of loyalty and disloyalty. The New York City or Philadelphia leader who receives the most scholarly treatment is Fernando Wood. Twice elected mayor of New York City, including serving as its first war-time mayor, and later a congressman, Wood is the focus of two well-researched books, various articles, and plays an integral role in most stories of New York City during the war. While most of the works repeat facts and arguments about his life story, there is a notable disagreement that this thesis will relitigate and seek to solve. Was Wood a disloyal, political opportunist masking or deploying his opposition to the war at different times when it was politically advantageous, or was he a loyal leader who stuck by his principles even forced to adapt to changing circumstances like everyone else? All in all, through Wood’s winding wartime career while there were shades of the latter, he was a politician first, willing to sacrifice his party and principles, and in one case his state’s safety, for political gain. Other political actors of different degrees of notoriety will also be recontextualized within this question, and while they all were political opportunists to varying degrees, none were as overtly duplicitous as Wood was.

Beyond Wood, both cities are also filled with partisan actors seeking to utilize the Civil War to push forward their vision for their city. While there are too many to cover in detail, this work will examine many based on their connections to the different intraparty factions of both cities. The politics of both cities were defined by constant party feuds that at times allowed for political and electoral success, but most often led to disaster. The New York City Democratic Party alone had three powerful factions, Tammany Hall, Mozart Hall, and the McKeon Democracy, all of whom will receive their due. New York City Republicans were divided between a more moderate faction led by New York Times editor Henry Raymond and a
more radical faction led by *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley. At different points in the war, these factions stood for different positions and achieved different levels of success. For instance, while Raymond’s faction originally opposed President Lincoln’s policies, by war’s end they were amongst his most powerful backers. Greeley’s faction helped deliver him the 1860 Republican nomination and then soured on him as the war progressed. The reason for this shift will be examined, occurring based on the evolving popularity of Lincoln and his wartime policies, and what they meant for this intraparty power struggle. Philadelphia, on the other hand, was less defined by interparty or intraparty feuds. Rather, it was characterized more by a divide between a bipartisan, pro-war consensus under Alexander Henry and out-of-power Democrats and Republicans who wanted a seat at the table but were never popular enough to receive one. The reason for this composition of Philadelphia politics will be examined. All in all, Henry’s desire for bipartisanship and consensus was successful, in large part due to a healthy use of police power, which allowed Philadelphia to avoid most of the divisiveness and bloodshed that befell New York City.

Besides political leaders, and their parties and coalitions, there are other key avenues to understand the intersections of the cities. For example, both cities had a rich heterogeneous mix of newspapers that were important for the politicization of those who led and were led alike. In 19th century America, newspapers were crucial prognosticators and disseminators of political thought, allowing everyday citizens, regardless of their education or political knowledge, to glean their own personal views from the opinions of their favorite newspaper. As Edward Dicey, a British journalist visiting America during the Civil War, put it, “In truth, the most remarkable feature about the American press is its quantity rather than its quality. The American might be defined as a newspaper-reading animal… Reading is so universal an acquirement here, that a far larger,
and also a far lower, class reads the newspapers than is the case with us.”

The papers, whether affiliated with politically independent or with a party or faction, still hoped to influence political parties and leaders. New York City especially was dominated by an ideological battle between its three most influential newspapers: Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*, Henry Raymond’s *New York Times*, and Fernando Wood’s *New York Daily News*. Their constant battle to define themselves as loyal, and their competitors (and thus their competitors’ readers) as disloyal would demonstrate the simmering tension between New York City’s ideological and ethnic communities. Due to their ties to a party faction, these newspapers successfully captured the views of their faction and its struggles, or outright refusal, to adjust as the national political circumstances changed. On the other hand, Philadelphia’s papers, while ideological, had few connections to organized politics, and thus politically evolved with much of the country as the war progressed.

This section, of a larger work encompassing the years 1859-1865, covers 1859-1861, examining how the quick rhetorical shifting, by both parties, from opposition to civil war to full-throated pro-war, anti-South oratory obscured real political divisions about loyalty. While in the end loyalty as constructed as supporting Lincoln and the war effort fully would win out in both cities over loyalty as constructed as supporting a party or a pre-war national construct, it was by no means an easy decision for either city and for those who led them. At times, the first construction would even be the most unpopular view of loyalty, especially during periods of Democratic control and when the Union war effort was struggling the most. By the end of the war, while many of the political leaders and factions evolved with their city’s residents towards the first definition of loyalty, others would refuse to evolve despite great pressure, to varying degrees of negative electoral and personal consequences. In that case, the differences
between the cities plays a deciding role, where in New York City those who sought bipartisanship failed completely, while their counterparts in Philadelphia succeeded. Likewise, while Democrats virtually disappeared from elected office in Philadelphia, in New York City they ruled for most of the war, even after a significant portion of their base rioted in the streets.

In truth, throughout the war there was no simple answer about what loyalty and disloyalty meant. Many in both parties would vehemently resist any definition but their own. While I know that my work will not lead to a simple answer about the roles of loyalty and disloyalty in political action and discourse, I hope that my use of the best of the scholarship combined with primary sources to fill its gaping holes will help conclude that one’s loyalty and disloyalty could not be judged by one’s partisan identification or political allies. It especially cannot be judged by one’s rhetoric, which was often vague at best and deceitful of one’s true intentions at worst. In fact, if there is one conclusion that this paper easily makes, it is that there were no universally agreed upon, or even mostly agreed upon, definitions of what constituted loyalty and disloyalty, only subjective opinions altered by time and animated by politics.

New York City and Philadelphia: The Early Days of the Split

For New York City and Philadelphia Democrats and Republicans leaders alike, April 12th, 1861 would mark a turning point from their pre-war attitudes towards the Union, secession, and other contentious issues. Democrats and Republicans, and their powerful political and media leaders, would immediately walk back much of the criticism they leveled at President Lincoln and the possibility of war. Both sides would go to great lengths to trumpet their loyalty to the war effort, seeking to outflank their opponents as the most loyal. It appeared that the coming of war would bring
an end to the discordant Northern politics of the 1850s and usher in a new era of bipartisan cooperation. But, these public demonstrations of agreement would be both short-lived and ultimately unsuccessful attempts at unity. By the end of the year, interparty and intraparty rivalries would resume, with efforts by politicians in both parties to denigrate others as disloyal to the war effort when it was still broadly popular and to highlight their own ideological principles to their supporters once it was not. These divisions in New York City and Philadelphia would be magnified by the contentious and divisive city elections in 1861, setting the stage for an even more contentious and divisive 1862.

However, to best understand where both parties and their heterogeneous factions would end up by 1862, it is necessary first to determine where they started. For both cities, the years immediately preceding the war were marked by political turbulence. Old political alliances and ideologies were chaotically rejected and replaced, as different groups and ideas jockeyed for power. The result would be the transformation of Philadelphia into a one-party city, a party defined by support for the Union over traditional party lines, though with a sizable minority of Democrats and Republicans opposing the consensus, and of New York City into a city politically partitioned into three nearly equal parts. Thus, even though both cities entered the war in relatively similar ideological positions, they would, thanks to these wartime dynamics, exit the year completely dissimilar.

For a city north of the Mason-Dixon line, pre-war Philadelphia was in many ways a Southern city. With its manufacturing capital greater than the combination of 11 states that would become the Confederacy, it received great economic investment from wealthy Southerners. These Southerners did not just send money to Philadelphia; in fact, many Southerners married into Philadelphia families and directed their manufacturing empires from within the city. They
then employed poor whites, often immigrants, and allied with them politically by focusing on a supposedly shared hatred for the city’s growing free black population. For decades before the war, these ties to the South manifested in clear voting preferences for Southern economic interests and led to massive Democratic electoral success in the city. In the city’s 1856 presidential election, Republican John C. Fremont received 11% of the vote, with the Democrats procuring a majority, and its burgeoning Know-Nothing Party forced to suppress many of its anti-slavery supporters. As Charles Godfrey Leland, a Philadelphia satirist, put it, “everything Southern was exalted and worshipped.”

One example of something Southern exalted in Philadelphia was fear and, in many, overt hatred towards the city’s free blacks. As previously established, some of the hatred felt by the city’s workers towards black residents was promoted by direct propaganda from the city’s Southern business leaders. Yet, most of the hatred felt by Philadelphians of all walks of life towards free blacks came from their unmistakable presence, constituting four percent of Philadelphia’s population. Though on the surface small, they were the largest black community in the North, and second only to Baltimore’s. Furthermore, they disproportionately lived in wards closest to the city’s major political and social institutions and often worked in economic sectors like menial labor and domestic work that kept them in poverty and near the city elite. Thus it is clear that in Philadelphia, the controversy over black rights in city society, or lack thereof, was more omnipresent than seemingly far-fetched fears of secession or unrelatable issues like Bleeding Kansas.

