Known best to Philadelphians as a founding father of modern American retailing and to students of American religion as a major figure in such manifestations of post-Civil War Protestant outreach as the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and Sunday-school movements, John Wanamaker achieved celebrity of a decidedly different sort during the 1889-1893 presidency of Benjamin Harrison. During his stint as Postmaster General in Harrison’s cabinet, Wanamaker became notorious in the minds of many Americans unfamiliar with his entrepreneurial and religious exploits as a symbol of political sleaze and mendacity. The color cartoon art gracing the covers and centerfolds of such dime illustrated humor weeklies as Puck and Judge repeatedly caricatured Wanamaker during the Harrison regime, often casting him in starring roles. The dominant cartoon image of Wanamaker became that of “Holy John” or “Saint” Wanamaker, symbol of spoils statecraft and holier-than-thou hypocrisy. Even within the tradition of a medium renowned for droll defamation—“Many cartoonists would be hired assassins if they couldn’t draw,” Jeff MacNelly once joked¹—the image of Wanamaker created by the leading graphic satirists of the day stands out as uncommonly unfair.

During Wanamaker’s tenure in Washington, political cartooning was dominated by two rival New York dime humor weeklies, Puck and Judge. Begun in a German-language format in 1876 by the

¹ Quoted in Newsweek, Oct. 13, 1980, 83.
Austrian-born Joseph Keppler, *Puck* made its English-language debut a year later and rapidly revolutionized the medium. In stark contrast to legendary pioneer Thomas Nast, Keppler endowed his lithographed centerfold and cover art with festive colors, blithe Viennese levity, and an affinity for elaborate scenes featuring characters by the dozens that delighted the multitudes and begot a host of imitators. Chief among them was *Judge*, founded in 1881 by Keppler expatriate James A. Wales and legitimized during a brilliant 1884 cartoon war over the alleged shortcomings of James G. Blaine and Grover Cleveland. The *Judge* reached full parity with *Puck* after William J. Arkell became publisher and lured *Puck* artists Bernhard Gillam and Eugene Zimmerman to the *Judge* staff. Both weeklies were born politically independent, but by 1884 *Judge* had become rock-ribbed Republican and *Puck* dogmatically Democratic, each taking the lead in developing caustic caricatures of opposition political figures.²

To those who knew him, Wanamaker surely provided an improbable target for Keppler. Biographical accounts agree upon Wanamaker’s singular success in reconciling the imperatives of marketplace and meetinghouse. The composite character profile emerging from these sources is that of the Christian businessman and exemplar of the Horatio Alger success ethic. Unlike such pious moguls as Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Pierpont Morgan, who frequently fell short of applying the canons of faith to the workaday world, Wanamaker seems to have achieved a rare symbiosis between the two spheres. As a young man, he had put the Philadelphia YMCA on a sound business footing and built up his beloved Bethany Sunday School in part through a wizardry at advertising that would become his hallmark as a master retailer. When he acquired the old Pennsylvania Railroad freight depot, he

lent the site to evangelists Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey for an epic revival before converting it into his huge "new kind of store." As a businessman, he provided shoppers with quality goods and money-back guarantees and clerks with Sundays off, classes in religion and business, social and recreational opportunities, and a mutual-benefit association. Although he delegated control of his mercantile empire during his stint in Washington, he returned home to spend Sundays at Bethany. As Robert Sobel has noted, "Wanamaker considered his business career as part of his private life; all was of a piece, and he would not tolerate a double-standard. Morality, not merchandising, was his true interest, and he viewed success in the latter as the fruits of his dedication to the former."3

Although this paragon of probity might seem an unlikely candidate for caricature as a venal hypocrite, he embodied many attributes that ran afoul of Keppler's prejudices. As a Republican, Wanamaker belonged to a party viewed by Keppler as a sinister cabal run by the likes of Matt Quay and Tom Platt. As a Philadelphian, he was fair game for an adopted New Yorker who missed few chances to denigrate the center of colonial and federal culture still envied by the colossus to the north. As a pillar of Christendom and a staunch sabbatarian, Wanamaker aroused the biases of an ardent champion of secular hu-

