

**JOHN CHARLES BLACK RUNS FOR  
CONGRESS IN EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS:  
1866 AND 1876**

**TIMOTHY OHREA SMITH  
Danville, Illinois**

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WIKIPEDIA biography of John Charles Black

1866 Canvass-originally published in Timothy Ohrea Smith's *A Star in His Course: The First Congressional Campaign of Joseph Gurney Cannon in 1872*-OCLC 1120769521

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**THE 1884 CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN IN THE ILLINOIS FIFTEENTH DISTRICT: GENERAL JOHN CHARLES BLACK CHALLENGES JOSEPH G. CANNON, "WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE WAR, CONGRESSMAN CANNON?"**

# 1866

There is also a suggestion of an objection that Bromwell did not well play the spoils game. In a *Danville Plaindealer* article published under the banner "CONGRESSMAN."

The re-nomination of Mr. Bromwell is a foregone conclusion. Gen. Moore is virtually defeated by instructions given in the counties in the District. Even Champaign County, where both of the Union papers at the seat of justice, supported Gen. Moore, has instructed for Mr. Bromwell. . . .

Under the circumstances, this is as it should be. Mr. Bromwell served the party faithfully *out of congress*. He has served the party *and the country* faithfully *in Congress*. He may not have secured the public teat for every political leech. Or dealt in pub. Docs as extensively as some seem to have wished, but he attended to his duty as a Legislator, and that is what he is elected for. We want working men in Congress, not political demagogues who spend their time in securing fat offices for a few dear friends, franking pub. doc s and fixing wires to insure their re-nomination. We want men who will devote their energies to the interests of the country regardless of future political preferment. [Emphasis added]<sup>1</sup>

The *Danville Commercial's* take on the challenge to Bromwell by Moore emphasized Bromwell's stature in Congress.

Has Mr. Bromwell disappointed the expectations of the people? I say no. Without the fear of contradiction, I again say that no man, in so short a time ever made in Congress a fairer record, or gained a more enviable reputation than H. P. H. Bromwell. Already one of the recognized leaders in Congress, no man has a more promising future than he. Then why discard him for an untried man? Is that good policy?

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<sup>1</sup> July 26, 1866

Again, it has ever been deemed good policy, sanctioned by custom, to continue a member in Congress so long as he fairly and honestly represents the will of his constituency.<sup>2</sup>

There was another reason raised in 1866 for not re-nominating Bromwell. He was not liked and considered not worthy of the job. The Rock Island *Argus* reported the following observation on Bromwell, taken from the Champaign *Visitor*.

The Champaign *Visitor*, a republican paper, comes out against the re-election of H. P. H. Bromwell, radical member of congress, closing a powerful article on this subject as follows:

And right here we have a word for the consideration of our editorial brethren. It is a truth filled with recollections of base ingratitude that the onus of district and county elections is almost invariably thrown upon the conductors of our local journals. Their labors during a canvass are incessant and exhaustive, and their reward never comes. While, therefore, we have been underlined at all past elections to perform without recompense the miracle of manufacturing great men out of 'dead culls,' has not the time arrived when we may demand that our burdens be lessened by the election of candidates for office who can bear their own weight, so that we may be spared the double drudgery of beating down opposing forces, while we are at the same time engaged in 'lubber-lifting' pudding-heads and ingrates into consequence? We vote in the affirmative, unanimously.<sup>3</sup>

These hints as to the need to replace Bromwell carried at least one warning for Cannon as he looked at the "lay of the land" of the voters and newspaper editors in the Seventh: military service during the war was to be rewarded, even over a man whose qualifications for office and Republican party loyalty, with no military service, could not be questioned.

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<sup>2</sup> July 26, 1866

<sup>3</sup> August 14, 1866

Bromwell was an early supporter for the impeachment of Andrew Johnson. In a speech in the House on July 11, 1867, Bromwell observed

The people are weary with the delay in hunting up specialties and trifles when the grand glaring fact stares them in the face that the Chief Magistrate has met both the last and the present Congress with the assumption of complete legislative power, exercising every attribute of a despot in this country, while Congress stood still and submitted.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps there was another material difference between Bromwell and Moore in 1866. Moore was apparently willing to listen to the moderate Republicans as they decided how to resolve their developing conflict with Andrew Johnson. The *Chicago Tribune* reported on August 28, 1866 that the “Union Republican Central Committee” [the appellation of the Republican Party adopted in 1862] had appointed delegates to attend the Southern Loyalist Convention, to be held on September 3, 1866, at Philadelphia. The convention was an effort to encourage support for Andrew Johnson and his lenient Reconstruction policies. General Jesse Moore and John Tincher were on the appointment list to attend. Bromwell was not.

On August 3, 1866, the *Union and Gazette* acknowledged Bromwell’s victory within the Champaign County Republican Convention, but noted

The contest between the two candidates presented was close in this county, and if terminated three weeks since, would undoubtedly have resulted otherwise. We regret the termination but have no desire to continue an opposition to Mr. Bromwell which must appear factious . . . .

When the Seventh congressional district nominating convention met on August 23, 1866, the “official” report published in the district’s newspapers revealed it was all sweetness in support of the re-nomination of Bromwell.

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<sup>4</sup> William H. Barnes, *supra*, entry on Bromwell

On motion of Mr. Gorin, of Macon, Hon. H. P. H. Bromwell was unanimously nominated as our candidate for Congress.

The Convention additionally made clear where the Seventh district Republicans stood on Andrew Johnson with the following adopted resolution

That Andrew Johnson has been faithless to his own declaration that 'treason should be made odious and traitors punished,' and that we condemn his efforts to prostitute the office of Chief Magistrate of the Nation to the base purpose of elevating traitors to the high places of the Government. . . .

The convention ended with "[a]ble speeches. . . made by Hon. H. P. H. Bromwell, Gen. Jesse H. Moore, and the Hon. J. L. Tincher. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

The threat of a convention challenge to Bromwell's re-nomination had been avoided, but the animosity shown against him by the Republicans in the Seventh did not dissipate and should have been a warning to the congressman of things to come in 1868.

**John Charles Black**, according to Danville's *Plaindealer*, received the National Union Party congressional nomination at the Philadelphia Democratic convention.<sup>6</sup> The *Plaindealer* also reported that at the Seventh district Democratic convention, held in Tuscola on August 22, 1866, there was no formal nomination for Congress,

. . .but recommended the Democracy to support Gen. Black, of Danville, who is understood to be a candidate for Congressional honors.<sup>7</sup>

Black was born January 27, 1839 in Lexington, Mississippi, and moved to Danville, Illinois, with his family in 1847, first stopping in Kentucky where his younger brother, William Perkins Black was born. He entered Wabash College at Crawfordsville, Indiana in 1857, but at the outbreak of the Civil War he enlisted as a private in the 11<sup>th</sup> Indiana Volunteer

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<sup>5</sup> Danville *Plaindealer*, August 30, 1866

<sup>6</sup> August 30, 1866.

<sup>7</sup> August 30, 1866

Regiment under General Lew Wallace, attained the rank of sergeant major, and was mustered out in August 1861 after three months service. He returned to Danville and promptly re-enlisted after raising a company, attained the rank of major of the 37<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry, and served with it through the end of the War, ultimately attaining its command. Black was wounded at Pea Ridge, and while leading an attack at the Battle of Prairie Grove was seriously wounded. He was brevetted a Brigadier General for his conduct during the War in storming of Fort Blakely on April 9 1865.<sup>8</sup>

After reading law in Chicago, Black initially practiced law in Danville after admission to the Illinois Bar in 1867.

When the campaign started at the end of August 1866, the Danville *Plaindealer* compared the two candidates.

The issue is now made up. The contestants have stripped for the strife and are waiting in the arena for the opening signal. Let us look at the gladiators, their positions, seconds, and supports.-They are both gentlemen of personal worth, education, and talent-their moral reputation untarnished. Black has been a soldier, has served his country under his country's flag, rising by the force of merits from the rank of captain to that of brevet brigadier general. He carries with him the honorable scars of battle. Bromwell served his country in another sphere, but has ever been the soldier's firmest friend. He carries upon him the dust of many a well-fought fight, the justice of which his opponent will scarcely deny. The political antecedents of both are Republican. One has kept his faith. The other has backslidden. Though they formerly stood shoulder to shoulder-touched elbows in the contest for progress and republicanism, they now stand in opposing positions. Bromwell. . .is an unswerving advocate of the Congressional theory of reconstruction. He is in favor of making treason odious and of punishing traitors-making them take back seats in state affairs. Black adheres to the President and his

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<sup>8</sup> In 1896 Black was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his conduct at Prairie Grove on December 7, 1862. See entry for Black in *A Biographical Congressional Directory, 1774-1911*, Senate Document 654, 61<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2nd session.

Premier ideas of *restoration* and *conciliation*-making treason odious by putting traitors in power, punishing and impoverishing rebels by *inflicting* them with pardons and *post-offices*. . . .<sup>9</sup>

The campaign did produce an unusual act of cooperation between the two candidates. The candidates made joint appearances for public debate in Mattoon (September 11<sup>th</sup>, Tuscola, 12<sup>th</sup>, Champaign, 13<sup>th</sup>, Paris, 18<sup>th</sup>, Charleston, 19<sup>th</sup>, Greenup, 20<sup>th</sup>, Decatur, 25<sup>th</sup>, Monticello, 26<sup>th</sup>, Danville 28<sup>th</sup>, Paxton, October 9<sup>th</sup>, Onarga, 10<sup>th</sup> and Middleport, 11<sup>th</sup> ). It appears that these affairs were structured with each man given an hour to make his points, and after each had their turn, the other was given time to respond.<sup>10</sup>

The *Chicago Tribune*, on September 17, 1866, stated its views on Black in an article recounting a speech given by Black in Chicago in 1863: “Colonel Black is the [Andrew] Johnson candidate for Congress in the Seventh.”

Four days later, the *Tribune* recounted Black’s reception in Charleston on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

General Black, in his speech, called upon the soldiers to condemn by their votes Gov. Oglesby, John A. Logan, and all other Radicals; but at the close of his speech a soldier arose in the audience, and swinging his hat called out, ‘Fellow soldiers, three cheers for Bromwell, Oglesby and the Radical Congress!’ and such deafening round of cheers went up in response as has seldom been heard here.

Black wilted before the lusty, loyal cheers of his late comrades in arms.

Bromwell surpassed himself, and it was evident to all that Black is a mere plaything in his hands. At the close of Bromwell’s speech, about thirty little girls came forward and loaded him down with bouquets, one of their number addressing him in these words:

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<sup>9</sup> August 30, 1866

<sup>10</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, September 26, 1866



'MR BROMWELL: In behalf of the mothers, sisters, and daughters of our dead soldiers at Andersonville, we present you these bouquets.'

.....

The thing is all one way in old Coles. Our soldiers and citizens are proud of Bromwell and sorry for Black.

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, the *Tribune* reported on the "joint discussion" between the two candidates in Decatur on the 25<sup>th</sup>. A portion of the discussion addressed whether the debt incurred by the Southern states in fighting the war should be repaid by the North. Bromwell was firmly against it and noted "the creditors of the late rebel Government were the men we had now to fight, and that nothing short of putting a clause in the constitution would save our children from the payment of that debt." The article concluded

General Black replied in a speech of one hour and twenty minutes, utterly ignoring all discussions, and depending entirely upon flippancy and repartee for applause he received. All felt he had been utterly extinguished by Bromwell.

During the campaign, Bromwell had to reschedule a joint appearance with Black at Paxton. Bromwell was Grand Master of the Illinois Grand Lodge of the Masons and its state session was going to occur on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, so Black graciously rescheduled the appearance to October 9<sup>th</sup>. Bromwell's involvement in and contributions to the Masons was deep and life long.<sup>11</sup>

In a letter to the editor of the *Chicago Tribune* published on October 4, 1866, "A SOLDIER" reported

The Seventh Congressional District is all right. H. P. H. Bromwell will beat the renegade soldier, General Black, so badly that the young man will scarcely ever be heard from again. He has fallen into bad company, and has already begun to discover the sad fact,

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<sup>11</sup> In May, 1868, Bromwell participated in the laying of the cornerstone at the new Masonic Temple at the corner of Ninth and F streets in Washington, D. C. Richmond, Virginia, *Dispatch*, May 22, 1868

and hence he hobbles on badly in the race. What a pity for himself, that this young man of some promise, was, in an evil hour, induced to sell out at such a low price. He was heretofore a Republican, and you may know he makes an awkward [sic] out fighting a veteran Republican with old Democratic arguments, such as abolition, negro equality, sectionalism, &c.<sup>12</sup>

It was not close in Black's home county of Vermilion. Bromwell bested Black 2,697 to 1,693.

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<sup>12</sup> A SOLDIER's prediction of Black's future career showed an astonishing lack of prescience. In addition to Black's accomplishments noted in this essay, in 1876 Black was the democratic candidate for senator, losing to republican General Logan. *The Chicago Legal News* reported at his death in August 1915:

Gen. Black attained great prominence in the legal profession and became known as an orator of repute. Twice [1876 and 1884] as the democratic candidate for representative in congress he all but defeated Joseph G. Cannon. In 1872 he was a candidate for lieutenant governor, but in the democratic state convention of 1884 he declined the nomination for governor of Illinois and refused the use of his name after it was presented as a candidate for vice-president in the democratic national convention of 1884.

He was tendered the office of commissioner of pensions by President Cleveland...his administration was marked by signal executive ability. On retiring he removed to Chicago and in 1892 was elected congressman-at-large on the democratic ticket. In 1895 he was appointed by President Cleveland United States district attorney of Illinois, serving until the close of the year 1898.

He was a member of the United States civil service commission December 1902-13, and president of the commission from January 1904 to June 1913. He was commander in chief of the G. A. R., 1903-04, having been commander of the Illinois department in 1902-03.

In the December, 1930 *Commercial Law Journal*, (Volume 35, page 716) Joseph W. Fifer, former governor of Illinois, opined:

[Gen. Black] was a citizen without reproach, he was an able lawyer, he was a brave, gallant soldier in the Civil War and rendered conspicuous service to his country in the hour of its dire necessity. He was more than that, he was a statesman of no small proportions and a statesman, too, as I believe, who never received an adequate reward for his eminent services to his country

The Congress that Bromwell returned to in December 1867 would be historic with its impeachment of Andrew Johnson. Johnson survived the “storm” of impeachment; and Bromwell survived his term, but the gathering “storm” of Jesse H. Moore in 1866 overcame him in 1868.

# 1876

## PART II-THE 1876 CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION IN THE ILLINOIS FOURTEENTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

### A. Who was John Charles Black?

John Charles Black was born January 27, 1839, in Lexington, Mississippi. Charles, as he chose to go by in his years of majority, was the son of Pennsylvanians John Black (1809-1847) and Josephine L Culbertson (1813-1887). Service in the ministry by the male Blacks went back several generations, and John Charles' father followed his father's path and became a Presbyterian minister, who practiced his ministry in the South until a year prior to his death<sup>13</sup>. The marriage produced four siblings: John Charles (1839-1915), Mary Elizabeth Black Hart (1841-1920), William Perkins Black (1842-1916) and Josephine LaRose Black (1845-1863), the latter three born in Kentucky. Prior to his passing in 1847, Rev. Black "obtained a wide repute as a preacher of unusual power, eloquence and fervor, and was made a Doctor of Divinity when thirty-six years of age."<sup>14</sup>

When his father died, Charles' mother removed herself and her children to Danville, Illinois, where Charles received his early education in the "common schools." The 1850 Federal census reported Josephine (age 36) as the spouse of Dr. William Fithian<sup>15</sup>, with Charles (age 12), William (age 8), Mary (age 9) and Louise (age 6) living in his household. William reported \$50,000 and Josephine \$1000 in real estate holdings. By 1860, Dr. Fithian's real estate holdings had grown to \$60,000, but

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<sup>13</sup> He was Pastor at Fifth Presbyterian Church of Alleghany City, Pennsylvania. Beckwith, Hiram, *History of Vermilion County*, page 401 (1879)

<sup>14</sup> Beckwith, *supra*, page 401.

<sup>15</sup> They married in 1850.

