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Chapter 5

The US Presidential Campaign Songster, 1840–1900

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US presidential campaign songsters served several purposes: they praised a preferred candidate, rubbished the opposition, flagged up popular issues, and whipped up a crowd's enthusiasm. Such songsters became common after they proved extraordinarily advantageous to the Whigs in the 1840 contest between William Henry Harrison (Whig) and Martin Van Buren (Democrat). A song in support of a President was, itself, nothing new. One such song was "God Save Washington," written in the 1780s to the tune of the British anthem "God Save the King."[1] The new departure for the Whig campaign of 1840 was the production of books of presidential campaign songs. It was a practice that, at four-year intervals, would prove common for the rest of the century. One of the first to take a historical interest in these songs was Irwin Silber, for many years the editor of *Sing Out!* magazine, who published an anthology *Songs America Voted By* in 1971.[2] In the intervening years, however, academic attention to these songsters has been sparse, despite the numbers that were published. In 1990, William Miles put together a comprehensive bibliography of 432 songsters relating to thirty presidential campaigns.[3]

It seems strange that presidential campaign songs have been so neglected, even when they appear to be highly relevant to particular topics under discussion. In a lengthy essay of music and politics in the USA, for instance, David King Dunaway allocates just three short paragraphs to consideration of this material.[4] A general reason for the neglect of these songs has been, perhaps, that they are neither typically representative of commercial popular

[1] David King Dunaway, "Music and Politics in the United States," *Folk Music Journal* 5, no.3 (1987): 280.

[2] Irwin Silber, *Songs America Voted By* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1971).

[3] William Miles, *Songs, Odes, Glees and Ballads: A Bibliography of American Presidential Campaign Songsters* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1990).

[4] David King Dunaway, "Music and Politics in the United States," *Folk Music Journal* 5, no.3 (1987): 280.

music, nor are they what most folksong researchers regard as folk music. The tunes to which the words are set may be described as popular (if they originated in a commercial context) or as folk (if they are traditional airs), but the lyrics themselves are often the work of people educated to a degree of literary skill. This is evident, for instance, in the lyrics of the song "Honest Abe" (written to the tune of "Bennie Havens, Oh" for the 1860 campaign).[5] The chorus offers an uninspired but presumably effective exhortation to the crowd that indicates no special literary talent on the part of the author:

> Then all good fellow-citizens,
> Come stand up in a row,
> And shout for Honest Abraham,
> For he is all the go.

However, the lines that end the fourth verse reveal a measure of classical learning:

> Let everybody know,
> That "Abe" will be next president,
> "Pro bono publico."

Campaign songster lyrics were often decried at the time as doggerel, but that is a term carrying connotations of failed attempts at poetic eloquence rather than suggesting the simple but rough-hewn verses of the "folk." Some scholars have been strongly opposed to regarding ballads of a propagandist nature as folksong. Thelma James asserted in the pages of the *Journal of American Folklore* that subversive or propaganda uses were not "proper uses of folk material," the truest values of which were "entertainment for the participants" and cultural study for scholars.[6]

[5] William H. Burleigh, ed., *The Republican Campaign Songster for 1860* (New York: H. Dayton, 1860), 21–22. "Benny Havens, Oh" was a song of the West Point Cadets.

[6] Thelma G. James, "The Editor's Page: Folklore and Propaganda," *Journal of American Folklore* 61, no.241 (1948): 311.

David Ewen credits the journalist Horace Greeley with stimulating the interest in campaign songs in 1840. As editor of *The Log Cabin*, the Whig paper, Greeley oversaw the publication of a fresh song each week of that year's campaign.[7] The Whigs produced a great quantity of songs that were compiled into songsters and published by Whig clubs in the larger cities. It should be noted, in passing, that this did not mean that the production of presidential marches, waltzes and polkas ceased, but they are not the subject matter of this chapter.[8] The distributor of the songster might be a state official, a committee or club that was part of the national party organization, or a publisher seeking commercial gain. Financial profit was not what most concerned the party committees, and they would occasionally issue a free songster. In contrast, a publisher did not necessarily feel bound by political sympathy if there was a clear opportunity to make money. *The Log Cabin Song-Book* (1840), a compilation of Harrison campaign songs by Samuel D. Taylor, furnishes an example of the demand for the songsters. It quickly sold out its first edition of 2000 copies, and was then issued in an expanded second edition.[9] Taylor's compilation, like the majority of songsters, was of song texts only, with tunes indicated by titles.

