Liberty University

The Heartland of the Democracy:

Presidential Politics in Oley Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, 1860-64

A Thesis Submitted to

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by

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Contents

Introduction and Historiography

Oley Township, founded in 1740, in Berks County, Pennsylvania holds a special place in the commonwealth's history because of its unique religious, political, and cultural history.[1] With hundreds of historic buildings and its Pennsylvania German heritage, the heart of the Oley Valley continues to attract colonial and Pennsylvania German historians from great distances so that they are able to analyze and research its rich heritage. Indeed, the area was designated as a National Historic District by the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 and much of the farmland has been preserved through land trusts and historical preservation efforts. Many of the original settler's descendants remain in Berks County and a large number of them live on or near the valley farmsteads which their ancestors built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unfortunately, scholars have largely overlooked Oley's antebellum and Civil War history. Throughout that period, the township (and larger county) maintained a strong allegiance to the Democratic Party. Oley, part of the "Gibraltar of the Democracy," steadfastly voted for Democratic presidential candidates throughout the nineteenth century, including Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge in 1860 and Gen. George B. McClellan in 1864. While Pennsylvania moved toward the new Republican Party, Oley and Berks County did not. Oley provides important insight into Democratic Party politics in the North during the Civil War.

Most of the voluminous literature on the American Civil War concentrates on battles and leadership. Grand narratives of the national course of the war and summaries about its causes and effects remain popular among audiences. Nevertheless, the gritty details of American life during the War of the Rebellion remain elusive. Within these areas, the nation's politics, culture, and

[1] Oley was not known by its 21st century name during the nineteenth century. Instead, it was known as Friedensburg by locals; the name was changed after World War II in order to prevent confusion with Friedensburg, Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. In order to prevent confusion, the author has chosen to refer to the historic village as Oley throughout.

society take on a new importance. Indeed, local histories allow the public to understand the past in relatable terms. According to Lucy Simler, a noted historian of southeastern Pennsylvania, community studies provide, "…a framework for the systematic analysis of these phenomena and an opportunity to unravel the individual threads from which history is woven."[2] Local histories also provide insight into the struggles, concerns, and everyday experiences of "ordinary" people. Furthermore, this kind of approach reveals the reactions and attitudes of ordinary Americans in extraordinary state, national, or international events. Local history, then, preserves unique perspectives and adds color to "grand history."

Local history, however, is not without challenges. Sources are scant. "Ordinary" Americans did not keep records like public officials or the upper classes. Those that were written often did not survive from one generation to another. Because of the comparative lack of primary sources, local interpretations must be considered carefully. If their sources are mishandled, local histories produce unbalanced perspectives; the greater context is destroyed and some of the benefits from learning about a locality are lost. Another weakness of local history is the interpretive discipline that they require. Local historians are passionate about their detailed topics. Because of this, many local historians tend to have conflicts of interest with their subject, which often brings their objectivity into question. Local historians often become interested in their subjects through personal connections to the people and places that they are studying. Unfortunately, these ties sometimes influence historians toward inaccurate interpretations of their topics. Consideration of these weaknesses is fundamental to writing a truthful local history.

Comprehensive narratives, of course, are not without merit. There are many practical reasons for the recognition which popular narratives, such as Allen Guelzo's *Fateful Lightning:*

[2] Lucy Simler, "The Township: The Community of the Rural Pennsylvanian," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 106, no. 1 (Jan. 1, 1982): 41, accessed January 15, 2014, http://ojs.libraries.psu.edu/index.php/pmhb/issue/view/2500.

A New History of the Civil War & Reconstruction (2012), David Potter's *The Impending Crisis* (1976), or James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (1988), have generated. These works allowed their analyses to take center stage without becoming bogged down by the intricate details of the Civil War era. Comprehensive narratives are much more accessible to laypeople, depending on the author's writing skill, and offer new ideas or details about historic leaders. Not only do they place the historian's analysis at the forefront, but they also give the major players from American history a chance for reexamination. Revisionism does not always mean a complete overturning of the historical consensus, but in many cases only refers to refining pre-existing concepts or arguments.

In spite of the major successes which overarching narratives have brought to the historical field, a sharp gap has developed between contemporary local histories and the general interpretations of the American Civil War. The separation hinges on the consensus understanding of events versus the localized understanding. It is a dispute of emphasis over the fine points of life in the camps, the home front, regions and other variables against the all-encompassing narratives of the Civil War. While traditional local histories have increasingly fallen out of favor with many academics, the results of such studies are remarkably fruitful for understanding Northern society before and during the war and displacing much of the historical clutter that can be accumulated in the historiography of the war. Hal Barron, a historian of nineteenth century Northern society, noted, "Throughout the nineteenth century, rural Americans were enmeshed in a life that was at once qualitatively different from, yet increasingly involved with, a dynamic urban industrial society."[3] Nineteenth century Americans faced dramatic technological advances coupled with rising immigration. Political institutions were challenged by each other and from

[3] Hal S. Barron, "Rediscovering the Majority: The New Rural History of the Nineteenth Century North," *Historical Methods* 19, no. 5 (Fall 1986): 141, accessed January 14, 2014, http://www.liberty.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1300163351?accountid=12085.

within the Northern community, as demonstrated by the tumult taking place within the three major parties. The Whig Party dissolved due to the mounting pressures in the 1850s. The Democratic Party positioned itself as the nation's rural party, but struggled to reconcile its image as the slaveholders' party in the rural mid-Atlantic and Midwest. Meanwhile, as the surging political underdog, the Republican Party capitalized from its position as the abolitionist party in New England, but faced fierce resistance from millions of voters who believed that it was voicing the opinions of America's radical fringe.

Northern folk communities dealt with these social factors in a wide variety of ways and it would be remiss to oversimplify these factors. The differences between a mid-Atlantic tenant farmer, a New England agrarian, and a Midwestern farmer could be stark, let alone from a massive Southern plantation owner. In other cases, Americanization could be so thorough that families of different heritages were indistinguishable. Many times, the remarkable dissimilarities of Northern society could be present within a single county or township; in these cases, one could travel less than one day's journey and find contrasting visions of American life during the nineteenth century. While the antebellum South has been justifiably analyzed for its unique slave culture, society, and economy, the North operated in a unique economic system with a complex ethnic community as well. Each special case contains a multiplicity of historic factors which remain difficult for modern historians to grasp. Although it may be tempting to overgeneralize these factors into a modern written narrative of antebellum America, the historic evidence resists the development of a convincing historical consensus for the North. As with all histories, geography and their position within the region and state are some of the most important factors to consider. Politics and voting patterns are also critical to understanding these areas. Industrial records form another basis for historical understanding. Also, in cases where records have

survived, it is important for the historic inhabitants to speak. The risks of oversimplifying the factors present in the North outweigh the benefits. The unique characteristics of a region can vary considerably and require detailed knowledge of the region. In one section of a given county, the population may be predominantly German. In another location of the United States, the citizenry could be made up of British, African American, or another ethnicity.

Historical dichotomies are particularly strong in the Northern states' rural areas, which made up the predominate population of the Union in mid-nineteenth century America. In the popular surveys, great swaths of territory and millions of Americans are summed up in only a few paragraphs or sentences, obscuring Northern societies' diverse qualities and its contentious nature. Whereas the South was considered the nation's ethnic epicenter, the North contained many different ethnicities, regions, industries, and countless other variables which have proven to be a daunting task to interpret. The South was also seen as the leader and chief force in the nation's political thought during the nineteenth century. However, the North underwent tumultuous political changes and debates, arguably much more radical than those in the South. The same questions posed by previous historians remain present factors in historical debates. What occurred in these areas? Why did they occur? What repercussions did they carry for the inhabitants of these geographic points/regions? While some areas and aspects of American life during the nineteenth century have been researched, analyzed, argued, and counter-argued extensively, the vast majority are rarely discussed, except by specialized interests such as local historical societies. In most cases, the research is undertaken in order to piece together an extensive genealogy as part of a family history to uncover long lost ancestors without any recognition of the greater regional importance that their work might have. Thus, while it may be beneficial for the family involved, additional research will be needed in order to uncover the

historic realities. In other instances, careful research reconstructs the region and synthesizes the variables so that others can understand a particular area and its interactions with its immediate neighbors, region, and nation in a unique historical context.

In the Northern states, the historical ground is particularly rich for critical analysis and discovery. Although many local histories were written during the late nineteenth century, revision and new analysis is a welcome addition to these areas. Southern communities have dominated recent regional and local histories, but some historical works, such as Nicole Etcheson's *A Generation at War: The Civil War Era in a Northern Community*, have attempted to reconcile the large discrepancy in the number of Southern and Northern studies. Although many local works were attempted in the North during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they have since fallen out of favor with the greater academy. In most cases, these historical journeys have been guided by private citizens looking for genealogical research. Although this research is helpful on an individual or familial level, the community's history and its interconnectedness can become lost because of the specialized nature of their goals. In order to gain a meaningful perspective of the Northern home front during the Civil War, it has become necessary to understand these regions and population centers as part of the greater context of forces at work, but also as distinctive points in their own merit. In order to argue this effectively, a proper balance must be maintained between the themes of greater American society which has plagued historians and their local histories.

One of the communities which faced many of these factors was Oley Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania. Located in the historic Oley Valley in the southeastern corner of the county, the township remained a bastion of Pennsylvania German culture for more than two hundred and sixty years despite being only fifty miles from Philadelphia. Many historic buildings

from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remain in pristine condition and act as living reminders of the past two hundred and sixty years of history which has taken place in this community. Historians from the past and present have recognized the unique characteristics of the valley, but only a few have touched on its Civil War era history, specifically its political history. The Oley Valley is one of southeastern Pennsylvania's most unique geographic and cultural landmarks, but its mid-nineteenth century history has been overlooked by many academics. Some historians have researched and analyzed the region's Pennsylvania German culture and society, but did not investigate the distinctive political dynamics taking place within the Oley Valley. Life in Berks County during the Civil War effort as a whole has taken preeminence over the particular forces at work in the Oley Valley. Oley and the surrounding township provide vital insight into the lives of ordinary Pennsylvanians during the antebellum period and the American Civil War.

The political history of the Oley Valley in the antebellum and Civil War period reveals the dichotomies of life in the Northern states. From a political perspective, the valley's citizens remained a firmly Democratic stronghold in Berks County. In each presidential election from 1828 to 1880, Oley voted for the Democratic Party, in most cases with overwhelming majorities.[4] Abraham Lincoln's ancestors had been some of the earliest settlers in the Oley Valley before moving on to Virginia, Kentucky, and Indiana. Three generations of the Lincoln family (Mordecai, John, and Abraham Lincoln) lived in southeastern Berks County, located in the modern-day Amity and Exeter Townships. Nevertheless, Oley rejected Lincoln and the Republican Party twice, preferring Democrats John C. Breckinridge on a fusion ticket in 1860

[4] Morton L. Montgomery, *Political Hand-book of Berks County, Pennsylvania: 1752-1883* (Reading, PA: B.F. Owen, 1883), 68-70, accessed January 17, 2014, https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=zlMVAAAAYAAJ.

and overwhelmingly choosing George B. McClellan in 1864. In the Pennsylvania gubernatorial races from 1814 to 1882, Oley sided with the Democrats seventeen times, with the Federalist Party of the 1810s and 1820s for five elections, and with the Anti-Masonic Party twice in the 1830s.[5] Such a Democratic voting record is unparalleled in the Northern states, especially after the rise of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and the sustained growth of the Republican Party in the 1850s and 1860s.

Oley's Democratic ties remained strong throughout the Civil War and they fervently opposed the federal government's prosecution of the war. Nevertheless, Oley's citizens actively participated in the war as soldiers, doctors, and farmers. Their opposition to the President did not diminish their contributions or service to the Union war effort. Although many of Oley's citizens were draftees who entered the Union Army following Congress' Militia Act of 1862, valley men fought in nearly all of the major battles in the eastern theatre of the Civil War and participated in engagements of all sizes, from Gettysburg to the Battle of the Deserted House near Suffolk, Virginia. Oley's soldiers traveled greater distances in only a few days than many of them they had during their entire lives. A large number of them were members of the 167th Pennsylvania Infantry, a regiment of 1,010 draftees which was comprised entirely of men from Berks County.[6] Out of a total of 5,315 known Civil War veterans buried in Berks County, one hundred and one soldiers rest in Oley's cemeteries.[7] They were interred at church cemeteries and private farm and family cemeteries where they lived and labored before being drawn into military service. From

[5] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 62-7.

[6] Gary L. Shugar, "The 167th Pennsylvania: Civil War's Only All-Berks Regiment," *Historical Review of Berks County* 65, no. 3 (Summer 2000), accessed January 17, 2014, http://www.berkshistory.org/articles/civil.html.

[7] See Historical Society of Berks County, *Civil War Veterans: Berks County, PA*. Reading, PA: Historical Society of Berks County, 1995 and Appendix B.

the Oley Cemetery at Spangsville to the Kauffman family plot, their graves remain permanent reminders of their service in support of the Union cause.

Oley's history during the Civil War has been subject to a few historical inquiries over the past two hundred and sixty years of the township's existence. Berks County's chief nineteenth century historian, Morton L. Montgomery, published several works on the county's history as well as discussions on the Oley Valley. Each of these histories was conducted in a late nineteenth century manner of style, distinguished by a heavy emphasis on raw data and chronological narratives. In his quest for materials and information, Montgomery combed the state's archives, conducted firsthand interviews, and meticulously recorded prominent social details of the county's townships before synthesizing them in his massive tomes. While they remain critical starting points for understanding Berks County and its inhabitants, Montgomery's work left little critical analysis and provided the dry details of industrial progress, agricultural abundance, voting records, and other details of life in the nineteenth century. Like many other late nineteenth century historians, Montgomery emphasized the triumph of civilization over the American wilderness in each of his epic histories and epitomized American histories written before the publication of Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis. Montgomery notes in his introduction, "…I shall have much to say of our untiring and successful industry, of our practical, pure and simple religion, and of our general education from which we have realized such fruitful local results."[8]

By examining the hard laboring inhabitants of his county, Montgomery saw a march of improvement starting with the conquest of the original Native inhabitants in the virgin wilderness during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Overall, Montgomery's works were

[8] Morton L. Montgomery, *History of Berks County in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Everts, Peck & Richards, 1886), 3, accessed January 15, 2014, https://archive.org/details/cu31924028852196.

characterized by a passion and pride for this region which colored the critical nature of his investigations. Because of Montgomery's emphasis on details, his meticulously researched works provided invaluable insight into the raw historic data of Berks County and the Oley Valley, including information on local censuses, production, industry, and other critical data.

Israel Daniel Rupp, another local historian, included Oley in his *History of Berks and Lebanon Counties* of 1844, focusing on the religious history of the township during the eighteenth century. Rupp also contained many statistics on the rich agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and other thriving industries which were taking place in Berks County in the 1830s and 1840s.[9] However, the centerpiece of Rupp's work, "…is to preserve the most interesting local facts relating to the Indians who inhabited this region; to give brief historical sketches of the first Swedish, Welsh, French, German, Irish, and English setters…."[10] As in Montgomery's works, Rupp briefly noted the religious fervor taking place in Oley during the eighteenth century as a melting pot of Universalism, the Society of Friends, and Moravians mixed with the growing community of German Lutherans. In the religious upheaval during the eighteenth century, Rupp noted, "…there were some who professed to be impeccable; or having attained to a state of sinlessness; they were, in their own estimation, *perfect* [italics included]."[11] Finally, in what may be the most valuable historical contributions of his work, Rupp transcribed some eighteenth century letters written by prominent Oley families in Pennsylvania Dutch, which detailed the religious movements sweeping the region in primary sources. These letters

[9] Israel D. Rupp, *History of the Counties of Berks and Lebanon* (Lancaster, PA: G. Hills, 1844), 262-271, accessed January 15, 2014, books.google.com/books?id=IEsVAAAAYAAJ.

[10] Ibid., iii.

[11] Rupp, *Histories of the Counties of Berks and Lebanon*, 233.

provide excellent documentation from the region's inhabitants and their perspectives of the Oley Valley during the eighteenth century.

The first detailed history of Oley Township was not attempted by an outsider. In 1860, Dr. Peter G. Bertolet, a valley native and member of Oley's Bertolet family, began his own investigation of Oley's past and titled the work *Fragments of the Past: Historical Sketches of Oley and Vicinity*. The author noted in the preface, "…this has not been a work for speculative gain, but a mere labor of love and delight…"[12] Born at the Abraham Bertolet Homestead on June 11, 1822, Bertolet was the youngest of Daniel and Maria Bertolet's nine children.[13] As part of his continuing education, Bertolet attended the University of Pennsylvania and earned a medical degree in 1843.[14] Although fully tasked with his work as a medical practitioner, the young doctor faithfully continued researching Oley's history in addition to maintaining his private practice in the Oley Valley. Dividing his manuscript into twenty five chapters, Bertolet reconstructed the valley's early history before transitioning his secondary source into a travel journal of the region's inhabitants and local points of interest in 1860. In the second half of his work, Bertolet included interviews with many of his neighbors and relatives about the past, present, and future of the Oley Valley. In his introduction, Bertolet acknowledged one of the difficulties of recording local history and noted, "If any of our ancestors become heroes, in character we don't just exactly care to see them in, it is yet hoped that we may be pardoned from this liberty thus taken, for we have in all instances sought to record nothing but the simple truth."[15] There were

[12] Peter G. Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past: Historical Sketches of Oley and Its Vicinity* (Oley: Oley Valley Heritage Association, 2012) ix.

[13] Ibid., iii.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., ix.

many potential conflicts of interest which Bertolet feared might color his findings and he worked to prevent them from impeding his work.

During the Civil War, Bertolet worked as a surgeon for Reading's Provost Marshal and this hindered progress on his manuscript. Unfortunately for posterity, Bertolet's work was never formally completed before his untimely passing on March 8, 1865. However, for the benefit of future historians of the valley, Bertolet's descendants donated the original manuscript to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia in the late nineteenth century. [16] There the manuscript remained largely unknown, outside of the Bertolet family and curious local researchers, until its first editing and publication by the Woman's Club of Oley Valley in 1980. Under the direction of the Oley Valley Heritage Association, it has been republished and serves as a valuable genealogical and historical tool for the region.

In the first quarter of twentieth century, P. C. Croll of Womelsdorf, Berks County, Pennsylvania, launched his own inquiry into the Oley Valley and titled his work as *Annals of the Oley Valley*. Originally published in twenty-five installments for the *Reading Eagle* newspaper in 1926, the work was republished in the same year as a complete collection in a single volume.[17] In his quest for knowledge, Croll uncovered Bertolet's manuscript in its home at the Philadelphia repository and integrated some of his findings into his own unique work. In contrast with Bertolet's work, Croll investigated Oley's families and their genealogies from the perspective of an admiring outsider, providing insight into the communal living taking place in the township. Additionally, Croll carried historical studies of the Oley Valley into the twentieth century. As Bertolet had done more than sixty years prior, Croll traveled throughout the region extensively during his college years at Kutztown University as a colporteur for the American

[16] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, iv.

[17] P. C. Croll, *Annals of the Oley Valley* (Morgantown: Masthof Publishing, 2010), 3.

Tract Society, interviewing the valley families and gathering oral accounts alongside prized family documents.[18]

Since Croll's time, very little writing has been done on the Oley Valley. In a brief historic tourist account, Berks County native Alliene S. DeChant wrote a casual, personal testimony of her travels through the valley and encounters with its residents during the early 1950s. DeChant waxed poetic in many passages, and wished to, "…tarry in the church yard so dear to my forebears."[19] The author concluded by noting, "The outline of the distant hills is visible under the stars. I keep remembering old mills, a mansion, a farmhouse, iron furnaces, a covered bridge, a spring house with a tiled roof. I know the kettle's rim now, and the Valley it encloses."[20] This work does not pass as a historical work. Instead, the work stands as a postcard vision of the Oley Valley, insulating the community and setting it in stark contrast to the hustling, bustling world of airplanes, highways, and suburbanization surrounding it.

Another casual study of Oley was conducted by local historian Richard H. Shaner titled *The America That Didn't Die: A 20th Century Cultural Folk Study of the Oley Valley of Pennsylvania* (1971). Shaner's work reflected the concerns which many rural Americans felt during the 1960s and 1970s. Although prosperity during the 1950s had transformed American life, the costs to regional heritage were felt. With the construction of the modern highway system and increased suburbanization of southeastern Pennsylvania, many local Pennsylvanians believed that their way of life was being threatened by the intrusion of outsiders into the rural countryside. This attitude was typified by the author's comment that, "When the cheap rogue of neon and cosmetic glow of the megalopolis urbanization has finally transformed the Oley Valley

[18] Croll, *Annals of the Oley Valley*, 3.

[19] Alliene Saeger DeChant, *Down Oley Way* (Kutztown: The Kutztown Publishing Company, 1953), 67.

[20] Ibid., 66.

into industrial parks, shopping centers, and low rent housing, one of the lowest forms of prostitution will have claimed another part of virgin America..."[21] Although his passion for the region was undeniable, Shaner's unrepentant biases exemplified the worst of local histories. Unlike Bertolet and Croll's works, which carefully attempted to remove as much bias as possible in their works and acknowledged biases when they were self-evident, Shaner lashed out at the outside world and viewed its intrusions as a "rape" of the area's culture, society, and beauty.[22]

Shaner then attempted a very brief contemporary overview of the valley and its inhabitants and based it on interviews conducted from his recently purchased farm in the Oley Valley. His position as chairman of the Oley Valley School District's social sciences department afforded him great access to its people and their viewpoints about the suburbanization/urbanization taking place around them, but his own biases overwhelmed even these viewpoints. For him, the valley and its families were the protective life support which has sustained Oley's heritage for more than two hundred years and its rural character must be preserved for future historians, social scientists, and others to experience and enjoy. The most important features of the work are the contemporary photographs of the valley landscape and its citizens from the time period. The folk community's activities, buildings, and views of life in the region are the centerpieces of the images and exhibit Oley's pastoral beauty and bucolic farmlands, which still characterizes the township. Even more strikingly, they mirror many of the images of the contemporary valley and testify to the sustained resistance to urban development which has taken place in Oley Township over the past forty years.

