

Robert W. Johannsen ---Frontier Politics and the Sectional Conflict  
...the Pacific Northwest on the Eve of the Civil War University of  
Washington Press, Seattle 1955

PNW in 1860 embraced 285,000 square miles, almost one tenth of the  
entire area of continental U.S. (U.S. Bureau of Census, Historical Statistics  
of the United States, 1789-1945 (Washington 1949), p.25.

known as Oregon Country for many years. Had two major political units  
: Oregon, admitted to statehood in 1859 and Washington Territory,  
created in 1853, and including, in addition to the present state of  
Washington, all of what is now Idaho and parts of western Montana and Wyo.  
Wash. Territory @ itself was almost three times the size of New  
England (p 3

PN became part of U.S. in 1846, two years later organized as Territory of Oregon  
~~First~~ First census taken in 1849 numbered slightly over 9,000

Nearly all came from Mississippi Valley overland, few living from early times,  
migrations from East did begin in earnest until 1843, became known as  
the Great Migration

A movement of agrarian people...hard times in Mississippi Valley  
following panic of 1837

5-- Oregon City, located at the falls of the Willamette River, was ~~in~~  
the metropolis of the Oregon Country in 1848, had population of 600 to  
700 persons

Gold discovery in California had provided a market for Oregon's  
farmers... followed by rapid succession of gold strikes in southern  
Oregon, Eastern Washington Territory, and p. 6- southern British  
Columbia...first effects were rapid depopulation of Northwest. Crops  
left unharvested, businesses abandoned, families left behind

In 1860 Oregon ranked 22nd out of 33 states in the nation in wheat  
production

(,Eighth Census, Population of the U.S. in 1860) (Washington 1860)  
p. xxix.

Portland, by that date, had become the largest town in the Northwest. with a population exceeding ~~28,000~~ 28,000. Salem and Eugene City each had populations surpassing one thousand....The Dalles and Walla Walla, each serving an extensive mining area, had become centers of population (eighth Census , Population of the United States in 1860 (Washington 1864), pp. 400-405, 580-585.)

According to census of 1860 , roughly 39 per cent of the population of the Pacific Northwest was born in the seven states of Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Ohio. Missouri alone contributed almost (p 7) 10 percent, more than any other single state. ..broken down according to section, the census figures indicate 21 per cent from the slaveholding states of the South, almost 22 per cent from the Old Northwest, 8 per cent from the Middle Atlantic states, and a little over 4 per cent from New England. Eighth Census , Population in the United States in 1860, pp. 400-405, 580-585. The remaining 45 per cent included a small number of foreign born and those born in the Far West, most of whom were minors in 1860.)

politics: No libel laws, invective and virulence ..

Oregon Spectator ~~xxxx~~ "We are now as we always have been, and ever shall be a democrat of the Jeffersonian school.

..they remember that if government become ~~destructive~~ destructive to the ends for which it was instituted, the people have a right to alter or abolish the same.

In 1855(p 9) "On the Democratic party of Washington Territory resolved, 'The best government is that which governs least.' 27 Olympia Pioneer and Democrat, May 12, 1855.

Oregon--passed from provisional self government to ~~statehood~~ territorial government...territorial government meant the extension of the principles and policies of the national political parties over the Pacific Northwest

issues and candidates of elections during early period based on local interests, classified according to three distinct elements in the population: those connected with the Hudson's Bay Company, the American settlers and the Methodist Mission group. With the organization of Oregon Territory the people of the Pacific Northwest were bound to the currents of national partisan politics. Their administrative and judicial officers were appointees of a partisan government.

.. the Democratic party was the first to organize in Oregon Territory and throughout the territorial period maintained a tight monopoly over local politics (p 13).

h..having emigrated for the most part from the Mississippi Valley, the settlers of the Pacific Northwest were steeped in the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian tradition (p 14)

Those from the slaveholding states of the upper and deep South may not have brought their slaves with them, but they did bring the principles of the Democratic party

...the Whigs in early Oregon differed but little from the Democrats, ..often referring to themselves as 'Clay National Whigs.'

..the first germs of the Republican party took shape both north and south of the Columbia River in 1855, but it not until four years later that the party achieved a complete organization and became a force in PNW politics. The Whig party, on the other hand, persisted long after its national counterpart had disappeared from the scene (p 14.)

during the decade of the fifties, this scattered heterogeneous politically unconscious population of the PN frontier attempted to meet the challenges of the mounting sectional struggle over slavery.. they first became aware of the pervasiveness of this explosive issue when Congress debated the organization of a territorial government for the far Northwest.

p 13--

Acquisition of a vast and relatively unsettled western area of the U.S. following Mexican War marked the recrudescence of the slavery issue. The question of the expansion of slavery into the West had been settled by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, when an arbitrary geographical line designed to separate free from slave territory was drawn across the Louisiana Purchase.

