

Boss Tweed's Ring and the Continuing Quest for Integrity in Government

Foreword

Five esteemed books have, between 1927 and 2005, been devoted to William M. Tweed and his Ring. Hundreds of others have dealt more briefly with him and it.

These works have described in detail the city in which a few men achieved autocratic power; have painted the personalities and told the stories of the main figures; have advanced theories about the rise and the fall of the cabal; and, in one case, stoutly defended Tweed from the harsh judgments that historians generally have subjected him to.

The present volume differs mainly from its predecessors in looking back to Tweed's Ring to guide the promotion of integrity in government. In its four linked parts, this book considers: (1) what the Ring was and did; (2) what has been written, said, and sung of it; (3) questions raised about it; and (4) its continued relevance, as seen in more recent events.

We know that official corruption predated the Christian Era by millenia¹ and still makes daily headlines throughout our nation and world; that it throws grit and wrenches into the gears of government; and that it entails the misallocation and theft of hundreds of billions of dollars annually. With each passing week, year, and century, we are learning how to deal better with it. This book seeks to contribute to that process.

Part I recounts the history of the Tweed Ring, renowned for:

- its control over the nation's largest city – pictured by contemporary cartoonist Thomas Nast in such forms as a giant thumb pressing down on Manhattan Island and as an unsated, maiden-slaying tiger;
- its practices, which included stealing elections, bribing legislators, buying off newspapers, stacking juries, and dictating to judges;

- its looting of municipal coffers, with estimates of the total economic harm ranging from \$20 to \$200 million – equivalent to \$350 million to \$3.5 billion modern-day dollars;
- its overthrow by an unprecedented, ad hoc, bi-partisan coalition of businessmen, journalists, lawyers, politicians, and other citizens, many of whom seriously considered but ultimately rejected the step of forming lynch gangs;
- its having “created the first modern city machine in New York City,”² a template that successors throughout the country and world would apply and adapt;
- its continuing status as “the towering landmark of American municipal corruption,”³ and
- its having been, along with the Erie Railway scandal – with which it was entangled – “one of the formative events of Progressivism... the modern American creed” most responsible for the reform of our cities.⁴

The Ring was led by William M. Tweed, who did not fit subsequent stereotyped conceptions of a powerful, crooked pol. At five feet, eleven inches and 280 pounds, his presence was notable. Notwithstanding his girth, he was said to dance – especially waltz – nimbly and well. His thinning hair, at the peak of his power, was brown tinged with red – the colors also of his short beard and mustache. His face was florid; his eyes, a piercing blue. He dressed immaculately in clothes bespeaking wealth, accentuated on his shirtfront by a diamond of 10.5 carats, worth \$14,000 then, hundreds of thousands today. He was courteous, cordial, jolly, and generally in control of his temper. His smiles were described as “winning and his manners magnetic.”⁵

Tweed also:

- had emerged from personal bankruptcy to amass, within ten years of public employ, a fortune equivalent to hundreds of millions of 2010 dollars – about which he boasted;

- gave rise to the term of “boss” in politics, for which he has remained a preeminent prototype;
- had “a genius for making friends;”⁶
- gave munificently to the poor;
- feasted in the best restaurants – Delmonico’s was a favorite – where usually he picked up the checks;
- was mercilessly caricatured by Thomas Nast in a legendary series of cartoons;
- was both lauded for the virtue and pilloried for the sinfulness of his private life;
- has been described with sympathetic affection in the histories and fiction of writers more than a century later; and
- died, distraught, in jail.

The second part reviews characterizations of and thoughts on the Ring: what it was, why it was, what it portended, why it fell, and what we should learn from it. The range of opinions on Tweed is illustrated by his starkly contrasting treatments at the hands of two eminent novelists of the twenty-first century. To E. L. Doctorow, history’s first boss had “the soul of a savage”⁷ and the “effect on the city... like a vampire’s arterial suck.”⁸ Pete Hamill, conversely, presented the man as a lovable, profane Falstaff/Robin Hood of the Gilded Age.⁹ “Because of Tweed,” said Hamill, “New York got better, even for the poor.” If forced to spend 30 days in prison with either Bill Tweed or Al Gore, Hamill “would need about 11 seconds to choose... Welcome to the cell, O lost boss. You can have the bottom bunk.”¹⁰ The accounts, portrayals, and analyses of the Ring – from contemporaries of Tweed through the present – indicate its impacts on governments and on attitudes toward public integrity.

The guidance of government using insights from corrupt events will be the sounder, the better our understanding of them is. Part III considers questions that have been directed at the generally accepted history of the Ring and at the roles of the main players in it. With an eye to strengthening

civic uprightness, it rates the performances of the law, the press, the financial sector, the political system, and anti-corruption citizens in combating the Ring.

Whether reflection on such questions still has relevance for governments a century and a third after the Ring is the concern of Part IV. The extinction of bosses and their political machines has been both announced and denied – while urban corruption grinds, perhaps inexorably, on. The more recent experiences of Chicago, Providence, and other cities are reviewed – to sense the extent to which an understanding of Tweed and his colleagues has remained of value.

I

The History of the Ring

1

Squire

Porpoise among minnows. In the New York State elections of 1867, the Democracy — as the Democratic Party was then commonly called — scored a stunning victory: winning majority control of a traditional Republican stronghold, the New York Assembly, the lower house of the State Legislature. This Democratic success was an eagle plume in the cap of Samuel Jones Tilden. The man the Republicans called “Silk-Stocking Sammy” was an acknowledged master of political organization and had been for the preceding year the Chairman of the State Democracy. In 1876, he would run for President of the United States. Despite receiving 252,000 more votes than his Republican opponent, Rutherford B. Hayes, he would lose in the Electoral College and not take the Oval Office.

It was assumed at the outset of 1868, as the legislators came together in Albany, that Tilden’s would be a main voice in naming the new Assembly Speaker. The Speaker would appoint the committees of that house and was deemed to have more legislative power than the Republican Governor, Reuben Fenton.¹¹ Tilden proposed for the Speakership John L. Flagg, Mayor of Troy, who had a reputation for gentlemanly qualities and a master’s degree from Harvard.¹²

Mayor Flagg would, however, never be Speaker. He was beaten out in the balloting for the post by one William Hitchman, an undiplomaed man whose background included stints as a carriage painter, fireman, policeman, Clerk to the Common Council of New York City, and Secretary of the Tammany Hall General Committee. Historians have termed him a “political hack from the upper East Side.”¹³

Hitchman’s victory over Flagg was a striking result — for which the new Speaker himself received little credit. Observers concurred that the outcome had been due to one man, a man who was himself entering the Legislature for the first time.¹⁴ Newly elected State Senator William M. Tweed, since his arrival in Albany, had been “slipping around like a porpoise among the small fishes of the Assembly, varying the performance, now and then, by reverently raising his hands and blessing his dearly

beloved Democratic children.”¹⁵ The success of Hitchman, Tweed’s nominee, signaled the rise to preeminence of the man who, for the next 42 months, would be the most powerful politician in the State. His fellow lawmakers would call him “Squire.”¹⁶

Civic machinators and seekers of favors would, in this period, come to Tweed’s suite of seven large rooms in the Delavan House in Albany. The suite was called “perhaps the most sumptuous and convenient to be found at any hotel in the country.”¹⁷ Costing \$500 per week,¹⁸ it was furnished with opulent carpets and sofas, “cushioned and basket chairs,” and “broad centre-tables,” with “red coal fires burning under fine mantles.”¹⁹ Roses adorned porcelain cuspidors and yellow canaries chirped in brass cages hung by the windows. The sideboards held decanters of whiskey, brandy, and Holland gin.²⁰ Men on various public payrolls attended to the outer doors²¹ – one of which had been specially installed to enable legislators to pay clandestine visits.²² At his desk, the Squire had a photograph of himself.²³

Years of mounting clout. Tweed’s immediate assumption of the lead role in Albany was not a complete surprise. Since 1858, he had been a member of the New York County (Manhattan) Board of Supervisors and, in 1864 and 1865, its President. In the early 1860s, he had assumed the leadership of the City Democracy. Since 1863, he had had as Deputy Commissioner of the Street Department of “the City” – New York City – thousands of workers answerable to him. Reformers had futilely protested (futile protests being those days, it seemed, their main stock in trade) his simultaneous holding of two governmental posts. Their dismay rose – and their ineffectuality became the more patent – when Tweed made the State Senatorship his third, powerful, concurrent, civic role. John T. Hoffman, since January 1866 the Mayor of the City, had been placed in position more by Tweed than by anyone else.

Tweed had thus, by the mid-1860s, established himself as the first prototype of the urban political boss, controlling four prime negotiable currencies of power: jobs, popular votes, legislative votes, and money – among which he traded cannily. He also grew rich. The *New-York Times* in 1870 would throw at him that, just ten years after declaring bankruptcy, Tweed could “boast of your ten millions.”²⁴ Occasionally, he put the figure at twice that amount.²⁵ Only one or two others owned real estate in Manhattan of greater value than his.²⁶ This fortune was amassed at a time when the average non-farm worker in the United States, when employed, earned \$490 in a year, at an average daily wage of \$1.47.²⁷ Skilled machinists earned \$2.67 per day,²⁸ the Governor of New York was paid an

annual salary of \$4,000,²⁹ and the Mayor of the City, \$7,500.³⁰ The daily papers of the City cost between two and five cents. (The dollar amounts of Tweed's time are roughly converted to those of 2010 by multiplying by 17.5.³¹)

Tweed's influence would, over his three and one half years in Albany, swell further. Later in 1868, he would expedite the naturalization of tens of thousands of new citizens — just in time to cast their first American votes that November for the Democracy's nominees. One beneficiary would be John T. Hoffman, who would be elected Governor. In the special election held the next month to replace Hoffman as Mayor, Tweed's candidate, Abraham Oakey Hall, would receive four times the vote total of his Republican opponent. Samuel Tilden judged that the combination of Tweed and his closest associates known as "the Ring" "became completely organized and matured on the 1st of January, 1869, when Mr. A. Oakey Hall became Mayor."³² It was also called the "Tammany Ring" and ultimately would be best known as the "Tweed Ring."

The Republicans, stung by those experiences, would, two years later, fashion defenses against the Ring's electoral rascality. The courts appointed a Republican overseer of the elections who, in turn, named two supervisors for each of the City's 386 precincts. Republican newspapers published the names of 15,000 men alleged to be illegally registered and threatened them with jail, if they voted. Republican President Ulysses Grant ordered the Eighth United States Infantry Regiment and other forces to the City, ready to intervene to enforce the election laws, should the United States Marshall deem it necessary. The level of vote-motivated naturalizations plummeted, as but 2,000 immigrants became citizens in October 1870. Most observers agreed that the elections the next month would be exceptionally free of corrupt influences and one estimated that the extraordinary measures kept 26,000 fraudulent Democratic votes from being cast.³³ The Republicans, thus multiply safeguarded against chicanery, needed then only to win the elections.

Instead, they were trounced. The flagbearers of the Democracy for Mayor and for Governor, A. Oakey Hall and John T. Hoffman, were reelected handily.³⁴ The party also won all six of Manhattan's Congressional seats and, for the first time in a quarter century, would have majorities in both houses in Albany.³⁵

The pinnacle and the pen. The consequences were wide-ranging. New York was and would be for the next one hundred years the most populous state — which conferred on its leaders automatic national stature.

From 1868 through 1948, two fifths of the major-party Presidential candidates were from the Empire State. Governor Hoffman was, after his reelection, the frontrunner for the Democratic Presidential nomination of 1872 and spoke out on national issues. In 1870, according to one contemporary: “Hoffman’s march to the White House, and Hall’s advancement to the Governor’s chair appeared to be assured.”³⁶ The Ring was said to have “meditated the setting up in Washington in 1873 of a Ring Government... vastly huger.”³⁷ Tweed himself considered becoming a United States Senator or Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s.³⁸

Less than a year after the elections of 1870, William M. Tweed would be arrested on charges of corruption. Two years after that, he would be convicted and would enter the penitentiary. He would, in 1878, die behind bars. The *New-York Times* said then that he had in his prime “exercised greater power over City affairs than any other man has ever done.”³⁹

Of the deeds of Tweed and his colleagues, it has been judged that: “No political scandal in American history has had a greater impact on America’s political consciousness.”⁴⁰ Tweed himself has been called the “most notoriously corrupt figure in the history of American cities”⁴¹ and is still deemed “the epitome of big-city corruption.”⁴²

2

Big Bill

Early Hustings, Hustlings

Son of the Lower East Side. Great grandparent Tweeds had come to the City in the mid-eighteenth century from a town on the Tweed River in southern Scotland.⁴³ William, the fifth⁴⁴ and last child of Richard and Eliza Tweed, entered the bustling world of Manhattan's Lower East Side on April 3, 1823 – the home of his birth and childhood standing at 1 Cherry Street.⁴⁵ The house next door, 3 Cherry Street, had, 34 years earlier, been the home of George Washington, in his first months as President of the newborn country.⁴⁶ The neighborhood in the 1820s still housed the respectable rich, but would decline over the next half century into notoriety for its cheap dance rooms and sailor flophouses.⁴⁷

The Boss-to-be was said to have been as a lad the spoiled favorite of his mother.⁴⁸ In her later years, William would visit Eliza weekly but she would not be told of the Ring's exposure. She would die in July 1873 – four months before his conviction. He would be buried beside his parents.⁴⁹

Tweed's father Richard ran a chair-making business and hoped that his youngest son would join it. The lad known in his neighborhood as Big Bill, however, initially resisted the idea and, wanting to become a bookkeeper, was trained in accounting at a private academy in Elizabeth, New Jersey. His ability to perform rapid mental calculations would later be thought impressive.⁵⁰ He returned to work⁵¹ for a brush-making company and, in 1844, wed Mary Jane Skaden, the daughter of its owner. They would have ten children.

Tweed became active in social and civic affairs. The organizations he joined included the Masons, the Odd Fellows, and a nativist party, the anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic Order of United Americans.⁵² For seven months in 1848 and 1849, he was the sachem (president) of his OUA lodge.⁵³ In 1848, he helped form a volunteer fire company and, the next year, became its foreman.⁵⁴ Fire fighting in mid-century Manhattan was a bare-knuckled, competitive enterprise, as other companies might have to be beaten off for the right to douse a blaze. At 250 or so pounds, Tweed took part in these skirmishes and in 1850 was suspended by the City Engineer for directing an

attack on another outfit, using “axes, barrels, and missiles.”⁵⁵ He never returned to fighting fires.

Instead, Tweed redirected his energies toward electoral politics and ran the same year as a Democrat for the post of Assistant Alderman of the Seventh Ward. He was defeated by 1,572 to 1,213 by the Whig John B. Webb, but would return to the lists the next year to run for Alderman – again against Webb. Tweed risked a second loss. Fortunately for him, a prominent acquaintance, Joel Blackmer, also contested the seat, running as an Independent Whig. Whether Tweed had himself persuaded the man to run is disputed.⁵⁶ Blackmer drew off enough votes from Webb, his fellow Whig, to effect Tweed’s first civic election – by 1,384 votes to 1,336 for Webb and 206 for Blackmer.⁵⁷ He was 28 years old.

Alderman. Aldermen were then unsalaried — an arrangement based on the noble notion that affluent men should and would serve without pay in high-minded fulfillment of duty. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the absence of remuneration was taken by many to excuse theft.

The incoming Democratic City Council of 1852 succeeded a Whig Council that had done little. The resulting pent-up demand for action opened the door to mischief. The twoscore members of the Council indeed diverted so much money into their own pockets as to become known as the Forty Thieves. Their methods included purchasing land at exorbitant prices in exchange for kickbacks, extorting bribes in awarding transportation franchises, selling City property at knockdown prices to friends, and introducing bills that threatened various persons — “cinch bills” or “strike legislation” — in order to be paid to withdraw them. Tweed was said⁵⁸ (he denied it in an affidavit⁵⁹) to have pocketed \$3,000 of the \$30,000 paid in bribes for the Third Avenue Railroad franchise and to have been otherwise prominent in the corruption.⁶⁰

Minutes of the Board of Aldermen offer glimpses of the young Seventh Ward member. He raised points of order, occasionally chaired Board meetings, and was named to committees – including one ad hoc threesome formed to deal with charges of corruption in the Street Department.⁶¹ In July 1852, Tweed chaired a committee appointed by the Board to pay respects to the late Kentucky Senator Henry Clay and gave an oration

abounding in high-flown rhetoric and extravagant eulogy of the deceased statesman, mixed with egotistical references to the speaker himself, who more than intimated that the vacancy they were then

called on to deplore could be easily filled by himself or by one of his associates.⁶²

Aldermen then also sat as justices. In December 1852, Tweed presided over a court session in which Assistant District Attorney Abraham Oakey Hall won the conviction of a man for stealing a gold watch.⁶³

In May 1852, prospective franchisee John Martine proposed to pay annual rent of \$3,500 to the City to operate a ferry between Brooklyn and Manhattan. Competing bids suggested that the City could realize three times that amount. Alderman Tweed spoke up: Martine's offer was enough, indeed more than enough – as any rent over \$2,000 would be excessive. If rent of \$10,000 was contracted for, “the citizens would have to pay the difference. There would be slower boats, not so good men, and worse accommodations... the man who offered \$10,000 did not know what he was about.” Ignoring protests that they were acting too hurriedly, the Aldermen – by a vote of seventeen to one – approved Martine's lease.⁶⁴

In awarding the ferry-service franchise, several Councilors accepted bribes. Tweed may have taken money, but, in any case, demanded and secured Brooklyn's support for his candidacy to the U.S. House of Representatives.⁶⁵ On September 15, 1852, he was unanimously nominated.⁶⁶ Four days later, however, allegations that the nomination had been unfairly obtained led the Democrats to endorse one Conrad Swackhammer as a second candidate. A lawyer in this meeting alleged that “rowdies” had nominated certain delegates. Thereupon, “a rush was made for the speaker, who, in order to escape being roughly handled, jumped from the second-story window into the street.”⁶⁷ Swackhammer did not end up running and Tweed defeated his Whig opponent by 2,109 to 1,767 votes. A few days later, it was charged that Tweed had purchased the votes of 250 colored citizens.⁶⁸

Throughout Tweed's first year on the Board of Alderman, the newspapers made much of its corrupt dealings. In the meeting of December 29, 1852, the Congressman-elect fired back:

But we know the virtue of a \$50 bill when it is wisely employed, and the echo that it will produce. The Press, however, has not the magnanimity to attack any individual member of this Board. They attack us in a lump and then they are safe. But no matter, all the clamor of the newspapers is produced by the almighty dollar. However, their

noise is of little importance: there is not one of them scarcely worth reading.⁶⁹

The *New-York Tribune* responded to Tweed by reviewing the issue in question: a railroad on Broadway. A majority of the Aldermen favored “outside speculators” to build and run it. Another group proposed to pay the City the same amount for the franchise, but to charge passengers three cents per ride, instead of five. It was clear to the *Tribune* that the Aldermanic majority was “either the purchased tools of the outside speculators or their corrupt and guilty confederates.” Tweed would not be supporting the majority position “unless a part of this shameful plunder were ultimately to line the pockets of Bill Tweed.”

As to Tweed’s suggestion that press opposition had sprung from “a \$50 bill:”

The Alderman “knows the value of a \$50 bill,” and of any number of fifties; if he didn’t how would he ever have been an Alderman and a Congressman elect? How would the Negroes of [Brooklyn] have been swindled into voting in bulk for Pierce [for President], Seymour [for Governor], Tweed & Co. when they all supposed they were voting for [others], if *somebody* deeply interested in that election had not known exactly “the value of \$50 bills?”⁷⁰

Alderman Sylvester Ward had responded to Tweed’s speech by saying that Tweed, “the gentleman of the Seventh,” was no friend of the poor – inasmuch as he would have them pay 67 percent more to ride the railroad to their work. Tweed had retorted by calling Ward “the blackguard from the Fifteenth Ward” and saying that he had not claimed to befriend the poor.⁷¹

And Congressman too. On March 4, 1853, William M. Tweed became a Member of the Thirty-Third Congress of the United States. For the remainder of the year, he would serve as both Alderman and Congressman. That he could not, when in Washington, attend meetings of the Common Council suggested to many that he should resign his Aldermanic seat.

In the City, citizens, increasingly sensing the foulness of their government, demanded reform. In June, with 92 percent voting in favor, the City Charter was amended.⁷² Changes included: mandating competitive bidding for City contracts, depriving Aldermen of their rights to appoint

policemen and to sit as judges in criminal courts, and strengthening the laws against bribery.⁷³

Tweed occasionally expressed himself on issues of public integrity. In July 1853, he “rose to a point of order, objecting” to the impropriety of another Alderman’s using such words as “peculation,” “notorious,” and “corruption” in reference to the Street Department.⁷⁴ On the last day of the year and his last as an Alderman, Tweed stated that “this much-abused Board” had governed the City at a total annual cost of \$4.5 million. He

ask[ed] the people if a city such as ours daily receiving an immense population of the idle, degenerate, vicious, and good, from all parts of the world, could be governed at a less expense. The public press, either willfully or otherwise, has always avoided placing these facts before the people.

This result was achieved, he said, even though half the City’s taxes were mandated by the Legislature of the State and not controlled by the Aldermen. He noted that the Governors of the Almshouse had treated the Comptroller with “low, cringing, fawning obsequiousness” – whereupon their budget had not been reduced.⁷⁵

In Washington, Tweed was bored – admitting that he had little interest “in hearing a lot of snoozers discuss the tariff and the particulars of a contract to carry the mails from Paducah to Schoharie.”⁷⁶ His lone contribution to the Congressional debates was “a short and incoherent speech in favor of the Kansas and Nebraska bill”⁷⁷ that may only have been printed and not spoken.⁷⁸

He wavered in settling on his next political steps. In early October 1854, he was unanimously renominated as a Congressional candidate.⁷⁹ In the elections the next month, however, he would run not for Congress but only for his former seat as Alderman – losing to the Whig Charles Fox by 1,843 to 910 votes. Fox would later remember that the Democrats had intended to count Tweed in. He had, however, marshaled a force of friends whose presence secured from the election inspectors an honest-enough tallying.⁸⁰ In this campaign, Tweed opposed the nativist Know-Nothing Party and would henceforth be known as a friend of Manhattan’s immigrants.⁸¹

At the end of the Thirty-third Congress in March 1855, Tweed returned to Manhattan. He found, however, that his time away had cost him: he was short of money,⁸² out of touch on local matters, and a resoundingly defeated

Aldermanic candidate. It was a low point in his career — from which he would rebound over the next sixteen years to amass more power than any urban politician ever had had.

Pol's Pol

The personal attributes of the man who would resurrect his career from its shambles in 1855 to its summit sixteen years later have been disputed. On the day after Tweed's death, the *Times* thought that “{s}uch talents as he had were devoted to cheating the people and robbing the public Treasury; his tastes were gross, his life impure,” culminating in “{t}hat vulgar material type of success which he attained by trampling on justice and honesty.”⁸³

Conversely, historian David McCullough was one of many who discerned a unique excellence in Tweed, judging that he “had a genius for organizing things.”⁸⁴ Lord James Bryce, a preeminent political scientist of the post-Ring era, advanced contradictory assessments of the stringpuller he once had seen in action: calling him both “a mere vulgar robber”⁸⁵ and a man “of genius”⁸⁶ – the latter term also applied by historian Jerome Mushkat.⁸⁷

Theodore Roosevelt, a thirteen-year-old in the City at the time of Tweed's fall, later summed him up as “a coarse, jovial, able man, utterly without scruple of any kind.”⁸⁸ Each of Roosevelt's four descriptive dimensions has been debated.