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[21] Richard H. Shaner, *The America That Didn't Die: A 20th Century Folk Cultural Study of the Oley Valley of Pennsylvania* (Reading, PA: Hunsberger Printing, 1971), 18.

[22] Ibid.

Recent serious scholarship has focused on the Oley Valley's colonial period. Philip E. Pendleton, a colonial historian specializing in architecture, published his well-received work *Oley Valley Heritage-The Colonial Years: 1700-1775* in 1994 through a joint effort between the Oley Valley Heritage Association and the Pennsylvania German Society. Pendleton's work contained dozens of images of the valley's homes and buildings as part of his analysis of the unique architecture of the Oley Valley. This study focused on many of the common themes which have been part of many Oley histories. However, Pendleton detailed the Germanic, Anglo, and Palladian architectural influences utilized in the Oley Valley during the eighteenth century as the centerpiece of his argument, highlighting the integrated nature of life in the growing community and the mixture of ideas which was taking place.[23] The work also integrated discussions of its economy, religion, and the community values, which were constructed through a mixture of European and American cultures. Even though the valley was divided between English and German speakers, with a strong French influence as well, Pendleton believed that the linguistic differences were overcome due to the high literacy rates of the male landowners.[24] Pendleton investigated the Huguenot, Moravian, and Lutheran influences which shaped the valley's cultural development.[25] Finally, *Oley Valley Heritage* contained discussions on the social condition present in the valley during the eighteenth century, including discussions on the colonial families and the development of local infrastructure.

Oley Township has been a source of historical interest since its founding in 1740. Local historians have recognized the importance of the valley's history, but there is still much work to

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[23] Philip E. Pendleton, *Oley Valley Heritage: The Colonial Years, 1700-1775* (Birdsboro, PA: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1994), 55-101.

[24] Ibid., 137-40.

[25] Ibid., 103-33.

be done in order to discover the community's workings, especially its antebellum and Civil War political history. Oley's nineteenth century political history offers some key insights into the wartime Democratic Party's working and their ability to maintain majority power in some Northern localities, even though their national power was shrinking.

Chapter 1:

Oley's Antebellum Society and Culture

The Oley Valley is located in the southeastern corner of Berks County, Pennsylvania, fifty miles northwest of Philadelphia and nine and one half miles east of Reading, Berks County's seat and largest city in the county. Taking the shape of an inverted "T," the valley covers an area of thirty square miles and is a distinct geographic feature in the county.[1] The edge of the valley is ringed by the Oley Hills, which range in height from six hundred to eight hundred feet in elevation above sea level, and are part of the Reading Prong formation of eastern Pennsylvania. The region is located at the junction of three physiographic weather zones in southeastern Pennsylvania: the Atlantic Coastal Plain, the Piedmont, and the New England Upland.[2] It is a unique physical formation of southeastern Pennsylvania and features all of these weather climates, which acclimates the weather to the topographical characteristics of the hills and valley. The environment in the valley is mild and characterized by warm, humid summers and moderate winters, typical weather patterns in southeastern Pennsylvania. The Indian summers were a time, "…when the flora abounds in the rich compositae [*sic*] and the verdant foliage of the trees begins to assume the dyes of beautiful contrasting colors…."[3] Because of these weather patterns, the valley sustains a growing season of between one hundred and seventy and one hundred and eighty days on average.[4] For the first European settlers moving into Berks County during the early eighteenth century, the Oley Valley appeared to be the epitome of the benefits of coming to the American colonies. While the immigrants endured hardships in the

[1] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 1.

[2] Ben Gelber, *The Pennsylvania Weather Book* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 5.

[3] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 42.

[4] Gelber, *The Pennsylvania Weather Book*, 5.

early settlings, the valley functioned as a gateway to spiritual and temporal prosperity of the American frontier in the eighteenth century. For settlers, the New World featured an abundant land filled with plentiful natural resources waiting to be utilized for their benefit.

Although the name "Oley" has historically been used to describe the entire valley, the area can be divided into two sections: north and south. Indeed, there exist clear cultural and social differences that separated the two regions. The southern region of the valley has historically been a transitional place, where immigrants settled and then moved on to other areas in search of new opportunities. However, the northern section has retained many of the early families who passed their claims on to their descendants. In the southern portion of the valley, Daniel Boone and Abraham Lincoln's ancestors settled before moving south and west for new opportunities in Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. In contrast, the Kauffmans, Griesemers, Fishers, Rhoads, DeTurks, and other settler families in the northern valley have remained well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This unique characteristic has created continuities between families and the region which rarely exist in the lower valley region. Families living in the northern portion of the valley transitioned from the wilderness cabins of their ancestors, constructed permanent stone homes and barns, and developed a unique society and culture which have remained well-defined into the twenty-first century.

The northern portion of the valley, the vertical section of the inverted "T," is aligned on a north-south axis and measures seven miles in length and four and one-half miles in width. This northern district encompasses Griesemersville, Oley, Pleasantville, and Spangsville as the major population centers. Oley Township is located entirely in this area and contains roughly seventy five percent of the rolling valley floor. The township's total area is 15,600 acres of land, which has been modified only slightly since its founding in 1740 as part of Philadelphia County. The

remaining twenty five percent of the valley floor is scattered among neighboring Alsace, Amity, Earl, Exeter, and Pike Townships.

The southern district of the valley, the crosspiece of the inverted "T," is aligned on an east-west axis and runs eleven miles in length by four and one half miles wide. This district contains Amityville, Birdsboro, Baumstown, Douglassville, Stonersville, and Weavertown, as it did in 1860. Here the valley is bisected by the Schuylkill River, which is its defining feature. North of the Schuylkill River, the valley lies in Exeter and Amity Townships, as well as a small portion in Douglass Township and the borough of Saint Lawrence. The valley also extends into areas south of the Schuylkill River in Cumru, Robeson, and Union Townships. The southern region of the Oley Valley is suitable for agriculture, just as the northern region is, but not of the higher quality. In the southern regions, the soil is primarily red shale, which does not drain moisture as well, contains fewer nutrients, and is tougher to cultivate and prepare for seasonal plantings. Armed with wooden plows drawn by livestock, the limestone soil of the north appealed to eighteenth and nineteenth farmers much more than the red shale because of its greater agricultural properties.

Before the first white settlers arrived in Oley, the Native Americans residing in the region recognized the valley's agricultural potential and the abundant of wildlife that lived in the forests.[5] The Lenape living in the valley planted extensively and harvested, maize, acorns, and other crops.[6] Additionally, they hunted and fished in the waterways and forests. As part of their farming techniques, the Lenape seasonally burned portions of the valley to prepare for spring planting and hunting parties, maintaining a largely open space on the valley floor sparsely

[5] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 1.

[6] Ibid., 9.

covered in white oaks.[7] Europeans and their children, including Daniel Boone, hunted and explored the forests in search of wild game to supplement their own provisions. Relations between the two civilizations appear to have been largely peaceful. One local legend passed through the Lee family and recorded in Rupp's county history recalls an instance when the neighboring Lenape protected Arthur Lee and his family from a hostile tribe which sought to raid the local settlements.[8] In order to encourage community between the Native Americans and the incoming settlers, an agreement was struck in 1730 which allowed the Lenape to retain roughly eight hundred acres of prime farm land in the heart of the upper valley.[9] Following the outbreak of war between the French and English in 1754, the Lenape abandoned the Oley Valley and travelled north to join other tribes fighting the British in the shadow of Pennsylvania's Blue Mountain. In 1760, the eight hundred acre reservation was claimed as unoccupied land by the Pennsylvania Land Company in London and quickly sold to German immigrants, effectively ending the feeble attempts by the Lenape to return to their former homes.[10] Oley's settlers and their descendants were deeply impressed by their encounters with the Lenape and reminisced about them freely. Oley's aged inhabitants recalled the locations of the native burial grounds, traced their settlements in the valley, and placed the locations of their orchards and fields for Dr. Bertolet during his historical research in the late 1850s.[11] By the 1860s, the only physical

[7] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 9 and 56-7; Pendleton, *Oley Valley Heritage: The Colonial Years*, 26-7.

[8] Rupp, *History of the Counties of Berks and Lebanon*, 231.

[9] Pendleton, *Oley Valley Heritage: The Colonial Years*, 26.

[10] Ibid., 26-7.

[11] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 5.

remnants of Lenape life in the valley were arrowheads eagerly collected from freshly plowed fields by local farmers.[12]

Prior to the arrival of the European settlers, the valley was sparsely covered in trees due to Lenape activities in the area, which caused the early settlers to gravitate toward the timber tracts along the streams and creeks as well as the valley's northeastern district. By the 1860s, the woodlands were being utilized for light industry. The land was efficiently cleared of stumps and fieldstones and meticulously groomed for farming. In the northern section of the valley, the fine limestone earth provided excellent soil drainage and valuable minerals which allowed for bountiful agricultural production under ordinary weather conditions in southeastern Pennsylvania. The soil of the northern section had been long recognized by settlers and farmers for its agricultural properties and the lure of this invaluable ground encouraged the Swedish, French, and German settlers to travel far into the Pennsylvanian wilderness during the eighteenth century to stake their claims in this land. Many of the early European immigrants, especially the Germans, were farmers and they recognized the foundational importance of selecting good ground in order to ensure their success in the New World.[13] Among the many benefits gained from farming on limestone soil are that the ground can be easily tilled and quickly prepared for plantings once cleared of trees, stumps, and stones. There was not a direct correlation between the different ethnic groups' settlement patterns and their soil choice for settlement, but they recognized the potential prosperity of the region's streams, land, and forests.[14] Although many factors went into purchasing property, their tract selection depended upon individual tastes,

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[12] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 11.

[13] Amos Long, *The Pennsylvania German Family Farm*, Publications of the Pennsylvania German Society, Vol. VI (Breinigsville, PA: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1972), 11.

[14] Pendleton, *Oley Valley Heritage: The Colonial Years*, 23.

availability for purchase, and price range for the respective buyers. Some families wanted to stake their claims on the valley's streams and creeks in order to construct mills which complemented their farms; others sought to purchase larger land tracts and concentrate on farming the open areas of the valley. In both cases, the desire for this land encouraged settlers to bypass land located closer to Philadelphia in Chester and Montgomery Counties.

The geographic realities of the Oley Valley do not expose the social conditions present in the nineteenth century. Discerning the social underpinnings of a society can prove challenging for the historian. While the physical terrain of the mid-nineteenth century remains largely unchanged, the social terrain has been altered and modified. Even though the modern inhabitants of Oley have done much preservation work in order to retain the township's rural character, historic structures, and rustic landscapes, changes between the past and present are inevitable. Fortunately in Oley's case, many primary documents and structures have survived to the present day and help reveal the details of life in the 1850s and 1860s. They provide fundamental examples of the region's layout and document the key landowners, churches, businesses, cemeteries, schools, and other features of the historic township. Also, histories and local accounts of Oley were conducted during the nineteenth century, which are beneficial for personalizing the raw data of censuses, tax records, and other records. One of these key documents is a detailed map constructed from surveys organized by Lawrence Fagan and published in 1860. Fagan's work includes remarkable statistics of the homes, businesses, industries, and churches from the whole of Berks County. More pertinently, Fagan's cartography also contains valuable statistical information about the county, including population, post offices,

property, taxable individuals, distances between points, and other factors which help to reconstruct life in Oley Township during the Civil War years.[15]

Built on the nutrients of the fertile limestone soil, farming was the foundation of the valley's economy in the nineteenth century, just as it has remained to the present day. Regardless of their chosen occupation, valley residents came in contact with farmers on a daily basis. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Pennsylvania's chief industry was farming; it ranked number one nationally in food production thanks to a confluence of the climate, soil fertility, and the skill of the farmers residing there.[16] Most valley farms in the mid-nineteenth century were solely operated by the farmer and his family, with only the very largest farms hiring outside helpers for the day to day farming operations or as supplemental hired hands for harvest time. While the farming family used brokers, merchants, or other middlemen to transport their goods from the fields to the marketplace, the daily labors were divided among the farmer and his children. Although their farming ancestors had carefully selected the region for its potential prosperity, the residents living during the 1850s and 1860s helped transform this dream into a reality through their hard labor.

Tasked with sizeable properties to farm and large amounts of livestock to tend, the Oley farmers studiously worked their land, moved their products to market, and prudently invested their profits for long term security. According to the local census of 1860, Oley Township contained 143 farms, valued at $10,479.43.[17] For millennia, farmers have gained a reputation for pride in their labors, the well-ordered nature of their properties, and the success which they have

[15] Lawrence Fagan, "Map of Berks County, Pennsylvania: From Actual Surveys," Library of Congress, accessed January 29, 2014, http://www.loc.gov/item/2012592156.

[16] Long, *The Pennsylvania German Family Farm*, xi.

[17] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 115.

brought to their communities. In many cases, especially in local accounts, this is said in vanity and reflects little in reality. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by their profitability and wealth generation, Oley's farmers could say this with more than a little truthfulness. This valuation does not entail all of the wealth invested in the township's farms. Based on their hard work, thrift, and frugality, Oley Township became the most prosperous township in Berks County in 1860, massing $1,107,562 in real and personal property in that same year.[18] Only Reading, with a population ten times larger than Oley Township in 1860, contained more wealth and capital than the small, farming community.

Rooted in the Pennsylvania German farming tradition, Oley's farmers were remarkably resourceful and rapidly adapted to the technological advances brought about by the Industrial Revolution. As new generations of sons took over from their fathers, new implements and agricultural practices were introduced to Oley's fields. Early mowers, reapers, threshers, drills, planters, and other mechanized implements were first introduced to the valley in the 1840s and the early adopters ensured a reputation of forward-thinking and technological advancement in the community.[19] Many traditionally minded Pennsylvania German farmers of the time period initially balked at the early adopters and invasion of the new implements, perhaps out of jealousy and perhaps with just cause. From their perspective, reaping and planting had worked for their ancestors while settling the wilderness and would work just as well for them, without the benefits of modern technology.[20] Others did not possess the necessary funds needed to finance the purchase of expensive, new machinery. However, their cautious initial reactions to the new machines should not misconstrue them as Luddites, who needlessly obstructed technological

[18] Fagan, "Map of Berks County, Pennsylvania: From Actual Surveys."

[19] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 110.

[20] Ibid.

advances. They quickly overcame caution once they saw the results which the machines brought to an already prosperous region. By 1860, the value of the township's farming implements had increased to $40,591.00.[21] Once a new technology reached the valley, the farmers quickly sought ways to add them to their collections of farming implements.

The typical Oley Valley farm of the nineteenth century consisted of several key buildings, including the farmhouse, woodshed, outhouse, pigpen, and barn, with additional buildings depending on the nature of the farm work and the extent of the land being farmed. There was tremendous variety on the Oley Valley farm, each one different from the other. Depending on property availability, the farmer's wealth, pre-existing buildings on the farm, and other factors, the Oley farmer may have a specialized building constructed in order to maximize the efficiency and prosperity of his property. Some farms might have a butcher house built in order to process pigs, cattle, and other livestock before selling them to neighbors. Others might construct additional corncribs adjacent to the main barn storage in order to hold the surplus corn. Additions were constructed, new buildings assembled, and repairs constantly made in a never-ending quest to keep the produce, livestock, hay, and straw safe from the natural elements and pestilence. Because of this, some of the farms in the valley developed into large compounds over many years.

A prime example of this are the Kauffman farm properties in the center of Oley Township, which have been noted by several historians and serve as examples of Pennsylvania German farming development for nearly three hundred years.[22] Constant reinvestment of financial capital into the farms sustained their lifestyle and ensured that the families lived well

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[21] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 115.

[22] See Long, *The Pennsylvania German Family Farm*, 9-10 and Pendleton, *Oley Valley Heritage: The Colonial Years*, 135, for more examples.

during the mid-nineteenth century. Many of the farmhouses and outbuildings date from the eighteenth century and they were constant sources of improvement and maintenance during the nineteenth century. As capital flowed into the Oley Valley, farmers invested accordingly in order to keep their property suitable for mechanizing agricultural practices. Shoddy maintenance was a bane to the Oley farm culture and the owner was demonized by his neighbors as, "…a sluggard if nothing worse."[23] It reached such levels, that trivial lapses in up keep, such as a fallen down wall or poorly kept properties, were quickly noticed.[24] In the closely knit township where everyone knew one another and in many cases were directly related to each other, this could lead to a poor reputation within the community and diminish one's place within their own families.

Capital investment was not limited to equipment or livestock. The entire farm property was centered on the barn, the home of the livestock and protector of the field's labors. Barns were both functional and symbolic structures on the farmstead. Large barns were practical capital investments which helped farmers store grains and protect livestock. They were also status symbols which set their owners apart from other farmers and solidified their reputation for agricultural prowess. The typical Oley Valley barn was the Pennsylvania bank barn, named as such because of its prevalence in Pennsylvania and distinctive appearance. Even to the present day, the Oley Valley is well known for its barn architecture and is central to historical studies of the Pennsylvania barn core region.[25] Visitors to the valley during the nineteenth century often remarked on the size difference between the farmhouse and the barn, ridiculing the locals by

[23] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 114.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Robert Ensminger, *The Pennsylvania Barn: Its Origin, Evolution, and Distribution in North America*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 51-2.

noting that the massive stone barns were often larger than the houses.[26] According to Bertolet, "The barn and outbuildings of a well-regulated farm are indeed complete, and scarcely equalled [*sic*] anywhere for convenience and comfort to cattle housed in them; and this is a very proper view of domestic economy in rearing and feeding stock."[27] The precise placement of this building would need to consider a variety of factors, including the distance from the farmhouse to the barn, access to a constant water supply for the animals, and the landscape of the property.

In the typical Oley barn, the first floor of the barn would be constructed with a stone foundation adjacent to a gently sloped landscape. The end walls were also constructed out of local stone and included wooden slats or brick-framed openings for ventilation on the barn floors which allowed airflow to help dry straw and hay stored on the second floor. The stone end walls supported the wooden beams and frame of the barn and also secured the roof to the entire structure. The basement floor housed the livestock and was divided into their respective stables. Many times, the farm implements would be stored on this level of the barn as well, allowing for easy access to the draft animals. Then, the builders backfilled a slope against the basement walls, meeting the topsoil with the second floor of the barn. This created a ramp or bank so that the farmer could have easy access to the second floor and drive wagons and other equipment directly into the barn's second level. On the second floor, the barn typically contained the threshing floor, haymows, and grain storage, which could be quickly and efficiently moved to the animal quarters during feeding times. Openings on the stone ends of the barn allowed airflow to pass through the second floor, drying the haymows and maintaining proper ventilation for the livestock. Without a well-constructed and maintained barn, the year's labor might end up rotting or wasting in the fields with the profits lost.

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[26] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 108.

[27] Ibid.

Building construction and maintenance costs were not the only expenses incurred by the Oley farmers. The chief working animals of the Oley farms were horses; 597 of these equines were owned in 1860.[28] In contrast to less wealthy areas, Oley's farmers operated their implements with horses and not mules or oxen. This issue is still debated among the Amish and Old Order Mennonites in Pennsylvania, who are still dependent on horses for transportation and farming. Equine based farming has the benefits of speed and they could also be used to pull carriages and travel quickly from place to place. Another important factor to consider is the social status which equine farming brings: owners are quickly identified for their wealth and position in the farming community. Horses are much more expensive to maintain in working condition than mules or oxen and have lower stamina and greater injury risks when pulling farm implements. Horses have a much different temperament from oxen and mules and require experience in order to properly use them while operating equipment. Operating a farm with horses as opposed to other draft animals distinguished these farmers from their neighbors and signified their prosperity. While others scratched out livings and barely sustained themselves, Oley's farmers were able to invest in horses. Only ten working oxen and thirty-three mules were listed by Oley's farmers in the 1860 census, which were the less expensive alternatives to horses and often argued as better draft animals than horses.[29] This is evidence of the large capital investments, the intensive farming, and the distinct communal attitudes exhibited in Oley during the 1850s and 1860s.

In their search to find economic stability and provide security from fluctuating prices, the Oley farmers diversified their crop management and property holdings. Oley farmers had many milk cows, swine, sheep, and other barnyard animals, which were used locally or exported

[28] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 115.

[29] Ibid.

regionally and nationally. These required constant care and demanded farmers who could properly prevent diseases from threatening their stock and treat outbreaks. In order to have a steady supply of milk for their families, Oley residents had 974 milk cows in their possession in the 1860 census.[30] Although this number seems quite high, Bertolet noted that dairy farming was not a large part of the local economy in the 1850s and 1860s.[31] The valley citizens were also extensive pig and cattle farmers, owning 1,408 swine and 936 cattle in 1860, enough to meet the pork and beef demands of the citizens with additional stock to be sold.[32] Pigs were fed with any scraps from the farmer's table. Large litters of piglets provided additional food for the family, with the excess sold in local markets once they had reached a desirable size.

Beef cattle required much more space and investment, but the potential profits and expanding demands encouraged Oley farmers to plunge wholeheartedly into the market. These animals would be raised and sold according to the farmer's needs and the demands of the market. According to one local resident, "This trade in fattening cattle is at times a little risky, and fluctuates like all other species of speculation. It is of course much influenced by the price of grain. Sometimes farmers do well by it, but often, if everything is reckoned, lose money."[33] Sheep were another farm animal commonly raised in the Oley Valley, although their numbers were far outweighed by swine and cattle; only 282 sheep are listed in the 1860 census.[34] These sheep were sheared annually and their wool used to warmly clothe the valley's inhabitants or provide mutton or lamb for the families, but little as far as exports. Midwestern farmers

[30] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 115.

[31] Ibid., 110.

[32] Ibid., 115.

[33] Ibid., 110.

