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NOTES ON THE HENRY CLAY CLUBS OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY*

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WHEN Henry Clay of Kentucky ran for the presidency in 1844, he was supported by the Whigs of Allegheny County. These Whigs organized themselves into so-called "Clay Clubs" which sprang up in the summer of 1842. Besides emphasizing the national aspect of political campaigning, however, the clubs also served local officeseekers. Beginning in 1842, the movement to form such clubs was not completed until two years later by which time most of the county's wards, townships, and boroughs had at least one such organization. As in all political organizations these clubs maintained a hierarchy of officials, published literature, and performed all other duties necessary to win elections. They arose in response to Clay's aspirations and died out when those hopes went unfulfilled in the election.

At the time of their inception three major parties existed in the county. The Antimasonic, Whig, and Democratic Parties were in continuous existence while each local election saw the emergence of splinter factions. The Antimasons and Whigs had temporarily joined forces in the Whig-Antimasonic Party to win the county for William Henry Harrison in 1840. But soon after hostility arose between them due to the Whig's intentions of backing Clay, a desire opposed by Neville B.

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Craig, editor of the *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette* and leader of the Antimasons. Running separate slates, they split the anti-Democratic vote and thus gave the Democratic Party many easy victories in local contests. By 1842 many presidential hopefuls had also made their wishes known, and each party in the county pledged its allegiance according to its own choice. The Democrats backed Pennsylvania's favorite son, James Buchanan; the Whigs, of course, came out for Henry Clay, early refusing to support President John Tyler as head of the party; the Antimasons, first supporting General Winfield Scott, fluctuated among many candidates, including John Quincy Adams. This was the political atmosphere of the period in which the Clay clubs arose.¹

Whigs' plans to establish some such club did not call for early organization. The fact that Clay Clubs did arise in 1842, two years before the national election took place, was due to intensified Antimasonic plans at that time to support General Scott. That perennial candidate came north to Pennsylvania in late May of that year for the purpose of consulting certain abolitionists like Thaddeus Stevens of Lancaster.² When Stevens chose to aid Scott, the Antimasons of Allegheny County followed the lead, established so-called "Chippewa Clubs" and hoisted Scott's banner. Not to be outdone by their hated foes, the Whigs called for the formation of a Clay club. It was the "ill-judged" and "premature" action (as the Whigs termed it)³ on the part of Scott's friends which forced them early into the field of forming political clubs.

The first Chippewa club was organized by Pittsburgh's fifth ward on June 11. Two days previous to this the *Gazette* had carried the call that such a meeting was to take place. More than 200 people attended and enrolled their names as members of the club. While the thought of calling a "Scott Club" had occurred to many Antimasonic leaders, the use of the title "Chippewa" seemed better suited because it would denote the General's fame as an Indian-fighter. Many Whigs who had not yet broken with Craig's leadership were present, and the speakers made the most of this by charging that Scott was the best

1 Samuel J. Astorino, "Politics in Allegheny County, 1841-1844" (Unpublished Master's thesis, History Dept., University of Pittsburgh, 1957), pp. 14, 62.

2 George R. Poage, *Henry Clay and the Whig Party* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1936), p. 108.

3 *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, June 9, 1842. Hereafter cited as *Gazette*; Clay Club Book, MS., in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society of Pittsburgh.

suited candidate for the presidency.⁴ A second meeting of this Chippewa Club in July hailed "wizard" Thad Stevens as the outstanding personality in the war on Masonry. If Scott was elected, further resolutions stated, Stevens should be given a cabinet post.⁵

Behind the ardent support given Scott, however, lay the obvious desire to control local politics. The battle between Whigs and Antimasons was a struggle in which each was seeking a method to attract members of the other. Thus Craig denounced Clay as a Mason and advocate of an anti-protectionist tariff, undeserving of conscientious votes. Had his plans successfully discredited the Kentuckian, Whigs would have returned to the Antimasonic fold where their added strength would have prevented Democratic victories. It was intended that Scott should prove to be the attracting factor. But the plans failed, and the Clay Whigs, instead of joining Chippewa clubs, remained a separate party. As they, too, sought added strength, it followed the something must be done to offset the Antimasonic campaign. Although they had not counted on coming out so early for Clay, the fact that local party control was at stake forced them to counterattack.

