

The Deal for Philadelphia:

Simon Cameron and the Genesis of a Political Machine, 1867-1872

by John D. Stewart II

Moisei Ostrogorski observed in 1904:

Sometimes an ambitious and specially gifted politician quickens or anticipates the process of natural evolution, he 'builds a machine' from top to bottom; he finds out men capable of serving him as lieutenants, comes to an understanding with them, and by his manoeuvres spreads his net over the whole city or the whole state. But if he succeeds in this, it is because the social and political elements of the Machine were there ready to hand.¹

The victory of Simon Cameron in the senatorial contest had insured the permanence of Pennsylvania's "Republican Revolution." In 1867, he set about the task of harmonizing the conflicting interests of the Allegheny and Philadelphia "rings" on whom depended the precarious political balance in the state. For the Curtis-McClure faction of the party, the senatorial defeat was the major event in their political lives. Never again would they rise so near the seat of power they once enjoyed. Even a Democratic newspaper observed after the election: "Of all the radicals, our choice was Simon Cameron—For, first, his election smashed the Curtin-McClure machine, whose juggernaut wheels have long run over the necks of Democrats . . ." ² Yet their friends were still strong at the local level particularly in Philadelphia, where politicians can be divided into two groups—the state and federal, and the locally oriented. The former, working from their legislative power base in Harrisburg, sought to control blocks of Philadelphia votes in order to increase their power in the state and federal arena. Municipal politics, on the other hand, consisted of a series of rapidly shifting coalitions of downtown, ward, and state politicians attempting to control city and county offices in order to benefit from the private business done with these governments.³

At the state Republican Convention at Williamsport in June, 1867, Cameron faced his first test of power with the leaderless

Philadelphia ring. The challenge came from his long time adversary District Attorney William B. Mann and from Mayor Morton McMichael, who were the only important Curtinities left in office. Mann attempted to have Pennsylvania Railroad attorney John Scott, who was not closely associated with either faction, named chairman of the Convention, but the effort was beaten down by Wayne MacVeagh.

The only other state office up for grabs was a seat on the Supreme Court, and Western Pennsylvanian Henry Williams won handily over Mann's candidate Russell Thayer, only to be defeated by Philadelphia Democrat George Sharswood.⁴ New York, Ohio, New Jersey and Maryland all returned Democratic majorities in 1867. Republican majorities in the Pennsylvania state legislature were reduced to five in the Senate and eight in the House; in Philadelphia Democrats swept the municipal elections carrying the entire ticket by an average of 4,000 votes. The *Pittsburgh Gazette* attributed the results to a lack of support from Mann and his followers, but Edgar Cowan and ex-President Buchanan placed the blame on Republican attempts to integrate the city's streetcars and grant the Negro suffrage.⁵

The Philadelphia election was a significant blow to the developing Cameron organization in that it awakened the slumbering Curtin clique which hoped to return to power and destroy the developing machine. Seizing the opportunity, McClure blamed the defeat on Cameron. He wrote from Montana ". . . I never saw such suicidal management, and if the Democrats have not carried the state, it must be because they have no vitality left."⁶

With Cameron controlling the Senate, but the Curtinites controlling the House, McClure returned to the fray. His deft management secured the election of Philadelphia's Elisha Davis as Speaker and Matt Quay's friend, also a Curtin man, W. W. Irwin as Treasurer. With the approaching National Convention and the fall mayoralty and presidential contests, Democrats joined the attack on those professional politicians whose votes were for sale; while at the other end of the Commonwealth, a coalition elected a Democratic-Workingman's candidate Mayor of Pittsburgh.⁷

Even with impending disaster, the two factions could not keep from battling each other. By March 11, 1868, when the Republican State Convention assembled in Philadelphia, Cameron found himself in a desperate struggle to block Curtin's nomination for the Vice-Presidency. The *New York World* focused national attention on the contest stating that almost the entire country was for a Grant-Curtin ticket. The Convention was unanimous for Grant, and Curtin polled 109 to Ben Wade's 22. Then the dictatorial McClure moved that the Convention delegates appoint a committee to select those who would attend the National Convention with instructions to vote for Grant and Curtin as a unit. McClure won 83 to 47, but his blatant usurpation of power served to unite anti-Curtin delegates behind Cameron.⁸ As William B. Thomas reported, "the Cur-

tain [sic] clique managed to manipulate the convention with considerable effect, but when the Members began to see the purpose of the leaders they began to rebel [.]”⁹

Cameron journals launched a blistering attack. The Harrisburg *Telegraph* stated that Curtin was not the choice of Pennsylvania but had been forced on them by Mann and McClure, and decried the fact that elected representatives, such as Don Cameron of Dauphin County, had been replaced by Curtin stooges. The newspaper then indicated the strategy that the Cameronians would pursue: “The National Convention will no doubt turn a deaf ear to all factions, [and] admit those whom the people elected. . . .”¹⁰ The Pittsburgh *Gazette* embarrassed Curtin by pointing out that he had opposed unit rule in 1860 and one Cameron follower admonished, “Surely Mr. McClure never dreamed that tyranny of this kind would be tamely endured.”¹¹

At the Chicago Convention the Rules Committee struck down unit rule in case of a divided delegation which was now assured by the seating of seven Cameron challengers including Don Cameron. Curtin’s strength steadily diminished until the fifth ballot when Cameron triumphed and Schuyler Colfax was nominated for Vice-President.¹²