Josephine listed no holdings, and in what had to have been a clerical error, John Charles' birthplace had changed to Kentucky.<sup>16</sup>

Charles entered Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana, as a freshman in 1858. Military fever was developing on the campus and Charles joined with John P. Blinn and Ezra J Dodds to form a "Cadet Company." Blinn acted as Captain with Black and Dodds as his lieutenants. These cadets bought their own uniforms and were armed with government rifles "secured through the influence of Lew Wallace."<sup>17</sup> Black also joined Phi Delta Theta fraternity<sup>18</sup> while at Wabash College. A history of the college noted that during Black's membership in the late Fifties, "The fraternity existed outside of the law, because of the college regulation against fraternities." It was only after the performance of its members during the Civil War was reviewed by the college administration, presumptively including that of Charles Black, that Wabash College accepted fraternities as a part of its social system.<sup>19</sup>

When Lincoln was elected in 1860, "Charly" wrote to his Mother

And now comes the proudest moment of my letter writing moments: I can and do set my hand to the statement that Lincoln is Elected! The boys & especially the Illinoisans were wild with joy & the halls resounded with glad cries and yells. I could not tell my delight, Mother, in the proud consciousness that I have helped, however feebly, to obtain the glorious result. Now can I speak my satisfaction that I am from the "Eelinois"-Mother of the first Republican president! I think the last hour of the revolution of '76 has come & the result will soon be perfected. God guide & hold Lincoln in his administration of affairs (I like to have added, We'll hold the Southerners). . . Charly<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Fithians resided in dwelling 126, and presumably next door, in dwelling 125, were the O. F. Harmons, an attorney.

<sup>17</sup> *Wabash College: The First Hundred Years, 1832-1932*, James Insley Osborne and Theodore Gregory Gronert, Crawfordsville, Indiana (1932), page 118.

<sup>18</sup> It was a secret society.

<sup>19</sup> *Wabash College, supra*, page 116.

<sup>20</sup> *Lincoln: Twenty Years on the Eastern Prairie*, Donald G. Richter, United Graphics, Mattoon, Illinois (1999), page 270.

Black, who was at the end of his junior year, with his brother William P.,<sup>21</sup> enlisted for a period of three months in Lew Wallace's Montgomery Guards on April 13/14/15, 1861, the days Fort Sumter was attacked.<sup>22</sup> Charles was made Sergeant-Major of Lew Wallace's 11<sup>th</sup> Indiana Volunteers. The Black brothers fought with this regiment at the battle at Romney, West Virginia. Upon their release, the brothers returned to Danville, Illinois, and recruited Company "K" of the 37<sup>th</sup> Illinois Volunteer Infantry. <sup>23</sup>Upon the formal organization of the 37<sup>th</sup>, Charles was elected Major (August 15, 1861) and William commissioned a Captain.<sup>24</sup> Charles was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on June 9, 1862, and to Colonel on November 20, 1862. He was promoted to Brevet Brigadier General on March 13, 1865, and was released from active duty on August 15, 1865. William was mustered out on September 29, 1864.<sup>25</sup> There was no physical description included on Charles' enlistment record, but William was described as 5'11", with black hair, black eyes, fair complexion, single and a student, aged 19.

A picture of Charles from the time period survives in a history of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> William would also become an attorney and would be described in *The Chicago Legal News*, Volume 31, pages 67-74, (1898-1899), William was described as a "God-made orator; he is logical, has an unusual flow of language and is one of the ablest speakers at the bar. He stands in the front ranks of the legal profession." He served as a defense counsel for defendants in the Haymarket Riot Trials.

<sup>22</sup> Approximately 75 miles directly east, Joseph G. Cannon, the newly elected state's attorney in the Illinois 27<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, was trying his first murder trial in Urbana, Illinois.

<sup>23</sup> While there are numerous histories of the 37<sup>th</sup>, an easily accessible one is in the *Chicago Tribune*, June 22, 1866.

<sup>24</sup> *Memorials of Deceased Companions of the Commandery of the State of Illinois, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*, Chicago (1901-1923), page 263.

<sup>25</sup> Illinois Databases of Illinois Veterans Index, 1775-1995.

<sup>26</sup> *The History of the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity*, Walter Benjamin Palmer (1906).



BRIGADIER-GENERAL  
JOHN CHARLES BLACK,  
Wabash, '62.\*

The brothers demonstrated extraordinary bravery and leadership during the War. They served all together through the War in the 37<sup>th</sup> Illinois, and both received the Congressional Medal of Honor for their bravery during the conflict.<sup>27</sup> Charles was wounded twice during the War. During the battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, on March 7, 1862, he received a gun-shot wound through an arm, with the second wound received at the battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas, on December 7, 1872.<sup>28</sup> William, too, was wounded at Pea Ridge, both falling within five minutes of each other, thirty yards apart.<sup>29</sup> President Lincoln followed their career and their wounding closely through the auspices of Ward Hill Lamon.

Upon his release from active duty, Charles <sup>30</sup>studied law in Chicago with the firm of Gookins and Roberts<sup>31</sup>, In early 1866 Charles (billed as “Gen.

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<sup>27</sup> One of five sets of brothers to accomplish this honor.

<sup>28</sup> Beckwith, *supra*, page 402.

<sup>29</sup> *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, 1847-1865*, Ward Hill Lamon, ed. By Dorothy Lamon, Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company (1895), page 104.

<sup>30</sup> Charles participated in the last battle of the war in Alabama at the assault on Fort Blaknelly. During that assault future challenger to Joseph Gurney Cannon fell, severely wounded: Samuel T. Busey of Urbana.

<sup>31</sup> Admitted to practice law in Illinois in 1867.

Charles Black, Illinois) gave a speech at the inaugural exercises of the Illinois chapter of Phi Delta Theta in the lecture room of the First Baptist Church on Wabash Avenue.<sup>32</sup> The *Tribune* summarized Black's speech in the next day's edition (January 12, 1866) of the paper.

He introduced his remarks by saying, in regard to the music, that it was unfortunate he had to break the spell which had evidently been thrown over the meeting by the charming rendition of Hood's poem, but it was a thing he could not avoid. They were now engaged, he said, in the solution of great national questions, which had been forced upon us by the recent struggle through which the country had passed; and on these it behooved us to ponder, and acquire what lessons we could derive from the stirring actions of our heroes, and the words of the wise. A time of change having arrived, it was fitting that we should indulge in a retrospect of the past, in order, if possible, to forecast the future—it would have been very pleasant task for him to give some account of the scenes connected with the great struggle of which he had much to tell, but it formed but a part of the subject on which he proposed to dilate, and he would therefore leave the story of the war to be told by others. The past week had witnessed in this city [Chicago] one of the most impressive of all processions.<sup>33</sup> We had welcomed a band of heroes, not with the bray of trumpets, or the roll of drums, but with weepings and lamentations, and had laid them in the cold embrace of earth. Such a scene was alike honorable to people and to the memory of those brave departed warriors. The speaker then passed in review the more prominent features of the intellectual progress of the age, and traced its developments in all fields of activity, literary, scientific and industrial. His discourse was full of suggestive thought, and although somewhat too general in its tendency, and having little reference to any special subject, was instructive and well-prepared. It was listened to with evident interest on the part of

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<sup>32</sup> Chicago *Tribune*, January 11, 1866.

<sup>33</sup> On January 7, 1866, Chicago provided a funeral service and burial for nineteen soldiers killed during the conflict from Batteries "A" and "B" of the First Illinois Light Artillery and the Chicago Board of Trade Battery. Thousands attended the service and followed the coffins to their burial. Chicago *Tribune*, January 8, 1866.



the hearers, and at its conclusion a vote of thanks was tendered the orator.

At some point in 1866 Black returned to Danville to run for Congress against Republican (Radical) incumbent H. P. H. Bromwell in the Seventh congressional district.<sup>34</sup> In 1866, the Seventh consisted of Macon, Piatt, Champaign, Douglas, Moultrie, Coles, Cumberland, Edgar, Vermilion, Iroquois, and Ford counties.

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<sup>34</sup> Charles was raised in the home of a high profile, wealthy, close friend and client of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln knew the two Black brothers well, having watched them grow up in Dr. Fithian's household.

<sup>35</sup> The following account of the 1866 congressional campaign first appeared in Timothy Ohrea Smith's essay *A Star in His Course: The First Congressional Campaign of Joseph Gurney Cannon*, pages 27-31 (2019).

<sup>36</sup> August 30, 1866. For a brief review of this party, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1866\\_National\\_Union\\_Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1866_National_Union_Convention)

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Bromwell, Oglesby and the Radical Congress!' and such deafening round of cheers went up in response as has seldom been heard here.

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.....

The thing is all one way in old Coles. Our soldiers and citizens are proud of Bromwell and sorry for Black.

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, the *Tribune* reported on the "joint discussion" between the two candidates in Decatur on the 25<sup>th</sup>. A portion of the discussion addressed whether the debt incurred by the Southern states in fighting the war should be repaid by the North. Bromwell was firmly against it and noted "the creditors of the late rebel Government were the men we had now to fight, and that nothing short of putting a clause in the constitution would save our children from the payment of that debt." The article concluded

General Black replied in a speech of one hour and twenty minutes, utterly ignoring all discussions, and depending entirely upon flippancy and repartee for applause he received. All felt he had been utterly extinguished by Bromwell.

During the campaign, Bromwell had to reschedule a joint appearance with Black at Paxton. Bromwell was Grand Master of the Illinois Grand Lodge of the Masons and its state session was going to occur on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, so Black graciously rescheduled the appearance to October 9<sup>th</sup>.

Bromwell's involvement in and contributions to the Masons was deep and life long. <sup>40</sup>

In a letter to the editor of the *Chicago Tribune* published on October 4, 1866, "A SOLDIER" reported

The Seventh Congressional District is all right. H. P. H. Bromwell will beat the renegade soldier, General Black, so badly that the young man will scarcely ever be heard from again. He has fallen into bad company, and has already begun to discover the sad fact, and hence he hobbles on badly in the race. What a pity for himself, that this young man of some promise, was, in an evil hour, induced to sell out at such a low price. He was heretofore a Republican, and you may know he makes an awkward [sic] out fighting a veteran Republican with old Democratic arguments, such as abolition, negro equality, sectionalism, &c.

H. P. H. Bromwell defeated General John Charles Black, 17,410 to 13,352.

By 1868, Black had moved his practice from Danville to Champaign.<sup>41</sup> In April 1868, Black attended the Illinois Democratic State Convention in Springfield and was nominated by the Democrats to be a Presidential Elector in the Seventh congressional district.<sup>42</sup> The State ticket that year was led by Sullivan, Illinois' John Eden (for Governor). During the 1868 campaign, Black appeared in Macon County to make a speech for the Democratic ticket, and the Decatur *Weekly Republican* noted

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<sup>40</sup> In May, 1868, Bromwell participated in the laying of the cornerstone at the new Masonic Temple at the corner of Ninth and F streets in Washington, D. C. Richmond, Virginia, *Dispatch*, May 22, 1868

<sup>41</sup> Initially he entered into a partnership with W. D. Somers, but that ended in February 1869 when that partnership dissolved and Black formed a partnership with J. M. Culbertson, with offices in Rooms 1 and 2, Marble's Block, Champaign City, Illinois. *Champaign Gazette and Union*, February 24, 1869. The *Champaign County Gazette*, in announcing the new partnership, opined, "We bespeak for them the greatest measure of success, and as they are a couple of energetic, studious and talented gentlemen, they will no doubt be entrusted with much legal business." March 3, 1869.

<sup>42</sup> Chicago, Illinois, *Evening Post*, April 16, 1868.

Charles Black, the other speaker, has been a good soldier and is a man of fair ability. Deceived, however, by the promise of office from the democrats he deserted the republican ranks, and has waded so far into the filthy sough of copperheadism that he cannot retrace his steps. He is an object of pity if not contempt.<sup>43</sup>

By 1870, Black had become the Champaign attorney for the Indianapolis, Bloomington, and Western Railway. This was a substantial client for the young lawyer. The one hundred and seventy mile railroad

passes through the counties of Marion, Hendricks, Montgomery, Fountain, Warren and Vermillion, in the State of Indiana, and Vermilion, Champaign, DeWitt, Piatt, McClean, and Tazwell Counties, in Illinois, on the line of the old emigrant State road, which was laid out in the best portion of those States before the time of railroads, was then the main line of Western travel, and consequently became more thickly settled than other sections of the West, as the numerous cities, large villages, and products of these counties demonstrate.

Besides the large agricultural productions of this section, the manufacturing interest is very extensive in the large towns, and rapidly increasing.

The coal mines at Danville on this line are extensively and profitably worked, and furnish business for over three hundred coal cars at present, and more than twice that number will be required to carry coal on completion of the remaining link.<sup>44</sup>

Black's reputation as a competent and talented man, even though a Democrat, is evidenced by Republican Governor Palmer's appointment of him as a delegate from the Seventh congressional district to the Federal Capital Convention in Cincinnati in October 1870.<sup>45</sup> This was part of a movement to remove the U. S. Capital to a more central location in the Midwest.

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<sup>43</sup> August 20, 1868.

<sup>44</sup> *American Railroad Journal*, Published Weekly by John H. Schultz, New York, June 4, 1870.

<sup>45</sup> *Rock Island Argus*, October 13, 1870.

Like most politicians and lawyers of the time, Black participated in local social organizations. In December 1870, Black was selected at the regular conclave of the Urbana Commandery of the Knights Templar as an officer.<sup>46</sup>

In the fall of 1871, the Illinois Democracy held a convention in Springfield and Black was selected to serve on the party's committee on Permanent Organization. Black was clearly a rising star.

In June 1872, the Danville *Times* floated Black's name as a candidate for Congress to oppose Cannon, who was running for his first term.

The Danville *Times* says General Charles Black, of Champaign (anti-administration) will probably run for Congress in the Fourteenth District, against Joseph G. Cannon (Administration candidate), and we may add, be elected. The *Times* says: 'A change of 426 votes would elect him (Black) allowing the voting population to be unchanged in numbers. We must keep our organization well in hand, and not attempt to proscribe [Horace] Greeley Republicans, or drive them from us, or we shall see the splendid Republican majority to which we are rightly entitled dwindle to a mere handful, or be turned against us.'<sup>47</sup>

On June 18, 1872, Black had the opportunity to mix with the Illinois Press Association at its annual meeting in Champaign-Urbana. When J. H. Oberly, editor of the Cairo *Bulletin*, the regular orator, did not attend, an "invitation to address the convention was extended to Gen Charles Black, of Champaign, who responded in eloquent and appropriate remarks, all the more enjoyable because made only upon shortest notice, and entirely extempore."<sup>48</sup> If Black was not known before by newspaper editors outside of east central Illinois, this last minute opportunity allowed him to present himself to a room filled with newspaper editors (all of whom practiced politics in earnest) from throughout the State. But Black's anonymity (if any remained after this

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<sup>46</sup> Champaign *County Gazette*, December 21, 1870.

<sup>47</sup> Reprinted in the Chicago *Tribune*, June 19, 1872.

<sup>48</sup> Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, June 24, 1872.

convention) would disappear a week later, when Black became the State Democracy's candidate for Lieutenant Governor.

Black joined Gustavus Koerner, the Democratic candidate for Governor, at the head of the 1872 State ticket. Black was describes as a "soldier, scholar, orator and lawyer" who "will bring to the office the requisite qualities, and cannot fail to receive the approval of the people."<sup>49</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* printed a letter from a "Fellow-Soldier" dated Chicago, July 1<sup>st</sup>, which provided a gruesome, but highly sympathetic, picture of Black on the political stump.

Sir: Regarding your candidate for Lieutenant Governor, some Chicago papers ask 'Who is General Charles Black?'

He is an able, popular, rising young lawyer, and a fine orator, well known on all platforms in the Seventh Congressional District of Illinois. No man thereaway [sic], as a public speaker, can equal General Black.

If his platform manners have a fault, it is their one-sidedness. His right arm gestures, but the left hangs limp. The apology for this is to be found in the fact that a couple inches of his left armwere dug out ('excision of the' something-or-other) in a hospital at Port Hudson (I think it was), just after the capture of the place, wherein he assisted. Besides, bits of bone, enough to set up a small anatomical museum, have been coming from the same wound at intervals since that occurrence."

On July 6, 1872, the Ottawa, Illinois, *Free Trader* noted

Gen. John C. Black, of Champaign County, the nominee for Lieutenant Governor, is a democrat, and one of the most eloquent orators in the West. He was a brave soldier in the war for the preservation of the Union, and is immensely popular in the southeastern portion of the State.