3 Wayne E. Fuller, RFD: The Changing Face of Rural America (Bloomington, 1964), 19; James A. Kehl, Boss Rule in the Gilded Age: Matt Quay of Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh, 1981), 97; and Robert Sobel, The Entrepreneurs: Explorations Within the American Business Tradition (New York, 1974), 76. Sobel's chapter on "John Wanamaker: The Triumph of Content Over Form" (pp. 73-109), provides the most perceptive insight into Wanamaker as retailer and man but essentially ignores his forays into politics and government. Fuller's RFD, 18-26, and his The American Mail: Enlarger of the Common Life (Chicago, 1972), 333, offer flattering appraisals of Wanamaker as administrator and postal service innovator. The standard biography of Wanamaker remains Herbert Adams Gibbons's encyclopedic, but dated and altogether uncritical John Wanamaker (2 vols., New York, 1926). Marion L. Bell, Crusade in the City: Revivalism in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia (Lewisburg, 1978), has cogent information on his religious activities and insights into his character and personality. Additional information of marginal value on Wanamaker as entrepreneur may be found in Gunther Barth, City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America (New York, 1980), 130-41; and Joseph H. Appel, The Business Biography of John Wanamaker, Founder and Builder (New York, 1930). The recent acquisition of the Wanamaker store papers and other Wanamaker items by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania no doubt will stimulate new work on Wanamaker's business career and management style. So, too, Herbert Ershkowitz's forthcoming biography of Wanamaker, based on the massive HSP collection, promises a modern reassessment of Wanamaker as businessman and reformer.
manism, a lifelong practicing Catholic who nevertheless derived his most sustained inspiration as an artist decrying the superstition of religious faith, the tyranny of religious establishments, and the absence of Sunday amusements. For Keppler, the combination of Wanamaker's devout beliefs with a chubby face uncannily resembling that of a cherub would provide the natural ingredients for memorable caricature. As a retailing titan, Wanamaker bore the double-edged stigma of slick shopkeeper and millionaire mogul to an artist whose loathing for labor and political radicalism was balanced by an equal animus against monopolists. Moreover, Wanamaker's 1888 baptism in national politics came as a corollary to his wealth and influence, for he quietly raised more than $200,000 for Harrison by soliciting support from friends and associates and by matching their $10,000 contributions with one of his own.

This activity alone might have brought down upon Wanamaker the righteous wrath of Keppler, had he not canvassed so covertly, for *Puck* cartoons had long promoted the simplistic notion that money in politics was inherently evil, the "soap" with which votes were purchased and wicked machines lubricated, and that rich men were drawn to politics invariably by sheer greed. The money barrels of Samuel Tilden, Roswell Flower, and other wealthy "pols" had become a Keppler cliché. During the 1888 campaign *Puck* repeatedly cast Harrison's affluent running mate Levi P. Morton as "Paymaster Morton" with his barrel of "soap" or "boodle" or bags of "fat," the latter commodity presumably "fried" out of industrial titans alarmed by free trade.5

Although Wanamaker tapped associates untainted by scandal and the $200,000 purportedly was spent to print and distribute campaign literature, his fund-raising activities did render him vulnerable to attack in the wake of a scandal in which he played no role. During

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4 Although his single-price, money-back policies and general integrity in customer relations seemingly epitomized the antithesis of the hostile shopkeeper image, Wanamaker did not escape its onus. On the eve of his appointment to the cabinet, he was attacked by a fellow Pennsylvanian in a letter to Harrison as "the Philadelphia tailor—a Jew inwardly—a sharper and rich." Quoted in Harry J. Sievers, *Benjamin Harrison: Hoosier President* (Indianapolis, 1968), 17.

the final days of the campaign, the opposition brought to light a circular letter from Republican National Committee treasurer W.W. Dudley to party operatives back home in Indiana, urging them to organize into “blocks of five” paid “floaters” to be voted under the aegis of “a trusted man with the necessary funds.” Dudley’s gaffe was exposed too late to rescue Cleveland, but it did provide Democrats with a rationale for defeat much more consoling than the lack of organization, energy, and tactics. The 1888 election became in retrospect the “Harrison boodle campaign.” As a noted fund-raiser, Wanamaker was transformed belatedly into its star soapmeister, financier of the “floater” vote, paymaster to Dudley and kindred souls who had made Harrison president by the theft of Indiana and New York with votes bought ostensibly with Wanamaker funds. Led by Joseph Pulitzer’s New York Herald, the Democratic press inflated greatly the sums that Wanamaker purportedly raised and personally donated, accusing him of buying outright his cabinet post for $40,000 or $50,000.

In January 1889, color cartoons in both Puck and Judge began featuring Wanamaker with regularity. He made his debut in Bernhard Gillam’s January 5 Judge centerfold “Too Many Fingers in the Cabinet Pudding,” drawn in drag as a little girl with a silver spoon vying with eleven other cabinet possibilities, all portrayed as young lads, for a sampling of chef Harrison’s cabinet pudding. In the January 26 Judge centerfold “The Perplexed Cabinet Maker,” Grant Hamilton echoed this theme in drawing Wanamaker as one of eighteen figural wooden timbers pondered by cabinetmaker Harrison. Similar in theme but more hostile to Wanamaker was Keppler’s January 9 Puck centerfold “The Woods Are Full of Them,” featuring Harrison with a

