

Republican Reign

It was late August 1847 when Fritz Rasmussen's parents left the island of Lolland along with their six children. Fritz's father, Edward, decided to emigrate to America in pursuit of "liberty and equality," which he found sorely lacking in Denmark.¹ The year before, one of the Lolland's social reform leaders, C. L. Christensen, had also emigrated to America, and the reason was believed to be the Danish authorities' harsh treatment of dissidents who advocated on behalf of smallholders and peasants.²

By 1847, Fritz Rasmussen's father was also engaged in political activity in opposition to the Danish authorities to such a degree that both political necessity and economic opportunity prompted his decision.³ On Lolland, where the Rasmussen family resided, land shortage was acute. In one county, Maribo Amt, 87 percent of all land belonged to properties larger

¹ Fritz W. Rasmussen, "Record! Of Scandinavians, Who Have Been Settled and Lived in the Town of New Denmark," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1857-1876. Green Bay Mss 4. Box 8* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1880); "February 1883. Sunday the 18th. 11 O'clock A.M.," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers, 1834-1942. Green Bay Mss 4. Box 2* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1883).

² Erik Helmer Pedersen, *Drommen Om America [The Dream of America]*, Politikens Danmarkshistorie (Copenhagen: Politikens Forlag, 1985), 56-59.

³ Rasmussen, "February 1883. Sunday the 18th. 11 O'clock A.M." For a discussion of reasons for emigration, see, for example, Kristian Hvidt, *Flugten Til Amerika, Eller Drivkræfter i Masseudvandringen Fra Danmark 1868-1914 [Flight to America or Driving Forces in the Mass Emigration from Denmark 1868-1914]* (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget i Aarhus, 1971), 263-270. Also Jørn Brøndal, *Ethnic Leadership and Midwestern Politics: Scandinavian Americans and the Progressive Movement in Wisconsin, 1890-1914* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 16-17.

than 4.4 acres.⁴ It was therefore no coincidence that Fritz Rasmussen, looking back from the vantage point of 1883, used the language of the oppressed and stressed the importance of *emancipation*:

He [Father], I afterwards came to understand, had to leave the Country, like many others, as a political refugee – : on account of his writings & doings, for and among the communalities, in regard to a more & thorough emancipation of the people generally, from the oppressive Sovereignty of the nobility.⁵

Edward Rasmussen's family emigrated on August 27, 1847, two months after Martha Clausen's brother had written to Claus Clausen to ask about emigrant prospects in Wisconsin, but the family did not see Clausen's cautionary letter.⁶ Where Claus Clausen had been guaranteed employment at arrival, the Rasmussen family's future was from the outset more precarious.

In Fritz Rasmussen's account, the family stopped briefly in Hamburg (then a sovereign state in the German confederation), boarded the ship *Washington*, and arrived in New York City on October 26. From New York the family travelled to Albany where the recently constructed Erie Canal originated. A few weeks later they boarded the *Atlantic* in Buffalo to be transported over the Great Lakes to Wisconsin (see Figure 4.1). Only later did they realize their good fortune. One of the next ships that went west over Lake Erie and Lake Huron was *Phoenix*, a modern steamer named after the bird in Egyptian mythology. But in contrast to the legend, *Phoenix* never rose from the ashes in November 1847. Instead, hundreds of Dutch emigrants lost their lives in the flames or icy water on their way to a new Midwestern home.⁷ "We were spared the suffering and catastrophe," remembered Fritz Rasmussen.⁸

While the Rasmussen family's ship made it unscathed over the lakes, the family did not. Nine-month-old Henry died of disease shortly before

⁴ Asger Th. Simonsen, *Husmandskår Og Husmandspolitik i 1840erne [Smallholder Conditions and Smallholder Politics in the 1840s]* (Copenhagen: Landbohøistorskab, 1977).

⁵ Rasmussen, "February 1883. Sunday the 18th. 11 O'clock A.M."

⁶ "Record! Of Scandinavians, Who Have Been Settled and Lived in the Town of New Denmark."

⁷ William O. Van Eyck, "The Story of the Propeller Phoenix," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 7, no. 3 (1924): 282–284; Anders Bo Rasmussen, *I Krig for Lincoln [To War for Lincoln]* (Copenhagen, Informations Forlag, 2014), 33–34.

⁸ Rasmussen, "Record! Of Scandinavians, Who Have Been Settled and Lived in the Town of New Denmark," Memorandum.



FIGURE 4.1 Fritz Rasmussen, born on the island of Langeland, emigrated with his family to Wisconsin in 1847 and eventually settled in New Denmark. Courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society.

they reached Milwaukee on a “cold, bleak” November day, and disease was ever-present. On the snow-covered wharf in eastern Wisconsin, survival more than enjoyment of liberty, equality, and champagne-filled springs was the main concern.⁹ “No money and could not speak [the language] and no countrymen: Father sick unto death – and so my youngest sister and youngest Brother. This was

⁹ The same observation was made by John Matteson when he arrived in New Denmark. “[John] Matteson found his soggy berth [in New Denmark] to be ‘much different from the songs of praise we had heard about America in the old country . . . about her magnificent forests teeming with unsurpassed wildlife, her crystal-clear springs, majestic waterfalls, and so on.’” Quoted in Frederick Hale, “The Americanization of a Danish Immigrant in Wisconsin 1847–1872,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 64, no. 3 (1981): 208.

a landing, opposite the gloriously golden and happy anticipation when leaving,” remembered Rasmussen.¹⁰ But an older Danish sailor, in the United States known as Johnson, “solicited help and finally by evening got us carted off into town and sheltered in a small, poorly furnished tavern or restaurant, kept by a young German and his wife,” recounted Rasmussen.¹¹

At the German couple’s place, the family regained their strength somewhat. With the help of fellow Scandinavian immigrants, they – after a brief stay at the local poor house – slowly regained their collective footing. Their fourteen-year-old son Fritz was sent away to work for a newly arrived Norwegian shoemaker, and shortly thereafter a sizable group of approximately fifty Danish immigrants, inspired by Rasmus Sørensen’s emigration pamphlets and Claus Clausen’s letters, arrived.¹² By June 1848, the newcomers had established a settlement, which was later named New Denmark.¹³

For six years, Fritz Rasmussen worked odd jobs in Wisconsin away from the small immigrant town, but in 1854 he returned, bought land, and soon started to keep meticulous records of major and minor events in New Denmark – not least land transactions.¹⁴ In his thousands of surviving diary pages, Rasmussen on several occasions mentioned his acquisition of Section 24, N.E. ¼, S.E. ¼ in New Denmark, and the pride thus exhibited in landownership was in no small part tied to his family’s Old World experience.¹⁵

Looking back later in life, Fritz Rasmussen reflected on his experiences in New Denmark in contrast to the Old World despite the hardship also encountered in Wisconsin: “We have come to this

¹⁰ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “FWR Milwaukee,” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Correspondence, 1834–1942. Green Bay Mss 4. Box no. 1* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1847).

¹¹ “Record! Of Scandinavians, Who Have Been Settled and Lived in the Town of New Denmark.”

¹² “FWR Milwaukee.”

¹³ “New Denmark, Brown Co. Wis. January 3rd, 1900.” See also Peter Sørensen Vig, *Danske i Amerika [Danes in America]*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Minneapolis, MN: C. Rasmussen Company, 1907), 258–262. See as well William J. Orr, “Rasmus Sørensen and the Beginning of Danish Settlement in Wisconsin,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 65, no. 3 (1982): 195–210.

¹⁴ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “Dagbog of F. W. Rasmussen. New Denmark, Brown Co. State of Wis [June 5],” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1856–1876. Box 8. Green Bay Mss 4* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1859).

¹⁵ “Record! Of Scandinavians, Who Have Been Settled and Lived in the Town of New Denmark.”

Country, where we are as free, privileged [sic] and no distinction – as to ‘Liberty and Equality’ of person – as the Nobles – so called – are in the lands where we came from.”¹⁶

This idea – Old World nobility whose disproportional political power and landownership “restrained” the hard-working, honest, common man from achieving liberty and establishing his “pedigree” – defined Fritz Rasmussen’s worldview and, as we have seen, recurred regularly among early Northern European laborers.¹⁷ While Rasmussen, consciously or unconsciously, benefited from his skin color and religion in terms of landownership and employment opportunities, his views on New World citizenship were not unlike those of the German forty-eighters, who, as Allison Efford Clark has shown, proposed “a nationalism based on residence, not race or even culture, and a form of citizenship grounded in universal manhood suffrage.”¹⁸

Still, this ability to enjoy the fruits of one’s own labor, earning one’s own bread through one’s own sweat, was a key pull factor to Scandinavian immigrants and one made possible, in part, by whiteness.¹⁹ When Catharina Jonsdatter Rüd, a Swedish immigrant maid making \$2 a week and living in Moline, Illinois, wrote home in March 1856, she celebrated America and the individual liberty she experienced as a white woman:

Here the servant can come and go as it pleases her, because every white person is free and if a servant gets a hard employer then she can quit whenever she likes and even keep her salary for the period she has worked . . . A woman’s situation is as you can imagine much easier here than in Sweden and I Catherine feel much calmer, happier and more satisfied here than I used to do when I attended school in Nässjö. Everything in this country [seems praiseworthy] – to describe all benefits would take a lifetime!²⁰

Rüd underlined the word “white” and thereby proved herself aware, as Jon Gjerde has pointed out, that she enjoyed “freedoms that did not exist

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. See also Andrew Zimmermann, “From the Rhine to the Mississippi,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 5, no. 1 (2015): 9.

¹⁸ Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (Washington, DC: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 32.

¹⁹ Fritz W. Rasmussen, “Den 31. Søndag. Paaske [The 31st Sunday. Easter],” in *Fritz Wiliam Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1861, June–1883, June. Box No. 2. Green Bay Mss 4* (Green Bay: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1861).

²⁰ Quoted in Werner Sollors, “How Americans Became White: Three Examples,” in *Multiamerica: Essays on Cultural Wars and Cultural Peace*, ed. Ishmael Reed (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 4.

in Sweden or for nonwhite people in the United States.”²¹ Since enslaved people in the United States were denied the fruits of their labor, Scandinavian-born laborers generally opposed slavery, with its parallels to the forced labor and serfdom which had been common in Denmark and Norway up until 1788. Unequal power and labor dynamics continued to exist in various guises in Scandinavia subsequently, and the Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish immigrants therefore arrived in the United States with suspicion of slavery’s extension or its beneficiaries’ political powers in the New World.

Thus, by the mid-1850s, the Republican Party’s ideology, what Eric Foner has termed *free soil, free labor, and free men*, meaning wage earners’ opportunity to become “free men” through landownership, aptly described a large swath of Scandinavian immigrants’ economic and social priorities and, by extension, their attraction to the Republican Party in the years surrounding the Civil War.²²

The issue of free soil was of central concern to Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes in the Midwest. With its importance for economic uplift and perceptions of liberty, land availability, in areas where slavery did not impact labor relations, played a significant part in shaping economic, legal, and moral positions in the Scandinavian-American immigrant community.