Yet in pre-war Philadelphia, free blacks were more than just a nuisance or something to fear; they were also a direct target of restrictive political measures. Blacks were stuck in low-level menial labor or domestic work because of economic restrictions passed by Southern-allied Democrats and supported by the white worker base. Employment in new factories built
by Southerners was closed to blacks, membership in trade groups was barred, and Democratic state legislatures mandated separate schools for blacks long before *Plessy vs. Ferguson*. While New York City has a more developed reputation for racism during the era, contemporary abolitionists actually thought Philadelphia was worse. The abolitionist William Wells Brown said that in Philadelphia, “Colorphobia is more rampant here than in the pro-slavery, negro-hating city of New York.” Frederick Douglass went even further, saying “There is not perhaps anywhere to be found a city in which prejudice against color is more rampant than in Philadelphia...The whole aspect of city usage at this point is mean, contemptible, and barbarous...” Unfortunately, even the war would not alter many of these obstructions and the city’s views of blacks would alter the rhetoric and policies of even more or less sympathetic political leadership.

The rise to power of an opposition party after such a Democratic landslide in 1856 illustrated how quickly new alliances could be created, be successful, and then immediately face the possibility of dissolution. It may be surprising that out of this virulently pro-Democrat, pro-South, and anti-black political structure, the Democratic Party would be displaced just two years later by an upstart party that stood against most of its core tenets. But, in reality, this displacement marked a major political realignment that befell much of the North, but especially Philadelphia. In the wake of Bleeding Kansas in 1855 and the Dred Scott Supreme Court case in 1857, new political coalitions were formed across the North to oppose the Democratic Party and its increasing agreement with the Southern ideology on slavery. Compromised of disaffected Democrats, former Whigs, nativists, and Free Soilers, these coalitions often struggled to succeed because of disagreements over the extent to which growing anti-slavery and anti-immigration ideologies should be emphasized. Those in Philadelphia came together in 1857 to form a new political
party, the Peoples Party.

The Peoples Party avoided the fate that befell other anti-Democrat coalitions by promising to ignore both slavery and nativism. They would only support popular sovereignty, not even abolition in new territories, and nativists would have to be satisfied with a lip-service plank of “Protection of American Labor against the Pauper Labor of Europe.”10 Rather than focus on what divided them, they focused on what they agreed on: the party portrayed Democrats as the aggressors on the question of slavery in an appeal to those who may nominally be Democrats, but still worried that slavery was bringing the country to the brink of Civil War.11 The Democratic Party was still a strong force, castigating the Peoples Party as the “‘Mulatto’ Party, offspring of miscegenation between the Americans and ‘Black Republicans.’” One Democratic speaker at an 1858 rally even argued that if the Peoples Party won, the state should go with the South before Republicans destroyed the national confederacy.12 Yet, in 1858 the new party would notch its first major electoral success, defeating the incumbent Democratic mayor and replacing him with one of their own, Alexander Henry. Therefore, it is clear that while Philadelphia had many Southern inclinations, they would not remain fully intact as the Civil War approached.
Alexander Henry, a wealthy young lawyer, hoped his term could avoid controversy while using his power to focus on his main legislative priority: improving the city’s public transportation. That his main policy goal was completely divorced from national politics reveals the tightrope that the Peoples Party sought to walk. Despite his victory, however, Henry’s influence and power over the city was tenuous at best. At any moment, the fragile alliance that brought him to power could collapse over internal divisions, allowing the Democratic Party to regain its usual power. Furthermore, the Peoples Party cannot be equated with the Republican Party; a separate political organization used the Republican name to push Henry and his allies towards a more candid antislavery position. His balancing act became more difficult after John Brown’s raid the next year. The raid would greatly polarize Philadelphia, convincing the city’s previously quiet abolitionists to schedule a public meeting at Independence Hall on the day of his execution. The audience at the meeting was divided between
abolitionists, black residents, and Southern sympathizers, and order was only ensured by the 120 policemen sent by Mayor Henry to attend the event. He would later use the police again to bar abolitionists from meeting Brown’s body when it passed through the city after his death and to stop Democrats from attacking New York abolitionist George Curtis as he lectured at the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Fair.¹⁴

Henry’s use of the city’s police force to maintain calm between divided factions would later become a hallmark of his administration and of the power of the Philadelphia mayoralty. The roots of this power actually came from a recent development in Philadelphia’s political and geographic evolution. In 1854, Philadelphia consolidated its outlying communities. Primarily intended to enlarge Philadelphia’s tax base, this consolidation also realigned political power around its executive and away from its city council. One key example of the increased power of the Philadelphia mayoralty was regarding the police. Now, each ward had its own police station under the supervision of a central station at City Hall, which the mayor controlled. Henry’s predecessors had already tested out the new police powers, first with the nativist and prohibitionist Robert Conrad suppressing Sunday newspapers and liquor sales.¹⁵ Out of this recent expansion would come Henry’s key mechanism for guiding his city through its darkest hours. The fact that wartime New York City had no such power vested in its mayor would one day restrain the leadership efforts of its non-Democratic leadership.

Despite trying to evenly utilize force against and on behalf of all political factions, Henry’s measures were wildly unpopular with much of the city in 1859 and into 1860. Democratic opponents saw him as a closet abolitionist who should have instead suppressed the anti-slavery meetings. Henry seemingly supported this argument by joining Curtis on stage at his lecture as a symbol of municipal authority and fairness. He was quickly rebuked in a 16-5 vote by the city’s Select Council,
and about a third of the city’s medical students from the South withdrew from their schools in protest. His political allies were not much better at supporting him, with many joining the city’s Republican Party rather than continue suppressing their views on issues surrounding slavery.\textsuperscript{16} Pushed in from both parties, Henry’s power nearly evaporated. Based on precinct returns from the May 1860 election for the mayoral race, A.K. McClure, a prominent Philadelphia Republican politician during the war and an ally of Henry, admitted years later that Henry was only re-elected because of falsified election returns, though there is no direct evidence of voter fraud or of Henry’s knowledge of any falsification.\textsuperscript{17} Perhaps to show he was still moderate, or out of legitimate ideological desires, Henry would end up supporting the Constitution Unionist, John Bell, over the Republican, Abraham Lincoln, in the 1860 presidential election. However, the latter’s large victory in the city, a sign of its continued drift away from the Democratic Party, would serve as a warning. For the mayor, his power as 1861 began was a far cry from the mandate he was seemingly given just three years earlier.

Democrats in the city also refused to give him or the Peoples Party room to reassure the city that they wanted reconciliation following Lincoln’s election and the secession of Southern states. On January 17th, Democrats held a mass meeting in which they supported Southern secession. One of the keynote speakers was William Bradford Reed, perhaps at the pinnacle of his power. Born into Philadelphia’s social elite, his grandfather served as Pennsylvania’s governor during the Revolutionary War, even as he was accused of directly communicating with King George III to betray his erstwhile friend George Washington. Originally an Anti-Mason and later a Whig, William Reed quickly irritated friend and foe alike. As historian Joanna Cowden put it in a very unsympathetic biography, “Attributing self-serving motives to those who opposed him, he measured their purity against his own
and found them wanting.” By 1856, he had abandoned the collapsing Whig Party, allying with many of his former friends and enemies by joining the Democratic Party.¹⁸

Before the switch, Reed was no Southern apologist like most in the Philadelphia Democratic Party. In his biography of his grandfather, Reed highlighted his grandfather’s support for Pennsylvania’s 1780 gradual abolition law as a proud accomplishment for his state.¹⁹ However, once he joined the Democratic Party, Reed abandoned such praise. Reed would reject congressional measures imposing limits on slave ownership in the territories. He would also align himself with a new home-state ally, the pro-Southern James Buchanan, for his presidential campaign. Reed would help Buchanan bring former Whigs like himself into the fold, portraying Buchanan as a moderate who would “save the country from the fanatical abolition which has always done wrong to us…”²⁰ After his victory, Buchanan would reward Reed by making him Minister to China, a prestigious diplomatic post that solidified Reed’s prominence and power within the city’s Democratic establishment. Reed would serve in this position until returning home in 1859 to defend Buchanan’s policies.