Having revenged himself for 1860 when the Curtin faction blocked his presidential aspirations, Cameron now levelled his sights on the Philadelphia cabal and began his protracted conflict for control of the ring. In his own journal, the Harrisburg *Telegraph*, Cameron later defined this “ring” as “a close and dexterous combination for the purpose of controlling public affairs and electing public functionaries.”¹³ The city’s position was complicated by the fact that under the state constitution, Philadelphia was a “creature of the state.” Mayor McMichael complained:

Of late years it has become too much the custom to settle at Harrisburg the affairs of Philadelphia . . . Whether a street should be opened and paved; whether a sewer should be built; whether a main of gas or water should be laid, are questions not for the Commonwealth, but for the corporation [i.e. Philadelphia, incorporated 1854]. If it is proposed to occupy our highways, to regulate the disposition of our finances or methods of our taxation, or to do any act exclusive of local interest, a direct respect for propriety would seem to require that the people most directly involved should be considered, and at least allowed the opportunity to be heard.¹⁴

Further, city councils and department heads exercised broad discretionary powers in the field of appointments, and therefore it is not surprising that power was badly fragmented among a host of local, state, and federal officials. The character of local politicians also proved to be a source of alarm to the city’s upper-class businessmen who found themselves losing control at the very moment when the need for government services was mushrooming.¹⁵ Membership in city councils after the war revealed a large influx of jobbers and contractors anxious to expand their horizons.

Early in 1868, the Union League launched an effort to secure the election of men “. . . whom office seeks, rather than those who seek office.”¹⁶ Attacking local political organizations such as the Pilgrims Club, one former party leader lamented:

When the best men of Philadelphia were sent to congress and the legislature, all our merchants were politicians . . . Now it is disgraceful to be political, and all power is handed over to other than those who should lead in politics.¹⁷

Cameron's strategy therefore was to capitalize on these factional and class rifts, utilizing patronage, the press, and the power of the State Legislature to solidify old friendships and find new allies eager to increase their power at the expense of the Curtin coterie.

In the race for District Attorney, Cameron prompted his old friend Isaac Hazelhurst to oppose Mann. Hazelhurst accepted the challenge and wrote to Cameron with a note of optimism: “We are getting along admirably here. The people, the organization, and the press are with me. I shall not only drive Mann off, but I shall be elected.”¹⁸ He had the support of youthful ward leader, later Governor, Samuel Pennypacker, and head of the Gas Trust James McManes. Their combined strength, although not sufficient to defeat Mann, did force him to withdraw permitting Democrat Lewis Cassidy to be elected.¹⁹

Cassidy had the backing of the increasingly influential Republican Councilman from the 9th ward, William S. Stokley, one-time confectioner who had worked his way up through the city's notorious firehouse gangs. Other leaders of the ring such as William Leeds, Hamilton Disston, William Rowan, Charles Porter, and William Elliott had strong hose company affiliations as well.

Each held a variety of strategic public offices, and all were Pilgrims along with leading Democrats John Welsh, Thomas Barger, and Cassidy. In addition, all were parvenu, self-made, professional politicians generally associated with the trades and manufacturing, which combined to earn them the wrath of the city's upper-class businessmen reformers. However, these ties enabled Stokley to build an independent power base which crossed party lines, and this proved crucial to his later domination of the machine.²⁰

As Democrats prepared for the mayoralty race, five thousand “repeaters” left New York for Philadelphia and Justice Sharswood issued five thousand naturalization papers within two weeks of the election. Worried Republicans like John Forney reported prophetically to William E. Chandler, “nothing can prevent us carrying Philadelphia but a successful system of fraudulent naturalization papers . . . giving the Democrats their usual share of cheating, we ought to carry it by 5,000 but it cannot be less than 2,000 . . .” William H. Kemble, another Curtinite, expressed concern over the power of the Whiskey Ring and the influence of gamblers on the Democrats' behalf.²¹

Whatever the cause, Democrat Daniel M. Fox was elected by 175 votes marking the second consecutive defeat of Curtin Republicans in the city. The following month, Cameron's state organization easily carried the city for Grant by 6,000 votes, clearly demonstrating the future course of Pennsylvania politics.²²

At this juncture many of the Curtin faction began to go their separate ways or gravitate to the opposition's camp. The time was right for Cameron to make inroads into the city, particularly with the upcoming Senate race in January. As was his custom, he probed cautiously, writing his correspondents to discover their opinions. Cameron's first inquiry concerned Kemble, who had entered state politics as Treasurer 1865-67 via a logrolling arrangement between McClure's Republicans and his own Philadelphia coterie, and was now president of the People's Bank. Together with Matthew Quay, who headed a powerful western Pennsylvania combine, they were popularly known as the "Ring." Quay was looking for a new luminary to whom he might hitch his star, and hoped to elect Kemble Senator, but he faced the powerful opposition of the Pennsylvania Railroad who favored John Scott of Huntingdon.²³ W. H. Cobb responded to Cameron:

I do know of Mr. Kemble; his reputation hath body enough to smell up to our mountain tops. God forbid that Pennsylvania should be so misrepresented. What is the reason that every villain in Philada [sic] pops out like 'Jack in a Box' every time there is a vacant chair."²⁴

The most powerful forces in Pennsylvania politics were at work, the Quay-Kemble combine, the Pennsylvania Railroad, and Simon Cameron. Quay, realizing he had bitten off more than he could chew, sought to have PRR President J. Edgar Thompson enter the race while Cameron did not commit himself. The Harrisburg *Patriot* complained that it was the same old sectional battle which had long divided the state; the struggle between the rural West and urban Philadelphia.

