

THE LIBERTY PARTY IN MAINE, 1840-1848  
THE POLITICS OF ANTISLAVERY REFORM

Despite the fact that the Maine Liberty party consistently produced one of the largest Liberty votes in the country during the 1840s, this antislavery political party has received little scholarly attention.<sup>1</sup> Yet Liberty men provided the intellectual and voting base for both the Free Soil and Republican parties which were to follow the Liberty party in the late 1840s and 1850s. They had to overcome many obstacles, however, because opposition to antislavery politics existed in the state, particularly among the Democrats.

The Democratic party quickly had achieved political hegemony in Maine after the election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency in 1828. Its narrow gubernatorial victory in 1829 was followed by easy victories in most subsequent elections. In fact, the Democrats lost the governor's chair only twice, in 1837 and 1840, in all the annual elections before 1854. The Maine Democratic party developed an efficient, powerful political machine that was unfriendly to abolition activity and consistently supported the southern statesmen in their maneuvers against the abolitionists.<sup>2</sup>

Although many persons believed that the state "was bound to the South by political and commercial bands of steel,"<sup>3</sup> there was substantial antislavery activity in the state. The leaders of the movement in Maine were very active and talented, and much of the steady progress of antislavery can be attributed to their tireless efforts. Most of them rejected gradualist and colonization schemes by 1833 and began forming local societies devoted to the immediate and unconditional emancipation of the slaves. Three Maine men represented the state at the December

1833 founding of the American Anti-Slavery Society at Philadelphia, and a state society was founded as an auxiliary to the national body in October 1834. Although there was much hostility to the abolition movement in Maine, county and town antislavery societies continued to spring up throughout the state. Maine abolitionists sponsored agents and touring lecturers, published tracts and pamphlets, sent petitions and memorials to Congress and the state legislature, established the (Brunswick) *Advocate of Freedom* as the state society's newspaper under the editorship of William Smyth, a Congregational minister and professor at Bowdoin College, and held many antislavery rallies. By the end of the decade, abolitionists were winning an increasing number of converts in the settled areas of the state which were not located along the seacoast, an unwelcome area for antislavery activity because of its commercial ties to the southern planters.

Two features stand out about the early abolition movement in Maine: its highly religious nature and the strength of its leadership. Maine abolitionism had a crusading, religious tone which was continually emphasized by its leaders, most of whom were ministers or prominent laymen in the major Protestant denominations. These major denominations in the state were internally divided over the slavery question, except that the Freewill Baptists clearly came out against slavery. A non-Freewill Baptist abolitionist recalled that "They not only took a decided position against slavery in their public meetings, but as a denomination, with nearly all its ministers and membership, enlisted in the cause with fidelity."<sup>4</sup> Congregationalists were also very active in Maine abolitionism. Twelve of the thirty-six men who signed the call for the establishment of the Maine Anti-Slavery Society were congregational ministers,<sup>5</sup> but many Congregationalists were also opposed to the agitation,

especially those in the wealthier areas along the seacoast.<sup>6</sup> With the exception of the Freewill Baptists, most denominations in the state were divided in their attitudes toward slavery. As a general rule, Congregationalists and Baptists were more sympathetic to abolitionism, while Methodists were more hostile; but all denominations contributed to the early leadership of the movement.<sup>7</sup>

These leaders were energetic men with varied backgrounds. Samuel Fessenden, a former Federalist state legislator, was one of the outstanding lawyers in the state. Austin Willey, who had attended Bangor Seminary, spent much of his life editing antislavery and reform newspapers. David Thurston was a Congregational minister and one of the founders of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Charles C. Cone, a Methodist Episcopal minister who was embroiled in the antislavery struggle within his own church, came to Maine as an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Ebenezer Dole was a deacon of the Congregational Church and a wealthy Hallowell merchant who was a main source of funds for the movement. Luther Wiswall, a Baptist minister, was active in many reforms in the state.<sup>8</sup>

At one time or another during the 1830s, each of these men undertook speaking tours on which they were subjected to much verbal, and sometimes physical, abuse. Their greatest strength was their unity. Despite their religious and social differences, Maine abolitionists suffered little internal strife compared to their compatriots in many other states. Anticlericalism and non-resistance never gained a foothold in Maine; the woman's rights controversy caused no dispute in the state because Maine women were content to work through their own antislavery societies in sponsoring sewing bees and bazaars to obtain funds; and when the time came to decide on a course of political action, practically all the active abolitionists in the state joined the Liberty party after a

brief period of confusion. Even William Lloyd Garrison, the most famous and controversial antislavery spokesman in the region, was not an issue in the state because he was almost unanimously disliked for his anticlericalism and aggressive manner.<sup>9</sup>

There was, nonetheless, a period of uncertainty during the late 1830s on the question of political action. Initially, most antislavery men preferred to work within the existing two party system, and this pressure tactic seemed to bring about some positive results. In 1838 the Maine House of Representatives passed a resolution opposing the annexation of Texas and the continuance of slavery in the District of Columbia by an 85-30 vote. Although these resolutions were defeated by the Democrats 11-10 in the state senate, it was obvious that public officials were increasingly willing to take stands which were at least mildly antislavery.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, many abolitionists were worried about tainting the movement by engaging in political action. William Smyth, who later became an ardent supporter of the Liberty party, probably spoke for most Maine abolitionists. He feared that entry into the political arena would compromise the high moral tone of the abolition movement, attract many who were only interested in political glory, and that "all real sympathy for the slave . . . would soon be lost in the strife of mere political partizanship."<sup>11</sup> Instead, Maine abolitionists initially preferred to act as a pressure group within the two parties, although it appeared that most of their success was with the Whigs. Even though the questioning of candidates' attitudes on slavery-related matters was not so extensively employed in Maine as in some other states, the newspaper of the state society implicitly approved the tactic by stating that "The time has come we believe, when we ought to refuse our suffrages to men who are not open, unflinching friends of Human Rights."<sup>12</sup> The state society itself,

however, refused to endorse any position on political action in a May 1839 position paper.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the society's newspaper gradually became more involved in politics when it declared that it was the moral duty of every man to engage in political action.<sup>14</sup> It would only be a short step from this position to the endorsement of political nominations, but this new position did not develop immediately.

The Maine abolitionists were uncertain about the feasibility of independent political nominations in late 1839 and throughout most of 1840. Although the question came up frequently in discussions in various antislavery publications and conventions, individual leaders were reluctant to take a public stand for a third party. County antislavery conventions and the state meeting of the Maine Anti-Slavery Society debated the issue and decided that an abolitionist should not vote for a candidate who was not against slavery, but they refused to take a position either for or against a third party.<sup>15</sup>

By the time of an April 1840 national convention for independent nominations at Albany, New York, however, Austin Willey, the new editor of the *Advocate of Freedom*, was gradually becoming more sympathetic to the independent political movement. Reflecting on the failure of the tactic of voters' questioning candidates on their views and then scattering their ballots among various write-in antislavery candidates if no acceptable regular party candidate could be found, Willey wrote that

... it is worthy of serious consideration whether the danger to our cause is not vastly more while we hold our present position as a prey to all parties, liable to be bought and sold to the highest bidder. We shall never accomplish any thing in our present scattered Indian mode of warfare. It is in vain to expect it. It is opposed to human nature to expect it.

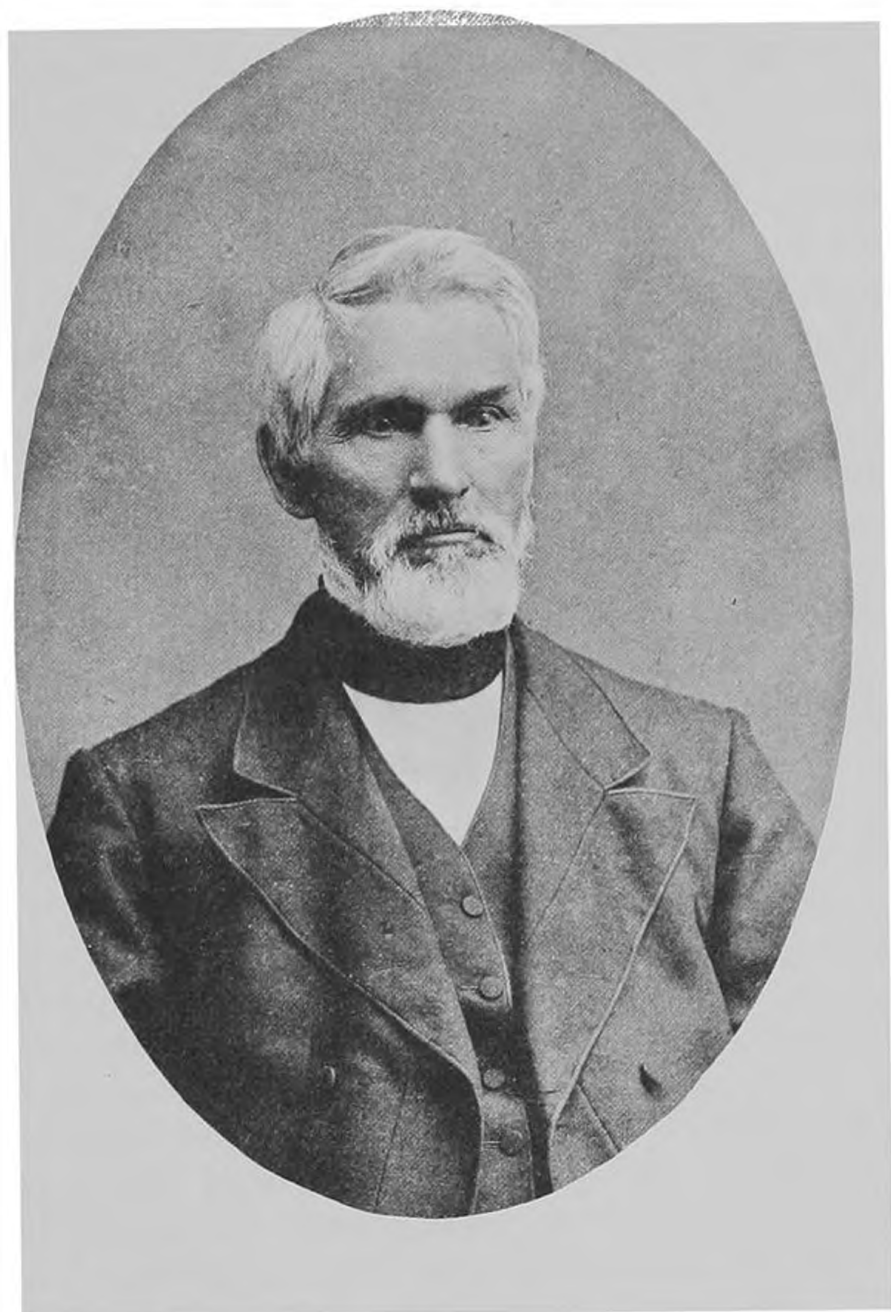
We frankly say, after examining this subject with all the care we possess, and in light of all the arguments we have seen, that we have no

hope of accomplishing any thing for the slave politically without system, or organization for that end.<sup>16</sup>