As soon as it became known that a Chippewa club was to be formed, the Whigs called for a meeting to discuss the possibility of organizing a Clay club. Sponsored by Pittsburgh's South Ward, the call first appeared in the *Daily Advocate and Advertiser* of June 3, while the meeting took place the following evening. Nothing was done actually to form a club, but arrangements were made to call a city-wide meeting for the same purpose. On June 11 interested people then gathered in Beare's Room in the Law Chambers on Fourth Street between Smithfield and Cherry Alley. The meeting opened by appointing Josiah King, president and James B. Murray, secretary. George Singer and John P. Bakewell were instructed to prepare resolutions "expressive of the sense of the meeting." While they retired R. E. Sellers addressed the crowd, eloquently praising Henry Clay. Following his speech Singer and Bakewell delivered their resolutions which, after the usual praise of Clay, urged wards and townships to form their own clubs. The final resolution appointed a committee of five (one from each ward in the city) to draft a constitution and by-laws to be submitted to the club at its next meeting on July 9. Following another address by Robert Forrester all those wishing to join the club were asked to enroll

⁴ *Gazette*, June 9, 1842; *Daily Advocate and Advertiser* (Pittsburgh), June 10, 17, 1842. Hereafter cited as *Advocate*.

⁵ *Advocate*, July 21, 1842.

their names in a log book provided for this purpose.⁶

This Pittsburgh club, formally accepting its constitution and by-laws on July 9, was entitled "The Henry Clay Club of Allegheny County." Later it became known as "The Central Clay Club of Allegheny County." It was the parent organization of the branch clubs which had been formed in wards, townships, and boroughs. The officers of the Central Club were one president, one vice-president from each election district, one secretary, and one assistant secretary. Many of the vice-presidents were also officers of branch clubs. When the first official meeting of the Central Club took place in early August of 1842, every district was thus represented; the vice-presidents numbered thirty-two. Thomas Bakewell was elected first president, James B. Murray was secretary, and Charles B. Scully was assistant secretary. An executive committee consisting of A. Wylie Jr., R. E. Sellers, F. G. Kay, Josiah King, and William Graham Jr., also served as a speaking group that toured the area urging Clayites to organize branch clubs.⁷

The laws of the Central Club provided that meetings would be held on the evenings of the first Fridays of each month, while special meetings could be called by the president or by the written request of five members. A quorum consisted of twenty. All committee reports were required to be submitted in writing, and, in most cases, such reports were published in the *Advocate*. Both the constitution and by-laws could be amended or altered.

The movement to form Clay clubs next spread to Allegheny City where a call for this purpose was published in the *Advocate* of July 19. Two days later, July 21, the meeting convened at J. Patterson's Salt Warehouse which was located between Sandusky Street and New Bridge Street. Election of temporary officers was held on August 11. Henry Irwin was chosen president, John Kelly secretary, and W. A. Irwin, John Morrison, John Freeman, E. W. Stephans, D. B. Shepley were elected the committee on resolutions. Robert Forrester was again on hand to address the crowd. The constitution and by-laws accepted on August 18 were very similar to those adopted by the Central Club. Officially designated as "The Henry Clay Club of Allegheny City, auxiliary to the County," its permanent officials included Henry Irwin as president, Edward Stephans and Abraham Patterson vice-presidents,

⁶ *Ibid.*, June 4, 7, 14, 1842; Diary of Robert McKnight, (June 11, 1842) MS., in the Darlington Memorial Library, University of Pittsburgh.

⁷ *Advocate*, August 6, 1842.

John E. Parke secretary, and John Kelly assistant secretary. This was the only club formed in Allegheny City, and it served all four wards.⁸

Other clubs, such as that formed in Birmingham Borough on July 28, 1842, followed the same pattern of organization. First, there was a call for a meeting, usually published in the *Advocate*. In most cases this call was signed by over 100 persons, and sometimes by over 200. Second, a preliminary meeting was held at which time temporary officers were chosen, speeches made, and future meeting dates were calendared. Finally, at the next meeting, the club would be officially established. The relationship between the branch clubs and the Central Club was not very tight: the branches could, for example, use their own discretion in matters specifically concerning their district. Should a branch wish to present an out-of-town speaker, it did not need the assent of the parent. On the other hand, the Central Club was responsible for laying down plans of action to be followed in county-wide matters. A candidate for local office, such as township commissioner, was supported simply by his township constituency. But for county and state offices, such as county treasurer or State Assembly, the officers of the Central Club had the last word in choosing the party slate. Although an office-seeker in this case might bolt the party, run as an "Independent Whig," in every case in the period 1842-1844, he lost the race. The parent was also responsible for the publication of pamphlets, handbills, and other political material. The *Advocate*, edited by George Parkin, was the party press.

