Summer 1997

MARYLAND
Historical Magazine

The Madness of Disunion: The Baltimore Conventions of 1860

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On Wednesday, April 18, 1860, the steamer *S. R. Spaulding* with approximately eighty passengers bound for Charleston, South Carolina, sailed from Baltimore to the accompaniment of music from Gilmore's band and loud cheers from those on shore. "For the alimentary comfort of those on board," one newspaper reported, "she is supplied with 4,500 pounds of fresh meat and poultry, and has besides 23 tons of ice."[1] She was due to arrive in Charleston, a city of fifty thousand, on Saturday, the twenty-first, in time for the Democratic Party's presidential nominating convention. The *Spaulding*'s passengers were Maryland's delegates to what was destined to be the most dramatic political convention in American history. Aboard the steamer were men named Johnson, Gittings, Landham, and Brent. None would take center stage in Charleston, though some would have significant roles.

Four years earlier, a party committee chaired by T. C. McCreary of New York had selected Charleston in the hope that holding the convention in a southern city would promote unity in what were exceedingly divisive times. Incumbent Democratic president James Buchanan, battered by sectional tensions and revelations of massive corruption in his administration, had chosen to retire after one term to the bucolic peace of his Pennsylvania farm. Congress was divided into two camps, northern and southern men, who were sometimes literally at each other's throats. On April 5, Congressmen John F. Potter of Wisconsin and Roger A. Pryor of Virginia almost came to blows on the House floor. Four days later they agreed to a duel—bowie knives were the weapons of choice—but cooler heads prevailed, and no duel took place. "There are no relations, not absolutely indispensable in the conduct of joint business, between the North and South in either House," South Carolina Senator James H. Hammond remarked. "No two nations on earth are or ever were more distinctly separate and hostile than we are here."[2]

The weather in the weeks preceding the convention had been hot and dry, but Charleston hotels and rooming houses nevertheless anticipated a lucrative week. Visitors discovered the price of a parlor and bedroom suite in a top hotel was approximately seventy-five dollars per day, though a state delegation could pay one hundred dollars per day to stay at St. Andrew's Hall. Breakfast could be

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taken for $1.00, dinner and supper for $1.50 each. "The southern delegates were at home; the city was theirs, doors were open, tables were spread, many were spared the discomforts of hotel fare in the lavender-drenched guest rooms of these wide-porched mansions." Murat Halstead of the *Cincinnati Commercial,* who with pronounced Republican leanings had come to observe the convention, was almost reluctantly taken with the city. "The most charming spot . . . is the Battery. . . . In the pleasant evenings the people of leisure congregate here; hundreds of carriages and buggies, full of ladies and gentlemen. . . . During the session of the Convention, there has been a band of music from Boston, used principally in serenading great men at a late hour and bringing out speeches."[3] The rough behavior common to conventions was, of course, inevitable. The night before the convention opened Halstead complained, "there has been a great deal more drunkenness here today than heretofore. Most of the violent spreeing is done by roughs from the Northern Atlantic cities who are at last making their appearance. There have been a number of specimens of drunken rowdyism and imbecility about the hotels. And I hear, as I write, a company of brawlers in the street making night hideous."[4]

As the convention opened, temperatures were close to one hundred degrees, making the overdressed and not yet acclimated northerners especially uncomfortable. Rain briefly cooled the city as 303 delegates from thirty-two states filed into Institute Hall on Meeting Street for the opening ceremonies at noon on Monday, April 23. During the previous decade, the Whig Party had disintegrated over slavery. Democrats, too, now seemed on the edge of that precipice. In 1859, Senator A. G. Brown of Mississippi had said: "The South will demand at Charleston a platform explicitly declaring that slave property is entitled in the Territories and on the high seas to the same protection that is given to any other and every other species of property and failing to get it she will retire from the Convention."[5]

His words hung ominously over a city in which political men had gathered to address problems that politics no longer could solve. As in any such assemblage there were factions, some extreme, others moderate. Many Democrats realized that their failure to agree on a nominee might well lead to a Republican president, southern secession, and perhaps war. Still, large numbers were optimistic that in the face of "Black Republican" hordes their party would unite behind a candidate. Delegate-laden trains rolling into Charleston from the North were filled with talk about the "Little Giant," Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, the former judge who stood barely five feet tall. Though he had sponsored the Kansas-Nebraska Act[6] with its consequently divisive doctrine of state sovereignty, Douglas was widely thought to be that man. His greatest strength was among Northwest and New England men, and he commanded support from at least half the delegates at the start of the convention. One correspondent reported that opposition to Douglas was evaporating even as the convention

opened. But Douglas was in poor physical and financial health, and his supporters had underestimated the power and tenacity of his enemies, who doubted that he could muster the two-thirds majority needed for nomination. Imposing forces were indeed converging to stop him. These included President Buchanan, still bitter at Douglas's refusal to support the proslavery Lecompton Constitution in Kansas,[7] and Mississippi senator and former secretary of war, Jefferson Davis. Another hurdle in Douglas's path was William L. Yancey of Alabama, an extremist in the defense of slavery who had honed his fire-breathing rhetoric during a career in law and seven terms in Congress. "There was nobody quite like Yancey," one historian later commented. Though mild in manner, he had killed his wife's uncle in a fight and fought a bloodless duel with a fellow southerner while in Congress. As a young man he had shown interest in the antislavery spirit, which he now detested. An extremist, "he was for maintaining the Union—if only the rest of the country would accept the extreme Southern position." "It is understood" of Yancey, Halstead reported, "that he has a vast amount of ammunition for a bombardment of the Douglas castle, ready for use when the decks are cleared for action."

Northern eyes were also upon Charleston. A railroad lawyer and Illinois politician who had lost a sensational senatorial race to Douglas in 1858 reflected on the Little Giant's chances. "Opinions here, as to the prospect of Douglas being nominated, are quite, conflicting—some very confident he *will*, and others that he will *not* be. I think his nomination possible; but that the chances are against him."[8] Southern nationalists, with no candidate of their own, were ready to fight Douglas to the bitter end. Moderate southerners, too, held strong reservations about him, especially in the wake of John Brown's failed abolitionist raid at Harper's Ferry.

The future of slavery was, of course, at the heart of the matter, and it lay treacherously in wait as the delegates paraded into Institute Hall. Prominent Republicans such as Lincoln and William Henry Seward had given speeches pledging not to interfere with the constitutional protection accorded slavery *where it existed*, but they were determined to prevent its spread into the territories, where, in their view, it merited no federal protection. Slavery was accepted, if not condoned, by most delegates from the northern states, but for many this visit to the city by the sea afforded their first look at real slaves and real masters. These northern Democrats had heard their southern colleagues praise slavery, its economic benefits, and its virtues as the natural relationship between white people and black. In early February, Mississippi's Jefferson Davis had introduced into the U.S. Senate resolutions designed to insulate slavery from reformers and abolitionists. Two of those resolutions—urging federal protection for slavery in the territories while denying their citizens the right to discourage or abolish the institution—were unacceptable to the Douglas Democrats, as everyone knew.[9]

Douglas had cast himself as the spokesman for the new Northwest, those territories that in the middle of the nineteenth century lay on the frontier, seeking entry into the Union. The Little Giant had effectively straddled the matter of slavery in the territories, and by Charleston his straddle had become a painful stretch. His troubles had begun six years earlier, in 1854, with the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and they worsened with a tactical misstep in Charleston when his men agreed to finalize the party's platform before the nomination was made. His forces were headquartered in Hibernian Hall, a two-story Gothic structure two blocks from Institute Hall. Its first floor was devoted to his campaign; the upper floor had several hundred cots for delegates whose exhaustion would presumably let them sleep through the noise and the early Carolina summer.

The Little Giant would learn in Charleston just how badly he had wounded his presidential aspirations while winning his Senate seat against Lincoln in 1858. During that campaign Lincoln had asked him if residents of a U.S. Territory could lawfully exclude slavery prior to joining the Union and writing a state constitution. Douglas, knowing that to answer "no" would alienate Illinois free-soil voters, had answered "yes." That clinched his victory. But the price was steep in his relations with the Southerners—the extremists found him unacceptable, and he made the moderates nervous.

