WHEN one attempts a study of the life of Victor E. Piollet, because of his many and varied activities covering a span of 78 years, it becomes a study of contrasts, with love and affection on one hand, and almost utter hatred on the other. He was the first son of Joseph Marie Piollet and Elizabeth Whitney who were married September 28, 1811, by the Rev. Minor York at Wysox, Pennsylvania.¹

Joseph Marie Piollet, the progenitor of the Piollet family in this country, was born August 15, 1773, at Bonneville, France. He was a soldier under Napoleon and was wounded at the Battle of Austerlitz. As a result of these wounds, he was unfit for further military service and was appointed paymaster of the French Army in the Alps. Shortly thereafter he returned to France and began an association with the financial house of Talleyrand.²

In 1806 he arrived in Philadelphia as representative for Count LeRay de Chaumont who had large land holdings in what is now Bradford County, Pa. Joseph Marie Piollet was charged with the settlement of all land grants held by his employer. He spent about a year in Philadelphia familiarizing himself with the English language and preparing for his duties along the upper Susquehanna. He made his way to Wysox and arrived there in 1807.³ He established a mercantile business in partnership with William Keeler. They were successful in this enter-

²Clement F. Heverly, Pioneer and Patriot Families of Bradford County, Pa., 1770-1800 (Towanda, Pa., 1915), II, 96.
³Ibid.
Having married Elizabeth Whitney, he fathered a family of two sons and three daughters.

Victor E. Piollet was born June 24, 1812, at Wysox, Pa. His brother, Joseph E. Piollet, was born August 30, 1819, at Wysox. They were associated throughout their long lives in various enterprises which brought them fame and fortune.\(^4\)

The town of Wysox, or Wysauking as it was sometimes called, was still a part of the Pennsylvania frontier. Common schools were few and far between. Victor Piollet received some tutoring during his early days at the instance of his father and mother. This was his only formal education. By industry and self-instruction he became one of the best informed men of his time. When he was 25 years old in 1837, he and his brother Joseph were contractors on a section of the North Branch Canal, then under construction by the state. His diligence and ability attracted the attention of state officials. In 1839 he was appointed superintendent of the North Branch Canal. At this time he was elected a colonel in the state militia. He bore this title for the remainder of his life.\(^5\)

While superintendent of the North Branch Canal Piollet employed David Wilmot, then a young, struggling lawyer, who had recently hung out his shingle in Towanda. Wilmot was grateful for the opportunity and the financial remuneration which he received. It is probable that this personal relationship existed for many years. In the political world, however, they came to a parting of the ways. Wilmot became a Republican and a leader of that party in the northern tier counties, while Piollet remained steadfast to the Democratic party until almost the end of his life. In 1846 and again in 1847 Piollet served as a representative of Bradford County in the Pennsylvania State Legislature.\(^6\)

The Mexican War occurred during his tenure as a legislator. President Polk appointed him a paymaster of the army. He was assigned to duty with the army of invasion under Generals Taylor and Scott. Just prior to his departure for service in Mexico, he married Miss Jane Miller, a daughter of Secretary of the Commonwealth Jesse Miller, who had served in Congress

\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid., History of Bradford County, 1088-1089.
\(^6\) Ibid., 1089.
and was one of the leading Democratic politicians in central Pennsylvania. With all of these political connections, it was a case of knowing the right people at the right time. A succession of appointments was sure to come to anyone who was as well-known in political circles as Piollet—the politics of the time being what they were.

In 1849 he was removed as paymaster of the army by President Taylor. He returned home and began the development of the enterprises in which he had been engaged prior to his service in the army. During his absence Joseph Piollet had gradually taken over the management of the family farm at Wysox. In 1850 at the death of Joseph Marie Piollet Victor and Joseph joined in a partnership which continued until the death of Victor. The father, Joseph Marie, as a young man had acquired a considerable amount of land in the village of Wysox as well as other tracts to the east and west in Bradford County. The two brothers began to develop these tracts. They carried on agricultural pursuits and became the acknowledged leaders of scientific farming in northeast Pennsylvania.

