



John Holmes, circa 1840. Collections of Maine Historical Society, MaineMemory.net #22394

JOHN HOLMES AND THE SHIFTING PARTISAN POLITICS OF SLAVERY IN EARLY MAINE

By Matthew Mason

The longevity and shifting partisan allegiances of the political career of John Holmes illuminate many of the issues animating Maine politics in the broad statehood era. None of these issues dogged Holmes or revealed the intersection of Maine and national politics better than that of slavery. His seemingly endless political flexibility makes Holmes an unusually good barometer of the mainstream position in Maine on slavery and related issues across this broad period.

Matthew Mason is a professor of history at Brigham Young University. He is the author of books including *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (2006) and *Apostle of Union: A Political Biography of Edward Everett* (2016), and the co-editor of books including *John Quincy Adams and the Politics of Slavery: Selections from the Diary* (2017).

John Holmes, it seems, was born for controversy. While his provocative stances on key issues at times caused him serious political and even personal pain, he never shied away from partisan combat. His opponents gave as good as they got from Holmes, in part because of the bitterness his many party switches provoked in them. By turns a Federalist, a Democratic-Republican, a Crawfordite, a National Republican, and a Whig, Holmes repeatedly faced the fury of a party scorned. Holmes's willingness to engage with a long train of divisive issues also helped render his career, which spanned three decades, more contentious than most. His seemingly endless flexibility of political principles does not make him an inspiring example of political integrity. But it does make Holmes an unusually good barometer of the mainstream of Maine politics on various issues, because he made it his business to find that mainstream.

None of these conflicts marked his political and personal life more deeply than those involving American slavery. Holmes earned the epithet "doughface" for his role in the controversy over slavery in Missouri, but he dealt with the moral, economic, constitutional, sectional, and partisan issues surrounding slavery at every stage of his public life. He usually did so in opposition to those who would wield slavery as a tool in state and national politics. But at other times, his political context encouraged him to flourish anti-

slavery pronouncements of his own. Tracing his mercurial career with an eye to this vital element in American life, then, helps illuminate the particular place of slavery in the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties, the factional politics of the 1820s, and the National Republican and Whig opposition to the Jacksonian Democracy. It also highlights the intersection of slavery with key events in Holmes's time, from the War of 1812, through the Maine and Missouri controversy, to the transition from the First to the Second Party System.¹

Close analysis of Holmes's time in politics also underscores the core importance of its Maine context. Whether the arena of conflict was Portland, Boston, or Washington, the dynamics of Maine politics shaped Holmes's stances on a host of issues, including slavery. Mainers' hate-love relationship with Massachusetts, for instance, meant that Bay Staters' multiple responses to slavery helped condition Mainers' own responses. And the linkage of Missouri to the conclusion of Maine's long struggle to break away from Massachusetts helped condition Mainers' stances on the most explosive discussion of slavery in Holmes's national career. In short, accident and partisan politics made it so that there was no escaping slavery in Maine; for the same reasons, at key moments, neither could Southern slavery escape Maine. Holmes the politician, consequently, could escape neither.

In March 1773, Melatiah and Elizabeth Bradford Holmes welcomed their baby boy John into their home in Kingston, Massachusetts. Both parents enjoyed a certain pride of descent, tracing their genealogy back to the Plymouth colony. After graduating from Rhode Island College in 1796, John achieved admittance to the Massachusetts bar in 1799 and made the fateful decision to migrate to Maine to establish a practice. He settled in Alfred, a district of the town of Sanford in York County, the southernmost county in the District of Maine. Alfred was a good match for this young man on the make, as his move there was part of a population boom. York County's population ballooned from 19,909 in 1784 to 46,283 in 1820, mirroring Maine's overall growth from just over 56,000

to over 297,000 in the same period. While the District's share of the vote in Massachusetts's gubernatorial election was just ten percent in 1800, it was fully a quarter in 1807. Alfred participated in this explosive growth, earning incorporation in 1808 like a multitude of other Maine towns in the early national period.²

Holmes was also part of a whole generation of lawyers who descended on a land of legal opportunity. Early national Maine boiled with conflict between "Great Proprietors" – wealthy men (most of whom lived outside the District) laying claim to vast tracts of land based on an often contradictory welter of grants and patents – and local squatters on the land, who styled themselves "Liberty Men." Both sides believed passionately that their legitimate property rights – and thus their liberty – were at stake in the struggle, to say nothing of the life-and-death subsistence issues involved on the squatters' side. An advocate of the squatters captured the connection of this struggle to liberty in a fictitious dialogue published in 1797, in which the "People" sought for their liberty at the hands of the "Court." "There is no liberty for you," the Court replied. "Return to a sense of your duties or . . . we will chain you to your oars." "What," cried the People, "are we in Algiers?" It was a pointed reference, for white Americans constituted part of the slave labor force of Algiers, and their plight and its racial implications had captured the attention of American audiences. It was also telling in that it positioned the most threatening slave drivers as residents not of Algiers or even of the South, but of Massachusetts.³

None of this rhetoric dissuaded Holmes, who did a brisk business representing various proprietors' interests. Holmes entered politics as a Federalist shortly after making his professional mark in Alfred. Given the Federalist leanings of most proprietors, this choice of parties made eminent sense. In 1802, Sanford and Alfred elected him to the House of Representatives, the lower house of the Massachusetts legislature. With the popularity of the Republican Party on the rise in Maine, however, he was re-elected only once. Despite his electoral setback, the able young man remained an asset to the Federalist Party as a key organizer in southern Maine. In

1809, he delivered the oration at Alfred's first July 4 assembly.⁴

In efforts like that oration, Holmes revealed himself to be a starkly sectional brand of Federalist. On partisan matters, he was something of a moderate, sounding traditional Federalist themes in a rather unremarkable manner. When addressing New England's sectional grievances, however, Holmes dealt in the harsh tones of many other Yankee Federalists. He warned darkly that New Englanders would not suffer "that their liberties shall be trifled with." Coastal Maine suffered greatly under the Republican Congress's Embargo on trade with Great Britain. This policy ended what had been "the Golden Age of Commerce" in Maine, which had contributed greatly to the wealth and growth of its coastal towns since the late eighteenth century. Holmes and other Federalists in Alfred funneled this anger into a town memorial against the Embargo. The authors of the memorial protested their attachment to the Union but reminded the administration that "*oppression did sever us from the British Empire.*" They warned that "life and liberty are as dear to us as our opulent brethren of the South, and we flatter ourselves, that we have as much love of *liberty* and abhorrence of *slavery* as those who oppose us *in the name of republicanism.*"⁵

In keeping with this brand of sectional rhetoric, it was when discussing Southern slavery that Holmes's July 4 address became the most strident. He hoped for a return of national prosperity but admonished that "we have much to humble our national pride, and stain our national character. Thousands of human beings are groaning in *slavery*, in the land of liberty." As the domestic slave trade between the Upper South and Deep South rose in prominence in the American consciousness, that image gave him a particularly vivid way to assault the morality of white Southerners. Nearly one million people, Holmes cried, "having senses as susceptible of pleasure and pain, and souls as pure and *white*, in the sight of GOD, as ours," not only suffered daily abuse by "their inhuman tormentors," but also faced the growing specter of being "bought and sold as beasts of burden." Bay Staters might boast of their own state as

completely free, but they should not forget that slavery constituted a "national stain" that might well call down the "retribution" of "Heaven." This passage equaled any other New England Federalist in antislavery zeal, and it exceeded many others. It anticipated by several years Federalist Congregationalist divines, who, especially during the War of 1812, branded slavery as one of the national sins that brought on the calamity of the war. Holmes's oration fit easily with other Federalist politicians' increasingly bitter attacks on the Southern planters – in this case, "inhuman tormentors" as well as human traffickers – who dominated the Republican Party and the federal government. And it echoed other Yankee Federalists in vaunting the superior libertarian credentials of Massachusetts, bastion and headquarters of Federalism.⁶

Within two short years of this speech, however, Holmes did an about-face on both partisan and sectional matters. Sometime in late 1811, Holmes deserted the Federalists for the Republican Party. He left no extant public or private explanation for this momentous decision. Holmes was only one of many ambitious young men in southern Maine who left the service of the proprietors to sometimes awkwardly seek common cause with the "Liberty Men" in Republican politics. But the Federalists still had their own centers of strength in Maine, and their popular appeal grew with the Embargo and then the War of 1812. Alfred reflected the closely divided state of Maine politics, narrowly voting Republican in the congressional election of 1810, then narrowly Federalist for governor in 1811, then Republican by a wide margin in 1812. If Holmes had a finger to the political wind blowing through his hometown, it was not sending him particularly clear directions.⁷

Because he failed to explain his partisan pirouette, however, Holmes gave his erstwhile allies an opportunity to ascribe the worst motives to his behavior. Naturally, they took it. One letter to the editor of the *Portland Gazette*, the leading Federalist newspaper in Maine, grouched that the Republicans "seem to consider this *miserable apostate* as a great acquisition to their strength." But he would desert them "the

moment they cease to put him into their best offices.” An editorial from the same sheet cast further aspersions on the motives of “this turn-coat.” The loyalties of “a man of his perfidious and unprincipled character,” the editor charged, were always suspect, for any observer could tell that “office is his aim – his only aim.”⁸

In what would become a theme in Holmes’s partisan life, the Republicans disregarded such warnings. His new party’s leadership showed no hesitancy to plot tactics and strategy with him, converting him from a Federalist insider and local broker to a Republican insider and local broker essentially overnight. Party backing helped Holmes win election to the state House of Representatives in early 1812, and his constituents in York County soon elected him to the state senate. John Holmes was the sort of man who you might not have been fully comfortable with as a comrade, but especially in the tightly contested partisan politics of Maine during the Embargo and war, Republicans could not afford to turn him away.⁹

And it was as a wartime champion of Republican policies that Holmes contributed greatly to both the party’s and his own cause. Once a moderate partisan and a passionate sectionalist, he came to national attention as a passionate partisan and an enemy to sectionalism. The Federalists laid responsibility for what they branded a disastrous war in the service of Britain’s enemy Napoleon at the feet of two consecutive Southern-dominated Republican regimes in Washington. These disasters would never have been possible, they grumbled, without the added strength the Republicans’ Southern and Western heartlands gained in both the House of Representatives and the Electoral College from the Constitution’s infamous three-fifths clause, which Federalists routinely branded “slave representation.” Given the power of the anti-Southern prejudices the Embargo and war had stirred up and the Federalists had harnessed to revive their fortunes at the polls, defensive New England Republicans preferred to change the subject in their responses.¹⁰

From his seat in the state senate, Holmes pursued the party line, seeking to reframe the issue in his speeches. The real problem, he insisted, was not Republican slaveholding or Fran-

cophilia, but rather Federalist disunionism in the service of Anglophilia. The Federalists might have the antislavery legacy of the American Revolution on their side, but Holmes sought to answer that with its republican and Anglophobic legacies. In December 1813 in the legislature, for instance, Holmes flayed the Federalists for having “taken their ground against their country and in favor of its enemy.” Their attempts “to excite local jealousies,” he charged, contemplated the separation of a “kingdom of New England” from the United States preliminarily to a return to the colonial relationship with Old England. On the whole this was an able, forceful diversion from the Federalists’ rallying cries. Any threat to enslave New Englanders, Holmes implied, emanated not from Napoleon or Southern Republicans, but from the Federalists’ plot against American liberty and independence.¹¹