Yet, well-read Scandinavian immigrants such as Even Heg and his fellow early editors of *Nordlyset*, who had advocated legislation to prevent slavery from spreading into the territories between 1848 and 1850, in line with the Free Soil party’s platform, rarely extended their argument to advocate for nonwhite people.²³ In this regard, Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes were far from alone. As Henry Nash Smith observed more than sixty years ago, “the farmers of the Northwest were not as a group pro-Negro. Free-soil for them meant keeping Negroes, whether slave or free, out of the territories altogether. It did not imply a humanitarian regard for the oppressed black man.”²⁴

²¹ Gjerde, “‘Here in America There Is Neither King nor Tyrant’: European Encounters with Race, ‘Freedom,’ and Their European Pasts,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 4 (1999): 387.

²² Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8–10, 83–87.

²³ Arlow William Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847–1872* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1953), 60; Theodore C. Blegen, “Colonel Hans Christian Heg,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 4, no. 2 (1920): 144.

²⁴ Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, First Vintage ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), 193.

Smith might as well have added lack of humanitarian regard for American Indians. In their dismissal of Native peoples' rights, Scandinavian immigrants, not least the better educated ethnic elite, differed from the central actors of the abolitionist movement who explicitly connected Indian dispossession to slavery's extension.²⁵ In short, Scandinavian immigrants, over time, showed themselves to be passionate Republicans but not abolitionists.

During the late 1840s and early 1850s, with the Democratic Party, the Free Soil Party, and the Whigs all vying for the Scandinavian vote, it was not evident that these newly arrived immigrants would eventually side with what became the Republican Party's platform, but it was clear that the majority of Scandinavians were primarily interested in free land and less in nonwhite free men despite their professed love of liberty and equality.²⁶

Despite his Old World abolitionist inspiration, Claus Clausen in 1852 attempted to find a golden mean politically as the first editor of *Emigranten*.²⁷ Clausen saw *Emigranten*'s mission in the New World as mobilizing its Scandinavian readership politically, not least in support of liberty and economic opportunity, and in the process he loosely aligned the newspaper with the Democratic Party while relegating discussions of nonwhite people in America to the margins.²⁸

In an opening editorial, written both in English and Danish, Clausen stressed the importance of embracing assimilation, which underlined the advantages enjoyed by the paper's mainly Protestant, literate, and white readership who were generally shielded from nativist critique.

We sincerely believe that the truest interest of our people in this Country is, to become AMERICANIZED – if we may use that word – in language and customs, as soon as possible and be one people with the Americans. In this way alone can

²⁵ Natalie Joy, "The Indian's Cause: Abolitionists and Native American Rights," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 8, no. 2 (2018): 233. For example, abolitionists involved in the anti-slavery Liberty Party in 1845 argued that "the forcible relocation of southern Indians could be traced to the Slave Power's efforts (with northern participation) to obtain fertile land for the expansion of slavery."

²⁶ Blegen, "Colonel Hans Christian Heg," 147. Blegen writes, in his somewhat uncritical portrait of the Norwegian immigrant leader, "[In Hans] Heg there is evident a deep faith in American ideals, in democracy, equality, and human freedom. A champion of such principles, Heg was put forward in 1852 as a Free-soil candidate for the state legislature."

²⁷ Claus L. Clausen, "Et Par Ord Til Læserne [A Few Words to the Readers]," *Emigranten*, January 30, 1852; Theodore C. Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1940), 308–317.

²⁸ Claus L. Clausen, "To Our American Friends," *Emigranten*, January 30, 1852.

they fulfill their destination, and contribute their part to the final development of the character of this great nation.²⁹

This openness (and ability) to Americanize, based on both individual and broader public interest, made Scandinavian immigrants more politically acceptable to Yankee Americans otherwise attracted to nativist ideas well into the 1850s and slowly provided political prospects for Scandinavian candidates as well.³⁰ Emphasizing the political rights and opportunities associated with American citizenship, Clausen, in an editorial dated February 13, 1852, underlined the importance of “schools, churches, and other civilizing influences” necessary for achieving political influence in America and warned his readership against wandering “out into the wilderness as soon as the land is acquired from the Indians.”³¹ Focusing solely on land development might lead to missed political opportunities, Clausen warned.³²

During the presidential election campaign of 1852, *Emigranten*, under the editorship of Clausen’s successor, Charles M. Reese, explicitly supported the Democratic candidate Franklin Pierce at the national level but encouraged the paper’s readership to support Scandinavian candidates in local elections for the state legislature regardless of political party.³³

One such candidate was Hans Heg, the twenty-two-year-old son of Even Heg. Hans Heg ran for the Wisconsin State legislature on a Free Soil platform out of Racine in 1852 but – partly due to the fact that Scandinavian immigrants still made up less than 10 percent of

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, 228–230.

³¹ Quoted in Harold M. Tolo, “The Political Position of *Emigranten* in the Election of 1852: A Documentary Article,” *Norwegian-American Studies* 8 (1934): 98.

³² Clausen wrote: “For my part, I fear that if some farm work is to be done on election day, [Norwegians] will fail to go to the polls even though the work could easily be postponed. It is a sad situation; it indicates that the Norwegian-American has no conception of what it means to be an American citizen. . . . Let us try to create a little political instinct in ourselves! Let us read and listen and I am sure you will more than stand your ground also in political colloquia of the future.” Clausen quoted in *ibid.*, 106.

³³ Clausen, “Et Par Ord Til Læserne [A Few Words to the Readers]”; Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition*, 308–317. See also Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, 124–128. On Scandinavian editors such as Claus L. Clausen and Charles M. Reese walking a middle editorial ground on abolitionism, see Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847–1872*, 62.

Wisconsin's foreign-born population in 1850 – lost narrowly to a Democratic candidate.³⁴

Yet, as the Whig and Free Soil Party morphed into the new Republican Party in the wake of the 1854 Kansas–Nebraska Act, the new political alliance, based on a strong commitment to free labor ideology, free soil, and, in time, a strong anti-slavery platform, increasingly appealed to Scandinavian immigrants.³⁵ By November 3, 1854, *Emigranten*, now edited by Norwegian-born Knud J. Fleischer, stated the paper's position as being firmly in support of the Republican Party:³⁶

The November 7 election day is upon us!

Then it will become apparent if wrong shall conquer right, good conquer evil, if slavery shall be expanded and supported, liberty suppressed and curtailed! The Republican Party fighting for liberty and right has risen up to fight the “Democratic” Party's friends, the defenders of slavery. Norsemen, you would not [want] the advance of slavery!³⁷

Emigranten conveniently ignored any lingering Republican nativist sentiment left over from the locally successful Know-Nothing party in the 1854 elections and tried to shift readers' focus.³⁸ By the summer of 1855, Fleischer was urging “Norwegians to work for the Republican platform,”

³⁴ J. A. Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie* [*The Scandinavian Regiment's History*] (La Crosse: Fædrelandet og Emigrantens Trykkeri, 1869), 104; Blegen, “Colonel Hans Christian Heg,” 147; Jeppesen, *Danske i USA 1850–2000. En Demografisk, Social Og Kulturgeografisk Undersøgelse Af De Danske Immigranter Og Deres Efterkommere* [*Danes in the United States 1850–2000. A Demographic, Social and Cultural Geographic Study of The Danish Immigrants and Their Descendants*] (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2005), 86; “Wisconsin-Affærer. Hans Christian Heg [Wisconsin Affairs. Hans Christian Heg],” *Emigranten*, September 12, 1859.

³⁵ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, 124–128.

³⁶ Blaine Hansen, “The Norwegians of Luther Valley,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 28, no. 4 (1945): 428.

³⁷ “Til Norske Vælgere i Dane County. Washburn! Washburn!! [To Norwegian Voters in Dane County. Washburn! Washburn!!],” *Emigranten*, November 3, 1854.

³⁸ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 135–144. McPherson points out that the 1854–1855 election ended the two-party system consisting of Whigs and Democrats. “Most estimates [of the newly elected Congress] counted somewhere in the neighborhood of 105 Republican congressmen, 80 democrats and 50 Americans [nativists] ... Of the Republicans (not all of whom yet acknowledged that label), perhaps two-thirds had at least a nominal connection with Know-Nothingism.” See also Rasmussen, “‘Drawn Together in a Blood Brotherhood’: Civic Nationalism Amongst Scandinavian Immigrants in the American Civil War Crucible,” *American Studies in Scandinavia* 48, no. 2 (2016): 7–31. On the Republican Party and nativism, see Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, 226–60.

as in his opinion there “prevailed a vicious alliance of antforeign Know-Nothing enthusiasts and unrighteous ‘slavocrats’” in the Democratic Party’s ranks.³⁹

Thus, *Emigranten*, which had for its first two years maintained an affiliation with the Democratic Party, as evidenced by Reese’s endorsement of Pierce in the 1852 election, adjusted its position based on the debate over free soil and, by extension, nonwhite free men, in part due to the impact slavery had on labor relations. From 1855, with the Republican Party gaining strength on the ground in Wisconsin, *Emigranten* aligned itself clearly with the anti-slavery party and urged Scandinavian immigrants to do the same.⁴⁰

By 1855, even openly Democratic newspapers such as *Den Norske Amerikaner* (The Norwegian American) made anti-slavery arguments. *Den Norske Amerikaner* pointed out that slavery had been “the main theme” in American politics since 1850, and in a front-page piece titled “Negerslaveriet og fremtiden” (“Negro Slavery and the Future”) the editor argued that the conflict between slavery and freedom had the potential to break the United States into pieces.⁴¹ Expansion of slavery into the territories, it was argued, “would paralyze all political power in the northern states and make them a sort of commercial appendix to the all-commanding slave oligarchy” where free labor was subjugated in relation to “a profitable and advantegous monopoly.”⁴² Perhaps worst of all, slavery’s sinfulness was being ignored in the South, and when Northerners pointed this out, “they point to their slaveholding clergy and slaveholding churches, with their prayers, awakenings, and the entire mechanism of a hypocritical religion.”⁴³

Starting with the Republican Party’s grassroots organizational activity in 1854 and supported by amplified anti-slavery advocacy in the Scandinavian press in 1855, the Scandinavian immigrant community became increasingly aware of slavery’s economic and moral implications on life in America. If the future United States could only be built on free

³⁹ Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847–1872*, 63.

⁴⁰ Carl Hansen, “Pressen Til Borgerkrigens Slutning [The Press until the Civil War’s End],” in *Norsk-Amerikanernes Festschrift 1914*, ed. Johannes B. Wist (Decorah: The Symra Company, 1914), 39. Carl Hansen claimed that *Emigranten* in the subsequent years “had an impact that can hardly be exaggerated” and noted the role of *Fædrelandet*, which was first published in 1864, as another key culture-carrying news outlet.

⁴¹ “Negerslaveriet Og Fremtiden [Negro Slavery and the Future],” *Den Norske Amerikaner*, February 28, 1855.

⁴² *Ibid.* ⁴³ *Ibid.*

soil, free labor, and free (but not necessarily equal) men, then Scandinavian-born agricultural laborers were willing to support the Republican Party's political project in ever-increasing numbers.

