THE KNOW NOTHING PARTY IN PENNSYLVANIA

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The political history of Pennsylvania like that of the nation at large has been characterized by the two-party system. At various times minor parties have appeared to sponsor some special issue. Of the minor issues that have at one time or another confronted the American people, that of nativism has its place in history. Generally, nativism meant hostility to anything un-American or to any influence which should be contrary to the established American customs. America was to be for Americans only. Nativist resentment had expressed itself as early as 1834, but really became an issue in 1854, at which time it was sponsored by the Know Nothing Order for a brief period of three years. This organization was very strong for a short time and brought about startling changes in Pennsylvania politics. However, its career was so short that Chief Justice Black characterized the organization by saying: "They're like the bee, biggest when it's born; it will perish as quickly as it rose to power."2

The Know Nothing Order began as a secret political society some time during 1850 or 1851. Its exact origin seems to be a point of dispute according to the various sources. In 1850 an organization was founded in New York by Charles B. Allen.

1Abstract of a thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree at Pennsylvania State College, worked out under direction of Professor Wayland F. Dunaway.
It was known as the "Order of the Star Spangled Banner" and sometimes by the name of "The Sons of the Sires of '76." The "United American Brotherhood" was founded in Baltimore during the winter of 1851. It was established by eleven persons, seven from Baltimore, three from New York, and one from New Orleans. Both of these orders were opposed to the influence of foreigners and Catholics in politics. In 1852 a few members from the "Order of United Americans" got into the "Order of the Star Spangled Banner." There was a revolution within the order and the society was reorganized. It was rapidly recruiting members but everything with relation to it was kept an absolute secret. It exerted some influence in the election of 1852, but by 1853 it was able to make a more decided stand, and then its existence became generally known.

The fundamental doctrine of the order was that "Americans should rule America." "Put none but Americans on guard tonight," the command of Washington in the midst of threatening dangers, was the motto now adopted to the use of the new party. The aim in view was that foreigners and Catholics should be excluded from all political offices, and that strenuous efforts should be made to change the naturalization laws so that an immigrant could not become a citizen until after a residence of twenty-one years in this country. The belief was that anyone whose ideas or interests lay outside of America could not be in sympathy with the American system, and then was a danger to the system.

The Know Nothing Order embraced four divisions or degrees. The proper name of the order was a secret. Each division had a proper name and the fourth degree was the true title of the entire compact. The name of the first degree was different in every state. In Pennsylvania it was the "Columbian League." The other degrees were the same in every state. The second was "Sons of the Sires of '76"; the third "Supreme Order of '76"; and the fourth "United American Brotherhood." Only the highest officials were admitted to the fourth degree.

The members of this order had to pass through a very solemn


initiation in order to be inducted into the first degree. After a probation period of three months a member might be proposed for introduction into the second degree, when he would go through another solemn initiation. A similar process was necessary for the third degree. The fourth degree was confined to the supervisory and advisory body of the order. The members of the order would recognize one another by various grips, signs, and pass words which would be changed from time to time in order to avoid detection.

For a time the secrets of the order were well kept, but it was certain that with such a large number, matters concerning the order were soon to leak out. When curious persons asked members concerning the name, aims, principles, and purposes of the order the usual answer was: "I don't know." This gave rise to the name by which the order was most popularly known "Know Nothing." The official and political name was the American Party. However, the order soon abandoned secrecy and became more of a political party, holding open conventions during its later life.

The calls for council meetings were not made by public notice, but sometimes by bits of colored paper cut into certain shapes and sizes and scattered over the sidewalks, and sometimes by cutting square or diamond shaped pieces from the bills, posters, and advertisements, then as now, posted on the fences around vacant lots. In Philadelphia, meetings were called by written notices. Thus, 6 - 15 - 8 meant sixth month, fifteenth day, eight P. M. The place was written backwards, and if the meeting was urgent a square bit of white paper folded diagonally was enclosed. Another mode of advertising consisted of small square bits of paper with mysterious inscriptions, and posted at the corners of streets, or scattered on the ground. Following is one of their advertisements:

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During the first three years of its existence the order exerted very little political influence, which might readily be expected because of its immaturity. In the national and state elections of 1851

\text{Pennsylvania Telegraph, April 22, 1854.}
to 1853 the nativist vote in Pennsylvania grew from 1,678 to 8,000. The Pennsylvania legislature for 1854 had five native members. In the Philadelphia election in the fall of 1853 the Nativists had candidates for all the various offices, who polled from 2,743 votes for the lowest to 18,180 for the highest.

