Tippecanoe and the Ladies, Too: White Women and Party Politics in Antebellum Virginia

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Source: *The Journal of American History*, Sep., 1995, Vol. 82, No. 2 (Sep., 1995), pp. 494-521

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of Organization of American Historians

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2082184

Tippecanoe and the Ladies, Too: White Women and Party Politics in Antebellum Virginia

Elizabeth R. Varon

The nineteenth-century ideology of "separate spheres," which prescribed that men occupy the public sphere of business and politics and women the domestic sphere of home and family, has exercised a powerful hold over historians of the antebellum United States. As a result, the fields of antebellum political history and women's history have used separate sources and focused on separate issues. Political historians—relying on sources such as voting records, newspapers, and the writings of politicians—have described the emergence in the 1840s of what the historian Joel H. Silbey has called a new "American political nation." Gone was the political world of the early republic, with its widespread antiparty sentiment, deferential behavior by voters, and political dominance by social elites. In the new order, political parties, led by professional politicians, demanded disciplined partisanship from the electorate. The "electoral universe" was in constant motion. Men participated in a frenzied cycle of party rallies, processions, committee meetings, conventions, caucuses, and elections. What about women? Since they were neither voters nor politicians, women have received only brief mention in the new political history.[1]

Women's historians, for their part, have shown little interest in the subject of party politics. Drawing primarily on personal papers, on legal records such as wills, and on the organizational records of female associations, they have illuminated women's domestic lives, their moral reform activities, and the emergence of the woman's rights movement. Those few scholars—Paula C. Baker, Mary P. Ryan, and Michael E. McGerr—who have tried to integrate political history and women's history have not challenged the historiographical impression that the realm of antebel-

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While my scholarly debts are many, I owe special gratitude to Nancy F. Cott, David Brion Davis, Melvin Patrick Ely, and Barbara F. Varon; the referees and editors of the *JAH;* and the staffs of the Virginia Historical Society and the Library of Virginia.

[1] Women's partisanship occupies two footnotes in a recent synthesis of American political history: Joel H. Silbey, *The American Political Nation, 1838–1893* (Stanford, 1991), 270, 308–9. See also *ibid.*, 46–48. For short discussions of women's partisanship, see Ronald P. Formisano, *The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s–1840s* (New York, 1983), 262–67; Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York, 1990), 221–22; and Lawrence Frederick Kohl, *The Politics of Individualism: Parties and the American Character in the Jacksonian Era* (New York, 1989), 72–74.

lum party politics was a male preserve. While these scholars note that women took part in political campaigns, they stress the theme of female exclusion from male political culture. As McGerr has written, women were let into the political sphere only "to cook, sew, and cheer for men and to symbolize virtue and beauty." They were denied "not only the ballot but also the experience of mass mobilization."[2]

The distance between antebellum political history and women's history is perhaps nowhere so great as in the historiography on the Old South. While northern feminist abolitionists who demanded political enfranchisement have begun to receive their due from historians of northern politics, no such radical vanguard existed in the South to command the attention of political historians. Both the major historians of antebellum southern politics and the major practitioners of southern women's history have neglected the subject of female partisanship. The current historiographical consensus holds that southern women, in keeping with the conservatism of their region, by and large eschewed politics even as northern women were fighting for access to the political sphere.[3]

This essay attempts to close the gap between women's history and political history. Focusing on the Commonwealth of Virginia, it argues that historians have underestimated the extent and significance of women's partisanship in the antebellum period. In the presidential election campaigns of the 1840s, Virginia Whigs made a concerted effort to win the allegiance of the commonwealth's women by inviting them to the party's rallies, speeches, and processions. Though the Whigs never carried the state for their presidential candidates, they repeatedly claimed that the majority of women favored their party over the Democrats. Whig campaign rhetoric, as presented by the party's newspapers, and women's private and public expressions of partisanship articulated a new ideal of feminine civic duty, one that I call Whig womanhood. Whig womanhood embodied the notion that women could—and should—make vital contributions to party politics by serving as both partisans and mediators in the public sphere. According to Whig propaganda, women who turned out at the party's rallies gathered information that allowed them to mold partisan families, reminded men of moral values that transcended partisanship, and conferred moral standing on the party.

The Whigs' claim that there was a "gender gap," to use a modern phrase, between them and the Democrats did not go unanswered. During the 1844 campaign, the

[2] For a synthesis of recent scholarship on domesticity, moral reform, and woman's rights in the antebellum period, see Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York, 1989), 67–112. On women and antebellum party politics, see Paula C. Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780–1920," *American Historical Review,* 89 (June 1984), 627–32; Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825–1880* (Baltimore, 1990), 135–38; and Michael E. McGerr, "Political Style and Women's Power, 1830–1930," *Journal of American History,* 77 (Dec. 1990), 866–67.

[3] On Southern politics, see, for example, William J. Cooper Jr., *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York, 1983); and John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830–1860* (New York, 1979). On southern women, see Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York, 1982), 181–82; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1988), 195; and Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784–1860* (New York, 1984), 224. The party designations "Whig" and "Democrat" do not even appear in the indexes of these three works.

Virginia Democrats made sporadic appeals to women. A full-scale public debate over women's partisanship erupted in the months after the presidential election of 1844, when the Whig women of Virginia formed the Virginia Association of Ladies for Erecting a Statue to Henry Clay. The Clay Association believed its work was the perfect expression of female patriotism. The Democrats disagreed, branding the association's activities unladylike and even rebellious. The debate fizzled out in a few months, with the Whigs apparent winners. Gradually, Democrats in Virginia adopted Whig tactics for developing female allegiance to their own party. By the mid-1850s the inclusion of women in the rituals of party politics had become commonplace, and the ideology that justified such inclusion had been assimiliated by Democrats.

In Virginia, the Whig party's "Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too," campaign of 1840 marks a turning point in women's partisanship. Prior to 1840, women, with a few notable exceptions, were marginal to the public discourse and rituals of political parties in Virginia. To be sure, many women felt partisan allegiances. Evidence of such partisanship can be found primarily in the letters of female relatives of politicians. Such women as Judith Rives, wife of United States senator William Cabell Rives, were trusted advisers to their husbands and frequently expressed partisan opinions in their correspondence with family members. Some women, particularly relatives of officeholders and those who lived near Washington, D.C., or Richmond, attended political speeches and legislative deliberations, but political parties made no systematic efforts to encourage or to publicize women's presence in the galleries.[4]

The rhetoric and symbolism of presidential election campaigns in the 1830s were predominantly masculine and martial. For example, the *Staunton Spectator* of October 20, 1836, featured the following exhortation to the voters of Augusta County: "Let every man then gird on his armour for the contest! Let the beacon FIRES be lighted on every hill, to give warning to all that the enemy is at hand! Let the WAR DRUMS beat a loud REVEILLE!"[5]

The only expression of partisanship by a woman found in the Virginia newspapers from the 1830s sampled for this essay is a poem to Harrison that appeared in the *Staunton Spectator* of September 1, 1836. A "young lady" from Pennsylvania defended Harrison and chided his critics with the words: "Those who would thus *disgrace their land* / Are found in every age; / Not ev'n our Washington could stand / Untouch'd by *Party rage*." The *Spectator*'s editors said of the poet, "We are glad she is for Harrison—though we understand most of the Ladies are so."[6]

[4] Eugene Genovese, "Toward a Kinder and Gentler America: The Southern Lady in the Greening of the Politics of the Old South," in *In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830–1900*, ed. Carol Bleser (New York, 1991), 129–33; Judith Rives to William Cabell Rives, Dec. 8, 1838, William Cabell Rives Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.). On women attending political speeches, see, for example, Anne Royall, *Mrs. Royall's Southern Tour; or, Second Series of the Black Book* (Washington, 1830), 34–39.

[5] *Staunton Spectator*, Oct. 20, 1836.

[6] *Ibid.*, Sept. 1, 1836.

The *Staunton Spectator* editors were ahead of their time in suggesting that an affinity existed between women and the Whig party; so, too, was Lucy Kenney of Fredericksburg, who made a similar claim. A single woman aspiring to be a professional writer, Kenney published a series of pamphlets in the 1830s, including one in which she proclaimed her support for Democratic president Andrew Jackson and his heir apparent, Van Buren. In 1838 Kenney switched allegiances and became a Whig. A fervent supporter of slavery and states' rights, Kenney believed that the passing of the Democratic torch to northerner Van Buren—who had supported the Missouri Compromise and, so southerners charged, had abolitionist supporters—boded ill for the South. But her defection from the Democrats was not purely ideological. When Kenney had called on Van Buren in 1838, asking that he and his party remunerate her for her efforts on their behalf, the president, much to her disgust, had offered her a mere dollar. Some "honorable Whigs," however, had a different notion of Kenney's worth and offered her one thousand dollars for her services.[7]

Kenney took the Whigs up on their offer, and later that year published a scathing pamphlet, *A Letter Addressed to Martin Van Buren,* in which she predicted that the 1840 election would strip Van Buren of the "usurped power" he had gained by "false pretences." Kenney's attack on the president prompted a response, in pamphlet form, from Van Buren supporter Eliza B. Runnells. According to Runnells, Kenney possessed none of the "elevated tone of feeling and celestial goodness, that has distinguished the female character." Kenney had been enlisted and armed for battle by "Whig magicians" and in the process "transfigured from an angel of peace, to a political bully."[8]

The exchange between Kenney and Runnells prefigures later developments. In 1840, as Whig recruitment of women began on a grand scale, Democratic commentators echoed Runnells's doubts about the propriety of women's partisanship. Stung by their loss in the presidential campaign of 1836, the Whigs in 1840 overhauled both their message and their strategy for taking it to the voters. In the South that message was, in the words of historian William W. Freehling, "safety on slavery and reversal of political immorality and economic chaos." Too ideologically divided in 1836 to settle on a single presidential ticket, the Whigs in this election cycle chose two sons of Virginia—Harrison and John Tyler.[9]

[7] Lucy Kenney, *Description of a Visit to Washington* (Washington, 1835), 4–12; Lucy Kenney, *A Pamphlet, Showing How Easily the Wand of a Magician May be Broken, and that if Amos Kendall Can Manage the United States Mail Well, a Female of the United States Can Manage Him Better* (Washington, 1838), 2–5, 15. On southern opposition to Van Buren, see William J. Cooper Jr., *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828–1856* (Baton Rouge, 1978), 74–75.