Coarseness. That Tweed aspired to refinement could be seen in his rooms at the Delavan Hotel where he “affected a love for the beautiful in art and a liking for surroundings that to a stranger bespoke a man of good taste.”⁸⁹ He referred to himself as a gentleman, though his recourse to such street language as “what the ---- do you care?” at the height of his power in the early 1870s was quoted by associates.⁹⁰

One historian wrote of Tweed that: “Like many great scoundrels, he was a good family man, a dutiful husband, a devoted father.”⁹¹ This backhanded tribute ran counter to the charges of a political opponent:

For years, [Tweed] had two mistresses, one of whom lived within a stone's throw of his house on Fifth Avenue, and in the summer as near his residence in Greenwich. Rumor says that he gave those two women \$1,800,000... Tweed gallanted [one of them] from Maine to California,

and through Fifth avenue and other streets of this city in defiance of public decency.⁹²

Another historian wrote that Tweed “was notorious, even from his youth, for licentious excesses, which were a scandal to the neighborhood in which he dwelt, and which grew upon him in after years;”⁹³ yet another placed the later Tweed in “the flashier type of oyster saloons... His companion... a little blonde, who did not reach to his shoulders, and many years his junior.”⁹⁴

Whether or not Tweed ever had any mistress, he spoke to the end of his days fondly of Mary Jane:

“My wife!” said Mr. Tweed with a little quiver and some warmth. “She is God’s own workmanship. The only thing against her is that she had such a worthless husband.”⁹⁵

Before his last illness, Tweed wrote his wife and children from his prison room twice each week. They would have stayed by him, but for his discouraging it. Tweed’s daughters, per the *Times*, were “pitiful” in their grief at his burial.⁹⁶ In better days, his female relatives were said to have wheedled much from him.⁹⁷

Though fond of food, Tweed prided himself on his moderation in drink: claiming never to have been drunk.⁹⁸ Like other details of his life, this too was challenged. A reporter described his having “loved the pleasures of the table and the bottle”⁹⁹ and quoted a steak-and-chop-house owner: “That’s Tweed. Drinks wine at 1 o’clock in the afternoon. He’ll come to a bad end.”¹⁰⁰

Joviality. Tweed said that his own “temperament, derived from my father, is to be hopeful and buoyant and enjoy what is going on.”¹⁰¹ His greetings to his followers in the Legislature, as he strolled through the train were described as not perfunctory “How do you do”s, but more: “‘How are you, Jim,’ ‘A nice day, Tom,’ ‘You’re looking like a fighting cock, Billy,’ and so on.”¹⁰² In one 1859 session of the County Board of Supervisors, Republican absentees precluded a quorum. Vainly, the Board waited for fifteen minutes – “in silence (with the exception of an occasional jocose remark from Supervisor Tweed,)”¹⁰³ – before adjourning.

Tweed’s demeanor was not, however, unbroken sunshine. Those who opposed him – including such magnates as Hoffman and Tilden – he could crassly bully. Smith Ely, Jr., was a Democratic and Tammany colleague since the 1850s – when they were for two years fellow School

Commissioners; a fellow Supervisor in the 1860s; and, in the 1870s, Mayor.¹⁰⁴ He reported that, after a falling out with Tweed, they sat together on the Board of Supervisors for five years without exchanging a word.¹⁰⁵ In 1908, Ely described Tweed as “a very agreeable, magnanimous, attractive fellow..., but absolutely without conscience.”¹⁰⁶

The result of Tweed’s affability, per one historian, was that “he numbered friends in every walk of life,” in particular, leading businessmen and journal publishers.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps, perhaps not. Even at the height of Tweed’s influence, his purported friends among such elites did not attend his daughter’s showpiece wedding nor, after his misfortunes, his funeral. Their amity may have encompassed little more than accepting tax favors and, perhaps in return, lending their names in support of Ring schemes. Even Tweed’s closest associates in his crimes, Peter Sweeny and Richard Connolly, were thought fundamentally hostile: “Sweeny despised him for his coarseness. Connolly regarded him as a hypocrite—as a man who adopted the bluff King Henry VIII style of doing things merely as a blind—as a cloak to hide his own shrewdness and his own intense selfishness.”¹⁰⁸

After his fall, Tweed felt that: “Everybody abandoned me except my family and a very few friends and these latter were afraid and helpless.”¹⁰⁹

Abilities. The talents of William Tweed – called “genius” both by those who had known him and by historians since – did not include many associated with successful public figures. Unlike Peter Sweeny and Samuel Tilden, Tweed had but minimal interest in national issues and revealed few insights into them. Nor did he have Tilden’s or Hall’s grasp of legal matters. As a speaker, Tweed was thought “not distinguished... though he could talk quite well and to the point when occasion required.”¹¹⁰ He said of himself, “I can’t talk and I know it.”¹¹¹ Notwithstanding his engaging personality and even though his popularity as a fireman had helped make him Alderman, Tweed was, throughout most of his career, not especially liked by voters.

In the absence of such qualities, Tweed had instead:

- **an abiding interest in the detail work of elections and of local government.** In 1868, when asked about his “identification with the party machinery,” he responded: “It is very extensive; I have that reputation, and I think it is pretty well deserved.”¹¹² Although he had debuted in government as an Alderman, then a Congressman, Tweed would later serve in lesser positions: including Member of the Board of Education, Member and Chairman of the Board of County Canvassers,¹¹³ Commissioner of Deeds, and Fire Commissioner. By the

count of the *New York Herald* in 1878, he had held “thirteen salaried offices from the city and county.”¹¹⁴ Non-governmental posts he filled included committee chairmanships in the Democracy and Tammany Hall, company directorships, and the presidencies of social clubs and a bank.¹¹⁵ While others would not have borne the tedium of the meetings and the routine tasks such positions entailed, Tweed persevered in them;

- **presiding skills.** From his first year as an Alderman, Tweed showed familiarity with the procedural options and maneuvers in meetings. For the next two decades, he would seem the natural choice to chair many types of gatherings;

- **a knack for securing the confidence and support of other politicians.** In his later years, this could be cynically attributed to a sense of how best to buy off his fellows. Earlier, though, in situations where bribery was unlikely, Tweed was often – despite his lack of broad popularity – asked to preside over meetings or tapped when one more candidate or appointee was needed; and

- **many acquaintances and a superb memory.** In 1868, he said, “Nine men out of ten either know me or I know them; women and children you may include.”¹¹⁶ In his final months in prison, Tweed was said to recognize one quarter of the passersby on the street and could give details of their businesses, families, and lives.¹¹⁷

Other points of distinction are murkier. Tweed’s ploys of the early 1860s,¹¹⁸ his quashing of the Young Democratic revolt in 1870, and his outmaneuvering of the reformers in the State convention of 1871 have been considered masterful. In these cases, however, the lead tactician may have been Peter Sweeny; in the latter two, the outcomes may have owed more to subornation than to strategy or skill. Sweeny in 1869 had been in Europe when Tweed thought to effect the twin coups of ousting Tilden as Chairman of the State Democracy and of himself replacing August Belmont as Chairman of the Democratic National Executive Committee. Both efforts crashed and burned.

Scruples. This man, who would later confess to having lied, bribed, stolen, and corrupted elections, was, intriguingly, known for his straight shooting. Tweed himself was said to have put all men into one of three

groups: “honest knaves” (among whom he counted himself); “hypocrites” (knaves feigning not to be); and “fools” (those so unenlightened as to give “sixteen ounces to the pound every time”).¹¹⁹ One historian made the distinction that Tweed’s commitments, unlike those of his political colleagues, could be trusted.¹²⁰ He prided himself on it: “I challenge any politician in New York to point out one instance where I have broken my word.”¹²¹ This too, though, was disputed: per the *Herald*, “Tweed would promise and break his word, always putting the blame of the broken pledge upon circumstance or somebody else.”¹²²

3

“Third City in the World”

Biggest and busiest. As replete in 1855 with potential and contradictions as William M. Tweed was his City. It then comprised Manhattan – much of the north of which was undeveloped – and minor islands nearby. On one of them he would be jailed.

Its citizens, even before the territorial expansion that would soon ensue, thought of themselves in the words of Mayor Fernando Wood in 1861 as the “third city in the world.”¹²³ The claim would, in the struggle a decade later to overthrow the Ring, be repeated and exceeded by the two sides: One Ring opponent calling the City “the third in Christendom;”¹²⁴ the Ring-apologetic *Herald* asserting that it had achieved a level of respect “which no other city, not even London or Paris, can command.”¹²⁵

Three towns in the modern Bronx would be annexed in 1874 – with Tweed having played, in the judgment of one biographer, an “instrumental” role.¹²⁶ Not until 1898 would Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island join with Manhattan and the Bronx to form what would then be, behind London, the second most populous city in the world. The U.S. Census in 1870 found 942,292 inhabitants: up from 515,547 twenty years before. Across the East River in Brooklyn were another 396,099 – making it, after Philadelphia, with 674,022, the third largest city of the nation. Construction of the monumental Brooklyn Bridge that would span that river would begin in 1869 – with Tweed having helped to arrange for it – and would take fourteen years.

A consequence of the Erie Canal, completed in 1825, was that, by the time of the Ring, the City handled the nation’s largest flows of merchandise, money, and mortals. Over 30,000 ships each year, carrying over half the foreign trade of the country,¹²⁷ docked at the wharves. On the New York Stock Exchange by 1868, securities valued at \$3 billion were traded annually, supplemented by transactions on Manhattan’s separate exchanges for produce, petroleum, and gold.¹²⁸ With 120 life insurance companies covering 85 percent of the national market and 60 commercial banks, the volume of capital investments made in Lower Manhattan exceeded that in the rest of the nation.¹²⁹

By the mid-1850s, over 300,000 immigrants were each year disembarking onto the island — with consequences for the City and nation

immediate and profound. Just over half of Manhattan's population and two thirds of its adults in 1855 were foreign-born.¹³⁰ Between 1846 and 1856, over one million Irish fleeing famine landed in New York.¹³¹ Constituting 21 percent of Tweed's Manhattanites, they outnumbered their compatriots in all cities other than Dublin.¹³² The second largest group of immigrants was German, at 16 percent of Manhattan's population and forming, behind Berlin and Vienna, the third largest cluster of Germans.¹³³ In July of 1871, the *New-York Times* would publish a special supplement in German, detailing the thefts of the Ring.

Progress and its underside. Throughout the life of Tweed, the City grew northward up the island. By 1868, the Sixth Avenue horsecar line ran to Forty-Fourth Street.¹³⁴ Tweed was perennially involved in extending the network of streets further uptown and in widening downtown avenues. Citizen reformers and the *Times* railed at the graft entailed.¹³⁵ North of Fifty-Ninth Street, work on Central Park began in 1858 — done mostly by unskilled Irish and German laborers earning a dollar per day¹³⁶ — and would be completed in 1873. The designer of the park, Frederick Law Olmsted, was abashed at the extent to which the hiring became based on political patronage and was in 1870 sent packing by Tweed and his co-Ringleader, Peter Sweeny.¹³⁷

As well as uptown, growth was up. Buildings had generally, through the 1860s, been limited to five stories. In 1870, the Equitable Life Insurance Company constructed at Broadway and Cedar its new headquarters: at seven and one-half stories high, it was the first office building with steam elevators for passengers.¹³⁸ Two years later, the cornerstone was laid for the Western Union Building — which would, when completed in 1875, use hydraulic-gravity elevators and be, at 230 feet, the nation's tallest office structure.¹³⁹

At times overlooked amid such progress as the bridge, the buildings, durable telegraphic connection with Europe achieved in 1866, and the completion in 1871 of Grand Central Depot — predecessor to Grand Central Station — were the poverty and putridity:

The streets in most areas were dirty and improperly drained. The air in good sections and in bad... stank with the exhalations of slaughter houses, gas works, decaying garbage, and the festering bodies of dead animals. The death rate in 1864 (40 in every 1000) was higher than that of any other large city in the Western world.¹⁴⁰

One half million lived in Manhattan's tenements,¹⁴¹ with a population density in East Side districts approaching 300,000 per square mile.¹⁴² Such housing conditions were in 1867 first addressed by the State government.¹⁴³ The number of homeless children was thought to exceed 10,000.¹⁴⁴ Tweed would in the summer of 1870 invite 180 boys and 100 girls under the care of the Commissioner of Charities and Correction to spend a day at his mansion in Greenwich, Connecticut, where they were "sumptuously entertained."¹⁴⁵

Governance. The leading city of the Western Hemisphere, in manufactures and in misery, was, during most of Tweed's prominence, not permitted to manage itself. Manhattan in the mid-1850s had a recent history of corruption, a Democratic Mayor of dubious rectitude, and a minority position in the largely rural State: constituting one sixth of its population. Upstate Republicans were dismayed at misdeeds in the City and confident of maintaining their majority status in Albany. (A decade later, the City's population would be estimated at one fourth of the State's; its taxes, one third of the State's; the value of its properties, two fifths; its representation in the State Legislature, one eighth; and in the U.S. Congress, one fifth of the State's.¹⁴⁶)

The solution the Republicans devised in 1857 was to put the City into the essential custody of the State. A new Charter and related laws were imposed on Manhattan mandating that the Governor name many local officials. City police — although paid out of City taxes — came under the control of a five-member (none Democrats¹⁴⁷) board appointed by the Governor. Other gubernatorial appointees administered Central Park, the Fire Department, the Commission of Emigration, and the Quarantine Commission (precursor to the Department of Health).¹⁴⁸ County institutions — New York County having the same territory as the City — were created with responsibilities that overlapped and conflicted with those of the City. Three fourths of Manhattan's budget was controlled by Albany¹⁴⁹ — which would not allow the untrusted and trussed-up metropolis to amend its own Charter.

George Washington Plunkitt was a Tammany politician under Tweed and for decades following his fall. (In August 1871 as an Alderman, he was named to the Joint Committee of Supervisors and Aldermen formed to investigate the charges against the Ring of the *Times*.) Around the turn of the century, he thought:

This city is ruled entirely by the hayseed legislators at Albany...
The hayseeds think we are like the Indians to the National

Government—that is, sort of wards of the State, who don't know how to look after ourselves and have to be taken care of by the Republicans of St. Lawrence, Ontario, and other backwoods counties... In this State the Republican government makes no pretense at all. It says right out in the open: 'New York City is a nice big fat Goose. Come along with your carvin' knives and have a slice.'...

The Republican Legislature and Governor run the whole shootin'-match. We've got to eat and drink what they tell us... If they don't feel like takin' a glass of beer on Sunday, we must abstain. If they have not got any amusements up in their backwoods, we mustn't have none... And then we have to pay their taxes to boot.¹⁵⁰

The City Democracy had repeatedly vowed to the voters to secure home rule.¹⁵¹ To be in a position to fulfill those pledges, Tweed ran in 1867 for the Senate of the State.

Tammany Hall. A main institution through which William M. Tweed expanded his influence was Tammany Hall. Becoming Grand Sachem in 1869, he presided over its zenith of power and its nadir in graft. Tammany had been, long before he joined it, tentacular in reach, boisterous in mood, and adaptable in politics. Tweed extended and strengthened the political networks of the Hall and used them to gain hegemony within the State Democracy. From 1866 to 1872, men designated by him and Sweeny for Tammany support served as Mayor and, from 1869 to 1872, as Governor.

Tammany Hall was the political wing of the Tammany Society, which had been founded in the 1780s and named after a chief of the Delaware Indians. While, even then, the link to original Americans had been fanciful, the fiction of a tribal background would linger in designations of Tammany leaders as "Sachems," of the rank and file as "Braves," and of their meeting house as the "Wigwam."

The Tammany in which Tweed became active in the 1850s had long been a formidable presence in City politics, legendary in its successes and its sins. It was overwhelmingly Democratic, with a sprinkling of Republicans. The partisan repertory of the Hall reflected decades of vying with the Whigs in developing methods to lie, cheat, buy, bully, steal, and ingratiate its way to electoral advantage. Its meetings were notoriously lively, as debates over candidates and issues could be transmuted at the throw of a beer mug into hearty fistfights, with occasional bludgeonings, stabbings, and gunfire. Even its officers, while presiding over meetings, were known to hurl heavy objects

at opponents and to forsake their platform to chase naysayers from the room.¹⁵²

The Grand Sachem of Tammany in the spring of 1860 was Isaac Fowler: a college graduate, socially esteemed, and a U.S. Postmaster, appointed by President Franklin Pierce.¹⁵³ It then came to light that, since 1855, he had embezzled \$155,000 in postal receipts.¹⁵⁴ Fortunately for the Wigwam's chieftain, the U.S. Marshal assigned to arrest him was a fellow Tammany brave – for whom giving Fowler enough forewarning to scamper off to Cuba was but due courtesy.¹⁵⁵

After the absconding of Fowler, Tweed – his own influence in the Hall on the rise – boosted the Irish within Tammany¹⁵⁶ and Shamrockmen soon became Grand Sachems. The Wigwam had recognized as early as 1823 that the incoming flood of foreigners could provide political advantage.¹⁵⁷ Assisting immigrants in settling and giving them jobs would pay ballot dividends when they became citizens. With the unwelcoming attitude of the Whigs toward the newly arrived,¹⁵⁸ Tammany and the Democracy soon had their allegiance. The Hall at first slated Irishmen for no offices higher than coroner. In 1858, however, this limitation was discarded and a fairer share henceforth of the Wigwam's nominations went to the Irish.¹⁵⁹

Both of the two leading immigrant groups, the Irish and the Germans, relaxed with alcohol and resented reformers' efforts to limit their intake of whiskey and beer. Their saloons — of which the City in 1871 had about 8,000¹⁶⁰ — were, perforce, political. They were governmentally licensed and supposed to close on Sundays. To keep their licenses in good standing and to get away with winking at the Sabbath, civic connections were key. Saloons were, moreover, natural political venues — where men congregated and discussed and skirmished over the issues of the day. The keepers of the grogeries were confidants, creditors, disseminators of information, and calmers of discord: well-suited for ward captaincy in the Tammany machine. When shock troops were needed to disrupt or to protect rallies or voting, the liquor houses supplied the “shoulder-hitters.” When, in 1859, Tammany controlled the appointment of election registrars, 68 of 609 were sellers of liquor.¹⁶¹ Of the 1,007 primaries and conventions prior to the City elections of 1884, 633 were held in saloons.¹⁶²

Using information taken in by its barmen and other precinct captains, the Hall adapted adeptly. It was sensitive to changes in public moods, including passing spasms of dismay at revealed corruption. Tammany would, at such times, announce its own devotion to uprightness in government and would head its tickets with reputable men. In 1853, it

supported the Amended Charter put forward in response to the crimes of the Forty Thieves. Six years later, it nominated for the Mayoralty William Havemeyer, who had previously in the office been known as a reformer. On the same Tammany ticket, however, were six nominees for Councilman who were under various indictments.¹⁶³ Havemeyer lost that election but would again — in 1872 after the fall of the Ring — be put forward as a symbol of reform and would then regain the Mayoral chair.

The City Democracy. Tammany Hall was, in Tweed's early political years, but one faction — if often that on top — within the ever-squabbling Democratic Party of Manhattan. In the early 1860s, much of his energy went into intra-Party grappling. By 1864, Tammany, under his leadership, had established its supremacy.

Like the Hall, the Democracy was known for rough methods. A sense of politics in Tweed's first year as an Alderman may be gained from the *Times'* account of the primary meetings held on August 26, 1852. Prospects for being accused of objectivity the paper dashed at the outset, asserting that the gatherings

cannot be described better than by saying that they were managed by men of the most depraved feelings, reckless as liquor could make them... Throughout the City, there certainly was not one in fifty of the men engaged in the elections that could establish the remotest claim to respectability.

The journal then described events in the wards. Lowlights included:

Second Ward—It was lucky that the Inspectors were behind a strong barricade, or they would have been unable to withstand the pressure of the mob...

Fourth Ward—Rioting commenced early in the evening... The dispute appeared to be as to the relative claims to the office of Coroner of Dr. HILTON and Dr. O'Donnell... {T}he O'Donnell men being in possession of the room, the Hiltonites attempted to drive them out. A desperate fight ensued, about sixty or seventy being engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict. Finding fists of small account, the assailants took to brickbats, and in a short time dislodged their opponents. The voting, which had been interrupted, was recommenced, but the defeated O'Donnell clan rallied in the street, and having a supply of bricks, they stormed the room, and again broke up the balloting... Again

comparative order and more voting—when it was announced that a large supply of ammunition had been discovered... in the shape of paving-stones. Parties were quickly armed, and promiscuously the stones flew through the crowd, and in at the windows and doors... [One man] had an eye pulled out...

Eighth Ward—... One man... had an eye gouged, and on his arm were the marks of a full set of teeth...

Eleventh Ward—... Several persons were knocked down during the contest, and we observed many of the electioneers hurled into the street without a vestige of clothing, and some 30 or 40 were taken to their homes with broken limbs and serious injuries...

Sixteenth Ward—... In three minutes there were three battles, and a man named Murphy was nearly killed...

Eighteenth Ward—“Knock down and drag out” was the order of the evening. One apothecary in the neighborhood of the place of meeting was called upon to dress four broken heads in less than thirty minutes after the polls opened...

Nineteenth Ward—... Enoch Camp was badly injured during the riot, and is not expected to recover.

The Seventh Ward, on this day, had “{a} quiet time, and the Tweed ticket elected without opposition.”¹⁶⁴

4

Ring Men

The Boss

Elections without opposition would recur for Tweed in the ten years following his return from Washington in 1855 – while his challenged candidacies would often fall short. The positions he would achieve via uncontested ballotings and appointments, coupled with the forging of key comradeships, would, in these years, bring him the influence that would enable him to forsake forever his day job as a maker of chairs.

Limited electoral success. The combination of Tweed's modest popularity and his high standing among politicians resulted in a curious career in which his name cropped up frequently for various nominations, but in which he rarely won contested elections of importance. Between his 1852 election to Congress and his 1867 capture of a seat in the New York Senate, Tweed had no notable ballot triumph. His own electoral career was one instead of bruted and actual candidacies, recurrent disappointments and moderate successes. Among them:

- his mention in September 1856 as a possible Mayoral nominee, the *Times* noting that “{i}t is said that ‘BILL TWEED’s’ friends consider him an eminently proper candidate;”¹⁶⁵
- his election later that year to the Board of Education;
- his election in 1857 to the County Board of Supervisors. He had been one of six Democratic candidates – all of whom, once nominated, were sure of election. The other five received more votes, even in Tweed's own district.¹⁶⁶ (The revamping of the Board's powers that year was an inspiration of Republicans who, in hopes of securing balanced, bi-partisan governance, mandated its composition of six Democrats and six Republicans. In practice, the Democrats soon figured out that control required only the bribing of any one of the opposition. The Board, as its members acquired wealth, became accused of making itself a “political tollgate,” routinely levying charges on beneficiaries of the legislation it passed.¹⁶⁷) Over the next dozen

years, Tweed's presence on the Board – of which he was four times elected President¹⁶⁸ – would be a major source of his power;

- his failed bid in 1858 for reelection to the Board of Education (the *Times* judging that Tweed's simultaneous membership that year on both the Board of Supervisors and the Board of Education had been an “obnoxious impropriety” – inasmuch as the former had the responsibility of revising the budget estimates of the latter);¹⁶⁹

- his unsuccessful candidacy the same year for the Democratic nomination for County Clerk;¹⁷⁰

- his third-place finish among four candidates in 1861, as the Tammany nominee for Sheriff (“a plum job famous for making men rich”¹⁷¹) – with 21 percent of the vote, versus 37 percent for the winner, representing another branch of the Democracy, and 30 percent for the Republican candidate;¹⁷² and

- his 1868 reelection to the Board of County Supervisors – of which he had been a member for eleven years and the President – in which he received 30,000 fewer votes than the other Democratic candidates.¹⁷³

Auspicious associations. Such experiences might have suggested a lamentable lack of the qualities needed to succeed in the hurly-burly of Manhattan's politics. Between 1856 and 1863, the only significant elections won by William M. Tweed – as County Supervisor – were automatic consequences of nomination. By the end of this time, however, no one in the City had more civic heft than he.