With candidates for the office increasing daily, Quay seized the initiative, and went to Washington in December to consult with members of the Pennsylvania delegation and, no doubt, Cameron as well.²⁵ Exactly what occurred is not known, but immediately upon his return, Quay wrote in his *Beaver Radical*:

The power he [Don Cameron] exerts in the politics of Pennsylvania is truly wonderful. His office was constantly crowded while we were in Harrisburg, with politicians from all parts of the state, and he will have as much to do with the election of United States Senator as any man in the state, the editor of THE RADICAL not excepted.

He also requested that Wayne MacVeagh send him an article for his paper in that Forney and McClure had already written him, and he did not wish to convey the impression that his paper was ". . . in the interest of Gen. Cameron's opponents."²⁷ Whether Quay sold out Kemble as some suggest, or Kemble and his partners "helped unite the city ring, the state machine, and the Pennsylvania Railroad," this much is certain—the first link in the Cameron-Quay

machine, which dominated state politics for the next four decades, was forged.²⁸ They would all support John Scott for Senator, and dump W. W. Irwin as Treasurer. Robert W. Mackey, who has been described as both a "raging consumptive," and the "ablest all-round leader the Republicans of Pennsylvania ever created," was selected to succeed him. On December 18, 1868, Cameron received congratulations for "stopping the Ring," and by New Years Day the advance guard began to assemble in Harrisburg.²⁹

The bargain for the Senate seat was finalized in a secret Philadelphia caucus early in January with Don Cameron probably acting as agent for railroad wizard Tom Scott. The election of the Speaker of the House on the 4th was expected to reveal the strength of the various candidates, and John Clark of Philadelphia was easily elected. Clark, an engineer during the war, had later contracted to build portions of the Central and North Central Railroads. Cameron had known him for some time, but few people were aware of these connections.

On January 19, 1869, John Scott was elected Senator by a straight party vote 78 to 51.³⁰ Most newspapers agreed with the Democratic Harrisburg *Patriot* which concluded that if a "pure man" could be found among the Republicans, it was John Scott. The *Patriot* credited Don Cameron with Scott and Mackey's success, while the bitterest comment came from the New York *World*: "Mr. Scott was made Senator by the joint combinations of the railroad and Senator Cameron, one party finishing the greenbacks and the other doing the manipulation of the members."³¹

With the installation of his new stalwart friend in the Senate, Cameron now turned his attention toward Washington where McClure, Forney, and Mann were working diligently to put Curtin in Grant's cabinet. Despite numerous pressures, the sphynx-like Grant gave no indication whom he would choose except that he would be from Pennsylvania. Cameron speculated to his son-in-law:

Who do you think it is? Boree [sic] or Stewart [sic] perhaps? Some think it is Mr. Kennon of Washington Co. I think it is someone residing in Philadelphia[,] Don, who came over this morning, says Boree.³²

Cameron was correct, for when Grant sent his list of nominations to the Senate, Adolph Borie, unknown son of a French immigrant, was appointed Secretary of the Navy and his friendship with Grant lasted until death. The juiciest political plum in Pennsylvania, the Collector of the Port of Philadelphia, went to an old Cameron lieutenant Henry D. Moore. A distant cousin, Henry Bingham, had been appointed Postmaster in 1867 and aided Cameron's cause by obtaining a million-and-a-half dollar appropriation for a new post office in the city. In addition, he was also influential in bringing the next National Convention to Philadelphia.³³ Bingham's brother John, Superintendent of the Adams Express Company, joined his brother's pledge to carry out Cameron's wishes stating:

... if he don't mind his business, and run the machine as well, and

better than it was ever conducted, I shall kill him[.] I want him to be an honour to you, and to make good all we promised, which I have no doubt about[.] . . . [If] he gets a man in place who is not a Cameron man[.] we will have him routed . . . we are not going to forget you."³⁴

Cameron was also successful in obtaining a myriad of other posts for his people—Assessors, Collectors of Internal Revenue, U.S. Attorneys and Marshals—all very important to the burgeoning machine.

The list of appointees throughout the Commonwealth continued, while at the national level two things were abundantly clear. First, no anti-Cameron man, except Curtin who was given the Russian mission as a sop, received appointments from Grant.³⁵ Russell Errett, James Kerns, Dr. H. E. Muhlenberg, Wayne MacVeagh, George Boker, George Bergner, William Strong, and John Hiestand were all loyal members of the Cameron faction. The President also appointed Philadelphia's exuberant alcoholic, John Forney, chairman of the Republican State Central Committee. This split him off from the Curtin faction and marked a periodic detente with his old enemy. It also meant the conversion of Forney's influential *Press* to the Cameronian camp.³⁶

Second, those such as Henry Adams who expected great things from Grant were stunned and ashamed at the appointments. Adams remarked that "a great soldier might be a baby politician," while the outraged McClure, who had behaved badly during the cabinet struggle was panned by the press.

