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Party Formation in the United States

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Political Science

by

Darin Dion DeWitt

2013

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# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Party Formation in the United States

by

Darin Dion DeWitt

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Thomas Schwartz, Chair

This dissertation is about how political parties formed in the world's first mass democracy, the United States. I trace the process of party formation from the bottom up. First, I ask: How do individuals become engaged in politics and develop political affiliations? In most states, throughout the antebellum era, the county was the primary unit of political administration and electoral representation. Owing to their small size, contiguity, and economic homogeneity, I expect that each county's active citizens will form a county-wide governing coalition that organizes and dominates local politics. Second, I ask: Which political actor had incentives to lure county organizations into one coalition? I argue that the institutional rules for electing United States Senators – indirect election by state legislature – induced prospective United States Senators to construct a majority coalition in the state legislature.

Drawing on nineteenth century newspapers, I construct a new dataset from the minutes of political meetings in three states between 1820 and 1860. I find that United States Senators created state parties out of homogeneous counties. They encouraged cooperation among county-wide governing coalitions by canvassing annual county political meetings, drafting

and revising a multi-issue policy platform that had the potential to unite a majority of the state's county governing coalitions, encouraging individual counties to create county-wide committees of correspondence and vigilance, and, finally, organizing a permanent state central committee and regular state-wide conventions. I also show that alternative political actors lacked the incentives, resources, and long-term policy view necessary to build a state-wide party.

I conclude by considering the implications of this argument for debates about the nature of partisan affiliation, party cohesion, the formation of policy agendas, and the linkage between the mass public and the national government in a federal system.

The dissertation of Darin Dion DeWitt is approved.

Kathleen Bawn

D. Roderick Kiewiet

John R. Zaller

Thomas Schwartz, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

For my family – Carolyn, Howard, Melanie, and Jeff

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

“In 1850 no country in the world (except the United States) knew political parties in the modern sense of the word. There were trends of opinion, popular clubs, philosophical societies, and parliamentary groups, but no real parties. In 1950 parties function in most civilized nations, and in others there is an attempt to imitate them.”

– Maurice Duverger (1959, xxiii)

In contemporary mass democracies, political parties are pervasive and central to the operation of government; they are, perhaps, the principal institution that organizes interest groups, the electorate, and the governmental institutions that craft public policy. Yet as Maurice Duverger observes, parties are a modern invention. Despite their recent dominance, it is possible, in both theoretical and empirical terms, to imagine alternatives and, from a normative perspective, it may be desirable to do so. For the ills of government are usually diagnosed as failures of party (Aldrich 2011, 4; Mann and Ornstein 2012). The goal of this dissertation is to explain the process of party formation and examine how this process impacts partisan organization and commitments.

Among political scientists and historians, there is no paucity of literature on political parties. Virtually all scholars of parties accept the premise that party organizations are desirable institutions, necessary for the functioning of democratic government. Working from this premise, the literature seeks to explain how parties facilitate democracy. As such, it is primarily descriptive – identifying activities that *existing* parties engage in and services that they provide to the polity (Eldersveld 1964; Key 1964; Sorauf 1976; Epstein 1986). Even those scholars that advocate reform fail to consider alternatives to parties; they seek merely to improve the effectiveness of parties as institutions of government and representation. This involved, prior to progressive reforms, the elimination of corrosive elements such as the patronage system and non-elected bosses and, after, the strengthening of organizational structures (American Political Science Association 1950). The prevailing consensus about the desirability of parties has sapped curiosity about alternatives to party government (Epstein 1986); scholars simply assume parties, as fully formed organizations, into existence (e.g., Schlesinger 1945; Riker 1987, Chapter 11).

In recent years, some political scientists have abandoned the assumption that parties are inevitable features of mass democracies. Duverger (1959), Schwartz (1989), Aldrich (1995, 2011), and Bawn *et al.* (2012) appreciate that politically active individuals have incentives to form a long coalition. These texts are particularly effective at explaining the persistence of parties by identifying why political actors use and maintain these organizations. However, in this literature too, there is no general evidence-based account of the process that produces parties to begin with.

This dissertation is an effort to model the process of party formation, develop implications that follow from competing models, and test those implications with historical and empirical evidence. In pursuit of this objective, I examine the formation of the world's first mass party organizations, those that emerged in the United States starting in the late 1820s, along with their reconstitution in the realignment of the 1850s and argue that Senatorial candidates were entrepreneurs who created and solidified state parties.

## 1.1 United States Senators and American party formation

To demonstrate the plausibility of my core argument – that United States Senators created parties – and suggest its potential for explaining a diverse set of cases, I briefly review three famous episodes of party building in American history – the formation of Andrew Jackson’s presidential majority, a Whig opposition in Congress, and a Free Soil-Democratic fusion coalition in Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> These narratives suggest that United States Senators were the principal entrepreneurs that constructed long coalitions and their accompanying organizational apparatuses at all levels of the federal system from the birth of mass parties in 1820s to their reconstitution in the realignment of the 1850s, which inaugurated our contemporary two-party system.

### 1.1.1 The Nation-wide Democratic party and the election of Andrew Jackson

Historians and political scientists agree that, by 1828, United States Senator Martin Van Buren invented the world’s first mass political party and this new organization, the nation-wide Democratic party, assembled Andrew Jackson’s Electoral College majority (Remini 1959; Aldrich 2011). But, in recounting these events, scholars rarely emphasize how Van Buren’s role as a Senator informed his party building efforts.<sup>2</sup>

Amid the factional politics of the Era of Good Feelings, Van Buren began to construct a state party. He traversed New York state several years in a row, meeting politically active individuals in each county and assessing public opinion. By 1820, he elicited support from a majority of counties for a coalition that would reform the state constitution and elect the

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<sup>1</sup>My interpretation of these events relies on Remini (1959), Holt (1999), and Donald (2009), respectively.

<sup>2</sup>To avoid confusion, in this dissertation, I will refer to United States Senators as “United States Senator” or “Senator” and state senators as “state senators.” The more ambiguous senator will not be used.

Little Magician to the United States Senate. In the fall elections, this new coalition won a legislative majority and achieved both of its goals.

To maintain a united and disciplined coalition, Van Buren created and staffed the Albany Regency, a central committee in the state capital that determined patronage allocation, outlined party issue positions, informed state legislators how to vote, and monitored county organizations. Van Buren also helped establish auxiliary organizations that assisted the Regency: the Albany *Argus*, a legislative caucus, and county-level committees. Finally, he maintained contact with local leaders by engaging in annual canvasses of the state. Having sustained this statewide organization, Van Buren was re-elected to the United States Senate in 1827.

Arriving in Washington in 1821, Senator Van Buren witnessed the disintegration of the the Jeffersonian Republican party. Drawing on his experience as a state party builder, he identified President James Monroe's failure to limit patronage to loyal partisans and assist in the nomination of his successor as the root causes of partisan breakdown. The Little Magician vowed that his prospective national organization would correct both of these errors.

To build a national party from the shattered pieces of the old Republican coalition, Senator Van Buren adapted his party building strategy that had proved successful in New York. In 1822, he began embarking on frequent tours of the South to meet political leaders and identify the basis of a future alliance. By 1823, he revived the Virginia-New York alliance by securing the aid of Thomas Ritchie, editor of the Richmond *Enquirer* and leader of the Virginia Radicals. Meanwhile, in Senate speeches and newspaper editorials, Van Buren articulated a platform, of Jeffersonian principles, that could bind members of new party coalition together and distinguish them from their rivals. After establishing an organization and a platform, Van Buren selected a presidential candidate, William H. Crawford (Watson 2006, 79). While the Virginia-New York alliance failed to secure the presidency for Crawford in 1824, Van Buren maintained friendly relations with existing allies and continued to build this nascent party.

In the first congressional session of President Adams's tenure, Administration supporters composed a minority of the United States Senate but opposition factions did not form a united front. In fact, in the 19th Congress, all Administration measures passed. Many opposition Senators did not see their differences with Adams and Clay as irreconcilable. The Little Magician had to actively encourage cooperation among a set of factions that saw no natural basis or immediate need for cooperation.<sup>3</sup> He devised a bargain that would tie all opposition factions together: Calhoun received the vice-presidential nomination, Jackson the presidential nomination, and the Crawfordites a Jeffersonian states' rights platform. To expand the national organization, Van Buren co-opted existing state parties and, then, created a national committee in Washington staffed by anti-Administration officeholders, which raised funds, established newspapers, and coordinated state campaigns.<sup>4</sup>

To shore up support in doubtful states, Van Buren assisted in the drafting and passage of the Tariff of 1828. While it was repugnant to the South, he considered a new tariff essential for carrying New York and the West.<sup>5</sup> Finally, to ensure that all factions united behind a presidential ticket and common platform, Van Buren proposed a national convention, rather than a series of state conventions.<sup>6</sup>

In the process of party building, Van Buren was a credible entrepreneur because, as a United States Senator, he led a state party and thereby influenced the decisions of numerous electors and congressmen. For this reason Calhoun, Crawford, and Jackson received Van

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<sup>3</sup>The national Democratic party did not emerge organically as a result of anti-Administration factions independently recognizing their common preferences. After the presidential election of 1824, the Radicals (or Crawfordites) were wary of a coalition; Van Buren considered Jackson "unsafe" (Remini 1959, 85). In April 1826, Van Buren began to independently oppose the Administration. He encouraged cooperation among opposition elements by arguing that Adams and Clay were reimposing the Hamilton-Jefferson divisions. When persuasion failed, Van Buren began to build an organization. It took Van Buren two years to secure Radical participation in the new coalition. Meanwhile, Jackson himself was also hesitant about the proposed alliance (Remini 1959, Chapter 11).

<sup>4</sup>Each state organization had to accept a states' rights platform and select a slate of electors pledged to Jackson.

<sup>5</sup>While a tariff may not seem consistent with Jeffersonian Republican principles, Van Buren oversaw a tariff schedule that led to increases on raw materials thereby assisting farmers at the expense of manufacturers.

<sup>6</sup>Van Buren also expected that a national convention would encourage the replacement of party principle for personal preference both in the present election and in the long-run.

Buren and committed to his proposals. In return for his efforts, Van Buren made allies across the nation thereby improving the visibility of New York and its politicians and increasing their net influence in national politics.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.1.2 The Whig party in state and nation

In the presidential election of 1832, Jackson's opponents – National Republicans, Antimasons, Nullifiers, and States' Rights – supported four separate electoral slates. While the National Republicans were the largest opposition group, they lacked the votes to credibly compete for the presidency or a majority in the national legislature. Prospects for fusion seemed slim as each group had a policy demand that was abhorrent to a potential ally.<sup>8</sup>

Despite a lack of coordination, a fusion coalition would be beneficial as the 23rd Congress included twenty Jacksonian Senators, twenty National Republicans, six States' Rights, and two Nullifiers. In late 1833, prior to the start of the congressional session, Senator Henry Clay directed the effort to build a united front among anti-Jackson men. He organized private meetings with fellow Senators John C. Calhoun (SC), Willie P. Mangum (NC), and Samuel Southard (NJ) as well as Representative John Quincy Adams (MA).<sup>9</sup> In these meetings, Clay forged a common platform – opposition to deposit removal and executive usurpation and support for supremacy of the laws – that addressed some policy concerns of each anti-Jackson group.

When the Senate met, Clay outlined his compromise platform in a speech on the Senate floor, anti-Jackson men pooled their votes to control the distribution of committee assignments, and Clay had coalition Senators remove bills from consideration that threatened

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<sup>7</sup>In the revived New York-Virginia alliance, Van Buren expected New York to lead in the selection of presidential candidates (Remini 1959, 29 and 142-3). This, of course, occurred in 1824, 1828, 1832, 1836, and 1840.

<sup>8</sup>The Calhounites supported nullification, the Nullifiers and States' Rights factions opposed the Force Bill, the Antimasons opposed all entrenched politicians, and the National Republicans sought tariff increases and a new bank charter.

<sup>9</sup>To secure a majority in many northern states, the National Republicans had to fuse with the Antimasons. Since the United States Senate lacked Antimasons, Adams was included as a representative of that group.

the unity of this nascent coalition. Then, in March 1834, Clay introduced the Whig label, which was immediately adopted by many Senators, who used it in their correspondence, and Washington-based newspapers (Mallory 1844, 194-201; Remini 1991, Chapter 26).<sup>10</sup> By focusing on republican values, the Whig label ameliorated “the stigma of anti-republican elitism” that hindered the National Republicans (Holt 1999, 29).

In the spring and summer of 1834, opposition Senators transformed their long coalition into a mass party by converting their state party machines into Whig organizations. Anti-Jackson Senators encouraged local and state tickets to adopt the Whig label and, often, called a state-wide Whig party convention. After a few months, the Whig label reached across more states than the National Republican label had, including Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Mississippi, and Virginia. This helps demonstrate that the Whigs were not simply the National Republicans with a new name.

In these early stages of development, the Whig Party was not a vehicle for securing the presidency. Instead, as Senator James Barbour explains, the Whig party ran several presidential candidates in 1836 to improve the party’s “prospect of retaining or acquiring the ascendancy in the State Government, an object of great importance, and almost a compensation for the [expected] loss of our Presidential candidate” (quoted in Colton 1856, 398).<sup>11</sup> This strategy worked well for the Whigs. By the end of 1836, they had become a national party. Relative to the National Republicans, the Whigs were competitive state-wide in new regions – West and South – and strengthened in old regions.

---

<sup>10</sup>On 14 March 1834, in a speech on the Senate floor, Clay asserted: “During our revolutionary war, the tories took sides with executive power and prerogative, and with the king, against liberty and independence. And the the whigs, true to their principles, contended against royal executive power, and for freedom and independence. And what is the present but the same contest in another form? ... The whigs of the present day are opposing executive encroachment, and a most alarming extension of executive power and prerogative. They are ferreting out the abuses and corruptions of an administration, under a chief magistrate who is endeavoring to concentrate his own person under the whole powers of government. They are contending for the rights of the people, for civil liberty, for free institutions, for the supremacy of the constitution and the laws” (quoted in Mallory 1844, 199).

<sup>11</sup>James Barbour was not a Senator at the time of this quote. But he had been a Senator and hoped to become a Senator again.

### 1.1.3 The Free Soil party in Massachusetts

In the 1850s, a profusion of new parties emerged across the United States. In Massachusetts, a state long dominated by Whigs, a new Democratic-Free Soil party captured control of state government in 1850.

In the mid-1840s, the Conscience Whigs in Massachusetts sought, unsuccessfully, to transform their party into an antiwar and antislavery coalition.<sup>12</sup> Charles Sumner led this faction by delivering speeches, writing editorials, authoring motions and bills for representatives to present in the state legislature, and maintaining contact with potential allies in other states.<sup>13</sup> At this point, Sumner was not a Senator but a young Boston lawyer who participated in local reform movements and had recently joined the local Whig organization as a means of achieving his reform goals.

When the Massachusetts Whig convention of 1847 nominated Zachary Taylor, a slaveholder and war veteran, for president, Sumner – against the wishes of his fellow Conscience Whig leaders – began fusion discussions with Liberty men and Democrats. While fusion was not formally enacted, Sumner and his new recruit, Henry Wilson, created a Free Soil party organization.<sup>14</sup> They created a state central committee, which Sumner chaired, and called a state convention for those opposed to the major party presidential candidates – neither Taylor nor Lewis Cass opposed the Mexican War or promoted free-soil. The Free Soil organization established the independence of the Conscience Whigs from the regular Whig party organization and elected representatives from 41 of 312 towns (Donald 2009, 141-149).

To increase their organization's influence, Sumner and Wilson pressed for fusion with the Democrats while the remaining Free Soil leaders favored reuniting with the Whigs.

---

<sup>12</sup>The Conscience Whigs controlled some rural districts but were led by a handful of young, political entrepreneurs in Boston including Charles Francis Adams, Richard H. Dana, John G. Palfrey, and Charles Sumner.

<sup>13</sup>Charles Sumner had not been a Whig but he was an idealist who shared much in common with Conscience Whigs and entered politics to pursue justice on these issues.

<sup>14</sup>Henry Wilson was not a member of the Conscience Whig movement and not looked on kindly by other Conscience Whigs, but he was willing to build an organization for Sumner. While he fully supported Sumner's Senatorial ambitions, Wilson was himself too a prospective Senator, elected in 1855 (Donald 2009, 223).

Sumner and Wilson worked behind the scenes to enact fusion at the 1849 Free Soil state convention. “While Wilson managed the floor of the convention, Sumner, as chairman of the committee on resolutions urged the delegates in opposing slavery not to forget another sort of tyranny, the “selfish, grasping, subtle’ money power of the Commonwealth” (Donald 2009, 152). The latter resolution was borrowed from an old Massachusetts Democratic platform. Reluctantly, other Free Soil leaders accepted it. Massachusetts Democrats responded by adopting several Free Soil planks including “opposition ‘to slavery in every form and color’ ” and a declaration that Congress had no power to institute slavery in the territories acquired from Mexico (Donald 2009, 153). Nonetheless, owing to the refusal of most Free Soil leaders, no formal fusion ticket was put forward in 1849.

In 1850, Sumner and Wilson continued to informally coordinate with Democrats but changed their strategy. In Massachusetts, candidates for state-wide office had to win a majority of the vote and, in the absence of a popularity majority, the state legislature filled those offices. Sumner and Wilson realized that if the Free Soil and Democratic parties could deny the Whigs a popular majority for state office, then they could secure the gubernatorial seat without fusion. In advance of the election, newspapers reported that two parties agreed on a pact where Free Soil men would provide legislative votes to elect a Democrat to the gubernatorial seat and pass a Democratic package of state reform measures while the Democrats would provide votes to elect Sumner as United States Senator.<sup>15</sup>

As predicted, the Whigs won a plurality not a majority. Consequently, a Free-Soil Democratic coalition formed that elevated Sumner to the United States Senate. In turn, Sumner’s Free Soil allies in the state legislature lived up to their part of the bargain. They provided Democrats with enough votes to call a constitutional convention and pass legislation “dealing with corporations, banks, and mechanics’ liens” (Donald 2009, 187 and 204). Then, in 1855, this coalition elected Sumner’s partner, Henry Wilson, to Massachusetts’s second seat

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<sup>15</sup>At the state Free Soil convention of 1850, Sumner announced his Senatorial ambitions and endorsed fusion with the Democrats but Adams, Palfrey, and Dana continued to block formal fusion at the state level. Subsequently, the Democratic convention also endorsed fusion. But it did not formally happen.

in United States Senate.

### **1.1.4 Lessons from history**

The previous narratives briefly examine party building at all levels of the federal system – in pursuit of the presidency, a Congressional majority, and a state-wide majority – and in two distinct eras of American party history – the second and third party systems. Yet at the heart of all of these stories is a cast of Senatorial entrepreneurs building state and national parties.

These narratives illustrate Senatorial entrepreneurs engaged in two activities that contributed to party formation. They built long coalitions in state and national legislatures. They also created durable party institutions – at both state and national levels – by attaching their long coalition to a political organization that consisted of permanent committees and regular conventions.

These historical narratives offer some general lessons. First, in their initial stages, Senatorial coalitions were tenuous, characterized by severe internal divisions. This observation holds for coalitions that fell apart – the Whigs – as well as those that became durable – the Democrats. Second, state and national coalitions were not built strictly in service of the presidency.

Finally, on a more speculative note, these narratives offer a lesson on party building strategies. At this point in history, party building was new and entrepreneurs were experimenting with alternative strategies. The successful party builders picked a coalition and stuck with it, slowly expanding that coalition over time. Now compare them to Senators Daniel Webster of Massachusetts and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. Each directed a state party machine and sought to build a national coalition but Webster and Calhoun bid for influence by switching between national party coalitions. Calhoun had affiliations with five labels in his lifetime: Republican, Jacksonian Democrat, Independent, Whig, and Democrat. Similarly, from March 1833 to January 1834, Senator Webster attempted to build

a new, pro-Union party that united him with his sometime nemesis, President Jackson.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, Webster was absent during Clay's negotiations for the Whig party and, upon observing the new coalition, Webster actively tried to prevent its successful takeover of the United States Senate in late 1833 and early 1834. Perhaps it is no wonder that the Whig party continually passed over Webster when promoting members to leadership positions.

## 1.2 An institutional explanation of party formation

American national parties are decentralized confederations of state and local parties (Herring 1940, 249; Schattschneider 1942, Chapter 6; Ranney and Kendall 1956; Epstein 1986, Chapter 1; Holt 1999, Chapter 1). But how do state and local parties form? To answer this question, I trace the process of state party formation from the bottom up and provide an institutional account that pays particular attention to the influence of geography and electoral rules. In broad terms, I argue that it was the magnet of the *federal* Senate that created *state* parties.

In antebellum America the basic unit of political administration was the county. Most were small. Table 1.1 shows that, in 1830, the median American county had a voting age population of 1,146 individuals. There, active citizens formed or joined a local governing coalition as a means of obtaining representation for community interests. Often active citizens were learned professionals – lawyer, doctor, printer, teacher, tavern proprietor, minister, shopkeeper – who staffed storefronts at the county seat. These occupations provided some leisure time to pursue politics, proximity to other activists, and regular contact with less active citizens. Then, as now, most citizens were disengaged from politics and the average level of political information was low (Bourke and DeBats 1998; Altschuler and Blumin 2000). Furthermore, political activists controlled the information that citizens acquired because

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<sup>16</sup>He did this with speeches in favor of Jackson, by leading the legislative passage of Jackson's Force Bill, holding a reception for Jackson in Boston, announcing a new era of good feelings in friendly newspapers, suggesting a new party that uses Jackson's nullification proclamation as its platform, and touring New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania to propose his scheme.

they presided over public spaces and edited the local newspaper. Under these conditions, in each county, political activists formed a stable, community-wide coalition that organized and dominated local politics. True, there could have been a factional fissure, but typically there was not: communities were too small and economically homogeneous to encourage that. However, these locally unified coalitions were not firmly tied to a single state-wide coalition: often they switched sides.

Table 1.1: Voting Age Population in United States Counties, 1830

State	Counties	Mean	St. Dev	Min	25th	Median	75th	Max
Connecticut	8	8,651	2,947	4,216	5,799	9,911	10,699	12,173
Maine	10	8,647	3,079	5,074	6,204	7,319	11,421	13,335
Massachusetts	14	10,336	6,272	884	6,553	9,476	15,238	19,936
New Hampshire	8	7,566	3,315	1,851	5,400	8,246	9,474	12,440
Rhode Island	5	4,243	3,571	1,169	2,668	3,151	3,842	10,386
Vermont	13	4,853	2,369	791	3,968	5,157	6,078	9,371
Delaware	3	4,116	1,281	2,814	2,814	4,158	5,375	5,375
New Jersey	14	4,763	2,015	1,020	3,404	4,795	5,992	9,187
New York	56	7,471	6,034	284	4,237	6,381	9,000	44,411
Pennsylvania	51	5,571	5,702	286	3,010	4,090	6,428	38,453
Illinois	49	637	524	6	355	520	756	2,490
Indiana	63	1,017	656	79	501	914	1,397	3,359
Michigan	16	558	441	1	301	379	716	1,720
Ohio	73	2,564	2,017	13	1,131	2,315	3,565	11,610
Missouri	32	751	585	281	408	550	902	3,370
Virginia	109	1,333	787	135	818	1,090	1,773	3,724
Alabama	36	1,089	545	218	741	1,021	1,336	2,986
Arkansas	23	260	142	66	117	246	373	512
Florida	19	261	284	0	50	206	444	849
Georgia	76	791	478	139	362	693	1,140	2,016
Louisiana	31	801	1,347	209	349	574	684	7,908
Mississippi	26	617	320	229	330	557	929	1,261
North Carolina	64	1,458	731	498	909	1,258	1,925	3,490
South Carolina	29	1,811	943	509	1,163	1,879	2,157	4,985
Kentucky	83	1,254	782	225	702	1,026	1,612	5,046
Maryland	20	3,378	3,275	855	1,417	2,332	3,794	14,341
Tennessee	62	1,618	906	281	934	1,431	2,229	4,178
All States	997	2,268	3,279	0	614	1,146	2,491	44,411

Source: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. Historical, Demographic, Economic, and Social Data: The United States, 1790-1970.

To form a state party, some political actor must have had an incentive to lure county organizations into one coalition. Who? Plausible suspects include national executives (McCormick 1966; Cox 1997), incumbent legislators seeking re-election (Duverger 1959) or policy

goals (Chhibber and Kollman 2004), state executives (Kruman 1983), or a network of socially prominent families (Ridgway 1979). However, in the antebellum era, presidents did not actively campaign, state legislators were amateurs in dire need of leadership, governors focused purely on administration, and prominent families were rarely influential beyond their local county. In short, these actors were unlikely to have much of an interest in a party until one existed.

I propose that United States Senators had the most to gain; the institutional rules for electing Senators – indirect election by state legislature – induced candidates to construct statewide majority coalitions. Such a coalition was the state party, and the Senator was its leader because no other actor had much of an incentive to put this coalition together.

My principal argument is that Senators created state parties out of homogeneous counties. Senators encouraged cooperation among county-wide governing coalitions by canvassing annual county political meetings, drafting and revising a multi-issue policy platform that had the potential to unite a majority of the state’s county governing coalitions, encouraging individual counties to create county-wide political committees, and, finally, organizing a permanent state central committee and regular state-wide conventions. In the process of linking county coalitions together, Senators shaped the geographic composition and issue content of the state party. I maintain that political activists had an incentive to follow their coalition’s Senator because United States Senators were the most influential individuals in shaping national policy and distributing federal patronage. Furthermore, as a builder of a state-wide coalition and a gatekeeper of federal benefits, a Senator secured influence over some state legislators and could occasionally deploy their votes in service of coalition bills.

For a Senator to act on this electoral incentive, bear the cost of coordinating counties, and successfully win the loyalty of county groups, the Senatorial office must provide rewards for its officeholder and his supporters. These conditions are not met until the third decade of the nineteenth century. Between 1809 and 1829, the United States Senate began to initiate legislation, command influence over federal patronage, and increase their visibility among

the mass public (Swift 1996).<sup>17</sup> By 1829, at the very latest, Senators had both incentives and resources to build a state party; the office itself was prestigious and supporters received both purposive and material benefits. United States Senators had incentives to form and maintain parties until 1913, when the Seventeenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was adopted and Senators became directly elected by popular vote.

While each Senator has both the incentives and resources to build a state-wide coalition, not every Senator will construct a state party that features a well developed institutional structure and a multi-issue policy platform. Some may build a temporary state-wide majority of Senatorial electors while others might construct a state machine based solely on patronage. The development of an institutionalized state party bound together by a policy platform is contingent on a Senator holding a long-term policy view. For those who harbor both an extended view and policy goals will benefit from the creation of a policy platform that unites a majority and partisan institutions to facilitate cooperation between coalition members.

The Senatorial office should be particularly effective at recruiting individuals with or promoting the development of a long-term policy view for lengthy, six-year terms encourage an extended view. Furthermore, since the United States Senate was designed to act as a check on both executive tyranny and the popular passions of the lower house, the Senate should attract statesmen concerned about the vitality of the American experiment. In summary, I expect that a Senator is more likely than other political actors to coordinate counties and organize state elections but the Senatorial entrepreneur must hold a long-term policy view for this coalition to develop partisan institutions and longevity across the legislative agenda.

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<sup>17</sup>Before and after his elevation to the United States Senate, Willie Person Mangum of North Carolina consistently described the institution as a safeguard against consolidation. For instance, in 1833 he argued that “the only check to as absolute power, as that in Russia is found in the Senate.—The policy of men in power is to destroy that body in public opinion.—Every other branch of the Gov[erment] is unquestionably & almost unqualifiedly subservient to the will & passions of One Man—or to speak more truly, to the will & passions of a Cabal that gives a decided direction to the Executive” (quoted in Shanks 1952, 55).

## 1.3 Claims

My explanation of party formation depends upon several features of political life in antebellum America listed below. For each claim that refers to United States Senators, I intend the label Senator to include both prospective and incumbent officeholders. This is true for all references to United States Senators unless I specifically refer to the label prospective or incumbent.

1. Most counties will be organized by a community-wide governing coalition that dominates local politics.
2. Most individuals will engage in politics, if at all, through their affiliation with a local governing coalition.
3. If an individual holds political opinions at odds with his community-wide governing coalition, he will either disengage from politics, move to a new county, or create a new county.
4. United States Senators create long coalitions in the state legislature as a means of securing the Senatorial office.
5. To construct these coalitions, Senators bid for the support of individual county organizations.
6. Since counties were politically organized and locally unified, they are not firmly tied to state-wide coalitions. Counties may be fugitive in their state-wide loyalty and, as a result, party composition may be fluid at the state level even when each county is politically monolithic.
7. In terms of policy, a state party composed of homogeneous counties may itself be a heterogeneous coalition.

8. United States Senators holding long-term policy views will facilitate the construction of state party platforms. State party platforms are constructed to bind a coalition behind a Senator. Since their work engages them in questions of national policy, a state party platform constructed by a United States Senator will focus on national political issues.
9. United States Senators holding long term-policy views create state party organizations including a state party convention and a state central committee. A Senator may also be responsible for the formation of legislative caucuses, the founding local party headquarters, and the establishment of political newspapers.

In subsequent chapters, I will assess the validity of these claims and consider their import for the organization and operation of political parties through an examination of state-wide party formation in Maine, New Jersey, and North Carolina.

## **1.4 Conclusion**

Duverger (1959, xxxv) argues that “it is the whole life of the party which bears the mark of its origins.” Consequently, in the process of explaining how parties formed, this dissertation will contribute to a wide range of theoretical concerns including debates about the nature of partisan affiliation, party cohesion, the formation of policy agendas, and the linkage between the mass public and the national government in a federal system. Furthermore, the empirical content of this dissertation helps document and explain the heterogeneity of American party coalitions and why instructions from state legislatures to United States Senators were both infrequent and ineffective.

# Chapter 2

## Party Formation in the Old South: North Carolina

### 2.1 Institutional and social setting

The principal argument of this dissertation is that Senators created parties out of homogeneous counties. I review North Carolina's state constitutions to demonstrate the plausibility of my claims that the county is a significant unit of political organization and that Senators have the strongest incentives and greatest resources to build a state party.

#### 2.1.1 The Constitution of 1776

The Revolutionary Constitution of 1776 created a bicameral General Assembly that met annually from mid-November to mid-January (North Carolina, 1835). Its members selected, by majority vote, the governor, state supreme court and district justices, and both state administrative officers and their staff. To elect a United States Senator, each house of the state legislature placed names in nomination. Then, to vote, each house met separately but simultaneously. A simple majority of members present was sufficient for election.

State legislative elections were held in county-wide districts; annually, in August, each

county elected two commoners and one state senator.<sup>1</sup> Free male taxpayers who resided in their home county for a year or more were eligible to vote for commoners, congressman, presidential electors, county sheriff, county clerk, and county constable.<sup>2</sup> To be eligible to vote for state senator, free male tax payers must possess a freehold of fifty acres or more.

The Constitution provides the governor with limited powers. He appoints justices of the peace, grants pardons and reprieves, declares embargoes, and serves as the captain-general and commander-in-chief of the militia. However, he does not have a veto and his patronage power is severely restricted. He filled vacancies with temporary appointees when the General Assembly was out of session and appointed county-level justices of the peace, on the advice of the county's delegation in the General Assembly and subject to the approval of an Assembly-appointed Council of State.<sup>3</sup> The legislature expanded the governor's role by selecting him to preside over the state Board of Internal Improvements, in 1819, and the state Literary Board, in 1825. Each of these institutions managed state investments and profits were often used to pay legislative salaries, the principal expense of North Carolina state government.

In summary, the Constitution of 1776 made the county the principal electoral district, treated counties equally in terms of representation, divided most governmental duties between state and county government, and failed to create a single office that was popularly elected from a statewide constituency. This is consistent with my claim that counties were the primary unit of American politics.

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<sup>1</sup>In addition, seven commercial towns each sent a single representative to the Commons.

<sup>2</sup>Sheriff became elective in 1829, clerk in 1832, and constable in 1833. Earlier, each office was appointed by justices of the peace in a county. The method for electing presidential electors was the subject of election law. Before 1812, the state was divided into districts that equalled the number of presidential electors. In 1812, the General Assembly selected the state's electors. After 1815, electors were popularly elected once again. In each district, voters chose between a slate of presidential electors that included a local representative.

<sup>3</sup>Prior to popular election of county offices in the early 1830s, justices of the peace filled the county court from their ranks and appointed local residents to the remaining county offices.