Thus, his 1861 speech was a homecoming for Reed, and an opportunity for him to stake out an ideological vision for the Philadelphia Democratic Party. He and the other speakers, Reed claimed, were there to discuss “conciliation and none other.” Lincoln’s election had unleashed a “fierce and feverish spirit” that could only be prevented if the South was placated. To appease the South, he urged the city’s Democrats to adopt a course of neutrality to orchestrate a settlement between those “whose fanaticism has precipitated this misery upon us” and their “brethren in the South, whose wrongs we feel as our own.”²¹ Though Reed did not directly advocate for secession, his advocacy of neutrality and later support for the Confederate cause over the Union cause led to that distinction being forgotten in the years ahead. But at the time, his speech
provoked relatively little controversy, as most city residents also wanted conciliation.

Philadelphia was a city struggling with many competing impulses in the years before the war. In many ways, it was a Southern city on par with many below the Mason-Dixon line. Its economy was closely allied with that of the South, its political opinions, demonstrated by the overwhelming support for Democratic candidates and positions, mirrored those of the South, and its unfortunate attitudes and treatment towards its black residents, mirrored the economic and social restrictions free blacks faced in the South. At the same time, antipathy began to develop against the Democratic Party, culminating in the election of Alexander Henry as Mayor. Still, there was no clear break, and Henry struggled throughout his first term to politically coexist between Southern allies and the growing Republican Party wanting stricter opposition. Henry also struggled to utilize a new feature of his position, control of the police. Furthermore, Democrats still held sway in the city, as seen by the popular speech of William Reed. A break would come, but it would take an event as catastrophic as the attack on Fort Sumter for Henry and his allies to gain an edge politically over their opponents and for Henry’s police-heavy strategy to prove effective.

New York City was also greatly divided politically in the lead up to the Civil War, and, like Philadelphia, residents faced the question about how close to align their city to the South. Wealthy New Yorkers, predominantly Democrats after the collapse of the Whig Party, had a vested economic interest in the South. New York City, more so than Philadelphia, was a part of a global trading network, and the most common good it unloaded in the decades before the war was Southern cotton. Cotton, of course, required slaves, and as the price of slaves skyrocketed, New York City banks extended credit to Southern plantations in exchange for continued access to the cotton market. Thus, New York City, as opposed to Philadelphia, was
explicitly complicit in slavery.\textsuperscript{22} Plus, it was an open secret that despite its nationwide ban in 1808, New York City continued as a place to import slaves from Africa. In fact, a city newspaper estimated in 1865 that between 1859 and 1860 alone, 85 ships had arrived in New York from Africa.

The views of the city on slavery were not all on one side of the debate though; in reality, New York City was on two opposing tracks when it came to slavery. Slaves had been officially manumitted in the city in 1827, a day that saw parades throughout the city, though mostly with only black residents participating. It also was home to prominent abolitionists, like Lewis Tappan, who served as a part of the Underground Railroad, and was the birthplace of the first black newspaper in the United States, \textit{Freedom's Journal}. Yet even Tappan was a major Northern trader of Southern cotton. Thus, while New York City was likely, as one historian later called it, the North’s most pro-South, anti-abolition city, it had an undercurrent of dissent and contradictions that would be tested throughout the Civil War.\textsuperscript{23}

As part of a national party, New York Democrats were also asked to swallow any misgivings they had about Southern priorities like slavery and free trade because those in the North could only win and influence national policy by courting and winning in the Solid South.\textsuperscript{24} Thus began a divisive internal party debate about how accommodating to be, and three camps were formed. “Hards” were parrots of Southern rhetoric, arguing the Union had to fully accommodate Southern expansionist desires. “Softs” advocated for popular sovereignty, a system devised by Illinois’ Stephen Douglas that allowed territories to choose for themselves if they wanted to slavery. Those who refused most or any accommodations with the South or slavery were “Barnburners,” though most Barnburners eventually fled to other parties or swallowed their misgivings for the sake of electoral success and joined one of the other two factions. While other state and local Democratic parties across
the North combusted under the weight of the party’s divisive policies of the 1850s, New York City’s was unique in that all these cleavages would mostly last throughout the war, though the factions took different names.  

Though he was not the cause of the divisions, perhaps no one embodied these internal divisions better than Fernando Wood. At the start of the war, Wood was a veteran New York City politician in his third nonconsecutive term as mayor. He was also a local, state, and national Democratic power broker who tried to maintain influence as the city, and his party, careened through crisis after crisis. All in all, the one constant of Wood’s political power was that it was never constant. In part this was because Wood had generally chosen no ideological side in the great debate over accommodation to the South; he was neither a Hard nor a Soft. In 1849 he allied with the Softs in exchange for being the party’s nominee the next year, though he lost because he refused to endorse the Compromise of 1850 as most other Softs did. When he finally won the mayoralty in 1854, he quickly alienated his supporters within the party with his patronage choices and public desire to be named Vice President in 1856. After failing to achieve that position, Wood had his term shortened by a year by Democrats to allow for a new election as soon as possible, with the explicit goal of replacing him.

All this hostility resulted in Wood being voted out of office in an 1857 landslide thanks to an unprecedented fusion of the Know-Nothing and Republican parties with the anti-Wood members of the Democratic Party behind one candidate. This anti-Wood coalition was primarily composed of members of Tammany Hall, the city’s Democratic machine for much of the century. Wood nominally controlled the machine during his two terms, but after his loss Tammany Hall replaced one of Wood’s close allies, Gideon Tucker, as a sachem and forced Wood out as Grand Sachem. Rather than try again to regain control of the city’s existing Democratic organization,
Wood decided to form his own political organization within the Democratic Party. Wood had been somewhat of a political kingmaker before by virtue of being Mayor, but most of his efforts were futile. For instance, his attempts in 1855 to form an alliance with Barnburner Democrats did not come to fruition as both they and Tammany Hall were happy to have them leave the party.  

Up until that point, even with the party’s internal divisions, patronage, platforms, and candidates were almost universally determined by unelected leaders of Tammany Hall and not by elected officials like Wood.

But Wood sought, even in defeat, to make himself the decider. He would form Mozart Hall in 1858 to directly challenge Tammany Hall “until it opened its doors” to his appointments. Wood’s first major success was not political, but in print. He and his brother bought a failing newspaper called the *New York Daily News*, and quickly turned it into a well-read mouthpiece for Mozart Hall. Throughout this time period, newspapers were often the chief mouthpiece for political parties and actors to present their ideas and positions to voters, to attack their opponents, and rally their supporters to their side. As will be discussed later, this allowed newspaper editors to possess a great deal of political leverage and wield great political capital; but, the same held true for elected officials too. Wood knew that a newspaper supporting Mozart Hall would greatly increase his reach and impact in city politics. As a supporter articulated in a letter shortly before the Woods bought the *New York Daily News*, “What strikes you of the project? In case of your approval I would undertake it at once & provide the necessary materials & force - editorially & otherwise - to make it worthy of democratic patronage & second to none of its contemporaries in point of spirit…” For Wood and his new backers, a newspaper was a crucial tool to regain their lost influence.

The problem for Wood, besides the trouble of trying to supplant an organization with a history and tradition of success
for decades, was that he had no ideological base of support. Wood likely underestimated how his constant evolutions had alienated most political allies and overestimated their willingness to defect from Tammany too. For instance veteran city naval leader Prosper Wetmore declined to ally with Wood in the 1860 elections, saying the offer Wood proffered was beneath his age and experience. Thus, Wood charted a new path towards being a kingmaker: identity politics among the city’s Irish. This was not the only strategy he employed though; for instance, he had used John Brown’s Harpers Ferry raid that year to great effect as supposed evidence of the dangers of Republican rule.

Wood had always pandered to the city’s Irish community, somewhat ironic since he had joined a local nativist group in an attempt to coalesce more support for his 1854 run. Although their poverty in Ireland and desire for American prosperity may have led them towards Republican free labor ideology, they resented Republican alliances with nativists. Since the mass immigration of Irish began in the 1840s, the Democratic Party had been their political home. But, after forming Mozart Hall, Wood would especially echo their rhetoric. He was a vocal opponent of prohibition, seen by many Irish immigrants at the time as a nativist talking point. He repeatedly denigrated his opposition as beholden to “British stockjobbers,” a clear ploy for Anglophobic Irish sentiment. But perhaps most importantly, he played on Irish fears of free black people as the Southerners did in Philadelphia and throughout the North, convincing them of future economic and social turmoil from greater black rights. Wood’s appeals to the Irish would also serve to fill the ranks of leadership in Mozart Hall since most of the defecting Tammany leaders, like Charles Daly, Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, were Irish themselves.