Holmes continued his rearguard actions as Massachusetts Federalists pushed towards the apex of New England sectionalism, the Hartford Convention. In the wake of a renewed embargo in 1813 and facing the danger of invasion in 1814, Massachusetts towns deluged the legislature with petitions calling for strong measures from a convention of New England states. Most of the town memorials prayed that the convention abolish that root cause of the war, “slave representation.” In response to these memorials, the legislature resolved on February 4, 1814, to call a convention by a margin of 23-8 in the Senate and 178-43 in the House. Speaking for his tiny minority in the debate surrounding this vote, Holmes alleged that Federalist leaders had stirred up all this “abuse against the officers of the General Government, to drive them out of *power* and get in *themselves*.” It was not only irresponsible to inflame the people’s passions, Holmes lectured, but it was also the very height of hypocrisy to claim to be George Washington’s political heirs while doing so. “Hear him foretell just such a party as yours,” he proclaimed in reference to Washington’s strictures against sectionalism in his Farewell Address, “and never again pervert his name to purposes like these.” In deflecting the focus onto Federalists’ treasonable ambition and invoking Washington, Holmes continued his adherence to standard wartime Republican procedure.¹²

But taking a fight head-on was more Holmes's style, and he thus became one of the few Republicans – either North or South – to directly address the Federalists' sectionalist creed. In February 1813, he and two other Republican state legislators publicly congratulated Elbridge Gerry on his election as Madison's vice president. The fact that a Massachusetts man was a heartbeat away from the presidency should silence the Federalists' "clamors against southern influence." In his speech responding to the town memorials, Holmes calculated that New England was overrepresented in the U.S. Senate proportional to population, and even in the House proportional to free population. In a June 1814 speech, he admitted that there was "some truth" in the Federalist argument "that the influence of the northern states is annihilated." But given that New England was represented in the House "agreeably to the constitution," and overrepresented in the Senate, the question remained: "Why is your influence destroyed?" He hastened to answer that "your groundless complaints against the administration of the general government; your pertinacious adherence to the enemies of your country, have brought your state into that disrepute and contempt of which she now complains." On yet another occasion, Holmes spoke at length against the proposed repeal of the three-fifths clause, in part because it would be a dangerous innovation upon the sacred Constitution. "The ground on which you tread is *holy*," he admonished. In these unusually direct engagements with Federalist sectionalism, Holmes became the very antithesis of a sectionalist. A far cry from his sectionalist rhetoric in his Federalist phase, he now painted complaints of sectional injustice as both unpatriotic and disconnected from reality. In this anti-sectionalism, he represented the mainstream of his new party.¹³

Even after the war, sensing that New England Federalists in the absence of that crisis were down but not out, Holmes used an Independence Day oration in Alfred to tie together many of his wartime themes and remind the audience of who these Federalists really were. It was a very different sort of speech than the one he had given in the same place exactly six years earlier. The war, he charged, had smoked the Federalists

out as "enemies of the revolution," men willing to stir up "local jealousies" (just as "'the father of his country' had predicted that factious men would" do) to establish their "hierarchy *over a section*, to be severed" from the rest of the Union by their joint labors with the British. New Englanders in particular needed to learn this moral to this story, he hectored, for they were peculiarly vulnerable to appeals to their sectional rights. This was especially true of the merchants – "calculating Yankees" – whose loyalties rarely extended beyond their own counting houses. In this oration, Holmes carried his anti-sectionalist passion to new heights. Perhaps most significantly, he applied stereotypes outsiders – usually Southerners – used to describe "Yankees."¹⁴

One might presume abusing New England in a New England state would be a risky endeavor, but Holmes did so with the approval of his Alfred constituents. In Maine, the Republican Party maintained its clear majority in spite of war and embargo, in large part because of the close association of Federalism with Massachusetts. If the Federalists tapped into deep wells of anti-Southern animus, the District's anti-Massachusetts animus ran at least as deep. "Perhaps the most sustained external force on Maine's history," a group of Maine historians has declared, "has been its hinterland relation to Boston." This has always been "a 'love-hate' relation." It leaned decidedly in the direction of hate in the early nineteenth century. One broadside tapped into Liberty Men's traditional rhetoric when its author urged that Mainers must not "hesitate in the choice between freedom and servitude" to the "*nabobs of Massachusetts and ENGLAND*" who predominated amongst the Great Proprietors. This picture of servitude to nabobs (East Indian princes) was an exact echo of the Federalists' anti-slaveholder rhetoric of the 1810s. And the wartime behavior of the very same Massachusetts Federalists to which this language was directed only deepened the rift between Massachusetts and its District. For when British forces occupied parts of eastern Maine, Massachusetts's governor proved indifferent at best, and Federalist bankers in Boston refused to fund the federal government's military operations in Maine. When Holmes flayed Massa-

chusetts Federalists for their antiwar stance and pro-English proclivities, then, a solid majority of Mainers cheered him on as their champion against an enemy that seemed more threatening than distant Virginia slaveholders. Thus, local Maine concerns converged with national partisan loyalty to instill a deep, even personal hatred of Federalists of the Boston stamp in Maine Republicans. Holmes's assaults on New England's narrow prejudices hardly offended such men, for they knew what he meant by "New England" and "Yankees" in that context.¹⁵

For his troubles fighting this mortal enemy, Holmes received strong support from the Maine and Massachusetts Republican establishments. Francis Douglas, editor of the leading Portland Republican organ, the *Eastern Argus*, devoted multiple prominent columns to reprinting Holmes's speeches under such headlines as "Republican Eloquence" and "Truth and Eloquence." Party officials nominated Holmes for Congress in 1814, and Republican meetings endorsed Holmes as a savior of the country from Federalist misrule. In late 1814 and early 1815, Massachusetts Republicans formed "Union Societies" in Boston, Portland, and smaller towns, to stand against Federalist disunionism. William King, Maine's leading Republican chieftain, declined to serve as president of the Portland branch, deferring to the rising star Holmes. Holmes narrowly lost his bid to represent York County in Congress to the Federalist incumbent Cyrus King (William's brother), but the Republican leadership promptly nominated Holmes to return to the state senate. Bay State Republican Nathaniel Ames enthused in his diary about how "John Holmes, a new champion of old principles, has sprung in the Senate of Massachusetts," rendering "the Federalists of Boston stamp, thunderstruck!" Boston printers portrayed him as a heroic party leader and sought out his speeches, which also received statewide circulation in the newspapers.¹⁶

But printers in New York City and Washington also published his speeches, which testified to his growing national prominence. Papers as far south as Charleston ran extracts of his speeches, as did leading national party organs in Washington and Richmond – all with laudatory

hyperbole. The editors of the *National Intelligencer*, for instance, decreed that one of his orations "deserves to be printed in letters of gold; framed and hung up in the house of every good man and true," and claimed that leading Federalist Josiah Quincy had *fainted* under Holmes's withering attacks! Rufus McIntire, fighting in New York at the head of an artillery company from York County, informed Holmes that "your speeches in the Massts Senate are generally read in this part of the country & much admired by every friend to his country. They are spoken of in the highest terms of approbation."¹⁷

Likely the praise that meant the most to Holmes came from his heroes at the head of the national party, Madison and Jefferson. In 1815, Madison appointed Holmes to the important post of a commissioner to conduct U.S.-Canada boundary negotiations pursuant to the Treaty of Ghent. Later that year, Holmes sent Jefferson a copy of his July 4 oration, pledging to receive "as a *parental monition*" whatever comment the sage of Monticello could offer on this effort to combat the enemies of "republican principles." "I have read it with great satisfaction," Jefferson replied, "at least with as much as the spectacle of wickedness under flagellation admits." Since these "monarchists and Anglomen" had not listened to Holmes's "excellent speeches," Jefferson concluded that "they would not, on this subject, listen to one even from the dead." Still, it was important to Jefferson to see "the sound in each state" correcting that state's "own unsound members." Jefferson's letter captured perfectly why Holmes's star shot to such national prominence so quickly. The national party leadership loved to see someone carrying on the good fight in the belly of the beast, and Holmes fit that bill. It does not take much imagination to appreciate what it must have meant to this forty-something state legislator from an obscure village in the District of Maine to be corresponding with – let alone attracting such high praise from – the likes of Thomas Jefferson.¹⁸

The fact that tireless and vehement Unionism fueled his meteoric rise both illustrated the place of slavery in the wartime Republican Party and shaped Holmes's later career. Locked in a struggle with resurgent Federalists who had chosen a

sectionalist strategy, Republicans could brook no overt sectionalism within their own national coalition during the War of 1812. Thus, for Holmes at that moment in that party, the disincentives to antislavery sectionalism were high, as were the rewards for seeking to deny it a place in national politics. Therefore, Holmes's fast track to the center of both Maine and national politics only continued in the postwar years. He played a central role in the District's drive for statehood, participated in court cases of national import, and began a long period of service in Congress. In all these activities he revealed his Jeffersonian orthodoxy and added to his personal reputation, both for good and for ill.

The question of separation from Massachusetts had divided District residents since at least the American Revolution, but after the War of 1812 the time seemed right to agitate for statehood. Maine Republicans, surprisingly enough, found common cause with Massachusetts Federalists eager to insulate Massachusetts proper from the growing influence of the Republican-heavy District. Maine's Republican establishment – led by the likes of William King, Albion K. Parris, and William Pitt Preble, and known as the “Junto” – pulled all its levers to wrest support for separation from the Maine electorate and acquiescence from Massachusetts officials.¹⁹

Holmes aided in this effort, but his role in the notorious Brunswick Convention of 1816 attracted the most attention then and thereafter. The General Court had agreed to recognize a statehood convention in Maine as legal on the condition that five-ninths of voters supported it. On September 2, 1816, fifty-three percent of Maine voters went for separation, short of the required supermajority. Maine politicians met in Brunswick beginning September 30, and separationists on this convention's Committee to Examine the Returns were determined to count and construe this vote in such a way that the convention could continue. Committee member Preble pushed to change the meaning of the five-ninths requirement by latching onto words in the statute like “majority.” Preble's hair-splitting prevailed in both the committee and the convention at large. But the General Court stood by the

five-ninths rule and thus dissolved the Convention in December, making the committee's maneuver seem like a blunder as well as morally suspect. As committee chair, Holmes suffered the resultant infamy.²⁰

Opponents of both Holmes and statehood made good use of this five-ninths fiasco for months, even years. By their mischief at Brunswick, their main argument went, “John Holmes & Co.” had confirmed themselves capable of almost anything in service of their all-consuming ambition to control the state government. Especially after Brunswick, people knew Holmes as a partisan warrior, not a statesman by any stretch. Holmes tried to be philosophical about this upward spiral of abuse, but it clearly bothered him. In late 1816 and early 1817, he posed pointed questions to confidants in Boston and Maine about the degree to which he had suffered “a loss of influence . . . in consequence of our proceedings at Brunswick.”²¹

