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A QUESTION OF TIMING:
ANTI-MASONIC HYSTERIA, 1820-1850

by

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Independent Study

Carl Goodson Honors Program
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A QUESTION OF TIMING:
ANTI-MASONIC HYSTERIA, 1820-1850

Since the earliest portions of American history, many misunderstood groups have been the target of public hysteria. Blacks, immigrants, Communists, and Catholics have all been attacked at different periods in America's history. Another group, which was the target of this kind of public hysteria from 1820 to 1850, was the Masonic fraternity, or Freemasonry. Various conditions of early nineteenth century America contributed to the developing "paranoia" surrounding the Masonic fraternity, and this paranoia became a political issue. Discovering why aspiring politicians used the Masons as a scapegoat for personal advancement involves finding the answer to two basic questions: why could it happen at all, and why did it happen when it did?.

The period of time prior to this attack is known as the "Era of Good Feelings". There was a strong political party, the Democrats; however, there was still dissatisfaction. Men were angered by what they saw as too little compensation for their services. Different sections of the country had different social beliefs. There was disagreement between the rich and poor classes. Religious and nonreligious organizations were still very far apart. The election of John Quincy Adams in 1824 intensified and redefined these various divisions.¹

To understand how Antimasonry could emerge, one must

¹Charles McCarthy, "The Anti-Masonic Party: a Study of Political Anti-Masonry in the United States, 1827-1840," American Historical Association Annual Report, (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1903) p. 370.

briefly look at the essence of its target, Freemasonry. Freemasonry was a secret fraternal organization which began in Europe in the early eighteenth century and rapidly spread to America. Its elitist bent appeared early, for in the colonies, Masonry quickly recruited such men as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin, and Paul Revere into its membership. In the tense times prior to the American Revolution, the society's secrecy offered the colonial patriots an opportunity to meet and plan their strategy. The Boston Tea Party, for example, was believed to be entirely Masonic, carried out by members after an adjourned meeting.

After the War of 1812, the country experienced rapid economic growth in an era which celebrated the "rise of the common man."² Masonry pursued these newly-prominent men just as it had their predecessors in the Revolutionary Era. This appeal put more distance between the prominent and common men, and heightened distrust of Masons as being anti-democratic in this age which worshipped democracy.

Masonry clearly drew the professional and businessmen of the country. This selection is shown in Table 1. The table, which gives statistics for three New York lodges, shows that most Masons were in the area of business or professional areas, while not many were engaged in agriculture.

John M. Blum, The National Experience, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1981), p. 220.

Table 1

Occupation	Le Roy No. 260			Batavia No. 433			Olive Branch No. 244		
	N	absolute percent	relative percent	N	absolute percent	relative percent	N	absolute percent	relative percent
Agriculture	18	25.4	29.0	4	5.3	5.7	7	8.0	19.4
Business	37	52.1	59.7	48	63.2	68.6	26	29.9	72.2
Professions	7	9.9	11.3	18	23.7	25.7	3	3.4	8.3
Unknown	9	12.8		6	7.9		51	58.6	

These types could best afford both the financial and time costs associated with Masonry. These high costs served to further alienate poor farmers.

Farmers in the Northeast were falling victim to the region's economic disparities. Assessors valued some farms in this area at under ten dollars per acre. All areas of the country were priced about the same with the North Central being the highest, valued at twelve dollars per acre; the South next, valued at six dollars per acre and the West, last, with land valued at two dollars per acre. The overall average for the United States was eleven dollars per acre. In contrast, some land in the top third of towns ranged from twenty to thirty dollars. In the wake of the transportation revolution, poorer areas became even poorer. In the early 1820s, fifteen dollars separated the values of the poorest and the wealthiest towns; by the late 1830s, the span was twenty-six dollars.³

During this period, much of the nation continued to operate in a barter-type economy. This economy was encouraged by the

²Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, "Freemasonry and Community in the Early Republic: The Case for Antimasonic Anxieties," American Quarterly, 34, (Winter, 1982), p. 554.

³William Lerner, ed., Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1975), pp. 461, 463.

lack of available money and markets. The quality of farmland differed greatly and many settlers did not possess clear title to their farms. As a result, they had neither the time nor the funds to become lodge members.⁴

Also within this area over eighty percent of the Masons made their livelihood in the professional and business at a time when almost ninety-three percent of the area's work force was engaged in agriculture.⁵ The lodges were located in market villages, but their members came from the surrounding countryside and neighboring rural towns.

