William F. Harrity and National Democratic Politics in the Cleveland Era

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William F. Harrity (1850-1912), chairman of the Democratic National Committee from 1892 to 1896, was a prominent public figure in Pennsylvania during the late nineteenth century. He practiced politics on the national level during a generation of change that transformed the political, economic, and social order of the United States.

A native of Delaware, Harrity relocated to Philadelphia in 1867. He graduated from LaSalle College, where he also taught Latin and Mathematics until 1871. Harrity then studied law with Lewis C. Cassidy and Pierce Archer, two prominent Philadelphia lawyers. Upon his admission to the bar in 1873, Harrity worked as one the firm's assistants until 1879, when he formed a partnership with James G. Gorman, who later secured a judgeship on the court of common pleas of Philadelphia. Although he gained recognition as a competent lawyer, Harrity quickly developed interests in business and politics. He was a capable businessman and politician known for his modesty, personal charm, and good humor.¹

Harrity's involvement with Democratic politics in Pennsylvania spanned nearly two decades. Living in a state dominated by an efficient Republican political machine that had been constructed by Simon Cameron and refined by Matthew S. Quay and Boies Penrose, Harrity functioned as a member of the loyal opposition.² Because of their stands on antiunionism and antiprotectionism, Democrats lacked strong support from labor and business groups in the state. Moreover, with their predilections for factions, Pennsylvania Democrats in the post-Civil War period formed distinct groups, including those led by Senator William A. Wallace, who battled for control of the Democratic organization against Samuel J. Randall, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives from 1876 to 1881 and a champion of tariff protection.³ Cultivating an association with the speaker, Harrity surfaced as one of Randall's lieutenants, but he later abandoned his political mentor when events dictated a different political alliance. It was in this divisive environment that Harrity made the connections that eventually earned him a place at the head of the national committee.

In 1882, Harrity, as chairman of the Democratic City Executive Committee of
Philadelphia, helped to secure the election of Robert E. Pattison, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate and the sole Democratic chief executive of Pennsylvania in the Gilded Age. Pattison served from 1883 to 1887 and 1891 to 1895. During Pattison's first administration, Harrity became an influential member of the Democratic State Executive Committee. In 1884 Harrity attended the Democratic National Convention which nominated Governor Grover Cleveland of New York for the presidency. After his election, President Cleveland, seeking tariff reform, deprived Randall of patronage and instead favored Congressman William L. Scott, an Erie industrialist with interests in shipping and railroads. Scott told Cleveland of Harrity's political sagacity and organizational skills. Upon Scott's death in 1891, Harrity took his place on the Democratic National Committee.

The only Democrat to occupy the presidential office during the Gilded Age, Grover Cleveland rewarded loyal party members for their services. Harrity benefited when the president tendered him an appointment as postmaster of Philadelphia, a position he held from 1885 to 1889. In this capacity, Harrity worked under Postmasters General William F. Vilas and Donald M. Dickinson and First Assistant Postmaster General Adlai E. Stevenson. This was the preparatory period for Harrity in national politics. Following Cleveland's defeat for re-election in 1888 and the installation of the Republicans under President Benjamin Harrison in 1889, Harrity relinquished the office. He then became president of the Equitable Trust
Company of Philadelphia, of which he was one of the founders. But he remained politically active. During the four years of the Harrison interregnum, Harrity rose from local to national leadership of his party.

In 1890, Harrity as permanent chairman of the Democratic State Convention, endorsed Pattison for governor. Having practically a solid Philadelphia delegation behind him, Harrity fought all the old leaders of the Pennsylvania Democracy, including Wallace. After nominating Pattison for a second term and leading his candidate to victory at the convention, Harrity served as Pattison's campaign manager. Running on a reform platform, the former governor defeated George W. Delamater, his Republican opponent. A delighted Cleveland sent his congratulations. "I have felt the most intense interest in the contest in your State," he wrote, "and have had great sympathy with the good people there, confronted as they were with everything bad." The ex-chief magistrate lamented the "pitiable" condition and "the struggle between right and wrong" that had been "forced upon your grand old Commonwealth." Cleveland also thanked Pattison "for the gallant fight" and all that he had done "in this trying hour to save the American character."6

Upon assuming office in 1891, Pattison appointed Harrity secretary of state of Pennsylvania. Using this office as a political base, Harrity consolidated his power during the second Pattison administration. He also turned his attention to national politics.

Harrity exerted a strong influence in favor of the nomination of former President Cleveland in 1892. From his office on Chestnut Street and from his home on Girard Avenue in Philadelphia, Harrity corresponded with Cleveland and others regarding the 1892 political situation. Of his correspondence much has been lost. Yet his letters clearly revealed his admiration for Cleveland and his determination to seek the restoration of the Democracy, nationally and in Pennsylvania.