Nervous as he was, Holmes proved something of a Teflon politician through this period, winning election to Congress. The Junto and its adjuncts went all out for his candidacy, showing no signs they deemed him radioactive. Benefiting from such ardent support, as well as a decided postwar shift towards the Republicans in York County's electorate, Holmes garnered over sixty percent of the vote, a remarkable showing in light of the calumnies the Federalists had poured on him in the wake of Brunswick. Moreover, Holmes's seat proved secure; he was re-elected to the House of Representatives in 1818 with relatively minimal opposition from the Federalists.²²

Once in Congress, Holmes continued to build his career on the foundation of the staunch Unionism and moderation on slavery that had become Republican orthodoxy. In January 1818, in the midst of a heated debate over a bill strengthening the Fugitive Slave Act, he gave a speech “conciliatory to the prejudices existing on both sides of the question,” and believed “that the bill might be so moulded as to be unobjectionable to any.” But when push came to shove, he favored the existing bill. He acknowledged that this support would surprise many given that he represented a Massachusetts dis-

trict, but he gloried in being the source of that surprise. “His course,” he protested, “on this, as on other measures, was based on his duty as a Representative for the whole Union, instead of local interests.” He did not think Northerners should step in “to try a question between a Southern master and his slave.” At least “his constituents” were not “competent” to try such a question because they, “to their honor, were not familiar” with slavery. Here was Holmes the proud moderate, standing on the Constitution and insisting slavery was a local matter, yet trumpeting the North’s cherished distance from slavery. As pro-southern as his language could sound on such questions, he insisted that his was the independent, middle course.²³

Maine Federalists read weakness of the knees rather than manly Unionism in such sentiments, but the Junto endorsed his position as sound. A letter from an enemy in Washington argued that Holmes’s fugitive slave speech only reinforced Capitol insiders’ sense that he had been overrated. He had proven “perfectly subservient to the views of Virginians,” and that won him the disdain even of Virginians, who “most heartily despise him for his subserviency.” On the contrary, Francis Douglas gushed in the *Eastern Argus*, Holmes’s were “sentiments worthy of a Republican” from any state or section.²⁴

The rewards of faithfulness to the party line for the new congressman more than outweighed Federalist abuse. Just sitting in Congress could be dazzling for men from towns like Alfred, for Washington afforded a style of life that few in their acquaintance could match. Holmes had been to Boston, of course, but when his family members visited him in Washington they were in awe. In a letter home written during one such visit, his daughter Sarah Anne admitted that her “head is almost turned with the busy, gay and fascinating rounds of the Metropolis.” She knew that her account of this social life would only add to the consequence of a letter postmarked Washington, which was equal to “a letter of twice its value from a little country village, like Alfred.” In Congress, Holmes won praise from national heroes such as Henry Clay, who said that one of Holmes’s speeches reminded him that the voice of this “eloquent gentleman from

Massachusetts . . . had been heard with so much delight from the east” during the critical days of the war. Moreover, he garnered prestigious committee assignments, such as Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Relations. Beyond prestige was the growing patronage Holmes had at his command. As a result of his ongoing role as a boundary commissioner, his place in Congress, and the widespread impression that he had the ear of President James Monroe, Holmes received at least his fair share of letters seeking his aid in securing government positions. They bore witness that Holmes was a rising star in the party, something the letter writers themselves attributed to his stand against Federalists during the war.²⁵

Along with the War of 1812, the congressional debate over statehood for Maine and Missouri proved to be the most pivotal period in Holmes’s public life. It also appears to have been the most wrenching. The controversy became so intense for Holmes in large part because the stakes were higher in Maine than anywhere except Missouri. Along with the rest of the Junto, Holmes’s political identity was so bound up with the statehood movement that the Missouri controversy’s link to Maine statehood made him personally invested in the outcome. On June 19, 1819, Massachusetts’s General Court and Governor consented once more to Maine’s separation, but again attached strict conditions. The most crucial of these stipulated that Congress must consent to Maine’s admission into the Union before March 4, 1820, for separation and statehood to be final. The process moved smoothly and decisively towards statehood at the local level. On December 30, 1819, however, the storm burst on Maine when Speaker of the House Clay avowed his intent to couple its admission to that of Missouri. Therefore, Holmes’s constituents knew this congressional debate not as the Missouri Crisis but as “the great question of Maine & Missouri,” and fixed their eyes firmly on how he and his congressional peers would act on it. From that viewpoint it was never simply a question of whether to restrict slavery in Missouri, as vexing as that question was on its own. The local dynamics of the struggle not only upped the ante

for the Junto but also enabled them to negotiate their stance from a position of strength that fellow doughfaces from other states did not enjoy. From drafting the state constitution in October 1819 through helping with their votes to secure the Congressional compromise that admitted both Maine and Missouri just two days before the March 4 deadline, the Junto could claim that they had wrought the heroic achievement of statehood. The national controversy, however, continued in different form until 1821, and Maine's representatives thus remained engaged in it well beyond the winning of statehood. In the midst of this maelstrom, as if to underscore the idea that fate had marked Holmes out for controversy, a bitterly divided state legislature first appointed and then reappointed him to the U.S. Senate.

The divisions were telling, but so were Holmes's two appointments granted by state legislators. The doughface argument had its political merits, especially in the Maine context. Its almost religious devotion to the Union increasingly resonated with the American public. So did privileging white men's democracy above Black men's rights, a prioritization that took on added potency in Maine when linked in profoundly ironic ways to the rhetoric of "emancipation" from the District's "bondage" to Massachusetts. In Maine as nowhere else, one could pose as both a doughface and a liberator. Confident that they had winning arguments on their side, therefore, Maine's doughfaces emerged from the Maine and Missouri Crisis scarred but unchastened. This would have a profound effect on the Junto's course in state and national politics in the first few unsettled years of statehood.²⁶

As the national and state Republican Party split into factions with an eye to who would replace President Monroe when he finished his second term, Holmes and the rest of Maine's party leadership cast their lot with Secretary of the Treasury William Crawford. The Junto had started leaning towards Crawford as early as 1821. In 1824, however, the party legislative caucus resisted Junto pressure and supported Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. The wounds of those who had lost their bid to restrict slavery in Mis-

souri were still raw enough in 1824 that they would not accept a Southerner over a New England president. But the Junto adhered obstinately to the Crawford cause for a variety of reasons both personal and ideological. Like other Jeffersonian ideologues, they looked to Crawford to lead the ranks of strict constructionist orthodoxy. Crawford also proved a valuable ally to William King personally, such as helping King secure a post as commissioner for Spanish claims in 1821. Furthermore, on February 14, 1824, Republican members of Congress met in a Caucus and overwhelmingly selected Crawford. This Caucus nomination struck many citizens as an undemocratic exercise wherein the one viable national party foisted a candidate on voters, but the Junto braved those populist winds.²⁷

Although the legacy of the Maine and Missouri Crisis pushed many into Adams's camp, that was another reason for Holmes to support Crawford. Many of Adams's supporters in Maine and elsewhere came from the ranks of the despised restrictionists, and the leading Adams newspaper had reprinted abuse of doughfaces without comment during the Crisis. Crawford, on the other hand, had thrown his weight behind Maine statehood in 1819. And at the very height of the Crisis, Holmes had held deep consultations with Crawford concerning how they could best achieve the all-important compromise. Crawford's was a cause he seems to have believed in, and he forged ahead with confidence that he had the backing of the Junto. Throughout the presidential campaign of 1824 he communicated with lower-level party leaders nationwide to secure party unity behind the nominee.²⁸

Holmes also entered the front ranks of Crawford's forces in the Senate, where he acted as a powerful advocate for their shared commitments to upholding states' rights and a strict construction of the Constitution and to combating antislavery agitation. In an election-year debate over restricting the state of Alabama, Holmes fell in with the most extreme states' rights men. In March 1824, the Senate considered a bill allowing Alabama to levy duties on its navigable waters. This bill would repeal a condition Congress attached to the act admit-

ting Alabama to the Union. Republican chieftain Martin Van Buren opposed the change, arguing that Congress had wisely affixed such restrictions on new states out of “a paternal interest for the new States.” To portray the federal government as a paternalist power over the states was a potentially damaging slip in the shadow of the Missouri Crisis. Holmes pounced on it. He wasted no time in declaring that the issue in this debate was “the same question that was agitated on the admission of Missouri into the Union.” Van Buren’s position consisted of nothing less than an imperial “supposition of power, on the part of the General Government, to impose restrictions upon the States, in regard to their legislation.” As a Crawford man and a Senator from the second-newest state in the Union, equality among old and new states was near and dear to Holmes.²⁹

Nor did Holmes shy away from his dough-faced record and principles in an even more momentous 1824 debate, this one over federal support for internal improvements. The proposal in question was a seemingly innocuous bill funding a survey for roads and canals. It raised alarms amongst Southern strict constructionists like John Randolph and Nathaniel Macon, and Holmes helped them raise the warning voice. He echoed Southern expostulations against setting monumentally dangerous precedents, pronouncing the call merely for surveys “the entering wedge, the commencement of a grand scheme of internal improvement.” He castigated “a new sect of expounders of the constitution” whose devotees construed not some particular clause to derive the desired powers, but rather drew “from *all*.” Americans, he insisted, should consider that the “power to do good, has been the plea of every tyrant” in world history. When they have obtained the power they sought, “they have reserved the good to themselves, and entailed the slavery, with all its misery and mischiefs, on those who granted it and their descendants.” This speech could have been delivered by any Southern Senator. Holmes deflected attention away from Southern slavery by employing that loaded word only in conjunction with the political bondage that would be a consequence of acquisitions of power via loose con-

struction. But in every other way it was of a piece with one of Randolph’s sprawling, brilliant speeches in this debate, in which he cried, “are gentlemen aware of the colossal power they are giving to the General Government” by means of loose construction? More explicit than Holmes, he warned slaveholders directly that “if Congress possesses the power to do what is proposed by this bill, . . . they may emancipate every slave in the United States – and with stronger color of reason than they can exercise the power now contended for.” Where would they find authorization for this audacious move? They may “hook the power upon the first loop they find in the Constitution; they might take the preamble – perhaps the war-making power – or they may take a greater sweep, and say, with some gentlemen, that it is not to be found in this or that of the granted powers, but results from all of them.” To protect both American freedom and Southern slavery, then, Randolph would give no latitude to a loose construction of the Constitution.³⁰

Despite the searing experience of the Missouri Crisis, Holmes pressed forward as if standing with the most extreme states’ rights Southerners both in 1820 and in 1824 was a badge of honor. Recalling how “in the unpleasant contest of the admission of Missouri into the Union, I then contended that no state could yield up a part of her sovereign power,” he exhorted the Senate to follow his example by manfully playing its constitutional role as protector of the states. “If we fall” victim to constituents’ anger, “our country will consecrate our fame.” Admitting to the adversities of the Maine and Missouri Crisis, then, only confirmed the doughfaces’ self-image as self-sacrificing warriors braving formidable foes in defense of a righteous cause. Holmes continued this glorious combat in this debate by voting with the minority against the survey bill. He also offered an amendment to the bill providing “that no money shall be expended for roads and canals, except it be among the several States, and in the same proportion as direct taxes are laid and assessed under the provisions of the Constitution.” This was potentially a very pro-Southern amendment. In 1824, the federal government derived no revenues from direct

taxes, which would have assessed slave states' tax burden by population including three-fifths of all their slaves. While they thus escaped this potentially higher tax burden the Constitution laid out under the three-fifths compromise, they would have benefited from increased funding under Holmes's scheme. Once again, he found himself in the minority, as his amendment failed.³¹