Election rallies became occasions on which music frequently played a significant role, with bands leading a parade and local singers and glee clubs performing in support of their preferred candidate. Glee clubs, ranging from a handful of members to huge choirs, were popular in nineteenth-century America, and most of them appear to have been keen to make a melodic vocal contribution (free of charge) to election campaigns. There were both men and women participating and singing in the 1840 campaign.[10] Songsters were taken to large campaign meetings, where the songs they contained were found to have more effect than reasoned argument. What is more, a crowd

[7] *All the Years of American Popular Music* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 57.

[8] An early example of an instrumental piece of this kind is the *President's March*, composed by Philip Phile for the inauguration of George Washington in 1789, which was fitted to the lyrics "Hail, Columbia" by Joseph Hopkinson nine years later.

[9] Miles, *Songs, Odes, Glees and Ballads*, xxvii, 7–8.

[10] Janet I. and G. Douglas Nicoll, "Political Campaign Songs from Tippecanoe to 72," *Popular Music and Society* 1, no.4 (1972): 195.

could use songs to drown out a speaker, as the Democrats found in their 1840 campaign.

Ainsworth Spofford observes that the attempt by Democrats to ridicule Harrison as "an uncultivated old farmer, who lived in a log cabin and drank hard cider habitually" had the unforeseen effect of supplying the Whigs with images that proved successful to their campaign.[11] In this period of economic downturn they portrayed Harrison as a sympathetic man of the people in contrast to Martin Van Buren, the wealthy, out-of-touch President. Harrison won what became known as the "log cabin campaign," but his toughness may have been overrated; he died one month after taking office and was succeeded by his Vice President, John Tyler.

The Democrats had at first dismissed the Whig songsters as inconsequential collections of doggerel ballads, and they referred scornfully to the Whigs as the "Sing-Song Party."[12] However, it was not long before they witnessed the political power of the campaign songster. Instead of being able to debate issues, they were confronted with voices raised in praise of the simple Harrison, drinking cider in his log cabin. An example follows from *The Harrison Medal Minstrel*, sung to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne."

> Should good old cider be despised,
> And ne'er regarded more?
> Should plain log cabins be despised,
> Our fathers built of yore?
> For the true old style, my boys!
> For the true old style,
> Let's take a mug of cider now,
> For the true old style.

[11] Ainsworth R. Spofford, "The Lyric Element in American History," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 7 (1904): 218.

[12] Miles, *Songs, Odes, Glees and Ballads*, xxiv–xxv.

Nevertheless, fond as he may have been of log cabins, Harrison owned a sixteen-room house set in 2000 acres of land.[13]

Songsters supporting Harrison also make reference in their titles and in individual songs to his nickname "Tippecanoe," which recalled his days as Governor of the Indiana Territory and the military battle he fought near the Tippecanoe River in 1811 against Shawnee warriors who opposed further incursions into Native American territory. Historians have since questioned Harrison's claim to have won a decisive battle.[14] The greatest hit of the campaign was the song "Tip and Ty," the refrain of which gave the Whig's their catchphrase, "Tippercanoe and Tyler, Too." The lyrics were written by Alexander Coffman Ross to an adaptation of Alexander Lee's comic glee "The Little Pigs."[15] Ross first sang it at a rally in Zanesville, Ohio, where it was enthusiastically received.[16] This encouraged him, when on a business trip to New York, to sing it at a Whig convocation in that city.

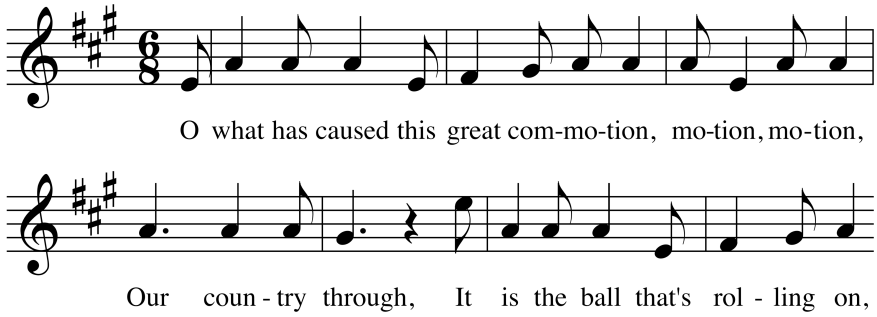
> O what has caused this great commotion, motion, motion,
> Our country through,
> It is the ball that's rolling on,
> For Tippecanoe and Tyler too,
> For Tippecanoe and Tyler too,
> And with them we'll beat little Van, Van, Van,
> Van, oh he's a used up man,
> And with them we'll beat little Van.