Their other commercial pursuits expanded rapidly. They developed the store business at Wysox until its influence and business dealings extended up and down the Susquehanna River from Elmira and Owego in New York State as far south as Harrisburg and Middletown on the Susquehanna, and later to the Mauch Chunk and Allentown area. They began to stock and sell all manner of staple goods in their store at Wysox. They further expanded their business until they sold fertilizers, limestone, and agricultural implements, as well as coal from the Wyoming Valley region. Timber, bark, and sawed lumber were in great demand so they shipped large quantities of these materials to market by raft and canal boat.

Eventually they began to buy large quantities of farm produce in the area and acted as middlemen supplying the markets along the Susquehanna and even the Philadelphia market. Their principal products were corn, oats, wheat and butter. With the increasing knowledge of their excellence as farmers—by people outside of the immediate area—they began to grow grain and furnish seed on contract for various seed houses, among them.

Ibid.
D. Landreth and Sons in Philadelphia. The opening of the North Branch Canal gave them further opportunities to serve an ever-widening market where greater profits were available to them.

In 1855 and 1856 the two brothers constructed the Barclay Railroad to assist in opening up the Barclay coal beds in southwestern Bradford County. This railroad extended from Towanda up the Towanda Creek to the junction of Schrader Creek and up that branch for a total distance of sixteen miles. The coal beds never proved as successful as their early promise suggested. Barclay coal was a type of anthracite. In the geological formation something was lacking. It was a bright attractive fuel which burned rapidly, but was very low in heat content and was not a saleable product.

The Piollet brothers helped establish the Schrader Manufacturing and Mining Company. They built a sawmill which produced many thousand feet of sawed lumber per day. The products of this mill were transported to market to the south, principally in the Wyoming Valley area. This material was in great demand. Hemlock lumber was required in great quantities to build coal breakers and other out-buildings around the mine shafts as well as being used in the construction of company towns which grew up around the mines. In addition to hemlock, the hardwoods were in great demand and were furnished to various manufacturing enterprises to build wagons and farm implements. The finer types of wood such as walnut and cherry were in great demand among the manufacturers of fine furniture, and for finishing interiors of many fine homes being built at that time.

As the business continued to grow and the families became more and more affluent, the residence in which they had lived in former years became too small to accommodate a large and growing family—which actually consisted of two households—that of Victor and his brother, Joseph. In 1871 Victor began to formulate plans for erecting a residence of such magnitude the like of which had never before been built in the upper Susque-
hanna. Even though it has fallen into decay and ruin, it excites
the passerby and makes one speculate upon its former glory and
magnificence. It was finally completed in 1873. An architect
must have been employed to design the house and write the
specifications for it. It was built in the form of a cross with
a great hall and stairway extending from the first to the third
floor. In the center was the great library which was the focal
point of interest. Even in that early day it was heated by steam.
A special stove was built and installed. The kitchen sinks were
of slate—cut to specification by the Lehigh Slate Company.
The exterior walls were of brick and the roof was covered
with slate. At the top was a great glass enclosed cupola which
could be seen for miles. The interior was finished with oak,
walnut and cherry. Many of the rooms were paneled with these
woods. The walls of some of the plastered rooms were painted
and various designs inscribed thereon. This house became one
of the show places of the countryside.

The house was occupied by the family until sometime after
the death of Louis Piollet in 1928. Within these walls Victor
Piollet held court, entertained local, state and national politicians,
leaders of the grange, and all of that multitude of friends he
had acquired during his lifetime. Hospitality was one of his
virtues. An invitation to his home was sought after.