At first thought it may seem strange that a new political party should appear at this time. However, there were several new issues and certain perplexing conditions which gave rise to the new Know Nothing party. The first, and possibly the most important issue was that of nativism, which was brought rapidly to the front after 1850 due to the rapid influx of foreigners. The political disturbances in Europe brought many foreigners to America, chiefly the Germans and Irish. The number of immigrants was constantly increasing after 1850 until the peak was reached in 1854 with 427,833 immigrants. Pennsylvania was in the center of the field of political nativism. She was receiving a large number of the immigrants of the day, and although this state was not the birthplace of the order which came to foster nativism, she was soon one of the centers of activity, and a hot bed of nativist reaction. The political life of Pennsylvania was greatly affected by the Know Nothing party and at one time was entirely revolutionized by its presence.

The second outstanding issue which gave rise to the party was the growing feeling of uneasiness in the minds of the Protestants with relation to the policy of the Roman Catholics. The cause of this uneasiness is not easy to determine. There was a prevalent idea that it was a clearly manifested purpose of the Roman Catholic Church to resist and destroy, or materially change, some leading measures of public policy, which have always been deemed essential to the permanency and prosperity of our civil and political institutions. It had long been public judgment that republican form of government needs general intelligence and that general intelligence depends upon instruction in state or public schools. The uneasiness of the public mind was further increased by seeing clearly the avowed policy of the Roman

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* Ibid., November 2, 1853.
* Cummings' Evening Bulletin, October 15, 1853.
* In 1850 the population of Pennsylvania was 2,311,786, of which 303,417 were foreign born. By 1860 the population had increased to 2,906,215, with a foreign population of 430,505, an increase of 127,088. A Century of Population Growth (Washington, 1909), pp. 57, 128.
Catholic Church to concentrate her vast church property of every
description in the hands of the bishops. It was well known that
the Roman Catholic citizens voted in a body, sometimes with one
party, sometimes with another. As to the justification for a
certain portion of this uneasiness there can be no doubt. Bishop
Hopkins admitted that there was powerful influence exerted
by priests in political matters, which was not to be reconciled
with the spirit of the Constitution He attempted to justify this
influence by saying that it came from the ignorance of the masses.

In Pennsylvania the growth of Know-Nothingsism was greatly
aided by the Campbell affair, which resulted from the appoint-
ment of Judge James Campbell to the position of Postmaster-
General in the Pierce cabinet. Campbell, who had had a suc-
cessful practice, was appointed Judge of the Court of Common
Pleas of Philadelphia in 1842. Due to a change in the Constitu-
tion in 1850 judges were made elective. In 1851 Campbell was
nominated as one of the Democratic candidates for the judgeschip
but was defeated by sectarian bigotry. The entire Democratic
ticket had been elected except Campbell. In January 1852 Gov-
ernor Bigler appointed Campbell to the office of Attorney-Gen-
eral. This office he held until the next year when he was
appointed to the position of Postmaster-General by President
Pierce. These appointments were an absolute defiance of the
nativist principles and raised a storm of opposition. The Phila-
delphia election of 1854 was considered a rebuke for the appoint-
ment of Campbell, and this affair was considered the chief
cause of the defeat of the Democratic party. The results
of the affair were much discussed in the newspapers of the day.

In addition to these specific reasons there were certain general
conditions which aided the new party. Among these were the
break-up of the Whig party, which was finally abandoned as a
state organization in 1856, and the revolt in the ranks of the Demo-
cratic party due to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. The
people of Pennsylvania like those of most northern states were
dissatisfied with the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and thus refused to
support the Democrats, and incidentally helped the Know Noth-

9 Cummings' Evening Bulletin, April 8, 1854.
10 Ibid., November 18, 1854.
11 Ibid., June 7, 1854. Ibid., October 7, 1854. Pennsylvania Telegraph,
May 17, 1854.
ings. In addition to the opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Bill there was a general contempt among the citizens of the state with the entire course pursued by the Democratic administration at Harrisburg and Washington. As a result of these conditions the new party found itself sponsored by a large group of supporters in Pennsylvania, and thus able to write a new chapter in Pennsylvania political history.