The principle of the Wilmot Proviso, calling for the exclusion of slavery from the new territories of the West, represented a large block of Northern opinion and eventually became the creed of the Republican Party. Opposed was demand of many Southerners that Congress refrain from interfering with slavery in the West. This attitude embodied the basic concept of popular sovereignty as developed by Stephen A. Douglas, maintaining that slavery was dependent upon local law and consequently the responsibility of the people in the territories acting through their elected legislatures. Fourth.. (p 16..the suggestion that the Missouri Compromise be extended to the Pacific Ocean

Area first became a part of the mainstream of American politics when James Knox Polk was elected president of the U.S. in 1844 on a frankly expansionistic platform. In this he pledged himself and his party to the acquisition of the Oregon Country and the annexation of one of Mexico's rebellious provinces, Texas. The former accomplished peaceably, after much negotiation, by treaty with Great Britain in the summer of 1846. The latter, although a fait accompli soon after Polk's inauguration, led indirectly to war with Mexico.

...p 19--The greatest impetus to the migration to the Far West of Southern slaveholders with their slaves was the California gold rush. Although the exact number is not known, slaves were brought to California to work with their owners in the mines. (Memoirs of Cornelius Cole (New York 1908), p. 92.

p 21--the exact number of slaves in the PNW during the decade of the fifties is not known. The number however was negligible...probable that most of the slaves that had been brought to Oregon were free by the middle fifties...the slaves were employed primarily as domestics or farm hands..

Tilton---

Tilton

p. 22-

The Pacific Northwest witnessed another incident regarding slavery that was of more than local importance. In the fall of 1860, a young slave boy held by James Tilton, Washington Territory's surveyor general, escaped to Victoria where he was aided by the British authorities. Tilton protested to the Secretary of State in Washington, D.C., but no action was taken on his behalf. The chief justice of the British colony granted the slave his freedom on the ground that a person aboard a foreign vessel in a British port was subject to the laws of Great Britain." James Tilton to Henry M. McGill, September 30, 1860 Letter and Documents Relating to the Offices of Governor and Secretary of Washington Territory, 1860-1864, University of Washington Library. The incident is described in detail in Robie L. Reid "How One Slave Became Free," British Historical Columbia Historical Quarterly, VI (Oct. 1942), 251-256.)

p 26

The first organization in the PNW of a political party devoted exclusively to halting the extension of slavery took place north of the Columbia River, in Washington Territory. In August, 1854, a handful of men met at Olympia to nominate candidates for county offices. Drawing their inspiration from the national Free-Soil coalition party, which had been

organized in 1848 with the nomination of Martin Van Buren for president, the members of the "convention" endorsed the Pittsburgh Free-Soil platform of 1852...

proslavery advocates:

Joseph Lane, leader and idol of Oregon Democracy, campaigned in favor of slavery/

Stephen F. Chadwick, a native of Connecticut and a local Democratic politician from southern Oregon, advocated introduction of slavery into Oregon

Most prominent advocate; Matthew P. Deady, associate justice of the territorial supreme court. Maryland-born and Ohio-bred...

Deady wrote: "If a citizen of Virginia can lawfully own a Negro (of which there is no doubt) then I a citizen of Oregon can lawfully obtain the same right of property in this Negro by either purchase or inheritance, and am as much ~~xxxxxx~~ entitled to the protection of Government in Oregon as Virginia.

p 42

Joseph Lane maintained at Winchester, Ore. speech that it was doubtful whether a man could be a good Democrat and vote against ~~xxxx~~ slavery.

p 43

The Lane County Democratic convention meeting at Eugene City in April, 1857, contended "that ~~slavery holders have~~ the Democratic party was not a proslavery party but contended "that slave-holders have equal rights in the Territories with their northern brethren."

p 44

Horace Greeley thought Oregonians might soon reduce the Indian population to slavery.

p 51

Admission of Oregon to statehood in February, 1859, marked a turning point in local Pacific Northwest politics.

p 53

The Democratic party, the first to organize in the Pacific Northwest, remained the dominant political group in the region until the outbreak of the Civil War

Clisck

I wish you would tell me the stor of tur life. I will come down one of these dats and bring you my book. I think you can do me the g od I need. One of these days. I will finish this very sorty will you please wait.

Democratic party politics in Washington Territory centered about the figure of Isaac I. Stevens. Stevens, a professional soldier, veteran of the Mexican War and a staunch Democrat, had been appointed governor of Washington Territory in 1853 as a reward for having campaigned for Franklin Pierce.

With the help of the pioneer and Democrat he had built up a political machine known locally as the "Olympia Clique." As in Oregon, the rigid control over local politics exercised by the Democratic machine created some dissension in the ranks. Of greater significance, however, in the splitting of the party was Stevens' policy and action during the Indian wars.