His early interest in politics and his experience as a member
of the state legislature may have probably only whetted his
appetite for further excursions into the political world. His
acquaintance included many politicians of the day. He associ-
ated with Charles R. Buckalew of Bloomsburg, who served in
the Pennsylvania State Senate, the United States Senate and the
House of Representatives from 1887 to 1891. Later his acquaint-
ance with Samuel J. Randall, a member of the House of Repre-
sentatives in Washington and Speaker of the House of Repre-
sentatives from 1877 to 1881, gave him opportunity to range
far and wide on the political scene. He was acquainted with
James Buchanan and took an active part in securing the nomina-
tion of Buchanan for the presidency. After the election Bu-

11 See invoices, Box 2, Piollet Papers, WHGS.
12 U. S. Government Printing Office, Biographical Directory of the Amer-
13 Ibid.
14 Bradsby, History of Bradford County, 1089.
chanan offered him the position of private secretary to the President, but he refused. He did serve some time, however, in Buchanan’s office at the beginning of the administration and then returned to Wysox.

Upon the election of Lincoln in 1860 Piollet emerged as a War Democrat as did his good friend, Hendrick B. Wright, in Luzerne County. In April, 1861, when President Lincoln issued the call for 75,000 men to put down the rebellion, a meeting was held at the courthouse at Towanda. Colonel Piollet addressed the meeting. His speech it is said has never been equalled for eloquence and patriotism. His words were the strongest appeal to the citizens to stand behind and implement the nation and free institutions and to maintain the integrity of the union. The following letter of April 15, 1863, reflects his attitude:

The affairs of our Government demand the earnest attention of the people. We have a common interest in the proper management of public affairs. This Government was instituted by our patriotic ancestors. They inaugurated it to secure the equality and liberty of our race. This generation owe it to their character and manhood, to transmit it in manner and form to those who come after them.

As a War Democrat, Piollet was the Democratic candidate for Congress in his district in 1864. The district included part of Sullivan, all of Montour, Columbia, Wyoming and Bradford Counties. The Republican candidate was Ulysses Mercur, later Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court. Mercur won, but only after votes cast by the soldiers in the field were counted. And there was some doubt at the time whether Mercur had actually won.

On August 29-31, 1865, a great political meeting occurred at Orangeville, Columbia County, in Megargell Grove at the foot of Nob Mountain which is a mountain range extending from Shickshinny in Luzerne County and terminating at Fishing Creek in Columbia County. Charles R. Buckalew organized the political meeting during the summer of 1865 as a result of the so-called in-

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15 Ibid.
16 Victor Piollet, April 15, 1863, Piollet Papers, WHGS.
Buckalew spent considerable time in organizing this meeting. He called upon all of his local friends and invited them to speak. In addition, he invited Heister Clymer, State Senator from Berks County, who had been a “copperhead” during the Civil War. From Wyoming County came R. R. Little and from Bradford County Victor E. Piollet. This meeting was organized primarily to buttress Buckalew’s political position in Columbia County and the surrounding territory. At that time he was in the midpoint of his term as United States Senator and he realized that much had to be done to fortify his position in the impending election to the Senate. The local speakers devoted most of their time to relating the events that transpired during the occupancy of the federal troops in Columbia County and spoke of many indignities which the citizens of that county were compelled to suffer.’

By underscoring these indignities Democrats may have hoped to offset the propaganda effects raised by the Republicans when they waved the “bloody shirt” which had been so effective for political success during the Civil War. Piollet spoke on two occasions during the three day meeting. On Tuesday evening, August 29, his speech was entitled, “Unequal Taxation.” His speech made two references to his own position with respect to the political situation in Columbia County:

“I have throughout my life held one political association; I stand with the men with whom I began. We are called Democrats. We have always borne that title. I never had any connection with any other political organization. I am somewhat advanced in years and am generally acquainted over the State, and I get the honest grip of a Democrat wherever I go; he unburdens his soul to me; he is not afraid of me in any way. I here declare that I never in my life saw among my political associates that man who wanted this Union divided; who would even agree for one moment that the cause of secession should triumph. There was no sympathy with the effort to break down this Government in the breast of any Democrat that I ever met. But I have met many—and I am of that class—who,

while devoting all their efforts to put down the rebellion and overthrow secession, wanted the liberties of the people preserved, and the Constitution and laws of the country held sacred and not violated under the plea of “military necessity.”