Tammany Hall made a concerted effort leading up to the 1859 mayoral election to court Wood’s Irish base, promising
them the share of patronage that had originally prompted Wood to form Mozart Hall. But Tammany Hall was still an imperfect messenger for Irish interests, choosing to nominate William Havemeyer, a German businessman, over the Irish community’s and Mozart Hall’s preferred candidate, William Kennedy, an Irish merchant. Havemeyer, and his candidate for the city’s Corporation Attorney, Samuel Tilden, called themselves “Fifth Avenue Democrats” based on their residence within the city’s upper economic echelon anchored at the city’s Fifth Avenue. They saw their wealth and social presence within the city as an asset, but most immigrants saw it as something else. Wood’s mouthpiece, the *New York Daily News*, repeatedly referred to Fifth Avenue Democrats “as a kid-glove, scented, silk stocking, poodle-headed, degenerate aristocracy.” They were also accused of not being Democrats, having supported the Free-Soil wing of the party in the prior decade.40

Displeased with Tammany Hall’s decision, Wood declared his candidacy, which he was not previously planning to do. Originally running against the coalition that had defeated him in 1857, his candidacy was aided by the Republican Party’s decision to nominate their own candidate. Their nominee, George Opdyke, hoped to appeal to independents and former Democrats upset by the Party’s pro-Southern stances. However, the Republicans were still too weak, and ended up siphoning enough votes from Havemeyer that Wood would shock many by winning the mayoralty again by a comfortable margin. Disgusted, Tilden would blame the “ignorant Irish” for their defeat, further driving the Irish away from Tammany Hall and that faction’s increasingly wealthy shift.41 All of a sudden, Wood was once again a power player in city party politics, and those who once attacked him and kicked him out were now singing his praises. A. Oakley Hall, a former Whig elected official and a decade later a Tammany Hall-backed mayor, wrote Wood that November to thank him for his “olive branch and to know that you bear no malice for the certainly objectionable language
displayed by me…which is now heartily withdrawn.”

The topsy-turvy political odyssey of Fernando Wood leading up to his surprising re-election as Mayor of New York City is possibly the best encapsulation of how his political power and ideals fluctuated. Wood’s primary goal, clearly, was to acquire and maintain power. To do so, Wood had no qualms about allying himself with different sides of the intraparty feud that consumed Democrats in the 1840s and 1850s. When he alienated too many allies in a quixotic bid for the vice presidency and lost the mayoralty in 1857, Wood pressed on, forming a rival Democratic faction to compete against his long-standing benefactors. With this new faction, Mozart Hall, Wood sought to encapsulate the pro-Southern ideology within the Democratic Party and capture the Irish immigrant demographic that was gaining more political influence every year in the city. This electoral strategy proved successful, demonstrating the popularity of his opinions and power of his constituents; yet, it also represented severe miscalculations by his old allies in Tammany Hall, their first of many in the years of the Civil War.

But Wood wanted more than the political comeback he had surprisingly achieved; he still wanted to be a national power player. Defeated, Tammany Hall wanted their power back and control of their city again. In pursuit of their feud, Wood and Tammany Hall would foster great national conflict within the Democratic Party at their party convention in 1860. In their desires for party supremacy, they would refuse to compromise on a presidential nominee, driving the Democratic Party into geographic factions that ran two separate campaigns. United, the Democratic Party may have won the 1860 presidential election, especially since Lincoln was loathed by much of the country; divided, they stood no chance against an emboldened Republican Party. Therefore, while it may be too simple to say the Tammany Hall-Mozart Hall feud was entirely responsible for the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860, it
unavoidably played a devastating role.

Wood was what his biographer Jerome Mushkat would call New York City’s first “prototypical modern municipal leader, a professional politician seeking to get, keep, maintain, and expand power.” Already established as not content with the mayoralty, as his predecessors were, he initially hoped to be nominated for President at the 1860 Democratic National Convention in Charleston, a long-shot bid quickly quashed when the national party recognized Tammany Hall, not Mozart Hall, as the New York Democratic delegation. Yet Wood decided to travel to Charleston anyway, subsidizing the travel expenses of his allies if they protested Mozart Hall’s exclusion. Knowing that his Irish base had little national influence, Wood focused more on highlighting his shared political interests with the South. As previously established, Wood employed this strategy in his 1859 mayoral campaign with success, and in the leadup to the 1860 party convention he doubled down on that strategy. His public letters with Virginia Governor Henry Wise supporting his state’s execution of John Brown sought to demonstrate his allegiance to the South and its political wishes, and made him the Southern delegates’ favorite candidate for Vice President, with many willing to lobby on his behalf. For example, Fred Aiken, the secretary of the 1860 Democratic convention and another Northerner with Southern sympathies, pledged to “use my best ability to affect the public mind of the South still more favorably in your behalf” so Wood would become Vice President.

Wood now hoped to be nominated as Vice President for John C. Breckinridge, President Buchanan’s sitting Vice President, who Wood called “a live & ambitious man, with a clear excellent & geographic status” to advance his candidacy. But Breckinridge, and his alliance with Southern “ultras,” best known for their support for secession over the past decade, made him anathema to much of the North. Tammany Hall publicly backed Stephen Douglas, whose popular sovereignty
was increasingly anathema to much of the South. Wood, perhaps, could have helped convince his Southern allies to support Douglas as their standard-bearer. However, Wood refused, publicly calling Douglas the “bob-tailed pony from Illinois.” Tammany Hall would not compromise either, supporting a resolution to mandate two-thirds of the delegates endorse the nominee. The goal of the resolution was to prevent a Southern candidate from winning a simple majority without any Northern support, but the plan backfired when Stephen Douglas was unable to reach two-thirds as well.

After 57 failed ballots the convention was postponed, and a second convention was called for Baltimore. An attempt by Douglas to withdraw for a candidate capable of winning Northern and Southern delegates when the Democrats met again was rejected by Tammany Hall. With no hope of winning, Breckinridge allies left the convention and nominated him on a separate ticket, creating two rival Democratic campaigns for the 1860 presidential election. Wood tried to work with the two tickets to fuse in states where the Republicans would win otherwise, but his efforts mostly failed. Lincoln would be elected by a narrow plurality achieved by winning states that Democrats, if united, would have otherwise won. While Wood’s more sympathetic biographer would wholly blame Tammany, Wood’s other biographer, the generally unsympathetic Samuel Pleasants, would wholly blame Wood. This historiographical discrepancy shows how one’s view of Wood clouds assigning blame for the Democratic debacle. Nevertheless, both sides of the New York Democratic divide were principally responsible for the party’s split and loss because they chose candidates that had no chance of winning and refused to abandon them when this became clear.
Once Lincoln was elected, Wood faced new and political challenges more dire than his fading national fortunes. As mayor of New York City, his first major challenge in 1861 was deciding how to respond to the growing calls from his city’s business community to forge some compromise to preserve the Union and the city’s economic relationship with the South. New York City’s business community was generally supportive of Republican protectionist measures versus Democrat free trade, but they worried that President Lincoln would stifle trade with their biggest market, the South. Wood struggled to allay their concerns; this tension would manifest most clearly before the war in Fernando Wood’s infamous “Free City” speech. In this speech, Wood advocated that New York City secede from the state of New York and pledge neutrality in the inevitable upcoming war between North and South. This speech would share some similarities to William Reed’s previously discussed
speech from the same winter. First, Wood argued that New York City must stand “with our aggrieved brethren of the slaves states” who they owe “friendly relations and common sympathy.” Second, Wood argued that a free city status would finally sever New York City from the wrongs of the state leaders (who he claimed were more dangerous than Southern secessionists) and attain security and prosperity. Finally, Wood qualified his pronouncement, saying that no violence should be utilized to help the city secede, but it should be done peacefully once war began.50

What is most surprising about Wood’s speech is how little notice it received at the moment. Partially this was the result of few thinking a free city would be accomplished; in fact, other than reported discussions with “certain wise men” of the merchant community at Wood’s residence, no tangible legislative or executive actions occurred.51 Yet this lack of coverage may be due to a contemporary perception that the speech was not as dubious as it appeared. Many biographers of Wood, in fact, argue that his Free City speech was not a controversial political manifesto, like Reed’s, but simply either a “trial balloon” to see what rhetoric was permissible at that unique moment of history or a simple continuation of New York’s downstate-upstate feud.52 Feuds regarding “home rule” for New York City, how much control the city should have independent of state oversight, were constant. This intrastate tension flared every time new taxes were debated or new regulations were proposed, every time legislative reapportionment was necessary, and especially every time that political patronage was doled out. Wood’s three terms as mayor were defined by a rivalry between New York City and the rest of the state that, even today, often transcends party lines. Therefore, Wood’s speech is often described as little more than perhaps an ill-timed continuation of this conflict, and not an accurate reflection of his ideological attitudes.