In the month leading up to the convention, several southern state Democratic parties had instructed their delegates to walk out of the national convention if its platform did not include federal protection for slavery in the territories. At least one delegate, from Texas, had informed Douglas of this threat. That Jefferson Davis's proslavery Senate resolutions had been endorsed by the Senate Democratic caucus had increased the tension in Charleston (though Davis, like many southerners, conceded that states had the right to outlaw slavery). Word soon spread that seven southern delegations were ready to leave en masse if the platform lacked the territorial slave code—whose inclusion everyone knew would make Douglas unelectable in November. If Yancey and Alabama walked out, it was said, the other Cotton States—Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas—would follow, and so would some men from North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri. There had been little civility on the eve of the convention, and an ugly tone was set the first day, when a Pennsylvania delegate attempting to speak was driven from the floor by cries of "God damn you, sit down!" and "What the hell do you want to talk for?"[10]

On the second day, Douglas won a key early round when the committee on organization agreed, by a vote of 197 to 102.5, to allow delegates to vote as individuals if they had not been instructed by their states to vote as a bloc. This had two effects: It freed about twenty-five southern delegates to support Douglas, but it also set off a firestorm among the radical southerners that further stiffened the lines of battle.[11]

William Lowndes Yancey of Alabama led the opposition to Senator Stephen A. Douglas at Charleston. (Maryland Historical Society.)

Somehow a note of frivolity crept into the air as well. On Wednesday, April 25, "the gallery was crowded with ladies, and it being filled, on motion, several hundred who were crowding outside, unable to enter the gallery, were admitted to the floor of the convention, occasioning much good feeling." Alabama's L. P. Walker informed the ladies that Mr. Cochrane of New York was a bachelor, following which the gentleman indeed "acknowledged his desperate condition and expressed his willingness to enter into the marriage relation." Walker announced that it was apparent that the reason why Cochrane had not married "was because he could not." He then "moved to lay the New York bachelor on the table." The chair "tolerated this nonsense for a time, but at last interposed and summarily shut down upon it." The floor of Institute Hall was packed, for "those who have tickets send them out after they get in, and others come in," complained one delegate. The chairman of the Vermont delegation, it was announced from the floor, died of apoplexy. And the credentials committee, adjudicating contested seats in four states, ruled in favor of the sitting delegates, allowing F. M. Landham and Robert J. Brent, of Maryland's Fourth Congressional District, to retain their seats.[12]

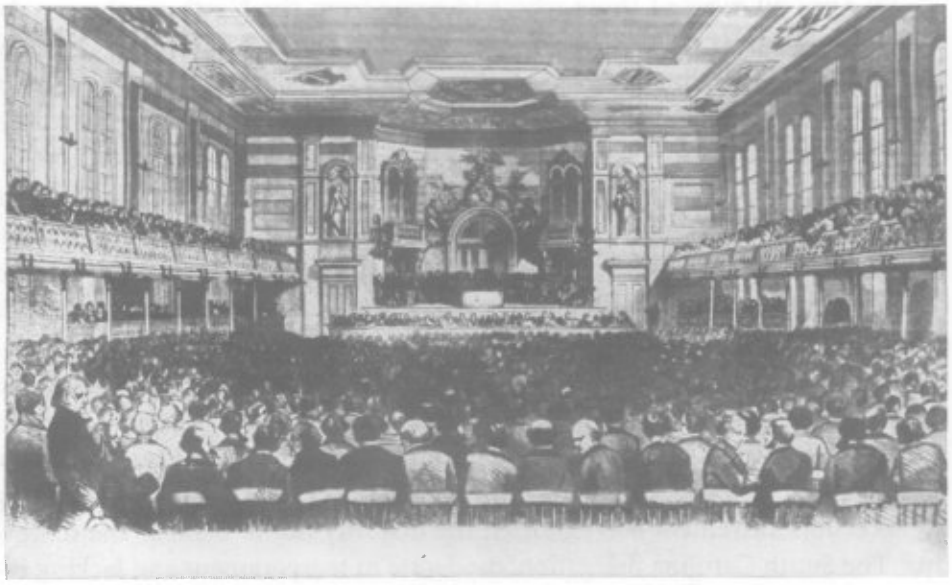
By Friday, the fifth day of the convention, wind and cold rain had dispelled the heat, and Charleston's bars, gamblers, and pickpockets were doing a brisk business. The platform committee presented three reports. The majority report, from the fifteen southern states, Oregon, and California, called for federal protection of slavery on the high seas and in the states and territories, whose citizens could not abolish or interfere with slavery; the acquisition of Cuba; and prompt construction of a railroad from the Mississippi to the Pacific. The minority ver-

sion, from the northern states, reiterated the Democratic platform of 1856, known as the Cincinnati platform, and tried to reassure the South by pledging adherence to Supreme Court decisions affecting slavery in the territories. Benjamin Butler of Massachusetts, who in a year would be the most hated man in Maryland, presented his platform of one, which merely reaffirmed Cincinnati.[13] Southerners found the minority report unacceptable. Yancey delivered a podium-pounding speech for the majority report that made clear the southern unwillingness to yield:

> What right of yours, gentlemen of the North, have we of the South ever invaded? . . . Ours are the institutions which are at stake; ours is the property that is to be destroyed; ours is the honor at stake—the honor of children, the honor of families, the lives . . . we yield no position here until we are convinced we are wrong.[14]

That evening George E. Pugh of Ohio gave the northern response, angrily rejecting Yancey's demand that northern Democrats accept slavery and its extension into the territories. "Gentlemen of the South," he thundered, "you mistake us—you mistake us—we will not do it!" After a recess, Pugh took the floor again for two more hours. He warned the southern men that their demands for protection of human property in the territories had no constitutional foundation, and that if such was their reason for remaining in the party, they must go. "In an instant the house was in an uproar—a hundred delegates upon the floor, and upon chairs, screaming like panthers, and gesticulating like monkeys. The President, for the first time, completely lost control over the Convention; not a word was audible. The reporters climbed upon their tables, the delegates mounted the chairs, the people in the galleries stretched their necks and hung over the balustrade." At last, by a small majority, the convention voted to adjourn.[15] Here was the first moment of crisis in Charleston, and how these men resolved it would go far toward determining the outcome of the presidential election and the Union's chance of remaining whole.

From Washington Douglas telegraphed his friends to support the Cincinnati platform and uphold the Dred Scott[16] decision but no more—they were not to give ground on the issue of popular sovereignty in the territories, whose citizens must be left free to choose or reject slavery. His managers hoped to lose no more than thirty to forty delegates, leaving sufficient numbers to ensure their man's nomination, though the game could just as easily go the other way—a larger desertion would make it impossible. New York navy agent George Sanders sent President Buchanan a lengthy telegram that included the entire revised minority report and urged the president to make a complete shift and support the Little Giant. Buchanan's response was "an angry outburst when he learned that the message had been sent collect, and that he had paid $26.50 for its wisdom." On



The 1860 Democratic National Convention in Charleston, South Carolina. (From Harper's Weekly, *April 28, 1860.)*

Sunday, amid continuing cold rain and wind, the Ohio and Kentucky delegations discovered that their private whiskey stocks, to which they attributed their good health, had run dry.[17]

On Monday, April 30, with Douglas's chances more perilous than ever, Baltimoreans read about Sunday's developments in Charleston: "There have been three fights within 24 hours. Two of the Ohio delegates threw plates at each other at the Mills House, and one drew a pistol while the other clinched. Col. Craig, of Missouri, and a newspaper reporter also had a rough and tumble fight at the Mills House, and Captain Levy and Mr. White have also had a fight in a bar-room." One Pennsylvania delegate attacked another over his refusal to sign a document—later found to be fraudulent—instructing the Pennsylvania delegates how to vote. Chaos on the floor of the convention floor rivaled that of the streets and taverns and eventually embroiled the Maryland delegation. As various points of order were being discussed amid deafening noise, William S. Gittings attempted to address the chair but was called to order. Someone shouted, "Mr. President, it is a mistake—I didn't second that man's motion down there." Gittings demanded to know "who it was who spoke so disrespectfully of him." A delegate identifying himself as Tom Hooper rose and denied saying anything disrespectful, to which Gittings replied that since no insult was intended, "the gentleman will call at my room and take a drink."[18] The president of the convention threatened to leave the chair if the uproar, which "would have drowned the thunder of a twenty-four pounder," did not cease.