And again he said,

Fellow citizens, these are sober times; the discussion of subjects pertinent to the occasion does not admit of fun; but there are in this community, gentlemen who have seen an exploit performed in this neighborhood that ought to be put in the history of some war. I do not believe it belongs legitimately to the history of the war for the Union. I am going to have that part of the war chronicled; its history shall not go unwritten. I know what General Cadwalader’s expedition up Fishing Creek was for. I know why he seized upon Democrats in Columbia County last year. It was to prevent a man about my size from going to Congress. (Laughter.) The troops had not more than landed at Bloomsburg before the Republicans in my neighborhood were chuckling about it and exclaiming “there is no danger of Piollet’s being elected; they ain’t going to let those fellows vote down there.”

On Wednesday afternoon, August 30, Piollet again addressed the meeting on the topic, “Review of the Parties.” He again referred to his regard for the people assembled and the effect it had on his own campaign for Congress the preceding year.

Your kindness to me I shall never forget. I have not met you since you so far honored me as to cast your suffrages for me to represent you in the National Legislature, at the last general election until on the present occasion. Although I was not then elected, I feel just as grateful to every man who owns the hands that deposited the ballot for me in that hour of terror, as though I had been elected. I do not care a button whether I ever hold an office or not. I do not wish to hold one unless my fellowmen desire me to do so; and if I shall ever be selected by the people to represent them, I will do so acknowledging the doctrine that the representative is bound by the will of his constituents.

19 Ibid., 120.
The effect of this meeting was the opening gun of a series of attacks upon the radical Republicans which went on for another two years. Piollet again became a candidate for Congress in 1868 against the same opponent and lost this time by only 311 votes. This vote was the largest ever cast for Congress in the 13th Congressional District.

The following excerpts from letters received by Piollet in the fall of 1868 illustrate campaign methods and reactions of the losers.

By the bearer . . . I again address you, of our hopes and prospects. I saw two men from Herrick, and gave them $15 to get out votes and pay the taxes of some that will not go to election unless this is done. They say they will poll ten more votes for you than was polled for Elwell, certain. One of them will see you at Camptown and post you in what is going on. . . .

We went into the fight in good earnest. I spent one week for you and my country, but all is lost, but we have the proud satisfaction that we have done our duty to ourselves our God & Country! There was lots of Republicans in our Town that promised to support you but only two done it. I know who they are. Their tickets was marked and can be seen in the box today.

The North Branch Canal was never an effective instrument for the transportation of goods from the Bradford County area to the markets in the South. The idea of a railroad supplanting the canal as a transportation artery began in the 1860s. The New York and Pennsylvania Railroad and Canal Company had come into existence. Asa Packer and his associates bought the right of way of the North Branch Canal and, following the canal bed through much of the territory, built the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Piollet played a major role in its construction from the Lackawanna Junction to the New York State line. This relationship between Packer and Piollet proved to be one of great advantage to the country politician. He became a member of the board of directors of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Packer located the Lehigh Valley Railroad shops at Sayre and sent his

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W. W. Kingsbury to V. Piollet, Towanda, September 22, 1868, Piollet Papers, WHGS.
Abraham Gay to V. E. Piollet, Meshoppen, October 20, 1868, ibid.
Bradsby, History of Bradford County, 1090.
son, Robert A. Packer, to take charge. A strong relationship between the two families emerged due to the marriage on September 2, 1875, of Emily Victorene Piollet to Robert Asa Packer.

During the canal and railroad building period more labor was required to do the work than the population of the area could furnish. During the 1850s the Welles family, particularly Charles F. Welles, Jr., became the agent whereby the great migration of Irish into the Bradford and Wyoming County area was accomplished. Welles also became interested in building the canal and at a later period in constructing sections of the railroad. His family had vast land holdings adjacent to these transportation arteries. The Irish agent, Sir Gerald Aylmer of Donodea, Ireland, upon instructions from Welles would recruit the necessary people. Welles paid for their passage. The Irish immigrants would take ship for New York, come by train to Waverly, and descend the valley by stage to Wyalusing. From there they would be assigned to the various projects on which they worked.