## 2.1.2 The Constitution of 1835

A new constitution took effect on 1 January 1836 (North Carolina Constitutional Convention, 1836). The General Assembly moved from annual to biennial sessions. In even years, elections were held in August and legislative sessions convened in November. The 120 seat lower house was apportioned to county units on the basis of federal population with each county allotted one or more representatives.<sup>4</sup> The 50 seat upper house was apportioned according to taxation, with each district consisting of one or more county-wide units. Finally, to improve transparency, voice voting replaced the secret ballot in legislative roll calls.

The new constitution empowered county governments by redistributing many tasks from the legislature to the county including duties related to divorce, alimony, orphans, and the construction and maintenance of roads.

The gubernatorial office became popularly elected in a state-wide district.<sup>5</sup> His term was lengthened, from one to two years.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the start date of his term was moved from mid-December to January 1, closer to the end of the legislative session in mid-January. Despite popular election, his formal powers barely changed.<sup>7</sup> The remaining state officers – Attorney General, State Treasurer, and Secretary of State – continued to be elected by the legislature.

Under the new constitution, the eastern counties lost their majority in the lower house but maintained it in the upper house. Otherwise, the basic structure of state politics remained. The constitutional revisions empowered counties, maintained counties as the primary electoral unit, and gave the governor few formal powers. Counties remained the primary unit of politics and the governor still lacked the electoral incentive to create a state party.

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<sup>4</sup>Borough franchise, for the state's seven commercial towns, was eliminated.

<sup>5</sup>If the gubernatorial election was contested, the legislature selected the governor.

<sup>6</sup>His tenure was limited to two consecutive terms. After serving two-consecutive terms, a former governor became eligible for office after taking one term off.

<sup>7</sup>One exception: the new constitution granted him the power to issue writs of election and fill vacancies that occurred in the General Assembly prior to its meeting.

### 2.1.3 Demographics, geography, and culture

North Carolina began the antebellum era with a large but scattered population. In 1828, North Carolina had thirteen seats in the United States House of Representatives, which gave it the fifth largest delegation out of twenty-three states.<sup>8</sup> By 1860, its House delegation consisted of eight seats and it ranked ten out of thirty-three states. In the interim, the state experienced high levels of emigration and its population remained primarily rural. Owing to weak intra-state development, the state government had meager revenue streams, often insufficient to cover the salaries of the General Assembly and its appointees.

Weak development was, in part, the result of poor transportation linkages. While some towns in the Eastern counties had navigable rivers and ocean access by way of the Cape Fear River, approximately two-thirds of the state's population lived in the central piedmont and western mountain regions which had no water transportation. As a result, "two-thirds of its meager trade was carried on through adjoining states" and, furthermore, "for its inadequate transportation facilities the State paid the heavy penalty of higher prices for what it bought, lower prices for what it sold, scarcity of capital, restricted trade, a regime of relative self-sufficiency, and a comparatively low standard of living" (Newsome 1939, 4). This had two effects. First, most North Carolinians earned and spent their money in neighboring states. Second, manufacturing failed to develop in North Carolina. By 1850, just one per cent of the state's population was employed in manufacturing, compared to eight per cent in New Jersey and five per cent in Maine (ICPSR 197?).

The state's population was quite homogeneous. According to the 1850 census, 99.7 per cent of the state's population was native-born and 97.5 per cent of the state's population was born in North Carolina (ICPSR 197?). Lastly, relative to other states, there was little religious diversity. The vast majority of churches in the state were Protestant; forty-four percent of the state's churches were Methodist, thirty-four percent were Baptist, and eight

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<sup>8</sup>It was tied with Massachusetts for this distinction. Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York had larger delegations.

percent Presbyterian.<sup>9</sup> Many historians have argued that partisan cleavages, in the second and third party systems, can be best understood as ethnic and religious conflicts (Holt 1969; Formisano 1971; Kleppner 1970; McCormick 1974). But North Carolina also develops parties in the absence of intra-state ethnic and religious cleavages.

## 2.2 The county as a political unit

I argue that Senators create state parties out of homogeneous counties. This assumes that the county is the primary unit of political administration and electoral representation and that each county is politically united. However, the literature review, in Chapter 3, shows that scholars of sub-state politics examine the congressional district or urban city rather than the county (Cox 1997; Trounstine 2008; Ethington 1994). I also found that, under normal circumstances, scholars of American politics expect two competitive parties in each district rather than one dominant party (Duverger 1959; Riker 1964, 1987; Trounstine 2008). Thus, my claims about the structure of local politics are not consistent with prior literature.

This section will demonstrate that disciplined county-wide coalitions are the basic unit of politics. In my review of North Carolina's institutional setting, I showed that both state constitutions assigned significant legislative and administrative authority to county governments and also encouraged county-wide organization; most officeholders were elected from county-wide districts and governmental duties were divided between state and county governments. In this legal environment, I expect that political activists will construct a county-wide coalition to control local decision-making and seek legislative representation. Since counties were small, economically homogeneous, and displayed geographic contiguity, I also predict that counties will be internally unified and dominated by a single local governing coalition. If these claims are true, then Senators built state parties by coordinating the actions of politically unified counties that were politically united but fugitive in their loyalty.

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<sup>9</sup>The remaining fourteen percent were Christian, Episcopal, Free Churches, Quaker, German Reformation, Lutheran, Moravian, Tunker, Union, and Roman Catholic.

## 2.2.1 The county as a unit of government in North Carolina, 1665 – 1860

The North Carolina county had deep roots as a unit of government. From 1665, the county was the single territorial division of political importance in North Carolina. Towns within each county had no legal or administrative authority and, as a result, never carried much political clout (Guess 1911).<sup>10</sup> County government was designed to be accessible to the population. Consequently, as new population centers grew, old counties were divided and new county lines adhered to both population and natural geography.

Initially, county government consisted of a sheriff, justices of the peace, and a clerk. Over the years, new county offices were added including register, treasurer, constable, and coroner. Most were appointed by the colonial governor. The county government dealt with criminal and civil cases, probation of wills, road and bridge building and management, land administration, orphans, and business franchises (Guess 1911, 7-30). The sheriff collected taxes, summoned juries, supervised elections, and managed the jail. Lastly, in the colonial period, the county served as the primary electoral unit with representatives in the House of Burgesses were elected from county-wide constituencies.

Under the Constitution of 1776, the county both maintained its colonial functions and assumed increased legislative and administrative powers.<sup>11</sup> For instance, the county was given a new role as caretaker of the poor and it governed local apprenticeship laws. Initially, county officials were either appointed by the governor or selected by those appointees. However, by the early 1830s, most county offices were popularly elected in county-wide districts.

To cover the costs of local government, the General Assembly granted counties the power to levy taxes. Thus, local government expanded and taxed its citizens more heavily than the state government. In 1834, Governor David Lowry Swain estimated that 75 per cent of all

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<sup>10</sup>Before 1738, the county was referred to as a precinct.

<sup>11</sup>Writing in 1911, Guess (1911) argues that North Carolina government remained dominated by the counties with the basic structure of county government largely stable since the colonial era.

taxes were levied by county governments for local projects. Consequently, citizens conducted most of their political business with county officials or individuals whose constituency was a single county. Federal government presence was limited to postmasters, occasional visits from federal judges, and, in select counties, customs officials.<sup>12</sup>

In summary, since the colonial era, county governments consisted of county-wide officeholders that used their legislative and administrative authority to direct local affairs.

### **2.2.2 County-level political organization**

The platforms, and nominations presented and approved of at political meetings may have been crafted behind closed doors by political elites. However, the meetings themselves were well-attended events. For instance, at the typical county meeting, it was not uncommon for 20 per cent of the county's voting age population to be present. Furthermore, political meetings were often attached to a public event such as a meeting of the county court, a militia muster, or an Independence Day dinner. In a world where most citizens were disengaged from politics and the average level of political information was low (Bourke and DeBats 1998; Altschuler and Blumin 2000), a political meeting reminded citizens of their political identity, introduced them to new political issues, and helped them interpret salient issues.

Political meetings could come in a variety of forms: town, county, congressional district, electoral district, and state. While counties hold conventions from 1820 on, the first electoral district convention took place in 1836, the first congressional district convention in 1839, and the first state convention in 1839. From 1839, state conventions occurred every two years, but congressional and electoral district conventions were intermittent. Unlike county conventions, those in congressional and electoral districts did not remind less active citizens of their political commitments. In the 1830s and 1840s, congressional and electoral district conventions were not public events; a few representatives from each county nominated can-

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<sup>12</sup>Postmasters were likely to be those who owned stores in the county seat. Thus, intrusion by the federal government was even less than one might expect.

didates without adopting a platform. Even in a presidential year, approximately 90 percent of all political meetings reported on in North Carolina consisted of county political meetings. In short, it was the county and the state that were politically organized units.

Who led these county meetings? In a study of Cumberland County, Watson (1981, 130) discovers that active citizens who engaged in “chairing a meeting, writing or moving resolutions, serving as a convention delegate, or filling any similar position” tended to be urban lawyers, merchants, and large-scale planters that also had business ventures at the county seat. He also finds that it is rare for an active citizen to reside outside of Fayetteville, the county seat. This is consistent with my claim that businessmen and learned professionals working at the county seat form a stable local governing coalition through their day-to-day interactions with each other and less active citizens.

### **2.2.3 Vote share for winning candidates at the county-level**

To empirically test my claim that counties were dominated by a single local governing coalition, I measure the county-level margin of victory for president, governor, and congressman from 1830 to 1860 (ICPSR 1999). I calculate *average margin of victory* as the vote share for the largest party minus the vote share for the second largest party. The margin of victory for all elections is summed and divided by the total number of elections. If a county is internally unified, then margins of victory should be large. Figure 2.1 shows that, in most counties, the winning candidate won with more than a bare majority. The minimum value is an average margin of victory of 8 points and the median is 32. Thus, in most counties, the vast majority of citizens voted together for the same candidate. If an opposition existed, it could not credibly compete for office.

### **2.2.4 Cohesion of the county-level electorate**

Variation in North Carolina election law provides a natural test for my claim that most counties will be politically united. Prior to 1836, state senate elections were limited to

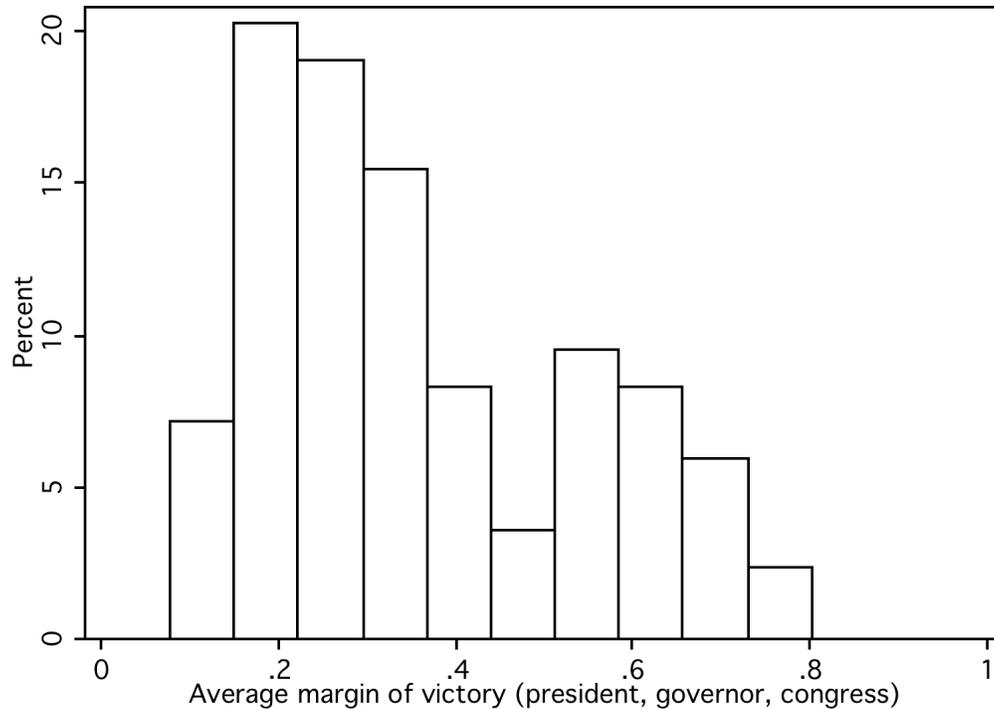


Figure 2.1: Average margin of victory at county-level, 1830 – 1860 (N = 65 counties)

free male tax payers possessing a freehold of fifty acres or more. Depending on the county, this disenfranchised between 17 and 43 per cent of the electorate (Counihan 1971, 6-7). If counties are politically divided on the basis of social class, then candidates with different political views will be elected to each house of the legislature. Furthermore, if candidates for the upper house advocate policies that are unpopular with the wider electorate, then the disenfranchised may demand increased voting rights. It is not unreasonable to expect that social class will be politically salient as many historians have explained the emergence of the Jacksonian Democrat and Whig party system as a function of class-based conflict (Schlesinger 1945).

Evidence collected by Counihan (1971, Chapter 2) is consistent with my claim that counties will be politically united. He estimates that, between 1815 and 1835, 50 per cent of state senators had previously served in the House of Commons. This indicates that state senators were acceptable as candidates to both the wider and limited electorate. Even

though state senators were responsible to a wealthier constituency, the legislation drafted and approved by the state senate was not consistently more conservative or liberal than the legislation drafted by the commons. Finally, while Counihan (1971, 40) uncovers no evidence of protest against “intra-county disparity in voting populations,” he does find persistent protest over inter-county disparities in representation.

To further assess the plausibility of my claim that most counties are politically united, I examined the political response to the Panic of 1819. The economic crisis should create intra-county division as the lower classes would benefit from debtor relief and increased state banking regulations. Yet, Newsome (1939, 32) discovers that counties were united in their responses; the masses in the Eastern counties followed their local leaders “most of whom were conservative in finance as well as politics” while the western counties favored debtor relief and bank regulation.

### **2.2.5 Conclusion**

In this section, I demonstrated that the county was the basic unit of political administration and electoral representation in North Carolina. I also showed that, in each county, political actors organized a homogeneous county-wide coalition that dominated local politics. This is consistent with my model of party formation where I argue United States Senators construct state parties by bidding for the support of individual counties. This evidence in this section clarifies the logic of this process. American counties were easy targets for they had an annual meeting, were economically homogeneous, and acted as a disciplined political unit.

## **2.3 State-wide political organization before mass parties, 1816 – 1840**

By 1816, the Federalist label ceased to exist in North Carolina and, for the next two decades, individualism triumphed. Historians argue, with scant supporting evidence, that cross-

county political alliances emerged in 1836 and, by 1840, North Carolina politics was characterized by a two-party system where individuals affiliated with one of the two parties, the major parties organized elections, and the majority party in the legislature distributed patronage in a partisan manner and privileged partisan bills (McCormick 1966, 209; Pegg 1968, 34-39; Williams 1970, 124; Kruman 1983, 20; Counihan 1971, 191; Watson 1981).<sup>13</sup> This chapter will focus on North Carolina politics from 1830 to 1840, a period that covers the transformation from a partyless period to one where a pair of state parties had formed.

My principal argument is that Senators created state parties out of homogeneous counties. In this section, I show that, prior to Senatorial intervention, individual counties were politically organized but parochial in their outlook and, as a result, counties did not form stable long coalitions in the legislature. Furthermore, I also rule out the rival hypothesis that common interest – rather than political entrepreneurs – led the process of party formation. Since the same political divisions existed before and after parties formed, it was not the introduction of a new and divisive issue that promoted cross-county alliances.

### **2.3.1 Political organization**

In the interval between the Era of Good Feelings and the emergence of the second party system in North Carolina, what form did politics take?

In electoral politics, campaign organization was confined to the local district. Until the late 1830s, there had been no attempt to form a state central committee, a state convention, or a legislative group to coordinate campaigns across county lines (McCormick 1966, 209). Instead, a majority of conventions were limited to nominations without a platform. When meetings offered policy statements, they were usually limited to local concerns – building a courthouse, having an engineer survey the county for potential internal improvements –

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<sup>13</sup>It is difficult to follow the process of party formation. With the exception of Jeffrey (1989), the literature is divided into scholarship that examines North Carolina state politics either before or after constitutional reform (e.g., de Roulhac Hamilton 1916; Williams 1970; Counihan 1971; Kruman 1983). These studies end or begin their analysis in the midst of party formation.

or a declaration of support for a multi-county project – the willingness of town investors to fund a railroad – or the merits of revising the state constitution. Sometimes, individuals at these meetings announced their preference for the presidency. From 1824 to 1833, most candidates, with publicly announced preferences, were Jacksonian. Yet, this support for Jackson was nominal. For instance, state legislators and congressmen with an announced preference for Jackson frequently opposed administration measures (Jeffrey 1989, 47).

Without common labels, the General Assembly had no shorthand to capture the political affiliation of officeholders or political appointees. This problem was compounded by the absence of an institutionalized channel to induce regular cooperation such as a legislative caucus. As a result, the individuals who held leadership positions in the General Assembly and legislative appointees had conflicting priorities and issue positions.<sup>14</sup> As late as 1837, a legislature with a Jacksonian majority appointed anti-Administration men to Assembly leadership positions and both the state and district courts (*Raleigh Register*, 25 November 1834, 27 December 1836 and 3, 10 January 1837). Furthermore, the composition of legislative coalitions was in perpetual flux as legislators formed coalitions on an issue-by-issue basis (Daniel 1954, 196). Majorities were rare, legislative gains were limited, and cycling across multiple legislative sessions often nullified those limited gains (Counihan 1971, Chapter 3). Even within a single legislative session, a cohesive factional group united on a state issue was severely divided on national issues as well as other state issues (Jeffrey 1989, 47).

In short, until the late-1830s, North Carolina lacked political structures that organize elections across multiple counties and, then, maintain the cohesiveness of that coalition in the state legislature. In the absence of Senatorial entrepreneurs building state-wide parties, individual counties were organized but did not coalesce into a long coalition. Furthermore, since governors and state legislators were amateurs without long-term policy views, they did not form a state-wide party.

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<sup>14</sup>Hoffman (1956, 350-1) finds that the Assembly rarely considered views on national affairs when making nominations. This might have extended to the election of United States Senators. Walton (1976, 173-6) finds that even the selection of United States Senators was not a strictly partisan affair until 1836.

### 2.3.2 Political entrepreneurs or common interest?

While I argue that Senators were the entrepreneurs that created state parties, I should also rule out a compelling rival. Perhaps the absence of parties in the 1820s and early 1830s reflects political consensus. Party formation may have coincided with the introduction of a new, divisive issue. However, whether viewed from the perspective of state or national politics, the party-less years are not a manifestation of political unity. In fact, the same political divisions characterized North Carolina before and after party formation, thus suggesting that political entrepreneurs created state parties.

Before the introduction of mass parties, policy entrepreneurs promoted divisive state-level reforms in transportation and education (Lerche 1948; Counihan 1971, Chapter 3). These proposals captured the interest of both political elites and the mass public. But policy entrepreneurs lacked a framework to press their demands and maintain policy successes and, as a result, rare victories proved hollow in the long run. The political system was built simply for managing narrow constituency measures, such as appropriations for local roads, and not for dealing with state-wide policy programs.

Relatedly, geography provoked division between the Eastern counties with access to water transportation and the middle and western counties without. While western counties began to voice support for internal improvements and new state banks but “organization went no further than occasional local meetings” (Counihan 1971, 180).

Further state-level division was induced by the Panic of 1819, which led to declining state revenue and land values along with mass foreclosures. In the run up to the presidential election of 1824, the effects of the Panic spurred factional and regional divisions on “the state issues of finance, constitutional reform, and internal improvements, and over the national issues of internal improvements, tariff, electoral reform and slavery extension” (Newsome 1939, 42). Yet, division on these issues did not result in the construction of state parties.

The state electorate was also divided on national issues. Prior to the 1832 presidential election, dissatisfaction with Jackson increased because he dismissed his cabinet which in-

cluded North Carolina's John Branch, helped nominate Van Buren for vice president, failed to address the tariff,<sup>15</sup> pressed the Force Bill, and vetoed of the Bank of the United States (Pegg 1968, Chapter 1). While this discontent was regularly discussed in newspapers, in the 1832 presidential election, Jackson won 25,261 votes versus 4,563 for Clay (ICPSR 1999). After the presidential election, Jackson's leadership – particularly, deposit removal in October 1833 and a pocket veto of Clay's distribution bill – fomented further dissatisfaction.

To summarize, in the two decades after 1815, there was a diversity of opinion within North Carolina. If common interest on divisive issues was enough to encourage party formation, then some political groups should have formed. Instead, state politics was characterized by factionalism; coalitions regrouped with each issue, appointment, and election. Finally, the set of political issues that divided North Carolinians characterized politics both before and after party formation. Thus, it is more likely that political entrepreneurs – possibly, United States Senators – constructed state parties by targeting the organizations that did exist, homogeneous county-wide governing coalitions.

## 2.4 The United States Senator: Willie Person Mangum

Between 1830 and 1840, a pair of mass parties formed in North Carolina. To identify the universe of Senatorial entrepreneurs that may have created state parties, I analyzed the activities of all individuals that sought a United States Senate seat between 1828 and 1842 (see Table 4.4). This chapter focuses on Willie Person Mangum, the Senator that constructed North Carolina's first state-wide party.

As a prospective and incumbent Senator, Mangum engaged in four party building activities. First, before state committees and party labels, he canvassed county meetings, thereby helping isolated counties coordinate their actions. During his travels, he discovered

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<sup>15</sup>There existed a protectionist community that wanted a decrease in the rates currently set by the Tariff of 1828, but still wanted reduced tariffs to exist so as to protect American “farmers, mechanics, manufacturers, and laborers”

local sentiment and translated it into a platform that could unite a majority of the state's county organizations. Third, he encouraged individual counties to create county-wide political committees. This made it easier for Mangum to contact local leaders, distribute political information, facilitate communication between counties, maintain local support, and ensure impressive turnout for allied presidential and gubernatorial candidates. Finally, he organized the first state-wide conventions and state central committees, thereby institutionalizing the state coalition that he constructed.

### 2.4.1 Background

In 1792, Willie Person Mangum was born in North Carolina's Orange County. While his father was prosperous – owning two hundred acres of land and several slaves – the Mangum family was not a member of their county's large-landowning elite (McDuffie 1925, 7).

Mangum graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1815, received his law license in 1817, and opened his practice in Hillsboro, the county seat of Orange County. There, he was recruited by Judge Duncan Cameron – a prominent member of the county's landed elite and a successful lawyer – to represent Orange County in the state legislature (Pleasants 1962, 7). Mangum agreed and held several elective offices in succession: state representative 1818-1819, superior court judge 1819-1820, congressman 1823-1827,<sup>16</sup> presidential elector for Jackson in 1828, and superior court judge 1829-1830.<sup>17</sup>

Mangum had long admired the United States Senate. As a congressman, in 1826, he argued that equality of state representation in the United States Senate was the “strongest

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<sup>16</sup>Mangum had no desire to remain a congressman (McDuffie 1925). On 14 August 1826, he announced his desire to return to the state superior court and received a temporary appointment from the governor (Thompson 1995, 110). As a further indication of Mangum's disinterest in the United States House of Representatives, in 1837, state and national political leaders urged Mangum to announce his candidacy, yet Mangum declined (Shanks 1952, 490-508). Instead, he ran for a seat in the statehouse and waited for an opening in the United States Senate.

<sup>17</sup>Mangum was a reluctant Jacksonian. In 1824, he supported Crawford and, after his defeat, he was friendly to Adams (Shanks 1950, xxiii). In 1828 he preferred Jackson over Adams but he was unenthusiastic about both (McDuffie 1925 38-39).

Federal feature” of the United States Constitution and the best safeguard against consolidation and a despotic president (quoted in Shanks 1950, 232). By 1828, he was on record as an aspirant for a Senate seat. He secured a Senate seat from the legislature elected in 1830 and he sought to maintain it until the mid-1850s (Pleasants 1962, 13).

### **2.4.2 The Senatorial election of 1830: Mangum builds a temporary coalition**

Party building began later in the South than it did in New England or the Middle Atlantic (McCormick 1966). In the 1820s, incumbent and prospective Senators, in Maine and New Jersey, guided county conventions. However, in North Carolina, no political actor appears at multiple county conventions in the 1820s. Furthermore, county platforms evince little interest in national issues. As a result, rather than state-wide parties, the North Carolina legislature of the 1820s featured a number of personal and regional factions (McDuffie 1925, 40; Shanks 1950, xxv; Fayetteville *Observer*, 23 December 1830).

In his first Senatorial campaign, of 1830, Mangum did not innovate. Rather than build a state party, he constructed a temporary coalition that would elect him to the United States Senate. This coalition served no other purpose; it would not initiate a permanent organization for future cross-country coordination nor did it endorse a common platform (Hoffman 1958, Chapters 1-2).<sup>18</sup> Thompson (1995, 127) discovers that most of the legislators sought an individual friendly to Jackson but, beyond that, each “wanted little more than the prestige and power that would come with victory.” Mangum met this standard; he had a states’ rights reputation and he supported Crawford in 1824 and Jackson in 1828.

Without a party organization to rely on, Mangum solicited support for his candidacy after the state election. He wrote to recently *re-elected* members of the state legislature

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<sup>18</sup>This is not to say that Mangum lacked policy ambitions. Before his election to the United States House of Representatives in 1823, he had staked a reputation on state and national issues. He was in favor of reapportioning the state legislature, state-funded internal improvements, and a reduced tariff. Yet, he relied more on goodwill built up through constituency service rather than policy (Thompson 1995).

and secured commitments from state senators William Sneed of Wake County and Charles Hinton of Granville County to have his name placed in nomination for a Senate seat (Shanks 1950, 385). This activity garnered public recognition; the Fayetteville *Observer* announced Mangum's Senatorial candidacy on the 26 August 1830, eleven days after the state elections.

Owing to favorable correspondence, Mangum believed that he had a legislative majority. However, on the first ballot, he received a plurality of 80 votes with the remaining 110 split among five alternatives – Stokes with 37, Owen 22, Speight 12, Donnell 7, and 32 blank (Fayetteville *Observer*, 2 December 1830; Shanks 1950, 388-389). Consequently, Mangum travelled to Raleigh to lobby legislators. There, he secured the support of Speight and Donnell, two fellow candidates (Fayetteville *Observer*, 9 December 1830). With their supporters, he won a majority (Shanks 1950, 391-392; Hoffman 1958, 35; Thompson 1995, 133-134).

### **2.4.3 Forging an agenda for a state-wide majority, 1833**

Senator Mangum, like many North Carolinians, was distressed by President Jackson's dissolution of his cabinet, failure to deliver on his promise of a tariff for revenue only, assertion that a protective tariff is constitutional, and endorsement the Force bill. In public, Mangum remained a Jacksonian. But, in late 1832, he began to covertly construct a new alliance with Senators Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun.<sup>19</sup> While Mangum was not the only North Carolinian with misgivings about Jackson, I argue that he was the first prominent political elite to simultaneously announce his opposition and propose a platform that had the potential to unite a state-wide majority. As a Senator with ambitions for re-election, Mangum had the electoral incentive to define a popular opposition platform.

Prior to Senator Mangum's switch in affiliation, few North Carolinians publicly opposed Jackson. For instance, in 1832, a Jackson-Barbour ticket was fielded to represent those who were alienated by the president but had not found a suitable alternative. Since Van Buren

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<sup>19</sup>At this point, Mangum did nothing to alienate Jackson. While he opposed the Force bill, he made no public speech nor did he vote on it (Shanks 1950, xxix).

was unpopular in North Carolina and Barbour was well-liked, this alternative ticket was an simple way to register dissatisfaction with Jackson. But few did. The Jackson-Barbour ticket won 4,255 votes and a plurality in six counties compared to 21,006 votes and 57 counties for Jackson-Van Buren and 4,538 votes and 1 county for Clay-Seargant (ICPSR 1999).<sup>20</sup>

In December 1833, after a series of private dinners with Senators Henry Clay of Kentucky, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, and Samuel Southard of New Jersey, Senator Mangum and his colleagues formed a majority coalition that organized the United States Senate and distributed a majority of seats on each committee to its members (Holt 1999, Chapter 2). Before publicly announcing his new opposition to the Jackson Administration, Mangum reached out for elite support, writing letters to potential allies in North Carolina that explained his opposition to the Administration and offered details about the nascent coalition forming in the national legislature (Shanks 1952, 51-101 & 240-47).

In these letters, Mangum began to articulate a set of issue positions that had the potential to unite a diverse group of supporters and build a state-wide majority coalition. Mangum argued that the issue of rechartering the Bank of the United States had to be tabled and, instead, discussion should focus on states rights, the unconstitutionality of deposit removal, the benefits of distributing the proceeds of the public lands, and, potentially, proposing a system of state-funded internal improvements. It may seem unusual that Senator Mangum, a proto-Whig, sought to postpone proposals for rechartering the national bank. Privately, Mangum did favor a recharter but he argued that “the naked question of recharter is much weaker, I presume, than the *Deposit* question—The battle should be fought on the *latter*” (Pleasants 1962, 34-38; Shanks 1952, 53-54). A focus on deposits rather than a recharter would better facilitate the construction of a state-wide long coalition. The policy planks that compose Senator Mangum’s long coalition are listed in Table 2.1.

This correspondence also reveals that Mangum sought the support of incumbent governor

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<sup>20</sup>Jackson’s margins were large. In the median county, the Jackson-Clay ticket won 78 per cent of the popular vote (mean = 72, standard deviation = 23).

Table 2.1: Willie Mangum’s Long Coalition, 1833–1838

	1833	1834	1838
Oppose Administration’s financial policy (Oppose deposit removal in 1833) (For restoration of deposits in 1834) (Oppose Sub Treasury in 1838)	Y	Y	Y
States’ rights (Limit executive patronage and expenditures)	Y	Y	Y
Distribution of the proceeds of the public lands	Y	Y	Y
State internal improvements	Y		Y
Table recharter of U.S. Bank	Y	Y	
Executive usurpation / Corruption of Constitution		Y	Y
Tariff for revenue only		Y	Y
Rescind expunging resolutions			Y

David Lowry Swain. Mangum requested that Swain use his personal popularity and prestige as governor to influence legislative proceedings – encouraging the legislature to pass a resolution in favor of distribution and suppressing any resolutions in favor of Jackson or Van Buren and rechartering the Bank of the United States. Mangum also asked Swain to evaluate favorability toward alternative systems of state-funded internal improvements. Owing to the popularity of Jackson, Mangum argued that success in building an opposition would require an entrepreneur to sell the opposition agenda by “the giving of light in active Canvasses” (quoted in Shanks 1952, 55). Mangum hoped that Swain would canvass the state in the summer of 1834 and his reward could be a Senatorial seat to be filled in December 1834 (Shanks 1952, 54). However, in 1834, Swain chose not interfere with legislative proceedings and not to canvass the state. Instead, he would seek another term as governor.

So far, my narrative suggests that Mangum began his coalition building efforts by drafting a policy platform and, then, retailing it to political elites in his home state. But proposing a popular platform requires some innovation. I argue that Senator Mangum’s agenda – outlined in letters to political elites in December 1833 – was not simply adopted from an existing opposition group in North Carolina. Rather, it represented a new package of public

policies. To demonstrate this point, I turn to my archive of political meetings as well as the legislative journals for the session that met on 18 November 1833 and adjourned on 13 January 1834. If Mangum followed popular sentiment, then I should observe similar policies proposed by the governor, state legislators, or specially convened county political meetings.

The empirical record demonstrates that Mangum's platform, while crafted to win favor, was introduced in advance of expressed opinion. First, Governor Swain, in his annual message and subsequent exchanges with the legislature, made no reference to distribution, deposit removal, or states rights. However, he did outline a rough plan for state involvement in internal improvements.<sup>21</sup> Second, no state legislator initiated a committee report, proposed a resolution, or drafted a bill in favor of distribution or deposit removal. There was a brief discussion of a local internal improvement project – a bill to fund a sand bar removal project in a single county. The bill did not pass. Third, a small group of anti-Administration legislators introduced a resolution in favor of rechartering the Bank of the United States. This was precisely the policy that Mangum sought to eliminate from political discussion because it would not promote the formation of a majority coalition. Finally, *prior to* Mangum's letters, I find no record of public meetings called to discuss distribution or deposit removal. In short, distribution and deposit removal were new political issues and, furthermore, Mangum's potential allies were pursuing a policy that he wanted removed from political debate.