Harrity regularly sent Cleveland clippings from Philadelphia newspapers. In a letter to Cleveland on April 15, 1892, Harrity enclosed some material and confided that the friends of Governor Pattison were influential. Harrity predicted that the Pennsylvania delegation to the national convention would give Cleveland "its united and cordial support.7" Cleveland appreciated this news. Believing that Pattison was "a splendid, honest, Christian man and very industrious," Cleveland, who had entertained notions in 1887 of appointing Pattison to head the Post Office Department in his Cabinet, wanted the governor's support in 1892.8

On June 9, 1892, Harrity attended a clandestine pre-convention gathering of
Held at the New York City home of William C. Whitney, former secretary of the navy from 1885 to 1889 and Cleveland’s 1892 campaign manager, these men formalized plans and strategies to secure the nomination of the ex-chief executive. Present were Harrity of Pennsylvania, Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts, William L. Wilson of West Virginia, William F. Vilas of Wisconsin, and Donald M. Dickinson of Michigan, among other leading Cleveland supporters.

Harrity knew them all well. Quincy, chairman of the Massachusetts Democratic State Committee and future mayor of Boston, managed the literary bureau of the Democratic National Committee. Permanent chairman of the national convention, Wilson was a Congressman from West Virginia in favor of tariff reduction who would secure a Cabinet portfolio in the second Cleveland administration. Senator Vilas, former Interior Secretary and Wisconsin lawyer, was a sound money Democrat and trusted friend of Harrity. Dickinson, former postmaster general during Cleveland’s first administration and a shrewd politician, chaired the Democratic National Campaign Committee in 1892. He described Harrity as a man “full of fight” who pinned “all his hope of any enduring future” upon his loyalty to Cleveland. These men and others met again in another Whitney Conference on June 17 at the Hotel Richelieu in Chicago for last minute preparations.

Democrats convened at Chicago in June, 1892, for their national convention. Cleveland won renomination on the first ballot. Pennsylvania’s delegates contrib-
uted to his victory by casting their entire 64 votes for the former president. After Cleveland's triumph, Pennsylvanians voted unanimously for Isaac P. Gray, an ex-Republican and former Democratic governor of Indiana, for the vice presidency. Because Gray was Whitney's choice for second place on the ticket, Harrity persuaded the Pennsylvania delegation to endorse the Hoosier candidate.\textsuperscript{12} It soon became clear that Gray, a Pennsylvanian by birth, would lose and that former Congressman Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois would win the vice presidential spot. Consequently, William U. Hensel, attorney general of Pennsylvania and former chairman of the Democratic State Committee, seconded the motion that Stevenson be nominated by acclamation.\textsuperscript{13} Pennsylvania delegates left Chicago convinced that in Cleveland and Stevenson they had a winning team for the November election.

The four Cleveland men who directed the 1892 Democratic campaign work were Harrity, Whitney, Dickinson, and Quincy. "I consider that we are doing great work," Whitney informed Cleveland, "in removing from the canvass the blight which dissension brings in the way of discouragement. . . . I want responsibility put on these people. I want it (to be) their fight."\textsuperscript{14}

Nearly a month after Cleveland’s nomination, members of the Democratic National Committee assembled at the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York City to select a new chairman. Because Whitney rejected the post, several candidates figured
prominently in the discussions. Looking carefully at Harrity's record of successful party service, Democrats concluded that the Pennsylvanian merited consideration. At first Harrity harbored some reservations about holding a position of such “grave responsibility,” emphasizing his belief that he lacked the requisite “experience and knowledge,” yet he expressed his willingness to work for the party.  

Several days later, Harrity demonstrated more self-assurance. “Although I do not desire the position,” he explained, “the matter has been presented to me in such a way that it may be difficult for me to decline if the committee in its wisdom should see fit to elect me.” Adding that others were “better equipped,” Harrity, urging Whitney to reconsider, concluded that the New Yorker would “inspire the greatest amount of confidence.” Nevertheless, Harrity carefully left the door open publicly to all possibilities while privately holding firm to his hope of securing the coveted appointment.  

When the committee met in July, a scheme to defeat Harrity crystallized among the anti-Cleveland faction in New York and other groups favoring Senator Calvin S. Brice of Ohio and Senator Arthur P. Gorman of Maryland, who sought the job. Their tenuous attempt to obtain control of the committee organization backfired.  