Piollet in his capacity as a superintendent of the canal and builder of several sections of the canal came into close contact with these Irish immigrants. He saw to it that as soon as possible they were naturalized and became voters. For many years they looked to him for guidance. He was quick to offer his assistance in order to further the interest of the Democratic party and its candidates. Part of Piollet's political strength in northeastern Pennsylvania rested on this Irish vote.

Because of his close connection with agriculture, Piollet early saw the great disadvantage of the American farmer in competition with industry. After the Civil War and the advent of the Grant Administration a period of reform began to dawn. The corruption and political chicanery that went on during the two Grant Administrations aroused public attention. The time was ripe for reformers to take the field. Regulation of currency became a prime consideration. The Panic of 1873 created a period of extremely hard times for American farmers.

In 1867 O. H. Kelley, a government clerk in Washington, conceived the idea of an organization consisting of farmers and

*Photocopy in Welles Collection, WHGS (original copy in the archives of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission).
pledged to the advancement and welfare of American farmers. Starting in Pennsylvania Kelly worked his way east, organizing the farmers into what became the Patrons of Husbandry. In 1871 there was only one grange organization in Pennsylvania—that at Clinton, Pa., organized by Luke Eger. Victor Piollet became enamored by the grange movement and the necessity of a platform on which the American farmer could express himself to make his needs and desires known to the general public.

Piollet joined this movement. By 1873 he had become state lecturer of the Patrons of Husbandry. This necessitated wide travel throughout the Commonwealth. His experience on the political platform in many campaigns served him in good stead. He was of imposing physical build, and as a platform speaker became one of the outstanding figures of his day. His activities in the development of the grange in Pennsylvania were so effective that by 1875 there were 636 subordinate granges instead of the meager 29 in 1873.

The grange constitution states specifically that it had not been founded for political purposes, but "to enhance the comforts and attractions of our homes, to strengthen our advancements and our pursuits, to foster mutual understanding and cooperation." This grange declaration thinly veiled the insurgent bitterness of its members. The movement grew rapidly. The inevitable wedding of the grange movement and politics reached its culmination in state campaigns in Pennsylvania and Ohio in 1875.

After the Republican victories of Lincoln the Democracy of Pennsylvania had been left without effective leadership. A political feud between Congressman Samuel J. Randall and Senator William Wallace began to develop. This feud lasted for two decades. Randall was a Congressman from a Philadelphia district which had been gerrymandered to secure his election, and further to insure that the remainder of the city's congressional districts would be occupied by Republicans. This made

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25 Ibid., Statistical Tables, 58-59.
26 Ibid., 86.
it possible for him to continue as a member of Congress for thirty years. Wallace had been a member of the state senate from Clearfield County and had occupied a high place in Democratic circles in Pennsylvania. The fight for leadership, which began between Randall and Wallace, was brought about by the accusation, after Wallace had been elected United States Senator, that he had been a part of the Treasury Ring during the Republican administration. It was said he had benefited financially by his undercover activities with the ring, in particular his association with the State Treasurer, Mackey, a Republican. In the fight for leadership Randall was joined by Charles R. Buckalew.