Among the factors in his rise to preeminence were his dealings with Elijah Purdy, George Barnard, and Charles Cornell:

- **Elijah Purdy: political paternity.** Elected along with Tweed in 1857 to the newly empowered County Board of Supervisors was the man known as the “Old Warhorse.” Elijah Purdy had long been active within Tammany Hall and, five years earlier, had allegedly been instrumental in the bribing of Tweed and other Aldermen.¹⁷⁴ Indicative of his stature in the late 1850s was his election to the Presidency of the Board of Supervisors and his leading the intra-party

opposition to the Democracy's difficult kingpin, Mayor Fernando Wood.¹⁷⁵ Tweed supported his fellow Wigwam brave Purdy¹⁷⁶ in both these roles and received in return his backing and guidance as Tweed became Chairman in 1861 of the New York County Democratic Central Committee¹⁷⁷ and in 1863 of the General Committee of Tammany Hall,¹⁷⁸ responsible for carrying out the policies of the Sachems – two posts that Purdy had himself held. In 1863, Purdy became the Grand Sachem of Tammany and Tweed was elected to his vacated spot as Sachem.¹⁷⁹ The Warhorse was seen by historians as a political sire to his younger party colleague.¹⁸⁰ (Tweed would say, upon Purdy's death in 1866, that he felt “as though I had lost a father.” He proposed a resolution, unanimously endorsed by the Board, praising the deceased for his “unswerving integrity.”¹⁸¹)

- **George Barnard: judicial alliance.** Also at issue in the elections of 1857 was the position of Recorder: a municipal judgeship. For it, Tweed favored George Barnard – of a respected City family and a graduate of Yale. When the man who was to have chaired the nominating session failed to appear, Tweed said, “Come on, I'll preside,” and took the chair. The roll-call voting, however, soon indicated that Barnard would lose. Tweed had a colleague offer a motion to dispense with calling the roll and thereupon called out, “All in favor of Mr. Barnard as the nominee of this body say aye. Carried! The meeting is adjourned!” In the ensuing tumult, a backer of the defeated candidate threatened Tweed with a cocked pistol. Tweed, however, brazened it out and the nomination held.¹⁸² Barnard would be elected and would win notice for the harshness of his sentences.¹⁸³ In 1860, with Tweed's continued backing, Barnard would be elected a Judge of the State Supreme Court.¹⁸⁴ For the next eleven years, Barnard would be a key courtroom confederate of the man who, for him, had looked down the muzzle of a gun.

- **Charles Cornell: administrative arrangement.** As Tweed and his allies within Tammany grew increasingly confident of their political deftness, they occasionally struck deals with their former arch-rival, ex-Mayor Fernando Wood. In late 1862, Wood joined with Tweed in persuading Mayor George Opdyke to appoint State Senator Charles Cornell¹⁸⁵ as Street Commissioner. One month later, Cornell said that his legislative duties precluded his running the Street

Department and made Tweed, at a salary of \$5,000, his plenipotentiary Deputy. Within days of his appointment, Tweed had replaced the previous leadership of the Department – including supporters and appointees of Wood – with his own men.¹⁸⁶ With the streets of Manhattan being extended uptown, widened, and improved; the budget of the Department, within four years, would quadruple.¹⁸⁷

From chairs to cherry-sized diamond. As, after 1855, his influence grew, Tweed devoted himself increasingly to politics and government. He had, following his return from Washington, worked with his father and brother in the chair-making firm of the family. But he knew it was not his calling. With the death of his father in May, 1860 and facing competition from low-price immigrant concerns,¹⁸⁸ Tweed had had enough of the furniture business. Rather than repay the debts of the company, he declared bankruptcy — although he may have had enough personal wealth to satisfy the creditors.¹⁸⁹ Judge George Barnard granted the discharge of his debts.

It was Barnard too who made Tweed a lawyer, attesting that he had had legal training in his office. The newly-minted lawyer could, as such, receive lucrative court appointments to such positions as receiver and referee. Payments to him for promoting or defeating legislation or for intervening with administrative departments could, henceforth, be reported as legal fees.

Tweed grew rich and flaunted his wealth. He took to wearing a blue-green diamond, the size of a small cherry, in his shirtfront.¹⁹⁰ Other members of Tammany were soon sporting similar, if respectfully smaller, stones. Tweed's gem would sparkle prominently in the cartoons of Thomas Nast.

He began to be called “Boss” – by which word he would refer to himself.

Statesman. From 1863 through 1871, Tweed's position as Tammany Boss entailed block-by-block organization, political maneuvering, and the setting of public policies. He extended and strengthened the grassroots political networks that Tammany had developed and appointed men accountable personally to him in every ward of the City.¹⁹¹ These representatives of the Sachem distributed food and fuel to the poor; coordinated patronage; took in payoffs from saloons, gambling houses, and brothels; kept Tweed informed of neighborhood issues and feelings; and had to deliver in elections.

Such micropolitics both guided and provided tools for Tweed's electoral and governmental strategies. These included: selecting candidates likely to win popular favor, negotiating with other Democratic groups and, occasionally, Republicans to trade electoral support, elevating allies to judgeships, working with judges to expedite the naturalization of immigrants, bribing legislators, and keeping figurehead office holders in line.

As he entered jail, Tweed was asked his occupation and responded, "Statesman."¹⁹² And he had, in fact, dealt extensively, at the local and state levels, with the public issues of his times: the awarding of ferry franchises and railway rights; the paving, widening, and straightening of streets; the extensions of water, sewer, and gas pipelines into Upper Manhattan; the completion of Central Park; the incorporation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and of what would become the New York Public Library; the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge; harbor improvements; the subsidizing of schools run by the Catholic Church; the establishment of the Buffalo State Asylum for the insane; support for orphanages; and the creation and financing of hospitals.¹⁹³ He was also credited with having achieved the elimination of corporal punishment in the schools – which was reversed, upon his ouster.¹⁹⁴ The summation of one historian was that "Tweed's legislative career as a champion of municipal advancement has seldom been matched in the history of the state."¹⁹⁵

Henchmen

Over and above all others implicated in the crimes of the Ring, four have been considered its core: William M. ("Boss") Tweed, Richard B. ("Slippery Dick") Connolly, A. Oakey Hall ("the Elegant Oakey"), and Peter B. ("Brains") Sweeny. They were the most prominently featured in the cartoons of Thomas Nast and the editorial diatribes of the *Times*. It was testified that millions of dollars in fraudulent kickback payments had been split up among these four and their two paymasters.

In higher office during its reign than any of the four subsequently synonymous with the Ring was John T. Hoffman: first, a judge partial to it; next, its Mayor; then, its Governor; and, prospectively, its President. Hoffman could generally – notwithstanding moments of independence – be counted on by Tweed and Sweeny to sign their bills and spending warrants, to veto the measures of their foes, and to personify a misleading element of

uprightness through the worst of their stealing. Hoffman was the first among the Ring men to receive the caricaturing attention of Nast, then receded into the backgrounds of the drawings¹⁹⁶ – which prefigured his subsequent fading into historical oblivion.

From 1863 into the summer of 1871, William Tweed and Peter Sweeny were the two most influential men in the government of the City. In 1866, John Hoffman became their Mayor. At about the same time and with an eye on securing the Irish vote, Tweed said, they “annexed”¹⁹⁷ their long-term Tammany acquaintance Richard Connolly and put him in charge of the City’s money. A. Oakey Hall, as a man of oratorical flair, legal ability, social standing, and demonstrated disposition to follow the instructions of Sweeny and Tweed, was in 1868 deemed a suitable candidate for the City’s nominally highest office.

Peter B. Sweeny. Sweeny (also spelled “Sweeney”¹⁹⁸) had been born in the City of poor Irish parents: his father was said to have kept “a cheap tavern in the outskirts of Jersey City.”¹⁹⁹ He had attended classes at Columbia College; then studied law; before accompanying a politician uncle to Albany. There, as a lobbyist, he proved “{a} master in the art of persuasion,”²⁰⁰ before returning to Manhattan. Sweeny, Tweed, and Connolly may first have gotten to know one another as fellow Democratic politicians in the mid-1850s. On June 11, 1856, the three were listed – along with 129 others – as vice presidents for a Democratic rally in the City addressed by Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois.²⁰¹

In 1857, Sweeny was elected District Attorney. Stage-frightened, however, in his first trial, he resigned the post. Henceforth, he held back in the shadows of the political stage, shunning public prominence, working secretly. In the same year, he joined Elijah Purdy, Samuel Tilden, William Tweed, and others in opposing Mayor Fernando Wood.²⁰² In this anti-Wood coalition led by Purdy that persisted into the early 1860s, Sweeny showed talent in authoring political memoranda.²⁰³ As the health and energy of Old Warhorse Purdy declined, his younger spear carriers, Sweeny and Tweed, came increasingly to the fore.²⁰⁴

In 1863, Sweeny was credited with packing the Tammany Hall General Committee with men who would support Tweed for its Chair. As Tweed then consolidated his power, Sweeny was considered his “chief collaborator.”²⁰⁵ If the later Ring were to be seen as a molecule of four political atoms, the bond developed between the Sweeny and Tweed atoms was the first and most important step in its formation.

Their alliance was symbiotic: Tweed, seeking influence and primacy, needed a savvy lobbyist and intermediary, buttonholing for him; Sweeny, preferring by the late 1850s, to acquire manipulative, backroom sway, was drawn to a gregarious striver, eager to chair meetings and willing to share decision making with him. Their union was furthered by commonalties: their cynical views of others; their shared grasps of political causes and effects; and their greeds. Of the four central Ringmen, Sweeny and Tweed were conceded to be the most politically astute: their judgments determined which candidates and positions would be backed and which abandoned. Sweeny was, in the years of Ring power, content to cede popular preeminence to Tweed and Hall – while he filled such positions of moderate importance as Chamberlain of the City and President of the Parks Department.

In appearance, Sweeny was described as “sinister” and “ugly,” with deep-set eyes that shone “like little dollars in the night.”²⁰⁶ The Chamberlain was generally “regarded as a dark brooding, mysterious Machiavellian,” notable for craftiness and cunning.²⁰⁷ His personality in public was reserved and few were said to like him.²⁰⁸ Tweed called him “a hard, over-bearing, revengeful man” who “wants his way and treasures up his wrath... We were so opposite and unlike that we never got along very well.”²⁰⁹

Sweeny read widely, bought works of art,²¹⁰ and, in his frequent trips to France, his friends included Baron Haussman and Victor Hugo.²¹¹

Richard B. Connolly. The only immigrant of the foursome was the Irish-born Richard Connolly, who had come as a boy to Philadelphia, before moving to New York. As a young man in Tweed’s Seventh Ward, he became engaged in local politics and specialized in delivering the Irish vote. In the 1850s, he was thrice elected Clerk of the County and, in 1859, State Senator. After serving one term in Albany, he left public life to become a banker.²¹² Not until 1867 did he return to civic position, as the Controller of the City.²¹³

Connolly’s “gold-rimmed spectacles, stately nose, clean-shaven face, and gently plump belly gave him an almost distinguished appearance.”²¹⁴ His manners were described as “good, though somewhat elaborate, with a decided tinge of obsequiousness toward his superiors and arrogance to his inferiors.”²¹⁵ He was called “cold, crafty, and cowardly, with a smooth, oily, insinuating manner”²¹⁶ and “an unctuous, Uriah Heep type bookkeeper”²¹⁷ and was thought the least attractive member of the Ring.²¹⁸

The pervasive extortions of Connolly and those under him could exasperate Tweed and prompt such notes as:

Dear Dick: For God's sake pay -----'s bill. He tells me your people ask twenty per cent. The whole d----d thing isn't but \$1,100. If you don't pay it, I will. Thine,

William M. Tweed.²¹⁹

One of Tweed's first acts in 1868 as State Senator was to secure passage of the Adjusted Claims Act. Under it, the Controller acquired the powers to decrease or increase claims against the City and to float bond issues. The first provision was ideal for the reaping of kickbacks; the second was a license to borrow in the name of the City as much money as the bond markets could be persuaded to lend.

A. Oakey Hall. The most politically prominent, if the least innately political, of the four was Abraham Oakey Hall. Tweed said that, "Politics are too deep for him. They are for me, and I can wade long after Oakey has to float."²²⁰ While conceding that "Hall was pretty good on his legs, to preside at a dinner or make a ready speech," Tweed also thought him "a dreadfully tiresome fellow, with his weak little puns."²²¹ Others too sensed a lack of ballast in the Mayor, who, at times, seemed little more than a "gaily bedecked butterfly" and an "elegant, clowning punster."²²²

Behind his colorful panoply and numbing word play, were, however, a daunting array of talents and the piston of ambition. For the pun-strewer was also a poet, a playwright, a classicist, a journalist, an editor, a lecturer, a lawyer, and a prosecutor. With his English and French ancestry and his professional and social status, A. Oakey Hall was thought to have "brought a sorely needed respectability to the Tweed Ring."²²³

Studious as a boy, he graduated from New York University in July 1844, shortly before turning eighteen. He then attended Harvard Law School for one semester, before leaving to pursue the reading of law – first in the City, then in New Orleans. In 1846, he was admitted to the bar of Louisiana and, two years later, returned to New York. There, he practiced law, became an Assistant District Attorney, wrote newspaper pieces, assisted Henry Raymond and George Jones in 1851 in founding the *New-York Times*,²²⁴ and married Katherine Louise Barnes, of a prominent Manhattan family. In 1854, he was elected District Attorney, an office that, with the exception of one four-year period, he would hold until becoming Mayor. The young lawyer and prosecutor was befriended by eminent New Yorkers and welcomed into their clubs – including, in 1861, the Union Club, the most prestigious in the City.²²⁵

In the same year, Hall, running as a Republican with Democratic support, recaptured the District Attorneyship.²²⁶ One year later, when President Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Hall judged that the Republicans had turned Abolitionist and became a full-fledged Democrat. He allied himself with Tweed²²⁷ and, in 1864 and 1867, was reelected DA. For the Boss, Hall was, in many ways, an ideal candidate: of high society, professionally distinguished, articulate, erudite, witty to a fault, and with appeal to a heterogeneous cross section of the City's voters. In 1868, after Hoffman's election as Governor, Hall was Tammany's choice to succeed him as Mayor. He would serve in that post for four years. In his Mayoral office, Hall had pictures of Connolly, Sweeny, and Hoffman and two of Tweed.²²⁸

The sobriquet of "the Elegant Oakey" and such references to him as "the popinjay"²²⁹ came from his dress. The dapper Jimmy Walker, Mayor of the City sixty years later, judged his own wardrobe drab next to that of his Gilded-Age forerunner – called "undoubtedly the best-dressed chief magistrate the town has ever had."²³⁰ One sartorial moment of note occurred on St. Patrick's Day of 1870. When the parade of the day reached City Hall, the Mayor emerged from his office to review it, resplendent in hat, suit, tie, and spats of green, with a shamrock boutonniere.²³¹

John T. Hoffman. Such an appearance would not have been made by the Presidentially dignified John T. Hoffman: Hall's predecessor as Mayor from 1866 through 1868 and Governor the next four years. DeWitt Clinton and he remain the only two to have held both offices.

Hoffman was tall, slender but strong, and handsome, with a luxuriantly drooping mustache – overgrown in the cartoons of Thomas Nast. The scion of a venerable Dutch family and the member of a leading law firm, his presence combined reserve and geniality.²³² He did not number among the many passion-evoking orators of the day. His speeches tended, though, to win admiration and trust²³³ – which served well enough the purposes of the Ring. In the aftermath of the New York City Draft Riots of 1863, Hoffman, as Recorder, acquired fame and popularity by dealing severely with the rioters brought before his tribunal.²³⁴

He was run by Tweed's Tammany in 1865 for Mayor and narrowly elected. In the mid-1860s, until his election to the statehouse, he was the Grand Sachem of the Wigwam – to which post he was succeeded by Tweed. Known for his personal uprightness, he often spouted bromides on the importance of honesty in public office along with pledges to root out corruption – which were scoffed at by the *Times*.²³⁵ His probity was such

that, in an era when governmental favors were bought and sold like so many cattle, he was not known to have taken a direct monetary inducement. He was, Tweed said, “impossible... to influence... by money or promise of place.”²³⁶

Both the father-in-law and brother-in-law of the Governor were, during Hoffman’s Mayoralty, put on the City payroll.²³⁷ Henry Starkweather, his wife’s father, became Collector of Assessments, in which position he received 2.5 percent of the monies taken in and 2 percent of those not collected.²³⁸ For this clerical role, estimates of his annual earnings ranged from \$10,000²³⁹ to \$136,000.²⁴⁰ Tweed would say in 1877 that Starkweather’s appointment was the only request Hoffman had ever made and that the Ring had, as a defensive tactic, selected him to be their unsullied figurehead.²⁴¹

Notwithstanding Tweed’s words on the matter, Hoffman – perhaps like Hall – may essentially have been bribed with position. Tweed had put him into, then plucked him out of, a judgeship and had sponsored him for the Grand Sachem’s headdress and through the Mayoralty to the Governor’s chair, with the White House beckoning on the horizon. The price Hoffman paid was toeing the Tammany line – if with occasional straying.

As Mayor, he had once asserted independence from Tammany policy by vetoing an ordinance to develop roads in Northern Manhattan. Tweed had then hurried from Albany back to City Hall to meet with the man he had put there. Newspapers reported that the Boss, instead of backing Hoffman for Governor, would himself run for the office.²⁴² The Common Council subsequently repassed the ordinance over the Mayor’s veto and Tweed’s candidacy never came to be.

A newspaperman recalled a scene during Hoffman’s first term as Governor when “Tweed, with red face, flashing eyes and threatening manner, burst into [his office].” The Boss shouted that he had heard that Hoffman intended to veto one of his bills – which Hoffman confirmed. Tweed threatened to deny him reelection. Hoffman said that he meant to serve a single term, with “no dictation;” whereupon Tweed cursed and left.²⁴³

Hoffman would, in fact, sign into law so much of the Ring’s legislation that he would secure a second term and would be routinely referred to by the *Times* as “the mere instrument of unscrupulous men,”²⁴⁴ serving with “supple slavishness.”²⁴⁵

5

Ring Means

Parts of Power

The *Times* in early 1871 summarized the history and operational essence of the Ring:

[Tweed and Sweeny] gained control of the Tammany General Committee, and through that, of the local Democratic Party, which they manipulated to suit their own purpose, until they had got possession of all the City patronage. With this and the City treasury in their hands, they have been able to buy up most of the leading men who opposed them, by the gift of office or direct bribes, until all opposition was silenced.²⁴⁶

The initial lead foci of Sweeny and Tweed – votes and jobs – were mutually reinforcing: the more votes they could secure for their candidates, the more jobs they could control; and vice versa. Also symbiotically linked were votes and clout in the courts: elections created judges, who then ruled for one's ballot methods. In the later years of their primacy – after Tweed became State Senator – the two Sachems of Tammany paid more attention to two additional levers of authority: the Legislature and the press.

Running throughout the Tweed/Sweeny system of governmental engineering were sluiced streams of money. Dollars shifted and created votes, complemented jobs as inducements, swayed judges and flowed from their rulings, and bought lawmakers and newsmen.

Votes. Tammany Hall's established prowess in the no-holds-barred world of civic balloting was taken by Tweed to a new level. Although all political parties in the City had played fast and loose with electoral gambits, Tammany often had taken the creative lead. Sharp practices included buying votes, distributing faulty ballots to opposition voters, posting toughs at polls to regulate entry, stealing and destroying ballot boxes, and disrespecting the notion that the counting of ballots might influence the announcing of results.

Voting more than once was common: as organized bands of roving repeaters made their precinct-by-precinct rounds of the polls, voting as many

as fifty times.²⁴⁷ In the elections of May 1870, 1,100 Negroes were in one ward registered to vote. Upon appearing at the polls, 500 found that white repeaters already had voted in their names. Some of the 500 persisted in attempting to vote and were arrested for repeat voting.²⁴⁸

Tammany had long assisted recent immigrants, expedited their naturalizations, and made clear their ballot obligations. The Hall, under Tweed in 1868, stretched the frontiers of the practice. Naturalizations in the City had, since the mid-1850s, averaged 9,000 per year.²⁴⁹ Before the elections of 1868, Tweed arranged for the naturalization of 40,000²⁵⁰ — four and one half year's worth of new citizens in three weeks. (This disparity derived in part from the reluctance of immigrants to become citizens, thereby exposing themselves to conscription, during the Civil War — as Tweed himself argued.²⁵¹) Most judges, including most of the Democrats on the bench, refused to abet the ploy.²⁵² Two, however, who went along were George Barnard and John McCunn. With Tweed's minions expediting the paperwork, McCunn could naturalize two new citizens per minute and 2,100 in a day.²⁵³ Estimates of the number of oaths of citizenship administered by Barnard at this time range from 10,093²⁵⁴ to 37,000.²⁵⁵ Of the 156,000 votes cast in the City in the elections of 1868, an investigating committee of the U.S. House of Representatives (of two Democrats and five Republicans²⁵⁶) estimated that 50,000 were fraudulent.²⁵⁷

Tweed said later that all of the trickery in the balloting was immaterial: that all that mattered was the announcing of the vote — after a simulacrum of counting.²⁵⁸ In 1868, City Democrats feared that news of their vote totals would guide upstate Republicans in their own corrupt reporting of results. To prevent this, the Democracy took control of and tied up the telegraph lines.²⁵⁹ The elections that year have been judged the most fraudulent ever in the City.²⁶⁰

Jobs. To the burgeoning list of payroll positions under his control in the Street Department, Tweed would, upon becoming President of the County Board of Supervisors, add those of its work force as well. The consequence was that, by the mid-1860s, he was seen in the City to be unrivaled in influence, with Sweeny ranking a distant second.²⁶¹ The hiring for other City Departments, for companies doing business with the City, and for such civic undertakings as the Brooklyn Bridge would also come under the sway of the Ring. Within months after his arrival in Albany in 1868 as State Senator, Tweed and another were in charge of employment on the State's canals.²⁶² By 1871, the number of Ring-controlled jobs was estimated at 12,000.²⁶³

Many were sinecures: representing work of little value to the City but slots of importance to Tweed: payoffs to the men who took care of the Ring's (occasionally, literal) punch list. Others were constituent largess. City Hall in the 1860s was awash in "idle men," without any evident purpose other than the drawing of pay.²⁶⁴ One example of the kind of position found by Tweed for his people was that of manure inspector — filled by a dozen members of the Street Department, each paid \$3 per day.²⁶⁵ (Tweed, speaking to a Congressional committee in 1868, claimed not to know of no-shows in the Department. Since he only went through the building about twice a year, he could not swear as to their activities, "but I know that when I send for them during business hours [from nine to four], I generally find them."²⁶⁶ Testifying nine years later to an Aldermanic committee, Tweed affirmed that many of his appointees indeed did no work.²⁶⁷)

The Permit Bureau of the City reported directly to Mayor Hall and was another case of patronage run amok. It should have received an estimated \$100,000 annually in payments. In 1866, however, it took in but \$23,000 — a figure that dropped five years later to \$12,000. In April 1871, receipts were \$6 and expenses, \$2,843.²⁶⁸

In the four years before Peter Sweeny became President of the Parks Department, yearly maintenance costs for Central Park averaged \$250,000. During his eighteen months in charge, the annual level rose to \$5 million, as the payroll grew to 4,000 workers.²⁶⁹

Justice. Valuable in boosting both ballot totals and patronage payrolls was influence in the courts and among the police. Wielding their gavels on its behalf, the Ring had State Supreme Court Judges George Barnard and Albert Cardozo, Superior Court Judge John McCunn, and others of lesser renown.