Perhaps Mangum based his platform on ideas articulated by state newspaper editors. After all, editors filled two pages of political news on a weekly basis and they had the freedom to propose policies that were unlikely to garner majority support in the legislature. To test this idea, I gathered all newspaper editorials printed from 1 January and 31 December 1833 in the Raleigh *Register* and Fayetteville *Observer*. These journals became the state's most

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<sup>21</sup>From Governor Swain's annual message to the legislature: "With respect to improvements of a local character, I think the safest and perhaps the wisest course for the Legislature to pursue will be, to incorporate companies in every section of the State where they may be necessary; and to subscribe for a uniform portion of stock in each – on the condition that no part of the public subscription shall be demanded until the private stockholders shall have paid, or secured the payment of their subscriptions" (*Journal of the Senate and House of Commons of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina 1833-1834*, 132).

prominent Whig journals and were more likely be critical of President Jackson. In these editorials, I look for discussion of three issues – distribution, deposit removal, and rechartering of the United States Bank. If newspaper articles in favor of a particular policy are published frequently in advance of Mangum’s proposal, then he is adopting a well developed policy plank. If newspapers articles occur near Mangum’s proposal, then he merely reflects a broad shift in political opinion. Lastly, if there are no newspaper articles in advance of Mangum’s proposal, then he is leading public discussion on the issue.

Table 2.2: Newspaper Editorials on the topics of distribution, deposit removal, and rechartering the United States Bank, 1833

Distribution	Deposit Removal	Recharter U.S. Bank
		RR, May 21
		FO, July 3
		FO, August 20
		FO, September 3
		RR, September 10
	RR, October 8	
		RR, October 8
		RR, October 15
		FO, November 12
	RR, December 17	

Note: FO = Fayetteville *Observer*, RR = Raleigh *Register*.

In Table 2.2, I list the dates of all newspaper editorials referencing distribution, deposit removal, and rechartering the Bank of the United States printed in the Fayetteville *Observer* and Raleigh *Register* for the calendar year 1833. Recall that Senator Mangum emphasized distribution and deposit removal but sought to eliminate all discussion regarding the recharter of the United States Bank.

None of these editorials address distribution despite the fact that it had been an active issue in Washington throughout the calendar year.<sup>22</sup> On the issue of deposit removal, the Raleigh *Register* published two editorials – on 8 October and 17 December 1833 – but the Fayetteville *Observer* published none. On the issue of rechartering the United States Bank, between July 30 and November 12, both the Raleigh *Register* and the Fayetteville

<sup>22</sup>Henry Clay drafted a distribution bill which passed both houses of the 22nd Congress right before they adjourned on 2 March 1833. It suffered a pocket veto from Andrew Jackson.

*Observer* each published four editorials. In summary, Mangum was leading public debate on distribution and at the forefront of a rather limited debate on deposit removal. Meanwhile, the issue of rechartering the United States Bank – an issue that Mangum sought to eliminate from political discussion – was frequently promoted in both newspapers.

In conclusion, Senator Mangum’s opposition to Andrew Jackson was novel. He did not act simply as an individual nor did he seek to influence state opinion on his favorite issue. Rather, he sought a long coalition and, even then, he carefully tampered with its issues to create a majority. In creating this platform, he did not simply assemble a platform of pre-existing policies, but innovated and proposed a platform that would increase opposition to the Jackson Administration and, potentially, unite a majority of individuals in the state. Senator Mangum engaged in this entrepreneurial activity because he had the appropriate electoral incentive as well as a long-term policy view. To win re-election to the United States Senate and to be an effective member of the proto-Whig coalition, he would need to assemble a new anti-Jackson majority in North Carolina’s state legislature.

#### **2.4.4 Going public with an anti-Administration platform, 1834**

In 1834, Senator Mangum publicly announced his opposition to Jackson and continued to tinker with state-wide policy platform. But, owing to Senate business, he was unable to canvass county conventions in North Carolina. In the absence of a Senatorial entrepreneur with a long-term policy view, a state-wide anti-Jackson long coalition failed to form.

In the United States Senate, anti-Administration men formed a majority coalition that organized the 1st session of the 23rd Congress, which ran from December 1833 to June 1834 (Holt 1999, Chapter 2). On 3 February 1834, Senator Mangum confirmed his membership in this opposition coalition. In a short statement on the floor of the United States Senate, he declared that President Jackson’s removal of deposits from the Bank of the United States was an unconstitutional act of executive usurpation; the question was not “bank or no bank” but “law or no law – constitution or no constitution” (Salisbury *Western Carolinian*, 1 March

1834).

Then, on February 25, Mangum delivered a lengthy critique of the Jackson Administration's "bold and lawless usurpation:" its lack of "fixed and well-defined principles" to guide policy, its failure to deliver on its promises of tariff reduction and distribution, and its attempt to expand executive patronage through pet banks (*Raleigh Register*, 18 March 1834). Looking ahead to the presidential election of 1836, Mangum credited Clay with saving the Union through his compromise tariff and noted that while he did vote for Vice President Van Buren with "deep reluctance," he "should not be likely to repeat the act" (*Raleigh Register*, 18 March 1834). This speech introduced a few new themes to Mangum's anti-Administration platform – executive usurpation and corruption of the Constitution, restoration of the deposits, and a tariff for revenue only. These ideas helped compose an even broader platform that could unite *potential* opponents of Jackson including supporters of national and local banks, local banks alone, federally funded internal improvements, nullification, states' rights, and state constitutional reform (Pleasants 1962, 54). Again, the policy planks that compose Senator Mangum's evolving long coalition are listed in Table 2.1.

By delivering his speeches on the Senate floor, he merited press coverage. And, with a friendly majority in control of the Senate, Mangum secured the votes to have Senate printers prepare thousands of copies of each speech for national distribution.

Senator Mangum's public pronouncements also influenced his legislative behavior. He introduced resolutions from more than a dozen counties and towns disapproving of deposit removal. He voted in favor of a resolution censuring Jackson for deposit removal, a resolution to restore the deposits, and printing several Senate reports critical of deposit removal (*Raleigh Register* 18 February & 22 April 1834; *Salisbury Western Carolinian*, 1 March 1834; *Fayetteville Observer*, 25 March 1834; 1834; Pleasants 1962, 39; McDuffie 1925, 51).

It is possible that Mangum's new anti-Administration position is a reflection of a prior sea change in state level public opinion. However, the evidence suggests otherwise. First, Senator Mangum's public stance against deposit removal and in favor of restoration preceded

all county-level meetings on the issue (Salisbury *Western Carolinian*, 1 & 15 March, 12 April 1834). Second, Mangum received letters from his constituents warning him that he could not oppose Jackson and expect to maintain their support (Shanks 1952, 59). Finally, a celebrated historian of antebellum North Carolina labeled Mangum's opposition to Jackson as a "mistake" and argued that "he jumped off the Jackson bandwagon a little too soon" (Hoffman 1956, 339). All of this suggests that Mangum was not reacting to a crystallized shift in public opinion. Instead, he had to actively build support for his new opposition group.

Senator Mangum's momentum in building a new party was stalled by Senate business. First, during the state campaign of 1834, he was unable to canvass North Carolina. As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, he spent the summer in the Northeast investigating the nation's banking system. Second, Governor Swain declined to act as a party chairman, lead the summer campaign, and become the presumptive nominee for the United States Senate seat to be filled in November 1834 (Shanks 1952, 54). Instead, Swain remained a non-partisan in pursuit of a third-term as governor and he did not attend a single county convention (Daniel 1954).<sup>23</sup> Third, Mangum faced resistance from potential coalition members. For instance, the Salisbury *Western Carolinian*, a states rights newspaper, noted that, despite nationalist overtures, their faction would "not barter their *principles* to obtain office" and would not "be satisfied to play *second fiddle*" (11 October 1834). In the absence of Senator Mangum canvassing county conventions, his proposed long coalition failed to form.

Since Senator Mangum was out of state on Senate business and unable to canvass, the county conventions that met between March and July of 1834 were similar to years before. First, none of the conventions adopted a party label: nearly all announced their meeting as representing the "Citizens of — County."<sup>24</sup> Second, no political entrepreneur attended

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<sup>23</sup>In return, county conventions paid no heed; just one convention passed a resolution in favor or in opposition to the past service of Governor Swain or his re-election.

<sup>24</sup>Competing meetings were held in the counties of Wake and Halifax. These meetings were modified by adding a town label to the end of the call.

multiple meetings. Third, just three of sixty-four counties formed some sort of local organization such as a county committee of correspondence or vigilance. Lastly, there was no cross-county organization. In the absence of a Senatorial entrepreneur building a state party, most counties failed to coordinate.

Nonetheless, Senator Mangum's speeches and his voting record in the Senate influenced the content of some county platforms. First, an increasing number of county political meetings drafted and passed policy resolutions on national affairs. In 1833, a congressional election year, three county political meetings passed resolutions relevant to national politics compared to fifteen in 1834. The remaining meetings attended to nominations and, in some cases, local affairs such as county internal improvements and state constitutional revision. While the mix of national issues varies across counties, they focused on executive usurpation, restoration of the deposits, and the rechartering of the United States Bank. The issues of executive usurpation and restoration of deposits reflect Mangum's concerns. But he had failed to eliminate rechartering the United States Bank from the dialogue and no county took up his concern for either distribution or a tariff for revenue only. In summary, while there was increased attention on national affairs, Mangum's proposed policy platform was not being picked up a mass of local governing coalitions.

Prior to the meeting of the state legislature, political observers were uncertain whether Bedford Brown – the incumbent Senator who supported Jackson on all issues except the Force Bill – would be re-elected. While Brown won re-election with 113 of the 194 votes cast, his supporters did not form a solid coalition across all votes. Anti-Administration men were elected to the positions of State Controller, State Treasurer, and Speaker of the House of Commons (Pegg 1968, 21). Furthermore, the non-partisan Governor Swain, rather than a firm Jacksonian, won re-election for a third-term. As in previous years, a cohesive long coalition, of majority size, did not form in the North Carolina state legislature. This is consistent with my argument that a state-level long coalition is unlikely to form until a Senator with a long-term policy view builds one by canvassing his state.

## 2.4.5 Canvassing the state and creating a party organization, 1835–1836

The state legislature elected in August 1836 would determine Mangum’s re-election prospects. In the sixteen months prior to those elections, Senator Mangum canvassed the state, retailed his anti-Administration platform, helped create county-level committees of correspondence and vigilance, and organized the first state-wide caucus which nominated Hugh Lawson White for the presidency and created North Carolina’s first state central committee.

Mangum was the first political entrepreneur in North Carolina – since I started collecting convention reports in 1820 – to visit more than one county political meeting in a single election cycle. Between 7 April and 6 June 1835, Senator Mangum attended political meetings in eight of North Carolina’s sixty-four counties. This may seem like a meager number but these eight meetings cover the northern and southern sections of each geographic region in the state – western, piedmont, and coastal. In addition, given the duration of his journey, Mangum probably conversed with leaders in additional counties.

In 1835, Governor Swain also attended four political meetings.<sup>25</sup> Each of these meetings took place in the western half of the state and they were also attended by Senator Mangum. This evidence may appear inconsistent with the implications of my model but consider the circumstances. First, Senator Mangum began courting Swain in December 1833. It seems reasonable that Mangum – as a resident of the central Piedmont – would invite a popular westerner to join him at political meetings in that section of the state. Second, in 1835, Swain was no longer eligible for re-election as governor. Lastly, Swain’s future career prospects were uncertain. He could return to his law practice in Asheville, seek a judicial appointment, or bid for North Carolina’s second Senate seat as he may have done in 1848 (see Table 4.4). Regardless of the path chosen, he would benefit from canvassing the state with Senator Mangum.

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<sup>25</sup>John Morehead and Thomas Galloway also attend two meetings each.

During Mangum's state-wide canvass, he educated the public about national affairs, raised funds to help support anti-Administration newspapers, encouraged the formation of county-level political organization, and championed the candidacy of Hugh Lawson White for the presidency. He asked each county to form a county-level committee of correspondence and and committee of vigilance. The former provided Mangum with a list of individuals that would safely deliver franked materials throughout the county and the latter created a turnout machine.

What effect did Mangum's actions have on political platforms of receptive county organizations? I consider Mangum's audience to consist of the sixteen political meetings that announced opposition to Jackson, opposition to Van Buren, support for Senator Mangum, or support for Hugh Lawson White. Mangum's opposition included the twenty-six political meetings that either passed resolutions in favor of Andrew Jackson, the Baltimore Convention, and Senator Bedford Brown or opposed to Senator Mangum. I label the former anti-Administration and the latter pro-Administration.

First, Mangum did not face a rival political entrepreneur. Among the set of pro-Administration meetings, no political entrepreneur canvassed multiple counties. Second, among the county political meetings friendly to Mangum, there was an increase in county-level organization. Six meetings instituted a local organization. In contrast, one Administration meeting created a political organization. Third, among anti-Administration men, there was an increase in the discussion of national political issues. Seventy-five percent of anti-Administration meetings passed resolutions on national issues compared to fifteen percent of pro-Administration meetings. Furthermore, the issues of the tariff, distribution, and executive corruption – policies pushed by Mangum – were taken up widely for the first time.

The election results were inconclusive. Pro- and anti-Administration officials ran even, with the balance of power in the General Assembly held by a handful of unaffiliated legislators (Dubin 2007, 140). It might be fair to say that the pro-Administration men had a slight advantage as the General Assembly elected Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr., a friend of the

Jackson Administration, to the gubernatorial office. But consider Mangum's achievements. The number of anti-Administration political meetings increased from five in 1834 to sixteen in 1835. Of those sixteen, six had a political organization. Furthermore, the platforms drafted by local meetings became increasingly focused on national issues and mirrored the policies proposed by Mangum in 1833 and 1834.

Senator Mangum helped arrange the call for a meeting in the state capitol of those legislators "opposed to the election of Martin Van Buren and Richard M. Johnson" (*Raleigh Register*, 29 December 1835; Thompson 1995, 244). This was the first state-wide caucus of the anti-Administration coalition. It nominated Hugh Lawson White for the presidency and appointed a seven-member state central committee, which was responsible for ensuring that each county fielded an electoral slate and formed a county-level committee of vigilance and committee of correspondence. The meeting did not nominate a governor. It left that task to the county meetings, which converged upon Edward B. Dudley (*Fayetteville Observer*, December 31, 1835, January 14, 1836; *Raleigh Register*, 1 February 1836).<sup>26</sup>

The first session of the 24th Congress kept Mangum in Washington until early July. Thomas Clingman, David Lowry Swain, and William A. Graham picked up the slack before Mangum returned. In all, forty-five anti-Administration county meetings were organized between 2 February 1836 and 28 June 1836. Twenty-three of these meetings created a local organization that consisted of a central committee and a committee on correspondence – as recommended by Senator Mangum during his 1835 canvass and at the 1835 meeting in the state capitol. In just two years, Senator Mangum had built a state-wide partisan organization. In terms of policy, a majority of these meetings declared Van Buren unsound on the tariff, slavery, and running the executive office without corruption.

To provide contrast, there were thirty-six county meetings affiliated with Senator Bedford

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<sup>26</sup>The absence of a gubernatorial nomination should not be interpreted as evidence in favor of prior agreement on a candidate. Pegg (1968, 67n108) argues: "Just why the caucus expected the various county meetings to agree on a candidate is not clear, unless it had reached an understanding as to the candidate. There seems to be no evidence to this effect."

Brown, Martin Van Buren, or gubernatorial candidate Richard Dobbs Spaight. Without similar entrepreneurial activities, 25 per cent of these meetings instituted local organization compared to 51 per cent of the meetings affiliated with Mangum. Also, 17 per cent of the meetings affiliated with Van Buren passed national resolutions compared to 51 per cent of the meetings affiliated with Mangum.

In the state elections of 1836, the anti-Administration candidate for governor secured office with a popular majority of 53.6 per cent of the state-wide vote. But Mangum was one seat shy of a legislative majority and lost his bid for re-election to the United States Senate. Mangum and anti-Administration candidates were weak in the eastern counties, which held a majority of seats in the state senate. Nonetheless, Mangum's achievements were extraordinary – he created a long coalition with political organization at both the state- and county-level. This was the foundation for North Carolina's first state party.

#### **2.4.6 A majority coalition in the legislature, 1838**

In 1838, Senator Mangum finished building his state party. After securing the support of five fugitive counties, Senator Mangum's long coalition controlled a majority in the state legislature. Over the next few years, Mangum continued to lead the coalition; he set the state agenda, created a state organization, and continued to canvass individual counties. The legislature of 1840 returned Mangum to the Senate where he served until 1853.

In the 1838 state elections, Mangum won the support of five county meetings that stood to benefit from his support for distribution and state internal improvements: Craven, Greene, Johnston, Martin, and Onslow. In 1836, in these five counties, the state legislative ticket for anti-Administration candidates won between twenty-nine and thirty-eight per cent of the vote. In 1838, the state legislative ticket for anti-Administration candidates, in these five counties, won between sixty-six and eight-five percent of the vote. These fugitive counties provided the anti-Administration coalition with the seats it needed to control the legislature.

The legislative session of 1838 was the first to feature a legislative caucus and the first to

distribute jobs and leadership positions on the basis of partisanship. No individuals aligned with the Van Buren Administration received a legislative appointment (*Raleigh Register*, December 27, 1836 and January 3 & 10, 1837; de Roulhac Hamilton 1916, 46; Walton 1976, 176n20; Pegg 1968, 65). While these events cannot be linked directly to Mangum, they do appear, for the first time in North Carolina, in a legislature controlled by a coalition that Mangum spent five years assembling.

Senator Mangum sought to influence the legislative agenda. Immediately preceding the 1838 legislative session, he published a series of resolutions in the *Hillsborough Recorder* that composed a Whig platform. These resolutions declared opposition to expunging Jackson's censure from Senate records, the Sub Treasury System, the level of expenditures by the General Government, and the increasing power and patronage of the Executive Department. These resolutions argued in favor of distributing the proceeds of the public lands to the states according to federal population and rescinding the Senate's expunging resolution.

These resolutions were tendered to Kenneth Rayner who read them in the House of Commons on 4 December 1838 (*Raleigh Register*, 10 December 1838). The General Assembly debated the resolutions for the remainder of the session, which adjourned on 8 January 1839. After each resolution was approved by a majority, some with slight modifications, the General Assembly requested that Governor Dudley forward them to Senators Bedford Brown and Robert Strange. They were subsequently printed as a pamphlet for the 1840 presidential campaign and formed the core of the campaign organized by the state central committee (Shanks 1953, 19; Huggins 2008, 432-7).

Senator Mangum's resolutions were the capstone to his coalition building process. In 1833, he argued that a state-wide coalition should unite on a platform in favor of distribution and opposed to executive usurpation and deposit removal. Five years later, he updated these concerns to fit current circumstances – for instance, trading opposition to deposit removal for opposition to the Sub Treasury system – and had a majority that he assembled in the legislature approve of these resolutions as the policy of the anti-Administration party. Taken

together, these resolutions represented Senator Mangum's long coalition (see Table 2.1 to compare his 1838 proposal with those from 1833 and 1834). It would be ideal if political historians compiled similar lists for Senatorial entrepreneurs in other states so that packages of articulated policies could be compared across states.

In November 1839, Mangum's coalition held the first state-wide convention in North Carolina, for the purpose of nominating a gubernatorial candidate and selecting delegates for the Whig national convention (Raleigh *Register*, 31 August 1839 & 16 November 1839; Fayetteville *Observer*, September 4, 1839). The proceedings of North Carolina's first state convention provide a critical test for the competing hypotheses that Senators or governors created state parties. If a Senator builds a state-wide party, then the state platform should focus on national issues. For a Senator seeks to build support for his national policy agenda. If, however, a governor builds a state party, then the platform should focus on state issues. These expectations are consistent with prior evidence. All six resolutions that Mangum published in the Hillsborough *Recorder* and transmitted to the 1838 legislature addressed national policy questions. Furthermore, the gubernatorial message of 1838 consisted of two state-level and zero national policy proposals (see Table 2.6).<sup>27</sup> But what happened at the Whig State Convention of 1839? The delegates approved a ten item platform that consisted of two state policy planks and eight national policy planks. Thus, a convention that nominated both a president and a governor emphasized national over state issues. This is consistent with my argument that Senators, rather than governors, created state parties.

Leading up to the state elections of 1840, Mangum attended the Whig National Convention in 1839 and, then, on 27 March 1840, he led the inaugural county convention of the year in his home county. He introduced a set of resolutions which focused on improving county-level Whig organization and cross-county communication (Raleigh *Register*, 27 March 1840). Lastly, Mangum won a nomination for state senator so he could be a member of the legislature that would elect North Carolina's next United States Senator.

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<sup>27</sup>The gubernatorial message of 1840 also included two state-level and zero national policy proposals.

In 1840, George A. Badger – a future United States Senator – also helped canvass eastern and central counties. Furthermore, for the first time in state history, the state central committee sent gubernatorial candidate John Motley Morehead on a speaking tour of the state, which took him to twenty-one of the state’s sixty-four counties. In the state elections of August 1840, the Whig party won the governorship, a majority of seats in the state legislature, and both vacancies in the United States Senate. Mangum filled the full, six-year term and William A. Graham, the four-year term. The Whig party also secured a majority for their electoral slate. After seven years of party building, the Whig party commanded a majority in the North Carolina legislature and featured an organizational apparatus that included a state convention, state party platform, and state central committee along with a legislative caucus that influenced nominations.

From 1833 to 1840, Senator Mangum created a state party by canvassing fugitive counties, retailing a platform suitable for a majority-sized long coalition, and by creating local and state-level organization. In subsequent years, as incumbent Senator, Mangum continued to shape the issue concerns of the state-wide coalition and encourage local political organization. For instance, at the 1842 state convention, Mangum presented a plan for county party organization that was endorsed and, later, widely implemented. Furthermore, even in that off-year state convention with no presidential or congressional contests, the platform focused on national issues; the six item platform included one state-level policy proposal and five national policy proposals. Again, this evidence is consistent with my hypothesis that Senators, rather than governors, created state parties.

Senator Mangum was re-elected to the United States Senate in 1846 and his state-wide long coalition dominated state government until the early 1850s. Political actors aligned with the Van Buren administration mimicked Mangum’s organization but, theirs remained weak and ineffective until the re-building of state coalitions in the 1850s (Kruman 1983, 35).

## 2.5 State legislators

To explain party formation, many scholars have focused on the incentives of incumbent legislators (Chhibber and Kollman 2004). Incumbents have an incentive to form a long coalition of majority size because membership in this coalition maximizes the probability of securing positive benefits on each legislative roll call (Schwartz 1989). Assuming that legislators seek re-election, incumbents have an incentive transform their long coalition into an electoral party by transforming their local electoral committee into a party affiliate because a legislator depends on his local electoral committee for re-election (Duverger 1959).<sup>28</sup>

This argument is contingent on two claims. First, legislators seek re-election and, second, they have a long-term policy view. However, neither claim holds in the antebellum era. Quite simply, the average state legislator was an amateur who rarely sought re-election. To demonstrate this point, Table 2.3 list the re-election rates for members of the North Carolina state legislature from 1820 until party formation in 1840.

Table 2.3: Re-Election Rates in North Carolina State Legislature, 1820–1840

Number of Terms Served	Percent of Legislators
1	45
2	25
3	11
4 or more	19

Source: State legislative journals (N = 1224).

Is the rate of re-election, displayed in Table 2.3, high or low? To determine the answer to this question, I compare re-election rates in North Carolina to the United States House of Representatives. Polsby (1968, 146) argues that, in the antebellum era, the United States House of Representatives was an institution of amateurs without specialized knowledge; it failed to provide career opportunities for its members and lacked persistent leadership. Polsby empirically demonstrates his point by measuring the number of terms served con-

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<sup>28</sup>I will use the term legislator to refer generally to both commoners and state senators. There is no need to treat members of each house separately for both represented county units, members of each house had similar demographic characteristics, and few pieces of legislation placed one house in opposition to the other (Counihan 1971).

gressman. He finds that, for each session of the United States House in the antebellum era, the mean number of terms served is usually two or more. By contrast, in the North Carolina General Assembly, the mean terms of service is slightly less than two in each legislative session. Based on this metric, the North Carolina General Assembly was not institutionalized. Furthermore, Kruman (1983, 51) calculates re-election rates for the years 1836 to 1850 and finds that more than 60 per cent of state representatives served a single term and another 25 per cent two terms. Re-election became less common, thus indicating that the state legislature became less institutionalized over time. Taken together, this evidence suggests that North Carolina's state legislature was filled with amateurs rather than professionals and, over time, the ratio of amateurs increased.

Even with rapid turnover, there was a contingent of men with significant tenure in the state legislature. Perhaps these men were of sufficient number to guide party formation. There is reason to be skeptical. Even men of long tenure rarely spent more than a few years on the same committee, which, again, suggests a lack of specialization. This observation is also consistent with my argument that state legislators lacked a long-term policy view.

Perhaps the speaker of the commons or president of the state senate guide the process of party formation. Given legislative rules, prospects for vigorous leadership are dim. First, seats on standing committees were appointed by the legislature and had to include one member from each judicial district. Second, legislative rules constrained leaders. Each bill was read on the floor, open to amendment, and subject to three roll calls before final approval.<sup>29</sup> At any point in this process, a legislator could call for a vote to override the speaker's rule. Quite simply, the institutional leaders of the General Assembly had lacked incentives and resources to build a party.

Finally, perhaps common interest encouraged the formation of a long coalition that lasted for a single legislative session. There was certainly a basis for common interest. In the 1820s and 1830s, western counties often called for internal improvements, state banking, and new

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<sup>29</sup>Once a bill was defeated, it must secure two-thirds support to pass in the same legislative session.

western counties. Yet this sectional interest lacked intra- or extra-legislative organization (Counihan 1971, 197). Legislators from western counties rarely pursued large scale public policies and, instead, focused on small appropriations for local projects (de Roulhac Hamilton 1916, Chapter 3; Newsome 1939, Chapter 1).

For instance, Archibald Murphey served in the state senate from 1812 to 1819 and was committed to a state-wide system of internal improvements. In 1815, he presented a plan for a state-wide system of improvements that would facilitate the transportation of goods across the state, from the western mountains to the ocean. The bill died and, in subsequent sessions, he continued to stuff it with additional improvements to win over unfriendly counties. When this failed, Murphey scaled back his proposal and, in 1819, passed anemic legislation to create a Board of Internal Improvements that would survey the state and recommend internal improvements that could be feasibly dealt with by private investment. This board remained inconsequential until the latter 1830s, when political parties appeared and delegated increased authority.

In summary, it is unlikely that state legislators constructed state parties because they were amateurs that represented parochial county governing coalitions. Absent a Senatorial entrepreneur canvassing county meetings and selling a policy platform, state legislators did not have the long-term policy views necessary to see the advantage in building and maintaining a long coalition.

## **2.6 Governors**

Since state parties emerged in the late 1830s, historians of North Carolina have argued that the switch from legislative to popular election of the governor, in 1836, must have led to the formation of state parties (Williams 1970, 124; Kruman 1983, 20). However, as I will show, the governor had neither the incentives nor the resources to build a state party and, as a result, ambitious office seekers with a long-term policy view did not seek the gubernatorial

seat.

Both North Carolina state constitutions granted the governor few formal powers; he lacked a veto, substantial appointment power, and a responsible executive branch. His constitutional powers were limited to his role as commander-in-chief and his control of a limited number of patronage appointments. It is implausible that these duties conferred much advantage. His role as Captain General and Commander in Chief of the North Carolina Militia was ceremonial. Militia efforts were directed by generals and field officers who were appointed by and responsible to the General Assembly (North Carolina 1835, 10-11). The governor could not call the militia without the consent of the General Assembly.<sup>30</sup> With respect to his minimal appointment power, the governor lacked discretion. He appointed county-level justices of the peace from a list prepared the General Assembly. He chose members of the Literary Board and the Board of Internal Improvements, but these bodies made no policy decisions. Lastly, he filled vacancies that emerged after the General Assembly had adjourned but it was rare for a governor to exercise this authority (Daniel 1954).<sup>31</sup>

Turning to the debates at the 1835 constitutional convention, I find that antebellum political elites recognized that the governor had little influence over state politics. For instance, William Gaston noted:

“The Governor of North-Carolina may be said to possess *no* political power. He has no share in making the laws, he has no share in the appointment of officers. Except the right of granting reprieves and pardons, all that is required from him is, that he should be a gentleman in character and manners, and exercise a liberal hospitality” (North Carolina Constitutional Convention 1836, 336-7).

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<sup>30</sup>During recess, he could call the militia with the consent of an assembly appointed Council of State. However, since the Council of State included seven members from across the state, it could take weeks for a governor to convene the Council. Hence, most governors did not and other powers contingent on approval of the Council, such as the authority declare an embargo, also languished. To illustrate gubernatorial weakness, in 1833, Governor Swain considered calling the militia to quash a threat in the west, but determined “that the laws of the state would not permit him” and, instead, requested federal assistance (Daniel 1954, 267).

<sup>31</sup>To fill a temporary appointment, the governor had to convene his seven-member Council of State and win majority support for his appointees. Consequently, most governors simply left posts vacant.

Gaston's characterization of the North Carolina governor provoked no dissent and the convention decided to maintain a limited role for the gubernatorial officeholder. The convention did debate whether the governor should be popularly elected.

“The PRESIDENT (Mr. *Macon*) did not think it of much importance whether the Governor is elected by the Legislature or the People. He had but little power. If he had a negative power over the laws passed, as Governors of many of the States have, he should say he ought to be elected by the People. Where the Governor has next to nothing to do, it is of little consequence who elects him”  
(North Carolina Constitutional Convention 1836, 335).

In the end, the convention endorsed popular election not as a means of increasing gubernatorial power but in an effort to make the constitution increasingly democratic.

In searching for potential gubernatorial influence, I also look beyond the constitutional text. For instance, it became customary for the governor to forward an annual message to the General Assembly. Furthermore, the governor also sent additional communications throughout the legislative session. It is possible that an energetic executive might influence the shape of legislative coalitions and the content of public policy by presenting a series of policy resolutions in his annual message.<sup>32</sup>

To evaluate this possibility, I reference the *Journals of the Senate and House of Commons of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina* and compile all interactions between the governor and the General Assembly for all sessions between 1830 and 1841.<sup>33</sup> This includes transcripts of gubernatorial messages, gubernatorial communications, and legislative requests for gubernatorial action.

In each legislative session between 1830 and 1840, the governor delivered an annual

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<sup>32</sup>The governor sent his message to the legislature at the start of each session. As such, the annual message was delivered near the end of a governor's term in office, just before his re-election. Owing to the timing of the annual message, a governor tended to observe the norm of the non-partisan, administrative governor. If an annual message proposed divisive policy, the incumbent might endanger his re-election prospects.

<sup>33</sup>A new volume is printed by the state printer at the end of each legislative session.

message. When examining annual messages, I break the speech down into a set of topics such as public education, internal improvements, the state judiciary, and so on. For each topic, I ask the following questions:

1. For this topic, does the governor hold either constitutional or assembly-delegated power? Yes or no. If yes, what?
2. Does this topic address a concern of state government? Yes or no.
3. Does this topic address a concern of national government? Yes or no.
4. Does the governor offer a *policy* recommendation? Yes or no. If yes, what?
5. Does the governor offer an *administrative* recommendation? Yes or no. If yes, what?

The first question helps identify policy areas that the governor has a duty to address. For instance, his administrative role at the Literary Fund and the Board of Internal Improvements combined with his responsibility for forwarding annual reports, may require the governor to touch on the subjects of public education and internal improvements.<sup>34</sup> But the governor can frame his report in multiple ways. He may offer a simple overview of the finances of each board. He may take the opportunity to recommend policy action. For instance, in 1840, Governor Dudley used his discussion of the Literary Fund to argue that a resolution should be passed requiring public schools to train students for militia service. Or he may ask the legislature to revise administrative procedures. For instance, in 1838, Governor Dudley sought legislation that would require criminal courts to submit reports to the governor on all cases where a conviction was made.<sup>35</sup>

In the nine gubernatorial addresses between 1830 and 1840, governors transmitted a large number of reports and discussed fourteen unique topics including banking, distribution of

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<sup>34</sup>A governor does not have to offer any words of advice. In 1832, Governor Montfort Stokes forwarded all necessary reports without comment. However, in all other cases, governors chose to comment even if it was a dry summary of state finances.

<sup>35</sup>This made it easier for the governor to process requests for pardons.

the proceeds of public land, Indian affairs, incendiary publications, internal improvements, pardons, public education, revision of public statutes, a state convention, the state judiciary, the state militia, the tariff, taxation, and North Carolina’s war claims.<sup>36</sup> For our discussion of party leadership, I am primarily interested in a topic if a governor makes a specific policy proposal.