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7 Wanamaker’s assertion of the sum he raised, the amount of his personal donation, and the lack of a quid pro quo understanding between that contribution and his subsequent appointment to the cabinet is corroborated by Gibbons, John Wanamaker, 1:352-73; Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley, 305-6; and Sievers, Hoosier Statesman, 378-80. In keeping with its pervasive tenor of Menckenesque cynicism toward politics and politicians in general, Josephson, The Politicos, 440, allows to stand unchallenged Democratic claims that Wanamaker raised between $400,000 and $700,000 in the final days alone and that his cabinet seat came as a direct payoff for a $50,000 contribution.
telescope eyeing a map of the country dotted with dozens of cabinet contenders, among them "$400,000 Contrib. Wanamaker." Lest this point have been made too subtly, a week later C.J. Taylor featured Wanamaker with a $400,000 moneybag, fellow Pennsylvanian Matt Quay with a barrel of "fat," and the infamous "Blocks of Five" Dudley as an unholy trinity of Republican corruption in the January 16 Puck centerfold "When Harrison Sounds that 'Bugle-Call'—the Friends of a Pure Ballot Will Rally—As Above" [#1]. A month later, the link between Wanamaker's retailing background and his new calling as the mogul of "floater" merchandising was made nicely in the February 13 Puck centerfold "St. Valentine's Day in Indianapolis—A Fantasy" with a valentine vignette [#2] featuring him with a money barrel and a signboard that read "If You Want Bargains of Boodle Go to Wanamaker's." 8

Such cartoons, along with the ongoing campaign of character assassination waged against Wanamaker by Pulitzer's World, Charles A. Dana's New York Sun, James Gordon Bennett's New York Herald,

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and other opposition organs, prompted Judge to counterattack with F. Victor Gillam's March 23 front cover cartoon “John the Postman Runs the Gauntlet of Mud,” featuring Wanamaker as a postal carrier dodging Democratic editorial mud balls of lies, slander, and libel as he delivers “business principles” mail. In a half-dozen other Judge cartoons celebrating the Republican restoration or lauding the new administration during the spring of 1889, Wanamaker was included only by virtue of his standing as a member of the official family. The same might be said for a pair of Puck centerfolds, Keppler's March 20 “President Harrison and his Cabinet” and Louis Dalrymple’s April 10 “Trouble in the Republican Circus,” both lampooning the uneasy relationship between Harrison and Secretary of State Blaine.9

9 Judge, March 2, 1889, pp. 340-41; March 9, 1889, pp. 360-61; March 23, 1889, p. 385; April 27, 1889, pp. 44-45; June 1, 1889, pp. 128-29; June 8, 1889, pp. 144-45; and June 29, 1889, pp. 192-93; Puck, March 20, 1889, pp. 56-57; and April 10, 1889, pp. 104-5.
Simultaneously, however, *Puck's* attacks on Wanamaker continued unabated. Taylor's March 20 front-cover effort "To the Victors Belong the Spoils" featured him walking off with a portfolio labeled "Made Postmaster General for Raising $400,000," while lining up under a sign "Promoters of Political Bribery Rewarded Here" were Tom Platt, Quay, Dudley, and other Republicans of suspect reputation. In this cartoon Wanamaker was clad as a parson in black hat and frock coat, pioneering attire that would evolve into a standard feature in *Puck* caricature. Keppler's April 17 centerfold "The Triumph of Boodle" cast Wanamaker, Dudley, Quay, and other campaign topsiders as Roman centurions marching alongside a bloated moneybags representation of Boodle riding triumphantly in a chariot with an "honest vote" slave girl trailing in chains. Frederick Burr Opper's May 15 back cover "Going Back on the Blocks of Five" featured Harrison as Richard III renouncing Buckingham Dudley, Dudley musing in wonder, "Made I him King for this?" and Royal Chamberlain Wanamaker resplendent in the raiment of a prince of the church, including a golden dollar-sign staff and hat that read "Go to John Wanamaker's for Bargains." A companion editorial noted that Dudley had been banned from White House fetes, but not the "godly haberdasher who has raised $400,000 for the Party." Taylor's May 22 centerfold "The Threatened Raid of the Harrisons Upon Washington" portrayed an endless line of bizarre Harrison kinfolk filing through a massive "Boonde Campaign of 1888" arch with "Wanamaker's $400,000 Cornerstone" carved into one of the bottom blocks.10

Before this oft-sung refrain from the Dudley affair grew tiresome, Wanamaker's first months in office began to yield fresh grist for *Puck's* mill. As Postmaster General, the administration's major-domo of patronage, Wanamaker took as his first order of business the wholesale purge of some 30,000 Democratic postmasters, making way for Republican successors. As one historian has observed, Wanamaker and Assistant Postmaster General J.S. Clarkson "decapitated a fourth-class postmaster every five minutes" during those first weeks.11 Wanamaker