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<sup>49</sup> Clinton, Illinois, Semi-Weekly Register, July 2, 1872.

Black's campaign was a family affair.<sup>50</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* reported on August 19, 1872, under the headline "LIBERALISM AT DECATUR, IL."

[t]he Greeley and Koerner Club of this city [Decatur] was addressed this evening by Captain William P. Black, of Chicago. His address was an able, eloquent, and logical appeal, devoid of all personalities, and at the same time, a scathing review of the Administration of General Grant. The audience was large and enthusiastic, many of whom, like the speaker, were Grant men in 1868, but now refuse to join in his re-election.

The Paxton, Illinois, *Weekly Record* took a shot at Black in its September 5, 1872 edition by describing him as "...the only black Greeleyite in Champaign. . ."

Black's candidacy on the State ticket gave him the opportunity to speak at venues throughout the campaign outside of East central Illinois.<sup>51</sup> But Champaign was never far from his stomping's. On September 14, 1872 a "grand Liberal demonstration" was advertised on the old Fair-Ground, adjoining the two cities. It was an old fashioned barbecue at which "an ox will be roasted whole."<sup>52</sup> Black joined, *inter alia*, Governor Palmer, John Eden, W. E. Nelson (who was running against Cannon for Congress), and J. B. Mann of Danville. In a hint of what was to come eighteen years later, General S. T. Busey (when Busey challenged and beat Cannon for Congress for one term in 1890), acted as Marshall.<sup>53</sup>

One of Black's last appearances in the campaign was in Rockford. In a special report to the *Chicago Tribune*, it was noted Black

made one of his usual brilliant and telling speeches. The audience throughout gave him their undivided attention, and the hearty applause which he constantly received demonstrated clearly that

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<sup>50</sup> Both Cannon and Black had younger brothers, both "William P.," both lawyers, and both took an active part in their older brothers politics.

<sup>51</sup> For list of State-wide appointments, see *Chicago Tribune*, September 28, 1872.

<sup>52</sup> As well as Republicans metaphorically.

<sup>53</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, September 12, 1872.



he was fully appreciated. A large number attended the meeting, and all seemed well pleased with the speech.<sup>54</sup>

Gen. Black's name appeared in a long article published in the *Chicago Tribune* on June 22, 1873, discussing the legitimacy of Abraham Lincoln. Ward Hill Lamon had raised the issue that Lincoln's parents were not married at the time of his birth, and the article included a telegram from Black to J. A. Reed confirming that Black (who was described as a "warm personal friend of Mr. Lincoln") had been in possession of a family record that confirmed the marriage of his parents.

The leaf is very old, and is the last page of the Apocrypha. It was given to me, with certificate of genuineness, by Dennis F. Hanks, in 1866. I have sent both record and certificate to William P. Black, attorney at law, 131 LaSalle street, Chicago, Ill., and duly by him delivered to the Illinois Historical Association. The Hon. I. N. Arnold called on my brother and obtained the originals for use in a revised edition of his life of Lincoln, and I understand that since then they have passed into the hands of Robert Lincoln, Esq., where they were when I last heard from them.

Black continued to participate in local politics in 1873, the year the Farmers and Grangers began to develop their political muscle in the circuit court and Illinois Supreme Court elections.<sup>55</sup> That muscle evolved in Illinois into the Independent Reform Party. On July 4<sup>th</sup> of that year Black spoke at the celebration in Urbana at Busey's Grove.

On August 20<sup>th</sup>, the farmers in Coles County, Illinois, met in a grand convention, and Black was there and made an "able speech." The farmers carried signs showing their political beliefs: "Equal Rights to All; Special Favors to None;" "Down with Monopolies;" "No More Office Seekers; Let the Office Seek the Man;" "In our Detestation of Salary-Grabbers We Know No Party-No Republicans, No Democrats." Just below the account of this Coles County meeting, the *Chicago Tribune* carried an account of Vermilion County's farmers' meeting in Catlin. It reported

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<sup>54</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, November 2, 1872.

<sup>55</sup> *Champaign County Gazette*, June 18, 1873.

There was assembled on the fair grounds at Catlin to-day a very large number of people, who had come expecting to hear a discussion of the transportation question that would give them a clearer insight into the causes that depress them, but instead they were treated by the Hon. Joseph J. [sic] Cannon to a lame defense of the salary-grab, and a plea for the return of the good old days when the mails were loaded down with books and documents bearing the franks of Congressmen. Mr. Cannon's speech was in every respect a failure, as farmers in this county are determined upon nothing so much as routing out the Congressional till-tappers.<sup>56</sup>

As the congressional elections in 1874 approached, Black resigned his position as the attorney for the Indianapolis, Bloomington and Western Railway, and the Bloomington, Illinois, *Pantagraph* wondered "whether [this was done] for the purpose of qualifying himself for a place on an Anti-monopoly ticket or otherwise is not stated."<sup>57</sup> A month later the *Pantagraph* reported "an effort is being made at Danville to bring out Gen. Charles Black, of Champaign, as an independent candidate for Congress."<sup>58</sup> In a special dispatch from Decatur to the *Chicago Tribune* published on July 9, 1874, it was reported the "Hon. Charles Black has the best hold for the Independent Reform nomination for Congress in this (the Fourteenth) District. If nominated, he will give the other candidate a lively race."<sup>59</sup> Yet the *Charleston Courier*, as reported by the *Decatur Weekly Republican*, had a different take on Black.

The *Charleston Courier* admits that there is not the harmony in the ranks of the opposition party to the Republicans in this district that should exist, but thinks Black would do more to harmonize the unorganized elements than anything else. When a party or a horde of 'Independents' are compelled to rely upon a single man, rather than upon measures, for success over a power party organization, founded on the living issues of the times, one would naturally conclude that they were sadly at fault for

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<sup>56</sup> August 21, 1873.

<sup>57</sup> May 29, 1874.

<sup>58</sup> June 24, 1874.

<sup>59</sup> July 9, 1874.

something to operate with. If there is not sufficient material in their principles to harmonize all their elements opposed to the Republican party, we should conclude that the reform movement would come out pretty slim.-*Danville Commercial* <sup>60</sup>

Black continued to make moves signaling an interest in pursuing office in the fall. A Masonic, Odd-Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Fenian [sic], and Grangers picnic was held in Catlin on August 6, 1874, and Black joined ex-Governor Palmer as the principal speakers. Palmer spoke on "Anti-Monopolies" and Black on "Secret Orders," presumably with the Grangers in mind. The report estimated eight thousand persons attended.<sup>61</sup>

Black remained viable in the Democratic party at the State level, at least before his letter discussed below became known. The *Chicago Tribune* reported on August 26, 1874, that, as to the "PRESIDENCY OF THE CONVENTION, the chances at present appear to be in favor of General Black."

By mid-August, however, Black had decided he wanted nothing to do with the farmer's Independent Reform Party.

On Tuesday night last, in a back office over a drug store in Decatur, a semi-secret caucus of the self-assumed heads of the McCormick wing of the Democracy of Macon county was held, which nevertheless assumed so far the functions of a county convention as to appoint delegates to the McCormick [head of the State Democracy party] State convention. To this assembly was read a letter which its chief engineer had extracted from the General. . . .

The General, we believe, is expected to be the candidate of that wing of the Democracy in his District. It will be observed [in his letter that was reprinted elsewhere in the paper] that he defines his position unmistakably, and cuts loose alike from the inflation Democracy and from the agricultural reformers.

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<sup>60</sup> July 9, 1874.

<sup>61</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, August 7, 1874.

This letter effectively ended Black's run, if one can call it that, for the nomination of the Democracy and the Independent Reform Party's candidate for Congress to challenge Cannon.<sup>62</sup>

The substance of Black's letter is interesting, and some thought it would end his political career, but there was probably another reason why Black sent it.

News was received at Danville Monday evening [September 18<sup>th</sup>] that Gen. Charles Black, who has been seriously ill for four weeks at the residence of his father-in-law, the Hon. C. R. Griggs, at Wilmington, Del., was rapidly failing and could not recover. His disease is affection of the lungs, and seems to have developed itself within a few weeks. His parents started for his bedside yesterday morning.<sup>63</sup>

The recovery from this illness was slow. Black, described as a "prominent politician and lawyer of this State, who has been suffering for some time past with a pulmonary disease," made an extended trip through the Southern States and on June 5, 1875, the *Chicago Tribune* reported his return to Urbana and "his health is much improved, and hopes are entertained of his entire recovery." That October, Black and his family made "their summer sojourn" to Colorado, and were reported back in Danville, "much improved in health."<sup>64</sup> But it was the *Danville Commercial* that hinted of things to come.

St Louis Republican: Gen. J. C. Black, of Champaign, Illinois, to whom the democrats of the 14<sup>th</sup> congressional district look as their coming candidate for representative in congress, returned a few weeks since from a health seeking trip in the western mountains. He recovers but slowly from his long and severe

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<sup>62</sup> For a detailed discussion of the development of the Farmers Movement and the Grangers into the Illinois Independent Reform Party, this letter, and its impact in the run up to the 1874 congressional campaign in the Illinois Fourteenth District, see Timothy Ohrea Smith's essay "...Are You Going To Vote For Pickrell, His Bull, or Me?" The 1874 Congressional Campaign of Joseph Gurney Cannon.

<sup>63</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, September 23, 1874.

<sup>64</sup> Champaign, Illinois, *Times*, October 2, 1875.

illness. He is an able lawyer, and doubtless the most gifted orator among the politicians and lawyers of that state. His military record as colonel of an Illinois regiment in Union service during the rebellion reflects honor upon him. His nomination for congress by the democrats doubtless only upon his recovery of health.<sup>65</sup>

As the spring of 1876 arrived in east central Illinois, speculation continued about Black running for Congress against Cannon, who appeared to have had a lock on his re-nomination. The *Mattoon Gazette* speculated on the possible Cannon opponents in its April 7, 1876 edition.

The first man named for the place was Hon. Charles Black, who has several times sacrificed as an offering on the Democratic alter, but infirm health disqualifies him for the arduous duties of the campaign, if not for congressional work should he-chance to-be elected. So he is regarded as essentially out of the question as a possible candidate.

Next to Black, the name of J. B. Mann Esq., of Danville has been mentioned. This *Man* is a promising young lawyer who has had the honor of being a partner of Judge O. L. Davis and who has some mettle for such a race, although by no means generally known or popular. How far his claims will be pushed is as yet problematical. We question whether Mann is regarded as a Bourbon Democrat. Our best information is that he is a disaffected republican of the Judge David Davis school who would be willing-oh yes glad-to take any position the democrats or independents might offer him.

Still later, it is understood, the independents have been considering the availability of Regent Gregory of the Industrial University at Champaign, under the supposition that the democrats would support him under the lead of the independents as they did Pickring [Pickrell] two years ago. But this scheme has its drawbacks. In the first place Mr. Gregory is a Republican and is

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<sup>65</sup> December 9, 1875.

an honest man who is accustomed to act up to the best convictions and if elected would be much more likely to support his views of what is right than to follow the lead of the Democratic Independent party. This is recognized as a serious obstacle to his candidacy and this together with Dr. Gregory's natural disinclination to politics will probably in the end dispose of him also.

Hence the present indications lead us to believe that Mann of Danville is most likely to lead the hosts of the unterrified to certain defeat in the next congressional contest in this district.

Whatever health issues lingered for Black, by May 11, 1876, the Paxton, Illinois *Record* reported that the Tolono Herald noted "It is now quite probable that General Charles Black will be the democratic candidate for Congress from this district."<sup>66</sup>

At the end of June 1876, Black's name was not only being tossed about for Congress, but also as a potential candidate for Governor of Illinois.

A candidate that is growing in popularity, for Governor of Illinois, is Gen. Black, the eloquent orator who made such an excellent race for Lieutenant Governor with Koerner, at the last election. The nomination will probably fall upon Black, McCormick or Palmer.<sup>67</sup>

While this article smacks of being a "trial balloon," Black's move towards the congressional nomination to oppose Cannon was facilitated by the help of his brother William, himself a distinguished veteran<sup>68</sup> of the War and a Chicago attorney.

Camargo has secured the services of W. P. Black, a Chicago [sic], and brother of Gen. Black, to spread the American eagle on the Fourth of July.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> May 11, 1876.

<sup>67</sup> Salem, Illinois *Herald-Advocate*, June 23, 1876.

<sup>68</sup> He would receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions at Pea Ridge on March 2, 1862.

<sup>69</sup> Mattoon *Gazette*, June 30, 1876.

In 1874, Cannon's congressional opponent Pickrell dealt with the problem of receiving the Democratic party and the Independent Reform Party's separate nominations by accepting the Reform nomination but receiving just the endorsement of the Democrats in the district. The two parties' platforms contained inconsistent planks, and the Republicans in the Fourteenth district pounded Pickrell for having his feet planted on two inconsistent political platforms. As 1876 approached, Black needed a strategy to reduce similar assaults on him because of the inconsistencies in the Democratic and the Independent/greenback parties' currency platform planks.

In an attempt to simplify what follows, the currency issues in 1876 were the beginnings of a debate that would last in American politics until the early 1930s: should the United States adopt a currency grounded in gold/silver (specie), or should it abandon the gold standard and issue currency based upon the full faith and credit of the federal government, (greenbacks). After the 1930s, the currency of the United States was and remains based only upon the full faith and credit of the federal government.

In 1876 there were four currencies in circulation: national bank notes; U. S. notes; other U. S. Currency; and fractional currency. Politically, the "hot" notes were the national bank notes and the U. S. notes. National bank notes were liabilities of national banks, issued by the national banks with limits imposed by their required deposits with the U. S. Treasury of government bonds. They could be used to pay debts but could not be used to meet the reserve requirements of national banks. United States notes were the "greenbacks." They were sometimes referred to as "fiduciary currency." These were created and issued by the Lincoln administration to help pay for the cost of the War. The other two principal components of "currency" were gold notes in circulation and gold coins (specie), but they played only a small role at this time. By 1874, the law fixed the amount of greenbacks allowed. During the greenback period, there was a suspension of tying the value of national bank notes and greenback currency to gold. The other principal portions of currency were gold and gold certificates. Because of the suspension of exchange of notes for gold, "there was a dual monetary standard-the greenback dollar and the gold dollar-the official, the other

unofficial, and the price of one in terms of the other determined in a free market-the market for gold . . . .That is why they could exist side by side without either driving the other out,”<sup>70</sup>

As congress struggled with solving the currency problem which had been exacerbated by the Panic of 1873, the three principal political parties adopted national platforms containing their solutions.

The Republican platform reaffirmed its existing monetary policy, that the Federal Government’s obligation was to pay all public creditors what was due them (i. e., make good on the pledge to exchange gold for the currency which it backed), and it

solemnly pledged its faith to make provision at the earliest practicable period for the redemption of the United States notes in coin. Commercial prosperity, public morals, and national credit demand that the promise be fulfilled by a continuous and steady progress to specie-payment.

This plank called for the party to stay the course in its established monetary policies: issue currency based upon gold, allow silver as legal tender only for transactions less than \$5 (the Republicans had removed silver as legal tender in 1873 but for the \$5 allowance), and remove greenbacks from circulation by the resumption of a currency based on gold.

The Democratic party’s platform approached monetary policy questions by claiming that reform of the policies adopted by the republicans at the conclusion of the War and during the last eleven years was necessary, but the Democrats shared with the Republicans the same final goal of a specie-backed currency. The Democrats differed from the Republicans in how to reach that goal. Reform by reductions in federal expenditures and elimination of corruption of the republican administration was one of the ways to return to a sound specie-based currency.<sup>71</sup> The Democrats proposed

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<sup>70</sup> See *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867-1960*, Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, Princeton University Press, 1963), pages 20 to 27.