By April 30 most of those who had come from the North to observe the proceedings had left, their rooming contracts and patience at an end. Their departure left hotel hallways navigable, barrooms accessible, and—more important—the Institute Hall gallery full of Charlestonians, whose applause for southern, anti-Douglas oratory was deafening. That same day the Douglas forces managed to ram their minority platform through the convention by the slim margin of 165 to 138, displacing the majority report.[19] Then, to cheers from much of Charleston's high society, "fifty delegates from the lower South thereupon walked out."[20] On the floor, Robert Brent of Maryland warned the southerners that their extreme views would lead to a Black Republican president opposed to slavery—presumably Governor Seward of New York—and a Congress of similar views. Finding himself ruled out of order, Brent accused the chair of treating him so because he was from a slave state. That evening, at a rally of Douglas supporters, Brent accused men with personal feelings against the Little Giant of encouraging the secession movement and exhorted the majority not to bend to the minority.[21] The South Carolina delegation, moderate in temperament and lacking instructions to withdraw, now did so in the face of boisterous encouragement from Charlestonian spectators.

Douglas's captains had entertained few illusions that their man—or any other, for that matter—would be nominated without the backing of the whole party, despite the rule allowing delegates to vote individually if not otherwise instructed by their states. Chairman Caleb Cushing then handed down a ruling on balloting that dashed Douglas's remaining hopes: to be nominated a candidate must receive two-thirds of the ballots of the total number of delegates accredited to the convention. Two-thirds of the ballots cast by delegates physically in the hall would not do, thanks to a rule enacted at the 1844 convention in Baltimore.[22] Douglas would still need 202 votes.

Ardent southern advocates of states' rights—in 1860 this meant several things but primarily that slaves were property, legitimized by the Constitution—were willing to meet the issue head-on should the Republicans win in November and honor their pledge to prevent the spread of slavery. If that occurred secession, they reasoned, would be the most palatable course. The time to settle on the 1856 Cincinnati platform and ignore the issue of federal protection of slavery in the territories had passed, for "Southern passions had been too deeply aroused." Men whose feelings were less passionate "did not see their way clearly but . . . bent before pressure, or simply followed the crowd for lack of any real guiding star. It may have been very hard . . . to see that a bitter-end fight on the slavery issue in this convention would be one ounce more than party or nation could carry without breaking."[23]

A smiling Yancey—who early in the Confederacy would be sent to Europe as its emissary, leaving more moderate men to run the affairs of the South—ad-

dressed the renegade southern delegates and others in front of the courthouse late in the evening on that second Monday. "A great crowd . . . wildly cheered an independent Southern republic. The city was mad with a passion not felt since Nullification days." Yancey called his colleagues to gather in a "Constitutional Democratic Convention" and field a candidate for the presidency. The next day the southern Democrats organized themselves at Military Hall, then moved to the Charleston Theater for business, where Yancey referred contemptuously to the larger group of Democrats over in Institute Hall as the "rump" convention.[24] They chose a patrician, Senator James A. Bayard of Delaware, as chairman and adopted the majority platform they had championed at Institute Hall. The seceders would support any man chosen other than Douglas, and if Douglas were chosen, they would nominate their own candidate.[25] Their course settled, they sat back at the South Carolina House to watch their northern brethren closely. Confident of their power in the party, they waited for the peace overture from Institute Hall they were certain would come.

Political men in the North were on tenterhooks, too: "This writing being early in the morning, Douglas is not yet nominated," Lincoln wrote to a political friend. "But we suppose he certainly will be before sun-set to-day, a few of the smaller Southern states having seceded from the Convention—just enough to permit his nomination, and not enough to hurt him much at the election. This puts the case in the hardest shape for us." Later the same day he wrote again: "We now understand that Douglas will be nominated to-day by what is left of the Charleston convention. All parties here dislike it. Republicans and Danites that he should be nominated at all; and Doug. Dem's that he should not be nominated by an undivided convention."[26]

Douglas was placed into nomination on May 1. When King of Missouri called his name, "a feeble yelp went up from the Northwestern delegations. It was not hearty and strong, but thin and spiritless. There was no hopefulness in it, but something of defiance. It was as much as to say, 'Well, if we can't nominate him, you cannot nominate anybody else.'" The balloting began. The Maryland delegation left the floor briefly for consultations, but the minutes of their deliberations are lost to history. Votes were spread among four men, with Douglas in the lead, though there was little optimism that he could attract the 202 votes that would represent the prized two-thirds.[27] The inability of the convention to focus on another candidate—even knowing that the southerners would likely accept anyone but Douglas—was ominous. The Douglas men were despondent, and Halstead wrote that northern and southern Democrats had resigned themselves to Republican New York Governor Seward's becoming the next president.

The Boston Brass Band opened business on May 2 with "a dozen spirited airs." The *Baltimore Sun* reported that "the state of things in Charleston seems to impart some interest to the so-called Union convention to be held at Baltimore

on the 19th instant." Maryland's Gittings said after the thirty-fifth ballot he would move that the convention reassemble in Baltimore in June. The delegates were less than enthusiastic, and "Mr. G. assured the convention that Baltimore was no longer a Plug Ugly town and promised the delegates a hospitable welcome." Gittings finally withdrew his motion "though with the promise that it would be renewed." A Tennessee delegate offered Philadelphia in lieu of Baltimore, but he was also denied. After the fifty-fourth ballot, Gittings suggested the gentlemen "face the music" because nominating a candidate now was "inexpedient." This time the chair ruled him out of order. The fifty-seventh ballot was the last, and again Gittings offered his motion to adjourn to Baltimore on June 1, only to find it rejected a third time. Douglas, meanwhile, had 152.5 votes, far short of the two-thirds required for nomination.[28]

By the morning of Wednesday, May 3, it was plain that the convention was hopelessly deadlocked. Fewer spectators took to the galleries, which subsequently were less noisy. "The ladies' gallery is very thin, and the poor creatures look down into the hall, vainly seeking objects of interest." Douglas men said they hated the party and hoped that any Democratic nominee other than Douglas might lose. The more despondent were heard wishing to join the Republicans. They were put out of their misery by the irrepressible Gittings, whose motion finally carried following abortive attempts to insert Philadelphia and New York as the new convention site.[29] The delegates adjourned, to try again in Baltimore at noon on June 18. Only seven ladies remained in the ladies' gallery. Steamers bound for New York and Philadelphia and the night train north were filled to overflowing, and the discomfort for those headed to Washington was far from over—they faced six changes of cars along the way.

The seceders were stunned. They had moved to Military Hall and taken to calling themselves "retiring delegates," expecting at any moment to rejoin their colleagues following the nomination of a compromise candidate.[30] Few had sought or expected a permanent break, but now their bluff had been called, their convention blown apart. This vocal southern minority had refused to see any difference on slavery between Douglas and a Republican. No one, it seemed, was satisfied, except the gamblers and pickpockets who had feasted on delegates for nine days. The southern firebrands agreed to meet in Richmond on June 11 and adjourned, their journeys home also made uneasy by fearsome uncertainties.