On July 19, accompanied by Attorney General Hensel of Pennsylvania, Harrity arrived in New York. Hensel boomed Harrity for the chairmanship by calling the Pennsylvania politician “the man for the place” and predicting that not only would he make “a winning fight” but would scale down the Republican majority in Pennsylvania by 20,000 votes. For his part, Harrity attended a meeting with Whitney, Cleveland, Stevenson, and members of the committee at Whitney's home. There they finalized matters. Cleveland personally appointed Harrity, a wealthy conservative Democrat, to head the national committee, and Stevenson and Whitney acquiesced in his decision. Committee Democrats privately concurred and then formally approved Harrity's selection on July 23.  

The day after his appointment as chairman, Harrity returned to his summer home at Riverside, near Bound Brook, to begin preparations for the campaign. “I am very much impressed,” he affirmed, “with the prospect of the success of the Democratic ticket this fall.” Large demonstrations of public support provided “practical evidence” that there existed a united party, and the “magnificent” ovation given Cleveland and Stevenson indicated that “the candidates were in touch with the people.” This was the clue to Harrity's political philosophy and a characteristic of Gilded Age politics that came to life in his career. When queried
about what attributes a political leader needs for success, he replied: “A politician should never attempt to drive public sentiment. He ought to be satisfied to follow it and always to keep in touch with it.” Harrity's statement constituted no ringing endorsement of a strong stewardship theory of presidential leadership or of a leader as a molder of public opinion, but it satisfied the American electorate of the 1890s.

To Cleveland, Harrity was the ideal chairman. Young and energetic, with a pleasing personality, the Pennsylvanian never wavered in his devotion to the former chief executive. Like Cleveland, Harrity was an eastern conservative committed to a sound currency and tariff reform. Both men opposed the McKinley Tariff of 1890, adventurism in foreign policy, and the free and unlimited coinage of silver at a ratio of 16 to 1 with gold, a policy which they contended would cause inflation and financial instability.

Several problems confronted Harrity in the Summer and Fall of 1892. These included Cleveland's reluctance to make campaign appearances, Stevenson's position on the contentious currency issue, the presence of a Populist ticket, and Democratic factionalism in New York. These matters tested Harrity's political skills as an organizer and negotiator.

Expressing serious misgivings about campaigning, Cleveland vetoed Harrity's pleas to go on the stump. “One thing I hope will not be urged upon me,” he

Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois served as Cleveland's Vice President, 1893-1897.
notified Vilas, "and that is trip-making and speech-making. I believe the imagina-
tion of the people is in just the right condition regarding the nominee."21 Cleveland reiterated his position in a letter to Whitney. "I am so satisfied," he wrote, "that stumping on my part would be a mistake that I do not think I could be
induced to undertake it in any circumstances and I don’t think any hopes ought to
(be) raised in that direction."22 Rebuffing Stevenson’s effort to persuade the for-
mer president to visit Illinois, Cleveland explained that he did not have "the least
idea of making a political trip away from home during this campaign, and I find
that the opinion of a majority of those in whose judgment I have confidence
agrees with mine, that it would be inexpedient to pursue such a course."23 The
nominee held firm to his views. Cleveland’s major public appearance that year was
his acceptance speech at Madison Square Garden.24

Because Cleveland declined to make campaign appearances, the burden of
delivering speeches fell on Stevenson. Harrity scheduled a heavy tour for Cleve-
land’s running mate across the nation. Stevenson and Harrity had first met at the
1884 convention and renewed their relationship during Cleveland’s first term.
Both men agreed in 1892 on the necessity of Cleveland’s election, the
reinvigoration of the Democratic party at all levels, and the importance of tariff
reduction. Their biggest difference centered on the volatile currency issue, for
Harrity distrusted Stevenson’s soft money stand and former support of
greenbackism.25

Cognizant of the need to ingratiate himself with conservative business groups
in the party, Stevenson sent a letter to Harrity outlining his adherence to the hard
money plank in the Democratic platform. The Illinois Democrat said that he
agreed with Cleveland on all questions discussed in the former president’s letter of
acceptance and that the message reflected the views of the Democratic party on
the financial question. Stevenson added that he fully endorsed that part of the
letter. Harrity immediately released Stevenson’s statement to the press, which
appeared in the New York Times with a Bloomington, Illinois, dateline.26

Succeeding in his desire to convince Stevenson to appease nervous eastern
conservatives upset with the nominee’s record, Harrity next directed his attention
toward another potentially troubling matter. He recognized that Populism, which
did not constitute a major force in Pennsylvania, threatened Democratic success in
the solid South, a region in which Cleveland had few ties and where debtors and
farmers distrusted his stand on gold. "In the South," warned Whitney, "the impres-
sion of you (Cleveland) got by the people is that you do not appreciate their suffer-
THE DISCORDANT DEMOCRATIC ORCHESTRA.