If a state executive uses his annual message to shape a legislative coalition and influence the output of public policy, then what should I observe? Willie Mangum provides an instructive example. Recall that, in 1838, prospective Senator Mangum sought to influence his new long coalition in the Assembly when he forwarded six national policy recommendations. The legislature debated these resolutions for a month, then passed each with a majority vote. Thus, if a governor seeks to lead a legislative coalition, I expect that he will forward multiple policy resolutions in each legislative session. Furthermore, I expect that the legislature will both debate and vote on these resolutions.

Table 2.4: Policy Proposals in Gubernatorial Messages, 1830–1840

Year	Policy Proposals	Discussed	Voted
1830	3	3	1
1831	2	1	1
1832	0	n/a	n/a
1833	4	3	1
1834	1	1	1
1835	0	n/a	n/a
1836	0	n/a	n/a
1838	2	1	1
1840	3	1	0

Source: State legislative journals

What does the evidence show? Table 2.4 lists the number of policy recommendations presented in each annual message. The text of each recommendation is listed in Table 2.5. By courtesy, the legislature usually referred to all gubernatorial policy proposals to the relevant standing committee. Column 2 of Table 2.4 identifies the number of gubernatorial

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<sup>36</sup>Sixty-three percent of the issues mentioned in the full set of gubernatorial messages addressed specific gubernatorial duties granted either by the constitution or assembly. This consisted of reports on public education, internal improvements, administrative duties carried out when the General Assembly was adjourned, and vacancies in appointed office. This also included communications from other state legislatures.

policy proposals that were debated on the floor of either the state senate or the commons and column 3 of Table 2.4 identifies the number of gubernatorial policy proposals that were submitted for a vote.

The resolutions listed in Table 2.4 constitute the gubernatorial platform. It is instructive to compare the length of the gubernatorial platforms with the length of prospective Senator Mangum's platforms. Each governor issued a policy platform that was shorter than prospective Senator Mangum's platform, which consisted of six policy resolutions in 1838. This is consistent with my argument Senators, rather than the governors, created long coalitions in the legislature.

Year	Policy Recommendation	Authority
1830	“Compile a system for North Carolina, for the gratuitous public instruction of the youth of the State. If, in such a system, it be necessary to tax the wealthy for the benefit of the poor, it is in the nature of things that it should be so.”	Y
1830	An inlet from the Albermarle Sound to the Atlantic Ocean is “an essential ingredient of the general economy of this nation” and should not be opposed. Pass a resolution to this effect to strengthen the position of the state’s representatives in Congress.”	Y
1830	North Carolina faces a decline in circulating medium and is forecasted to experience further declines in the near future. Consequently, the governor recommends that “A Bank be established, somewhat on the principle of the United States’ Bank, neither exclusively the property of the State, or exclusively the property of individuals - relying neither on the prudence of directors alone, nor yet committed entirely to the management of the Legislature” (160). The governor notes that two great citizens of the state have already made the exact same policy recommendation.	N
1831	To guard against slave insurrections, “would it not be advisable to establish a more efficient and accountable police, and to arm and equip one or more companies of volunteers or detached militia, in each county, to be called out when required, and to be paid while in actual service?”	N
1831	“Would it not be advisable to provide for the establishment of a new Bank, in which the funds of the State may be invested, under such regulations as to your wisdom and experience shall be deemed proper and safe?”	Y

1833	“With respect to improvements of a local character, I think the safest and perhaps the wisest course for the Legislature to pursue will be, to incorporate companies in every section of the State where they may be necessary; and to subscribe for a uniform portion of stock in each – on the condition that no part of the public subscription shall be demanded until the private stockholders shall have paid, or secured the payment of their subscriptions.”	Y
1833	“The aggregate amount of the fund is at present too small, to justify our entering upon any general system of education”	Y
1833	To improve quality of the state courts, the governor requests that legislature have the laws of the state revised and published.	N
1833	In repines to the treasurer’s report indicating insufficient revenue, the governor recommends that “the burden of taxation should be equalized, its range must be enlarged and the aggregate amount increased, if we expect to sustain the character and credit of the State, in the promotion of any liberal enterprize.”	N
1834	Recommends that the state legislature approve a constitution with limited powers.	N
1838	“I propose then that our state lead the way in the reform of our Banking system, and respectfully recommend the chartering of a Bank with a capital of ten millions of dollars, allowing the existing banks to subscribe all their capital stock into it. The remaining stock to be taken by individuals; into the details of which it is not now necessary to enter” (280). ”I have attempted nothing more than a general outline of the plan; its details, should you deem it worthy your consideration, can be arranged at your convenience.”	Y
1838	Owing to a teacher shortage, the governor recommends that a school be established for educating teachers and the employment of a Superintendent of Public Education.	Y

1840	<p>“I would respectfully recommend the increase of the capital of the Banks of the State and Cape Fear, one million of dollars each; and that the State hand over to them equally, as her subscription of stock, all of the Cherokee bonds, and the hands and notes belonging to the Boards of the Literary Fund of North Carolina, and Internal Improvements, convertible as collected, with such other funds as can be spared from other purposes; provided the Banks will loan to the Wilmington and Raleigh, and Raleigh and Gaston Rail Road Companies, \$300,000 to \$400,000, on the bonds of said companies, guaranteed by the State, on the property of which companies the State being already secured by mortgage, at a rate of interest not exceeding six percent per annum for the period of ten years unless these companies are enabled sooner to pay the same.”</p>	N
1840	<p>In response to a report on lunatic asylums, compiled at the request of the state legislature, the governor recommends the construction of some number of prisons and lunatic asylums along with a superintendent.</p>	Y
1840	<p>Recommends militia training for public schools.</p>	Y

Table 2.5: Policy Recommendations in Annual Gubernatorial Messages, 1830 – 1840

Table 2.4 shows that the majority of governors in North Carolina did not use their annual message to submit a lengthy list of policy resolutions. Just three of nine gubernatorial messages included three or more policy proposals in their annual message. Despite a limited number of proposals, the legislature chose not to debate all of the governor's policy proposals. Ten of the fifteen policy proposals were discussed on the floor of, at least, one branch of the state government. Finally, just five of the fifteen proposals proceeded to a final vote. From this evidence, I conclude that the governor did not use his annual message to lead the production of public policy.

In addition to his annual message, the median governor sent eight communications to the General Assembly.<sup>37</sup> Most messages consisted routine affairs. For instance, in response to sundry legislation, the governor forwarded annual reports of the Board of Internal Improvements, Literary Fund, Treasurer of the University of North Carolina, and state banks along with presidential election returns and notices of resignations. With two exceptions, the remaining communications consisted of requests for legislation addressing administrative issues. For example, on 27 December 1834, Governor David Swain reported that, owing to a recent fire, the state supreme court had no suitable meeting place.<sup>38</sup>

Did those two exceptions represent attempts at party building? No. On 4 January 1830, Governor Montfort Stokes forwarded resolutions from the Alabama legislature endorsing the re-election of Andrew Jackson with a note reading "I have great pleasure in laying before you, for your consideration, this evidence of increased confidence in our beloved Chief Magistrate" (*Journals of the General Assembly of North Carolina, 1830-1*). On 7 January 1833, Governor David Lowry Swain forwarded resolutions from the Tennessee and Alabama legislatures concerning the constitutionality of federally funded internal improvements. Swain noted that "the propositions they involve are of vital importance to the interests of the Southern States,

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<sup>37</sup>The minimum value is 5 and the maximum value is 10.

<sup>38</sup>Or, on 3 December 1834, Governor Swain forward communication from the Adjutant General which seeks an appropriation for the preservation of public arms. Swain forwards the document because he believed that the gubernatorial office did not have "any authority to pay it" (*Journals of the General Assembly of North Carolina, 1834-5*, 165).

and call for early and deliberate consideration.” On their face, these messages seem out of character. However, both of these positions – support for Jackson in 1830 and opposition to federally funded internal improvements in 1833 – were consensus positions supported by nearly every faction in the state.

Did governors canvass the state? The first gubernatorial candidate to attend multiple county conventions was Edward B. Dudley. In 1836, Dudley, the anti-Van Buren candidate, attended two county conventions while his opponent, Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr., failed to attend a single county convention. Furthermore, neither candidate made any significant legislative speech to rally the counties in their absence. In 1838, Dudley ran unopposed and did not attend a single convention. But, in 1840, John Motley Morehead visited twenty-one counties and his opponent, William Saunders, visited three. Morehead canvassed at the request of the state central committee – an organization created by Mangum. From 1842 to 1860, at the request of the state central committee, gubernatorial candidates canvassed a majority of the state’s counties. Thus, governors did participate in party maintenance but less so in party building. For their partisan activities began after the political party had formed. Recall that the Whig coalition, as assembled by Willie Mangum, took control of the state legislature and acted in a partisan fashion in the legislative session of 1838.

All of the evidence thus far indicates the absence of gubernatorial policy leadership. This is compatible with my previous examination of state policy platforms. The first state-wide convention held in 1840 passed a platform that included two state and eight national policy issues and the second Whig state convention in 1842 passed a platform that consisted of one state and five national policy issues. This is consistent with a model where Senators build a state-wide long coalition on a platform of national policy issues.

Before closing the case on governors, I consider one final source of gubernatorial power – prestige of the office. Was the job of governor desirable? If the answer to this question is yes, then it is still possible that party leaders assumed the weak gubernatorial office. However, the answer is a firm no. From 1798, the governor was required to live in the capital

city.<sup>39</sup> For residents outside of Raleigh, this required a leave of absence from work and, thus, a loss of wages for the term. The gubernatorial officer was one of the few full-time political posts in the antebellum era. The officeholder was burdened with a high volume of administrative duties – pardons, judicial duties for the court of equity, legislative research, processing appointments, sending legislative communications, tendering appointments – and governors frequently complained about the workload (Shanks 1950, 234-235). By contrast, most other elective and appointive offices were part-time and, thus, allowed an individual to remain at home and pad his regular salary. Consequently, in a study of North Carolina from 1835 to 1865, one student of North Carolina politics finds that “the parties nearly had to beg for a viable candidate” (Kruman 1983, 33).

This evidence might prompt one to ask: Who chose to serve as governor? The empirical evidence suggests governors were simply the most salient figures in the state legislature. For instance, from 1815 to 1835, the median governor served 5.5 years in the state legislature before assuming office (see Table 2.6).<sup>40</sup> In comparison, the median state legislator served two years in the General Assembly. It is not until the mid-1850s, that governors are selected without substantial state legislative experience.

Perhaps a better question is: What type of candidate did the state legislature select for the gubernatorial office? In 1832, the General Assembly elected David Lowry Swain as governor and served for three one-year terms. While active in state politics since 1824, he had not expressed a preference nor had he participated in the presidential campaigns of 1828 and 1832 (Daniel 1954, 217-236). He had no reputation on national issues; his virtue was his non-partisanship. In his inaugural address, Governor Swain confirmed his reputation by declaring “I am no partisan” (*Raleigh Register*, 14 December 1832). He lived up to this promise. Recall that, as Senator Mangum began to build a party opposed to President Jackson, he sought the support of both Swain and his office. Mangum met with Swain

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<sup>39</sup>Other state officials appointed by the General Assembly were merely requested to have offices in Raleigh.

<sup>40</sup>Half of the ten governors were elected when they were sitting members of the General Assembly.

Table 2.6: Governors in North Carolina, 1815–1860

Name	Gubernatorial Tenure	Prior terms in General Assembly
William Miller	1814-1817	5
John Branch	1817-1820	6
Jesse Franklin	1820-1821	6
Gabriel Holmes	1821-1824	7
Hutchins Gordon Burton	1824-1827	3
James Iredell, Jr.	1827-1828	11
John Owen	1828-1830	3
Montfort Stokes	1830-1832	3
David Lowry Swain	1832-1835	5
Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr.	1835-1836	15
Edward Bishop Dudley	1836-1841	7
John Motley Morehead	1841-1845	3
William Alexander Graham	1845-1849	6
Charles Manly	1849-1851	0*
David Settle Reid	1851-1854	6
Warren Winslow	1854-1855	1*
Thomas Bragg	1855-1859	1
John Willis Ellis	1859-1861	2*

\*Notes: (1) Charles Manly was a clerk assistant in the House of Commons from 1824 to 1830 and, then principal clerk from 1830 to 1847 (with the exception of 1842-1843). (2) Warren Winslow was temporarily appointed by the state senate, of which he was a member. (3) John Willis Ellis was a Superior Court judge from the time he left the General Assembly in 1848 until his election to the gubernatorial office.

in the summer of 1833 but Swain refused to cooperate. He made no attempt to engage national issues or influence the legislature until he was no longer eligible for re-election to the gubernatorial office (Daniel 1954, 438-9).

In summary, North Carolina governors had few formal powers, presided over almost no patronage, and faced a high volume of administrative duties. In return for their service, they received meager financial rewards. Given this lack of resources, I found that governors did not present legislators with a policy agenda and that state party platforms paid more attention to national rather than state issues. Furthermore, prior to state party formation, governors did not help county organizations coordinate by canvassing the state. Thus, it seems unlikely that governors created state parties.

## 2.7 Presidents

Between 1830 and 1840, I find that none of the major presidential candidates campaigned in North Carolina or, for that matter, elsewhere. While some prospective presidents embarked on goodwill tours of the United States, those did not proceed through North Carolina. Furthermore, presidential candidates embarked on goodwill tours to secure the support of incumbent or prospective Senators.

Henry Clay depended on Mangum to secure support for his candidacy in 1836 and 1840. After Mangum announced his opposition to the Administration, he began to send letters to political elites in North Carolina, endorsed Clay for the presidency in 1836 and asked his allies to do the same (Shanks 1952, 51-101 & 240-47). As Thompson (1995, 201) argues, Mangum “became one of his state’s leading exponents of interstate cooperation.” When Clay was no longer viable at the national level, Mangum chose Hugh Lawson White over John McLean and convinced his co-partisans to join him (Shanks 1952, 247).

By fall 1837, Mangum committed to building support for Clay’s presidential candidacy despite great uncertainty among his allies in North Carolina (Shanks 1952, 512). During the state legislative session of 1838, Mangum met with friendly state legislators to build support for Clay’s candidacy (Thompson 1995, 288). He pressed newspaper editors for endorsements, forwarded those endorsements to Clay, and assembled a delegation to the national convention that voted in Clay’s favor (Huggins 2008, 417). When Clay lost the nomination at the 1839 National Whig Convention, the coalition transferred its efforts to the candidacy of William Henry Harrison.

If parties were assembled for the purpose of electing a president, then party formation should coincide with presidential elections, political meetings in the electoral district should be significant events, and turnout for the presidential contest should be higher than turnout for other offices. However, in North Carolina, party building began in 1833, *after* a presidential election and *after* the congressional elections of 1833. Furthermore, political meetings in electoral districts were rarely large-scale public events and, furthermore, contained little

policy discussion. Finally, between 1830 and 1840, when I compare turnout for November presidential elections to August state elections, I find that presidential turnout trailed behind state legislative turnout in 1832, 1836, and 1840 (ICPSR 1999). Political parties and voters were more interested in state elections than presidential elections.

In summary, the national focus of state party platforms in North Carolina suggests that individuals engaged in national affairs such as Senators or presidential candidates built state parties. Yet the combined evidence shows that it was Senators who canvassed counties to build a state-wide long coalition and, furthermore, party building took place near Senatorial rather than presidential elections.

## 2.8 Socially prominent families

Historians have argued that members of the landed elite – with cross-county familial ties – formed the initial legislative coalitions. Familial ties brought individuals together in the state legislature and, from that point, members of this coalition discovered common goals and objectives. As a theoretical story, this may seem plausible but recall that while Willie Mangum was the descendant of a well-to-do family, he was not a member of his county's landed elite. I find that this is true for the other political actors who engaged in multi-county canvassing between 1830 and 1840. Politics provided these well-to-do individuals with an additional source of income, name recognition that proved valuable for raising legal business, and community stature.

For the case of North Carolina, I can also draw on the empirical work of Counihan (1971) to evaluate the hypothesis that familial networks of landed elites created state parties. For the state senate, Counihan (1971, 23-28) evaluates the legislative roll calls of members from “old county families” who served multiple, consecutive terms in office relative to other members. He discovers the absence of “a common political philosophy” on state and national issues and concludes that each member of the landed elite narrowly followed community

interests on a case-by-case basis (24).

In summary, while members of the landed elite were involved in county politics, they left the task of party building to ambitious Senators.

## 2.9 Conclusion: Thomas Lanier Clingman and the rise of the state-wide Democratic party

Owing to the relative absence of political entrepreneurs in North Carolina, it may appear that Willie Person Mangum's party building activities are a function of some individual quirk and not Senatorial ambition. However, by extending my timeline past 1840, I find that Senatorial ambition also explains the belated organization of the Democratic party. In the 1840s, the Whig opposition had been a tenuous minority coalition with an ineffective central organization (Kruman 1983). But, in the early 1850s, Thomas Lanier Clingman – an unsuccessful aspirant for a Whig seat in the United States Senate – built the state-wide Democratic party and transformed it into the state's dominant coalition.<sup>41</sup> He achieved this goal by switching his state-wide affiliation and bringing seven western counties with him into the new coalition.

Born in 1812, Clingman “strove in every act of his political career to be United States Senator” (Jeffrey 1998, 2).<sup>42</sup> He was predisposed to the national Whig party; he opposed Andrew Jackson and supported a state-wide system of internal improvements. But these political beliefs were unpopular in Surry, his local county. To begin his political career, Clingman moved to a more politically hospitable community, Asheville in Buncombe County.

In 1840, Clingman ran for state senator and as an elector for Harrison and Tyler.<sup>43</sup> From

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<sup>41</sup>This review of Thomas Lanier Clingman's Senatorial ambitions and the basic facts of his party building activity primarily relies on Jeffrey's (1998) magisterial study of the Senator.

<sup>42</sup>Clingman's ambitions for a Senatorial seat were well known by 1845.

<sup>43</sup>The state senate district included Buncombe, Cherokee, Haywood, Henderson, and Macon Counties. The district for presidential electors also included Burke, Rutherford, and Yancey Counties.

June to November, he canvassed the eight counties in his district. His opponent did not and, on election day, Clingman won large majorities in each county.<sup>44</sup>

Over the next eight years, Clingman became the most active and influential political elite in western North Carolina, earning the moniker “Champion of the West.” In most years, he called and chaired the county convention in Buncombe and canvassed the western third of the state on behalf of Whig candidates. For instance, in 1842, on behalf of the Whig candidate for governor, Clingman engaged in a series of public debates with the Democrats’ gubernatorial nominee. Then, in 1843, Clingman won a congressional seat and founded a newspaper, the *Asheville Messenger*, as a means of disseminating political information from Washington. The paper hewed closely to the policies of the national Whig party. Clingman credited his entrepreneurial activities for the high turnout in the solid Whig counties of the west, which were essential to state-wide Whig victories. Meanwhile, in 1847, Clingman returned to the United States House of Representatives and remained there for five terms.

In 1846 and 1848, Clingman sought open seats in the United States Senate but he failed to win the support of Whigs from eastern and central counties. As a result, he declared himself an Independent and began to court his state’s Democratic minority. In his canvass of 1849, Clingman denounced the “central managers” of the Whig party in Raleigh and, in the subsequent session of the United States House of Representatives, he acquired a reputation as a defender of Southern Rights, opposing all provisions of the 1850 Compromise except the Fugitive Slave Act. In 1851 and 1852, he canvassed the western counties of North Carolina and transformed local opinion on slavery. Westerners owned few slaves and prioritized the Union over slavery. To maintain constituent support, Clingman argued that prospects for disunion would increase unless southerners rebuffed northern aggression. As Clingman’s friend observed: “No matter ... what principles he advocated, the people were his devoted supporters and never deserted him” (John Hill Wheeler quoted in Jeffrey 1998, 3).

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<sup>44</sup>As a state senator, Clingman guided claims for disputed Indian lands in his district through the General Assembly and secured several local improvements.

In 1851, Clingman won re-election to the United States House of Representatives as an Independent. From 1852 on, his news organ printed Democratic slates for office. Consequently, he supported Democrat Franklin Pierce for president over Winfield Scott, even though he was an enthusiastic Scott supporter in 1848. With large majorities in western counties, Pierce became the first Democrat to win North Carolina's electors since 1836. The Whigs correctly attributed their defeat to "Clingman's defection" (Jeffrey 1998, 93). Finally, in 1858, Clingman secured a Senatorial seat and the Democrats maintained narrow dominated over state politics.

In summary, in the 1830s, Senator Willie Person Mangum created North Carolina's first state party by coordinating the actions of homogeneous counties. Then, in the 1850s, Thomas Lanier Clingman led seven fugitive counties – Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Haywood, Henderson, Macon and Rutherford – from Whig to Independent to Democrat (Burnham 1999). This shift gave the state-wide Democratic party narrow control of the North Carolina state house and it remained the dominant party for the foreseeable future.

## Chapter 3

# Party Scholarship: Consensus, Gaps, and Mistakes

This dissertation ties together four literatures on political parties. The first literature, which accounts for the bulk of scholarship on parties, is primarily descriptive; it puts forth a definition of party and, then, outlines the functions that most political parties either do or should perform (Schattschneider 1942, 1960; Key 1949, 1964; American Political Science Association 1950; Downs 1957; Eldersveld 1964; Sorauf 1976; Epstein 1986). The second is more theoretical. There, political scientists seek to explain why political actors organize politics by party rather than an alternative institutional arrangement (Schwartz 1989; Aldrich 1995, 2011; Bawn *et al.* 2012). These scholars identify incentives that political actors have to form or maintain a party. A good explanation of party formation should also predict how many parties will form. Thus, a third literature is explicitly comparative, focusing on explaining the number of political parties in a particular country, usually as a function of electoral rules (Duverger 1959; Cox 1997; Chhibber and Kollman 2004). The fourth literature explains stability and change in electoral competition between two American national parties as a function of individual attachment and issue conflict (Burnham 1970; Sundquist 1983; Mayhew 2002).

This literature review is organized as follows. First, I introduce generalizations from the party literature that have been widely adopted and, thus, are considered to provide an accurate representation of political parties. Second, I identify theoretical and empirical gaps in existing partisan theory. Finally, I draw on my Senatorial coordination model to identify potential mistakes in the partisan literature. Each of my case studies is a critical test of competing claims.

## **3.1 Consensus claims about political parties**

In discussing scholarly consensus on political parties, I group claims into three categories: broad trends in party development across American history, the formation and maintenance of political parties, and the activities that parties engage in and services that they provide.

### **3.1.1 Trends in American party development**

- The constitutions and laws of the American federal system do not prescribe or outline political parties. Their invention was hindered by a norm of anti-partism (Hofstadter 1969; Formisano 1971; Voss-Hubbard 2002). Perhaps, prior to the Jacksonian era, American parties were “amateurish” (Watson 2006, 6). While they were composed of rival leaders, voters, and policies, they lacked permanent organizational structures, long-term stability, and deep roots in the electorate.
- Between 1828 and 1840, American politics – at the local and national level – matured. This system became characterized by parties with an extra-governmental organization that dominated campaigns, constituencies with competitive Democratic and Whig organizations, and a mass electorate with stable partisan loyalties that determined individual vote choice (Riker 1964; McCormick 1966; Silbey 1985; Epstein 1986). While labels and levels of competition changed in the partisan explosion of the 1850s, the basic structure remained. Until the 1890s, political parties dominated government by

organizing the legislature, elections by regulating access to political office, and the electorate by framing political issues and bringing partisans to the polls. Parties maintained their dominance by distributing patronage and policy benefits to loyal partisans (Silbey 1991).

- The resulting national parties were decentralized federations of local parties (Herring 1940; Schattschneider 1942; Ranney and Kendall 1956; Epstein 1986; Holt 1999; Aldrich 2011). While less attention has been paid to subnational parties, some scholars assert that local districts aggregate into state-wide coalitions that, outside of realigning eras, exhibit stability in composition and leadership groups (Sundquist 1983; Holt 1999; Chhibber and Kollman 2004).

### **3.1.2 How parties form**

- Political actors construct partisan institutions. But a party is just one of many possible institutions that these actors might create or use to organize political activity and achieve their goals. They choose a partisan institution because it effectively solves recurring difficulties of political life – majority instability, mobilizing the electorate, and access to office – and, as a result, is often a superior means for realizing their goals – a career in office, professional prestige, and the enactment of favored policies (Schwartz 1989; Aldrich 1995, 2011).
- America’s mass parties were created to contest the presidency, and subsequent realignments are contingent on presidential mediation (McCormick 1966; Sorauf 1976; Cox 1997; Aldrich 2011, Chapter 5; Sundquist 1983, 43-44).
- Prospective members of the lower house of the legislature create or adopt a party label as a means of securing and maintaining office (Key 1964; Sorauf 1976; Aldrich 1995). The incentive is especially strong for incumbent officeholders seeking re-election

(Duverger 1959; Aldrich 1995; Chhibber and Kollman 2004; Cox and McCubbins 2005). Thus, incumbent legislators play a consequential in uniting isolated constituencies.

- At the district level, scholars of American politics assume that two political parties will form while single party dominance is an aberration (Key 1949; American Political Science Association 1950; Riker 1964; Trounstine 2008; Aldrich 2011). By contrast, comparative politics scholars predict that in the typical American district – a single member district with a single ballot and plurality rule – two or fewer candidates will be electorally viable (Cox 1997; Riker 1982; Duverger 1959, 217 & 239).
- At the national level, American politics scholars still assume two parties. However, for the United States – a country that tends to be composed of single member districts with a single ballot and plurality rule – the comparative literature suggests that the upper bound is two times the number of districts. Cox (1997) and Chhibber and Kollman (2004) predict an upper bound of 870 parties in the United States, or 435 single member simple plurality congressional districts each with two local parties.
- Partisan electoral coalitions tend to be stable over time; the same set of party labels compete for office and are supported by roughly the same set of individuals across multiple elections (Sundquist 1983). This occurs because individual voters develop loyalties to a partisan label or ideology and this induces partisan identification and partisan voting over the long-term (Campbell *et al.* 1960; Chhibber and Kollman 2004). It is rare to observe change in the structure of each party’s electoral coalition (Burnham 1970; Sundquist 1983; Mayhew 2002; Aldrich 2011).

### 3.1.3 What parties do

- Political parties articulate the interests of a diverse array of narrow groups and aggregate those interests into a compromise package or platform, which expresses the will of the people (Eldersveld 1964; Key 1964). Consequently, parties are the site where

organizations seek to influence the selection of elected officials and the policies that these officeholders formulate and pass (Sorauf 1976, 2).

- Parties dominate the organization of electoral politics, at the nomination and general election phases (Downs 1957; Duverger 1959; McCormick 1966; Sorauf 1976; Katz 1980; Cohen *et al.* 2008). They define the set of electoral choices and eligible voters use party labels as a shortcut to evaluate both candidates and issues. Thus, parties simplify the electoral choice for the mass electorate.
- Parties influence government organization and output. Officeholders must affiliate with a party to achieve their goals of a career in office, professional prestige, and the enactment of favored policies (Aldrich 2011). For advancement within the legislature, the enactment of pet policies and thereby re-election prospects require membership in the majority. Both formal and informal leadership positions have become partisan offices, and successful legislation – whether broad or particularistic – requires the support of a majority of the majority party (Sinclair 2006; Mayhew 1966; Cox and McCubbins 2005).
- Partisan institution tie the American federal system of separated institutions sharing power together (Riker 1964, 1987).

## 3.2 Gaps in the party literature

- Theoretical and descriptive studies of American parties along with comparative studies of party aggregation are inattentive to the electoral structure of the American federal system and the distribution of political authority across this system. If Martin Van Buren and Henry Clay constructed national parties out of pre-existing local party organizations, then it is important to appropriately identify local political structures that hold and exercise consequential political authority (Remini 1959; Aldrich 2011; Holt

1999). Instead, scholars have either assumed that some local unit – state, congressional district, or city – is the basic building block of national partisan alliances (Holt 1999; Chhibber and Kollman 2004; Ethington 1994) or ignored the question altogether (Wiebe 1967; Epstein 1986; Aldrich 2011). Thus, this dissertation asks: What is the principal unit of local political organization? Furthermore, scholars of party aggregation have not examined the impact of the upper house of the national legislature (Duverger 1959; Cox 1997; Chhibber and Kollman 2004). Their focus has been exclusively on modeling coalition formation in the United States House of Representatives.

- One the one hand, the theoretical literature on political parties argues that politically active individuals have incentives to form a long coalition, but without providing a general evidence-based account of the process that produced parties to begin with (Duverger 1959; Schwartz 1989; Aldrich 1995, 2011; Bawn *et al.* 2012). On the other hand, the literature on party aggregation argues that the number of observed parties is generally fewer than theoretically possible and, thus, the problem is to explain why so few parties form (Cox 1997). Here, the question of why parties form in the first place is simply passed over. In both cases, scholars have failed to ask the following questions, which are critical to explaining the process of party formation and why parties perform their critical democratic functions.

- Which political actor (or actors) builds a long coalition at the state level? Which political actor (or actors) builds a long coalition at the national level? The costs associated with building a party are massive. Thus, what resources does this political actor have at his disposal? For this entrepreneur, what are the benefits of successful party building? Finally, how does the process of party building work in practice?
- The principal innovation of the second party system was the development of extra-governmental state and national organizations that tied candidates together across

districts. At what levels of the federal system were American parties organized – town, county, congressional district, state, national? Who constructed the party organization at each level of the federal system? How and why did political groups create cross-district political organizations?

- A pithy platform is central to most activities that parties engage in. It ties groups together in a political coalition, summarizes what a party stands for, sets the agenda for the party coalition in the legislature, and influences the votes of affiliated legislators. Yet, the origins of this platform remain murky. Which political actor assembles this compromise package? Which districts does he target and how does he sell the final compromise? As an entrepreneur, does he have discretion in the formulation of the platform?
- Since there are a vast number of potential coalitions, what explains the composition of the coalitions that do form? Are some political coalitions more natural than others? Or, as McCormick (1966) asserts, are American parties simply electoral coalitions whose constituents parts can be endlessly rearranged?
- In the United States, some districts are consistently dominated by a single political coalition and others experience fierce partisan competition. Yet, instances of one-party dominance, as in the post-Civil War South, are treated as an anomalous state. As a result, the literature fails to explain why some single-member-plurality districts reach their upper bound of two parties and others do not. If normative theorists are correct in claiming that two-party competition is necessary for effective democracy, then party scholars should explain why a single political group dominates many, if not most, local constituencies.
- Many of the benefits that parties provide are contingent on the existence of just a few national parties. For instance, in order for parties to simplify the electoral choice and provide a meaningful cue for voters, the number of national parties must be small. Yet

party scholarship does not explain why there are just a few national parties (Sorauf 1976; Cox 1997). In fact, Cox (1997) predicts that American national politics will have no more than 870 parties. Thus, theoretical and empirical attention must be given to identifying the incentives that lead politicians running in different districts to unite behind state or national party labels.

- Both historians and political scientists have failed to examine how nineteenth-century voters acquired political information, developed a political identity, and visualized connections between local and national politics. Most scholars simply import insights from American survey research (Campbell *et al* 1960), which describes voters in a mature democracy with long-standing political parties. This lacuna is surprising given that one of the more celebrated features of the Jacksonian democracy is the mobilization of the masses. Thus, it is important to begin modeling and empirically evaluating the process by which individual voters developed political affiliations and identities.

### 3.3 Mistakes in the party literature

- Political historians discount the efficacy of a general theory of party formation because diversity in local conditions may lead to a different party building process in each community (Watson 2006, 172). I argue that it is not unreasonable to propose and test a general theory, as political actors in individual states operated in similar institutional and cultural contexts. While variation is undoubtedly present, much of it is regional – West, South, Middle-Atlantic, New England – or common across states – urban versus rural or coastal versus mountain. As such, it is a mistake to claim that this variation should preclude theory building.
- Party theory identifies incentives that purportedly explain why political actors form parties. However, many of these incentives are provided by a mature party system and, therefore, explain why political actors maintain existing parties, not why they

form parties in the first place. For instance, Aldrich (2011) argues that an office seeker has an incentive to form or join a party because a partisan brand efficiently delivers meaningful information about an unknown candidate to voters who have little incentive to consume political information. Furthermore, a party has a turnout organization that benefits the prospective office seekers by bringing co-partisans to the polls. Relative to going it alone, a party reduces the costs of running a campaign and increases the benefit of campaign activity. Similarly, Chhibber and Kollman (2004, Chapter 2) claim that candidates with recognizable labels are more likely to win, voters are more likely to vote for these candidates, and, thus, office seekers will form or affiliate with a party.