However, this argument is dubious since this would not
be the end of Wood’s questionable actions and rhetoric towards the South in the months before the war. His prior Thanksgiving proclamation urged citizens to pray that Republicans stop violating “the federal compact.”53 He issued a formal apology in January to the Governor of Georgia when New York state authorities found 25 muskets were heading south to aid the rebellion.54 His brother even demanded “total acquiescence in all Southern demands.”55 Some of Wood’s allies and base were even secession apologists. At a December 15th meeting, some Democrats passed a resolution extending “heartfelt sympathy” to Southerners “engaged in the holy cause of American liberty and trying to hold back the avalanche of Britishism…”56 It seemed that Wood and his allies would be a constant thorn in the side of Unionists until reconciliation was achieved.

As Wood ignited controversy and division, the city’s Republican Party sought to resolve its own internal divisions. For the decade before Wood’s controversial speech, parties in opposition to the Democratic majority in New York City would be too divided or controversial to reap the benefits of these divisions. By 1860, what had originally been a loose union of people united only by their opposition to Democrats was now a formalized Republican Party, but like Democrats, the Republicans had their own factions. The party was divided by a debate about whether to lean more towards its Whig Party roots or its Free-Soil Party roots. The former wanted a greater focus on economic issues like tariffs or infrastructure, hallmarks of the Whig ethos, and less on the South and slavery, the issues that destroyed the Whig Party. The latter, some of whom were once Democrats, wanted the focus on slavery and Southern expansionism.

This divide was often correlated with newspaper consumption. Whigs, who favored accommodation with Know-Nothings and former Democrats, read Horace Greeley’s New York Tribune. Those who wanted the party wholly Whiggish read Henry Raymond’s New York Times. What saved these
factions from destroying the national party as Democrats did was that they all agreed to work for Abraham Lincoln’s election, even though many had originally supported New York’s own, William Seward, especially the Raymond faction. Lincoln winning New York and defeating the Democratic candidates nationwide was more important to both than settling intraparty scores. That does not mean the Raymond faction was happy; in fact, in a bitter *New York Times* article reflecting on the convention, the paper referred to Lincoln’s backers as “recusants” and thought so little of Lincoln that they referred to him as “Abram Lincoln.”

The rivalry between Raymond and Greeley was not just ideological, it was also personal. Raymond used to work under Greeley and for his *New York Tribune* but left after he became fed up with Greeley’s public embrace of social experiments like utopian socialism. Not only did he start his own competing paper, the *New York Times*, but he stole more than a dozen workers from Greeley, who for decades afterwards continuously referred to Raymond as “the Little Villain.” For the next two decades, their papers would bitterly compete for economic supremacy in the city, with Greeley’s high-strung editorial style and greater political radicalism keeping him ahead of Raymond for much of that time. Politically, however, Greeley was less successful against his nemesis. In 1854, both sought the Whig nomination for the lieutenant governorship of New York, with Raymond winning thanks to the backing of William Seward. Greeley, of course, would get the last pre-war laugh against Seward in that regard, though both Raymond and Greeley continued to jockey, as we will see unsuccessfully, in the years after.

The secession crisis brought the schism back as both party’s factions presented contrasting proposals for how to proceed, making it all but impossible to wholeheartedly attack Wood and his free city speech. Thurlow Weed, a close ally of Seward and Raymond, proposed that secession be averted by calling for a national convention that would constitutionally
enshrine the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850. While this proposal was seeming to limit some westward extension, it would have led to the unstated result of permanently protecting slavery in the Southern states.\(^6\) Horace Greeley and his allies vehemently rejected Weed’s proposal, saying that accommodation would delegitimize the entire antislavery stand. Greeley asked all New York City Republican Congressmen to go on record favoring “prompt and energetic enforcement of all the laws of the general government” as the way to ensure “the safety of the country” and “the preservation of the Union.” Though they rejected Greeley’s proclamation, none explicitly endorsed Weed’s proposals either.\(^6\) Once the war began, it would become common for New York City Republicans to paper over this resistance to aggression and their support for some accommodations. Yet in due time, desires for accommodation would return with a vengeance at the war’s climax.

Clearly, in the years before the Civil War internal disputes dominated both the Republican and Democratic parties of New York City. It has already been established that the Tammany Hall-Mozart Hall feud even had national consequences, aiding in the election of Abraham Lincoln and weakening the influence of Mayor Wood. His actions after the election of Lincoln, especially his Free City speech, caused further damage to his power. Though the clash between Republican coalitions did not have the same negative national consequences, in part because both sides went out of their way to accommodate the nomination of Lincoln and work towards his election, that does not mean the divide was any less severe. Its Whiggish wing, embodied by Henry Raymond and the *New York Times* and its Free Soiler wing, embodied by Horace Greeley and the *New York Tribune*, disagreed mightily over the direction the party should take regarding what issues to prioritize, what policies to support, and what base of political support they should cultivate.

Both Philadelphia and New York, already established as,
despite their political diversity, broadly sympathetic to Southern attitudes and positions, changed their rhetoric dramatically with the attack on Fort Sumter April 12th, 1861. In Philadelphia, excited crowds began peacefully roaming the streets to debate the latest reports from the South and exclaim their glee at the prospect of war. Quickly however, these gatherings became more sinister in behavior. According to the Philadelphia Public Ledger, originally an anti-slavery newspaper that under new ownership became virulently pro-Confederate until it was sold in 1864, “everyone who hinted any sympathy with the secession was made to make an unequivocal stand.” Some, like an intoxicated man who in a drunken stupor made the mistake of declaring himself a Southern sympathizer, went unharmed after leading “three cheers for the thirty United States.”62 After a local newspaper published the names and addresses of several wealthy Southerners, these crowds marched to their homes, demanding shows of patriotism. When one of the Southerners, Colonel Robert Patterson, refused, his windows were smashed. Others deemed disloyal took refuge in the Court House or fled to police protection. Those unable to flee in time were roughed up, with reports of one man having his clothes ripped off and another having his head put in a noose.63

To stem the growing violence, Mayor Henry put his political fortunes on the line again with his use of his powers over the city police. On April 15th, a pro-Union mob “swelled to many hundreds” outside the office of a notoriously pro-Southern newspaper, the Palmetto Flag, seeking more violence against Southern sympathizers. Henry arrived with the chief of police and the Reserve Corps to restore order. As the crowd clamored for a speech, Henry deftly calmed the crowd with the following:

Your devotion to the flag of your country satisfies me that you are equally devoted to the maintenance of the laws, and to the preservation of order. I see that there are no traitors among you, and I rejoice to know that
When the crowds dispersed but regathered the next day at the home of the infamous William Reed, Henry went one step farther to protect Southern allies. Reed of course was no friend of Henry and those who supported the Peoples Party, and afterwards Reed refused to thank the Mayor for his help. Yet in his remarks outside Reed’s home, Henry threatened the crowd, ordering the police to shoot to kill to maintain order if the crowd did not disperse. The next day, he issued an executive proclamation asking residents to identify any persons suspected of aiding the enemy. This order required “that all persons shall refrain from assembly…unlawfully, riotously, or tumultuously, warning them that the same will be at their peril.” For Henry, order and loyalty were one and the same. Active secessionists in his city and rioting anti-secessionists were both disloyal to him, their city, and the new war effort. Rather than alienate Unionists with his executive crackdown, Henry’s popularity skyrocketed, and the city calmed. By April 18th, the streets were clear and Union flags adorned the homes of those of all political persuasions. While some Southerners left town, most retreated into silence, knowing that they were outnumbered, but protected if they kept quiet.