The triumphant year for the Know Nothings in Pennsylvania was 1854. By the end of the year they occupied for the moment the place of chief public interest, and it appeared for a time as though the organization would become a vital factor in state and national politics. The first startling exhibition of the power of the Know Nothing party in Pennsylvania was given in the first municipal election held in Philadelphia after the consolidation of the city and county in 1854.

The American City Convention for the nomination of officers which was held on April 12, 1854, nominated Robert Conrad for mayor and Baker for city solicitor. An adjourned meeting of the City Convention was held on April 19, at which time they nominated John N. Henderson for city controller, and Adam Much for city commissioner. Conrad was also nominated by the Whigs because he was in favor with the Know Nothings, and with the combination of two strong parties backed by the "Know Nothing Organization," there was every probability of his election.

The Know Nothings were in the thick of the fight and during the campaign preceding the election numerous mass meetings were held. The municipal election was held on June 6 and resulted in a victory for the whole Know Nothing ticket, including the mayor, solicitor, controller, commissioner, and a majority of the members of the various boards. The day after election the editor of the Evening Bulletin said: "There never was a more thorough and devastating defeat than that suffered by the Democratic party. . . . There is not enough of 'the Democracy' in the councils and the various other city offices to utter courageously a single loyal word for the powers at Washington and Harris-

23 Cummings' Evening Bulletin, April 20, 1854.
24 Pennsylvania Telegraph, April 19, 1854.
This Philadelphia election was looked on as a reprimand for the appointment of Campbell, because the people of the city could not be forced to accept whom they did not want.

In other municipalities throughout the state the Know Nothings were also electing their candidates by handsome majorities, and were upsetting the previous calculations of the old politicians. In the municipal elections in Lancaster, Washington, Chambersburg, and Allegheny they succeeded in getting their candidates elected. It is interesting to note that in some instances they supported the Whig candidates and in others the Democratic nominees, while in some cases they even elected men not known to be candidates for the office. As one editor aptly put it: "These Know Nothings appear to know no Party."

The state election of 1854 presented the most unique and most conspicuous contest to be found in the entire political history of Pennsylvania until that time. The Whigs and Democrats held their state conventions early in the year. The Democrats met at Harrisburg on March 10th and 11th, and nominated Governor Bigler for governor, Black for supreme judge, and Henry S. Mott for canal commissioner. The Whig state convention met in Harrisburg on March 15th. Ex-Governor Johnston was elected president of the convention. On the third ballot James Pollock was nominated for governor. Daniel Smyser was nominated for supreme judge, and George Darsie for canal commissioner. Consideration of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill raised an issue eagerly seized by the Whigs, and they made opposition to the bill the main question. There was a suggestion that Pollock withdraw in favor of Wilmot, the Free Soil Democratic candidate, but Pollock in an open letter made it clear that he was opposed to the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and in favor of re-enacting the Missouri Compromise, thus placing himself within the ranks of the opponents of the bill. This attracted the Free Soilers and they finally withdrew the name of Wilmot and supported Pollock.

Andrew G. Curtin was selected by ex-Governor Johnston as

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15 Cummings' Evening Bulletin, June 7, 1854.
16 Pennsylvania Telegraph, July 12, 1854.
17 Ibid., March 11, 1854.
18 Ibid., March 18, 1854.
19 Pennsylvania Archives Fourth Series (Harrisburg, 1902), VII, 784.
chairman of the Whig State Committee. Mr. Curtin thus assumed the responsibility of conducting the campaign for Pollock. Everything went smoothly for a few months until Curtin learned that there was a secret organization in Pennsylvania that controlled a majority of the Whig votes and many of the Democratic votes. The men in control of the party demanded certain political rewards in return for the support of their party. Curtin hesitated for a long time and had several conferences with them before he finally acceded to their demands. The program was arranged that the State Council would announce as nominees of the Know Nothing party Pollock, Whig, for governor; Mott, Democrat, for canal commissioner; and Baird, one of their own party for supreme judge.