CONDUCTOR HARRITY.—"Boys, I'm afraid we'll have to try another tune. There's no harmony in your music. Grover drowns everything else with his horn, and it ought to be played very quietly. Dana's piece ought to be heard above all, but somehow it doesn't work. Adlai, you're no good, any way. David B. seems to be playing hard enough, but no one can tell whether he's in tune or not."—From Frank Leslie's.
ing and poverty (and these are the real sources of the Alliance movement) and have your ideas formed by Eastern money power, etc. - the usual twaddle."  

To counteract this situation, Harrity, Cleveland, and Stevenson devised a southern strategy at "Gray Gables," Cleveland's summer home overlooking Buzzards Bay from Monument Point in Massachusetts. The three leaders decided to promise southern Democrats patronage rewards for a Democratic victory. They also pledged economic revitalization of the South and federal noninterference in southern elections. Once the plan had been formalized, Harrity dispatched Stevenson on a mission to southern states, including Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and North Carolina to execute the deal.

While Stevenson was campaigning in the South, Harrity concentrated on the political situation in New York. Because Tammany Hall had not supported Cleveland for the presidential nomination in 1892, Harrity worried that the Democrats could lose the electoral votes of that important state. Harrity also had to deal with Cleveland's stubborn nature, for the former president insisted that he did not want his Empire State opponents playing a prominent role in the New York campaign. He was referring especially to Lieutenant Governor William F. Sheehan and to Edward Murphy, Jr., a wealthy Troy brewer who since 1887 had chaired the New York Democratic State Committee.

Harrity and Whitney convinced Cleveland to attend a dinner at the Victoria Hotel in New York City to iron out differences with Tammany boss Richard Croker, Murphy, Sheehan, and Congressman William Bourke Cockran of New York, a sound money Democrat. Declining to promise any patronage to the Hill-Sheehan group, Cleveland, loyal to his Mugwump cohorts, issued a surprise ultimatum. He threatened to surrender the presidential nomination if the regular Democratic organization of New York refused to support him. In the end, Tammany leaders and Hill gave Cleveland their half-hearted support in the campaign. Once again Harrity had helped to arrange a compromise.

Shortly before election day, Harrity surveyed the political climate, announced that the tariff and a stable currency were the central issues, and predicted that Cleveland would win the election with 244 electoral votes. Responding to a question about the political outlook, Harrity displayed exuberant confidence when he said: "Nothing has been left undone that could be done to secure success. . . . I am thoroughly satisfied with the manner in which the work has been done at all points. . . . We fought this fight on the old line."  

On November 8, 1892, Cleveland won the presidency, garnering 277 electoral...
votes to 145 for Harrison. Aided by Republican divisions and the McKinley tariff's unpopularity, Democrats also captured control of both houses of Congress. Although Harrison carried Pennsylvania and its 32 electoral votes, Cleveland showed surprising strength, losing the state by only 64,000 votes, which marked his best performance in Pennsylvania in the three contests when he headed the national ticket.

The outcome of the 1892 presidential election was Harrity's most satisfying moment as national chairman. He analyzed the results on November 9. "I have by experience in politics been reluctant to prophesy," he assured colleagues and friends, "but it is my good fortune that the few positive predictions I have made have been fulfilled." Harrity pointed out that he claimed "no special merit" beyond having tried faithfully to serve his "party and the public through energetic and harmonious action." Harrity also used the occasion to attack "one of the most injudicious arguments" advanced by the Republicans, who held that the voters should not consent to the unification of power and responsibility in one party to
give it simultaneous control of both chambers of Congress and the presidency. Harrity castigated this theory, claiming that divided responsibility had caused enough mischief and had "prevented a fair trial of party principles in governmental action." He promised that the Democrats would provide good and economical government and a reduction of public burdens.

Wishing to reward Harrity for his services to the Democracy, Cleveland offered him a Cabinet position. The chairman declined this portfolio, preferring to complete his term as secretary of the commonwealth and remain as head of the national committee. He also wanted to remain in Philadelphia in order to pursue his business interests.

During Cleveland's second administration from 1893 to 1897, the crusade for free silver and the economic depression that followed the Panic of 1893 demoralized the Democrats in Pennsylvania and divided the party nationally. Harrity chaired the national committee during these turbulent years of political protest, economic discontent, and social tension. An unpopular Cleveland remained virtually closeted in the Executive Mansion during the last half of his term. The political realignment then occurring would eventually dominate the nation until the Great Depression of the 1930s. This trend began with the 1894 congressional and state elections, resulting in GOP victories across the nation. Pennsylvania returned to the Republican fold by electing Daniel H. Hastings to the governorship. Chairman of the Pennsylvania delegation to the Republican National Convention in 1896, he placed Senator Matthew Quay in nomination for the presidency.