In reality the Clay Club system was a political machine. Its officers were party bosses whose task was to deliver the vote of their districts.

Craig and his Antimasons violently fought the work of the Clay Clubs. Still relying on the supposed popularity of the Antimasonic movement, Craig, through the *Gazette*, charged that many members of the clubs were Masons. He published lists of those whom he suspected and stated that should Whig candidates be elected to office, the county would fall under the control of Masonry. Was not Clay also a Mason? In addition to this indictment the Antimasonic leader pointed out that such clubs indulged in "man worshipping." Clay, Craig said, had no consistent program. The Whig Party had never formulated a platform because it was forced to manipulate its program among dif-

⁸ *Ibid.*, July 19, 23, August 20, 1842.

ferent sections of the country. Southern Whigs and Northern Whigs possessed different pictures of what Clay advocated.⁹

To the first charge, that of including Masons among their members, the Clay clubs pointed out that Masonic candidates, including many named by Craig, had been indorsed by the Antimasonic Party in the elections of 1840. It was therefore illogical that the Craig group should presently bring up the point. If any party was unfaithful to its principles, it was the Antimasonic Party. The clubs flatly refuted the second charge, that of "man worshipping." In the first place, they stated, Clay did have definite proposals. Second, these Whigs felt that should the time ever come when it was wrong to vote for Clay, they would switch their allegiance. The clubs, in conclusion, were formed in support of a political principle and not in support of a single individual.¹⁰

During the period of party strife between the Clay Whigs and Antimasons, Craig usually outwitted the Whig politicians. Both sensing the hopelessness of their split insofar as local contests were concerned, the two parties made advances for fusion in the very midst of the enthusiasm over Clay clubs in the summer of 1842. On July 23 Craig ordered his committee of correspondence to make the first step in this direction by calling for a joint convention to be held on August 17 which would select a slate for the October State Legislature election. The call was reiterated in the *Gazette* of August 9, and the Clay machine, open to the idea, agreed to the plan.¹¹ On the surface, however, Craig opposed the plan, maintaining that his committee, of which he was chairman, did not have the power to make such agreements. Only if the Whigs were willing to give three of the four places on the ticket to the Antimasons, would he sanction the union. In spite of his seemingly sincere opposition, the union convention met. Significant was Craig's departure from Pittsburgh just before the convention gathered, not returning until after the votes were counted.¹²

The convention, nevertheless, placed Craig on the ticket which was evenly balanced between the two parties. With this new strength the "Antimasonic-Whig" ticket, as it was called, easily emerged

⁹ *Morning Chronicle* (Pittsburgh), September 29, 1842; *Gazette*, June 8, 1842.

¹⁰ *Advocate*, June 8, 14, 1842.

¹¹ *Gazette*, July 23, August 9, 1842.

¹² *Advocate*, July 29, 30, August 30, 1842.

victorious and Craig along with it. When Craig returned, he did an about face and refused to recognize the newly-formed party. He wanted the Antimasons to maintain separateness: "I shall hold myself as free to locate its separate distinctive organization, as I have been heretofore." Since he had not been present when nominated, having no voice in the matter, he claimed no responsibility for the convention's actions.¹³ Much to the chagrin of the Whigs, and too late to do anything about it, they realized that Craig had left town in order to make for a more quiet scene while his cohorts convinced them that he would abide by the union in the future, even to the extent of supporting Clay. That the Whigs had been "duped" in a bargain, there was no doubt.