When the Republican Party's foot soldiers started to fan out over the Midwest to influence local, state, and national elections, they also helped shape opinions in Scandinavian immigrant enclaves. Andrew Fredrickson in 1861 remembered the middle of the 1850s as a politically formative period, where "the Republican Party, of which I am part," was created.⁴⁴ Also, Celius Christiansen in his memoirs specifically remembered an 1854 visit to New Denmark by a representative of the Republican Party which he – along with Harriet Beecher Stowe's bestselling novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and a bribe of two dollars to vote for De Pere as Brown County's county seat – credited with cementing his anti-slavery views in support of the Republican Party.⁴⁵

With the help of Norwegian leaders such as Hans Heg (see Figure 4.2), *Emigranten's* agenda-setting ability on behalf of the Republican Party, and the canvassing and bribery experienced by immigrants such as Celius Christiansen, Scandinavian immigrants were slowly but surely primed through political campaigns and editorials to support the Republican Party.⁴⁶ On July 11, 1856, Scandinavian anti-slavery sentiment was concretely tied to support for the Republican Party when a broadside from the Republican state central committee was distributed by *Emigranten* in Norwegian. "The Union's current political battle is the conflict between liberty and serfdom," read the proclamation's first paragraph, in language that closely mirrored the phrases used by Scandinavian immigrants themselves.⁴⁷

The Central Committee's plea for Republican presidential candidate John C. Fremont went on to emphasize the fact that it was not trying to

⁴⁴ Andreas Frederiksen, "Denmark. Brown Co. Wisc. Den 16. Februar 1861," in *Afskrift af 22 breve til Frederik Nielsen, Herlev DK fra A.F. Wilmington Ill. og West Denmark og Neenah Wisc. (1847–1872)* (Det danske udvandrerkonvolutarkiv, 1861). See also Hale, "The Americanization of a Danish Immigrant in Wisconsin 1847–1872," 211.

⁴⁵ Christiansen, *En Pioneers Historie (Erindringer Fra Krigen Mellem Nord- Og Sydstatene)* [*A Pioneer's Story: Memoirs from the War between North and South*] (Aalborg: Eget forlag, 1909), 15–32.

⁴⁶ Blegen, "Colonel Hans Christian Heg," 148. On attempts to counter claims of the Republican Party's ties to nativist movements, Blegen writes: "Many Germans and Scandinavians at this time believed that the Republican party was tainted with Know Nothingism, and Heg's place on the Republican ticket in Wisconsin was undoubtedly a Republican bid for the Scandinavian vote."

⁴⁷ Edward Ilsley, "Fra Den Republikanske Stats-Central-Committee [From the Republican State Central Committee]," *Emigranten*, July 11, 1856.

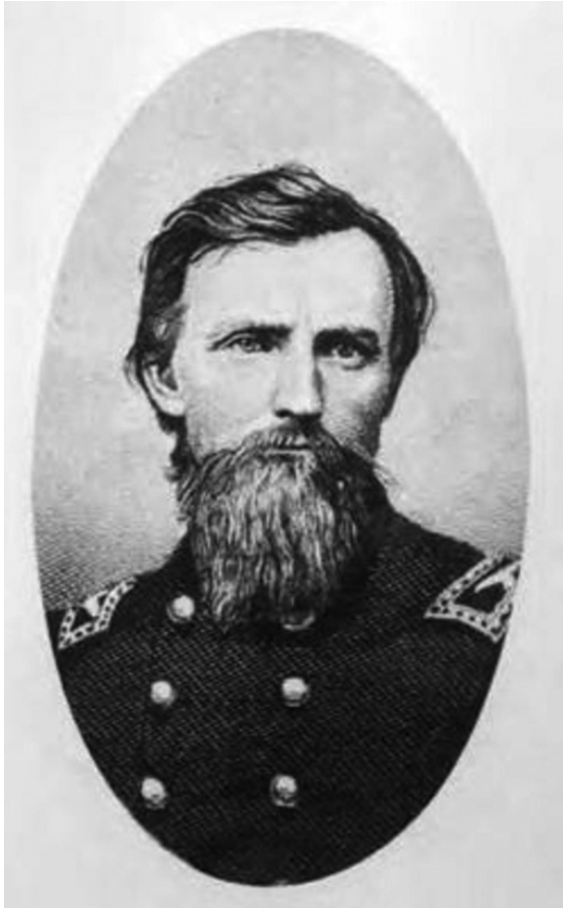


FIGURE 4.2 Hans Heg was among the most successful early Scandinavian immigrants. His leadership ability and political savvy earned him the position of colonel when the Civil War broke out. Image by The History Collection/Alamy Stock Photo.

influence “the Scandinavians or other adopted citizens to do anything other than what any good and informed Christian would recognize as right” and additionally distanced the party from the “despised Know-Nothings.” In conclusion, the Republican committee added, “everyone who in his heart hates slavery will vote for Fremont.”⁴⁸ In other words,

⁴⁸ Ibid. See also Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition*, 317.

any anti-slavery, pro-free labor, enlightened Christian immigrant could safely support the Republican Party going into the 1856 election.

The link between religion and anti-slavery sentiment was an important one. The abolitionist movement had long and deep ties to religious factions, such as the Quakers and Puritans, arguing, as did Grundtvig and Claus Clausen among others, for a common humanity.⁴⁹ On June 10, 1857, *Nordstjernen* (The North Star), a newly established “National Democratic Paper” within the Scandinavian-American public sphere explicitly linked free soil, popular sovereignty, and religion in its opening editorial but implicitly admitted the difficulty of defending “popular sovereignty” and the resulting violence in western territories to a Scandinavian audience.⁵⁰ While admitting that bands of bandits, who “happened to vote the Democratic ticket,” had crossed into Kansas and committed violent acts against settlers, *Nordstjernen*’s editor attempted to shift the responsibility to abolitionist agitators.

Who was it that eagerly seized this opportunity for political gain? Who collected money, arms, ammunition and people to send to Kansas and keep up the Civil War? The “Republicans”! . . . Men like Horace Greeley, Henry Ward Beecher and thousands of others of the same mold, who overtly preached insurrection through the press and from the pulpit.⁵¹

Beecher’s importance in the anti-slavery struggle was not lost on Scandinavians residing in or visiting the New York area. As early as 1850, Fredrika Bremer heard Beecher preach on his opposition to the Fugitive Slave Act and described the chapel as “full to overflowing.” He is “much esteemed and beloved,” as well as “highly gifted,” noted Bremer.⁵²

Since 1847, Henry Ward Beecher had placed his Brooklyn-based Plymouth Church on the national map with his fight against slavery and, according to at least one study, used the church as a hub for the Underground Railroad and a stage for anti-slavery events (see Figure 4.3).⁵³ Among the several Scandinavian immigrants who regularly

⁴⁹ Manisha Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 15–17.

⁵⁰ “Til Vore Læsere, Gamle og Nye [To Our Readers, Old and New].” *Nordstjernen*, June 10, 1857.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Fredrika Bremer, *The Homes of the New World: Impressions of America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853), 553–554, 615. During an earlier visit in March 1850, Bremer described Beecher as “full of life and energy” and preaching “with riveting effect.”

⁵³ Frank Decker, “Working as a Team: Henry Ward Beecher and the Plymouth Congregation in the Anti-Slavery Cause,” *International Congregational Journal* 8, no. 2



FIGURE 4.3 Henry Ward Beecher, here photographed with his famous sister Harriet after the Civil War, made a strong impression on Scandinavian congregationists and visitors to Plymouth Church. Photo by Sepia Times/Universal Images Group via Getty Images.

(2009): 38. See also Wayne Shaw, "The Plymouth Pulpit: Henry Ward Beecher's Slave Auction Block," *American Transcendental Quarterly*, no. 14 (2000): 335-337; Jonathan Earle, "Beecher's Bibles and Broadwords: Paving the Way for the Civil War in the West, 1854-1859," in *Empire and Liberty: The Civil War and the West*, ed. Virginia Scharff (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 52.

attended Beecher's sermons was Danish-born Ferdinand Winsl ow, who on December 14, 1856, braved heavy rain en route to Plymouth Church to witness what he would describe to a Midwestern audience the following day as "Henry Ward Beechers Pr edikener Om Negerne i Amerika" (Henry Ward Beecher's Sermons on the Negroes in America).⁵⁴

However, when Winsl ow published his Beecher-based musings in the pages of *Kirkelig Maanedstidende* (Church Monthly) in March 1857, the powerful, conservative, well-educated Scandinavian clergy was in the process of distancing itself from revivalist interpretations of Lutheranism and aligning itself more closely with pro-slavery interpretations of the Bible.

Claus Clausen had started *Kirkelig Maanedstidende* together with his Norwegian-born colleagues Adolph Carl Preus and Hans Andreas Stub in 1851, but few members of the Scandinavian religious elite held positions as close to abolitionism as him. Consequently, collaboration on religious matters was not frictionless.⁵⁵

The Norwegian synod's clergymen, many of whom were closely affiliated with the Norwegian state church, underscored their theological conservatism when they conducted a Midwestern search to establish collaboration with a larger Lutheran synod for future Scandinavian clergymen's education. To achieve this goal, two pastors appointed by a synod committee to study theological seminars between 1852 and 1857 settled for an affiliation with the German-led Concordia College in the slave state Missouri, instead of Buffalo or Columbus in the north.⁵⁶

Given the Norwegian synod's decision to establish a partnership with the conservative German Missouri Synod, where an August 1856 article in the church's periodical *Lehre und Wehre* (Teaching and Guidance)

⁵⁴ Ferdinand S. Winslow, "Henry Ward Beechers Pr edikener Om Negerne i Amerika [Henry Ward Beecher's Sermons on the Negroes in America]," in *Kirkelig Maanedstidende* [Church Monthly], ed. Kirkens pr ester i Amerika (Inmansville, WI: Den Skandinaviske Presseforening, 1857).

⁵⁵ Brynjar Haralds o, *Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode: En Unders okelse Av Slaveridebatten i Den Norske Synode i USA i 1860- rene Med S rlig Vekt P  Debattens Kirkelig-Teologiske Aspekter* [The Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod: A Study of the Slavery Debate in the Norwegian Synod in the United States During the 1860 Emphasizing the Debate's Church-Theological Aspects] (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1988), 39. See also Hansen, "Pressen Til Borgerkrigens Slutning [The Press until the Civil War's End]," 15–16. The Press Association's founding meeting was held on March 10, 1852, and admitted James D. Reymert, the first editor of *Nordlyset* in 1847, who later became active in Democratic politics and journalism. Additionally, the Scandinavian Press Association's first board of managers included, among others, Clausen, Gustav Fredrik Dietrichson, and A. C. Preus.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

“concluded that slavery and Christianity were not in any way incompatible,” it may seem surprising that Winsl ow’s depiction of Beecher’s anti-slavery sermons were published in the official outlet for the Norwegian Synod in 1857.⁵⁷

Winsl ow’s timing is part of the answer. Anti-slavery contributions stopped appearing in *Kirkelig Maanedstidende* after the first Norwegian students left for Concordia College in St. Louis in the summer of 1858. Yet, outside the Norwegian Synod, the revivalism and anti-slavery of Henry Ward Beecher clearly inspired Scandinavians like Winsl ow who felt compelled to disseminate the Plymouth Church preacher’s ideas about slavery and sin, which seemed closer in spirit to the Scandinavian revivalist factions than the Scandinavian state churches, to a wider Scandinavian audience in the Midwest.