As to the exact status of these men there appears to be some controversy. With relation to Mott there is little doubt, because he was a decided opponent of the Know Nothings and would never have joined the order. There were charges that he was a Know Nothing which he openly denied. Darsie, the Whig candidate for canal commissioner, was unacceptable to the Know Nothings because he was born in Scotland. With relation to Pollock the question of being a Know Nothing is the most unsettled. Some authors claim that he was not a member of the organization. However, charges that he had joined the order may be found in such articles as the following: "It is also known that to this faction Judge Pollock belongs, having become a member on the evening of the 15th day of June last, at the corner of Ninth and Arch Streets, Philadelphia, in a certain lodge of which James S. Pringle is the presiding officer; and he was conducted there by Mayor Conrad." No evidence has been discovered that this charge was refuted at any time, and whether or not this was merely a campaign trick, it is an evident truth that Pollock was elected with the aid of the Know Nothing vote.

The returns of the election which was held on October 10 were beyond expectation. They revealed Pollock, a Whig, chosen for governor; Mott, a Democrat, chosen for canal commissioner; and Black, a Democrat, chosen for supreme judge. The total
popular vote which was approximately 370,000, was divided as follows: Democratic 167,000, Know Nothing 120,000 and Whig 83,000. It is clearly evident that if the Whigs and Know Nothings had concentrated on all candidates the Democrats would have failed to elect a man. Judge Black, in reflecting on this election said: "The popular majority was very heavy. It was that year that the Know Nothings arose and beat every Democrat on the State ticket but me. They refused to unite with the Whigs on a candidate against me."\textsuperscript{24} Judge Black certainly realized that he was saved by the split Whig and Know Nothing vote. However, the returns show that he was not entirely correct in his recollection, because Mott another Democrat was also elected.

The Know Nothings elected twenty-three members to the legislature—one to the Senate, and twenty-two to the House, and also had a hand in electing many of the others. In the new legislature which convened at Harrisburg in January, 1855, the Americans elected all the caucus nominees of the party. They included seven Democrats, nine Whigs and one Native.\textsuperscript{25} On January 15 the legislature elected Eli Slifer, an American from Union County, as state treasurer to serve for one year.

In the local elections held in the various parts of the state during the latter part of 1854 and the beginning of 1855, the Know Nothings continued to be successful. In the city elections in Lancaster and Reading they succeeded in electing their candidates for mayor and other city offices. The borough elections in Danville, Lock Haven, Lamar, and Williamsport resulted in Know Nothing victories. A list of some of the remaining counties and municipalities in which the Know Nothing vote was influential will illustrate the manner in which the votes were diffused. Each one of the following counties showed a majority of Know Nothing votes in the elections held during this period: Dauphin, Lebanon, Mifflin, Armstrong, Allegheny, Beaver, Perry, Crawford, Huntingdon, Blair, Clarion, Lancaster and Clearfield. In the list of municipalities with a deciding Know Nothing vote was found Tremont, Johnston, Hollidaysburg, Gaysport, Altoona, Martinsburg, Hughesburg, Jersey Shore, Columbia, Elizabeth-town, Washington, Bedford, Harrisburg, Lebanon, Lewistown,

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Pennsylvania Telegraph}, January 10, 1855.
Carlisle, Shippensburg, Easton, Catasaqua, Gettysburg and Bethlehem. This list is not exhaustive but is illustrative of the influence of the party in Pennsylvania.

The Know Nothings still controlled Philadelphia by a narrow majority after the municipal election held on May 1, 1855. The radical Whigs and Know Nothings barely defeated a fusion ticket of Whigs and Democrats, by electing their candidates for City Treasurer, Commissioner and a majority of the members to the Boards of Surveyors, Health, Guardians of the Poor, and Prison Inspectors, and the Select and Common Councils. The Executive Committee of the American party considered this election the greatest triumph of the American party. Their power was shown by the fact that the Americans defeated the naturalized vote, both Catholic and Protestant, which was arrayed against them, and which united upon the Whig and Democratic fusion ticket, to defeat the American candidates. The Know Nothings triumphed single handed. It was said that the Americans were losing, but this was due to the fact that many Whigs who voted with the Know Nothings in 1854 now voted with the Democrats.

The Know Nothing party was never felt as a controlling factor in Pennsylvania after the spring of 1855. Its activity was confined to one year, 1854-1855, when it controlled Pennsylvania; and its decline was as rapid as its growth. It had gradually absorbed the Whig party, leaving nothing but a skeleton, and now itself was being absorbed by the new Republican party.