In the recent encounter at Washington, the defeat of Curtin and the discomfiture of his plenipo [*sic*] fill the rival faction with ecstasies [*sic*] of delight. In measuring himself with Cameron it must be owned that McClure showed a great weakness. He was clumsy in his movements, and exposed himself, while Cameron glided quietly and unseen to his work. Cameron struck blows in the dark, while McClure made Pennsylvania Avenue vocal with the tale of his repulse. In dexterous use of the political rapier he compares as well with Cameron as a muton butcher with a skillful anatomist.³⁷

With Curtin in exile and McMichael out of office, the wounded McClure returned to his recently established legal practice in Philadelphia with his partner William B. Mann. They concentrated primarily on local affairs, but Mann did successfully manage Governor Geary's re-election on October 12, 1869, after Geary had broken with Cameron. Philadelphia accounted for nearly 95 per cent of his majority throughout the state, and he carried the city by a scant 196 votes.³⁸

This was made possible by Mann's recently introduced Registry Law which placed all voter registration under strict control of the Republican Party. McClure's personal dislike of Geary, plus Mann's fraudulent manipulation of the election returns caused McClure to disassociate himself from Mann. Geary, too, could not afford to ignore the public cries of corruption, and turned reformer.³⁹ He openly joined the Democratic press in attacking Mann's

alleged participation in the nefarious pardon trade in the city's prisons, and in his *Annual Message*, 1869, he struck at the very law which had caused his election.

At the last session of the Legislature an act was passed known as the "Registry Law," the intention of which was to protect the ballot box against corruption and fraudulent voting, to which it has for many years been disgracefully exposed. This law seems to have been so defective in some of its provisions as to have received the condemnation of a majority of the Supreme Court, by which it was pronounced 'incongruous and unconstitutional'. At the election immediately after this decision, it is alleged that frauds were perpetrated, surpassing in magnitude, perhaps, any that have been heretofore consummated in the history of the Commonwealth. These frauds have demonstrated the necessity of the passage of some law or laws, that will accomplish the desired object, without being subject to the exceptionable features pointed out by the learned gentlemen who pronounced the opinion of the Supreme Bench.⁴⁰

Early in January, 1870, Geary, after firing Benjamin Brewster as Attorney General, lashed out at the "political and moral debauchery" in the state treasurer's office. Stung by the attack, Kemble, Mackey, Hill, and State Representative Elliott, gathered in room 42 of the Girard House to formulate plans to meet the threat. Kemble stated that "Geary didn't know any better" and was evidently experiencing either a brief case of naivete or meglomania. They concluded, however, that the price of disposing of him would result in sending "a lot of our people to the penitentiary."⁴¹ Therefore, although Mackey won the caucus nomination with the help of Cameron, they resigned themselves to defeat by W. W. Irwin who had struck a bargain with the Democrats. Mackey, however, recaptured the position the following year at which time Don Cameron wrote to Wayne MacVeagh ". . . we are on top again. Quay is jubilant. . . ."⁴²

Throughout the rest of 1870, Tom Scott and Don Cameron attempted to heal the Mackey-Irwin schism, but found that mutual antagonisms of a personal nature "make men to a degree unmanageable almost insane, to reasons from outside."⁴³ Grant dispatched troops to the city for the fall Congressional elections, and despite a superb job of gerrymandering by Republicans, the Democrats captured the State Senate 17 to 16. Republicans outnumbered their opponents 55 to 45 in the House, but the Democratic victory meant that it was no longer necessary for them to join Curtin Republicans in supporting Irwin as Treasurer.

Irwin's continued depletion of the Treasury surplus, and the focus of national attention on the Treasury Ring, also made further agreement impossible. The machine then began its purge of those fifteen Republican bolters who had joined the Democrats. By 1871, only one Republican dared vote against Mackey, and within three years, none of those members who had voted against him remained in the legislature.⁴⁴

Cameron himself spent most of 1870 "capturing Grant," and by June he became part of the holy trinity of Chandler, Conkling,

and Cameron which dominated the President's thinking. It was in that month that Grant, Cameron, and "Jolly Jack" Hiestand, Naval Officer in Philadelphia, went on a fishing trip to the headwaters of the Susquehanna, in Cameron County. According to press reports, "not a single aquatic craniate vertebrate" was lifted from the waters, "but old Simon, the consummate fisher of men had caught the biggest fish of all—President Grant."⁴⁵

By the fall, the dismissal of Secretary Cox, and the fall of Charles Sumner before the Grant ax, had the effect of further increasing Cameron's influence in the National Administration. His succession to the chairmanship of the Committee on Foreign relations was compared by a Philadelphia paper to Caligula's promotion of his horse to consul. With the advent of 1871, it was apparent that Philadelphia, particularly the power of McClure, Mann, and Stokley, remained the major obstacle to his total domination of the state.⁴⁶

With his alienation from Mann and most other leading Republicans, McClure began his flirtations with the Democrats and various reform elements. Mann was locked in a struggle with Mayor Fox over the Metropolitan Police Bill which placed control of the city police in a state board. Several prominent Republicans felt that the bill went too far and joined the opposition to defeat it.