“One of the most brilliant personalities in this country is undoubtedly Henry Ward Beecher, admired by his friends, hated and slandered by his enemies,” Winsl ow wrote. To the Danish immigrant, Beecher was “the forceful giant of truth in these times of confusion.”⁵⁸

Yet, one of the “truths” that Beecher promoted was the idea of a social hierarchy based on typologies of race. The distance between Lorenz Oken’s “five races of man” – or Carl Linneaus’ *Systema Naturae* with Europeans on top of a racial hierarchy – and Beecher’s sermon this Sunday was negligible.⁵⁹ In Beecher’s sermon one found the savage yet noble Indian, too “proud to be subdued to Slavery,” fleeing before civilization

⁵⁷ Quoted in Kristen Layne Anderson, *Abolitionizing Missouri: German Immigrants and Racial Ideology in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016), 77–78.

⁵⁸ Winslow, “Henry Ward Beechers Pr dikener Om Negerne i Amerika [Henry Ward Beecher’s Sermons on the Negroes in America]”; “Africa among Us: Sketch of Two Sermons by Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, at His Church, Yesterday, on the African Race in America,” *New York Times*, December 15, 1856.

⁵⁹ David Howes, *The Sixth Sense Reader* (New York: Berg, 2009), 10; Stefan M uller-Wille, “Race and History: Comments from an Epistemological Point of View,” *Science, Technology & Human Values* 39, no. 4 (2014): 600–602; “Africa among Us: Sketch of Two Sermons by Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, at His Church, Yesterday, on the African Race in America.” After singing two hymns and reading the notices, one of which concerned a fair to raise money for “fugitives from slavery,” Beecher, according to the *New York Times*, started his sermon on slavery with musings on westward expansion. “This Continent, said the preacher, presented a most curious spectacle of mixed peoples. Here were the original people – the Indians – too haughty and proud to be subdued to Slavery. They are crumbling away. Civilization carries hell on its outer edge, and burns up everything it first touches. The whole Indian race retreats to the westward, following the path of the sun; they will soon imitate its example, and go down, but into a night that knows no morning.”

but destined for destruction, as well as the unattractive, uneducated slave who needed white Anglo-Saxon Protestant help to attain social uplift. The substance of Beecher's sermon was significant because of the influence the preacher had on American religious culture and, by extension, the countless congregationists attending and disseminating his sermons.⁶⁰

While Beecher emphasized that "African people are not stupid," that "for music, oratory, gentility, for physical learning and the fine arts, they have a genius just as truly as we have not," and that colonization was a hypocritical pipedream, it was clear that the Plymouth Church preacher did not consider African-Americans his equals. "We are the great Anglo-Saxon people," said Beecher. "We boast that the African was brought here from his own wretched home to learn the truths that are brought to light in the Bible, but when he is here we pass laws forbidding him to learn to read it." He added:

The whole nation is guilty. But the thing cannot go on; either Slavery will kill out Christianity, or Christianity will abolish Slavery . . . Emancipation is only a question of time, not of fact. Society must lift up these dregs, or they will eat out the bottom and all fall through . . . Society can't carry our Slavery in its bosom. Slaves, without culture, will rock down our civilization – with culture they will free themselves.⁶¹

The means to cultural uplift was education, according to Beecher, and toward the end of the service a collection was made to benefit a school for young Black women. Among the school's original benefactors was Henry Ward Beecher's older sister Harriet, the famed abolitionist author.⁶² Yet Beecher's view of "Africa among us" clearly demonstrated the limits of abolitionist sentiment, even among individuals who were considered central to, or at least active in, the movement. As such, Beecher's sermon

⁶⁰ Clifford E. Clark Jr., "The Changing Nature of Protestantism in Mid-Nineteenth Century America: Henry Ward Beecher's Seven Lectures to Young Men," *Journal of American History* 57, no. 4 (1971): 833. As Clifford E. Clark Jr. has argued, "because of his immense popularity, Henry Ward Beecher exerted a strong influence on the religious outlook of his day. Through his extensive activities as newspaper editor, lyceum lecturer, and preacher, he spoke to thousands of Americans and helped shape their views on a variety of religious and social questions."

⁶¹ "Africa among Us: Sketch of Two Sermons by Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, at His Church, Yesterday, on the African Race in America." See also Clark Jr., "The Changing Nature of Protestantism in Mid-Nineteenth Century America: Henry Ward Beecher's Seven Lectures to Young Men."

⁶² Winslow, "Henry Ward Beecher's Prædikener Om Negerne i Amerika [Henry Ward Beecher's Sermons on the Negroes in America]"; Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 262–372.

reflected Stephen Kantrowitz's point that "open advocacy of interracial sociability as a means of improving society was rare even among committed white abolitionists."⁶³

Nonetheless, Beecher's notion of the thrifty, beautiful European immigrants and Anglo-Saxon Americans, who, despite their original sin, could get ahead in society if they worked hard and played by the rules, appealed to Scandinavian immigrants like Winsl w and his Scandinavian social circle. Winsl w's older brother, Wilhelm, later recalled:

In the beginning of 1857 my younger brother Ferdinand invited me to come and stay with him in the United States. A year and a half was spent on that visit, which proved of great importance to me in more than one respect. I shall here only mention that I became highly influenced by the preaching and theological views of Henry Ward Beecher.⁶⁴

Furthermore, Ferdinand Winsl w's brother-in-law, Christian Thomsen Christensen, practiced what Beecher preached in the aftermath of the 1856 sermon. Christensen and his family joined Plymouth Church in July 1857, and, though they temporarily "dissolved" their connection in December 1857, they renewed their membership and played a prominent part in the church after the Civil War.⁶⁵ Other people in the Scandinavian network listened to Beecher's sermons, as evidenced by the church's prominence in several travelogues from America before and after the Civil War.⁶⁶

The Scandinavian connection to Beecher's revivalist church and the connection between his anti-slavery views based on white Protestant

⁶³ Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829–1889* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), 60–64.

⁶⁴ Wilhelm Winsl w, "Reports and Letters. The Rev. Wilhelm Winslow," in *The New Church Messenger* (Brooklyn: Swedenborg Press, 1885), 292. Also Marcus Thrane expressed admiration of Henry Ward Beecher's sermons. See Marcus Thrane, "Program [Program]," *Marcus Thrane's Norske Amerikaner*, May 25, 1866.

⁶⁵ Christian Thomsen Christensen corresponded with Beecher and volunteered in Plymouth Church after the Civil War, for example as president of the Church Work Committee. "Plymouth Church Membership 1847–1901" (Plymouth Church, 1857). See also Clark Jr., "The Changing Nature of Protestantism in Mid-Nineteenth Century America: Henry Ward Beecher's Seven Lectures to Young Men," 845. See also Henry Ward Beecher, "My Dear Mr. Christensen," in *Papers of Christian T. Christensen, 1862–1906* (Huntington Library, Art Collections & Botanical Gardens, 1877); "Plymouth Church and Foreign Missions," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 4, 1892.

⁶⁶ Bremer, *The Homes of the New World: Impressions of America*, 553–554, 615. Also Robert Watt, *Hinsides Atlanterhavet: Skildringer Fra Amerika [Beyond the Atlantic: Accounts from America]*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (Copenhagen: P. Bloch, 1872), 234–245; "General Christensen to Give up Business," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 25, 1900.

superiority were important because Winsl w worked consciously to establish a link between Beecher’s ideas and the Scandinavian Midwestern communities by disseminating the December 1856 sermon to *Kirkelig Maanedstidende’s* readers.

In Beecher’s sermons, religion intersected with politics. Henry Ward Beecher’s brand of Protestantism, known as “the gospel of love” or “the gospel of success,” focused on individual agency (e.g. “his belief that anyone could become successful if only he worked at it”), while maintaining some belief in “original sin,” and his humorous, populist preaching style – what Mark Twain later termed the ability to discharge “rockets of poetry” and explode “mines of eloquence” – attracted thousands every Sunday.⁶⁷

Importantly, Beecher’s views on slavery and social mobility and his notions of white superiority to some extent inspired and closely mirrored well-educated Scandinavian immigrants’ thinking, helping undergird their “free soil” opposition to slavery as well as their rationale for participation in American territorial expansion.⁶⁸ Moreover, Beecher’s gospel of success served as an argument for free labor ideology – the call for Christianity to abolish slavery was an argument in support of “free men” – yet a notion of white, Protestant superiority held the sermon’s two strands together.

This was part of the reason Winsl w described Beecher as “a giant of truth,” excitedly relaying his sermon, and it was part of the reason Beecher continued to inspire. Beecher helped legitimize Scandinavian immigrants’ rationale for claiming and owning land in the Midwest and their attempt to achieve upward social mobility through hard work in a free labor economy. Moreover, due to the constant influx of immigrants from the East Coast to Scandinavian settlements in the Midwest, as well as the fact that Norwegian immigrants had travelled from Muskego, Wisconsin, to New York as early as 1852 to help their newly arrived countrymen, Winsl w and his brother-in-law Christian Thomsen Christensen were well-known in the larger Scandinavian settlements out west.⁶⁹ Claus

⁶⁷ Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher*, 181, 372. See also Clifford E. Clark Jr., “The Changing Nature of Protestantism in Mid-Nineteenth Century America: Henry Ward Beecher’s Seven Lectures to Young Men,” 832–836.

⁶⁸ Ferd. S. Winslow, “Brooklyn. 11th Septbr. 1856. Religion Og Politik [Brooklyn. September 11, 1856. Religion and Politics],” in *Kirkelig Maanedstidende*, ed. Kirkens Pr ster i Amerika (Inmansville: Den Skandinaviske Presseforening, 1856).

⁶⁹ Ferd S. Winslow, “Det Skandinaviske Selskab i New-York [The Scandinavian Association in New York],” *Emigranten*, January 30, 1857.