Ghosts of Sheets and Pumpkin

As Democrats reorganized back in their home states and Republicans prepared for their second national nominating convention, the Constitutional Union Party opened its first convention in Baltimore at noon on May 9, 1860. The day before the city marked the occasion with a parade that packed the streets and

showed off its new steam fire engines. The assembly gathered in a federal courthouse that was formerly the First Presbyterian Church, at the corner of Fayette and North Streets. The old church had an illustrious political history—Andrew Jackson had been nominated there in 1828 and Martin Van Buren in 1836. The building had galleries on three sides and "gas fixtures . . . in the event that the convention may sit at night." In attendance were approximately seven hundred aged and well-connected gentlemen who didn't like the way things looked. Murat Halstead observed that many "are of the 'eminently respectable' class of gentlemen—and most of them are somewhat stale in politics. . . . The delegates seemed to be in high spirits, and to be confident of their ability to make at least a powerful diversion. The general foolishness of the two great parties has given the third unusual animation."[31] Many of these gentlemen were from the border states. Distressed by the escalating rhetoric pushing the nation toward division and war, they had first met late in 1859 in search of a middle ground and thought they had found it in the proposition that North and South could remain together if they somehow could remove slavery as a national issue.

The effort was led by the venerable Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky,[32] who had invited fifty senators and congressmen unaffiliated with Republicans or Democrats to fuse with the remnants of the Whig and American parties. This new political party would put forth a platform featuring "the Union and the Constitution" and opposition to the Democrats.[33] Founding principles were "the removal of the slavery question from party politics, development of national resources, maintenance of honorable peace with all nations, strict enforcement of the laws and the powers of the Constitution, and respect for state rights and reverence for the Union."[34] All states had been invited to send delegates to a national convention in Baltimore. Twenty-two had accepted, emboldened by the Democratic fissure in Charleston and the prospect that the Republicans might also split in Chicago over Seward. Some questioned the relevance of this party in a time when people were moving to extremes of the political spectrum—the *New York Herald* described the convention as a "Great Gathering of Fossil Know Nothings and Southern Americans"—but these men were determined to save the Union and believed they were on a path to do just that.[35]

The Constitutional Union party had first stirred in Maryland in 1857, a state with strong support for the American or Know-Nothing Party. Three years later former state Know-Nothing leaders and ex-Whigs cast their support to John Bell of Tennessee, who had been sympathetic to the Know-Nothings. Local Know-Nothing organizations easily transferred their allegiance to the Constitutional Union party. Casting themselves as the only viable alternative to the Democrats, Southern Know-Nothings invited all opposed to the Democrats to join them in a new conservative party, dedicated to "Union and Constitution." On April 19, the Maryland convention of the Constitutional Unionist Party at Carroll Hall

U.S. Senator from Maryland Anthony Kennedy served as a member of the Constitutional Union Party's Executive Union Committee. (Maryland Historical Society.)

elected two delegations of former Know-Nothings as Maryland's delegates to the national convention. The two groups, one of which included Baltimore Mayor Thomas Swann, fought over who would represent the city.[36]

Senator Crittenden, the guest of John Pendleton Kennedy while in Baltimore, opened the convention at noon on May 9. He "was received with applause from the galleries, and the ladies, who occupied the west gallery, waved their handkerchiefs."[37] Former New York Governor Washington Hunt was chosen as temporary chairman. Halstead found the opening events tedious, though perhaps only in comparison to the raucous experience two weeks earlier in Charleston:

> The Convention insisted on applauding nearly every sentence, and several times refused to let [Mr. Hunt] finish a sentence. It was worse than the applause given by an Irish audience at an archbishop's lecture . . . during the first hour and a half of the session, I presume at least one hundred rounds of applause were given, and the more the "spreads" applauded, the greater became their zeal. . . . I have stated . . . that the Douglas men were the most noisy fellows in the world. . . . I take it back. The "Plugs" can beat them at their own game . . . every speech was received in this "tremendous" style. The moment a speaker would say Constitution . . . Union, American . . . or anything of the sort, he had to pause for some time until the general rapture would discharge itself by stamping, clapping hands, rattling canes, etc. . . . and if he should . . . commence the broken sentence over again, ten to one, when he arrived at the patriotic

> point where the fracture commenced, the storm would break out again with redoubled fury.[38]

Early signs pointed to a ticket with Sam Houston of Texas and Edward Everett of Massachusetts. A resolution passed specifying the manner of voting, though its requirements presented difficulties for the Maryland delegation, which "being unable to get proper construction of the . . . resolution through its head without a surgical operation, retired for consultation, and to have the necessary operation performed." On the first ballot, Bell took 68.5 votes to 57 for Houston, and on the second ballot the prize was his, by a count of 125 votes to 68 for Houston, who had been the choice of southern Know Nothings and Baltimore ladies, who from the galleries showered the platform with bouquets.[39] Bell was a safe choice for cautious men. A wealthy Tennessee lawyer and owner of eighty slaves, he had had an impressive career: state legislator, congressman, Speaker of the House, secretary of war, and senator. His vice presidential mate, the distinguished Everett, did not wish the honor (Everett would give a magisterial oration three years later honoring the fallen at Gettysburg, though it would be eclipsed in history by Lincoln's 272 words). Maryland gave 7.5 votes to Bell and half a vote to Houston on both ballots.[40] Only one utterance of slavery at the convention violated the proscription against public statements on that subject—when F. W. Grayson of Pennsylvania declared that Republicans and Democrats differed on the matter only as to how it must be legislated in the territories, by Congress or the territories themselves. His pronouncement was loudly hissed. Republicans, in full campaign form following Lincoln's May nomination in Chicago, derided the Constitutional Unionists as "Bell Ringers" and "Do Nothings," despite the pleas of Henry Winter Davis for a cooperative arrangement between Bell and Lincoln in which one would have no ticket in states where the other was strong (and would have meant no Lincoln ticket in Maryland).[41]

This amiable gathering of Constitutional Unionists held none of the sectional bitterness that had destroyed the Whigs and now threatened the Democrats. Baltimore lawyer Brantz Mayer proclaimed slavery a false issue, men's disagreements over it "as harmless and hollow as ghosts manufactured out of sheets and pumpkin."[42] Those enamored of this Constitutional-Unionist middle ground hoped the new party would attract enough votes to deprive the major parties of outright victory by sending the election to the House of Representatives. Though the logic of Constitutional Unionism was hard to fault, its fundamental principle—glorifying Constitution and Union and enforcing its laws—was hardly the engine to ignite public interest in the politics of the time. Its proponents did not see that their thinking was soft and hollow, and that in 1860 men were aroused by the more passionate appeals of other parties.

The Madness of Disunion

On June 15 and 16, 1860, between six and eight thousand people—delegates, press, and hangers-on, more than had been in Charleston—poured into Baltimore for the next round of the Democratic convention. Several state delegations brought their own bands. "During Saturday Barnum's Hotel, the Eutaw House, and the other hotels, received their delegations and guests . . . and in the afternoon the rotundas, halls and parlors, presented a scene seldom witnessed, blocked as they were with baggage, and filled with the strangers in their linen dusters, too busy aiding to swell the political hubbub and hum of voices, to change their travelling apparel." The *Baltimore Sun* had been sanguine from the start about the chances of success:

> although the adjournment has been made to a city in which popular sentiment is as staunch in support of the South as in any of her sister cities, yet it must be admitted that the convention having been originally organized at Charleston, that should have been the place for the reassembling of it . . . the Convention would do honor to itself and justice to the party, by uniting upon some worthy, unobtrusive, honest and substantial man, who . . . will be acceptable to the South and command the confidence of the North. Such a nomination would tend in an immeasurable degree to heal the dissensions which now disturb the Union.[43]

The writer predicted that, should the Democrats fail to settle on a nominee, there would be two Democratic candidates, splitting the vote and forcing the election of the Republican Lincoln. The *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser* engaged "two of the most accurate and expert Phonographers of Washington city, with a full corps of assistants, to furnish us with a *verbatim* report of the proceedings," and in the same edition offered an analysis of Democratic difficulties and an endorsement of the Constitutional Union Party:

> It is not possible to gratify or satisfy both extremes of the Party, because they separate upon issues that are irreconcilable. . . . no amount of ingenuity, human or angelic, can reconcile Popular Sovereignty with the views of Southern delegates, or can construct a platform that will sustain both sections at once. . . . the Seceders at Richmond . . . do not hesitate to call the darling doctrine of Popular Sovereignty "a snake that is to be strangled."