Hendrick B. Wright, the workingman's friend, from Luzerne County and Victor Piollet of Bradford County were the regional leaders along with James P. Barr of Pittsburgh who rushed to aid Randall's quest for leadership. The convention of the Democrats resulted in the "Battle of Erie" which the Democratic State Convention of 1875 came to be called. At that convention lines were sharply drawn between the Randall and Wallace factions. And the maneuvering that went on prior to the convention on both sides was fearful and wonderful to behold. The first contest concerned the election of a chairman for the convention. In this fight the Randall faction won: they elected Hendrick B. Wright as permanent chairman. In the nomination for Governor both sides put forth a candidate which resulted in Wallace's candidate, Judge Pershing, being nominated. In the early maneuvering for nominating the governor, Piollet's name appeared prominently. For months preceding the nominating convention people in the grange movement and the reform element of the Democratic party had urged him to be a candidate. The convention then proceeded to nominate a state treasurer whose election by the people rather than the legislature had been provided for in the recently adopted Constitution of 1873. Several candidates were placed in nomination. On the third ballot the convention nominated Piollet over Playford and Noble. The stage was set between the two parties which had emerged as political forces in the Commonwealth.

28 Ibid., 20.
29 Ibid., 179.
30 Ibid., 180.
the leadership of Senator Simon Cameron the Republican convention had previously nominated General Hartranft of Montgomery County and Henry Rawle from Erie County for state treasurer.

The Panic of 1873 had caused great distress among the farmers and laboring classes of the state. The Republican party proceeded to direct their 1875 campaign toward the "hard money" question. The idea of inflation disturbed some people in Pennsylvania. In sections of the state where Republicans could be influenced by the idea of inflation candidates proceeded to agree with their ideas. By pursuing such a course Republicans eventually won the election. The determined and able leadership of Simon Cameron who had suffered reverses in the campaign of 1874, combined with Magee in Allegheny County and the Treasury Ring in Philadelphia, were sufficient to make the Republican party victorious in the campaign. From the outset the Democratic campaign faced difficulty.

There was an effort made through Piollet's influence to capture the farm vote in the state for Democratic candidates. The Democracy before and during the campaign also attempted to create an alliance between labor and agriculture. Chauncey F. Black a few days before the election forwarded the following letter marked confidential to Piollet:

When I opened my newspaper on that memorable morning in September, and saw your nomination for Treasurer I was more delighted than I ever was by any similar event. I shall not stop to mention the reasons why and I don't suppose you would care to read them if I should. Some of them I have given to the public from time to time through the columns of the Sun, and I have reason to believe not without effect. I felt that the battle ought to be made under your leadership, and with treasury frauds, and Ring robberies and corruptions as the issue. In that case it would have been fierce, aggressive, rapturous, triumphant.

The unusual situation created by the feud between Randall and Wallace never healed during the campaign. Both of these

\[\text{Ibid.}, 199.\]
\[\text{Horace H. Day to Victor Piollet, March 6, May 9, 1875, Piollet Papers, WHGS.}\]
\[\text{Chauncey F. Black to Victor Piollet, New York, October 31, 1875, Piollet Papers, WHGS.}\]
men campaigned in behalf of the Democratic ticket. But neither
was as enthusiastic as they should have been. Wallace's nominee,
General Pershing, 34 failed to do anything in his own behalf
during the whole campaign. Piollet did most of the campaign-
ing. 35 He was beset by demands from all kinds of Democrats.
The "Greenbackers" and the Democrats in the grange were de-
manding inflation. Piollet tried to reconcile the difference of
opinion which existed within the membership of the grange. 36

Hendrick B. Wright, as the state chairman of the Democratic
party, made an unfortunate speech at Reading. The conse-
quences resulting therefrom enraged the "hard money" elements
of the party. 37 On Piollet's part many of the things which he
had said during his career came back to haunt him during this
campaign. The Irish, whom he had on most occasions been able
to handle in a political way in Bradford and Wyoming Counties,
began to remind him of some of the indignities they had suf-
f ered from the early days during the construction of the canal
and railroad. Michael Coyle of Meshoppen wrote to Piollet on
October 4, 1875, that:

No doubt you will be surprised to get a letter from
a son of old Earin. At the request of several of my
countrymen I am going to ask one request of you.
And that is to go to your son-in-law, Mr. Packer, and
please to use your influence with him in giving work
to James Sheridan of Meshoppen who was one of the
discharged men of the gravel train last spring. He is a
good faithful man and worked for the company for
several years which all of the Messrs. Rahmes can
testify to and you yourself must know him. Now Mr.
Piolette please to grant us this request and we shall
promise you the full Irish vote of Wyoming County.
You please to ask H. B. Morogan about me and he
will tell all about me. Please to answer Emadiatly (sic)
as Sheridan is very Anxious to here (sic) the results. 38