Holmes continued his Crawfordian line in the Second Session of the Eighteenth Congress, one which debated strict construction and states' rights in context of Southerners' stated determination to prevent Northerners from using the federal government to abolish slavery. In a February 1825 revival of the internal improvements debate, Holmes once again joined openly proslavery Southern Senators in warning and voting against federal funds for internal improvements. He also opposed funding for Columbian College in the District of Columbia because it would nationalize the college and resisted removing Supreme Court justices from circuit duty because this would isolate them in Washington. "We are every day becoming a little too national," he admonished, and as a good Crawfordian he would resist this trend.³²

Holmes also sought to vindicate Crawford and his principles back in Maine, in the face of swelling popular support for Adams. The leading tool he applied to this task was the *Columbian Star*, a paper printed in Alfred from mid-1824 through mid-1825. Holmes owned half of this establishment, and it was very much his paper. The paper's prospectus set its face against "those doctrines of implication and construction, which destroy the balance and establish a despotism over the individual States." Nor would Holmes's paper brook any sectional appeals in the presidential contest. "We shall cling to *the Union* as the rock of our political salvation," the prospectus lectured, "disclaiming all other local distinctions, and geographical partialities." In such appeals to Unionism, Holmes and his editors sought to make Adams's strongest point – his local, sectional appeal – a point of weakness and danger. Other articles linked Adamsites to the hated Federalists and their war record, even after the popular election

finished without a clear result. "Local partialities and sectional jealousies have always operated to keep us down," scolded "A REPUBLICAN," and they "always will. The New England candidate has *failed*, and *as such* he always *ought* to fail." The partisan legacy of the war remained present ten years later, made even more raw by intervening struggles such as the Maine and Missouri Crisis.³³

In addition to these familiar partisan deflections of the appeal of sectionalism, the *Star* also pursued the sort of moderation on slavery itself that Holmes had espoused since his initial conversion to the Republican Party. One article ostentatiously noted that the Revolutionary hero the Marquis de Lafayette, while on a visit to the United States, had attended a meeting of the American Colonization Society, thus sanctifying this quintessentially moderate approach to slavery by his very presence. In June the sheet ran an article, obviously meant to be instructive, headed "Lafayette and His Slaves." It reported conversations in which Lafayette laid out the fate of his plan "for the melioration of slavery, and the gradual emancipation of slaves in the colony of Cayenne." He began implementing it in 1785, but then the French Revolution intervened, destroying Lafayette's influence and replacing his scheme with "sudden and unconditional emancipation, and its consequent horrors in the colonies of France" – a reference to the long, bloody overthrow of slavery that was the Haitian Revolution. In this paper, the moral of Lafayette's story was that disciplined, gradual emancipation was the true legacy of the American Revolution, while French-style agitation for rash immediate emancipation would derail gradual progress into the pit of the Haitian Revolution.³⁴

From praising conservative reform in this piece, however, the *Star* soon gave voice to revulsion against philanthropy of any kind in a controversy over cooperation with Great Britain to suppress the Atlantic slave trade. The hard line Holmes's paper pursued on this subject started a minor newspaper war in Maine that further revealed the doughfaces' ordering of priorities. The first notice of the controversy came in August 1824, when "INDEPENDENCE" re-

viewed the Senate's debate over an Anglo-American slave trade convention proposed by Secretary of State Adams, in which both powers would allow one nation's navy to search ships flying the other's flag for smuggled slaves. The core issue for this writer was that whereas Americans had fought the War of 1812 largely to resist the British practice of boarding American vessels and impressing seamen into the Royal Navy, the proposed treaty would allow the Royal Navy back onto American ships. American citizens' generous hatred of the slave trade posed a danger here, for "the constitution and liberties of this country are never in more danger than when we are passionately in pursuit of a favorite and benevolent object." Moreover, "INDEPENDENCE" thought he detected the old marriage of false humanity with partisan scheming in Adams's proposal. Clearly Adams and his followers aimed to capture the votes of the free states by this maneuver, supposing "that another Missouri excitement might be gotten up which might have a bearing on *the Presidency*." The author and the management of the *Star*, however, hoped that American nationalism and Anglophobia would put down this attempt to ride a sectional hobbyhorse to the White House. It had become second nature to Holmes and his allies to decry false humanity for political gain, and to protest their own antislavery but caution that other considerations outweighed such apparently humanitarian causes. And even in the heat of this losing presidential battle, Holmes and his cronies hardly shrank from the legacy of the Maine and Missouri Crisis. Indeed, they themselves kept resurrecting it, seeming to believe that it was a useful way to paint opponents as ambitious, sectionalist busybodies in the Federalist mold.³⁵

The slave trade controversy continued in Maine well after the House of Representatives elected Adams president. In January 1825, a Paris, Maine, newspaper published two letters in support of the treaty from an unnamed correspondent in Washington. Sweeping away complicating issues like the right of search, the letter writer insisted that the current case was nothing more than "a question which the law of nature's God has settled and which the heart of man

recognises spontaneously and irresistibly." This writer typified antislavery men's long-running quest to present issues as simply as possible: this was a straightforward question pitting humanity against inhumanity, with no ulterior motives at work on his side. Based on the sort of inside information these letters included, their author was likely a Congressman from Maine, and another author who seems to have been a Senator from Maine published some severe strictures on these letters in the *Maine Inquirer*. In Holmes's style, this scribbler rebuked the gentleman from Washington for peddling a perilous blend of sectionalism and partisanship. "The writer affects to feel, and no doubt sincerely feels, a deep abhorrence of the Slave Trade," but "who, in Maine or elsewhere in the United States, does not? Professions of sympathy, which are common to all," he warned, "not unfrequently imply deep design." Even more damning was the Paris letter writer's reference "to the *Missouri Question*," for he "seems willing to revive that appalling conflict." But this attempt to harness Mainers' antislavery sentiment for Adams's cause would fail, for while Mainers "would cheerfully engage in any practical measures to abolish slavery," they would refuse to do so "at the expense of national rights." The original writer responded by seeking to parry the charge of sectionalism. Opposition to the foreign slave trade, he pointed out, "involves no sectional feeling or local prejudice. All parts of the country" had united in Christian benevolence to try to abolish it. Moreover, no American would need to sacrifice "any essential interest of his country" to secure this, "the only possible remedy" to the great evil of the age, whose continuance reflected badly on "our national character." At this point the *Star* jumped back into this fray, running an anonymous letter under the predictable headline "Right of Search." This writer pledged "to strip the subject of pathos and delusion" by emphatically declaring that the right of search in question was "very little short of colonial subjugation." The Representative's "fervour of philanthropy" which prompted his exaggerated picture of the slave trade's horror "is all *very fine*, but it has no bearing upon the question."³⁶

This debate was in many ways a microcosm of the larger clash between antislavery agitators and doughfaces in Maine in the early 1820s. Both sides professed antislavery feeling, which in this case led the doughface to wonder aloud about the usefulness of professing that feeling so loudly in politics. Both sides issued revealing statements about not only the ordering of their priorities, but also the relative weight they each assigned to moral principles and realpolitik. The doughfaces made appealing arguments, especially when the antislavery men got carried away into a rather cavalier attitude towards the right of search and an overly trusting attitude towards the British. But they also let the other side push them into a knee-jerk reaction against the relevance of natural rights principles and concern for America's moral reputation in the world. They pursued this war of words well past the presidential election that had sparked it because it went right to the heart of their respective creeds.

Well into the Adams presidency, Holmes's principles still harmonized entirely with his party cronies both local and national. In the *Argus*, Juntoites stood firmly behind doughfaceism. Alongside the likes of Van Buren, Holmes led Senate resistance to Adams's foreign policy. In 1826, the Senate debated Adams's proposal to send a delegate to a conference in Panama of all the newly independent nations in the Western Hemisphere. The politicians coalescing around Andrew Jackson and against Adams sought to make opposition to the Panama gathering a key ingredient in the glue for their nascent party. The Senate conducted a secret debate in which Southerners' solicitude to protect slavery overtly mixed with concerns about national neutrality and sovereignty. In a March speech on the Senate floor, Holmes argued against the conference in familiar doughfaced tones. Holmes defined himself as the defender not of slavery but of order, sectional peace, national sovereignty, and the Constitution (all of which the convention would endanger). In fact, he chided his Southern allies for having "said too much *against* emancipation." "By provoking a discussion you increase the evil you attempt to remedy. On this subject your

wisest policy is to say but little," especially on such a prominent international stage. He also denounced the expected Panama agenda item of an international concert to suppress the transatlantic slave trade. "However I detest this traffic," he proclaimed, "I never would concede the *right of search* to any nation under Heaven."³⁷

Holmes's stance against the Panama mission called forth the accustomed assaults from his Maine opponents. Some antislavery men familiar with the debates discerned "the cloven foot of negro slavery and southern dominancy" at the base of the opposition to the Panama congress. Maine's opposition papers complained about how often their Senators stood with the South rather than with their constituents. They judged Holmes guilty by association with such men as John Randolph, who had framed the Panama debate as part of Southerners' global defense of slavery. Randolph had "only talked out more plainly," they charged, "what his coadjutors felt and acted upon," for they were only more covertly "the opposers of *emancipation*." It was all reminiscent of Holmes joining the opposition to the British slave trade convention, and such actions proved his real stance on slavery better than any of his wriggling public self-vindications.³⁸

But if Holmes's alliance with Southerners and other doughfaces had played into his opponents' hands, their attacks on him set the stage for the Junto to pose him once again as a statesman above sectional narrowness. "Mr. Holmes," the *Argus* wearily remonstrated, whether in 1812 or 1826, refused to "belong to the New England party, forsooth!" The paper's editor Francis Douglas hoped Holmes "will never unite" himself "to a geographical party," instead continuing to act "for the best interests of the country" as a whole. Holmes joined in his own defense with a revealing public letter written from Alfred in August 1826. What provoked his ire was an editorial in a Rhode Island newspaper calling him "*the unblushing advocate of domestic slavery*," among other things. Holmes began his refutation of the charge by pointing to his role in framing Maine's constitution, "which recognizes *universal freedom*." He appealed to his Yankee upbringing, which had

bred in him such an “utter abhorrence of slavery in whatever disguise” that he had never even considered owning a slave. He then introduced a series of documents, the clincher being Thomas Jefferson’s April 1820 letter of support for Holmes’s doughfaced course. The sage of Monticello “knew the depravity of the human heart; that ambition in the cloak of humanity” would continue to agitate the question of slavery. Jefferson had just died on July 4, 1826, and Holmes sought to screen himself with the legacy of this civic saint. Indeed, he offered up the sort of religious rhetoric for this document that he and other contemporaries had traditionally reserved for Washington and his Farewell. To face down “the censure of thousands of demagogues in the garb of philanthropy,” Holmes would hold up this letter “as MY SHIELD, MY DEFENCE, MY STRONG TOWER.” That letter, Holmes concluded, constituted “the solemn monitory advice of A FATHER TO HIS CHILDREN.” Holmes confessed that he had not felt free to publish this correspondence within Jefferson’s lifetime, but with his death and this renewed attack he saw the necessity of brandishing this potent weapon.³⁹

Keeping the Crawfordian faith thus had enormous benefits for Holmes. To be sure, it put him in an uncomfortable minority during the Adams boom of 1824. But it kept him in the good graces of the still-powerful Junto. And as the Crawford faction within the fragmenting Republican Party stood as the keepers of the Jeffersonian flame, Holmes could still claim fellowship with his recently departed hero. All of these factors proved strong inducements for him to continue in advancing doughfaced arguments both locally and nationally.