Tweed's long-term ally, George Barnard, behaved in and out of his courtrooms with an insouciance bespeaking confidence that, with Tammany's backing, he was electorally entrenched. He issued court orders from the home of a friend's (Jim Fisk of the Erie Railway) paramour²⁷⁰ and was legendary for "indulging on the bench in the most ill-natured and reckless displays of ignorance, vulgarity, and absence of personal dignity."²⁷¹ He liked at the head of his courtroom to "drink brandy, or sit with his boots on the desk before him... whittling... pine sticks... He was also not without humor of a vulgar cast."²⁷²

Albert Cardozo, in the judgment of one contemporary, "had undoubted talent... and was far better qualified than Barnard for his

position.” He was thought, however, “thoroughly venal, and stood ready to sell law as a grocer might sugar.”²⁷³ Defense lawyers of the City regularly purchased from Cardozo writs of habeas corpus – by which their clients, most previously convicted of larceny, would be released on flimsy procedural pretexts and for nominal bail, then generally not retried.²⁷⁴

Also holding down inmate numbers was John McCunn. One standard practice for him was the wholesale release from custody of Tammany’s repeaters caught in the act – on such grounds as “that the arresting officer had detained them unnecessarily at the station house.”²⁷⁵ In 1870,

a United States marshal, attempting to arrest a ballot stuffer, had a revolver shoved in his mouth... The marshal’s assailant was released after he explained to Judge John McCunn that “it was done in fun.”²⁷⁶

Judicial favors flowed to friends of the Ring and were sold to others: lucrative appointments as receivers and legal referees; partial rulings; and favorable assessments and damages in connection with public works projects. In commercial law, the most notorious series of bought and biased rulings occurred in connection with the Erie Railway – separately considered below.

A striking example of criminal jurisprudence under the Ring, publicized by the *Times*, concerned Patrick Duffy, a member of the Tammany Hall General Committee. In 1857, an inebriated Duffy shot dead “a colored man... sitting quietly on the stoop of his residence.” Released on bail, he was not tried. Two years later, however, the excitable Patrick was prosecuted for assaulting and almost killing a steamboat captain – for which he was fined six cents. Between 1867 and 1870, he was arrested for shooting two others and participated in the stabbing murder of a restaurant owner – for all of which he was not tried. In 1870, for the near-fatal stabbing of a police officer, Duffy was sentenced to nine and one half years in Sing Sing Prison. Governor Hoffman soon, however, was prevailed on by Tweed to grant their Wigwam colleague a pardon – requiring, though, that Duffy at once leave the country.²⁷⁷

Other judicial favors of the Ring were jobs in the courts, where, as elsewhere, featherbedding was endemic. Between 1863 and 1871, the total annual costs of the Supreme, Superior, Common Pleas, and Marine Courts rose by 375 percent, to \$661,500.²⁷⁸ The *Times* estimated that 150 or more of the 200-plus court attendants or officers “could be dispensed with, and

then leave more than the Courts need, and more than they had before the 'Ring' began to rule."²⁷⁹

More party men, including many with criminal records, were given employment in the police.²⁸⁰ Citizens who, in the 1850s, had thought the politicization of the department scandalous would soon have their reproving eyes opened wider. Connections over competence guided appointments from patrolman to Superintendent. With Wigwam braves conspicuously active as purveyors, enablers, and consumers of various vices; saloons, brothels, and gambling houses – and the constabulary reaping of tribute from them – thrived as never before. The Ring allowed gendarme captains to rule as tribute-taking chieftains, victimizing petty criminals and the innocent poor.²⁸¹ For decades to come, commissioners would be frustrated by the autocratic independence of the precinct officers.

Laws. Albany's having in 1857 clamped its statutory full nelson onto the City limited what Tweed and Sweeny could do – until their sway could be extended up the Hudson to the capital. The Boss in 1868 soon showed that the methods honed among Manhattan's Supervisors were comparably effective in the Legislature of the State. He was occasionally candid about his means. Standing once in a group in Albany, he spoke of a fellow Senator passing by: "That's the worst legislative thief I ever knew. He won't stay bought. No matter how small the thing is I want him to do, I've got to buy him all over again."²⁸²

In 1877, Tweed testified on how, seven years before, he had secured the passage of his City Charter – distinguishing among the methods used for three legislative categories:

Assemblymen. Within the State Assembly, he relied on a trusted lobbyist, A.D. Barber,²⁸³ to round up the required votes – at a total cost, Tweed said, of \$600,000;²⁸⁴

Republican Senators. To deal with the opposition party in the upper house, Tweed consulted with journalist Hugh Hastings of the *Commercial Advertiser*, who advised him to meet with five key Republican Senators. Over the course of a few days, Tweed spoke with each. After haggling, a price of \$40,000 per Senator was agreed. For deniability: \$200,000 in cash was given to one of the five for distribution to the others – providing four with a basis for claiming they never had taken a penny from the Boss; then, at the suggestion of Hastings, a Republican caucus was called. The bought five influenced

it to back Tweed's Charter. Tweed had explained to one that, "if money matters are mentioned... you can say, 'I was governed by the caucus, and had to do it because the caucus did, and I personally went against it.'"²⁸⁵ Hastings received \$20,000 for his counsel; and

Democratic Senators. To win the support of his fellow Democratic Senators, Tweed varied the inducements: for one, "appoint[ing] ["fifty or sixty"] men for him in different positions—small positions, \$2.50 or \$3 a day—who did no work;"²⁸⁶ others he helped in business matters, or lent or gave money to, or "gave a place to his partner... to be not less than \$20,000 a year." One he relied on Richard Connolly to bring around.²⁸⁷

Tweed's Charter passed in the Assembly by 116 to 5 and in the Senate by 30 to 2 – vote margins that precluded blaming small groups of legislators for the result.²⁸⁸ The total price to the Ring was said to be \$1 million.²⁸⁹

Words. Sweeny and Tweed, like Samuel Tilden, knew the importance of public opinion and were adept in its manipulation. The Ring routinely paid the press of the City and State to print whipped-cream pieces and to pigeonhole unflattering reports. Tweed stated – having retained the canceled checks as proof – that the price paid to Albany papers was "sometimes \$5,000, sometimes \$1,000, sometimes less" for each favorable article.²⁹⁰

Most of the money came not from the pockets of Ring members, but from the coffers of the City – as payments for printing its official announcements (termed "advertisements"). Between January 1869 and mid-September 1871, ninety journals received \$2.7 million.²⁹¹ (These payments represented not just purchases of puffery, but also thefts and favors. Tweed's *Transcript* received \$783,000 between 1867 and 1871 and other recipients were "pauper concerns," surviving on their municipal stipends. Twenty-seven of the latter folded upon the fall of the Ring.²⁹²)

Tweed also gave money personally to individual reporters and, in jail, lamented that they had turned on him – after he had regularly paid the tailor's bills of one, the house rent of another, and had made loans of between \$5 and \$50 to a third.²⁹³ (Speaking to a reporter in prison, though, Tweed attributed his present "fix" to his lack of success in buying off "newspaper men as easily as I did members of the Legislature... The most of those ----- cusses would refuse money when they didn't have enough to get 'em a decent meal!"²⁹⁴)

Pillage

With unprecedented control of the City's governmental landscape, the Ring had before it the irresistible temptation to strip-mine its wealth. The later words of Tammany leader George Washington Plunkitt (speaking of himself) could have been applied to Tweed: "He seen his opportunities, and he took 'em."²⁹⁵

Non-competitive transactions. All business contracts of the City in excess of \$600 were legally required to be made with the lowest of competing bidders.²⁹⁶ Between statute and practice lurked, however, a gap. Ring members routinely leased to the City — at multiples of fair rents — space for use as National Guard armories. Tweed once sold 283 benches to the armories for \$600 each. He had bought them for \$5 apiece and netted \$168,385.²⁹⁷

Connolly, Sweeny, and Tweed saw profit potential in firms doing business with the City. One such was the New York Printing Company, in which the Boss acquired for \$10,000 a one-fifth interest. Soon, the company was doing much of the printing for the City and for others seeking official favors. It also received substantial payments from the City in cases in which insignificant or no services were rendered.²⁹⁸ It grew to 2,000 employees²⁹⁹ and Tweed came to receive annual dividends of \$50,000 to \$70,000.³⁰⁰ Other firms in which he invested and to which he guided City business included a stationery supply company, the *Transcript* newspaper, and a marble quarry.³⁰¹

Contractor kickbacks. In 1860, Tweed and two to six other members of the Board of Supervisors conspired to steer business to favored contractors submitting inflated bills. The contractors would then pay those Supervisors fifteen percent of the money received.³⁰² The proportion kicked back rose by 1870 to at least 65 percent:³⁰³ for every dollar paid out by the City to favored contractors, Tweed would state in 1877, 25 cents went to himself, twenty to Connolly, ten to Sweeny, five to Hall, and two and a half each to two Ring paymasters — with but 35 percent at most kept by the contractors.³⁰⁴

The money was handled by the Ring's paymaster/bagman clerks: James Watson, the County Auditor, and Elbert Woodward, Clerk to the Board of Supervisors. A contractor would typically bring his claim to Woodward. The two would agree on the amount to be paid to the contractor

and on that that he would pay back to Woodward. Woodward would then distribute the kickback percentages within the Ring.

Particularly favored projects for sweetheart contractors were National Guard armories and the new courthouse for the County. For furnishings and repairs of the armories over a period of seventeen months, four men were paid \$2.7 million.³⁰⁵ An investigation later found that, of \$3.2 million spent on armory repairs, “\$2,950,000 represents money stolen from the taxpayers.”³⁰⁶ The courthouse had been authorized in 1858 with a budget of \$250,000; its costs thirteen years later exceeded \$13 million — four times what recently had been paid for the British Houses of Parliament and nearly twice the cost of Alaska.³⁰⁷ Indicative of the laxness with which the expenditures were being tracked were such accounting entries as “brooms, etc.,” \$41,190.95.³⁰⁸ The same contractors also performed work — for which the City paid — on the homes of Tweed, Connolly, and Barnard.³⁰⁹

Persons without kickback arrangements found that the City dragged its feet in honoring legitimate claims against it. They might despair of ever being paid and would sell their claims at discounts to government insiders — who could secure payment in full.³¹⁰

Baseless claims. A related way for friends of Tammany to make money was, in return for kickback percentages, to have the City make payment on unfounded claims. Richard O’Gorman had made a name for himself as a Ring opponent and battler of corruption and, consequently, was backed by reformers to become Corporation Counsel for the City.³¹¹ Two years later, their error was evident. Judgments against the municipality during the Counselship of O’Gorman had reached an all-time high. Two fifths of them were considered legally baseless and likely to be reversed on appeal, if appealed. The expenses of his office had also risen to record levels.³¹²

Public works jobbery. Modifications of the municipal infrastructure — its streets, rail lines, public transportation, docks, parks, and water and sewage systems — offered profit prospects. Private properties: were acquired by the City; benefited from and were impaired by civic improvements; were subject to assessments for benefits; and were compensated for harm suffered. Uncountable complicating factors precluded perfect fairness — if sought.

The Ring did not seek it. Among the best-known of its “jobs” — manipulations of public projects for private gain — was the widening of Broadway. On May 17, 1869, the Legislature authorized expansion of the avenue between Thirty-Fourth and Fifty-Ninth Streets. Traditionally, the

assessments on private properties occasioned by such public works had been determined by three Commissioners: one nominated by taxpayers, one by the City, and the third by an independent judge. By 1869, however, the Ring – through Judges Barnard and Cardozo – controlled Commissioner appointments. Its henchmen became Commissioners, were excessively paid for their services, and enabled the Ring-connected to speculate profitably in affected properties. It was estimated that, between 1868 and 1873, charges for Commissioner services totaled \$1.5 million and averaged five times what would have been ample fees.³¹³

Ring insiders acquired lots on Broadway that soon were awarded damage-compensation amounts exceeding their purchase prices – yielding windfall profits estimated at \$1 million.³¹⁴ Sweeny and Tweed, both shortly before and after the passage of the Widening Act, purchased Broadway properties – at times openly; at others, using dummy names.³¹⁵ Those who declined to sell their lots to the extended Ring were exorbitantly assessed for the benefits imputed to them.³¹⁶ What the *Times* called the “Broadway Widening Job” was repeated, it said, on smaller scales throughout the City: in “innumerable other jobs.”³¹⁷

Comparatively, such jobbery has been judged benign. A contemporary in 1875 thought the street widenings and extensions and similar schemes of “the Ring and its wary satellites” to be “their most certain and perhaps least reprehensible sources of wealth.”³¹⁸ Decades later, Tammany’s George Washington Plunkitt distinguished between “dishonest” and “honest graft.” The former included “blackmailin’ gamblers, saloon-keepers, disorderly people, etc.” Examples he gave of honest graft were his investments in properties, based on insider tips on the sites of future public projects.³¹⁹

Business extortion. Firms not doing business directly with the City also paid tribute to its officials. Actions requiring discretionary approvals – such as the issuance of charters, licenses, or permits – invited extortion. It was thought that, by granting licenses and by not revoking them or not taking legal action when violations or crimes were discovered, the Ring controlled and exploited junk shops, merchant stands, gambling houses, brothels, dance houses, concert saloons, and lottery shops.³²⁰

Opponents of Tammany, termed “Antisnappers,” were special targets. Municipal inspectors were endlessly inventive of ways in which they might be found in violation of ordinances – for which fines or bribes had to be paid. One Antisnapper saloonkeeper, on receiving a large water bill, naively proposed not to pay it. He thought that, inasmuch as his saloon had no

faucet and was not linked to the municipal water system, it ought not to be billed. He brought all its water from his home. He was informed that, unless he paid within three days, the water to his home would be shut off.³²¹

Bribery. The sums paid as bribes to enter into noncompetitive transactions or in response to extortion understate the total harm done. It has been estimated that Ring members received for the granting of public franchises \$1 million annually.³²² The loss to the City, however, might have comprised not just this amount, but also any excess profits realized by the franchisees and reductions in the qualities of the goods and services provided. When political pressure led merchants to purchase 20,000 defective water meters, one historian estimated a profit to the Ring of \$840,000.³²³ Because, however, of the defects, the City lost, in addition to that amount, the value of having meters that worked, net of what their cost would have been. Similarly, when the enforcement of regulations was predicated on maximizing the regulators' income, the citizens lost both the bribes paid to avoid enforcement and the goals of the regulation.

Consequences of politically appointed officials routinely accepting bribes to overlook violations³²⁴ were that foodstuffs rotted and buildings tottered. One notorious placeholder was James McGregor – a Tammany brawler and election repeater – who had been made the Superintendent of Buildings. McGregor secured reappointment to his office one month after a building he had certified to be sound had collapsed, killing five, and a week after another fell to the ground within hours after his warranting its structural integrity.³²⁵

The Shiny Hat Brigade. Men like McGregor composed what was dubbed the “Shiny Hat Brigade:” Tammany stalwarts in public positions, distinguishable by “a certain swagger in their gait... and striking style of dress, the large diamonds and the fashionable high hats they wore.” Their services to the Ring were political: as enforcers, bouncers, shock troops, and repeaters in local meetings, party conventions, and civic balloting. Their rewards were such City posts as court attendant or manure inspector – undemanding enough that many of them were to be “found any afternoon (for late hours prevented early rising) on the sunny side of Broadway and Fifth avenue, or on the prominent street corners, smoking light-flavored cigars, and looking like capitalists.”³²⁶ They were also dubbed the “praetorian guard” of the Ring.³²⁷

How serious a drain on the City purse the Shiny Hatters were is not clear. They were said to number 12,000 to 15,000.³²⁸ The portion of departmental appropriations in the City paid to non-workers has been

estimated at 33 percent,³²⁹ while the annual salaries of politico no-shows were put at between \$1,000 and \$1,500.³³⁰ Taking lower figures and multiplying (33 percent of 12,000 times \$1,000 = \$3,960,000) suggests that the harm done to the public treasury by the stylish saunterers was \$4 million or more per year.

Governmental greasing: the Brooklyn Bridge. When planning for the Brooklyn Bridge foundered on the foot dragging of Manhattan's government in investing in its stock, Tweed was consulted. He asked for and received about \$60,000³³¹ to be used to persuade Aldermen to have Manhattan pay \$1.5 million for Bridge stock — while Brooklyn subscribed for twice as much. Tweed also arranged personally to buy shares with face value of \$42,000 for \$8,400 — and for Connolly and Sweeny to make similar purchases.³³² Involvement in the enterprise would give the Ring a say in the hiring of thousands.

Tax favors. Members and friends of the Ring, those whom it contemplated using, and those who slipped it bribes were said to have paid lower taxes. The *Times* asserted that an owner of real estate worth \$10,000 to \$20,000 might be taxed on 60 percent of its market value, while a millionaire in real property would pay on 40 to 50 percent. "The Ring," the paper said, "worked this business of valuation as a mine of political influence."³³³ In a calculation of the total harm done to the City by the Ring, a significant component was thought to have been "taxes arbitrarily reduced by The Ring for money and in return for favor."³³⁴

Beneficiaries of favorable tax treatment might have been disposed to act in ways that furthered Ring purposes. The wealthiest person in holdings of Manhattan properties was John Jacob Astor III. Astor in 1870 attested to the accounting practices of Controller Connolly and, the next year, became a partner with the Ring in the projected, quasi-public, Viaduct Railway. Whether he and/or the other eminent men of the City who joined him in these actions received tax reductions and, if so, were influenced by them is not known.

The Erie Railway

As the Ring's crimes were leading spurs of urban reform, the business scandal thought most to have spawned the upgrading of the legal system and financial sector was that of the Erie Railway. The two — through the involvement of George Barnard, Peter Sweeny, and William Tweed — were

linked. Although Tweed initially acted against the Erie, he and Sweeny later joined its board. He calculated that his efforts for it over one period of three months had netted him \$650,000.³³⁵ Reformers charged that the Tammany and Erie cabals had merged to form a corrupt meta-Ring that straddled courts, legislatures, and the business world.³³⁶ The *Times* judged in October 1870 that “the condition of things Tammany and Erie are jointly responsible” for “a general want of confidence and prolonged stagnation” on Wall Street. That the volume of trading on the New York Stock Exchange had fallen by two thirds from 1868 to 1870 was ascribed by the *Times* to the union of Tammany and Erie.³³⁷ The paper also then judged that a triumvirate composed of Tweed, Sweeny, and Jim Fisk of the Erie “govern the State,” Governor Hoffman being “a mere effigy.”³³⁸ It was thought that “the contest over the road ruined more reputations, destroyed more fortunes and developed more rascality than any one enterprise in this country.”³³⁹ Two significant steps in rehabilitating the integrity of the New York legal profession – the formation of the Bar Association of New-York and the impeachment of three Ring judges – were substantially motivated by judicial misdeeds connected with the Erie.³⁴⁰

Railroad and competitor. The Erie Railway Company, as 1868 opened, was a major transporter, with 773 miles of track, nearly 400 locomotives, and a main line that ran from the west bank of the Hudson across from Manhattan first north, then west, through New York State to Buffalo on its eponymous lake. It carried each year two million passengers and three million tons of freight,³⁴¹ with annual revenue of \$16 million.³⁴² The Erie, the Baltimore and Ohio, the New York Central, and the Pennsylvania were considered the four “trunk lines” of the country: the main routes connecting the East Coast with the West.³⁴³

Treasurer and leading director of the Erie was Daniel Drew, who was supported on its board by two young men he had befriended: Jim Fisk and Jay Gould. Drew had made news in 1866 – before Fisk and Gould had joined the board – as he had speculated in the stock of the Erie: selling its shares short, while their price rose into the 90s. With personal losses thus looming, Drew, as treasurer, had the company convert bonds into common stock, of which he dumped 58,000 shares onto the market. The share price fell from 95 to 50, transforming his losses into gains – at the expense of purchasers at the higher prices. The fleecing of those investors was little censured: Drew’s fiduciary obligation to them being treated as a detail of relevance only to the incurably naive. One contemporary wrote that, instead,

Mr. Drew was looked upon as having effected a surprisingly clever operation, and he retired from the field hated, feared, wealthy, and admired. This episode of Wall Street history took its place as a brilliant success.³⁴⁴

Such incidents had made the Erie known as the “Scarlet Woman of Wall Street.”

Three competitors of the Erie in the State were the Hudson River Railroad, the New York Central, and the New York and Harlem. All three, by the end of 1867, were under the control of Cornelius Vanderbilt, a multi-millionaire and quintessential robber baron known as the “Commodore.” Vanderbilt hoped in early 1868 to achieve a monopoly position in the State by taking over the Erie.³⁴⁵ Given Drew’s scarlet past, the Commodore could not but know the danger in attempting to purchase on the street a controlling bloc of Erie shares: the railroad could just issue enough new stock to thwart him. Vanderbilt therefore acted to protect his planned purchases: by securing from Judge George Barnard in February 1868 an injunction against the issuance by Erie of any more stock than the 251,000 shares believed extant. It was the opening shot in what would become known as the Erie War.

The eerie war. The Erie Directors – led by Drew, Fisk, and Gould – knew, however, how to fight judicial fire. Barnard was but one of 33 justices of the New York Supreme Court. Deeming him a wholly-owned asset of the Commodore,³⁴⁶ the Erie troika sought relief in other courts. They persuaded a justice in Binghamton to stay proceedings in all suits pending before Barnard and to suspend Vanderbilt’s nephew from his position on the Erie board. Later the same week, the Erie obtained an injunction from yet another justice, this one Brooklyn-based: an order that restrained all parties to the pending suits from further proceedings and directed the railway to convert its bonds into stock.

Enjoined now both to issue and not to issue more stock, the Erie board felt free to do what it wanted: on March 10, 1868, it converted dubious bonds into an additional 50,000 shares. Buyers working for Vanderbilt and not suspecting the source of the securities soon laid out \$7 million for Erie stock – as the Commodore acquired a holding of 100,000 shares.³⁴⁷ Many of his purchases were short sales by Drew, who used front men to cloak his role.³⁴⁸ The irrepressible Fisk crowed that, “If this damned printing press doesn’t break down, we’ll give the old hog all he wants of Erie.”³⁴⁹ Not

until the next morning did Drew and his cohorts decide that the better part of valor lay in slipping away from the reach of further New York court orders. With their corporate papers and the cash bilked from the Commodore, they crossed the Hudson to Jersey City, New Jersey.

The flight led to a colorful, if not highly consequential, phase of the Erie War – a main basis, however, of its name. Judge Barnard blustered that he would have the fugitives held on bail of \$500,000 each.³⁵⁰ Fifty rough characters appeared at the depot of the Erie in Jersey City with the professed intent of kidnapping railway directors and returning them to New York. They may have been freelancers hopeful of earning a reward from Vanderbilt, rather than his agents.³⁵¹ The Erie board thereupon mustered a paramilitary force of 125, mainly Jersey City policemen and railway employees, and posted it about their hotel.