Further, friends of Mann introduced a series of bills into the Legislature designed to take over the main sources of patronage in the city from Stokley, by placing water, police, and highway departments under three independent commissioners (all Democrats) wielding unlimited power of funding and appointment. This served to further antagonize many of the city's reform element generally identified with the Curtin wing, and eventually led to a movement for constitutional revision which both Cameron and Quay would support.⁴⁷

A meeting of public protest, headed by George Buzby of the Citizens Municipal Reform Association (CMRA), deplored the attempt of Mann's oligarchy to take over municipal affairs, and a committee of fifty was chosen to present a memorial against the bills in Harrisburg. Defeat of the bills came not from the public opposition, however, but from Cameron's ally, state representative William Elliott who killed the bills in committee.⁴⁸

By the end of 1871, Mann, apparently having learned his lesson, accepted Cameron's leadership in both state and city and received organization support for his successful re-election as District Attorney. Although Mann and Cameron hated one another, the former's vote getting techniques had saved the party on several occasions, therefore he had to be tolerated. Like Quay before him, he now became a loyal Cameronian serving as chairman of the State Convention in 1872 and stumping the state for the entire ticket. Mann's support resulted in greatly enlarged pluralities for Grant and Governor Hartranft in Philadelphia, which Cameron

could now count on for a 20,000 vote plurality in the city and certain victory in the state. As one historian put it, "He was accepted into the new rising Philadelphia hierarchy, an adjunct of the Cameron machine. His body was counted among the faithful but his soul was that of another."⁴⁹

Stokley, who was a Select Councilman of the 9th ward, proved to be Cameron's most formidable Philadelphia opponent. The struggle arose over the so-called Buildings Ring, or the construction of the infamous City Hall complex which took over thirty years and an estimated \$25,000,000 to complete. It soon became Philadelphia's showcase of political jobbery in the Gilded Age, and the problem centered primarily on the location of the buildings. Stokley favored the Penn Square site in his own 9th ward but by April 25, 1867 the battle lines were clearly drawn as a majority of the Council's Committee on City Property, (William Bumm, Edward Shallcross, Samuel King, and Stokley himself), recommended construction at the 5th ward Independence Square site, heart of the city's merchant district.⁵⁰

After two years of maneuvering, Mayor Fox signed the bill on January 1, 1869 naming Independence Square as the location. A coalition of jobbers and contractors associated with the Mann wing of the Curtin faction, together with prominent businessmen John Price Wetherill, Henry Lea, and James H. Orne, combined for his victory; but Stokley's single-minded determination now moved the conflict to the State Legislature. His close friend Wilson Henszey (10th ward) had gained election to the State Senate and in March of 1870 introduced two bills requesting that the issue be submitted to a public referendum, and also prohibiting the Independence Square site. These measures passed the Senate on March 22, 1870 with the only dissenting vote coming from the lone Democrat in the Philadelphia delegation David Nagle.⁵¹

By April, both the Curtin and the Cameron factions had sprung into action with Governor Geary vetoing an additional bill to add Stokley and friend Henry Phillips to the list of building commissioners. Again, the pro-Stokley bills passed the Legislature and specified further that Independence Square remain "a public green forever." In case the electorate should reject the site, provision was made that at least some public buildings be constructed at the Penn Square site.⁵²

By August 5, 1870, supplementary bills were passed creating an entirely new Buildings Commission with Stokley's group possessing a clear majority. In addition, none of the contractors or Councilmen named in 1868 were included. The press attacked both the new Commission and the Penn Square site arguing that the latter was too far removed from the city's commercial district. The *North American* preferred Washington Square east of ninth street which it claimed would "confirm the concentration of business of all kinds

—commercial, fiscal, legal, governmental, maritime, internal, transportation, insurance etc. . . . in the old original city of Penn.”⁵³

The referendum of October 10 gave Stokley an 18,000 vote majority with wards 18 (Bumm), 19, 22 (Smith), and 23 (Shallcross) deviating from the straight party vote. The business community was outraged, and a public meeting led by Henry Lea formed a commission, including many active reformers, to present a 30,000 signature petition to the State Legislature. Law suits demanding injunctions against the construction were also instituted and Cameron, again seeing the opportunity to “divide and conquer,” took action on their behalf.⁵⁴

Elliott, with his power as Chairman of the Commission on Railways, managed to delay construction while McManes and Kemble leaked a story to the *Bulletin* that John Rice, Stokley’s contractor-friend and Chairman of the new Buildings Commission, had attempted to bribe a Councilman. Mann, fresh from his defeat in the Commission Bill struggle, joined the Cameronian assault in *Forney’s Press*, “The wealth, influence, and respectibility of the city are arrayed in deadly opposition to it [Buildings Commission] and will spare no means to secure the repeal of the act creating it.” A new bill was introduced forbidding construction at the Broad and Market street intersection, but received a negative recommendation from the powerful Committee on Municipal Corporations. Moreover, Elliott could not muster the necessary two-thirds vote in the Senate to override the original bills, and Chief Justice Thompson of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court refused to grant the injunction.⁵⁵

Having lost all attempts to block Stokley in the Legislature, Cameronian Republicans resigned themselves to working with him in Philadelphia and endorsed his candidacy for Mayor in 1871. The *North American* observed: “although a member of the Buildings Commission, he [Stokley] has steadily resisted its aggressive proceedings, and since general opinion has showed how distasteful it has become, has been in favor of its abolishment.” The *Bulletin*, formerly his most caustic critic, also followed suit and endorsed his candidacy for Mayor.