While advantages of time, money, and location added to the Masonic sense of superiority and fueled outsiders' fears of elitism, Masons were not unusually wealthy, despite non-Masons' contrary belief. They came from all economic levels. This fact is seen in one township deep in Antimasonic territory. In the township of LeRoy, New York, which had a Masonic lodge with approximately sixty-six members, Masons were in all categories of property ownership with 28.6 percent in the top and 18.4 percent in the bottom twenty percent. Only four Masons were in the top fifteen property holders, and at least four owned no property at all.⁶

Not only did the Masons seem to violate the American "democratic ideal"; they also displayed what Alic Felt Tyler

⁴Kutolowski, p. 554.

⁵Ibid, p. 553.

⁶Ibid, p. 554.

identified as the second element of early American life: evangelical religion.⁷ The Masonic fraternity, which contained religious symbols, adopted Enlightenment ideals and utilized reason rather than religious faith in the achievement of benevolence and reform. The eighteenth century saw the emergence of the Enlightenment. Reason, natural law, and progress were all key terms of this time. It was believed that all people should make up their own minds in the area of religion. This idea was seen in the development of hundreds of sects in the Western society.⁸

The Enlightenment "religion" of Deism and its rationalism did not mark the American masses. The emotionalism of the First (1740s) and Second (1880s) Great Awakenings originated the push for evangelical Protestantism as America's unofficial religion.

In the rural areas, isolated sectional revivals continued to emerge during the 1790s, increasing the religious fervor. Due to this enthusiasm, the "Second Awakening" made important permanent conquests. Waves of this awakening were rolling until after the turn of the century.

Affiliation did not matter because Congregational, Baptist, and Methodist churches all held meetings. No one could escape the church; one might dwell in some isolated spot for a period but settlers arrived, churches formed, and revivals took place. The new locations experienced the same habits, theology, and mannerisms as the older locations.

⁷Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, (Minnapolis, Minnesota: university of Minnesota Press, c1944), p. 23.

⁸Crane Brinton, A History of Civilization, 2 vol., (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 284.

After 1800, the excitement of religion began a cyclical rise and fall. This excitement slumped during the War of 1812. During this time, migration brought new members and need for spiritual satisfaction. This movement kept the Great Revival alive.

Following the War of 1812, another upheaval began. These upheavals were the largest experienced. Many people sought God in this time of adversity and depression. Many types of excitement were competitors with the religious fervor. One of these types was the Masonic fraternity.

As previously stated, Masonic beliefs are based on Enlightenment ideals. The Masons state their overall mission to be as follows:

To seek that which is the most worth in the world;
 To exalt the dignity of every person, the human side
 of our daily activities and the maximum service
 to humanity;
 To aid mankind's search in God's Universe for identity,
 for development, and for destiny;
 And thereby achieve better men in a better world,
 happier men in a happier world,
 and wiser men in a wiser world.⁹

Masons teach their members the highest ethics and the wise lessons of philosophy and religion. They reveal the wisdom of the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries and their symbols of words and phrases long considered lost. These truths are those taught by Plato, Pythagoras, Socrates, Homer, and the other intellects of the ages. Initiates learn secret rituals and passwords and take upon themselves various oaths as they pass through the

⁹Henry C. Clausen, What is The Scottish Rite?, (Washington: The Supreme Council, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, 1973), p. 2.

various degrees , from apprentice to Master of the Royal Secret. The most important oath assumed by members is the vow to persevere the secrecy of the rituals of the fraternity.

These teachings cast a bad light on the Masonic fraternity. Masonry had come to serve many members in place of a church, to the exclusion of true religion. Rumors that the oaths took the Lord's name in vain, and that alcoholic beverages were used in its various ceremonies irritated a growing sensitivity on the subject of temperance. Its titles, such as Prince of Jerusalem, and its rituals smacked of monarchy as well as of infidelity. The very secrecy which required such reckless guarding suggested dangerous designs. Curiosity, rumor, and fancy also added to the apparent threats of Masonry to the peace and order of society, and heightened non-Masonic perceptions of an anti-religious as well as an irreligious organization.