[34] Ibid., 115.

effectively replaced eastern farmers as the source of wool by the mid-nineteenth century, raising them on much larger properties and undercutting the costs incurred by raising them in the East.[35] Each family would also have several chickens, ducks, geese, or turkeys for a constant supply of poultry and eggs, but unfortunately these fowl did not meet the criteria for the early census takers. The total value of these animals in the 1860 census was $93,707.00.[36]

From its location fifty miles northwest of Philadelphia and centrally located in southeastern Pennsylvania, Oley's inhabitants had access to the northeastern corridor's major population centers, such as Philadelphia. The region experienced population growth following the turn of the nineteenth century. Other developing cities within Pennsylvania included Allentown, Lancaster, and Reading, which increased demands for goods and products and caused infrastructure needs for better roads, canals, and railroads. This cyclical economic effect created an equation for explosive population expansion in Berks County during the first sixty years of the nineteenth century. A look at the United States census records uncovers the extent of the new nation's growing communities during the early to mid-nineteenth century and the changes taking place during those years. In Reading, the population nearly doubled from 2,235 in 1790 to 4,332 in 1820. From 1830 to 1860, Reading's population exploded from 5,856 to 23,162. Oley and its surrounding township were not exempted from the county's population increases. In its first recorded federal census for the locality, Oley Township contained 968 total residents in 1800. In 1830, the township's population increased to 1,469. Oley's population had risen to 2,056 by 1860.[37] Out of these numbers in 1860, 381 lived in the village of Oley, mostly working in local businesses which were tied to farming, such as blacksmiths, tanneries, and dry

[35] Long, *The Pennsylvania German Family Farm*, 447.

[36] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 115.

[37] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 46.

goods stores. In 1860, Philadelphia was the second largest city in the United States with 565,529 residents, creating insatiable demands for products from Berks County.[38] Reading, less than ten miles from Oley, was the thirty seventh largest population center nationally and counted 23,162 within its city limits in 1860.[39] Agricultural and industrial products increased in the 1850s and 1860s and the regional infrastructure steadily improved during the nineteenth century in order to meet the marketplace's demands.

The earliest pathways into the Oley wilderness followed Lenape trails deep into the unmapped forests. Many early highways and roads were cut into the Pennsylvania wilderness during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which connected farms, churches, and linked growing territories to each other. One example is typified by a 1727 Philadelphia court petition calling for a road to be constructed between the Lutheran Meeting House in neighboring Tulpehocken Township and the Quaker Meeting House in Oley.[40] In 1755, the foundations of the modern day Oley Turnpike Road were established and connected Exeter's Black Bear Inn to Spangsville, crossing The King's Highway (present day PA-662).[41] In 1776, the Friedensburg Road was first laid out and connected the village of Oley to Mt. Penn and Reading by way of Alsace Township. During the nineteenth century, the region's infrastructure steadily improved, although many of the local roads remained dirt. In 1862, the Oley Turnpike Company was established and began collecting tolls from travelers along this ten mile stretch of macadam in

[38] US Bureau of the Census, "Table 9. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1860," accessed January 31, 2014, http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab09.txt.

[39] US Bureau of the Census, "Table 9. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1860," accessed January 31, 2014, http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab09.txt; Fagan, "Map of Berks County, Pennsylvania: From Actual Surveys," Library of Congress, accessed January 29, 2014, http://www.loc.gov/item/2012592156 counts 23,171 on his map published later in 1860.

[40] A. E. Wagner, F. W. Balthaser, and D. K. Hoch, *The Story of Berks County (Pennsylvania)* (Reading, PA: Eagle Book and Job Press, 1913), 95, accessed February 10, 2014, https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=FVQVAAAAYAAJ.

[41] Ibid.

order to pay for the $50,000 improvement costs and the company holders' dividends.[42] As in the twenty-first century, only a handful of major roads crossed the northern section of the Oley Valley. Dozens of byways branched out into the township and linked its farms and industries together, bringing them into contact with the greater county by horseback, carriage, and wagon.

While Oley contained many agricultural and geographic advantages which caused the early settlers to make their lives there, the terrain turned against them with the coming of the railroad age. The hills which helped to foster Oley's distinct culture and society defied any intrusion of the infant railroad industry in the early and mid-nineteenth century. No direct rail connection existed between the township and its neighbors, which has always been the case in Oley's history. Nevertheless, this did not mean that the region was completely isolated from the rail lines which were spreading across the Northern states. They were keenly aware of the best methods of transporting their goods to the marketplace. While they remained suspicious of the new technology, the state organized subsidies, and the private financiers and businessmen who owned and operated the rail lines, Pennsylvanians recognized the economic benefits which they brought to the region.[43] The closest rail connection from Oley was the Eastern Pennsylvania Railroad station at Fleetwood, located about five and three-eighths miles outside of the valley to the northwest.[44] Finished in 1859, the Eastern Pennsylvania rail lines connected Reading to Allentown and the Lehigh Valley, joining these regions together and allowing Allentown to gain access to the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad.

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[42] Wagner, Balthaser, and Hoch, *The Story of Berks County*, 95.

[43] John D. Majewski, *A House Dividing: Economic Development in Pennsylvania and Virginia Before the Civil War*, ed. Louis Galambos, Robert Gallman, and Naomi Lamoreaux, Studies in Economic History (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 111-4.

[44] Fagan, "Map of Berks County, Pennsylvania: From Actual Surveys."

If Oley's citizens deemed it better to travel to another rail junction, perhaps seeking to sell goods to southeastern Pennsylvania or Philadelphia, the next closest junction was at Reading's rail hub, situated about nine and one-half miles through the hills to the west.[45] Reading's connection with Philadelphia predated its link with Allentown and brought a much larger market for Berks County's goods. First constructed in 1833, the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad traversed the Oley Valley's lower section and served as a major rail hub for the county and region, becoming one of the first double track railroads in the United States in 1843. Another option for valley businessmen and farmers would be to transport their goods to Douglassville, located ten and five-eighths miles south of Oley.[46] From these points, goods could be transported throughout southeastern Pennsylvania and the mid-Atlantic region. The major thoroughfares, railroads, and canals of Berks County lay within several miles of Oley, but did not cross any of the township's boundaries.

The major waterway of the Oley Valley is the Schuylkill River, which served as a transportation artery for the region's inhabitants and their goods for centuries, dating back to the Lenape natives who first traveled the Pennsylvania woodlands. With the arrival of the early European settlers and their descendants, the river became a key industrial feature and was utilized for industry and commerce. The Schuylkill originates in Pennsylvania's coal region near Pottsville, flows southeast through Reading, passes through the southern portion of the valley, and then continues on to Pottstown and Philadelphia before merging near the mouth of the Delaware River. At each of these urban centers, the river played a major role in the placement of the settlement and their orientation in the region. Although certainly not as significant as the Mississippi, Delaware, or Ohio River valleys, the Schuylkill provided excellent transportation for

[45] Fagan, "Map of Berks County, Pennsylvania: From Actual Surveys."

[46] Ibid.

the region's barges and other commercial enterprises. Lumber and coal, among many other materials passed mills, forges, and other early industries in eighteenth and nineteenth century Pennsylvania. The Schuylkill Navigation (commonly known as the Schuylkill Canal) was completed in 1826 and allowed coal and other goods to be moved from Pennsylvania's anthracite coal regions along its one hundred and eight mile route from Port Clinton, Schuylkill County, to Philadelphia.[47] Although the railroads transformed the markets through speed and quickly surpassed the canals in total tonnage, the Schuylkill Navigation was a critical conduit for Berks County's transportation infrastructure. While a series of canal failures had caused deep financial deficits in the commonwealth's budget, the Schuylkill Canal maintained efficiency and solvency.[48]

Oley Township is also crisscrossed by some local waterways which have powered the region's development and been harnessed by the local mills and furnaces. A tributary of the Schuylkill River is the Manatawny Creek, whose source begins near Lobachsville and stems from several small streams and creeks flowing from the hills surrounding the Oley Valley. The Little Manatawny Creek passes the village of Oley, heads east toward Pleasantville, and then winds south along the eastern side of the township before emptying into the Schuylkill River at Pottstown. These steams were important factors in Oley's small industries and allowed mills, furnaces, and forges to be constructed along the waters' edge.

The valley's industrial businesses supplemented its agricultural foundation, but there were also several small mills and businesses which contributed to Oley's economy. According to Fagan's 1860 map, Oley contained eight grist mills, eight saw mills, one furnace, one forge, two

[47] Rupp, *History of the Counties of Berks and Lebanon*, 383.

[48] Majewski, *A House Dividing*, 115.

hotels, and two stores which provided services for the local inhabitants.[49] Bertolet noted that the village of Oley also contained, "…smithys, coachmakers, wheelwrights, tinsmith, shoemakers and some four or five tailor shops."[50] Two of the most important industries were the Oley Furnace and Oley Forge. In 1744, John Yoder and John Lesher of Oley co-founded the Oley Forge with John Ross, an outside financial backer, and constructed the business with the expressed purpose of "…manufacturing pig metal into bar iron…."[51] Fed by the waters of the Manatawny Creek, the forge was located along the eastern edge of the township with plenty of waterpower and timber in the surrounding hills, which were necessary ingredients needed to keep the forge operating. Under the direct supervision of Lesher, the forge quickly became profitable, even manufacturing cannon balls during the Revolutionary War. Beginning in 1794, the forge came under the direction of Frederick Spang and his family, whose then directed the forge for the next seventy years. By 1856, the forge was operating with two fires and a water driven hammer which manufactured two hundred tons of blooms (iron ore and slag mixture) annually.[52] Ultimately the forge was closed in 1864. The Oley Furnace was founded in 1765 and was located northwest of the village of Oley. Under the leadership of Daniel Udree, a Revolutionary War officer and largest taxpayer in Berks County in 1828, the forge prospered and encouraged local development.[53] This was done in conjunction with the local forges in surrounding townships, especially the Rockland Forges located only a few miles to the northeast,

[49] Fagan, "Map of Berks County, Pennsylvania: From Actual Surveys," Library of Congress, accessed January 29, 2014, http://www.loc.gov/item/2012592156.

[50] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 94.

[51] The Pennsylvania Society of the Colonial Dames of America, *Forges and Furnaces in the Province of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1914), 111, accessed February 5, 2014, http://books.google.com/books?id=_mEoAAAAYAAJ&num=13.

[52] J. P. Lesley, *The Iron Manufacturer's Guide to the Furnaces, Forges and Rolling Mills of the United States* 163, accessed February 5, 2014, http://books.google.com/books?id=vjI7AAAAcAAJ&num=13.

[53] Wagner, Balthaser, and Hoch, *The Story of Berks County*, 194.

which Udree also owned.[54] In the mid-nineteenth century, the furnace closed for twelve years before being reopened as a joint business venture between locals and investors in 1855. In 1857, the furnace manufactured seven hundred and fifty seven and one-half tons of wheel iron in just thirty six weeks.[55] In each of these cases, the primary market was the local economy, focusing on the implements and tools which the farmers would need in day to day activities.

While Oley's economics generated tremendous prosperity by the mid-nineteenth century, social institutions were a critical component of valley life. Much research has been done into the broader Pennsylvania culture, but little analysis has been done on political trends in conjunction with the social tensions taking place. From a broader perspective, Oley was one of the best examples of "…ethnicization-as-Americanization."[56] Caught in the middle of this process, the region exhibited many of the characteristics and mannerisms of the Old World, but was radically modified by the forces at work in Pennsylvania and in the process of becoming members. They remained proud of their Pennsylvania German heritage and culture, but simultaneously were attempting to become accepted members of mainstream American culture. The region featured a different ethnic and cultural composition than any other area in Pennsylvania as evidenced by the immigration patterns. Nevertheless, marriages between the valley families and the introduction of new German immigrants to the Oley Valley during the nineteenth century caused German culture to become the dominant social factor in the valley. While the Pennsylvania Germans were a central part of the American experience socially, economically, and culturally, they

[54] Lesley, *The Iron Manufacturer's Guide*, 176

[55] Ibid., 163.

[56] Stephen M. Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land: Pennsylvania Germans in the Early Republic* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 3.

remained a distinct subculture of American society. The Americanization process revealed some of the underlying social tensions in the community.

Religious life was a noteworthy social factor in the Oley and was frequently mentioned in early histories of the region. The rural nature of the Pennsylvania frontier ensured religious liberties for the settlers which Europe did not afford, even under the authority of the British throne, and many fled there to escape persecution. English Quakers, French Huguenots, Swedish and German Lutherans, Moravians, and other Christian denominations and sects constituted the first waves of immigrants to enter the valley in the eighteenth century laying the foundation for a unique perspective in Pennsylvania German culture. Interdenominational church meetings were commonplace before buildings could be constructed during the eighteenth century and ideas were exchanged between church attenders. While orthodox Christian teachings were generally accepted by the population, the region also attracted some unusual characters that shaped local religious thought. Mattias Baumann, German leader of a cult known as the "New Born," immigrated to Oley in 1718 and sought to overturn denominationalism by unifying them under his leadership. Following his move to Oley, Baumann preached, "Men say that Christ has abolished sin. It is true with me, for I am as Adam was before the fall. As Adam was before the fall so I have become."[57] George De Benneville, founder of the Universalist Church of the United States, fled to Oley from France at age 38, meeting with many of the prominent families and teaching the Native Americans.[58] De Benneville was a noted preacher in Oley and conducted the burial rites of many locals, which demonstrated his influence in the community.[59] Powwowing, a Pennsylvania German practice of folk-medicine and healing through prayers,

[57] Croll, *Annals of the Oley Valley*, 17.

[58] Ibid., 119-22.

[59] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 25.

charms, and rituals, was also practiced in the region into the nineteenth century. Anna Mary Jung, commonly known as "Mountain Mary," was a powwow practitioner who lived in the Oley Hills north of Pikeville from 1749 to 1819. At her home, Jung drew visitors from far and wide, healing them with medicinal compounds from her herbal garden.[60]

By the mid-nineteenth century, the frontier religious atmosphere had coalesced into five German Reformed Churches.[61] The Moravians, Quakers, "New Born," and other sects had become extinct in the region, although their beliefs and practices influenced the worldviews of their descendants in Oley.[62] The main three churches were Lutheran and Evangelical branches of the German Reformed Church, including the two churches at Spangsville, Salem United Church of Christ, Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Frieden's Union Church in Oley.[63] The churches at Spangsville were constructed out of brick materials in 1821 and 1822 and bore striking architectural similarities, causing them to be labeled by the locals as the "twin churches." Each church contained one hundred and fifty regular attenders and enjoyed friendly relations with each other; the Lutheran church shared their facility and weekly offerings with the Reformed congregation as their church was being constructed.[64] In 1832, the Frieden's Union Church was constructed as the main place of worship in the village, with the brick facility shared

[60] David W. Kriebel, *Powwowing Among the Pennsylvania Dutch: A Traditional Medical Practice in the Modern World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 100-1.

[61] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 106.

[62] Ibid., 107.

[63] Frieden's United Church of Christ was the namesake of Friedensburg, the village of Oley's name until after World War II.

[64] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 78.

by Lutheran and German Reformed congregations. These churches had roughly one hundred and twenty-five members in their respective congregations.[65]

Oley's churches held weekly services and annual camp meeting services in the Pennsylvania German Lutheran and Reformed tradition. The services were bilingual, spoken and sung in English and Pennsylvania German, and featured the most popular hymns and choruses of the day, signifying the linguistic changes taking place in the valley. The township was a bilingual community which integrated both Pennsylvania German and English into everyday life. These tent meetings were generally conducted by an itinerate preacher and attracted the curiosity of the local citizenry, resulting in them being well attended. Modeled after evangelical meetings during the Second Great Awakening, they revived the inhabitants' spiritual side and added to the communal aspects of the township. While their spiritual motivations should not be understated and many valley citizens were genuine in their faith, they were also denominationally minded and conscious of their place in Pennsylvania German society, due in large part to their experience during the Great Awakenings. Tent revivals were one way of modifying their practices to match the American Christian culture. They were key Pennsylvania German institutions, but they were challenged by the Second Great Awakening, revivalism, and rising evangelicalism.[66] Neighbors spent a week camping in tents alongside their neighbors during the summer months and attended services day and night. Charles H. Haesler, from neighboring Pottstown, reminisced during a European trip that, "Such a camp-meeting…scattered all over the sylvan groves of the good, old, fertile Keystone State, where people live in that happy condition that always follows the consciousness of serving God 'with all their might.'"[67] Clearly, these

[65] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 93.

[66] Nolt, *Foreigners in Their Own Land*, 5.

annual revivals made deep impressions on the community, not only because of their spiritual importance, but also because of the social impact which they generated. One annual service which was notable in the farming community was a public worship tradition called Harvest Home, celebrating the gathering of another year's crops and goods.[68] This unique community tradition functioned as a Thanksgiving styled service which offered praise to God for providing rain and sunshine for a successful harvest.

Another example of the underlying tensions taking place in Oley during the Civil War era dealt with the local school system. Before 1850, the Moravian and German Reformed churches owned and operated the local schools in a parochial tradition. As early as 1750, the Moravians made Oley a central part of their school system; students in Frederick Township, Montgomery County were transferred to the Oley Moravian school under the direction of George Youngman.[69] In the rural mindset of the region, many of the farmers resisted education beyond twelve or fourteen years of age, arguing that their children needed little beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic skills provided at home or through the churches. Nevertheless, beginning in 1850, the state and township mandated that twelve common schools be constructed for the benefit of the children of Oley, at a cost to the taxpayers and at the discretion of the locality.[70] However, once the law went into effect, problems quickly arose. According to Bertolet, a medical doctor and supporter of education:

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[67] Don Yoder, *Pennsylvania Spirituals* (Lancaster, PA: Pennsylvania Folklife Society, 1961), 62.

[68] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 111.

[69] Morton L. Montgomery, *Historical and Biographical Annals of Berks County, Pennsylvania*, Vol. 1. (Chicago: J. H. Beers & Co., 1909), 99, accessed January 15, 2014, https://archive.org/details/cu31924097286300.

[70] The twelve school districts were designated by neighboring dwellings. The districts were as follows: Furnace, Brumbach's, Church, Kiefer's, Hunter's, Knabb's, Wiest's, Reiff's, Guldin's, Hoch's, Palm's, and Pleasantville Independent. See Croll, *Annals of the Oley Valley*, 145.

> Considerable difficulty was experienced in apportioning these houses to the satisfaction of all. In some instances, through individual favoritism they were illy [sic] located. This created heart-burnings and general animosity against the school system. Some would give vent to ill feeling openly. Others held it in their bosoms and said nothing.[71]

One response to this bitterness was the commissioning of the Oley Academy, located in the village, on January 1, 1857 as a joint stock company and its final construction in the same year at a cost of $3,000 dollars.[72] It was a backlash to the poor quality of the common schools in the area and the intrusion of state affairs into the township. The full capacity of the two story brick building was eighty pupils and Bertolet remarked that it had been well attended with classes ranging from forty to seventy-five students.[73] Nevertheless, one incident demonstrates the anger which had accumulated in the community; while some worked to resolve the conflict peacefully, others resorted to insidious tactics. On a summer Sunday morning in 1858, the schoolhouse near Spangsville exploded, around three o'clock in the morning, waking the locals and causing commotion in the township.[74] The precise cause of the explosion was never uncovered and no one was ever charged with foul play, but it evidently was because of animosity surrounding the common school system in Oley Township.[75] The school was reconstructed in its original spot and no other incidents took place regarding the school buildings.

Because of their farming excellence, the township was able to earn a leading role in Berks County's economy and solidified its reputation for agriculture. The prosperity of the region was a synthesis of the geography, including the creeks, soils, forests, and rivers, and the original settlers' hard labors in the eighteenth century Pennsylvania wilderness. In the words of

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[71] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 76.

[72] Ibid., 93-4.

[73] Ibid., 93.

[74] Ibid., 76.

[75] Ibid., 76.

Philip Pendleton, "These different people were generally good neighbors to one another, even if local life included some social, economic, and personal friction."[76] Nevertheless, the region's increasing prosperity during the nineteenth century had not brought thorough social stability. In an era of Americanization, the mixture of German, Swiss, French, and British cultures had been largely unified into a distinct subset of Pennsylvanian German culture. The community had exhibited many of the tenants of greater Pennsylvania German folk culture, including an intensely close-knit society, German Reformed religious traditions, and the Pennsylvania German dialect. However, they had also been impacted by French, Swedish, and British cultural influences, which created social patterns which were not present within the greater culture around them. The inhabitants had close ties with Huguenot, Quaker, Moravian, and other nonmainstream religious teachings which were part of the mid-nineteenth century mindset in the Oley Valley. With these factors in mind, though they can be investigated even more thoroughly, these social, cultural, and economic conditions were critical to the political development of Oley during the mid-nineteenth century and contributed to their steadfast adherence to the Democratic Party.

[76] Pendleton, *Oley Valley Heritage: The Colonial Years*, 149.

Chapter 2

Oley's Democratic Roots and the 1860 Presidential Campaign

The Democratic Party played a central role in Oley Township and Berks County's antebellum politics. By 1860, this allegiance was out of step with the rest of the state. In southeastern Pennsylvania, the Republican Party had already made deep inroads in a region that had once enjoyed a Democratic majority. While the Democratic Party was, as one scholar observed, "…reduced to a minority throughout the North, and in several states all but obliterated," Berks County remained a steadfast "Gibraltar of the Democracy."[1] Furthermore, there existed a powerful Southern-oriented political force within the township and county. Oley and Berks voters chose Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge over Northern Democrat Stephen A. Douglas and Republican Abraham Lincoln in 1860 for three major reasons: their traditional adherence to the Democratic Party, their close connections with James Buchanan and belief in his political system, and because of fears about the Republican Party. The reasons for their political opposition in 1860 were not chiefly rooted in ideology, but because of partisan political loyalties. Indeed, Oley Township and Berks County reveal the tenacious perseverance of the Northern Democracy. According to historian Joel Silbey, the Democratic Party—despite their national woes in the 1850s and 1860s—"…never surrendered its beliefs or gave up the fight to recapture enough votes from the Republicans to enable it to regain the dominance it had achieved in American politics in the period before the realignment of 1854-1860."[2]

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[1] Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 149.

[2] Joel Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868*, ed. Harold M. Hyman, The Norton Essays in American History (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), xi.

The national Democratic Party faced several problems by 1860. One of the few remaining "bonds of Union" dating back to the early republic, it was riddled with sectional and intra-party strife. The Democrats were particularly vulnerable to division because they were a national party. Their larger membership was far more diverse and less sectional than the Whigs; members were from the North, South, and Midwest and brought different ideologies which were irreconcilable with one another, particularly on the slavery issue. Forming a national consensus was difficult in optimal circumstances, but the increasing number of national crises made reconciliation between the different branches of the Democratic Party an extremely difficult task for party leaders.