Stevens left governorship in 1857 and announced his intention to run for the office of territorial delegate, partly in an attempt to vindicate his actions as governor.

Republicans, inviting the participation of all ~~xx~~ who "would ~~xxxxxx~~ save the soil bearing the name of the great and good Washington from the pollution of slavery" had some difficulty finding a man willing to lead a part in the election campaign (p 85). The choice finally fell on Alexander Abernethy, a member of the territorial legislature. ~~Their~~ Reps devoted most of their platform to local issues. Their only national excursion into national politics lay in an endorsement of the 1856 national Republican platform and a scathing denunciation of the Dred Scott decision.

The election was fought and won by the Democrats in Washington Territory largely on the strength of the Indian war issue. Stevens began a four-year period as territorial delegate that was to lead him into the arena of national politics.

1859  
1860--Stevens reelected by 60 per cent of the total vote cast..returned to Washington where he was destined to play a leading role in the crucial election of 1860.

p 89-

The year 1860--the Democratic party split into Northern and Southern wings in pac northwest, a split that was reflected soon afterward in local politics throughout the country.

p 93

Abraham Lincoln was first mentioned for the presidency in the PNW in Feb. 1860. Simeon Francis, a personal friend of Lincoln who had moved from Illinois to Oregon in 1859 wrote a lengthy article to the Argus outlining Lincoln's life and career and urging his nomination.

...p 90- The Republican organization (in Ore) was the first to anticipate the national nominating conventions in 1860. In April, 1859, when the Republicans met to draw up a platform and to nominate a candidate for the congressional election, they also turned their attention to the forthcoming national convention of their party. Although the apportionment to the national convention was not known, three delegates were elected, A.G. Hovey, Dr. W. Warren and Leander Holmes. On the motion of Bron J. Pengra, editor of the newly founded Republican paper The People's Press, the delegates to the national convention were instructed to support William H. Seward for the presidential nomination. Seward's endorsement by the convention came as a shock to many Republicans in Oregon. Seward was considered a radical on the slavery question; his "irrepressible conflict" and "higher law" doctrines were ideas which these frontier Republicans refused to accept.

...because of Seward's unpopularity among Oregon Republicans and because of the irregularity of his endorsement by the convention, the party did not support the New York Senator. In the fall of 1859 William L. Adams through his newspaper announced his support of Edward Bates for the Republican presidential nomination. Bates..Southern born and

the campaign of 1860

The fusion of Republican and Douglas Democrats in the state of Oregon and its success in the senatorial election were a revolution in Pacific Northwest politics.

The Pacific NW was brought closer to national politics in 1860 by the active participation of two "favorite sons" in the election campaign Joseph Lane, the vice presidential candidate on the Breckenridge ticket, and Isaac I. Stevens, the national chairman of the Breckenridge campaign committee.

(p 129)

In contrast with present-day campaigns, the presidential campaign of 1860 was a quiet one, an atmosphere that belied the tremendous importance of the issues involved. Abraham Lincoln made no speeches during the campaign. Douglas, the most energetic of the candidates, toured widely throughout the Midwest, South and East.

p. 143

The sentiment in the PNW in favor of both a transcontinental railroad and a homestead act undoubtedly operated to the advantage of the Republican party. While the local Democratic organizations united with the Republicans in support of these measures, they were betrayed by the actions of many of their national leaders.

p 143

Two additional issues that influenced the election of 1860 in the Pacific NW were the question of corruption in government and the controversy over the Oregon war debt.

...the question of payment of the Oregon war debt was a potent force in local politics during the later years of the decade. The debt had been created by both Oregon and Washington Territory in 1855-56 when

local troops were raised to combat an Indian uprising. Amounting to six million dollars, the debt was supposed to be met and repaid by the national government. Congress, alarmed at the large amount due, had begun a series of investigations which proved highly annoying to the PNW. Although Lane worked hard throughout his terms in Congress to secure the payment of the war debt, his efforts were always blocked. By 1860 voters in the region were ready to turn elsewhere for satisfaction. ... Abraham Lincoln carried Oregon by the slim margin of 270 votes over Breckenridge, his nearest competitor. Douglas dropped over 1,000 votes behind Lincoln. The complete returns gave Lincoln seven counties, 5,345 votes; Breckenridge, eight counties, 5,085 votes; Douglas four counties, 4,131 votes; and Bell a mere 213 votes.

..

p 154..the six months that followed the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 were a crucial period for the U.S.