These threats caused religious denominations to turn away from the order. Ministers who were Masonic were forbidden to preach. Non-Masonic ministers attacked the Order from their pulpits. Prominent Masons were often refused communion. Women resolved that their daughters should not be allowed to marry Masons and hurried home to persuade their husbands to withdraw from the order. The Masonic order was declared to be sacreligious and the entire order was called antireligious and undemocratic.¹⁰

Between 1775 and 1825 the prevailing attitude of Americans toward their society changed drastically toward distinctive individualism. Jeffersonism became the political vehicle for

¹⁰Tyler, p. 355.

this change. Due to a basic reorientation within American society, Federalism, a political expression of people who sought security and self-fulfillment in an ordered, structured social system, simply vanished. Federalism was an important political party in the 1790s, partly because of a few dominating leaders and the remarkable acceptance of the Constitution. But its foundation as a political party, belief in an integrated functional society, collapsed with the end of the War of 1812. This war, which the Federalists opposed and over which they threatened disunion, became known as the "Second American Revolution" to the jubilant victors.

The Federalist downfall and the Republican presence were natural results of the economic disturbances that followed the War of 1812. This tension was seen in the election of 1816. While James Madison was ending his second term as president, he began to support a member of his cabinet, James Monroe, for the presidency. Monroe, a Republican, won an easy victory over his Federalist opponent, Rufus King. Four years later, the Federalists were too feeble to support a candidate; Monroe easily won reelection for a second term. Shortly afterward, the Federalist party ceased to exist. The eighteenth-century ideals of a republic without political factions seemed to be a reality.

Shortly before his first inauguration, Monroe pondered the problem of the dying Federalist party. He decided to hold a tentative hand of friendship to the Federalists while at the same time recognizing the valid claims of the Republican "family". In his inaugural address, the President observed,

much to his pleasure, that the American society was really "one great family with a common interest".¹¹ He acknowledged that experience had brought important changes to the Republican policy and that it would be the object of his constant actions to further promote the harmony which now existed between the Republicans and the Federalists.

Monroe made great efforts to promote this harmony, including visits to Federalist strongholds, such as Boston. His warm reception in these strongholds prompted one Federalist newspaper to label this period as the "Era of Good Feelings". These "good feelings" lasted only two years--the middle of Monroe's first administration--before the political strife and the sectional bitterness suddenly revived and the national prosperity came to an abrupt halt.

Hammering out the nature of the new nation's society caused economic and social changes following the War of 1812 which had a large impact on the nation's political life. Between the presidential elections of 1824 and 1840, a new party system had emerged--one which differed in its willingness of its leaders to accept party conflict as inevitable and constructive; politicians who would use a potentially volatile issue for personal gain, regardless of the risks to society or some of its members.

The emergence of a new politician, one whose career was based on something other than family name or wealth, caused many

heated battles during the 1820s. The election of 1824, which saw the election of John Quincy Adams, was one of the most heated in American history. The election was among four candidates: Adams, Andrew Jackson, William H. Crawford, and Henry Clay. Although Jackson won a plurality of both the popular and electoral votes, no candidate won a majority; thus, the election was decided in the House of Representatives. After much commotion, Adams was elected President.

The appointment of Henry Clay as Adams' Secretary of State led disappointed Jacksonians to detect a case of political manipulation. They claimed that Adams had bought Clay's support in exchange for the appointment. For the remainder of Adams' term, his enemies charged that the will of the people had been betrayed. Though Adams had made a political bargain, there was no wrongdoing; however, he could never refute the acquisitions.

With all the background elements ready, all that was needed for hysteria was a single event to put everything in motion. The event came about in 1826, with the disappearance and apparent murder of William Morgan, a down-on-his-luck stonemason from Batavia, New York. Illness and poverty had led him to desperation. Morgan, a disgruntled Freemason, decided to change his financial status through sales of a sensationalized "exposé" of Masonry, which he would write. News of his plans set off a series of harassments, which led to his repeated arrest for nonpayment of small debts. After release from one of these charges, Morgan was kidnapped and allegedly murdered.