Clausen, for example, later in life described both Christensen and Winsl w as friends, and vice versa.⁷⁰

Whether it was in Beecher's church in Brooklyn or in more primitive Midwestern places of worship, numerous early Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish immigrants availed themselves of this opportunity to explore religion outside the Scandinavian state churches. As we have seen, the early Norwegian immigrants of Muskego, Wisconsin, transplanted parts of the Haugean movement to American soil; the early Swedish settlement in New Sweden, Iowa, converted to Methodism; and importantly a large proportion of Danish immigrants to the United States who did not settle in the Midwest came on tickets paid by the Mormon Church en route to Utah.⁷¹

Claus Clausen also increasingly linked religion and anti-slavery agitation in the more secular public sphere and initially found an ideological ally in Norwegian-born Carl Fredrik Solberg, who took over *Emigranten* on April 17, 1857 (see Figure 4.4).⁷² Solberg gladly carried on the paper's position on "the slavery and public land issues," which had been in place since Fleischer's editorship.⁷³

Almost simultaneously with *Emigranten's* editorial change, prominent Scandinavian-born men founded the Scandinavian Democratic Press Association and a few months later launched "a National Democratic"

⁷⁰ Writing a letter on behalf of Claus L. Clausen in 1872, Christian T. Christensen noted: "I have known him intimately for a number of years past, and esteem him highly"; see C. T. Christensen, "Danish Consulate and Legation, Pro. Tem. New York April 4th 1872," in *Papers of Claus Clausen. RG 15. Box 1. Correspondence 1871-1876* (Luther College Archives, 1872). Also Rasmus Andersen, *Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen - Banebryder for Den Norske Og Danske Kirke i Amerika. Forste Skandinavisk Feltpr st. [Pastor Claus Laurits Clausen: Trailblazer for the Norwegian and Danish Church in America. First Scandinavian Chaplain]* (Blair, NW: Danish Lutheran Publishing House, 1921), 128. On Clausen's relationship with Ferdinand and Wilhelm Winsl w, Andersen writes: "He [Ferdinand] and his brother Wilhelm Winslow stood as Clausen's friends through the years." On Norwegians from Muskego, see Hansen, "Pressen Til Borgerkrigens Slutning [The Press until the Civil War's End]," 25.

⁷¹ See, for example, Eugene F. Fevold, "The Norwegian Immigrant and His Church," *Norwegian-American Studies* 23 (1967), 3-16. Also Earl D. Check and Emeroy Johnson (translator), "Civil War Letters to New Sweden, Iowa," *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1985); Enok Mortensen, *The Danish Lutheran Church in America*; Allen, *Danish, but Not Lutheran: The Impact of Mormonism on Danish Cultural Identity, 1850-1920* (Philadelphia: Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America, 1967).

⁷² Harold M. Tolo, "The Political Position of *Emigranten* in the Election of 1852: A Documentary Article," *Norwegian-American Studies* 8 (1934): 94-95.

⁷³ Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition*, 318.



FIGURE 4.4 As editor of *Emigranten*, Carl Fredrik Solberg was one of the most influential Scandinavian-American voices in the Civil War era. Courtesy Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum Archives.

competitor to *Emigranten*.⁷⁴ *Nordstjernen* (The North Star), which succeeded *Den Norske Amerikaner*, published its first issue on June 10, 1857,

⁷⁴ Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847–1872*, 12–13, 65. See also Hansen, “Pressen Til Borgerkrigens Slutning [The Press until the Civil War’s End],” 26. The Scandinavian Democratic Press Association, according to Hansen, was established on April 1851 by prominent Scandinavian-born Democrats. Among the organization’s founders were Gabriel Björnson, who served in the Wisconsin Assembly in 1851, Charles Reese, and J. D. Reymert (who had previously been part of the leadership behind *Emigranten*), and it was supported by prominent Norwegian farmers in Dane County. Also R. M. Rashford, ed., *The Legislative Manual of the State of Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: E. B. Bolens State Printer, 1877), 158.

but quickly ran into trouble based on its position regarding slavery.⁷⁵ Before 1854, the Democratic Party's insistence on individual freedom and support of immigrant causes seemed to hold some sway over a Scandinavian audience averse to interference from the government or clergy based on their Old World experience, but increasingly the question of slavery, exacerbated by Democratic leader Stephen Douglas' advocacy of "popular sovereignty" in Kansas, proved difficult for Democratic newspaper editors to defend. The issue of free soil, with its underlying premise that American Indians had no right to the land, was an issue of utmost importance for Scandinavian immigrants: in tying discussions of free soil to discussions of free men, not least the moral issue of free non-white men, *Emigranten* gained an upper hand in the competition.⁷⁶

Not even Charles M. Reese, a skillful writer and editor who "was not without a following" and who found employment with Democratic newspapers after his departure from *Emigranten*, could gloss over the increasing political differences on the issue of slavery, and the Scandinavian editors' position on human bondage proved to be the key to the success, or lack thereof, of *Nordstjernen* in competition with *Emigranten*.⁷⁷

When Solberg recounted the competition between the two papers later in life, he noted that *Nordstjernen* failed "to make much headway among the Norwegians" and emphasized the Republican Party's increasing appeal to immigrants advocating free soil and anti-slavery politics.⁷⁸

When the *Emigranten* plant was moved to Madison I was made editor of the paper, and when the new Norwegian paper [*Nordstjernen*] was started I became at once one of the targets of its abuse. We had it hot back and forth, but I felt that I had the better of it as our paper was on the right side of public questions.⁷⁹

While it is difficult to determine the exact ideological leanings in Scandinavian communities at the ground level, subscription numbers and scattered diary references indicate that *Emigranten*, as a loyal

⁷⁵ Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847-1872*, 24-25, 65-68. See also Hansen, "Pressen Til Borgerkrigens Slutning [The Press until the Civil War's End]," 26.

⁷⁶ Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847-1872*, 68. Andersen argues "that Solberg, through *Emigranten*, represented majority opinion among the Norwegians on this issue [slavery]."

⁷⁷ "Til Vore Læsere, Gamle Og Nye [To Our Readers, Old and New]." See also Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847-1872*, 20.

⁷⁸ Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition*, 318.

⁷⁹ Albert O. Barton, "Reminiscences of a Pioneer Editor," *NAHA Studies and Records* 1 (1926).

supporter of the Republican Party, was far more attractive than *Nordstjernen*. By early 1854, *Emigranten's* self-proclaimed subscription list counted between 500 and 600 names, and its overall readership, due to newspapers being shared in the settlements, was likely higher.⁸⁰ In contrast, no issues of *Nordlyset* were published between October and December of 1857, and in subsequent editions complaints over the newspaper's financial state appeared regularly, while *Emigraten's* weekly issues arrived steadily in Scandinavian enclaves and helped build a Scandinavian Republican electorate during the same time span.⁸¹

In addition to the issue of free soil, Reese and Solberg sparred over the issue of Black people's ability to vote in Wisconsin when the question was debated in the summer and fall of 1857. On November 3, 1857, a referendum was held in Wisconsin on the issue of "Suffrage for African Americans," meaning African-American men over twenty-one years of age, and Solberg's editorials in the weeks and months leading up to the election argued for Black people's right to vote while also explicitly stating that *Emigranten's* editors distinguished between the Republican Party's policy and abolitionist policy.⁸²

According to the editor, it was *Emigranten's* position that everyone should "be free and have equal rights." The Scandinavian newspaper opposed slavery's expansion but would not interfere with slavery where it already existed. "Abolitionists we have never been," the editor stated. Yet, "when a free Negro settles in Wisconsin, he should enjoy his share of civil rights."⁸³

Conversely, Reese warned *Nordstjernen's* readers that the result would be "a black governor and a black legislature in Wisconsin! . . . Would not

⁸⁰ Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847-1872*, 12-13, 61. According to Andersen, *Emigranten* was more "representative of Norwegian-American opinion in the 1850s" with its "antislavery Democratic" program until 1854 when it switched to support the Republican Party. On subscription list numbers, based on then-editor Charles M. Reese, see Hansen, "Pressen Til Borgerkrigens Slutning [The Press until the Civil War's End]," 24. See also Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition*, 317-319.

⁸¹ Hansen, "Pressen Til Borgerkrigens Slutning [The Press until the Civil War's End]," 28.

⁸² "Bør Negerne Have Stemmeret i Wisconsin?," *Emigranten*, August 12, 1857; "Tale Af Carl Schurz, Republikansk Kandidat for Lieutenant Governor, Holdet i Madison Den 16. Oktober 1857 [Speech by Carl Schurz, Republican Candidate for Lieutenant Governor, Held in Madison October 16, 1857]," *Emigranten*, October 23, 1857.

⁸³ Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847-1872*, 65; "Bør Negerne Have Stemmeret i Wisconsin?," *Emigranten*, August 12, 1857.

our Black Republican friends then rejoice? Then there would be not freedom and equality, but first the Negro and after him the white man.”⁸⁴

While Solberg likely was ahead of the Scandinavian public opinion on this issue – and also later changed his editorial stance – Solberg’s editorship does indicate the increased focus on anti-slavery issues within the Republican Party. Moreover, the Scandinavian electorate in Wisconsin seemed to be increasingly following Solberg’s arguments.⁸⁵

Thus, when Solberg later in life remembered that he got the better of *Nordstjernen*, it had much to do with the Republican Party’s appeal to Scandinavians based on free soil and free labor policies.⁸⁶ In a September 12, 1859, profile of Hans Heg, likely written by Solberg, the Norwegian-born politician’s successful rise from farmer to businessman and candidate for statewide office with broad-based ethnic support was emphasized along with his long-standing “opposition to the spread of slavery.”⁸⁷

Thus, Abraham Lincoln’s speeches in Cincinnati and Milwaukee in September 1859, building on his argument for the primacy of free labor stretching back to the mid-1840s, likely resonated powerfully in the Scandinavian-American community. Social mobility, what Abraham Lincoln on September 17, 1859, called, “improvement in condition” in a free country, was “the great principle for which the government was really formed.”⁸⁸

A few weeks later, at the Wisconsin State Fair in Milwaukee, Lincoln elaborating on these free labor thoughts. “Men, with their families – wives, sons and daughters – work for themselves, on their farms in their houses and in their shops,” he said, “taking the whole product to themselves, and asking no favors of capital on the one hand, nor of hirelings or slaves on the other.”⁸⁹ Free labor, Lincoln argued, led workers to reap

⁸⁴ Quoted in Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847–1872*, 66–67.

⁸⁵ Hansen, “Pressen Til Borgerkrigens Slutning [The Press until the Civil War’s End],” 31.

⁸⁶ Barton, “Reminiscences of a Pioneer Editor.”

⁸⁷ “Wisconsin-Affærer. Hans Christian Heg [Wisconsin Affairs. Hans Christian Heg].”

⁸⁸ Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 113–115. See also Roy P. Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 3 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 438–463.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*, 113–115. According to Foner, by the time Lincoln gave his speech in 1859 he had embraced the market revolution and “advised farmers to abandon traditional ways in favor of new methods of plowing and crop rotation and new fertilizers, seeds, and agricultural machinery.” See also Basler, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 3, 438–463.

“the fruit of labor” and thereby gain the opportunity for economic improvement.⁹⁰ On July 2, 1860, in one of the few editorials in *Emigranten* signed directly by Solberg himself, he clearly laid out his and his newspaper’s reasons for supporting Abraham Lincoln in the important upcoming presidential election. The Democratic Party’s political decay and despotism, after decades in power, played a part, but anti-slavery attitudes, pro-homestead sentiment, and opposition to non-contiguous empire were issues at the top of the list.