The first evidence of the weakness and dissension within the Know Nothing party came when the legislators met during the session which assembled in January, 1855, for the purpose of electing a man to the United States Senate. The Know Nothing caucus which met on February 9, 1855, finally nominated Simon Cameron as the party candidate after taking seven ballots. However, after the fifth ballot twenty-eight Know Nothings withdrew from the caucus because they felt there was bribery in connection with the nominations. Considerable surprise was expressed when the results became known, especially since the party had earlier pledged itself to support only a Know Nothing. When

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26 Ibid., February 24, 28, March 8, 21, 24, June 5, 1855.
27 Cummings' Evening Bulletin, May 2, 3, 4, 1855.
28 Ibid., May 11, 1855.
the legislature met in convention on February 13th and again on
February 27th, they failed to elect a Senator after five ballots
had been taken. Cameron, the American nominee, was leading
on all ballots but he could not secure enough votes to be elected.
There were rumors afloat that led to the feeling that there should
be an investigation into the senatorial election, and a committee
was appointed to investigate. The committee was composed of
three Senators and three Representatives. It held twenty-seven
sessions, from February 13th to March 22nd, and examined fifty
witnesses. However three of the most important witnesses
could not be found and the absence of these men prevented the
committee from securing sufficient evidence of bribery or cor-
rupption and it finally asked to be discharged.29 Nothing of impor-
tance was made public during the course of the proceedings.30

The National Council of the Know Nothing order met in Phila-
delphia on June 5, 1855. They had come together to adopt a
declaration of principles. However, the difference over slavery
led to a sharp contest in the full meeting over the attitude of the
body on slavery in the territories. By a vote of 80 to 59 they
finally adopted a resolution opposing the legislation by Congress
on the subject of slavery within the territories of the United
States, and the interference by Congress with slavery as it exists
in the District of Columbia.31 This attitude was finally incor-
porated into the platform of the party which was adopted on June
14, 1855.32 The Know Nothings had to face the inevitable.
They had attempted to avoid the slavery question as long as
possible, but they soon found themselves forced to face it. At
this meeting they decided to have their meetings open. As a
result of this National Council they had finally exhausted their
secrets.

The Americans were extremely active during the period of the
convention. On June 7, 1855, a banquet was held at the Sansom
Street Hall, at which seats were provided for 500 persons.33 On
June 11th, the delegates to the convention paid a visit to Carpenters

29 Reports of the Joint Committee of the Legislature of Pennsylvania, in
Relation to the Alleged Improper Influences in the Election of United States
Senator (Harrisburg, 1855).
30 Pennsylvania Telegraph, February 17, 21, 1855.
31 Cummings’ Evening Bulletin, June 6, 7, 8, 1855.
32 Ibid., June 15, 1855.
33 Ibid., June 8, 1855.
On Saturday evening, June 16th, a Grand Mass Meeting of the American party was held at Independence Square with speaking from three stands.

The State Council of the Know Nothing party met in Reading on July 5, 1855. The Council split over the Philadelphia platform and finally repudiated the twelfth section of the platform as adopted at Philadelphia. A section was adopted in its place, declaring in favor of the re-enactment of the Missouri Compromise, and opposing the admission of any more slave states north of the Missouri Compromise line. The vote on this new section stood 133 to 53. The eastern delegates stood 73 to 27. Thirty western men were opposed to the platform as not strong enough. The repudiation of the twelfth section and the formation of a northern party was led by ex-Governor Johnston. Here was the first movement of dissension within the party.

In the local elections held throughout Pennsylvania during the latter part of the year 1855 the Know Nothings were gradually losing influence. In Lancaster which had turned in a Know Nothing majority in the previous election the opposition carried the city. The average vote was Anti-Know Nothing 710, and Know Nothing 580. In Philadelphia the Know Nothings had nominated candidates for all the offices for the fall election of 1855. The Old Line Whig convention met and nominated by acclamation the whole American ticket. This put the fight up to the Know Nothings and Democrats, and tested the strength of the Know Nothings, who were defeated by majorities from 1500 to 3000.