The CMRA on the other hand, called for constitutional reform to prevent further acts of “power without responsibility.” It complained: “the commission is empowered to tax us without limit and to spend our money without supervision, to hold office without restriction of time, and to fill vacancies in their own body.”⁵⁶

In the last analysis, however, Stokley managed to temper criticism by never again voting against measures opposed by the press. Instead, he maintained control through his friends on the Commission, Mahlon Dickenson of the Harmony Engine Company, and notorious Pilgrims John Hill and Richard Peltz who replaced Chairman John Rice and himself early in 1872. Democratic opposition was blunted with the election of Thomas Barger, Issac Cassin, and Thomas Gaskill to the Buildings Commission. All three had been

named by Mann in the 1871 patronage struggle over the water, police, and highway departments.

Stokley's closest ally in the Buildings Ring struggle, Wilson Henszey, returned as President of Common Council in 1872 from the State Legislature and controlled all appointments and appropriations. Mann was made one of the sureties of William Struthers & Son marble contractors for the complex, while the People's Bank, to mollify Kemble for the rejection of his brother's contracting bid, was authorized by councils as the depositor of city funds. Peter Widener was named Treasurer of the Buildings Commission. His business associate William Elkins, also a director of the Excelsior Brick Company, became a major subcontractor as did James Dingee, brother-in-law of William Leeds.⁵⁷

The deal for Philadelphia was now complete. The struggle over the Buildings Ring had not only brought about agreement between Cameron and Stokley, but also forced McClure into a vitriolic campaign against Stokley in the next mayoralty contest. However, Stokley's support of Cameron and reformer backed plans for a state constitutional convention, plus his willingness not to tamper with election returns to the constitution's detriment, assured him of the support of a considerable number of the city's "solid men."⁵⁸ Having absorbed the key elements of the Mann faction and the Democratic opposition into the Commission, he had established himself as the dominant figure in the Philadelphia machine. Mann, Cameron, and McManes could do no less than support his re-election.

For the first time since its inception the Republican Party appeared, on the surface at least, factionless. Members of the Curtin-McClure combine were now either dead, retired from public life, or converted to the Cameronian organization. McClure would assume the role of an independent reform journalist, while Curtin and Forney eventually found their way into the Democracy. In the words of one historian "a machine had been born" or as Hamilton Fish observed: "The expurgated Republican Party is stronger on account of those members who have gone from it. Let the 'curtin [sic] fall'."⁵⁹

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Moisei Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, edited and abridged by Seymour Martin Lipset (New York, 1964), 2: 179-227.
- ² *Bedford Gazette*, January 18, 1867; Brooks Mather Kelley, "A Machine is Born: Simon Cameron and Pennsylvania 1862-1873." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1861, p. 172.
- ³ Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Growth* (Philadelphia, 1958), p. 215.
- ⁴ The *Beaver Argus*, July 3, 1867 contains a good account of convention proceedings. See also the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, February 1, 1867 on the east versus west overtones of the Williams-Thayer contest; and Samuel Dickson, "George Sharswood—Teacher and Friend," *American Law Register* 55 (1907): 401-427 on his career. Appleton's *Annual Cyclopeda and Register of Important Events of the Year*, 43 vols. (New York, 1861-1903), 1867, p. 620 lists the tally as Sharswood 267, 746, Williams 266, 824.
- ⁵ *Pittsburgh Gazette*, October 10, 1867; Cowan to S. R. Phillips, 28 November 1867, Simon Gratz Autograph Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania hereinafter cited as HSP; Buchanan to James D. Ellis, 14 December 1867, Buchanan MSS, Library of Congress hereinafter cited as LC. Election returns are contained in *The Tribune Almanac for the Years 1838 to 1868 Inclusive* (New York, 1868) 2: 44.
- ⁶ A. K. McClure to Gratz [n.d.] Simon Gratz Autograph Collection, HSP; Alexander K. McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1905), 2: 212.
- ⁷ *Pittsburgh Gazette*, December 11, 1867, January 9, 15, 1868; *Harrisburg Telegraph*, January 10, 1868; Circular Number 1 dated December 10, 1867, in the *Philadelphia Press*, January 1, 1868.
- ⁸ *New York World*, February 18, 1868; *Beaver Argus*, March 25, 1868; *New York Times*, March 12, 1868.
- ⁹ Thomas to Cameron, 19 March 1868, Cameron MSS, LC.
- ¹⁰ *Harrisburg Telegraph*, March 13, April 11, 1868.
- ¹¹ *Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 17, 1868; William H. Russell, "A Biography of Alexander K. McClure." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1953), p. 368.
- ¹² *Official Proceedings of the National Republican Conventions of 1868, 1872, 1876 and 1880* (Minneapolis, 1903), pp. 33, 97-103; Willard H. Smith, *Schuyler Colfax: The Changing Fortunes of a Political Idol* (Indianapolis, 1952), pp. 273-75; Colfax to Theodore Tilton, 4 January 1868, Schuyler Colfax MSS, New York Public Library.
- ¹³ *Harrisburg Telegram*, October 9, 1874.
- ¹⁴ *First Annual Message of Morton McMichael*, 1867, pp. 29-30.
- ¹⁵ According to the *Philadelphia City Directory* and the *Annual Report of the City Controller*, 1870, city councils made 85 appointments between January and November. Department appointments were as follows: Police 832, Highways 22, Water 50, City Commissioners 116 court officers and aldermen plus 1,000 part-time canvassers, Board of Revision 68, and Board of Health 25.
- ¹⁶ *Philadelphia North American*, May 22, 1868.
- ¹⁷ Charles Gibbons, in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, February 10, 1873.
- ¹⁸ Hazelhurst to Cameron, 19 June 1868, Cameron MSS, LC.
- ¹⁹ Pennypacker to MacVeagh, 26 June 1868, Issac Wayne MacVeagh MSS, HSP; *Harrisburg Telegraph*, July 18, 1868.
- ²⁰ Public Law 934 (April 15, 1872), *Laws of Pennsylvania, 1872*, pp. 979-80; McClure, *Old Time Notes*, 2: 244-54. Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 271n. 47 suggests that the Irish of Newburyport, Massachusetts, entered politics after achieving socioeconomic success, whereas Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, 1961), p.