A few weeks later Willey, who had been receiving much criticism from abolitionists within the major parties, hedged somewhat when he expressed his doubts about the country's readiness for an independent antislavery political party, but he believed that such a party would definitely be viable in the future.<sup>17</sup> Despite a direct appeal from Charles T. Torrey, a Massachusetts leader of the movement for a third party, the Maine Anti-Slavery Society refused to send any delegates to the Albany convention which nominated James G. Birney for the presidency on an abolition ticket; but Ichabod Coddington, a Congregational minister and Maine antislavery lecturer, attended as an unaffiliated delegate and found the proceedings encouraging.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, the Maine abolitionists did not set up a separate slate for the September 1840 state elections. In fact, *Advocate of Freedom* editor Willey announced that he was voting for the Whig gubernatorial candidate, Edward Kent, who had "fully adopted all the principles we asked,"<sup>19</sup> and he subsequently claimed that abolitionist votes were responsible for the Whig success in the 1840 state elections.<sup>20</sup>

The friends of independent nominations did slightly better when they managed to field an electoral ticket for the November presidential elections. After an October meeting of the Somerset County Anti-Slavery Society defeated a proposal for an antislavery set of electors supporting Birney, about twenty men met separately at Bloomfield to nominate their own ticket of Birney electors. Few efforts were made to publicize the nominations or circulate printed ballots, however, and the new electoral ticket drew less than two hundred votes in November.<sup>21</sup> The future of the new party in Maine did not seem very bright in late 1840.



Fraternally Yours.  
Austin Wiley

Maine antislavery men shook off their reluctance to participate in the new party during the first half of 1841, however, and they managed to achieve a primitive party network by the time of the state elections in September. Pressure for an independent political party began in the local antislavery societies with the passage of resolutions favorable to independent nominations and the sending of delegates to the national party convention which was to be held in New York City in May. After the annual February meeting of the Maine Anti-Slavery Society declared its autonomy from both the feuding national organizations, the American Anti-Slavery Society and the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, the members generally agreed to avoid internal conflict by laying on the table a measure that approved independent political action. At the conclusion of the state meeting, those interested in the third party appointed delegates to the national convention and elected a committee to issue a call for a state convention to be held on July 1. These individuals then returned to their homes and quickly organized county and town meetings favorable to independent nominations. A convention at Kent's Hill, Kennebec County even nominated a candidate for Congress in the March elections. The hundreds of votes this candidate received were evidence of the increasing popularity of independent nominations. Maine delegates attended the national convention at New York in May, and then returned home to organize themselves more fully at the July 1 state convention.<sup>22</sup>

The attendance and enthusiasm at the state convention was remarkable in comparison to the apathy of the previous fall, but the elevation of a slaveholding southerner, John Tyler, to the presidency upon the sudden death of William Henry Harrison in April and the reluctance of Whig Governor Edward Kent to push antislavery measures helped to convert many voting



abolitionists to the new party. This convention followed the same basic pattern as earlier antislavery gatherings: all those attending were able to participate fully (Maine women did not attempt to participate); the convention passed highly moralistic resolutions framed in religious terms; members made plans for the distribution of tracts and pamphlets; and the convention commissioned lecturers and agents to work within the state. Additionally, the members agreed on a rudimentary political organization and established the *Liberty Standard* as the party organ with Joseph Lovejoy, a Universalist minister and brother of Illinois antislavery martyr Elijah Lovejoy, as editor. Jeremiah Curtis, a former Democrat, was nominated for governor, and district chairmen were selected to organize the party locally. The new party attacked the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, John Fairfield, for supporting slavery, and criticized incumbent Governor Kent for his inaction. Considerable Liberty (the name the party adopted at the New York convention) activity took place in the state before the September elections, including the employment of Austin Willey as an agent and the merger of the new party paper with the *Advocate of Freedom*.<sup>23</sup>

These efforts met with some success in the elections. The Liberty vote increased from the paltry 1840 presidential count to 1,662 ballots only ten months later. Liberty voters also prevented either major party from obtaining the necessary majority in three state senate races and thirty-three for the state legislature.<sup>24</sup> At this time in Maine politics, the winning candidate had to receive over 50 percent of the total vote to be elected. A mere plurality was not sufficient. The election results were particularly bitter for the Whigs, who saw their growth in the state disintegrate along with their hold on the governorship.

They accurately ascribed many of their woes to the Liberty party, which was primarily composed of former Whigs in these early years.<sup>25</sup>

Although the Liberty percentage of the vote was quite small, Maine Liberty men were encouraged by such gratifying results in so short a time. They knew that their party had the potential to be a factor in the state's politics, and they looked forward to refining their political operation and broadening its base of support. Maine antislavery men believed that they had successfully embarked on a new tactic in the struggle against the peculiar institution.

Few substantive changes in strategy took place in the Maine Liberty party during the two years following the 1841 election, but the new party continued its growth and became an increasingly important element in the politics of the state. Although the Maine Anti-Slavery Society still remained aloof from giving the party its official endorsement, it was apparent that the leadership of both groups contained most of the same faces.<sup>26</sup> The local antislavery societies varied in their courses of action. Some of them endorsed the Liberty party with no debate, while the more prevalent practice was the establishment of a Liberty organization parallel to the local antislavery society. This was usually carried out with minimum friction because growing numbers of active antislavery men were members of both organizations. This was typical of the harmony which existed among the abolitionists of Maine. The local affiliates of the state society and the branches of the Liberty party followed the model of their respective state organizations in holding their conventions at the same place on succeeding days, permitting antislavery advocates to attend both conventions in a single trip. The relationship between the Liberty party and the Maine Anti-Slavery Society was so close that Austin Willey, an outspoken Liberty leader, served as the sole agent of

the state antislavery society in 1842 and 1843.<sup>27</sup> This general harmony was possible because there were few devoted followers of the controversial William Lloyd Garrison in the state. Maine antislaveryites were able to settle their differences among themselves without the interference of Garrisonian partisans.<sup>28</sup>

Liberty men intensified their efforts in 1842 and 1843, but they made few changes in strategy, tactics, or political style. The party had a long way to go before it could claim to match the Democratic or Whig organizations. Despite Austin Willey's later recollection that there were "attempts to enroll every Liberty voter,"<sup>29</sup> the party accomplished only sporadic grass roots political organizing during these years. This does not mean that the antislavery cause languished during the early 1840s, however, but merely that Liberty men utilized the tactics of the abolitionists in the 1830s, not the more sophisticated political techniques and appeal that they would develop later in the decade. They circulated tracts in great numbers, sent agents and lecturers – including a famous fugitive slave, Lewis Clark – on tours throughout the state, and continued to pressure the churches to take strong antislavery stands. In short, the early Liberty party did not adopt the conventional style of American politics. Gubernatorial candidate Jeremiah Curtis (1841) and James Appleton (1842-1843), a former Federalist state legislator, did not stump the state in search of votes; Liberty leaders gave only lip service to setting up a political machine; and little space in the party press was devoted to electioneering. Instead, the party existed as a vehicle of political protest which many members looked upon as a temporary expedient until one or both major parties adopted antislavery positions.<sup>30</sup>

This does not mean that Liberty men were not concerned with how they fared in elections, but just that they used the tactics and rhetoric of religious conversion instead of the arts of political persuasion and grass roots

organization. Initially, these methods were successful in solidifying the existence of the party. Perhaps this was most clearly shown in the important roles Liberty candidates soon assumed in statewide and local races. Even without a smooth-running party apparatus, Liberty men increased their vote for gubernatorial candidate Appleton to 4,080 in 1842 and 6,746 in 1843.<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, the Democratic party continued to dominate the gubernatorial races as Appleton drew off antislavery Whig votes, but the Liberty party made its presence felt in the local races. Though the new party failed to elect many state representatives in either 1842 or 1843,<sup>32</sup> the Liberty candidates frequently captured enough to prevent either major party candidate from obtaining the necessary majority. For instance, no candidate obtained a simple majority for four of the seven seats in the United States Congress for 1843; and Liberty men prevented so many elections for the Maine legislature in 1842 and 1843 that some legislators began proposing that a plurality be sufficient for election.<sup>33</sup> Voters who were swelling the membership of the new party came from all over this huge state with the exception of sparsely populated frontier areas. The movement became so established in the eastern sections that another newspaper, the *Bangor Gazette*, with lawyer John E. Godfrey as editor, came into existence in April 1842, and a little more than a year later there was a short-lived attempt to publish a daily newspaper. In addition, the Liberty party was endorsed by a "Convention of Colored People for Maine and New Hampshire," which voted to recommend Appleton and declared its duty to go to the polls and support the Liberty party.<sup>34</sup>

The party attracted voters by nominating men who were highly respected in their communities. To generalize about them is difficult because they came from such diverse backgrounds. For example, the seven Liberty

candidates for the Maine seats in the United States House of Representatives in 1843 consisted of a judge, two lawyers, two physicians, a farmer, and a minister.<sup>35</sup> And the head of the state ticket was James Appleton, “a mechanic working daily at blow-pipe and watchspring.”<sup>36</sup> The common characteristics of Liberty candidates were their high moral character, intense religiosity, and sympathy to temperance. The high degree of religiosity, generally true of Liberty men everywhere, was especially true in Maine, where it would be difficult to find a prominent Liberty man who was not also deeply involved in his religion. Even opponents did not assail the character of Liberty candidates. They did not even bring up Samuel Fessenden’s well-known youthful indiscretion by which he illegitimately fathered future Maine politico William Pitt Fessenden.