Before President Adams left office, however, Holmes made the second major party switch of his life. Unlike in 1811, this time Holmes got pushed out of his existing party. The strong-willed and ambitious Holmes had never been an easy ally or a good subordinate, and there were hints of tensions between him and the rest of the Junto as early as 1823. Although Holmes had joined ranks with the Jacksonians in certain debates, by 1826 he started to manifest increas-

ing flexibility on the question of strict construction of the Constitution in Senate debates over internal improvements. While he fell far short of advocating loose construction, his attempt to stake out moderate ground confirmed other Junto members’ fears that Holmes was less doctrinaire in private than he sounded in public. Even the slightest or imagined conciliatory gestures towards Adams did not sit well with the Junto, and one of King’s confidants told him frankly that “I have no confidence in” Holmes. In 1826, therefore, leading Maine Republicans decided to back Albion K. Parris for Holmes’s Senate seat, due to expire in 1827. Parris won only after multiple ballots and direct Junto pressure in the legislature. Not content with this crushing defeat of the incumbent Senator, Preble also worked to make sure Holmes could not retreat to the haven of the Congressional district for York County. In that district, the Junto supported Rufus McIntire, who won by a narrow margin.⁴⁰

The circumstances of this shocking defeat stung Holmes and his shrinking circle, but it gave Holmes the opportunity to play one of his favorite roles, the independent statesman. At a public dinner in his honor in spring 1827, Holmes boasted that he enjoyed the approbation of his conscience as one who stood up for the Constitution and had “not inquired so much what was *popular* as what was *right*.” Still, to have his erstwhile friends turn on him so shabbily was a betrayal involving more than himself, given how dependent on his Senatorial service his family had become. In February 1827, his daughter Sarah Anne informed Holmes that “in regard to the senatorial election, we have been all solicitude – Mama has felt more than you possibly could.” She parroted standard early national pieties about the burden of public life on one line, but in the next stroke of her pen she admitted that “there is an infatuation in public life, which is unaccountable.”⁴¹

Holmes stayed in that life by falling immediately into the arms of the National Republican faction gathering around the likes of Henry Clay and Daniel Webster. Much like the Democratic Republicans had done in 1811, local, regional, and national party operatives welcomed their

recent enemy with open arms. Holmes in short order became something of a regional power within the party and benefited from the National Republicans' local successes in 1828. In that year, Adams once again carried Maine. More importantly for Holmes, the National Republicans won the state legislature. The new legislature appointed him and Peleg Sprague to the Senate. Holmes won on the second ballot, besting such adversaries as William King to complete his revenge on the Junto. Especially after the searing experience of betrayal and defeat, his family also felt "a degree of pleasure mingled with pride to see a father taking such a stand among the great men of the nation – coping with the mightiest of them." Junto members naturally mustered far less enthusiasm for Holmes's triumphant march back to Washington; one even ascribed dark supernatural power to Holmes, muttering that "the *necromancer* has beat us all *hollow*."⁴²

Although the Junto had kicked Holmes out of the Democratic Party, in the face of his prosperity his enemies treated him with all the scorn reserved for apostates. Beginning in January 1829 with his Senatorial appointment, the *Argus* staff's indignation cried out from almost every issue. One tack they took was to sardonically wish the "federalists" luck with their new acquisition, "the very Prince of Twaddlers." "If they will have him they must pay him," they admonished their adversaries. "A genuine cow-boy will fight only for pay or plunder." A toast at a Jackson celebration said it all: "*John Holmes* – The political weathercock of Maine, who has sacrificed principle and honor for the sake of office." Ironically, the *Argus*'s incessant sorties against him arguably served to make Holmes the central figure in Maine politics between 1829 and 1831. While national Jacksonian leaders were nowhere near this obsessed with Holmes, he also aroused their ire. One Jacksonian derided him as the "Thersites of the Senate," in reference to the ugly, foul-mouthed character in the *Iliad* who railed impertinently at Agamemnon. As always, he elicited such responses from newfound adversaries because his accession to the camp of the enemy proved advantageous to the latter.⁴³

And indeed, Holmes proved an effective Na-

tional Republican scourge against the Jacksonians. In a series of essays he wrote for a Maine newspaper, he flayed the Junto as "men of no fixed principles," parading as men of the people when in fact they were "the only real aristocracy we have." In speeches published for national consumption by the party press, Holmes ably voiced the opposition's horror at Jackson's expansion of executive power during his presidency, accumulated at the expense not only of Congress but also of the states. Holmes also cheerfully flogged the Jacksonians on an issue near to Mainers' hearts, that of the disputed boundary between Maine and Canada. On this subject, he assumed the posture of a full-throated defender of Maine's interests, abandoned by Jackson's pusillanimous border negotiations with Britain. All of these efforts illustrated what Holmes brought to the opposition as a recent convert: he could meet Jacksonians on their own terms, speaking their own language.⁴⁴

His posture as a Maine man on this issue was part and parcel of a larger shift in Holmes's rhetoric. He who in the middle phases of his career had claimed that sectional loyalties and interests had no place in American politics returned to his early Federalist roots as a spokesman for New England and the North. Should "Jackson become your President," he demanded in 1828, "where is the strength and nerve in N. England to resist arbitrary measures and defend the constitution against military usurpation?" Later, in a Senate exchange, Holmes depicted New England Jacksonians as Judases to their region's "cause and character."⁴⁵

Southerners' attacks on New England during a tense debate surrounding federal lands in 1830 provoked Holmes into even stronger defensive sectionalism. In the midst of this debate made famous by the lengthy exchange between Webster and Robert Y. Haynes, Holmes rose to defend New England against those who charged it with "*perpetual hostility to our brethren of the West*." "If God gives me strength," Holmes vowed, "I intend to bare my arm and lend my humble aid to defend my country from so foul a reproach." That this former anti-sectionalist would refer to New England as "my country" was stunning enough, but there was more to

come. He offered a poetic paean to New England generally and in particular to “Massachusetts, ‘the cradle of independence.’” “If I ever forsake or forget thee,” he cried, “may this arm fall from the shoulder-blade!” Holmes also reviewed the Missouri Crisis in a way calculated to astonish those who remembered his arguments in its midst. Southerners in the current debate had introduced New England’s restrictionist majority in the Missouri contest as evidence of hostility to the West, but Holmes responded that “no hostility was intended;” instead, “a great moral and benevolent principle was the governing principle in that controversy.” Southern extremists in the 1830 debate had openly defended slavery, and Holmes protested that he could see “no good reason to bring slavery into” that discussion. “So strong are the feelings of my constituents on this subject,” he warned, that “it is one upon which they will scarcely stop to reason.” Thus warned, if Southern agitators were determined that America’s sectional divide “should be marked deeper and deeper, the sin will be at the door of the slave-holding States. Since the decision of the Missouri question, nine-tenths of the excitement has been produced from the South itself,” which excitement threatened to “revive all the angry passions which once became so alarming.” To these threats and disorganizing doctrines, “I respond to the Senator from Massachusetts, *the Union – the Union, in the exercise of all its legitimate power – the Union!*”⁴⁶

What was most striking in this speech was Holmes’s new attitude towards both his erstwhile Southern allies and those who had been his bitterest enemies in New England. His new-found determination to attend closely to his constituents’ antislavery sensibilities was surprising, but his revisionist review of New England’s career in national politics was nothing short of astonishing. This willingness to advocate for New England and to blame the South for contemporary threats to the Union signified the degree to which entering the National Republican ranks and combating Southerners had “baked” this former doughface.

As the 1820s gave way to the 1830s, South Carolina’s drive to nullify a federal tariff gave

Holmes an especially good opportunity to pose as an American patriot even as he defended his region. Holmes took it. In a January 1832 speech, he insisted that the nullifiers shared “the same doctrines” and the “same cause” with the infamous Hartford Convention: namely, “usurpation of a State upon the legitimate powers of the Federal Government.” He then roared that while Southrons were “disposed to be merry at the expense of New England,” the violence of the ever-expanding institution of Southern slavery showed “that New England notions will bear a comparison with any other notions whatever.” While nullification allowed Holmes to look consistent as a career-long defender of the Constitution and Union, he was following a sectionalist tack that would have horrified his wartime self. The extent of the change also manifested itself in the bitter antislavery expressions in some of his fan mail after the tariff speech. Given that “the profit of the slave holders is principally derived from what they cheat out of their slaves in feeding and clothing them,” wrote one correspondent, why should Congress pass trade policies that would “incourage them to increase their number of slaves” even more?⁴⁷

Holmes also effectively employed his trademark sarcasm against the nullifiers. During one Senate debate, John Tyler of Virginia alluded to an occasion during the war when Randolph had referred to the War Hawks as the firm of “James Madison, Felix Grundy, John Holmes and the Devil,” and asked what had become of that firm. Holmes readily responded that “the first member is dead, the second has gone into retirement, and the last has gone to the Nullifiers, and is now electioneering among the gentleman’s constituents! and thus the partnership is legally dissolved.” This produced a roar of laughter at Tyler’s expense. This phase of Holmes’s political career effectively wiped out any memory of his doughfaceism in at least one observer. Decades later, Washington insider Benjamin Perley Poore recalled Holmes as “the humorous champion of the North,” a man “ever on the watch” to satirize “some unguarded expression by a Southern Senator.”⁴⁸

Indeed, Holmes had moved into the front ranks of New England sectionalists within the

National Republican movement. During the federal lands debate he coordinated with Webster, and in its wake worked to publish Webster's and Sprague's speeches together with his own as a united response to the publication of Hayne's addresses. These publications generated some remarkable fan mail from Northern sectionalists. Upon reading Holmes's "able & excellent speech," for instance, a Yankee transplant in Cincinnati could not "withhold the expression of my feelings for your manly, eloquent, just, & well-deserved defence of New England." A resident of Portland congratulated Holmes and all other "Champions of New England" for having delivered speeches that were "highly gratifying to the pride & just cause of this humbled section of the Union." Another grateful recipient of one of Holmes's speeches gushed that "you cannot tell how it made my heart swell with Joy," and hoped that Holmes's rebuke would reverse the South's provocative stance towards New England, lest "civil discord, may try the prowess of the Yankees." To be sure, in such effusions, New England loyalty equated with American patriotism and defense of the Union. But this correspondence presented the spectacle of John Holmes, of all people, making New England sectionalists' hearts leap for joy and pens fly in poetic gratitude!⁴⁹