Another arrival in Jersey City was Senator Abner Mattoon, a member of the New York State Senate committee considering a bill to legalize the recent issuance of Erie stock – which Judge Barnard, not a disinterested observer, characterized, accurately enough, as the legalization of counterfeit money.³⁵² Senator Mattoon told the board that the remuneration of legislators in the Empire State was woefully insufficient.³⁵³

Fisk, seeing a military titan in his mirror and with a mistress lodged nearby, was exultant and positioned three cannon and a navy of four lifeboats to beat off any further invasion. Drew and Gould, however, missed their homes in New York and wished to control their company without legal encumbrance. The three acted on two fronts: first, on that of public relations, by cutting railway fares and portraying themselves as valiant defenders of the public against the threat of a Vanderbilt monopoly; and, second, in the legislative arena, by sending Gould to Albany with half a million dollars.

The legislative and judicial fronts. Evidence of what such a sum could achieve was soon forthcoming. Before the Legislature was the bill to bless the newly hatched Erie stock. By a vote of 83 to 32, the Assembly on March 27 adopted a committee report critical of the bill. The hand of the Boss was sensed in the result: Senator Tweed had been engaged by Vanderbilt and would later state that he had paid out \$180,000 of the Commodore's cash to defeat the Erie's legislation.³⁵⁴

Three days later, Gould arrived in the capital. Briefly, his money vied against Vanderbilt's, with the price running up to \$20,000 per maker of laws.³⁵⁵ Then, to legislative dismay, Vanderbilt dropped out of the bidding, pulling the bottom from the market for the yeas and nays. Legalization of

the Erie stock was on April 20 voted by the Assembly by 101 to 5³⁵⁶ – a resounding repudiation of its vote of 24 days before. Approval by the Senate and signature into law by Governor Fenton – both actions allegedly influenced by bribes³⁵⁷ – soon followed.

Judicial war had, meanwhile, continued. Judges enjoined judges; witnesses attested to the venality of Justice Barnard; the Erie sued the judge; the impugned magistrate wept in court and swore his innocence; lawyers accused each other of malpractice and threatened Barnard with impeachment; Peter Sweeny was appointed by Barnard as a receiver – despite the absence of anything to receive (the assets having gone to New Jersey). One summing up was that the legal proceedings of the Supreme Court of New York relating to the Erie “read like some monstrous parody of the forms of law.”³⁵⁸

Erie and Tammany together. Vanderbilt’s withdrawal from the auction for legislative votes may have sprung from his thought that it would cost him less to deal directly with the Erie board. Early in April 1868, Drew, without informing Fisk and Gould, entered into negotiations with the Commodore and a comprehensive settlement was reached three months later. Under its terms: Vanderbilt was returned \$5 million³⁵⁹ of the cash he had laid out for Erie stock; a group of Boston investors was paid off; Peter Sweeny got \$150,000 as a receivership fee for having done nothing; the Erie’s suit against Judge Barnard was dropped; and legal exoneration for Drew and others was agreed.³⁶⁰ The total of \$9 million required to be paid out from Erie coffers by its officers was termed a “remarkable disposition of property entrusted to their care.”³⁶¹

Largely shut out of these negotiations and the corporate plundering they entailed were Fisk and Gould. The pair did, however, with Drew exiting the Erie board, take over the rail line. They also made contact with Tweed and fellow-roguish friendships arose. Tweed took to suborning legislators for his new chums and had Judge George Barnard switch sides and henceforth do their judicial bidding. Sweeny and Tweed became Erie Directors, while Fisk and Gould continued the company tradition of manipulating its securities for personal gain, to the detriment of outside investors. They also broke new ground in using the Erie treasury to finance their raids on other lines.³⁶²

The Erie Classification Act. A threat to the two new controlling directors was, however, the possibility that defrauded investors might vote them off of the board. To counter this danger, legislation known as the Erie Classification Act was, in the spring of 1869, put forward. Its purported

purpose was to protect the Erie board from hostile raiders by providing that no more than a specified (or “classified”) one fifth of the directors could be changed in any year. Half a million dollars of Erie money was distributed by Tweed to secure its passage.³⁶³ The Boss would later testify on his role:

Q. Did you ever receive any money from either Fisk or Gould to be used in bribing the legislature?

A. I did, sir.

...

Q. Did Mr. Jay Gould ever give you money which he suggested to you should be used for the purpose of—

A. He has, sir, frequently.

Q. And did he also at times suggest the names of legislators?

A. I don't think he did: I was pretty well up in that myself.³⁶⁴

Laughter ensued.³⁶⁵

Governor Hoffman signed the bill into law on May 20, 1869. Five days later, the *Times* opined:

And now, when Governor HOFFMAN deliberately signs a law designed to keep such men [as Fisk and Gould] in power... he forfeits every claim to respect and confidence as a public officer... He can hereafter make no claim to statesmanship or high moral principle.³⁶⁶

The signature would be held against him to the end of his political days.

Tragedy, tears, blame, esteem. With Erie funds going for legislative persuasion, privileged-investor buyoffs, Sweeny enrichment, and speculative forays, its rails and rolling stock fell into disrepair and accidents resulted. Of one fatal mishap in July 1869, the *Times* described “little children bruised to jelly, clasped to the bosoms of mothers whose hair and clothing were adding fuel to fires that had quenched the cries and seared the gaping wounds of their kindred.” The paper descried the roots of the tragedy in Hoffman's signature two months before. It had enabled the company, which once, “in its equipment and tonnage and earnings and repute and credit ranked with” the other leading railroads of the day to be turned over to “two Wall-street stock jobbers and their lawyer (and their associates).” Employees became negligent. Fisk and Gould at the Erie had “depressed its bonds, impaired its credit, overissued its stock, squandered its money and

disgraced its name.”³⁶⁷ The company would not pay a dividend on its stock until the 1940s.³⁶⁸

Even as other publications joined the *Times* in condemning the security swindles of the Erie, there was also broad approval of them. Gould in February 1869 testified before a committee of the State Senate and was treated with respect as “a man of magnificent views on the subject of railroads.”³⁶⁹ (Such treatment being perhaps not wholly unrelated to Gould’s gifts of railway passes to the legislators – as, two months later, he wrote Tweed that he had provided them to all members of the Assembly.³⁷⁰) Later in the year, President Grant cruised up Long Island Sound on Fisk’s steamer and accepted Gould’s offer of the directors’ car of the Erie for his vacation travels.

6

The Status of Public Integrity

Foil of earlier corruption: Fernando Wood. The best-known Tammany figure of the 1850s was Fernando Wood. With citizens, in 1854, still shaking their heads over the exploits of the Forty Thieves, Wood came forward as a reform candidate for the Mayoralty. Although many felt that he had escaped conviction as a swindler by bribing a judge,³⁷¹ Wood won the contest and, two years later, reelection. Initially as Mayor, he took reform measures, but soon was selling appointments to City offices, extorting election-fund contributions from policemen,³⁷² and adding to his personal fortune. When certain Sachems in the later 1850s felt shortchanged in Wood's allocation of patronage,³⁷³ they withdrew from him Tammany's support. Wood's subsequent political escapades would transpire outside of the Wigwam and, often, in opposition to it.

New Yorkers, by the second half of the 1860s, were used to corruption. They may, indeed, have thought rising Ring thievery not much worse, or even better, than earlier graft. They remembered the scandals of Wood, many of which served as templates for Tweed. Ballot fraud had been rife for decades and the Boss's gambit of wholesale naturalizations before elections had smaller-scale precedent in the time of Fernando.³⁷⁴ Wood had also anticipated Tweed in purchasing favorable press coverage via advertising contracts³⁷⁵ and in pocketing the City's payment of excessive rents on his own properties.³⁷⁶

One scandal of notoriety involving Wood in 1861 was reminiscent of practices under the Forty Thieves. The City agreed to pay contractor Andrew Hackley \$279,000 over five years for street cleaning. The bidding, illegally, had been closed, as twenty-three applicants had bid less than Hackley – one by \$84,000. When Hackley then failed to clean the streets, the City suspended payments to him. Court testimony indicated that the Aldermen, Wood, and the Mayor's brother Benjamin had been paid off.³⁷⁷

Sales of City positions and extorted assessments on them were common under both Wood and Tweed and would persist under later Tammany bosses. It was judged in 1866 that “{t}he plunder of the persons who are so unfortunate as to serve the public, and of those who aspire to serve the public, is systematic, and nearly universal.”³⁷⁸ judges were asked to pay for inflation-matching increases in their salaries; teachers had to pay

for positions, which sometimes were auctioned to highest bidders.³⁷⁹ Peter Sweeny was said to have paid \$60,000 to become Chamberlain.³⁸⁰ Wood may personally have been more involved in position sales – from admission to and promotion within the police force to the Corporation Counselship for the City and to judgeships³⁸¹ – than was Tweed (who testified that salary kickbacks – which he termed “taxes” – were often not demanded of the men for whom he found jobs³⁸²).

A comparative judgment on Fernando Wood and the budding Ring was, in 1867, provided by George Templeton Strong, a Manhattan lawyer and diarist. Wood was then running in a three-way race to reclaim the Mayoralty against the Republican William A. Darling and Tammany’s John Hoffman, seeking reelection. Strong felt that Darling stood no chance and voted for the incumbent, even though “Hoffman is in league with the Ring.” Not to do so would have aided Wood, who “stinks in the nostrils of mankind... his dealings with the city government have shown him to be the consummate ideal of a clever demagogue and scoundrel.”³⁸³ (Wood, as in his first campaigns for the Mayoralty, was again waving the flag of reform: attacking Hoffman as an apparently honest front man for corrupt associates.³⁸⁴) Hoffman won, with 60 percent of the vote to 22 percent for Wood and 18 percent for Darling.³⁸⁵

As a political power in the City for over forty years, Wood had many interactions with Ring members. Judges Barnard and Cardozo were both allies on whom Wood could count for favorable rulings in political and commercial cases,³⁸⁶ while Connolly was a friend. In 1868, after Wood’s last bid for the Mayoralty had fallen woefully short, he apparently struck a deal with Tweed: accepting the supremacy of the Boss and getting Tammany’s backing for his Congressional campaigns.³⁸⁷

From 1867 until his death in 1881, Wood served in the U.S. House of Representatives, chairing the Committee on Ways and Means in his last two terms.

The nascent Ring. Biographer (of Horace Greeley, Aaron Burr, Andrew Jackson, and Benjamin Franklin; later, of Thomas Jefferson and Voltaire) James Parton published in October 1866 in the *North American Review* an article of 53 pages: “The Government of the City of New York.” That his subject had become “a welling fount of moral pollution,”³⁸⁸ Parton ascribed to “the Ring.” The Ring he described – his article appearing two months before Connolly was elected Controller and 27 months before Hall became Mayor – had not yet coalesced into the quartet of later renown. It was, instead, a larger, amorphous group of civic officials doing mutual

favours to enrich themselves. None of the four were mentioned by name – although Sweeny and Tweed were likely two of the “about seven men” by whom, Parton wrote, “all the political concerns of the city are controlled.”³⁸⁹

(Opponents of those thought to control the City’s government had been railing against what they called “the ‘Ring,’” “the famous ‘Ring,’” or “the Aldermanic ‘Ring,’” since at least the campaigns of 1861.³⁹⁰ Over the next three years, mentions of “the Ring” in the Republican press presumed that the reader would know who was meant.³⁹¹ In 1865, opposition to the Mayoral candidacy of Hoffman by the *Tribune* and the Citizens’ Association was based on his alleged thralldom to “the ‘Ring.’”³⁹² By 1867, there was sensed “a national mania about rings, Whiskey Rings, Indian Agency Rings, Railroad Rings” and the *Herald*, without naming names, described the origins and depredations of the “famous Tammany Ring.”³⁹³ In his Mayoral campaign of that year, Fernando Wood attacked the incumbent, John T. Hoffman, as the “creature” of “the Ring” – which he also called “the City Hall Ring,” “the Supervisor’s Ring,” and “the Tammany Ring.”³⁹⁴ While Tweed had long been assailed as a, and occasionally the,³⁹⁵ leader of “the Ring,” the Republican press did not begin to write of the “Tweed Ring” until the early 1870s.³⁹⁶)

The biographer minced not his words: “It is not that the city government, so far as controlled by politicians, sometimes steals. We do not make that charge. We say it does nothing but steal.”³⁹⁷ The pilferage had come in within a single generation. Previously, “the affairs of both the city and the State of New York were so well managed, that other States and cities were glad to copy their methods of doing public business.”³⁹⁸ As late as 1850, “it was a disgrace to steal the people’s money.” Soon, however, “the only men in the city government despised and snubbed by their equals would be the few who did *not* steal.”³⁹⁹ Wholesale graft was seen to have come in when street railroads were replacing the horse-drawn omnibuses and Aldermen could, in granting franchises, become rich.⁴⁰⁰

The City government described by Parton featured:

- **Low repute.** “It has fallen into complete contempt. It is a dishonor to belong to it;”⁴⁰¹
- **An appalling legislature.** Twenty-four Councilmen were paid \$2,000 per year – twice the pay of the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.⁴⁰² Six of the two dozen were “respectable;” the remainder were Shiny Hatters: “butcher-boys who have got into

politics, bar-keepers who have taken a leading part in primary ward meetings, and young fellows who hang about engine-houses and billiard-rooms.”⁴⁰³ Debates were “ludicrous,” with “most of the business... pushed through without the slightest discussion.”⁴⁰⁴ Attempts of the honest sixsome to resist open jobbery were disdainfully overridden. The seventeen Aldermen differed discernibly from the Councilmen only in being “a little older and somewhat better dressed;”⁴⁰⁵

- **Specious bipartisanship.** “These lords of the town have had the deep cunning to give a few of their best appointments and several minor offices to Republicans, as part of their system of preventing investigation;”⁴⁰⁶

- **A purchased press.** The newspapers were “bribed to silence” with advertising and “all the reporters were hired not to report anything disagreeable by the annual gift of two hundred dollars;”⁴⁰⁷ and

- **Impunitous theft.** Since 1850, as “the public thieves have stolen not less than fifty millions of dollars, not one man of them has ever been punished, nor even made to disgorge.”⁴⁰⁸

Greased wheels. New modes of transportation and economic organization expanded corruption prospects: from Manhattan’s ferryboat franchises, through the surface railroads on the streets of the City and State-wide graft in the railways and canals, to the intercontinental rail-network thefts epitomized by *Crédit Mobilier*. Larger systems enabled greater stealing. The burgeoning of corporations after the Civil War also created new modes of graft. Shares of stock became currencies of inducement, tools of trickery for such men as Daniel Drew, and objects of manipulation.

For decades, civic insiders schemed to profit from public transportation on Broadway. In 1863, there was competition between governmental levels over the right to squeeze the juice from this plum. Entrepreneur George Law had persuaded the State Legislature to consider granting him a charter for a railway on the avenue. Prominent New Yorkers protested the likely injury to “the most beautiful thoroughfare on this continent.”⁴⁰⁹ The City Council then thought to preempt the Albany legislators by granting the Harlem Railroad – into which Cornelius

Vanderbilt was then buying – the right to lay rails on Broadway. The Council let the Harlem know that \$100,000 distributed among its members would suitably signal its appreciation.⁴¹⁰

Anticipating that the Harlem would win the Broadway franchise, Aldermen bought heavily into it and were rewarded: Governor Seymour's veto of George Law's bill moved the price of Harlem shares to a level 81 percent higher than it had been a few months before. The legislators had found a new way to cash in on their positions.⁴¹¹

Unfortunately for them, they then had a further thought: why not extend their profits by selling the Harlem short, prior to revoking its franchise? On June 25, 1863, with many members of the Council having taken short positions, it repealed its grant of authority to the line. After quickly dropping thirteen percent that day, the Harlem stock price, though, began to rise: Vanderbilt was buying in, increasing his stake. By the twenty-eighth, the stock had recouped its initial loss and had tacked on a gain of 27 percent. The Councilmen would have to cover their short positions by buying shares at a higher price set by Vanderbilt. Having lost money to the Commodore and become objects of derision as the public learned of the goings on, the chastened members of the Council voted on June 29 to return the franchise to the Harlem.⁴¹²

State legislatures throughout the nation in the last decades of the nineteenth century were notorious for acting as agents of corporate railroads: granting them lands and rights, with minimal consideration of their citizens. Just how quickly state governments could jump when the engines whistled was seen in 1869 in Pennsylvania. The Erie Railway was then seeking control of the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne & Chicago line. This threatened the Pennsylvania Railroad, which introduced in the legislature a classification act for the PFW&C similar to that of the Erie. Thirty-four minutes after its introduction, the Governor signed it into law.⁴¹³

The railroads also, though, portrayed themselves as the victims of conniving lawmakers. Regulation of the rates they could charge determined whether they would flourish or fail. They understood that “ransoms” had to be paid to the legislatively connected to prevent the passage of threatening bills.⁴¹⁴

Press perspectives. The journals of the City, in the years after the Civil War, took corruption for granted. The *New York Herald*, in late 1865, thought that the Mayoral election was of little import – since constraints imposed by the State precluded honest government.⁴¹⁵ Two years later, the *Times* would note “the corruption of City Government and the urgent

necessity for thorough municipal reform... a matter of notoriety for a good many years.”⁴¹⁶ The *Times* in 1868 denounced the “farce of naturalization”⁴¹⁷ (the Democracy’s citizenship mills) and deplored the apathy of “our business men... while the public plunderers quietly slip into the places of trust.”⁴¹⁸ The paper then saw Mayoral Candidate Oakey Hall as but the agent of the “Tammany Ring.”⁴¹⁹ The *New York Tribune* similarly at this time labeled him “the most supple myrmidon of the Tammany Ring. For many years he has been the support of the thieves who have plundered the treasury.”⁴²⁰

Ring-related phenomena. Various events with Ring connections cast light on current standards of public integrity:

- **Extirpation of the more honest.** Matthew Brennan, in 1866 the Controller, was denied Tammany backing for reelection and asked why. Tweed explained: “Why, why, because you won’t make money yourself nor let others make any. That’s why!”⁴²¹ Richard Connolly would succeed him. Judges of integrity, similarly, tended not to be renominated.⁴²²

- **A legislative resignation.** New York State Assemblyman E. M. K. Glenn represented a rural upstate district. In the spring of 1868, he was appalled at the open bribery of legislators by Vanderbilt and the Erie. He took the floor to say that a lobbyist had offered him \$500 to vote in support of the Erie and demanded a Committee of Investigation. That Committee reported a few days later, after examining the books of the Erie and the New York Central, that “no money had been appropriated, drawn or used for influencing the Legislature.”⁴²³ Disgusted by the charade, Glenn announced that he could no longer continue to serve in such an Assembly, resigned his seat, and departed.⁴²⁴

- **Wheels within wheels.** While where it had begun or was strongest might be debated, none disputed that the odor of unchecked avarice ran throughout the City’s government. Tweed said later that “the greed below us ate up faster than any greed of our own.”⁴²⁵ Mid-rank officials operated on the presumption of self-serving dishonesty in both their superiors and their subordinates. Tweed said that administrative heads desiring Albany’s appropriations to their departments were informed what the cost of the requisite bribery would

be. They would pay him and he would distribute the legislative lubrication. The department heads were expected to recover their outlays via “payments of bills for which little or no consideration was given to the city.”⁴²⁶ The nested hierarchy of corruption was termed “wheels within wheels.”⁴²⁷

- **Selective law enforcement.** The discretion to try or not to try filed indictments constituted leverage on the indicted – power which Oakey Hall, as District Attorney, and other prosecutors were accused of exercising for personal or party advantage.⁴²⁸ While Hall did prosecute an estimated 10,000 cases, he also jauntily announced in 1868 his intention not to try an additional 10,000 indictments deriving from liquor-statute violations.⁴²⁹ He seemed too to have had a similar approach to upscale prostitution. While streetwalkers were often apprehended and the brothels of working areas raided, but seven charges were brought in the 1850s against the patrician houses of pleasure.⁴³⁰ (Hall became DA in 1855. In this era, the Rector of New York’s Trinity Church, “the most prestigious pulpit in the United States,” told his congregation that he had averaged less than one visit per decade to houses of ill-repute. His parishioners were surprised at the infrequency.⁴³¹)

- **Farcical franchise.** Hall had been elected Mayor in December 1868 to replace Hoffman, upon the latter’s becoming Governor. With City Mayors then serving two-year terms, the Elegant Oakey might remain in office through the end of 1870. But, what if a Republican judge were to rule that his term was just the remainder of Hoffman’s and ended one year earlier? Tweed, late in 1869, catered to this possibility by including within the City elections a contest for the Mayoralty. On the afternoon of Monday, December 7, Manhattan – including Hall himself from the newspapers – learned that it would the next day elect a Mayor.⁴³² Hall was subsequently reported to have received 66,000 votes, to 1,051 for all others.⁴³³ Tweed would, the next year, have Hall again reelected.