[13] J. and G. Nicoll, "Political Campaign Songs from Tippecanoe to 72," 195.

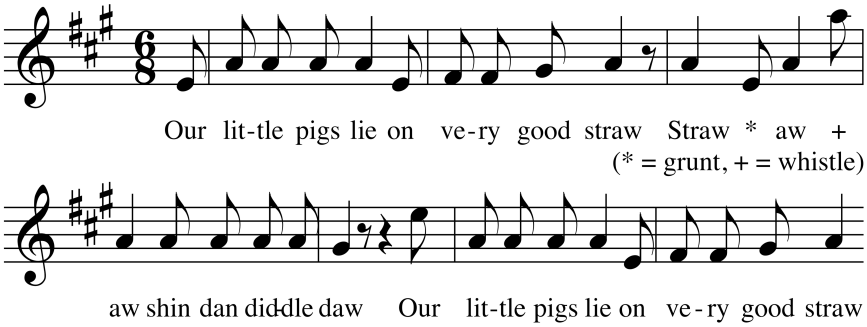
[14] For example, Alfred Cave, *Prophets of the Great Spirit* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), and Robert M. Owens, *Mr. Jefferson's Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

[15] The original is described as a "minstrel number" by Irwin Silber in *Songs America Voted By* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1971), 37. The year 1840 makes minstrelsy an unlikely source (the first minstrel troupes were formed in 1842–43); moreover, the striking similarity of the tune to Lee's glee is beyond doubt.

[16] Silber, *Songs America Voted By*, 37.



EXAMPLE 5.1a "Tip and Ty," a "new comic Whig glee" published in Boston by Parker & Ditson at the corner of Washington and School Streets, 1840.



EXAMPLE 5.1b Alexander Lee, "The Little Pigs" (*c*. 1820), a "favorite comic glee" published in Boston by C. Bradlee, 107 Washington Street, *c*. 1835.

This is one of several variants of the song.[17] Ethelind Butterfield claims that it illustrates how Whigs had discovered that the most effective campaign strategy was to keep repeating the candidate's name rather than reasoning with the electorate.[18] It might be observed, however, that Van Buren's name is subject to similar repetition. This song, which manages to avoid any political issues in its dozen verses, may suggest that they were not important in campaign songs, but despite what was regarded as a preponderance of Whig hokum, issues frequently did find their way into lyrics. Whether the songs were hokum or not, the United States was already more advanced in the

[17] It was published by Firth and Hall in New York and Parker and Ditson in Boston. It seems earlier in date than the version in Silber's book, because it is closer to Lee's glee. Silber reproduces what he believes to be Ross's original, but cites no source. It is the same variant of the tune as that "arranged by a member of the Fifth Ward Club" and published by Thomas Birch in New York (1840).

[18] Ethelind Munroe Butterfield, "American Political Songs," *New York History* 30, no.4 (1949): 414.

process of electoral democracy than Europe at this time. A remarkable 80 percent of men voted in the 1840 election (although it should be noted that in 1840 the vote was only available to free adult male citizens).[19]

The 1840 presidential campaign showed the power of the campaign song, but what was it that created this power? It may be instructive to move to a period of conflict and political fervor, when issues could not be ignored, and examine the campaign songsters of 1860 and 1864. At the time of the 1860 election, the Democratic Party had split into two factions over the issue of slavery, and there was also a new party on the scene. This meant that Republican Abraham Lincoln faced three rivals for the presidency: Stephen Douglas (Democrat), John Breckinridge (Southern Democrat), and John Bell (Constitutional Unionist). Because of westward expansion, political power was shifting away from the South. Added to this, the North was becoming a haven for runaway slaves. Republicans were opposed to the extension of slavery into any new state joining the Union. "Stand by the Flag" (to the tune of "The Star-Spangled Banner") in *The Democratic Campaign Songster* accuses both Lincoln and Breckenridge of harbouring treasonable views regarding slavery.