10 *Puck*, March 20, 1889, p. 49; April 17, 1889, pp. 120-21; May 15, 1889, pp. 202, 208; and May 22, 1889, pp. 216-17.
did not reject the idea of civil service per se and later developed into a spokesman of sorts for the reform initiative, but he opposed giving lifetime tenure to men he seemed to regard as the fruits of an accidental presidency. Keppler skillfully satirized the postal purge in his May 29 centerfold “The Administration Guillotine” [#3] with executioner Clarkson beheading Democratic postmasters at a rate of two thousand per week while Wanamaker, sepulchral in his black parson’s frock coat, checked the names of victims on his list. In Dalrymple’s August 21 Puck centerfold “Draw Your Own Conclusions,” a cartoon inspired in all likelihood by Civil Service Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt’s mediagenic foray against the notoriously corrupt postmaster of Milwaukee, Wanamaker was featured with Clarkson, Dudley, Quay, and other purported Republican spoilsmen as African natives unable to halt the steamship Civil Service Reform with its crew of Uncle Sam and young Roosevelt (who loathed Wanamaker and had recently

442-44, and 447-52, Wanamaker emerges as the venal, hypocritical bête noir of the heroic young Roosevelt, a view essentially corroborated in Dorothy Ganfield Fowler’s superficial The Cabinet Politician: The Postmasters General, 1829-1909 (New York, 1943), 207-23.
characterized him as "outrageously disagreeable as he could be" on the issue).\footnote{Roosevelt to Silas W. Burt, July 29, 1889, quoted in Sievers, \textit{Hoosier President}, 80; \textit{Puck}, May 29, 1889, pp. 232-33; and Aug. 21, 1889, pp. 432-33. For Roosevelt's attacks upon notorious Wanamaker-Clarkson appointees, which provided the context for the latter cartoon, see Morris, \textit{Rise of Theodore Roosevelt}, 403-9.}

Although he embraced civil service only after the postal purge and began to champion it in earnest only after his party's horrible showing in the 1890 elections, Wanamaker did from the outset of his cabinet tenure adopt an ambitious reform agenda to improve postal services to patrons and put the department on a more efficient business footing. Among his initiatives were rural free delivery to every American household, a parcel post, and a postal savings plan, all of which eventually came to fruition from seeds he had planted, along with a progressive but doomed crusade to replace the telegraph and telephone monopolies of Jay Gould and other moguls with a national system owned and operated by the federal government. His curtailment of national postal privileges for Louisiana Lottery solicitations helped kill that notoriously corrupt enterprise. Wanamaker's work ethic became the talk of the town. He reached his desk early and labored late into the evening, often coming home so late that he startled Washington milkmen making predawn rounds.\footnote{See Gibbons, \textit{John Wanamaker}, 1:276-337; and Morgan, \textit{From Hayes to McKinley}, 324-25.} Since both \textit{Puck} and \textit{Judge} prized populist virtue in public officials and with equal fervor loathed Jay Gould and the Louisiana Lottery as cancers upon the commonwealth, it is truly remarkable that Wanamaker's Poor Richard regimen and his reform initiatives were not reflected in a single cartoon in either publication.

His religious endeavors, however, elicited no such anonymity. His weekly pilgrimages back home to spend Sundays at Bethany helped inspire Opper's "Our Political Saints," the \textit{Puck} back cover of May 29, 1889. Featured as a trio of holy hypocrites were Harrison paying lip service to merit but practicing spoils patronage, Elliott F. Shepard halting stagecoach service on Sundays but not the clipping of dividend coupons, and "Saint Wanamaker" [#4] simultaneously providing religious instruction to his Sunday-school class and refreshing boodle bins...

at party headquarters with gold coins from his copious barrel. His phase-out of Sunday work duties for postal employees, done without fanfare and without disruption of services to patrons, was attacked in tandem with Shepard’s curtailment of Sunday stages by Keppler in the June 26, 1889, *Puck* centerfold “Our Sabbatarian Obstructionists.” Ten days later *Judge* responded with the back cover cartoon “Watering Their Stock in Trade,” featuring the dousing of an arsenal of fireworks representing Democratic slander by Wanamaker, Blaine with an “American policy” bucket, and Harrison with an “honest administration” fire hose. In “Making a Crime of Religion,” on the *Judge* back cover of August 10, 1889, Emil Florhi depicted Wanamaker, Shepard, New York Archbishop Corrigan, a rabbi, and other religious figures under attack by anthropomorphic newspaper figures of malice and a cherubic “Truck” clone of *Puck* in an overt response to Keppler’s “Sabbatarian Obstructionists.”