“Emigranten” will work actively in this electoral campaign and be in “the thicket of the fight” for Lincoln and Hamlin, for the freeing the territories, for the Homestead Bill’s adoption, for the Cuba Bill’s rejection, for a moderate toll’s adoption to protect interests in the northern and western states etc.⁹¹

For a few months, Solberg even lowered *Emigranten*’s subscription price to 50 cents annually compared to \$2 during the previous presidential election campaign and thereby indicated the importance he placed on influencing Scandinavian popular opinion in the coming months.⁹² The ties between *Emigranten* and anti-slavery advocacy was made even clearer in August 1860, when Solberg’s good friend, Hans Heg, serving as prison commissioner, decided to shield abolitionist editor Sherman Booth from arrest by the authorities at the Wisconsin State Prison.⁹³

Booth had gained national fame in March 1854 when he gathered a crowd to free runaway slave Joshua Glover in Racine and afterward became a prominent voice in the anti-slavery struggle.⁹⁴ “We send greetings to the free states of the Union, that, in the state of Wisconsin, the fugitive slave Law is repealed!” Booth wrote in his newspaper the *Milwaukee Free Democrat*.⁹⁵ Yet, in a prolonged back-and-forth legal tangle, Booth was by March 7, 1859, unanimously found guilty of

⁹⁰ Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*, 113.

⁹¹ Solberg, “Emigranten under Præsidentvalgkampen [The Emigrant During the Presidential Election].” For discussions of Cuban annexation, see “Annexation of Cuba Made Easy,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1860.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Royal M. Bryant, “State of Wisconsin, County of Dodge [August 21],” in *Hans Christian Heg Letters, 1840, 1861–1863* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1860). See also Hans C. Heg, “Booth Flyttet – Breve Fra Hans C. Heg [Booth Escaped – Letters from Hans C. Heg],” *Emigranten*, August 13, 1860.

⁹⁴ Diane S. Butler, “The Public Life and Private Affairs of Sherman M. Booth,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 82, no. 3 (1999): 168. Butler points out that Booth also at this time had gained national infamy “by seducing, and possibly raping, a fourteen-year-old girl.”

⁹⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 178.

violating the Fugitive Slave Act by the United States Supreme Court led by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney.⁹⁶

Accordingly, federal authorities arrested Booth on March 1, 1860 and placed him in the federal custom house in Milwaukee. Booth remained confined in Milwaukee until August 1, when ten of his political allies broke him free and ushered him to the state penitentiary in Waupun, where he received lodging under Heg's supervision.

On August 2, 1860, a US marshal arrived at the Waupun prison looking to apprehend Booth, with a letter from a federal marshal, John H. Lewis, asking Heg to assist in Booth's arrest. The Norwegian-born prison commissioner, however, replied that his men "currently were employed in a better and more honorable way."⁹⁷ By August 3, Heg instead invited Marshal Garlick in to arrest Booth in person, but Booth threatened to shoot anyone who tried to arrest him.⁹⁸ When later deposed, witnesses remembered Garlick saying, "The men that talk so much about shooting are not the ones to shoot."⁹⁹ When Garlick, however, asked Heg what he thought about the situation, he received the following answer:

Mr. H. replied that he did not know what Booth would do, but if he was in Booth's place and had been houn[d]ed round for the last six years, the very first man that should make an attempt to arrest me I would shoot him down as I would a dog. Mr. Garlick asked H. if he had anything against him as a man. Heg replied I have nothing against you Garlick as a man, but I think you ought to be in better business than serving as the tool for the slave catchers.¹⁰⁰

Heg's remarks, and Booth's threat of violence, made the federal marshal leave the prison; with the aid of abolitionist allies, Booth continued to escape federal agents for two more months before he was finally arrested in Berlin, Wisconsin, on October 8, 1860. Because of Heg's role in what turned out to be Booth's initial escape, the Scandinavian prison commissioner, who held larger political aspirations, was afforded considerable statewide attention, as he relayed his version of events in English-language and Norwegian-language newspapers.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 182–189. Heg, "Booth Flygtet – Breve Fra Hans C. Heg [Booth Escaped – Letters from Hans C. Heg]."

⁹⁷ Hans C. Heg, "Booth Flygtet – Breve Fra Hans C. Heg [Booth Escaped – Letters from Hans C. Heg]."

⁹⁸ "Booth Flygtet – Breve Fra Hans C. Heg [Booth Escaped – Letters from Hans C. Heg]."

⁹⁹ Bryant, "State of Wisconsin, County of Dodge [August 21]." ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Barton, "Reminiscences of a Pioneer Editor."

To Scandinavian readers, at least the way it was remembered, the episode added to Heg's anti-slavery credentials and solidified his position as a Scandinavian political leader. The event was important to *Emigranten*, and likely to its readers, because it was a Norwegian-born immigrant taking an overt stand against the Fugitive Slave Act, and in that context it mattered less that Booth's personal popularity in the pages of *Emigranten* was negligible due to his sexual assault of a fourteen-year-old girl the year before.¹⁰²

Emigranten's increasingly firm anti-slavery position seemingly resonated with Scandinavian newspaper readers to a much greater extent than was the case with the rival *Nordstjernen*. Between 1858 and September 1860, *Nordstjernen* was edited by the politically ambitious Danish-born immigrant Hans Borchsenius, but it failed to find an effective counter to *Emigranten's* popularity, since the Democratic Party seemed increasingly pro-slavery from the Scandinavian readers' perspective.¹⁰³ When Borchsenius was nominated by the Democratic Party on September 19, 1860, to run for county clerk, he passed the editorial duties over to his employee Jacob Seeman. In his first editorial on October 10, Seeman drew upon the Democratic Party's long history and central position in American politics as an appeal to Scandinavian readers. Seeman simultaneously expressed pride in and support for the threshold principle's main strands of population growth and territorial expansion, which likely had a broad appeal among a Scandinavian readership.

I pay tribute to democratic principles and support the Democratic Party because the Union under Democratic rule has grown from 13 to 33 states, has increased its population from close to 4 million to 30 million people and now is regarded one of the mightiest and proudest empires on earth in terms of trade, sea power, agriculture, arts and sciences.¹⁰⁴

According to Seeman, the Democrats had always been the immigrant's friend, and it was therefore imperative that the "abolitionizing" Republican Party's "wrong, deplorable, and treasonous teachings,"

¹⁰² Butler, "The Public Life and Private Affairs of Sherman M. Booth," 168, 82–89. *Emigranten* noted that Booth had "lost his good name" in a "scandalous trial" the previous year before describing events related to his escape from authorities in August of 1860. Heg, "Booth Flygtet – Breve Fra Hans C. Heg [Booth Escaped – Letters from Hans C. Heg]."

¹⁰³ Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847–1872*, 68.

¹⁰⁴ Jacob Seemann, "Til 'Nordstjernens' Læsere [To the *North Star's* Readers]," *Nordstjernen*, October 10, 1860.

were given a more “conservative, honest and truthful quality,” as only the Democratic Party could, or the result could be the deathknell of the Union.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Seeman’s editorial would prove to be the last ever published in *Nordstjernen*. Shortly after the October 10 issue, Borchsenius sold the newspaper to Solberg. In a letter to subscribers in January 1861, distributed through *Emigranten*, the former editor detailed the reasons why and lamented the fact that there was no longer room for “two political papers with opposite views.”¹⁰⁶

Two years as editor of a Democratic newspaper had disabused Borchsenius of the notion that Scandinavian immigrants, “under the circumstances, due to little interest in reading or more correctly little interest in subscribing to political papers,” were willing to support a newspaper in competition with the Republican Party’s anti-slavery platform. According to Borchsenius, a newspaper needed between 1,500 and 2,000 subscribers to survive, and “the highest number” he had been “able to achieve at ‘Nordstjernen’” had been between 800 and 900, and out of that number there had always “been a few hundred that did not pay.”¹⁰⁷

Consequently, Borchsenius sold his list of subscribers to Solberg to get out of debt. *Emigranten*’s subscription list, which, according to Reese, in early 1854 had counted between 500 and 600, had grown sizably under K. J. Fleischer’s and later Solberg’s editorship. When Fleischer handed the editorial reins to Solberg in April 1857, he expressed satisfaction that the subscription list now numbered between 1,300 and 1,400 names.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Solberg, in an editorial published on December 7, 1863, put the subscription number at 2,700.¹⁰⁹ This positive development in subscribers, if the editors’ own numbers can indeed be trusted, corresponds with Theodore Blegen’s assessment. Solberg, according to Blegen, “expanded the paper in size, varied its contents, increased its interest and value as a literary magazine, reached out to all parts of the Northwest for Scandinavian Americans, and built up its circulation until, in Civil War times, it had nearly four thousand subscribers.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Hans Borchsenius, “Cirkulære Til Nordstjernens Abonnenter [Circular to the *North Star*’s Subscribers],” *Emigranten*, January 7, 1861.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. ¹⁰⁸ Solberg, “Til Emigrantens Læsere [To the *Emigrant*’s Readership].”

¹⁰⁹ “Emigranten for Aaret 1864 [The *Emigrant* for the Year 1864],” *ibid.*, December 7, 1863.

¹¹⁰ Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition*, 318. Blegen’s estimate of close to 4,000 subscribers is based on Solberg’s recollection later in life,

Solberg's claims that *Emigranten's* position was on the "right side of public questions" and therefore decisive in his competition with *Nordstjernen* found support in the writings of the enterprising Reese, who, by September 22, 1860, now on his fourth newspaper editorship, wrote for a newly established and, as it turned out, short-lived "Republican campaign paper," *Folkebladet*,

The struggle this fall will be simply between Freedom and Slavery, and where is the man in the North who can for a moment be undecided as to which side to take? We for one have bid a long farewell to the so-called Democracy and shall hereafter be found battling for Freedom, Free Speech, and Free Territory!¹¹¹

Folkebladet was published out of Chicago, which was also the home of the much more established and influential Swedish-language newspaper *Hemlandet*. Edited by Swedish-born Pastor Tuve N. Hasselquist (see Figure 4.5), who emigrated in 1852 in part due to his criticism of the Swedish state church, *Hemlandet* had catered to Illinois' growing Swedish-born population since 1855.¹¹² For years, *Hemlandet* touted anti-slavery viewpoints to its readership; though it had fewer than 1,000 subscribers, it, according to the estimate of biographer Oscar Fritiof Ander, probably had several thousand readers.¹¹³

"Perhaps the most effective testimony to Hasselquist's influence in forming the political opinion of the Swedes is found in the success of *Hemlandet* over its competitors, *Svenska Republikanen* and *Minnesota Posten*," notes Ander, who adds, "Swedes were Democratic in 1852, but voted Republican in 1856, and since that time they remained so faithful to the principles of that party that all attempts made after 1860 to start at Democratic newspaper were doomed to fail because of lack of support."¹¹⁴

when he stated: "During the war I built up a circulation of nearly four thousand for *Emigranten*." See also Barton, "Reminiscences of a Pioneer Editor." Also Borchsenius, "Cirkulære Til Nordstjernens Abonnenter [Circular to the *North Star's* Subscribers]."

¹¹¹ Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand: The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847-1872*, 69.

¹¹² Dag Blanck, *The Creation of an Ethnic Identity: Being Swedish American in the Augustana Synod, 1860-1917* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 27-28, 39.