[8] Lucy Kenney, *A Letter Addressed to Martin Van Buren, President of the United States, In Answer to the Late Attack Upon the Navy, By the Official Organ of the Government* (Washington, 1838), 6; E. B. Runnells, *A Reply to a Letter Addressed to Mr. Van Buren, President of the United States; Purporting to be Written by Miss Lucy Kenny, The Whig Missionary* (Washington, 1840), 4–6.

[9] William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776–1854* (New York, 1990), 295–99, 345, 359–63; Richard Patrick McCormick, *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era* (Chapel Hill, 1966), 186–98.

The new medium for the message was equally important. The Whigs decided that to win the election, they needed to "agitate the people"—and that the people included women. Leading Whigs around the country called for strong local organization and the use of "every lawful means" to bring men to the polls. Means for influencing the electorate included dinners, barbecues, picnics, and processions, with women as spectators and participants.[10]

Historians generally agree that the Whigs' 1840 campaign marks the first time a political party systematically included women in its public rituals. All around the country, women turned out at Whig rallies; on occasion they even made speeches, conducted political meetings, and wrote pamphlets on behalf of the Whigs. And yet, while many scholarly studies note these developments, none draw out their implications. Historians have relegated women's partisanship to a few pages of description here and there; and they generally present women, not as political actors, but as "audience and symbol." The pioneering treatment of Whig women, Robert Gray Gunderson's *The Log-Cabin Campaign,* characterizes women's role at rallies as "conspicuous, but passive." A recent study by Ryan makes a similar case: women who attended Whig political events in 1840 did so "not in public deliberation but as symbols," as "passive and respectable representatives of femininity."[11]

The Virginia evidence suggests that to characterize women's partisanship as passive is to obscure the transformation in women's civic roles that the election of 1840 set in motion. Newspapers, pamphlets, and speeches, taken together with women's diaries, letters, and reminiscences, chart that transformation. The function of antebellum newspapers, which were the organs of political parties, was to make partisanship seem essential to men's identities.[12] With the campaign of 1840, Whig newspapers took on the additional task of making partisanship seem essential to women's identities.

Whig newspapers in Virginia, in lockstep with the party's national organ, the *Washington National Intelligencer,* featured invitations to women to attend the speeches and rallies of "Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too," clubs and provided glowing reports of such events. The *Staunton Spectator* noted, for example, that the women of Mt. Solon favored its "Tipp and Ty" club with their attendance and "enjoyed very highly the display of eloquence" by the speakers. Whig rhetoric argued that the presence of women at such events bespoke not only their admiration for Harrison but also their opposition to the policies of the Democrats. In an article in the *Washington National Intelligencer,* one Whig correspondent, commenting on the high turnout of women at Whig rallies, declared that women supported the Whigs

[10] *Staunton Spectator,* Sept. 10, 1840; *Fredericksburg Political Arena,* March 24, Sept. 22, 1840.

[11] Ronald P. Formisano, "The New Political History and the Election of 1840," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* 23 (Spring 1993), 681; Watson, *Liberty and Power,* 221; Robert Gray Gunderson, *The Log-Cabin Campaign* (Lexington, Ky., 1957), 4, 7–8, 135–39; Ryan, *Women in Public,* 135–38.

[12] Silbey, *American Political Nation,* 54.

because the "selfless schemings" of the Van Buren administration had "made themselves felt in the very sanctum sanctorum of domestic life."[13]

Anecdotes celebrating women's influence began to circulate in the Whig newspapers of Virginia. One such story, "Another Conversion," told the tale of Miss Bond, "a warm Harrison woman," who refused to marry Mr. Provins, her Democratic suitor. After hearing a particularly convincing Harrison speech, Provins finally came around: "*he* declared for Harrison, and *she* declared for PROVINS on the spot." The very fact that the writer referred to Bond as a "warm Harrison woman" reflects the new political climate. Women who felt partisan identities in the 1820s and 1830s were often referred to as "men": in 1827 James McDowell wrote to his wife, Susan, that his sister Sopponisha was an "Adams-man"; in 1834 William Cabell Rives referred to his friend Mrs. James Cocke as a "warm *Jackson-man.*" In 1840, and in the presidential campaigns that followed, partisan women were commonly described, and described themselves, as "Whig women" and "Democratic women."[14]

According to the Whig press, women could contribute to the campaign not only by listening to speeches and by exerting influence over men but also by making public presentations. On October 1, 1840, the "Whig Ladies of Alexandria" presented a banner with the motto "Gen. Wm. H. Harrison, the Glory and Hope of our Nation" to the local Tippecanoe club; male delegates of the club carried the banner in a Whig procession that took place four days later in Richmond. Whig newspapers also occasionally published Harrison songs and poems by women. One Virginian wrote a song in honor of her party's candidate that ended with the refrain "Down with the Locos / dark hocus-pocus / The Banner of Liberty floats through the sky."[15]

The single most vocal female contributor to the Tippecanoe campaign was Kenney. She published two pamphlets, *A History of the Present Cabinet* and *An Address to the People of the United States,* in support of Harrison's 1840 campaign. He was an honorable statesman who had earned the "blessings of thousands of women and children" in his career as an Indian fighter. In keeping with a favorite Whig theme, Kenney asserted that Harrison's private character was as unassailable as his public record. He was an "honest and upright" and "chivalric" man who would restore the United States to "peace, plenty and prosperity." "Let the present party leaders remember that in November next we will shout the harvest home," she declared, sure of Harrison's triumph.[16]

[13] *Staunton Spectator,* Sept. 10, 1840; *Washington National Intelligencer,* Sept. 21, 1840. References to the *National Intelligencer* are to the daily (not the semiweekly) run of the paper.

[14] *Richmond Yeoman,* Sept. 10, 1840; James McDowell to Susan McDowell, May 24, 1827, James McDowell Family Papers (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill); William Cabell Rives to Judith Rives, Sept. 7, 1834, Rives Papers.

[15] *Richmond Yeoman,* Oct. 15, 1840; *Fredericksburg Political Arena,* Sept. 1, 1840.

[16] Lucy Kenney, *An Address to the People of the United States* (n.p., [1840]), 1, 6, 11. (There is a copy of *An Address* in the Library of Congress.) Lucy Kenney, *A History of the Present Cabinet* (Washington, D.C., 1840), 6.

The personal papers of Virginia women confirm that the 1840 campaign was different from its predecessors. "Fashionable topics seem to turn on politics more than anything else at present," Whig Judith Rives wrote her son in February 1840, from the family plantation in Albemarle County. "I never saw anything like the excitement here," Sarah Pendleton Dandridge of Essex County informed her sister; "we hear of nothing but Gen. Harrison." Girls as well as women were caught up in the campaign hoopla. Sara Pryor, who grew up near Richmond, relates in her reminiscences that she knew many a young girl who enjoyed "singing the campaign songs of the hero of the Log Cabin." Thirteen-year-old Frances Ann Capps of Portsmouth attended a crowded Whig meeting at which she listened to a four-and-a-half-hour speech; she found the occasion "very pleasing."[17]

Private residences and businesses became sites for the consumption and production of partisan material culture. Women not only bought a vast array of Whig paraphernalia (such as stationery, songbooks, plates, buttons, glassware, and quilts bearing Harrison's name) but also made their own. In preparation for a Whig procession, Celestia Shakes of Alexandria made a model log cabin, which she placed in the window of her shop where everyone was sure to see it; "the Cabin pleased the Whigs very much [and] they cheered it," she wrote her sister.[18]

In the age of mass politics, even women's housekeeping could serve partisanship. Party conventions, rallies, and processions might bring thousands of visitors who had to be lodged, fed, and cared for. Naturally, women played a key role in providing these services and so facilitated the political process. One such woman, Mary Steger of Richmond, wrote to a friend in September 1840 about her preparations for the upcoming state convention of the Whig party:

> every Whig house in the city is to be crammed we expect to have 10 or 12 sleep here to say nothing of the stragglers in to dinner &tc you will think perhaps it needs not much preparation but we are all in a bustle . . . . it is no easy task in this filthy place to keep a three story house clean . . . . there are from 6 to 8 thousand Delegates and members of our Tippecanoe Club here determined to pay all their expenses. . . . Our Log Cabin is open almost every few nights (the regular meetings being once a week) to some speakers from a distance. the Cabin holds 1,500 and it is always full.

In all likelihood, Steger had been to the "Log Cabin" (the Whig campaign headquarters) herself to hear Whig discourses. It was quite impossible to remain aloof from politics, she told her friend: "I never took so much interest in politics in my life.

[17] Judith Rives to Frank Rives, Feb. 29, 1840, Rives Family Papers; Sarah (Pendleton) Dandridge to Martha Taliaferro Hunter, April 18, 1840, Hunter Family Papers (Virginia Historical Society, Richmond); Mrs. Roger A. Pryor, *My Day: Reminiscences of a Long Life* (New York, 1909), 47; Frances Ann Bernard Capps Diary, Sept. 10, 1840 (Virginia Historical Society).