For a year following “Sabbatarian Obstructionists,” *Puck* found no new cause to pillory Wanamaker per se, but found him useful as a presence in cartoons mocking the Harrison agenda and Republican party. He saw service as a protectionist indifferent to the plight of unemployed artisans in Dalrymple’s “President Harrison’s Triumphal Tour” (Sept. 4, 1889) and a worshipper of Virginia Readjuster Wil-

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14 *Puck*, May 29, 1889, p. 240; and June 25, 1889, pp. 296-97; *Judge*, July 6, 1889, p. 216; and Aug. 10, 1889, p. 296.
lamb Mahone in Dalrymple’s “The Latest Idol of the ‘Grand Old Party of Moral Ideas’” (Sept. 25, 1889). He was featured as a waiter offering an empty plate of “high moral ideas pudding” to Uncle Sam in Taylor’s “A Barmecide Feast” (Oct. 9, 1889) and as an opponent of tariff reform hiding behind a “boodle” barricade in Dalrymple’s “A Useless Barricade” (Jan. 15, 1890). Keppler drew him as a bidder in an auction for the presidential chair in “None But Millionaires Need Apply—The Coming Style in Presidential Elections” (March 12, 1890), a nonpartisan indictment of tycoons in politics. In “Robin Hood With a Difference” (June 4, 1890), Taylor depicted a host of plutocrats enriched further by money taken from poor farmers and factory workers by a merry band of Republican protectionists; in a wry wrinkle on the running gag of Wanamaker as holy hypocrite, Taylor cast him as the rather unsaintly Friar Tuck.15

All the while, Wanamaker’s central identity as a Puck cartoon convention remained that of a generic symbol of Republican venality. In the wake of Democratic victories in key 1889 state contests, Taylor’s wry “The Republican Party Holds Her Own” (Nov. 20) portrayed Miss Republican Party eyeing warily the storm clouds of voter discontent as she gathered in baskets and bundles the artifacts of sundry scandals, including a “Blocks of Five” bundle of Dudley, Quay, Platt, and Wanamaker. Opper’s centerfold “Promise of Performance—The Great Republican Moral Show” a week later cast Wanamaker as a carnival ticket-seller with a sign that read “Pay Your Boodle Here.” He then received star billing in Taylor’s outstanding December 11 centerfold “Too Much Shop” [#5], a witty parody on Wanamaker’s retailing background and his noted penchant for promotional advertising. Another successful portrayal of him as a mercantile sharper turned political spoilsman was Dalrymple’s “The Ruling Passion” (April 16, 1890), a black-and-white piece featuring Clarkson interrupting a preoccupied Wanamaker to ask what to give a job seeker and eliciting the response, “Ten off for cash!”16

One of Wanamaker’s promotions in Taylor’s “Too Much Shop,” the “Blocks of Five for Children,” represented the Puck artists’ increasing

15 Puck, Sept. 4, 1889, pp. 24-25; Sept. 25, 1889, p. 82; Oct. 9, 1889, pp. 106-7; Jan. 15, 1890, p. 351; March 12, 1890, pp. 40-41; and June 4, 1890, pp. 232-33.
16 Puck, Nov. 20, 1889, p. 210; Nov. 27, 1889, pp. 218-19; Dec. 11, 1889, p. 666; and April 16, 1890, p. 114.
tendency, in exploiting the scandal, to ignore its perpetrator Dudley, now persona non grata in the Harrison camp and of diminishing value for Democratic demagogy, and to highlight instead Wanamaker, a nonparticipant but, as an administration luminary and personal friend of Harrison, a more useful target. Dalrymple's "They Can't Keep Him Hid!" (Jan. 22, 1890) excluded Dudley among the party faithful attempting to keep a "Blocks of Five" skeleton confined in the "Republican Family Closet," but with Harrison, John Sherman, George Edmunds, and Attorney General W.H.H. Miller was Wanamaker, clad in the checked suit of a lowlife dandy, with papers that read "Wanamaker's 400,000 Dollars" and "Holy John." Dudley and he did appear together in Keppler's "Any Thing to Keep Afloat a Little Longer" (May 21, 1890) and Taylor's "A Monument of Scandals" (Sept. 17, 1890). The former featured Wanamaker in a Republican lifeboat striking a prayerful pose in a "hypocrisy is the best policy" life jacket; the latter portrayed him in black parson's frock coat with a sign reading "$400,000.00 Bribe Money for a Seat in the Cabinet."
Dudley was not the only Republican campaign operative of dubious or downright unsavory reputation to provide *Puck* with opportunities to malign Wanamaker through guilt by association. One result of widespread denunciation of Senator Matt Quay for alleged misuse of public funds, instigated by a series of *New York World* exposes by reporter William Shaw Bowen, was a series of *Puck* cartoons linking Wanamaker to the Pennsylvania Republican kingpin solely through the commonality of residence. "Hypocrisy is the Best Policy" Wanamaker and "Embezzler of Public Money" Quay starred together in Keppler's April 30, 1890, centerfold "A Spring Fresher" [#6], along with a wee Harrison menaced by rising floodwaters of public outrage. Taylor's July 30 centerfold "Their Latest Degradation" had "felon overseer" Quay in prison stripes with pistol and prod herding a number of Republican luminaries, Wanamaker included, described somewhat surprisingly in the subtitle as the "respectable leaders of the Grand Old Party." In the human tower of Republican corruption in Taylor's aforementioned "A Monument of Scandals," the two Pennsylvanians were paired near the peak, with Harrison in his presidential chair resting on their shoulders and his Cape May Point "gift cottage" at the base. This presidential summer home also figured in one other *Puck* Wanamaker cartoon, Keppler's June 25, 1890, centerfold "There's a Man in the Case—Only a Little One, Though," portraying the First Lady taking from hands identified as Wanamaker's a model of the cottage as her tiny husband cowered behind her.18