The distance Holmes had traveled from his doughface career suggests sectionalism's place in the National Republican program – at least in Maine. The many twists and turns in his stance on partisan and sectional issues suggest that the real John Holmes thought like a lawyer, vigorously advocating whoever he represented in politics. His advocacy for New England as a National Republican thus highlights how comfortable this imperfectly realized national opposition conglomerate could be with sectionalism. Northern luminaries like Webster had helped form the coalition (which would later morph into the Whig Party) in the first place in part because they felt the need to organize a Northern response to those who had opposed Adams's presidency simply because he was a Yankee. Defensive Northern sectionalism thus came naturally to the Northern wing of this coalition. Jacksonian Democrats seeking to firm

up their own coalition on a national basis could have far less tolerance for divisive outbursts from sectionalists within its ranks.⁵⁰

Still, many other National Republicans eschewed sectionalism, so the Maine context and Holmes's personality are also necessary to understand Holmes's newfound sectionalism. Throughout the antebellum period, Maine politicians could still gain traction by railing against the state's "humiliating subjugation" to Massachusetts, and about how Massachusetts had "chained Maine to her car." Holmes's enemies thus capitalized on his histrionic pledges of loyalty to Massachusetts by repeatedly insisting that all appeals to Northerners' "*sectional* feelings" were Federalist "arguments to a charm." The leaders of the Maine Democratic Party thus continued to deny quarter to any hint of sectionalism. Given Holmes's combative personality, this only encouraged a knee-jerk sectionalism from him.⁵¹

As thrilling as crossing the Junto was for Holmes personally, that also entailed dire political consequences in the 1830s and early 1840s, an era of Democratic ascendancy in Maine. Democrats in the state legislature flexed their muscles by passing censures on Holmes for disregarding the legislature's instructions to oppose the United States Bank and the tariff. Holmes's latest Senate term expired in March 1833, and the legislature replaced him with Ether Shepley.⁵²

True to form, Holmes's was a long, acrimonious, and very public retirement. It began in 1832, when the state legislature's censure made it apparent that he would not gain re-appointment. In March 1832, he wrote an open letter to the public declining reelection. The Democrats had a field day with this rather ludicrous gesture of quitting before he was fired. Later that summer, Holmes supporters caused a brief partisan fray by organizing a celebratory dinner for the lame duck Senator. One editor mockingly suggested toasts for the occasion, such as one lauding Holmes as having "been faithful to – HIMSELF." The jousting between the *Argus* and Maine's National Republican sheets over this dinner continued for weeks after all the dishes had been cleared. And in March 1833, when



John Holmes' Mansion, built in 1802 (photograph circa 1900) in Alfred, Maine, Collections of Parsons Memorial Library, MaineMemory.net #35535

Democrats gathered in Augusta to celebrate Jackson's inauguration, toasters could not resist a kick or two at Holmes on his way out. Nothing like the typical retirement of a multiple-term Senator, Holmes's forced retreat from national politics proved a fitting end to a tumultuous career at the intersection of Maine and national politics.⁵³

Holmes retired to Alfred, and in this narrowed sphere he remained an ardent and outspoken foe of Jackson. In 1836 he ran successfully for the state legislature and won re-election in 1837. During these two terms, Holmes presented the picture of an embittered old man, in forced retirement from national politics and recently widowed when his wife Sally died in December 1835. He resumed his position as the partisan brawler. He made such a habit of bullying younger legislators that a young Hannibal Hamlin enhanced his growing reputation by standing up to Holmes.⁵⁴

Upon leaving this brief and stormy legislative

career, Holmes retired farther up the coast to Montpelier, the family mansion of Revolutionary War hero General Henry Knox and home of Holmes's new bride, the forty-six-year-old Caroline F. K. Swan. By all accounts it was a happy marriage, the latest in a series of amicable family relationships this quarrelsome public figure seems to have enjoyed. Despite this domestic bliss, Montpelier was a fittingly forlorn setting for the postlude to Holmes's political career. The mansion suffered from chronic structural problems that persist to this day, such as water damage to the walls. In August 1837, Nathaniel Hawthorne was among the visitors haunted by the mansion, proclaiming that "the house and its vicinity may be taken as an illustration of what must be the result of American schemes of aristocracy" such as those of the great proprietor Knox. Hawthorne likely used Montpelier as the basis for his 1851 novel *The House of the Seven Gables*. For all the poetic symbolism of Holmes's once-bright political path ending in this place,

he quickly resumed his legal career, took an active interest in local causes, and worked to improve his wife's estate. In 1841, Whig President William Henry Harrison rewarded Holmes's party loyalty and legal distinction by appointing him United States attorney for the Maine district.⁵⁵

Holmes displayed his comprehensive grasp of the American and Maine legal systems in a book he completed in Thomaston and saw published in 1840, *The Statesman*. At the center of his treatise stood the unique American system of federalism, which entailed a fragile balance between state and national power. He warned against anything that would upset this balance but refused to specify where such threats were likely to originate, in keeping with his manifest design to make this as straightforward and non-partisan a text as possible. Likewise, the formerly embattled doughface blandly described but took no sides on multiple explosive issues surrounding slavery and race, making no mention of their bearing on the scarring political battles of his career. With this textbook, Holmes added to a growing civics literature that sought to make republican statesmen of the rising generations. For all of Holmes's "baking" in the National Republican phase of his career, the slavery-related passages in *The Statesman* fit this genre's emphasis on moderation and forbearance in sectional controversies.⁵⁶

This line of argument was all the more remarkable given that that "baking" may have proceeded even more in Holmes's retirement. Holmes's papers at the New York Public Library contain an undated, unsigned, and fragmentary address "To the Whig Electors" from a politician declining nomination to the Senate. "Much as I am of a *Whig*," the author explained, I am "still more of an *Abolitionist*." Because the Whigs had not distinguished themselves in relation to "their maintenance of the right of petition & of free discussion" in the famous Gag Rule controversy of 1835-1844, this author declared himself "unwilling to place myself, by the acceptance of office, under further obligations to a political party, which might . . . reduce me to" sustaining "its support of American Slavery." He found the "pretensions" of the slaveholder Clay "to

the Presidency" and to primacy within the party to be evidence that the Whigs were too soft on slavery. While on its face this document comprised an attack on the national Whig Party, its author also likely meant to push Maine Whiggery in a more antislavery direction as it competed with the Democrats for Maine's increasingly antislavery voters.⁵⁷

But Holmes would not live to see the full triumph of antislavery in Maine. In July 1843, while in Portland pursuing the business of U.S. attorney, Holmes died of "consumption" at the age of 70. His death attracted some notice within Maine's legal community, and he had a funeral at the Portland church where he attended, but overall it was a quiet death for someone who had once been so prominent. His obscurity soon became such that some confusion even exists as to where Holmes is buried. It is almost certain that his original burial was in Eastern Cemetery in Portland, in the private tomb of Cotton Brooks. But there is no marker for Holmes in the Eastern Cemetery, which leaves open the possibility that his family later moved his remains, either to the Knox burial plot by Caroline's side (Caroline died in 1851), or to Alfred's Congregational cemetery alongside Sally. The mystery of his burial is of a piece with his decade-long fade into obscurity after his forced exit from the national stage.⁵⁸

Soon after that retirement, in his July 4 oration in 1834, Holmes looked back on his national political career. He had always, he insisted, spoken "with freedom and independence" to protect the liberties and interests of his "countrymen." Claiming to be an independent statesman was such a common trope as to be unremarkable to any student of early national politics. But Holmes bespoke such a self-image often enough in enough different circumstances to suggest that he really believed this of himself. Scarred by repeated and particularly tough political fights, he likewise cultivated the persona of a survivor. "The maxims of my whole political life," he defiantly declared from one of a series of minority positions in 1831, included a belief that "an honest and faithful officer" must be willing to "be subjected to the strictest examination, and if he cannot stand let him fall." Of

course, a whole series of examiners found culpidity where his self-examination found independence. For them he epitomized the mercenary pol willing to jettison principle and even party to gain an advantage. It was in this character that he remained a central figure in Maine's politics for two decades.⁵⁹

Holmes's interactions with issues related to slavery provide a particularly good gauge of the place of slavery in Maine's and the nation's party platforms and strategies. Rather than supporting any grand, sweeping pronouncements concerning slavery's place in national parties or party systems, Holmes's career leads to more precise and particular conclusions: that Massachusetts Federalists felt comfortable leveraging sectional tensions surrounding slavery at the height of their struggle with the Republicans from 1808 through 1815; that at that moment and then when faced with the Maine and Missouri Crisis

and its aftermath in the 1820s, the Republican establishments in Portland and Washington felt they could countenance no sectionalist agitation over slavery from Northerners; and that the National Republican and Whigs allowed for, and their situation in Maine encouraged, Northern sectionalist expressions within its ranks. That Holmes took such a wide variety of approaches to the issue, and that the response to these approaches from the Maine electorate varied so over time, should remind scholars of the need to attend to local context, partisan context, and changes over time when exploring the role of slavery in nineteenth-century American politics. Holmes's career is an especially good measure of that ever-shifting role precisely because he evinced precious few fixed principles of his own on the issue of slavery.

NOTES

1. Hereafter in this article I will refer to the Democratic-Republican party as the "Republican Party" and its members as "Republicans" for brevity's sake.
2. [William Willis,] "The Hon. John Holmes," *The Law Reporter* 6 (Aug. 1843): 145-55; idem., *A History of the Law, the Courts and the Lawyers of Maine* (Portland, Me.: Baily and Noyes, 1863), 275-76; Dumas Malone and Allen Johnson, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927-36), 9:166. Genealogical information from <http://trees.ancestry.com>, and John Holmes Papers, Parsons Memorial Library, Alfred, Maine; Charles E. Clark, James S. Leamon & Karen Bowden, eds., *Maine in the Early Republic: From Revolution to Statehood* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1988), 15, 129; Paul Goodman, *The Democratic Republicans of Massachusetts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), 132; William D. Williamson, *The History of the State of Maine; from Its First Discovery, A.D. 1602, to the Separation, A.D. 1820, Inclusive*, 2 vols. (1832; reprint, Freeport, Me.: Cumberland Press, 1966), 2:564-69.
3. Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1790-1820* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1990), quotation on 89; Willis, *History of the Law*, 128-29; Robert J. Cook, *Civil War Senator: William Pitt Fessenden and the Fight to Save the American Republic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), ch. 1. For Americans' consciousness of white slavery in northern Africa is Paul Baepler, ed., *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
4. ____ to John Holmes, October 1808; Central Committee to John Holmes, 8 March and 14 April 1809; [Party Leaders] to John Holmes, Abiel Hall, and Jonathan Farnham, 6 and 19 April 1811; Harrison Gray Otis to John Holmes, 15 Apr. 1811; all in John Holmes Papers, New York Public Library (NYPL). See also Taylor, *Liberty Men*, 181-207.
5. John Holmes, *An Oration Delivered at Alfred, in the County of York, on the Fourth of July, 1809* (Kennebunk, Me.: James K. Remich, 1809), 3-16, quotation on 12-13. Alfred memorial quoted in the *Salem [Mass.] Gazette*, 18 Mar. 1814. For more on this and similar meetings in Maine, see *Portland Gazette*, 15 Aug. - 3 Oct. 1808. For similar complaints against Republicans as anti-commercial, hypocritical slaveocrats, see *Portland Gazette*, 29

Aug., 5 Sept., 24 Oct. 1808, 17 June 1811, 30 Nov. 1812, 5 Apr. 1813. Laura Fecych Sprague, ed., *Agreeable Situations: Society, Commerce, and Art in Southern Maine, 1780-1830* (Kennebunk, Me.: The Brick Store Museum, 1987), 22-28.