Having previously endorsed Everett, the paper went on to urge the election of the Constitutional Union ticket: "We will fight on their side . . . and engage to confine Mr. Lincoln to his original occupation of mauling rails."[44]

Barnum's City Hotel quickly filled with delegates and the press on June 15, 1860, as the Democratic convention prepared to reconvene at Baltimore's Front Street Theater. (Maryland Historical Society.)

Lt. Col. Robert Edward Lee, acting commander of the Department of Texas, United States Army, wrote to a friend: "the papers will give you news of the Baltimore convention. If Judge Douglas would now withdraw and join himself and party to aid in the election of Breckinridge, he might retrieve himself before the country and Lincoln be defeated. Politicians I fear are too selfish to become martyrs." Baltimore City delegates resolved in a meeting on June 14 at Rechabite Hall that, while they would support the eventual nominee, they would express a strong preference for Douglas.[45]

On Sunday evening, June 17, bands attached to various delegations drew several thousand excited spectators to Monument Square for what one newspaper called "airs in the square." While the early demeanor of the crowd seemed to

favor the Little Giant, anti-Douglas sentiment began to surface, judging from the reactions to speeches by assorted dignitaries that lasted until almost midnight. In the end, there was little reason to hope that what had failed in Charleston would succeed in Baltimore. It was rumored that many southern delegates were ready for a reprise over the slave code, and that northern men were ready to fight and drive their southern brothers out of the party. Senator Judah Benjamin of Louisiana was mistaken, thundered Ohio's George Pugh, "if he supposes that the men who stood there at Charleston for two weeks in that atmosphere voting down your resolutions again and again, and voting for Stephen A. Douglas, are going to be tired when it comes to Baltimore, which is a much more agreeable atmosphere for them." The more extreme southerners, having met in Richmond the week before, had decided not to act until the larger convention reconvened in Baltimore. They were poised for further disruption. Their delegations, excepting Florida, had been instructed by their state party organizations to reclaim the seats they had vacated in Charleston, and most of them were in Baltimore for that purpose. The other southern states, with the exception of South Carolina, had chosen new delegates in new elections, and a bitter fight over the legitimate heirs to those seats would be the first order of business.[46]

On the Monday morning of June 18, 303 delegates and almost two hundred editors and reporters (despite allotted space for only one hundred newspapermen) filed into the Front Street Theater at 10 A.M. to open the convention. Unlike those at Charleston, the Baltimore galleries were with Douglas all the way. Thorough preparation had preceded the visitors to the theater, which featured "a rich and beautiful scenery to relieve the heaviness of the unplastered walls." The theater's dress circle had been designated as the gallery for the ladies, who were to be admitted free. Reports circulated that free tickets distributed at Barnum's Hotel by the chairman, Caleb Cushing, were being scalped for between two and five dollars. The delegates got down to business with a speech from Cushing reminding them that they were in Baltimore to decide the fate of the seats of Democrats who had bolted in Charleston, and, following that, to finalize a platform and choose a presidential nominee. At the outset tensions seemed to abate, as "the prospect of a solution of the difficulties . . . appeared last evening to be a shade better. The prominent men of both sides were more inclined to talk calmly over the prospects of the party, and while the firmness of neither section appeared to be in the least shaken, there seemed to be a more lively appreciation of the madness of disunion on the question of candidates."[47]

The credentials committee began sorting out the contested seats in the southern delegations. At first the Douglas men were willing to embrace all Charleston prodigal sons except those from Alabama and Louisiana, whose new delegates they insisted be seated, as retribution for the behavior of Yancey and Slidell.[48] Other pressing matters arose. Mr. Salisbury of Delaware addressed the chair on

the matter of tickets, the supply of which had apparently been infected by counterfeits, causing new ones to be issued. "Some of my delegation are outside and cannot get into the hall—that they wish tickets; cannot get tickets, and do not know who issues tickets to this Convention. I would like the chair to indicate by what authority tickets are issued, and how delegates will gain admission to the floor of this Convention." After being informed that tickets had been sent to the chairman of each delegation, Salisbury was asked to render himself more understandable, because "he is now speaking from the stage of a theatre, and it is important that he should face those in the rear, and address them, and not the chair, if he desired to be heard." Salisbury replied, "I wish to say to the gentleman . . . that I am not a theatre man. I never attended a theatre ten times in my life." Came the reply: "Well, you are making your *debut* then, and we want to hear what you say!"[49]

Six hours of speeches exhorted the delegates either to restore the seceders to their seats or reject their attempts to return. The president complained about the noise level from the gallery, and Frederick delegate Bradley Johnson objected to the behavior of the spectators: "As a delegate from Maryland I ask that representatives of this State may be cleared from the imputation cast upon them by the disorder in the gallery. Those joining in the disorder there are not the people of Baltimore. I ask of the Chair that the galleries may be cleared." The convention loudly shouted him down. Three more hours of oratory greeted those on Monument Square that evening, as Douglas and Yancey supporters labored to outspeak and outshout one another.[50] The following day heavy thunderstorms greeted the adjourning delegates, dampening evening speeches and prompting brisk sales of pro- and anti-Douglas umbrellas. On the third day, June 20, some complained that the police were preventing delegates from entering the theater.

The political climate seemed favorable enough to Douglas. Signs of support for him in the Deep South emerged. The editor of the Aberdeen, Mississippi, *Conservative* had written to Douglas two months before Baltimore:

> It is a source of much regret to your numerous friends in this section of Mississippi, that the state will be represented in the Charleston convention by gentlemen who, it is honestly believed, do not entertain the political sentiments of the majority of her people. The delegates from this portion of the state . . . are men who reflect the sentiments of that faction in this State known as *"fire-eaters"* of the most rabid description—advocating a re-opening of the African Slave Trade, and a protective code for the Territories. . . . It will be urged in that body by the delegates from this State that you will not receive the support of the State or of Alabama in November, but . . . I pledge you the electoral vote of Mississippi at the ballot box. I write this letter as the representative of that large and respectable

> class of gentlemen in this locality known as "Douglasites" by their enemies, but who are certainly in the majority, though they will have no voice in the Convention. Mississippi will vote for *Douglas* in the event of his nomination, and I shall repeat it . . . at Charleston next week, to those delegates from this State who in opposing your nomination, do not reflect the will of the majority in this State.[51]

A schoolteacher-lawyer had written him shortly after Charleston:

> Perhaps you would like to hear a few words from a political friend residing in the land of the seceders. . . . The breakup of the Charleston convention produced no excitement among the masses of the people. There was much regret that you were not nominated. It is confessed on all sides that you are the only democrat North or South that can beat the Black Republicans. If the people could express their sentiments the seceders would not be sustained and others would be sent to Baltimore in favor of your nomination. . . . It is a common assertion here that you could carry this State over Jeff Davis' head by from five to ten thousand majority.[52]

There was plenty of excitement away from the theater floor. Prominent Baltimorean Reverdy Johnson, the former U.S. senator and attorney general who had worked very hard for the Little Giant in Charleston, hosted Douglas's supporters at his house on Monument Square, which provided a platform for evening speeches throughout the week. Just across the square, at Gilmor House, was the southern headquarters. Rival speakers, bands, and crowds thronged the square, which "packed fuel beneath the already boiling cauldron."[53] On the evening of June 19, the Douglas men fired rockets from the windows.

Rule or Ruin

As the week wore on, the nighttime noise from the large crowds outside Douglas headquarters was exceeded only by that emanating from the southern headquarters across the square.[54] Tempers rose with the temperature of early summer, and fisticuffs erupted on the convention floor between two men from the rival Arkansas delegations. One slapped his insulter and drew a pistol from his pantaloons, "and a duel only avoided after a series of notes were exchanged according to the custom of the times." A more serious incident occurred when two rival Delaware delegates fought and, at five o'clock the following morning, Congressman Whitely of Delaware attacked Joshua Townsend of Ohio in the hall of their hotel, the Maltby House, as the latter sleepily made his way to the washroom.[55]

This was the first national political convention with telegraph wire in place for instant reporting, and rumors flew across the nation. One held that only

some seceders would be invited back, which most knew would bring on another walkout. Another claimed that Douglas was poised to withdraw.[56] Early on June 21, the fourth day, as the committees were beginning their reports, "a tremendous crash was heard in the centre of the building, occupied by the New York and Pennsylvania delegations. Delegates rushed in masses to the windows, and climbed, nimbly as monkeys, over the chairs of the reporters seeking . . . to place themselves under the protection of the president."[57] A section of floor had collapsed, and though no one was injured and damage was not extensive, it was a harbinger of bad tidings. A recess was called so the floor could be repaired, and despite the inevitable jokes about the party's weak platform, few dared see symbolism in the reconstruction.