The Liberty appeals during these early years emphasized the moral duty of participating in antislavery politics. Maine Liberty men believed that their party “must be based upon the highest principles of truth and Christianity . . . and presented in the language of calm reason & Christian philosophy.”<sup>37</sup> Even though Liberty propaganda mentioned the economic and political threat of the South, especially in the more secular *Bangor Gazette*, the main body of the party literature and convention resolutions concentrated on the moral evil of slavery and the duty of right-thinking, God-fearing men to oppose it at the ballot box.

This concern for morality brought Maine Liberty men to officially endorse temperance. Both Liberty newspapers supported the temperance movement very strongly, and one editor claimed that the Liberty party’s “candidates are, and will be, temperance men.”<sup>38</sup> Perhaps Austin Willey was overstating the case when he declared that “All abolitionists were prohibitionists,”<sup>39</sup> but the temperance fervor definitely permeated the party.

This crusading moralism in politics seemed to be succeeding well during the early 1840s. As Liberty followers prepared for the 1844 local, state, and presidential elections, they had sufficient cause for optimism: the two-year-old party had captured over 10 percent of the vote for governor in 1843 and was acknowledged as a threat to the major parties; it had established two newspapers which, if not wealthy, were at least solvent; it had become the voice for the overwhelming majority of Maine abolitionists; and Liberty leaders and their followers were so energetic that Joshua Leavitt, the editor of the (Boston) *Emancipator* and national Liberty figure, was moved to characterize one convention in Maine as "the most encouraging Liberty Convention I ever attended." He correctly pointed out that Maine antislavery men "had never been divided by the melancholy contests of Massachusetts and New York."<sup>40</sup> But that did not mean that there was complete harmony among Maine Liberty men. Several problems of the next few years had their roots in this early period of consolidation.

Eighteen forty-four and 1845 were discouraging years for the Liberty party in Maine. Although the party demonstrated sufficient strength at the polls to be a factor in the politics of the state, it did not continue to make the great gains which it had achieved in 1842 and 1843. Commenting on the Liberty stagnation, the state central committee issued a warning shortly after the 1845 election that "all history demonstrates that for any reform in its earlier stages of existence to remain stationary is *certain death*."<sup>41</sup> Internal difficulties and lack of a general consensus on the character of the movement contributed to this lack of electoral progress. The Liberty party had been founded primarily as a vehicle of moral protest, but it was clear by 1844-1845 that there had to be modifications in this approach if the party was to remain electorally

viable. Though this period of soul searching was not completed by the end of 1845, the party was consciously employing more strategies which were within the traditional practice of American politics. Before party members began emphasizing these vote-getting techniques, however, they were forced to confront many of the same questions which Liberty men across the country were attempting to resolve.

The major issues which troubled Maine Liberty men were whether the United States Constitution was an antislavery document and whether Liberty party members should cooperate with members of other political parties.<sup>42</sup> The debate over the nature of the Constitution began relatively early in Maine. James Appleton devoted most of his letter of acceptance for the 1842 Liberty gubernatorial nomination to a discussion of the relationship between the Constitution and slavery. While declaring that he “would not be understood as supposing that Congress has the power to abolish slavery in the states,” he wondered “is slavery consistent with a republican form of government?” He thought that it was not, but he believed that the matter should be adjudicated by the Supreme Court. Appleton’s opinions anticipated the drift of Maine Liberty sentiment by a few years, however, because most Liberty men before 1844 were unwilling to grant the federal government the power to interfere with slavery in the slave states.<sup>43</sup> The state central committee maintained that “POLITICALLY, we claim no right, and have no intention, of interfering with Slavery in the States.” Instead, Maine Liberty men declared their intention to “SHUT SLAVERY UP IN THE STATES, where alone it is tolerated by the CONSTITUTION.”<sup>44</sup>

The situation changed during 1844 and 1845 to a point where most Maine Liberty men subscribed to the idea that the Constitution was an antislavery document. Several

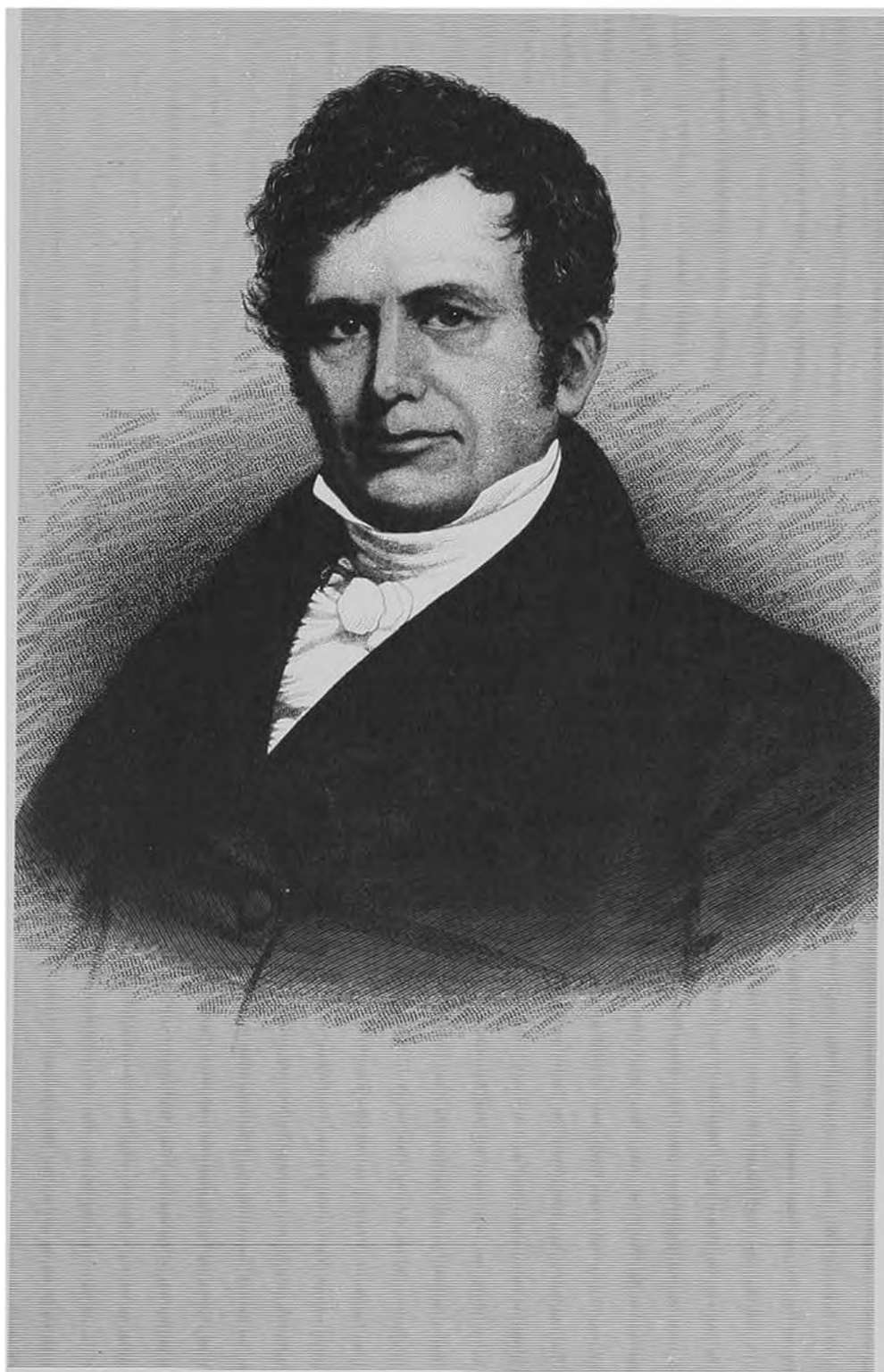
local and one state convention presented various arguments supporting the belief that the Constitution was an antislavery document.<sup>45</sup> Although there were many different arguments for the antislavery interpretation, the end result was finally acknowledged in the *Liberty Standard* in the fall of 1845:

It [the Liberty party] maintains a radically new construction of the constitution. Without this nothing could effectually be done. If slavery is by that instrument made a national interest, as is conceded by both old parties, and by the government for 20 or 30 years, we have no political right to touch it except through a change in the constitution, which is impossible. The Liberty Party makes the constitution the enemy of slavery, as it really is, consequently it can be effective against it.<sup>46</sup>

This was a potentially divisive stand because the two most outstanding lawyers in the Maine Liberty camp, 1845 gubernatorial nominee Samuel Fessenden and Seth May, strongly believed that the federal government could not interfere with slavery in the slave states. They both felt, though, that enough outside pressure could be constitutionally applied to bring about the abolition of the peculiar institution everywhere.<sup>47</sup> The party finally decided to deal with the problem in a manner best suited to maintaining party harmony – by avoiding a statewide stand and “without determining what may be the utmost limits of the power of the constitution against slavery.”<sup>48</sup> The noncommittal stance allowed local Liberty meetings to follow their own constitutional predilection without forcing their decisions on the larger membership as party dogma. This was a typical example of how Maine Liberty men maintained harmony and avoided the brutal internal struggles which characterized the party in some other states.