¹¹³ Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition*, 318.

¹¹⁴ Oscar Fritiof Ander, *T. N. Hasselquist: The Career and Influence of a Swedish-American Clergyman, Journalist and Educator* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Historical Society, 1931), 159-160.

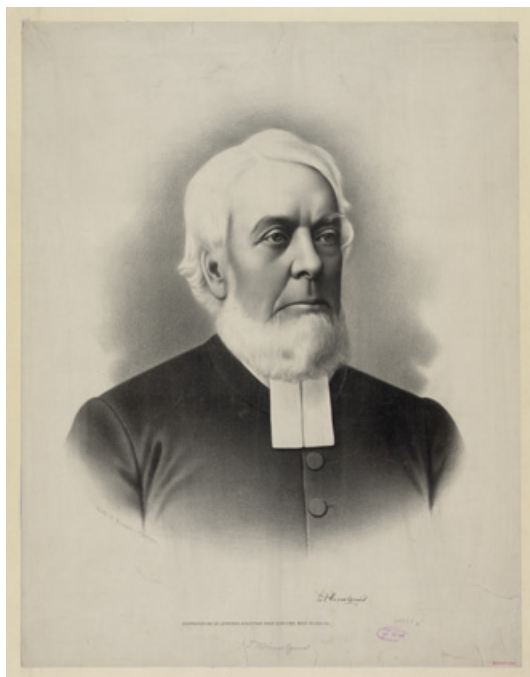


FIGURE 4.5 Tuve N. Hasselquist was a towering figure among early Swedish-American immigrants and through his editorship of *Hemlandet* served as an opinion leader in Scandinavian communities. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Consequently, the solidly Republican *Hemlandet* and *Emigranten* were by 1860 the only surviving secular Scandinavian newspapers in Illinois and Wisconsin, since they were the only ones that could be sustained through Scandinavian-born subscribers.

In trying to explain why Scandinavian immigrants chose so clearly to support the Republican Party, editor Knud Langeland, who by 1867 published the newspaper *Skandinaven* (The Scandinavian) out of Chicago, offered this explanation: “The Scandinavian people in America joined the Republican party en masse because it was founded upon the eternal truth: ‘Equality before the law for all citizens of the land without regard to religion, place of birth, or color of skin.’”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Arlow W. Andersen, “Knud Langeland: Pioneer Editor,” *Norwegian-American Studies* 14 (1944). Arlow W. Anderson, “Knud Langeland: Pioneer Editor,” *Norwegian-American Studies* 14 (1944).

While this Scandinavian hagiography necessarily needs to be contextualized by their implicit and explicit support for and benefit from their white, Lutheran background, the extent to which Scandinavian immigrants in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota backed the Republican Party before, during, and after the Civil War is noteworthy.¹¹⁶ Thus, the elections of 1860 provided a litmus test for the political power of ethnicity in relation to the Republican platform's focus on free soil, free labor, and free men among Scandinavian immigrants. The settlement of New Denmark was just one of many examples.

On a beautiful Tuesday morning, November 6, Fritz Rasmussen awoke in New Denmark and observed frost still visible in areas shaded by the trees as he went down to the local schoolhouse to vote.¹¹⁷ The Danish immigrant cast his vote for Abraham Lincoln and followed the election proceedings for some time thereafter before returning home to butcher pigs.¹¹⁸ Rasmussen thereby took the political advice of *Emigranten*, but the same was not the case among all New Denmark's residents. New Denmark, like the rest of the United States, was split in two. The town's eligible voters gave Stephen Douglas forty-three votes, while Abraham Lincoln received thirty-seven. According to the 1860 census, New Denmark counted 424 inhabitants, including 139 with Scandinavian heritage, while the rest were mainly Irish or German-speaking.¹¹⁹ Despite the community's ethnic differences, everyday life was relatively frictionless, but the presidential election of 1860 revealed political differences tied to Scandinavian immigrants' notions of ethnicity, the politics of class, and the racially charged notions of citizenship. As such, the election of 1860 foreshadowed future conflict zones surrounding the Scandinavian community.

¹¹⁶ Hans Borchsenius, "Et Par Ord Om Valgene [A Few Words on the Elections]," *Emigranten*, October 27, 1862; Peter Sørensen Vig, *Danske i Krig i Og for Amerika [Danes Fighting in and for America]* (Omaha, NE: Axel H. Andersen, 1917). Being politically and economically savvy, and perhaps genuinely influenced by the course of events in 1860 and 1861, *Nordstjernen's* former Democratic editors, Hans Borchsenius and Charles M. Reese, had by 1862 both volunteered for the Union Army and publicly proclaimed their support for the Republican Party's Union and anti-slavery platform.

¹¹⁷ Fritz W. Rasmussen, "November 1860. Den 7de. [November 1860. The 7th]," in *State Historical Society of Wisconsin Archives Division. Rasmussen, Fritz. Additions, 1860–1919. Gren Bay Mss 4. Box 9* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1860), 51–52; Rasmussen, *I Krig for Lincoln [To War for Lincoln]*.

¹¹⁸ Rasmussen, "November 1860. Den 7de. [November 1860. The 7th]."

¹¹⁹ Joseph C. G. Kennedy, ed., *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864), 533. The number of Scandinavian residents is gathered from www.ancestry.com.

While immigrants generally had to reside at least two years within the United States to be able to apply for citizenship and vote in elections, Wisconsin's State Constitution of 1848 specified that "white persons of foreign birth who have declared their intention to become citizens conformably to the laws of the United States" were eligible to vote.¹²⁰ Thus, together with his brother Jens (James), Fritz Rasmussen declared his intention to become a citizen of the United States on March 29, 1860, with the aim of getting a local position of trust in the New Denmark town election in April.¹²¹ While Rasmussen failed to win local office in April, his declaration of intent made it possible for him to help elect the next president of the United States. As November 1860 drew nearer, New Denmark residents followed political events with increasing interest and, based on Rasmussen's diary entries, tracked local news closely.¹²²

Despite Wisconsin being lauded as the possible birthplace of the Republican Party, Brown County was not a Republican stronghold.¹²³ The local newspaper, *Green Bay Advocate*, was edited by Charles D. Robinson, a Democrat who had served as Wisconsin's secretary of state between 1852 and 1854; Robinson strongly supported Stephen Douglas in the presidential campaign of 1860.¹²⁴

Leading up to the election, Robinson on a weekly basis lauded Douglas and, on October 19, in an attempt to build up and Democratic groundswell enthusiasm, passionately described a Douglas campaign event in Fond du Lac where he estimated a crowd of 15,000 to be "entirely in bounds."¹²⁵ Robinson did not report the substance of Douglas' speech, but, in the week leading up to the election, the editor was much clearer about the fact that slavery was the most important election issue, and he laid out what was at stake to his readership. The *Green Bay Advocate* urged a vote for Stephen Douglas to ensure that slaves were kept in

¹²⁰ Wisconsin Constitutional Convention, *Constitution of the State of Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: Beriah Brown, 1848), 4.

¹²¹ Fritz W. Rasmussen, "Den 31. Løverdag [March]," in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1856-1876. Green Bay Mss 4. Box 8* (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1860).

¹²² *Ibid.*; Rasmussen, "November 1860. Den 7de. [November 1860. The 7th]."

¹²³ "Brown County Election Returns," *Green Bay Advocate*, November 16, 1860. In the 1860 presidential election, Stephen Douglas received 1,272 votes to Abraham Lincoln's 874 votes in Brown County.

¹²⁴ For Charles D. Robinson's political career, see William J. Anderson and William A. Anderson, eds., *The Wisconsin Blue Book* (Madison, WI: Democrat Printing Company, 1929), 144. Also Harold Holzer, *Lincoln and the Power of the Press: The War for Public Opinion* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2015), 518-519.

¹²⁵ Charles D. Robinson, "The Douglas Gathering at Fond Du Lac," *Green Bay Advocate*, October 19, 1860.

bondage, as abolition, “if the Republican platform is properly interpreted,” would mean equality for Black people, increased competition in the labor market, and a potential threat to white women.¹²⁶ “To the People of Brown County,” Robinson wrote:

Large numbers of pamphlets in the French and Holland languages, have been put in circulation by Republicans in this county, so utterly untrue in their statements, and so odious in all respects, that it is important something should be said to expose them, although the time is so short before election, and the means of printing in those languages so limited.¹²⁷

Conversely, *Emigranten*, which also circulated in New Denmark, encouraged support at the ballot box for “freedom and equality,” which, from the editor’s perspective, was personified by Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin.¹²⁸ Thus, to Scandinavian voters in New Denmark, there was a clear choice between Abraham Lincoln (advocated by *Emigranten*) and Stephen Douglas (supported by the *Green Bay Advocate*) ahead of the November 6 election.

Since the Democratic Party at its June 1860 convention had split into a Northern (Douglas) and Southern faction (John C. Breckinridge), the Republican Party’s chances seemed promising by November.¹²⁹ Hence, it was a confident *Emigranten* editor who penned his last editorial on the eve of the electoral contest. Solberg predicted a resounding Republican victory in the North and Midwest and projected Wisconsin to be called for Lincoln at margins even greater than would be the case in Minnesota and Iowa.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ “To the People of Brown County,” *Green Bay Advocate*, November 1, 1860.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ See “National Republication Nomination,” *Emigranten*, September 24, 1860. One of New Denmark’s founders, Frederik Hjort, subscribed to *Emigranten* in 1860, and Fritz Rasmussen described his neighbor Lars Andersen paying a subscription to *Emigranten* in 1863 as well. See “Indbetalt På Emigr. [Paid to Emigranten],” *Emigranten*, January 7, 1861. Also Fritz W. Rasmussen, “Thursday December 31,” in *Fritz William Rasmussen Papers. Diaries, 1857–1876; Account Books, 1856–1909; “Record of Scandinavians Who Have Been Settled and Lived in the Town of New Denmark, Brown County, Wisconsin.”* Box no. 8 (Wisconsin Historical Society, 1863).

¹²⁹ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, 307–308. Also James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26. Regarding the political complexity of the 1860 election, McPherson adds, “a remnant of Whigs, mostly from the border states,” in an attempt to avert disunion, established the Constitutional Union party.