34 Cyrus L. Pershing to Victor Piollet, September 27, 1875, Piollet Papers,
WHGS.
35 S. W. Buck to Victor Piollet, September 27, 1875, Piollet Papers, WHGS.
36 W. W. Hensel to Victor Piollet, September 27, 1875, S. W. Buck to
Victor Piollet, September 27, 1875, S. W. Buck to Victor Piollet, September
30, 1875, George Rhey to Victor Piollet, October 4, 1875, S. W. Buck to
Victor Piollet, October 7, 1875, Piollet Papers, WHGS.
38 E. M. Davis to Victor Piollet, October 19, 1875, Piollet Papers, WHGS.
38 Michael Coyle to Victor Piollet, October 4, 1875, Piollet Papers, WHGS.
Opponents tried to embarrass Piollet. A suit was brought against Piollet in behalf of his mother-in-law for the return of some real estate which, in all probability, was only done for its political effect. And a remark which he reputedly had made during the Franco-Prussian war that he hoped the French would lick the damned Dutch was circulated among the German population against his candidacy.

He was not without resources of his own to combat all these adversities. He was in continual demand throughout the state to make public appearances on behalf of himself and the ticket. Democrats asked him to make many, many more appearances than he could possibly fulfill.\(^3\) In so short a campaign he travelled from one end of the state to the other. It was a tiring experience.

The Democracy in Pennsylvania looked to the campaign in Ohio for some indication of what might happen in Pennsylvania.\(^4\) The election in Ohio was held in October. What happened in the contest between Rutherford B. Hayes and Allen was sure to be a barometer of what might happen in Pennsylvania in November. Following the election of Hayes, the Republican candidate for Governor of Ohio, the spirits of the Democracy in Pennsylvania were considerably dampened and a flood of letters came to Piollet. Most of these letters discussed the effect of the Ohio election and its influence upon Pennsylvania.\(^5\) It is evident that it was just a case of “whistling in the dark.”

As the campaign progressed and the lines were more tightly drawn, Henry M. Hoyt, Republican chairman for the state of Pennsylvania, wheeled out the big guns. Among others he brought out that old champion, Galusha Grow, the “Father of the Homestead Act,” who stumped the state on behalf of the Republican ticket and “hard money.” Grow proved most effective wherever he appeared.\(^6\)

\(^{3}\) R. A. Packer to D. R. Lathrop, September 30, 1875, B. F. Myers to Victor Piollet, September 30, 1875, Timothy Swaney to Victor Piollet, October 21, 1875, D. Hankinson to Victor Piollet, October 2, 1875, Piollet Papers, WHCS.

\(^{4}\) J. B. Browley to Victor Piollet, September 30, 1875, Piollet Papers, WHCS.

\(^{5}\) S. W. Buck to Victor Piollet, October 14, 1875, A. Cummings to Victor Piollet, October 14, 1875, James Hemphill to Victor Piollet, October 18, 1875, Piollet Papers, WHCS.

\(^{6}\) Evans, Pennsylvania Politics, 1872-1877, 190.
On election day November 2, 1875, the Democratic ticket went down in defeat. They carried 37 counties in the state. Defeat only came to them because of a well disciplined and well-oiled organization in Allegheny and Philadelphia Counties. Piollet lost by 9,725 votes. To add to his chagrin the Democratic ticket polled in Piollet's own home county of Bradford 1,000 votes less than they had in the campaign of 1874. Piollet evidently failed to intercede for James Sheridan. For once in his political career the Irish in Bradford County refused to support Piollet at the polls.