The disputes over Liberty voters either fusing or coalescing with elements of other political parties was not so smoothly resolved, however, because the antifusion and anticoalition forces believed that political association with





*Samuel Alexander*

members of other parties would contaminate Liberty principles and bring about the end of the party as an independent political movement.<sup>49</sup> Party differences on this question began in the early years of the party and continued until the Liberty men finally joined the Free Soil coalition, and these disagreements sometimes resulted in hot public exchanges which were atypical of the general harmony which pervaded the Liberty movement in Maine.

Fusion, the Liberty party's backing of a major party nominee, became an issue during the early years of the Maine Liberty party, but it did not become a divisive issue until 1846. Shortly after the September 1842 state elections, an abolitionist complained to Austin Willey that Liberty men had united with Whigs in Portland on the nomination of the same candidate. Not only was this man a professed Whig, the abolitionist objected, but he "was secretary of the [Whig] convention at Gray, which eulogized that man-thief, Henry Clay, and endorsed his nomination for President."<sup>50</sup> An upset Austin Willey asked Portland for an explanation which, if ever received, was never printed. This incident was an exception to the general behavior in the early years, however, and there was very little fusion with the major parties in Maine before 1846. Unlike neighboring New Hampshire, where there was much successful fusion in local races, Maine Liberty men scored relatively few electoral victories in the years before 1846. In fact, Whigs and Democrats sometimes united to prevent a Liberty candidate from deadlocking an election, sometimes agreeing to elect a Whig one year and a Democrat the following year.<sup>51</sup>

The rise of temperance as an issue in Maine politics presented Maine Liberty men with an even greater temptation to work with members of the major parties. Temperance had been and would continue to be a major issue in Maine politics, and Democrats and Whigs failed to resolve it along party lines. The issue became particularly

explosive during the mid-1840s. Temperance-minded Whigs and Democrats were often willing to abandon their own party's nominee because he was not sufficiently strong on temperance, but they were not so willing to cast their votes for the temperance oriented Liberty candidates who had been causing so much confusion in the state's politics. They were willing, though, to work with Liberty men to set up independent slates containing members of all three parties. This presented Liberty men with a particularly difficult dilemma: on the one hand, Liberty men did not wish to be held responsible for the defeat of temperance, a cause which appealed to their reform instincts almost as much as antislavery; but, on the other hand, they did not want to be accused of dealing with members of proslavery political organizations. Liberty responses varied. While the *Emancipator* warned against such actions, Austin Willey maintained an unaccustomed silence, and John E. Godfrey, editor of the *Bangor Gazette*, urged Liberty men to set aside the party temporarily when temperance was an issue.<sup>52</sup>

These difficulties in maintaining party discipline were considered minor because few members in the state became noticeably upset by them. After John P. Hale and his alliance of Independent Democrats, Whigs, and Liberty men scored their stunning victory in the spring 1846 elections in New Hampshire, however, the debate in Maine became more acrimonious. To accept the New Hampshire formula in Maine would entail significant modifications in party ideology and tactics. The Liberty party would be transformed from a moral reform agency which had an uncompromising tone to a more secular organization containing Whigs and Democrats, a situation that would soften Liberty principles considerably. This would be a difficult transition for those members of the Maine Liberty party who had been developing a reputation for the uncompromising nature of their

antislavery. The *Bangor Gazette*, whose editor and backers had shown an orientation toward practical politics, confronted the issue in an editorial which advocated the tactics of the New Hampshire Liberty men, and declared that "We wish to see Maine New Hampshirized."<sup>53</sup> The paper encouraged the visit of Joshua Giddings, the famous Whig antislavery congressman from Ohio, to the state, and Liberty leaders from the Bangor area were instrumental in persuading John P. Hale to campaign for Liberty candidates in the eastern part of the state.<sup>54</sup>

The majority of Liberty leaders, however, took a dim view of coalition and fusion. They feared that these types of politics would lead to the destruction of both the principle and structure of the Liberty party. The internal disagreements became public when Whigs and Liberty men in Somerset County were discussing cooperation for the September 1846 elections. Willey's *Liberty Standard* declared that this would mean "the destruction of the Liberty Party in Somerset" and that the *Bangor Gazette* "censured us and . . . those in that county who were resisting the insidious attack."<sup>55</sup> Although the dispute was eventually smoothed over with mutual apologies, it was indicative of a basic disagreement within the party.<sup>56</sup> The *Liberty Standard* believed that the party could be most effective by avoiding involvement with other parties, especially since the Liberty party was beginning to attract more Democrats, whereas the publishers of the *Bangor Gazette* thought that active cooperation with the local Whig party and unhappy Democrats would contribute to a more effective movement. The annual state Liberty gathering supported the *Liberty Standard* position in its January 1847 convention by endorsing Samuel Fessenden, an anticoalition advocate, for the United States presidency over John P. Hale.<sup>57</sup> This dispute would soon resurface as the Maine Liberty party moved reluctantly into the Free Soil movement.

Despite the confusion among the Maine Liberty men as they attempted to define their role in the American political system, they did develop a more sophisticated and productive political organization by the end of 1846. The dismal presidential returns in 1844 brought the party barely four thousand votes, and the discouraged Maine Liberty men fell into almost complete apathy during the following year. Nonetheless, it soon became apparent that something had to be done or the party would not survive. The Liberty organization had succeeded in involving more ministers and church members in the interdenominational antislavery conventions held at the same time as the state Liberty conventions, and individual church groups were becoming more vocal in their protests against slavery — but the actual political results were disappointing, although not nonexistent.

For instance, the presence of the Liberty party discouraged the major parties from putting up certain candidates in strong antislavery areas. For example, it was well known that the Democrats did not renominate incumbent Congressmen Nathan Clifford and Nathaniel Littlefield in 1843 because party leaders feared that their pro-South votes in Congress would prevent their election. Nevertheless, it became apparent that pressure group and balance-of-power tactics were limited in their effectiveness. Neither major party embraced antislavery wholeheartedly, and, as a result, Liberty men began efforts to strengthen the political and financial bases of the party.

The primary vehicle to accomplish this was the Maine Liberty Association with its county and town auxiliaries. After some success with the association concept at the local level in 1844, the annual state Liberty party convention of January 1846 founded the Maine Liberty Association and adopted a detailed constitution for the new organization.<sup>58</sup> The annual membership fee was one dollar, and life memberships were available for ten dollars. The

organization was established to aid in the dissemination of antislavery literature, to assist in the prosecution of the cause, and also, very importantly, to provide another source of revenue for the always depleted Liberty coffers. The concept of a Liberty Association received much approval at the convention, and 150 delegates immediately became members. The Maine Liberty Association replaced the Maine Anti-Slavery Society, which had become so identified with the third party that its separate existence was unnecessary.

Unlike much of the inaction of previous conventions that urged the necessity for more thorough organization, the Liberty party actually did much toward setting up a systematic and effective grass-roots organization for itself with the establishment of the Liberty Association. The state association printed a monthly magazine, the *Flag of Freedom*, for which a circulation of fifteen thousand was claimed in 1846;<sup>59</sup> and the party newspapers reported the intense activity of the associations throughout the summer of 1846. This local interest and activity far surpassed the Liberty efforts of previous years.

This added activity and the efforts of John P. Hale in the southeastern parts of the state on behalf of Liberty candidates resulted in unparalleled Liberty successes in the September state elections. Samuel Fessenden, who had been the party's gubernatorial candidate since James Appleton declined renomination in 1845, received almost four thousand more votes than the Liberty candidate had obtained in any previous election.<sup>60</sup> Fessenden's 15 percent of the vote prevented both major party candidates' from obtaining a simple majority, so Democrat John Dana had to await the meeting of the state legislature in the spring before he could claim victory. The Liberty men also did comparatively well in the lower house of the state legislature, where their ten representatives doubled the party's previous high. As usual, many state and local

offices went unfilled because no candidate had received a simple majority of the vote. The state Liberty agent reported that the elections for four congressional seats, nineteen state senators, and more than sixty state representatives were defeated at the first ballot.<sup>61</sup>

Most of the 1846 gains for the Liberty party came at the expense of the Democrats.<sup>62</sup> The national Democratic party was increasingly identified as the proslavery party, and the state Democratic organization was not sufficiently dissociated from national policy to satisfy many antislavery oriented Democratic voters. In addition, some Democrats and Liberty men saw the success of coalition politics in New Hampshire, and began to work for a similar situation in Maine. This was most notably true in the southeastern section of the state where the Liberty party had always been more pragmatic and less doctrinaire.

Liberty men attributed their improved performance to their more sophisticated organization and John P. Hale's endorsement of many candidates.<sup>63</sup> They believed that the party was now on its way to great success. The Liberty Association produced a new source of revenue with over seven hundred dues paying members in 1846, and almost all of this money went into town, county, and congressional races. The passage of resolutions calling for a \$3,000 subscription fund and the financing of five Liberty agents for the state demonstrated the optimism at the first annual meeting of the association. The state meeting also went on record as being firmly opposed to coalition or fusion politics with its strong endorsement of Samuel Fessenden for president in 1848.<sup>64</sup> Fessenden was well known for both his opposition to bringing extraneous issues into the party and for his refusal to cooperate with either of the major parties. There was a minority in the party who disagreed with these stands, however, and the

internal dispute over working with members of the major parties was the salient feature of Maine Liberty party affairs in 1847-1848.

After 1845 Liberty candidates did much better at the polls. They began to employ more traditional political tactics and organizational techniques along with the continued use of tracts, agents, and other methods borrowed from the abolitionism of the 1830s. At the same time, more Liberty men showed a willingness to abandon their earlier refusal to work with the two major parties. These proponents of coalition politics, however, were a distinct minority in Maine at the beginning of 1847. They had strength in the Bangor area, and the *Bangor Gazette* served as their mouthpiece; but they were not strong enough to wrest control of the state organization from their opponents who were led by Austin Willey and Samuel Fessenden, men who were much closer to the one-idea of antislavery, anticoalition position than were the Bangor men.