By the following summer, however, the picture changed. Where Craig had been able to rule his party with a strong hand, it was presently evident that his controlling grip was slipping. Antimasons in the townships were increasingly going over to the Whig Party. This was especially true of the farmers in those areas. And although Antimasons in Pittsburgh did not depart in such numbers, a few of the ward leaders did leave the party and defect to Clay's cause. In short, the Antimasonic Party was beginning to show signs of weakness. The Democratic press, fearfully watching the trend, admitted that "the whigs are sweeping all before them."¹⁴

Faced with such a situation, Craig acted swiftly to stem the tide. His first step was an attempt to revive the popularity of Antimasonry by claiming possession of the "secrets" of Masonry, which he promised to disclose to the public. Such a disclosure, he believed, would enhance the prestige of the Antimasonic Party and give it a plausible reason for remaining in separate existence. Craig, for reasons unknown, never did publish the information. In many respects the whole affair backfired on him. For with his failure to make the publication, county citizens could only conclude that he did not have the "secrets." The promise was thought to be merely another scheme to keep his party alive. Added to denunciations that Craig, while in office, had failed to obtain legislation outlawing extra-judicial oaths, his unfulfilled promise to make the disclosure became a political liability.¹⁵

Craig also sought to forestall the fall of his party by adding ab-

¹³ *Gazette*, September 5, 1842; *Weekly Mercury and Manufacturer* (Pittsburgh), September 9, 1842.

¹⁴ *Daily Morning Post* (Pittsburgh), July 14, 1843. Hereafter cited as *Post*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 25, 27, August 2, 1843.

olitionism to his party principles. His overtures to the Liberty Party for alliance bore fruit when that party and the Antimasons met in joint convention in the Mormon Church in Pittsburgh. If the meeting was a sincere attempt to form a fusion party with Liberty voters, it ended in failure. Craig's insistence that his party have major control over the selection of future tickets exasperated the Liberty Party and caused them to leave the convention, heaping curses upon the Antimasonic leader. Yet Craig remained to organize a new party clothed in the dual role of Antimasonry and abolitionism. Its new title was the "Political-Abolition-Exclusive-Antimasonic Party." In shortened terms these Antimasons called themselves "Exclusives." The move to adhere to abolitionism was intended to discredit the followers of Henry Clay. It was no secret that Clay kept some 300 slaves on his farm in Kentucky. As Antimasonry denounced Clay as being a Mason so too did the *Gazette* begin a similar attack by calling for the immediate emancipation of the slaves.¹⁶ This, however, also proved to be a bad political move. Abolitionism was not a popular cause. Both Democrats and Whigs saw in it the seeds which would, if it should attain power, destroy the Union. Even Craig's own followers believed this, and Antimasonic defections continued.

In early August, 1843, those Antimasons bent on leaving Craig approached Whig leaders in the hope of forming a fusion ticket, without Craig this time, to beat the Democrats in the coming October elections. In the manipulations that followed, these disaffected Antimasons lost their identity as a separate political faction. They simply gave in completely to Whig demands that they join the party without conditions. It was an unconditional surrender which further bolstered the growing strength of the Clay machines.

Meanwhile the Exclusives who remained loyal to Craig also sought to make a union with the Whigs. Secret meetings decided a compromise ticket which Craig approved. But objections arose over the platform. Insisting that any newcomer give undivided allegiance to Clay, the Whigs immediately deflated the fusion proceedings because the *Gazette* would have no part of that. Craig, on the other hand, demanded that Antimasonry and abolitionism be the major planks of the new platform. Since this was a virtual censure of Clay's 300 slaves and his Masonic membership, the Whigs likewise refused to

16 *Advocate*, May 20, June 2, 3, 1843; *Gazette*, May 21, 1843.

acquiesce. A few days after the initial transactions, the proposal fell through. Open warfare was renewed. The Exclusives entered the October elections as a separate group.¹⁷ Although the voting showed that Craigian-style Antimasonry was witnessing a decline, it also pointed out the Exclusives' ability to continue to poll more ballots than the Whigs. This did not, however, indicate that Craig had found a method of instilling new life into his party. The results of the election had an illusory effect. Exclusive decay continued until March, 1844, in a special race for Secretary of War William Wilkins' vacated congressional seat, Craig, on the abolitionist ticket, received only 600 votes.¹⁸ The Antimasonic Party, as a separate political organization, no longer existed.¹⁹