Republican corruption. The *New-York Times* portrayed the Ring as an overwhelmingly Democratic scandal. Tilden and the Democratic press counterattacked by publicizing Republican graft. On the municipal level, they could point to the pillaging of Philadelphia by a Republican machine⁴³⁴

and to the wholesale subornation of opposition party members by the Ring – as Republican legislators, officials, and journalists retailed and wholesaled their services. The need to bribe Republicans, it was argued, had, moreover, been created by Republicans themselves – through their crafting of the City Charter of 1857 to cut their own minority in the City and majority upstate into the equation of urban power.⁴³⁵ The Erie Classification Act had indeed been, as the *Times* charged, signed by Hoffman and had served the interests of Tweed. This did not, however, clinch the paper's case that it was a uniquely Democratic misstep. The Democracy's organs counterargued that Hoffman had merely failed to veto a bill that had been passed with overwhelming majorities by the two Republican-controlled chambers. (To this, the *Times*' response was that the Republicans had not known what they were doing, inasmuch as “the bill was so drawn up that it was almost impossible for any outside person to detect its real purpose.” Hoffman, in contrast, “knew all about the plot, for we opened his eyes to it, and entreated him as he valued his own reputation to veto the bill.”⁴³⁶)

On the national level, the Republican administration of Grant lurched from scandal to scandal. Blotches on its record included:

- **Black Friday.** Jay Gould and, to a lesser extent, Jim Fisk, in September 1869, while running the Erie Railway but ever vigilant for profit possibilities, headed a group of speculators in gold. They were getting information from inside Grant's administration on his policies, believed they could influence the President himself, and were bidding up the price of the metal. The entrepreneurially naïve Grant was initially oblivious to these events and saw no harm in traveling in luxury as the guest of the gold-dust duo – who, in their recruitment of co-speculators, made much of their closeness to the President. In mid-September, Grant finally understood the essence of the operation and that his sister, Jenny Grant Corbin, and her husband Abel were in league with Gould. He had his wife Julia write Jenny to insist that the Corbins close out forthwith their speculations. The letter was on the evening of Wednesday, September 22 shown to Gould, who had bought \$50 million of gold on margin and would be ruined, should the message become widely known. He persuaded the Corbins to keep it secret and began surreptitiously selling his own gold while still talking up its price and publicizing a few token purchases. On the morning of Friday, September 24, the price of gold reached a peak 25 percent higher than when Gould had begun buying months before. A few minutes before

noon, the financial district learned that the Federal Government had started selling gold from its reserves. A tsunami of sale orders swept through the brokerage houses and, within half an hour, the price fell 18 percent.⁴³⁷ The day and a half between Wednesday evening and Friday morning may have been intended by Grant as an interval to allow the Corbins to liquidate their positions.⁴³⁸ The forewarning enabled Gould to save himself millions and possibly to emerge with a profit.⁴³⁹ He had not told Fisk about Julia Grant's letter and had had his brokers not sell to Fisk's. Jubilee Jim, in consequence, had continued buying and stood to lose millions – until Gould suggested that he repudiate his purchase orders.⁴⁴⁰ Those whom he had bilked would sue for payment but would be prevented from collecting by two Ring judges: George Barnard and Albert Cardozo.⁴⁴¹

- **Crédit Mobilier.** Created to finance the first transcontinental railroad, Crédit Mobilier received Federal subsidies exceeding the costs of construction by millions of dollars. With an eye to protecting the company and enhancing its profits, its shares were distributed at discounted prices to nationally prominent politicians. One Democratic and sixteen Republican Members of Congress held stock in the company and benefited from its defrauding of the government. Implicated Republicans included both of Grant's Vice Presidents, future President Garfield, and the 1884 Presidential nominee, James G. Blaine.⁴⁴²

- **The Whiskey Ring.** Since the Lincoln Administration, tens of millions of gallons of whiskey had been evading Federal taxation. Employees of the Treasury Department accepted bribes to undermeasure the liquor or to give over more tax stamps for it than were paid for. Investigations culminating in May 1875 yielded 350 indictments and fingered John McDonald and Orville Babcock as leaders of the Ring. McDonald was Collector of Internal Revenue for a seven-state district, a former general, and a friend of Grant. Babcock was Grant's personal secretary and close companion. Babcock convinced Grant that, despite abundant evidence to the contrary, both McDonald and he were guiltless. McDonald did serve time in jail, while Babcock was saved from conviction by the President's perjured testimony on his behalf.⁴⁴³

- **Cabinet and kin of Grant.** The pervasiveness of the culture of corruption was seen in the cabinet and family of the President. Former general William Belknap served for seven years as his Secretary of War. Exploiting his position, Belknap and his second and third wives arranged for a friend to manage the post for trading with Indians in Fort Sill, Oklahoma Territory. In return for the appointment in which the friend could profitably deal with – many said “swindle” – the Native Americans, he signed a contract to pay the Belknaps \$6,000 annually, of which they received about \$20,000. Belknap was impeached, tried, and acquitted because only 58 percent, instead of the required two thirds, of the Senate voted for conviction. Seven eighths of those voting for acquittal cited their belief in the lack of Senatorial jurisdiction, since Belknap had come to the President in tears, had confessed, and had begged to be allowed to resign – which request Grant had granted.⁴⁴⁴ Navy Secretary George Robeson made the Belknaps seem small-timers. On his cabinet salary of \$8,000, Robeson banked during his Secretaryship \$320,000. Many suspected the source to have been a company receiving government contracts. With the books of the company in disarray and the Congress distracted by the proceedings against Belknap, impeachment of Robeson was discussed, but not undertaken.⁴⁴⁵ Yet another cabinet member, Interior Secretary Columbus Delano, had arranged, it appeared, for his son to profit from shakedowns in the awarding of surveying contracts. The Secretaries of State and the Treasury urged Grant to call for Delano’s resignation, which the President declined to do.⁴⁴⁶ The ethos of the President’s officials was seen also in his relatives. Congressional investigations revealed that Grant’s younger brother Orvil had received payments under a surveying contract for an area he never had visited and also had somehow acquired interests in Indian-trading-post stores.⁴⁴⁷ Grant had himself helped his wife’s brother to secure trading privileges with Indians.⁴⁴⁸ The President enabled corrupt behavior: by retaining implicated officials; by snapping at reporters asking about the scandals; by immediately in writing accepting his War Secretary’s resignation “with great regret,” which, per a biographer, “saved Belknap;”⁴⁴⁹ and became inimical toward the cabinet member most forthrightly fighting the sleaze, Treasury Secretary Benjamin Bristow. Ohio Congressman and future President James Garfield was with Grant as the President learned details of the sordidness in his administration. He was struck

by the President's "imperturbability... I am in doubt whether to call it greatness or stupidity."⁴⁵⁰

Citizen Perceptions. George Templeton Strong's diary related the reactions that he and his Brahmanic friends had to their government. At a dinner party just after the elections of November 1868: "Our talk... was mostly of our civic woes; of election frauds and of our disgraceful judiciary, and of the probable Vigilance Committees of the future."⁴⁵¹ The idea of acting outside the law through such committees would crop up again in his diary over the next three years. Later that month, in connection with the ongoing saga of the Erie Railway, Strong wrote of George Barnard and another judge that "one or both ought to be impeached... This is a thoroughly rotten community, and something must give way soon."⁴⁵²

The next spring, as the Erie Classification Act was being enacted, Strong commented on the addresses at a law school commencement:

It is notable that these four speeches, prepared without concert, should each have been mainly an expression of the same thought, viz., that corruption in our legislative bodies, our great corporations, and now even in the state judiciary, and in the sheriff's office, has at last reached a stage that must produce revolutionary action if no legal remedy can be found. Such things are "in the air." The strongest expressions to this effect received the loudest applause, and every condemnation of our accursed elective judiciary system brought down the house. I verily believe we are nearly ripe for a Vigilance Committee. No help from Albany can be hoped for. Railroad kings (Fisks, Vanderbilts, and the like) and scoundrelly "Rings" control our state legislation.⁴⁵³

In April of 1870, a justice of the Superior Court was considered for the vestry of Strong's Trinity Church:

What we hear of his personal character seems in his favor. But when his name was brought up... his position on the bench was held a fatal objection to him. He must have been put there with the approval of the Ring and is, therefore, open to violent suspicion of being everything a vestryman of Trinity Church should not be. The objection is unanswerable, but what an illustration it is of the degradation of this city! A seat on the bench of the Superior Court... is now prima facie evidence of dishonesty.⁴⁵⁴

In the elections of May 1870 following the adoption of the Tweed Charter, Strong “voted this morning, *pro forma*, being well aware that any number of repeaters would be produced to neutralize my vote should it seem likely to affect the result and endanger the scoundrel rule of Tammany.”⁴⁵⁵ Prior to the elections of that fall, Strong thought that:

If misrule could ever justify assassination of the ruler, ours would justify it; for in such *canaille* as Bill Tweed and Barnard and Cardozo we have not only tyrants, but tyrants beneath contempt – vulgar swindlers who ought to be in the penitentiary.⁴⁵⁶

On April 6, 1871, Henry Ward Beecher – eminent, eloquent clergyman, famed former abolitionist, and brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe – addressed 2,000 disgruntled citizens in Cooper Union. His subject was the current tax bill of the Ring:

The whole money is put into the hands of four men... to be provided for according to their best judgments in the different departments. (Laughter.) We cannot but doubt that so important a trust as this has been put into the hands of honest and honorable men. (Great laughter.)⁴⁵⁷

New Yorkers were that year frequently moved to mirth – and not only by irony. As evidence of Ring crimes was straightforwardly recounted in speeches, the reactions were applause and, more often than hissing, laughter.⁴⁵⁸ British historian James Bryce, decades later, commented:

All the world knows that [Americans] are a humorous people. They are as conspicuously the purveyors of humour to the nineteenth century as the French were the purveyors of wit to the eighteenth... Their capacity for enjoying a joke against themselves was oddly illustrated at the outset of the Civil War... by the merriment which arose over the hasty retreat of the Federal troops at the battle of Bull Run. When William M. Tweed was ruling and robbing New York, and had set on the bench men who were openly prostituting justice, the citizens found the situation so amusing that they almost forgot to be angry.⁴⁵⁹

The Citizens' Association. Dismay over open and growing graft led in 1863 to the birth of the Citizens' Association of New-York as "the first non-partisan society formed to cope with municipal maladministration."⁴⁶⁰ Its founder was Peter Cooper, a wealthy inventor and industrialist. Cooper had made steam engines more efficient, had built America's first steam locomotive, had manufactured the first iron structural beams, had brought the Bessemer steel-making process to America, and, for dessert, had invented Jell-O. He had also, in 1853, been a leader in reforming the Charter. Much of his fortune – \$600,000 between 1853 and 1858 – he had given away in the founding of Cooper Union, a college providing free education in the applied sciences to poor men and women.

Aged 72 in 1863, Cooper knew the enduring nature of civic malfeasance and sensed the need for a permanent watchdog. His prestige would attract the contributions of others and his signature on letters announcing findings and charges would ensure their serious consideration. The membership of the Association in 1866 was described as "eminent merchants, lawyers, and men of leisure, united for the sole object of reforming the government of the city."⁴⁶¹ Eminent jurists would appear as its counsel in investigating municipal wrongdoing.⁴⁶² The fledgling outfit – headed by a civic exemplar, assisted by the concerned and capable, amidst rising corruption and disgust toward it – was positioned to become an effective force for public honesty.

It did not. Despite its promise, composition, and zeal, the Citizens' Association would, in its early years, largely demonstrate the ineffectuality of dreamy-eyed amateurs in vying with graft-adept pros.

In 1864 and 1865, the Association identified and endorsed worthy candidates. It felt that reformers had previously erred in "tinker[ing] at the charter in the vain hope that we could legislate honesty into the dishonest till it is a patchwork deformity." Instead they should henceforth concentrate not on laws, but on men: nominees "of character, intelligence, of honorable public career or private record."⁴⁶³

Two of the ten aldermen elected in 1864 had had the backing of the Association and, the next year, three of seventeen.⁴⁶⁴ In 1865, it (along with four other political parties) supported Richard O'Gorman for Corporation Counsel and (with two other parties) John Hecker for Mayor. O'Gorman would be elected and would prove corrupt. Hecker won thirteen percent of the vote – shunting off, the *Times* said, enough votes from Marshall Roberts, "the excellent candidate of the Republican party," to make Hoffman Mayor. The paper concluded that

{t}he failure of the ‘Citizens’ Association’ to make even a respectable appearance, numerically, indicates the inherent political impotence of such ill-constituted bodies... and the result shows that while they are capable of little good... they possess great powers of mischief.⁴⁶⁵

The Association redirected its energies toward reporting and lobbying. By 1866, it had published a dozen reports with such titles as: “Wholesale Corruption. Sale of Situations in Fourth Ward Schools;” and “Who pays for the Stealings? The Workingman!”⁴⁶⁶ It had also pushed for improvement in the living conditions of the poor: comparing the mortality rate of the City with that of London and charging that “seven thousand lives are sacrificed yearly by the want of sanitary regulations.”⁴⁶⁷

Three targets of the Association were leading areas of Ring thievery: the New York Printing Company, the courthouse interminably under construction, and the armories of the National Guard. In 1866, the Association was dismayed that the New York Printing Company was paid \$1,500 for printing 5,000 copies of the “New Election Law” – for which \$250 would have been a fair price. Mayor C. Godfrey Gunther had vetoed the appropriation, but the Supervisors, without discussion and by a vote of seven to one, had overridden him.⁴⁶⁸

Also in 1866, the Association reported that spending on the courthouse already exceeded ten times the originally budgeted amount of \$250,000, with over \$2.5 million in additional costs anticipated for completion. It calculated that the architect was being paid at a rate of at least \$1,000 per hour.⁴⁶⁹ The responses of the County Board of Supervisors to such charges were to look into them itself, to refuse to allow counsel of the Association to attend its investigative meetings, and to make “a unanimous report that the Court-house was being built in the most economical manner, without any extravagance or corruption whatever.”⁴⁷⁰

Adding insults to injury, the Supervisors paid themselves \$12,000 for the few hours they devoted to defending their conduct and paid the New York Printing Company and the Transcript Association (another Tweed outfit) \$14,000 to print copies of their absolutonal report.⁴⁷¹ The Association the next year documented in detail overcharges in the construction – with similar lack of effect.⁴⁷²

On September 1, 1867, the *Times* published a letter signed by Peter Cooper as Chairman of the Association, addressed to the Board of Supervisors.⁴⁷³ It itemized such expenditures on the armories as “Two

hundred and twenty cane-seat half-arm chairs for use of four companies' rooms, with extra heavy double front rounds, at \$7 each... 1,540." The items totaled \$207,000. Cooper concluded that:

These enormous expenditures cannot but give rise to a just indignation... The carelessness, extravagance and waste cannot but be patent to any one who will cast the most cursory glance over the bills... The Association calls the attention of the Board to this matter, hoping that a decent respect for the people of this county will compel a discontinuance of this reckless and shameful expenditure of the public money.

State Republicans occasionally acted in parallel with the Association: holding hearings on such matters as the purported sales of positions, kickbacks, and questionable contract processes for street cleaning.⁴⁷⁴ The state of the streets was indeed a long-standing⁴⁷⁵ focus of reformers – as frequently they lamented that, despite excessive allocations to the cleaners, thoroughfare filth persisted. This concern in 1866 focused the attention of the Association on the Street Department, headed by Commissioner Charles Cornell and his Deputy, William Tweed. The Association sued Cornell for allowing improper payments and persuaded Republican Governor Fenton to appoint a judge to investigate. Mayor Hoffman's narrow loss to Fenton that fall in his first campaign for Governor was attributed in part to his perceived tightness with the "Tammany Ring," as personified by Cornell and Tweed.⁴⁷⁶ Shortly thereafter, both resigned from the Department.

Their two departures momentarily suggested that the Association might indeed be proving itself an effective force for cleaner streets and government. Tweed, however, was soon back as the Deputy to a new Commissioner, George McLean,⁴⁷⁷ with his operations but minimally hindered – even though McLean himself was not a full-fledged accomplice. In one subsequent moment of slapstick, a Ring contractor came to the Department with a bundle of cash for Tweed, whom he found chatting with McLean. In passing his package to the Boss, he dropped it. Tweed covered it with his foot and later slipped it into a drawer – all apparently without arousing McLean's suspicions.⁴⁷⁸

In 1867, the Citizens' Association itemized its dissatisfaction with the Street Department, finding excess in the prices paid for such items as ink and feather dusters. Commissioner McLean replied to the particulars and defended his procurement policies generally: "It was found... that the

lowest bidder was not always the best contractor for the public interests.” Instead McLean acted “as any prudent citizen, I think, would have done in his own case under the circumstances; I ascertained who was the most capable, conscientious and reliable contractor to do this kind of work, and I made an agreement with him on the best terms I could secure.”⁴⁷⁹ He would continue to contract with whomever he wished, in disregard of competitive bids.

Other foci of the Citizens’ Association included the Office of Richard O’Gorman, Corporation Counsel; the piers; the public markets; and procedures for handling claims against the City. In lengthy letters to the *Times*: O’Gorman defended his procedures;⁴⁸⁰ Commissioner McLean disputed pier-by-pier the charges that more lumber had been paid for than used;⁴⁸¹ and Controller Connolly explained his supervision of the markets.⁴⁸² In 1867, the Association and the *Times* jointly objected to the establishment of a Board of Audit to respond to outstanding claims against the City from earlier years. The Association secured an injunction from the State Supreme Court against all awards by the Board. The injunction was, however, subsequently lifted.⁴⁸³

The *Times* in September 1868 assessed the efforts of the Citizens’ Association over its first five years. It conceded that “our City Government needs reforming, no one can doubt... Corruption, venality and inefficiency characterize every branch of it.” But was the Association making any headway? Other than publishing letters signed by Cooper and maintaining lobbyists in Albany, “we recall nothing it has done in the prosecution of the work to which it claims to be devoted.” Citizens gave over \$15,000 annually to the Association, which was, however, betraying their trust:

so far as we can see, the existing Association is doing substantially nothing,—and doing it at an expense utterly unwarranted by the results achieved... We can recall no one abuse that it has stopped or even checked, no single reform it has brought about, no branch of the City Government which it has made more honest, more economical or more effective.

The conclusion: “We need an association more practical in its ideas and more effective in its mode of working than this.”⁴⁸⁴ Such words would soon seem mild.

7

Apogee

As the 1870s opened, Tweed and Sweeny had been, for a half-dozen years, the two most powerful men in the City. In addition to wealth, they also had brought onto themselves resentments which, in the first month of the new decade, boiled over into open revolt. Influential members of the Ring's own party resented its dictatorial stature and banded together, calling themselves the Young Democracy, to challenge its rule. Prominent among them and touted to be their Mayor⁴⁸⁵ was James O'Brien, a former Alderman who, with Tweed's vital backing, had in 1867 been elected Sheriff of the City and with whom Tweed had since fallen out. The Ring would emerge triumphant from its tussle with the Young Democrats and would continue on to further victories in the elections that fall.

The eight months between the November elections of 1870 and the *New-York Times* edition of July 8, 1871 would be the high tide of the Ring. Signs of its paramouncy and riches would include a contemplated statue of the Boss and the dazzle of his oldest daughter's wedding. In Albany, the Ring would have bicameral Democratic majorities, a compliant Governor, and drawerfuls of cash. It would use them to consolidate its fiscal power, to dig deeper the trenches around its offices, to enhance its ability to steal elections, and to embark on the largest project in the City since Central Park.

The Young Democracy and the new Charter. The battle between Tweed and the rebels within his party would be fought in the press – as two Democratic papers, the *New York Sun* and *New York World*, backed O'Brien's group with anti-Ring invective⁴⁸⁶ – and in the Legislature of the State and within Tammany Hall itself. The Democracy had often campaigned on a platform of home rule: vowing to have the State return to the City control over its own affairs. Both the Ring and the Young Democrats put forward legislation – proposed new Charters for the City and ancillary bills – securing home rule for Manhattan and also serving their own factional ends.

Reformers praised what would become known as the Tweed Charter for: stripping the notoriously corrupt County Board of Supervisors of its powers, for making department heads more answerable to the Mayor,⁴⁸⁷ and for simplifying the lines of responsibility. Control of the police would revert from the State to the City. The Ring's legislation also: would remove from

office many Young Democrats; would give the Mayor the power to appoint a broad array of department heads and other administrative and court officials – many of whose terms would extend beyond his own;⁴⁸⁸ and would enhance its control over municipal monies. To effect its passage, Tweed – as described above – distributed \$1 million in bribes. Also critical in securing Republican votes (or at least in providing cover to explain them) was his acquiescence to a new Election Law to curb fraudulent balloting.

The million dollars could have been considered by Tweed an investment on which the returns promised to be great. For the Charter – along with adjunct legislation and two unsurprising appointments – assigned the safeguarding of City money to the four leaders of the Ring. Appropriations would be made by a newly constituted Board of Apportionment, consisting of Mayor Hall, Controller Connolly, the Commissioner of Public Works, and the President of the Parks Department – with Hall naming Tweed and Sweeny, respectively, to the latter two posts. To close up the accounts previously administered by the Supervisors, the Charter delegated authority to an interim Board of Audit: the Mayor, the Controller, and the President of the Supervisors: Hall, Connolly, and Tweed.

On April 4, 1870, the day before the Senate vote on the new Charter, the Senate committee dealing with it had a public hearing – held in the Delavan House, the hotel of Tweed, who chaired the session. It was window-dressing fluff for a fix that already was in: the Legislature had been bribed; the Assembly had voted its approval of the Charter; reform organizations and most City papers sang its praises; the room was stacked with Ring supporters. First to speak was Horace Greeley, Editor of the *New-York Tribune*. Greeley said that the Tweed Charter “embod[ied] many excellent advances to reform, we are not here to ask you to reject it; we ask you to improve it.” He urged that no one should be allowed to hold more than one City office and that Mayors should not be permitted to make appointments extending beyond the ends of their terms.⁴⁸⁹

Most of the speakers praised Tweed’s bill. One who did not was Samuel Tilden, then in his fourth year as Chairman of the Democratic State Committee. After his first few sentences, Tweed broke in: “I am sick of the discussion of this question.”⁴⁹⁰ Tilden waited out the interruption, then denounced the Boss’s Charter as humbug: providing for “a Mayor without any executive power... a Legislature without legislative power... elections without any power in the people to affect the Government.”⁴⁹¹ Upon

finishing, Tilden left the room — suppressing his fury and muttering to another that Tweed would end up either in jail or in exile.⁴⁹²

Press commentary on Tweed's Charter largely bespoke political position, with one surprising exception. Seconding the predictable paeans of Ring journals was the judgment of the middle-of-the-road⁴⁹³ *Herald*: the Charter was “perhaps, not the very best one that wise men might make... but nevertheless it is a very good Charter.”⁴⁹⁴ Among the Republican papers, Greeley's *Tribune* thought that the Republicans in Albany had erred: accepting the Charter as the price of getting “a stringent Election Law,” which it indeed believed “quite a good one.” The Charter, however, was “a bad bill,” which “surrenders our City to the rule of Tweed and Sweeny for a number of ensuing years.”⁴⁹⁵

Greeley's fellow-Republican *Times*, which had occasionally lamented Ring misbehavior, was now giddy: suggesting that Tweed, for his role in the Election Law and the Charter, “has put the people of Manhattan Island under great obligations.”⁴⁹⁶ Throughout the process, “the Tweed party has not manifested the slightest disposition to evade or prevaricate.”⁴⁹⁷ The *Times*, the next month, expressed

comfortable assurance... that the new municipal régime now being established will be in the general interest, and that the policy of the Board of Works, under Mr. Tweed's directions, will be strictly in accord with the assurances which were given when the new charter was adopted. It is evident that the Democratic leaders who have been entrusted with the control of the City Government are disposed to act in good faith.⁴⁹⁸

The foxes had not just the henhouse keys but also the applause of many pullets.

The elections of 1870. Just how highly the voters esteemed the Ring would be seen in the fall elections. On October 19, the Wigwam hosted the Tammany County Convention. “The ‘Boss,’ appeared on the stage,” said the *Tribune*,

to the admiration of all beholders, now seated at a table writing notes, now issuing instructions to [State] Senator Genet, again disappearing behind the scenes and mysteriously appearing to give an order to be promptly obeyed, but always looking evidently the dictator, before whom all should bow the political knee.

In his opening remarks, Tweed noted that it was the first time that body had convened since the new Charter had returned to the City its right of self-government. He turned to the candidature of Oakey Hall for Mayor, “eulogizing his ability and the sincerity and honesty which distinguished his official character.” After the nominations and speeches of the evening, Tweed was called for and responded: “I will only say a few golden words – go home early, work industriously, see that every one who is entitled to vote is registered, and every man registered is entitled to vote.”⁴⁹⁹

Eight days later, what the *Herald* called “the largest and most imposing political parade ever made in this or any other city” came to Union Square and Tammany Hall: fifty thousand Democrats in a procession two miles long, carrying Roman candles, torchlights, and banners through the rainy evening as cannons blasted and bands provided “indifferent and unsteady music.”⁵⁰⁰ *The Times* was tickled to spot among the signs

one evidently smuggled in by some satirical Dutchman, labeled

WANTED
HONEST MEN.

The Boss chaired this “Grand Ratification Meeting” of the Democracy and inveighed against the measures being taken by Grant’s administration and Congressional Republicans to rein in ballot fraud. It was a time, he said:

when the great City of New-York must put forth its utmost energies in the struggle for the overthrow of that despotic sway under which we have groaned for the last eleven years... By the telegraphic reports in the papers today, we see that the great City of New-York is to be

disenfranchised, the popular voice, awed and subdued by the power of the Federal Government... We know and feel that although the oppressor's hand is upon our throat, still we must calmly resist, and by the firm and judicious exercise of the proper law of our Government... show that the City of New-York is a peaceable, law-abiding, and, as the world knows, a well-governed City.

Later in the evening, the crowd called on Jim Fisk to speak – to his professed surprise, he said as he responded, inasmuch as he had never been a Democrat and this was, indeed, his first political meeting. He found himself, however, now, as the *Times* took down his words, “bound to the Democratic Party, and with the votes of the twenty-five thousand men under him... if he found an opportunity he would vote three times a day all along. (Laughter and cheers.)”⁵⁰¹

Of the balloting on November 8, the *Times* reported:

The election passed very quietly in the City...