The process of political nationalization was well underway by the mid-nineteenth century, but Americans were far more interested in state and local politics than national races or events. The weekly newspapers in Berks County devoted more coverage to the state and local politics than their national politics. Some events were indelibly stamped on the national conscience and broadcasted through newspapers, pamphlets, and political organizations of the day. The ongoing battles between Jayhawkers and Bushwhackers in Kansas during the 1850s, Charles Sumner's caning in the United States Congress in 1856, the Dred Scott decision in 1857, John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, and many other events elevated political consciousness to new levels. Others gained publicity, but were seen as having little effect on the nation. The Nashville Convention of 1850 was noticed in the *Reading Gazette and Democrat* but they concluded that, "…[the Convention] commands very little attention, and its proceedings excite little or no interest anywhere. It may be regarded as a dead failure."[3] Politics remained a personal and local affair, where leading state and county figures fought one another for power and

[3] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Nashville Convention," June 8, 1850, Historical Society of Berks County, microfilm.

authority in the parties and branches of state government. There were legitimate concerns about local and state politics in the young republic. The state and county governments had stronger authority and influence over their constituents than the federal government. Each state's legislation had far greater impact on the localities through taxes, tariffs, public construction, and other local interests.

As part of the county's 1st election district, Oley Township joined with Reading and several other neighboring townships.[4] Nevertheless, voters did not have to journey into the city in order to cast their ballots. Beginning in 1814, Oley's residents traveled to Jacob Kemp's public house to exercise their right to vote.[5] This election marked the first time that Oley' citizens were able to vote within their own district. Prior to 1814, residents traveled to other polling places in order to cast their votes. Conveniently located one mile south of Oley on the road to the Yellow House Hotel, this centrally located and easily accessible inn served as the township's voting place throughout the nineteenth century. In the polling booths at Jacob Kemp's public house, Oley mandated its place as one of the county's greatest Democratic strongholds throughout the nineteenth century.

During the hotly debated races, rival newspapers and party supporters battled to make certain that their respective party platforms were heard throughout their region. Under the political conditions of the mid-nineteenth century, politicians depended on their party's political machinery for nomination and election. Candidates were not expected to actively campaign for office or nominations and depended upon partisan newspapers, editors, local clubs, and state and local politicians to spread their positions and lay the foundations of a winning contest. By 1860,

[4] This district included: Reading, Alsace, Bern, Brecknock, Caernarvon, Cumru, Exeter, Heidelberg, Maidencreek, Oley, Robeson, and Ruscombmanor Towships. See Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 50.

[5] Montgomery, *Political Hand-Book*, 51.

"The quadrennial choosing of a president was accomplished in the context of a ritualized 'campaign,' which began in the summer with the national conventions and ended in November with the election."[6] In Berks County, editor J. Lawrence Getz and the *Reading Gazette and Democrat* rallied Democratic support in the county and acted as the preferred paper of the majority party. Other smaller papers circulated in the county, but they never rivaled Getz's weekly circulation. Over twenty years of sustained Democratic leadership in the county, Getz became the leading political power player in Berks County. Jacob Knabb's *Berks and Schuylkill Journal* raised the opposition's banner. For years, the paper was a leading Whig voice in the region, but sided with the Republican platform in the 1850s. Getz and Knabb were lifelong residents of Berks County and deeply entrenched in the local political leadership. The dueling papers desperately battled for votes in the hard fought Civil War presidential campaigns and vocalized their subscribers' concerns.

The Democratic Party's influence in Berks County and Oley Township was not an aberration. Andrew Jackson's rising national popularity was reflected in Oley's election returns. In 1828, Jackson earned one hundred and thirty-nine votes from the township compared to John Quincy Adams' thirty-nine votes.[7] The trend continued in 1832. Jackson received one hundred and five votes to William Wirt's twenty-four supporters on the anti-Masonic platform; Henry Clay and the rising Whigs did not receive any support.[8] Martin Van Buren, Jackson's first Secretary of State and second term Vice-President, garnered one hundred twenty-two votes from Oley in 1836 compared to fifty votes for Whig William H. Harrison.[9] The Democrats faltered in

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[6] David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: America Before the Civil War, 1848-1861*, completed and ed. by Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011), 407.

[7] Montgomery, *Political Hand-Book*, 68.

[8] Ibid.

the 1840 presidential contest. Van Buren lost to Harrison in their rematch, but Democratic support in Oley remained strong. One hundred and eighty-two votes went to Van Buren, while one hundred and twelve voters supported the Whigs.[10] In 1844, the Democrats worked to regain lost ground. During James K. Polk's campaign for the presidency, Oley Democrats increased their majority and cast two hundred and three ballots for Polk, compared to only one hundred and three votes for Clay, his final unsuccessful bid for the presidency.[11]

Presidential politics began to trend toward Whig candidates in the mid-1840s, but Oley's citizens continued to sustain the Democratic Party. During Zachary Taylor's campaign for the White House in 1848, Oley supported Democrat Lewis Cass and cast two hundred and eighteen votes versus one hundred and nineteen for Taylor.[12] Cass held a strong position within the national Democratic Party and parried efforts by James Buchanan and others to claim the nomination. Although the Berks County Democrats initially supported Buchanan, they rallied behind Cass and backed his presidential campaign. The first non-incumbent Democrat to lose a presidential election, Cass advocated popular sovereignty and firmly established it in the Democratic platform.[13] The Compromise of 1850 garnered much local attention and locals believed that the Northern abolitionists were responsible for rising sectional tensions.[14] Fearing backsliding within their ranks, the *Gazette and Democrat* encouraged Democrats to the polls in early 1851 saying, "[the Whigs believe that]…Pennsylvania is again to be the battleground of the

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[9] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 68.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 69.

[13] Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 72.

[14] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Compromise," August 24, 1850, Historical Society of Berks County, microfilm.

Union, and are shaping their movements accordingly."[15] National tensions rose and Berks County Democrats determined to uncover the problem's source. A Democratic editorial dated April 12, 1851 concluded,

> The Northern abolitionists are another class of the one-idea fanatics whose idiosyncrasies we have endeavored to describe. Their brains are completely filled with abstract ideas of liberty—which is undoubtedly one of the most captivating fancies which the human mind can contemplate…they can see, hear, or conceive of nothing which might have a tendency to make them proceed with caution…[16]

By the 1852 election, the Democratic Party's fortune began to ascend again. Their increasing political majorities pushed the Whig Party toward extinction and sent many of its former members into the new Republican Party by the late 1850s. Buchanan's influence reared its head at Pennsylvania's Democratic Convention, before General Franklin Pierce captured the nomination and Berks County's support.[17] In a campaign between Pierce and Winfield Scott, Oley provided one hundred and ninety-two votes for Pierce and one hundred and twelve votes for Scott.[18] Berks Democrats were ecstatic about the victory, reveling that, "Pennsylvania is again true to her ancient faith…"[19]

At the 1856 Democratic National Convention, native Pennsylvanian James Buchanan captured the Democratic nomination and the commonwealth's voters came out in large numbers to elect their fellow citizen to the nation's highest office. Pennsylvania was a key part of national election strategies. As a swing state, its twenty-seven electoral votes swung presidential elections

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[15] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Next Presidential Election," March 16, 1851. Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[16] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Phases of Fanaticism," April 12, 1851, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[17] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Presidential Question," June 7, 1851, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[18] Montgomery, *Political Hand-Book*, 69.

[19] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, November 5, 1852, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

between the Democrats and Republicans. Democratic leaders in Berks County warned their supporters about the Republican menace,

> The evil which [Henry Clay] then called 'Abolitionism,' but which now cloaks itself under the specious name 'Republicanism' is no longer an imaginary danger. We see a party, representing only sixteen of the thirty-one United States, and all of them Northern States, nominating candidates for President and Vice President from their own section, and upon a platform repugnant to what the fifteen Southern States believe to be their constitutional rights under the Federal Government…[20]

Historian David Potter noted that, "The contest [in Pennsylvania] was fierce and desperate, and very much in doubt until the Democrats won the state election in November. Thereafter, Buchanan's election seemed assured." The mounting uncertainty among local Democrats before the election appeared to be unfounded. Democratic headlines exclaimed, "Buchanan and Breckinridge Elected!! The Constitution and the Union Sustained!!" before noting that "The great national struggle is over…"[21] Buchanan collected two hundred and forty-nine votes in the township, compared to sixty nine votes for American Party candidate Millard Fillmore and only twenty votes for the inaugural Republican Party presidential candidate John C. Fremont.[22] Oley and Berks Democrats sighed in relief that the crisis had been averted. Thus, Oley remained a strongly Democratic stronghold in presidential elections prior to the Civil War. They believed that the 1860 contest would bring similar results and maintain a Democrat in the White House.

The Berks County Democratic Party also dominated at the local level. Pennsylvania's state elections were held earlier than their federal contests. Regularly scheduled state elections were conducted on the second Tuesday of October.[23] The October elections acted as bellwethers

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[20] *Reading Gazette and Democrat,* "Is the Union in Danger?" July 12, 1856, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading PA, microfilm.

[21] *Reading Gazette and Democrat,* "Buchanan and Breckinridge Elected!! The Constitution and the Union Sustained!!" November 8, 1856, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[22] Montgomery, *Political Hand-Book*, 69.

for the upcoming November elections. The victorious party pointed to the winning tallies as proof of their triumph and used them to validate their platform. Defeats provoked the losing side to increase the intensity of their campaigning and rally local support for the national elections through the party apparatus. Losing parties rarely adjusted their platform to fit the national outlook. Instead, they moved to bring the population closer to their views.

Many legislative campaigns, federal, state, and local, were fought which shaped the commonwealth's history, making that source of Oley's political history a fascinating and complex part of its political picture. Their history is worthy of its own historical analysis. Each one of them contained its own history and the political motivations behind it, which resulted in contests swinging to one party or another. One example demonstrated the changing electoral boundaries which Oley took part in. In the first half of the nineteenth century alone, Berks County included five different federal congressional districts. Redistricting adjusted the districts to keep in proportion with the state's representation in Congress. In 1802, Berks County, together with Chester and Lancaster Counties, formed the 3rd Congressional District and chose three representatives in each election. In 1812, Berks became part of the 7th Congressional District with Schuylkill County, electing one representative. By 1822, Lehigh County was added to the 7th District and two representatives were elected between the three counties. In 1832, Berks encompassed the entire 9th District and designated one representative. In 1843, the district remained the same size, but was renumbered from the 9th District to the 8th District. The 8th Congressional District remained consistent through the end of the nineteenth century.[24]

In order to offset the challenges of following the shifting legislative districts and legislators, a simpler correlation can be drawn between Oley's gubernatorial and presidential

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[23] According to the 1790 Pennsylvania State Constitution.

[24] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 10.

voting records. As the state's executive, the governor held a strong position within the Commonwealth and played a central role in state party leadership. Although they were forced to provide their own housing in Harrisburg until 1858, governors had close proximity to state legislators in Harrisburg and federal legislators in Washington, D.C. Both positions were in the executive branch and chosen by direct popular votes, although the President was formally elected through the Electoral College. Their similarities make comparing the results easy to compare and contrast during the nineteenth century elections.

The Republican Party was virtually non-existent in the county. Although the Democratic margins often approached two to one majorities in the township, roughly thirty percent of the population voted for the fledgling Republican Party. The anti-slavery positions of the Republican Party clearly resonated with some Oley citizens. Slavery existed in the Oley Valley during the eighteenth century and at least five local families owned African slaves into the early nineteenth century.[25] Led by patriarch Daniel Y. Bertolet, Oley's Bertolet families changed their political affiliation to the Republican Party in response to the slavery issue.[26] The institution never took deep roots in Oley; slavery was strongly discouraged by the local Quakers and countercultural to the many Pennsylvania Germans living in Oley. Any remaining proslavery sentiments were erased by the commonwealth's abolition legislation in 1787. Other voters, mainly former Whigs, saw the Democratic Party as the source of the nation's troubles and sought to move the nation in another direction. But these concerns were not enough to cause a mass exodus from the Democratic Party and bring the Republicans to a strong position in the Oley electorate. The Democrats firmly remained in the majority.

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[25] Bertolet, *Fragments of the Past*, 103.

[26] Croll, *Annals of the Oley Valley*, 58-9.

A look at Oley's gubernatorial history helps to explain the political trends in the Oley at the state level and the depths of Democratic allegiances. The complete political picture of the township would include historic details from every election, federal, state, county, and township, dating back to its Oley's formation as a separate entity of Philadelphia County in 1740. However, the similarities between the federal and state executive elections bear many inherent resemblances which allow for historical connections to be observed and analyzed.

Beginning in 1829, the gubernatorial election demonstrated the similarities and dissimilarities taking place in the township. The 1829 gubernatorial contest featured an extremely close contest in Oley. George Wolf, the Democratic candidate, narrowly edged Joseph Ritner, the Anti-Masonic candidate in a final tally of one hundred and twelve votes to one hundred and eight.[27] Wolf won the gubernatorial race, but the two opponents battled once again for the governorship in 1832. This time, Ritner did even better in Oley, nearly doubling the Democratic vote in a final tally of one hundred and twenty-seven votes to sixty four.[28] In 1835, Governor Wolf and Ritner were joined by Henry Muhlenberg, who captured the Democratic nomination from the sitting incumbent. Wolf was forced to run as an independent Democrat with Whig support in order to maintain his seat in government. In Oley, the returns demonstrated the confusion facing the state at large. Ritner earned one hundred and twenty four votes and was elected governor, becoming the state's only Anti-Masonic governor; Muhlenberg earned eighty-one votes and Wolf finished with fifty-nine supporters in Oley.[29] In the 1838 campaign, Ritner's support in Oley collapsed; the Governor was defeated in the township and state by Democratic

[27] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 63.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

nominee David R. Porter, one hundred and eighty-four votes to eighty four votes.[30] This election marked a decisive turning point in Pennsylvania and Oley politics, as the Anti-Masons never assumed their former popularity. The Buckshot War erupted following a power struggle between the Democrats and Whigs, with the Democratic Party emerging from the controversy more powerful than their political opponents in Pennsylvania.

In the aftermath of the 1838 controversy, Democratic Party support spread throughout the state and manifested itself in the 1841 gubernatorial election. In Oley, the Democrats regained their dominance, with one hundred and ninety-six votes going to Governor Porter and eighty-five voting for Whig candidate John Banks.[31] Under a new state constitution, Porter was forbidden from seeking a third consecutive term in 1844 and the Democratic candidacy fell to Francis R. Shunk. That year marked another Democratic triumph in Oley, with two hundred and twelve voters choosing Shunk over Whig Joseph Markle.[32] The Democrats nominated Shunk again in 1847, this time against Whig James Irwin. Shunk was re-elected and received one hundred and sixty-seven votes to Irwin's eighty-seven supporters in Oley.[33] Unfortunately, the Governor contracted tuberculosis and resigned as governor on July 9, 1848 before succumbing to his illness on July 20. As Pennsylvania Senate Speaker, the governorship passed to Whig William F. Johnston and a special election was conducted in conjunction with other races on October 10, 1848. Johnston narrowly won the race in the closest gubernatorial race in Pennsylvania's history by defeating Democrat Morris Longstreth by three hundred and five votes.[34] Oley and Berks

[30] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book,* 63.

[31] Ibid., 64.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

County voted overwhelmingly for Longstreth, casting one hundred and eighty four votes compared to one hundred and four ballots in the township and 8,411 to 4,207 in the county.[35]

Following Longstreth's close defeat in 1848, Pennsylvania Democrats turned to William Bigler to restore their gubernatorial position in 1851. As early as May 25, 1850, the *Gazette and Democrat* proclaimed, "…we believe, at this time, that the Democracy of Berks feel a strong partiality for Col. Bigler, and would prefer him to any one now named for the high office of Governor."[36] Bigler enjoyed a wide Democratic majority in Oley, garnering one hundred and ninety-five votes in Oley compared to Governor Johnston's one hundred ballots, on his way to his statewide victory.[37] In 1854, Bigler ran for his second term, but lost to Whig nominee James Pollock. In Oley, two hundred and six voters cast their ballots for Bigler, while only one hundred and five sided with Pollock.[38]

The 1857 contest marked the highest point of Democratic strength in Oley in all of the pre-Civil War gubernatorial races. The margins in Oley were stunning. One hundred and seventy-five voters chose Packer, but only thirty nine cast ballots for Wilmot.[39] William F. Packer carried the state over Republican David Wilmot, the first Republican gubernatorial candidate in state history. While Packer is rarely noted beyond his position as the fourteenth governor of Pennsylvania, his opponent has been featured in numerous Civil War histories. Wilmot gained considerable attention through his political activities in Pennsylvania's Whig, Free Soil, and Republican Parties, but his historical recognition stemmed from presenting a brief

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[35] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 64.

[36] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Gubernatorial.," May 25, 1850, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[37] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 65.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

piece of legislation in Congress as a freshman Pennsylvania representative in 1846. The Wilmot Proviso marked a critical occasion in congressional history, but not for its radical opposition to slavery. Instead, it highlighted the severe political tensions between Northerners and Southerners which manifested themselves in the aftermath of the Mexican War. In the House, representatives argued along sectional lines and not party lines in their quest to pass the provision. "The episode had occurred so suddenly and ended so abortively that its full significance was not perceived until much later. But in that age of fairly strict party discipline, it must have been shocking to see northern Democrats deserting the [Polk] administration…as a solid body."[40] Wilmot's actions in Congress marked one of the first instances of sectional tensions taking place within the Democratic Party.

In light of this electoral overview, questions will undoubtedly rise about the social conditions taking place in the township which brought about the Democratic victory in the township in 1860. Some general observations can be seen which are applicable to Oley. The second major explanation for Breckinridge's majority vote in Oley is rooted in the social structure of the valley, which incubated and encouraged Democratic conditions. They were idyllic Jeffersonian/Jacksonian agrarians living in a time of increasing urbanization and industrialization. Oley citizens were rooted to the land and chiefly concerned with state and local politics. In elections, they allied themselves with other conservative, party-minded national voters. As the national crisis approached desperate levels, their solution was to elect or re-elect Democratic politicians and preserve the Union by defeating the sectional Republican Party. Not everyone voted for the Democrats, but the vast majority powered Democratic influence in Oley for more than thirty years before the Civil War. Once settlers moved into the township, they and their descendants tended to remain in Oley. Due to the limited size of the township and the

[40] Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 23.

increasing land prices, some of Oley's progeny was forced to move into new areas and find new lands for starting their families. Nevertheless, a large percentage of them remained in Oley and passed their ancestral lands on to future generations through inheritance.

Following the firm establishment of a Democratic majority in the Oley Valley, familial pressures between all members manifested themselves in the voting bloc. Women did not have the right to vote and electoral considerations were driven from a patriarchal perspective. Fathers, sons, grandfathers, and uncles shaped the political beliefs of their families. Families in the Oley Valley attempted to pass their political identities to their children by training them in politics. These effects created a hereditary Democratic force in Oley Township which consistently voted for party candidates. This pressure was chiefly caused by the relationships between families in Oley. Families intermarried with one another and this reinforced Democratic loyalties. Politicization was not always dependent on specific issues debated within the party, but hinged on party loyalty itself.[41] This argument can have some difficulties in explanation, as its implementation was done throughout childhood as part of an unspoken politicization process. It was an intensely personal undertaking, but undoubtedly shaped political thought in the Oley Valley. Manifestations can be seen in some of the actions which locals took with the common school system. Politics were strongly discouraged in all schools, but especially in common school systems where fears of state control manifested themselves. Differences in party affiliation between fathers and sons rose in Oley during the nineteenth century, just as they do in contemporary America. But the party bonds remained strongly imbedded in the community and family pressures encouraged loyalty to the Democratic Party.

[41] Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew L. Slap, The North's Civil War (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 32.

Oley Democrats had every reason to feel confident of their political strength in the region as the 1860 presidential campaign approached. Reading served as home of the Pennsylvania's Democratic convention from February 27 to March 1, 1860, bringing Democrats from all corners of the commonwealth and allowing locals to fraternize with the most powerful party leaders in the state. With the October state elections and national elections upcoming in November, the Democrats sought to assert a unified party front against the rising Republican opposition. The previous gubernatorial and presidential elections had gone to the Democrats, with local party leader Buchanan elected to the presidency and William F. Packer elevated to leadership as Pennsylvania's governor. The euphoria of the convention overshadowed the fractures and instability within the party. Democrats believed that they would reassert their positions within the state and national governments at the national party convention, restoring hope in Democratic planks across the country and preserving national union over the divisive Republicans. Under local leader Hiester Clymer's guidance, Berks County's Democrats set out on the national convention trail with optimism.

By late June 1860, the Democratic enthusiasm in Berks County was sharply diminished by the divisions taking place in the national party. In April, the delegates fought at the Democratic National Conventions in Charleston, South Carolina and at Baltimore, Maryland in June. In Charleston, the convention was unable to select a consensus candidate. Following the Charleston debacle, another national convention was scheduled to take place in Baltimore in June, with hopes of finally securing a presidential candidate and unifying the party behind his campaign. Berks sent another delegation to the convention, but this time the results were even more destructive. Many Southern delegates abandoned the convention, leaving the rest to nominate Douglas, and launched their own gathering only a few blocks away. In the face of party

disunity, the Berks delegates struggled to maintain unity within their own ranks. On the first presidential ballot, Clymer and his second, David Fister, cast their ballots for James Guthrie of Kentucky, former Secretary of the Treasury under Franklin Pierce.[42] However, on the second ballot, party division became apparent. Clymer faithfully supported Guthrie, but Fister changed his vote to John C. Breckinridge, the sitting Vice-President.[43] Following Douglas' nomination on the second ballot, a large minority of delegates, including Fister, abandoned the convention hall and nominated Breckinridge as their candidate.[44] Democratic unity collapsed, but supporters still hoped that their candidate would be able to overcome the divisions and unite the party for the sake of the national Union.

The rising intensity of the presidential campaign demonstrated that neither side of the Democratic ticket was willing to abandon their candidate. Interparty tensions increased during the hot summer months. The sharp divisions allowed the second important factor in Oley politics to manifest itself: Buchanan's political influence in the commonwealth. Following the Baltimore convention, the Buchanan Democrats became reinvigorated at Breckinridge's selection as a candidate. Buchanan and his allies quickly moved to drum up support in Pennsylvania during the summer months. While the President was never a candidate during the 1860 campaign, he remained a powerful force among Pennsylvania politicians even as his popularity in the national party deteriorated.