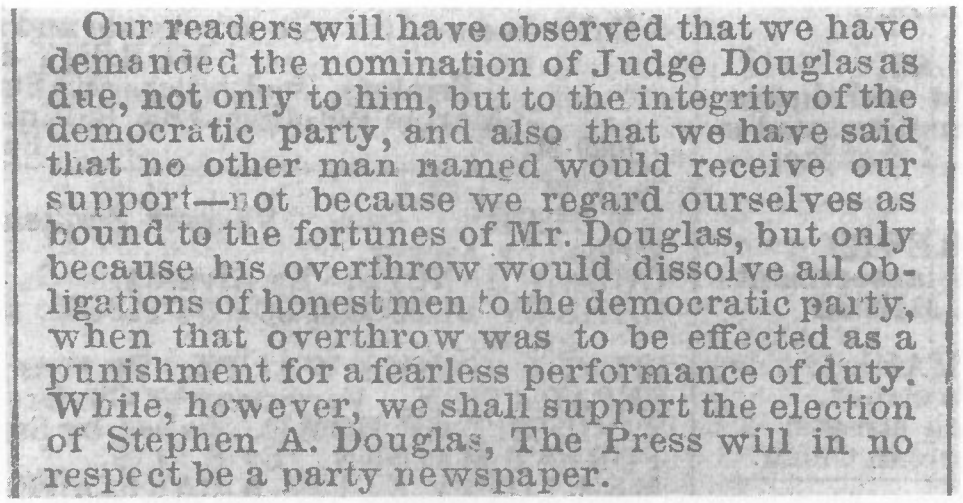
The credentials committee presented three reports. The majority, a carefully crafted compromise, "called for the seating of new delegations from Alabama and Louisiana, for the admission of both the old and new delegations from Arkansas and Georgia with the dividing of the vote between them, and for the readmission of the bolting delegations from Texas, Mississippi, and Delaware whose seats were not contested." Two minority reports were defeated. One invited all the bolters to return, and a second, from Gittings of Maryland, concurred with the majority report but required that Yancey's Alabama delegation be accepted, too, though Gittings withdrew it the next morning, expressing as he did so his infatuation with Yancey. The seceders still loudly insisted on the slave-code platform denied them in Charleston, their credo in Baltimore being "rule or ruin," wrote Georgia's Alexander Stephens. They hoped delegates from the upper South would join them, and if denied their threat was bolder still—they would bolt for good and form a new party.[58]

Attitudes were plainly hardening, and the mood soon grew ugly. During an argument over tickets on the fourth day, William Montgomery made a disparaging remark about his colleague and fellow Pennsylvanian, Josiah Randall; following the day's adjournment, Randall's son assaulted Montgomery, and only fast action by the crowd averted a more serious incident. On Monument Square that night, bands drowned out opposing orators. The pro-Douglas Keystone Club band of Philadelphia marched through the center of the square into a hostile rally "throwing rockets and bombs to open their way" and were promptly attacked by an anti-Douglas mob in front of the Gilmor House. "A surging wave of humanity swept upon the band, knocking their instruments right and left, and blows were struck promiscuously." The police were of little help until the Pennsylvanians retired. The anti-Douglas rally "continued to a late hour."[59]

The next day came the tragedy everyone had come to expect and most to fear. On Friday, June 22, the Douglas majority report passed by 150 to 100.5. During the evening session, Charles W. Russell of Virginia spurned the compromise offered by the Douglas men to seat only some of the southern delegates and

Reverdy Johnson hosted determined supporters of Stephen A. Douglas at his house on Monument Square in Baltimore. (Maryland Historical Society.)

announced his state's withdrawal from the theater on Front Street. Ignoring pleas from the party chairman about the perils of a split, the Virginians "rose in a body, and passing into the aisles, proceeded to leave the theatre, shaking hands and bidding personal friends good-by, as they retired." Next went most delegates from the Upper South and a few proslavery men from the North.[60] Speeches predicting dire consequences were issued amid great disorder that reflected the gravity of the moment. One hundred and five men walked out, more than a third of the total, and they included all the delegates from the Deep South, North Carolina, California, Oregon, Kentucky, Missouri, and Arkansas. Nineteen of twenty-four from Tennessee and twenty-five of thirty from Virginia left, as did half of the Marylanders after Bradley Johnson proclaimed that some delegates had authorized him to announce their withdrawal in order that they might cast their lot with the South. Saturday brought more bad news. Caleb Cushing and a majority of the Massachusetts delegation withdrew. Spokesman Benjamin Butler—with his prizefighter bodyguard from Boston behind him—broke the news. "We put our withdrawal before you, upon the simple ground, . . . that there has been a withdrawal, in part, of a majority of the States; and further (and that, perhaps, more personal to myself) upon the ground that I will not sit in a convention where the African slave-trade—which is piracy by the laws of my country—is approvingly advocated."[61] Butler's view was not uncommon in the North. The nation's founders had allowed slave importation to be banned beginning in 1808, and Congress had kept the trade out of the Northwest Territories. Men like Butler held the view that the founders had so acted precisely because they found the whole business immoral and wished to prevent its spread. Many believed



Our readers will have observed that we have demanded the nomination of Judge Douglas as due, not only to him, but to the integrity of the democratic party, and also that we have said that no other man named would receive our support—not because we regard ourselves as bound to the fortunes of Mr. Douglas, but only because his overthrow would dissolve all obligations of honest men to the democratic party, when that overthrow was to be effected as a punishment for a fearless performance of duty. While, however, we shall support the election of Stephen A. Douglas, The Press will in no respect be a party newspaper.

On June 26, 1860, the Baltimore Sun *cautiously endorsed Stephen A. Douglas's nomination for the presidency. (Maryland Historical Society.)*

that, whatever its constitutional and legal protections, slavery would wither away if righteous men would fight its expansion into free states and territories.[62]

The dwindling number of delegates accredited to the original meeting chose Ohio Governor David Tod as chairman of the convention's remnants. Tod immediately recognized the call to vote before more delegates left. This he did in "the din of an indescribable confusion. There were partial responses from some . . . which could hardly be heard, and the Convention seemed rapidly becoming a roaring mob." Gittings asked if the two-thirds rule was in effect. The question became moot before he got an answer, for on the second ballot Douglas received 181.5 votes, with eighteen going to various others. At last the Little Giant had the prize in his grasp, and the vote was then made unanimous for him.

All decorum evaporated in the commotion that greeted the nomination. An unusual statement came from the chair: "Gentlemen, you all know that the Chair feels so much disposition to join in these yells that *he* can't keep order." The convention recessed until evening to choose the party's nominee for vice president, an honor awarded to the delegates from the South who had remained with the party. They chose Benjamin Fitzpatrick of Alabama on the first ballot, though later he would decline in favor of Herschel V. Johnson of Georgia, himself chosen by the Democratic National Committee. Thomas M. Lanahan of Baltimore was chosen for the National Executive Committee.[63] On Saturday, June 22, the convention adjourned *sine die* at 9:45 P.M.