.. one by one the slave states of the deep South adopted ordinances of secession until by the first of February, 1861, seven states were out of the Union.

p 157--As the crisis deepened Joseph Lane and his Breckenridge Democratic supporters in Oregon came to a parting of the ways. Lane's position became increasingly more radical. By the time Congress assembled in December, 1860, he was completely identified with the Southern group and assumed the role of defender of Southern action. He was not only reconciled to disunion but began to advocate it.

p 160--As the Southern states moved closer to secession, many eyes in the nation were directed toward the youngest, most isolated area of the country.. how will the Pacific states remain affected, it was inevitable that the idea of an independent republic west of the Rocky Mountains should be revived at this time. This idea had its roots in the belief that the Pacific Coast was too distant from the population

centers of the East to be an integral part of the United States.

The isolation of the region and the belief that its interests were closely tied with the Pacific area and Far East had encouraged the notion that the Pacific Coast could not be a part of the United States (this idea expressed by many national leaders from Thomas Jefferson to Zachary Taylor...in 1855 some persons in Washington Territory favored the formation of a new republic in order to bring nearer home to the Pacific Coast the powers of government, to secure independence, to cut off overland connection, and to make the new republic the depot of Asiatic trade.

...severe areas bent on self destruction...avoid taxes Northwest opposed disunion, looked for positive governmental action against the Southern secessionists.

p 186

~~and the~~ The actual secession of the Southern states gave encouragement to the proponents of a Pacific Republic. "If the Union should go into more than two pieces," wrote one settler in the Pacific Northwest, "Then it (The Pacific Republic) would most likely become a fact, and rather a small ~~one~~ one." Matthew P. Deady Papers, Oregon Historical Society Library... (Coto James W. Newsmith )

During the ~~next~~ early months of 1861, rumors circulated in Washington Territory that groups of men stood ready to assume control of the government machinery should the Union fall to pieces. One Republican newspaper reported:

"It has long been understood that a secret sworn society of armed men, numbering several thousands, existed on the shores of the Pacific, whose sole aim was to possess the arms, treasure and fortifications of the Federal Government, levy taxes a la South Carolina, and subjugate, by force and arms, such of the people as had the temerity to demur to their attempt

at coercive control.

Earlier the same paper had reported that certain citizens of the territory had already received their commissions in the new government but that the "precise time of their entering upon the discharge of their self-imposed duties" remained uncertain. (Port Townsend North-West, March 7, February 28, 1861.) These alarms proved unfounded.

(p 187) Sentiment in the region was strong against breaking away from the Union....

Washington Territory declared for the Union in unequivocal terms. The territorial legislature debated through the winter a series of resolutions "expressive of our attachment to the national Union, and pledging Washington for the parent government." Toward the end of the session which was described by a participant as one of "marked excitement," the resolutions were passed with but one dissenting vote. (Augustus Ripley Burbanck Diary, Library of Congress, microfilm in the University of Washington Library) p 198, February 7, 1861; Territory of Washington House Journal 1860-1861 (Olympia 1861), p 387; Territory of Washington Council Journal, 1860-1861 (Olympia 1861) pp 310-311).

Later a mass meeting was summoned at the capitol in Olympia for all who loved the union and were opposed to a Pacific "republic." A large and enthusiastic "crowd gathered, elected a president and seventeen vice-presidents, six secretaries and a committee on resolutions including men drawn from all parties. Four resolutions were approved by the meeting, deploring the efforts to break up the Union, repudiating the attempts to establish a Pacific confederacy, proposing an amicable settlement of all grievances between the North and South, and declaring the attachment of Washington Territory to the Union. It was hoped that these "evidences of our loyalty may not be without their weight, as they plainly show that we appreciate with warm gratitude, the care of our government,"

(Olympia Washington Standard, March 2, 16, 1861; Olympia Pioneer and Democrat, March 15, 1861. )

No such demonstrations were held in Oregon. A small Union meeting was held at Astoria early in April at which a former Breckinridge Democrat urged the formation of a Union party and exhorted all present to support the Union...

p 000 188

All hopes for a peaceful restoration of the Union and for the avoidance of an armed collision between the North and the South were dashed by the Confederate batteries in Charleston harbor. In the early morning hours of April 12, 1861, after fruitless negotiations with the small garrison, Southern guns began the bombardment of Fort Sumter. News of the attack reached the Pacific Northwest on April 29, when the steamer "Cortes" arrived in Portland with from San Francisco. The reaction was electric. The settlers on this far frontier, like people throughout the North, responded to the headlines with an unquestioned devotion to the Union. The fine distinction between coercion and the enforcement of the laws was forgotten. All agreed that the government must suppress the rebellion...

For almost four months, particularly since the news of South Carolina's secession had reached the area, the people of the Pacific Northwest had watched the Eastern developments. Although they felt detached from the sectional struggle so far as the issues involved were concerned, they nevertheless showed a deep interest in and anxiety about the national difficulties. From the very first they expressed and felt a devotion to the Union; their efforts were bent toward the preservation of the Union by the best means they knew, compromise and cautious moderation.