[18] Edith P. Mayo, "Campaign Appeals to Women," in *American Material Culture: The Shape of Things around Us,* ed. Edith P. Mayo (Bowling Green, 1984), 128–32, 143; Celestia Shakes, as quoted in T. Michael Miller, "'If elected . . .'—An Overview of How Alexandrians Voted in Presidential Elections from 1789–1984," *Fireside Sentinel,* 10 (Oct. 1988), 100.

. . . the fact is you have to know something about them for nobody here thinks of any else."[19]

For Whig women in Virginia, the crowning event of the 1840 campaign was Whig luminary Daniel Webster's visit to Richmond during the October convention. Susan Hooper, who achieved some renown as a writer during the Civil War, was at a reception for Webster on his arrival in Richmond and later wrote a detailed description of the event. Her father, a staunch supporter of Webster, "could not permit so golden an opportunity of his child's seeing his political idol to pass unimproved; so, girl, almost baby as I was, he hurried me down to the honorable gentleman's reception . . . that in after years I might boast of having heard Webster, the immortal."[20]

After giving two speeches to huge crowds of enthusiastic Whig men and women, Webster yielded to the "particular request of the ladies of Richmond" and agreed to present a special address on women's political role to them at the Whig campaign headquarters. On October 7, some twelve hundred women turned out for the event. Webster took issue with the popular maxim that "there is one morality for politics and another morality for other things," and he looked forward to the day when the standards of private life would govern public conduct. It was women's special duty, he suggested, to bring that day about.[21]

Because their moral perceptions were "both quicker and juster than those of the other sex," Webster continued, women could infuse society with the "pure morality" on which sound government depended. Mothers had to teach their children that

> the exercise of the elective franchise is a social duty, of as solemn a nature as man can be called on to perform; that a man may not innocently trifle with his vote; that every free elector is a trustee as well for others as himself, and that every man and every measure he supports has an important bearing on the interests of others as well as on his own.

Webster refrained from analyzing specific political issues, not because he feared the women would not be interested, but because, he said, "You read enough—you hear quite enough on those subjects."[22]

Webster's views were echoed by two of Virginia's leading Whigs, former governor James Barbour and Richmond lawyer James Lyons, who spoke to the crowd after Webster had finished. They made explicit what Webster had implied: women's civic duty was to create Whig families, and their public participation in Whig events empowered them to fulfill that role. Barbour expressed delight at having seen throngs of women attend Whig rallies throughout "the length and breadth of this land" during the year's canvass. Those women were "animated with the one holy

[19] Mary Pendleton (Cooke) Steger to Sarah Harriet Apphia Hunter, Sept. 13, 1840, Hunter Family Papers.
[20] Mary T. Tardy, ed., *The Living Female Writers of the South* (Philadelphia, 1872), 409–10.
[21] *Richmond Whig,* Oct. 9, 1840. References to the *Richmond Whig* for the years 1840–1844 are to the semiweekly run of the paper; references to it for 1845–1860 are to the daily run.
[22] *Ibid.*

purpose of redeeming from destruction those liberties earned for us by our fathers, which are equally dear to woman as to man, and which she, with us, is equally bound to transmit untarnished to our children for ages to come." With all the ladies against the Democratic candidate Van Buren, Barbour asked, how could he possibly win? Lyons proclaimed that the "countenance" of the ladies was both a means and a guarantee of the party's success. With Whig mothers there must be Whig sons and Whig daughters; with Whig daughters there would be Whig sweethearts, he asserted. Guarded by the "shield of female purity," Lyons concluded, the Whigs were sure to conquer.[23]

The *National Intelligencer,* which reprinted the speeches in their entirety, praised Webster for celebrating the "vast influence" of women on the well-being of society. The *Richmond Whig* saw the turnout of women as evidence that the "better part of creation were and are, almost unanimously Whig." Women's support for the party "ought to silence Loco Focoism, and sanctify the inevitable Revolution which is about to occur," the editors proclaimed.[24] The "Revolution" the editors had in mind was the victory of Harrison over Van Buren. But they, along with Webster and his colleagues, were helping to actuate another revolution—one in gender conventions.

Webster and his fellow speakers were in effect articulating a new theory of women's civic duty. That theory, Whig womanhood, attempted to reconcile women's partisanship as Whigs with the ideology of domesticity or "true womanhood." The canon of domesticity, like the revolutionary-era theory of republican motherhood, celebrated woman's power and duty to mold the character of her sons, to instill in them civic virtue and a love for the Republic. At the same time, domestic doctrine held that the "true woman" was nonpartisan. Men embodied the "baser instincts"—selfishness, passion, and ambition—which partisanship expressed. By contrast, women were selfless, disinterested, and virtuous. Men pursued their self-interest in the public sphere; women maintained harmony, morality, and discipline in the domestic one.[25]

What was new about Whig womanhood was its equation of female patriotism with partisanship and its assumption that women had the duty to bring their moral beneficence into the public sphere. Whig rhetoric held that women were partisans, who shared with men an intense interest and stake in electoral contests. No longer was patriotism a matter of teaching sons to love the Republic. A patriotic woman would teach her family to love the Whig party; she, after all, understood that the Whigs alone could ensure the health and safety of the Republic.

That very understanding was forged in public. Rather than affirm a cherished tenet of the ideal of domesticity, that women must avoid the contentious political

[23] *Ibid.*; *Washington National Intelligencer,* Oct. 9, 1840.

[24] *Washington National Intelligencer,* Oct. 10, 1840; *Richmond Whig,* Oct. 9, 1840.

[25] Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1980); Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven, 1977), 66–70; Baker, "Domestication of Politics," 629–31.

arena in order to safeguard their virtue, Whig speakers argued that by attending campaign events, women could transform the public sphere, fostering "domestic" virtues such as fairness, harmony, and self-control in a larger setting. Women's "countenance" sanctified the Whig cause; their presence bespoke the party's moral rectitude. Not only did women legitimize partisan behavior, they helped set limits on it—they guarded men with a "shield of purity" and made them understand the moral consequences of their actions. In a sense, Whig womanhood was the ultimate testament of faith in true womanhood. Its expositors held that *even* participation in party politics could not corrupt women or erase the fundamental differences between them and men.

How well did Whig rhetoric about women conform to reality? The Whigs' claim that the "ladies are all Whigs" was, of course, a fanciful fabrication. Even though expressions of partisanship by Whig women outnumber those by Democratic women in extant writings from 1840, it seems unlikely that a majority, let alone the entirety, of Virginia women supported the Whigs. Despite Harrison's vigorous campaign, the Democrats still had the support of a majority of voters in Virginia in 1840; women's private papers simply do not bear out the Whig contention that many of these Democratic voters had Whig wives. Since women did not cast ballots, the Whigs' assertion that there was a gender gap in politics cannot be empirically proven or refuted—therein, no doubt, lay some of its viability as propaganda. But the Whig party clearly did much more than its rival to encourage and celebrate female partisanship, and Whig women, most likely as a result, outdid their Democratic counterparts in displays of partisan zeal.

Judging by the campaign reports of Democratic newspapers, the Democrats were deeply ambivalent about women's partisanship. Jackson, the grand old hero of the Democratic party, drew admiring crowds of men and women when he toured the South, but such Democratic newspapers as the party's national organ, the *Washington Globe,* did not make a concerted effort to publicize or encourage women's presence at Democratic rallies.[26]

The leading Democrats in Virginia did little to contest the Whig party's assertion that it alone had the blessing of women. Some Democrats openly expressed their contempt for Whig tactics. The *Richmond Crisis,* a Democratic campaign paper, mockingly suggested to the Whigs that they might increase the "swelling pageant" at their state convention if they ran the following advertisement: "A meeting of the Babies of Richmond, with their Nurses, is respectfully requested this evening, at the Log Cabin, in order to form a Tippecanoe Infant Club." After Webster's speech to the Whig women of Richmond, a correspondent to the *Richmond Enquirer* lambasted speaker and audience alike, asking "Are the ladies of Virginia so destitute of religious and moral instruction, that they need a thorough politician to enlighten them on the subject of the training of their children?" At least one Democratic paper took a different tack: when a woman in Charlottesville wrote to the *Warrenton*

[26] *Washington Globe,* Oct. 27, 1840.

Jeffersonian with the news that the Democratic convention in her town had "caused some of the Whigs to lose their countenance," the editor of the newspaper held her up as a "good Republican." He responded to the Whig insistence that "'All the Ladies are Whigs!'" by proclaiming, "We never believed it." But most Democratic editors chose to ignore rather than refute the Whigs' claims about women.[27]

Why was the Whig and not the Democratic party the first to seize the opportunity to make, as one Democrat put it, "politicians of their women"? Answers to the question must be speculative, for neither Whig nor Democratic commentators explicitly accounted for this difference in the political tactics of the two parties. Studies of Whig ideology argue that women were central to the Whigs' world view. Although the Democrats sought to maintain a strict boundary between the private and public spheres and resented attempts to politicize domestic life, the Whigs invested the family—and women in particular—with the distinct political function of forming the "stable American character" on which national well-being depended. While the Democrats acknowledged the reality of social conflict, the Whigs preferred speaking of a society in which harmony prevailed; women's "special moral and spiritual qualities," Whigs maintained, fitted them for the task of promoting such harmony.[28]

Historians Joe L. Kincheloe Jr., Ronald P. Formisano, and Richard J. Carwardine suggest that inclusion of women in partisan rituals was a by-product of the Whig party's efforts to blend religion and politics. Many Whig leaders were steeped in evangelical religion and applied what they had learned in the religious sphere to the political one. They practiced "secular revivalism"—the great rallies of the 1840s were, in essence, secular camp meetings. Using the evangelical idiom, Whig orators told crowds of enthusiastic men, women, and children that a presidential campaign was not simply a contest over political principles but a clash between good and evil.[29]

While some Whig men may have conceived of religious revivals as a model for partisan rituals, it is also likely that the connections of Whig leaders to benevolent reform movements predisposed them to recognize the value of women's aid. Scholars have long identified the Whig party with benevolent reform. The Whigs believed, the historians Daniel Howe and Lawrence Kohl have argued, in the malleability of human nature. They championed institutions that could help individuals achieve the "self-mastery" on which social order depended: schools, benevolent societies, reformatories, and asylums. All around the country, Whigs were leaders in reform movements. Henry Clay of Kentucky served as president of the American Colonization Society, and Theodore Frelinghuysen of New Jersey served as president of the American Tract Society and the American Bible Society. In Virginia, too, Whigs

[27] *Richmond Crisis,* Sept. 16, 1840; *Richmond Enquirer,* Oct. 15, 1840; *Warrenton Jeffersonian,* Sept. 19, 1840.