The nine (of sixteen) bolting Maryland delegates had walked from the Front Street Theater to Maryland Institute Hall to join their anti-Douglas brethren, who called themselves the National Democratic Convention. Institute Hall accommo-

dated eight thousand people, and its galleries were full as the seceders' convention opened at noon on Saturday, June 23. Marylanders E. S. F. Hardcastle and William P. Bowie were chosen as temporary secretary and vice president, respectively. Tremendous applause greeted the arrival of Caleb Cushing to assume his seat as convention chair. William Yancey "glowed with satisfaction. . . . Garnett, of Virginia, whose countenance is usually grave as Don Quixote's, seemed pleased as a schoolboy with new boots." One delegate thanked the Almighty for now being able to speak without being hissed and not having to listen to nauseating speeches.[64] Former Kentucky senator and current vice president John Breckinridge was quickly nominated on one ballot for president, and Joseph Lane of Oregon for vice president.[65] Maryland delegates in their excitement offered to pay the expenses of the entire convention. The convention adopted the majority platform from Charleston—supported by the fifteen slave states, Oregon, and California—which protected slavery in the territories. The whole affair, dull in its unanimity and its contrast with the northern meeting, was over in a day. Yancey addressed his fellow renegades at length about Alabama's position. Two weeks later, in Illinois, the Republican candidate wrote to a friend:

> The signs now are that Douglas and Breckinridge will each have a ticket in every state. They are driven to this to keep their bombastic claims of *nationality*, and to avoid the charge of *sectionalism* which they have so much lavished upon us. . . . It is an amusing fact, after all Douglas has said about *nationality*, and *sectionalism*, that I had more votes from the Southern section at Chicago, than he had at Baltimore! In fact, there was more of the Southern section represented at Chicago, than in the Douglas rump concern at Baltimore![66]

John Contee, a Maryland delegate from Buena Vista, published a letter to Marylanders on June 25 in which he explained that he had tried faithfully to honor his obligation to them as a delegate, and that Cushing's departure for the seceders' convention legitimized that gathering as the true National Democratic Convention. He urged his fellow citizens to support Breckinridge and Lane.[67] On June 26 the *Baltimore Sun* announced its support for Douglas as the legitimate nominee of the Democratic party. The fire-eaters had fallen on their swords, and whether their wounds were fatal would not be known for certain until November.

NOTES

1. *Baltimore Sun,* April 21, 1860; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser,* April 19, 1860. The *American* spelled the name "Gilmor."
2. William B. Hesseltine: "Pryor-Potter Duel," *Wisconsin Magazine of History,* 27 (1943–44):

400–409; Senator James H. Hammond to Major Hammond, April 22, 1860, quoted in Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1948). Potter also once knocked the wig off Mississippi Congressman William Barksdale.

3. *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser,* April 24, 1860 (room prices.) Nichols, *Disruption of Democracy,* 291; William B. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln: Murat Halstead Reports the Caucuses of 1860* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1960), 40–41.

4. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 18; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser,* April 24, 1860.

5. Percy Lee Rainwater: *Mississippi, Storm Center of Secession* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1938), 109. South Carolina Institute Hall could hold approximately 3,000 people. It later became known as Secession Hall because the state's Ordinance of Secession was signed there on December 20.

6. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 allowed residents of those territories to choose whether they would be free or slave. It became a rallying cry for the doctrine of popular sovereignty, whose chief proponent was Douglas. The Act overrode the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had prohibited slavery in either territory.

7. The Lecompton (Kansas) constitution, which allowed slavery in the Kansas territory, was drafted by a rump convention with no legitimate claim to represent its residents. Buchanan's man in Charleston was Senator John Slidell of Louisiana, assisted by Senators James A. Bayard of Delaware and Jesse D. Bright of Indiana, and New York navy agent (and former American consul in London) George N. Sanders.

8. Bruce Catton, *The Coming Fury* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1961), 2; Allan Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln,* Vol. II, *Prologue to Civil War, 1859–1861* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 216; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 24; Abraham Lincoln to Hawkins Taylor, April 21, 1860, quoted in Roy P. Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 4:45. Emphases Lincoln's.

9. Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln: Prologue,* 179.

10. Ibid., 207n; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser,* April 24, 1860; Nichols, *Disruption of Democracy,* 295; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 23.

11. Nichols, *Disruption of Democracy,* 296–97. The Maryland delegates supported this measure, with 4.5 votes for Douglas and 3.5 votes against him. See also, Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 25, 29–31. *Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention, convened at Charleston, S.C., April 23, 1860* (Washington: Thomas McGill, Printer, 1860), 9, gives the roll call of states, though an arithmetic error in the tally shows 103.5 votes for Douglas.

12. *Baltimore Sun,* April 26, 1860; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 33–34, 37, 39; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser,* April 26, 1860. William D. Bowie was chosen Vice President and Levin Wolford Secretary of the Maryland delegation. The death of John S. Robinson, the Vermont delegate, is reported in *Proceedings,* 14. Seats were contested in Massachusetts, Maryland, Illinois and New York. See *Proceedings,* 12.

13. The Cincinnati platform—named for the site of the 1856 Democratic National Convention—called for the right of territories to write a constitution, with or without slavery, and petition to join the Union. See Betty D. Greeman, "The Democratic Convention of 1860: Prelude to Secession," *Maryland Historical Magazine,* 67 (1972): 232; Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln: Prologue,* 214; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 45. For resolutions see *Proceedings,* 19–21. The majority report contained five resolutions, the minority, six; both included the provisions on Cuba and the Mississippi-Pacific railroad.

14. Speech of W. L. Yancey of Alabama, to the National Democratic Convention, April 28, 1860, quoted in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 215, and Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln:*

Prologue, 217. Also *Richmond Dispatch,* April 24, 1860, quoted in Catton, *The Coming Fury,* 32.

15. *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser,* April 27, 1860; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 54–56.

16. Dred Scott was a Missouri slave taken by his owner to Illinois and, later, Wisconsin, both free states. When Scott sued for his freedom, the Supreme Court ruled that he was not a citizen and thus had no standing to sue. This 1857 decision also declared the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional because its provision for freeing slaves taken into non-slave states deprived their owners of property without due process, in violation of the Fifth Amendment.

17. Nichols, *Disruption of Democracy,* 302; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 67.

18. *Baltimore Sun,* April 30, 1860; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser,* May 1, 1860. Halstead reported the incident slightly differently, stating that when Gittings rose to renew Butler's motion to vote for a nominee, the Alabama delegate, whom Halstead called "Cooper," said, "I don't second *the motion of that man down yonder*" (italics added). Also Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 69–70. William S. Gittings was a delegate from Baltimore City. The *Baltimore Sun* on June 22, 1860, referred to Thomas B. Cooper as a delegate from Alabama, and its June 23 issue referred to both Hooper and Cooper. The *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser* gives the name as "Hooper" on May 1. The Douglas men were staying at the Mills House, and southern men at the Charleston Hotel. The reporter brawling at the Mills House was Langmore of the *St. Louis Republican.*

19. Maryland's delegates voted 3.5 yeas and 4.5 nays. Butler's report was defeated 198 to 105, with Marylanders voting 5.5 yeas and 2.5 nays. See *Proceedings,* 29–30. Just prior to the second vote, the gentlemen in the gallery were asked to refrain from using the heads of the men below them as spittoons. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 69.

20. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 215. The delegations from Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Florida, and Texas left. See Proceedings, 35–46, for their withdrawal announcements.

21. *Baltimore Sun,* April 30, 1860; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser,* April 30 and May 2, 1860; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 72.

22. Catton, *The Coming Fury,* 36; William Lee Miller, *Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 481. Miller explains that the two-thirds rule had been used in 1832 and 1836 but not in 1840, and that its reinstatement at the 1844 convention—led by southern delegates—gave the South a regional veto over party decisions. Caleb Cushing was a brilliant orator and former Massachusetts congressman who had entered Harvard at age thirteen. His early abolitionist ardor had cooled considerably by 1860.

23. Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln: Prologue,* 220; Catton, *The Coming Fury,* 31.

24. Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln: Prologue,* 221; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 86. The Nullification Crisis of thirty years earlier had been brought on by South Carolina's challenge to federal power, in this case over the right of the national government to levy import tariffs against the states. The seceding Gulf States were followed by four delegates from Arkansas, three from Missouri, two from Georgia, and one each from Virginia and Delaware. On the night of April 30, most of the remaining Georgia and Arkansas delegates joined them.