When the story of Morgan's disappearance became public knowledge, most people believed that the Masons had killed him to prevent him from exposing their secrets. This belief gave the public the needed excuse to hate the Masons. When the first part of Morgan's book, Illustrations of Masonry by One of the Fraternity who had devoted Thirty Years to the Subject, was released, it engendered a feeling of hatred toward Masonry. Several suspects were arrested for the abduction, and even though some pleaded guilty, there was not enough evidence to convict any of them of murder.¹²

If investigators had been pushed by officials and Masons had cooperated fully with them, this incident might have ended with only local interest. However, it soon became apparent that the Masons tried to silence the incident. The public began to boycott merchants who were Masons, and broke off personal and business relationships with others.¹³ Public meetings were held and resolutions were passed declaring Masons unfit for public office and charging them with putting allegiance to their society above allegiance to the state.¹⁴

Based on all these complications, early Antimasons became convinced that they had to take political action to overthrow Masonry. In 1827, Antimasonic groups held conventions throughout

¹²Harry Edward Neal, Diary of Democracy: The Story of Political Parties in America, (New York: Julian Messner, 1966), p. 56.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴A.W. Ward, ed., The Cambridge Modern History, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907), p. 379.

the Northeast to nominate candidates for the legislature.

"The Masonic fraternity has outraged humanity and violated all law," was the cry of the Antimasons.¹⁵

Most of the party's support was found in the country, not the city. Everywhere throughout the country the Antimasons boasted of their strength in the rural areas. The rural support for Antimasonry is shown in Table 2 and Table 3. Table 3 shows the Antimasonic support in a rural New York county. The greatest percentage is seen in Elba, a township which did not house a Masonic lodge. The second greatest percentage was in Perry, where a lodge was housed. Table 2 shows that support for the Antimasons spread across all barriers. The table shows the political candidate support by occupation, residence, denomination, and age.

TABLE	Candidates plus Committee (N = 37)		Committeemen (N = 26)						
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage					
Occupation					<i>Denomination</i>				
Professions*	15	44.1	13	56.5	Nonpietist*	15	60.0	11	68.8
Business*	13	38.2	8	34.8	Pietist*	10	40.0	5	31.1
Farming	6	17.6	2	8.7	N Known	25	67.6	16	61.5
N Known	34	91.9	23	88.5	<i>Age, 1830</i>				
Place					20-29	6	20.7	6	28.6
Elba	14	37.8	12	46.2	30-39	13	44.8	8	38.1
Roy	6	16.2	4	15.4	40-49	9	31.0	7	33.3
Twenty other towns	17	45.9	10	38.5	50-59	1	3.4	—	—
N Known	37	100.0	26	100.0	N Known	29	78.4	21	80.8

¹⁵Michael F. Holt, History of U.S. Political Parties, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1973), p. 577.

¹⁶Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, "Antimasonry Reexamined: Social Basis of the Grass Roots Party", Journal of American History, 71, (September, 1984), p. 282.

Antimasonic Voting Correlated with Wealth,
Economic Development, and Religiosity, Genesee County

TOWNSHIP	ANTIMASONIC VOTE, 1828, 1830, 1832 (%)	VALUE PER ACRE, 1836	IMPROVED ACREAGE, 1825 (%)	POPULATION DENSITY PER SQUARE MILE, 1825	IMPROVED ACREAGE, 1835 (%)	POPULATION DENSITY PER SQUARE MILE, 1835	VALUE OF MANU- FACTURES, 1835	NUMBER OF CHURCHES
Alabama	60.0	\$ 7.66	—	—	29.4	30.2	\$ 1,950 ^a	2
Alexander*	53.1	18.38	41.8	52.9	61.4	69.5	89,162	4
Attica*	65.0	19.23	33.2	53.9	48.5	71.9	51,660	4
Batavia*	70.6	29.20	38.7	62.7	65.6	82.8	90,750	4
Bennington	59.1	7.23	17.3	26.7	37.7	48.8	22,748	2
Bergen*	63.9	21.06	36.4	49.2	58.2	55.6	1,575 ^a	4
Bethany*	71.6	21.47	42.6	57.2	67.3	69.3	79,210	7
Byron*	84.2	22.30	40.0	52.3	67.7	59.4	40,645	6
Castile*	62.9	15.71	19.5	42.2	53.7	67.3	24,805	3
China*	57.4	5.00	7.5	15.4	21.7	34.3	19,786	3
Covington*	81.7	22.35	40.6	54.0	61.1	55.6	21,385	6
Elba	88.3	19.79	20.6	29.0	56.6	51.4	35,343	7
Gainesville	55.6	10.91	29.3	41.5	50.9	55.6	33,112	4
Le Roy*	78.4	30.81	47.2	54.4	70.5	77.5	167,599	6
Middlebury*	63.5	16.49	38.7	67.1	70.8	69.9	25,970	6
Orangeville	80.6	8.47	23.4	33.1	43.5	49.3	12,028	5
Pembroke*	59.6	12.65	16.6	23.5	42.8	51.8	23,468	3
Perry*	86.2	22.03	42.9	65.1	70.1	81.1	117,364	6
Sheldon*	57.1	6.29	17.7	25.8	36.8	45.3	31,857	5
Stafford*	74.0	21.72	46.6	71.5	65.0	75.8	96,038	5
Warsaw	61.6	16.42	33.1	59.0	52.3	75.8	98,100	4
Wethersfield	71.5	6.16	14.4	22.6	30.2	45.0	29,410	4