In 1896, Harrity remained a leading Democrat in Pennsylvania politics. A delegate-at-large and chairman of the Pennsylvania delegation to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Harrity played a prominent role as a minority spokesman for sound money in an assembly dominated by free silverites committed to the 16 to1 ratio. Because Gold Democrats controlled the Pennsylvania delegation, they registered an emphatic voice against the free silver platform. Moreover, Pennsylvania unanimously endorsed former Governor Pattison as a favorite son on all five ballots for president. Not once did the Pennsylvania delegates vote for William Jennings Bryan, the young Nebraska silverite who captured the Democratic presidential nomination. For the vice presidential contest, most Pennsylvanians were absent or refused to vote.

Harrity received from 11 to 21 votes for vice president in 1896 from a few states on all five tallies. He always commanded three votes from Delaware but never obtained a single vote from Pennsylvania. He would have easily garnered the
William Jennings Bryan, the Nebraska Silverite, and bete noire of the Cleveland wing of the Democratic party.

64 votes of his state if he had, as chairman, requested an endorsement, but he asked the delegation not to vote for him. Although free silver leaders were particularly anxious to nominate Harrity in order to placate sound money Democrats and the Clevelandites, Harrity could not agree with their views. Eventually, Arthur Sewall of Maine, a wealthy shipbuilder who advocated silver remonetization, won the vice presidential nomination, but Stevenson would have been a more logical choice.36

A discouraged Harrity returned to Philadelphia from the Chicago proceedings to ponder Bryan's "cross of gold" speech and the future of the party. Replaced as national chairman by Senator James K. Jones of Arkansas, Harrity still retained a place as a member of the Democratic National Committee from Pennsylvania. Yet the victory of the silver forces disturbed him. Hoping that the silver craze would dissipate with time, Harrity believed that he and other conservatives could survive the storm.

An astute politician, Harrity figured that Bryan probably would not win the presidency. Nor could the National Democratic Party, a splintered flock of bolting Gold Democrats, hope to succeed under the leadership of their septuagenarian presidential nominee, Senator John M. Palmer of Illinois, who had been nominated at Indianapolis in September. This group, while indirectly aiding the GOP, would provide a haven for anti-Bryan Democrats such as Cleveland who could not vote for the Republican ticket headed by William McKinley, the sound money
standard-bearer from Ohio and advocate of tariff protectionism.\textsuperscript{37} Bryan's nomination divided the Democrats and placed Harrity in a difficult position. The stands of two administration figures--Cleveland and Stevenson--illustrated this party schism. President Cleveland, who detested Bryan and favored Palmer for president, remained uncompromising in his opposition to the Nebraskan and the Chicago platform. "I cannot write or speak favorably of Bryanism. I do not regard it as Democracy," he confided to Wilson S. Bissell, his former law partner who served as postmaster general from 1893 to 1895.\textsuperscript{38} Vice President Stevenson, on the other hand, wholeheartedly supported both the free silver platform and Bryan, calling the nominee "a gifted man" and "fearless champion" whose campaign was "the marvel of the age."\textsuperscript{39} Unalterably opposed to the principle of excommunication from the party, Stevenson minimized differences, preached assimilation, campaigned for Bryan, and emerged in 1900 as Bryan's running mate. Others, including Secretary of the Interior Hoke Smith, a Georgia Democrat, backed Bryan but rejected the platform.

On October 15, 1896, Senator Jones, acting on behalf of the Democratic Campaign Committee, asked Harrity his views with regard to the Bryan campaign. Harrity responded on October 20 by declaring his allegiance to the Democratic party but maintaining his belief in a sound money doctrine and the actions of the Pennsylvania Democratic State Convention at Allentown on April 29.\textsuperscript{40} This satisfied Jones, who concluded that insufficient reasons existed for removing Harrity from the Democratic National Committee. He later described Harrity's letter as "straightforward, candid, and manly."\textsuperscript{41} In some ways, Harrity's feelings in 1896 paralleled those of J. Sterling Morton, secretary of agriculture in the second Cleveland administration, who at a later date offered his version of the dilemma in having to decide between Bryan and McKinley. "It is a choice between evils," he rationalized, "and I am going to shut my eyes, hold my nose, vote go home and disinfect myself."\textsuperscript{42}