> Come freemen, then rally, to the flag let's be true,
> 'Gainst the treason of Lincoln, and Breckinridge too.

The intention behind the accusation of treason was no doubt to remind voters that, in 1859, the abolitionist John Brown had been tried for treason and hanged, following his attempt to start a slave uprising among African Americans by attacking the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. The formation of the Constitutional Union Party (out of the Know-Nothing Party) was partly driven by the anxiety caused by Brown's attack. Far from nursing anxieties about the present, there was an overriding confidence to the campaign songs supporting Lincoln; Silber comments that they "encapsulated the bursting energy of the future," by the side of which the songs promoting

[19] Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 42.

the Constitutionalists Bell and Everett appeared as "echoes of an era which had vanished."[20]

There is no space in this chapter to examine more than one of the 1860 songsters in any detail, so I have chosen *The Republican Campaign Songster for 1860* as representative of the period. The journalist William Henry Burleigh edited and compiled this songster, which runs to sixty-seven pages containing a total of forty-two songs, four of which were written by Burleigh himself. Burleigh recognized the changes in political campaigning that had occurred since the 1840 election, writing in his preface, "For twenty years past, in each of our quadrennial elections, the SONG had been recognized as a legitimate political power, scarcely secondary in its influence to that of the SPEECH itself."[21] Burleigh has no truck with those who criticize campaign songs on the grounds of triviality, arguing that it is wrong to label "trivial" anything that stirs hope and raises human aspirations. One of Burleigh's songs, "Rally Boys, Rally," certainly rises above the trivial and makes effective use of the catchphrase "Lincoln and Liberty" in its refrain. His lyrics are written to fit the tune "Hail to the Chief," first used for Washington's birthday in 1815. This melody was used at John Tyler's inauguration and was, indeed, to be played at Lincoln's inauguration on 4 March 1861. Since 1954 it has been the official tune to mark the arrival of the President at State ceremonies.[22]

Burleigh throws out the following challenge to those who attack campaign songs for their lack of literary merit:

> If there are some things here that offend the fastidious, let such reflect that those very things may have a power to stir into activity some honest heart that could scarcely be reached by more refined and subtle modes of expression. It must be obvious, too, from the very necessity

[20] Silber, *Songs America Voted By*, 85.

[21] William H. Burleigh, preface to *The Republican Campaign Songster for 1860* (New York: H. Dayton, 1860), iii.

[22] It is Scottish in origin and was first used by James Sanderson for verses from Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake* (Second Canto).

> of the case, that, in a work like this, adaptation to the popular taste must take precedence of any purely aesthetic considerations.[23]

The argument derived from moral tone was a familiar one in the nineteenth century, and may be regarded as a later reworking of ideas of sensibility found in eighteenth-century English literature. If the songs inspire healthy human feelings, that is what really counts. Henry Russell, a "respectable" entertainer celebrated in both Britain and North America, fought off charges of sentimentality in his songs by asserting the importance of their healthy moral tone, explaining that this could produce only healthy effects, whereas "sickening sentiment is born of a sickening mind and generally produces sickening effects."[24] It was certainly the intention of those who wrote campaign songs that those present at rallies would listen to the lyrics and be stirred into activity. Spofford comments on the excitement generated by speech and song at political rallies in the nineteenth century:

> It is hardly possible for those who have never shared in the enthusiasm of a great political mass meeting to conceive of the furor sometimes inspired by speeches and songs. Held, for the most part, in the open air, with the broad blue sky for canopy, the audience take on a freedom not elsewhere seen, and shout their vociferous approval, or roar forth a chorus, at the top of their many-voiced lungs. All that is sung or spoken goes to confirm opinion, and to strengthen them in their party faith.[25]

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[23] Burleigh, preface to *The Republican Campaign Songster for 1860*, iv.

[24] Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2nd ed. 2001), 41. Russell, far from being annoyed at learning that his arrangement of the traditional song "The Old English Gentleman" had been given new words by William Hayden as "The National Whig Song," chose to sing it himself at Niblo's Garden, New York (to the anger of Democrats in the audience). See Vera Brodsky Lawrence, ed., *Strong on Music*, Vol. 1: Resonances 1836–1849 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 67–68.