[28] Ryan, *Women in Public,* 136; William R. Taylor, *Cavalier & Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), 115–40; Watson, *Liberty and Power,* 219–21; Kohl, *Politics of Individualism,* 72–73, 108.

[29] Joe L. Kincheloe Jr., "Transcending Role Restrictions: Women at Camp Meetings and Political Rallies," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly,* 40 (Summer 1981), 159; Formisano, *Transformation of Political Culture,* 262–64; Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, 1993), 33–34, 53–55, 65.

championed moral reform. Prominent Whigs such as Governor Barbour supported a variety of reform causes, from a conviction that public education and benevolent societies were a means to create a more harmonious society.[30]

As many recent studies show, by 1840, women had long been active in the sphere of benevolent reform. They had proved that they were effective organizers, skilled at mobilizing public support for their projects. In Virginia, men had enthusiastically enlisted female support in the temperance and African colonization causes, arguing that the participation of "disinterested" and virtuous females would legitimate those causes. In short, when reform-minded Whig leaders such as Barbour encouraged women to join in the party's glorious crusade, they were not inventing or advancing new arguments to justify public activism by women, but rather recasting old ones, adapting the ideology of benevolent femininity to the new realities of mass party politics.[31]

On balance, Whig propaganda about women more closely resembled the rhetoric of disinterested benevolence than that of religious enthusiasm. Women's roles in the two settings, evangelical revivals and partisan rallies, differed in one essential way. Camp meetings were known for their high emotional pitch. Kincheloe asserts that women who attended them "screamed, participated in the 'exercises,' exhorted, sang, and did anything else that men could do." Women's role at political rallies, by contrast, was more to contain passions than to give in to them. Political passion, according to nineteenth-century rhetoric, was a sort of "blindness"; critiques of "blind party spirit" float through the campaign rhetoric of the 1840s.[32] Whig rhetoric implied that women, by virtue of their moral superiority, could resist this blindness. Whig men occasionally praised female enthusiasm, but they more often stressed Whig women's disinterestedness, dignity, and decorum.

In other words, the participation of women helped to relieve men's anxieties about changes in electoral behavior. Even though men likened partisan competition to warfare, they were intensely concerned with constraining the behavior of partisans. This concern, it might be argued, ran especially high among Whigs in 1840, when they began their appeals to women. The Whigs wanted to have it both ways: to steal the Jacksonians' democratic thunder and to claim that the Whigs were a breed apart from the Democrats—and a superior one at that. The Whigs' 1840 campaign was masterminded by a new cadre of professional politicians who sought to beat the Jacksonians at their own game of rousing the common man. They hoped that the din produced by Harrison's Log Cabin campaign of 1840 would drown out the Democratic charge that the Whigs had no platform and no policies. Even

[30] Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago, 1979), 36, 158; Kohl, *Politics of Individualism*, 72–74; Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York, 1991), 179, 664; Charles D. Lowery, *James Barbour, A Jeffersonian Republican* (University, Ala., 1984), 229.

[31] Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, 1990); Lebsock, *Free Women of Petersburg*, 195–236; Elizabeth R. Varon, "'We Mean to be Counted': White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1993), 53–62, 102–4.

[32] Kincheloe, "Transcending Role Restrictions," 165; Baker, "Domestication of Politics," 630–31.

as they stressed the humble origins of their candidate and claimed to be more democratic than the Democrats, the Whigs also sought to retain the mantle of patrician dignity. In contrast to the Democrats' excessive partisanship and executive corruption, the Whigs, so they claimed, represented disinterested virtue, a love of the Union, and a reverence for the traditions of the Founding Fathers.[33]

If this message seems dissonant, it was. Men such as Webster, Clay, and John Quincy Adams initially resisted the notion that the Whig campaign of 1840 should focus on "style, song and hysteria." When these "old guard" leaders began to taste victory, however, they came around and played the demagogue to crowds of enthusiastic followers in places such as Richmond, telling them what they wanted to hear. The Democrats naturally asserted that the Whigs' efforts to unleash voter enthusiasm were immoral and destructive to the public peace; particularly disturbing, Democrats charged, was the way the dispensing of hard cider by Harrison campaign workers encouraged intemperance.[34] But the Whigs had the perfect counterargument—the very presence of women at Whig events insured decorum and sobriety. With women on their side, Whigs could lay claim both to popular democracy and to dignity.

The Whig party's victory in the 1840 presidential contest proved to be short-lived. The death of Harrison within a month after his inauguration exposed the fault lines in the Whigs' fragile coalition. Seeking a consensus candidate in 1844, the Whigs chose Clay, whom their northern and southern wings could agree on. Clay, a southerner, opposed the annexation of Texas unless on terms acceptable to the North. And he championed an "American System" of internal development that would bind the country together through commercial ties.[35]

The years between Harrison's victory in 1840 and Clay's campaign in 1844 afforded women and men alike fewer opportunities to display partisanship than the presidential campaign season had. Women did attend political speeches and debates in nonelection years.[36] But they were not generally included in the year-round succession of meetings, held behind closed doors, in which the state business of the Whig party, such as the selection of delegates to state conventions, was conducted. Women's function in partisan life had clear limits: their role was not to choose Whig candidates but to affirm the choices of Whig men, particularly in high-stakes presidential campaigns; to help maintain party discipline; and to bring new members into the Whig fold.

As soon as the presidential canvass of 1844 got underway, the tide of female partisanship rose again, to new heights. The Whig party in Virginia flooded women

[33] Silbey, *American Political Nation,* 112–17; Kohl, *Politics of Individualism,* 89; Sydney Nathans, *Daniel Webster and Jacksonian Democracy* (Baltimore, 1973), 127–31; Freehling, *Road to Disunion,* 361.

[34] Gunderson, *Log-Cabin Campaign,* 125, 144, 183; Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics,* 61.

[35] Freehling, *Road to Disunion,* 411–36.

[36] For an example of a woman attending a political debate, see Capps Diary, Dec. 15, 1843.

GRAND RALLY

OF THE WHIGS OF AUGUSTA,

ON WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY NEXT.

We have the pleasure of announcing to our fellow-citizens that among the distinguished Whig Speakers who have been invited from abroad to attend our RALLY, we have reason to expect the following gentlemen:---*Benjamin Watkins Leigh*, esq. of Richmond; *John Janney*, esq. of Loudoun; *William Madison Peyton*, esq. of Roanoke; *Andrew Hunter*, esq. of Jefferson; *Oliver P. Baldwin*, esq. of Rockbridge; and perhaps others, from whom we have not yet heard.

Ample arrangements have been made for the comfortable accommodation of the meeting, which will be held in the beautiful grove near the Virginia Institution. A DINNER will also be provided, and a hearty WELCOME extended to ALL who may think proper to attend. The *Ladies*, from every part of the county, are specially and very respectfully solicited to grace the occasion with their presence.

[P. S.---Mr. Leigh has arrived.]

Whigs of Augusta---To the Rally! To the Rally!

MONDAY MORNING, AUG. 26, 1844.

Broadsides such as this one, announcing a "Grand Rally of the Whigs of Augusta" during Henry Clay's 1844 presidential campaign, illustrate the Whigs' policy of urging "Ladies" to turn out in support of the party.
Courtesy Library of Virginia, Richmond.

with a virtual torrent of invitations to Whig events. As in 1840, Whig men thought that the approval of women legitimized the Whig campaign. "If we doubted before," a correspondent wrote after seeing the large number of women at a Whig rally in Goochland County, "now we know the Whigs must be right and will be more than conquerers." Such outpourings of female partisanship led the *Richmond Whig* to draw a now familiar conclusion: "It is well known that the Ladies are Whigs, almost universally."[37]

Women's support for the Whigs, Virginia newspapers were at pains to point out, was not restricted to such urban strongholds as Petersburg and Richmond. Women attended Whig events in towns, villages, county courthouses, and rural settings around the state. The presence of 350 women at a Whig rally in Clarksburg, for example, was evidence that "ladies in the remote and retired Mountain districts take the same interest in the success of the Whig cause, which they do everywhere else."[38]

[37] *Richmond Whig*, April 26, May 2, 1844.
[38] *Ibid.*, Sept. 6, 1844.