6. Holmes, *Oration Delivered at Alfred*, 11-12. For other New England Federalists' engagement with slavery, see Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), esp. 31-74; and Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. ch. 3 and 6.

7. Ronald F. Banks, *Maine Becomes a State: The Movement to Separate Maine from Massachusetts, 1785-1820* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press for the Maine Historical Society, 1970), 44-50, 57-58; Taylor, *Liberty Men*, ch. 8; Louis C. Hatch, *Maine: A History*, 5 vols. (New York: The American Historical Society, 1919), 1:72-73; *Portland Gazette*, 19 Aug., 9, 16 Sept. 1811; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, Me.), 15 Nov. 1810; 11 Apr. 1811; 9 Apr. 1812.

8. *Portland Gazette and Maine Advertiser*, 21 Feb., 2 July 1814; see also 5 Oct. 1812, 24 Oct. 1814.

9. [Willis,] "Hon. John Holmes," 152; Republican leaders in Portland to Holmes, 11 Feb. 1813, in John Holmes Papers, NYPL.

10. J.C.A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783-1830* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983); James M. Banner, Jr., *To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970); Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, ch. 2.

11. John Holmes, *Speech of the Hon. Mr. Holmes, in the Senate of Massachusetts, During the Debate on the Reported Answer to the Governor's Speech* (Washington: Rapine and Elliott, n.d.), 1-7. See also John Holmes, *Three Speeches of Mr. Holmes, in the Senate of Massachusetts, 1814* (New York: E. Conrad, 1814).

12. Holmes, *Three Speeches*, 16-22; quotations on 17. For other examples of this line of argument from Holmes, see *Independent Chronicle* (Boston), 10 Mar., 20 June, 27 Oct. 1814; Senate Documents 4820, Massachusetts Archives, Boston; *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), 9 and 16 Feb. 1814; Theodore Dwight, *History of the Hartford Convention, With a Review of the Policy of the United States Government Which Led to the War of 1812* (1833; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 341-42.

13. *Eastern Argus*, 11 Mar. 1813; *Truth and Eloquence! Speech of the Honorable Mr. Holmes*. N.p., Rare Books / Special Collections, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., pp. 9-10, 21; *Niles' Weekly Register*, Supplement to vol. 7, 49-53; Holmes, *Three Speeches*, 18-21. Holmes's calculation that New England was overrepresented in the U.S. Senate became part of Massachusetts's thirteen Republican senators' official protest against the call for the Hartford Convention; see *Niles' Weekly Register* (Baltimore) 7 (12 Nov. 1814): 153; For an exploration of the complexity of this party's relationship to slavery, see Padraig C. Riley, *Slavery and the Democratic Conscience: Political Life in Jeffersonian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

14. John Holmes, *An Oration, Pronounced at Alfred, on the 4th of July, 1815* (Boston: Rowe and Hooper, 1815), 6-23.

15. Richard W. Judd, Edwin A. Churchill, and Joel W. Eastman, eds., *Maine: The Pine Tree State from Prehistory to the Present* (Orono, Me.: University of Maine Press, 1995), 6-7 (quotations), 51-66, 178-87; Banks, *Maine Becomes a State*, 60-68; Clark, et al, eds., *Maine in the Early Republic*, 9 (quotation). This broadside comes from 1819, but typifies the sort of rhetoric "Liberty Men" had used for decades; See D.W. Lincoln to John Holmes, 4 Feb. 1814; Samuel Ayer to John Holmes, 10 Nov. 1816, John Holmes Papers, NYPL.

16. Charles Warren, *Jacobin and Junto, or Early American Politics as Viewed in the Diary of Dr. Nathaniel Ames, 1758-1822* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931), 264 (quotation), 279; *Eastern Argus*, 10 Feb., 24 Feb., 12 May, 30 June, 7 July, 20 Oct., 3, 17 Nov. 1814, 23 Mar. 1815; Circular, 14 Aug. 1815, Box 27, folder 9, William King Papers, Maine Historical Society, Portland; Banks, *Maine Becomes a State*, 68-69; *Portland Gazette*, 21 Nov. 1814; Massachusetts General Court, 1814, Senate, *Synopsis of Debates, in the Massachusetts Legislature* [Boston, 1814]; D.C. Ballard to John Holmes, 5 Mar. 1814, A. Dunlap to John Holmes, 19 Mar. 1814, John Holmes Papers, NYPL.

17. *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), 8 (first quotation), 9 Feb., 23 June, 12 Nov., 19 Dec. 1814; *The Enquirer* (Richmond), 19 Mar., 25 June, 8 Nov. 1814, 22 Mar. 1815; *Southern Patriot and Commercial Advertiser* (Charleston, S.C.), 5 Nov. 1814; McIntire to Holmes, 13 Apr. (second quotation), 14 Dec. 1814, John Holmes Papers, NYPL.

18. Holmes to Thomas Jefferson, 7 Aug. 1815, The Thomas Jefferson Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov>; Jefferson to Holmes, 23 Sept. 1815, Miscellaneous Letters Collection, ca. 1775 - ca. 1920, Maine Historical Society. This letter is also in The Thomas Jefferson Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov>; [Willis,] "Hon. John Holmes," 153.

19. Clark et al, eds., *Maine in the Early Republic*, ch. 4, 6; Judd et al, *Maine*, 163, 178-87; Banks, *Maine Becomes a State*.
20. Banks, *Maine Becomes a State*, ch. 6.
21. *Portland Gazette*, 12-26 Dec. 1815; 14 May, 17, 24 Sept., 8-29 Oct., 5-30 Nov., 7, 14 Dec. 1816; 22, 29 June, 6, 20 July 1819; Banks, *Maine Becomes a State*, 112; George Blake to Jonathan Russell, 5 Jan. 1817, Photostats, Massachusetts Historical Society; *Portland Gazette*, 17 July, 25 Dec. 1821, 25 Feb. 1823; Charles M. Wiltse, ed. *The Papers of Daniel Webster*, 8 vol. (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1974), 1:234; Henry Orne to Holmes, 15 Nov. 1816; Albion K. Parris to Holmes, 1 Mar. 1817, John Holmes Papers, NYPL.
22. *Eastern Argus*, 9, 23 Apr., 11 Sept., 9, 16, 23 (first quotation) Oct., 13 Nov. (second quotation) 1816; 13-27 Oct. 1818; [Willis,] "Hon. John Holmes," 153.
23. *Annals of Congress*, 15th Cong., 1st Sess., 828, 838. For more on this debate and the concerns that surrounded it, see Mason, *Slavery and Politics*, ch. 6.
24. *Portland Gazette*, 17 Mar. 1818 (first quotation); *Eastern Argus*, 22 Nov. 1815, 5 June, 13 Nov. 1816 (second quotation).
25. Sarah Anne Holmes to Eliza, 15 Feb. 1823 (typescript), John Holmes Papers, Parsons Memorial Library (first quotation); James F. Hopkins and Mary W. M. Hargreaves, eds., *The Papers of Henry Clay*, 10 vol. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959 -), 2:542 (second quotation); William B. Parker to Holmes, 21 Feb. 1817; Samuel Ayers to Holmes, 18 Mar., 10 Apr. 1817; Enoch Lincoln to Holmes, 3 May 1817; and James Irish to Holmes, 8 July 1817, all in John Holmes Papers, NYPL; Benjamin Waterhouse to Holmes, 28 Jan. 1818; Willie Browne to Holmes, 18 Feb. 1818; William Otis to Holmes, 18 May 1818; and William P. Preble to Holmes, 26 Mar. 1818, all in John Holmes Papers, Maine Historical Society.
26. As crucial as this episode was, I treat it so briefly here because I have analyzed it in depth elsewhere; see Matthew Mason, "The Maine and Missouri Crisis: Competing Priorities and Northern Slavery Politics in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 33 (Winter 2013): 675-700.
27. Josiah W. Seaver to William King, 10 Aug. 1821; Alfred Johnson to William King, 31 Mar. 1824, William King Papers; Hopkins, ed., *Papers of Henry Clay*, 3:336; see also 3:148; Richard P. McCormick, *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 51; Banks, *Maine Becomes a State*, 121; Hatch, *Maine*, 181-87; Judd, et al, *Maine*, 196-200; Thomas L. Gaffney, "Maine's Mr. Smith: A Study of the Career of Francis O.J. Smith, Politician and Entrepreneur" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maine, 1979), 31; Mark L. Hill to King, 7, 13, 22 Jan. 1821; John Williams to King, 24 Jan. 1821; Holmes to King, 23 Jan. 1821, all in William King Papers; *Daily National Intelligencer*, 16 Feb. 1824. For more on the caucus and the popular politics of the 1824 election, see Donald Ratcliffe, *The One-Party Presidential Contest: Adams, Jackson, and 1824's Five-Horse Race* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2015); George Dangerfield, *The Awakening of American Nationalism, 1815-1828* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 212-30; Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 74-75, 79. Dissident members of Maine's state legislature held their own counter-caucus to nominate Adams; *Niles' Weekly Register* 23 (25 Jan. 1823): 322; see also 25 (31 Jan. 1824): 340.
28. Holmes to King, 13 Feb. 1820, William King Papers; *St. Louis Enquirer*, 26 July 1820; Banks, *Maine Becomes a State*, 123-29; Holmes to King, 13 Feb. 1820, and Mark Langdon Hill to King, 6 Dec. 1819, William King Papers. For Holmes's work for Crawford in 1824, see Holmes to W.G. Howard, Washington, 4 Apr. 1824, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Boston Public Library; Charles E. Dudley to Holmes, 10 Mar. 1824; Samuel Herrick to Holmes, 25 Feb. 1824, John Holmes Papers, Maine Historical Society.
29. *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st Sess., 340-41.
30. John Holmes, *Speech of Mr. Holmes of Maine, on the Subject of Internal Improvement, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, April 21-22, 1824* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1824), 3-22, quotations on 6-7, 17-19; see also *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st Sess., 541-58; *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st Sess., 1296-1311, quotations on 1307, 1308.
31. Holmes, *Speech . . . on the Subject of Internal Improvement*, 11, 22; *Annals of Congress*, 18th Cong., 1st Sess., 568, 570-71.
32. *Register of Debates*, 18th Cong., 2nd Sess., 90-98, 535, 549-50, 558, 648-60, 666-67, 671, 679-81, 696-97; quotation on 94. See also *ibid.*, 19th Cong., 1st Sess., 455-58.
33. Financial Statement of the Proprietors of the *Columbian Star*, John Holmes Papers, Maine Historical Society; *Columbian Star* (Alfred, Me.), 15 July, 19 Aug., 7, 28 Oct., 18 Nov., 2, 23 Dec. 1824; 24 Feb., 21 July 1825.