Although the *Bangor Gazette* and the Liberty party in that area had always been more secular and less inclined to the highly moralistic rhetoric which characterized the main body of the party, problems did not surface until the previously discussed disagreement over the Somerset County situation in the summer of 1846. The peace the disputants proclaimed in September 1846 did not last long, however, and the *Bangor Gazette* and the *Liberty Standard* took opposite positions on many of the important issues confronting the party in 1847 and 1848. The root problem was a difference in perception as to what the true nature of the Liberty party should be.

The *Gazette* people angered many abolitionists with their reluctance to condemn American participation in the Mexican War, but the real division in the Maine Liberty party was occasioned by the *Bangor Gazette's* willingness to



cooperate with local Whigs and its attempts to maneuver the Liberty men into a larger national coalition that would include dissident Whigs and Democrats. The underlying tension erupted into a pair of harsh public disputes over the best date for holding a national Liberty nominating convention for the 1848 presidential contest and over a state senate nomination in 1847.

In the argument over the time for a national Liberty nominating convention, the *Bangor Gazette* and the *Liberty Standard* were clearly at odds. The *Gazette* sided with those national advocates of a convention in the late spring of 1848 in order to give a broader movement a chance to develop; while the *Liberty Standard*, gubernatorial candidate Fessenden, and most of the prominent Maine Liberty men sided with those desiring a fall 1847 convention. The dispute reached a highly personal level with Willey accusing the editor of the *Bangor Gazette* of dropping several "honeyed innuendoes against those who differed with him."<sup>65</sup>

The disagreement over the senate nomination was a local issue which reflected a national problem for Liberty men. Briefly, Willey's *Liberty Standard* dropped the name of a Mr. Wadsworth from its approved candidate list for the state senate seat from Lincoln County because Wadsworth openly supported the Whig F. H. Morse for the Congress. The *Liberty Standard* claimed that Wadsworth "had acted in close concert with the leaders of that party [the Whigs] in efforts to induce Liberty men to abandon their first organic element as a party." The *Bangor Gazette* had chastised Willey and the *Liberty Standard* for deleting a nomination made by a duly constituted convention, and it accused them of attempting to dominate the party. Of course, the *Liberty Standard* denied this, saying that it "omitted his name, *not on their ticket*, but on *our list*," which was its journalistic prerogative. Willey concluded with a perceptive acknowledgement that there

were important differences within two factions of the Maine Liberty party that were irreconcilable.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, these differences concerned the political philosophy of the Liberty party.

Most leading and vocal men in the party – including Fessenden, Willey, and most of the old line Liberty men who had been loyal to the party since the early 1840s – still conceived of the party as primarily a vehicle of moral reform that could not compromise its guiding principles without undermining its basic foundation. They repeatedly declared that there could be “No voting for slave-holders, or those in political fellowship with them.”<sup>67</sup> Although these members had begun to apply the conventional vote getting techniques of American politics, they were not willing to compromise their ideological stands to attract support from those more interested in success at the polls.

Their opponents within the party were more oriented toward immediate political victory. Most of these men were rarely mentioned in earlier Liberty proceedings and were relatively recent converts to the party. They had deeper attachments to the major parties and to the spirit of compromise which was necessary to function effectively in the American political system. In short, they were practical politicians who were willing to mute their principles in order to take a few steps toward their goals, even if this left them short of the goals. The question was not one of which faction disliked slavery more. Rather, it was a question of what were the best means to reach a commonly desired end. It was paradoxical that the views and strategies of the minority came to dominate the Maine Liberty party within a year of the acrimonious intraparty disputes of mid-1847, but old line Liberty men quickly became convinced that they would have to give in if they hoped to have any chance of achieving effective political opposition to slavery. The conversion of the old line

Liberty men to coalition politics did not come about immediately, nor did it come because they were persuaded by the arguments of those in favor of working with members of the two major parties. Instead, these men responded to the outside pressures in such a way that they had no viable alternative except to join the Free Soil movement when it came into existence.

The turning point for these older Liberty adherents came in late July 1847 when Willey travelled to Boston for a meeting with John P. Hale. Willey came away from the meeting impressed by Hale, and he quickly reached the conclusion that "his principles and objects were those of the Liberty Party."<sup>68</sup> Soon he declared that Maine Liberty men were willing to waive their preference for Fessenden because "we know of no man whose nomination on the whole is likely to be so useful to the cause as that of *John P. Hale*."<sup>69</sup> Thus the Maine Liberty men were united in approving Hale's nomination for the presidency at the October 1847 national nominating convention, but to do so they had to go outside the party for a candidate whose antislavery principles were not so clear cut as those of most of the Maine Liberty conventions of earlier in the year.

From this time on, Maine Liberty men were caught up in the national movement that led to the formation of the Free Soil party.<sup>70</sup> This did not bring the two factions within the Maine Liberty party together, however, as the old line leaders favored union only on the Liberty principle of nonextension of slavery with John P. Hale as the presidential candidate, while the minority faction was willing to accept a coalition on weaker antislavery terms with a candidate who would not necessarily have to meet the more stringent antislavery requirements which the controlling body of Maine Liberty men demanded in a candidate. In short, the Maine split was a microcosm of the national division within the party: one group willing to go

further than the other in modifying earlier Liberty stands in order to effect a union of the antiextension of slavery elements on the choice of a candidate.<sup>71</sup>

With the presidential nomination of Lewis Cass by the Democrats and Zachary Taylor by the Whigs, however, Fessenden and Willey reversed their earlier opposition to coalition politics and began actively supporting a union of Liberty men and the dissident elements of the two major parties. In fact, they became the acknowledged leaders of the Free Soil movement in Maine by the summer because, unlike many other states, adequate leadership was not forthcoming from disgruntled Whigs and Democrats in the state. The Liberty men still held out for a Hale presidential nomination and expressed an extreme distaste for the old foe of abolitionism, Martin Van Buren, who was gaining strength as a coalition candidate;<sup>72</sup> but they made sure that Whigs, Democrats, and Liberty men were equally represented as delegates to the Free Soil convention in August at Buffalo when a conference to select delegates was held at Portland in late July.<sup>73</sup> At the Buffalo convention, the Maine delegation cast six votes for Hale, five for Van Buren, with one vote unaccounted for, but they accepted the Van Buren nomination despite their earlier protestations. Willey changed the name of the *Liberty Standard* to the *Free Soil Republican*, and the grass roots Liberty organization served as the basis for the Free Soil party in the state.<sup>74</sup>

Liberty men joined dissatisfied Whigs and Democrats in a hastily called Free Soil state convention at Gray. They set up a ticket for the September state elections that was headed by Samuel Fessenden and dominated by former Liberty men. A massive rally, attended by John P. Hale and former Massachusetts Whig Stephen C. Phillips, the Bay State candidate for governor, was held in Lewiston on September 8 with an estimated three thousand persons

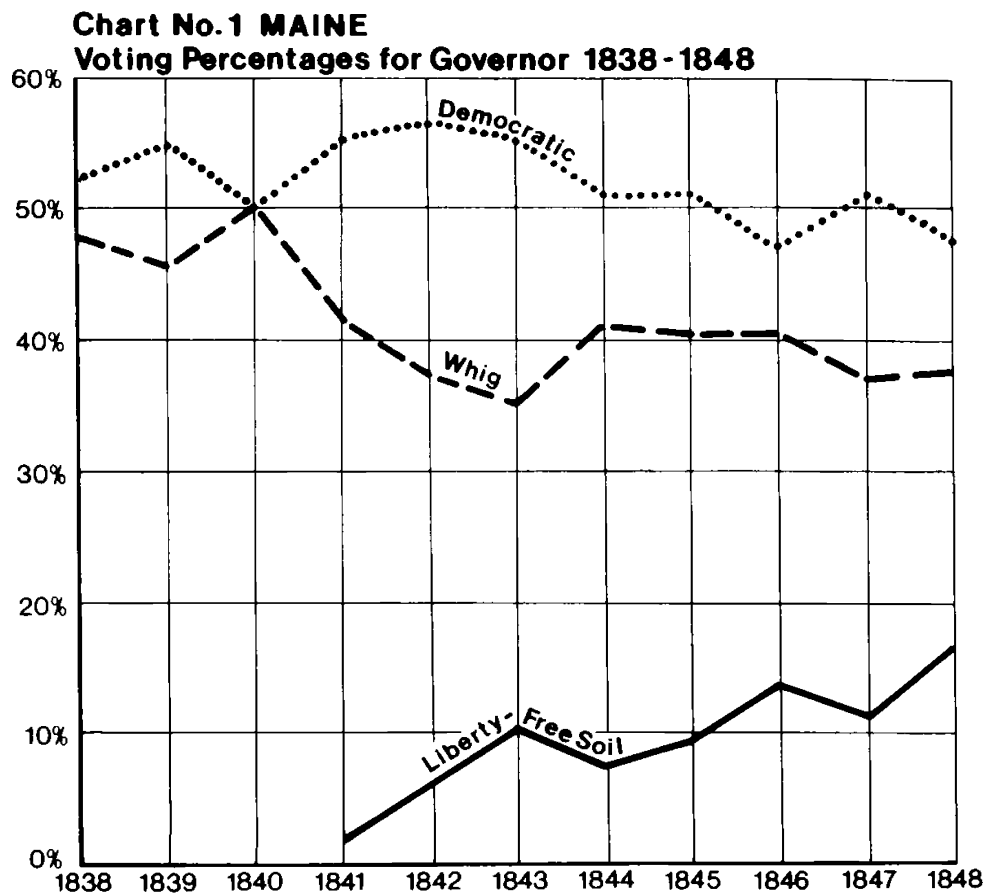
in attendance. Another convention in Portland on September 27 selected presidential electors.<sup>75</sup>

The effect of these efforts was minimal, however, as the Free Soil party made no dramatic improvement over previous Liberty achievements in either the September state elections or the November presidential contest. The results of the 1848 elections were very similar for the Free Soil party, as they gained only 177 votes between September and November and saw their percentage drop from 15.1 to 13.9 percent due to an increased turnout for the major parties. In the state races, the Free Soilers elected thirteen state representatives and defeated the election of over half of the state senators, but the Democrats captured the governorship, the state's presidential vote, and five out of seven congressional seats. The Free Soilers would have had a greater effect on the state elections except for the passage of a new state law, largely prompted by Liberty success, eliminating the simple majority requirement in gubernatorial and state representative races and making a plurality sufficient for election.<sup>76</sup>

The results of the election were very disappointing to the former Liberty men of Maine who had dominated the state organization of the new party, but they continued to work for antislavery and played important roles in the temperance movement that became so important to Maine politics in the 1850s and later in the Republican party.