<sup>71</sup> This reform policy provides the context for the struggles (and Cannon’s efforts to make sure the proposed cuts did not effect the substantive services of the post



Reform is necessary to establish a sound currency, restore the public credit, and maintain the national honor. We denounce the failure for all these eleven years to make good the promise of legal tender notes, which are a changing standard of value in the hands of the people, and the non-payment of which is the disregard of the plighted faith of the nation. We denounce the improvidence which in eleven years of peace has taken from the people in Federal taxes thirteen times the whole amount of the legal tender notes, and squandered four times their sum in useless expense, without accumulating any reserve for their redemption. We denounce the financial imbecility and immorality of that party which, during eleven years of peace, has made no advance toward resumption, no preparation for resumption, but instead has obstructed resumption by wasting our resources and exhausting all our surplus income, and, while annually professing to intend a speedy return to specie payments, has annually enacted fresh hindrances thereto. And such hindrance, we nounce [sic] the resumption clause of the act of 1875, and we demand its repeal.

The Independent party's platform, also known as the Greenback party, based its monetary policy in the failure of both the Republicans and the Democrats to provide relief from the effects of the Panic of 1873.

1. We demand the immediate and unconditional repeal of the specie resumption act of January 14, 1875, . . .
2. We believe that the United States note, issued directly by the government [not those issued by national banks], and convertible on demand into United States obligations, bearing a low interest, not exceeding one cent a day on each one hundred dollars, and re-exchangeable for United States notes at par, will afford the best circulating medium ever devised; such United States notes should be a full legal tender for all purposes, except for the payment of such obligations as are existing contracts expressly made payable in coin. And we hold that it is the duty of the government to

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office) between the democrats and the republicans over the budget during the first session of the Forty-fourth Congress.

provide such a circulating medium and insist in the language of Thomas Jefferson 'that bank paper must be suppressed and circulation restored to the nation to whom it belongs.'

By this second plank, the Independent party endorsed the continuation of greenbacks as currency that were not backed by specie, i.e., soft money. The one cent interest per hundred dollars technically made the greenback currency specie-backed, but in fact it remained fiduciary currency. By their reference to Jefferson, the democrats also called for the withdrawal of authority for national banks to issue bank notes.

As the Democratic and Independent parties in the Fourteenth district prepared for their separate conventions in Champaign (both held on the same day in buildings across the street from each other), Black prepared a letter dated July 17<sup>th</sup> in Urbana setting forth his political beliefs on the currency question and resumption of specie payments.

It will never be known if Black knew about Cannon's presentation in the House several days earlier. But the opportunity to reply to an inquiry about his position on the currency question gave him the opportunity to set forth his thoughts on the matter, allowing the voters in the Fourteenth district to contrast their positions. The letter also gave him an opportunity to reveal his reason for accepting both the Democratic and Independent/Greenback party congressional nominations. Black's letter was his effort not to adopt wholly either of the Democratic or the Independent/Greenback platforms, nor reconcile their clear incompatibilities on the currency issues, but to formulate his own position on the problem. In doing so, he was doing exactly what Cannon did in his July 13<sup>th</sup> House presentation. Cannon parted ways with the Republican platform of using only gold as the specie of currency by insisting that silver be made, with gold once again, the basis of the currency.

The letter was reported and reprinted in its entirety in a number of newspapers throughout the Fourteenth district,<sup>72</sup> and Republican

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<sup>72</sup> See *Danville News*, August 2, 1876. The *Chicago Tribune* reported: "Danville, Ill., July 21.-Gen. Charles Black, of Champaign, who will receive the nomination for Congress from this District on the Democratic ticket, publishes in the *Danville Daily*

commentary and analysis was quick. Black began his letter confirming that within the Fourteenth congressional district

the paramount questions of the canvass here are those of FINANCE. Until a conclusion is reached in the public mind regarding these, other issues, *save that of reform*,<sup>73</sup> will be treated as of no special value, however vital they may be.”<sup>74</sup>

Black’s letter was, as Cannon noted thousands were doing, engaging in the general discussion on financial policy, seeking his solution to the problem.<sup>75</sup> And like Cannon, he started his presentation asserting

The first maxim to be remembered in the discussion of the money question now, as always, is, that HONESTY IS THE ONLY POLICY a great republic ever can, or ever will, adopt. Adopting any other would prove a people lacking in vital power.

Like Cannon, Black reviewed the history of the republican monetary policy from 1866 to 1875, and recounted how the Republicans began

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*Times* of to-day a lengthy letter favoring soft money and the repeal of the Resumption act.”

<sup>73</sup> Emphasis added by essayist. By informing his electorate that the campaign to replace Cannon was based not only on the currency question, but also the need to reform the Government allowed by the Republicans, Black could accept both the Democratic and Independent/Greenback party nominations.

<sup>74</sup> Danville News, August 2, 1876.

<sup>75</sup> See **Silver Coin** discussion, *supra*. “ Mr. Speaker, there is a general discussion throughout the country as to what should be our financial policy; and no man in ordinary life-times can intelligently read and digest all the essays and plans suggested by the thousands of persons who are discussing this question, and generally each one of whom is absolutely certain that his proposition is the magic wand which, if adopted, will calm either the storm or serve as a rudder by which to steer the ship of state over the angry sea into a harbor of safety. I do not deprecate the discussion, for in a republic like ours, whose destiny is control directly by the people, discussion leads to a proper understanding of the question, and when once understood, I have no doubt the people will, in the future as in the past, approve those measures which are right and politic; *for in the long run the old maxim applies to nations as well as to individuals, that honesty is the best policy; . . .*” [Emphasis added]

the process of moving toward a gold-based currency with the elimination of silver as legal tender for all practicable purposes. He reviewed the legislation that affected this, and called them “enormous crimes in legislation.” This legislation, with the increased authorization for the issuance of national bank-issued notes facilitating the process, resulted in the reduction in the amount of currency in circulation, i. e., greenbacks, and what remained were fewer greenbacks (i.e. “cheap money”) for the people to pay their debts.<sup>76</sup> Black’s support of greenbacks is best summarized in his statements: (1) cheap money based on the credit of an opulent republic is better than costly money based upon the republic’s gold bond backed currency; and (2) national bank notes need to be eliminated. Greenbacks were the people’s money.

The *Danville News* (probably William Jewell) summarized Black’s position in stark political terms.

Of course the letter of General J. C. Black is a matter of considerable local importance, and will be read by many of our citizens. Since he has come before the public as a candidate for congress, (generally so understood), and as this letter is his private platform, it is entitled to some attention. We cannot, for want of space, review this letter critically at length in this number of THE NEWS, but will pay it due attention in the next. [See August 7<sup>th</sup> edition] Briefly, we now say this letter that it is a good bourbonic democratic document. Because, 1<sup>st</sup>. The writer accuses the republican party of all ills that our poor old Job-like Uncle Sam suffers from, and punches up his boils lively with rye straws. 2d. He writes with characteristic burbonic, bucolic, ignorance or disregard of the facts.

3d. He shows a blissful ignorance of the elements of financial and political economy, over which Adam Smith, Bastait, Mill or Perry would groan.

4<sup>th</sup>. He treats the farmers and mechanics precisely as if they were a set of ignorant boobies dependent upon wise men like himself to

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<sup>76</sup> On July 1, 1876, in the financial pages of the *Chicago Tribune*, a greenback was quoted at 89 3/8 cents on the [gold] dollar.

give them information. Bourbons ever pre-suppose the ignorance of the 'credulous masses.'

5<sup>th</sup>. He uses the nonsense of calling the greenback 'the people's money,' and National Bank Notes 'the money of speculation.' This is the outer limits of the language of the demagogue.

6<sup>th</sup>. In asking that republicans be turned out of office and democrats put in, General Black only asks just what democrats have clamored for from the day of the elevation of the republican party to power-during the war and since the war, until this day. And when Mr. Black tells us to appeal to the ballot box for relief from our financial ills, and place in power the democratic party, it is [illegible]. Put in power the party that cursed the greenback, and condemned its issue as unconstitutional and tyrannical, who damned Chase, its projector, the congress that passed the greenback act, and President Lincoln who signed it. Put in office, as a means of relief a party which to-day can't repeal the greenback law! A party with a 'very hard money head,' as the New York *Sun* calls Mr. Tilden! This is a grim jest, General; it will strike sensible republicans and greenback men as thin nonsense.

6<sup>th</sup>[7<sup>th</sup>] The General shows himself a bourbon by passing over every good act which the republicans have done, and by forgetting all the bad acts the democrats have done.

7[8<sup>th</sup>] He shows himself a bourbon by the fact that he makes no mention of the massacres south; takes no note of the hoisting of rebel flags, or other little amusements, just like those which took place before the war.

In short, the General may be set down as a reliable bourbonic democrat, who now stands upon a little platform of his own making, but who, should he be sent to congress, would be placed in the rear of Knott, or Hill, or Lamar, with a gang of other 'independent men' and he with these other 'independent men' would follow the lead of these bourbon democratic lights like young goslings follow mother geese.

It is important to note that Jewell's criticism leans heavily on the "bourbon" nature of the letter, not so much the monetary policy. "Bourbons" were Republicans who abandoned Grant and the Republican party because of his and its corruptions. Jewell's approach suggests that he knew the "reform" aspect of Black's candidacy was the real threat to Cannon and fellow Republicans in the Fourteenth congressional district..

The *Danville Commercial*, in its review and critique of the letter on July 27, 1876, opined that "The people of this district-perhaps fully nine-tenths of them-love the greenback *and national bank currency* [Emphasis added]; they too believe it the best paper currency in use before the war, 'based' as it was on specie (?), and in this our congressional representative is with them thoroughly."

The anticipated nomination of Black to oppose Cannon occurred on August 7, 1876.<sup>77</sup> In what must be a rare occurrence in politics, two parties, in this case the Democratic and the Independent, met on the same day at the same place, across the street from each other, [Barrett's Hall for the Greenbacks and Eichberg's Hall for the Democrats] and nominated the same man for congress, John Charles Black.

Champaign, Illinois, Aug 8.-The Assistant Democrats and the regular Mossbacks held separate Conventions in this city to-day to select a candidate from this, the Fourteenth District. The Conventions assembled in different halls on opposite sides of the street. The Democrats here are generally in favor of hard money, and selected Gen. Charles F. Black [J.(John) Charles Black] as their man. Black could not be found to make them a speech, but his Democratic friends say that he is heartily in accord with the St. Louis platform and candidates. The Greenbackers' Convention wrangled considerably, and were a long time in getting to business. They adopted anew the Indianapolis platform, and then nominated Gen. Black as their candidate. The General was speedily found and made a speech that he is in accord with them. It is, however, difficult to an outsider to make anything of the speech. It means nothing, and was made to catch gudgeons. . . .The

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<sup>77</sup> For an account of the conventions, see *Danville Commercial*, August 17, 1876.

Republicans in this city are jubilant, as they feel confident that the attempt to ride a hard and soft-money horse will defeat him by a large majority. The trading between the two 'reform' parties has been so open and undisguised that all decent men are disgusted.<sup>7879</sup>

Black's attempt to stand on the two platforms of the Democratic and Independent/Greenback parties was described by Lothrop of Champaign County as "eating milk and honey from the same dish with the same spoon, and were having a loving time generally."<sup>80</sup> How could the hard-money Democrats nominate a soft-money man? The answer, besides wanting to beat Cannon, lies in the words "save that of reform" that Black included in the introduction to his letter. Black's reference to "reform" would have appealed to the Democrats, whose National platform, almost in its entirety, was based on the need to reform the Government and eliminate Republican abuses.

But, just like Pickrell's experience in 1874, the two-platform dilemma was not abandoned by the Republicans in their attacks on Black. On August 17, 1876, the *Decatur Weekly Republican* opined

Gen. Black isn't dainty about the matter of platforms; he is like the circus man who said he could ride 'two horses and straddle six others.' When asked if it wasn't rather hard, he replied that 'it wasn't hard on the horses but pretty hard on the straddle.' Perhaps some of our democratic independent circus riders could speak in 'meetin' and give us a bit of experience about this straddling business.

Black also faced the appearance of being the perennial candidate who loses. On August 17, 1876, the *Decatur Weekly Republican* recounted a

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<sup>78</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, August 9, 1876.

<sup>79</sup> There was a rumor reported from Mattoon that Black intended to depart for Colorado and return to the district if Indiana, whose elections precede those in Illinois, went democratic. The rumor speculated that during his absence his brother, W. P. Black, would represent him in the district in the active work of the campaign. *Danville Commercial*, August 3, 1876.

<sup>80</sup> *Decatur Weekly Republican*, August 10, 1876.

conversation that was supposedly overheard on the Illinois, Bloomington & Western Railway “a few days ago.”

First Dem.-‘Well, what is to be done at the Champaign congressional convention?’

Second Dem.-‘Oh, they’ll nominate Black, I reckon.’

F. Dem.-‘Yes, act the d-m fool again as usual.’

S. Dem.-‘That’s so. I think the Democratic party in this district would be a good deal better off if such broken down political hacks as Gen. Black and -----, of Decatur, could be boxed up and kept quiet for a while.’

And the first speaker fully coincided in that opinion. So that’s how popular General Black is going to be.

In the same edition, the *Weekly Republican* took a shot at Black, citing the *Chicago Times*: “The *Chicago Times* calls General Black, of Champaign, the Democratic Independent candidate for Congress the ‘greatest political humbug in Illinois.’ The *Times* does occasionally stumble into the truth, after all.”

While Cannon finished the first session of the Forty-fourth in Washington, D. C., several local papers took the opportunity to refresh their reader’s memory on Black’s letter in 1874 refusing to accept the Independent nomination for Congress

because their principles looked to *expansion, repudiation and speculation*, breeding fever in the body politic; and resulting in corruption, and political and individual impurities.<sup>81</sup>

It was clear that Cannon was going to run against Black like he did against Pickrell, for having his feet in two inconsistent monetary platforms, the Democrats for hard money [gold back currency] and the

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<sup>81</sup> Clinton, Illinois *Public*, August 18, 1876. See also Danville *News* article on August 16, 1876.



Independents, or Greenbacks, for soft [what was sometimes called fiduciary] money.

While Cannon finished up in Washington, D. C., at least one of his supporters made a speech in support of Cannon. W. R. Jewell, a veteran, lawyer, minister, and editor of the *Danville News*, who would become a close adviser<sup>82</sup> to Cannon well into the Twentieth Century, gave a speech on the public square in Danville on the various issues of the day. He would make a number of speeches during the campaign in support of republicans. The competing paper, the *Danville Commercial*, opined

The speaker [Jewell] was enthusiastically applauded throughout his speech, and those who had never before heard him were surprised at his clearness of statement, force of experience and his eloquence of manner.

## **B. Cannon Is Re-nominated For A Third Term**

On February 3, 1876, the *Danville Commercial* ran a column under the headline FOR CONGRESS—WHO. It summarized an article that the Charleston *Plaindealer* ran the previous week supporting Cole County's Col. Jas. A. Connolly for Congress. It noted the *Mattoon Journal* had seconded the idea, and that Connolly was a hometown favorite for the job.<sup>83</sup> The *Commercial* reported

We grant to Col. Connolly all that is claimed for him by his most enthusiastic friends. He is an ardent republican, a good lawyer, an eloquent speaker, and a popular man in his county. In the last Illinois legislature he distinguished himself, and became the acknowledged leader of the republican side of the house, and without doubt with experience would make an excellent congressman.

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<sup>82</sup> The inner circle included brother William until his death in 1902, wife Mary until her death in 1889, and Jewell.

<sup>83</sup> The *Commercial* did not disclose that Cannon was building a home for himself and his family in Vermilion County and would become a Vermilion County "home candidate" after July 1876.

The Commercial proceeded to review Cannon's accomplishments in his first term and the current session of his second term, and concluded

We believe we are justified, from the record, in stating that Mr. Cannon possesses all the qualifications, ability, and devotion to the interests of his constituency that are required in a congressman, and we shall use what influence we possess to secure his return.

On February 9, 1876, the *Danville News* observed<sup>84</sup> "The Congressional candidacy is now being much discussed, as there are already several aspirants mentioned." By April 14<sup>th</sup>, the *News* was fully supporting Cannon.

We have before spoken favorably of the re-nomination of Hon. J. G. Cannon for Congress. We believe that Mr. Cannon is doing good service in this office, and so far we can see no reason why he should not be returned, but we can see good reasons as to why he *should* be returned. Mr. Cannon has now become fully acquainted with the duties of his office; he holds a high place upon an important committee working efficiently. While we do not maintain that he is among the ablest speakers on Congress, we do assert that he is far above the medium Congressman in oratorical ability, and in real working ability equal to any.