¹³⁰ “Præsidentvalget [The Presidential Election],” *Emigranten*, November 5, 1860. On Wisconsin’s congressional districts, which were apportioned and expanded from three to six in 1861, see the Chief Clerks of the Senate and Assembly in the Year 1863, *The*

Moreover, alluding to the importance of ethnicity in politics, Solberg criticized his countryman James D. Reymert for accepting a Democratic congressional nomination. “In the Second District our sly countryman Reymert has attempted to lead 5,000 Norwegian Lincoln-men astray against their better judgement in a manner that is a poor example to follow,” *Emigranten’s* editor wrote.¹³¹ Solberg feared that Reymert’s Norwegian origin could lead Scandinavian voters to abandon Lincoln and the Republicans at the national and state levels in favor of a fellow countryman regardless of his political views. However, Solberg’s fear proved unfounded. In Wisconsin, Abraham Lincoln won a clear victory with a majority of over 20,000 votes, and Scandinavian-born immigrants largely supported the Republican Party.¹³²

In New Denmark, for example, Lincoln performed better than in the rest of Brown County, and it is likely that a sizable chunk of the Lincoln vote came from the Scandinavian residents. As we have seen, Fritz and Jens Rasmussen, along with their brother-in-law Celius Christiansen and Andrew Frederickson, supported the Republican Party.¹³³ Additionally, New Denmark resident Frederik Hjort was on the list of paying subscribers to the solidly Republican *Emigranten*.¹³⁴ As such, Hjort, and the neighbors he shared the newspaper with, could read Solberg’s assessment of the election on November 10, where he rejoiced that

Wisconsin has elected all three Republican candidates – Potter, Hanchett and Sloan – for Congress with large majorities. Our friend Reimert, to the credit of

Legislative Manual of the State of Wisconsin (Madison: Atwood & Rublee, 1863), 131. Also L. D. H. Crane, *A Manual of Customs, Precedents and Forms, in the Use in the Assembly of Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: E. A. Calkins & Co., 1861), 42.

¹³¹ “Præsidentvalget [The Presidential Election].”

¹³² “Brown County Election Returns.” See also “Valgene Tirsdagen Den 6te November – Et Tusinde Hurraer for Lincoln Og Hamlin [The Elections Tuesday November 6 – A Thousand Hurrahs for Lincoln and Hamlin],” *Emigranten*, November 12, 1860.

¹³³ Christiansen, *En Pioneers Historie (Erindringer Fra Krigen Mellem Nord- Og Sydstatene)* [A Pioneer’s Story: Memoirs from the War between North and South], 15–17. For Christiansen’s naturalization information, I have used www.fold3.com. James took out his naturalization papers together with Fritz and later served in the Wisconsin Legislature for the Republican Party while Hjort was on the list of paying subscribers to the solidly Republican *Emigranten*. James E. Heg, ed., *The Blue Book of the State of Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: Democrat Printing Co., 1885), 159, 427. See as well Frederiksen, “Denmark. Brown Co. Wisc. Den 16. Februar 1861.” See also Hale, “The Americanization of a Danish Immigrant in Wisconsin 1847–1872,” 205–211. According to Hale, “like many other Scandinavian-Americans, he [Frederikson] declared his allegiance to the Union and supported the infant Republican party.”

¹³⁴ “Indbetalt På Emigr. [Paid to Emigranten].”

the Norwegian part of the population, did not succeed in leading the Norwegian Lincoln-men away from their duty and obtain their votes. Here and there he has received up to half a dozen votes more than his party in a Norwegian township, that is all, and several places he lags behind.¹³⁵

The election returns published by Solberg the following week seemed to validate his point about there being little Scandinavian support for an ethnic Democratic candidate. In the Norwegian townships of Perry, Springdale, and Vermont, which were located in a district won by both James D. Reymert at the congressional level and Douglas at the presidential level, there was no significant ethnic boost in votes, and the same was the case in the Republican-leaning township of Pleasant Springs, where the numbers 119 for Lincoln and seventy-five for Douglas were exactly the same as the numbers for Luther Hanchett and Reymert. All told, Reymert lost by more than 500 votes (4,797–4,210) to the Republican Hanchett in Dane County.¹³⁶

Notably a small handful of Democratic candidates at the local county clerk level – Hans Borchsenius, Ole Heg, and Farmer Risum – all lost also, while John A. Johnsen, a Republican, won in Dane County.¹³⁷ On the topic of slavery's extension, Scandinavian immigrants likely disagreed with their Irish- and German-born counterparts. As Frederick Luebke has argued, "Lutheran and Catholic Germans in rural areas remained loyal to the Democracy in 1860, while other Protestants and the freethinking liberals were attracted to Republicanism. Irish Catholics were uniformly Democratic despite intraparty problems."¹³⁸

Lincoln, in the the words of James McPherson, "carried every free state except New Jersey, whose electoral votes he divided with Douglas, and thereby won the election despite garnering slightly less than 40 percent of the popular votes."¹³⁹ Among the states that decided the 1860 election was Illinois.¹⁴⁰ On election day in Rockford, Illinois, the Swedish

¹³⁵ "Valgene Tirsdagen Den 6te November – Et Tusinde Hurraer for Lincoln Og Hamlin [The Elections Tuesday November 6 – A Thousand Hurrahs for Lincoln and Hamlin]."

¹³⁶ "Official Statement of Votes Cast at The Election in Dane County, November 6, 1860," *Emigranten*, November 19, 1860.

¹³⁷ "Valgene Tirsdagen Den 6te November – Et Tusinde Hurraer for Lincoln Og Hamlin [The Elections Tuesday November 6 – A Thousand Hurrahs for Lincoln and Hamlin]."

¹³⁸ Frederick C. Luebke, ed., *Ethnic Voters and the Election of Lincoln* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), xxviii.

¹³⁹ McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln*, 26.

¹⁴⁰ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, 216. The election of 1860, Foner points out, "hinged on the states Frémont had failed to carry – New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois."

immigrants in town, according to *Hemlandet's* correspondent, unanimously gathered in front of the Swedish church and marched to the courthouse while cheering “hurrah” under the American and Swedish flags, “the true Republican ballot making up their only weapon,” and met up with an estimated 100 members of “The Young Men’s Republican Legion” voting for the first time.¹⁴¹

According to the letter-writer, every single Swede in town voted Republican and cheered in front of the courthouse, while a group of Irish immigrants left the area, remarking that “had any other nation dared to show up with their national flag it would surely have been torn apart.”¹⁴² In Red Wing, Minnesota, Swedish-born Hans Mattson remembered leading several meetings in a Republican club before the election and later posited that Scandinavians “almost to a man” were “in favor of liberty to all men” and therefore “joined the Republican party, which had just been organized for the purpose of restricting slavery.”¹⁴³

The Scandinavian vote was not decisive for the outcome of the presidential election of 1860, though ethnic scholars subsequently tried to emphasize its importance. Still, the votes that were cast by Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish immigrants did support the Republican Party with seemingly significant margins.¹⁴⁴

Additionally, in Iowa, ethnically German forty-eighters such as Hans Reimer Claussen and Theodor Olshausen, who had fled Denmark after the First Schleswig War, supported the Republican Party by 1860; in the predominantly Scandinavian township of Cedar in Mitchell County, only 1.4 percent of the inhabitants voted for a Democratic candidate.¹⁴⁵

In Illinois, Danish-born Ferdinand Winsl w described, on February 12, 1861, going to Springfield with the German-born Republican politician Francis Hoffman to see Lincoln. Here Winsl w was introduced to

¹⁴¹ H., “Rockford, Ill. D. 10 Nov. 1860,” *Hemlandet*, November 14, 1860. ¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Mattson, *Reminiscences: The Story of an Emigrant* (Saint Paul, MN: D. D. Merrill Company, 1891), 56–57.

¹⁴⁴ As an example of trying to prove Swedish immigrants’ outsize influence on the 1860 election, see Hokanson, *Swedish Immigrants in Lincoln’s Time* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 27. According to Hokanson, “the outcome of the presidential election of 1860 hung on a very small margin. Lincoln could not have been elected without the support of the Germans and the Swedes.”

¹⁴⁵ Thomas P. Christensen, “A German Forty-Eighter in Iowa,” *Annals of Iowa* 26, no. 4 (1945): 248–249; George H. Daniels, “Immigrant Vote in the 1860 Election: The Case of Iowa,” in *Ethnic Voters and the Election of Lincoln*, ed. Frederick C. Luebke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 126–127. See as well Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 4, 12.

Lincoln, shook his hand, and listened to the “impressive and tender” farewell address that the newly elected president gave before leaving for the White House.¹⁴⁶

“I know I cried when the cars started bearing him along with his destiny and that of over thirty millions [sic] men, whose fates he was going to shape,” Winsl w wrote to his wife, adding: “It was a solemn moment for me, but I have an unshaken confidence in his ability, firmness and honesty.”¹⁴⁷

By February 1861, Lincoln’s ability to shape the country’s fate was already being severely tested. Writing from New York on February 5, 1861, Denmark’s acting consul general, Harald D llner, assessed the situation in no uncertain terms. “Sir,” D llner wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, C. C. Hall, “the Union of the states is virtually dissolved.”¹⁴⁸ South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, and Louisiana had broken away, and delegates were now gathered in Alabama to “form a Southern confederacy.”¹⁴⁹ One week later, utilizing the language of the threshold principle, D llner added that “the State of Texas, an empire within itself according to size and resources, has seceded from the Union.”¹⁵⁰

Two months later, Civil War broke out, and diplomatic tension ran high. In the conflict’s early phase, when the loyalties of several states were still in question, American fear of foreign powers’ interference was palpable. The latent or explicit fear of *Kleinstaaterei* thus hung over the State Department and left little room for error or compromise, especially in the border states.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Ferdinand S. Winsl w, “Chicago, February 12th, 1861” (transcribed letter in possession of Laura Sadovnikoff, 1861). In the evening Hoffman and Winslow dined with Carl Schurz, William Ogden, and Jonathan Scammon who all had ties to Lincoln and the Republican Party.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ H[arald] Dollner, “Consulate General of Denmark. New York, 5th February 1861,” in *Collection 0002. Udenrigsministeriet. 1848–1972. Depecher. Washington 1861–1862 mm. Box 155* (Copenhagen: Rigsarkivet, 1861).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ H[arald] Dollner, “New York, 12th Febr. 1861,” in *Collection 0002. Udenrigsministeriet. 1848–1972. Depecher. Washington 1861–1862 mm. Box 155* (Rigsarkivet, 1861).

¹⁵¹ Given the political pressure generated by Civil War, it is perhaps not surprising that the Swedish consul in New York on October 22, 1861, acknowledged receipt of a letter from Secretary of State Seward telling the Swedish-Norwegian government to replace their vice-consuls in Norfolk and Baltimore respectively as they, according to the Americans, had “allowed themselves to be made mediums of private treasonable correspondence.” See Claudius Habicht, “New York 22d Octobr 1861,” in *M-60. Notes from the Swedish*

In Scandinavian enclaves across the Midwest, the Civil War simultaneously forced Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes to articulate in even clearer terms their understanding of American citizenship. Accordingly, Scandinavian immigrants' notions of liberty and equality in relation to upward social mobility, their notions of political competition with Irish and German immigrants, and at the highest possible level their notion of universal values in relation to the Declaration of Independence's egalitarian ideal were put to the test when civil war broke out on April 12, 1861.¹⁵²

Legation in the U.S. to Dept. of State, 1813–1906. Roll T3 (National Archives at College Park, 1861).

¹⁵² On the Declaration of Independence and “the nation’s implied promise to those who had been denied the rights espoused in its founding documents,” see Edna Greene Medford, *Lincoln and Emancipation* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015), 21, 111–112. On the Declaration of Independence and continued belief in white superiority, see, for example, Hahn, *A Nation without Borders: The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830–1910* (New York: Viking, 2016), 67–68.