Questions still remain on the earlier political sympathies of Liberty party members at a time of high political interest and participation. The trends in the voter of the Maine Liberty party were for strong former Whig support for the new party in the early 1840s and increased Democratic participation in the new party after 1844.<sup>77</sup> The Maine Liberty party vote followed a pattern of steady increase in support up to 1844, a drop in strength in 1844,

and then a resurgence in the years after 1844.<sup>78</sup> The party reached its peak in 1846 when it drew 9,343 votes, over 13 percent of the total.



A relatively stable voter base had developed for both the Whigs and Democrats by 1840. This stability remained for the Democrats throughout the early 1840s, while a declining statewide Whig vote after 1840 indicated a greater change in the Whig base of support. The Liberty base was nowhere near as stable as that of the two major parties. For instance, the Pearsonian interelection correlation coefficients between the 1841 and 1847 gubernatorial elections for the three parties are:

|            |                      |
|------------|----------------------|
| Democratic | 0.8321               |
| Whig       | 0.7549               |
| Liberty    | 0.3370 <sup>79</sup> |

This indicates that the Democrats and even the weakening Whigs maintained their relative bases of support quite well between 1841 and 1847, while the Liberty party's voter base of 1847 only mildly resembled that of 1841. The strong former Whig base of the early Liberty party was demonstrated by a corresponding rise in Liberty sentiment as the Whig vote dropped in the Maine towns. This is shown by an analysis of the twenty Liberty party banner towns for 1842, all of which received over 15 percent of the vote in that year's gubernatorial election.<sup>80</sup> Liberty support in fourteen of these towns came almost exclusively from former Whig sources, most of the Liberty support in three towns was former Whig, in two towns Liberty support was almost equally divided between Whig and Democratic sources, and in one town it was impossible to determine the source.<sup>81</sup> This analysis supports the traditional contention that the Liberty party was primarily a Whig-based movement.

The Maine Liberty party's constituency changed considerably by the latter half of the decade. This was apparent not only from the Liberty interelection correlations discussed above but also from an examination of the twenty-one Liberty party banner towns for the 1846 gubernatorial election, all which gave over one-third of their vote to the Liberty party. A large part of the new accessions (since 1842) to the party by 1846 were former Democrats, although former Whigs continued to make substantial contributions. The new banner town list shows Liberty support was almost exclusively Democratic in three towns, mostly Democratic in five towns, about evenly divided between Democratic and Whig in five towns, mostly Whig in one town, and almost exclusively Whig in two towns. The source of votes was indeterminate in two

towns.<sup>82</sup> It is difficult to assess which of the major parties contributed more to Liberty support by 1847 – Liberty men were probably fairly evenly divided in their former political allegiances – but there is no doubt that a much greater portion of party members in the later years had formerly been Democrats than had been the case in the first few years of the party.

Although this increased Democratic participation in antislavery politics has been generally neglected by historians, the Maine participants were aware that it was beginning to take place as early as 1843.<sup>83</sup> Appeals to Democrats, the practice of nominating more former Democrats in state and local elections, and reports of former Democrats entering the Liberty party increased after 1844 as the national Democratic party became characterized as the proslavery party.<sup>84</sup> That this loss of strength began to have an effect on Maine Democrats was clearly demonstrated by a noticeable softening of their hostility to antislavery and Democratic Governor John Dana's endorsement of the antiextension of slavery in the Wilmot Proviso in early 1847.<sup>85</sup>

The Liberty constituency in Maine was a very heterogeneous group. Baptists seem to have played a disproportionately important role, but members of all major dominations were important in the party. Religious feeling and moral conviction were significant forces in the party. Liberty candidates came from several walks of life. Of the seven congressional candidates in 1846 "One is a judge, one a lawyer, one a minister, one a doctor, one a farmer, one engaged in lumbering and trade, and one a merchant."<sup>86</sup> Liberty candidates were respected members of their communities. One Liberty journalist challenged anyone to "point to one [Liberty candidate] who has not the respect and confidence of the community where he resides."<sup>87</sup> No one is recorded as having answered the dare.

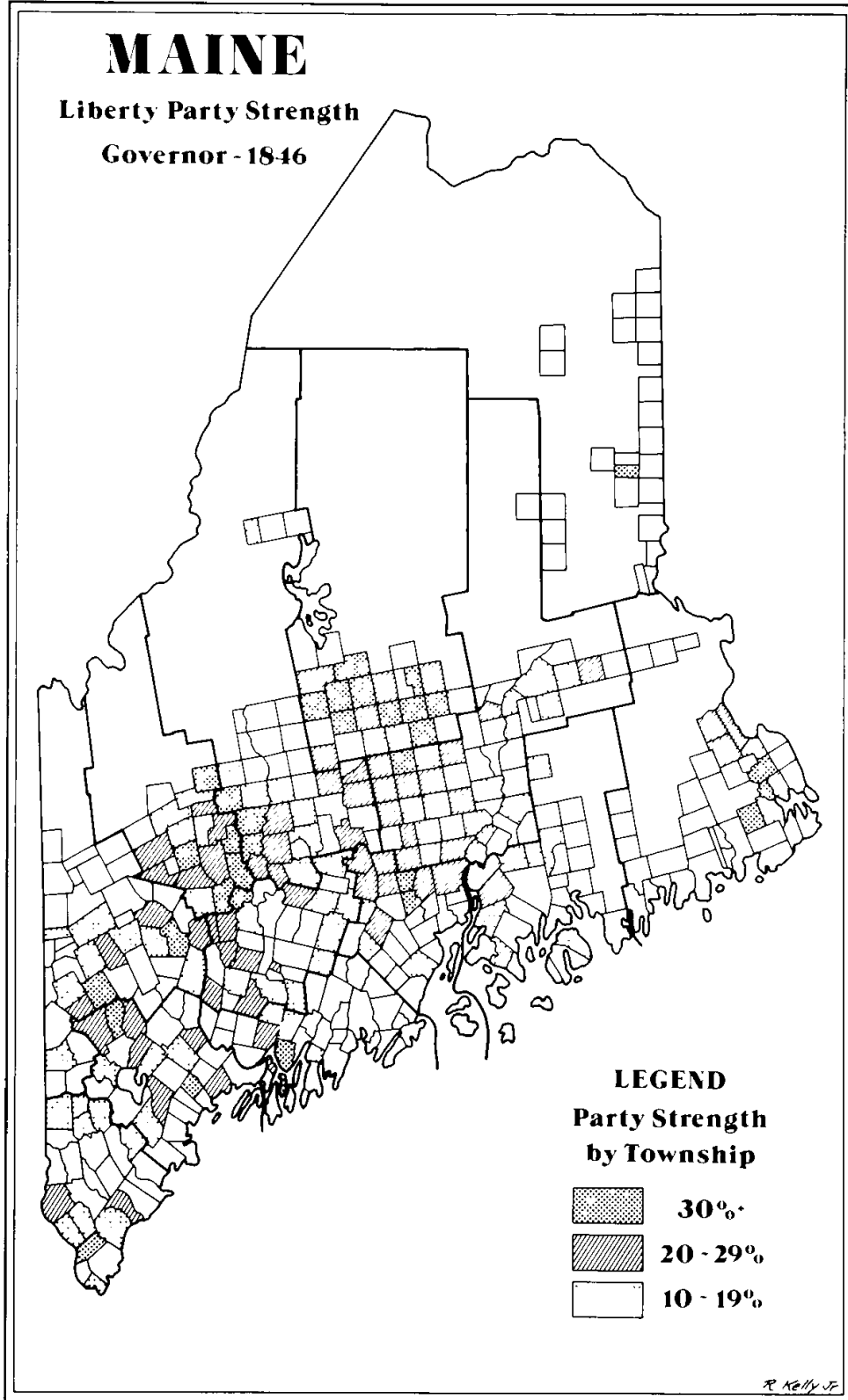


The town map of the Liberty party strength in 1846 indicates more about the Liberty party.<sup>88</sup> Two facets are very obvious: first, little Liberty support existed in the seacoast towns, undoubtedly because these areas were dependent upon the southern trade and were reluctant to take part in activities which could be construed to be unfriendly to a southern institution; and second, the Liberty party did poorly in frontier towns, probably because it was difficult to get a political organization set up in the widely scattered, sparsely populated areas which had inadequate communication networks. Liberty strength in Maine was concentrated in the central part of the state for most of its existence, and it was only during the last few years of the movement that it spread beyond the Penobscot River into the eastern tip of the state.

The Liberty strength was concentrated in four or five pockets west of the Penobscot River in the central and east-central portions of the state. The area of strength in the southwestern part of the state was as much attributable to the efforts of New Hampshire Liberty men and John P. Hale's Independent Democrats as to the activities of the Maine abolitionists. The pattern of Liberty voting was similar throughout the state: core towns of heavy Liberty strength surrounded by towns of gradually decreasing Liberty support. Both the *Bangor Gazette* and the *Liberty Standard* served this area and provided information and the means for Liberty communication. This region's economy was minimally affected by the southern trade that was an inhibiting factor to Liberty party development along the seacoast. These pockets of Liberty strength also provided the nucleus for the Free Soil party, which received most of its support from former Liberty party areas.