Several things accounted for Buchanan's influence in the area. As a young man, Buchanan became a key player in the early Pennsylvania Democrat movement in the first quarter

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[42] Russell F. Weigley, "The Lincoln Election in Berks: A Survey of Politics during the Election Year 1860." *Historical Review of Berks County* 17, no. 4 (July/Sept. 1952), accessed January 16, 2014, http://www.berkshistory.org/articles/lincoln_election.html.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

of the nineteenth century. His position in the state party rewarded him with political advancement under the Jacksonian spoils system. Historian Peter Knupfer noted, "Throughout [Buchanan's] long career he helped to wield the state party's patronage to reward loyalty and deter dissent."[45] At eighteen, Buchanan moved to Lancaster and helped found the strong Democratic presence in southeastern Pennsylvania. His close proximity to Berks County allowed him to forge close alliances with members of the local party machine even as he moved from one government office to another. From 1832-33, he served as U.S. Minister to Russia under Jackson before becoming a United States Senator from Pennsylvania between 1834 and 1845. Under President James K. Polk, Buchanan served as Secretary of State from 1845-49 and helped oversee the Mexican War. Before becoming President in 1857, Buchanan acted as Ambassador to the United Kingdom in Pierce's administration.

Because he had been a major player in the party's takeover of southeastern Pennsylvania in the 1820s and 1830s, Buchanan was held in high esteem by local Democrats. Based on his political experiences, the spoils system had rewarded him and provided the best way to ensure advancement and political strength. Buchanan found that forging the local Democratic majority depended on organization and loyalty; he taught his followers that the way to ensure Democratic power was to remove disloyal elements and implemented this strategy at all levels within the state and national party. Democrats who challenged the party from within were viewed as traitors. Buchanan Democrats were trained to uncover them and remove them from party leadership. Putting his politics into practice, the President used his power and influence in Pennsylvania to support Vice-President Breckinridge against his old nemesis Douglas. The Illinois Senator and other Northern Democrats successfully waged an insurgent campaign

[45] Peter Knupfer, "James Buchanan, the Election of 1860, and the Demise of Jacksonian Politics," in *James Buchanan and the Political Crisis of the 1850s*, ed. James Birkner, (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1996), 152.

nationally against the Buchanan machine throughout the 1850s but they faltered in Pennsylvania in part because of the President's influence.

The Buchanan-Douglass conflict originally erupted over Kansas' Lecompton Constitution in 1857-58. Douglass and his Northern Democrat allies advocated popular sovereignty against the administration backed pro-slavery document and sided with Republican Congressmen. In 1859 and 1860, Buchanan saw Douglas not only as a threat to the Democratic Party, but also as a threat to the nation's unity.[46] As early as December 1859, the *Gazette and Democrat* praised the Vice-President for his conservative positions, national outlook, and level-headed contributions in the government. "[Breckinridge] is a statesman of comprehensive views, and truly national feelings; and his past course is a guaranty [*sic*]…"[47] Opponents, such as Whig and later Republican Thaddeus Stevens, mounted successful efforts against the Buchanan machine in Lancaster, but the Democratic leader remained a popular figure among rural Pennsylvania Democrats. After he won the White House in 1856, Buchanan's political connections were further strengthened in southeastern Pennsylvania and he retained many campaigning allies in Reading and Berks County.

By the late summer and early fall, the tension in the county reached new boiling points. In July, the Berks Democrats gathered in a last ditch effort to adopt a fusion platform and ticket, to save the party and country from division. Pennsylvania Democrats were horrified at the prospect of Republican officeholders and they used partisan tactics to undermine their opponents. The third major feature of the Oley Democracy centered around their fears about Republicanism. Weekly editorials in local papers blasted Lincoln as a sectionalist and Black

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[46] Peter Knupfer, "James Buchanan, the Election of 1860, and the Demise of Jacksonian Politics," in *James Buchanan and the Political Crisis of the 1850s*, 152.

[47] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Hon. J.C. Breckinridge," December 17, 1859, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

Republican, whose election would entail the destruction of the Constitution and divide the nation.[48] A June 2 editorial epitomized their distain, "A candidate more offensive and hostile to fifteen States of this Union, and more bitterly opposed to the rights which the Constitution guarantees to them, could not have been chosen than Abraham Lincoln."[49] The perceived threat to the Union and Constitution was pervasive among Democrats and weekly editorials and opinions whipped them into action. In order to stop Lincoln, the Berks Democrats adopted the State Central Committee's proposition that they form a fusion ticket for the Democratic Party, commonly known as the Reading Platform.[50] Following a Democratic victory in Pennsylvania, Democratic electors would not be chosen from Breckinridge or Douglas men. Instead, the electors pledged to vote for whichever Democratic nominee defeated Lincoln in the state election.[51] In the aftermath of county party deliberations, the *Gazette and Democrat* came out strongly for the Breckinridge faction on July 7, even though they had already successfully implemented a fusion ticket on county ballots. The Berks Democrats explained the rationale behind their decisions:

> With two Electoral Tickets in the field, and a divided vote, defeat in the State, and (as the result may depend on Pennsylvania) probably in the Union, would be certain. But with upon the terms recommended by the Committee, the victory is within our grasp. The friends of Breckinridge, we are assured, will go heartily into the campaign against the common enemy and be content to let the result determine how the Electoral vote of Pennsylvania shall be cast. It remains to be seen whether the friends of Mr. Douglas will meet them in the same spirit of forbearance and conciliation…But we confess that we are

[48] Weigley, "The Lincoln Election in Berks: A Survey of Politics during the Election Year 1860."

[49] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Lincoln and the 'Higher Law,'" June 2, 1860, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[50] Weigley, "The Lincoln Election in Berks: A Survey of Politics during the Election Year 1860."

[51] Ibid.

> not very hopeful of the co-operation of the leaders of the Douglas wing in this plan of union.[52]

The Breckinridge-Douglas divide had widened during the meetings in Reading. On July 21, the Douglas faction organized a meeting at Schumucher's Hotel in Reading and denounced Breckinridge and his supporters as disloyal members of the party. They preferred to risk the Republicans win the election rather than capitulate and lose the interparty struggle to the Douglas wing of the party in the middle of an ongoing presidential election.[53] Tensions extended beyond the party leaders deliberating in Reading. Nevertheless, the State Democratic Committee's efforts were successful. The Reading Platform was passed and implemented on the county's electoral ballots.

In some rare instances, overly zealous campaigners and supporters resorted to brutal tactics. A campaign pole raised for Lincoln in Exeter Township, bordering Oley, was smashed by neighboring Democrats, eager to intimidate the rising Republican opposition; it was quickly reconstructed by its supporters.[54] In nearly all circumstances, disagreements between the Republicans and Democrats remained argumentative and not violent or destructive. Many party poles were raised throughout the county, a popular way of showing support for a candidate. On August 11, 1860, a Democratic pole was raised in Reading at Ninth and Washington Streets which stood one hundred and four feet high and topped with a flag which read, "For Governor, Henry D. Foster. The Union of the Democratic Party for the sake of the Union."[55] In Boyertown, located just east of Oley near the Berks-Montgomery county line, a local band led a large parade

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[52] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, July 7, 1860, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[53] Weigley, "The Lincoln Election in Berks: A Survey of Politics during the Election Year 1860."

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

of torch-carrying Democrats through the center of town, emblazoned with signs reading, "A Union of hearts, a Union of hands, The Flag of our Union forever," "No Rail Splitters, nor Union splitters," and "We can split our own rails, Abe!"[56]

On September 8, 1860, Douglas visited Reading in an attempt to make inroads in the Democratic county. The trip was part of Douglas' unprecedented campaign across the country. The fusion ticket had been created by Breckinridge supporters in Berks County, but Douglas recognized that encouraging high Democratic turnout benefitted his cause. This would provide him with an opportunity to add Pennsylvania's twenty-seven delegates to his column in the Electoral College, even if Berks County remained stalwartly behind Breckinridge. However, leading Berks Democrats remained faithfully committed to Breckinridge-Lane and were not influenced by the national figure's appearance. On the day of Douglas' arrival, the *Gazette and Democrat* pronounced their loyalty to Breckinridge and concluded,

> If the Democratic State Convention which met in Reading the last of February, had been charged with the selection of candidates for the Presidency and Vice Presidency, there is every reason to believe that it would have selected the very ticket since nominated by the National Democracy at Baltimore. No one who was present at Reading and mingled with the delegates would fail to be aware that at least three-fourths of them preferred Breckinridge to any other candidate for the Presidency…. Breckinridge and Lane are the candidates of Pennsylvania. She would have chosen them if the choice of candidates had been placed on her alone. They represent the principles she has always adhered to, and she will sustain them in their struggle for the right. They are men of the Jackson stamp—frank, manly, and courageous—and the Democracy of the old Keystone will rally around them as they rallied around the Hero of New Orleans in the great fight of 1828.[57]

It is unknown what Douglas thought about his visit to Reading, but the leading Democratic paper in the county made their positions clear. Their allegiances were not with its distinguished visitor. A week later, the paper released its overview of the presidential candidates, without analyzing

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[56] Weigley, "The Lincoln Election in Berks: A Survey of Politics during the Election Year 1860."

[57] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Breckinridge and Lane," September 8, 1860, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

the Republican candidate, and emphasized the differences between Breckinridge and Douglas. They attacked Douglas and his supporters and emphasized the differences,

> There is the Breckinridge wing of the Democratic party, which, upholding the equality of the State, the integrity of property under the Constitution and the right of the people of the Territories to determine the character of their local institutions upon arriving at the proper stage of political maturity, stands where that great national party has always stood and is nearly homogeneous in its character, North and South. Its members are now, as ever, for the Union in its completeness and integrity, and for the Constitution in its strictness and impartial application. And in saying this, everything is said which is needful for their vindication. Then there is the Douglas wing of the Democracy, somewhat anomalous in its character, its Southern adherents being radically pro-slavery, and utterly repudiating the…sovereignty dogma promulgated by their leader, and upheld as the test of Democratic orthodoxy by their Northern allies. Hence this dogma has not about it even the odor of nationality, much less the sanction of Democratic authority.[58]

Although Douglas was nationally seen as the leading Northern Democrat, the editors strongly suggested that Douglas was another sectional candidate, just like the Republicans. But above all, Douglas men were making a sustained effort to resist party authority by continuing to campaign against Breckinridge. Party disloyalty was the most serious sin that one could commit against the state party's apparatus, especially one led and operated by dyed-in-the-wool Buchanan Democrats. In 1850, Getz and his editors outlined an analysis of the threats to the Democratic Party. Living in an age of Democratic ascendency, they did not see the Whigs as their chief threat. Instead, they looked inward and expressed Buchanan Democratic sentiments. "The Democratic party suffers more from the treachery of pretended friends, than it does from the fiercest attacks of open enemies."[59] In 1860, the party revolt had now begun and Berks Democrats were determined to ostracize party rebels and dissenting factions in order to prevent the Republicans from winning seats.

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[58] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Political: A Survey of the Field," September 15, 1860, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[59] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "A Chapter upon Disorganizers," July 27, 1850, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

As in prior campaigns, the state elections on October 9, 1860 were seen by both parties as the forerunner of success in the national contests in November. A strong showing in the state and county races portended either success or failure and brought a swift response from the losing side. For the Democrats, the 1860 gubernatorial race was particularly troubling and propelled them to higher levels of rhetoric to drive out their supporters' votes. The Democratic gubernatorial candidate Henry Foster arrived in Reading on September 26 and campaigned at the Berks County fair for votes.[60] The campaign was a success. His showing in the Oley Township and Berks County demonstrated significant margins and sustained loyalty to the Democrats. Oley supported Foster by a margin of two hundred and twenty-six votes to Republican Andrew G. Curtin's one hundred and sixty-five; as a whole, the county chose Foster over Curtin with 10,318 to 6,833 ballots.[61] However, Reading swung against the Democrats and supported Curtin, 2,077 to 1,862, and the statewide gubernatorial results went to Curtin and the Republicans.[62] The contest set off a flurry of Democratic Party activities in Berks County. Democrats were stunned that Reading had turned against their party and toward the Republicans. Rallies were held throughout the county in order to maximize voter turnout for the presidential election. The October 13 edition of the *Gazette and Democrat* noted,

> We have lost the State—that's a stubborn fact. But there is no little comfort in the reflection that Old Berks has nobly vindicated her ancient renown. She has redeemed herself from the stain that was put upon her two years ago, but the faithlessness of pretended friends, and once more stands before the world a straight-out Democratic county….We have lost much; but Berks has stood firm, and the city of Reading has almost recovered her former credit. Let us be thankful, and take courage for the November battle.[63]

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[60] Weigley, "The Lincoln Election in Berks: A Survey of Politics during the Election Year 1860," accessed January 16, 2014, http://www.berkshistory.org/articles/lincoln_election.html.

[61] Montgomery, *Political-Handbook,* 65.

[62] Ibid.

As the election came closer, fears became more pronounced. Election Day headlines broadcast Democratic desperation. In a headline stretched down the side of the political section, the *Reading Gazette and Democrat* noted,

> "Democrats of Pennsylvania!!! Rush to the rescue of the imperiled Union! Make one more effort to save your country and maintain the Constitution unimpaired! Do not lag behind you brethren in other States! The Democrats of New York, on your North, New Jersey, on your East, Maryland on your South, and Ohio on your West, are making a bold push for victory!! Emulate their example! Arouse! The enemy, confident of success, are sleeping at their posts! A bold stroke may take them by suprise [*sic*] and give us the victory![64]

Months of campaigning and rhetoric in Berks County had passed and the election would now decide the Democrats' place in the federal government. They believed that the fate of the Union and Constitution hinged on the result.

On November 6, 1860, Oley turned out for the presidential election and was presented with a choice between Lincoln and the Republicans, the Breckinridge-oriented fusion ticket, a straight Douglas ticket, and John Bell's American Party ticket. Bell's and Douglas' returns were dismal in the township; not one person voted for Bell and only one person voted for the straight Douglas ticket.[65] Oley voters understood that the race would come down to the fusion ticket and the Republicans. Lincoln and the Republicans made a very strong showing; it was the closest that Oley came to supporting a Republican presidential ticket in the nineteenth century, as well as the first time that Reading supported a Republican candidate for the White House. Nevertheless, the Republicans' well-financed campaign did not overcome the Democratic majority in the county. The fusion ticket received one hundred and ninety-seven votes, compared to the Republican's

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[63] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Glorious Old Berks," October 13, 1860, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[64] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, October 27, 1860, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[65] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 69.

one hundred and fifty seven supporters.[66] Returns showed that voter enthusiasm was down; turnout in the township was significantly lower than during the 1856 campaign. Reading voted for Lincoln with a majority of 2,019 to the fusion ticket's 1,487 ballots, with Douglas receiving seventy-three votes and Bell earning one hundred and twenty-one.[67] In Berks County, the cumulative results were similar. The Reading Platform received 8,846 votes, Lincoln captured 6,709, Douglas brought four hundred and twenty, and Bell finished last with only one hundred and thirty-six.[68] But their efforts did not prevent the Republicans from winning the overall popular vote in Pennsylvania and gaining the coveted Electoral College electors. Lincoln carried Pennsylvania and received the most national electors, making him the first Republican President-elect in the nation's history.

The hard fought presidential campaign had been front page news in Berks County throughout 1860. Now that the election was over, the Democratic majority looked to reconcile their defeat in the presidential campaign. Oley's traditional Democratic allegiances, their close connections with President Buchanan, and their overwhelming desire for Democratic unity led the Breckinridge-fusion ticket to victory in 1860. Nevertheless, national tensions were apparent in the aftermath of Lincoln's victory. Oley and the rest of the nation waited uneasily for reactions to Lincoln's election and hoped that concerns for national unity would be heard throughout the nation, preserving the Union and Constitution and preventing conflict from rising in the United States.

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[66] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 69.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

Chapter 3

Oley's Wartime Partisanship and the 1864 Presidential Campaign

The War of the Rebellion did not alter partisan allegiances in Berks County. Indeed, Northern Democrats continued to rally behind the banner of Democracy. Partisan politics did not stop during the national struggle. Oley Township revealed that while Northern Democrats fiercely opposed Lincoln, they remained loyal partisans who tenaciously worked together for national reunification. Home front morale ebbed and rose according to battlefield and election results, but the township's desire for the restoration of the Union never abated. Oley Township was deeply concerned with the Union and the preservation of the Constitution and their strong party loyalties encouraged opposition to the Republicans during the Civil War.

The wartime Democratic Party has not been extensively researched. Many secondary works, which briefly touch on party politics during the war, reflect historic Republican Party attitudes. The Democratic Party has traditionally been divided into two camps: the War Democrats and the Copperheads. War Democrats believed in the Lincoln's policies and turned to the Republican Party in large number during and after the war. In contrast, the Copperheads (Peace Democrats) are portrayed as staunchly believing that the Southern states should be allowed to go their own way. The Copperheads are believed by most scholars to be the core of Democratic support during the war. Jennifer Weber's *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents* argues that the Copperhead elements approached parity with their War Democrat counterparts by the 1864 presidential election.[1] However, some interpretations have helped reveal the chief concerns of the party during the war effort. The core party membership was concerned with reasserting its power in American politics. Democrats were not content to sit

[1] Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponent's in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.

by and watch as the Republicans led the national reunion. Joel Silbey recognized that after the defeat in 1860, "A tension therefore developed between the desire to win and the internal commitments and partisan imperatives still strong within the organization….The presence of the forces creating that tension during the war and immediately thereafter explain why the Democrats survived after 1860…."[2] The disloyal elements of the Democratic Party, members that supported Lincoln's policies, either abandoned the party or were driven to the Republicans. Those that remained on the Democratic rolls concentrated on Lincoln and Republican policies.

Democratic concerns were rooted in their political ideologies. They were, "…conservatives, not revolutionaries."[3] Berks Democrats were concerned over Lincoln and Republican interpretations of the Constitution. They believed that the President was threatening the rule of law and order in the United States through extralegal activities and the method for correcting these wrongs was to defeat Lincoln in the 1864 campaign. The most frequently raised Democratic concerns focused on suspensions of habeas corpus, declarations of martial law, emancipation of slaves, the institutionalization of state and national drafts and quotas, the new federal income tax, and state and national indebtedness. In the most extreme cases, Democrats believed that the Republican government was conspiring to prolong the war so that abolitionism could be forced upon the South. The solution to Democratic concerns was to restore Democratic leadership to the governorship and presidency. In order to reach those goals, the national Democratic minority looked to pockets of Democratic majorities, such as Oley Township and Berks County, to fuel their efforts and rally support for candidates in hard fought races.

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[2] Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, xii.

[3] Arnold M. Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement, 1861-1865* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), 17.

Despite a national loss in 1860, Berks County Democrats refused to admit that the Republicans had performed better—especially since local returns showed that the Democrats had maintained their traditional dominance. Local Democrats, then, looked inward to understand their failures and resolved to never split the party again. The *Reading Gazette and Democrat* summed up many local attitudes in its post-election analysis, noting that the main cause of defeat was division within party ranks—the "hopeless breach," "…deprived us from the very start of all the prestige of power and left us consciously weak and impotent for any demonstration against the common enemy which could inspire even the most sanguine with confidence."[4]

As the war continued and the 1864 presidential race drew closer, the Democratic Party recognized that the prosecution of the war depended on the election. In nearly four years of fighting, Lincoln had proven deeply committed to the restoration of the Union and vowed that he would continue fighting so long as he remained president. In his first Inaugural Address, Lincoln swore to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. The President believed that his oath authorized him to bring back the Southern states to the Union through any means which he deemed necessary. As commander in chief, this meant that he could also use military force, if necessary, to suppress the rebellion against the Constitution after early peace negotiations had failed. According to his interpretation of the Constitution, President Lincoln believed that he was legally and morally obligated to restore the Union. According to his Democratic opponents, the actions that he took during the war were destructive and prevented the war from ending quickly and sought to defeat him during his re-election campaign. The President was not immune to elections; the Constitution required that the President be re-elected every four years in the November election and there were not any provisions in the Constitution

[4] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Defeated!" November 10, 1863, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

for suspending any elections, even in cases of insurrection. Recognizing this opportunity, Democrats waged hard fought campaigns to win back the White House and governor's seats and reassert control in Congress and the Northern legislatures. The choice between the two parties hinged on the war question and who Northern voters hoped would resolve the conflict. By 1864, a large minority in the North had become dissatisfied with Lincoln's leadership and policies during the war and sought an alternative leader to end the bloodshed quickly.

Although the war brought new challenges, everyday life in the Oley Valley did not stop following the rebellion's outbreak. Farmers continued working their fields, tending their livestock, and maintaining their farms in order to secure profits, along with other businessmen, bankers, and those of various other occupations living in the village. Oley's Lutheran and German Reformed ministers continued teaching and looking after their congregations in the valley. Children were born, members of the community passed away, and funerals were performed in the local cemeteries, each one accompanied by hymns, local folksongs, and spiritual songs in English and Pennsylvania German. In just one example, Dr. Peter G. Bertolet, author of *Fragments of the Past* and leading figure in Oley, passed away on March 8, 1865, and was buried at the Friedens Church cemetery in the village. The Oley Academy and common schools continued educating the township's youth and remained operating throughout the conflict. Nevertheless, the war touched the lives of Oley's inhabitants. Berks County never directly experienced the hard hand of war, like counties in south-central Pennsylvania did during the Gettysburg campaign of 1863. Reading's rail hub and industry would have been a valuable military target for Confederate troops marching in southeastern Pennsylvania. Fortunately for Oley's residents, the closest that Confederate troops ever came to Berks County was Wrightsville, York County, located thirty-five miles to the southwest on the Susquehanna River.

Young men volunteered for the war effort, while others were drafted for service after the conscription legislation was enacted under the Militia Act of 1862 and the Enrollment Act of 1863. Fathers and sons bid farewell to their families and headed off for military camps in Reading, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg to join in the struggle for the Union.