Philadelphia also decided to invest in its own military protection, creating a Philadelphia Home Guard. Philadelphia’s social elite worked with Mayor Henry to create a civil defense force under his control that would be independent of the city’s forces under the federal government which Lincoln was beginning to deploy against the Confederacy. As the founders of the Philadelphia Home Guard explained in a public proclamation from April 19th, just one week after Fort
Sumter, “those of our citizens whose ties prevent them from undertaking active service, should lose no time in organizing a ‘Home Guard’ to be in readiness to repel external aggression and to maintain internal order.” They would go on to say that the Home Guard would be created by the people: only city residents, not the state or the federal government, would be responsible for volunteering, training, finances, etc. The founders included prominent members of the city’s social and economic elite. For them, publicly, the Home Guard was simply a way for those too old for active service or unable to leave their businesses behind to help the war effort.

However, the Home Guard would also have two ulterior purposes that would serve the city and the Union war effort more than the older gentlemen ever would have militarily in case of an invasion. First and foremost, the Home Guard could be an extension of the Mayor’s police forces. Henry Charles
Lea intimated as much in a later private letter to Mayor Henry, saying that with his support the Home Guard will “hold themselves…to obey any orders you may give for service” within the city. Henry had already demonstrated that he was willing to use his police powers to maintain order in the city, and that police presence was effective. Now, he would have some of the city’s most recognizable and powerful leaders aiding in that effort. Second, the Home Guard would be a tangible mechanism for the city’s leaders, supportive of the Union but skeptical about the war effort, to have their voices heard and their impact felt. Many members of the Home Guard, including Lea, were initially skeptical of Henry and his policies, even publicly questioning his spending and infrastructure priorities in 1860. As powerful businessmen, most had close economic and social connections to the South, like their aforementioned New York City counterparts, and would therefore have some justification for neutrality towards the war effort. Instead, the Home Guard prevented neutrality, and would, until the creation of the Union League in the next year, be the primary mechanism for helping them stay supportive and loyal.

It is unmistakable that the coming of the Civil War was a blessing for Mayor Henry’s political prospects. Though Henry had originally hoped his term could avoid national debates, the war undeniably strengthened his control over Philadelphia and its politics. Before the war, he was severely weakened, arguably only winning re-election because of voter fraud. He had also proven unable to convince Philadelphia voters that his political vision, a party between that of the Democrats and Republicans, was a worthwhile course for the city. Yet thanks to the war, Henry had a new political mandate. His use of the police to foster order, reviled before the war, was appreciated by both sides for preventing violence and mayhem. Additionally, he worked diligently to foster political alliances
with war supporters who may have disagreed with him on other political issues. By inviting them into his coalition, perhaps best embodied by the forming of the Home Guard, his new allies had a vested interest in supporting his administration and his policies. This support even extended once Henry started voicing some more controversial opinions, granting Henry a veneer of bipartisanship and moderation that would severely hamper his opponents’ political efforts.

Residents and attitudes in New York City also saw a sea change in sentiment after Fort Sumter. At a massive rally on April 20th, an estimated 50,000 packed Union Square for a public pro-war meeting carried out by a wide and bipartisan group of the city’s political and economic leaders. Organizers included all three mayoral candidates in 1859, Havemeyer, Opdyke, and Wood, and the dueling Republican newspapermen, Henry Raymond and Horace Greeley. Tammany Hall would soon take their own actions, formally adopting resolutions declaring they were “heartily united to uphold the constitution, enforce the laws, maintain the Union, defend the flag…the Union must and shall be preserved.” For the most part, Tammany Hall would publicly remain strong Unionists throughout the war, highlighting their views on the war to deflect later charges of disloyalty from both parties.

In the battle of the presses, Horace Greeley gained an edge, according to noted diarist George Templeton Strong, since “the Greeley wing of Republicanism” was the chief driver of war in the first place, leaving Raymond’s “conservative” wing looking like a follower. Greeley’s harsh rhetoric towards the South long before Fort Sumter was vindicated by the attack, while Raymond’s moderation, plus his ally Seward’s desire for political compromise, were now obsolete as the nation sought revenge against the “‘chivalric’ bullies and braggarts” of the South.

Even Fernando Wood was swept up in the patriotic fervor. On April 15th, he issued a proclamation summoning citizens “irrespective of all other considerations and prejudices”
to obey the law, preserve order, and protect property. Attending the city’s first “Union Rally” the next day, he literally draped himself with the American flag while exhorting “every man, whatever had been his sympathies, to make one great phalanx in this controversy, to proceed to conquer a peace. I am with you in this contest. We have no party now.” He made similar remarks at the rally on the 20th and proposed a special million-dollar tax to support the war effort and create a “Mozart Regiment” under his command. To some, this sudden transformation was clearly a sham and a political ploy, with one unnamed critic growling “The cunning scoundrel sees which way the cat is jumping, and put himself right on the record in a vague, general way, giving the least offense to his allies of the Southern Democracy.” Wood, perhaps indicating this hedging, argued in that same flag-draped speech that whether the Union would be reunited “by fratricidal warfare or by concession, conciliation, and sacrifice” was still unanswered.

Regardless, Wood clearly hoped that his party and his base, like he was publicly trying to do, could support the war without having to support all of Lincoln’s policies. He also hoped they could do so within the new demands of loyalty to the Union. Yet, voices remained within the Democratic Party that rejected the entire legitimacy of the war and any bipartisan accommodations with it or Lincoln. Wood’s brother, Benjamin, was perhaps the loudest of these voices. Benjamin Wood directly opposed his brother’s transformation, using the Daily News, of which he was now the sole editor due to his brother’s re-election, to scold Mozart Hall’s war platform, and maintaining that only “friends of Peace” were true Democrats. In this battle between the Woods, the publisher would beat the politician. Mozart Hall formally endorsed Benjamin Wood’s sentiments, though they would agree to work with Tammany Hall on nominating a united slate in the fall elections if possible. This defeat by his own organization would send a chilling message for Fernando Wood about straying from his
new political base, a message he would long remember going forward.

The fact that such a vocal minority of Southern sympathizers persisted surely damaged New York City’s overall loyalty to the war effort. Yet perhaps most significantly, New York City would not have a similar institution or organization as effective as Philadelphia’s Home Guard. A bipartisan Union Defense Committee, of which Fernando Wood was initially an ex-officio member and active participant, was formed shortly after Fort Sumter by the city Chamber of Commerce. Their stated goal was to serve “in aid of the Government in the present crisis, to accelerate and facilitate the organization of forces, the transportation of troops and provisions, and the cooperation of popular action in all loyal parts of the country.” But, its impact and the creation of a Union Party in September 1861 were only successful primarily upstate. Tammany Hall, despite agreeing with most of Lincoln’s war policies before emancipation, also never publicly considered allying with the city’s Republican Party.

Therefore, there was no formal infrastructure or alliance in place for much of the war to ensure that the city’s elite who were generally supportive of the war, but not of Lincoln and some of his policies, had buy-in to the war effort. There was nothing to ensure their loyalty and continued support. In those crucial early days, a bipartisan consensus like that of Philadelphia could have been achieved, but it was not. Wood also refused to use his executive authority in the same way as Henry did to silence dissent and maintain order. For instance, a June editorial by his brother claimed that Northerners had been tricked into supporting the war effort, and now they had to turn against the war and ensure conciliation.

Under Wood’s leadership in 1861, not only would the Democratic Party not unite in its role as “the loyal opposition,” but its anti-war voices were as loud, powerful, and effective at rallying their base as ever. It was at this point that New York
City and Philadelphia both began to irrevocably diverge on their journey through the war. Philadelphia came out of the first few months more united and peaceful than before, while New York City remained as divided as ever, if not more than before. The blame for the continued divisiveness of New York City politics is not solely Wood’s, but he played a crucial role. Though he had publicly backed much of the pro-war zeal that engulfed the city after the attack on Fort Sumter, he privately capitulated to his anti-war backers, especially his own brother. Furthermore, unlike his counterpart in Philadelphia, he did not seek to foster bipartisan loyalty to the war effort or allow his political coalition to grow with pro-war voices. By and large and in part thanks to Wood, New York City’s political situation looked little different in the fall of 1861 than it did in the winter of 1861.