The Pearsonian interelection correlation coefficient for the 1847 Liberty vote and the 1848 Free Soil vote in the governor's contest was 0.7496, evidence of the great

Chart No. 2



similarity in the voter bases of the two parties. This similarity is made even more clear by an examination of the nineteen Free Soil banner towns, all of which received more than 40 percent of the town vote. Twelve of the nineteen towns appeared on either the 1842 or the 1846 Liberty party banner town lists, no minor point since the Maine data set contains 355 towns. The Free Soilers matched or surpassed their Liberty totals of the previous year in all but two of the banner towns, and the additional Free Soil support not directly attributable to Liberty sources was about evenly divided between the two major parties. Of all the towns in the state, antislavery politics suffered substantial losses in only a few in the transition from Liberty to Free Soil. The vast majority of Maine voters who cast their ballots for the Liberty party in 1847 joined the Free Soil movement. The Liberty party had a substantial impact on Maine politics, and, along with the Free Soil party, prepared the way for the Republican party of the 1840s.

– NOTES –

<sup>1</sup> All the national studies of antislavery politics neglect Maine, but Richard H. Sewall, *Ballots for Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976) gives the best national overview so far. Edward O. Schriver, "The Antislavery Impulse in Maine, 1833-1855" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, 1967) and Richard A. Wescott, "A History of Maine Politics, 1840-1856: The Formation of the Republican Party" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, 1967), (hereafter cited as Wescott, "Maine Politics"), do little in-depth work on the Liberty party. The most useful source is Liberty party leader Austin Willey's *History of the Antislavery Cause in State and Nation* (Portland, Maine: Brown Thurston and Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, 1886: reprint ed., New York: Negro University Press, 1960), (hereafter cited as Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*).

<sup>2</sup> Richard McCormick, *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North

Carolina Press, 1966), pp. 50-54 gives a concise summary of the Maine political system before 1840; also see Louis C. Hatch, *Maine: A History*, 3 vols. (New York: American Historical Society, 1919), 1: 1-275.

<sup>3</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43; also see Norman A. Bowter, *History of the Freewill Baptists: A Study in New England Separatism* (Rochester, N.Y.: American Baptist Historical Society, 1957).

<sup>5</sup> Robert C. Senior, "New England Congregationalists and the Antislavery Movement" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1954), p. 153; Calvin M. Clark, *American Slavery and the Maine Congregationalists* (Bangor, Me.: Calvin Clark, 1940).

<sup>6</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, pp. 108-9.

<sup>7</sup> On the Baptists in Maine, see F.M. Graham, "Maine Baptists and Antislavery, 1830-1850" (M.A. thesis, University of Maine, 1962); and the chapter on antislavery in Henry S. Burrage, *History of the Baptists in Maine* (Portland, Me.: Marks Printing House, 1904).

<sup>8</sup> All of these men later became members of the Liberty party.

<sup>9</sup> Ichabod Coddington to William Lloyd Garrison, December 1838, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library, reports on this as early as 1838; for a later condemnation of Garrison by the state society's newspaper, see *Advocate of Freedom*, 10 May 1838.

<sup>10</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 113.

<sup>11</sup> *Advocate of Freedom*, 10 May 1838.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 August 1848.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 May 1839.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 October 1839.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 22 February 1840.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 March 1840; see the long editorial criticizing this stand in *Liberator*, 13 March 1840. The *Liberator* was the Garrison newspaper published in Boston. Willey's own confusion was revealed by his later support of the Whig candidate for governor, thus strengthening the questioning method.

<sup>17</sup> *Advocate of Freedom*, 21 March 1840.

<sup>18</sup> C. T. Torrey to Editor, 16 March 1840, in *Advocate of Freedom*, 28 March 1840. The editor replied that lack of friends and poor weather for travelling would prevent his attendance, but these may have been secondary considerations to his fear of dividing the state society. Ichabod Coddington to Willey, 6 April 1840, in *Advocate of Freedom*, 7 May 1840, clarifies that Coddington went as a private individual and his votes in the open convention had "no connexion with abolitionists of Maine."

<sup>19</sup> *Advocate of Freedom*, 3 September 1840.

<sup>20</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 145.

<sup>21</sup> *Advocate of Freedom*, 22 October 1840; Augustus F. Holt, as quoted in Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 149, and is followed by a list of electors. See James M. Dodge to Willey, 1 January 1841, in *Advocate of Freedom*, 7 January 1841, in which he complains that all votes for the Birney-Earle ticket were not reported.

<sup>22</sup> "Meeting of the Pisquataquis Antislavery Society, 6-7 January 1841, as reported in *Advocate of Freedom*, 28 January 1841. See *Emancipator*, 10 June 1841; *Liberator*, 19 February 1841; *Advocate of Freedom*, 16 February, 11 March 1841; and Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, pp. 156-58, for details of the Sixth Annual Convention of the Maine Anti-Slavery Society.

<sup>23</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 12 July 1841.

<sup>24</sup> Returns for the election are:

|                           |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| John Fairfield (Democrat) | 47,354 |
| Edward Kent (Whig)        | 36,780 |
| Jeremiah Curtis (Liberty) | 1,662  |

Returns have been provided through the courtesy of the Interuniversity Consortium for Political Research at Ann Arbor, Michigan. Unless otherwise noted, returns in the remainder of the study for the state level have been supplied by I.C.P.R., which bears no responsibility for their use.

<sup>25</sup> *Kennebec Journal*, as quoted in *Liberty Standard*, 3 November 1841. See voter analysis later in the study for the basis of the early vote.

<sup>26</sup> See Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, pp. 183-86, 208-9, for the state leadership of both groups in 1842 and 1843.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>28</sup> See letter of E.D. Hudson to Garrison, 6 June 1843, in *Liberator*, 8 July 1842, which discusses the weakness of the Garrisonian faction in Maine and labels Maine abolitionists as being of the "compromising order." Nonetheless, there were a few Garrisonians in the state, see Eunice Dosman to Respected Friend [Francis Jackson?], 19 March 1843, Antislavery Collection, Boston Public Library.

<sup>29</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 196.

<sup>30</sup> For an articulation of this position and its later rejection, see *Bangor Gazette*, 28 May 1842, 23 June 1843.

<sup>31</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 239.

<sup>32</sup> *Bangor Gazette*, 17 February 1844, lists the three Liberty representatives elected in 1843.

<sup>33</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 18 January 1843.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 October 1842. The vote was 21-7 with many abstentions.

<sup>35</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, pp. 224-25.

<sup>36</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 9 February 1842.

<sup>37</sup> From the "Manuscript Journals," 30 September-12 October 1843, as quoted in Peter Tolis, *Elihu Burritt: Crusader for Brotherhood* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1968), p. 94. For a typical Willey editorial stressing this, see "Is the Law of God Paramount to Human Enactments? Shall He Govern the Nation?" in *Liberty Standard*, 28 September 1843.

<sup>38</sup> *Bangor Gazette*, 4 March 1843.

<sup>39</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 270.

<sup>40</sup> "Editorial Correspondence of J.L. [Joshua Leavitt]," 7 September 1842, in *Emancipator*, 15 September 1842.

<sup>41</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 5 February 1846. Emphases in original.

<sup>42</sup> A third area of national contention among Liberty men, the question of whether the Liberty party should become a national reform party, did not trouble the Maine segment of the party. Overwhelming support for maintaining the "one-idea" approach existed in Maine.

<sup>43</sup> James Appleton to J.C. Lovejoy, Simon Paige, Calvin Spaulding, William Stickney, and Washington Wilcox, 17 February 1842, in *Liberty Standard*, 23 February 1842. There were exceptions to this general position. A July 25, 1843 Liberty convention in the Seventh Congressional District declared that "under that [United States] Constitution according to its letter and spirit no person can be born or held a slave," in *Liberty Standard*, 2 August 1843.

<sup>44</sup> "State Liberty Party Address," in *Liberty Standard*, 24 May 1843. Emphases in original.

<sup>45</sup> See Cumberland County Antislavery Convention, 14 April 1844, in *Liberty Standard*, 23 May 1844; Wilton District Liberty Convention, 13 July 1844, in *ibid.*, 1 August 1844; State Liberty Convention at Portland, 3 July 1845, in *ibid.*, 10 July 1845; Somerset Mass Convention, in *ibid.*, 16 July 1845; Kennebec Liberty Convention, 21 August 1845, in *ibid.*, 6 November 1845.

<sup>46</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 6 November 1845.

<sup>47</sup> Seth May to Austin Willey, 13 February 1844, in *Liberty Standard*, 29 February 1844; "Aggressions of Slaveholders, and Duty of Citizens" [editorial by Willey], in *ibid.*, 16 November 1845.

<sup>48</sup> "State Liberty Convention," 6 January 1846, as reported in *Liberty Standard*, 15 January 1846.

<sup>49</sup> Fusion was a temporary uniting on a candidate with another party, while coalition was a permanent alliance with non-Liberty voters (as in the later Free Soil movement).

<sup>50</sup> "Abolitionist" to Austin Willey, in *Liberty Standard*, 28 September 1842.

<sup>51</sup> For instance, see a long article on the 1843 Bangor local election in *Liberty Standard*, 22 March 1843; for New Sharon and Blanchard, see *Emancipator*, 16 November 1843; for New Sharon in 1845, see J. C. to Willey, 10 October 1845, in *Liberty Standard*, 6 November 1845; general comments from L. Harmon to Willey, 12 January 1846, in *ibid.*, 22 January 1846.

<sup>52</sup> *Bangor Gazette*, 7 March 1846. Apparently the strategy worked in this particular instance because the *Bangor Gazette*, 13 March 1846, reported that temperance men swept the city.

<sup>53</sup> *Bangor Gazette*, 4 July 1846.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 July 1846.

<sup>55</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 3 September 1846.

<sup>56</sup> *Bangor Gazette*, 12 September 1846.