SOURCES: *Census of the State of New York for 1835* (Albany, 1835); Thomas F. Gordon, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Philadelphia, 1836), 467; New York State census for 1825, in *New York Senate Journal*, 49 sess., 1826, appendix A.

* Town housing Masonic lodge.

^a Suspected census error.

The fear of Masonic secrecy and undemocratic ideas brought about many changes in the laws of this period. An example of this change was a law passed by the Vermont legislature in 1833:

A person who administers to another an oath or affirmation, or obligation in the nature of an oath, which is not required or authorized by law, or a person who voluntarily suffers such oath or obligation to be administered to him, or voluntarily takes the same, shall be fined not more than \$100 and not less than \$50.¹⁸

This law was later adopted by Massachusetts and New Hampshire. This adoption prompted Daniel Webster, the great lawyer and statesman, to say:

All secret associations, the members of which take upon themselves extraordinary obligations to one another and are bound together by secret oaths, are natural sources of jealousy and just alarm to others, and especially unfavorable to harmony and mutual confidence among men living together under public institutions; and are dangerous to the general cause of civil liberty and justice. Under the influence of this conviction I heartily approve the law lately enacted in the State of which I am a citizen, for abolishing all such oaths and obligations.¹⁹

In an effort to fight Jacksonian Democracy, conventions were held in March, 1828, urging a state convention in August to represent the people and

to take measures for the destruction of the Masonic institution, for sustaining the liberty of the press, and asserting the supremacy of the laws, for protecting the rights and privileges of the citizens against the vindictive persecutions of members of the Masonic society .

¹⁸J.M. Foster, "Secret Societies and the State", Arena, 19, (February, 1898), p. 233.

¹⁹Ibid, p. 237.

After these conventions, the party became involved in many important issues which led many people to believe that principled Antimasonry had vanished; however, true Antimasonry did still exist and the party kept opposing the Masons with trials and investigations. All of these efforts were seen by the Democrats as ways to "keep the pot boiling" for political purposes, and it was indeed necessary to do this if radical party members were to be kept in line, and laggards' zeal maintained.

Although the Antimasons were not a major political party, one of the Antimasonic Party's biggest contributions to political history occurred in Baltimore, Maryland, in September, 1831. The first national political convention was held by the Antimasons to select a Presidential candidate. The convention nominated William Wirt, a Maryland lawyer. Wirt made a dramatic speech to the convention proudly proclaiming his membership in the Masonic order and defending the order. He suggested that the convention might prefer another candidate. The delegates voted unanimously to put Wirt in the race, which proves the Democratic belief that opposition to Masons and Masonry must have been a minor factor in the party's aim to capture the Presidency.²⁰

More important than Wirt's nomination were the issues with which the convention dealt. Some examples of resolutions passed are as follows:

²⁰Neal, p. 63.

Resolved: That a committee be appointed to consider the nature, principles, and tendency of Freemasonry as regards its effects on the Christian religion.

Resolved: That a committee of five be appointed to inquire and report concerning the effect of the ties and obligations of Freemasonry upon the commerce and revenue of the United States.