Policemen guarded the doors of the polls, and the United States marshals stood inside watching the ballot-boxes and the voters as they stepped up to deposit their votes. Behind the boxes sat the State inspectors and the United States supervisors of election... Outside crowds of the usual class of people brought out by an election, pressed round the doors. There were to be seen roughs and respectable citizens, colored men and men of all nationalities, sober looking men and men with red noses and other signs of bibulous tendencies.⁵⁰²

Relatively few newly-naturalized citizens appeared at the polls; professional repeaters voted but once; arrests for false registry were few; and the U.S. Marshals ended up doing little more than watching and being watched. John T. Hoffman and A. Oakey Hall led the Tammany ticket to victory. Both men were exuberantly touted for higher offices; neither would ever again run in any election.

A boss in bronze. In the weeks after the elections of 1870, the idea arose that a statue might be cast of the Boss. While opinions have differed on whether the original thought was serious or jocular,⁵⁰³ it soon was both. A Tweed Testimonial Association was formed and 38 men – including Cardozo, Connolly, Hall, O'Brien, Sweeny, and Watson – signed a circular soliciting contributions. Nine thousand dollars was raised.⁵⁰⁴ One historian

termed the sum “an impressive display of spontaneous affection.”⁵⁰⁵ Others thought that Tweed had approved the solicitations as a way of smoking out the true feelings toward himself of purported political friends.⁵⁰⁶ The Association thought that the uncovering of the statue would occur in the summer of 1872⁵⁰⁷ – perhaps at the intersection of Broadway and Canal Street, designated “Tweed Plaza.”⁵⁰⁸

Meanwhile, opponents of the Ring were having a field day of ridicule: sending nine cents for the statue in a letter to the *New York Sun*, so that the millions of dollars in Tweedian frauds would never be forgotten;⁵⁰⁹ proposing unkind inscriptions for the memorial; and suggesting clothing and postures for the metallic Grand Sachem.

Tweed ended the fun on March 13, 1871. In a letter to his Testimonial Association, he said that he had always regarded the proposal as a joke, that statues were for the dead, and that he hoped “to survive in all my reign, politically and physically, more years to come.”⁵¹⁰ He had the money returned to the donors.⁵¹¹ The Association said that it had anyway been thinking of forgoing the statue and instead founding “a grand charitable institution, bearing Mr. Tweed’s honorable name.”⁵¹²

Politician purchase. On April 7, 1871, a Tammany Assemblyman, “unprovoked” and “probably drunk,”⁵¹³ struck an older, smaller, and frailer fellow legislator on the floor of the Assembly, opening a cheek wound to the bone. Senator Tweed ordered the resignation of the aggressor – which left the Democrats one vote short of the number needed to put through their agenda. The Republicans caucused and proclaimed their united opposition to the Ring’s bills – substantiated by a statement signed by their entire number.⁵¹⁴ They said that the current session would differ markedly from those of the recent past: no Republican would, this year, succumb to the inducements of “the Tempter.”⁵¹⁵ On April 15, however, a Republican Assemblyman, Orange S. Winans of Chautauqua County, rose to announce that he would henceforth vote with the Democracy. His price was understood to have been \$100,000.⁵¹⁶ (Winans was denounced as a traitor by his party. His wife was persuaded by her father to leave him and the “scorn of his townsmen” chased him from his home. He was believed to have turned to the bottle and to have ended as either a suicide or a “besotted tramp” in the West.⁵¹⁷)

The Tempter’s package of bills was approved by both legislative houses on April 18, after a two-hour delay – which was thought due to

two or three Democratic Assemblymen... who had made up their minds that, if the 'Boss' could afford to pay \$100,000 to a Republican... he had no business to overlook the equally needy members of his own party.⁵¹⁸

Gilding the legal lily. The legislative session of 1871 showcased the Ring at the height of its powers. With majorities in both houses, procedural formalities could be forgone. Bills were passed without having been printed, distributed, read, or discussed:

No one, not even the members who voted for or against them, knew, or was permitted to know, their contents till after they were signed by the Governor.⁵¹⁹

Able, thus, to pass more or less what they wanted to, the Ring's efforts in Albany in 1871 further fortified the commanding position their legislative coups and election victories of 1870 had secured. Main bills pushed through to enactment were: the Two Per Cent Tax Levy, project-specific appropriations, and amended versions of the Election and Registry Statutes and of the City Charter. The dollar volume of bribery may have declined from the \$1 million laid out the previous year for the Charter as the *Times* thought only that “[I]t could not have cost less than \$300,000 to put this Tax Levy scheme [the main piece of the package] through.”⁵²⁰ Chief effects of the bills included:

- **Limiting taxation, while amassing debt.** The Two Per Cent Tax Levy applied to 1871 and 1872, while the Amended City Charter, made permanent its provisions. The title of the former was a bid for popular approval for limiting taxation to two percent of assessed property values, with the total receipts capped at \$25 million per year⁵²¹ – down from over \$27 million in 1870.⁵²² The *Times*, however, argued that limiting taxes – or even reducing them to one percent of asset values – was but a delusive and false economy in the absence of constraints on bond creation.⁵²³ Bonds totaling \$16 million were authorized for issuance in 1871;⁵²⁴

- **Controlling revenues and expenditures.** The Board of Apportionment – Connolly, Hall, Sweeny, and Tweed – was to determine allotments to the various departments, “to regulate all

salaries of officers and employes of the City Government,” and to allocate receipts from liquor licensure to applicant charities. The four, plus a few others could “*sell any or all property of the City* [emphasis in original],” with the proceeds to be controlled by the Ring. The *Times* deemed it obvious that a provision authorizing Connolly and Hall to select eighteen papers to publish City advertising legalized the bribery of its competitors. The reconstituted Board of Supervisors was reduced to being “impoverished and directed” to raise the amounts of money decided on by the four.⁵²⁵ In sum, “the power of raising taxes... has now been quietly withdrawn from the Legislature, and placed in the hands of four men;”⁵²⁶

- **Making offices appointive.** It was critical to the Ring to keep Connolly in charge of the City’s money and financial records. It had surreptitiously inserted in the Tax Levy of 1870 a clause to make the Controllorship appointive. Fearing that that might be challenged, the Ring, in its Amended Charter of 1871, gave the Mayor the right to make appointments to the previously elective offices of the Controller, Corporation Counsel, Education Commissioners, and School Trustees and Inspectors; and

- **Facilitating electoral fraud.** A quid that Tweed had granted to the Republicans in 1870 for the quo of his Charter was acceptance of their elections law. In 1871, the Ring, in its amended Election and Registry Bills, revoked the concession. The provision that voter registry would cease one week before elections had enabled the Republicans in 1870 to discover and bar from the polls 15,000 improperly registered voters. The 1871 bill allowed registry to continue through the Saturday before a Tuesday election and unregistered persons to vote by submitting unsupported affidavits that they had found it inconvenient to register. Such submissions would be made to inspectors appointed by the Mayor. Hall also gained in 1871 the right to appoint poll clerks.⁵²⁷

The Viaduct Railway. The most ambitious public project undertaken by the Ring was a rail line that was to run most of the length of Manhattan. New Yorkers, aware of systems of rapid transit in London and elsewhere, had been pressing for one of their own – for which proposals had been put forward.⁵²⁸ These would have entailed no public expense – and

comparatively limited opportunity for graft. A prototype subway, based on pneumatic propulsion, had been constructed.

The Ring reflected and came up with its own solution: a line that would run forty feet or more above street level, on 348 bridges,⁵²⁹ from Lower Manhattan to “its great upper depot, occupying two blocks between One Hundred and Twenty-fourth and One Hundred and Twenty-sixth streets, and thence over into Westchester County.” One bridge was to be “of the Saracenic style of architecture, with stone parapets and mullions richly ornamented with carvings.”⁵³⁰ Twenty “fast trains” would run each hour at twenty miles per hour on two tracks, supplemented by a comparable number of slower “way trains.” A daily average of 140,000 passengers was projected, paying an average fare of thirteen cents.⁵³¹ The line would be built and maintained by an officially private, but effectively quasi-public, tax-exempt company. The total cost for what was to be known as the Viaduct Railway – or the Viaduct – was to approximate \$60 million.⁵³²

Governor Hoffman, on April 5, 1871, signed into law the Ring’s bill for the Viaduct. It directed the City to invest \$5 million – understood to be the first of many such outlays – in the stock of the company. Work would not begin until an additional \$1 million in stock was subscribed for by private citizens. The *Times* called the first \$5 million “but a tub thrown to the whale. The Viaduct could hold in its capacious belly three Court-houses, a dozen palatial mansions, and all the plasterers, carpenters, and carpet-men of the Ring.”⁵³³

Aspects of the Ring’s railway included:

- **attending to the competition.** The Legislature also passed in 1871 a bill for a limited, pneumatic, subway system, which was to be privately funded – potentially both a transport rival and a shaming contrast for the Viaduct. It was vetoed by Hoffman – immediately after he had held what the *Times* termed a “farce” of a hearing on it.⁵³⁴ Senator Tweed also introduced a bill to repeal the authorization previously granted another company to build the Greenwich-street Elevated Railroad. The bill would have forced that project, on the verge of going into operation, to be dismantled and the capital invested in it lost. Tweed’s measure was voted down but thought likely to be reintroduced;⁵³⁵
- **confiscatory powers.** The Viaduct statute authorized the new company to construct rail lines wherever it wished, throughout the

City. Other recently enacted laws empowered it also “to lay out, open, widen, straighten, extend, alter, and close all streets... below Fourteenth-street” and to assess the expense “upon the property intended to be benefited thereby, which assessments immediately become a first lien upon all such property” – which would “saddle the whole expense upon somebody else’s property,” up to a limit of \$50 million;⁵³⁶ and

- **“decoy ducks.”** Historians have seen cleverness in the Ring’s use of the reputable to cloak roguery.⁵³⁷ It had esteemed businessmen attest to the soundness of City finances and could point to the presence on various Ring boards of such men. The Viaduct Bill listed many luminaries of the City, including Peter Cooper and Horace Greeley, among those who would found the new company.⁵³⁸ Later, a Board of 25 Directors was elected.⁵³⁹ The *Times* asked why the Board had fifteen men (among them August Belmont, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and business leaders John Jacob Astor III, Charles Tiffany, and Alexander Stewart) not previously considered “partners of the ‘Ring,’” along with eight (among them, Connolly, Hall, Sweeny, and Tweed) known for “spoliation.”⁵⁴⁰ It had earlier answered its own question: “the respectable men... are only put there as decoy ducks. They are to entice people to come forward with their money, which Tweed and his henchmen will afterward gobble up.” The esteemed figures were playing “cats’-paw to the monkey.”⁵⁴¹

The company planned to complete the line to Forty-Second Street within one year; to the Harlem River, within three; and the whole line, within five.⁵⁴² Private subscription to the stock soon exceeded the \$1 million mandated minimum.⁵⁴³ In the late spring of 1871, the Directors began meeting in weekly sessions⁵⁴⁴ – the secrecy of which the *Times* protested.⁵⁴⁵

The enterprise would expire along with the Ring – with all Viaduct Directors resigning in mid-November, 1871.⁵⁴⁶

The wedding. In 1869, William Tweed had given his second-oldest daughter, Elizabeth, in marriage to John Henry Maginnis of New Orleans. It had not been thought an extraordinary event.⁵⁴⁷ Two years later, on May 31, 1871, came the nuptials of older siblings: Arthur Ambrose Maginnis and Mary Amelia Tweed. In the interim, the Boss had smashed the revolt of the Young Democrats, enacted a new Charter, reelected Hoffman and Hall, achieved his legislative victories of early 1871, and banked more millions.

After the ceremony at Trinity Chapel, the reception was held in the Tweeds' "palatial mansion, corner of Forty-third-street and Fifth-avenue."⁵⁴⁸ The newlyweds received the guests

standing under a magnificent marriage bell of japonicas... The parlors and stairway and upper rooms were all decorated with natural flowers from Mr. Tweed's hothouse at Greenwich. The floral decorations were most profuse and in excellent taste.⁵⁴⁹

The kitchen of Delmonico's restaurant had taken two days to prepare the dinner.

Exciting most commentary were the gifts – of which an extended list was furnished by the *Herald*. As in the matter of the statue, there was a sense that strength of fealty was tested and signaled. Publicized givers included: Barnard; Connolly; Sweeny; Woodward; Ring contractors Davidson, Garvey, and Ingersoll; Sheriff Matthew Brennan (who would, five months later, arrest the giver of the bride); and three leaders (but not James O'Brien) of the recently vanquished Young Democrats. From Jim Fisk came "a frosted silver contrivance representing an iceberg, evidently intended to hold ice-cream"⁵⁵⁰ and from Jay Gould, a "silver nutpicker."⁵⁵¹ The haul included forty sets of silver, of which one had 240 pieces.⁵⁵² The total estimated value exceeded \$700,000 – "present[ing] an appearance of brilliancy," said the *Herald*, "which can never have been equalled in munificence even in this Empire City" and "completely eclipsing" the presents given two months earlier at the nuptials of Queen Victoria's fourth daughter.⁵⁵³

Neither Hall nor Hoffman came or were listed as donors.

Astute observers thought the Ring "more securely established in power than any dynasty in Europe."⁵⁵⁴

8

Exposure and Fall

Critics. Thomas Nast had, in 1867 and 1868 in the pages of *Harper's Weekly*, drawn cartoons that assailed civic corruption generally and specifically John Hoffman – as a front man for thieves.⁵⁵⁵ In 1869, he began a series of anti-Ring drawings that would become one of the most celebrated and consequential campaigns in the history of cartoons. In his sketches, Tweed was an imbecilic, adipose, hollow-eyed, and inebriated oaf, with a large diamond sparkling on his shirtfront. If off in its details – Tweed was neither a dolt nor a drunk – the sequence was on target in its main theme: for he was indeed bloated in power. Nast did not fret the fine points. The larger truths that moved him were that the City spent and incurred debt at scandalous rates, that corruption thrived, and that Tweed called the shots.

Occasionally complementing the drawings of Nast were criticisms of City corruption appearing in the Republican dailies: the *Tribune* and the *Times*. The obeisances offered by the *Times* in the spring of 1870 for Tweed, his Charter, and his new Election Law thus constituted a notable departure from its long-term policy. It may have owed in part to the business participation of James B. Taylor, one of three directors of the *Times*, with Tweed in the New York Printing Company, sharing in its indecent profits.⁵⁵⁶ Taylor died in August of 1870 – the first of two deaths credited with hastening the fall of the Ring. The *Times*, the next month, under the direction of its publisher, George Jones, and its managing editor, Louis Jennings, opened its own concerted campaign against “TWEED & CO.”⁵⁵⁷

For the better part of a year, the charges were broad in gauge: the courthouse was costing multiples of what it should have; Connolly was ignoring his statutory obligation to report annually on the finances of the City; Tweed had risen in nine years from bankruptcy to fortune; the ineluctable explanation was graft. That most other journals were silent was because “bribing the Press [by paying for the publication of City advertisements] has never been carried to so great an extent as now.”⁵⁵⁸ (The *Times*, having itself played the game – receiving in 1869 for City advertising \$29,000 – knew whereof it wrote.⁵⁵⁹)

An ancillary target of the *Times* was Samuel Tilden: who had, since his testimony against Tweed's Charter, lapsed into silence about the Ring. On September 23, 1870, the newspaper described him as "a lawyer of high standing and character" and as one "as much disgusted with the City Government as any of us." Instead, however, of responding to its appeal to strike against the corruptionists, the *Times* said, he acted only as their "{s}lave."⁵⁶⁰ Indeed, the *Times* said:

respectable gentlemen, leading the Democratic party, like... Mr. Tilden, though despising, from the bottom of their hearts, the thieves in high places, and believing them thorough swindlers, yet never ventured to utter a word against them in public. In fact, to the distant public, their respectability covered the Ring's rascality.⁵⁶¹

The Chairman of the State Democracy would later claim ignorance of the thefts of the Ring⁵⁶² – writing that his inaction derived from his belief "in the potency of definite facts in making an impression on the public," with little use for "a column of rhetoric."⁵⁶³ With his network of contacts, Tilden must, from September 1870 through June 1871, have known more about the ongoing misdeeds than was then to be found in the columns of the *Times*.

He took, however, no steps to support the campaign of the Republican paper. In the State Convention of September 1870, Tilden spoke on such matters as the Franco-Prussian War then underway and on the dangers of standing armies, but not of the Ring, newly under full-bore attack by the *Times*.⁵⁶⁴ A few weeks later, at a Democratic rally, Tilden was reported to have appeared together on the platform with Jim Fisk, John Hoffman, Horatio Seymour, William Tweed, and Fernando Wood.⁵⁶⁵

Chiming in occasionally against the Ring was the *Nation*, a weekly magazine of news, commentary, and opinion. Founded and edited by Edwin Lawrence Godkin, it was a Republican organ largely devoted to themes of national and international scope. In the fall of 1870, it described the travels and depredations of two thousand Tammany "boys" whom Tweed and Sweeny had brought in on the Erie Railway to the State Democratic Convention in Rochester – as contingent protective fists, should the Young Democrats play the muscle card. The *Nation* also warned Tilden about the quality "of the company he keeps"⁵⁶⁶ and applauded the strong measures taken by the Federal Government to prevent ballot frauds by "the Tammany Hall mob" and "the mercenaries of the Ring."⁵⁶⁷

The main decrier of the Ring, remained, however, the *Times*. Jennings and Jones strove for specificity: alleging, for instance, that five contractors who were personal friends of Connolly had received \$7 million from the City⁵⁶⁸ and that Tweed's New York Printing Company was being paid immense sums by the City and State.⁵⁶⁹ When Connolly divulged that City debt had risen to \$82 million, the paper squawked at the 94-percent increase in the 64 months since Hoffman had first become Mayor⁵⁷⁰ and demanded to know where the money had gone.⁵⁷¹

The Ring, unruffled. The Controller, however, continued to stonewall: ignoring requests like that of the New York City Council of Political Reform on April 26, 1871 to examine his books.⁵⁷² A month later, Connolly was reported to be "issuing pasteboard cards, or circulars, like those which stationers and insurance companies scatter about hotels and eating-saloons... the object being to show that New-York is solvent." The cards said that the City, with property worth \$147 million, had but \$26 million in debt.⁵⁷³

The Ring, in sum, seemed still securely in place at mid-year of 1871. Its last electoral test, the previous November, had been triumphantly passed – with the years of Nast's cartoons and the incipient campaign of the *Times* appearing then to have had but scant effect. New statutes had strengthened its vise grip on the City's government and purse. Citizens grumbled, to be sure, but they had been doing so for years. George Templeton Strong's diary was relatively silent on civic graft in the first half of 1871. He did, though, on April 21, lament the passage of the Sweeny-Tweed legislative package:

The Ring has carried all its measures... the city of New York is now at its mercy—autonomy, self-government, rights of suffrage, and 'democratic principles' being ignored. "Boss" Tweed and his tail are sovereigns of this city and county.

He mused:

Perhaps the title "Boss of New York" will grow into permanence and figure in history like that of the doge of Venice. All titles have their beginnings, and we may be ruled henceforth by a series of bosses, hereditary or nominally elective. This may prove a degree better than the direct rule of 30,000 beastly Celtic bogtrotters.⁵⁷⁴

Germinant threats. Unbeknownst, however, to Strong, as to most of his City, events had been underway that would soon contribute to the unhorsing of the Ring. In January 1870, Former Sheriff James O'Brien had prevailed on Controller Connolly to offer employment in his offices to an accountant friend, William Copeland. Copeland discovered there that many payments to contractors had suspicious documentation. Although ordered to leave such records alone, he instead, surreptitiously, made notes of them, which he gave to O'Brien.⁵⁷⁵

In January of 1871, a second significant death occurred: James Watson — County Auditor and a paymaster for the kickbacks — was, in a trotting-sleigh accident, kicked in the forehead by his horse. Senator Tweed, on learning of the gravity of the injuries, hurried from Albany to the City. Fearing that the expiring bookkeeper might, to the wrong ears, speak carelessly or confessionally, the Ring limited access to his bedside to those in its trust. His home was “converted into a sort of restaurant and prison combined, where strangers ate, and slept and watched, compelling WATSON’S stricken family to remove to the top floor to hide their grief and obtain domestic privacy.”⁵⁷⁶ When, a week after the accident, Watson died, Connolly took possession of his accounting records.⁵⁷⁷ Among the Auditor’s twelve pallbearers were Connolly, Hall, Sweeny, and Tweed.

To fill the position of the man promoted to replace Watson, Connolly hired Matthew O'Rourke, a former newsman turned bookkeeper. Like Copeland earlier, O'Rourke soon was making notes of suspicious payments. By July, the *Times* had the incriminating documents compiled by both men: brought to it by O'Rourke himself⁵⁷⁸ and by James O'Brien.⁵⁷⁹

On July 8, 1871, the tone of the anti-Ring campaign of George Jones and Louis Jennings changed from general indignation to particular, detailed charges. The *Times* that day published “facts... obtained from what we consider a good and trustworthy source and the figures which help to explain them are transcribed literally from books in the Controller’s office. If Controller CONNOLLY can prove them to be inaccurate he is heartily welcome to do so.” The records showed that hundreds of thousands of dollars were being squandered annually in the leasing of space for armories for the National Guard of the State: both in excessive rents and in the leasing of unusable, unoccupied space. The landlords were members or associates of the Ring. The *Times* listed the addresses and the amounts — so that interested citizens could visit the properties and see that the payments were multiples of reasonable rents.

The immediate impact of the article was not great: despite its most detailed documentation of corrupt payments yet presented, other papers ignored it. The attention of the press and the City was instead being drawn to an impending tragedy: of greater concern to citizens on that eighth of July was the looming prospect of bloodshed in their streets.

Four days hence was Orange Day, the one-hundred-and-eighty-first anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne, fought on July 12, 1690. In it, the Protestant King of England, William III, had defeated his deposed predecessor, James II, at the head of Irish Catholic forces. Irish Protestants in Manhattan celebrated the date with public parades, which were seen by their Catholic compatriots as sectarian affronts. Their attack on the parade in 1870 had led to hundreds of injuries and five deaths.⁵⁸⁰

To prevent a recurrence, Mayor Hall, on the tenth, issued, through his Police Superintendent, an order forbidding the proposed procession of 1871. The ban was immediately criticized as an appeasement of riotous Catholics, depriving the Orangemen of their Constitutional right of free assembly. Responding to such sentiment, Governor Hoffman countermanded the Mayor to permit the parade and ordered soldiers and police to protect the marchers. In fulfillment of Hoffman's order, four regiments of the National Guard would escort the paraders.

In the early afternoon of Wednesday, the twelfth, 100 Ulstermen started south from Eighth Avenue and Twenty-Ninth Street. Soon, a shot was heard, the troops fired into the crowd, and 44 deaths⁵⁸¹ ensued. The seriously wounded included 61 civilians, 26 policemen and soldiers,⁵⁸² and the political careers of Hall and Hoffman.

Whether the Governor, the Mayor, or other Ringmen had, with respect to Orange Day, been seeking to turn attention from the *Times* article of July 8 is not known. Dismay with the calamity may well have made the City the more receptive to the continuing campaign of Jones and Jennings, soon to reach its height.⁵⁸³

The accounts revealed. The *Times* announced to its readers on July 19, 1871 that “{w}e have openly charged DICK CONNOLLY with being a THIEF, and we shall now prove him to be one. We shall do the same with Mayor HALL.”⁵⁸⁴ It printed evidence the next day that the excessive rents paid for the armories — amounting to thefts of \$250,000 per year — were dwarfed by “more stupendous frauds” in outfitting and repairing those properties: \$941,000 for ten of the armories over nine months. How much longer would citizens “consent to being robbed by the shameless thieves who now control our City?”⁵⁸⁵

In the next issues of the paper, the numbers grew. For furniture and repairs for the new County courthouse in 1869 and 1870, one firm, headed by Tweed crony James Ingersoll, had been paid \$5.7 million.⁵⁸⁶ Andrew Garvey, another associate of Tweed and a plasterer — indeed, “the prince of plasterers” — had received \$133,000 for two days’ work and \$2.9 million over two years.⁵⁸⁷ To put its figures into perspective, the *Times* calculated that the funds expended to carpet the courthouse and other County buildings could have covered Central Park three times.⁵⁸⁸ Articles ended with teasers that the morrows’ editions would strike more blows.