Above all things Mr. Cannon is cautious, safe, practical man. This has been shown in his efforts to repeal the odious third class matter postal law, which extorts double rate of postage on books, pamphlets, small packages and papers, forcing the people to send such things by express and being really in favor of the express monopoly. This law Mr. Cannon has fought in Congress with courageous ability.

Again, when the question as to whether we should be forced to specie payment came up, Mr. Cannon was present and voted against forced resumption and a rapid contraction of the currency and in favor of the repeal of the resumption act.

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<sup>84</sup> As reported in the *Decatur Daily Republican* on April 14, 1876.

We fail safe in saying to the people of this county that they will be safe to return Mr. Cannon to Congress, and we hope they may so instruct their delegates at our primary elections. It is certainly very poor economy to turn out of office men who are experienced. It is far better to keep safe and experienced men in office while they discharge their duties faithfully, and hence it is best economy to return Mr. Cannon to Congress. Remember this suggestion when you come to the primaries to vote.-*Danville News*<sup>85</sup>

The republicans in Danville Township heeded the *New's* call. The *News* reported on May 3, 1873, that pursuant to a call of the County Republican Central Committee<sup>86</sup>, they met on April 29, 1876, at the Danville Opera House, where "Wm. P. Cannon [Congressman Cannon's brother], chairman of the Township Central Committee, called the meeting to order and proceeded to nominate delegates to the county convention who were instructed to use their influence to secure delegates to the Fourteenth Congressional Convention to re-nominate Cannon. .

Cannon would be finishing his second term in Congress in east central Illinois in March 1877, and for a number of years that was the most that any congressman got to serve before a challenger took the nomination away from the incumbent. Cannon may have seen Connolly as a real threat to his re-nomination, but that threat substantively evaporated when Connolly was appointed United States district attorney for the southern portion of Illinois.<sup>87</sup>

At the end of April Cannon obtained a leave of absence for ten days from Congress to return home to attend to a family illness. There is no record of which member of his family was affected, but there were no reported deaths in his immediate household nor that of his brother William, so the illness must have passed without a loss of life. Before he returned to Washington, D. C., however, he managed to pay a visit to Danville, and

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<sup>85</sup> As reprinted in the Decatur *Daily Republican*, April 14, 1876.

<sup>86</sup> Members were W. P. Cannon, Park T. Martin, Frank W. Penwell, R. W. Hanford, and E. A. Routh

<sup>87</sup> The Danville *Commercial* reported on April 6, 1876, that Coles County's *Plaindealer* asserted that the buy-off of a competitor by Cannon would not stop Connolly, but it did.

the *Commercial* reported “Mr. C. finds that there is no serious opposition to his candidacy for Congress in this district.”<sup>88</sup>

As the political season began to mature at both the local and the national level, Cannon must have enjoyed some fond recollections of his last years in Parke County, Indiana, when he first saw and admired Oliver P. Morton. Cannon left for law school in Cincinnati in the fall of 1857, but a year before his departure, he had watched Morton in his unsuccessful campaign for Congress. By 1876, Morton had risen in national politics (A U. S. senator from Indiana) and was seriously mentioned as a Republican candidate for the Presidency.<sup>89</sup> The *Danville News* printed an article on Morton’s work on a Senate resolution finding that the United States constituted “one solid, indivisible Nation.” This suggests just how troublesome and destructive the Republicans at the national level viewed the ex-Confederates in the House in 1876.<sup>90</sup> Yet at the local level in east central Illinois, the young man who so admired now Senator Morton in 1856 was seeking his third term in Congress as a Republican.

Cannon had to rely upon the efforts of his representatives to manage his re-nomination in the Republican conventions in each county in the Fourteenth district. He remained in Washington, D. C., locked in a battle in the House with the Democrats over the funding of the national government. It appears, though, that Cannon’s political skills had finalized his re-nomination before he returned to Washington, D. C. at the end of April 1876.<sup>91</sup> Each of the counties in the Fourteenth District, at their Republican nominating conventions, instructed their delegates to vote for Cannon’s re-nomination at the congressional district’s nominating convention later on in the summer. On May 4, 1876, Cannon received the support of the Coles County Republicans for re-

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<sup>88</sup> April 27, 1876.

<sup>89</sup> *Danville News*, May 31, 1876.

<sup>90</sup> May 3, 1876.

<sup>91</sup> One wishes the extant record revealed just where and when Cannon went within his district during those last days of April to confirm his political base. Perhaps the illness in the family was a cover for a political trip; the timing just before the county Republican conventions raises that possibility. A cynic might also note that absence from the House with its approval was allowed for illness, and the congressman got paid during the absence. See House of Representatives Rule 33.

nomination.<sup>92</sup> Macon County instructed its delegates to vote for Cannon on May 13, 1876.<sup>93</sup> Vermilion County followed suit on May 17, 1876.<sup>94</sup> Douglas County instructed its delegates to support Cannon on May 20, 1876.<sup>95</sup> Champaign County joined the Cannon line on June 21, 1876.<sup>96</sup> The Piatt County Republicans met in convention on April 15, 1876, but the Piatt County *Herald* contains no report of delegate instructions.<sup>97</sup>

On May 31, 1876, the *Danville News* reprinted a portion of Cannon's speech on proposed cuts to the Post Office and Post Roads appropriations.

Did Cannon make a "flying" trip home at the beginning of July? The *Danville News* reprinted a Tolono *Herald* report that he spent a "part of last Friday (7<sup>th</sup>) in this city." It's tempting to speculate such a trip since the Cannons were in the process of moving from Tuscola to Danville and the first Republican county conventions were scheduled in the next several weeks, but this Tolono report was likely a false sighting. Cannon was on the floor of the House voting on Thursday July 6<sup>th</sup> and Friday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, and the House adjourned on Friday at 4:35 P.M. Several members were granted absences on both days but Cannon was not among them. The House was in session on Saturday, July 8, but there were no recorded votes that day. There was no House session on Sunday, but Cannon was on the House floor (it convened at noon) on Monday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, and made several comments for the record. Since the report was that he was in Tolono on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and his presence in D. C. on that date can be confirmed, it's was in all likelihood a false sighting.

The Republican Congressional Convention was held in Champaign on Tuesday, July 25, 1876. Short work was made for Cannon's re-nomination. Mr. Zack Morris placed Cannon's name in nomination and on the motion of H. A. Neal of Coles, the nomination was made unanimous by acclamation.<sup>98</sup> A new Central Committee was appointed:

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<sup>92</sup> *Danville News*, May 10, 1876.

<sup>93</sup> *Decatur Daily Republican*, May 15, 1876.

<sup>94</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, May 18, 1876.

<sup>95</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, May 21, 1876.

<sup>96</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, June 23, 1876.

<sup>97</sup> April 19, 1876.

<sup>98</sup> *Danville News*, August 2, 1876.

George Scroggs, Champaign; H. W. Magee, Mattoon; Capt. L. L. Parker, Hugo, Douglas County; R. P. Lytle, Decatur; W. F. Foster, Monticello; and W. J. Calhoun, Danville. While the committee on resolutions was busy doing its work, “stirring speeches by Mr. Calhoun<sup>99</sup>, of Vermilion County; Judge C. B. Smith [the Farmers candidate for circuit judge in 1873] of Champaign; H. A. Neal, of Coles, L. L. Bond, of Piatt, and Z. S. Swan of Champaign. The speakers were frequently and loudly applauded.”<sup>100</sup> The most significant matter at the convention was the adoption of a resolution supporting the greenback as the child of the Republican party and its continued strength relied upon the continued success of the Republican party. After adopting the State and National Republican platforms, the convention resolved, *inter alia*,

That we heartily indorse and approve of the course of our efficient and faithful representative in congress, Mr. Joseph G. Cannon, and of his action and his votes on currency and resumption measures.

### **C. The Campaign**

Political platforms in 1876 meant something to the voters. Candidates were expected to believe in their party’s statements of policy, and if they had any material disagreements with their party’s platform, they were expected not to accept the party’s nomination. The 1876 congressional campaign presented the voters of the Fourteenth District with two candidates who did, in fact, disagree with the platforms of their party.

Cannon had clearly stated his position for a currency (that included greenbacks) based on both gold and silver, but neither the Republicans nor the Democrats had enacted legislation for a return to silver, with gold, as the specie basis for currency. In that regard Cannon was inconsistent with the Republican platform, but he did support a currency based upon specie.

Black’s two principal inconsistencies, however, were material and hard to reconcile, at least in the voter’s minds. The first inconsistency can be

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<sup>99</sup> A young lawyer who read law under J. B. Mann and admitted to the bar on January 8, 1875; would have an extraordinary career in the practice and later career at the turn of the century under the auspices of President McKinley and Taft.

<sup>100</sup> Mattoon *Gazette*, July 28, 1876.

found in the fact the Greenback party's platform, supporting a currency based upon only the good faith and general credit of the Federal government, was incompatible with the Democrat's platform policy that the currency must be grounded in specie. Black had originally opposed greenbacks in 1866, but had apparently changed his position in 1876 to obtain office. Black's second inconsistency lay in his assertion for the need for reform of Government to eliminate the abuses committed over the years by Republican administrations. Reform was also a principal part of the Independent/Greenback party platform, but Republicans asserted that if elected, Black would join the Democracy/Confederates in the House, and the first session of the Forty-fourth Congress had revealed that the Democrats and Independents elected in 1874 had done relatively little in seeking such reforms. These inconsistencies would be raised time and again in the 1876 campaign by the Republican press and in the speeches given by Cannon on the campaign trail.

Unfortunately, none of the few Democratic newspapers from the Fourteenth District survive. There were a number of Independent newspapers that started out supporting Black, but several changed their minds during the campaign. Some editions of the Rossville *Observer* do survive. In the middle of the campaign the *Observer* dropped its endorsement of Black and then a week later suggested it was a mistake to do so. What attacks by the Democrats and Independents and Greenbackers that do survive are in the reprints of opinions and reports from those papers that appeared in the Republican newspapers as a result of the newspaper exchanges permitted by the postal laws.<sup>101</sup>

Black's nomination by the Independents and Greenbackers did not guaranty their support. This is illustrated by the Vermilion County Greenback Party convention. On Monday, August 21<sup>st</sup>, at 3 P.M., the Vermilion County Independent Greenback Party met in convention at Lincoln Hall.<sup>102</sup> This gathering provides an insight as to how the upcoming contest between the Republicans, the Democracy, and the Independents was developing in the new home county of Congressman Cannon. It did not bode well for the former resident of Danville, Charles Black.

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<sup>101</sup> For a list of the newspapers published in the Fourteenth Congressional District in 1876, see APPENDIX A.

<sup>102</sup> Danville *Commercial*, August 24, 1876.

The meeting was called to order by Wood. F. Townsend, a Danville attorney. Henderson Cook took the chair and Theodore Stipp<sup>103</sup> was made secretary. The roll call of the townships represented gives an indication that the Greenback party was not well-grounded in Vermilion County. Sidell, Vance, Middle Fork, Butler, Newell, Georgetown, Danville, Blount, Ross, Oakwood and Grant were represented; Catlin, Elwood, Pilot and Carroll were not represented.<sup>104</sup>

A resolution was offered that would require any candidate receiving the party's nomination to not only support the national and state tickets of the Independent Greenback party, but also "to pledge themselves to renounce both of the old parties, to stand on the independent national platform and to support the whole independent greenback ticket from Peter Cooper down to coroner." [an "iron-clad pledge"] This was denounced by a Danville delegate as opposed to the spirit of the Greenback party, but the resolution was voted on four times and passed each time.

The Oakwood delegation<sup>105</sup> chairman then arose and "stated that in view of the passage of the [resolution] to gag the delegates and put a jack-screw collar on everybody, he was authorized to withdraw his delegation from the convention."

It was then noticed that two of the Vermilion County newspapers had reporters in attendance, Jewell of the *Danville News* and Smith of the *Danville Times*. Each were called upon for a speech, but Smith made clear that he was a "FIERCE RESUMPTIONIST amid applause from the spectators, and stated he didn't believe there could be prosperity until a greenback dollar was at par with gold." Jewell agreed with a point of order raised by a delegate that this was not a venue for discussions of political differences, and Jewell sat down.

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<sup>103</sup> Stipp's name had been mentioned as a possible candidate to run against Cannon in 1874.

<sup>104</sup> Catlin, Elwood, and Pilot were Cannon strongholds in the 1876 election. Carroll was a Democratic stronghold. Sidell, Newell, Danville, and Blount would support Black. Danville was a surprise since in 1874 it save Cannon, but in 1876 Cannon lost it to Black, 982 to 1084. *Danville News*, November 15, 1876.

<sup>105</sup> Oakwood was also Cannon "country."



After the appointed committee retired to a back room to determine rules for credentials, a man from Edgar County rose, asked, and was allowed to make a statement.

The object of the independents is success; to succeed we must coalesce with the democrats where necessary to beat the republicans and succeed ourselves; this is what we are doing in the 15<sup>th</sup> congressional district, where we are supporting Andy Hunter, a defeated democrat, for congress against Eden; we must not be too rigid in calling for pledges; where we cannot elect a man who is for Cooper, let us unite with democrats and elect a man who is for Tilden-anything to beat the Republicans; let a man be for anybody he pleases, so he is right on the main question-for greenbacks;. . . .

But this did not go over well with at least one of the Vermilion County delegates.

Mr. W. A. Moore was called for. He said he would like it if the independents could elect a representative, but he was OPPOSED TEETH AND TOE NAILS to coalition; didn't want anything to do with democrats or republicans as such, but was for principle-defeat rather than sacrifice; if resumption is right then we are wrong; the man who is not for Peter Cooper is not a greenback man; if we are to succeed by a coalition with democrats then we do not want success. Mr. Moore's speech was straight out from the shoulders and rather laid the Edgar county man out.

H. F. Powell then addressed the convention stating

He didn't know of such a thing as democratic or republican independents; want to know how Black was nominated; Vermilion county had no hand in it; he was a republican now as ever, as far as its distinctive principles were concerned, but those ideas were not now in the front; he said something about MULES

AND JACKASSES, intimating that the democrats were that kind of an animal (part one thing and part another).<sup>106</sup>

When the committee on credentials returned, a decision on candidates that would run in both Vermilion and Edgar counties (state offices) was deferred until the Independents of Edgar could be consulted, and nominations for various Vermilion county offices were made, with candidates making the “iron-clad pledge.” At this point an old Republican name familiar to Cannon appears as one of the nominees for sheriff: Col. Lyman Guinnip. Guinnip rose and stated he “was in favor of retiring the national bank currency and issuing greenbacks direct to the people. He had been an independent candidate all the time. After some close quizzing the Col. was allowed “to pass”.<sup>107</sup>

On the second ballot, more votes were cast than on the first ballot, and shouts of stuffing the box were heard. The voting procedure was changed. Marquis received the necessary votes on the fourth ballot and was nominated. Mavity received the nomination for circuit clerk, but prior to the voting the *Commercial* reporter noted in the article “the candidates all went up like little men and took the oath of allegiance with alacrity.” E. Q. Nye defeated H. H. Dyer<sup>108</sup> for prosecuting attorney, and Alderman Mike Kelley won the nomination for corner on the first ballot over John Frazer.

Then came the matter of General Black.

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<sup>106</sup> On September 6, 1876, the *Danville News* reported that the republican newspapers within the district “were making great ado because the democrats and independents have concentrated upon Gen. J. C. Black for Congress.” The *News* opined “The democrats and independents have not concentrated on General Black. The democrats can’t sell and deliver the independents quite as easily as they thought. Independents don’t sell very easily to cheap democrats.” The Vermilion County Greenback convention confirms this observation and suggested trouble ahead for General Black.

<sup>107</sup> Guinnip received the fewest votes on the first ballot and was dropped from the list of potential nominees.

<sup>108</sup> When your essayist arrived in Vermilion County to begin his private practice of law in 1977, the county officials and members of the Vermilion County and Iroquois County Bars celebrated Dyer Day, an annual socializing event. Henry H. Dyer (1831-1881) practiced with James Dyer (1851-1941) in Hoopeston. It was James who founded the Dyer Day Picnic and his son Charles F. continued the tradition.