- In the party systems literature, the United States is classified as a system of 435 single member simple congressional districts (Cox 1997, Chapter 3; Chhibber and Kollman 2004).<sup>1</sup> However, in the nineteenth century, the congressional district was not a meaningful district of political organization. Instead, politically active individuals organized at the state and county level. Despite being the primary unit of political organization, the county has been ignored by party scholars. Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, membership in the United States House of Representatives was porous and the institution lacked a routine career path for ambitious office seekers (Polsby 1968). In short, examining returns from the United States House of Representatives is unlikely to illuminate the process of party formation.
- Party scholars discount local government because it is a creature of state government (Chhibber and Kollman 2004, Chapter 3). However, until the New Deal, county governments presided over a larger share of taxation and spending than did state governments (Key 1956). In addition, individuals were far more likely to have contact with county government. By rendering local government inconsequential, party scholars have made several critical mistakes in their characterization of party development.

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<sup>1</sup>Cox (1997) and Chhibber and Kollman (2004) fail to recognize that not all American congressional elections are conducted by single member simple plurality rule.

First, at the subnational level, scholars have simply assumed that local districts aggregate into state-wide coalitions (Schlesinger 1983; Holt 1999; Chhibber and Kollman 2004). But, as I will show, it took an entrepreneur to build state-level parties. Second, these scholars have also assumed that – outside of realigning eras – state parties exhibit stability in composition and leadership groups. However, many of those state parties were characterized by instability in their geographic composition. Third, for the second party system, it is a stylized fact that two-party competition was the norm at the local level (Riker 1987; Aldrich 2011, 304). However, I will show that the modal observation is single party dominance. Finally, inattention to local communities has led scholars to assume that the process of party formation began at the national level and was imposed on local communities (Cunningham 1957, 1962; Duverger 1959; Chhibber and Kollman 2004). This simplification obscures local level organization that took place simultaneously with organization at the national level.

- It is often claimed that office seekers employ a party brand to improve their election or re-election prospects (Duverger 1959; Key 1964; Sorauf 1976; Cox and McCubbins 2005). To provide evidence for this claim, scholars lean on Burnham’s collection of United States election returns, wherein Burnham assigns – without documentation – a party label to most members of the United States House of Representatives (ICPSR 1999). However, examination of state and county convention reports demonstrates that many of these politicians sought office without a major party label. They ran as representatives of their county-wide community or a state-wide independent.
- Relatedly, my model suggests that researchers have been too quick to assign party labels to voters and state-wide political coalitions. Maybe those labels correct distinguish legislative goals, but they cannot help with elections when they are not recognized by politicians and voters. At the individual level, voters were tied to community-wide coalitions that were volatile in their state-wide affiliation. Across a series of

elections, an individual might vote for multiple party labels while remaining loyal to his local governing coalition. Consequently, it is more appropriate to conceptualize an individual's political affinity as geographic rather than partisan. At the state level, there was little organization beyond the actions of one or more Senatorial candidates. And among Senators, candidates changed state-wide affiliations as they sought new allies. In short, in many cases, there was no permanent state organization or coalition to assign a party label.

- Duverger (1959) famously argued that the re-election incentive drives incumbent legislators to form a stable long coalition in the legislature, secure support from individual electoral committees, link those electoral committees together under a common label, and build electoral communities in new communities (Cox 1997; Chhibber and Kollman 2004). However, in the antebellum era, state legislators and members of the United States House of Representatives rarely sought re-election and, thus, they were unlikely to lead the process of party formation.
- A wide range of scholars insist that the institution of the presidency influenced party formation. Cox (1997, 186-202) argues that presidential candidates sought the support of candidates for the United States House of Representatives and thereby encouraged district-based legislators to run campaigns under a common label. McCormick (1966) argues that the reintroduction competition for the presidency in 1824 spurred a new wave of party formation in the states with competition between competing state coalitions emerging in the first presidential election without a regional candidate. Chhibber and Kollman (2004) argue that national parties formed in response to the centralization of governmental authority in the office of the presidency under Andrew Jackson. However, I will show that the timing of party formation does not line up with the predictions of McCormick (1966) or Chhibber and Kollman (2004). Furthermore, there is no evidence to support Cox's (1997) claim that presidents acted as party builders.

- If the president encourages national party formation, then a state executive may also encourage state party formation (Sorauf 1976; Kruman 1983). However, antebellum governors lacked the resources and incentives to form a party and pursue a policy agenda. They had few formal powers and their office was a full-time administrative position with meager financial rewards. Furthermore, most governors could win election without a state-wide majority.
- It is frequently assumed that nineteenth century politics was oriented around local issues because citizens had direct interactions with state officials and limited contact with the national government (Weingast 1998, 152). However, Senators constructed state-wide coalitions on a platform that consisted of national issues and built support for that platform by traveling to individual counties and engaging the public. Senators brought the national government to local citizens and the American federation was centralized early on.

# Chapter 4

## Methods: Reconstructing Nineteenth Century Politics

### 4.1 Reconstructing nineteenth century politics

If prospective United States Senators constructed state parties – by linking county organizations together – why has this activity gone undetected?<sup>1</sup>

I argue that much of the explanation is empirical; prior scholarship has looked in the wrong place. In studying American political institutions, political scientists have focused primarily on the presidency and the United States House of Representatives to the detriment of both the United States Senate and local politics. Thus, the discovery of Senatorial entrepreneurs has been left to political historians. However, to make the past intelligible,

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<sup>1</sup>This claim goes against the stylized story that prospective Senators solicited support for their candidacy after state elections through letter writing campaigns to elected state legislators (Fehrenbacher 1962). However, there is some evidence that Senators engaged in public canvassing to build a majority in favor of his candidacy. The strategy of locking up legislators in advance of a state election was famously employed in Illinois in 1858 (e.g., Riker 1987). Riker (1987) also cites a case in 1834 where two prospective Senators engaged in a public canvass, but he suggests that the practice was not common until the 1890s. Clark (1912, 9-10) argues that prospective Senators canvassed in Indiana from statehood in 1846 to 1917, however, he provides no firm evidence to support his claim. Finally, Rothman (1966, 6 & 159-162 & 187-190) argues that, starting in the 1890s, U.S. Senators acted as the boss of their respective state party, commanding deference from other political actors. In short, while several authors see Senators as party leaders, they do not bestow this title on Senators until long after parties formed.

political historians lean on elite correspondence and dismiss open sources – speeches, platforms, and editorials. Their claim is that private statements represent what an individual really thinks (Trachtenberg 2006). The absence of open sources is most glaring in political histories with a national focus.<sup>2</sup> For instance, in Michael Holt’s *The Rise and Fall of the Whig Party*, a 1,248 page day-by-day account of the Whig party in each American state and the nation’s capital, the author’s narrative of Whig party formation does not cite a single open source (see Holt 1999, Chapter 2).

I argue that correspondence, on its own, is often a weak base of evidence for assessing arguments about party formation. First, few manuscript collections have survived, and even fewer are archived. This leaves many prospective and elected Senators without an archive. For instance, of the thirteen men who served in the United States Senate from New Jersey between 1820 and 1840, just six have a dedicated archive that consists of their correspondence.<sup>3</sup> The remainder have a handful of letters scattered across the country. Second, before archiving, many collections are edited by family, thereby removing evidence of political machination. Third, most collections contain letters a Senator received. Thus, letters sent to political lieutenants, outlining party strategy, are lost. For instance, take Senator Willie Person Mangum of North Carolina. In Chapter 2, I argue that, from 1833 to 1840, Mangum helped create North Carolina’s first mass party. The North Carolina State Archives embarked on a multi-decade effort to collect and organize the correspondence of Senator Mangum. As a result, his archive is more comprehensive than most. Table 4.1 identifies, for Senator Mangum, the proportion of his political papers that are (a) letters received by Senator Mangum, (b) letters sent by Mangum to his wife or children, (c) letters sent to

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<sup>2</sup>Political histories of sub-state-level communities and minor political figures are more likely to turn to open sources, for the manuscript record is nearly non-existent (e.g., Jeffrey 1999). However, these works are less likely to ask the analytical or theoretical questions posed in works with a national focus (e.g., Holt 1999; Gienapp 1986; Potter 1976).

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Southard, Mahlon Dickerson, William Dayton, Garret D. Wall, John C. Ten Eyck, and John Renshaw Thompson have a large volume of their papers archived at at least one library, while James J. Wilson, Joseph McIlvaine, Ephraim Bateman, Frederick Frelinghuysen, Jacob Miller, William Wright, and Robert Stockton do not.

all other individuals. Letters to wives and children are unlikely to include much political discussion. For example, despite the fact that his wife received a formal academy education, Senator Willie P. Mangum of North Carolina thought politics was “too complex for women and so only made passing reference to the subject in his letters” to his wife (Thompson 1995, 53). The third category consists of the letters written to all other individuals. They may contain political content. In the median year, the papers of Willie Person Mangum includes just two letters written by the Senator himself. Finally, if I am correct in positing that prospective Senators build state coalitions, then a Senatorial candidate does not write letters but, rather, travels town by town to meet with political leaders, attend local conventions, and give public speeches. This activity is all face-to-face and, potentially, reported on in local newspapers.

Table 4.1: The Papers of Willie Person Mangum, 1830–1840

Year	Total Letters	Letters Received	Letters Sent to Wife and Children	Letters Sent to all others
1830	31	28	1	2
1831	31	27	2	2
1832	98	83	9	6
1833	42	36	3	3
1834	136	121	2	11
1835	88	82	2	4
1836	95	86	7	2
1837	21	21	0	0
1838	22	19	1	2
1839	18	16	0	2
1840	62	58	2	1

Source: Shanks (1950, 1952, 1953, 1955, 1956).

I argue that newspapers are a superior resource for studying politics in the nineteenth century. First, most newspapers were political organs, founded to promote political ideas and serve as the official voice of a county governing coalition.<sup>4</sup> Second, in each state, newspapers were widespread. In any given year, a majority of counties had a local newspaper. Third, they were published at regular intervals, usually daily in large counties and weekly elsewhere. In contrast, most manuscript collections have large gaps and, thus, are not appropriate for

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<sup>4</sup>Nearly every newspapers was political and those that were not often evolved into political presses. For instance, North Carolina’s *Hillsborough Recorder* began as a literary paper and became political after twelve years in business.

systematic inquiries.<sup>5</sup> Fourth, while many newspapers were short-lived, a handful in each state were published throughout the antebellum era. Fifth, in the vast majority of newspapers, the bulk of non-advertising space consisted of detailed political news covering national, state, and local events (Russo 1980). This political news consisted of editorials, articles from other papers, presidential messages to Congress, gubernatorial messages, speeches of prominent national figures, the proceedings of the state and national legislature, proceedings of county political meetings and conventions, and campaign speeches and addresses. Sixth, once parties emerged, newspapers were not simply repositories of party harmony; contending factions engaged in, sometimes vicious, debate in rival co-partisan newspapers, thus revealing intra-party tensions.<sup>6</sup> Seventh, newspaper editors were often the principal means of announcing the date and location for political meetings at both the state and county level. Thus, they provide the best means to track the development of party organization. Finally, newspapers were more common than personal letters. In a survey of the second party system, Watson (2006, 269) finds that “most of the contents of the early mails were newspapers and other printed materials, not personal letters, so it was the post office (plus the common practice of reprinting articles from distant papers in the local press) that made a national political conversation possible in the first place.”

Most political historians stress that political newspapers were partisan. If this is true, then newspaper may not be ideal for analyzing the process of party formation for it's possible that a newspaper emerges only after a party has formed. While newspapers were frequently partisan, it is important to note that the partisanship of a newspaper – like the partisanship of a county – was not fixed and, in some cases, was indeterminate. For example, North Car-

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<sup>5</sup>In visiting archives, I have found a paucity of letters during critical moments of party formation. To illustrate, Bowdoin College Library has a comprehensive collection of papers from Maine's Fessenden Family. In the 1840s and 1850s, William Pitt Fessenden had Senatorial ambitions. In 1853, he actively campaigned for the United States Senate, but the manuscript collection has one political letter for that entire calendar year. Meanwhile, I have collected dozens of newspaper articles relating to his political activity in 1853. Whatever the reason for the lack of letters, more information about Fessenden's Senatorial campaign is likely to be gleaned from the newspaper record.

<sup>6</sup>For example, in Maine, the Portland *Eastern Argus*, sparred with co-partisans at the Bangor *Jeffersonian* and the Augusta *Age* throughout the 1830s.

olina’s Fayetteville *Observer* adopted Jackson’s policy positions until his veto of the Second Bank of the United States, when it began to critically analyze his issue positions. Shortly thereafter it joined the ranks of the opposition and adopted the Whig label (Fayetteville *Observer*, 10 March 1836). Similarly, North Carolina’s Salisbury *Western Carolinian* opposed Jackson in the aftermath of deposit removal, began to promote anti-Administration candidates, and eventually adopted a “States Rights” label in 1836. But, in 1839, the *Western Carolinian* switched its political preference at the state and national level, adopting a “Democratic Republican” label. Thus, it might be more fruitful to think of newspapers, as I suggest above, as political organs that serve as the official voice of a county governing coalition. When that county governing coalition joined a party, the newspaper did too. This characterization is consistent with the fact that many leading newspapers, in a state, were founded prior to the existence of state parties.

## 4.2 Case selection

My goal is to study party formation nationwide. It is not feasible to collect evidence from each state because few newspapers published between 1800 and 1860 are digitized.<sup>7</sup> However, select titles are available in their original form in state archives, university libraries, and county historical societies. To make the task of data collection manageable and maintain a national perspective, I select one state from each region: Maine in New England, New Jersey in the Middle Atlantic, and North Carolina in the Old South. I select cases by region because state constitutions and cultures tend to be homogeneous within each region (McCormick 1966; Mellow 2008). I start my search in 1820, approximately one decade before the modern mass parties emerge in select states, and end my study in 1860 just before the Civil War disrupts the normal operation of politics.

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<sup>7</sup>While many funding institutions have encouraged the digitization of American newspapers, these repositories focus on titles published (a) during the Founding period and (b) from the Civil War to present. When titles from 1800 to 1860 are digitized, they often have such large gaps in their records that systematic analysis is nigh impossible.

## 4.2.1 Newspapers

For each state, I created a newspaper directory that lists all newspaper titles and their county of publication by year, from 1820 to 1860. I find that, in each calendar year, Maine and New Jersey are home to, at least, a dozen newspapers and North Carolina, at least, two dozen. Of all of these titles, approximately half have been archived. Of this subset, a significant proportion of these titles have spotty records. These limitations narrowed the range of possible titles that I could use. After identifying the universe of surviving newspapers, I narrow this list down to nine newspapers in Maine, eight in New Jersey, and ten in North Carolina. The set of newspapers referenced for this dissertations listed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: List of Referenced Newspapers

State	County	Title	Years
Maine	Cumberland	Portland <i>Advertiser</i>	1823–1860
	Cumberland	Portland <i>Eastern Argus</i>	1820–1860
	Cumberland	Portland <i>Eastern Argus, Revived</i>	1839–1841
	Cumberland	Portland <i>Gazette</i>	1818–1824
	Cumberland	Portland <i>Independent Statesmen</i>	1821–1825
	Kennebec	Augusta <i>Kennebec Journal</i>	1825–1860
	Kennebec	Augusta <i>Age</i>	1831–1860
	Kennebec	Hallowell <i>American Advocate</i>	1820–1836
	Kennebec	Hallowell <i>Gazette</i>	1820–1860
	Lincoln	Wiscasset <i>Lincoln Telegraph</i>	1820–1821
	Oxford	Oxford <i>Democrat</i>	1833–1860
	Penobscot	Bangor <i>Courier</i>	1833–1860
	Penobscot	Bangor <i>Jeffersonian</i>	1849–1851
	Penobscot	Bangor <i>Register</i>	1821–1851
	Waldo	Waldo <i>Patriot</i>	1837–1838
	Washington	Eastport <i>Eastport Sentinel</i>	1822–1831
	York	Saco <i>Maine Democrat</i>	1829–1860
New Jersey	Burlington	Mount Holly <i>Mirror</i>	1820–1860
	Essex	Newark <i>Daily Advertiser</i>	1832–1860
	Mercer	Trenton <i>Emporium</i>	1821–1827
	Mercer	Trenton <i>Federalist</i>	1820–1829
	Mercer	Trenton <i>New Jersey State Gazette</i>	1829–1857
	Mercer	Trenton <i>True American</i>	1820–1860
	Somerset	Somerset <i>Messenger</i>	1823–1860
	Sussex	Sussex <i>Register</i>	1820–1860
North Carolina	Craven	New Bern <i>Sentinel</i>	1822–1837
	Cumberland	Fayetteville <i>North Carolina Journal</i>	1826–1838
	Cumberland	Fayetteville <i>Observer</i>	1820–1860
	Edgecombe	Tarboro <i>Free Press</i>	1824–1859
	Orange	Hillsboro <i>Recorder</i>	1820–1860
	Rowan	Salisbury <i>Carolina Watchman</i>	1832–1860
	Rowan	Salisbury <i>Western Carolinian</i>	1820–1844
	Wake	Raleigh <i>North Carolina Standard</i>	1834–1860
	Wake	Raleigh <i>Register</i>	1820–1860
	Wake	Raleigh <i>Star</i>	1820–1856

In selecting particular newspapers, I favor those with long reigns as they are more likely to be contacted by county political organizations and have reporters in the field. I also ensure that the final subset includes geographically proximate rivals within each region of the state so that I can uncover potential disagreement both within and across regions.

### **4.2.2 United States Senators**

To compare the relative contribution of United States Senators to the process of party formation, I must, first, identify all of the individuals that qualify for this category of political actors. Identifying the full universe of prospective Senators is particularly difficult in an era of indirect elections, when United States Senators did not have to seek a ballot nomination or run a formal campaign.

To illustrate my method, I will refer to North Carolina. I could start by listing all of the individuals who served as a United States Senator from North Carolina. These individuals are listed in Table 4.3. This approach poses two problems. First, some prospective Senators may coordinate the actions of multiple counties and create a state-wide party organization but fail to clear the hurdle of an absolute majority in the state legislature. Thus, this prospective Senator may build an effective opposition party that coordinates counties in elections and representatives in the legislature, but that prospective Senator will not be included in Table 4.3. Second, some elected Senators did not actively seek the job. Some were temporary appointments, selected to fill a short-term vacancy. Others were selected by a senior Senator, perhaps to provide ideological or geographic balance in the Senate delegation. Still others were offered to loyal party servants biding time until a premier patronage position, such as a superior court judgeship, became available. The general point is that Table 4.3 excludes some individuals who sought Senate seats and potentially built partisan institutions and includes others who were political activists but may have had a narrow vision, concerned mostly with their own district or reputation.

A potential solution is to compile the names of all individuals who received five or more

Table 4.3: United States Senators in North Carolina, 1789–1860

Name	Sessions Served
Benjamin Hawkins	1789-1794
Samuel Johnston	1789-1792
Martin Alexander	1793-1798
Timothy Bloodworth	1795-1800
Jesse Franklin	1799-1804, 1807-1812
David Stone	1801-1806, 1813-1814
James Turner	1805-1816
Francis Locke	1813-1816
Nathaniel Macon	1815-1828
Montfort Stokes	1815-1822
John Branch	1823-1830
James Iredell	1827-1830
Bedford Brown	1829-1840
Willie Person Mangum	1831-1836, 1839-1852
Robert Strange	1835-1840
William Alexander Graham	1839-1842
William Henry Haywood, Jr.	1843-1846
George Edmund Badger	1845-1854
David Settle Reid	1853-1858
Asa Biggs	1855-1858
Thomas Lanier Clingman	1857-1862
Thomas Bragg	1859-1862

Note: Dates, listed under sessions served, refer to the full-term of a congressional session.

of the one-hundred-and-seventy legislative votes for a Senate seat.<sup>8</sup> These individuals are listed in Table 4.4. As before, Table 4.4 includes many political actors who did not seek a Senatorial seat but were drafted at the last minute as a result of their availability, popularity, or reputation in particular issues. This method is less likely overlook individuals with a credible chance of winning a Senate seat. In an era without formal ballot nominations, a serious candidate for the Senatorial office should be able to win a handful of votes in the state legislature.

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<sup>8</sup>Individuals with less than five votes are excluded because these candidates tend to consist of those not actively seeking a Senatorial seat. For instance, in 1854, Daniel Barringer chose not to vote for himself and threw away his vote on John Kerr. Kerr did not receive any other votes.

Table 4.4: Prospective United States Senators in North Carolina, 1825–1854

Date of Election	Name	Highest Number of Votes	Winner
11/1825	Nathaniel Macon	votes not reported	Y
11/1828	James Iredell	votes not reported	Y
	John Branch	votes not reported	
	Montfort Stokes	votes not reported	
11/1829a	John Branch	votes not reported	Y
	John R. Donnell	votes not reported	
	Charles Fisher	votes not reported	
	Montfort Stokes	votes not reported	
11/1829b	Bedford Brown	votes not reported	Y
11/1830	Willie Person Mangum	votes not reported	Y
	Montfort Stokes	votes not reported	
11/1834	Bedford Brown	113	Y
	Thomas Settle	60	
12/1836	Robert Strange	85	Y
	Thomas Settle	83	
11/1840a	Willie Person Mangum	99	Y
	Bedford Brown	65	
11/1840b	William A. Graham	98	Y
	Robert Strange	64	
12/1842	William Haywood	95	Y
	William Graham	69	
	R. M. Saunders	78	
11/1846a	George Badger	87	Y
	Asa Biggs	73	
11/1846b	Willie Person Mangum	89	Y
	James McKay	70	
12/1848	George Badger	83	Y
	Thomas Clingman	67	
	J. B. Shepard	22	
	Jas J McKay	18	
	William B. Shepard	17	
	Weldon N. Edwards	13	
	W. F. Leak(e)	13	
	David Lowry Swain	9	
	Mr. Dobbin	7	
	Charles Fisher	6	
11/1854a	Asa Biggs	91	Y
	George Badger	69	
11/1854b	David Reid	92	Y
	Daniel Barringer	65	

To compile a list of individuals who received legislative votes for United States Senator, I consulted the *Journals of the Senate and House of Commons of the General Assembly of North-Carolina*.<sup>9</sup> I found each reference to a vote for “Senator in Congress.” Each house voted separately but simultaneously. Prior to a vote, each house agreed on a time and day to conduct the vote. Furthermore, in each house, representatives or state senators announced the names of nominees and forwarded that list to the other branch of the legislature. The candidates who received at least one vote in the state legislature are listed in Table 4.4. The column labeled “highest number of votes received” lists the total number of state representatives and state senators that supported the Senatorial candidate on any one of the ballots for United States Senator. As such, the number of votes listed within a single year may exceed the number of seats in the legislature. For instance, if Romulus Saunders wins twenty votes on the first vote in the state senate and eight on the first vote in the house, then ten on his second vote in the state senate and forty-five in the house, I assign him a score of sixty-five for, at some point, he won twenty votes in the state senate and forty-five in the house – even though he never exceeded fifty-five votes on a single ballot. The point is that sixty-five individuals in the state legislature supported him at some point in the electoral process. Finally, when possible, I have used manuscript collections, open sources, and political histories to distinguish between those individuals who made a public commitment to seeking a Senatorial seat and those who did not. This information will be referenced in the state-level case studies.

### 4.3 Building a dataset from newspaper archives

For each title, I scan copies of minutes from all political meetings regardless of constituency (town, county, district, state) or topic (general, single interest). I also copy all campaign speeches, gubernatorial addresses, election returns, and state legislative proceedings. I sup-

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<sup>9</sup>Each state holds similar journals in their state archives.

plement this information with historical election returns (ICPSR 1999), state legislative journals, political correspondence, and secondary sources.

I am primarily interested in reports from annual county meetings. These meetings, held at the county seat during a session of the superior court, and were open to all. Notices for a county convention tended called for the attendance all “citizens” or “gentlemen” of a particular county.<sup>10</sup> After a call to order, the convention chose a chairman, a few vice presidents, and a secretary or two. Then, the chairman appointed a committee on resolutions, which prepared and submitted a county platform, and a committee on nominations. Often, the chairman selected delegates for district (and sometimes state) conventions along with members of the country central committee or county committee of vigilance. Usually, several speakers – both local and visiting – addressed the delegates. The platform was read aloud, discussed, and voted on. Newspapers recorded this activity along with attendance and associated votes. With a complete set of county convention reports, I can track the travel patterns of political entrepreneurs and map local opinion on public policy.

The reports from county-level meetings are illuminating when contrasted with district and state conventions. The district convention was used for nominating congressional candidates, presidential electors, state senators, and state convention delegates. As I will demonstrate, these conventions met less regularly than county meetings. The state convention passed a state platform and, when the governor was popularly elected, it *usually* nominated the governor. As with district conventions, a state convention did not always meet – even in cases where there was a popularly elected governor.

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<sup>10</sup>Party labels became more common starting in the middle of the 1840s.

# Chapter 5

## Party Formation in New England: Maine

### 5.1 Institutional and social setting

Since party scholars have ignored the institutional structure of state and local politics, I briefly review Maine's constitution to identify all geographic units of political administration and representation as well as the set of political actors that have incentives to form a party.

#### 5.1.1 The Constitution of 1820

Maine's constitution provides universal male suffrage. Elections for governor, state representative, and state senator were held annually on the second Monday in September and, in even years, congressional elections were held concurrently. Candidates for each of these offices were required to win a majority of votes.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of a majority, elections for state representative and congressman were repeated until a candidate won a majority.<sup>2</sup> For

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<sup>1</sup>In 1848, elections for state representative become plurality rule.

<sup>2</sup>There was no threshold for proceeding into subsequent rounds.

governor or state senator, the seat was filled at the subsequent legislative session.<sup>3</sup> Districts were apportioned according to population. Each district for state representative consisted of one or more towns and each district for state senator, congressman, and presidential elector consisted of one or more whole counties.<sup>4</sup>

Annually, on the first Wednesday in January, the governor assumed office and the legislature convened, with the legislature choosing a Council of State, Secretary of State, and Treasurer by joint ballot. The legislature had the exclusive right to propose constitutional amendments and they could remove state appointees by a majority vote in each house.<sup>5</sup>

Maine's governor had more constitutional resources than most of his contemporaries (Banks 1970, 163). He faced no term limits. And, on his own authority, he could convene the legislature, "give the Legislature information of the condition of the State, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he may judge expedient," and veto legislation with an override requiring a two-thirds vote in each house (Maine Constitutional Convention 1894, 21). The governor was also commander in chief of the state's army, navy, and militia.

The remainder of the governor's constitutional powers required the advice and consent of his seven-member council.<sup>6</sup> The framers created the Council to keep tyrannical executives in check and, as a result, the governor "was the 'head' of the executive department, but he did not 'control' it" (Banks 1970, 164; Tinkle 1992, 98). The executive department distributed a vast range of state and local appointments.<sup>7</sup> This included the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General. However, executive leadership of the militia was limited as the Major Generals – the principal directors of militia forces – were appointed by the legislature.

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<sup>3</sup>For state senate, legislators choose from a list that contains the top two candidates. For governor, the lower house selects two candidates from the top four and the state senate picks one of those as governor.

<sup>4</sup>After 1832, presidential electors ran in state-wide districts.

<sup>5</sup>The state senate initiated impeachment trials for state officers.

<sup>6</sup>Each Councillor had to represent a separate county.

<sup>7</sup>This included "all judicial officers, the Attorney General, the Sheriffs, Coroners, Registers of Probate, and Notaries Public" along with "all other civil and military officers, whose appointment is not by the Constitution, or shall not by law be otherwise provided for" (Maine Constitutional Convention 1894, 20).

Regarding the judiciary, the constitution created a supreme judicial court which issued advisory opinions on the request of the governor, commons, or state senate.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, at the substate level, the constitution created county government that consisted of a court of sessions that levied local taxes, a sheriff, a county attorney, register of probate, justice of the peace, treasurer and notary public. Initially, half of these officers were appointed by the governor but, in 1855, the legislature made all county offices elective. The constitution also required towns to provide public education at their own expense by levying a tax on polls and estates.

In summary, Maine consisted of town, county, and state-level officeholders. In addition, the governor may have had the incentives and resources to build a party for he needed a majority of the popular vote and, with his Council of State, he distributed state and local patronage. In this chapter, I will rule out the hypotheses that the town was the primary unit of political organization and that prospective governors created state parties. On balance, the former seems unlikely as not every town had its own representative and nearly all local government was conducted by the county court of sessions and its staff of county-wide officers.

### **5.1.2 Laws and customs**

The rules for Senatorial election were governed by state law. To secure office, a Senatorial candidate had to obtain two majorities, one in each house of the legislature. There was no limit on the number of candidates. If no candidate wins a majority, then voting starts anew. Subsequent rounds are open to all first round candidates and new entrants.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>All other state courts were left to the discretion of the legislature.

<sup>9</sup>If the legislature adjourns before a candidate is selected, the office remains vacant.

## 5.2 The county as a political unit

In this dissertation, I argue that Senators created state parties out of homogeneous counties. I begin by providing evidence in support of my claims about counties. I will demonstrate that, in Maine, the county is the primary unit of representation and administration. I will also show that individuals who staffed the storefronts at the county seat led cohesive county-wide coalitions, which were the basic building blocks of a state-party.

For the most part, campaigns and elections were organized at the county-level. Nearly every elected and appointed officer represented a single county (sheriff, judge, register of probate, most congressmen and state senators) or multiple counties (a few congressmen and state senators). The governor and state representative – who served one or more towns – were exceptions. Second, counties were politically organized. In each county, from 1820, one or more political groups usually held a county-wide mass meeting that determined most nominations. On occasion, this meeting also selected delegates for state and national conventions and passed a policy platform. Third, for offices with multi-county constituencies, control over nominations rotated between county organizations (Wescott 1966, 8-16). Fourth, the county governing coalition organized the state and local campaign within the county by printing ballots, raising funds, and holding public events. Fifth, state conventions and central committees apportioned representation to county units. These state institutions did not dominate county organization for state committees were rare before 1840 and state conventions were infrequent until the late 1850s. Finally, the state legislature respected county autonomy. To fill a vacancy in the state senate, state senators and representatives from the respective county met in a caucus to fill the vacancy. The legislature usually ratified their choice (Hatch 1919, 351).

Not only were the counties politically organized but county-wide representatives engaged in a significant share of political administration. For instance, the county court of sessions levied taxes on polls and land to fund salaries for sheriff, justices of the court of sessions,

judge of probate, register of probate, clerks, treasurer, constables, coroners, and criers.<sup>10</sup> The county also levied taxes to pay interest on county debt as well as construct and maintain county buildings, prisons, and roads (Greenleaf 1829, 323-325).

In Table 5.1, I estimate the prominence of the county as political subdivision by comparing tax revenue levied by state and county governments between 1821 and 1827.<sup>11</sup> While taxes varied across counties, on average, each individual contributed similar amounts to the state and county governments.

Table 5.1: Ratio of State to County Taxation in Maine, 1821–1827

Year	State taxation % (Dollars)	County taxation % (Dollars)
1821	45 (33,837)	55 (41,545)
1822	57 (52,664)	43 (39,718)
1823	54 (37,114)	46 (31,505)
1824	49 (41,252)	51 (42,100)
1825	49 (44,640)	51 (46,448)
1826	46 (44,265)	54 (51,900)
1827	45 (49,581)	55 (60,060)

Source: Greenleaf (1829, Chapter 10).

Finally, county autonomy increased over time at the expense of the executive department, while the town’s administrative authority remained the same. In 1843, the legislature increased the jurisdiction of the justices of the peace and trial justices (Barry 1965, 96). Then, in 1855, the legislature modified the constitution so that all county offices became popularly elected in county-wide constituencies thereby eliminating most gubernatorial patronage.

In summary, Maine’s counties were the primary unit of political organization and representation. With the state government they shared the task of governing and, by the end of the antebellum era, the counties became increasingly consequential. The state did not

<sup>10</sup>The court of sessions also collected fees and duties on transactions within the county.

<sup>11</sup>The state poll tax was a flat rate for all individuals. The county poll tax was a flat rate in each county.

regain its dominance until the twentieth century (Barry 1965).

### **5.2.1 Politically active citizens**

In my model of party formation, I argued that the active citizens who formed or joined a county governing coalition were the businessmen, craftsmen, and learned professionals who staffed storefronts at the county seat. It was their proximity, common interest, and regular contact with less active citizens that promoted a community-wide governing coalition.