The Whig party's campaign rhetoric conjured up an image of the ideal Whig woman: a chaste, honorable lady who attended political rallies to sanction the party, to dignify its proceedings, to affirm her loyalty, and to gather information that would allow her to transmit Whig culture to her family, friends, and acquaintances. Although often spoken of, Whig women rarely got the chance to "speak" for themselves before partisan audiences in 1844. On at least one occasion, however, a Virginia woman addressed a Whig crowd through a male proxy. On September 3 the *Richmond Whig* featured "AN EXAMPLE TO THE WHIG LADIES OF RICHMOND!," the story of Miss Martha Peake of Charlottesville. Peake presented a "splendid Banner" to the Clay Club of Charlottesville in September 1844, along with a "chaste and beautiful letter" that one of its male members read aloud. When Clay is elected, she cautioned the Whig voters of the town, "forget not that those whom you have vanquished are your brothers, subjects of the same government, struggling as ardently and as honestly, as you, for what they believe, with mistaken judgment, in my poor opinion, to be the true path to national honor, happiness and glory." Only if the victorious Whigs were able to transcend the fierce emotions of party competition would the nation "bask in the sunshine of moral, social and political purity and peace."[39]

Webster and his fellow Whig luminaries undoubtedly would have approved of Peake's message, for she was imposing her superior moral sensibilities on the conduct of politics and admonishing men of the proper limits of partisanship. Apparently the *Richmond Whig* agreed that Peake successfully harmonized partisanship and true womanhood: she was bound to get married soon, the editors allowed, for her Whig credentials made her "pre-eminently qualified to confer domestic happiness" on some fortunate man.[40]

In 1844, the Whig party's claim that it had the support of the commonwealth's women was most certainly intended, as it had been in 1840, to provoke the Democrats. The *Lexington Gazette* printed a letter to the Whigs of Fishersville by Benjamin Johnson Barbour, in which he taunted the Democrats for alienating the female population. Eve had been deceived "by the prince of the Locofocos, and had ever since eschewed both him and his party"; no Democrat would stand a chance to get married until after the November election.[41]

Virginia women's own accounts of the campaign of 1844 echo the party's rhetoric. Virginian Marion Harland, a nationally famous novelist and author of domestic guidebooks for women in the mid-nineteenth century, asserts in her autobiography that even as a child of thirteen, she was a violent Whig partisan and supporter of Clay. In 1844 the Whigs invited the women of her county to a political rally, the first time such an invitation had been extended to ladies, according to Harland;

[39] *Ibid.*, Sept. 3, 1844.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Lexington Gazette,* Oct. 31, 1844.

the innovation "set tongues wagging," she remembers, and "practically guaranteed the county for Clay."[42]

Like Harland, Missouri Riddick of Suffolk appreciated the Whig party's hospitality. She wrote to her husband in White Sulphur Springs on August 5, 1844:

> Great preparations are making for the Democratic mass meeting, at Cowling's landings on the 10th. . . . we think, as no doubt you do, that it will be a poor affair . . . the ladies are not invited. I believe all of the ladies will attend the Whig Barbecue, as they are particularly invited, and tables and seats are to be provided for them.

In her husband's absence, Riddick felt it her duty to stand in as the political head of the family: "I shall go [to the rally], as your representative," she told him.[43]

In the early stages of the 1844 campaign, Democrats made few overtures to women to join in partisan activities, but by the fall of 1844, the party was actively appealing to women and trying to counter Whig propaganda with its own claims. Hundreds of women attended a Democratic rally in Fairfax in September; twenty-eight young ladies carried flags bearing the "different mottoes of the states." "About 100 ladies favored Mr. L. [Mr. Leake, the speaker at the rally] with their presence, and their approving smiles," wrote the *Richmond Enquirer* of another Democratic meeting, "demonstrating the falsity of the charge that the 'Ladies are all Whigs.'"[44]

These appeals notwithstanding, some Democrats continued to be critical of female mobilization. At a Loudoun County political debate, a Democratic orator "assail[ed] the ladies for attending political meetings" and "for giving their smiles" to the Whigs. Describing a Whig procession in New York, a Democratic correspondent to the *Washington Globe* declared that while the Whigs' "showy pageant" might "amuse the wives, daughters and sisters of our sovereign lord the people . . . it can neither buy, bribe, nor beat the staunch and sterling democracy of New York, when it comes to the matter of MEN." Such skepticism about the propriety and utility of Whig appeals to women was not confined to men. According to Serena Dandridge, a Democrat from Essex County, the reason the Whigs lost the election of 1844 was that they had "too many women & children in their ranks."[45] Ironically, the strongest articulations of Whig womanhood and the most strident attacks on it came after the election of 1844 had been lost. For it was then that Whig women in Virginia tried to snatch a symbolic victory from the jaws of defeat.

On November 19, 1844, the *Richmond Whig* published a seemingly innocuous letter that would touch off months of debate in the Virginia press. The letter, from

[42] Marion Harland, *Marion Harland's Autobiography* (New York, 1910), 121, 127–29.

[43] Missouri Riddick to Nathaniel Riddick, Aug. 5, 1844, Riddick Family Papers (Archives Division, Library of Virginia, Richmond).

[44] *Washington Globe,* Sept. 26, 1844; *Richmond Enquirer,* Oct. 7, 1844.

[45] *Richmond Whig,* Aug. 13, 1844; *Washington Globe,* Nov. 1, 1844; Serena Catherine (Pendleton) Dandridge to Mary Evelina (Dandridge) Hunter, Dec. 11, [1844], Hunter Family Papers.

Lucy Barbour of Barboursville, Orange County, proposed that the "Whig women of Virginia" give some "token of respect" to Clay, who had just lost his third bid for the presidency of the United States. Barbour was a member of Virginia's social elite. Her husband James, who had died in 1842, had been one of the most prominent Whigs in Virginia. He had served as governor of the commonwealth, United States senator, and the secretary of war under John Quincy Adams. The Barbours counted Clay among their close friends.[46]

Barbour anticipated that her call to action would raise eyebrows. "I know our sex are thought by many unstable as water," her letter continued, "but after crowding the Whig festivals, and manifesting so much enthusiasm, few will be found so hollow-hearted as to refuse a small sum to so good—I had almost said, so holy a cause": the tribute to Clay. The editors of the *Richmond Whig* agreed to adopt Barbour's scheme as their own. The editors of the *Richmond Enquirer* wasted no time in ridiculing the plan to honor Clay: "Has it come to this, that the 'gallant Harry' has been turned over to the tender mercies of the ladies . . . ?" The *Enquirer* also printed a letter from one "Incognita," who thoroughly disapproved of the notion that Whig women should hold a meeting to decide on a strategy for honoring Clay: "a public meeting of political amazons! . . . Was such an event ever recorded, or before heard of, in the annals of time?"[47]

Barbour vigorously defended her project. In a December 4 letter to the *Richmond Whig,* she stated that women deserved "freedom of thought even on political subjects; and the power of performing an act of justice to an injured statesman; when, doing so, we neglect no duty assigned to us by the most rigid." "We are the nursing mothers of heroes, statesmen, and divines," she continued, "and while we perform a task so important, we mean to be counted something in the muster-roll of man."[48]

Inspired by Barbour's appeal, a group of Whig women met on December 9 at the First Presbyterian Church in Richmond and formed the Virginia Association of Ladies for Erecting a Statue to Henry Clay; they elected Barbour as president. The statue was to be funded by membership subscriptions, costing no more than one dollar each. Men could make donations but not become members. Auxiliaries to the association, with women as officers and collectors, were organized all around the state and began the work of soliciting donations to pay for the cost of commissioning the statue.[49]

Thanks to the survival of a subscription book from around 1845–1846 that lists contributors to the Clay Association by county, we can get a sense of the breadth and nature of the organization. The book lists the names of 2,563 subscribers,

[46] *Richmond Whig,* Nov. 19, 1844. See Lucy Barbour's obituary, *ibid.*, Dec. 3, 1860. Lowery, *James Barbour,* 9–16, 39–40, 52–53, 178–79, 196.

[47] *Richmond Whig,* Nov. 19, 1844; *Richmond Enquirer,* Nov. 29, Dec. 2, 1844.

[48] *Richmond Whig,* Dec. 13, 1844.

[49] Letters and articles from December 1844, which describe the formation of the Virginia Association of Ladies for Erecting a Statue to Henry Clay, were printed as part of the coverage of the unveiling of the Clay statue in *Richmond Whig,* April 12, 1860.

covering counties from Accomac on the Eastern Shore to Nelson on the Blue Ridge; at least 2,236 of the subscribers were women. The association, which received national publicity in the *National Intelligencer,* also had auxiliaries in Alexandria (204 subscribers) and in Boston (215 subscribers). Additional contributions came from families in Vermont, Mississippi, and Georgia.[50]

The list of subscribers confirms that there was a strong connection between Whiggery and female benevolence in Virginia. Seventeen of the thirty-six members of the Female Humane Association of Richmond in 1843—an organization that provided food and shelter to destitute girls—subscribed to the Clay Association in 1845. Lucy Otey of Lynchburg and Ann Clagett of Alexandria, directors of orphan asylums in their respective towns, are two more of the many benevolent women who contributed to the Clay project.[51]

As in the case of Lucy Barbour, the social prominence of the Clay Association's leaders did not insulate them from criticism. As auxiliaries sprang up around the state, so, too, did debate over the propriety of the association. On December 22, 1844, for example, two days after the Whig women of Lynchburg formed an auxiliary, the editors of the Democratic *Lynchburg Republican* attacked the Clay Association, suggesting with derision that "the name of every lady who mingles in this great work of generosity and patriotism will be handed down to posterity as a *partisan* lady." "Is not this whole movement conceived in a spirit of rebellion?" the editors asked. The Democrats mocked the notion that partisanship was appropriate for women—that partisanship and patriotism were synonymous. The Whiggish *Lynchburg Virginian* defended the Clay Association, commending it for advancing the Whig cause: "we shall not be surprised if the vehemence and universality of this female and most honorable sentiment," its editor mused, "will present Mr. Clay again as a candidate for the Presidency in 1848."[52]

A week later, two more male defenders of the association came forward, urging Whig women to stand their ground. A correspondent with the pen name "Peter Caustic" proclaimed, "There is too much firmness of character, and nobleness of soul about Virginia's daughters to suffer themselves to be intimidated by the denunciations of Locofocoism." The second defender agreed, stating that "the Whig ladies of Virginia consider themselves at least as well qualified to judge of their own acts as the Locofoco editor, who has undertaken to lecture them."[53]

Perhaps the most strident defense of the association came from a correspondent of the *Lexington Gazette,* who jumped into the fray after an auxiliary was formed in that town in January 1845. The Democrats, he claimed, were being disingenuous:

[50] Virginia Association of Ladies for Erecting a Statue to Henry Clay, Subscription List, c. 1845–1846 (Archives Division, Virginia Historical Society). Some subscribers can be identified as men; some signed only their initials. *Washington National Intelligencer,* Nov. 18, 1845; *Staunton Spectator,* Feb. 6, 1845; *Richmond Whig,* March 17, 18, 1845.