In contrast to the divisions that had existed during the campaign of 1860, all political groups joined in a common crusade to save the Union. The former Breckinridge party was one of the most vocal in support of the Union, further indication that the Breckinridge vote in the Pacific Northwest had been a Union vote. . . p 189--the Douglas Democrats were no less vocal in favor of the Union

p 190

In its attitude toward the secession crisis, the Pacific Northwest assumed the character of a "border region." Its feeling of detachment from the sectional struggle, its refusal to admit either slave or free Negroes, its wholehearted devotion to the Union, its support of compromise and aversion toward coercion, its failure to grasp the real seriousness of the crisis, its general inclination toward a conservative and moderate policy, and its abhorrence of all that smacked of radicalism--all these were characteristics of both the Pacific Northwest and the "border region" of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. The similarity between the far Northwest frontier and the border states to the Eastward was further manifested in the months that followed the bombardment of Fort Sumter.

p 194--One of the most complete conversions was that of Matthew P. Deady. He turned his (p 195) back to the Jeffersonian principles he had supported earlier and became an avowed Federalist. A proslavery advocate in the years before the election of 1860 and a partisan of Breckinridge during that election, Deady wrote in May, 1861, that he had got over the "seductive Jeffersonian humbugs...about, every man being his own government, rotation in office, and eternal vigilance (which means eternal sedition) is the price of liberty..."

"Jefferson (Deady continued) overthrew the Federal govt as well as the Federal party with his resolutions of /98 and to day we are reaping the consequences. He has been the model for every disturber of the public peace ever since, and his resolutions and declarations of Independence

16, and his resolutions and declarations of Independence contain enough of revolution nullification secession and anarchy, to set the four corners of the world by the ears."

Of the Democratic party Deady wrote "It has only been a piece of party machinery kept running by power of former prestige and force of habit since Polk's administration."

p 197

Most of the settlers enthusiastically supported the government and the administration, but there was a sizable minority, notably former Breckinridge Democrats, who refused to support a Republican president in a war against Southern people and institutions. The convictions of some led them to join the Confederate army.

...As the war continued, the frontier population gave credence to Stephen A. Douglas' assertion that there were no neutrals in the struggle for the Union. The problem of where to draw the line between loyalty and disloyalty persisted throughout the Civil War. As a result reports of disunionists or secessionists in Oregon were often misleading and did not necessarily mean that Oregonians were supporting the Confederacy or actually disloyal to the Union. There were, however, many isolated incidents throughout the Pacific Northwest to inspire such reports.

Rumors circulated almost immediately that the ~~Crooks~~ ~~Knights~~ & Knights of the Golden Circle had established lodges in The Dalles, Albany, and Corvallis and were plotting the overthrow of the United States government. (Portland Weekly Oregonian, May 11, 1851; Corvallis Oregon Weekly Union, June 1, 1861, . Slater, editor of the Union vehemently denied the existence of lodges of the ~~K~~ Knights of the Golden Circle in Oregon.)

At Long Tom precinct in Lane County, an area in which persons of Southern birth and background predominated, the Confederate flag was raised and waved undisturbed for some time. Nearby in the small town of Monroe, a church meeting was broken up when the minister urged the audience to sustain the government. A camp meeting of the Southern Methodist Church ended in a riot when the minister refused to display the American flag and made several "harsh remarks" about it. In the mining district of eastern Washington Territory a government official was reported to have drunk a toast to Jefferson Davis as a greater man than George Washington. On Sauvie's Island, near Portland, a group of men declared that "no damned Abolitionist should raise the American flag on that island. These incidents were multiplied many times (Oregon and Its Share in the Civil War, Robert Treat Platt, OHQ IV, (June 1903), 89-109.

Opposition to the prosecution of the war was expressed as soon as the policy of the Lincoln administration became known, and the groundwork of the later "Copperhead" movement was laid.

p 209

With the adjournment of Congress in March, the Pacific Northwest's two principal actors on the national stage, Joseph Lane and Isaac I. Stevens, left the national capital for their homes. Lane arrived in Portland on the same steamer that brought the news of Fort Sumter's bombardment. His reception was far from cordial. Rumors circulated throughout the Northwest that Lane would attempt to take Oregon out of the Union. Just before embarking for the Pacific Coast, he was supposed to have announced: "I am out of politics; but I shall continue to stand by the right. I will urge the democrats of Oregon to adopt the Constitution of the Confederate States of their platform" (Portland Weekly Oregonian, April 27, 1861)...after his arrival on his farm at Winchester Lane settled down to a quiet life, rarely leaving his home for the next twenty years.