[25] Spofford, "The Lyric Element in American History," 222.

The ability of campaign songs to change a voter's choice of candidate may be debatable, but Donald Pickens is surely correct to insist that they played an important role in creating party solidarity.[26]

The following brief comments on, and quotations from, a selection of songs that appear in *The Republican Campaign Songster for 1860* will give the reader an idea of the types of verses that were designed to stir people into activity and how they presented their political messages. Patriotic sentiment for the flag and admiration of Lincoln's toughness and honesty are common themes. It is necessary to keep in mind the context of the mass meetings at which these songs were performed, for it is sometimes difficult, otherwise, to understand how some of them could in themselves inspire the excitement described by Spofford. "Up for the Conflict" (to the tune of "The Old Oaken Bucket") has a refrain in praise of the "flag of the free," and Lincoln receives hyperbolic praise via some unoriginal metaphors:

> Our leader is one who, with conquerless will,
> Has climbed from the base to the brow of the hill;
> Undaunted in peril, unswerving in strife,
> He has fought a good fight in the Battle of Life

"Roll on the Ball" fails to achieve either hyperbole or originality in its images of Lincoln, and the traditional tune to which it is set—"Rosin the Bow"—doesn't provide enough notes to include the word "him" in line four.

> "Old Abe" he is honest and truthful,
> A live "representative man,"
> He's neither too old nor too youthful,
> So Democrats beat if you can.

"Freedom and Reform" (to the tune of "We're a Band of Freemen") revels in an assertive and repetitive chorus:

[26] Donald K. Pickens, "The Historical Images In Republican Campaign Songs, 1860–1900," *Journal of Popular Culture* 15/, no.3 (1981): 165–74, at 166.

We're a band of freemen,
We're a band of freemen,
We're a band of freemen,
We're for freedom and reform.

In "Lincoln and Liberty" (to tune of "Rosin the Bow"), Jesse Hutchinson's lyrics make a reference to Lincoln's past that was common in this campaign. The Hutchinson Family Singers, a popular singing group, were involved in the1860 campaign. John Hutchinson issued his own songster, which also contains this popular song by his brother (*Hutchinson's Republican Songster, for the Campaign of 1860*).

They'll find what by felling and mauling,
Our railmaker statesman can do;
For the people are everywhere calling
For Lincoln and Liberty too!

Other songs focus on particular issues of concern. "The Poor Voter's Song" raises the subject of bribery for votes to the tune of the popular minstrel song "Lucy Long."

They thought me of their tribe,
Who on filthy lucre dote,
So they offered me a bribe,
For my vote, boys! my vote.

"The Bobolink's Campaign Song" (no tune given) takes on the issue of slavery. George W. Bungay is named as author of the lyrics, and the song is prefaced with the following contextual information: "When the bobolink migrates to the South he stops singing, changes his plumage, and is known as the rice-bird of Georgia and the Carolinas, and the reed-bird of Maryland." In this song, the bird is compelled into silence by the din of people in chains.

When I am at the sunny South,
I dare not sing my mellow strains;
A song of Freedom from my mouth

Would drown amid the din of chains.

Two songs use the tune of "America." "God Made Us Free!" reminds people of the bad old days under "Britain's tyrant hand,"[27] but also highlights the "blight of slavery." In "God and the Right," the hymn-like character of the tune again conveys the idea that serving Lincoln is also doing the right thing by God. The insistence that sons should not disgrace their fathers is an effective tactic in songs that demand allegiance, and this is found in the third verse.

Stand as your fathers stood,
Sound no retreat.

Three songs make use of the tune of "The Star-Spangled Banner," a patriotic song with lyrics written in 1814 by Francis Scott Key to an earlier melody by John Stafford Smith. The tune had acquired, as yet, no unique significance as the official national anthem of the USA, and did not attain this status until 1931. The first set of fresh lyrics, "The Banner of Freedom," is, as might be guessed, about the flag and the necessity of waving it and following it. The flag is a stirring image, and several other songs focus on it: "The Lincoln Flag" (to the tune of "Yankee Doodle") is another plea to wave it, while "Our Standard Bearer" (no tune given) stresses that the flag is a symbol of the Union. The second song to the tune of "The Star-Spangled Banner" is "Honest Abe of the West." The lyrics are attributed to Edmund C. Stedman (1833–1908), who is one of two contributors to this songster who achieved fame as a poet. The other is John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–92), the author of the lyrics to "The Song of the Kansas Emigrants," and "Free Discussion" (no tunes are named for either). Stedman's "Honest Abe" shows that campaign songs can, indeed, draw on the higher levels of imagination.