On election day in 1896, voters chose McKinley. "What a relief the result is to all business men," rejoiced Russell B. Harrison, an Indiana lawyer and son of former President Benjamin Harrison, to Republican Senator Stephen B. Elkins of West Virginia.\textsuperscript{43} The verdict in Pennsylvania was especially decisive. There McKinley swept the state with 61% of the popular vote, providing him with an overwhelming margin of 295,000 votes over Bryan.\textsuperscript{44}

No doubt Harrity received the news of McKinley's triumph with mixed emotions. The fundamental contrast between Bryan and McKinley on the currency
issue overshadowed other considerations for many frightened financiers, and Harrity was no exception. The election, moreover, failed to end the debate between the two sides. In a letter to a sound money banquet, President-elect McKinley repeated his maxim: “Poor money never made a country rich; and sound money will not, and cannot, make one poor.” While lecturing at Carnegie Hall at the same time, Bryan countered this theory. “I don’t want an absolutely honest dollar,” he proclaimed. On this issue, Harrity and other gold prodigals sided with McKinley.

After his defeat for the presidency, Bryan sought revenge against Harrity. Resenting conservative attempts to oust Bryanites from state political organizations, Bryan made the Chicago platform the litmus test of faith by purging those who refused to pledge their loyalty. This stance further alienated Harrity, who would neither consent to Bryan’s radicalism nor agree to abandon his principles to seek repentance. Although the Democratic National Committee would not convene until January 1900, the Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee, acting with Bryan’s approval, retaliated against Harrity in 1897.

On August 29, 1897, Harrity sent a letter to John M. Garman, chairman of the Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee, defending his position regarding the movement agitated by the silver faction to oust him from the national committee. Harrity pointed out that there was no vacancy in the Pennsylvania membership of the Democratic National Committee, for he had been elected to that position by the Democratic National Convention upon the unanimous recommendation of the Pennsylvania delegation to that convention. Reminding his antagonist that he had not resigned, Harrity emphasized that no state convention or person possessed the power of removal except the national committee, which maintained jurisdiction over the qualifications of its members. Should the national committee in the future decide to consider the matter, Harrity promised to submit to its authority and bow to its decision.

Harrity’s letter to Garman was not only a powerful indictment against the Keystone State free silverites who sought his dismissal but also a reasoned defense of his own actions. He wrote:

The attack made upon me by some of those within the Democratic Party in Pennsylvania is unjustifiable, and, in the main, it is prompted by selfish, unworthy, and malign motives. By their willful and malicious misrepresentations they have misled some others into the belief that in some way I have been inimical to the Democratic Party and its interests. But
such is not the fact. I have never voted any other than the Democratic
ticket, and have never supported any other than Democratic candidates.
That has been by habit. I have no desire to change it, and I do not intend
to do so. . . . Allow me to add that I do not believe that success ought to
or can attend the efforts of those who are so narrow and bigoted as to
insist that the declarations of a political convention are so binding upon
the political consciences of the members of a party as to drive from its
membership all of those who do not accept implicitly every line and
every letter of its every dogma or doctrine.48

When Pennsylvania Democrats assembled at Reading on August 30 for their
state convention, which officially opened the next day, free silver zealots pursued
their campaign to force the former chairman off the national committee.
Congressman Daniel Ermentrout demanded that only those who had been loyal to
Bryan in 1986 should retain a commission in the administration of the party's
organization. Thomas E. Haak, a member of the State Central Committee, boasted
that nothing would give him more pleasure than to remove the man who had
"helped the Republicans in the last presidential contest."49 Other silverites argued
that Democrats should simply ignore Harrity rather than catapult him into national
publicity and thereby run the risk of generating a national outpouring of sympathy
from conservatives.

On August 30, by a vote of 53 to 26, the Pennsylvania Democratic State
Committee adopted a resolution declaring vacant Harrity's seat on the Democratic
National Committee. Introduced by John B. Keenan of Westmoreland, the resolu-
tion claimed the existence of a vacancy due to Harrity's "voluntary withdrawal
from politics" and for not being in accord with the principles of the Democratic
party. Charles P. Donnelly of Philadelphia, who presented a minority report, and
Thomas C. Barber of Union, among others, rallied against the resolution, urging
harmony in the party as a prelude to winning state and local elections. After the
passage of the resolution, delegates replaced Harrity with James M. Guffey of Pitts-
burgh, a follower of Bryan, who won endorsement by a vote of 290 to 134.50