[51] *Constitution and By-laws of the Female Humane Association of the City of Richmond* (Richmond, 1843), 1; Legislative petitions, Lynchburg, Jan. 2, 1846 (Archives Division, Library of Virginia); *Lynchburg Virginian,* Dec. 22, 1844; Legislative petitions, Alexandria, Feb. 19, 1847 (Archives Division, Library of Virginia).

[52] *Lynchburg Republican,* Dec. 22, 1844; *Lynchburg Virginian,* Dec. 26, 1844.

[53] *Lynchburg Virginian,* Jan. 2, 1845.

"The sneering democratic gentry who ridicule the idea of ladies meddling with politics, would not be so bitterly sarcastic if they could have a little of this meddling on their side of the question." "We are willing to avow our own opinion that woman's proper sphere is HOME," the writer continued. But "there are occasions . . . when her domestic duties themselves demand that she should enter the arena which man has considered his exclusive province."[54]

Whig women themselves came forward on their own and Clay's behalf. In December 1844 a female correspondent to the *Richmond Whig* wrote that women had a duty to honor Clay since he had been "shamefully neglected by his countrymen." She had nothing good to say about the newly elected president, James K. Polk: "The more insignificant a man is, the greater are his chances, with the Democracy, for attaining exalted honors."[55]

Susan Doswell, president of the Hanover auxiliary, asserted in an address to her colleagues that women "cannot but erect a statue . . . that our children may early learn well to distinguish the true difference between exalted worth and that cringing sycophancy, which, in a Republic, too often usurps its highest honors." A pledge by the women of Lunenburg County also was a clear testament to Clay's worth: "we hereby resolve to contribute our humble mite in conferring honor where honor is due." Sarah French, vice president of the Warrenton auxiliary, wrote to Clay on February 27, 1845, asking him to visit her town (he graciously declined). The association's goal, she stressed, was to teach the young men of Virginia to imitate Clay's "noble deeds."[56]

The women who spoke for the association tapped into two currents in Whig political culture: the party's social elitism and its emphasis on "statesmanship." The Whigs considered themselves the party of "property and talents." One prominent Virginia Whig recorded in his memoirs his belief that the Whigs "represented the culture and the wealth of the State. . . . It had become an old saw that 'Whigs knew each other by the instincts of gentlemen.'" Furthermore, as historian Thomas Brown has pointed out, the Whigs claimed to stand for "statesmanship" over "partisanship." The Whig party carried on the Founding Fathers' tradition of disinterested statesmanship, transcending partisanship and sectionalism in the interests of national unity.[57]

One of the central issues in the 1844 campaign was Clay's stature as a gentleman and statesman. The Democrats assailed Clay's character, charging him with the unchristian practices of dueling, gambling, and womanizing. The Whigs countered that Clay was the epitome of a southern gentleman, a model of gallantry and social grace. Just as women's support had helped Harrison establish a virtuous reputation,

[54] *Lexington Gazette,* Jan. 9, 1845.

[55] *Richmond Whig,* Dec. 13, 1844.

[56] *Ibid.*, Feb. 12, 22, 1845; Sarah S. B. French to Henry Clay, Feb. 27, 1845, in *The Papers of Henry Clay,* vol. 10, ed. Melba Porter Hay (Lexington, Ky., 1991), 203.

[57] John Herbert Claiborne, *Seventy-Five Years in Old Virginia* (New York, 1904), 131; Wilfred Binkley, *American Political Parties: Their Natural History* (New York, 1965), 152; Thomas Brown, *Politics and Statesmanship: Essays on the American Whig Party* (New York, 1985), 154–69.

so, too, did it help, in Clay's case, to defuse the "character issue." Women around the country flocked to Clay's speeches and showered him with gifts. "If nothing else, Clay had the women's vote," Clay biographer Robert V. Remini asserts, repeating a favorite theme of Whig rhetoric.[58]

According to the Whigs, Clay's public record was as spotless as his character. The man who had steered the Union through the nullification crisis, Clay was known as "the Great Pacificator." In 1844, Clay's reputation as a peacemaker had special meaning, in light of Whig fears that Polk's election would bring a bloody war with Mexico. Clay's antiwar stance, Whigs argued, endeared him to women. An article on the Clay statue that appeared in the *Richmond Whig* in March 1845 suggested that Clay represented the "love of peace which is the sweetest attribute of woman."[59]

The notion that Whig women saw Clay as a guarantor of peace finds support in the correspondence of Ellen Mordecai, a fervent Whig from Richmond. Mordecai believed that Clay's defeat was a horrible omen for the Union. On the subject of Polk's inauguration in March 1845, she wrote: "I don't know that I am feeling too much apprehension for the welfare of my country, yet it appears even to me . . . that dark clouds are gathering, which unless scattered by elements now unseen, will thicken and bursting, overwhelm us in misery."[60]

Even as Mordecai penned her lament, debate over the Clay Association was dying down. Perhaps it had become clear to Whigs and Democrats alike that the Whig women were determined to see their project through. In November 1845, barely a year after Barbour's initial appeal, the association commissioned sculptor Joel Tanner Hart to design and to execute the marble statue; he was to be paid five thousand dollars for the project. Once sufficient money had been raised to pay Hart, the association's only purpose was to encourage him to finish the statue. Finally, in 1859, after a series of delays because of ill health, Hart completed his work.[61]

On April 12, 1860, the eighty-third anniversary of Clay's birth, the Clay statue was inaugurated in Richmond, amid great public celebration. Business in the city had been virtually suspended so that the entire community could participate in the inaugural ceremonies; an estimated twenty thousand spectators witnessed the unveiling. The Clay statue, which stood in an iron pavilion in Capitol Square until 1930, now stands in the Old Hall of the Virginia House of Delegates.[62]

The 1844–1845 debates over the Clay Association, though short-lived, are significant for revealing the tensions inherent in Whig womanhood, a new variation

[58] Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics,* 72–75; Remini, *Henry Clay,* 539, 544, 578, 613, 633–43, 650–58.

[59] Howe, *Political Culture of the American Whigs,* 138; *Richmond Whig,* March 15, 1845.

[60] Ellen Mordecai to Peter Mordecai, March 3, 1845, Mordecai Family Papers (Southern Historical Collection).

[61] *Richmond Whig,* April 12, 1860; W. Harrison Daniel, "Richmond's Memorial to Henry Clay: The Whig Women of Virginia and the Clay Statue," *Richmond Quarterly,* 8 (Spring 1986), 40; Elizabeth R. Varon, "'The Ladies Are Whigs': Lucy Barbour, Henry Clay, and Nineteenth-Century Virginia Politics," *Virginia Cavalcade,* 42 (Autumn 1992), 72–83.

[62] The city stretched the celebration out over the next few days, with a banquet honoring Clay at which former president John Tyler spoke. Newspaper reports reprinted the host of letters that famous Americans such as President James Buchanan and Gen. Winfield Scott had sent to the directors of the Clay Association, praising its work. *Richmond Whig,* April 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 1860.

on the timeworn and resilient doctrine of "indirect influence." This doctrine, which eventually emerged as a key argument against woman suffrage, held that women's civic duty lay, not in casting a ballot, but rather in influencing men's opinions and behavior.[63] The Whig innovation was to suggest that in the era of mass party politics, women could not fulfill this mandate properly unless they were integrated into the culture of political parties. For all its homages to female influence, the concept of Whig womanhood still ultimately vested women's power in male proxies. An unanswered question at the heart of Whig womanhood was implicitly posed by Lucy Barbour. What if men, despite the benign efforts of women, simply failed to do the right thing? What if they elected the wrong man? What were women to do then?