The Oley Valley was a key part of Berks County's war effort on the home front. As a major breadbasket of the county, Oley citizens contributed much of their annual agricultural produce to the Union Army. The valley's mills and markets strained to maintain full production and struggled to meet demands for their goods. Mill owners gathered the valley's agricultural resources and prepared them for sale and distribution. Acquiring enough foodstuffs to feed the growing Northern armies during the war was a massive undertaking in its own right, but fundamental in order to keep the armies in the field and advancing into Confederate territory. Millions of tons of meat, fruit, and grains from the Keystone State were purchased by the federal government for the armies and navy during the conflict, driving food prices high throughout the war. Horses, cattle, mules, pigs, and other livestock were raised in increasing numbers to meet demands and capitalized on profits. Berks County's new infrastructure which had been constructed during the pre-war years would be put to its strongest test. While increased demands were seen as a strong detriment to consumers, producers, like farmers, financially profited from the armies' needs. Their place as a producer helped Oley's farmers achieve a measure of financial stability.

The war brought increasing challenges to the valley farmers beyond working to keep up with demands. Although many advances in farming technology had been accomplished by the mid-nineteenth century, labor remained a key component of farming in the Oley Valley. In the 1840s and 1850s, local free labor diminished as young men emigrated to the Midwest and West

in search of affordable land and Pennsylvania's industries brought higher wages to Berks County. But the influx of immigrants to Pennsylvania during the 1850s was unable to offset farmers' increasing labor demands. As a result, a general labor shortage swept the region. Farming brought many young men to the valley who worked as hired hands. Sometimes they were only seasonal workers, brought in for help during planting or harvesting seasons. However, in many cases, the field hands working on the valley's largest properties and lived with the farmers throughout the year, forging intimate friendships with their employers and families as they toiled side by side in the fields planting, harvesting, and husbanding livestock.

In 1850, the best harvest hands in Pennsylvania were paid between seventy-five cents and one dollar per day; working from sunrise to sunset. They were expected to mow one and a quarter acres of hay or cradle two acres of wheat per day.[5] By the late 1850s, farm wages had risen sharply. Cradlers were now paid wages of $1.50 to $2.00 per day; expert mowers commanded $1.00 to $1.50 per day.[6] Annual hired hand wages averaged between $150 and $200.[7] Following the outbreak of war, the military brought increased pressure on the farmers and directly competed with them for farm hands. In 1862, the editor of Pennsylvania's *Farmer and Gardener* noted that before the war had begun, a shortage had developed in Pennsylvania which threatened their ability to maintain agricultural production. The young men were among the most likely candidates to volunteer for service or be drafted to fill the state's draft quotas, further contracting an already small labor supply. In many parts of rural Pennsylvania, three-fourths of

[5] Stevenson W. Fletcher, *Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, 1840-1940* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Museum and Commission, 1955), 77.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

the young men volunteered for the army or were drafted.[8] The editor lamented that, "The withdrawal of nearly a hundred and eighty thousand able-bodied men from our state, is a subject for most serious thought."[9] The only solution to the farm crisis would be to increase mechanization: "Those who have used the flail must secure the thresher; the scythe must give way to the reaper. The horse-power must do the work of the men."[10] Because of their early adoption of mechanized implements, Oley was spared some of the costs associated with mechanization. But by 1863, farm labor problems had become even more acute. Another Pennsylvania farm journal noted, "Complaints of the scarcity of laborers in all the manufacturing departments reach us daily….The great abundance of money, the readiness with which workmen of all classes find employment in manufacturing establishments, have only added to the difficulties which farmers will shortly experience."[11] Oley's farmers, although they were the most prosperous in the county, could not match wages with larger, neighboring industries when they competed for free labor in the county.

The valley's local industry was greatly impacted by the war. In contrast to the farming community, Oley's pockets of industry were harmed as larger urban industries signed lucrative government contracts to produce cannons, ammunition, and firearms. The local industrialists did not possess the means to mass produce for the military and were dependent on local production in order to survive. The Oley Furnace, operated north of the village by William Clymer & Company, worked nonstop to maintain charcoal production for the valley's consumption. In *Annals of the Oley Valley*, D. K. Hoch offered his firsthand experiences as a young boy

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[8] Fletcher, *Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life*, 78.

[9] Ibid., 77.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

witnessing the furnace's operation during the Civil War years. As a boy, Hoch marveled at the day to day workings of the furnace. The furnace families lived in stone cottages near their workplace and labored from early in the morning to the evenings, gathering firewood from the Oley Hills and carrying it down to the furnace below for burning. The Rissmiller family worked preparing the firewood. Hoch recalled:

> The father would stoop, extending both arms beneath a pile of cord wood and with a dexterous movement transfer an almost unbelievable amount of wood to the sled. A daughter would then lead the horse to the hearth, while another daughter would bring back an empty sled. A son unloaded the wood and set it on the hearth as expertly as his father loaded it on the sled.[12]

After the charcoal had been prepared, workmen at the furnace worked day and night to keep the fires burning. On each Sundays, the furnace families would travel south to churches in the village. Hoch recalled, "I said that the furnace workers were an interesting community. They were contented and happy. Labor troubles did not vex them. They were not pleasure mad. Their amusements were simple and most of them were deeply religious."[13] The Oley Furnace continued making charcoal and other products until about 1884, when it was demolished.[14] The Oley Forge, located at Spangsville did not emerge from the war unscathed either and only survived until 1870.[15] Industry in Reading and other areas made local operations obsolete; they could no longer keep up with the massive scale of industrialization which the war had initiated in the county and were forced to close their doors less than twenty years after the war was over.

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[12] Croll, *Annals of the Oley Valley*, 106.

[13] Ibid., 106-7.

[14] Ibid., 106.

[15] Morton L. Montgomery, "Early Furnaces and Forges of Berks County, Pennsylvania," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 8, no. 1 (March 1884): 66, accessed January 14, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20084640.

Pennsylvania brought three hundred and sixty thousand enlistments for service in the War for the Union. Thousands of soldiers answered Lincoln's call for seventy-five thousand volunteers to suppress the rebellion. As the war dragged on, the North turned to conscription as a way to maintain the massive armies in the field. Because of the complex system of volunteers, conscripts, exemptions, and re-enlistments, determining precisely how many Oley men served in the Union army is a difficult task which has never been finished. Likely, this goal will never be fully completed. Cemetery records of soldiers buried in the township and draft notices in local newspapers are the best source of determining which men served in the Union army. One hundred Civil War veterans are buried in Oley's cemeteries, ranging from large burial grounds at the Oley and Spangsville churches to private cemeteries located on family farmland.[16] By comparing county and family records with soldiers' names, some of the men can be positively identified as living in the valley during the Civil War period. Nevertheless, this method has many weaknesses. Some of the young soldiers who were born and raised in the Oley moved to other areas of Pennsylvania or beyond to other states after the war was over, scattering them in different counties and states. Others moved to the valley after the war was over and were buried in the cemeteries.

Another key factor in determining who was living in the township during the war depends upon newspaper conscription records. The Militia Act of July 17, 1862 authorized states to begin military conscription in areas which did not meet volunteer quotas based on population. Oley's first experience with the quota system occurred on September 27, 1862. The township was tasked with providing sixty-two men for service, but failed to meet the military's demands.[17]

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[16] See Appendix B.

[17] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, September 27, 1862, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

On October 25, sixty men from the township were drafted and ordered to report for duty in the Union armies.[18] When this tactic failed to provide adequate manpower, the Enrollment Act of 1863 was passed by the United States Congress and brought the first national conscription legislation to the United States. The first formal draft class for Berks County was completed on August 29, 1863 and published in local newspapers; one hundred and seventy-nine men aged twenty to forty-five were enrolled from Oley Township and fifty-four men were selected for service.[19] However, not all of the selected men actually joined the military. Thus, precisely counting the number of Oley soldiers remains an elusive task for the historian, even in an area which is limited in scope by township boundaries and a small population.

Oley's soldiers began an extensive correspondence with family and friends in Pennsylvania after entering the service. The surviving letters remain predominantly in private family collections of Oley descendants. Nevertheless, a few primary sources have found ways to local historical societies and museums. Looking at a few samplings of their letters provides some insight into their lives on the battlefront and their interest in affairs going on at home. Although Oley remained strongly Democratic, they also were committed to fighting for the Union.

In a letter from April 8, 1862 from Fortress Monroe, Hampton, Virginia, Private Mark L. Deturck, Battery M., 5th United States Artillery, described military life in a letter bound for Oley. The young private revealed some of his military experiences and motivations to Ephraim Kauffman, a neighbor and member of one of Oley's most prominent families. Both families had deep ties within the valley and lived only a few miles apart from one another for more than one hundred years. Although the valley native had already been in the service for a few months,

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[18] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Draft in Berks County: Complete List of Drafted Men," October 25, 1862, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[19] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, September 5, 1863, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

Deturck reassured Kauffman that, "I'm well at the present and I hope that you are the same. Further I will let you know that I like it very well yet."[20] Deturck proceeded to detail some of the sights and events which his unit had witnessed and taken part in. The young soldier described that, "…the rebels burned hampton [*sic*] about four hundred houses you can't see nothing but walls and chimneys…"[21] The fighting for Yorktown began about nine miles in front of his position and Deturck expressed to Kauffman that he wished he could begin fighting the Rebels at Norfolk as soon as possible.[22] "…if we do, I [will] kill every damn rebel I can get. I wish I could get Jeff Davis."[23] In his closing, Deturck expressed wishes that his friend in Oley, "Give my best respects to all the girls around you."[24] Deturck expressed many of the sympathies felt across the nation. He was eager to kill Confederates, even though the regiment had never been in battle before, but was also deeply concerned with his reputation among the young women at home in Oley. As a committed, but green volunteer, Deturck was keen to crush the rebellion as quickly as possible and return home. Nevertheless, his zeal in the army would be tempered by a long Civil War career marked by combat throughout the Virginia theater of conflict.

In March 1863, another letter arrived at Ephraim Kauffman's home, this time from Private William R. Fisher of Company K, 151st Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. As a nine-month regiment recruited in September 1862, many of the men in the 151st Pennsylvania had joined in order to secure the state's $200 bonus payment as part of their enlistment.[25] A large

[20] Mark L Deturck to Ephraim Kauffman, April 8, 1862. Author's collection

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

number of them were from Berks County; Companies E, G, H, K, and I were organized from Berks County, with Company K mostly coming from just north of Oley in Longswamp Township. Around sixty teachers and former educators joined the ranks, causing the unit to be nicknamed "The Schoolteachers' Regiment."[26] The majority of soldiers, however, heralded from Berks County's rural farming communities. As with the Deturck's, the Fisher family had a long history in Oley and were closely connected with their Kauffman neighbors. Although attached to the Army of the Potomac in the spring of 1863, the 151st had not yet been through its baptism of fire. Nevertheless, Fisher believed that a great confrontation with the Army of Northern Virginia was coming soon:

> We are now under marching orders, to leave at any moment we are called uppon [*sic*]. A Great Battle is soon expected and we expect to take part in it, the Right wing of the army is now moveing [*sic*] and if the weather does not make a stop in it, you may soon expect to hear of the greatest battle ever fought. There will be at least 150 thousands of our troops moved forwards and the men can hardly wait to get into action as we are all ready to put down Rebbelion [*sic*] or die in the battle field. Should we not succeed or fall in battle we will at least have the honor of being soldiers in defence of our country's flag or which our friends can boast when we are gone.[27]

Fisher would soon be proven right, but his prophecy was delayed by four months. In May 1863, the Chancellorsville campaign was fought in central Virginia's wilderness, but the 151st Pennsylvania again missed combat. However, in their home state, Fisher and the rest of the 151st fought on the first day at Gettysburg, July 1, 1863. Although the regiment had never experienced combat, the men gave an excellent account for themselves and Berks County. Fighting alongside the famed Iron Brigade in defense of their home state, the 151st Pennsylvania suffered three

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[25] Kerry Lanza, "One Moment of Glory: 151st Pennsylvania Volunteers, With Five Berks Companies, Write History at Gettysburg," Historical Society of Berks County, accessed January 30, 2014, http://www.berkshistory.org/articles/civil2.html.

[26] Michael A. Dreese, *Like Ripe Apples in a Storm: The 151st Pennsylvania Volunteers at Gettysburg*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2000), 153.

[27] William R. Fisher to Ephraim Kauffman, March 1863, author's collection.

hundred and thirty-seven casualties out of four hundred and sixty-seven men brought into battle.[28] After their harrowing experience at Gettysburg, Fisher escaped unharmed and mustered out of the service with the rest of his regiment on July 27, 1863.[29] Undoubtedly, Fisher shared his stories and experiences with Kauffman and other neighbors following his return to Oley.

Ephraim Kauffman would have his own close encounter with military service. During Berks County's largest enrollment and draft on August 29, 1863, Kauffman was selected from among one hundred and seventy-five other Oley men along with fifty-three other citizens from Oley less than three weeks after his twenty-fifth birthday.[30] However, Kauffman never fought in the war. The events and reasons behind this remain elusive. The Kauffman family was financially secure in the 1860s and it is possible that his family paid a commutation fee so that their son would not have to serve in the military. It is also possible that his found a substitute that was willing and able to take his place in the service. Nevertheless, these alternative possibilities remain speculative without accurate documentation from the Kauffman family records.

Although Oley soldiers were serving throughout the eastern theatre of the Civil War, this should not suggest that Democratic politics in Oley and Berks County stopped following the 1860 campaigns. As the records from the opposing county newspapers demonstrate, the battles between Republicans and Democrats were fiercely challenged with each contest. Back and forth editorials denounced the opposing side as unpatriotic, unconstitutional, and extended into accusations of treason and destruction of the national Union through sectionalism or party politics. With no challengers fracturing the party from within and united by a growing

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[28] Lanza, "One Moment of Glory: 151st Pennsylvania Volunteers, With Five Berks Companies, Write History at Gettysburg."

[29] Ibid.

[30] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Draft in Berks County," September 5, 1863, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

satisfaction with Lincoln's policies, the Democrats mounted strong efforts to retake the governorship and the White House.

The Southern states' secession movement had a rallying effect in Berks County. Partisan politics were set aside for the time being and concerted efforts were made to support President Lincoln and his administration's prosecution of the war from Washington. Although still stinging from their November defeat, the Berks Democrats adopted a reconciliatory tone with Lincoln and increasingly denounced Southerners for their rebellion against the Union. While the local Republicans were reveling in Lincoln's budding presidency, the *Gazette and Democrat* moderately praised Lincoln's inaugural address: "Its tone, we confess, is pacific and friendly toward the South—more than we anticipated—but yet it falls far short of public expectation, in that it fails to speak of the condition of the country as the President actually finds it, but, presents it, rather, as he would wish it to be."[31] From their perspective, Lincoln was acting naively and failing to recognize that the nation had already torn itself apart following his election. In a following editorial on March 16, 1861, the local tone exhibited more trust in Lincoln's ability to thwart the Republican's abolitionist wing's ambitions. The paper concluded that,

> The vigorous coercive measures against the South, which were foretold, as sure to follow the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, have been abandoned, if they were ever projected; and we now find the Republicans in power ready and willing to go even farther than was ever contemplated by Mr. Buchanan, in the pacific policy he so wisely marked out.[32]

By the end of March, it was becoming clear to many in the Northern states that peaceful reconciliation, possibly through a constitutional amendment, was becoming far less likely than armed conflict against the South. The nation's fears were soon realized. Ft. Sumter, South

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[31] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Inaugural," March 9, 1861, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[32] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Lincoln Yields," March 16, 1861, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

Carolina was bombarded in the second week of April and the county prepared for war. Both papers led the county in an outburst of patriotism and anger at the Southern attack. The *Gazette and Democrat* wrote,

> The dreadful evil that all true patriots have apprehended, and striven to prevent, is now upon us. By the deliberate act of the rebellious States that have set up a government hostile to the Union to which their obedience is lawfully due, the first act in the bloody drama of fraternal war has opened, and the two sections of our once united, happy and prosperous country and now arrayed against each other in a deadly feud. The forces of the United States, in rightful and peaceable possession of the fortress belonging to the nation, have been wantonly attacked, its flag shot down and dishonored, and its property seized by violence. […] It may be though, on the one hand, that the party now at the head of the Government has been slow to offer a compromise broad enough to meet the emergency, it must be remembered on the other, that the people who we sought to conciliate have evinced no disposition to accept any proposals, however liberal, but have from the first, declared, that their determination to renounce and resist the authority of the Federal Government was fixed, final, and irrevocable.[33]

Support remained high throughout 1861 and early 1862. Some tepid opposition broke out against controversial Republican legislation. Name-calling became part of the local lexicon, but locals remained supportive of Lincoln. During the summer months of 1861, the Berks Democrats engaged in their own method of crisis politics and moved to distance themselves from former candidate John C. Breckinridge. Local Republicans did not forget Breckinridge's local triumph in 1860 and used it as an epithet against Berks Democrats.[34] In response, Democrats moved to minimize the connection: "Our confidence in Mr. Breckinridge's attachment to the Union is shaken. We say so, much more in sorrow than in anger, but truth compels us to the confession."[35] They never apologized for their support of Breckinridge in 1860 and felt no reason to do so.

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[33] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Our Flag," April 20, 1861, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[34] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "A Breckinridger," September 20, 1862, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

Concerns were increasingly raised about abolitionist pressures on Lincoln and the federal government; July 27, 1862: "The people must be told whether we are fighting for the Union or to abolish slavery. The Union ought to be the sole object of the war. Abolition clamor should be either hushed or disregarded."[36] Roughly one year later, the tone which had colored the early months of the war had evaporated and open hostilities had once again broken out between the two parties, with Lincoln as the focal point of Democratic hatred and opposition. September 27, 1862 brought one of the most emotionally charged issues of the *Gazette and Democrat* of the entire war. The edition highlighted the core arguments brought by Berks Democrats during the War for the Union. The local Democratic press launched an attack on the Emancipation Proclamation as "An Abolition Edict." From Lincoln and his supporters' perspective, the legislations would benefit all sides; the action would encourage slaves to seek freedom, disrupting the Southern economy in the process, and also provide another key step towards abolition. From conservative Democrats' perspective, however, the step was fraught with danger. They believed that the Proclamation was Lincoln's most explicit support for abolitionist legislation and a severe hindrance to ending the war quickly.

> The Proclamation, if this shall be its effect, can do no good. So far from ending the war in ninety days,' as they who urged it allege, it will only tend to prolong the war, as the unconstitutional acts of the last Congress (upon one of which it is founded) have done: — to pervert it from its only justifiable purpose—the maintenance of the Constitution and the preservation of the union—into a war of conquest, subjugation and final extermination: and to render all hopes of peace more remote than ever.[37]

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[35] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Mr. Breckinridge," July 27, 1861, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[36] *Berks Gazette and Democrat*, "A Mistaken Policy," July 27, 1862, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[37] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "An Abolition Edict," September 27, 1862, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

The paper also included a strong denouncement of Lincoln's suspension of *habeas corpus* and warned against the threat to the Constitution.

> The Proclamation of the President, dated the 24th day of September A.D. 1862, is a virtual declaration of Martial Law throughout the Union. […] Comment on this extraordinary stretch of Executive power, is needless. It speaks for itself! But the inquiry is on the lips of millions of American freemen, as true and loyal to their Government as any place-man in Washington or else dare claim to be: '*Do we yet live in a land of liberty, and under the protection of a written Constitution?* [italics included]'[38]

The day's news also brought the first ramifications of the Militia Act to Berks County. The blows were strongly felt in Oley and Berks County, but they would be provided with an opportunity to voice their concerns nationally in the November Congressional elections.

By the end of 1862, the Berks Democrats had become increasingly weary of the conflict and ongoing bloodshed. Victory remained elusive in the East. The only rallying Union victories occurring during the spring Peninsula Campaign outside Richmond, Virginia and the hard fought Maryland Campaign of September. Defeats and setbacks were numerous and dissension was growing in Berks County. Berks County Congressman Sydenham E. Ancona (D) was up for re-election, but locals also beat a Democrats rallying cry for others in Pennsylvania. One unknown Berks Democrat urged supporters to the polls and said, "Is there a Democrat in Berks county, who has not been slandered and insulted by rabid Abolitionists almost every day for the last year, by being called a 'secession sympathizer,' 'traitor, &c.?' Let them remember the ballot-boxes next Tuesday, and answer these insults with their votes!"[39] Ancona was never seriously challenged in the contest. The Democratic Party made gains in the commonwealth contests, demonstrating that their position was still strong in Pennsylvania and denied the Republicans of

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[38] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Martial Law!" September 27, 1862, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading PA, microfilm.

[39] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, October 11, 1862, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

having outright control of Congress. Berks County was also aware that the congressional elections were being eagerly watched in the Confederacy. The *Gazette and Democrat* noted, "…the Union men of the South will take heart at the recent conservative triumphs in the North, is already evident."[40]

Recognizing that the presidential campaign was less than two years away, local leaders began shortening their lists of potential candidates. The Republican Party in Berks County was in favor of Lincoln's policies and his re-nomination campaign was not strongly challenged. They were content to build upon their strength from the 1860 campaign and narrow margins with the Democratic Party as much as possible. The Democrats in the county quickly recognized a potential candidate. Gen. George B. McClellan, a New Jersey Democrat, had been removed from command of the Army of the Potomac by President Lincoln on November 5, 1862. In reply to his removal, the Berks Democratic leaders observed that his removal from army command could prove beneficial to the party in the near future. "But that people will, ere long, call him to higher duties and more exalted honors: and then when his vindication shall be complete, the miserable conspirators who are now exulting in the triumph of their partisan malignity, will hide their heads in shame before the resplendent star of his glory."[41] As a former general-in-chief and commander of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan had been elevated to some of the highest positions in the military. The 'higher duties and more exalted honors' could only mean his elevation to commander-in-chief; Berks County Democrats hoped that he would respond to their calls and campaign for the White House in 1864.