Consistent with my claims, Potter (1974, 28-145) finds that, in each county, a small group of professionals – merchants, shipbuilders, bankers, lumber investors, traders, lawyers – dominated county-level political office from 1820 to 1857. While the composition of the state legislature changed, the same individuals frequently held county office for decades. Similarly, Wescott (1986, 7) discovers that politically active individuals, in the 1840s and 1850s, were primarily attorneys, merchants, bankers, physicians, and ministers. All of these jobs were concentrated in the town square at the county seat (Greenleaf 1829).

### **5.2.2 Cohesion of the county-level electorate**

Within each county, I argue that citizens acted were politically united. To illustrate, county lines were initially drawn from Maine's coast toward the interior such that each county consisted of a combination of coastal towns engaged in trade and subsistence, backwoods farms. This intra-county diversity might produce intra-county political divisions. But historians find that the a recurring division in state politics was between Eastern and Western counties, each with similar intra-county divisions (Hatch 1919; Potter 1974; Wescott 1986).

In a study of economic development in Maine, Potter (1974, 51-167) finds that while political activists cooperated within each county, investing as a group in local business and county-specific improvements, they rarely cooperated with or assisted groups in other counties. In consequence, each county developed economic policies suited to their local conditions such that policy demands varied widely among co-partisans across the state. In summary,

each county was politically united but parochial in their policy views.

### **5.2.3 Conclusion**

Contrary to the common perception that New England state governments were strong and their subunits inconsequential (McCormick 1966, 35), I have shown that, in Maine, the county was the primary unit of electoral representation and political administration. To control local government and influence both state and national politics, active citizens had to build a county-wide governing coalition; town control would not suffice. I find that political activists responded to these incentives. Active citizens at the county seat formed a single local governing coalition that organized and dominated campaigns, ran the county court of sessions, and levied taxes to conduct county business. Over time, these local governing coalitions secured increased autonomy and an expanded political jurisdiction. However, in the absence of a political entrepreneur, disciplined county units did not form a state-wide long coalition. They held parochial policy views and, as a result, state politics was factionalized.

## **5.3 State-wide political organization before mass parties**

Before I examine the process of party formation, I must rule out the hypothesis that Maine entered the Union with mature state party organizations. Prior to statehood, Mainers had organized a state-wide separationist movement and served in the partisan-organized Massachusetts General Court. Nonetheless, I find that Maine politics initially lacked state-wide organization. Mainers, too, needed an entrepreneur to build a state party.

In 1785, political elites, in the District of Maine, began to create county political organizations as a means of securing separation from Massachusetts. Over the next three and a half decades, cross-county political coalitions drafted statehood petitions and organized state-wide referendums. In the process, many counties established political newspapers and

organized county committees to help turn out the vote (Banks 1970, 12-138). At statehood, in 1820, Maine had strong county organizations and a legacy of cross-county cooperation. Furthermore, all county groups were united on the single issue of opposition to Massachusetts.

As former members of the Massachusetts legislature, Maine's political elites participated in state-level political organization. From 1800 to 1824, two parties – Federalist and Republican – competed for control Massachusetts legislature. Each held a mixed-legislative caucus which resulted in a “centralized, well-disciplined party” (McCormick 1966, 24).

The political organization of the Massachusetts General Court and the statehood movement did not transfer over to Maine state politics. At statehood, William King, president of the constitutional convention and leader of the statehood movement, was unanimously selected as governor of the state. But he found himself presiding over a heavily factionalized legislature (Banks 1970, Chapter 9; Meehan 1972, 17-18; Potter 1974, Chapter 1). He swiftly retired to pursue burgeoning economic opportunities provided by a new state.

In succeeding years, there was little cross-county political organization. As I previously argued, each county organized and funded the state and local campaigns within their county bounds. They did not rely on the resources of a state organization (Wescott 1986). In fact, state conventions were infrequent. In the first two decades after statehood, the dominant coalition called just three state conventions – in 1829, 1833, and 1837.<sup>12</sup> Two met after an unexpected gubernatorial vacancy while an insurgent faction eager to dispose of the incumbent governor called the third. State central committees were also rare. An insurgent faction in the dominant political coalition – led by a prospective Senator – created the first state central committee in 1832 and maintained it in 1833 but thereafter it fell into disuse. The central committee did not become a regular feature of state politics until the 1840s. In the first two decades after statehood, most political business was conducted at county meetings. Thus, Senatorial party builders faced a political landscape of homogeneous county

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<sup>12</sup>After the rise of the Republican party, the state convention became a regular event. Prior to that, state conventions were also held in 1843, 1846, 1849 and 1853.

organizations that had not formed a long coalition in the legislature.

## 5.4 United States Senators

In this section, I trace Maine's political history from 1820 to 1860 from the perspective of four prospective Senators that constructed state-wide parties out of homogeneous counties. While two of the four entrepreneurs secured a Senatorial seat, each impacted the composition of the state's political coalitions. Furthermore, in the course of seeking and maintaining a Senatorial seat, each rebuilt their coalition to include former rivals. Lastly, while Senators led the coalition formation process throughout this time period, it was not until the 1840s that prospective Senators bound their county units together on a common multi-issue platform and created minimal state organization.

Recall that Maine was initially a district in Massachusetts. From 1805, a group opposed to the dominant coalition in the Massachusetts legislature won two of every three votes in Maine (Robinson 1916, Lampi n.d.). While support for statehood varied over time, Maine's active political elites became united in the few years prior to separation. At statehood, in 1820, Maine's political elites, from both sides of the pre-statehood divide, formed a universal coalition, known as the Junto. It consisted of at least one representative from each county; it controlled access to office and shared patronage.<sup>13</sup>

In 1820, the Junto's county-level leaders swept all major political offices with William King of Lincoln County running unopposed for the governorship and John Holmes of York County and John Chandler of Kennebec County securing seats in the United States Senate. Each had led the statehood movement in their respective counties for over a decade and each helped draft the state constitution (Banks 1970; Hatch 1919, 118).

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<sup>13</sup>The Junto consisted of individuals that had formerly affiliated as Federalists and Democratic Republicans. Electoral strength at statehood would determine patronage division.

### 5.4.1 General Joshua Wingate, Jr.: The formation of an opposition coalition, 1820–1829

In Maine's first decade as a state, prospective Senator Joshua Wingate, Jr. and incumbent Senator John Holmes created the first pair of state-wide coalitions in Maine. In the absence of state conventions, state committees, and distinctive partisan labels, Wingate and Holmes influenced annual county conventions by canvassing the state and chairing the inaugural meetings of campaign season. While these early coalitions focused more on patronage than policy, they nominated governors, ran common electoral slates, sought control of leadership positions in the state legislature, and distributed patronage to its members.

In 1820, Joshua Wingate, Jr. was the only candidate to challenge John Holmes and John Chandler for a seat in the United States Senate. Wingate's failure is not surprise. While he supported the separationist movement, his political activity was limited; he attended just two separationist meetings (Banks 1970, 64 & 152). Rather than serve in elected office, Wingate had spent the last fourteen years as a Collector of Customs in Bath, one of the more lucrative appointive positions in the state (Cleaveland 1882, 56). By contrast, Senators Chandler and Holmes had served in the Massachusetts General Court and United States House of Representatives. Furthermore, they had presented separationist claims to the Massachusetts legislature, organized and led state and local separationist meetings, introduced referenda on separation, and co-authored the state constitution (Banks 1970).

After unsuccessfully competing for each of Maine's United States Senate seats, Wingate, in early 1821, led the initial challenge against the Junto (*Eastern Argus*, 2 February 1821). With no Senatorial vacancy until 1824, he began to assemble a state-wide coalition by running for the governor in 1821.

Wingate began his campaign by securing support from political activists in his home county, Lincoln, and a favorable editorial from the *Lincoln Telegraph* (21 June 1821; Meehan 1972, 38). With this campaign material, Wingate and his allies canvassed the state, in advance of the county conventions, in search of activists that would nominate him for

governor at their local county convention (*Eastern Argus*, 12 June, 7 August 1821; *Portland Gazette*, 10 July 1821). Wingate pledged to remove former Federalists, those that allied with the dominant coalition in the Massachusetts legislature, from appointive office (Hatch 1919, 166-7). The county-by-county approach was determined by the absence of a state convention and committee. In the process, Wingate secured further editorial endorsements (*Eastport Sentinel*, 30 June 1821; *Portland Gazette*, 10 July 1821).

Incumbent United States Senator John Holmes organized the campaign against Wingate. Upon learning of Wingate's political activities, Holmes called and chaired the first county convention of 1821, in York, where he delivered a speech against Wingate's candidacy and advocated Albion K. Parris for governor (*Eastern Argus*, 10 July 1821). Holmes claimed that Wingate opposed the state administration, would not govern the state with economy, and had plundered the public treasury in his post as customs collector. Holmes distributed his speech to newspapers across the state.<sup>14</sup> Holmes's speech impacted coverage of Wingate's candidacy. For instance, prior to Holmes's speech, the Junto-aligned *Eastern Argus* printed favorable, if not enthusiastic, notices about Wingate's gubernatorial prospects, noting that he was a sound Republican: "His talents, education, and general acquaintance with the interests of the State are not inferior to those of any man in it" (26 June 1821). However, after Holmes's speech, the *Eastern Argus* began to question Wingate's capacity to effectively govern the state: "General Wingate makes pretensions to exclusive republicanism! Yet ever since he resigned his office at Bath, he has been unceasing in his efforts to divide and break down the republican party" (24 July 1821). In July and August, Holmes sent the *Eastern Argus* a five article series regarding the merits of Parris and Wingate for the gubernatorial office that was reprinted and discussed in newspapers throughout the state.

In response to the York County Convention, Wingate immediately organized the second county convention of the year in his home county, Lincoln, and secured a gubernatorial

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<sup>14</sup>See e.g., *American Advocate*, 14 July 1821; *Portland Gazette*, 17 July 1821; and the *Bangor Weekly Register*, 19 July 1821.

nomination (*Lincoln Telegraph*, 19 July 1821; *Eastern Argus*, 17 & 24 July 1821).<sup>15</sup> To aid his candidacy, Wingate purchased his own paper, the *Independent Statesman*, in July 1821 and won the support for the *Wiscasset Gazette* (*Independent Statesman* 14 July 1821; *Eastern Argus* 17 July 1821). Throughout August, conventions were held in Maine's remaining counties. Two county conventions adopted the label "Republican" while the remainder met simply as the "gentlemen" of a particular county.

In short, in the elections of 1821, incumbent and prospective Senators coordinated the counties around a broadly acceptable candidate for state office. Furthermore, even the winning side did not have state committee or a party label; they too relied on Senator to help organize state elections.

Owing to Wingate's entrepreneurial actions, the statehood coalition fractured. Consequently, political actors that had formerly affiliated with Federalists in the Massachusetts General Court began to consider their options for the upcoming state election (*Portland Gazette*, 31 July 1821).<sup>16</sup> Some of these former Federalists were aligned with the Junto but most of them consisted of individuals who had dropped out of politics around statehood.

Two weeks before the election, a newspaper that had been Federalist in the pre-statehood era placed Ezekiel Whitman in contention for the gubernatorial office; meetings in Somerset and Kennebec concurred (*Portland Gazette*, 28 August 1821; *Hallowell Gazette*, 5 September 1821).<sup>17</sup> Whitman had been a Massachusetts Federalist and was currently a member of the United States House of Representatives. Yet, unlike other Massachusetts Federalists, Whitman had been a steadfast friend of separation from 1803 on (Banks 1970, 42 & 104). Parris, the Junto candidate, won with 53 percent of the vote against Wingate with 16 percent,

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<sup>15</sup>Lincoln County had been the home of William King, Maine's first governor and a member of the Junto. However, after statehood, King proceeded to Portland in Cumberland County and Washington, D.C. where he focused on new economic prospects now that Maine was a state. This left a leadership gap in Lincoln County that Wingate filled.

<sup>16</sup>Despite this chaos of alignment, many prominent former Federalists remained tied to the Junto until 1829 (*Kennebec Journal*, 4 Sept 1829).

<sup>17</sup>The former Federalists did not have any cross-county organization (see Meehan 1972, 51).

Whitman with 28 percent, and the remainder scattered (Lampi n.d.).

After the election, Wingate continued to build a fusion organization of those opposed to the Junto (Chaplin 1934, 62). Wingate courted former Federalists by advocating distribution of patronage to a narrow coalition. In January 1822, Wingatonians and some Whitman supporters composed a majority of the Maine House of Representatives, where they formed a coalition and prevented a member of the Junto from winning the speakership (Meehan 1972, 27). This coalition also redirected the state printing contract from the Junto-controlled *Eastern Argus* to Wingate's *Independent Statesman*. This "monopoly of official patronage and advertisements" would help increase the Statesmen's circulation (Portland *Gazette*, 22 & 25 January 1821).<sup>18</sup> The cooperation of Wingate and Whitman supporters, led to further divisions in the Junto. In the state senate, the Junto temporarily punished cooperative former Federalists, denying them a seat on the Governor's Council.

In the state elections of 1822 and 1823, groups opposed to the Junto coalesced behind common slates for office (Portland *Gazette*, 22 February 1822; *Eastern Argus*, 1 April & 5 August 1823; Meehan 1972, 51 & 67).<sup>19</sup> For instance, in 1822, Wingate declined a nomination for governor so that anti-Junto votes could be concentrated behind Whitman's candidacy.

Wingate also influenced the development of the presidential contest. In 1823, members of the Maine Legislature recognized that John Quincy Adams and Secretary of the Treasury William H. Crawford were the leading presidential candidates in the state but no recommendation was made (*Independent Statesman*, 23 January 1823). In November, Wingate's news organ announced support for Adams and unqualified opposition to Crawford (*Independent Statesman*, 29 November 1823). In the subsequent legislative session, Wingate's principal confidant, state legislator Benjamin Ames, called an after-hours meeting to nominate a presidential candidate. The meeting chose Adams, selected James Campbell and Thomas

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<sup>18</sup>It is notable that this coalition did not award the contract to the *Gazette*, an ex-Federalist newspaper that had a wider a circulation than the *Statesman*.

<sup>19</sup>In 1822, the Junto reallocated patronage to loyal members, thereby reducing the share enjoyed by former Federalists, as they no longer constituted one-third of the Junto's electoral strength (Meehan 1972, 27).

Fillebrown for electors-at-large, and forwarded a copy of the proceedings to Maine's national legislators (*Independent Statesman*, 28 February 1824).<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, the Junto-aligned *Eastern Argus* remained silent on the presidential question, waiting for the congressional caucus to anoint a candidate (*Eastern Argus*, 27 January 1824).

On 4 June 1824, Wingate's *Independent Statesman* began to announce calls for county conventions. The first political convention of 1824 – held in Oxford County on June 9 – nominated Adams, adopted the label “People's ticket,” as suggested by Wingate's *Independent Statesman*, and ratified the choice of James Campbell and Thomas Fillebrown for electors-at-large (*Independent Statesman*, 20 March & 18 June 1824). Subsequent Adams conventions also nominated Campbell and Fillebrown and adopted the “People's ticket” label.<sup>21</sup>

In Maine, Junto efforts on behalf of Crawford lagged. The Crawford movement was led by Senators Chandler and Holmes in Washington. In attending the congressional caucus of February 1824 and voting for Crawford, they became the first major political elites in Maine to *publicly* endorse his candidacy. In February, they also wrote letters to the Secretary of the Treasury on behalf of appointees that would turn out the vote for Crawford (Meehan 1972, 75). Furthermore, Senator Holmes founded a new newspaper, the *Columbian Star*, devoted to discussions of the presidential question (Meehan 1972, 79-80). The Junto launched their campaign in their stronghold, Cumberland County, with a mass meeting on July 22, a month and a half after the first meeting organized by the Wingate faction (*Eastern Argus*, 22 & 29 June, 27 July 1824).<sup>22</sup> The call for the convention made no reference to Crawford but the July 27 convention nominated Crawford and Albert Gallatin for president and vice president by a vote of thirty-nine to one.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>The meeting made no vice presidential nomination. The final ticket in the *Independent Statesman* lists no vice presidential candidate (*Independent Statesman*, 29 October 1824).

<sup>21</sup>*Independent Statesman* on 18 June, 2, 23 July, 6, 20 August, 3, 10 September, and 22 October 1824.

<sup>22</sup>The Junto issued their first convention call on June 22 and on June 29 the *Eastern Argus* labelled Joshua Gate and William Chadwick as electors-at-large for a Republican ticket.

<sup>23</sup>The Junto supported Crawford because, as Secretary of Treasury, he provided them with control over patronage, deposited government funds into Junto owned banks, and revised the coasting law (Banks 1970).

In the end, the Wingate Republicans and the Junto Republicans each ran a full slate of electors. However, just two of the ten county conventions nominated Crawford electors. None of these conventions passed platforms. Rather, it appears that that each side tied their fortunes to the presidential candidate that promised the greatest patronage rewards (Meehan 1972). On election day, Adams won all of Maine's electors and a state-wide majority of seventy-five per cent (Lampi n.d.). Wingate's presidential success was not repeated in state elections. The Junto won a small majority in congressional and state elections and with it control of the gubernatorial seat, Executive Council, and speakership of the Maine House of Representatives (*Eastern Argus*, 13 January 1825; Meehan 1972, 87). While several counties defected from the Junto on the presidential question, they remained loyal for state elections.

To summarize, between 1821 and 1824, prospective Senator Joshua Wingate amalgamated old rivals into a new state party, thus creating a two-party system in Maine. For the remainder of the decade, this new coalition nominated a single slate of candidates (Ring 1996, 129). In the 1820s, each state-wide coalition was heterogeneous – consisting of men who had used the labels Federalist and Democrat prior to statehood. Beyond Senatorial entrepreneurs, each coalition had no state-wide organization such as a state convention, state central committee or distinctive partisan label. Instead, Senator Holmes and the Junto controlled Cumberland County, Wingate Lincoln County, and the remainder was up for grabs. Holmes and Wingate coordinated the counties into state coalitions by canvassing the state, chairing the inaugural conventions of each campaign season, proposing nominations, and writing editorials. For the most part, the Junto maintained narrow control of state politics.

Contrary to McCormick (1966), this new party system was not firmly tied to the presidential question nor did it emerge as a consequence of Clay replacing Adams in 1832.<sup>24</sup> Rather, it emerged in 1821 and 1822 to aid an ambitious politician seek a Senate seat. Wingate never won that seat, but he did construct an opposition party, of near majority size, that

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<sup>24</sup>McCormick argues that the second party system should emerge in New England states once it is clear that a New England candidate will not represent one of the major parties in 1832. However, in his case study of Maine, he argues that the second party system emerged in 1828 (McCormick 1966, 89).

stuck together in the long-term.

### **5.4.2 Francis Ormand Jonathan Smith: Building a Jacksonian coalition, 1827–1841**

In the early 1830s, a faction of young men, led by prospective Senator Francis O. J. Smith, displaced the Junto and became the new leaders of the dominant state-wide coalition. However, when a decisive minority of this state-wide coalition refused to support Smith's bid for a United States Senate seat, Smith and his county organization joined the opposition – helping them achieve their only two state-wide victories in the 1830s and 1840s.

In 1827, the Junto hired Smith, a 21-year old lawyer, to serve as editor of their news organ, the Portland *Eastern Argus*. In the *Argus*, Smith endorsed Jackson for the presidency even though the Junto had not coalesced behind Jackson and had considered aligning with Adams (*Eastern Argus*, 19 June 1829). Nonetheless, the Junto followed Smith's lead. During the campaign, Smith spoke at his local county caucus, organized the 'Young Men of Portland', and wrote 31 editorials in favor of Jackson that were reprinted widely. These editorials condemned "the political, social, and economic institutions favoring the wealthy and elite" including "the debtor laws, the militia system, the tenured and non-elective judiciary, and the political activities of religious institutions" (Gaffney 1979, 38).

While Adams won a popular majority in Maine, each congressional district cast one electoral vote. In Cumberland County, Jackson won his only elector in New England. Smith was credited with this victory, Cumberland County became nationally prominent as "the Star in the East," and the Junto prepared for a windfall of federal patronage (*Eastern Argus*, 7, 11, 13 November 1828).

Smith was a rising star in Maine's dominant state-wide coalition, but he was increasingly dissatisfied with Junto leadership. In 1829, Smith began organizing young activists across the state against the Junto practice of distributing patronage to a small group of elder elites. The young men registered their discontent at the first state-wide political convention in Maine,

a meeting called by “the members of the legislature” to pick a gubernatorial candidate after the incumbent unexpectedly announced his retirement at the end of the legislative session (*American Advocate*, 14 March 1829). The Junto-endorsed candidate, former Adams supporter Samuel Smith, secured 181 votes while the young men delivered their 44 votes to a pure Jacksonian, Robert P. Dunlap (*Eastern Argus*, 12 June 1829; *American Advocate*, 13 June 1829). The young men criticized the nomination of a candidate who professed neutrality toward Jackson (*Eastport Sentinel*, 24 June 1829).

The state-wide gubernatorial nominating convention of 1829 offers two general lessons.<sup>25</sup> First, this open convention represented the whole state political organization of the dominant state coalition. It nominated a gubernatorial candidate but it did not enact a platform, organize a state committee, or commit to a state-wide label. Furthermore, it was temporary. There were no plans to call another state-wide meeting. Thus, state-wide political coalitions remained loose; mature mass parties had not yet formed in the state of Maine. Second, since Wingate defied Junto leaders in 1821, this was the first case in which a state-wide political organization experienced organized, intra-coalition division.

Between 1829 and 1833, Smith and his young men’s faction took control of the dominant state coalition. In 1833, seventy per cent of state convention attendees supported Robert P. Dunlap, the young men’s candidate for governor, compared to just twenty per cent in 1829.<sup>26</sup> How did Smith engineer this transformation?

In 1830, Smith mapped out a career trajectory – state representative, state senator, president of state senate, congressman, and United States Senator – that would enable him to assume leadership of the state party (Gaffney 1979, 64). First, he travelled the state to develop ties with young activists in Cumberland, Kennebec, York, and Penobscot Counties (*Eastern Argus*, 28 August 1833). Second, in 1831, he encouraged many of these individuals

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<sup>25</sup>The call for the convention did not include the label Republican. The only reference to “Republican State Convention” that I could find was in the May and June editions of the *Eastern Argus*. However, the candidate chosen eventually ran under the label “Republican,” as most candidates did in 1833.

<sup>26</sup>The state leaders of 1829 opposed Dunlap in 1833. Thus, Dunlap’s increasing popularity is not a result of winning Junto support.

to run for state legislature. Incumbent officeholders often held leadership positions at their county convention. Smith hoped that the 1832 Cumberland County convention would nominate him for state senator and, as such, sought to ensure that loyal supporters influenced its proceedings. Finally, to increase his control over political information, Smith established a newspaper in the capital city, Kennebec County's *Augusta Age*. For a year, Smith edited the *Age* and expanded its subscriber list (Lucey 1946, 101-2).<sup>27</sup> In 1832, Smith turned the *Age* over to his assistant and returned to Portland and the *Argus*. His legislative recruits led the Cumberland County convention, Smith was nominated as state senator, and won the election.

In 1833, as president of the state senate, Smith sought to remove the Junto-endorsed incumbent governor. The incumbent desired re-nomination but Smith convinced members of the young men's faction to create a state committee empowered to call a state convention (*Eastern Argus*, 15 April 1833). While Smith and his allies had already chosen Dunlap as their nominee, they remained silent so the convention could nominate Dunlap under the veil of popular choice (*Eastern Argus*, 21 January, 19 & 26 April 1833; *American Advocate* 24 April 1833; Gaffney 1979, 76-77). To aid Dunlap's candidacy, Smith's *Eastern Argus* published an editorial calling for the nomination of a "straight-out Democrat," a label that described Dunlap but not the incumbent governor who remained neutral on the presidential question (Hatch 1919, 213).

The state convention of 1833 delivered 185 votes to Dunlap and 79 to the incumbent. The latter remarked that the young men's faction called the state convention to remove him from office for failing to "render the Executive a mere machine from promulgating the appointments which they see to make fit" (*Augusta Age*, 26 June 1833; *Eastern Argus*, 28 June 1833; quoted in Gaffney 1979, 77).<sup>28</sup> Thus, in 1833, Smith and his allies controlled the legislative caucus and the state convention of the dominant statewide coalition. On the party

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<sup>27</sup>At the *Age*, Smith omitted editorials in favor of the incumbent governor, a Junto endorsed candidate.

<sup>28</sup>The convention did not pass a platform. After nominating a governor, it adjourned.

building front, prospective Senator Smith created the very first state central committee for the dominant political coalition, called a state convention in a year where one was otherwise unnecessary, and secured the votes to remove the incumbent governor.

Smith's state-wide influence had its roots in county-level leadership; he was also the leader of his county governing coalition. To illustrate, the Cumberland County convention of 1833 nominated Smith to fill a vacancy in the United States House of Representatives (*Eastern Argus*, 5 July 1833).<sup>29</sup> The Junto held a dissident county convention in Cumberland where they nominated an independent ticket for governor and congressman. But the Junto had lost their popular support in Cumberland County. Seventy delegates attended the Junto convention compared to 300 at Smith's convention (*Eastern Argus*, 21 August 1833). And, in the special congressional election of 1833, Smith won 3,910 votes versus 407 for the Junto candidate. In summary, by 1833, Smith was the principal leader of both his local county organization and the state-wide majority party.

The state legislators elected in 1834 would select a United States Senator. Prospective Senator Smith campaigned for the seat on a short platform that endorsed Andrew Jackson, strict construction of the Constitution, deposit removal, and safeguarding government patronage from corporations (*Eastern Argus*, 22, 27, 29 August, 1 September 1834; *Augusta Age*, 20 August 1834; *Portland Advertiser* 15, 22 July, 19 August 1834). Since Smith had been a proponent of the United States Bank and Maine's state expenditures outpaced revenue, prospective Senator Smith spent the first eight months of 1834 building support for deposit removal – first by sending favorable editorials from Washington and, then, by delivering speeches prior to the state elections in six of the state's ten counties (Grant 1972; Jewett 1937, Chapters 1–2). Smith argued that the United States Senate's pro-banking coalition was a permanent minority and, as a result, agitation should cease until the Bank's charter expired in 1836 (*Eastern Argus*, 14 March 1834; *Portland Advertiser* 1 April 1834).<sup>30</sup> While

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<sup>29</sup>The county convention did not pass a platform but one resolution read that its platform and principles could be found in the pages of the *Eastern Argus*, Smith's news organ.

<sup>30</sup>There is no suggestion that anti-Bank forces were organizing as an interest group in Maine.

campaigning, Smith sought to remove incumbent congressional candidates in three Eastern counties – Hancock, Washington, and Penobscot – who Smith found less than cooperative when submitting requests for federal patronage. Smith argued that their “defeat would be of more ultimate benefit than injury” to the state-wide party (quoted in Gaffney 1979, 126).

The “Republican” ticket led by Robert P. Dunlap for governor maintained control of the state government (*Eastern Argus*, 13 September 1834). Despite Smith’s advocacy in favor of deposit removal – a policy position labelled as unpopular by historians (e.g., Grant 1972) – his state-wide coalition maintained a stable vote share in each county. However, Smith failed to win the Senate seat. By attempting to remove congressional incumbents in three eastern counties, Smith lost the support of state legislators in those counties (Ring 1996, 155-9). Nonetheless, Smith suggested John Ruggles for Senator and he won on the first ballot despite facing popular competitors (*Eastern Argus*, 27 January 1835). Consistent with my model, Gaffney (1979, 137-8) suggests that Ruggles won the Senate seat because the eastern counties had no prior history of coordinating. In advance of the state election, no political actor, other than Smith, attempted to link a majority of constituencies together.<sup>31</sup>

In summary, under the leadership of prospective Senator Smith, the young men’s faction assumed leadership of several county-wide governing coalitions, increased their seat-share in the state legislature and elected its members to Speaker of the House, President of the State Senate, and the Executive Council. Then, in 1833, Smith created a state committee and called a state convention that nominated and elected his favored gubernatorial candidate. Finally, while Smith did not win the Senatorial seat in 1835, his last minute recruit did.

### **Encouraging a rival entrepreneur**

After Ruggles elevation to the Senate in 1835, the next Senatorial election was scheduled for the legislative session of 1839. Owing to the fact that Smith alienated three counties in

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<sup>31</sup>For instance, I find no evidence that, during 1834, John Ruggles attended political conventions outside of Lincoln, his home county.

his coalition, a rival Senatorial entrepreneur immediately began to coordinate counties and bid for their support. In 1835, Reuel Williams, a Senatorial aspirant that had not run a campaign in 1834, used his county newspaper, the *Augusta Age*, to help coordinate those counties dissatisfied with Smith. In two years, Williams had built a solid state-wide coalition and, when Senator Shepley prematurely resigned, the Maine legislature sent Williams to the United States Senate (*Eastern Argus*, 21, 28 February 1837; *Portland Advertiser* 21, 28 February 1837; Poor 1864, 25).<sup>32</sup>

The introduction of a new political entrepreneur changed the policy commitments of the dominant state-wide coalition. From 1831 to 1834, with one prospective Senator, Francis O. J. Smith, canvassing the counties, local platforms were relatively uniform, focused on national issues, and few in number. Most counties lauded Jackson for his veto of the Bank of the United States, recovery of trade with British West India, and tariff reduction.<sup>33</sup>

In 1835, after F. O. J. Smith's unsuccessful attempt to remove his opponents, this uniformity disappears and new platform planks emerge (*Eastern Argus*, 10 February, 10 March, 17, 30 June, 8, 11, 14, 15 July, 18, 22, 25 August, 1 September 1835). First, some counties – Lincoln, Penobscot, Waldo, York – declined to pick sides; they adjourned their county conventions without making substantial policy commitments. Second, the policy commitments of the remaining counties were no longer uniform, although they remained focused on national issues and were few in number. Third, new policy platforms, heretofore unseen in Maine, were introduced at county conventions courted by Williams. For instance, Hancock and Washington counties were the first to pass the following resolutions supported by prospective Senator Williams but not prospective Senator Smith: approval of Jackson's "introduction of specie for currency" and support for "the prohibition of all bills under five

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<sup>32</sup>This vacancy was unexpected. Governor Dunlap appointed incumbent Senator Shepley to the Maine Supreme Court. Shepley preferred a job with life tenure and resigned from the Senate on 23 September 1836.

<sup>33</sup>*Eastern Argus*, 1 March, 5, 9, 19, 23, 30 August, 3, 6, 9 September 1831. 6 March, 19 June, 06, 20, 27, 31 July, 10, 14, 21, 23, 31 August, 4 September 1832. 28 June, 5, 8, 10 July, 12, 19, 28 August 1833. 5 March, 11, 14, 28 July, 8, 25 August 1834.

dollars.” These conventions also announced opposition to “those fanatics among us, who are interfering with the domestic concerns of the South.” Among the dominant state coalition, these were new and divisive issues.

By 1836, Smith’s state-wide support had eroded (*Eastern Argus* 11, 13, 14, 16, 25 July, 17, 25 August, 2, 3, 5 September 1836). Cumberland County, Smith’s home county, forged common commitments with Penobscot county as both conventions passed resolutions in favor of term limits for the state judiciary, tariff reduction, increased restrictions on state-granted charters, and distribution of federal deposits to state governments as a means of increasing state currency. While York County declined to pick sides, Williams solidified the remaining counties on a short platform that supported Indian removal and opposed distribution of the federal surplus to state governments.

Consequently, when Senator Shepley prematurely resigned, it is no surprise that Williams won the Senatorial election of 1837. Furthermore, in the fall of 1837, Gorham Parks an ally of Williams and enemy of both Smith and Senator Ruggles won the gubernatorial nomination (Hatch 1919, 227). Parks, consistent with the Senator Williams’s platform, opposed to the distribution of the federal surplus.

### **Smith bolts the dominant state-wide coalition**

In 1837, after Gorham Parks won the gubernatorial nomination, Smith and his Cumberland County political organization bolted the state-wide majority coalition, identified as “Conservatives,” and worked independently of the traditional state majority.

In contrast with Senator Williams and his gubernatorial candidate Gorham Parks, the Conservatives argued that the federal government should facilitate an ample credit system and regulate the currency either through the creation of a new national bank – on sounder constitutional footing – or by placing federal deposits in state banks. To this end, they favored distribution and opposed hard money policies such as the specie circular (Gaffney 1979, 197–207). In the state elections of 1837, Smith allied with the Whig opposition and

together they elected a Whig to the gubernatorial seat with 50.1 per cent of the state-wide vote. Smith took credit for the Democratic upset and the Democrats agreed (Gaffney 1979, 204-5). This was the first opposition victory in Maine's political history and it was result of a prospective Senator changing the state-wide affiliation of his county party.