New York City, additionally, had a crucial and divisive mayoral election to endure that year, another reason for its continued political divisions. The fact that Philadelphia had no major elections in the fall of 1861 is another major reason why it remained peaceful and united. Other than a congressional special election won by a Democrat, Charles Biddle, there were few opportunities for partisan electoral conflict that could break the bipartisanship. This gave Henry time and resources to realize his mayoral vision and find common ground with allies and enemies. He could show the people of Philadelphia why they wanted his moderate Unionism and strong police power. Additionally, without major elections, the city’s Democrats had few opportunities to advance its bench of potential elected officials. Thus, the Democratic Party continued to highlight politicians of yesteryear, like William Reed. Without constituents to serve, and thus their sentiments to consider, these party elders even championed recognition of the Confederacy as an independent nation.79 As Philadelphians were beginning to send their sons and fathers off the war, these aging politicians seemed out-of-touch and elitist at best,
treasonous at worst. In response, city residents painted the entire city’s Democrats with a broad disloyal stroke that many Democrats sought to soften by allying with Henry. It would take another year for Philadelphia Democrats to elect new leaders, but by then they were more focused on national issues like emancipation and national forums like Congress, leaving the bipartisan leadership of the city and alliances with Henry intact.

As for New York City, Fernando Wood entered his re-election campaign in a precarious position. His “conversion” to Unionism caused distrust and defections from Mozart Hall without gaining him new allies. While his opponents once again refused a coalition, both Tammany Hall and the Republican Party were emboldened by the popularity of the war, and both called for its vigorous execution. Tammany Hall even declared at their state convention “the first and most sacred duty of every man” is to “devote his energies and his means, with all his heart and soul, to the earnest and resistless prosecution of the war, until the rebellion is utterly suppressed.” Furthermore, President Lincoln “is imperatively required...to take every step...which may be necessary to secure the triumph of our arms...and that his measures will be passed upon by a generous and patriotic people...without party spirit.” Boldly, every Tammany candidate statewide publicly endorsed these sentiments. Tammany Hall was also emboldened by a new interparty consensus. Unlike in 1859 when campaign attacks were primarily directed at Havemeyer and Opdyke, Tammany Hall and the GOP reached an unofficial détente, training their fire solely on Wood, his views on the war, and his policies.

Wood’s chances were further diminished when he was credibly accused of corruptly doling out city contracts to close allies, while also using city finances for electioneering and public election funds for personal gain. Severely weakened, Wood went to two tried and true methods when a political position may be popular, but the candidate is not. First, and
more successfully, he publicly decried his investigations as politically motivated. He zeroed in on accusations that the city’s Corporation Attorney investigated him to advance his candidacy for District Attorney, forcing him to publicly renounce his candidacy.\textsuperscript{84} Second, he nationalized his race. On November 29th, a week before Election Day, Wood changed the tenor of his campaign and his ultimate political destiny with a speech at Volks Garten. Casting off any prior support for the war effort, Wood charged the Lincoln administration with the intention of prolonging the war “as long as there is a dollar to be stolen from the National Treasury or a drop of Southern blood to be shed.” He also charged Lincoln and the Republican Party with being in favor of abolition so free black workers could compete with poor white laborers. To Wood, the Republican Party hoped for the destruction of immigrants, especially his base, since “They will get the Irishmen and Germans to fill up the regiments and go forth to defend the country…they will themselves remain at home to divide the plunder.”\textsuperscript{85}

In this speech, Wood publicly relitigated his favorite political talking points, especially support for the South and for immigrants, specifically Irish and German. Yet privately, Wood refused to wholly denounce his prior Unionism. In a curious development, the same day that he gave his Volks Garten speech he also fired off a defensive letter to Secretary of State and fellow New Yorker William Seward. Despite what others were saying about him, he was “for a vigorous prosecution of the war, for sustaining the administration by every power at our command and for the restoration of peace only if it can be done consistently with the safety, honor, and unity of the entire government.”\textsuperscript{86} Even with a Republican in the race, Wood claimed that he deserved their support for his campaign since he best articulated Unionist ideals.

There are two possible reasons for this letter. One is that Wood sincerely believed that, despite his history of
controversial comments, including his speech that very day, he was loyal to the Union and deserving of Lincoln’s support. That idea prompts another question, why this or the fairly pleasant reply from Seward’s son thanking Wood for his support for the Union, were not released to the public, which could have swayed enough skeptics to re-embrace him? Thus, the second reason is most likely: Wood was simply a shrewd politician, cynically hoping to utilize the Lincoln administration and its vast political resources, or at least keep them from being used against him. The fact that no evidence exists of Lincoln or Seward publicly bashing Wood during the campaign or diverting energy to helping elect the Republican indicates that Wood’s letter may have been effective. For example, Seward did not respond to entreaties from the New York Metropolitan Police, a force under state Republican control, to arrest Wood for the content of his speech. Furthermore, Thurlow Weed had privately requested a meeting with Wood the month before “if it would not make too much talk,” perhaps to discuss the race, though no record exists of if the meeting occurred.

However, the lack of effort may also indicate that the Lincoln administration had little confidence a Republican could be elected as Mayor of New York City; and, there was good reason to assume this. The Republicans had once again nominated George Opdyke. A wealthy clothing manufacturer, his primary pre-war income came from selling clothes to slaves down South, and his Whiggish politics inspired few allies. He did gain some Republican approval after his 1859 loss for working with loyal businessmen during the secession crisis to prevent the city’s businessmen from committing “a compromise of principle” to assuage the South. But, as a vocal Republican, he faced constant labeling by Democrats as a “black Republican” hoping to emancipate blacks and subjugate whites. Like Wood, he was also perceived as a politician first, civic leader second. George Templeton Strong, though a Republican, nonetheless described him as a “pushing, intriguing
man, fond of power and position.”

The enigma in the race was the Tammany Hall candidate, Charles Godfrey Gunther. Like Opdyke, he was a rich merchant. Thus, many assumed he would be closer in policy outlook and personality to the Fifth Avenue Democrats. However, Gunther was a prominent German activist and organizer. Though Wood was primarily concerned with the Irish, German immigrants made up a prominent part of his anti-war coalition, so it was assumed that Gunther could bring parts of Mozart Hall’s base back into Tammany Hall. As for Gunther’s appeal to pro-war Democrats, that was less clear. Civil War historian Ernest McKay claims that despite being a member of Tammany Hall, the “War Democrats,” on specific war policies Gunther differed little from the Woods. Thus, he too inspired little confidence amongst New Yorkers. In the end, many New Yorkers cared little about which anti-Wood faction won, so long as Wood was gone. As New York political historian Sidney Brummer put it, in the minds of many critics of Wood and his policies, “Whether to vote for Opdyke or for Gunther, was with many simply a question of which had a better chance of defeating Wood.”

Election Day finally came on December 3rd, 1861, and few intimated to guess who would win. Each candidates’ headquarters were packed well into the morning. Through the night, each group alternated between pessimism and optimism. As a potentially foreboding sign, when Opdyke arrived at his headquarters early the next morning, someone gave off an alarm that the floor was collapsing. Panic ensued, with some suffering bruises and torn clothes. Early returns indicated a Gunther victory, but by ten a.m. Opdyke was declared the winner with little more than six hundred votes over Gunther and 1200 over Wood. Opdyke won nine of the city’s wards, mostly dominated by Republicans, but he also embarrassingly won Wood’s home ward by one percent and did especially well in wards populated
by former Know Nothings. Gunther, as expected, won the four German wards from Wood, but did not win all of the Irish wards, splitting them with Wood costing Tammany Hall the race.\textsuperscript{95} Without the Democratic split, especially over immigrant votes, it is safe to assume either Wood or Gunther would have easily won, but with the split New York City had just had its closest three-way race ever and elected its first Republican mayor. In what must have been an awkward transition, Wood and Opdyke civilly exchanged letters and agreed to meet at some point in December.\textsuperscript{96}

Perhaps real change could be imparted on the city’s policies and its relationships with the war effort and Albany. Some Republicans were optimistic, with Henry Bellows regarding Opdyke’s election as “an augury of national strength.”\textsuperscript{97} Some, like Strong, while happy that Wood lost, saw Opdyke as little more than the lesser of evils.\textsuperscript{98} But most were worried. Even with a Republican mayor, the Republicans who controlled Albany were unlikely to grant more power to the city, most remaining appointed and elected municipal officials were Tammany or Mozart allies, and there was still a hotbed of anti-war, anti-black, anti-Lincoln newspapers and activism throughout the city. To say that Opdyke’s tenure would be divisive and contested would be an understatement, though what happened would likely have been more tumultuous than most would have anticipated.\textsuperscript{99} If 1861 was a year for Republican gains and Democratic divisions, in both cities, then 1862 and 1863 would show the power Democrats could yield if they united, but also the dangers that unity posed and how fragile it would be.