Resolved: That a committee be appointed to consider and report the most expedient time, place, and manner for making nominations of candidates for the offices of President and Vice-President of the United States.²¹

Antimasons claimed that they were saving the nation by attacking the Masonic monster. They claimed the destruction by the Masons was a moral issue. They used the following points as their basis:

1. The authority of the Lodge over its members is inimical to public justice. The Master of the lodge is the supreme authority. Such a thing as an appeal from the Master to the lodge is unknown in Masonry. An officer of the Grand Lodge stated:
 Not only do we know no North, no South no East, no West, but we know no government save our own. To every government save that of Masonry, and to each and all alike, we are foreigners. We are a nation of men bound to each other only by Masonic ties, as citizens of the world, and that would the world of Masonry; brethren to each other all the world over; foreigners to all the world besides.
2. The oaths of the Lodge are a menace to public rights. Take the first three degrees of Masonry. The Entered Apprentice swears to keep the Lodge secrets, on the Bible, in the name of God, on the penalty of having his throat cut, his tongue torn out by the roots, and his body buried in the rough sands by the sea at low-water mark.

²¹McCarthy, pp. 398-399.

The Fellow-craft oath, besides secrecy, adds a promise to abide by all Lodge rules, obey signs and summonses, assist poor Fellow-crafts under penalty of having his heart pulled out. The Master Mason's oath adds the keeping of fellow Master Masons' secrets under penalty of having his body burned to ashes.

3. The false religion of the Lodge corrupts society. The Lodge is a religion. Masons were believed to be "free from sin by living up to the rules of the order".
4. The Lodge is an enemy of the home. How often a Mason spends \$300 for his uniform, while his wife wears a \$1.50 calico dress.²²

All of these secrets and many more were exposed by former Masons who renounced their vows in the heat of the Antimasonic hysteria.

The Antimasonic Party, which grew from this hysteria, is also remembered by the fact that it introduced several men to public life. These men later achieved fame in the political arena and many went on to hold important offices, such as Millard Fillmore, who became President. Other political leaders who had some prominence in the Antimasonic party were William H. Seward, who later became Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of State, Thaddeus Stevens, and Thurlow Weed.²³

Seward joined the Antimasonic party after the National Republican party died. He confessed that he joined the Antimasonic party because he thought them the only political organization, having any life, which opposed Andrew Jackson, John Calhoun,

²²Foster, p. 238.

²³William O. Lynch, Fifty Years of Party Warfare, 1789-1837. (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1967), p.390.

and Martin Van Buren, three political leaders whose policy seemed to him to involve the loss of a national system of revenue, and of enterprises of state and national improvement. As a representative of this short-loved party, he made his entrance into public office, being elected in the autumn of 1830 to the New York state senate. This party also made him their candidate for governor.²⁴ Later Seward joined the Whig party and helped form the Republican party.

Thurlow Weed was one of the Antimasonic leaders who was directly affected by Morgan's disappearance. Weed had been offered the opportunity to publish Morgan's book, but had refused on the grounds that his partner belonged to the Order. At first he evinced little concern about the abduction. Finally, he joined a committee which raised funds for the murder investigation. Weed stated his belief that an actual murder had occurred and called upon the Masonic order to disavow the deed and help bring the guilty men to justice.²⁵

When the political aspects of the Antimasons began, Weed was not one of the early advocates. He stated later that he was reluctant to see the agitation enter into politics. Later, after conducting his own investigation of the murder and declaring that the trials had prevented a disclosure of facts, he plunged into the local political campaign as an ardent Antimason.

²⁴Thornton Kirkland Lothrop, William Henry Seward, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1924), p. 17.

²⁵Glyndon G. Van Deusen, Thurlow Weed: Wizard of the Lobby, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1947), p. 40.

Weed's biggest contribution was the Anti-Masonic Enquirer. This newspaper contained four small pages per issue. Its chief preoccupation was with the fortunes of the movement whose name it bore. Weed also used the paper to try to get a nomination for governor from the party. Weed never got his nomination, and when Antimasonry dissolved, he joined the Whig party.

When Stevens entered the party, he entered full force. He denounced the Order emphatically. Many Masons believed his hatred stemmed from the fact that he had been refused admission to the Order. Proof of this refusal cannot be found, however.

His antimasonic activities were not confined to his home state of Pennsylvania. He spread the party's views throughout New England. He "preached" that the only way to suppress evil was to oppose it politically.