The convention not being entirely satisfied that Gen. Black was altogether 'sound on the goose,' a committee consisting of G. W. Smith, H. F. Powell, and Mont. Robinson was appointed to ascertain in 'black and white' if he, the said General, was for the whole thing from 'Peter Cooper down to coroner.'" The *Commercial* reporter then opined, parenthetically, "We fear this committee will get John Charles into a close place."<sup>109</sup>

On September 6, 1876, the *Danville News* predicted

Gen. Black and his democratic managers hope to succeed in his election: 1<sup>st</sup>. By democrats voting for him because he is well known to be a democrat. 2<sup>nd</sup>. By greenback men voting for him because he makes greenback speeches.<sup>110</sup> But when once elected he will be a democrat full and unreserved.

Black's second inconsistency is illustrated in one of Black's early campaign appearances in Coles County. Coles tended towards the Democracy in its elections, and on August 17<sup>th</sup> Black set forth his justification for accepting both parties' nomination. Black, from the beginning of the campaign, rested his hopes for election not so much on the currency issue, but in the need for reform. There was complete agreement between the Democratic and the Independent/Greenback parties on the corruption in the Republican party and the need to

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<sup>109</sup> While the committee attempted to meet with Black, he never received the committee. *Danville News*, October 11, 1876.

<sup>110</sup> A brief republican analysis of a speech by Black in Danville can be reviewed in the *Danville News*, September 13, 1876. On October 4, 1876, the *Danville News* noted "General Black claims to be a greenback nominee, yet he cannot make a greenback speech for the greenback ticket; he is working directly against Peter Cooper, and the State greenback ticket, and doing all he can to elect a gold resumptionist [in Tilden]." During his stay in Danville in September, Black registered at the Centennial Hotel (northwest corner of Main and Walnut). *Danville News*, September 13, 1876. Why didn't he stay with the Fithians? Perhaps because it was a new hotel. It occupied the upper floors, and under the same roof were The Trade Palace built by Holloway & Scott (occupied by C.B. & J. R. Holloway as a dry goods store) and business rooms for C. R. Brown. *Danville News*, January 1, 1877.

reform the Government. The *Commercial*<sup>111</sup>, reprinting a *Marysville Independent* query, asked

One thing the people of this section will wish to know is, did J. Charles Black accept the nomination for congress at the hands of the democratic convention recently held at Champaign? And if he did what was the understanding in regard to the platform upon which he so accepted? If Black accepted the democratic nomination on the St. Louis platform, and on the same day and the same hour accepted the nomination of the independent greenback convention on the Indianapolis platform, then we say give us anybody, even a Cannon, till we shoot the stuffing out of such a candidate.-[*Marysville Independent*.<sup>112</sup>]

Perhaps the following, from the *Chicago Times* report of a democratic demonstration at Mattoon [the 17<sup>th</sup>], at which Gen. Black spoke, last Thursday afternoon and evening, will shed a little light on the subject:

MATTOON, Ill., Aug .17.-To-day has been a glorious one for independents and democrats in Mattoon and vicinity. Notwithstanding the rain and the unpropitious weather, crowds came to town from the country, and hundreds came up on the trains and swelled the throngs to thousands. About 1 o'clock, the rain ceased, and at 3 o'clock the democratic wigwam was crowded and all the available space occupied by an anxious audience. Gen. Black, the independent and democratic nominee for the district, was introduced to the audience. . . and was greeted with applause. Although suffering from ill-health, he made one of the most forcible arguments and convincing speeches of the campaign. Such an arraignment of a party and its leaders has scarcely ever been equaled. Throughout his entire address of nearly two hours he was given the closest attention, and frequently deafening shouts, by common impulse, came from the people. He closed in this manner:

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<sup>111</sup> August 24, 1876.

<sup>112</sup> The *Marysville [Potomac] Independent* supported Cannon only because there was not a better candidate. *Danville Commercial*, September 7, 1876.

It has been said to me that I cannot be elected; that Cannon's money will defeat me. Fellow-citizens, I shall not stultify myself by using more money than to legitimately pay the expense of a campaign. I would rather hold a burning coal in my hands than to hold a single dollar dishonestly, or to pay a single dollar for corrupting purposes. I would rather forever remain in private life than to gain the highest office in the gift of the people by attempting to corrupt my constituents. ***Reform and honesty is the rallying cry which will elect me.*** [Emphasis added] I am no banker. I represent no class. I stand before you as a representative of the whole people.

Mr. Black produced a profound sensation by his eloquent address.

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No substantial report of a Black speech in this campaign can be found. What can be found are suggestions of what his stump speech was like through critiques by Republican newspaper reports. For example, the Decatur *Daily Republican* reported on August 31, 1876

The singular feature of his speech was his attempt to convey the idea that he is not a partisan himself, while every sentence contained some stereotyped Democratic slang about Gen. Grant and his administration, and though he was filled to the brim with this character of abuse he had not a word to say in denunciation of the Democratic party, nor did he say aught which could offend the most sensitive member of that organization. . . .

It has been said of General Black that he never speaks without telling his hearers something about the ancients, and delving about among the legends of classic lore. Last night was no exception to the rule, for the general recklessly flung into the faces of his democratic audience an illusion to 'Ormus and Ind,' and mercilessly pitched at their bewildered heads the story of Laocoon, not caring whether they went away under the impression that this fabulous priest had anything to do with the greenback question or not. But then, he abused Grant and the republicans, and his democratic worshippers understood that and they were happy.

In a letter to the *Commercial* from an observer of Black in Mattoon, the writer opined

A few republicans who imagine that severally and individually each would make a better member of congress than Joe Cannon, and hence thought of voting for Black, went away, after hearing him, thoroughly cured of the latter half of their vagary. The fact is, that the independents see in Black only a bourbon democrat, thinly disguised, and realize that every vote given to him contributes towards putting our national congress into the control of the confederates who have disgraced the country for the past nine months. Reform never climbs by such low ladders, and that sensible independents do not propose to make themselves the lower rungs to be pressed by the thankless feet of bourbons.

Cannon's campaign in Vermilion county began on Saturday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, the day after his return from Washington. Cannon appeared at a Republican meeting in Gilbert's Grove at Rossville in the afternoon. He was not advertised as going to be there, and made only a few remarks, waiting until his rally in Danville that evening for the formal opening of his campaign.

In the evening, at Henderson's Hall, he again spoke, occupying about two hours. He was intently listened to throughout this time, though the hall was uncomfortably warm.

Mr. Cannon took no doubtful ground on the finance or other questions. He was square on the Cincinnati platform, and showed clearly enough that his vote to repeal the time clause of the resumption act was perfectly consistent with said platform. He punctured the national bank bugaboo, so that there was nothing left for those who call for the retirement of national bank currency to stand upon. He made allusion to Gen. Black's candidacy, and said that not a man held the Gen. higher in personal esteem than himself, and if the campaign descended to dirt throwing, Gen. Black must take the initiative (which, by the way, he had already done-see report of Black's Mattoon speech). He showed the inconsistency of Black's standing on three platforms and wherein he had estopped himself from claiming votes on the ground of him

having been a soldier. We cannot go further in a report. Every one of our readers may have an opportunity to hear Cannon speak before the campaign is over, and the Danville people may hear tonight. The speech was the best we ever heard Mr. C. make, and its effect on Rossville people was good.

Each of the candidates crisscrossed the entire district<sup>113</sup> for the next two and a half months, stating their case in small and large rallies, receiving the partisan praise of their respective newspapers and the partisan criticism of their opposing newspapers.<sup>114</sup>

Who was Black going to vote for in the presidential race? Greenbacker Cooper or Democratic Tilden?<sup>115</sup> The General answered the question in a speech given on September 8<sup>th</sup> in Urbana, and Black stated there was never any doubt who it would be; and he finally set forth for all to hear his reasons and reconciliation for accepting both party nominations.

This is the first time in this campaign that I have had the presidential question propounded to me before the only tribunal I hold myself responsible to—the people of the 14<sup>th</sup> district—and I immediately and plainly reply. It is a question that need never have been asked. It was well understood by the convention who nominated me, who was my individual choice among the candidates in the field. No man has any reason to believe that my choice now is different from what it was then. I expect to vote for Mr. Tilden, whose record as a reformer needs the approval of the people, but in doing so, I do not surrender my position in regard to the financial issues of the day. That I maintain and shall continue to support regardless of party resolutions, because I think it wise, just to the people of the northwest and honest

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<sup>113</sup> For a discussion of these campaign trails, see your essayist's examination of Cannon's two previous campaigns in the district: *A Star in His Course: The First Congressional Campaign of Joseph Gurney Cannon in 1872*-OCLC 1120769521; and ". . . Are You Going To Vote For Pickrell, His Bull, or Me?" *The 1874 Congressional Campaign of Joseph Gurney Cannon*. The campaign in 1876 was just as exhaustive as it was for both candidates in 1872 and 1874.

<sup>114</sup> See the account of Black's speech in Danville in the September 7, 1876 *Danville Commercial*.

<sup>115</sup> Recall the Vermilion County Independent/Greenbackers appointed a committee to find out if Black "was sound on the goose," i.e., Peter Cooper.

towards all. That position I expressed clearly to the delegates of both conventions and to the people of the district in my letter of July 17<sup>th</sup>. I have held that position for eight years,<sup>116</sup> believing it to be lawful and equitable; and the passage by a convention of a different resolution does not change the situation. In this tremendous struggle with rings and corruptions in all departments of the government ***I must choose the man who holds out the best hope of reform and economy in governmental administration.*** [Emphasis added]

Throughout the campaign, Black's oratorical skills were highly praised, but the substance of his speeches was questioned. The *Danville Commercial*, in reporting on Black's appearance at Georgetown, opined

Many admired the General's eloquent oratory, but looked upon it as the beautiful rose which o'ershadows the underlying thorns, and unlike the honest homely face of truth, which enforce and secure conviction.

Many of the organizers of political rallies in the district wanted Cannon and Black to share the same stump at the same time and discuss the issues together. But that was not to happen as it did when Black contested Bromwell in 1866.

It is boasted by Mr. Black's friends that Mr. Cannon will not meet him in public discussion. We know this to be incorrect; Mr. Cannon is ready to meet Mr. Black, day after day, from now until the close of the campaign. More than this, the citizens of Lynn Grove, both democrats and republicans, joined in writing letters to both Mr. Black and Mr. Cannon, asking them to meet there to discuss the political issues. Mr. Cannon replied promptly, accepted the invitation and went at the time named, while Mr. Black did not reply to their kind letter, and did not go. The fact is that Mr. Black can get along better without an opponent than with one. He is a

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<sup>116</sup> The *Arcola Record* wondered on this point, "If General Black has held to the financial doctrine enunciated in his July letter for eight years, why did he announce his opposition to the independents only two years ago, and denounce them for advocating the same doctrine?" as quoted in the September 28, 1876 *Danville Commercial*.



brave knight in a fight with a windmill, and is a master giant in beating the air, but he would rather not meet any object as solid as a Cannon.<sup>117</sup>

A review of Cannon's debating skills and exchanges with the democratic congressmen set forth in the discussion of the Forty-fourth Congress' first session, *supra*, suggests that Cannon would have had no difficulty, and probably a great deal of fun, in breaking down Black's assertions with the sarcasm he so effectively used on the House floor.

Not all was fine oratory. The Hoopston Greenbackers rally cry was:

Beefsteak when I'm hungry  
Whiskey when I'm dry  
Greenbacks when I'm hard up  
And Heaven when I die.<sup>118</sup>

The rough and tumble of the canvass was not always verbal. In Tuscola, the *Journal* advocated the election of Republican J. C. Walker for Douglas County circuit clerk, not only because he was competent, but also because he and his brothers served as Union soldiers during the War. The *Tuscola Review*, democratic in its leanings, inquired in print why the *Journal* did not also report that his brothers were born horse thieves and had been in the penitentiary. Walker called on the editors for a retraction, but when it did not come Walker

waded into the two men [Coaverse and Parks] and gave them both a tremendous thrashing. From the office of the Review, he went before a justice of the peace, where he entered a plea of guilty of assault, and paid a fine of five dollars, which he considered a very small charge for the satisfaction of giving a couple of slanderous democrats a good drubbing.<sup>119</sup>

Gold and silver coin (up to \$5) were not the only currency in use in the Fourteenth district in the fall of 1876. The *Danville News* reported "there is still much sickness, and several cases of typhoid fever are

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<sup>117</sup> *Danville News*, October 11, 1876.

<sup>118</sup> *Danville Commercial*, October 5, 1876.

<sup>119</sup> *Danville Commercial*, September 28, 1876.

reported,” and “quinine is now a legal tender on the Wabash, and in fair demand on the silvery Vermilion.”<sup>120</sup>

Black’s health failed at the beginning of October.

Gen. Black is sick at his home in Champaign, and Capt. Townsend<sup>121</sup> of this city [Danville] filled some of his appointments this week.<sup>122</sup>

In the “take-it-for-what-its-worth” category of political reporting, the *Danville News* noted on September 27, 1876

Hon. C. R. Griggs, formerly of Champaign, is the father-in-law of Gen. J. Charles Black. Mr. Griggs in a conversation, we understand, with the General not long since told him if he ‘wanted office he would have to change his politics, or remove from the fourteenth congressional district.’ This was sensible and truthful advice, which has been verified every time ‘Chawles’ has been a candidate.

By November 1<sup>st</sup>, the *Champaign Times* was calling Gen. Black “Champaign Charley.” The *Danville News* thought that the General was “heavy on champaign [sic], and the name is very appropriate and will stick.”<sup>123</sup>

As election day approached, the *Danville Commercial*<sup>124</sup> reported on the real reason why Joe Mann supported Black, and in the process, why the republicans of the district supported Cannon. After first noting that Mann supported Black because he was a gallant soldier, the *Commercial* asked then why didn’t he support Hayes for that reason? And then

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<sup>120</sup> September 20, 1876.

<sup>121</sup> Danville attorney Wood F. Townsend.

<sup>122</sup> *Danville News*, October 11, 1876, citing the *Danville Press*.

<sup>123</sup> *Danville News*, November 1, 1876.

<sup>124</sup> October 19, 1876.

Why do you rejoice over the defeat [for Governor] of gallant soldier, Ben Harrison<sup>125</sup>, in Indiana, by the stay-at-home, Blue Jeans Williams? The truth is, Mr. Mann does not support Gen. Black because he was a soldier, but because he is a representative of democratic principles. Neither do republicans support Mr. Cannon because he was not a soldier and was a prosecuting attorney during the war, but because he is a true and honest representative of republican principles.

In his opening speech of the campaign, Cannon observed that if Black's "campaign descended to dirt throwing, Gen. Black must take the initiative. . . ." There were two incidents where supporters of Black did throw "dirt" at Cannon.

Danville's J. B. Mann, perhaps in a spasm of over-enthusiasm, reportedly claimed in a speech that Cannon compromised "whiskey cases and pocketing the bribes and fees of crooked dealers while he was prosecuting attorney." Mann would retract the claim later on during the campaign, but like mud slung on a wall, it would stick and rise again in future campaigns against Cannon. See Danville *Commercial* editions of October 19, 1876. In his withdrawal of his statement, Mann claimed "I, therefore, desire to testify that I did not intend to charge Mr. Cannon with the crime I am made by such report to impute to him. I intended merely to compare his acts during the war, that is following his business as prosecuting attorney, and earning large fees therefrom, with those of General Black, in exposing himself to all the dangers incident to life of a brave soldier. And I, again, explicitly deny any intention to charge

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<sup>125</sup> Harrison was invited to speak in Danville on November 3<sup>rd</sup> with, *inter alia*, Hon. Thomas H. Nelson. Nelson was Cannon's father's defense counsel in 1847/1848 for his criminal prosecution for the violation of the Indiana Black laws in hiring an unbonded black man to help on the Cannon farm. It appears Nelson did not attend. Harrison spoke in support of the Republicans and Cannon. Danville *Commercial*, October 26, 1876. The *Commercial* also predicted in the same edition "The defeat of Abraham Lincoln by Stephen A. Douglas, in the race for United States senatorship in 1858, was what made Lincoln president two years later. Who knows but Ben Harrison's defeat by Blue Jeans Williams may make him president also. We advise the people to keep their eyes on him."

bribery against Mr. Cannon in my remarks referred to," *Danville News*, October 18, 1876.<sup>126</sup>

The second incident appeared on October 23, 1876, when the *Champaign County Gazette* reported on "dirt" that would in fact follow Cannon well into the 1890s.