p 211

Stevens returned to Olympia late in April looking "grave and care-worn, for he had taken deeply to heart the troubles between the north and south," "Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Washington, Idaho and Montana, 1845-1889 (San Francisco 1890) p. 206;... Soon afterward, he delivered an address in which he not only denied the right of secession but also declared that the election of a Republican president was not sufficient cause for seceding, although he held the Republican party responsible for disunion. The only salvation, he said, was through a united Democratic party. He urged every citizen to stand by the government and maintain it against aggression. Stevens, however, soon learned that he was under the odium of disunion. Many persons questioned his loyalty and emphasized his leadership in the Breckinridge organization, in the course of which he had become intimately associated with many secession leaders..... Stevens term as delegate had expired with adjournment of Congress in March (1861)

p 212

Before the election of Lincoln was known, William Winlock Miller, superintendent of Indian affairs under Buchanan and a leading administration Democrat in the territory, cautioned Stevens that "we must keep up the Organization of the Democratic party and fight on and fight always."

p 216

The cause of union-Republican in the PNW suffered three setbacks in the months that followed the initial crisis in 1861. During the summer, Congress (p217) seated George K. Shell, Oregon's pro-Southern representative, after two weeks of investigation. Andrew J. Thayer, the Douglas Democratic contestant for the seat, made an unsuccessful appeal to the patriotic sympathies of the Northern congressmen. The seating of a pro-Southern Democratic congressman by a Congress controlled by Northern

2019-08-16 09:00:00 Northern "ep blicans had been interpreted  
 an effort to conciliate the border and Pacific Coast state .

....In October, 1861, Edward Dickinson Baker, Oregon's Republican Senator  
 and one of the mainstays of the Union cause on the Pacific Coast, was  
 killed in action in the battle of Ball's Bluff on the Potomac River. Baker  
 had decided early in the crisis to participate militarily in the war against  
 the South. Receiving an appointment as colonel, he raised a regiment of  
 volunteer troops in the East. His death was a hard blow to Republicans in  
 Oregon, who regarded Baker as their most reliable medium of  
 communication with the Lincoln administration.

...Washington Territory seemed safely Republican for the duration  
 with the election of a Republican delegate and with Lincoln-appointed  
 Republican officeholders arriving in the territory. The Democratic  
 majority in the territory, however, was not diminished,...

p 218...the Copperhead opposition continued to denounce the prosecution of  
 the war and the infringement of civil liberties by the Lincoln  
 administration...

p 219

While the Northwest frontiersmen were busy building a social,  
 economic and political structure of their own on the far shores of  
 the Pacific, they nevertheless were not too occupied to glance  
 now and again at the political upheaval in the East. The settlers were  
 indeed, as one editor put it, spectators to the war of sections. Yet they  
 expressed a strong interest in the national political difficulties.

The pioneer wrote: Politicians...urge this Territory is far removed from  
 contending sectional interests, that we are in a latitude unprofitable to  
 slave labor, and that therefore it is of but little interest to  
 us whether the Federal Government protects slavery in the territories, or  
 excludes it. Whether it be of consequence or not, there is a principal  
 involved (Letter to the Editor, Olympia Washington Standard, February 9, 1861.)

When the crisis erupted into war, the settlers of the Pacific Northwest stood by the Union. Their contribution to the war effort was perhaps negligible insofar as men and arms were concerned, but the Republican and Union victories in the elections of 1860 and 1862 illustrated their support to the administration. Throughout these difficult years the conservatism of the frontier kept them safely within the folds of the Union, and it guided their footsteps long after the last shot had been fired...

End of notes from book.

The Secession Crisis and the Frontier: Washington Territory, 1860-1861

By Robert W. Johannsen The Mississippi Valley Historical Review Journal  
of American History, Vol XXXIX No. 3, December, 1952 pp 415-440

While a tremendous volume of scholarly historical work has been done on the Civil War period there exists no adequate treatment of the role played by the Pacific Northwest during that time. Sparsely populated and isolated from the East by poor transportation and communication as well as two thousand miles of prairies, deserts, and mountain peaks, this frontier region nevertheless felt a strong interest in national affairs and expressed a vital concern over the sectional crises that finally culminated in the Civil War. At its outbreak the area, known for many years as the Oregon Country, was divided politically into two major units: Oregon which had been admitted to statehood in 1859, and Washington Territory including what is now Idaho and parts of western Montana. A study of the reaction of the settlers of Washington Territory to the secession crisis of 1860-1861 illustrates not only the significance and character of national politics on the level of frontier politics but also the strong connecting tie that existed between the frontiersmen of the Pacific Northwest and the national government during one of the most critical periods of American history.