The death of the Antimasonic Party was of primary importance to the rise of the Clay clubs. The clubs obviously had one less enemy with which to deal. Their membership showed a slight increase. In the special election for Wilkins' seat the Whig Party easily carried the day, indicating that a Clay victory in Allegheny County in November was forthcoming. In addition to the fall of the Antimasonic Party, the Clay clubs were also strengthened by the "sale" of the *Gazette* to "fifteen whigs." This was accomplished in February, 1844, when this group, acting through James Dunlop, new president of the Central Clay Club, subscribed \$200 apiece as a "loan" to M. M. Grant, publisher of the *Gazette*, in return for a "promise" to support Henry Clay.²⁰ There was no doubt that the "new" Whig Party was presently capable of defeating all opposition.

When James K. Polk of Tennessee was chosen as the Democratic presidential nominee, the Clay machine in Allegheny County finally had a stationary target. Up to this point the Whigs had had a difficult task in attacking the many candidates who appeared on the scene. Buchanan was the most difficult to deal with since he was the state's favorite son. Scott also presented a problem because of his Antimasonic support. In their attempt to disassociate themselves from President Tyler's leadership, the Whigs were open to charges of political heresy. Each man presented different views and different policies and had to be attacked with different methods. Such a situation

17 Astorino, "Politics," pp. 54, 55.

18 Henry R. Mueller, *The Whig Party in Pennsylvania* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1922), p. 95n.

19 J. Cutler Andrews, "The Antimasonic Movement in Western Pennsylvania," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, XVIII (1935), 268.

20 *Post*, February 2, 1844.

necessitated a constantly alert Whig opposition. On the other hand, Clay presented a stationary target as early as 1842. Furthermore, he had a long political record. In Polk, however, Clayites found at least a few shortcomings. Polk was the first dark-horse candidate in American politics and was not well known outside of Tennessee. When news of his nomination reached Allegheny County, the Democratic press sought to overcome this disadvantage by printing long biographies of him. Although he had no long record to attack, Polk was nevertheless open to charges of political inexperience.

The fact that Polk was from the South was displeasing to the high-protectionist tariff sentiments of the county. The tariff was the predominant factor in every campaign in the county during this period. Indeed, the campaign of 1844 throughout Pennsylvania was fought over the tariff.²¹ The tariff problem came to a head in the county in 1842 when the Compromise of 1833 lapsed. Candidates for every office having a bearing on this problem sought to convince the voters that they favored a high tariff which would protect the area's dawning industrialism. The Southern position, traditionally favoring a low tariff, was hated by the North. Thus the Democrats were put on the defensive in the county and attempted to convince voters that Polk was a high tariff man.²² In the light of Clay's record in promoting American industry, this was made all the more difficult.

The tariff problem altered the structure of the Clay club system. When the tariff controversy was most acute during the summer of 1844, there came into existence so-called "Whig Tariff Clubs." Oddly enough, these Tariff clubs arose in areas which already had Clay clubs. Thus in Allegheny City the "young men" formed a "Young Men's Clay and Tariff Club of the City of Allegheny" on August 14. This particular club had one president, R. C. Gray, four vice-presidents, Lewis R. Landsay, Samuel Mellville, David W. Bell, J. D. Blackstock, two secretaries, one treasurer, and an executive committee. The *Allegheny Morning Express* was adopted as the club's official organ. Pittsburgh's third ward had a similar "Whig Tariff Club" while Elizabeth Township organized the "Tariff Club of Elizabeth" on August 30. The purpose behind this new movement was to give more emphasis to the tariff picture. They were intended to specialize

21 Malcolm R. Eiselen, *The Rise of Pennsylvania Protectionism* (Philadelphia, Malcolm R. Eiselen, 1932), p. 154.

22 *Post*, July 4, 10, 23, 1844.

in propagandizing Clay's tariff background. In practice, however, the clubs covered many subjects not pertaining to the tariff. They dealt, for example, with the Texas annexation problem, the dispute arising over the distribution of the proceeds from the sale of public lands, and supported the Whig gubernatorial nominee, General Joseph Markle of Westmoreland County.²³