Some of the democratic papers have published an 'affadvy' made by one Van Deren, of Tuscola, as to the effect that Mr. Cannon upon a certain occasion remarked to the aforesaid Van Deren, in response to the inquiry why he did not go into the war, 'there ain't money enough in it.'

Van Deren's honesty was promptly question by the district's republican newspapers, noting that to the "best men" in Tuscola he is a loafer and a deadbeat, and that his word was not highly regarded in the community. A citizen of Tuscola responded to the allegation by defending Cannon.

To those of us who know the parties, Mr. Cannon and this fellow Van Deren, any statement or writing will be useless. We know Mr. Cannon, and remember him as one of our most honored and respected citizens; we remember him as a close student and successful professional gentleman, the peer of any lawyer who practiced at the Douglas county bar; we remember him as a business man who contributed by his enterprise to the prosperity of our city and county; we remember him as a man whose purse was always open to demands of charity, who never looked coldly upon any object or request; we remember him as the always

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<sup>126</sup> For a detailed analysis of Cannon's tenure as state's attorney, see Timothy O. Smith's *Joseph G. Cannon: State's Attorney, Twenty-Seventh Judicial Circuit, 1861 Through 1868. This is an analysis of Cannon's years as state's attorney in Ford, Champaign, Douglas, Vermilion, Edgar and Coles Counties (to the extent the records of his 2227 indictments survive) from 1861 through 1868, his family's negative experiences with the law prior to 1857, his decision to go to law school, Cannon's course of study at the Law School at Cincinnati as well as his early civil practice in Shelbyville and Tuscola-OCLC 1131863998*. This copy is only a partial copy of the entire essay, limited to Parts I, II, and III for Champaign County only, and IV. The complete essay for all counties in the Twenty-seventh Judicial Circuit is at Springfield and Danville.

genial, pleasant and inspiring neighbor; and we remember him as a man whose character is unsullied and above reproach.

And for this Van Deren, to put into Mr. Cannon's mouth the words he attributes to him, is simple and ridiculous nonsense. The execrable grammar is Van Deren's. Mr. Cannon would not be guilty of that! And we know this Van Deren, too. We know him as a chronic loafer and whiner; a lubberly, lazy, phlegmatic lout, who has allowed his wife, a respected lady, to nearly wear away her life in contributing to his support. I know Mr. Cannon will not give him a passing notice, and it is for the purpose of setting right those who might attach some importance to his statement, that I write this letter.

The Danville *Commercial* reported on Van Deren's original letter, noting in its condemnation that it was sent away from Tuscola for initial publication even though there were three democratic papers in the county, and if Van Deren's word had any substance, any one of the three would have published it. Additionally,

[Van Deren] was a republican in 1864 and was defeated for the republican nomination for sheriff; he was defeated for the same nomination in 1866; he then Johnsonized and was made postmaster of Tuscola; in 1872 he was a liberal, and in 1874 an independent, now a democrat, and in case Tilden and Black are elected he has the promise of the post office again. His soldier record goes to prove he went into the army because there was 'money in it.'

Van Deren did not let this pass without a response. In a letter to the Rossville *Observer* dated October 31, 1876, he disputed the allegations as to his personal character and invited the editor of the Champaign *County Gazette* to consult with a number of well respected citizens of Tuscola who would vouch for his good standing.<sup>127</sup>

The prediction that Cannon would not address this matter proved correct, but it must have hurt Cannon. It was Van Deren who introduced

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<sup>127</sup> Rossville, Illinois *Observer*, November 3, 1876.

Cannon to Lincoln in Decatur in May 1860, and who acted as Cannon's character witness when Cannon sought formal admission to the Illinois Supreme Court in 1861.

When the Van Deren matter is added to the J. B. Mann comments about Cannon's years as state's attorney, the *Danville News* saw an opportunity to attack Black for the falsehoods that his campaign was spreading against Cannon and seize the high ground for Cannon's reelection.

Yet still those who feel that if General Black is elected it cannot be done on his own merits, but must be done by false statements as to Mr. Cannon, continue to pour forth a stream of mean little falsehoods.

Voters, Mr. Cannon has spent his manhood life in this district. He has been twice elected to Congress; his official record has been thoroughly searched in these campaigns; his private life and official record are good. He is devoted to republican principles; his election will cause grief to the rebel claimants and politicians of the south, while these same men will rejoice over the election of General Black. Think of all this, and do not sacrifice a good man and a good representative in this crisis, when the democrats, aided by a solid south, are trying to seize the reins of government.

There was one more story on Black that sought to drive a wedge between him and the Independents and Greenbacks. The timing of its publication was perfect. In 1873 and 1874, any politician affiliated with a railroad was an anathema to the Independent Reform Party of farmers and laborers. Seeking to tie Black to railroads, and corruptions like the ones he railed against the Republicans in his campaign speeches, the *Champaign County Gazette* published an article<sup>128</sup> on Black's ties to the railroad and his complicity in corrupt practices.

General Black held for a time, some four years, we believe, the position of attorney for the I. B. & W. railway company. The reason of his appointment to that position is well known to the

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<sup>128</sup> November 1, 1876.

people of this county. He was the attorney for the corporation during the period of its greatest prosperity and, until about the time when the road became so badly embarrassed that a receiver was talked of.

The people of some portions of Champaign county are financially interested in the I. B. & W. railway to the extent of their subscription to the capital stock, as follows:

Champaign \$100,000  
Urbana \$100,000  
St. Joseph \$50,000  
Mahomet \$50,000  
Scott \$25,000  
Total \$325,000

When another year shall have rolled around, a portion of this vast sum will be due. There will then have been paid \$325,000 as interest on the bonds issued to the railroad company. The people of the various townships hold as security for the sum of \$650,000, certificates of stock, which possesses the value of so much blank paper. At one time these certificates of stock represented a money value of 23  $\frac{1}{4}$  per cent of their face value, and could have been sold for that sum. They are now worthless, because of the careless, not to say criminal acts of the officers of the railway, of whom Gen. Black was one.

During the time he acted as their attorney, a Credit Mobilier was organized by the officers of the road, who let fat contracts to themselves as individuals, and, at the same time robbed the company. Gen. Black stood by, and if he did not advise the contracts, certainly knew their contents, and knew them to be illegal. While the corporation was being stolen bankrupt Gen. Black stood by and saw it done, without uttering a note of warning. It cannot be said that he was ignorant of the transactions which were going on, for he was the legal adviser of the officers of the corporation.

Let us ask then, if a man who stood by and saw the people of this county robbed of \$650,000 is a safe man to send to congress, where the opportunities for permitting steals from the treasury are so great? The burden of Gen. Black's speeches is 'reform.' If he will go to work and reform the I. B. & W. railway company he will have a job full equal to his capacity and, if he succeeds in that job, the people may feel confidence enough in his ability to accomplish more; and should it become necessary to have something done in that line in congress may select him to do it.

Gen. Black's associations and affiliations have been and are corporations, whose object has been to rob the people. His actions show that he sympathizes with them and not with the people. He stands in the same relation to the Credit Mobilier of the I. B. & W. that Sam Tilden does to the other one of the Union Pacific railroad. Neither are safe men to trust with the interest of the people and we verily believe that the people will see to it that they are not trusted.

From the Twenty-first century, one can almost hear the air coming out of Black's congressional balloon in Champaign County with the publication of this story.



# REPUBLICAN MEETINGS!



**HON. JOSEPH G. CANNON,**

Republican candidate for Congress, will address the people of Macon county at the following times and places:

Argenta, Friday, Oct 13th, at 1 o'clock, P M

Orcans Friday, Oct 13th, at 7 P M

Austin and Illini townships, at Latham, Saturday, Oct. 14th, at 1 P M

Wheatland Monday, Oct 16th at 2 P M

Mt Zion Monday, Oct 16th, at 7 o'clock P M

On October 16, 1876, the *Chicago Tribune* printed its report of Special Correspondence datelined Decatur, Illinois on October 14<sup>th</sup>. It consisted of a detailed accounting of Cannon's speech in Macon County's Village of Oreana. The gathering was described as "a modest gathering of farmers, embracing every shade of political opinion, and, I am glad to record, passed off most satisfactorily." The full report of Cannon's speech is herein reported since it is the most complete account of one of Cannon's campaign speeches in this campaign. It is also a fitting way to end this discussion of the campaign for congress in the Fourteenth District in 1876.

For the first time in the political history of this district, the incumbent has been re-nominated for a third term,-an evidence that Mr. Cannon has been a faithful and honest representative of its interests. In 1872 he defeated Maj. Nelson by a majority of 3,000. Jesse More's majorities in '70 and '68 were about 2,000 from which the deduction was made that the Fourteenth District was a safe republican one. But in 1874, after a most arduous and active canvass of sixty days, Mr. Cannon only defeated Tom Pickrell, Independent Democrat, by 600. Generally known as the Champaign District, and having the large towns of Decatur, Urbana, Tolono, and Danville in it, yet the farming element controls everything. The Independent-Reform-Granger-Greenback party has, since 1873, had a stronger foothold in this than in any other district in the State-numerically larger than in the Nineteenth (Anderson's) District. That element was thoroughly organized in 1874 against Mr. Cannon by Pickrell, who, in addition to being a practical stock man and farmer of national reputation, is also a shrewd politician of Republican antecedents, and his full vote may be taken as the sum total of the defection in the Republican party.

Mr. Cannon is making the same active canvass he did in 1874, and everywhere he finds the same zealous support. In this canvass, however, he has less of opposition than he did in '74, J. C. Black, a lawyer of Champaign, being his opponent. Gen. Black was a Union soldier, but he has always been an uncompromising Democrat, and, while his moral and social standing is good, he lacks those

open and unreserved political convictions which could commend him to the indifferent Republican Greenbacker. Gen. Black has always been a politician in the odious sense of the term. A happy illustration of this trait was given by Mr. Cannon in his speech last night. Said he:

CANNON ON CHARLEY BLACK. 'IN 1866 Gen. Black made a Democratic speech at Mattoon. Then he had peculiar and positive convictions on the financial question. Taking a torn fractional 25-cent piece in his hand, he held it up before the audience and said: 'Do you see this! A nasty, greasy rag that you can smell all over the house. Well, this is Republican money.' Then taking a silver quarter in his hand, he rang it down on the stand and exclaimed: 'This, my friends, is good old Democratic, constitutional money!'<sup>129</sup> To-day Gen. Black is the nominee of a Democratic party which supports Hendricks, greenbacks, and inflation, and expects to get the votes of Republicans who held up the hands of Abraham Lincoln while he conquered a rebellion by the aid of the 'nasty, greasy, rag' money.

'Two years ago,' said Mr. Cannon, 'the Opposition claimed that new issues had sprung up which the Republican party had failed to meet; that the Democratic party was dead, and appealed strongly to Republicans to go with them and form a new party. Thousands of good Republicans, sated with continued success and grown indifferent, believed them and went off; men who stood by and defended the principles of the party in its earlier years, and who seemed to feel that it had fully accomplished its mission. The election came under these circumstances, and it seemed as though a whirlwind had swept over the country. After an arduous campaign, however, I was elected, I went to Washington. For the first time since 1860 the Republican caucus to select officers of the House of Representatives was held in the Judiciary room. We wended our way up the winding stairway to that room, and, in half an hour, had discharged the routine duty. The reaction which swept over the country had completely changed the political

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<sup>129</sup> The Decatur Daily Republican reprinted on September 25, 1876, a similar recollection published in the Piatt County *Herald*, and quoted the *Herald* 'Consistency, thou art a jewel,' but thy name is not General John Charles Black."

conditions. The overwhelming Opposition met in the hall of the House and held its caucus. You have been told in the canvass that the Democratic party was dead, and you were led to believe that this new party would be the Opposition. But what was the result? The same old Democratic party came to the front, reinforced by the sixty-eight ex-Confederate Colonels and Generals, and nominated a straight Democratic list of officers. Where were the Independents? I asked of John R. Eden. 'I don't know,' he replied. Old man Campbell, of LaSalle, voted for Bill Anderson for Speaker, and Bill Anderson voted for old man Campbell for Speaker. [Laughter.] Afterward Campbell said to me, very solemnly: 'We Independents made a mistake; we ought to have held a caucus and cast our vote for one man,' [Great laughter.]

Mr. Cannon then gave a graphic and humorous description of the halt, lame and blind Democratic rabble which helped organize, was pensioned upon, and ran the last House of Representatives. And all this time, he said, the hard-fisted honest Independents of Illinois believed the Democratic party to be dead, but to-day it exhibits alarming vitality while it plays the same deceptive policy upon the unsuspecting voter, and stands forth in all its hideous deformity.

As Mr. Cannon was talking to a farmer audience, largely composed of Peter Cooper men, he made careful allusion to the inferiority of the party as demonstrated by the late canvas in Indiana, it only carrying one solitary township. 'on election day,' he said, 'the Democratic Independents went to the polls hurraing for Peter Cooper and Harrington and straightway voted for 'Blue Jeans' and the Rebel Democracy. The honest Greenback Republican was cheated, then, as the honest voter of every hue has always been cheated by the Democracy, when he has been coaxed or bullied into the support of an independent or opposition ticket. Democratic leaders are proficient in lip-service, but they never forget to vote the straight ticket.

Another very interesting point was made against the Independents with telling effect 'Says one, "We do not expect to elect Peter Cooper, but we do expect to through the election into

the House.” Suppose you do; who will be elected then: Let me remind you that the next President must be elected either by the people or the present House of Representatives. As it is largely Democratic, of course it would elect Mr. Tilden. What benefit will you Peter Cooper men derive from that result? Can’t you see that you are only playing into the hands of the Tilden Democracy.’

Mr. Cannon’s speeches cover the whole ground now debatable, and are accomplishing a great deal of good. His Congressional record being among the best of any Western Republicans, he takes but little time in its defense. He has been a hard worker for four years, and ranks among the most influential members of the party at the National Capital. At home he is in good standing with all local factions, and will not fail to secure the full party vote. In addition to that, he has large and influential connections, socially and otherwise, and his election is among the certainties. Gen. Black, his opponent, has not filled any of his appointments this week, claiming to be sick, but the truth is, he has virtually given up the race. He is an honorable man, and, finding what was an uncomfortable position he was in, has concluded, undoubtedly, to let the financial lunatics-the Greenbackers-scatter off in any direction they choose.

## **D. The Results and Aftermath**

The election was held on November 7, 1876, the first Tuesday of the month. Delays were common in counting the votes and the final, official county was published in the Danville *Commercial* on November 23, 1876.

Vermilion:	Cannon	4,184
	Black	3,474
Champaign:	Cannon	4,271
	Black	3,903
Piatt:	Cannon	1,775
	Black	1,473
Macon:	Cannon	3,112
	Black	3,055
Coles:	Cannon	2,808
	Black	2,970

Douglas: Cannon 1,691  
Black 1,723

TOTAL: CANNON 17,980  
BLACK 16,603

In the last presidential election in 1872, Cannon received 15,191 votes against 11,405 for W. E. Nelson. Cannon prevailed in 1876 with a majority of 1,327. Cannon had defeated Pickrell with a majority of a little over 600 in 1874.

The *Champaign County Gazette* celebrated Cannon's re-election, noting

He had been a true and faithful representative of the interests of the people of the 14<sup>th</sup> district, and has spared neither time nor money to assist his constituents upon all proper occasions. His experience as a legislator was and is worth a great deal. While Mr. Cannon may not be the most polished orator, yet he has a plain and direct manner of stating a proposition that does not require the flowery eloquence of a Demosthenes to veil its meaning. His acts and votes upon the salary grab, the silver bill, the repeal of the resumption act, the ferretting out and exposing of the southern ring of straw mail bidding, all entitle him to receive praise from his constituents. Added to this, Mr. Cannon is an indefatigable worker, and always pushes the work he has in hand. . . .he is known as an upright business man, a gentleman whose word is as good as his bond at home, and against whose integrity there has never been an objection raised that was entitled to a moment's consideration.<sup>130</sup>

The Republicans in the Fourteenth district turned their attention to the Tilden-Hayes presidential election results. The newspaper headlines<sup>131</sup> in Danville in mid-November summarized the feelings in that election.

### **TREMBLING BALANCE!**

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<sup>130</sup> November 8, 1876.