*Puck*’s linkage of Wanamaker with Quay, combined with its failure to brand him with the onus of the gift cottage, poses a paradox defying rational explanation. In the furor over the Harrison cottage, Wanamaker's involvement had been central. Wanamaker had long maintained a summer home at Cape May Point on the New Jersey shore and had hosted the Harrisons there during the summer of 1889, then raised $10,000 to buy and furnish a neighboring home as a gift to the couple. To stifle criticism, the president belatedly repaid Wanamaker. Wanamaker was ripe for attack for his poor judgment in the matter. By comparison, his link to Quay was remote at best. The two Pennsyl-
vanians seem to have been polar opposites in character and personality: Quay the ultimate political professional, amoral but magnetic, and Wanamaker a model of rectitude who never came close to losing standing as a political amateur, characterized by Sobel as "humorless, ambitious, hard-working, and probably stuffy." Quay apparently welcomed Wanamaker's debut as a party fund-raiser, for he admired his energy and abilities, but from the outset the merchant's pious
“Sunday-school politics” rankled Quay. In turn, Wanamaker, as H. Wayne Morgan has aptly expressed it, “disliked the dirt where Quay planted flowers.” Never close, the two drifted into overt enmity after Harrison curtly severed ties with Quay, and in later years the two warred bitterly for control of the Pennsylvania Republican party. For *Puck* to malign Wanamaker over Quay’s purported misdeeds was patent demagogy, pure and simple. Why it strained credibility to do so, while simultaneously downplaying his genuine vulnerability in the gift cottage scandal, remains a mystery.¹⁹

Also unclear is the rationale behind Keppler’s August 20, 1890, *Puck* centerfold “Prudery Run Mad” [#7], starring as holier-than-thou jackasses, busily torching the collected classics of world literature, Wanamaker and gadfly guardian of public morals Anthony Comstock. A brilliant cartoon combining Keppler’s talents for caricature and wry irony with high moral dudgeon in the cause of freedom of expression,

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its use of the Wanamaker emporium as a backdrop and its parody of legendary Wanamaker "bullet" advertising copy to promote such fanciful specials as his "Patent Pictorial Blocks of Five" to teach children "the alphabet of political morality" make it clear that Wanamaker was its primary target. A companion editorial fulminated against him for banning from the federal mails Leo Tolstoy's slightly risqué and supremely dull *The Kreutzer Sonata*, but no reference to such an edict may be found in the newspapers of the day, biographies of the two purported villains of the piece, or scholarly studies of literary censorship. Comstock's only apparent link to Wanamaker was his rather unorthodox commission as a special agent of the Post Office, which had enabled him since 1873 to act as a free-lance vigilante against the postal transmission of impurity as he defined it. The most logical explanation for the Keppler cartoon is that the manic Comstock had exercised his autonomous powers to impose sanctions against the Tolstoy work and that Wanamaker was implicated only by the guilt-by-association circumstances of Comstock's commission.20

The 1890 congressional elections, which cost Republicans effective control of the Senate and reduced by half their ranks in the House, prompted three *Puck* cartoons utilizing Wanamaker in an ancillary capacity. Dalrymple's October 22 centerfold "The 'Wide-Awakes' of 1890" cast him as "Holy John" on a balcony with sundry Republican luminaries and rogues, while parading in review in imitation of the legendary 1860 Lincoln marching cadres were farmers protesting the McKinley Tariff. In Keppler's post-election centerfold "Napoleon's Retreat" (Nov. 19, 1890), Wanamaker appeared as one of the defeated soldiers led in snowy retreat by Napoleon William McKinley. Dalrymple's February 18, 1891, centerfold gloat "Gone Where the Bad Parties Go" [#8] featured Wanamaker in clergyman's attire with a golden barrel around his neck conducting graveside services for the Republican remains in a graveyard of political lost causes. Then *Puck* caricatures of Wanamaker ceased for a season. For four months during the late winter and spring of 1891, his only appearance in a color