Markle's nomination caused another twist in the Clay club system. In Plum Township there was organized a "Clay and Markle Club" on September 5. Penn Township had a club with the same name. Manchester likewise had a "Clay and Markle Club." Markle was also supported by a small newspaper called *The Mississenawa War Club*. This journal was intended to emphasize Markle's campaign, but soon after it started publishing, its name was changed to read *The Harry of the West*. In this way the journal served both Clay and Markle. Publishing *The Harry of the West* was J. W. Coach, while R. R. R. Dumars was its editor. It was sold on Wednesdays and Saturdays. As a campaign newspaper its life was brief, and it was naturally discontinued after the election.²⁴

Democratic counterparts to the Clay and Markle clubs were "Polk and Dallas Clubs." George Mifflin Dallas of Philadelphia was the Democratic vice-presidential nominee. In Manchester the Clay and Markle Club extended an invitation to the Polk and Dallas Club to debate the political issues of the campaign. The latter accepted, and the debate was scheduled for August 17. Three men were to make up each team. The Whig team consisted of Walter Forward, former secretary of the treasury, Thomas Williams, and Cornelius Darraugh. The Democratic team had Wilson McCandless, Andrew Burke, and Alexander Brackenridge. In spite of plans to have the debate, the event never took place. Forward declined to appear, and Moses Hampton was scheduled to substitute. McCandless, however, refused to accept the change; he had expected to challenge Forward. The Democratic team then called a postponement of the debate until Forward was prepared to appear. The Whigs, nevertheless, went ahead with their plans and put in their appearance at the scheduled place. Since

²³ *Gazette and Advertiser* (the names fused as a result of the "sale"), August 17, 1844; *The Harry of the West*, October 2, 1844, the only copy, found in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society at Pittsburgh.

²⁴ *Gazette and Advertiser*, September 13, 1844.

the Democratic debaters did not attend, the Whigs claimed victory by default, charging fear on the part of the opposition.²⁵

In addition to Polk and Dallas clubs, the Democrats also organized so-called "Hickory Clubs." These clubs were named for Polk who was being hailed as "young Jackson" or "young Hickory." The first Hickory club was formed by Pittsburgh's third ward on July 20. Seven days later a second such club appeared in Pitt Township. In late July Peebles Township organized a "Young Hickory Club." Robinson Township raised its club on August 16. By August 23 a Hickory club appeared in the fourth ward of Pittsburgh. The following day the second ward called for the organization of a club, and this was completed by August 27.²⁶ The Hickory clubs had no parent as did the Clay clubs. Moreover, Hickory clubs never developed on as large a scale as did their Whigs counterparts. As political machines Clay clubs were far superior. Of course, the Clay club system had the advantage of a longer existence by which it could develop. The Hickory clubs no sooner came into being than the election was over. They never really had a chance to prove themselves. The time which they sorely needed to get up a membership, elect officers, and establish operational procedure was not available.

Due to this lack of an organized machine to offset the Clay clubs, the Democrats supplemented the work of their Hickory clubs with so-called "Hickory poles." The poles were stripped tree logs donated by farmers. Usually the poles measured more than thirty feet in height. A barbecue was held at which time the pole was "raised" with accompanying ceremonies. Most of the poles were decorated with colored flags, feathers, and posters. By September Pittsburgh had Hickory poles on virtually every street corner. The importance of these gatherings lay in the opportunity to present speeches.²⁷

Among the many charges flung at Henry Clay one was peculiar to Allegheny County. In August, 1841, the Senate had chosen Pittsburgh as the site of a new western armory. The appropriation for the building of the arsenal was immediately opposed by Clay on the grounds that the rivers surrounding the city usually dried up in the summer and froze over in the winter, making the city inaccessible by water. This would obviously negate the usefulness of the armory. In the

²⁵ *Post*, August 16, 17, 20, 1844.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, July 26, August 22, 24, 1844.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, August 22, 1844.

summer of 1844 the Democrats brought up the charge that Clay had a "malignant hostility to Pittsburgh." Even James Buchanan seemed surprised at Clay's opposition to a Pittsburgh armory. This opposition became all the more aggravating when it was realized that the county lost an opportunity for additional employment. The loss of prestige brought on further bitterness.²⁸