Lo! see the bright scroll of the Future unfold!
Broad farms and fair cities shall crown our devotion;
Free Labor turn even the sands into gold,
And the links of her railways chain ocean to ocean;

[27] "America" ("My country, 'tis of thee") was written in 1831 by Samuel F. Smith to tune of "God Save the King."

Barges shall float on the dark river waves
With a wealth never wrung from the sinews of slaves
And the chief, in whose rule all the land shall be blest,
Is our noble old Abe, honest Abe of the west!

The image of the railways chaining together the oceans is striking, and alliteration is effectively deployed in the sixth line ("wealth never wrung," "sinews of slaves").

The third song to use the same tune is "Old Abe, the Rail-Splitter," which has lyrics by Jesse Clement that assure us the fences of "Old Abe" will stop the spread of slavery. This is a reference to Lincoln's hardworking past as an axe-wielding frontiersman who split logs to make rail fences. Portraying a candidate in this way is obviously a lesson learned from 1840 Harrison campaign. The image is found in other songs. "The Western Star" (to the tune of "Gaily the Troubadour") enjoins the listener to celebrate Lincoln's working past.

Lincoln, the "*Rail-splitter*!"
Give him three cheers.

In "Old Abe and the Fire-Eaters" (to the tune of "Dearest May"), R. Colby draws on Lincoln's rail-splitting past in order to build various metaphorical allusions around the word "fence." Other songs emphasize that Lincoln is not just a splitter, but a uniter. "The People Are Coming" (no tune given) emphasizes widespread popular support for the Union under his leadership: "Abe and the people are a-coming!"

It will be evident that the preferred types of tunes are those of traditional songs, patriotic songs, and songs composed for urban entertainments, such as blackface minstrel shows. Simple or already well-known tunes were desirable because there was little learning to do. If a tune such as "Yankee Doodle" was selected, then only the new lyrics needed rehearsing. Directness and simplicity was also preferred in the text. Getting across an idea or message was the paramount consideration, not poetic flights of fancy. Tunes that

allowed verses to alternate with a simple repeated chorus (the form of most minstrel songs) offered an ideal means of encouraging the crowd to share in the sentiments expressed.

The 1860 campaign was overwrought in mood at times because the issue of slavery had become so pronounced. The Republicans, who had founded their party in 1856, replaced the Whigs as the main challengers to the Democrats. The two rival candidates were Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas. The Republican catchphrase this time was "wide-awake," although it was more commonly found on banners and hats than in songs, which preferred the image of Lincoln the "rail-splitter." The Republican wide-awake clubs adopted a quasi-military character, wearing uniforms, organizing processions and marching bands, and policing Republican rallies. At the close of the campaign, Lincoln was elected because of his having carried seventeen out of thirty-three states, but he had not achieved a majority of the popular vote and had almost no support from the South. Even before Lincoln's inauguration, seven Southern states seceded from the Union and shortly afterwards formed the Confederacy. These were significant events in the lead-up to the Civil War.

Lincoln was re-nominated in 1864, and a second wide-awake campaign began. This was during the Civil War, and the Democrats were calling for peace and negotiation with the Confederacy, while the Republicans stressed the need to fight for the Union. *Hutchinson's Republican Songster, for the Campaign of 1860* outlined the Republican Platform before moving on to the songs. Resolution eight declares that "the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom," and stresses that there must be no legal existence given to slavery. In 1860, Lincoln had held to the Republican policy that there should be no extension of slavery, but his personal anti-slavery feelings were to prevail and make him a committed abolitionist. The violent political conflicts that preceded the entry of Kansas to the Union as a free state in 1861 had illustrated that no compromise was possible over slavery. In 1864 emancipation was part of the campaign. *The Lincoln and Johnson Union Campaign Songster* of that year begins with the Union Party Platform, which announces (in resolution three) that the party seeks an amendment to the

Constitution that will "terminate and forever prohibit the existence of slavery within the limits or the jurisdiction of the United States."

