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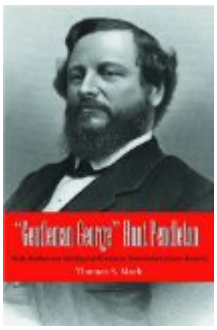

Thomas S. Mach. *"Gentleman George" Hunt Pendleton: Party Politics and Ideological Identity in Nineteenth-Century America.* Kent: Kent State University Press, 2007. ix + 307 pp. $39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-87338-913-6.

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Ohio Democrat George Pendleton was a considerable force in American politics during the latter half of the nineteenth century. He served four terms in the U.S. House of Representatives (1857-65), ran as the Democratic vice presidential nominee alongside George McClellan in the election of 1864, entered the 1868 Democratic Convention as the presidential frontrunner (he did not win the nomination), served one term in the U.S. Senate (1879-85), and authored the 1883 civil service legislation that bears his name. Despite Pendleton's political significance, no scholarly biography of "Gentleman George" exists. Thomas S. Mach, professor of history at Cedarville University, fills this void with a well-researched account that stresses Pendleton's commitment to Jacksonian principles and efforts to unite the Democratic Party.

The first half of the book traces Pendleton's rise in the Ohio Democratic Party through his years as a Peace Democrat in Congress during the Civil War. Born to a prominent Cincinnati family, Pendleton earned a law degree and eschewed his father's Whig background by joining the Democratic Party. After one term in the state senate, Pendleton won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Here, his political ideology matured through the battle over admittance of Kansas as a state under the Lecompton Constitution, where he weighed the conflicting issues of popular sovereignty, constitutional rules regarding statehood, and the sectionalism pulling his party apart. Secession and Civil War strengthened the states' rights aspect of his Jacksonianism and catapulted him to leadership positions. During the secession crisis, Pendleton called for union through peaceful compromise. Short of that, he preferred a peaceful splitting of the Union based on Southern states' rights to federal force maintaining the Union. However, once the Confederates fired on the U.S. flag at Fort Sumter, Pendleton backed using force for defense, but still not to force reunion. During the war, Pendleton, according to Mach, was part of the loyal opposition who wanted "the Constitution as it is, the Union as it was" (p. 62). Pendleton became a leading critic of President Abraham Lincoln's war policies that limited individual liberty and increased federal power, while continually seeking a peaceful resolution to

the conflict. His commitment to the principles of states' rights, strict construction, and individual liberty earned him a place on the 1864 Democratic ticket as vice president.

The second half of the book examines Pendleton's postbellum career. In 1866, he lost his reelection bid to Congress by a slim margin because Republicans waved the bloody shirt and Ohio Democrats half-heartedly backed President Andrew Johnson's failed Reconstruction policies. Out of public office for the first time in over one decade, Pendleton practiced law, served various functions for the Kentucky Central Railroad (including its presidency beginning in 1870) while it underwent a major corruption investigation, and remained active in the state party. He accepted the defeats of slavery and secession, but clung tenaciously to his Jacksonian principles. Pendleton latched on to monetary policy as a means to unify the drifting Democratic Party. Specifically, he called for greenbacks issued during the war to be used to pay off war bonds. While on the surface this use of inflationary federal money seemed un-Jacksonian, Mach explained that Pendleton saw this as a means toward Jacksonian ends. Because national banks held most of the bonds and enjoyed financial success due to the interest paid on them, paying off the bonds would eventually kill national banks. Furthermore, after payment of the bonds, Pendleton called for greenbacks to be taken out of circulation and for a return to specie. Politically, Pendleton hoped this so-called Ohio Plan would unite Midwestern and Southern Democrats against the elitist Bourbon Democrats in the East.

This party activism almost won Pendleton the 1868 Democratic presidential nomination. In 1869, he narrowly lost the race for Ohio governor to Republican Rutherford B. Hayes. Pendleton reentered public office in 1878 as a U.S. senator. As with the greenback issue one decade earlier, he championed civil service reform as a way to unite the Democratic Party and to use non-Jacksonian means to accomplish a Jacksonian end. In this instance, both Andrew Jackson and Pendleton envisioned a more democratic government that was responsive to the people. But, where Jackson developed the spoils system toward that end, Pendleton saw that system's failings and pushed for civil service reform. While Pendleton succeeded in passing the legislation, it ultimately killed his political career. The Pendleton Act was popular among Southern Democrats, but not so much among those in the East and Ohio who controlled patronage. Manipulated by Cleveland politicians with connections to Standard Oil, Ohio Democrats embraced machine politics and ousted the reformer. For a time, Pendleton found himself out of a job, but finished his public service career as envoy to Germany.

Mach is at his best when he examines the factions within the Democratic Party at the national, sectional, and especially state levels. His use of newspapers, rhetoric, and government documents lends considerable insight into how Democrats from the Civil War era struggled to find a meaningful and winning ideology in the American political landscape they once dominated. Within this conversation, however, Mach too often overhypes Pendleton as the authoritative, visionary voice of next generation Jacksonian Democracy, whereas his opponents within the party continually come across as narrow-minded, self-aggrandizing, corrupters of Jacksonian principles. Instead of pitting Pendleton against these antagonists, he would have been better served to show how various Democratic factions embraced their own versions of modernized Jacksonianism and why Pendleton's Midwestern version included a mix of libertarian, states' rights, and modern liberalism. This would have put Pendleton in a larger intellectual context. It would have also allowed Mach to discuss Pendleton's particular form of Jacksonianism without finding it necessary to explain away the long list of contradictions.

The connection to modern liberalism will be a point of interest for Gilded Age political historians. Mach teases his readers in the introduction by suggesting that Pendleton's "mixture of Jacksonianism and reformism" kept the Democratic Party united until it triumphed as modern liberalism during the New Deal (p. 7). The connection was "neither direct nor total," but still significant (p. 7). Pendleton's limited use of the federal government, such as in civil service reform, to protect democracy and ultimately elevate the common man, evolved through the Populist and Progressive movements into modern liberalism. As such, this book fits nicely with recent studies by James T. Kloppenberg (*The Virtues of Liberalism* [1998]), Nancy Cohen (*The Reconstruction of American Liberalism, 1865-1914* [2002]), Rebecca Edwards (*New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865-1905* [2006]), and others that have traced modern liberalism--intellectually and culturally--back into the nineteenth century. Typically, Lincoln and Radical Republicans are seen as the primary builders of modern liberalism during the Gilded Age, but Mach shows that a bitter opponent of these Republicans contributed just as significantly.

Mach also portrays postbellum Democrats as an intellectually diverse group with ideas beyond racism, redeeming the South, low tariffs, and agrarian interests. Pendleton's views on race, however, are underemphasized in this book. Mach does not hide Pendleton's overt racism, but minimizes its importance, writing that Pendleton was a "man of his times" and that it was not an essential part of his political outlook (p. 2). Given that his hometown of Cincinnati sat across the Ohio River from a slave state, that much of his electoral support came from recent immigrants who feared potential economic competition from freed slaves, that the existing body of law supported white supremacy, and that his mother's family was Southern, racism would seem to be an essential ingredient of his devotion to states' rights and strict constructionism. Mach could have improved his book by including some Cincinnati social history to tease out the importance of race to Midwestern Democrats and their political ideology, particularly since the Ku Klux Klan enjoyed considerable success there a generation later.

Mach makes significant contributions to our understanding of the origins of modern liberalism, the legacy of Jacksonian Democracy, the turmoil within the Democratic Party, and Ohio politics. This is an accessible biography of a neglected but important political leader.

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