42 states, "the Irish used politics [in New Haven, Connecticut] to surmount obstacles to their advance in the socioeconomic world." In Philadelphia, it appears that politics was definitely an avenue of social mobility for a large number of the city's Irish. In fact, politics provided the primary means of mobility for nearly all of the Pilgrims who came from humble beginnings: Leeds (lettercarrier), Rowan (paperhanger), Porter (tinsmith), and Elliott and Hill (marblecutters).

- ¹ Forney to Chandler, 28 September, Kemble to Chandler, 5 June, 9 October, 1868, William E. Chandler MSS, LC.
- ² Election totals in Pennsylvania were Grant 342,280, Seymour 313,382 or 52.2% of the total. John Hartranft was elected Attorney General of the state with 50.7% of the vote. The Democrats elected one new senator but lost fourteen seats in the lower house. John A. Smull, comp., *Smull's Legislative Hand Book* (13 vols. Harrisburg, 1867-1879), 1873, p. 273.
- ³ Erwin Stanley Bradley, *The Triumph of Militant Republicanism* (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 309-310.
- ⁴ Cobb to Cameron, 22 October 1868, Cameron MSS, LC.
- ⁵ *Beaver Argus*, December 2, 23, 1868; *Harrisburg Patriot*, December 2, 1868.
- ⁶ *Beaver Radical*, in *Beaver Argus*, December 23, 1868.
- ⁷ Quay to MacVeagh, 20 December 1868, MacVeagh MSS, HSP.
- ⁸ Bradley, *Militant Republicanism*, p. 312; Kelley, "Machine is Born," p. 240. In view of Kemble's later relationship with Cameron while State Treasurer, and considering that he had promised Wayne MacVeagh a deposit for his new Chester County banking venture as early as October, 1867, it seems more likely that a bargain was struck at this time. Kemble to MacVeagh, 3 October 1867, MacVeagh MSS, HSP.
- ⁹ McClure, *Old Time Notes*, 2: 255; Cobb to Cameron, 18 December 1868, Cameron MSS, LC.
- ¹⁰ John Scott's brother-in-law, G. Eyster, wrote of the secret conclave: "the real caucus . . . was held in a room in Phila., not far from the Penna. R.R. Office, this night one week. Mr. S[cott] was present by request." [G. Eyster] to William McPherson, 8 January 1869, William McPherson MSS, LC. McClure in his *Old Time Notes*, 2: 225 credited Tom Scott alone with John Scott's election.
- ¹¹ *Harrisburg Patriot*, January 7, 8, 1869; *New York World*, January 19, 1869. Matthew Josephson, *Politicos* (New York, 1938), p. 389, 444-47 incorrectly viewed the party "caucus" as the means by which twenty-five millionaires controlled the organization. See David J. Rothman, *Politics and Power: The United States Senate 1869-1901* (Cambridge, 1966), chs. 2, 4.
- ¹² Cameron to MacVeagh, 24 February 1869, MacVeagh MSS, HSP. Cameron did not yet know Grant personally. Hence, the president cautiously steered the middle road between the Curtin and Cameron factions by remaining silent on his appointees. Grant's decision to name Borie was coloured by the fact that the new Secretary of the Navy was the largest Philadelphia contributor to his new \$50,000 home.
- ¹³ Borie, recognizing his subservience to Admiral David Porter, the real head of the department, resigned on June 25, 1869. Borie to Grant and Grant to Borie, June 25, 1869, Borie Family MSS, HSP. John Forney, *Anecdotes of Public Men* (New York, 1873), 2: 194 remarked that Borie "took office with a sigh and gave it up with a laugh." Moore rejected Cameron's offer to post the necessary bond to assume the collectorship stating that it had already been posted by others. This began a cooling off period in their relationship for Cameron quipped: "his [Grant's] first act was to appoint to a place a man who has been employed to slander me for a year." Notation on Moore to Cameron, 18 March 1860, Cameron MSS, LC. Moore was replaced over a patronage struggle in March, 1871. A. Cummings to Cameron, 20 March 1871, Cameron MSS, LS.
- ¹⁴ Bingham to Cameron, 22 March 1867, Cameron MSS, LC. See also H. H. Bingham to C. Gilpin, Charles Gilpin MSS, Gratz Collection, HSP.
- ¹⁵ Cameron could have easily rejected Curtin, but preferred to have him re-

moved from the political arena. Cameron to MacVeagh, 18 [April] 1869, MacVeagh MSS, HSP. McClure embarrassed everyone, including Curtin, with his public attempt to force Curtin into Grant's cabinet. This was apparently a decisive factor, together with the rapid dissolution of the Curtin clique, in Grant's decision to cast his political fortunes in Pennsylvania with Simon Cameron. See the Philadelphia *Bulletin*, in the Harrisburg *Patriot*, March 1, 1869; and Henry Cooke to Jay Cooke, 10 March 1869, in Ellis P. Oberholtzer, *Jay Cooke* (Philadelphia, 1907), 2: 79.

³⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 41 Congress, 2 Session, p. 164; Forney to Cameron, 29 December 1869, 26 March 1871, Cameron MSS, LC.

³¹ Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (New York, 1931), p. 262; Harrisburg *Patriot*, March 4, 1869.

³² *Smull's Legislative Hand Book*, 1873, p. 277 listed the count at 290,552 for Geary and 285,956 for Packer.

³³ Mahlon H. Hellerich, "The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1873." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1956, pp. 346-51. During the cabinet struggle, McClure published an open letter in the Philadelphia *Bulletin* containing a statement, supposedly from Grant, that he had not received a letter from "..... on the cabinet," meaning Geary. The Governor wrote to the President and denied that he favored Curtin for the post, and was on unfriendly terms with McClure thereafter.

³⁴ George E. Reed, ed., *Messages and Papers of the Governors 1857-1871*, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 4th series, (Harrisburg, 1902), 8: 946-47. Geary brought suit against the Philadelphia prison keepers and won. The Court ruled that a sentence could be changed only in the same terms in which it was pronounced. Commonwealth versus Mayloy and Keating, *Pennsylvania State Reports*, 58 (1869): 291-92.

³⁵ Reed, *Papers*, pp. 1008-1009; Kelley, "Machine is Born," p. 234; McClure *Old Time Notes*, 1: 81-82.

³⁶ D. Cameron to MacVeagh, 19 January 1871, MacVeagh MSS, LC.

³⁷ Scott to Cameron, 11 January 1870, Cameron MSS, LC.

³⁸ J. McAfee to John Covode, 30 November 1870, John Covode MSS, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania; Edwin S. Bradley, *Simon Cameron: Lincoln's Secretary of War* (Philadelphia, 1866), pp. 328-29.

³⁹ *New York World*, June 20, 1870. In the U.S. Senate, Cameron generally acknowledged Roscoe Conkling's leadership of the party on national issues.

⁴⁰ The Harrisburg *Patriot*, November 7, 1870 charged that "Cameron had Cox driven from the cabinet" for refusing to permit political assessments in his department. Cameron did not want to see his friend Sumner go as some have charged, and they parted with a mutual "God Bless You" on Sumner's last day in the Senate. Forney to Sumner, October 20, 1870, in Earle D. Ross, *Liberal Republican Movement* (New York, 1919), p. 12; Cox to Garfield, 24 October 1870, in William B. Hesseltine, *Ulysses S. Grant: Politician* (New York, 1957), p. 217; Edward L. Pieve, ed., *Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner* (Boston, 1893), 4: 476.

⁴¹ Harrisburg *Patriot*, February 27, 1869; Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, March 8 1871; Philadelphia *Public Press*, May 23, 1871.

⁴² Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, March 10, 15, 16, 1871.

⁴³ Erwin S. Bradley, *Simon Cameron: Lincoln's Secretary of War*, p. 342.

⁴⁴ J. St. George Joyce, ed., *The Story of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1919), p. 285; Philadelphia *North American*, February 15, 1867; *Journal of Select Council*, 1867, 1: 285; "Proceedings at the Laying of the Corner Stone of New Public Buildings on Penn Square in the City of Philadelphia July 4 1874," Public Documents Division of the Philadelphia Public Library, hereinafter cited as PPL, contains an excellent synopsis of the economic and political background of the complex as well as a list of major contractors.

⁴⁵ *Journal of Select Council*, 1868, 2: 246; Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, February 11, 1869, February 4, 1870; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 1870*, pp. 323-25.

- ⁵² *Journal of the House*, 1870, pp. 1122, 1150; *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1870, pp. 589, 609, 731, 930, 990, 1070, 1170.
- ⁵³ Public Law 1404 (August 5, 1870), *Laws of the General Assembly of the State of Pennsylvania*, 1870, pp. 1548-50; *Philadelphia North American*, January 18, 1869.
- ⁵⁴ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 11, 1870; *Philadelphia Press*, March 7, 1871; *Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 11, 1871.
- ⁵⁵ *Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 25, June 23, 1871; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 13, 1871; *Philadelphia Press*, May 5, 1871; *Philadelphia Post*, May 27, 1871.
- ⁵⁶ *Philadelphia North American*, June 15, 1871; "The Citizens Reform" published by the CMRA, October 1871, HSP.
- ⁵⁷ *Philadelphia Press*, October 19, 1872; *Philadelphia Sunday Times*, March 14, 1875; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 24, 1873. According to the *Journal of Common Council*, 1873, Vol. 2, appendix 145, \$279,414 was deposited in the People's Bank in October, 1873. "Proceedings at the Laying of the Corner Stone," PPL, pp. 62-63.
- ⁵⁸ *Philadelphia Sunday Times*, February 15, 1874; *Philadelphia North American*, February 10, 16, 17, 1874.
- ⁵⁹ Fish to Cameron, 9 October 1872, Cameron MSS, LC.