The Democrats were still divided into two factions. The term "copperheads" was used to indicate those in the Northern states who sympathized with the South and wished to make concessions to end the war. The reference was to the copperhead snake, but, as happens so often, what was meant as abuse became adopted and reinterpreted, and a songster called the *Copperhead Minstrel* was ready in time for the 1864 campaign. The Democrat candidate George B. McClellan was a major general who had organized the Army of the Potomac, but he was suspected by Lincoln of having no appetite for the war and had therefore been relieved of his command. McClellan, whose short stature (especially in contrast to the tall Lincoln) earned him the nickname "Little Mac," weakened the Democrat campaign when he decided he was not, after all, going to support his party's anti-war platform. Lincoln was re-elected, and Lincoln's supporters were disposed to blame McClellan for the setbacks the Union had endured.

It is scarcely surprising to discover that images of the Civil War and the retelling of its incidents made their way into the 1864 songsters. Some examples taken from *The President Lincoln Campaign Songster* will suffice to illustrate this. Here, for example, is the beginning of the first stanza of "The Campaign Is Opened," written to the tune of one of the most popular songs of this period, George Root's "The Battle Cry of Freedom."

> The campaign is opened for Eighteen sixty-four,
> Our best blood is flowing for freedom;
> Grant has crossed the Rapidan, and we hear the canon's roar,
> 'Mid shouts of the brave sons of freedom.

Other songs make reference to the draft (introduced in 1863), swamps and trenches, wounds and sickness, battlefields, battle cries, beating the drum, and unfurling the flag. It is evident that loathing of the copperheads has increased, and anger is the mood of many other lyrics. It would be wrong, however, to give the impression that the Civil War dominates the songs; it is

more of an ever-present background. The purpose of the songster, after all, is not to depress potential voters, but rather to stimulate enthusiasm for the Union cause and encourage belief in an unstoppable march to victory. One of the final songs, "What Are We Fighting For," aims to boost morale with an inspiring clarification of the justness and nobility of the Union cause.

Republican songs reveal the party's dedication to modernization and national unity, and the willingness to sweep regional and local issues aside in order to achieve this objective. Republicans regarded free trade, which the Democrats supported, as un-American, and argued that the American economy needed high tariff protection. They also despised the Democrat "Copperheads" who blamed the outbreak of Civil War on the activities of abolitionists. Yet, in the minds of Democrats, the Republicans used the cause of national unity as a mere excuse for paternalism and authoritarianism.

Butterfield writes that songsters were less spontaneous and more elaborate after the Civil War, and their production was "more highly organized and centralized." She adds: "Most of the songsters were now issued directly from Washington, bearing the official stamp of the party's national committee."[28] For reasons of space, I need to limit my survey, so I will jump to the end of the century to see what has changed and what has remained similar to earlier campaigns. It is certainly the case that there are images and tunes that return from one campaign to the next. The tune "Yankee Doodle" remains a popular choice, and was made use again of in a song that was part of the James A. Garfield (Republican) *vs*. Winfield S. Hancock (Democrat) campaign of 1880. Notice that the lyrics show the influence of past campaigns, returning to Lincoln's watchword "wide-awake":

> The soldier boys are wide awake,
> And eager for the fray, sir;
> They'll vote for Garfield—no mistake—
> On next election day, sir.

[28] Butterfield, "American Political Songs," 418.

"Wait for the Wagon," a minstrel song of 1851 (composed by George P. Knauff), is another tune that occurs regularly. It was used in the campaigns of 1852, 1856, and 1860, and turns up in several later presidential campaigns, too. It was even used by supporters of Theodore Roosevelt in 1912.[29]

The 1896 campaign proved interesting because of the heated debate about the gold standard. The songster *True Blue Republican Campaign Songs for 1896* gave its support to the gold standard and William McKinley, while support for silver and William Jennings Bryan was to be found in the *Red Hot Democratic Campaign Songs for 1896*. A sign of the times was that both of these songsters had the same compiler and publisher. The burgeoning song industry of Tin Pan Alley in the 1890s also encouraged the production of separate songs complete with new music. One such, supporting Bryan, was "The Silver Knight of the West," written and composed by Lucius C. West.[30]

> My countrymen, quite soon a sound,
> Like chime of silver bell,
> In music of the busy mint,
> Of victory will tell.
> But not of mortgage, nor per cent,
> Nor yellow gold by Wall street lent.
> Nor silver dollars worth but half –
> Things so absurd but make us laugh.
>
> CHORUS
> They shall not with this crown of thorns,
> Brave Labor's brow enfold.
> They shall not crucify mankind,
> Upon a cross of gold.