In 1860 Washington Territory, with an area almost three times that of New England, had a population of only 11,594 people. The backgrounds of the settlers were varied, a large proportion of them originating in areas that had just emerged from a frontier stage. The census returns of that year indicate that nearly half of the native-born population of the territory had been born in ten (p 416) states of the middle and upper Mississippi Valley and that a large number had emigrated from slaveholding states of the upper and deep South. Seven years earlier the area had been split off from the Territory of

Oregon and given separate territorial status. From the first territorial election in 1854, the Democratic party had held undisputed sway over local politics. Although the territory had been created under a Whig president the appointment of officers was left to his Democratic successor. From then until after the outbreak of the Civil War, the territorial patronage was closely controlled by the Democratic party. Not only did the appointed officers serve as a connecting link between the national and local party organizations but they built up around them a strong political machine, known locally as the "Olympia clique." The Republican party had a small beginning in the 1856 election and was considerably strengthened in the following years by the demise of the local Whig party. It never was a match for the Democratic organization, however, which polled over 60 per cent of the total vote cast for the territorial delegate in the two elections preceding 1860. (For a summary of political activity in Washington in the years prior to the Civil War see Robert W. Johannsen, "National Issues and Local Politics in Washington Territory, 1857-1861," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (Seattle) XLII (January 1951) 3-31.)

Although the nature of the territorial system itself necessarily demanded an extension of federal power, sentiment in favor of the sovereign local state was strong among members of both parties in Washington Territory, a Jeffersonian ideal that persisted elsewhere on the far Northwest frontier.

Almost from the beginning of the territorial period, the settlers manifested an active interest in national politics, even though as a territory the region had neither a voice in national affairs nor a vote in national elections. The great distance which lay between the Pacific Northwest and the centers of political activity in the East, the sparse population, and the limited economy of the territory made many national issues abstract. The local political parties, however, followed the alignments of their national counterparts.

Although the extension and protection of slavery in the territories (p 417) was the dominant national issue during the fifties, it was of little practical significance in the far Northwest. Some slaves, however, were brought into the Pacific Northwest by settlers from southern states, settling for the most part in Oregon where the principle of slavery extension was argued more bitterly. North of the Columbia River some minor excitement regarding slavery was recorded in the fall of 1860 when a young slave boy held by James Tilton, Washington Territory's surveyor general, escaped to Victoria where and he was aided by British authorities. Tilton's protest was forwarded to the secretary of state in Washington, D.C., but no action was ever taken on his behalf.

p 418--because of the status as a territory, Washington was not formally ~~represented~~ represented in the national presidential nominating conventions scheduled for 1860. The territorial Democrats however, had an indirect representative at the national convention at Charleston in the person of Isaac I. Stevens, Washington's delegate in Congress, former governor of the territory and leader of the local Democracy. The state of Oregon was allotted six delegates for the Charleston meeting but only two of those chosen actually attended. The other four votes were delegated by proxy and exercised by various individuals, among them Stevens. (The two members of the Oregon delegation who appeared in person at Charleston were John K. Lamerick, formerly a brigadier general in the Oregon militia, and Lansing Stout, Oregon's congressman in Washington, D.C. Lamerick later entered the Confederate army. Other delegates who held proxies were A.P. Dennison, an Indian agent in Oregon; Justus Steinberger, a agent of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company; and R.B. Metcalf, a former Indian agent in Oregon Territory.)

Thro ghout the convention proceedings th Northwest delegation acted with th administration, or southern, wing of the party. "hen the debate over the adoption of a platform resulted in the disruption of the convention, the ri al wings of the party each scheduled a meeting in ~~m~~ Baltimore for the middle of June. Stevens, assuming the leadership of the Oregon delegation, appeared in the Douglas convention but ~~Oct~~ later withdrew. Joining with the Southerners he participated in nominating John C. Breckinridge and Lane on a strong proslavery platform.

p. 420 The nomination was receiv d with jubilation by many Democrats in Washington Territory. "hen the news arrived enthusiastic citizens of Olympia, the territorial capital, fired sixty guns to celebrate th<sup>3</sup> occasion. ...The pioneer and Democrat, with a preoccupation for party regularity, at first cast a few doubts on the legality of the convention that nominated Breckinridge. These doubts were soon dismissed with the observation that, even if only "eleven" (sic) states were represented at the con ention, the deleg tes represented people "who entertain views upon the question of slavery similar to those we hold to."  
(Olympia P ioneer and Democrat, July 27, 1860)

The optimism of territorial Democrats was heightened even more by the results of the local territorial election in July 1860, when twenty-four Democrats and nine R epublicans were returned to the territorial legislature. In a co fidant tone that was shortly to be reversed by ci cumstances the Democratic organ declared, "The democracy were never before so united."