During the last decade of his life Piollet well might be considered an elder statesman. He paid as much attention to business as to politics. Only once more was he to be a candidate, and that for Congress in 1886 when he was the leader of a forlorn hope in a district containing a 4,000 Republican majority. He spent much of his time in business affairs and attending meetings of various organizations to which he belonged. He served a long time on the Board of Trustees of Pennsylvania State College.44

Disagreement with the Cleveland Administration over tariff policy finally led Piollet out of the Democratic party. His last significant political appearance may have been testimony before the Ways and Means Committee at Washington in behalf of a protective tariff for farm products and in opposition to a tariff for revenue only.45 After breaking with the Democratic administration, Piollet communicated frequently with Senators Quay and Cameron on political matters. John Wanamaker as Postmaster General during the Harrison Administration was also a frequent correspondent.

His letter to W. L. Scott on September 17, 1886, demonstrates how far he had swung away from the Democratic party.

Your favour of the 15th came to hand this morning. I will gladly go to Erie and talk in behalf of your election independent of political consideration; simply asking your re-election for the good you have, and can do

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43 John A. Smull, comp., Legislative Handbook (Harrisburg, 1876), 267-286.
44 Bradsby, History of Bradford County, 1089-1091.
45 Samuel J. Randall to Victor Piollet, January 5, 1890, and printed copy of Piollet's testimony before Congressional committee, undated, Piollet Papers, WHGS.
the people interested and engaged in the industrial pursuits regarding labor.

There is a man in Union City who is a republican, a bright minded farmer, and a granger, his name is David Wilson good talker. Let me know how he stands or I will find out. You must give me ample, timely notice of the date you will want me so I will be at liberty to attend. I will do all I can to promote your Election gladly.46

Probably his last political blast at a long time local opponent was written to Samuel J. Randall on January 28, 1889:

The word has been given out that Joseph Powell47 will make an effort to be retained in the Philadelphia Custom House under the incoming administration. This would be an outrage. Can you devise a way to prevent it—if any thing that I can do to prevent such an outrage it will be greatly given. Certainly he has no claims on the Harrison party.

Who he will get to support his application I have no idea beyond the statement that Lieutenant Governor Davis will help him.48

In all of his political career Piollet occupied the unique position of a politician who had no political base in his own community from which he could operate effectively. The newspapers in Bradford County did not support his position in any way or at any time. He could only maintain his political position by cultivating a political alliance with Buckalew, the political idealist and protectionist, on the one hand and with Samuel J. Randall, Congressman from Philadelphia and a machine politician, on the other. Randall from his position of power was useful to Piollet in distributing post office appointments and other favors that were extended to his followers in Bradford County and the adjacent area. With this arrangement Piollet seemed content for he never sought public office except for his early career on the county level.

46 Victor Piollet to W. L. Scott, September 17, 1886, Piollet Papers, WHGS.
47 Joseph Powell was a former business associate of Piollet and member of Congress, 1875-1877. See Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961.
48 Victor Piollet to Samuel J. Randall, January 28, 1889, Piollet Papers, WHGS.
His former business and political allies prior to the Civil War and afterward—namely, David Wilmot, Joseph Powell and the publisher, Stephen W. Alvord, aroused Piollet’s hatred. He never forgave them for their acts in opposition to him. His relationship with Hendrick B. Wright was that of mutual respect engendered only by political expediency. Apparently no deep personal friendship existed between the two men. Many of his business and financial transactions when held up for inspection were subject to suspicion. His personal relationships could, on occasion, be brutal. In all of his political and social life it is well demonstrated that he was generous and a fine host. He could be endearing and charitable to his family and close friends. But one of his weaknesses was that he could never forgive nor forget the animosities brought about by political differences.

Piolett died August 27, 1890, at the age of seventy-eight, on the same farm where he was born at Wysox. With all of his virtues and vices, his loves and disagreements with others, in retrospect, it can be said he lived a full life. And it certainly was exciting! In many ways Piollet was typical of politicians who made up the backbone of party leadership in rural Pennsylvania.