34. *Columbian Star*, 3 Mar., 9 June 1825.
35. See *Columbian Star*, 19, 26 Aug., 2 Sept. 1824. For a particularly good primary-source paper trail on the rise and fall of the proposed convention, see *Register of Debates*, 18th Cong., 2nd Sess., Appendix, 8-26.
36. *Oxford Observer* (Paris, Me.), 6 Jan. 1825; 10 Feb. 1825, 6 Apr. 1825; *Maine Inquirer* reprinted in *Oxford Observer*, 17 Feb. 1825; *Columbian Star*, 14 Apr. 1825. For the final, rather repetitive, round in this debate, see *Oxford Observer*, 28 Apr. 1825; *Columbian Star*, 5 May 1825.
37. John Holmes, *Speech of Mr. Holmes, of Maine, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, on the Mission to Panama, March 1826* (n.p.), quotations on 19-21. See also *Register of Debates*, 19th Cong., 1st Sess., 263-76, 151, 666-67, 671; *Eastern Argus*, 18 Dec. 1821; 12 Nov. 1822; 20 May, 19 Aug. 1823; 17 Feb., 27 Apr., 1 June 1824; *Register of Debates*, 19th Cong., 1st Sess., 112-343. For good examples of how Southerners injected slavery into this debate, see *ibid.*, 112-32, 207-08, 284-86, 289-91, 329-32. For more on this conference, its context, and the opposition to it, see James E. Lewis, Jr., *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783-1829* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 190-214.
38. Charles Hammond to John C. Wright, 27 Mar. 1826, in Donald J. Ratcliffe, "The Decline of Antislavery Politics, 1815-1840," in John Craig Hammond and Matthew Mason, eds., *Contesting Slavery: The Politics of Bondage and Freedom in the New American Nation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 277; *Eastern Argus*, 4, 21 Apr. 1826 (quotations); *Gazette of Maine*, 21, 28 Mar., 4, 11, 26 Apr., 2 May, 27 June, 29 Aug. 1826.
39. *Eastern Argus*, 18 Apr. 1826; see also 4, 21 Apr., 26 May, 1 Sept. 1826; *Eastern Argus*, 23 Aug. 1826; see also 19 Sept. 1826. The prominent editor Hezekiah Niles took brief notice of this exchange and praised Holmes's response; see *Niles' Weekly Register* 31 (9 Sept. 1826): 23.
40. Th. D. Robinson to King, 1 Feb. 1826 (quotation); Ann King to King, 8 Dec. 1823; Samuel Bishop to King, 25 Jan., 8 Feb. 1825; L. Williams to King, 16 Feb. 1825; Holmes to King, 15 Jan. 1826; Mark L. Hill to King, 14 Dec. 1825, 7 Jan. 1826; [William King] to "Dear Sir," 22 June 1827, all in William King Papers. See also *Register of Debates*, 19th Cong., 1st Sess., 82-108; Holmes to Henry Clay, 8 June 1825, in Hopkins, ed., *Papers of Henry Clay*, 4:421-25; Wiltse, ed., *Papers of Daniel Webster*, 2:98, 230; William King and Mark L. Hill, *Remarks Upon a Pamphlet Published at Bath, Me., Relating to Alledged Infractions of the Laws During the Embargo, Non-Intercourse, and War* (Bath: Thomas Eaton, 1825); Gaffney, "Maine's Mr. Smith," 33-37; *Eastern Argus*, 19, 23, 30 Jan., 2 Feb. 1827. Early evidence of the rift came when one of Holmes's letters to King appeared in the newspapers without Holmes's permission; see *ibid.*, 26 Sept., 6 and 24 Oct. 1826. McIntire took 2,174 votes to Holmes's 1,932; see *ibid.*, 14 Sept., 26 Oct. 1827.
41. Sarah Anne Holmes to Holmes, 17 Feb. 1827, Alfred (typescript), Holmes Papers, Parsons Memorial Library; *Eastern Argus*, 13 Apr. 1827; see also 5 Apr. 1827.
42. Albert Smith to Peter Green or William King, 16 Jan. 1829, William King Papers (quotation); Sarah Anne Goodenow to Holmes, 11 Mar. 1830, Alfred (typescript), Holmes Papers, Parsons Memorial Library. For his association with Clay, see e.g. Hopkins, ed., *Papers of Henry Clay*, 7:630; and with Webster, see Dow, *Reminiscences*, 123-24; Wiltse, ed., *Papers of Daniel Webster*, 2:385. For local and regional welcomes, see J.A. Burleigh to Holmes, 21 Dec. 1829; Mark Dennett to Holmes, 6 Jan. 1827; and D.L. Child to Holmes, 19 Oct. 1829, Holmes Papers, Maine Historical Society; Gaffney, "Maine's Mr. Smith," 47. For the voting, see *Eastern Argus*, 20 Jan. 1829.
43. *Eastern Argus*, 20 Jan. – 10 Feb., 24 Feb., 10-24 Mar., 7 Apr. – 26 May, 9 June, 23 June – 18 Aug., 8 Sept., 22 Sept. – 20 Oct., 3 Nov. 1829; 9 Mar., 5, 9, and 30 July, 24 Sept. 1830, 29 Mar., 9 and 12 Aug. 1831; quotations from 20 Jan., 24 Mar. 1829. See also *Eastern Republican* (Bangor, Me.), 24 Aug. 1830; Malone and Johnson, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography*, 9:167; W.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 1061.
44. *Kennebec Journal* (Augusta, Me.), 29 Dec. 1827, 4, 11, 18, Jan., 22 Feb. 1828; John Holmes, *Speech of Mr. Holmes, of Maine, in the Senate of the United States, on his Resolutions Calling upon the President of the United States for the Reasons of His Removing from Office, and Filling the Vacancies thus Created, in the Recess of the Senate* (Washington: National Journal, 1830); Holmes, *Post Office Inquiry: Mr. Holmes's Speech on Mr. Grundy's Resolution, Delivered in the Senate U.S., February, 1831* (Washington: National Journal, 1831); Holmes, *Speech of Mr. Holmes, of Maine, in the Senate of the United States, on the Nomination of J. J. Crittenden, 4th February 1829* (Washington: Peter Force, 1829); Holmes, *Speech of Honorable Mr. Holmes of Maine, on the Annual Appropriation Bill, Against the Policy of the Administration in Regard to Diplomatic Intercourse, the Colonial Trade,*

- and Northeastern Boundary. Delivered in the Senate, U.S., April 9, 10, and 11, 1832 (N.p.), 1-2; Holmes, *Speech . . . April 9, 10, and 11, 1832*, 1-16; Seager, ed., *Papers of Henry Clay*, 7:630.
45. *Eastern Argus*, 9 Mar. 1830; *Kennebec Journal*, 8 Feb. 1828; see also 4, 25 Jan. 1828.
46. John Holmes, *Speech of Mr. Holmes, of Maine, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, February 18, 1830, in the Debate which Arose upon Mr. Foot's Resolution Relative to the Public Lands* (Washington: National Journal, 1830).
47. John Holmes, *Speech of Mr. Holmes, of Maine, on the Tariff* (N.p., 1832), quotations on 1, 14; Joseph Granger to Holmes, 6 Mar. 1830; Joseph Stockbridge to Holmes, 2 June 1832; Enoch Hardy to Holmes, 27 June 1832; John Smith to Holmes, 17 Mar. 1832 (antislavery quotations), Holmes Papers, Maine Historical Society. See also Gaffney, "Maine's Mr. Smith," 88-90.
48. Undated sketch in John Holmes Papers, Library of Congress; Benjamin Perley Poore, *Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis*, 2 vol. (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers, 1886), 1:72.
49. Benjamin Ames to Holmes, 20 Mar. 1830; S. G. Leeth to Holmes, 10 Mar. 1830; Isaac S. Lyon to Holmes, 26 Apr. 1832; David Crowel to Holmes, 20 Mar. 1830; E. Kent to Holmes, 11 May 1830; Samuel Tucker to Holmes, 22 Mar. 1830, John Holmes Papers, Maine Historical Society; Dow, *Reminiscences*, 123-24; J.W.E. Edwards to Holmes, 6 Apr. 1830, Holmes Papers, Maine Historical Society; Wiltse, ed., *Papers of Daniel Webster*, 3:74; A letter in Daniel Webster's voluminous fan mail after this debate bespoke these overlapping and mutually reinforcing loyalties. "I thank you," Abbott Lawrence effused, "as a citizen of Massachusetts, of New England, of the United States, not only for myself, but for my children"; Remini, *Daniel Webster*, 330.
50. Wiltse, ed., *Papers of Daniel Webster*, 2:98-99, 155-57.
51. Gaffney, "Maine's Mr. Smith," 180-84, 324; *Eastern Argus*, 1 May, 27 Nov. 1827; 10 Feb. 1829; 16 Apr. 1830.
52. Elizabeth Ring, *Maine in the Making of the Nation, 1783-1870* (Camden, Me.: Picton Press, 1996), 132-33; Richard R. Wescott, *New Men, New Issues: The Formation of the Republican Party in Maine* (Portland, Me.: Maine Historical Society, 1986), 15-62; Banks, *History of York*, 2:280-81; Hatch, *Maine*, 1: 210-11.
53. *Eastern Argus*, 13 Mar., 10, 20, 31 July, 3, 7, 14, 24 Aug. 1832; 15 Mar. 1833.
54. [Willis,] *Hon. John Holmes*, 155; John Holmes, *Oration Delivered at China, Kennebec County, Maine. By Hon. John Holmes, July 4, 1834*, Maine Historical Society; H. Draper. Hunt, *Hannibal Hamlin of Maine: Lincoln's First Vice-President* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 16-17; Hatch, *Maine*, 1:116-18; Newspaper clipping, 1890, in Holmes Papers, Library of Congress.
55. Thomas Morgan Griffiths, *Major General Henry Knox and the Last Heirs to Montpelier*, Arthur Morgan Griffiths, ed. (Monmouth, Me.: Monmouth Press, 1965), 52-71; Record of Marriages and Intentions, Town of Alfred, York County, Maine, microfilm edition, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The American Notebooks*, Randall Stewart, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), 22-23; Thomas Morgan Griffiths, *Maine Sources in The House of the Seven Gables* (Waterville, Me., 1945); Cyrus Eaton, *History of Thomaston, Rockland, and South Thomaston, Maine*, 2 vols. (Hallowell, Me.: Masters, Smith & Co., 1865), 1:386-87, 402; [Willis,] *Hon. John Holmes*, 154.
56. John Holmes, *The Statesman, or Principles of Legislation and Law* (Augusta, Me.: Severance and Dorr, 1840), 12-13, 22, 54, 102-04, 158-67, 175-77; Peter B. Knupfer, *The Union As It Is: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 60-85. The appreciative in Holmes's audience included Clay; see Seager, ed., *Papers of Henry Clay*, 9:309.
57. Hatch, *Maine*, 1:236; Wescott, *New Men, New Issues*, ch. II-IV; Judd et al, *Maine*, ch. 15-16.
58. Holmes Papers, Parsons Memorial Library; Copy of an Old Record of a Death, John Holmes, Maine Historical Society; Willis, *History of the Law*, 289.
59. Holmes, *Oration Delivered at China*, 16; Holmes, *Post Office Inquiry*, 3.