The state election of 1854 had left the three contending parties in the most uncertain situation. The only state office to be filled in 1855 was that of canal commissioner, but the legislature had to elect a man for United States Senator. The Democratic convention met early and nominated Plumber for canal commissioner. The Whigs nominated Joseph Henderson; the Know Nothings selected Peter Martin of Lancaster. The Republicans met in Pittsburgh and instead of nominating Martin, nominated Passmore

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26 *Harrisburg Keystone*, May 9, 1855.
27 Cummings' *Evening Bulletin*, October 12, 1855.
28 *Pennsylvania Telegraph*, September 19, 1855.
Williams, which changed everything that had been hoped for previously. The campaign dragged on with these three regularly nominated candidates in opposition to the Democratic nominee, until a State Central Committee met in Harrisburg on September 27th, and nominated Thomas Nicholson as a Union candidate for canal commissioner. However, less than two weeks were left to reconcile the three opposition camps and effect a complete fusion, and Nicholson was defeated by a plurality of 11,536 votes. Plumber had a minority of 2,715 of all the votes cast and would have been defeated if the opposition had concentrated on one candidate.39 As a result of the election of 1855 the legislature was controlled by the Democrats. This legislature met in convention on January 14, 1856, and elected ex-Governor Bigler, who had been defeated for the governorship in 1854, to a full term in the United States Senate.

During the spring of 1856 the Know Nothing party was defeated in the municipal elections held in Lancaster on February 5th, and later in Philadelphia on May 6th. In both cities the party lost its political power and the Democratic party was again returned to power. The following explanation for the defeat appeared in the Public Ledger: "The American party managed to involve the city's finances so badly that the citizens seemed determined to try a change. The vote in the last election shows expression of the public in favor of economy."40

There was a movement among the opposition to the Democrats throughout the state for cooperation, and on February 13, 1856, the American, Whig, and Republican members of the legislature issued a call for a "Union Convention" to meet at Harrisburg on March 26th to nominate candidates for the various state offices.41 They decided that this was the only way to defeat the Democrats. The "Union Convention" met in the Hall of the House of Representatives and nominated Darwin Phelps, an American for auditor-general, Bartholomew Laporte, a Republican for surveyor-general, and Thomas E. Cochran, an Old Line Whig for canal commissioner.42 The state election was held on

39 Ibid., October 24, 1855.
40 "Public Ledger, May 7, 1856.
41 "Harrisburg Telegraph, February 19, 1856.
October 14th, and resulted in a Democratic victory by a narrow majority of about 2000 votes.\(^4\)

The presidential election became a great uncertainty as a result of the election of 1855. The Know Nothing party decided to enter the presidential race and was the first party to hold its convention. On February 18, 1856, the National Council of the Know Nothing order met in Sansom Street Hall in Philadelphia. The object of the meeting was to reconcile the differences in the American organization relative to the slavery question. After much disorder and many debates the Council finally adopted a national native platform of the Know Nothing party, which was later to be submitted to and adopted by the National Convention. On February 22nd, the American National Nominating Convention met at the National Hall on Market Street, Philadelphia, with all but four states represented. The convention was split over the slavery question and certain of the state delegations revolted, entirely or in part. One of the delegations which revolted in part was that from Pennsylvania led by ex-Governor Johnston. After adopting the platform, the convention proceeded to nominate Fillmore and Donelson for President and Vice-President. The portion of the Pennsylvania delegation which had seceded from the convention later joined the other northern seceders in nominating and supporting the Republican candidates, Frémont and Dayton. As a result of these conventions the Know Nothings were badly disrupted over the slavery question and the forces of opposition to Democracy were disunited.

A Union State Committee was finally held in Harrisburg on October 21, 1856, which adopted a Union Electoral Ticket as agreed upon by the American and Republican State Committees earlier.\(^4\) According to this plan the voters were to vote for the same twenty-six electors, while the twenty-seventh elector, who was to head the list, was to be either Frémont or Fillmore, according to the preference of the voter. In event that the Union ticket should be elected, the twenty-seventh elector would be lost, but the other twenty-six were to vote for Fillmore or Frémont according to the proportion of the votes which they had received as the twenty-seventh elector.

\(^{4}\) The Tribune Almanac and Political Register (New York, 1857), pp. 48, 49.