<sup>57</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 12 January 1847.

<sup>58</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 22 February 1844, and Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 241, both report on the founding of the Kennebec Liberty Association. Local successes encouraged the founding of the state organization.

<sup>59</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 313.

<sup>60</sup> The I.C.P.R. returns for 1846:

|                            |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| David Bronson (Whig)       | 28,986 |
| John Dana (Democrat)       | 33,905 |
| Samuel Fessenden (Liberty) | 9,343  |

<sup>61</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 22 April 1847, lists eight of the ten representatives and requests the names of the others. Despite the improvements at the grass roots, this shows that the lines of communication from the local to the state elites did not have the efficiency of a sophisticated political machine. See also "The Election, by W. Davis (Agent)," in *Liberty Standard*, 1 October 1846.

<sup>62</sup> See Reinhard O. Johnson, "The Liberty Party in New England, 1840-1848: The Forgotten Abolitionists" (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1976), pp. 395-423, for an extensive quantitative analysis of the vote for 355 Maine towns for the period 1840-1848. He uses

interelection correlation coefficients, elementary linkage analysis, scatterplots, banner town lists, and a voting map. A summary of his findings is included in the last part of this article.

<sup>63</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, pp. 305-6; *Liberator*, 25 September 1846; *Liberty Standard*, 22 October 1846; Samuel Fessenden to John Keep, 28 October 1846, in *Liberty Standard*, 21 January 1847; Willey to Readers, 10 May 1847, in *Liberty Standard*, 13 May 1847.

<sup>64</sup> "First Annual Report of the Maine Liberty Association," in *Liberty Standard*, 21 January 1847; "Maine Liberty Association," in *Liberty Standard*, 11 February 1847.

<sup>65</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 22 April 1847; Fessenden to Leavitt, 8 June 1847, in *ibid.*, 8 July 1847; *ibid.*, 19 August 1847.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 September 1847.

<sup>67</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, pp. 307-8; this sentiment appears continually in the pages of the *Liberty Standard* and is reflected in all the state conventions and most of the local ones. Also see the two-part article, "Mission of the Liberty Party," in *Liberty Standard*, 3, 24 June 1847.

<sup>68</sup> Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 319; Richard H. Sewell, *John P. Hale and the Politics of Abolition* (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 90.

<sup>69</sup> *Emancipator*, 6 October 1847. Emphases in original.

<sup>70</sup> The information of the Free Soil party in Maine is extensively treated in Wescott, "Maine Politics," pp. 74-117; and Edward O. Schriver, "Antislavery: The Free Soil and Free Democratic Parties in Maine, 1848-1855," *New England Quarterly* 42 (March 1969): 82-86. The best national study of the Free Soil movement, a book which also includes scattered comments on Maine, is Frederick J. Blue, *The Free Soilers: Third Party Politics, 1848-1854* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1973).

<sup>71</sup> The hostility between the *Bangor Gazette* and the *Liberty Standard* continued until the Free Soil coalition.

<sup>72</sup> Wescott, "Maine Politics," p. 101; *Liberty Standard*, 13, 20 July 1848; Willey to Salmon P. Chase, 10 July 1848, Chase Manuscripts, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., reported that "We cannot support Mr. [Martin] Van Buren – it would destroy us."

<sup>73</sup> Liberty men dominated this conference even though it was called by Jabez Woodman, a Whig unhappy with the Taylor nomination. See Wescott, "Maine Politics," p. 107.

<sup>74</sup> *Free Soil Republican*, 31 August 1848; Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 361.



<sup>75</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 24 August 1848; see the Free Soil ticket in Willey, *History of the Antislavery Cause*, p. 344.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 344-45. A new state law, primarily prompted by the Liberty party's success, eliminated the simple majority requirement in gubernatorial and state representative races.

<sup>77</sup> This is the previously mentioned summary of the quantitative findings in Johnson, "The Liberty Party in New England," pp. 395-423.

<sup>78</sup> Chart 1. Voting Percentages for Governor. 1838-1848.

<sup>79</sup> Pearsonian *r* product moment correlation coefficients may range from -1, perfect negative correlation, to 1, perfect positive correlation, with 0 signifying no correlation at all. Therefore, the Whigs and Democrats had a high positive correlation with their own earlier election, while the Liberty party had only a slight correlation. The data base is the gubernatorial election results for 355 Maine towns that were gathered by the author from newspapers and archival sources.

<sup>80</sup> The term "banner town" was widely used at this time because the town with the highest vote for a party was often awarded a banner. Complete banner town lists for 1842, 1846, and 1848 – along with their annual returns for the years 1838-1848 – are included in Johnson, "The Liberty Party in New England," pp. 395-423.

| <sup>81</sup> | <i>Almost All Whig</i> | <i>Mostly Whig</i> | <i>About Even</i> | <i>Indeterminate</i> |
|---------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Sumner        | Weston                 | Blanchard          | Hartford          | Bowerbank            |
| Monson        | N. Yarmouth            | Guilford           | Dixmont           |                      |
| Winthrop      | Corinna                | Peru               |                   |                      |
| Woolwich      | South Berwick          |                    |                   |                      |
| Bloomfield    | Lexington              |                    |                   |                      |
| New Sharon    | Waterford              |                    |                   |                      |
| Atkinson      | Stark                  |                    |                   |                      |

The categories are set up by quintiles (e.g 80-100 percent is almost all Whig, 60-79 percent is primarily Whig, 40-59 percent about even etc.).

<sup>82</sup>

| <i>Almost All Whig</i> | <i>Mostly Whig</i> | <i>About Even</i> |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Dennysville            | Anson              | Brooks            |
| Woolwich               |                    | Vienna            |
| Williamsburg           |                    | Garland           |
| Kingfield              |                    | Milo              |
|                        |                    | Stark             |

|                          |                              |                      |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Mostly Democratic</i> | <i>Almost All Democratic</i> | <i>Indeterminate</i> |
| Elliottsville            | Monson                       | Temple               |
| Industry                 | New Sharon                   | Charlotte            |
| Jackson                  | Abbott                       |                      |
| Atkinson                 |                              |                      |
| New Portland             |                              |                      |

<sup>83</sup> *Bangor Gazette*, 24 June 1843.

<sup>84</sup> For example, see *Liberty Standard*, 6 November 1845, 24 December 1846; *Emancipator*, 12 August 1846; *Boston Daily Chronotype*, 8 September 1846; *Liberty Standard*, 27 August 1846, states that of the seven United States congressional candidates in Maine for the Liberty party, "Three or four of the list were once democrats."

<sup>85</sup> *Portland Eastern Argus*, 6 May 1847; *Boston Daily Chronotype*, 8 September 1846, comments on the growing antislavery sentiment of Democratic newspapers in Maine.

<sup>86</sup> *Liberty Standard*, 27 August 1846.

<sup>87</sup> *Bangor Gazette*, 20 August 1842.

<sup>88</sup> Chart 2. Maine Map of Liberty Party Town Strength. Governor. 1846.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Chansonetta: The Life and Photographs of Chansonetta Stanley Emmons, 1859-1937* By Marius B. Peladeau. (Waldoboro, Maine: Maine Antiques Digest, 1977. Pp. 96. Paper. \$8.95).

*Raymond Then and Now.* By Ernest H. Knight. (Raymond, Maine: The Raymond Woman's Club, 1977. Pp. 188. Paper. \$8.00)

Frederick Thompson and Marquis Fayette King are names not likely to kindle recognition in the minds of most readers. The fact that both were Maine photographers, and not painters, has placed them in an historical limbo. Yet both men were respected members of the community and both recorded their eras. As such their careers need to be researched and their work needs to be located and cataloged. Though King photographed the aftermath of the Great Portland Fire of 1866, today he is probably better known as the author of *First Parish Church in Falmouth* (1898). If the reader has time, he or she might look at a copy of *Harper's Monthly Magazine* (September 1909). Illustrating Holman Day's article about the coastal folk of Maine are a number of Frederick Thompson's photographs. Here the photographer has documented the twilight of an era; the images are worth at least a thousand words.

Maine and her people have been the focus of cameras since the apparatus first came into practical use. In 1823, the engraver Abel Bowen planned a view of Portland using a camera obscura. Josephine Cobb, an authority on early photography, has noted that James William Glass, Jr. used a camera lucida during the northeast boundary survey during the 1840s; the results of this survey are now on deposit in the National Archives. One of the oldest true cameras was recently discovered in the York Institute

at Saco, Maine. Maine Historical Society is a veritable Comstock Load of early photographs that begs to be mined.

As the twentieth century gained momentum, a number of Maine photographers, including Bernice Abbott, Kosti Ruohomaa, and Eliot Porter, achieved recognition as artists. But those who preceded them, professional and amateur, remain anonymous. This has little to do with documentation and more to do with lack of interest. Recently, enthusiasm for photographs as art and documentation has been growing. The Wm. Underwood Co. recently circulated an exhibition and short catalogue relating to photographs of William Lyman Underwood (1864-1929). Though not a major artist, Underwood produced a number of strong images of the Maine landscape and of Passamaquoddy guides, including Joe Mell. This effort, organized by Bill Bagnal, points out that the history of photography and the photography of history remains in Maine largely unexplored territory.

*Chansonetta*, a pioneering probe into this dark area, is of importance to the historian and the art lover as well. In terms of content and design, it is an unusually beautiful book which boasts an introduction by Bernice Abbott and a solid text by Marius B. Peladeau, director of the William A. Farnsworth Museum at Rockland. *Chansonetta*, at the time of this review, has achieved acclaim beyond the borders of Maine. Because it transcends the coffee table niche in that it adds greatly to our collective knowledge, it is indeed worthy of all praise.

Born at Kingfield, Maine, in 1858, "Netta" was the only daughter of Solomon and Apphia Stanley. Among her six brothers, Francis E. and Freelan O. Stanley were to achieve fortune and prominence through the development of the Stanley Steamer automobile and the patent photographic dry-plate. Her brothers' interest in