25. Catton, *The Coming Fury,* 38–39. Halstead reported that the southerners convened in St. Andrew's Hall, making no mention of the Charleston Theater. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 85, 87.

26. Abraham Lincoln to Cyrus M. Allen, a lawyer in Vincennes, Indiana, May 1, 1860, and

Lincoln to Lyman Trumbull, May 1, 1860, both in Basler, *Collected Works*, 4:46, 47. "Danite" was an Illinois term for administration men.

27. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 98; *Baltimore Sun*, May 2, 1860. Nichols, *Disruption of Democracy*, 306, and Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 99, state that two Maryland delegates voted for Douglas, whereas the *Baltimore Sun* reported that 3.5 of Maryland's votes went to Douglas.

28. *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, May 3, 1860; *Baltimore Sun*, May 3, 1860. Halstead reported that Gittings was ruled out of order after the fifty-fifth ballot (Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 104. The results of each ballot can be found in *Proceedings*, 46–53. The "Plug Uglies" were one of the most notorious of Baltimore's violent political gangs. The violence they inspired in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially around the time of elections, had by 1860 been greatly curtailed by electoral and police reforms, but the name endured as a symbol of rowdyism.

29. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 101, 105. Gittings's motion finally carried, 168 to 88. See *Proceedings*, 54.

30. No Marylanders joined them.

31. *Baltimore Sun*, May 9, 1860; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 121, 123.

32. Less than a year later Crittenden would author the great compromise named for him, one of several attempts early in 1861 to entice the seceded states back and keep the upper South and border states from joining the Confederacy. The Crittenden Compromise was a series of constitutional amendments to protect slavery. It was opposed by Lincoln and defeated on the Senate floor, 25 to 23, on January 16, 1861. All 25 votes were cast by Republicans. In one of many ironies of the Civil War, two of Crittenden's sons became generals, one on each side.

33. Donald W. Curl, "The Baltimore Convention of the Constitutional Union Party," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 67 (1972): 254.

34. Joseph H. Parks, *John Bell of Tennessee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), 349.

35. *New York Herald*, May 9, 1860, quoted in ibid., 352.

36. Jean H. Baker, *The Politics of Continuity: Maryland Political Parties from 1858–1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 40; *Baltimore Sun*, April 20, 1860. The Constitutional Unionists elected one delegation, the Know-Nothing city convention the other.

37. *Baltimore Sun*, May 10, 1860. Kennedy was a lawyer, novelist, member of the Maryland House of Delegates, and from 1838 to 1846 a Whig member of Congress from Maryland. He served as Millard Fillmore's Secretary of the Navy in 1852 and 1853. He became an ardent Unionist after the Civil War began.

38. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 123, 127. Halstead used several slang expressions of the time: "spreads" were important people, and "Plugs" referred to the rowdy gangs of the period. Other terms included "swells" for men dressed too well, and "screws" for misers. See Hesseltine, 307.

39. Ibid., 131–34; Parks, *John Bell of Tennessee*, 353, gives the results of the second ballot as 138 for Bell and 69 for Houston.

40. Four Maryland delegates attended, and three were given key posts: Dennis Claude became vice president; S. C. Long, secretary; and U.S. Senator Anthony Kennedy (brother of John Pendleton Kennedy) was chosen a member of the party's Executive Union Committee. See Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 124.

41. Bernard C. Steiner, *Life of Henry Winter Davis* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1916), 162–63, 169, quoted in Parks, *John Bell of Tennessee*, 373. Davis, a Know Nothing congressman from Baltimore from 1858 to 1865 (not continuously) and one of the outstanding orators of his

generation, was a strong Unionist who opposed secession on both constitutional and economic grounds.

42. Mayer Papers, quoted in William J. Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances: Maryland from 1850 to 1861* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 146.

43. *Baltimore Sun*, June 18, 1860.

44. *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, June 18, 1860.

45. Robert E. Lee to Major Earl Van Dorn, July 3, 1860, Lee Papers, Library of Congress, quoted in Catton, *The Coming Fury*, 68; *Baltimore Sun*, June 15, 1860.

46. *Baltimore Sun*, June 18, 1860; *Congressional Globe*, 36th Congress, 1st Sess., 2247, quoted in Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln: Prologue*, xx; Greeman, "The Democratic Convention of 1860," 243.

47. *Baltimore Sun*, June 18, 1860; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, June 18, 1860.

48. Nichols, *Disruption of Democracy*, 313.

49. *Baltimore Sun*, June 19, 1860. Halstead spelled the name "Saulsbury," as did the *Sun* in its June 23 edition and the *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser* on June 19.

50. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 98, 207; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, June 19, 1860. Johnson later fought for the Confederacy and, in 1864, led a cavalry raid that terrorized Baltimore City.

51. R. D. Shropshire to Douglas, April 16, 1860, quoted in Rainwater, *Mississippi, Storm Center of Secession*, 119 (italics his).

52. S. S. Fairfield to Douglas, May 19, 1860, quoted in Rainwater, *Mississippi, Storm Center of Secession*, 129–30.

53. *Baltimore Sun*, June 18, 1860.

54. Ibid., June 20, 1860.

55. Ibid.; Greeman, "The Democratic Convention of 1860," 247; *Baltimore Sun*, June 21, 1860; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, June 21, 1860.

56. *Baltimore Sun*, June 18, 1860. By telegram and letter, Douglas authorized his forces to withdraw his name for the sake of party unity, though his men refused to do it. Not until he was finally nominated was his offer to withdraw revealed to the convention. The full text of Douglas's letter appeared in the *Sun* of June 25.

57. *Baltimore Sun*, June 22, 1860; Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 211.

58. Greeman, "The Democratic Convention of 1860," 249. Stephens, a Democratic representative from Georgia who voted against secession in the 1861 Georgia convention but was fated to become Vice President of the Confederacy, quoted in George Fort Milton, *The Eve of Conflict: Stephen A. Douglas and the Needless War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934), 468.

59. *Baltimore Sun*, June 22, 1860; *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, June 22, 1860.

60. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 220–21, 234. The reports of the credentials committee are given verbatim on pages 211–19. See also McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 216.

61. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln*, 234. Accounts of the *Baltimore Sun* and Halstead differ regarding which delegates left the convention. Halstead noted that Butler's voice was "like a crosscut saw." Ibid., 24.

62. Article 1, section 9 of the U.S. Constitution contains the founders' compromise on slavery. Its vague language reflected the issue's sensitivity: "The migration or importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight. . . ."—when Congress did in fact ban it.

63. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 244–45, 255. Maryland cast 2.5 votes for Douglas. Fitzpatrick received 198.5 votes to one for William Alexander of New Jersey. Halstead reported that Douglas was actually nominated on the following day. The *Baltimore Sun* and *Baltimore American* both refer in their coverage of the Charleston meeting to a Maryland delegate named F. M. Landham, though Hesseltine on page 284, lists T. M. Lanahan of Baltimore City as a Maryland delegate and makes no mention of a delegate named Landham.
64. Hesseltine, *Three Against Lincoln,* 267–68; *Baltimore Sun,* June 25, 1860. Institute Hall was also called Market Hall at that time. William C. Wright, *The Secession Movement in the Middle Atlantic States* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1973), 24, writes that nine of sixteen Maryland delegates bolted. I have not been able to verify that claim elsewhere.
65. Breckinridge received 81 votes, to 20 for former senator and Buchanan ally Daniel S. Dickinson of New York, though after the first ballot the Dickinson votes switched to Breckinridge to make his nomination unanimous. Maryland cast 1.5 votes for Breckin-ridge and 3 for Dickinson. *Baltimore Sun,* June 25, 1860. Many sources erroneously state that Breckinridge was nominated in Richmond, where the seceders first met following Charleston.
66. Abraham Lincoln to Anson G. Henry, July 4, 1860, in Basler, *Collected Works,* 4:81–82. (Emphasis Lincoln's.)
67. *Baltimore Sun,* June 25, 1860.