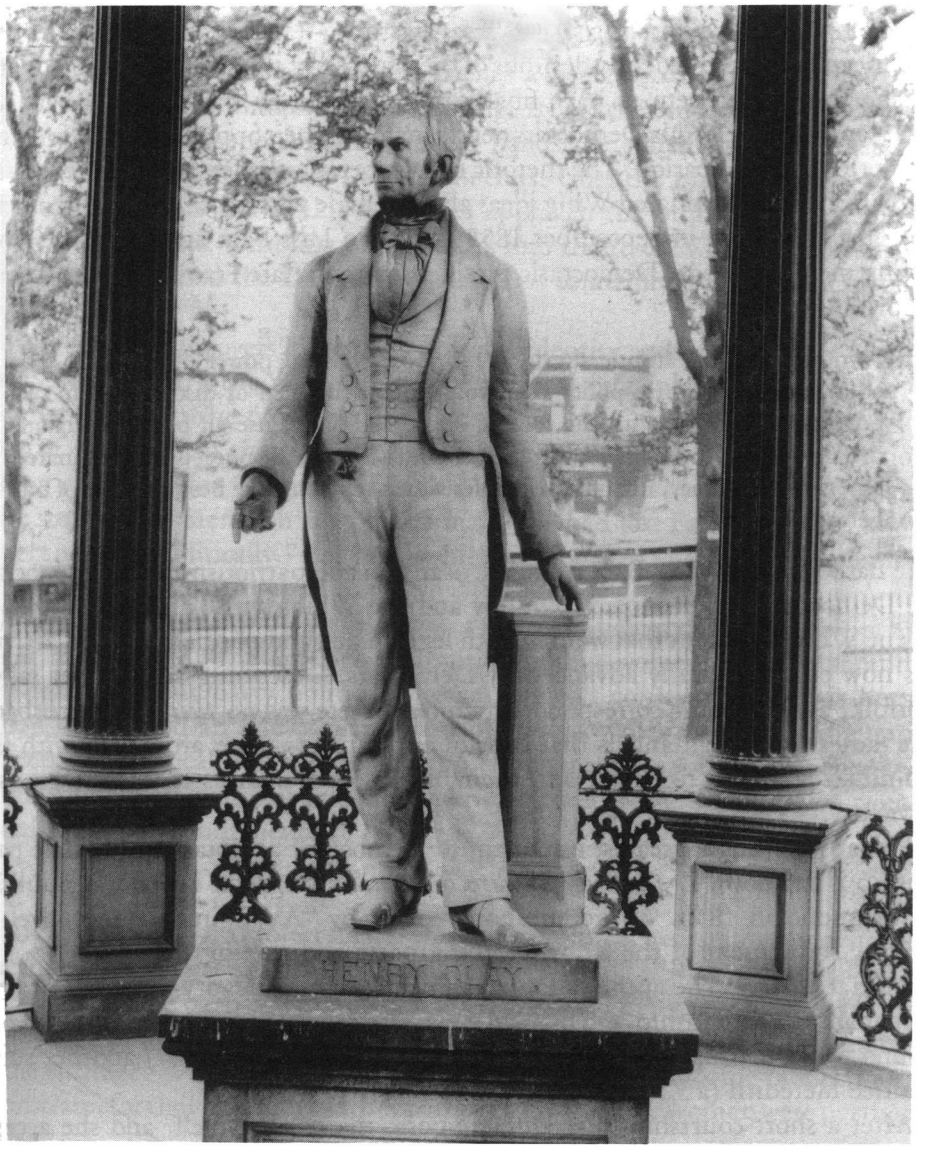
In the wake of Clay's 1844 defeat, Barbour and her supporters offered an answer: women had the duty to restore the reputation of their party's rejected hero. Barbour conceived of women as opinion makers. They were not simply to affirm the choices of men, but to advance their own ideas of what constituted political worth in men—before, during, and after campaign season. In attacking the association, Democrats worried out loud about the potentially radical implications of this view and paid backhanded tribute to women's influence. When Whig men rushed to defend Barbour, they reminded Democrats that Whig women's partisanship came with the full approbation of Whig men; the women of the Clay Association were not challenging the authority of all men, only of Democratic ones. Rather than symbolizing female rebelliousness, the Clay Association came to symbolize the efficacy and propriety of political collaboration between men and women.

By the time the Clay statue was inaugurated in 1860, both Clay and the Whig party were long gone. Clay had died in 1852, the same year that the Whig party—its fragile coalition of supporters torn apart by sectionalism—ran its last presidential campaign. But in at least one respect, Whig political culture, like the Clay statue that symbolized it, proved more enduring than the party itself. For even as the Whigs disintegrated, their policy of making "politicians of their women" became standard practice in Virginia politics.

In the presidential campaigns of 1848, 1852, and 1856, each of the parties competing for voters in Virginia actively appealed to women to join its ranks. In 1848 and again in 1852, the Whigs sounded familiar themes with respect to female partisanship. One feature that distinguished the 1852 campaign from earlier ones was the frequency with which women made public presentations of campaign decorations, occasionally accompanied by brief addresses. In September 1852, for example, two Whig women presented a banner and a transparency to the members of the local Whig club in Norfolk; each woman also made a short speech.[64]

[63] Sarah Hale, Whiggish editor of *Godey's Lady's Book,* summed up the doctrine of indirect influence perfectly when she stated, "This is the way women should vote, namely, by influencing rightly the votes of men." Sarah Hale, "How American Women Should Vote," *Godey's Lady's Book,* 44 (April 1852), 293.

[64] *Alexandria Gazette,* Sept. 3, 15, 1848; *Norfolk American Beacon,* Sept. 25, 1852.



The statue of Henry Clay, which stood near the southwest corner of Richmond's capitol square from 1860 to 1930, bore witness to the enduring popularity of Clay and to the partisan zeal of the thousands of women among his followers.
Courtesy Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia.

In 1856, the American party, picking up where the Whigs left off, encouraged and publicized women's displays of partisanship. For example, a grand rally of the Know-Nothings in Kanawha witnessed the presentation of a large flag by Mrs.

Ruffner, with a note attesting that she was "warmly attached to the principles of the American Party, and ardently desirous of their success at the approaching election."[65]

The Democrats seem to have finally come around by the campaigns of 1848, 1852, and 1856. Virginia Democrats nearly matched their opponents' zeal for female support and participation. The rhetoric of Democratic women and men reveals how fully they had appropriated Whig ideas about female partisanship. At a Democratic meeting in Norfolk in September 1852, a certain Miss Bain addressed the crowd, urging men to support Democratic presidential candidate Franklin Pierce with the following words:

> Patriotic sons of Patriotic sires! . . . Oppose with all power of rectitude that odious and destructive policy that would plant the seed of discord within our borders. . . . battle with the foes of Pierce and King; use all proper exertions to defeat them . . . You can inspire others with a love for the pure, uncontaminated tenets of democracy, the only principles which represent the best interests of our beloved Union.[66]

Like Barbour before her, Bain fused partisanship and patriotism, but she associated the Democrats with sectional harmony and the Whigs with "discord."

The Whig argument that women both legitimized and purified partisan activities was now enthusiastically advanced by Democrats. Describing an October rally in Norfolk, a Democratic correspondent wrote: "There was no *fuss*—no disturbance. The ladies—guardian angels that control our natures—were around us with their illuminating smiles to cheer, and their bright countenances to encourage us on to victory."[67]

Perhaps the single greatest testament to Democratic acceptance of female partisanship is the novel *The Life and Death of Sam, In Virginia,* which was published in Richmond in 1856. Authored anonymously by "A Virginian," the novel is a stinging indictment of the Know-Nothing party and ringing endorsement of the Democratic party. The author adapted a favorite Whig allegory—the tale of lovers kept apart by partisanship—to his own ends. The central drama of the novel revolves around the courtship of Fannie Bell (a Catholic and a Democrat) and her suitor, Maurice Meredith (a Know-Nothing).[68]

After a short courtship, Meredith proposes marriage to Bell, and she accepts. But the engagement is based on deception, for Meredith, who knows that Bell comes from a Democratic family, has hidden from her the fact that he is a Know-Nothing. Worried that Bell will renounce him if she learns the truth, Meredith tries to reassure himself with the rhetorical question, "what does a woman know or care about a

[65] *Richmond Whig,* Sept. 30, 1856. On gender and American party rhetoric, see Janet L. Coryell, *Neither Heroine nor Fool: Anna Ella Carroll of Maryland* (Kent, 1990), 13–29. The Republican party's constituency in Virginia in 1856 was negligible. Richard G. Lowe, "The Republican Party in Antebellum Virginia, 1856–1860," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography,* 81 (July 1973), 259–67.

[66] *Norfolk Southern Argus,* Sept. 23, 1852.

[67] *Richmond Enquirer,* Oct. 23, 1852.

[68] "A Virginian," *The Life and Death of Sam, In Virginia* (Richmond, 1856).

man's political opinions[?]" But doubt plagues him, and one night he has a disturbing dream. In the dream, he approaches a bridge spanning a rushing river between two jutting mountain crags. The bridge is bedecked in Democratic mottoes, and Bell is the gatekeeper, holding in her hands the scales of justice. Meredith watches as his political enemies, the Democrats, cross the bridge singing victory songs. When his Know-Nothing comrades approach the bridge, they are turned away by Bell and sent tumbling off the rocks into the river. Woman, representing justice, has sanctioned the Democratic party and condemned the American party to failure.[69]

Bell eventually discovers Meredith's political identity and calls off their engagement. "Must I marry the man . . . whose political principles would lead him to no higher aim than the proscription of foreigners and Catholics?" she angrily demands of Meredith in their final confrontation. Meredith, who runs as a Know-Nothing candidate for Congress, is dealt a crippling defeat in the state elections. At the story's end, Meredith is a broken man: "he had lost Fannie; he had lost all prospect of rising politically." Bell meanwhile gets engaged to Mr. Dew, a promising young Democrat.[70]

The Life and Death of Sam, In Virginia reveals much about women's political roles at mid-decade. The author's assumption is that women do—and should—know enough about party politics to serve as men's consciences. Bell is both a partisan herself and an arbiter of partisan behavior by men. Bell is the figurative gatekeeper of political righteousness. Her message is that those who win the moral sanction of woman are right and win political power; those who deceive woman to evade her moral judgment are doomed.

Any scholar engaged in a project such as this—the project of expanding our definition of meaningful political activity—is ultimately confronted with the inevitable question: So what? The partisan women described above do not meet the paradigmatic standards of political participation. They did not vote, nor did they agitate to win the suffrage. We cannot measure their impact on the outcome of elections or demonstrate, for that matter, that they had any impact at all. Women were partisans. So what?

I would like to address this question head on. The kind of evidence presented here has far-reaching implications for the fields of political history and women's history. On the one hand, my findings underscore what political historians have been saying for years. Partisanship was indeed a consuming passion and pastime for antebellum Americans. On the other hand, the Virginia evidence calls into question a common assumption in the historiography of antebellum politics: participation in campaign activities was a highly significant form of political expression for men, but not for women. McGerr makes a very convincing case that in the

[69] *Ibid.*, 211–14.
[70] *Ibid.*, 254–60, 307.

nineteenth century, men "voted twice at an election—once at the polls by casting a ballot, and once in the streets by participating in campaign pageantry." I hope to have demonstrated that voters and potential voters were not the only ones caught up in the "process of communal self-revelation" that campaigns represented; their wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters, too, were an integral part of the new American political culture.[71] Women, alongside men, expressed political preferences and assumed public identities by taking part in campaign rituals.