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cartoon was as a small bird in Bernhard Gillam's May 9 Judge centerfold "Noah Hayseed's Ark."\textsuperscript{21}

This dry spell was broken abruptly and improbably by the most sustained and most salacious of \textit{Puck} offensives against Wanamaker, beginning with Taylor's June 17, 1891, front-cover cartoon "The Two Wanamakers" \textsuperscript{[#9]}, a Jekyll-Hyde portrayal of the rakish slickster "Smart John" urging his saintly twin "Pious John" to the fore "till this Philadelphia trouble blows over!" The "Philadelphia trouble" was a scandal of major proportions involving the financial failure of the Keystone Bank and subsequent revelations of stock fraud, insider manipulation, and a quid pro quo deal between Keystone and other Philadelphia banks and city treasurer "Honest John" Bardsley for interest-free use of surplus city funds in exchange for bank stock and unsecured personal loans. Although no evidence was brought to light that Wanamaker was involved in any way in the scandal or in dealings of any nature with any of its principals, the coincidence of common Philadelphia origins was sufficient cause for Keppler and his staff to

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Puck}, Oct. 22, 1890, pp. 136-37; Nov. 19, 1890, pp. 200-201; and Feb. 18, 1891, pp. 436-37; \textit{Judge}, May 9, 1891, pp. 74-75.
exploit the scandal as a typical manifestation of Wanamaker corruption. Indicative of the vaporous nature of such guilt-by-association, a *Puck* commentary on the Taylor cartoon alleged, "His personal holiness shines genially upon the sinful but successful Quay and the sinful and hapless Bardsley. The sweet effluence of his sanctimoniousness hovers over each new financial scandal that is brought to light in Philadelphia."\(^{22}\)

The *Puck* assault continued a week later in Keppler's "Truth is Stranger than Fiction," showing Pious John penning racy ads and Sunday-school notes as the ghost of Charles Dickens lamented to the shades of Pecksniff and Uriah Heep that he had not lived to use Wanamaker as a character surpassing them both in sanctimonious mendacity. Keppler's "The Righteous Man Has No Fear" two weeks later dressed him in the familiar black attire of the parson intoning a

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\(^{22}\) *Puck*, June 17, 1891, pp. 257, 258; July 1, 1891, p. 290; and July 8, 1891, p. 306.
homily on the rewards for his "True Goodness" in political fund raising and bank jobbery. Oppers July 22 "What the Administration 'Pecksniff' Will Doubtless Do Next" portrayed "Holy John" in black frock coat visiting the prison cell of "Honest John" Bardsley with religious tracts and a sermon on the merits of "political pull" in evading criminal consequences. Keppler's July 22 centerfold "The Rival Toreadors," primarily a satire on the rivalry between Grover Cleveland and David Hill, featured a Republican bull wounded by the picador lances of sundry embarrassments. The lance symbolizing the Keystone-Bardsley affair read simply the "Wanamaker Scandal." Taylor's August 26 centerfold "Our Political Pandora" depicted as one of many scandals rising from Pandora Harrison's box the wraith of Wanamaker in parson's hat and frock coat with a Mosaic stone tablet inscribed "Bank Scandal." Taylor's "Early Morning in Philadelphia" (Sept. 23, 1891) featured the likenesses of Wanamaker and Quay in clouds of smoke billowing from Pennsylvania Republican headquarters but unnoticed by Philadelphia editors George W. Childs and Clayton McMichael.23

Puck finally abandoned this rather feeble line of attack but during the year leading up to the 1892 Harrison-Cleveland rematch found ample opportunity to exploit Wanamaker as a generic symbol of venality and spoils. Keppler's October 28, 1891, "Sizing It Up" portrayed Cleveland eyeing the throne of a tiny Harrison obscured by a huge grandfather's hat atop a pedestal held up by various Republican operatives of unsavory reputation, including Wanamaker and the resurrected Dudley alongside five numbered blocks. The August 3, 1892, centerfold "The Last Review" included Wanamaker, "floaters in blocks of five," and other elements of alleged corruption among the troops reviewed by Harrison in Keppler's parody of the well-known Meissonier painting. Dalrymple's October 5 centerfold "The Great Republican Bluff" had Harrison posturing as a paragon of "purity and righteousness" while trying to obscure a monument to King Boodle on a pedestal held up by symbols of Republicans' stolen elections and spoils, including Wanamaker and Dudley flanking five numbered blocks. Keppler's October 19 centerfold "The Republican Pharisees"