Antimasonry was more than a political vehicle to Stevens. It aimed at making men equal before the law, which was the bed rock of true democracy. He never waivered from his belief that Masons were pledged to and did "promote each other's political advancement in preference to a Non-Mason." His attacks continued until his death when he wrote the Clerk of the House of Representatives, requesting the names of Freemasons who were members of Congress.²⁶

As the Antimasonic Party entered the 1830s, many problems began to surface. Many leaders took party defeats personally which hurt the party. The party also began to change sides

²⁶Thomas Frederick Woodley, Thaddeus Stevens, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Telegraph Press, 1934), p. 83.

on the issues. Other important issues, such as the New York Bank issue, were lost by the Antimasons, which caused more conflicts.

With all these conflicts withing the party, success in the election of 1833 was impossible. This election meant the death of the Antimasonic Party and the organization of the Whig Party. Thurlow Weed said:

The election of 1833 demonstrated unmistakably not only that opposition to Masonry as a party in a political aspect had lost its hold upon the public mind, but that its leading object, namely to awaken and perpetuate a public sentiment against secret societies, had signally failed. The Jackson party was now more powerful than ever in three-fourths of the States of the Union. The National Republican party was quite as fatally demoralized as that to which I belonged. This discouraging conditions of political affairs resluted in a virtual dissolution of the Antimasonic party. All or nearly all of our leading friends having no affinities of sentiment or sympathy with the Jackson party found themselves at liberty to retire from political action or unite with the then largely disorganized elements of opposition to the national and state administrations. The "Evening Journal" went diligently to work organizing the elements of opposition throughout the state into what soon became the "Whig party".²⁷

When the Whig party was formed, the Antimasonic party disappeared, as if by magic. Many people believed that the Masonic institution had been effectively dissolved and thus the Antimasonic Party had lost its purpose.

Americans have been in a state of hysteria at various times throughout the nation's history. These hysterical eras have been based on such things as the economic, political, and social milieu. Some groups which have been objects of this hysteria are blacks, immigrants, and Communists.

²⁷McCarthy, p. 425.

Prior to the emancipation of slaves, there was great hysteria over slave rebellion. The background of this hysteria shows great internal conflict, as well as religious unrest. Also during this period, many important decisions increased sectionalism and the internal conflict. These decisions include the Dred Scott decision and the Compromise of 1850. This hysteria helped cause the Civil War and the eventually freeing of slaves.²⁸

This racially-oriented hysteria did not end here. In 1919, there were more race riots.²⁹ Race riots were again prominent in the 1960s, especially in the South, when the blacks fought and marched for civil rights.

Another period of hysteria was the result of a war. This period was the "Red Scare" of 1919-20, or the fear of communism. After World War I and the Communist victory in Russia, many Americans feared a take-over of America. This fear was further fueled by A. Mitchell Palmer, then Attorney General, who shipped European immigrants back to Europe. Palmer acted at least partly out of political aspirations of his own.

A second "Red Scare" occurred in the 1950s, after World War II. George McCarthy, who also had political aspirations of his own, tried to rid America of all Communists and Communist sympathizers. Many Americans appeared on his "Red List" and

²⁸For further reading on this subject, consult David Brian Davis, The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style, (Baton Rouge. Louisiana State University Press, 1969).

²⁹For further reading of this subject, consult Winthrop D. Jordan, White over Black, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, c1968).

were cursed for life.

The public hysteria which surrounded the Masonic fraternity was indirectly related to a war, the War of 1812. The economic depression which coincided with the ending of this war pitted the lower class against the upper class. The religious revivals selected supposed nonreligious groups to be the object of attack. Changes in politics also increased the tensions. Politicians, who believed that the end (their election) justified the means, "manufactured" an issue, further promoting the fear. The Masonic fraternity was the logical scapegoat because its members were high-income professionals and believed unpopular teachings often viewed as sacreligious. The Antimasons successfully hurt the Masons in the eyes of the public by dealing with perceptions, not reality, for people operate on what they believe to be true. The timing of these events was the biggest enemy of the Masonic Order. The timing of these events led to the hysteria, which almost destroyed the Order. Lack of knowledge and fear of the unknown, or xenophobia, are the real enemies in all these situations; but especially in the case of the Masonic fraternity, the victim during this time in history.

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