A recognition of the extent of women's involvement in campaigns may hold the key to understanding another issue of great interest to political historians: political socialization. Party loyalty was notoriously strong during the era of the second party system. Scholars have explored the importance of families and kin groups in transmitting partisan loyalties; Whig discourse, along with women's own testimony, shows that women played a key role in the socialization of young voters.[72]

Not only were women integral to party politics; gender was integral to party ideologies. Two recent studies suggest that Whig womanhood had its roots in Federalist and Adamsite gender ideologies. Rosemarie Zagarri has found that Federalists were more inclined than Democratic-Republicans to acknowledge publicly women's civic contributions as republican mothers. Supporters of John Quincy Adams, according to Norma Basch, espoused "proto-Whig" ideas about women and politics. They offered women a "few rays of autonomy" by arguing that household and polity were intimately linked, and that the moral standards that governed the former should govern the latter; Jacksonians by contrast upheld the notion of a sharp demarcation between the public and private spheres.[73]

The Whigs' innovation in the 1840s was both tactical and ideological. The party is noteworthy for the sheer quantity of invitations and publicity it offered to partisan women. Even more important was the meaning the Whigs attached to women's presence. Whig propagandists vigorously made the case that women's support said something crucial about the party—women's allegiance was proof of the Whigs' moral rectitude. Whigs in effect claimed that a "gender gap" separated them from the Democrats.

Over the course of the 1850s, the Democratic party in Virginia went a long way toward closing that gap, although Democrats never developed the Whiggish penchant for making grand claims (such as "the ladies are Democrats"). If we focus our attention on the North and West, however, where the Republican party had significant backing, it appears that the Democrats were not through playing catch-up in the race to mobilize female support. In 1856 the fledgling Republicans, running John Frémont as their first presidential candidate, upped the ante by placing Frémont's wife, Jessie, at the center of their national campaign. Renowned for her

[71] Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865–1928* (New York, 1986), 37.

[72] Formisano, "New Political History and the Election of 1840," 674–75; Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, 1983), 45–52.

[73] Rosemarie Zagarri, "Gender and the First Party System," in *Federalists Reconsidered,* ed. Doron Ben-Atar and Barbara Oberg (forthcoming); Norma Basch, "Marriage, Morals, and Politics in the Election of 1828," *Journal of American History,* 80 (Dec. 1993), 914–18.

political pedigree, beauty, and intelligence; her daring decision to elope with Frémont at the age of seventeen in 1841; and her antislavery convictions, Jessie Benton Frémont was celebrated in campaign songs, stories, and paraphernalia. Democrats around the country greeted this development with indignation and scorn. The Republican practice of according candidates' wives prominence in campaigns carried over into the postbellum period; Democrats generally did not favor such an approach.[74] A growing body of scholarship suggests that a gender gap between political parties—measurable before woman suffrage in appeals and assertions, not in votes—may be an enduring feature of the American political landscape.

If evidence on antebellum women's partisanship serves both to deepen our understanding of party politics and to suggest avenues for further inquiry, so, too, does it shed light on fundamental issues in women's history. Whig womanhood represents a distinct stage in the historical evolution of women's civic role. Linda K. Kerber's pathbreaking study has established that in the early republic, republican motherhood, the notion that women should serve the state by raising civic-minded sons, was the dominant theory of women's civic duty. Numerous studies have shown that in the first three decades of the antebellum period, republican motherhood was transformed into benevolent femininity—the idea that women had the duty to promote virtue not only within their families but also in the surrounding community by supporting benevolent enterprises.[75]

Whig womanhood took the assumption of female moral superiority embedded in these existing concepts of female duty and adapted it to the realities of mass party politics. Women's moral virtue, their influence within the home, and their proven benevolence fitted them, the Whigs held, to play a distinct role in the new political order. They could exert a civilizing influence on partisan competition, even as they fostered partisan loyalties in their families and communities. Whigs wedded the doctrine of indirect influence to the notion of women's incorruptibility—women who assumed a public identity as Whigs did not, so the party asserted, lose their claim to special virtue.

Baker has rightly argued that the "cultural assignment of republican virtues and moral authority to womanhood helped men embrace partisanship" by relieving their anxieties about electoral competition; what she and others have failed to appreciate is the extent to which women themselves embraced partisanship in the antebellum era and were embraced by parties.[76] The testimony of Marion Harland, Lucy Barbour, and others reveals that women understood that their inclusion in mass politics was a profoundly significant development. Through the medium of partisan campaigns, both womanhood as a construct and individual female voices entered the public discourse on politics in a way they had never done before.

[74] Pamela Herr and Mary Lee Spence, eds., *The Letters of Jessie Benton Frémont* (Urbana, 1993), xxiii; *Richmond Dispatch,* Sept. 23, 1856; Rebecca Edwards, "Gender and American Political Parties, 1880–1900" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1995), 18–71.

[75] Kerber, *Women of the Republic;* Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence.*

[76] Baker, "Domestication of Politics," 646.

The Whigs reconciled female moral superiority and women's partisanship and opened up new opportunities for women in the process. But did Whig womanhood represent a step toward full political enfranchisement for women? Rather than fitting comfortably into a narrative of progress, my findings affirm Suzanne Lebsock's hypothesis that meaningful change can take place for women in an antifeminist atmosphere. Although female partisanship flourished in antebellum Virginia, no woman's rights movement took shape there. The very same Virginia newspapers that encouraged women's partisanship routinely mocked and lambasted the woman's rights movement, likening its supporters to Amazons and "cackling geese."[77]

Lebsock and Anne Firor Scott have effectively challenged the notion that southern women lagged behind northern ones in benevolent activity. Women's partisanship demonstrates, even more dramatically than their work in benevolent societies, that our dichotomous picture of northern women's political activism and southern women's political marginalization needs to be rethought. Southern women were, indeed, much less inclined to embrace woman suffrage than northern ones. But we should not equate their conservatism with uniformity of opinion or with passivity. Women in antebellum Virginia—like conservative women in the modern era—debated each other fiercely over political issues and actively worked on behalf of political causes.[78]

During the 1840s, the principal political fault line in Virginia was the line dividing Democrats and Whigs. Allegiances to party not only bound like-minded women and men together but also linked them to their political counterparts in other states. At its height, the second party system, by pitting two national parties against each other, united northern and southern partisans and thereby minimized the impact of sectional issues.[79] While northern and southern women may have lived in strikingly different settings, those who followed political events and identified themselves as partisans shared the experience of mass mobilization. The advent of Whig womanhood and the story of the Clay Association reveal that partisanship united women, as well as men, across sectional boundaries.

Even in the heyday of mass politics, however, sectional tensions suffused partisan rhetoric. Southern Whig women shared with northern ones the experience of participating in political rallies, but what southern women heard at those rallies was different—sometimes subtly and sometimes dramatically—from what northern women heard. For the southern Whigs and southern Democrats, in contrast to northern ones, claimed their party and theirs alone could simultaneously protect slavery from northern intervention and preserve the Union. In the 1850s, as slavery became the overriding theme in partisan discourse, political parties increasingly promoted rather

[77] Lebsock, *Free Women of Petersburg,* 243; *Alexandria Gazette,* Oct. 20, 1852; *Richmond Dispatch,* Sept. 16, 1852.

[78] Lebsock, *Free Women of Petersburg,* 240–44; Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana, 1991), 19–20, 195.

[79] Richard P. McCormick, "Political Development and the Second Party System," in *The American Party Systems: Stages of Political Development,* ed. William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham (New York, 1975), 90–116; Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill, 1989), 49–51.

than restrained sectionalism.[80] The splintering of the second party system along sectional lines culminated in the election of 1860, the first in which regional rather than national parties squared off against each other in the North and South.

Just as the emergence of the second party system is reflected in political discourse by and about women, so, too, is its demise. During the crucial election campaign of 1860 and throughout the Virginia legislature's famous secession debate of 1861, unionists and secessionists called on women to join their ranks and adapted the Whigs' old battle cry to their own purposes. "The ladies are all for *Union,*" declared the unionist *Lynchburg Virginian* in September 1860; six months later, a Petersburg correspondent to the pro-secession *Richmond Dispatch* declared that women "have all abandoned the Union and raised the cry of secession."[81]

As the antebellum period drew to its explosive close, Whig womanhood was transmuted in Virginia into Confederate womanhood. Male and female secessionists argued that women should be Confederate partisans and should play a public role in promoting the cause of southern independence. Sectional identities had come to eclipse partisan affiliations: for example, on April 18, the day after Virginia seceded from the Union, a woman from Louisa County submitted a piece entitled "A Woman's Appeal" to the *Richmond Dispatch.* "Farewell to Whigs and Democrats, Secessionists and Submissionists, and political characters of every variety of here heretofore," she wrote. "Farewell, forever! 'Tis now North or South, Liberty or Slavery, Life or Death. . . . Mothers, wives and daughters, buckle on the armor for the loved ones; bid them, with Roman firmness advance, and never return until victory perches on their banners." This "woman's appeal" can and should be read two ways: as a statement inaugurating a new stage in the sectional conflict in Virginia, and as the product of two decades of political activity and discourse by women. In Virginia, and, I venture to suggest, in the South as a whole, the political mobilization of white women that began in 1840 culminated, not in the formation of a woman suffrage movement, but in active support of the Confederacy by most women and active support of the Union by some.[82]

[80] Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates,* 51–54.

[81] *Lynchburg Virginian,* Sept. 5, 1860; *Richmond Dispatch,* March 8, 1861.

[82] Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," *Journal of American History,* 76 (March 1990), 1200–1228; *Richmond Dispatch,* April 18, 1861; Varon, "'We Mean to Be Counted,'" 446–67; George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana, 1989).