Smith saw this new Conservative-Whig coalition as his best bet for securing Maine's next Senatorial seat, to be filled by the legislative session of 1841. With an eye to the state elections of 1840, Smith sought to cement this alliance. First, Smith founded a conservative newspaper – the *Eastern Argus, Revived* – where he argued that Harrison was a true Jeffersonian, opposed both Van Buren and incumbent Governor John Fairfield, and authored weekly editorials on behalf of the new coalition (*Eastern Argus, Revived*, 23 June 1840; Gaffney 1979, 250). Second, Smith stumped the state making several visits to county conventions and political rallies in seven of the state's thirteen counties including Cumberland, Franklin, Kennebec, Lincoln, Penobscot, Somerset and York Counties (*Augusta Age*, 5 September 1840; *Portland Advertiser*, 23 June, 18, 22, 28 August, 1, 8, 29 September, 13, 20 October 1840; Gaffney 1979, 250-251). In his speeches, Smith argued that pro-Bank Democratic Republicans should support this Whig ticket or abstain (*Eastern Argus, Revived*, 8 September 1840).

In state elections of 1840, the Conservative-Whig coalition won a legislative majority, the gubernatorial seat, and Harrison beat Van Buren by 411 votes. Fessenden credited Smith for the opposition victory (Fessenden to Smith, 7 July 1840, Smith Papers). During the campaign and post-election, Smith's *Eastern Argus, Revived* argued that the Conservatives were entitled to the Senatorial seat but the Whigs selected George Evans – a liberal not well-liked by the conservatives. After this decision, Smith declared that there would be “no amalgamation of parties in Maine,” he dropped out of politics, and, as he predicted, the new opposition alliance in Maine collapsed (Gaffney 1979, 273-4). The Whig opposition did not win another state-wide election until the rise of the Republican Party in the mid-1850s.

### 5.4.3 Hannibal Hamlin: Putting the state coalition back together, 1841 – 1850

In the 1840s, it was common for candidates affiliated with Maine's dominant state-wide coalition to adopt the label "Democratic Republican." Consequently, I use this label. At the start of the decade, the Democratic Republicans were in disarray. In 1843, two Democratic Republican candidates ran for governor and, furthermore, the coalition was hopelessly divided on the presidential question (*Eastern Argus*, 1 July 1843).<sup>34</sup> They could not rely on old leaders to ameliorate the discord. Smith remained inactive and Senator Williams retired prematurely in 1843 to focus on his business affairs (Hatch 1919, 314). In this void, prospective Senator Hannibal Hamlin began to construct a new state-wide coalition. He was the first entrepreneur affiliated with Maine's dominant coalition that committed its county units to a lengthy, multi-issue policy platform, which was notable for defining Maine's Democratic Republicans as an anti-slavery coalition.

Since entering politics in 1829, Hamlin supported the Administrations of Jackson and Van Buren, particularly their positions regarding the national bank, hard money, distribution, governmental economy, and expansion of white male suffrage (Hunt 1969, 17-42).<sup>35</sup> However, like most Mainers in the 1820s and 1830s, Hamlin was anti-slavery.<sup>36</sup> Prior to his bid for a Senate seat, Hamlin edited a Democratic newspaper, served five-terms in the statehouse, two-terms as congressman, and twice as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

In early 1845, Hamlin announced his intention to run for a United States Senate seat to be filled by state legislators elected in September 1845. Immediately after returning from home the House of Representatives in spring 1845, he began to defend his voting record in

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<sup>34</sup>I uncover no evidence that these coordination failures were a function of policy conflict.

<sup>35</sup>On local issues, Hamlin sought to put an end to capital punishment in Maine.

<sup>36</sup>Over time, Hamlin became increasingly anti-slavery but he remained opposed to abolitionists. To illustrate, in 1836, Hamlin supported the right of petition and advocated a policy of non-extension. In 1844, he opposed the annexation of Texas as a *slave* state. In 1846, he contributed to the Wilmot Proviso and, in 1847, he called for a prohibition of slavery in all Territories. And, in 1848, he opposed the fugitive slave law.

public speeches (*Portland Advertiser*, 1 April 1845; *Augusta Age*, 4 April 1845). Then, his lieutenants canvassed annual county meetings:

“In the beginning of the canvass Mr. Hamlin and his supporters had easily the best of it. They carried the majority of the caucuses in the summer of 1845, at which the Democratic candidates for the legislature were chosen, and nominated men who pledged themselves to vote for Mr. Hamlin when his name came before the legislature” (Hamlin 1899, 149; *The Maine Democrat*, 19 August 1845; Hunt 1969, 36).<sup>37</sup>

After convention season, Hamlin canvassed the state again, promoted a multi-issue platform, summarized in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Hannibal Hamlin’s Long Coalition, 1845

Policy
Right of petition
Favor Independent Treasury
Postal rate reduction
Privilege settlers by graduating public land prices
Against distribution of the proceeds of public lands
Tariff for revenue only (with a focus on raw materials)
Against annexing Texas as a single slave state (prefer to divide into free and slave sections)
Favor reoccupation of Oregon
Favor a railroad to Oregon, out of military necessity
Favor federal fishing bounties

When the state legislature met in May 1846, a majority of state representatives and state senators were pledged to Hamlin’s Senatorial candidacy (*The Maine Democrat*, 5 May 1846; Hamlin 1899, 150; Hatch 1919, 332-333). Hamlin won the first ballot in the lower house

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<sup>37</sup>Charles Hamlin, Hannibal’s son, managed his father’s business and political affairs. In the process, Charles archived more than 10,000 letters along with diaries and newspaper clippings. While this archive does not survive to this day, Charles and his son used it to write an extensive biography of Hannibal Hamlin.

but, owing to his anti-slavery convictions, two pledged delegates in the state senate withheld their votes. As a result, he was one vote short of a majority in the state senate. After six weeks, Hamlin instructed his supporters to vote for James Bradbury, a moderate on the slavery question and Bradbury won (*Hallowell Gazette*, 25 July 1846; Hunt 1969, 37).<sup>38</sup> One state senator pledged to Hamlin remarked that those “who betrayed their constituency by opposing Mr. Hamlin were not met on their return home with ‘shouts of applause and bands of music,’ but were invited to political graves which know no resurrection” (quoted in Hamlin 1899, 153).

Hamlin’s canvass offers two lessons. First, when dissident Democrats demanded that Hamlin be replaced with candidate less committed to anti-slavery, legislators pledged to Hamlin stood firm on ballot after ballot for six-weeks. Only when Hamlin withdrew did those legislators support a new candidate and, even then, they switched to a candidate endorsed by Hamlin. Second, Hamlin refused to compromise his policy principles on the slavery dimension even though he was advised that, by doing so, he could win the Senatorial election by securing the votes of the pro-slavery defectors (Hamlin 1899, 148-152). This is consistent with my claim that a Senator does not merely assemble a state coalition, but helps shape the content of its policy platform.

Upon defeat, Hamlin altered his policy platform to include stronger anti-slavery planks and, then, retailed those new planks to county political organizations across the state. Rather than seek another term as a congressman, Hamlin, in September 1846, ran for and won a seat in the lower house of the state legislature for he believed that remaining in Maine would help him build a state-wide majority coalition (Hatch 1919, 334).

In between losing the Senatorial election of 1845 and assuming a seat in the Maine state legislature of May 1847, Hamlin returned to Washington to finish his congressional term where he developed a stronger anti-slavery position by helping draft the Wilmot Proviso and calling for the prohibition of slavery in all Territories.

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<sup>38</sup>Bradbury won over Hugh Anderson, the favorite of the dissident Democrats.

Then, as a state representative in 1847, Hamlin introduced and secured enough votes from Democratic Republicans to pass three new anti-slavery resolutions:

- Opposition to slavery extension
- Opposition to the introduction of slavery into Territory acquired from Mexico
- The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 should govern the acquisition of all free territory

These resolutions took a stronger anti-slavery position compared to those in Table 5.2, which were limited to the right of petition and Territorial balance for slave and free-soil interests. By introducing and passing these resolutions, Hamlin re-defined what it meant to be a member of the Democratic Republican party in Maine.

When Senator Fairfield died in December 1847, the incoming anti-slavery majority elevated Hamlin to the United States Senate where he remained until he became Abraham Lincoln's Vice President in 1860 (*Portland Advertiser*, 18, 23 May 1848; *Augusta Age*, 26 May 1848).

### **Hamlin's re-election campaign, 1849–1850**

In June 1848, Hamlin took his seat in the United States Senate as legislative debate focused on slavery. In his Senate speeches, Hamlin remained committed to his anti-slavery resolutions of 1847. He opposed the fugitive slave bill and called for congressional prohibition of slavery in all Territories, immediate statehood for California, and abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia.

Since Hamlin filled a short-term Senate vacancy, the state legislative session of 1850 would determine his re-election prospects. From March to September 1849, Hamlin canvassed the state, recruited and promoted the nomination of anti-slavery Democratic Republicans for the state legislature, helped draft anti-slavery platforms, won pledges of support from approximately two-thirds of the state's Democratic Republicans, and courted an emerging Free-Soil faction (*Eastern Argus*, 4, 12, 25 July, 13, 27 August, 1, 3, 6 September 1849;

Wescott 1966, 128; Hatch 1919, 350; Hunt 1969, 67; Fosburg 1967, 28-41). He also suggested and built support for John Hubbard, a firm anti-slavery advocate, for the gubernatorial seat. Hubbard won the nomination with 353 votes against his more conservative rival John Hodgson, with 235 votes. After the elections, Hamlin and his lieutenants remained in contact with pledged delegates and, in May 1850, Hamlin travelled to Augusta to attend the opening of the legislative session (Hamlin 1899, 235-236).

After the legislative elections of 1849, Bion Bradbury, a pro-slavery Democratic Republican, announced his Senatorial candidacy. Bradbury had not canvassed the state prior to the state elections and, thus, lacked pledged delegates (Hamlin 1899, 239-241). Perhaps this is why, in the subsequent Senatorial election, Bradbury failed to secure a united vote from the faction of pro-slavery Democratic Republicans (Bangor *Jeffersonian*, 18 June 1850).

Prospectively, Hamlin expected to have just enough anti-slavery Democratic Republican votes to win re-election even though his anti-slavery inclination alienated Democratic Republicans in Aroostook and York Counties (Hunt 1969, 67). Hamlin found himself one vote short which he eventually secured from a Free Soil legislator, winning re-election without the support of pro-slavery Democrats or Whigs. In the next state election, the Free Soil organization joined the anti-slavery Democratic Republicans. Hamlin now led a long coalition of majority size united on his preferred multi-issue policy platform (Hatch 1919, 360).

#### **5.4.4 William Pitt Fessenden: Building an Opposition Coalition, 1837–1856**

Since Joshua Wingate's defection in 1821, the dominant state-wide coalition faced a sizable opposition. For instance, from 1834 to 1855, a loose coalition of Republicans and, then, Democratic Republicans controlled, on average, 58 per cent of the seats in Maine's House of Representatives (standard deviation = 9.1) (Burnham 198?). In this section, I focus on prospective Senator William Pitt Fessenden, the principal architect of the opposition coalition that won the statehouse in 1837 and 1840 and, then, became the state-wide majority

from 1856 under the label “Republican.”

Fessenden began his political career in 1831 as a state representative. On policy, he opposed slavery and supported the Bank of the United States, federally funded internal improvements, a protective tariff, public support for education, and temperance (Fessenden 1907, Chapter 1). This agenda limited his career prospects as anti-Jacksonian politicians were uncompetitive at the state-level and in Fessenden’s home county, Cumberland. While Fessenden remained politically active, he infrequently held elected office.

### **William Pitt Fessenden courts Francis O. J. Smith: The opposition victories of 1837 and 1840**

Previously, I showed that, in 1837, prospective Senator Francis O. J. Smith defected from the dominant state-wide coalition and allied with the Whigs. This resulted in two coalitions evenly dividing the statehouse from 1837 through 1841. On the Whig side, it was a prospective Senator, William Pitt Fessenden, that encouraged Smith’s defection as a means of securing a state-wide majority for Whig candidates.

In 1837, while managing Edward Kent’s gubernatorial campaign, Fessenden travelled to several counties and observed disagreement among Democratic Republicans on banking (Hatch 1919, 369; *Portland Advertiser*, 11 April, 29 August 1837). Back home, in Cumberland County, Fessenden courted prospective Senator Smith, leader of the Cumberland County’s local governing coalition and a Conservative Democratic Republican faction that opposed the Independent Treasury. Smith and his county governing coalition allied with the Whigs, which helped the Whigs win the gubernatorial seat and a legislative majority.

In an effort to maintain this alliance, Fessenden travelled to New York to raised funds for Smith’s proposed newspaper, the *Eastern Argus, Revived*. Smith promised Fessenden that he would use the newspaper to declare opposition to Van Buren in advance of the Democratic National Convention and encourage pro-bank Democrats to support the Whig ticket for state and national office. While this alliance would help Whigs maintain the statehouse and win

the presidency, Maine’s Whig activists were not supportive of Fessenden’s maneuver for it appeared to directly aid their rivals (Cook 2011, 41). Nonetheless, Fessenden persevered.

Table 5.3: William Pitt Fessenden’s Long Coalition, 1840

Policy
Van Buren Administration exhibits executive corruption: expanding appointed office, distributing public domain to speculators, increasing national expenditure, concentrating national revenue in Executive branch
Poor management of public treasury by Van Buren Administration; Failed to punish “defaulters who have plundered the public treasury”
Oppose Independent Treasury for it “has resulted in the almost entire extinction of trade, diminished the national resources to a ruinous extent, and overwhelmed the people with distress”
Protective tariff to safeguard wages for laborers
Distribute proceeds of public lands to the states
Favor federal fishing bounties
Right of petition (Legislative convention only)

In the 1840 elections, Fessenden was the principal architect of the Whig party’s platform and state-wide political organization. In March, Fessenden – as a state representative – called and presided over the “Legislative Whig Convention,” which affirmed support for the presidential ticket of Harrison and Tyler and introduced a state party platform (Portland *Advertiser*, 10 March 1840). Fessenden also organized the next convention of the campaign, a Whig Young Men’s Convention to be held in Cumberland County. There, Fessenden read and received approval for his prepared policy platform (Portland *Advertiser*, 28 April 1840). These platforms, authored by Fessenden, are summarized in Table 5.3; they represent the first multi-issue policy statements of the campaign.

To ensure local Whig organizations coordinated around a common platform and electoral slate, Fessenden created the first state Whig committee, which called a state-wide “Harrison convention” (Portland *Advertiser*, 21 April, 28 June 1840). The state convention nominated Edward Kent for the gubernatorial office and affirmed its support for Fessenden’s state platform (Portland *Advertiser*, 23 June 1840). After the state convention, Fessenden built local support by contacting county-level Whig organizations to arrange a speaking tour that,

by November, took him to seven of the state's ten counties to deliver a three-hour set speech (Fessenden 1907, 18; Wescott 1966, 22; *Portland Advertiser*, 28 August, 1, 8, 11 September 1840). Who else canvassed the state? Edward Kent, the Whig gubernatorial candidate, did not but prospective Senator Smith visited three counties (*Augusta Age*, 29 August 1840).<sup>39</sup> It was prospective Senators that canvassed the state to build support for a common ticket.

In Cumberland County, Smith's dominant local governing coalition convened with Fessenden and his Whig compatriots to select a common slate of candidates (*Portland Advertiser*, 28 August 1840). Smith argued that Harrison, rather than Van Buren, was the true heir of Jefferson and, thus, the Whig ticket deserved Cumberland's support. This convention nominated William Pitt Fessenden for the congressional seat in Cumberland County.

In the September elections, the Whigs won the gubernatorial seat by 237 votes state-wide and also secured a majority in the state legislature. Furthermore, Fessenden became the first opposition candidate elected to the United States House of Representatives from Cumberland County, a feat that would not be repeated until the county became Republican in 1856. Fessenden continued to canvas until the presidential election and Harrison carried Maine by less than 400 votes (*Portland Advertiser*, 16, 20, 27, 30 October, 3, 6 November 1840).

The Conservative-Whig coalition fell apart after 1840 when the Whigs failed to reward Smith with a Senatorial seat. Nonetheless, the basic dynamic of the story is consistent with my model of party formation. Francis O. J. Smith was the leader of his county party. By fielding a Whig slate rather than the usual Democratic Republican slate, the state-wide Whig coalition won its only state-wide victories in Maine. At the state-level, coordination was organized by Smith and Fessenden – two actors who had announced their ambitions for a Senatorial seat.

During his congressional tenure, Fessenden observed that the Southern Whigs thwarted

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<sup>39</sup>Edward Kent did deliver a speech in Massachusetts but the contents of that speech were not printed in Maine (*Portland Advertiser*, 15 September 1840).

their coalition's positive policy agenda. He concluded that the national Whig party was an unnatural alliance that shared little common ground and, in a letter to his law partner, proposed a new national coalition:

“In my opinion nothing but a strict union and friendly understanding between the north middle and northeast, together with Kentucky and Tennessee, will give strength and consistency to our party. The Southern Whigs are not to be relied on. I think that a union such as I have referred to will be formed. The Western boys are good fellows and ripe for concert and vigor” (quoted in Jellison 1962, 42).

For the next decade and a half, Fessenden constructed a new opposition party in Maine in the image of this prospective national coalition. This new coalition, at the state level, would elect Fessenden to the United States Senate and, at the national level, achieve the goals of his state party more effectively than the current national Whig coalition.

### **Leading the opposition, 1843–1856**

From 1843, Whig legislators consistently delivered their Senatorial vote to Fessenden (*Portland Advertiser*, 7 March 1843, 21 January 1845, 28 June 1850, 8 March 1853, 18 January 1859; *Hallowell Gazette*, 25 July 1846). As leader of the opposition, Fessenden continued to canvass the state. In 1844 and 1849, in advance of state elections that chose Senatorial electors, Fessenden surveyed the state political situation by visiting several of the state's thirteen counties for speeches and debates (Fessenden 1907, 30; Cook 2011, Chapter 2; Wescott 1962, 123).<sup>40</sup> And, to improve his Senatorial prospects, he ran for town representative in 1844, 1852, and 1853 so that he would be a member of the legislatures that chose Maine's United States Senators.

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<sup>40</sup>In 1844, Fessenden visited Cumberland, Lincoln, Oxford and Hancock Counties (*Portland Advertiser*, 11 June, 13, 27 August, 3 September 1844). Wescott (1966, 123) discovered – a now lost – diary of James Shepherd Pike and argues that, in 1849, Pike acted as a surrogate for Fessenden. Pike canvassed all Whig organizations in the state, maintaining a daily diary of all interactions.

By 1850, Fessenden was actively building a state-wide anti-slavery coalition. First, he courted anti-slavery Senator Hannibal Hamlin. Fessenden sent editorials praising Hamlin's Senate speech against the 1850 Compromise to newspapers across the state and, furthermore, he forwarded his approval to Hamlin himself. Second, as slavery became increasingly salient, Fessenden began to encourage cooperation between anti-slavery Democrats, Whigs, and Free Soil men. For instance, in 1850, when Senator Hamlin was just shy of a legislative majority, Fessenden travelled to Augusta and convinced Free-Soil legislators that Hamlin trumped all viable alternative majority candidates on the slavery question. While the Free-Soil legislators had planned to defer the Senatorial question to the next legislative session, Fessenden convinced them to unite with anti-slavery Democrats to elect Hamlin without the votes of the pro-slavery Democrats (Cook 2011, 74-5).

Fessenden's strategy was not broadly supported. The 1850 Whig state convention passed a resolution condemning Free-Soil support for Hamlin (*Portland Advertiser*, 2 August 1850). Whig activists did not appreciate Fessenden's coalition building strategy which exacerbated Democratic divisions and led to the election of the only available candidate with desirable policy credentials on the most salient issue of the day. It is fair to say that fellow Whig elites did not agree with Fessenden's argument that "we are bound to look at results, rather than to principles alone" (quoted in Jellison 1962, 57).

After Hamlin's re-election in 1850, the Democratic Republicans in Maine began to fracture into pro-Compromise and free-soil county organizations. Then, in 1851, both state-wide coalitions became were divided on the merits of prohibition – an issue raised by Portland mayor Neal Dow (Byrne 1961). In 1852, with an eye on a Senatorial seat, Fessenden continued to court Hamlin, arguing that "all were Democrats now" (Cooks 2011, 81). And, in 1852 and 1853, Fessenden built support for an anti-slavery, pro-temperance coalition. Hamlin's push for fusion with anti-slavery Democrats is not mirrored in the Whig press, which instead argued for the Whigs to hold on to their identity as they may, in fact, emerge as the new majority (e.g., *Portland Advertiser*, 10 November 1852).

Prior to the meeting of the 1854 legislature – which would select a United States Senator – Fessenden prepared for fusion of anti-slavery men in the legislature. In November 1853, Fessenden received renewed pledges of support from anti-slavery Democrats (Cook 2011, 84). To maintain this support, Fessenden asked Hamlin to send a note in favor of Fessenden’s Senatorial candidacy to his allies in the state legislature (Whalon 1968, 5). When the lower house of the 1854 legislature met, state legislators representing Democratic-Republican conventions with anti-slavery platforms joined Whigs to staff leadership positions, fending off procedural delays from the pro-slavery Democrats (Wescott 1966, 202).

First, the anti-slavery Whig-Democratic Republican coalition had to select a governor. Since no candidate – pro-slavery Democrat, anti-slavery Democrat, or Whig – won a majority for governor, the lower house forwarded the names of the anti-slavery Democrat and Whig to the state senate. There, the Whigs held a majority and elected the Whig candidate. Then, the coalition of anti-slavery Democrats and Whigs in the lower house elected William Pitt Fessenden to the United States Senate (*Portland Advertiser*, 8 March 1853; Fosburg 1967, 52).

To maintain this proto-Republican coalition, Fessenden appealed to William Crosby the newly elected Whig candidate for governor for his help in delivering patronage to anti-slavery Democrats and Whigs:

“Whatever of success the Whigs had, saving in your election by the [State] Senate, is due to the aid afforded them by the [anti-slavery] Democrats, and even your election could not have been accomplished without their aid in the preliminary proceedings. ... Our best policy is to conciliate and strengthen the minority of the democrats, as far as possible, for to weaken them is to injure ourselves. Our only hope for the future is in their strength, and willingness to stand in their present position. ... You expressed to me last fall your entire willingness to allow them a fair share of the State offices, if you should be elected Govr. If such was a good policy then it can be no less so now. Your friends expressed their

convictions of the propriety of this course during the canvass at Augusta. ... I think I see in the present state of things a fine opportunity, yet, to build up a strong independent party essentially Whig, which will have the power to control the State Gov't for many years, and to accomplish great good. This however will depend much and mostly upon yourself" (quoted in Wescott 1986, 112-113).

This letter suggests that an understanding was reached between Fessenden and the anti-slavery Democrats in advance of his election. Furthermore, it shows that Fessenden, as United States Senator, sought to keep this coalition together in the long-term.

Fessenden had demonstrated the viability of an anti-slavery coalition that united Whigs and anti-slavery Democrats. In the election of 1856, politicians affiliated with the "Republican" label commanded a majority of legislative seats. In that election, opposition elements united on a single ticket and dominated state politics into the twentieth century. Furthermore, this new coalition re-elected Senator Hamlin. Hamlin and Fessenden each served in the executive branch under Republican presidents and then returned to the Senate with Fessenden serving until 1870 and Hamlin until 1880.

## 5.5 State legislators

The literature review in Chapter 3 presents a range of scholarly arguments that suggest that state legislators, presidents, governors, or socially prominent families – rather than United States Senators – may have created state parties. Before concluding, I consider the evidence on behalf of each alternative.

To explain party formation, many scholars have focused on the incentives of policy-motivated incumbent legislators, who bring their local district into a state-wide coalition when seeking re-election (Duverger 1959; Chhibber and Kollman 2004). These arguments are contingent on two claims. First, legislators seek re-election and, second, they have a long-term policy view. However, neither claim holds in the antebellum era. The vast majority of

state legislators serve a single term in the statehouse. Wescott (1986) finds that less than 20 per cent of state legislators served two or more terms in the 1840s and 1850s, the period when institutionalized state parties formed.

Furthermore, in an analysis of state legislative activity, Potter (1974, 26) finds that the vast majority of antebellum focused on “organizing towns, defining the powers and duties of state and local officials, and resolving an extraordinary number of community problems” while much of the remainder consisted “of simple acts of incorporation.” Thus, Maine’s legislators drafted legislation that was parochial in nature. This is consistent with Jewett’s (1937) analysis of economic affairs, which shows that the state collected meager tax revenues barely sufficient for salaries let alone any pro-active public projects. Consequently, state development took place on a county-by-county basis with the assistance of private investors and the federal government (Potter 1974, 44; Greenleaf 1829).

In summary, the average state legislator was an amateur who rarely sought re-election and, thus, it is unlikely that a coalition of state legislators formed a state-wide party.

## 5.6 Governors

In my review of Maine’s constitution, I noted that governor had more constitutional resources than most of his contemporaries and, as a result, it was exceedingly important to rule out the rival hypothesis that the governor built parties in Maine (Banks 1970, 163). However, I will show that the gubernatorial power in Maine was still limited and became increasingly meager over the course of the nineteenth century.

Maine’s governor was strong in comparison with other governors. However, did he have the constitutional resources to “take care that the laws be faithfully executed”? While the legislature appointed the Secretary of State, the State Treasurer, and militia officers, the executive department appointed and, if necessary, could remove the Attorney General along with all county attorneys and sheriffs. Thus, with a friendly Governor’s Council,

the governor's appointment and removal power allowed him to effectively preside over a responsive executive department.

However, it is not clear that governor could rely on his Council for support. In a study of Maine's constitutional development in the nineteenth century, Barry (1965, 106-141) finds that legislature appointed a responsible Governor's Council that acted as a check on gubernatorial power by helping the legislature "effectively block critical appointments and squelch undesired proposals." In another study of constitutional development, Tinkle (1992, 98) argues that until the mid-twentieth century, the governor was 'head' of the executive department, but he did not 'control' it." Consistent with the conclusions of these studies, I also find in my newspaper that the Governor's Council of 1829 vetoed many of Governor Lincoln's initial nominations and he was forced to work with his Council to discover compromise candidates (*Eastern Argus*, 17 February 1829). In short, the governor's ability to lead the executive department and use patronage to build a state party was restricted by his Council.

Even at their peak, the governor's formal powers were checked by his Council but, starting in the 1840s, those formal powers diminished over time. In 1841, Governor Edward Kent recommended that the legislature modify the constitution such that the electorate, rather than the governor, fill all county offices as well as many state offices including adjutant general, quartermaster general, attorney general, and land agent offices. For "local people knew the qualifications of the candidates and the performance of the incumbents" (Barry 1965, 95-96). This suggests that filling office was more of an administrative duty than a source of political power.

In response to Governor Kent's request, the legislature began to trim the governor's formal powers. In 1842, the legislature made the office of state's attorney elective at the county-level thereby eliminating the governor's power to both appoint and remove state attorneys (Emery 1915, 97). Then, in 1855, the ninth constitutional amendment made county all offices elective and, furthermore, transferred all state-level appointments from the

executive branch to the legislature. As before, the governor also lost his power of removal. As a result of these modifications, “the executive officials in any county may defy [the governor] and practically nullify any law of the state in that county” (Emery 1915, 97). Emery (1915, 98) also claims that nullification was so frequent that individual cases “are too familiar to need citation.” For the remainder of the century, the executive branch saw its few remaining powers trimmed even more (Barry 1965, 141).

## 5.7 Presidents

It seems eminently implausible that presidents built state parties. However, from 1820 to 1860, not a single presidential candidate visited the state of Maine to build support for his party and his candidacy in advance of his election. Perhaps, however, presidential candidates do not need to canvass as they are the most prominent individuals in Washington and can build state parties by interacting with members of Congress. However, the two political actors – Hannibal Hamlin and William Pitt Fessenden – most closely associated with building a state-wide party that consisted of a multi-issue policy platform and state-wide organization, built their state-wide coalitions in advance of winning a seat in Congress. Thus, it is unlikely that their state-wide long coalition in Maine was the product of engaging with a presidential entrepreneur in Washington.

The content of my case studies is not consistent with a model of presidential party building. Rather my case studies demonstrate that Senators created state parties to improve their prospects for political office and that these coalitions came together proximate to Senate elections rather than presidential elections. Of course, Senators cared about who won the presidency and, as a result, they mobilized their pre-existing coalition on behalf of a presidential candidate. But presidential considerations came after coalition formation. For instance, Senators John Chandler and John Holmes attempted to mobilize their statehood coalition for William Crawford in 1824. And, in 1838, prospective Senator Smith threatened

to withhold his coalition's support from the Democratic Party if they nominated Martin Van Buren for the presidency and passed a platform endorsing hard money policies.

## 5.8 Socially prominent families

Ridgway (1979) argues that locally prominent families, through intermarriage, extend their influence across a state. In the legislature, members of this kinship network form a parliamentary group that constitutes the basis of a nascent state party.

While kinship ties were often important in determining an individual's social position, no historian has empirically demonstrated the claim that intermarriage connected families in more than a few counties and, furthermore, that this network asserted itself as a coalition in the legislature. In most states, that is a rather tall order. For instance, to form a majority coalition in the North Carolina legislature, a kinship network would need to extend across 33 counties. Maine, however, stacks the deck in favor of this hypothesis. With just ten counties prior to 1838 and sixteen counties from 1860 to the present, it is much more feasible that a network families could control politics in a majority of the Maine's counties. However, even in a state with a small number of counties, the evidence for this rival hypothesis is meager.

First, the universal coalition that organized Maine's separation from Massachusetts between 1805 and 1820 was led by entrepreneurs "with shipping, banking, real estate, and various other business interests" who lacked ties to Massachusetts's aristocracy and politically influential families (Meehan 1972, Chapter 1). In the move to statehood, Banks (1970, 7) finds that "pre-Revolutionary War ruling class constituted only an ineffectual minority" and, instead, politics was dominated by an emerging class of "lawyers and merchant capitalists."

Second, in this chapter, I identified four party builders in Maine: Joshua Wingate, Jr., Francis O. J. Smith, Hannibal Hamlin, and William Pitt Fessenden. Of these four political actors, three – Smith, Hamlin, and Fessenden – were college educated lawyers that entered

politics to improve their material worth and social status (Gaffney 1979; Hunt 1969; Fessenden 1907; Jellison 1962; Cook 2011). While these men were better off than most, they were frequently in debt and lacked the vast tracts of land that supported members of the aristocracy. They relied on the salaries of political office and the resulting prestige that this conferred on their law practice to survive. Only Wingate – who married into Massachusetts’s famed Dearborn family – was a member of the aristocracy. While Wingate’s familial connections helped him secure appointed office in the pre-statehood era, he failed to secure a patronage post after 1820 (Meehan 1972, 19–38). In fact, of the four party builders, Wingate was the only one that failed to secure a seat in either house of Congress.

Finally, in search of favorable evidence, I turn to the Washburn family of Oxford County, who had been locally prominent and well-to-do since the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>41</sup> If there was a political dynasty in Maine, the Washburn family was it. During the nineteenth century, four of eleven children became career politicians (Kelsey 2008). The oldest son, Israel Washburn, Jr., became the de facto leader of his county party, chairing many of his county’s annual meetings in the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>42</sup>

The narrative, however, departs from Ridgway’s (1979) theory in two ways. First, the Washburn sons and daughters did not create a cross-county kinship network in Maine. Rather, most of the children – including those who became politicians – moved out west where their family’s money and prestige provided them with superior political and economic opportunities. Second, Israel Washburn, Jr. rarely attended county meetings or delivered campaign speeches outside of his home county. He left that task to the Senators of his day, Hannibal Hamlin and William Pitt Fessenden.

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<sup>41</sup>Today, the Washburn estate is a popular tourist attraction that includes an archive where family diaries, letters, and scrapbooks are preserved. If an archive of correspondence could reveal the workings of a nineteenth-century political family, this archive will. This archive forms the basis of two books (Kelsey 2004, 2008).

<sup>42</sup>See the Oxford *Democrat* 22 July 1841, 23 August 1842, 29 August 1844, 26 August 1845, 1 September 1849, 27 August 1850, 31 August 1852, and 17 August 1853.