From 1792 to 1873, the USA had been bimetallist, and both silver and gold were legal tender with the exchange rate fixed at 15:1 (dropping to 16:1 in

[29] Ewen, *All the Years of American Popular Music*, 59.

[30] Reproduced in Levy, *Grace Notes in American History*, 204–6. It was simultaneously published in Chicago and New York by the National Music Co.

1834). In 1873, however, and largely because of debts accumulated during the Civil War, the government legitimized paper dollar bills, and these were not redeemable in coin. In 1879, bills once more became redeemable, but only in gold. This inevitably pushed the value of gold up, and the value of silver down. In consequence, many farmers suddenly found that their debts had risen and they were unable to use silver to pay them off. The 1893 depression meant that inflation, money supply, "free silver," and the gold standard were fiercely debated topics. Bryan successfully opposed the government's plan to issue millions of gold bonds to New York banks and foreign investors in 1894, and the chorus of the campaign song quotes from a celebrated speech that he gave at the National Democratic Convention on 9 July 1896.

Civil War imagery disappears from Republican songs in 1896 campaign, and there is a new interest being shown in foreign policy. The expansionism that made the wealthy American entrepreneur a well-known character in twentieth-century European literature and stage entertainment is adumbrated in a campaign song of 1900: "We know out business, yes! we do / We are Americans thru and thru … Fearless we'll follow the Red, White and Blue … Even though it lands us in Timbuctoo."[31]

A few words are appended, here, regarding the twentieth century. The growth of popular song production in New York's Tin Pan Alley was to lead to a tendency for political parties to pick an existing song that had a sentiment or mood with which a candidate could be identified. The best-known example of this is Franklin D. Roosevelt's theme song "Happy Days Are Here Again" (lyrics by Jack Yellen, music by Milton Ager, 1929), which he first made use of in the 1932 campaign. Although it became common for there to be just one official or semi-official campaign song (often distributed with sheet music), presidential campaign songbooks continued to be produced for the first half of the twentieth century, but in much smaller numbers. In his comprehensive bibliography, William Miles lists thirty-eight songsters published 1908–1964, but earlier in his book he gives the titles of thirty-nine that were published in 1844 alone. Luke Gullickson, in a study of the

[31] From the *National Republican Song Book* of 1900, quoted in Pickens, "The Historical Images in Republican Campaign Songs," 172.

presidential campaign songs of the Progressive Era (approximately 1890–1920), is in no doubt that this period concluded "the golden age of campaign songs."[32] The disappearance of presidential songs attracted the notice of the magazine *Variety* in 1952, when a short article appeared with the title "Presidential songs used to be part of U.S. topical scene—now no more."[33]

The decline of the presidential campaign songster can be linked, at first, to the flourishing market for the popular songs of Tin Pan Alley, but shortly afterwards records, film, radio, and eventually television all play a part in its decline. The consequence of these developments in leisure activity was that large numbers of people became increasingly less likely to gather together to rehearse songs for performance at political rallies, and the number of sing-along traditional tunes that people knew well enough to sing to new lyrics in public was diminishing with each decade.

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[32] "Presidential Campaign Songs of the Progressive Era: The Political Language of Personality." *Constructing the Past* 8, no.1 (2007): 1–17.

[33] Jim Walsh, "Presidential songs used to be part of U.S. topical scene—now no more," *Variety*, Oct 29, 1952:1.

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ULAN Press, which specializes in reprinting using OCR technology, has issued several campaign songsters. They are marketed via Amazon. Campaign songsters can also be found in collections held by the American Antiquarian Association, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Library of Congress, Harvard University Library, the University of Pennsylvania Library, and the New York Public Library.

Online Sources

The Harris Collection at the John Hay Library, Brown University, Rhode Island, includes many campaign songsters: <http://library.brown.edu/collections/harris/songst.php>.

The Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University, includes campaign songsters: <http://popmusic.mtsu.edu/collections/default.aspx>.

The Internet Archive has downloadable campaign songsters: <http://archive.org/>.

The Lester S. Levy Sheet Music Collection <http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/>.

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