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[40] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Hope in the Ballot-box," November 15, 1862, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[41] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Gen. McClellan's Removal," November 15, 1862, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

The 1863 gubernatorial election in Berks County was an eagerly anticipated precursor to the 1864 presidential campaign. Tensions mounted within the county, partisan rhetoric increased, and extremists found root. In 1861 and 1862, Berks County Democrats had not supported extremist rhetoric. Instead, they insisted "Democrats can give not better evidence of their fidelity to the Union, then in the alacrity with which they have responded to the call of the President for troops to aid him in crushing the rebellion of the South."[42] By 1863, however, radical Ohio Congressman Clement Vallandigham's speeches gained notoriety in the county and his orations were republished in the *Gazette and Democrat*. In their search to find solutions, some leading Berks Democrats turned to the Copperheads, the pro-Confederate faction in the North. Vallandigham proudly accepted the label 'Copperhead,' to such an extent that he wore a lapel pin made from a penny while speaking in public.[43] The Ohioan repeatedly attacked Lincoln in public speeches and advocated allowing the Southern states to leave the Union peacefully, a right which he believed was constitutional. His opposition became so virulent that he was arrested by military authorities and banished to the Confederacy by presidential order on May 19, 1863. Vallandigham's republished speeches were quickly countered by *Berks & Schuylkill Journal* editorials. One attack, out of many which were launched beginning in late 1862, drew direct correlations between Confederates fighting against Union and Democrats resisting them in Berks County.

> The friends of the rebels in our midst, not satisfied with what they have already done to cripple the power of the government and to give aid and comfort to Jeff. Davis, are now banding themselves together in sworn secret organizations, having signs, grips, and pass-words. Openly, they pretend that their object is to support the Constitution. Their secret and true objective is to create a reliable, compact, efficient organization in the North to

[42] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "No Party Now!" May 18, 1861, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[43] Allen C. Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War & Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 229.

> support the cause of the rebels, to force the government into a compromise with traitor, and to resist the raising of any more men to carry on the war.[44]

Republican papers demanded all-or-nothing support for the President and the Union. "Perhaps they have not heard of them—perhaps they approve of them—perhaps they belong to them. In times like these, every citizen must be for or against the Government."[45] Berks County was increasingly becoming dissatisfied with the progress of the war effort and the Lincoln Administration's inability to quickly resolve the conflict. In an editorial titled "Vallandigham's Case," the *Gazette and Democrat* defended the Ohio congressman,

> What was the offence of Mr. Vallandigham? In a free State, in a State not occupied by the foot of an enemy, where all the functions of government are in their normal state, in a Commonwealth not under martial law any more than the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, this man denounced the party in power. He uses, perhaps, violent language, but he used no language in sympathy with rebellion, no language hostile to the maintenance of the Union. In his way, he advocated nothing short of an undivided Union, where sections should be governed by their own municipal laws, without interference from of the sections. His manner may have been offensive, but his purpose was strictly lawful and fair—a purpose that every American freeman, with the Constitution in his hand, can prove to be his *inalienable right*. […] The people see this and feel it. They want the rebellion crushed, the war ended, and the Union restored; but they do not believe that for the achievement of these ends, the sacrifice of their own liberties and the perversion of our Government from a protector of their dearest rights into a harsh, lawless oppressor, is necessary, or should be tolerated.[46]

By the early summer of 1863, Berks Democrats were listening to the most radical elements of the national party, even though they did not agree with all of their ideologies.

Although Gov. Curtin had successfully turned back Confederate invasions of Pennsylvania in 1862 and 1863, the Republican never earned widespread popularity in Oley or Berks County. Reading served as a major rendezvous point for forces during the Gettysburg

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[44] *Berks & Schuylkill Journal*, "Organized Treason in Berks: Sworn Traitors," March 31, 1863, Historical Society of Berks County, microfilm.

[45] *Berks & Schuylkill Journal*, "The Peace Party," March 31, 1863, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[46] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Vallandigham's Case," May 23, 1863, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

campaign, as national and state forces moved to drive back the Rebel invaders. Financial concerns rose over increasing state taxes and the mounting deficits in Harrisburg, built over nearly three years of fighting. Curtin was also identified by Democrats as a close supporter of the President. Both sides were confident of victory but anticipated that the final returns would be very close. As with each prior election, both sides rallied to increase voter turnout and increased campaigns and editorials against the other side. Curtin, running on the Union Party label of the Republican ticket, narrowly defeated Democratic candidate George Woodward in the overall race 269,506 to 254,171.[47] Nevertheless, in Berks County, Woodward dominated the race and capturing 12,627 votes to Curtin's 6,005.[48] In a very close contest, Reading cast 2,158 ballots for Curtin against 2,109 for Woodward. Nevertheless Oley and the rural townships overwhelmingly sided with the Democrats. Oley brought two hundred and eighty-six votes for Woodward, compared to one hundred and twenty-four votes for Curtin.[49]

The October election's results provided evidence that Democrats still had much work to do in the commonwealth, but Democratic strength in the 'Gibraltar of Democracy' was also a warning signal that Republican gains had not been solidified. Republicans in Berks County emphasized the importance of their statewide victory. A November 7, 1863 headline proclaimed, "The 'Abolitionists' have as good as *abolished* [italics included] 'Copperheadism' in the free States. The advocates of slavery and sympathizers with treason are completely routed."[50] The Democratic leadership was particularly bitter with the gubernatorial result and charged Lincoln

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[47] Michael J. Dubin, *Gubernatorial Elections, 1861-1911: The Official Results by State and County* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2003), 465.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 66.

[50] *Berks & Schuylkill Journal*, November 7, 1863, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

and the Republicans with using underhanded tactics to ensure Curtin's re-election. "Power, patronage, money, government and corporation influence, unfair military interference, false professions of Unionism, and downright fraud, have, as might have been feared, proved too much for the people to contend against, unaided by anything save the truth and justice of their cause."[51]

Following the gubernatorial race, Oley and Berks' attention fully turned to the 1864 presidential campaign. The Oley and Berks Democrats whole-heartedly backed McClellan. The General's biography and speeches were republished in the *Gazette and Democrat* and a growing movement encouraged him to enter the contest and accept the party's nomination. McClellan personalized the most important issues which they had vocalized throughout the conflict. First, the New Jersey Democrat steadfastly refused to link the war with slavery and abolitionism; he was willing to restore the Union without abolishing slavery in the United States. Secondly, McClellan was a military commander and Democrats believed that he could quickly dismiss accusations that the party was supporting the Confederacy by campaigning against Republicans. Local papers consistently credited him with victory on the battlefield and attacked Lincoln for removing him from command of the Army of the Potomac. However, while their leaders, delegates, and sentiments were clearly supportive of McClellan, the Berks Democrats were willing to support whichever candidate the Chicago Convention decided to select for the Democratic nomination. A local Democratic editorial on the Chicago Convention advocated,

> Let it boldly avow its determination to thrown Lincoln's proclamation, usurpation and Negro theories to the dogs, and open a platform of peace, reunion and justice, being to contemplate the wants of white men. Let them nominate a white man, not a fossil of the past or memnon [*sic*] of the present, whose marble pulses do not quicken amidst the outrages and usurpations of thee fearful times, and when the work is done let the people

[51] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Election," October 17, 1863, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

> be prepared to accept their choice whoever it may be, and rally for their altars and their homes.[52]

Another Reading Platform was not needed in 1864. The war, Lincoln, and his administration's decisions and actions during the conflict crystalized public opinion and unified conservative Democratic loyalties in Oley Township and Berks County. Local Republicans swiftly responded to McClellan's ticket and compared their sectional composition to the Union/Republican ticket. In a statement mirroring Democratic arguments from the 1860 presidential race, the *Berks and Schuylkill Journal* smugly noted, "The only Constitutional and anti-sectional are Lincoln and Johnson—one of whom hails from Illinois, and the other Tennessee, a slave state."[53] The Democratic ticket was composed of candidates from the loyal states; McClellan resided in New Jersey and vice presidential running mate George H. Pendleton hailed from Ohio.

In order to firmly reclaim Berks for the Democrats, the party returned to tried and true methods which had built their commanding membership. As the race heated up in September and October, Getz's paper once again encouraged high voter turnout and coupled it with sharp editorials and letters to the editor which spoke out against Lincoln and the Republicans. An anonymous letter to the editor in late October posed the question, "Which is the greatest criminal? Lincoln, or the man who is so unfortunate to believe in, and not up to, Lincoln's teachings?"[54] An editorial in the November 5th weekly argued, ""In God's name, how is this cruel war ever to stop if Lincoln is re-elected?"[55] Especially pertinent to the Oley farmers was a

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[52] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Chicago Convention," August 27, 1864, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[53] *Berks and Schuylkill Journal*, "Unconstitutional Candidates," September 3, 1864, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[54] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, October 29, 1864, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[55] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Shall We Vote for Eternal War?" November 5, 1864, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

private letter to the *Gazette and Democrat* entitled, "Vote for Lincoln and Mortgage Your Farm." The unknown author concluded, "Next to the certainty of another draft, to follow the inauguration of Lincoln, should he be elected, is the land tax, now held in suspense, but which will spread over every foot of soil as soon as Congress can be got together to vote for it."[56] Another letter to the editor argued, "How can any laboring man vote for Abraham Lincoln? In the good old Democratic times he was free, happy, and prosperous. […] The price of clothing, food, and fuel has advanced to such a degree that his heart sickens at the prospect held out in the dreary future."[57] The Democrats did not have a monopoly on exorbitant rhetoric from their readers. One morbid author to the *Berks & Schuylkill Journal* suggested a premature ending to the McClellan presidency, should he garner enough votes to win the national election.[58]

With mounting anticipation and concerns, Oley voters retuned to the ballot box at Jacob Kemp's inn on November 8, 1864. The results in the township brought no surprises. Once again, they overwhelmingly sided with the Democrats. Three hundred and one voters sided with the McClellan-Pendleton ticket, expressing their dissatisfaction with Lincoln and his war effort and reasserting a strong Democratic majority in the Oley Valley.[59] Only one hundred and thirty-eight cast their ballots for the President.[60] The county's margins brought similar results. 12,929 voted for McClellan in Berks County, compared with only 6,197 for Lincoln.[61] Reading narrowly sided

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[56] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, November 5, 1864, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[57] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, November 5, 1864, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[58] *Berks and Schuylkill Journal*, "The Fate of McClellan if Elected," November 5, 1864.

[59] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 70.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 70.

with the Republicans, as they had during the 1863 gubernatorial election and the 1860 presidential campaign. Nevertheless, the Democratic majority in the rural townships held firm and carried the county by a margin of more than two to one. Lincoln's deficits in Berks County were not repeated in the rest of Pennsylvania. The Keystone State added twenty-six Electoral College votes in the Republican column and helped re-elect Lincoln for a second term in the White House.

The elections results effectively eliminated resistance to Lincoln and his policies in Berks County. Democrats recognized that Lincoln had received a national mandate for his policies and four more years in office. In the *Berks and Schuylkill Journal*, Republicans rejoiced in their victory. "This verdict is rendered by the PEOPLE, in the exercise of their loyal majesty, and leaves no room for quibbling traitors to doubt the fidelity of the loyal States to the Republicans."[62] They were not concerned with the local returns, where the Democrats had carried the county's popular vote, and looked to the state and national results. In the *Gazette and Democrat*, Democrats recognized the magnitude of their defeat at the polls.
"The great contest between popular freedom and arbitrary power has been fought, and the result is the defeat of the people's cause by a majority so overwhelming as to afford us no consolation in the present and little hope in the future."[63] The editors hypothesized that, "The present policy of the Administration, if adhered to, will *not* end the war or restore the Union, or even *reconstruct* it, within the next four years [italics included]. That policy pursued, the war will end,

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[62] *Berks and Schuylkill Journal*, "The Copperhead Party Annihilated," November 12, 1864, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[63] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Election," November 12, 1864, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

if it ends at all, in separation, and the consequent permanent dissolution of the Union."[64] Local Democrats maintained a close watch on the ongoing peace process, especially rumors of peace talks between the Federal and Confederate governments and the passage of the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution. National politics looked forward to the inauguration in March 1865, the Republican-majority Congress, and the war's resolution under their leadership.

On March 4, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln placed his hand on a Bible and was sworn-in for a second four year term in the White House. Now, with four years of war coming to an end, the new term looked to bring optimism, peace, and final victory before reuniting and reconstructing the nation. The autumn election provided Lincoln with a governing mandate which had eluded him since the 1860 election. Six weeks later, at Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C. on April 14, Lincoln was assassinated and died the following morning. The news spread rapidly across the nation's capital and the halls of government, but not in time for Northern papers to carry the news in their April 15 editions. In Berks County, the news officially arrived the following weekend, April 22, 1865. As in other parts of the nation, the shocking news brought a wave of anger against Booth and deep mourning for the fallen President. Berks Republicans eulogized the slain president and began converting the President's image from a wartime leader, unifier, and liberator into national martyrdom. The *Berks and Schuylkill Journal* described the county's sentiments in its April 22 edition,

> The stores were all closed, business of every kind suspended, and the place wore a Sabbath-like appearance. Every house appeared draped in mourning and emblems of every description gave evidence of the popular grief. Most of the public, and a large number of private buildings of the city were festooned in their entire front with crape and flags were everywhere displayed at half mast and bound in mourning. Minute guns were

[64] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "The Election," November 12, 1864, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

> fired at intervals during the entire day at the Fair ground and elsewhere, from sunrise to sunset.[65]

The *Gazette and Democrat* echoed their political opponents' sentiments, calling Lincoln's assassination "…a horrid tragedy…"[66] In the immediate aftermath of the national calamity, the Berks Democrats recognized that, "At a time like this, political differences sink into nothingness, and every heart that is not dead to the common feelings of humanity, bends in unison with abhorrence of the dastardly act and detestation of the fiendish actor."[67] As the Union military gained an upper hand over the Confederacy and national reunion appeared closer to fruition, Lincoln encouraged reconciliation on kind and un-vengeful terms. Following his assassination in the nation's capital, many Northerners feared that the acts of vengeance would undo his efforts and rekindle partisan actions in the South, dragging the war on and bringing with it untold more casualties and maiming. The most extreme partisans on both sides attacked each other; Republicans were suspicious of Democratic and Southern connections with the assassins and some Democrats applauded Lincoln's murder. Berks Democrats did not approve of the President's death, even though they had been outright opponents of his policies for much of the conflict. Instead they believed, "By the side of the cold corpse of the murdered President, his most implacable political opponent may shed a tear of sincere sorrow for his death and the manner of it. There is no hypocrisy in that."[68] But they also restated their commitment to their party; "Deploring [Lincoln's] murder, does not imply conversion to his governmental policy; and

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[65] *Berks and Schuylkill Journal*, "Wednesday, April 19, 1865: Observances of the Day in Reading," April 22, 1865, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[66] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Assassination of the President," April 22, 1865, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[67] Ibid.

[68] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Partisan Rancor," April 29, 1865, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

this all but the bigoted partisan whose prejudices have destroyed his judgment will readily understand."[69] The outpouring of national grief did not mean that the 'Gibraltar of the Democracy' immediately reversed its party loyalties or political ideologies. Mourning would not color their discernment, loyalties, or beliefs in the Democratic Party.

The evidence of their loyalties came one year later. In 1866, the first postwar gubernatorial election, the Berks Democratic majority remained strong, with 13,288 going to the Democrats and 7,121 going to the Republicans in the countywide returns.[70] Oley's Democratic current in Pennsylvania's gubernatorial elections remained constant as well; the township brought two hundred and ninety-seven ballots for Clymer's final tally and only one hundred and fifty votes for Geary.[71] The 1868 presidential contest between Republican Ulysses S. Grant and Democrat Horatio Seymour brought two to one Democratic majorities in the township as well. Two hundred and ninety-four votes were cast for Seymour compared to one hundred and forty-seven for Grant.[72] Oley and Berks County remained a hotbed of Democratic support through the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.[73]

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[69] *Reading Gazette and Democrat*, "Partisan Rancor," April 29, 1865, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, PA, microfilm.

[70] Dubin, *Gubernatorial Races, 1861-1911*, 465.

[71] Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*, 66.

[72] Ibid., 70.

[73] See Appendix A.

Conclusion

The Civil War changed Oley Township, just as the national struggle indelibly affected Pennsylvania and the rest of the nation. Men participated in the war as soldiers, both volunteers and draftees. Women and children worked alongside the remaining menfolk and helped maintain the community's agricultural well-being. The township's economics shifted from peacetime capacities to wartime production levels, bringing benefits and obstacles to Oley's inhabitants. Although few in contemporary times remember their political opposition to the President, Oley Township vigorously resisted Lincoln's war policies throughout the conflict and voted against him in each presidential election. During the President's re-election campaign in 1864, Oley decisively rejected his policies and reaffirmed their commitment to the Democratic Party with two to one margins at the ballot boxes. Democratic dominance in the region was a constant factor in valley politics, but Oley's experience with presidential contests demonstrates that partisan politics and loyalty to the Union could exist side by side during the Civil War.

The political conditions in Oley Township were unique, not only to the region but also from other communities in the area. Their combination of society, culture, history, and prosperity were unique to the Oley Valley and resulted in a variety of influences which encouraged the majority to consistently vote for Democratic tickets throughout the nineteenth century. Any unwarranted connections beyond those boundaries would have to take other historical factors into consideration. Oley was marked by agrarianism, prosperity, and conservative Pennsylvania German culture. In some cases, the social elements at work in the township were closely mirrored in surrounding townships and counties. Reading, the county seat and Berks' political center, had a large impact on political ideology in Oley due to its proximity and the exchanges which took place between the two entities. The city was the political center of Democratic

politics in southeastern Pennsylvania during the antebellum and Civil War periods. Many of the other townships in Berks County were rooted in Pennsylvania German culture and grounded rural agrarian community. Similar political histories could be written about those townships which would contain many of the core ideas expressed throughout Berks County.

Although their national membership was fracturing in the 1850s, the Democratic Party remained a powerful factor in Northern politics in the late antebellum and Civil War-eras. As has been shown in Oley Township, Democratic loyalties ran deep in many Northern counties and townships and they were not rapidly changed, if their allegiances could be switched at all. Berks County was nationally known as the 'Gibraltar of the Democracy' during the nineteenth century for its tenacious loyalty to the Democratic Party. Oley's culture, history, and economics encouraged Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Democracy to take root in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, forming a majority membership which would dominate the township during the nineteenth century. The township's conservative Pennsylvania German background naturally resisted changes in political party affiliation. The rural farming community was the epitome of a Jeffersonian society; agrarian based with small industries to supplement the community. Pennsylvania Democrats found fertile ground for their conservative constitutional based politics. As the crises of the 1850s brought the nation to the brink of rebellion, their strong devotions to the Democratic Party were organized under Buchanan party politics. The inhabitants believed that the Democratic Party was the national, conservative party; the increasing instability of that institution had direct correlation with the growing crises in the national union. The solution to the political crisis was to redouble efforts in Democratic campaigns and use Buchanan's political methods to ensure stability within party ranks.

With this mindset, Berks County Democrats tied the Constitution and federal institutions' fate to their party's strength during the 1860 presidential campaign. Disunion in the party threatened the national party membership; members who agitated against the party (such as Stephen A. Douglas) would not receive support or political patronage and would quickly be purged from the membership rolls. The nation's survival depended on conservative, national-minded leadership in the federal government and political parties whose chief goals were union between the states based on the conservative fundamentals of the Constitution. Under their conservative interpretation of the Constitution, slavery was guaranteed in the Southern states; property was a civil liberty secured under the Bill of Rights and amendments and the government had no right to deprive a person of material possessions. As the 1860 election drew closer, the problems within the party proved intractable between the Breckinridge and Douglas supporters and another solution was sought. Berks County's Democratic leadership, including many from the various townships, gathered in Reading and put their party-first beliefs into practice through the Reading Platform, which organized fusion against the Republicans and pledged to vote for any Democrat who gained a majority popular vote against Lincoln in the election. Their tactics did not overcome the Republican strength in the rest of Pennsylvania, although their loyalty and reputation among Pennsylvania Democrats were unquestioned.

The political history of Oley Township during the Civil War era demonstrates that Democratic majorities were composed of complex ideologies, which were often only tied together by party loyalty. Although contemporary historians have characterized Northern Democrats during the Civil War era as weakening in power during the antebellum period, Oley shows that in the party remained formidable opponents of Lincoln and the Republicans in communities throughout the North. Once the conflict began, the party divided into 'Peace' and

'War' camps, with fringe elements becoming 'Copperheads.' From this understanding, the 'War Democrats' were mostly supportive of Lincoln's policies and the reunification effort. They were chiefly concerned with ending the war and maintaining a unified front behind the commander in chief. While they were loyal to their party and believed in many of its tenants, this group was consistently shifting from the Democratic Party to the Republicans during the war years. Once the crisis was over, they often remained loyal to the Republican Party and did not return to the Democrats. The Peace Democrats are understood as an organization which was committed to ending the war quickly, without eliminating slavery and including other concessions to the Southern states. Finally, the Northern Copperheads were the most virulent opponents of the Lincoln administration, advocating peaceful division of the country and encouraging outward sympathy with the Confederate cause. Each of these categories is typically portrayed as a distinct group within the Northern Democratic Party. In other instances, however, the categories are oversimplified under one umbrella with the Copperhead faction assuming a prominent role within the Democratic Party.

In Oley Township and Berks County, the Democratic loyalties remained firmly entrenched. They were staunchly loyal to their party, which was not typical in the Civil War North. Jennifer L. Weber noted that the Copperheads were a formidable minority force in Northern politics during the war years and Lincoln was deeply concerned with their ability to undercut the war effort. The Republican Party waged extensive campaigns through newspapers and local party leaders against the threat. However, she concluded that, "In many ways, the Copperheads were brought down not by external events but by their own weaknesses. They were never organized."[1] In *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement, 1861-1865*, Arnold M. Shankman divided antiwar activities in the commonwealth into two factions, the 'peace at any price' men

[1] Weber, *Copperheads*, 216.

and the more moderate 'peace Democrats.'[2] However, Oley has shown that the Democratic Party was strongly organized in some areas and managed to avoid the pitfalls which undermined the party nationally. Their loyalty to the Democratic Party would only be surpassed by the Southern states.

Although Oley Democrats were staunchly loyal to their party, they were also supportive of the Union war cause. Oley rejected Lincoln's wartime decisions and goals and feared abolitionist and radical Republican influences, but they were hopeful that the nation could be reunified. Many of Oley's men fought in the war, but the electorate was firmly opposed to Lincoln's aims and methods for ending the sectional crisis. In Oley, Democratic majority partisanship was not eliminated during the crisis. Instead, the conflict hardened partisan lines which had begun splintering during the 1860 campaign war and remained a powerful force in Berks County politics.