23 Puck, June 24, 1891, p. 273; July 8, 1891, p. 305; July 22, 1891, pp. 345, 352-53; Aug. 26, 1891, pp. 8-9; and Sept. 23, 1891, p. 65.
cast Wanamaker along with Clarkson, Quay, Tom Platt, and Joseph B. Foraker as holy hypocrites entering a church past an empty sack for the “Republican Corruption Fund to buy Floaters” held by Quay lieutenant Dave Martin, described by one authority as “a politician from Philadelphia with a reputation for political manipulation” then in charge of the crucial canvass in New York City.24

Scholarly studies of the 1892 campaign suggest strongly that—compared to the tariff controversy, Republican efforts to restore voting rights to black southerners with the ill-fated 1890 Force Bill, and the developing furor over silver coinage—intimations of corruption played little role in the outcome of the contest. Nonetheless, the theme loomed large in the cartoon art of the campaign, as evidenced in Puck and Judge post-mortem centerfolds. Bernhard Gillam’s November 19 Judge centerfold “Benjamin ‘Where am I At?,’” an unusually self-deprecating lament, included among the wreckage of the Harrison effort the Wanamaker money barrel, wry acknowledgment of its potency as an opposition symbol. Keppler’s November 30 Puck centerfold “Now They Realize It” featured Cleveland with young Puck surveying a similar pile of Harrison campaign debris, including the Dudley blocks of five and Wanamaker, in his familiar black parson’s attire with hands poised in prayer. Along with a nonthematic Judge New Year’s Eve centerfold featuring dozens of political notables as brownies, these pieces marked the end of Wanamaker’s extraordinary reign as a major color cartoon convention of the Harrison era. In four years, his cherubic countenance had become so familiar to the patrons of Puck and Judge that even unlabeled it was recognizable instantly, not only as the ubiquitous parson or in other human portrayals, but even as tiny birds or a design motif on a Grecian fountain frieze.25

Wanamaker’s return to private life did not bring about a complete cessation of his political activism or of cartoons lampooning it, but journalistic exploitation of him as a cartoon character became a rarity.


25 Judge, Nov. 19, 1892, pp. 334-35; and Dec. 31, 1892, pp. 472-73; Puck, Nov. 30, 1892, pp. 222-23. The definitive study of the 1892 campaign remains Knoles, Campaign and Election of 1892; but see also Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley, 424-39.
The death of his nemesis Keppler, in February 1894, removed the most powerful master of Wanamaker caricature, and his subsequent battles with Quay for control of the Pennsylvania Republican hierarchy brought him belatedly to the side of the angels in the minds of Keppler’s successors. After 1892 Wanamaker appeared in only three Puck cartoons, a pair of 1894 centerfolds satirizing Republican tariff policy and a whimsical 1898 Taylor piece on the diversity among heaven’s angels. Caprice continued to characterize Puck portrayals of him, for in J.S. Pughe’s centerfold “Giving the Whole Snap Away” (Sept. 26, 1894) Wanamaker was cast as the hero of the piece for championing free-trade beliefs he never espoused.26

He was not treated so magnanimously, however, in his final trio of Judge cartoons, an ironic turnabout prompted by his assault upon the Quay organization that split the Pennsylvania Republican party into warring camps. Two of these were quite harmless, both featuring him as a lad brawling with Quay as minor facets of mass events, but Grant Hamilton’s June 12, 1897, “Another Stuffed Prophet” [#10] ranked among the most venomous—and creative—of all Wanamaker caricatures. Its portrayal of him as a latter-day Moses with stone tablet mixing political demands with dry-goods bargains blended superbly those essential character flaws of mercantile avarice, immoral self-interest, and sanctimonious hypocrisy combined so artfully by Keppler and his lieutenants to evolve the stereotype of “Holy John” Wanamaker.27

Although it appeared in Judge instead of Puck and was the handiwork of Hamilton instead of Keppler, this acid caricature of Wanamaker as stuffed prophet symbolizes splendidly the whole phenomenon of this unlikely but compelling cartoon convention. Political cartoonists and the scholars who study their work make much of the element of artistic integrity, equating greatness in the medium with the premise that complex, abstract truths difficult to express in words may be conveyed with clarity through graphic commentary that captures the essence of

27 Judge, June 12, 1897, p. 393; June 19, 1897, pp. 418-19; and March 12, 1898, pp. 170-71.
a subject's character. Few would dispute the marriage of genius and integrity in the more memorable cartoon portrayals of Richard Nixon, Ayatollah Khoumeini, and in all likelihood Wanamaker's contemporaries Blaine, Ben Butler, and Roscoe Conkling. The example of John Wanamaker, however, provides an exception to this axiom, for Keppler and his peers enjoyed sustained success exploiting a compelling and creative caricature of a sleazy sharper and holy hypocrite at odds with factual reality and, in many instances, simple common sense.

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