Angry confrontations between rival factions dominated the Reading proceed-
ings. A fight broke out on the stage when John T. Murphy of Philadelphia, a secre-
tary, grabbed the gavel from Congressman Ermentrout, the temporary chairman,
and attempted to preside. Pandemonium then ensued, and police were called to
quell the riot. They ejected Murphy from the stage before sending for re-enforce-
ments to prevent a repetition of the scene that brought the morning session to a
close. Senator William Lindsay, a sound money Democrat from Kentucky, pro-
nounced as "absolutely absurd" the outcome at Reading.51

The embattled Harrity, secluded at a vacation retreat in Atlantic City during the convention, reiterated that the irresponsible action taken at Reading would not alter his opposition to the concept of free silver without waiting for the consent of other nations. Harrity also predicted that the Pennsylvania Democracy, if it wanted to win future victories, would have to recede from its position, and when that occurred, his stand would be vindicated by the public. "I am not greatly disappointed at the outcome. . . . I find it quite easy to be philosophical over the situation," he remarked.52

After years of devoted service to the Democracy, Harrity felt alienated from his fellow Pennsylvania Democrats. Bryan's politics of exclusion differed fundamentally from Harrity's practice of the politics of inclusion. Harrity could only wonder how an ideologue of such stern political demeanor could have possibly served as president of all the people.53


A consummate bank executive and a practical politician, Harrity held the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee at a propitious time. He worked closely with Cleveland, Stevenson, Whitney, and others during the successful Democratic campaign of 1892. However, cataclysmic events that engulfed the second Cleveland administration overwhelmed the Democratic party and overshadowed Harrity's contributions. Then, in 1896, the year in which the Democracy returned to its philosophical roots. Harrity's opposition to the free silver plank in the platform cost him his power and influence in the party headed by Bryan and his eventual removal from the national committee. Since that time neglected by scholars who have concentrated on other personalities of the period, Harrity deserves wider recognition as a Gilded Age national Democrat.
Notes


2. Cameron, who failed to secure the 1860 vice presidential nomination but was President Abraham Lincoln’s secretary of war for nearly a year, served in the United States Senate from 1845 to 1849, 1857 to 1861, and 1867 to 1877. Quay, a former Pennsylvania state treasurer, held a Senate seat from 1887 to 1899 and 1901 until his death in 1904. Penrose, a member of the Pennsylvania House and Senate, sat in the upper chamber of Congress from 1897 until his death in 1921.

3. Wallace, a state senator and delegate to his party’s 1884 and 1892 national conventions, served in the United States Senate from 1875 to 1881. Randall, who participated in the Civil War, held a seat in the national House of Representatives from 1893 to 1897.


5. Adlai E. Stevenson, Vice President of the United States from 1893 to 1897, was the grandfather of Adlai E. Stevenson II, the Democratic presidential nominee in 1952 and 1956 and United States Ambassador to the United Nations from 1961 to 1965. This intergenerational political patriarchy continued with Adlai E. Stevenson III, United States Senator from Illinois from 1970 to 1981.


7. William F. Harrity to Cleveland, April 15, 1892, Cleveland Papers.

8. Cleveland to William F Vilas, September 14, 1887, William F Vilas Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison. At the time, Vilas was Cleveland’s choice to fill the position of secretary of the interior, thereby creating a vacancy for the postmaster generalship.

9. Cleveland to Vilas, May 12, 1892, Vilas Papers. For information on Harrity and preliminary campaign work, see Cleveland to Daniel S. Lamont, February 8, 1892, Daniel S. Lamont Papers, Library of Congress. Lamont, one of Cleveland’s close friends, served as secretary of war from 1893 to 1897.

10. Donald M. Dickinson to Cleveland, June 13, 1892, Cleveland Papers. Also, Charles E. Walker to Cleveland, August 7, 1892, Cleveland Papers; C. H. Jones to Dickinson, July 15, 1892, Donald M. Dickinson Papers, Library of Congress.


12. Hoke Smith to William C. Whitney, June 25, 1892, William C. Whitney Papers, Library of Congress. Smith, who served as Cleveland’s secretary of the interior for three years, later became governor of Georgia and a United States senator. Whitney’s papers are a good source for 1892 politics.

13. Thomas Campbell-Copeland, ed., Cleveland and Stevenson: The Democratic Campaign Book

14. Whitney to Cleveland, July 29, 1892, Cleveland Papers.


16. Ibid., July 15, 1892, p. 4.

17. Ibid., July 10, 1892, p. 12; July 20, 1892, p. 2.


19. Ibid., July 25, 1892, p. 5.

20. Ibid., July 1, 1892, p. 1.

21. Cleveland to Vilas, June 30, 1892, Vilas Papers.

22. Cleveland to Whitney, August 23, 1892, Whitney Papers.

23. Cleveland to Adlai E. Stevenson, September 13, 1892, Adlai E. Stevenson Correspondence, Elizabeth Stevenson Ives Papers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield.