## 5.9 Conclusion

In the state of Maine, from 1820 to 1860, prospective and incumbent United States Senators constructed state parties by coordinating the actions of homogeneous counties. Counties were easy targets for they had an annual meeting and, furthermore, Senators had the prospect of enlarging their coalition as these politically unified counties were fugitive in their loyalty. For instance, I showed that Maine's Whig opposition coalition won a state-wide majority in 1837 and 1840 because prospective Senator Francis O. J. Smith lead fugitive counties from an alliance with Democratic-Republicans to an alliance with the Whigs.

The principal political innovation of the mid-nineteenth century was the creation of mass parties that were bound together by an extra-legislative organization and a multi-issue policy platform. I showed that prospective Senators created state political organization – in the form of a state central committee – in a temporary form in the 1830s and a permanent form in the 1840s. Permanent state organization emerged when prospective Senators Hannibal Hamlin and William Pitt Fessenden began to coordinate counties around a multi-issue policy platform. Thus, it was Senatorial candidates with a long-term policy view that built permanent political institutions. Finally, the state convention comes into its own at the tail end of the 1850s, after Hamlin and Fessenden left Maine for the United States Senate. They needed both a state convention and a state central committee to help manage party affairs back home.

# Chapter 6

## Party Formation in the Middle Atlantic: New Jersey

### 6.1 Institutional and social setting

Political organization in New Jersey began at the county level. Amid hostilities with Great Britain, New Jersey's counties began the process of building independent political organizations by creating county committees of correspondence. This was followed by Articles of Association and the designation of a colony-wide congress that consisted of county-level representatives, elected from county-level meetings (Prince 1963, 2-11). The state constitution of 1776 maintained the county as the basis of electoral administration and political organization.

#### 6.1.1 The Constitution of 1776

The bicameral legislature – an Assembly and Council – was endowed with legislative supremacy and composed of county representatives.<sup>1</sup> Each county had three representatives in the lower

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<sup>1</sup>The speaker of the lower house convened and adjourned the assembly and the members of each house were “judges of the qualifications and elections of their own members” (Bebout 1942, 3).

house and one in the upper house.<sup>2</sup> In a joint meeting, the legislature appointed, by a majority vote, the governor, attorney general, field and general officers of county-level militia units, and United States Senators.<sup>3</sup> In addition to its legislative duties, the upper house exercised a judicial function as the final court of appeals and an executive function as the governor's cabinet.

The governor lacked traditional executive and legislative powers. He had no veto and no appointive power. Instead, the governor served in a judicial capacity. As chancellor, he reviewed equity appeals and as surrogate-general, contested wills. Finally, the governor and state senate granted pardons and were "the court of appeals in the last resort in all causes of the law" (Bebout 1942, 3).

Elections for state legislators, county sheriff, and county coroner were held annually on the second Tuesday in October.<sup>4</sup> In midterm years, congressional elections were held with state elections and in presidential years on the first Tuesday in November. While congressmen and presidential electors were elected from a state-wide constituency, all other offices were either elected in county-wide districts or appointed by the state legislature filled with county representatives.<sup>5</sup> For all offices, there was very nearly universal white male suffrage.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the state legislature delegated substantial authority to the county government. Each county had a court of common pleas staffed with prosecutors, justices of the peace, clerks, surrogates, and commissioners.

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<sup>2</sup>After 1830, each county had one state senator in the Council and one representative for every 6,000 inhabitants in the Assembly.

<sup>3</sup>Over time, this list expanded to include: state treasurer, secretary of state, state supreme court officers (justices, reporter, clerk), state prison officials, state librarian, and directors of state companies.

<sup>4</sup>Candidates for the lower house must be worth 500 pounds or more and members of the upper house had to be a freeholder worth 1000 pounds or more. Under the election law of 1797, the township became the polling unit but the county remained the electoral unit. The polls were open on the second Tuesday of October for two-days.

<sup>5</sup>The sole exception is that each town elected a constable.

<sup>6</sup>The electorate included all men 21 and older who resided in a county for a year or more with at least 50 pounds of property, although the property requirement was not enforced in the nineteenth century and New Jersey closely approximated universal white male suffrage (McCormick 1965, 163).

### 6.1.2 The Constitution of 1844

Under the Constitution of 1844, the governor became popularly elected by a plurality vote for a three-term with a one-term limit and acquired both legislative and executive powers.<sup>7</sup> He convened the legislature, communicated messages, and had a veto with simple majority override. With the advice and the consent of the state senate, he appointed the attorney general, secretary of state, field and general officers of the militia, chancellor, and both the staff and justices of the Supreme Court, Court of Chancery, and Court of Errors and Appeals. Finally, the governor's judicial role was reduced. He no longer served as surrogate general or chancellor.

The new constitution created new administrative positions at the county-level and made most county offices elective rather than appointive.<sup>8</sup> In short, under the new constitution, the counties and the governors saw their political authority increase, while the powers of the state legislature were lessened.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the new constitution sanctioned the county-level court system that emerged after 1776, eliminated the inconsequential property requirement for voting, and increased the term for state senators from one- to three-years with one-third of its membership elected each year.

In summary, since the colonial era, the county remained the primary administrative unit of sub-state politics – the courts, militia, and local government operated at the county-level – and, over time, county government grew and localities gained increased control over staffing local office. Furthermore, until 1844, the county was the only electoral district for state and local office. Thus, the constitutions provided strong incentives for county organization.

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<sup>7</sup>The governor became re-eligible three years after leaving office.

<sup>8</sup>Justice of the peace became an office elected in township districts but justices of the peace received their commissions from county government.

<sup>9</sup>Regarding patronage, the legislature retained the right to appoint judges of the courts of common pleas, state treasurer, keeper and inspectors of the state prison.

## 6.2 State-wide political organization before mass parties, 1789 – 1829

In the first few decades under the United States Constitution, political organization in New Jersey did not extend beyond the county-level (Prince 1963, 11). By 1803, most counties held a single annual county meeting that took place in the county seat up to three months prior to the state elections. This meeting nominated state legislators, sheriffs, and coroners and its candidates dominated office (Fee 1933, 42-218).<sup>10</sup> Some of these organizations created county committees of correspondence, an affiliated newspaper, and a constitution to set a schedule and outline the rules for political meetings.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, county organizations did form two loose legislative coalitions – Federalist and Republican. However, by 1816, the Federalist label fell into disuse (Fee 1933, 210-225). Thus, in the 1820s, New Jersey state politics featured no cross-county organization.<sup>11</sup>

The absence of a state organization did not reflect a dearth of salient policy concerns. In the 1820s, legislators discussed policy regarding debtors, public education, economic stimulus, banking, incorporating companies for internal improvements, and slavery extension (Fee 1933, 227). But few proposals passed. In a legislature composed of small factions, “no single faction ever prevailed long enough to shape a cohesive policy,” and, as a result, there was “an almost total lack of constructive legislation in the 1820’s” (Ershkowitz 1965, 6, 23). In a single session, legislative coalitions did not span multiple issue dimensions. And, from session to session, legislation on each of the issues was volatile. For instance, debtor laws

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<sup>10</sup>Fee finds a few dissatisfied individuals might occasionally challenge the regular public meeting and that these challenges lead to rare instances where a dissident faction elects a seat or two. However, gains are rarely county-wide or persistent over the long term.

<sup>11</sup>During the first few decades of the nineteenth century, there were state-wide conventions to create slates for congress and presidential electors, but there was no state-wide organization or state-wide leaders (McCormick 1965, 162). Rather, unified county organization each named their local candidate. In the first party system, the Republicans dominated at the state-level and dominated a majority counties, winning by very large margins.

were frequently revised and state policy shifted back and forth between imprisonment and no imprisonment for debt (Fee 1933, 227-230). This state of affairs – solid county organization and issue-by-issue coalitions in the state legislature – characterized New Jersey politics until parties formed.

When did parties form? The historical consensus is that proto-Democratic-Republican and proto-Whig coalitions formed in 1829 but these coalitions lacked stability in membership, cohesion, and an organizational apparatus until 1834, when two competitive mass parties – Democratic and Whig – emerged (McCormick 1965, 172; Fallaw 1970, 108; Levine 1977, 30 & 96).<sup>12</sup> This pair of mass parties contested state elections for the next two decades.

## 6.3 United States Senators

In this section, I focus on state politics from 1829 to 1834, the critical period of party formation that begins with loose legislative coalitions and ends with two competitive mass parties, and examine the actions of Senatorial entrepreneurs.

### 6.3.1 Samuel Southard

After obtaining his law license in 1811, Samuel Southard settled in Flemington, the county seat of Hunterdon County. In four years, he was elected to lower house of the state legislature. Until his death in 1842, Southard continuously occupied political office including associate justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court from 1815-1820, United States Senator 1821-1823, Secretary of the Navy 1823-1829, attorney general of New Jersey 1829-1832, governor 1832-1833, and United States Senator 1833-1842.

In 1827, Secretary of the Navy Southard announced his opposition to Andrew Jackson and, after Jackson won the presidential election of 1828, Southard searched for a new office. Since the New Jersey legislature of January 1829 would select two United States Senators,

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<sup>12</sup>Each of these new state-wide mass parties represented individuals and county organizations that had affiliated as Federalist and Republican in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Southard wrote to allies back home seeking their support. He found that several Adams affiliates – Theodore Frelinghuysen and Charles Ewing – and Jackson affiliates – Garret D. Wall, Mahlon Dickerson, and William Jeffers – had already secured pledges of support (Birkner 1984, 115-117).

Nonetheless, with Adams men holding a majority of seats in the state legislature, Southard was confident that it would elect himself and Frelinghuysen (Fallaw 1970, 53). But the Adams men were not a party. New Jersey's affiliates of both Adams and Jackson lacked a common platform, a state-wide party organization, and partisan institutions in the legislature (Ershkowitz 1965, 64). Thus, in the Senatorial election of 1829, each self-nominated candidate sought individual pledges of support. Since Southard was in Washington, finishing his term as Secretary of the Navy, he designated William Rossell to present his name and line up votes. But there was no stable long coalition of majority size in the legislature nor was there a coalition tied to Southard. As a result, Rossel had “difficulty in holding the original supporters of his candidate to their pledges” (Fallaw 1970, 54). After a dozen ballots, the legislature – with two different factional combinations – elected Theodore Frelinghuysen, an Adams man, and re-elected Mahlon Dickerson, a Jacksonian. Southard was appointed as attorney general. In short, the emerging coalitions in the state legislature of 1829 lacked leadership, an institutional apparatus, discipline, and a majority of seats.

From 1829 to 1834, prospective Senator Southard built a state-wide anti-Jacksonian majority in New Jersey and linked this coalition with similar organizations in other states. In spring 1829, he began to create this state party by bidding for the support of counties that delivered lopsided majorities to Adams. Southard called on his allies to hold county meetings of Adams men, create committees of correspondence, and advertise those committees in allied newspapers (Fallaw 1970, 62). By the end of the summer, Essex, Hunterdon, and Middlesex counties had been organized. After attending these meetings, Southard updated Henry Clay on his progress, noting diversity of issue concerns among anti-Jackson men (Birkner 1984, 125). For instance, Southard had pressure from counties within his state and from leaders in

Pennsylvania to build an anti-Masonic coalition but Southard preferred to build a coalition in support of Clay's American System and, by 1830, the emerging Jacksonian opposition party was contesting elections on a platform in favor of the American System.<sup>13</sup> Through 1834, Southard continued to press for permanent county-level committees of correspondence and vigilance and maintain contact with state party leaders outside of New Jersey.<sup>14</sup>

With local organization in place, prospective Senator Southard, in 1830, proceeded to build a state organization by creating a "permanent central state committee to control the party between meetings of the state convention, raise campaign funds, and provide replacements for the nominated tickets when necessary" (Ershkowitz 1970, 17). To influence political information, Southard raised money and solicited an editor for a pro-Adams newspaper based in Trenton, New Jersey's state capital. The Trenton *Union* debuted on 26 November 1830. Southard intended for this imprint to act "directly under the control of the party's central committee" (Ershkowitz 1970, 19). Consequently, he frequently contributed editorials, forwarded speeches from Washington that would aid the state party, and provided continued financial assistance. For instance, in 1830, Southard forwarded a speech of Senator Frelinghuysen's "attacking the Jacksonians' plans for removing the Cherokees west of the Mississippi, knowing that Frelinghuysen's remarks would be warmly received" by the Quaker counties in West Jersey (Birkner 1984, 127).

With an eye toward the elections of 1832, Southard continued to facilitate communication between local organizations in New Jersey as well as between New Jersey and both presidential candidates and allied leaders in other states (Ershkowitz 1970, 17-20). Southard hoped to elect a state-wide majority in favor of his Senatorial candidacy and deliver New Jersey's electors to Henry Clay. In reviewing, Southard's correspondence for the years 1831 and 1832, Birkner (1984, 129) notes that "Clay and Southard regularly exchanged corre-

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<sup>13</sup>Southard "saw no future in the [Anti-Masonic] movement, in New Jersey or anywhere else" (Birkner 1984, 125-6).

<sup>14</sup>Birkner (1984) discovers that Southard's canvass in 1830 was cut short as he became seriously ill in late July and was bedridden through November.

spondence, assaying political currents in various states, discussing the best timing for the announcement of Clay's candidacy in 1832, and weighing strategies to be pursued."

In 1832, prospective Senator Southard called for a state convention to meet prior to the county conventions. There, he delivered a prepared platform for the coalition (McCormick 1965, 169). While traversing the state, he distributed campaign funds raised by the state central committee, often from his legal clients, to county committees (Ershkowitz 1970, 17-18). In canvassing, he made a concerted effort to win counties in the industrial northeast that had voted for Andrew Jackson in 1828 but would benefit from Southard's tariff and banking policies (Fallaw 1970, 128-9). Furthermore, "Southard also handled the extra-organizational negotiations with the Anti-Masonic" leaders in the state and nation in an effort to eliminate a slate of anti-Mason presidential electors that might hurt Henry Clay (Ershkowitz 1970, 17).

In 1832, Southard's coalition won control of the state legislature, in part, by picking up support in Morris County, which had previously supported Jacksonian candidates. The resulting state-wide majority consisted of former National Republicans, Anti-Masons, and Jacksonians united around banking policy, tariff, and Indian affairs (Fallaw 1970, 108).

In October 1832, the state legislature elected Samuel Southard as governor but it was widely accepted that he would be elevated to the United States Senate in February 1833, at the end of the legislative session. In this legislative session, a political party emerged. For the first time, political appointments were made on a partisan basis – by a single unified coalition in opposition to another single unified coalition (Levine 1977, 93). Furthermore, in his gubernatorial message, Southard introduced several state policy proposals – abolition of imprisonment for debt and the construction of a new state prison – which his coalition in the legislature debated and passed. This was the first time that a gubernatorial policy proposal cleared the state legislature. Furthermore, Ershkowitz (1970, 20) discovers that Southard pressed this state policies "in order to foster the impression that the [anti-Jackson party] were the reform party in New Jersey." Finally, Southard used his gubernatorial message to

identify the vast difference between the parties on national issues (Birkner 1984, 137).

After creating an institutionalized state-wide party, Southard did not canvass in the state elections of 1833. Meanwhile, several Democratic Republicans, including prospective Senator Garret D. Wall, targeted the Quaker counties of West Jersey, which had supported Southard in 1832. The Democratic Republicans exploited a religious controversy that split orthodox and Hicksite Quakers, won the support of the Hicksite faction thereby winning control of the state legislature (Fallaw 1970, 125-154).

Without active support from a Senatorial entrepreneur, Southard's state-wide party was weak. Thus, in 1834, Senators Southard canvassed in both East and West New Jersey prior to the state-wide convention, where he delivered the convention's keynote speech (*Newark Daily Advertiser*, 5, 7 July, 1, 7, 16, 20, 26 August, 13 September 1834). With Southard's help, the "Whig's" secured a state-wide majority and took back the statehouse. New recruits were favorable to Southard and the Whig party's banking policy and were also favorable to Whig policies on federal aid to internal improvements and a protective tariff (Fallaw 1970, 166).

Recall, that McCormick (1965), Fallaw (1970), and Levine (1977) all identify 1834 as the year where mass parties had formed. In this section, I have shown that between 1830 and 1834, prospective Senator Samuel Southard counseled county governing coalitions on local organization, canvassed the state, created a permanent state central committee, founded a friendly newspaper in the state capital, raised and distributed campaign funding, called an early state convention in 1832 to set the agenda for the campaign, brought new counties into the coalition, pushed legislation through the state legislature that would help state politicians in subsequent campaigns, and presided over the first legislature to distribute patronage in a partisan manner. In short, Southard created a state party by helping homogeneous counties coordinate and endowing this coalition with the political institutions to encourage cooperation over the long-term. Southard's organization was effective. Two parties were competitive at state-level for the next two decades and, after 1837, the state legislature

became quite productive at proposing and passing state public policy.

### **6.3.2 Mahlon Dickerson and Garret D. Wall**

From 1826 to 1835, Senator Mahlon Dickerson and prospective Senator Garret D. Wall built the state-wide coalition affiliated with Andrew Jackson. In 1826, Secretary of the Navy Southard remained friendly with Adams and Jackson supporters but in the state canvass Senator Dickerson “seized the opportunity to malign his enemy, thus embittering Southard toward all supporters of Jackson” (Ershkowitz 1970, 14). Then, in late 1827, prospective Senator Wall called a state convention and created a state central committee of which he became the president (McCormick 1965, 166).

When Dickerson retired in 1832, Wall became the principal entrepreneur for the Jacksonian coalition. Among Senatorial candidates affiliated with Jackson, he consistently won the most votes in the state legislature and was widely recognized as Samuel Southard’s principal Senatorial opponent in 1832 and Frelinghuysen’s in 1834 (*Newark Daily Advertiser*, 14 October 1834). To beat his rivals, in 1832 and 1833, Wall continued to canvass the state and courted the Hicksite Quaker faction, which controlled Salem and Cumberland Counties (Fallaw 1970, 125-154). While he failed in 1832, he was successful in 1833 and the Jacksonians took control of the state legislature. Eventually, Wall won a seat in the United States Senate in 1835 for a single-term.

### **6.3.3 Senators versus governors or state legislators: A long coalition of national policy resolutions**

If Senators build state parties, then the long coalition that ties county units together should focus on national issues. To test this claim, I draw on Levine (1977) who calculates intra-party cohesion and inter-party difference for all roll calls from 1829 to 1844. From 1834 through 1837, he finds two salient dimensions that distinguish a pair of legislative groups

– patronage and national policy resolutions. It is not until 1838, that state issues become mapped on to pre-existing partisan division (Levine 1977, 100-101). But, even then, these state issues never reach the same levels intra-party unity and inter-party opposition. In summarizing the entire period from 1829 to 1844, Levine (1977, 230) argues that “roll calls on appointments, election laws, disputed elections, gerrymandering proposals, the public printing, and resolutions on national political issues invariably produced the highest indices of party voting in the legislature.” This is legislation that focuses on patronage, coalition maintenance, and national political issues but not state public policy. This is consistent with a model where United States Senators build parties out of homogeneous counties.

## 6.4 State legislators

Owing to constitutional rules, the bicameral legislature dominated state politics and, as a result, politically active individuals had an incentive to control it as a means of selecting the governor, distributing patronage, and passing legislation.

As in North Carolina and Maine, there was high turnover in the state legislature. Table 6.1 lists the re-election rates for the New Jersey state legislature from 1829 to 1844. Of the 807 legislators, 80 per cent served two or fewer terms. As a result, in any legislative session, there were few experienced political actors.

Table 6.1: Re-Election Rates in the New Jersey State Legislature, 1829–1844

Number of Terms Served	Percent of Legislators
1	49
2	31
3	11
4 or more	9

Source: Levine (1977, 77-78) (N = 807).

Who led this state legislature filled with amateurs and how? Perhaps the speaker of the assembly and the vice-president of the state senate used their control over the rules and a committee system to guide legislative output. But the evidence is unfavorable. The leaders

leaders of each chamber did not introduce the necessary structure of rules and committees to guide legislative action. For instance, standing committees on state policy issues such as agriculture, corporations, education, judicial proceedings, the militia, and military pensions were not created until the 1838 session, well after parties had formed in New Jersey. Furthermore, prior to 1838, there was a rules committee but Levine (1977, 47-50) discovers that in some sessions the opposition controlled this potentially important committee.

After party formation, the principal institution for encouraging partisan cooperation was mixed-legislative caucus, which met after hours to determine party positions on public policy and party nominees on patronage positions (Levine 1977, 229). While details about the caucus are sparse, Levine (1977, 38) finds that, in 1832, three “outsiders” – prospective Senator Garret D. Wall, gubernatorial candidate Peter Vroom, and collector of customs James Parker “controlled” the Jacksonian party caucus. Thus, in a legislature filled with amateurs, it was prospective Senators and state party leaders that led decision-making process.

## 6.5 Governors

It is unlikely that New Jersey’s governor built a state party. Under the constitution of 1776, the the governor had no veto and no appointment power. The governorship was primarily a judicial position that provided few opportunities to venture into political matters.

Take, for instance, the informal power of transmitting an annual message. No governor issued an annual message in the 1820s. While annual messages became routine in the 1830s, they were delivered in January, after the state legislature had set its in agenda in a two-week October session. Finally, the first instance of the state legislature debating and passing a gubernatorial policy proposal occurred in 1833, after prospective Senator Southard had built a state party. And the governorship in this session was held by Southard himself.

In a study of the gubernatorial office in New Jersey, Lockhard (1964, 7) argues that “none of the 14 governors who served under the 1776 constitution exercised broad leader-

ship.” While the Constitution of 1844 provided the governor with some resources to exercise executive power, Lockard (1964, 8-9) finds that it was not until after the Civil War that governors either acted as party leaders or were “allies” or “subordinates” to party organizations by relying on them and being responsive to them.

## 6.6 Presidents

Prior to formation of stable mass parties, no presidential candidate attempted to link county organizations together. Fallaw (1970) argues that before 1840, “state leaders did most of the pre-campaign planning as well as the actual campaigning” for the presidency.

For example, between 1822 and 1824, incumbent Senator Southard assembled a majority political coalition on behalf of John C. Calhoun’s presidential campaign – enlisting the support of former Federalists and former Republicans. Before Calhoun dropped out of the race in early 1824, “both Calhoun’s friends and enemies in New Jersey believed he could carry the state” (Ershkowitz 1965, 38; Ershkowitz 1970, 12). Thus, to promote his candidacy for the presidency in New Jersey, Calhoun sought to win the support of an incumbent United States Senator.

Again, between 1830 and 1832, prospective Senator Southard was the principal architect of Henry Clay’s campaign in New Jersey. First, “Clay and Southard regularly exchanged correspondence, assaying political currents in various states, discussing the best timing for the announcement of Clay’s candidacy in 1832, and weighing strategies to be pursued” (Birkner 1984, 129). Second, Southard also reported on his progress in building a state-wide majority to Clay-affiliated Senators and supporters in other states (Ershkowitz 1970, 19-20). Thus, Southard not only facilitated cooperation among New Jersey’s counties on behalf of Clay but, through correspondence with other party leaders, helped build a cohesive national majority for Clay by identifying popular issues and potential divisions.

## 6.7 Socially prominent families

Assuming that I am correct in identifying Samuel Southard as the principal architect of the first mass party in New Jersey, does he match Ridgway's (1979) description of a landed elite that enters politics and builds coalitions by relying on an extended network of family members across the state? No.

Southard was not a member of the landed elite and, for most of his life, he was in debt. He entered politics, in part, as a means of earning a living. For political office provided not only a stipend but prestige that benefited his law practice. "Political associates sent him cases from various parts of the state. Often, individuals came to him because of his reputation in government" (Ershkowitz 1970, 6-7).

## 6.8 Conclusion

In the 1820s, New Jersey politics featured unified counties that formed coalitions in the state legislature on an issue-by-issue basis. From 1829 to 1834, prospective Senator Samuel Southard created a state party by canvassing and organizing homogeneous counties. Then, to bind these counties together and facilitate cooperation across counties, he provided coalition members with a platform and a state-wide organization. Meanwhile, using similar methods, incumbent Senator Mahlon Dickerson and prospective Senator Garret D. Wall organized a competing coalition. As a result, the state legislature of 1834 features two cohesive coalitions divided on two dimensions: patronage and national policy. Finally, shifts in the identity of the party in power were a result of Senators luring fugitive counties into their coalition.

# Chapter 7

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I offered a general evidence-based account of the process that produced parties to begin with. I argued that United States Senators created the world's first mass party organizations out of homogeneous counties. Those mass parties, which began to form in the 1830s, were state-wide institutions endowed with an extra-legislative organization and a multi-issue policy platform. Scholars of American political institutions, whether political scientists or historians, tend to focus their research on the presidency and the House of Representatives. As a result, the political actors most consequential for party formation – county-wide governing coalitions and United States Senators – remain obscured.

I traced the process of party formation from the bottom up. I found that state constitutions, in each region of the United States, delegated significant legislative and administrative authority to county governments and apportioned most political offices to county-wide districts. Furthermore, as the antebellum era progressed, county governments, in each of my cases, gained new formal powers and more control over local affairs. County government was designed to be accessible to its citizens. As new population centers flourished, old counties were divided with new county lines adhering to population and natural geography. In short, state constitutions provided an incentive for political actors to organize at the county level and counties were drawn in a manner that encouraged interaction in the town square at the

county seat.

In this environment, political activists constructed a local governing coalition to control local decision-making and seek legislative representation. Since counties were small, economically homogeneous, and displayed geographic contiguity, they were internally unified and dominated by a single local governing coalition. Leading activists tended to be the businessmen, craftsmen, and learned professionals who staffed storefronts at the county seat. These individuals had some leisure time to pursue politics, frequent face-to-face interaction with each other, and regular contact with less active citizens. Then, as now, most citizens were disengaged from politics and the average level of political information was low. Citizens became engaged in politics through their local governing coalition. For instance, I showed that virtually all counties held annual meeting. These meetings reminded citizens of their political identity, introduced them to new political issues, and helped them interpret salient issues. Furthermore, the local organization and its members identified as the citizens of a county rather than members of a political party, which provided for flexibility with regards to state-wide affiliation. Finally, in the rare instance that an individual had pre-existing issue positions that placed him in opposition with his local governing coalition, he usually preserved intra-county unity by disengaging from politics, moving to a new county, or creating a new county.

In summary, prior to Senatorial intervention, individual counties were politically organized. But, as I have shown, they were somewhat parochial in their outlook. Counties did not form stable long coalitions in the legislature. Instead, state politics was characterized by factionalism; coalitions regrouped with each issue, appointment, and election.

In tracing the process of party formation, the second step involves identifying which political actor had an incentive to lure disciplined county organizations into a single state-wide coalition. I argue that United States Senators had the most conspicuous incentive; to secure office, they needed a legislative majority. This majority coalition was the state party, and the Senator was its leader because no other actor had much of an incentive to put it

together. Thus, it was the magnet of the federal Senate that created America's first mass party organizations.

Before state committees and party labels, prospective and incumbent Senators constructed state-wide majority coalitions by canvassing county meetings and bidding for their support. American counties were easy targets for they had an annual meeting, were economically homogeneous, and state representatives voted the county line. And political activists in the counties had an incentive to follow their coalition's Senator because United States Senators were the most influential individuals in shaping national policy and distributing federal patronage. Senators had the prospect of enlarging their coalition because these politically organized and locally unified were not firmly tied to a state-wide coalition. Counties were fugitive in their state-wide loyalty. As a result, a state party composed of fugitive counties may be fluid at the state level even when each county is politically monolithic.

Senators with a long-term policy view created more than a temporary coalition of electors. They constructed a long coalition in the state legislature endowed with state and county-level political organization. For instance, during their travels, Senators discovered local sentiment and translated it into a platform that had the potential to unite a majority of the state's county organizations. In drafting a state party platform, Senators did more than adopt a range of pre-existing issue positions. They innovated by offering a package of policy resolutions in advance of expressed opinion, thus setting the policy agenda in their state. Since their work engaged them in questions of national policy, Senators constructed state party platforms that focused primarily on national political issues. Thus, in the process of linking county coalitions together, Senators shaped the geographic composition and issue content of the state party. Furthermore, by traveling to individual counties to retail their policy platform, Senators brought the national government to local citizens and the American federation was centralized early on.

While canvassing, Senators holding long term-policy views also encouraged county political groups to create local committees of correspondence and vigilance. This made it easier

for Senators to contact local leaders, distribute political information, facilitate communication between counties, maintain local support, and ensure impressive turnout for allied presidential and gubernatorial candidates. Furthermore, they often organized state-wide conventions and state central committees and were responsible for the formation of legislative caucuses and the establishment of political newspapers. These political organizations helped a Senator maintain and monitor his coalition during his time in the national Capitol.

It might seem plausible to argue that national executives, state legislators, state executives, or networks of socially prominent families helped construct state parties in the antebellum era. However, relative to United States Senators, each of these actors had a weaker set incentives and resources and, furthermore, I find little evidence in favor of these alternatives. First, presidents did not actively campaign in the individual states and the timing of party formation in each state was not closely aligned with presidential elections. Second, state legislators were amateurs that rarely sought re-election. They represented parochial county governing coalitions and were in dire need of leadership. Even in New Jersey, where the state constitution created an unusually strong legislature and weak executive, legislative paralysis prevailed until Senatorial entrepreneurs built state-wide parties in the early 1830s. Third, governors had few formal powers and meager patronage resources. In addition, in most states, a gubernatorial candidate could win office without a supportive legislative majority. Consequently, it was rare for a governor to use his informal powers or propose a multi-issue policy platform. Instead, they focused purely on administration. This characterization applied in cases where the governor had some executive and appointment power – in Maine and in New Jersey after 1844. Finally, most Senatorial entrepreneurs did not descend from the landed elite. They were born into families wealthy enough to provide their offspring with an education but most needed the stipend from political office to pay their bills.

While my model of party formation is limited to explaining state party formation, I conclude by speculating about the process of national party formation. I expect that United

States Senators have a stronger incentive to form national parties than do national representatives or presidents. First, relative to presidents, Senators and national representatives have a more immediate need to form a long coalition of majority size. Such a coalition will help members of each house control the organization and policy output of their legislative body. Among Senators and national representatives, Senators are more likely to hold long-term policy views, which encourage political actors to expend the necessary time and resources to build a political party that sticks together across the legislative agenda and, then, across elections. A Senator's long-term view is a product of the electoral rules and duties of his office. The Constitution of the United States grants Senators a term of six-years in an era where the modal officeholder served for a single term and deviations from this norm were considered as a threat to the American experiment. Thus, term length was consciously designed to encourage Senators to govern with an extended view.

It was the combination of a six-year term with a large constituency, substantial autonomy, and national duties that allowed a Senator's long-term policy view to flourish. First, a large constituency minimized the tie between an officeholder and his constituents. Second, rotation in Senatorial classes insulated the Senate – as an institution – from popular passions that might disrupt a long-term policy view. Third, indirect election helped obscure the link between a Senator and his constituents, further insulating him from popular passions. Finally, Senators were in charge of explicitly national duties given their role in advising the president on treaties and executive appointments. Thus, they were entrusted with safeguarding the American experiment in the long run. In short, the rules governing Senatorial elections in combination with their duties made each Senator, in the words of Hamilton, an “agent for the Union” that “is bound to perform services necessary to the good of the whole” (quoted in Elliott 1888, 320).

The argument that Senators also built nation-wide parties remains plausible after returning to the historical narratives in Chapter 1. The formation of the nation-wide Democratic and Whig parties suggest that Senators constructed national parties by co-opting existing

state parties. This stands in contrast to the stylized fact that the Democratic party was formed, in response to the breakdown of the congressional caucus, as a vehicle to secure the presidency for Jackson (McCormick 1966). Rather, the proto-Democratic coalition was formed by Senator Martin Van Buren in 1822 prior to the breakdown of the congressional caucus.<sup>1</sup> And, furthermore, the organization and principles of the nation-wide Democratic and Whig parties were established before presidential candidates were drafted (Remini 1959, 125).<sup>2</sup> However, even if some party building activity was presidentially directed, who better than a Senator (or coterie of Senators) to construct a presidential coalition? After all, a Senator in control of a state party machine is not only likely to deliver his state's electoral vote to the candidate of his choice, but he can do it relatively cheaply for he already has a majority-sized coalition in place.

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<sup>1</sup>Van Buren expected to build additional support for Crawford as a result of a successful caucus. When the caucus disintegrated, Van Buren did not alter his party building strategy, but, instead, noted that the party organization would need a substitute - the national nomination convention.

<sup>2</sup>To be fair, presidential candidates were selected in an effort to further build an existing party.

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