The Clay clubs, meanwhile, had just passed through a period of strife brought on by their attempt to make Harmar Denny the Whig vice-presidential nominee. The Denny movement began in early January, 1844, when the *Advocate* saw the need of having Clay's running-mate come from the middle or northern states in order to balance the ticket. At this time the two most prominent hopefuls were Millard Fillmore and John Davis of Massachusetts. Claiming that those states had already been favored with presidents and vice presidents, the *Advocate* asked that powerful Pennsylvania be next honored. Denny, whose "character for consistency, sterling integrity, sound patriotism, devotion to Whig principles, and undeviating morality" were above question, was a logical choice. Furthermore, the *Advocate* continued, Denny could count on the support of Adams, Somerset, Erie, Mercer, Lancaster, Chester, Lebanon, Dauphin, Huntingdon, and Allegheny Counties. His only rival in Pennsylvania for the second place on the ticket was Thomas M. T. McKenna of Washington County. But McKenna remained passive on the question of his availability and Denny, it was felt, had a clear field in the state.²⁹

At the first Central Clay Club meeting in February the membership broke into two factions. The first speech, delivered by a Dennyite, called on the citizens of Pittsburgh to support the move. The next speaker, however, offered a resolution to the effect that it would be "inexpedient" for the club to express its sentiments at this time. He opposed Denny on several points. First, Denny was accused of being anti-Clay in that he disfavored the Kentuckian's Compromise of 1833. This was the most serious charge. Second, Denny was accused of selling to the city a "barren hill" on which was to be built the new city water works. It was later discovered that the property was not suited for this purpose, and the \$45,000 paid for the land was wasted. Third, it was charged that Denny opposed the inclusion of Antimasons in the

28 *Ibid.*, July 13, 19, 25, 1844; Diary of Robert McKnight, (September 1, 1841) MS., in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Society of Pittsburgh.

29 *Gazette*, January 2, 26, 1844.

Whig Party. Denny, it was said, favored an exclusive Antimasonic Party. He even went so far as to support the action taken by Craig at the Mormon Church Convention. The next speaker rose to defend Denny and his sentiments on the Compromise of 1833. Cornelius Darraugh joined in this support. As the meeting wore on confusion and disagreement became more and more evident. Some of the members walked out in disgust while others were fast approaching the brink of physical violence. Finally, Robert McKnight, a member of the executive committee, quitted the scene by throwing the question to a vote. The first resolution to support Denny was won by a margin of two to one, but a second resolution to make the vote unanimous fell short. The factions were not to be reconciled.³⁰

Denny's friends took to travelling around the county enrolling new members in the Clay Club Book. This was in preparation for the next club meeting. Anti-Dennyites held firm to their stand that Denny would not make a suitable vice-presidential candidate because of his past opposition to Clay's policies. The question was finally settled in March when it became known that the New York Whig delegation would not support Denny's move. Theodore Frelinghuysen of New Jersey was chosen instead. With their hopes crushed, county Dennyites despairingly predicted that Clay would lose 10,000 Pennsylvania votes.³¹

Once again unified, the Clay clubs concentrated on the coming election. Huge torchlight rallies were held throughout the summer. Whig campaigning culminated in a great parade held on September 10. Plans for the parade were begun in middle August as each Clay club drew its place in line. Whigs gave special attention to decorating their homes and shops along the parade route. The *Advocate* reported that Pittsburgh was a city flooded with banners and posters. On the appointed day, the huge parade moved through Pittsburgh. That same evening a torchlight parade followed the same route. Rallies lasted far into the night. It was a memorable day for the Whigs, not to be equalled by Polk's followers. In fact, it was the largest parade ever to be held in Pittsburgh up to that time.³²

The Clay clubs of Allegheny County did their work well. In the October elections Markle defeated Francis Shunk, the Democratic

³⁰ *Post*, February 5, 1844.

³¹ *Ibid.*, February 7, April 4, 1844.

³² *Ibid.*, October 15, 1844.

gubernatorial nominee, although Shunk won the state and the governorship. For Congress Cornelius Darraugh won over Democrat Alexander Brackenridge. For the Senate George Darsie emerged victorious over Democrat Chambers McKibbin. The Whigs also swept the minor offices.³³ In the presidential race held on November 2, Clay carried Allegheny but lost Pennsylvania and the election. It was the last time Clay ran for the presidency. With their mentor gone the Clay clubs of Allegheny County disbanded.

33 *Ibid.*, November 15, 1844.