25. Edward M. Shepard to Cleveland, September 10, 1892, Cleveland Papers; A. D. Moru to William L. Wilson, October 8, 1892, William L. Wilson Papers, West Virginia University Library, Morgantown.


27. Whitney to Cleveland, August 30, 1892, Cleveland Papers.

28. For details on the political package of 1892 and its importance in the campaign, an episode hitherto overlooked by historians, see Cleveland to Stevenson, June 27, July 5, July 24, and September 13, 1892, Stevenson Correspondence, Ives Papers, Library of Congress; Stevenson to Cleveland, September 6, 12, 21, 1892, Cleveland Papers. Useful insights came from the author's interview of Elizabeth Stevenson Ives, Stevenson's granddaughter, August 4, 1969, Bloomington, Illinois, and from the author's interview of Letitia E. Stevenson, Stevenson's daughter, October 13, 1968, St. Louis, Missouri.

29. Birmingham Age-Herald, October 18-20, 1892; Raleigh News and Observer, September 16-23, 1892; Louisville Courier-Journal, August 4-6, 1892; Hopkinsville Kentuckyan, September 2-6, 1892; William Lindsay to Eleanor Lindsay, August 6, 7, 1892, William Lindsay Papers, University of Kentucky Library, Lexington; Letitia Green Stevenson to Mrs. Whorton Green, October 31, 1892, William Ward Orme Papers, Illinois Historical Survey, University of Illinois Library, Urbana-Champaign; and Stevenson to John S. Henderson, June 29, 1892, John S. Henderson Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill. Excellent material on the Populist party can be mined from the Marion Butler Papers, University of North Carolina Library, and from the James B. Weaver Papers, Iowa State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines.

30. Cleveland to Wilson S. Bissell, June 30, 1892; Whitney to Cleveland, August 9, 1892, Cleveland Papers.

31. Cleveland to Bissell, July 24, 1892; Farquhar to Cleveland, September 23, 1892, Cleveland Papers. Harrity and Cleveland had long supported the methods and purposes of the Association of Democratic Clubs, believing that they promoted success, discussed party positions, and presented the goals of the Democracy. See Cleveland to Chauncey F. Black, September 26, 1889, in Nevins, Letters of Cleveland, pp. 212-13. Black, a York attorney who had been lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania from 1882 to 1886 and the Democratic gubernatorial nominee in 1886, was president of the National Association of Democratic Clubs. His father, Jeremiah S. Black, was attorney general for three years under President James Buchanan.


Pennsylvania History
Weekly Bulletin, November 11, 1892, p. 1; telegram, Pattison to Cleveland, November 9, 1892, Cleveland Papers; William M. Springer to Whitney, July 24, 1892; James Stevenson Ewing to Whitney, July 1, 1892, Whitney Papers; and John W. Foster to Stevenson, June 25, 1892, Stevenson Family Papers, Illinois State Historical Library.


35. Ibid., November 16, 1892, p. 5; December 28, 1892, p. 1.


38. Cleveland to Bissell, September 16, 1900, Cleveland Papers. See Cleveland to Judson Harmon, July 17, 1900, Cleveland Papers.

39. Stevenson, Something of Men I Have Known, p. 315; Bloomington Daily Bulletin, October 4, 1896, pp. 1-4; and Springer to Bryan, August 12, 1896, William M. Springer Papers, Chicago Historical Society Library. Springer was a Democratic Congressman from Illinois who served in the House of Representatives from 1875 to 1895.


41. Jones to Harrity, July 20, 1897, Ibid. Jones, a veteran of the Confederate Army and the House of Representatives, served in the United States Senate from 1885 until 1903. Bryan erred in selecting Jones to head the Democratic National Committee. A zealous southerner from a Democratic state, Jones badly bungled certain matters and did nothing substantial to bring out the vote for the ticket.

42. J. Sterling Morton to Cleveland, November 2, 1900, Cleveland Papers.


45. The Akron Beacon and Republican, March 1, 1897, p. 2.


48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., August 31, 1897, p. 1.

51. Ibid., September 1, 1897, p. 2.

52. Ibid. Also, Chauncey F. Black to Bryan, April 2, 1897; W. H. Thompson to Bryan, April 29, 1897; Joseph Sibley to Bryan, May 4, 1897; James Kerr to Bryan, May 13, 1897; and C. S. Thomas to Bryan, May 18, 1897, William Jennings Bryan Papers, Library of Congress.