Nevertheless, these divisions were not clearly defined during the war years and the oversimplifications have carried into historical studies. In reality, all of these divisions were working together simultaneously in the community. Three distinct phases of Democratic opposition can be seen in Oley Township and Berks County. From the beginning of the war in April 1861 to September 1862, Berks Democrats supported the methods which Lincoln and the Republicans utilized to end the war quickly. Concerns were raised over tax increases, command decisions, and feared abolitionist pressure within the Lincoln administration, but they were within the minority of popular opinion. Following McClellan's removal from the Army of the Potomac, the implementation of the first drafts in the county, and the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, the county transitioned into a second phase which lasted through the 1863 gubernatorial election. Now, Berks Democrats believed that Lincoln's war policies

[2] Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 14-5.

reflected abolitionism and threatened to distract the war from its core end goal, the reunification of the Union and the re-establishment of constitutional authority. By the spring of 1863, the Democratic majority struggled to maintain moderation and organization. Copperhead leaders' messages, including Clement Vallandigham, were republished in the local Democratic papers and their rhetoric resonated with some Berks residents. Coinciding with this rising sentiment was support for a McClellan presidential candidacy. From October 1863 to November 1864, the Berks Democrats transitioned into campaigning for their chosen candidates, including repeated calls for McClellan to accept the party's nomination. The war effort became a war of attrition and larger casualties were felt in Berks County. Drafts were constantly needed to maintain the armies, which threatened to bring harm to local men. Abolitionism was seen as intentionally forcing the war to continue longer than necessary and causing the Confederacy to struggle longer than was necessary.

The general motivations of Berks and Oley Democrats could not be defined under any of these historical categories. Joel Sibley recognized the problem in his landmark work *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Ear, 1860-1868*. Sibley noted the distortion of the Democracy within the broader Civil War historiography. "Not that there were not 'good' Democrats and 'bad' Democrats…but because it oversimplifies a very complex situation and fails to understand what the Democratic party was all about in this crucial period of its operations."[3] Although Silbey's work is centered on understanding the national Democratic minority, it also provides insights into the areas where Democratic majorities were maintained. The Oley and Berks Democrats resisted the instability which marked the party in other regions and states and their fall from majority power through a combination of means. The region had

[3] Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, xiv.

voted solidly Democratic for more than twenty-five years and they remained tied to their party loyalties. Sibley noted,

> Most people continued to vote as they always had. People chose…to vote for one of the two national parties since they believed that it fulfilled their self-interest in a way that the other party did not. Their children continued to support the same party in the 1850s because they continued to believe that it still reflected they interests and the other party still did not.[4]

Oley and Berks County's Democratic identities stemmed from conservative constitutionalism and strong aversions to abolitionism and other agitators. They saw the Democratic Party as the best fit for their needs, with its national outlook and non-sectional composition of Northerners, Southerners, and Midwesterners.

This belief was also encouraged by James Buchanan and his especially strong supporters in southeastern Pennsylvania. Buchanan's headquarters was located in neighboring Lancaster County, but his core base resided in Berks County. Buchanan and many southeastern Pennsylvania Democrats strongly emphasized party unity above all else and warned against rebellion within the party apparatus. This line of thinking came from both sides and operated in a circular reinforcing trend; Buchanan personally believed in party unity above all else and locals tied national unity to the success of the Democratic Party. Their partisanship extended to such limits that equated party unity and power with national union and strength. Democrats used their influence in Berks media and social organizations to push elements of rebellion and disunion out of the party with great effectiveness and avoided the pitfalls which had crippled the national party because of the large majority base in the county. Democratic organization allowed the party to rebound from a mediocre showing in 1860 and dominate the results in the 1863 gubernatorial race and the 1864 presidential race. In many Northern areas, the methodology

[4] Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 14.

which Buchanan and Northern Democrats used to enforce party loyalty backfired. But in Berks County, the Democrats remained firmly entrenched.

Although they were fervently committed to partisan politics, Berks County's participation in the Civil War must also be taken into consideration. The Berks County Democrats were not actively supporting the rebellion and there were not calls for the war to end with disunion between the states. Oley Democrats were committed to reunifying the country, but they sharply disagreed with Republican methods and processes during the conflict. The best evidence of this is their active participation in the war. Identifying a precise number of soldiers from Oley Township has never been completed, and will likely never be fully accomplished. The county remains ripe for accounts of regiments and companies with members from Berks County. The 167th Pennsylvania Infantry, the only all-Berks regiment during the Civil War, has not yet received a full scholarly treatment.[5] Because of this, some observations and analysis would border on speculation. Questions concerning the nature of their motivations and beliefs remain largely unknown. Did they become more supportive of the war after joining the military? Or did they become less supportive and revert back to their traditional Democratic ways as the conflict continued? It is reasonable to determine that Oley contributed many soldiers to the Union war effort and they served throughout the eastern theater. Even though the region supported the Democratic Party and actively participated in partisan politics during the conflict, Oley men served throughout the Union Army. A sizeable number of them joined as volunteers, but the majority of them were conscripted into the army, demonstrating their lack of enthusiasm for Lincoln's policies in 1861 and 1862. However, there is no evidence of widespread desertion or misconduct in the military by men from the township or surrounding county. There is also no

[5] See Gary L. Shugar, "The 167th Pennsylvania: Civil War's Only All-Berks Regiment," *The Historical Review of Berks County* 65, no. 3 (Summer 2000), accessed January 17, 2014, http://www.berkshistory.org/articles/civil.html for a brief overview of this drafted regiment's history.

evidence that men traveled south and joined the Confederate armies, although it is estimated that nearly two thousand Pennsylvanians did from 1861 to 1865.[6] Their political opposition was not tied to treasonous activity and did not undermine their contributions to the war effort.

Oley Township's political history during the Civil War years demonstrates that Northern political partisanship encapsulated many different ideologies and influences which contributed to their Democratic allegiances during the conflict. Contrary to popular misconceptions, not all of the citizens in the North supported Abraham Lincoln and his war policies. Based on their ideologies and party affiliations, Oley Democrats fiercely resisted the Lincoln Administration throughout the war. Although the strength of their resistance was uncommon, Oley Democrats highlight some of the political forces and ideologies at work in the North during the Civil War. Their stringent political opposition did not result in support for the rebellion or misconduct in the military. Their political resistance was separate from their concerns over policy and decision-making in Washington, D.C. and did not diminish their contributions to the war for the Union. The Oley Democrats maintained majorities in the township and remained steadfastly loyal to the Union, even though the Democratic Party was fading around them and the nation was being challenged as it never had been before.

[6] For more insight see Christian B. Keller, "Keystone Confederates: Pennsylvanians Who Fought for Dixie," in *Making and Remaking Pennsylvania's Civil War*, eds. William Blair and William Pencak (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 1-22.

Appendix A: Oley Township's Presidential and Gubernatorial Voting Returns[1]

Presidential Contests, 1828-1880

1828	A. Jackson (D): 135	J. Q. Adams (Nat. R.): 39		
1832	A. Jackson (D): 105	W. Wirt (W): 24		
1836	M. Van Buren (D): 122	W. H. Harrison (W): 50		
1840	M. Van Buren (D): 182	W. H. Harrison (W): 112		
1844	J. Polk (D): 203	H. Clay (W): 103		
1848	L. Cass (D): 218	Z. Taylor (W): 119		
1852	F. Pierce (D): 192	W. Scott (W): 112		
1856	J. Buchanan (D): 249	J. Fremont (R): 20	M. Fillmore (Amer.): 69	
1860	J. Breckinridge (F): 197	A. Lincoln (R): 157	S. Douglas (S. Dem.): 1	J. Bell (Con.):0
1864	G. McClellan (D): 301	A. Lincoln (R): 138		
1868	H. Seymour (D): 292	U. S. Grant: (R): 147		
1872	H. Greeley (D): 222	U. S. Grant: (R): 130		
1876	S. Tilden (D): 309	R. Hayes (R): 159		
1880	W. Hancock (D): 303	J. Garfield (R): 153		

Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Contests, 1829-1882

1829	G. Wolf (D): 112	J. Ritner (Anti-M): 108	
1832	G. Wolf (D): 64	J. Ritner (Anti-M): 127	
1835	H. Muhlenberg (D): 81	J. Ritner (Anti-M): 124	G. Wolf (Ind. D): 59
1838	D. Porter (D): 184	J. Ritner (Anti-M): 84	
1841	D. Porter (D): 196	J. Banks (W): 85	
1844	F. Shunk (D): 212	J. Markle (W): 109	
1847	F. Shunk (D): 167	J. Irwin (W): 87	
1848	M. Longstreth (D): 184	W. Johnston (W): 104	
1851	W. Bigler (D): 195	W. Johnston (W): 100	
1854	W. Bigler (D): 206	J. Pollock (W): 105	
1857	W. Packer (D): 175	D. Wilmot (F.S.): 39	
1860	H. Foster (D): 226	A. Curtin (R): 165	
1863	G. Woodward (D): 286	A. Curtin (R): 124	
1866	H. Clymer (D): 297	J. Geary (R): 150	
1869	A. Packer (D): 287	J. Geary (R): 124	
1872	C. Buckalew (D): 278	J. Hartranft (R): 141	
1875	C. Pershing (D): 258	J. Hartranft (R): 120	
1878	A. Dill (D): 272	H. Hoyt (R): 139	S. Mason (G): 13
1882	R. Pattison (D): 303	J. Beaver (R): 134	J. Stewart (I): 0

[1] Compiled from Montgomery, *Political Hand-book*; Glossary: (D). Democratic Party; (Ind. D). Independent Democrat; (F). Fusion/Reading Platform; (R). Republican Party; (W). Whig Party; (Nat. R). National Republican Party; (Amer.). American Party; (S. D). Straight Democratic ticket; (Con.). Constitutional Union Party; (Anti-M). Anti-Masonic Party; (F.S.) Free Soil Party; (G). Greenback Party; (I). Independent Party.

Last Name	First Name	Township	Cemetery	Enlistment	Discharge	Birth	Death	Unit	Rank
Althouse	Milton B.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	12/18/1861	12/17/1864	12/5/1842	5/3/1927	Durrell's Independent Artillery	PVT
Antrim	William A.	Oley	Union Church	10/23/1862	7/27/1863	12/24/1828	4/9/1902	Company I, 179th Pennsylvania	PVT
Bahr	William C.	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1836	4/27/1918	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	1st SGT
Bertolet	Ezra B.	Oley	Frieden's Union	7/2/1863	8/20/1863	1841	1873	Company B, 53rd Pennsylvania Militia	PVT
Bertolet	P.G.	Oley	Frieden's Union	Unknown	Unknown	1822	1865	Unknown	Unknown
Bertolet	R. Morris	Oley	Frieden's Union	Unknown	Unknown	1846	1882	Unknown	Unknown
Bower	Isaac W.	Oley	Frieden's Union	9/10/1864	6/4/1865	3/12/1843	5/31/1896	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania and Company G, 198th Pennsylvania	CPL
Bower	John W.	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/8/1861	8/9/1862	1840	3/16/1917	54th Pennsylvania Regimental Band	musician
Boyer	Jeremiah H.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1819	1904	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Brown	Reuben	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/12/1862	8/12/1863	1820	1893	Company I, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Butterweck	William H.	Oley	Frieden's Union	9/10/1864	6/4/1865	6/21/1847	6/8/1900	Company G, 198th Pennsylvania	PVT
Carl	Augustus	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/5/1862	8/12/1863	1840	1927	Company H, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Clauser	Samuel	Oley	Kauffman's Private	Unknown	Unknown	10/9/1807	4/19/1864	Unknown	Unknown
Cleaver	William K.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	9/23/1861	9/23/1864	1832	3/1/1917	Durrell's Independent Artillery	PVT
Davidheiser	Cyrus C.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	9/24/1861	9/23/1864	10/8/1826	4/30/1910	Durrell's Independent Artillery	PVT
De Hart	Samuel	Oley	Knabb Private	3/21/1865	7/1/1865	2/13/1826	3/31/1905	Company K, 99th Pennsylvania	PVT
Delcamp	Adam	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	1/26/1864	7/13/1865	1/7/1846	9/18/1922	Company C, 15th Pennsylvania	PVT
Dengler	John	Oley	Frieden's Union	4/23/1861	7/23/1861	10/29/1837	5/23/1923	Company C, 7th Pennsylvania	PVT
Deysher	John G.	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	12/13/1835	1/9/1913	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Deysher	Daniel	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1/7/1839	10/27/1914	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Diehl	Franklin	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	2/24/1843	4/20/1931	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Diehl	Charles	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	10/21/1861	6/14/1864	3/9/1844	6/14/1864	Company K, 93rd Pennsylvania	PVT
Dierolf	Jacob S.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	12/31/1834	4/17/1867	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Dillaplane	James H.	Oley	Frieden's Union	9/2/1864	6/2/1865	3/3/1845	12/2/1925	Company H, 205th Pennsylvania	PVT
Dreibelbies	Jacob B.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	8/25/1862	3/15/1864	2/29/1844	1/28/1912	Company H, 68th Pennsylvania	PVT
Drumheller	Joseph	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	3/25/1864	6/27/1865	10/18/1837	1/12/1906	Company K, 93rd Pennsylvania	PVT
Eberhart	Franklin L.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	8/1/1863	7/1/1865	1844	9/12/1923	Company E, 69th Pennsylvania	PVT
Eidel	Frederick R.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	9/16/1861	7/30/1865	1842	1/27/1931	Company A, 50th Pennsylvania	SGT/IC?
Eidel	Samuel R.	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1825	1880	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Endy	John L.	Oley	Frieden's Union	10/21/1861	6/27/1865	1842	6/3/1915	Company K, 93rd Pennsylvania	SGT
Endy	Charles L.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	9/22/1861	9/30/1864	9/21/1842	8/23/1905	Company H, 104th Pennsylvania	PVT
Enoch	Samuel R.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1861	6/27/1865	2/20/1845	5/5/1908	Company A, 93rd Pennsylvania	PVT
Fisher	W. R.	Oley	Union Church	9/30/1861	6/17/1865	Unknown	Unknown	Company I, 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry	PVT
Fisher	Ezra	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/5/1862	8/12/1863	5/9/1839	11/14/1891	Company H, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Flicker	George	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	Unknown	Unknown	1834	1880	Unknown	Unknown
Focht	David M.	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1834	11/12/1906	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Folk	John M.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	8/26/1864	8/23/1865	2/10/1839	2/7/1923	Company E, 205th Pennsylvania	PVT
Gift	Robert M.	Oley	Union Church	11/3/1862	6/2/1865	3/29/1844	4/7/1940	Company K, 151st Pennsylvania	PVT
Gift	Levi	Oley	Frieden's Union	3/7/1865	8/25/1865	4/21/1826	1/14/1868	Company B, 104th Pennsylvania	PVT
Glase	William T.	Oley	Frieden's Union	9/2/1861	9/30/1864	7/22/1843	5/22/1881	Company H, 104th Pennsylvania	PVT
Gorrell	Albert	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	10/2/1862	Unknown	6/1/1833	8/24/1886	Company L, 6th Pennsylvania Cavalry	PVT
Grimly	Daniel S.	Oley	Union Church	7/2/1863	8/20/1863	7/21/1840	6/23/1875	Company B, 53rd Pennsylvania Militia	PVT
Guldin	Henry	Oley	Frieden's Union	6/2/1863	9/2/1864	5/14/1844	5/12/1924	Company H, 205th Pennsylvania	PVT
Haas	William	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	3/20/1865	7/27/1865	1/10/1827	12/6/1904	Company H, 51st Pennsylvania	PVT
Haas	Daniel	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	3/25/1865	7/27/1865	1841	7/16/1913	Company H, 51st Pennsylvania	PVT
Hartline	David S.	Oley	Frieden's Union	3/21/1865	7/27/1865	11/27/1838	12/13/1924	Company H, 51st Pennsylvania	PVT
Hartline	Ezra D.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	12/29/1828	11/15/1910	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT

Hartline	James A.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1840	12/1/1918	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Hartline	John R.	Oley	Frieden's Union	2/8/1864	2/8/1867	4/8/1847	1/12/1920	Company B, 33rd US Infanty	SGT
Hartline	Daniel E.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	3/21/1865	7/11/1865	5/30/1847	12/17/1937	Army	PVT
Hearing	Augustus	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	2/10/1830	11/22/1876	Army	PVT
Heffner	Francis	Oley	Union Church	Unknown	Unknown	1813	1898	Unknown	Unknown
Helig	George S.	Oley	Frieden's Union	4/23/1861	7/23/1861	7/17/1830	12/27/1865	Army	CAPT
Herbst	George	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	10/27/1862	8/12/1863	1835	3/9/1921	Army	PVT
Hess	Samuel H.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	12/28/1841	6/19/1913	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
High	Daniel H.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1/13/1841	1/10/1884	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Hoffman	George	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	Unknown	Unknown	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	musician
Holder	Jeremiah H.	Oley	Frieden's Union	4/23/1861	7/23/1861	1837	1904	Company C, 7th Pennsylvania	CPL
Houck	Peter H.	Oley	Frieden's Union	4/23/1861	7/27/1861	1842	6/13/1900	Company C, 7th Pennsylvania	musician
Houck	Daniel R.	Oley	Frieden's Union	4/23/1861	7/27/1861	7/29/1842	12/4/1913	Company C, 7th Pennsylvania	PVT
Hunter	Daniel V. R.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	10/4/1806	2/10/1875	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Hunter	Jefferson R.	Oley	Frieden's Union	10/21/1861	Unknown	8/18/1844	5/23/1866	Company K, 93rd Pennsylvania and Co. M?	PVT
Hunter	J. A.	Oley	Frieden's Union	Unknown	Unknown	1837	1887	Unknown	Unknown
Jack	Charles F.	Oley	Union Evangelical (Pleasantville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1829	1903	US Army	PVT
Kerst	Franklin B.	Oley	Frieden's Union	4/23/1861	7/23/1861	11/29/1837	10/17/1871	Company C, 7th Pennsylvania	1st SGT
Laucks	John S.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	4/23/1861; 11/4/1862	7/23/1861; 8/11/1863	11/13/1841	4/17/1898	Company D, 7th Pennsylvania and Company C	CPL
Leeds	Mahlon	Oley	Union Church	2/10/1864	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Company K, 93rd Pennsylvania	PVT
Lees	Daniel	Oley	Herman Bertolet's Farm Private	7/3/1863	8/26/1863	8/9/1815	3/12/1874	Capt. Ermentrout's Co	PVT
Levan	Jacob	Oley	Frieden's Union	4/23/1861	8/11/1863	1/26/1843	Unknown	Company C, 7th Pennsylvania	CPL
Link	Albert	Oley	Frieden's Union	Unknown	Unknown	1845	1863	Unknown	Unknown
Maurer	John	Oley	Frieden's Union	9/12/1864	6/7/1865	7/5/1830	2/23/1887	Company F, 48th Pennsylvania	PVT
Miller	William M.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/1/1862	7/27/1863	4/6/1825	3/11/1902	Company H, 151st Pennsylvania	SGT
Miller	Seyer	Oley	Frieden's Union	4/23/1861	7/23/1861	1830	1863	Company C, 7th Pennsylvania	PVT
Milot	Lewis G.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	4/15/1836	2/5/1912	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Minninger	Daniel G.	Oley	Union Church	11/5/1862	8/12/1863	4/13/1837	7/27/1921	Company H, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Moyer	James	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	4/30/1864	7/11/1865	10/4/1844	12/1/1914	Company B, 3rd Artillery, 152nd Pennsylvania	PVT
Moyer	Abner D.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	Unknown	Unknown	1842	1885	Unknown	Unknown
Prutzman	Charles	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1/6/1831	3/13/1909	Army	PVT
Reiff	Franklin	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/5/1862	8/12/1863	1/20/1839	7/17/1900	Army	SGT
Reitenauer	Abraham	Oley	Frieden's Union	2/29/1864	6/27/1865	1/16/1845	1/13/1931	Army	PVT
Reitnouer	Samuel J.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	3/3/1864	3/12/1866	12/29/1842	10/5/1921	Army	PVT
Rhoads	Daniel	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/12/1863	7/10/1865	1/17/1842	12/31/1922	Army	PVT
Schadler	William H.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	8/8/1861	9/16/1861	6/29/1841	9/16/1861	Army	PVT
Schaeffer	A.W.	Oley	Union Church	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1845	Unknown	Army	PVT
Scherer	Isaac	Oley	Frieden's Union	9/17/1864	3/31/1865	4/9/1818	4/2/1865	Army	CAPT
Schreader	Daniel M.	Oley	Frieden's Union	2/29/1864	6/27/1865	1844	10/23/1911	Army	PVT
Seyler	Lewis	Oley	Frieden's Union	7/6/1863; 9/2/1864	8/12/1863; 6/2/1865	11/5/1845	4/21/1899	Army	PVT
Smith	Albert U.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1841	3/25/1918	Army	CPL
Snyder	Henry	Oley	Frieden's Union	Unknown	Unknown	1845	1863	Unknown	Unknown
Susanna	Adam	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	3/21/1865	7/27/1865	10/20/1833	4/25/1910	Army	PVT

Swavely	Daniel H.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	11/16/1838	2/9/1914	Army	PVT
Swavely	John L.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	7/30/1863	2/20/1864	12/18/1846	12/8/1914	Army	PVT
Swavely	John S.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	3/28/1846	3/15/1924	Army	PVT
Swavely	Reuben	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	1837	5/7/1892	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT
Updegrove	Jacob	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	4/12/1837	8/23/1863	US Army	PVT
Weber	Jacob W.	Oley	Oley Church (Spangsville)	1/13/1865	7/12/1865	11/14/1825	6/16/1886	Army	PVT
Weller	Henry Z.	Oley	Frieden's Union	7/2/1863	8/20/1863	11/8/1843	10/9/1925	Army	PVT
Yerger	Josiah E.	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/4/1862	8/11/1863	10/18/1833	3/30/1865	Army	PVT
Yerger	Charles M.	Oley	Union Church	5/2/1862	5/2/1865	10/26/1839	12/12/1925	Army	PVT
Yergey	Augustus M.	Oley	Frieden's Union	2/17/1862	2/17/1865	1844	10/14/1926	Army	PVT
Youse	David G.	Oley	Frieden's Union	11/12/1862	8/11/1863	1831	1902	Company C, 167th Pennsylvania	PVT

TOTAL FOR OLEY: 101
TOTAL FOR BERKS: 5315

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