<sup>131</sup> *Danville News*, November 15, 1876

**WHO'S MR PRESIDENT?**

**SLEEPLESS ANXIETY!**

**A GREAT SENSATION!**

**THE PEOPLE DID**

**AND WAITING TO SEE WHAT THEY DID**

**WAITING, BETTING, GUESSING, CURSING PRAYING**

In the same edition of the *Danville News*, it told the citizens of Vermilion County who may have subscribed to the paper just through the election that

Twenty cents a week will secure you the DAILY DANVILLE NEWS

-General Black is politically dead, but yet tabernacles in the flesh.

If you didn't bet on the presidential election you'd bet-ter not.

The presidential election would not be resolved until March 1, 1877 as the second session of the Forty-fourth Congress came to a close.

While the defeat of General Black by Cannon did not kill his political career<sup>132</sup>, the report of his purported death (like Mark Twain, it was greatly exaggerated) appeared in newspapers in mid-November 1876. Black had the rare opportunity to personally read his obituary in the various reports of his passing. A typical account appeared in the *Clinton, Illinois Weekly Register* on November 17, 1876.

Gen. John Charles Black, of Champaign county, one of the bravest and truest of the band of Illinois Democrats who remained loyal to Stephen A. Douglas and the Union, died at Danville last Friday. His military career covered the entire period of the war of the

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<sup>132</sup> Black would challenge Cannon again for Congress in 1884 in another bitter campaign. Upon the election of President Cleveland, Black's political career would be revived in presidential appointments.

rebellion and his record was among the brightest, having met the approbation of General W. T. Sherman, upon whose recommendation he was created a full Brigadier General. A lawyer by profession, he was well and favorably known throughout the State, though his ability to practice was often limited to a short period during each year on account of injuries received during the war. In one of the memorable engagements down death he had his left arm shattered to pieces, his lungs perforated and his body riddled with rebel bullets.<sup>133</sup>

In 1872, General Black ran for lieutenant governor on the Greely ticket, receiving his nomination at the hands of the Democracy solely because he was the only man who could compare in eloquence with Senator Oglesby. This Fall he received the nomination for Congress in the Fourteenth District, and on Tuesday of last week closed as arduous campaign against Joseph G. Cannon. The campaign undoubtedly precipitated General Black's death. On Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> inst., at Danville, at an open air Democratic rally he spoke an hour and forty-five minutes, much longer than his shattered health justified, because the train which was bringing Hon. Thomas Hoynes to relieve him was behind time. On the following Monday night he made another speech at Champaign, which, coupled with the excitement of the election day and his defeat, unquestionably brought on his death. General Black was one of the most eloquent men in the Democratic party of his State; he was an honorable man; a scholar, and of strong friendly impulses.

On November 29, 1876, the *Danville News* reported

General John C. Black was in this city yesterday, hale and hearty. His late active canvass acted as a "movement cure" in his case. It has been beneficial to his health.

But his health would not remain good. The *Danville News* reported on January 3, 1877, that Black had an operation in Chicago and "is now

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<sup>133</sup> Black's award of the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions at Pea Ridge would not happen until the early 1890s.



confined to his bed at his brother's in that city." In March 1877, it was reported that the General Black was "very sick, but is now much better but is not able to leave his bed."<sup>134</sup> A week later, the *Gazette* reported Black remained in poor health and "is very low."<sup>135</sup> By mid-April

Gen. Black, it seems, is trying the blue glass remedy. The Danville News says: "The front room window of Dr. Fithian's residence, in which Gen. J. C. Black lies sick, has a blue glass pane in it."<sup>136</sup>

Two weeks later

Gen. Black and wife went from Danville to Chicago on Monday of last week. The general is to receive medical treatment for his arm.<sup>137</sup>

But Black was recovering, but not completely. The *Champaign County Gazette* reported on June 27, 1877

-Gen. Black appeared in this city on Saturday [June 17<sup>th</sup>] for the first time in several months. He is looking weary and worn, the result of the continual suffering and pain which he has undergone, from the wounds on his arm, since last fall. . . .

From the perspective of the Twenty-first century, Black's performance during the congressional campaign in east central Illinois in 1876 was remarkable. In 1878 Congress increased a small pension he received in 1865 as a result of his wounds from \$30 per month to \$100 per month. In the process of obtaining that increase, a stunning history of Black's wounds during the War and his struggles with them through 1878 were made a part of the public record.

Senator David Davis, formerly Illinois Eighth Judicial Circuit Judge with Abraham Lincoln, U. S. Supreme Court Justice, and in 1878 U. S. Senator

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<sup>134</sup> Mattoon *Gazette*, March 23, 1877.

<sup>135</sup> Mattoon *Gazette*, March 30, 1877.

<sup>136</sup> Mattoon *Gazette*, April 13, 1877.

<sup>137</sup> Mattoon *Gazette*, April 27, 1877.

from Illinois,<sup>138</sup> obtained leave on February 15, 1878, to introduce a bill (S. No. 751), based upon Black's petition, for the relief of John Charles Black, late Colonel Thirty-seventh Illinois Volunteers. Davis gave a brief summary of Black's service and the bill was referred to the Committee on Pensions. Davis ended his observations by noting

No history of Illinois. . . can be written without honorable mention of the name of John Charles Black. Ennobled by nature and distinguished alike for his gallantry and sufferings, he appeals with confident hope to the justice of Congress.<sup>139</sup>

When the bill was reported back to the Senate for action, Senator Anthony wanted to know why the larger amount of \$100 was being allowed since it was a larger amount than the usual pension. Senator Baily let the report accompanying the bill answer the question. After the standard introductory language, the report advised the Senate

That at the outbreak of the late civil war Mr. Black, just entering upon manhood and having recently completed a collegiate course, was engaged in the study of the law; but upon the call of the President he enlisted as a private in Company I, Eleventh Indiana Zouaves, a regiment mustered into service for three months. Upon the expiration of this service he enlisted in the Thirty-seventh Illinois Infantry for three years and was elected and commissioned major of the regiment. In 1862 he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-colonel and afterward to the rank of colonel. In 1864 Colonel Black and his men re-enlisted for the veteran service. From November 1864 until February 1865, he commanded the fourth brigade reserve corps, military division of the Mississippi; and in March 1865, while in active service, was made brigadier-general by brevet for gallant and meritorious services in the field and was mustered out of service in August, 1865.

In March 1862, at the Battle of Pea Ridge, Lieutenant-Colonel Black was shot in the right forearm, the bullet passing between

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<sup>138</sup> And the judge who presided over Cannon's first criminal trials as state's attorney in April 1861 in Urbana, Illinois.

<sup>139</sup> 7 *Congressional Record*, page 1050.

the bones about three inches below the ulua, and injuring the elbow joint.

In December 1862, at the Battle of Prairie Grove, he was shot in the left upper arm. The bone being shattered, resection became necessary, and from that time the arm has been permanently disabled. The wound inflicted at Pea Ridge apparently healed, but in December following reopened and caused great suffering.

After he left the military service General Black resumed his professional studies, was soon admitted to the bar, and almost immediately upon his admission entered upon a large and lucrative practice, which he continued to enjoy until the year 1874, when in consequence of the great suffering caused by the wound in his right arm, his health became much impaired, his person emaciated, and he was constrained to abandon his profession.

From the year 1874 until this day he has been an invalid. The wound in his arm has caused the most intense suffering, and in 1876, in order to save life, the elbow-joint was resected. He is now [in 1878] a physical wreck, maimed and diseased, incapable of any effort, and much of the time confined to his bed.

From August, 1865, until 1877, General Black was paid a pension of \$20 per month, based upon the injury to his left arm. In 1877 this was increased to \$50 per month because of the loss of use of the other arm. He now asks that the right to \$50 per month be recognized from August, 1865.

The committee is convinced the claim is well founded.

A strong, healthy man, possessing fine talents and great abilities, who would have gathered fame and wealth, has been stricken in his country's service. He asks the country he served so well to give bread to himself and opportunity to educate his children.

The committee, however, respectfully submit that instead of granting arrears of pension, Congress should recognize the

distinguished claims of General Black and grant him a pension of \$100 per month, and therefore they recommend the passage of the accompanying bill.<sup>140</sup>

After being engrossed and read a third time, the bill passed the Senate. On June 15, 1878, the House advised the Senate that the House had passed S. No. 1275, and it became law on June 18, 1878.<sup>141</sup>

One can argue, with full justification, that John Charles Black did not exhaust all his courage on the fields of battle in the Civil War.

How did the campaign wear on Cannon? He did return to Washington, D. C. for the beginning of the second session of the Forty-fourth Congress on December 4, 1876, but he was back home in Danville to celebrate the Christmas holidays.<sup>142</sup>

The Hon. J. G. Cannon is at home spending the holidays, and of course the [Danville] News has interviewed him on the political situation. He expressed the conviction that Governor Hayes has 185 electoral votes, that these votes will be counted for him on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, and that Mr. Hayes will be inaugurated next March. Mr. Cannon does not believe that there will be any war; he thinks there is no war feeling among the better class of Democratic politicians in and out of Congress; there is a class of hungry office hunters congregated at Washington, and scattered throughout the country, fierce and ready for war, or anything for place and pay, who will do the wind work for a revolution if others will do the fighting.

Mr. Cannon is in good health, thinks the empire is peace, and returns to his post after the holidays<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> 7 *Congressional Record*, page 4640.

<sup>141</sup> Forty-fifth Congress, Sess, II. Chapter 283

<sup>142</sup> On December 19<sup>th</sup>, Cannon obtained formal leave of the House to be absent from December 20<sup>th</sup> to January 5<sup>th</sup>. No reason was given. 5 *Congressional Record*, page 297.

<sup>143</sup> Danville News, December 25, 1876.

During Cannon's time at home, celebrating his first Christmas with his family in his new home, he and Mary had several options for entertainment. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 27<sup>th</sup>, the Chicago Museum Company performed at the Opera House. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Charles Dickens came to town as Katie Putnam starred in "Old Curiosity Shop." On the 29<sup>th</sup>, Madame Rentz's Female Minstrels performed and on the 30<sup>th</sup>, Liliputian's Comic Opera Company presented its show. The Cannons loved to dance, and they had the opportunity to do so at Turner Hall, which "was well patronized."<sup>144</sup>

Christmas was a time of charity in Danville, and W. P. Cannon appears in the lead in such matters in 1876. A small number of people met at Lincoln Hall in the evening of December 31<sup>st</sup> to work through the Aid Society on providing charity to needy persons through the various wards of the city.<sup>145</sup> Cannon, with J. G. English and Mayor Dickason were appointed to a committee to raise money for the group. It was suggested that

Flour sacks be distributed to the houses of the people, to be filled with whatever families could spare. . . it was believed that every sack would be filled when the wagon came around to gather them up and take them to the store-room of the Aid Society. . . W. P. Cannon, in some way, expressed the opinion that it takes 25 yards of calico to make a woman a dress. Adopted, as there was but one lady present.

"The basket" was passed among those present for contributions. J. B. Mann promised that his flour sack would be filled, and he was by far the largest contributor of the evening, \$20. Was he making amends for his wrongful corruption charges in the campaign against W. P.'s brother (who gave \$10) in front of W. P.? Did Mann give a greenback or a gold-backed note?

New Years Day in Danville, January 1, 1877, was a day for private parties and receptions at open houses to receive a wish and give a wish

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<sup>144</sup> Danville News, December 22 and 26, 1876. Did Mary Cannon, an active member in the Tuscola Methodist church, attend the service at North Street Methodist Church on Christmas night, perhaps singing in the choir?

<sup>145</sup> Danville News, January 1, 1877.

for a Happy New Year.<sup>146</sup> Each home had multiple hostesses, and the leading ladies of Danville greeted their callers in their decorated homes during the day. On that day the following homes with their hostesses participated in the event:<sup>147</sup>

Judge O. L Davis, No. 93 Vermilion Street (currently the Federal Court House)

Mr. C. B. Holloway, corner of Madison and Oak Streets (dry goods merchant)

Dr. H. W. Morehouse, South Vermilion Street (physican)

Mr. E. E. Boudinot, corner of Madison and Robinson Streets (druggist)

Mr. W. E. Shedd, Franklin Street (hardware dealer)

Mr. William Hessey's, No. 181 Main Street (dry goods and notions)

Miss Mattie Probst, No. 9 Franklin Street (boots and shoes)

Mr. A. C. Daniel, corner of North and Gilbert Street (coal)

Mr. J. B. Hooper, North Hazel Street-east side of Hazel south of Williams-  
no occupation given

Mr. C. J. Palmer, corner of Hazel and Harrison Streets (real estate and  
loan agents)

A. L. Webster, No. 70 Walnut Street (heavy hardware)

A. G. Webster, No. 18 Franklin Street (groceries)

J. G. English, corner of Pine and Harrison Streets (banker-First National  
Bank)

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<sup>146</sup> The *Danville News* suggested "Black coat and pants, white vest, regulation hat, and a cardinal red necktie, would be a stunning calling suit for to-day, young man." January 1, 1877.

<sup>147</sup> Occupation is taken from the 1876/1877 City Directory.

Dr. W. W. R. Woodbury, corner of Vermilion and Williams Street (drugs, books, paints, etc.)

Mayor L. T. Dickason, South Pine Street (Dickason & English-dealers in grain and rail road timbers)

Mr. O. S. Stewart, corner of Franklin and Seminary Streets (soap manufacturer)

Judge E. S Terry<sup>148</sup>, corner Vermilion and Harrison (lawyer)

Mrs. J. L. Tincher, corner of Franklin and Seminary Streets (widow of banker and politician)

H. Pottenger, west (No. 1) North Street (groceries and provisions)

J. W. Stansbury, Harrison Street between Franklin and Pine (justice of the peace)

The Danville *News* on January 2/3, 1877, provided a brief description of the receptions and open houses, and paid particular attention to the guests who registered at A. L. Webster's home since Mrs. J. G. Cannon was one of the hostesses at that location.<sup>149</sup> The Danville *News* published "a list of the gentlemen calling at No. 70 Walnut Street, and taken from Mrs. A. L. Webster's autograph album. . .," perhaps because the newly residing congressman and his wife were there trading best wishes for a the New Year. It appears to be a "Who's Who" of Danville businessmen. One of the callers was J. B. Mann.

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<sup>148</sup> This is the same E. S. Terry that played a role in the 1857 trial that convinced Cannon to become an attorney and persuaded him to relocate to Tuscola when his private practice failed in Shelbyville. See Timothy O. Smith's essays *The Slander Case That Convinced Joseph G. Cannon to Become a Lawyer: Rose v Strouse*, and *The Tuscola Years of Joseph Gurney Cannon and his family: With attention given to the contributions of men from Parke County, Indiana, in the establishment and Development of Tuscola and Douglas County, Illinois-OCLC 1005740162*

<sup>149</sup> Her fellow hostesses were, with Mrs. A. L. Webster, Mrs. C. W. Gregory, Mrs. D. D. Evans, Mrs. Thomas J. Elliot, Mrs. J. W. Eiholt, and Mrs. S. James McKee.

Mrs. W. P. Cannon was a hostess at Dr. W. W. R. Woodbury's home.

While Cannon may have been prescient on the Hayes 185 votes, Cannon had a ring side seat during the second session of the Forty-fourth Congress as the Democrats and the Republicans struggled over the counting of the electoral votes. The *Danville News* opined on December 29, 1876

Congress is chewing the presidential quid, and will chew nothing else for—who can tell how long?

Hayes would win election to the Presidency on March 1, 1877, with 185 votes to Tilden's 184 votes, but Cannon would spend his time working on what little pending legislation could be addressed as the Electoral Commission did its thing.

The Cannons, Joseph and Mary, left for Washington on the morning of January 3, 1877.<sup>150</sup> It is not recorded which train they boarded in Danville. If it was the I. B & W train, and it was and remained on schedule, they would have boarded at the depot at the north east corner of Gilbert and Williams at 8:30 A. M., and arrived in Washington, D. C., the next day at 5:20 P.M. Their alternative was to take the Chicago, Danville and Vincennes train, boarding at its Junction depot<sup>151</sup> at either 2:15 A. M. or 11:55 A. M., and once in Chicago transfer to an east bound train.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> *Danville News*, January 3, 1877.

<sup>151</sup> In a depot constructed by H. W. Beckwith in 1876 at a cost of \$3,000. *Danville News*, January 1, 1877.

<sup>152</sup> Timetables for all trains serving Danville were published daily in the *Danville News*.