Territorial interests in the national election was further enhanced by the appointment of Stevens as chairman of the Democratic National

Executive Committee , the official Breckinridge and Lane organization. Since 1852 ,when he actively campaigned for Franklin Pierce, Stevens had been highly regarded by Democratic party leaders. Appointed governor of Washington Territory the following year , he was instrumental in perfecting the organization of the territorial Democratic party. In 1857 and again in 1859 he was elected territorial delegate. During his terms in Congress he kept in close connection with the Buchanan administration. When the ~~democratic~~ party split over the Kansas issue, Stevens remained loyal to the administration wing. During the summer of 1860 , when the threat of disunion became increasingly great, Stevens believed that the election of Breckinridge was the only alternative to an open break between the North and the South. From his headquarters in the national capital, he worked diligently throughout the summer, writing campaign pamphlets, making addresses, and conferring with leading Democrats.

The optimism of some territorial Democrats and the confidence of the Democratic orator was hardly justified. The Democratic party in the territory , like the national party, was not at this time united. Since 1856 a local split centered around the arbitrary actions of Governor Stevens during an Indian war along ~~Pacific~~ Puget Sound. It assumed larger significance as early as February, 1859. In an address to the voters of the territory , the Democratic Central Committee for Washington Territory announced:

For near one year--since the unfortunate difference between President Buchanan and Senator Douglas on the Kansas question, there had evidently been a steady and fixed determination on the part of the outs, claiming to belong to the democracy (The anti-Stevens Democrats) to ignore the present administration , create a Douglas movement, and construct a party here whose issue with the democracy would be placed upon the ground of difference (sic) that existed between the President and that Senator at the last session of Congress.

p 421 In spite of efforts to heal or ignore the breach, the Douglas, or

anti-Stevens , wing gained strength.

So the Democrats in Washington Territory were quite disturbed at the disruption of their party on the national level. As the presidential election approached , the conviction grew that no candidate would receive a majority of the electoral vote, thereby throwing the decision into the House of Representatives.

...Republicans in the territory were jubilant over the national turn of events. Two newspapers were founded in 1860 to provide the 422 new party with a medium for expression. The Olympia Washington Standard announced its determination to "do battle for the advancement of freeterritory, free labor, free speech and free men."

The first issues were devoted to the presidential election. In spite of the fact that Washington Territory had no vote in this election, the editor felt that the area had a vital interest in its outcome. The United States Supreme Court had , according to the paper, declared Washington a slave territory when it ruled on the Dred Scott case. "We have long entertained the opinion that Washington Territory was Republican at heart," the editor continued rather naively, that a large majority of the territorial electorate opposed the proslavery tenets of the Democratic party and regarded with horror the Democratic efforts to make slavery national and freedom sectional. That the territorial elections disproved these assertions did not seem to deter his enthusiasm. The northern states, he predicted, would vote for Lincoln while those of the South would support Bell.

...On November 23, 1860, news of Lincoln's selection in the Pioneer and Democrat dashed "bey's "faint hope. Elsewhere in Northwest the voting also revealed the relative strength of political parties in the region.

A divided Democratic party in Oregon gave the state to Lincoln who won by a bare 264 votes over Breckinridge, his nearest competitor. It is significant that Oregon was one of the two free states that gave Breckinridge a larger vote than Douglas.

..Richard D. Gholson, the Buchanan-appointed governor of the territory, had left Olympia early in 1860 for his home in Kentucky where he campaigned for Breckinridge and later urged the secession of his native state. A month before Lincoln's inauguration he tendered his resignation to the secretary of the state "unwilling even for a day to hold office under a (so-called "Republican" president." Local Republicans, indicating a complete lack of understanding of the territorial system, confidently expected that they would be called upon to assume the territorial administration. Even before Lincoln's election a New York lawyer wrote to one of his friends, an aspiring officeholder, "Now is the time to ~~xxx~~ revolutionize Wash Terr & get rid of the clique that has ruled it for years & you are the man to do it." In an effort to expedite Lincoln's task of filling the territorial office and to reward deserving local politicians, a group of Republicans met at Olympia in December, 1860, agreed that only residents of the territory should be appointed, and drew up a tentative list of officers, giving first preference, of course, to those who were present. One of the group admitted, "the darling idea of my heart, (is) to make this Territory ultimately a Republican State." (Elwood Evans to William D. Kelley, July 29, 1861, U.S. Department of State, General Records, Appointment Papers, Applications and Recommendations (microfilm copy in Pacific Northwest Collection of originals in the National Archives)

Democratic leaders in the territory were undaunted in the face of the national defeat of their party. Before the election of Lincoln was locally known, William ~~Wicks~~ Winlock Miller, former superintendent of Indian Affairs under Buchanan and a leading administration Democrat in the territory, cautioned Stevens that "we must keep up the organization of the Democratic party and fight on and fight always."