This work has sought to compare and contrast New York City and Philadelphia politics by looking at how the cities, in similar positions demographically, politically, and socially before the war, reacted to the conflict. The primary framework for doing so has been examining how political actors in both cities, from elected officials and party leaders to
everyday voters, defined loyalty and disloyalty during an event so all-encompassing and divisive. It is without a doubt that in both cities, despite their differences by the end of the war, some of the same definitions were utilized. Additionally, some of the same ideological arguments were made in both cities, often by members of the same political party. Both cities also endured intraparty feuds that ensured that claims of loyalty and disloyalty were not just lobbed at partisan opponents, but intraparty ones as well. In writing on Philadelphia during the American Civil War period, one hundred years later, historian William Dusinberre framed Philadelphia as a city that entered the conflict weak and bitter. The city was “fiercely jealous of New York,” but also of other cities like Boston and New Orleans that had usurped its national and global economic output. Its only reliable trading partner was the South, and they were now leaving the Union. For decades, it had struggled to integrate its ethnically and racially diverse inhabitants into the city. These internal tensions led to nativist riots in the 1840s and a black population, the largest in the North, with few economic or social opportunities. It also had a fragile municipal government led by a weak mayor, even after it consolidated with its outlying counties in 1854. All in all, there were many reasons why many Philadelphia residents had an inferiority complex towards their Northern neighbors.100

The central question of this paper, therefore, has been why did Philadelphia and New York City diverge so sharply and if and how did conceptions of loyalty and disloyalty play a role? Philadelphia’s success at avoiding much of the turmoil that befell New York City was due to the leadership of its wartime mayor, Alexander Henry. First and foremost, Henry took what was once considered a weakness of the municipal government of Philadelphia, that as mayor his primary means of influence was control over the police, and turned it into a positive. Philadelphia easily could have descended into the divisiveness and bloodshed of its northern neighbor, and nearly
did because it too possessed a loud and somewhat popular anti-war faction. But it did not, largely because Henry repeatedly, fairly, and unequivocally utilized his police powers to maintain order.\textsuperscript{101} He also ruled in a bipartisan manner, avoiding many of the contentious and divisive issues of the day. His party, first known as the People’s Party and then the Union Party, allowed members of different political persuasions to feel included and heard in city governance as elected officials, members of the Home Guard, and in unofficial capacities. At times, especially immediately before Fort Sumter, both of these political values made Henry unpopular with both sides, but as the war progressed his deft handling of the city granted him easy electoral success because more Philadelphians than not were invested in the well-being of their city. It is no wonder then that Dusinberre, writing a century after Henry retired in January of 1866 (mayoral terms had been extended to three years during his reign and elections moved to the fall), declared that “Alexander Henry’s conduct of the police force from 1858 to 1865 in itself shows him to have been the best mayor Philadelphia ever had.”\textsuperscript{102}

To conclude, this examination of the years 1859-1861 promised no easy answers about the types of definitions of loyalty and disloyalty employed during the Civil War, nor about the reasons why each city ended up on the trajectory it did. As I stated earlier, throughout the war there was no simple answer about what loyalty and disloyalty meant, and therefore there is no simple reason for the fates of the actors and groups from Philadelphia and New York City that have been discussed. In the end, we must recognize that even if we treat the years around the Civil War as being on some clear arc destined to bend in a certain direction, there will always be bumps and always be outliers. All historians and readers of the era can do is try to pull back the curtain of time, reevaluate long standing historical assumptions, increase the prominence of forgotten leaders and groups of people, and try to understand it all to the
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best we can, as I have sought to do in this thesis.
Notes

1 John Strausbaugh, *City of Sedition: The History of New York City During the Civil War*, 13
4 William Dusinberre, *Civil War Issues in Philadelphia, 1856-1865*, 42
5 Russell Weigley, “*The Border City in Civil War 1854-1865*,” 383
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid, 386.
9 *Douglass’ Monthly*, February 1862.
12 Ibid, 76-78.
13 Russell Weigley, “*The Border City in Civil War 1854-1865*,” 391.
15 Russell Weigley, “*The Border City in Civil War 1854-1865*,” 369-370.
18 Joanna Cowden, *Heaven Will Frown on Such a Cause as This: Six Democrats Who Opposed Lincoln’s War*, 97.
19 Ibid, 103.
21 *Philadelphia Pennsylvanian*, January 16, 1861.
22 John Strausbaugh, *City of Sedition: The History of New York City During the Civil War*, 14-17.
23 Ibid, 20.
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24 Jerome Mushkat, *The Reconstruction of the New York Democracy*, 16
26 Samuel August Pleasants, *Fernando Wood of New York*, 27.
29 Gideon Tucker to Fernando Wood, December 29, 1855, Fernando Wood Letters and Documents, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.
30 Samuel August Pleasants, *Fernando Wood of New York*, 90.
31 John Strausbaugh, *City of Sedition: The History of New York City During the Civil War*, 117.
32 Daniel F. McMahon to Fernando Wood, January 9, 1859, Fernando Wood Letters and Documents, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.
33 Prosper Wetmore to Fernando Wood, January 9, 1860, Fernando Wood Letters and Documents, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.
34 John Strausbaugh, *City of Sedition: The History of New York City During the Civil War*, 117.
36 Iwan Morgan and Philip John Davies, *Reconfiguring the Union: Civil War Transformations*, 145.
39 Charles Daly to Fernando Wood, October 3, 1859, Fernando Wood Letters and Documents, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.
42 A. Oakley Hall to Fernando Wood, December 23, 1859, Fernando Wood Letters and Documents, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.
44 Fred Aiken to Fernando Wood, May 8. 1860, Fernando Wood Letters and Documents, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public
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Fernando Wood to Robert Tyler, March 8, 1860, Fernando Wood Letters and Documents, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library. Italics are Wood’s.


Tyler Anbinder, “Fernando Wood and New York City’s Secession from the Union: A Political Reappraisal,” 85.

Samuel August Pleasants, *Fernando Wood of New York*, 113-114.


*Ibid*; Tyler Anbinder’s work is the best example of this ideologically neutral vein in the historiography.


John Strausbaugh, *City of Sedition: The History of New York City During the Civil War*, 139.


Mary Hodnett, *Civil War Issues in New York State Politics*, 7-12.


John Strausbaugh, *City of Sedition: The History of New York City During the Civil War*, 54.

Mary Hodnett, *Civil War Issues in New York State Politics*, 15.


*Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 15, 1861.


*Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 16, 1861.

Joanna Cowden, *Heaven Will Frown on Such a Cause as This: Six Democrats Who Opposed Lincoln’s War*, 108.

*Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 17, 1861.


“Home Guard of the 24th Ward,” Henry Charles Lea papers, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania.
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69 Henry Charles Lea to Alexander Henry, May 17, 1861, Henry Charles Lea papers, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania.

70 Henry Charles Lea to Alexander Henry, July 16, 1861, Henry Charles Lea papers, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania.

71 New York Tribune, April 27, 1861.

72 George Templeton Strong, Diary of the Civil War 1860-1865, March 11, 1861.

73 Jerome Mushkat, Fernando Wood: A Political Biography, 116-117.

74 New York Sun, April 16, 1861.


76 New York Times, April 24, 1861.


80 Resolutions printed in the New York Herald, September 10, 1861.

81 Ibid, November 5, 1861.

82 Sidney David Brummer, Political History of New York State during the Period of the Civil War, 77.


84 Richard O' Gorman to Fernando Wood, October 16, 1861, Fernando Wood Letters and Documents, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

85 “Address of Mayor Wood delivered at Volks Garten,” November 27, 1861.

86 Fernando Wood to Seward, November 27, 1861, Fernando Wood Letters and Documents, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

87 Samuel August Pleasants, Fernando Wood of New York, 127-130.

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90 John Strausbaugh, City of Sedition: The History of New York City During the Civil War, 205.
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92 Ernest McKay, _The Civil War and New York City_, 111.
93 Sidney David Brummer, _Political History of New York State during the Period of the Civil War_, 177.
94 Ernest McKay, _The Civil War and New York City_, 113-115.
95 Jerome Mushkat, _Fernando Wood: A Political Biography_, 124.
96 George Opdyke to Fernando Wood, December 13, 1861, Fernando Wood Letters and Documents, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.
97 Ernest McKay, _The Civil War and New York City_, 115.
98 George Templeton Strong, _Diary of the Civil War 1860-1865_, December 14, 1861.
99 John Strausbaugh, _City of Sedition: The History of New York City During the Civil War_, 206-207.
101 Ibid, 170.
102 Ibid, 22.

Images (in order of appearance):