\(^{4}\) Public Ledger, October 22, 1856.
The campaign preceding the election was an extremely active one. Indeed it was one of the most exciting ever experienced in Pennsylvania. All three parties were making strenuous efforts to arouse the voters and to secure the support for their candidates. The Know Nothing party was not to be outdone in its fight for the election. Most authors ignore the work of the Know Nothing party in this election, and give all the publicity and honor to the Republican party with which it was cooperating. The Know Nothings began early to arouse the public to its duty and to line up the voters of the party. In Philadelphia a great mass meeting was held in Independence Square on July 2nd, with speaking from four stands. On July 14th, the "National Fillmore and Donelson Union of Philadelphia" was founded, with Henry D. Moore as president. From this time until the election in November, Fillmore meetings were common occurrences in Philadelphia, with many flag raisings in connection with the meetings. In other parts of the state the excitement was just as great and they were having their demonstrations with as much enthusiasm. Among the numerous mass meetings were those held in York, Easton, Shamokin and Harrisburg. It is evident now that neither party was very certain of success before the election. A correspondent from Lancaster wrote: "Mr. Buchanan goes to Berks County ostensibly to attend the County Fair, but the real object is to consult the Berks County prophet, whether or not he ought to withdraw."

However, the union of the opposition was not sufficient to defeat Buchanan in Pennsylvania and as a result he was elected President, on November 4, 1856. The vote of Pennsylvania in this election was as follows: Buchanan, Democrat, 230,686; Frémont, Republican on the Union ticket, 147,286; Fillmore, American on the Union ticket, 55,852, and on the Straight American ticket 26,337. Buchanan had carried the state by a plurality of 27,152 popular votes. But he had a majority of only 815 popular votes. If the fusion of the opposition had been absolute and there had been a little more cooperation throughout the state,

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46 Ibid., July 15, 1856.
47 Ibid., September 16, 23, 25, 27, 29, 30, October 1, 2, 3, 10, 28, 30, 1856.
48 Ibid., August 18, 25, 26, 1856. Public Ledger, September 26, 1856.
49 Cummings' Evening Bulletin, October 3, 1856.
Buchanan might not have carried Pennsylvania. As a result he would not have had a majority of the electoral votes and the election would have been thrown into the House of Representatives, with the results there a question.

The election of 1856 left political conditions in Pennsylvania rather uncertain. In local elections the Know Nothings began to fuse with the Republicans and make Union nominations. In most of the counties and municipalities the Know Nothing enthusiasm had died and what was left was willing to act with some other party. In Philadelphia in the municipal election in May, 1857, the Know Nothings gave indifferent support to their candidates and the Democrats carried the city and the majority of the ward elections.51

The Know Nothings of Pennsylvania fused their interest with the Republicans in a union convention which was held in Harrisburg on March 25, 1857.52 A governor, two judges, and a canal commissioner were to be elected in the state election of 1857. Two places on this ticket were offered to Americans: Veach for judge, and Millard for canal commissioner. However the true Americans were not satisfied and they held a “straight” American convention at the Fulton House, Lancaster, on June 3rd.53 At the convention nine counties were represented by fifty-four delegates. They decided to enter the field in October and proceeded to place nominees for the various offices. Isaac Hazelhurst was nominated for governor; John Linderman for canal commissioner; and Jasper Brady and Jacob Broome for supreme judges. The campaign was rather quiet as far as the Know Nothings were concerned. Nativism had run its race, and the majority of the people were placing their political allegiance on another basis. In the election the Know Nothing party polled only 28,000 votes throughout the state, and half of these were cast in Philadelphia. They were not able to carry one county in the state. This election accomplished what the state leaders expected and forced the Know Nothing party to make a public exhibition of its weakness.

The year 1858 saw the elimination of the Know Nothing party

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51 Public Ledger, May 6, 1856.
52 Ibid., March 26, 27, 1857. Reading Gazette and Democrat, March 28, 1857.
from the political arena. The municipal election in Pittsburgh on January 3rd was marked by the absence of Know Nothing candidates. On February 2nd, a municipal election was also held in Lancaster with the Know Nothing party absent from the field. In the municipal election in Philadelphia in May the Know Nothing party joined with the People's party and aided them in electing their ticket. However, in the municipal election on October 12, 1858, the Know Nothings had candidates for sheriff, register of wills, and clerk of the Orphans Court, but they polled less than 500 votes. This was the last appearance of the party in Philadelphia and clearly shows how its strength had decreased.

As a state organization the Know Nothing party met its death in the Union State Convention, composed of the American, Republican, and People's parties, which met in Harrisburg July 14 and 15, 1858. It was deemed wise to change the name of the opposition, and a resolution was adopted changing it to the People's party. By this action the last barrier had been crossed in fusing the opposition to the Democrats into one political organization, and the Know Nothings had to accept the fact that they were not to be the party in opposition to Democracy.

*Cummings' Evening Bulletin, October 13, 15, 1858.*