Defending the Ring. In contrast to the modest reaction to the *Times*’ article of July 8, the resumption of its disclosures twelve days later seized the attention of the City. As three of the four Ring leaders responded with public silence; the fourth, Mayor Oakey Hall, mustered a scattershot reaction of indignation, defiance, obfuscation, disdain, and countercharge. Among the points he made were:

- that the *Times* was acting out of “political partisanship”⁵⁸⁹ and from pique that the City had been contesting and had not paid its advertising bill of almost \$14,000⁵⁹⁰ and that the City’s advertising had been withdrawn from it;⁵⁹¹
- that a clerk fired from the Controller’s Office for dishonesty had sold copied extracts of City ledgers to the *Times*;⁵⁹² and
- that the Board of Supervisors, as constituted under the old City Charter, had approved the payments covered in the exposé. Conceding that the figures in the *Times* “may have been exorbitant;... no responsibility for them really rests with either the Controller or myself.” The wrongdoing, if any, was that of the former Supervisors.⁵⁹³

“{T}he unjust and false aspersions,” Hall said, would not affect him, Connolly, Tweed, or others in the least. Only their concern for the credit of the City would lead them to “condescend to hasten the publication of a report that will beyond question vindicate Mr. Connolly.”⁵⁹⁴ Hall challenged the *Times* to validate its charges by commencing prosecution. “Even,” the Mayor said, “if there was anything in [the campaign of the paper], it would blow over before the next election.” What mattered was that “{w}e have got the State and we mean to keep it.”⁵⁹⁵ He personally “shall remain at my

post, and let my enemies see that I am invulnerable to their malicious attacks.”⁵⁹⁶

Hall’s defenses were echoed by the Democratic press.⁵⁹⁷ The Elegant Oakey himself penned the editorials of the *New York Leader*, a Tammany paper referred to by the *Times* his “personal organ.”⁵⁹⁸ The *Leader* called the articles of the *Times* “a serial tale which might properly enough be entitled the ‘Romance of the Ring.’” It also played the card of social-stratum ill will: the series illustrating, it said

the willful deliberate ignorance in which the so-called better classes of New-York choose to live of their own municipal affairs... *The Times* presumed upon this ignorance of the so-called ‘better classes’ when it ventured to publish as the results of its own surreptitious gimlet-practice upon the doors of the Controller’s office.⁵⁹⁹

The Democratic *New York World* blamed the other party:

The Republican Legislature exempted the Board of Supervisors from all checks of any kind by other officers or departments of the government. The Mayor was, indeed, clothed with a nominal veto; but it was a hollow sham to save appearances... What the Mayor was powerless to block by his idle veto, the Controller was equally powerless to block as guardian of the Treasury... The only remedy was... to abolish the Board—that mongrel progeny of a Republican Legislature.⁶⁰⁰

The nominally independent⁶⁰¹ *New York Herald* served the interests of the Ring by largely ignoring the revelations of the *Times*. (George Templeton Strong, on July 27, thought it one of the few journals in the country not discussing them.⁶⁰²) On July 29, in an editorial the *Times* thought written by Hall,⁶⁰³ the *Herald* finally spoke up to urge fair play. It conceded the undeniability of “stupendous frauds in connection with the construction of the New Court House,” but thought that “the saddle” should “be put on the right horse:”... “republican legislation.” The *Times* was being “puerile and nonsensical.”

The *Herald* continued, the next week, to editorialize in highroad tone: unlike, it said, the “over-excited” *Times*. “New York,” said the *Herald*, “is to America what Paris once was to the World... great, rich and powerful... The whole country regards it as master, and when it speaks... it is heard with that respectful attention which no other city, not even London or Paris, can

command.” “Hot words” must not be allowed to impair New York’s financial stature, for, “{i}f the city’s credit is destroyed the city will be destroyed with it.”⁶⁰⁴

The Ring sought also to defend itself through the muffling of its critics. Both the *Times* and Thomas Nast recounted efforts to buy them off: offers of \$5 million to George Jones⁶⁰⁵ and of \$500,000 to Nast⁶⁰⁶ to abandon their campaigns. The offers were spurned. Louis Jennings was reported to have been many times arrested, but always bailed out, and, like Nast, threatened with murder, although never physically assaulted.⁶⁰⁷

The press, pressing on. The *Times* mocked Hall’s responses to its charges that it had been motivated by the non-payment of a \$14,000 claim and that the accounts had been copied by a dishonest clerk:

This is the most remarkable defense ever recorded in judicial annals... In other words, *the Mayor admits the truth of our charges and the accuracy of our figures* (emphasis in original), but says it is sufficient for him to discredit our motives. His defense is a clear admission of guilt.⁶⁰⁸

Undeterred by Hall’s random shots and by the carping of rival papers, Jones and Jennings incessantly taunted the Ring to respond: if its charges were off target, prove it. Above all, make public the books of the City. How could the Ring continue to deny citizens their basic rights to know how much of their money was being spent and to what ends and how much debt was being taken on?

As the feebleness of Hall’s defenses persuaded many of the likely truth of the *Times*’ revelations, the paper soon had fourth-estate support. Edwin Lawrence Godkin’s fellow-Republican *Nation* on the twenty-seventh echoed Jones and Jennings, scoffing at the barrage of Hall as lacking “the least relevancy to the matter at hand.” (It also chided the *Times* for insufficient “moderation of epithet.”)⁶⁰⁹ A week later, of further defenses put out by Hall, the *Nation* judged that, like the earlier parryings of the Mayor, it “corroborates the charge [of the *Times*] and deceives no one... The Mayor... gets into the box against himself.”⁶¹⁰

Another Republican paper, Horace Greeley’s *New-York Tribune*,⁶¹¹ had been an early critic of the Ring. The *Tribune* had, however, recently softened its tone on the City’s Government – as Greeley himself had cozied up to Tweed. (The *Tribune* was also being paid by the Ring \$12,000 per month to publish City announcements⁶¹² – which it would continue to do in

August.) For two days after the detailed bombshells of the *Times* began bursting on July 20, the *Tribune* straddled the editorial fence by urging Hall and Connolly to sue for libel: “If [the charges were] true, the thieves who thus prostitute great public trust should be prosecuted... If false, the journal... should be taught that slander so monstrous is a luxury too costly to be indulged in.”⁶¹³

On Monday, July 24, 1871, the *Tribune* abandoned contingent language and nailed its colors to the mast of reform: reprinting from the *Times* the copied extracts of Connolly’s accounts – from which it concluded that “{f}raud” “seems clear.” It thought that Mayor Hall “hits *The Times* sundry sharp raps, but does not meet the issue.”⁶¹⁴ The next day, it shredded, point-by-point, Hall’s arguments.⁶¹⁵ It declared itself finally convinced that the charges of the *Times* were true by the weakness of the Ring’s response⁶¹⁶ and thought that many New Yorkers had had similar reactions: “The defense set up by the Mayor has startled the public more than the broad accusations of *The Times*.”⁶¹⁷

Citizen steps. What would the startled New Yorkers do? Dissatisfaction with civic graft had, until mid-1871, been largely confined to the channels of isolated editorial stridency, dinner-party denunciations, diary confidences, and applauded speeches. Currents of general urgency suddenly, however, in the last dozen days of July, rose to overflow the old streambeds and threatened even to wash away the Ring itself. As early as July 25, the *Tribune* reported that: “A movement is already on foot among a large number of capitalists, who propose to resist the further collection of municipal taxes until an official showing of the city’s finances is compelled.”⁶¹⁸

The initiative was the next day endorsed by the *Times*, along with, as
a

preliminary step to this, or any other actions that may be thought advisable... a public meeting called of the leading merchants and bankers of the City... At this meeting a committee should be appointed, of not less than twenty-five leading citizens and tax-payers, without distinction of party, who should demand... a full examination of the Controller’s books.⁶¹⁹

Preliminarily, the meeting was set for August 8,⁶²⁰ then put off until September, when many magnates would be back from their summer spots.

Those in the City could, however, at once enlist in the concerted withholding of tax payments. By July 28, the *Times* reported that “{o}ver one thousand names, including those of many eminent merchants and bankers, have already been subscribed” to the tax revolt.⁶²¹

Within days of the start of the *Times*' series, effects were seen on the City's credit. On July 26, no more than nominal bids were made on \$40,000 of City bonds offered on the Real Estate Exchange. One week earlier, \$50,000 of similar bonds had been sold in the same market at par.⁶²² City loans were delisted by the securities exchange of Berlin.⁶²³ Bankers refused to endorse Connolly's debt instruments and cut off further lending.

Both the Ring and the reformers thought City credit key. A payment of \$2.7 million in interest on City obligations would be due on November 1 and \$25 million in short-term paper would come due in the following two months.⁶²⁴ Mayor Hall and the *Herald* argued that it was therefore essential for the City to ignore the charges of the *Times*.⁶²⁵ Opponents of the Ring inferred instead that it had to be effectively out by Halloween.⁶²⁶

Reform organizations – both pre-existing and newly formed – voiced outrage. The meeting of the Citizens' Association of the Twelfth and Nineteenth Wards (Northern and Northeastern Manhattan) on August 7 was disrupted by Tammany toughs. It nevertheless passed resolutions calling for the nonpayment of taxes until one could be “assured of their honest application” and for the Mayor to provide a full financial accounting and, if unable to refute the accusations of theft, to resign.⁶²⁷

William Tweed, on August 16, transferred properties worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to his son Richard.⁶²⁸

Just another passing squall? But, as August 1871 advanced, the indignation of the press and the public seemed to ebb. Connolly, early in the month, had finally released financial statements, which failed to placate the *Times*. It had long bemoaned the Controller's ability to becloud the financial state of the City and now found the latest reports “a confused jumble of figures, accompanied by unintelligible comments... we defy any man to tell... what the actual debt is, or was.”⁶²⁹ The indebtedness of the City and County had been \$34 million at the end of 1868 and, “as far as allowed to be known,” was \$101 million on July 31, 1871 — despite receiving taxes and other revenues at a level of at least \$24 million per year. (The Ring-soft *Herald* inferred from Connolly's report that the “Net Funded Debt” was \$60 million.⁶³⁰) The City was spending at a rate of \$46 million per year — nearly equal to the \$49 million disbursed by the Federal Government for all its expenses other than its debt interest, diplomatic corps, postal operations,

and military.⁶³¹ With the debt now confirmed to be of vast, if uncertain, size, the *Times* asked again where the greenbacks had gone.

But the *Times* was no longer publishing sensational daily accounts of yet more contractors making hundreds of thousands of dollars for short periods of work. The *Tribune*, too, was running fewer pieces on the Ring frauds. On August 17, the *Nation* judged the City “quite apathetic over the discoveries made in the Comptroller’s office.”⁶³² Two days later, the *Leader*, in logic-defying prose presumed to be Hall’s, proclaimed victory:

The attack [of the *Times*] has only made the officials who represent Tammany strong throughout the nation... The papers of the different States, which, a few weeks ago, could see no reason why Tammany should have any voice in National politics, now rise up, and, with one accord, have a National voice for Tammany. We are stronger in the country than we were or cared to be a month ago.⁶³³

While public figures, from Governor Hoffman on down, continued to lie low, political clubs affiliated with Tammany announced continued support for the Ring.⁶³⁴ Tweed himself, when asked by a Missouri reporter if he had stolen, had responded that “this is not a question one gentleman ought to put to another.”⁶³⁵

The Aldermen – many Tammany-beholden – on August 23 made clear their support for the Ring. They passed a resolution asserting the legal opinion that the *Times* lacked clear title to its premises and “authorized and directed” the Mayor to bring suit “on behalf of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonality of the City of New York, to recover possession of” the property.⁶³⁶

Building further on the support for the Ring among the elected legislators of the City, Mayor Hall proposed that a committee of citizens be appointed to review the municipal accounts. Such a panel was, in the last week of August, jointly named by the Aldermen and Supervisors – who informed each of its members in their notice of appointment that it was in response to “the gross attacks of a partisan journal upon the credit of the city” and the harm occasioned by “libels so gross and attacks so false and exaggerated.”⁶³⁷

George Templeton Strong had thought on July 27:

It’s a great misfortune that these disclosures are made at this time; for everybody is out of town, and vigorous action is impossible. By next

October, everyone will have begun to think of something else and there will be no vigorous campaign against these thieves and ruffians.⁶³⁸

Within a few weeks after that entry, the denunciations made by the *Times* and other papers had grown scantly and fainter, less was heard of citizen initiatives against the frauds, the popinjay Mayor was crowing in victory, and Tammany Hall and its Alderman were flexing their muscles in support of the Ring.

Perhaps, as Hall had hopefully predicted and as Strong had feared, the hailstorm of accusations had, indeed, briskly blown itself out. Would this latest spasm of civic upset prove as lacking in stamina as previous, similar, short-lived twitches?

Reform resurges. The thought of Hall and the Aldermen to thump the *Times* by strong-arming it legally out of its building reenergized the Ring's decriers. The paper itself scoffed:

Our property was lawfully bought and paid for, and our friends need have no fears about our retaining it... What we have published cannot be disproved, and the only answer the City authorities can make is to attempt to annoy us by litigation.⁶³⁹

The *Evening Post* thought that

We greatly mistake the temper of a free people, if an effort by our City Government to silence the Press by persecution be not met with a more general and more indignant protest than even the continued suppression of the public accounts.⁶⁴⁰

Journals around the country – in Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and elsewhere – chimed in with articles backing the *Times*.⁶⁴¹ The Ring's challenge of the building title was judged “a great blunder:” in converting other editors from jealous observers of the *Times*' battle to staunch defenders of the paper.⁶⁴²

At the end of the month: Jones and Jennings ran new front-page headlines of fraudulent payments – its figures this time taken from Connolly's own reports;⁶⁴³ the *Nation* began to clamor for a lynching;⁶⁴⁴ and German citizens persuaded their hitherto-Tammany-tight leaders to oppose the Ring.⁶⁴⁵

“The Great Citizens’ Meeting.”⁶⁴⁶ On the evening of Monday, September 4, the once and future Mayor, William Havemeyer, presided over a reform gathering of thousands. It was held in Cooper Union – where Abraham Lincoln on February 27, 1860 had made the single speech judged most instrumental to his becoming President.⁶⁴⁷ The hall on the evening of the late summer day opened its doors at 7:00 – an hour before the program would begin. With seating for about 2,000,⁶⁴⁸ the Union was soon “crowded to suffocation.”⁶⁴⁹ The *Tribune* judged the majority to be Republicans; a third or more, “revolting Tammany Germans;” and Young Democrats, the third major faction. “A score or two... chiefly Germans” were women and, of the men, “nineteen-twentieths... were advanced in years—voters and property owners.”⁶⁵⁰ Five thousand could not get in and gathered outside to be addressed by secondary speakers. “Hangers-on of Tammany” were in the crowd. It became clear to them, though, “that the audience did not intend to brook any interference, and the small number of roughs who were in attendance were obliged, however unwillingly, to keep silent.”⁶⁵¹

George Templeton Strong had a card to be on the platform, “but the crowd and heat were beyond endurance [outside, it had been 80 degrees at 6:00 and would be 77 at 9:00 and 74.5 at midnight⁶⁵²]; so I adjourned to the committee room awhile... and then looked at the auxiliary open-air meeting. Both seemed earnest and uproarious.”⁶⁵³ Strong discussed the event with his father-in-law, Samuel B. Ruggles, who was not “inclined to be prominent in it. Mr. Ruggles fears these villains might take vengeance on him by stopping certain improvements now in progress to the damage of sundry uptown lots of his. But his conscience is a little uncomfortable.”⁶⁵⁴ (Ruggles would, however, that night be named to the reformers’ Committee of Seventy.)

The meeting ended thirty minutes into the morrow.⁶⁵⁵

The full first page and nearly all of another of the *Times* the next day were devoted to it. The account given here is, except where otherwise noted, based on that of the *Times* – which was selective.⁶⁵⁶ In contrast to the extended verbatim transcripts of many speeches (by two former Mayors, a former Governor of Wisconsin, two judges, and the publisher of the leading German newspaper), the paper reported but a nine-line synopsis of that given by Robert Roosevelt, a Democratic, Tammany Congressman, and the uncle of Theodore. The *Times* related that it was itself “lustily cheered” and that there were repeated calls for George Jones.⁶⁵⁷

The addresses touched on interrelated aspects of the scandal:

- **Fiscal obfuscation.** The magnitude of the harm done to the City was seen in the amount of debt incurred. It was lamented that – a month after Connolly had given what Hall had promised would be a full accounting – the precise amount of debt borne by the City still was not known. Different speakers had different estimates of it: \$101 million, more than \$110 million, \$113 million, and at least \$125 million were among the figures thrown out;

- **Specific corrupt payments.** The exorbitant figures paid to named Ring contractors were recounted in detail – to the merriment of the crowd. Special attention was given to the \$6.3 million in largely bogus claims approved for payment by the interim Board of Audit – Connolly, Hall, and Tweed – that would be the basis for the trials of the latter two; and

- **Conspicuous wealth.** The speakers were offended by the sudden affluence of Ring members, who “from recent penury, have become enormously rich.” Their wealth, moreover, “flaunts itself in the public gaze, in gorgeous array – in splendid equipages, and in palatial residences.”

Aspects of the Ring receiving relatively little mention that night included:

- **Electoral frauds.** Robert Roosevelt⁶⁵⁸ was the only speaker to stress the importance of keeping the Ring from stealing elections – although another alluded briefly to it. The *Times*, which had itself so many times made this point, here played it down; and

- **The Erie Railway.** In the elections of 1870, the trio of Tweed, Sweeny, and Fisk had been held up by the *Times* as a main reason to vote Republican. Ten months later, Jubilee Jim and his rail line escaped mention.

Edward Salomon, former Governor of Wisconsin, undertook to explain why the leaders of the City had largely, until that evening, held their tongues. He said that, until the summer of 1871, citizens “lacked the specific evidence of the specific fraud—the names and figures—to bring home to them the clear conception of the enormity of the fraud and

corruption, the peril of their property, the public danger, and the necessity of some action.” No speaker gave reasons why the City had so long acquiesced in being denied its statutorily mandated financial reports – other than indirectly, in noting the apathy of the era.

After the third of the seven main addresses, twelve resolutions were read out. They: expressed “astonishment and alarm” that City and County debt had more than doubled since January 1869; concluded “that enormous sums of money have been wrongfully taken from the public Treasury;” identified Tweed, Connolly, and Hall as “the public officers directly arraigned at the bar of public judgment for these offenses;” entreated citizens to vote for reform candidates; thanked the press, and especially the *Times*, for exposing the frauds; called for the expulsion and punishment of the corrupt officials, for a full accounting of City finances, for provisions to prevent the unauthorized creation of municipal debt, for the recovery of the stolen funds, and for the State to enact a new City Charter; and authorized former Mayor Havemeyer to appoint an Executive Committee of Seventy to achieve these ends. The resolutions were approved by acclamation.

At the end of the meeting, the bi-partisan membership of the Committee of Seventy was announced. It included the three Mayoral candidates of 1872, the man who would be elected Mayor in 1874, the next Governor, and a future U.S. Secretary of State. At least eighteen of the committee were financial experts:⁶⁵⁹ an indication both of the threats posed to the City’s credit and of the fiscal leverage that reformers intended to wield. The Republican *Nation* thought that the seventy included too many of its own party.⁶⁶⁰

After the meeting. Two days later, Richard Connolly’s wife transferred \$500,000 in bonds to her son-in-law.⁶⁶¹

One of the first steps taken by the Committee of Seventy was to back the suit of one of its members⁶⁶² – John Foley, deemed a desirable litigant in part because of his Irish name⁶⁶³ – against the City. In ruling on it on September 7, Justice Barnard – breaking fourteen years of compliance with the wishes of Tweed – enjoined Connolly from issuing new bonds or paying any more money to the New York Printing Company or to three other Ring firms.⁶⁶⁴

To a reporter who sought out Tweed the next day to learn his thoughts on the injunction, the Boss said that “if this man Jones would have said the things he has said about me twenty-five years ago, *he wouldn’t be alive now* [emphasis in original]. But, you see, when a man has a wife and children he can’t do such a thing. (Clenching his fists:) I would have killed him.”⁶⁶⁵

Tweed later called the injunction a telling blow.⁶⁶⁶ He, along with Tilden, ascribed it to the risible thought of the judge that it could make him Governor.⁶⁶⁷ City workers feared for their pay and gathered in ominous crowds.⁶⁶⁸ The banks feared defaults on their holdings of City securities.

Samuel Tilden steps forward. For several weeks after the sensational revelations of the *Times* in July 1871, the Chairman of the State Democracy had maintained a public silence. Tilden would later claim to have been conferring with leading Democrats on how to close down the Ring.⁶⁶⁹ After one such meeting, in which he was one of three main participants, only the other two were quoted by the *Tribune* in denouncing the Ring's leaders.⁶⁷⁰

The mystery of Tilden's position and actions in this period was deepened by his failure to participate in the rally of September 4. He was said to have helped to plan it and had been invited to speak. “{U}naccountably,” however, per a biographer, he neither spoke nor was he named to the Committee of Seventy that night nor was he among the 227 listed vice presidents of the meeting.⁶⁷¹ The man who would ultimately derive more political credit than any other from the felling of the Ring may then still have been straddling the political fence.

Not until a week after the rally, on September 11, did Samuel Tilden take his first significant public action against the Ring in over a year: by dispatching a circular letter to the State party. In it, he urged that honorable delegates be sent to the State Convention since “{w}herever the gangrene of corruption has reached the Democratic party we must take a knife and cut it out by the roots.”⁶⁷²

Before the week was out the knife that Tilden sought would be delivered into his hands.

Ring cracks and wobbles. On September 10, with various investigators preparing to examine the records of the Controller, Connolly's office had been broken into and 3,500 payment vouchers stolen. Duplicate copies of many were, however, subsequently found and the burglary appears not to have hindered appreciably the subsequent prosecutions. Mayor Hall blamed the break-in on Connolly and, the next day, asked him to resign. As the financial specialist of the Ring core, the Controller's connection to the fraudulent payments was the least deniable. If any carcass was to be thrown to the nipping wolves of reform — Hall, Sweeny, and Tweed may have reasoned — his was the most logical.⁶⁷³

Connolly, however, did not fancy scapegoathood and went to the reformers: first to William Havemeyer, then, on September 15, to Samuel Tilden, his long-time Tammany colleague. Tilden and Connolly agreed on a

scenario in which the latter would continue as Controller, but would appoint a deputy, the reformer Andrew Haswell Green – a partner in Tilden's law firm – to exercise all powers of the office. This arrangement would prevent Hall from appointing a new Controller and would put the reformers in charge of the City's funds and financial records. Tilden, Green, and their clerks were soon going through the municipal accounts, gathering evidence against the Ring. Connolly believed that Tilden had, in return, pledged leniency to him.⁶⁷⁴

Green had immediately to respond to the chaos in the financial markets and in the City's accounts triggered by Barnard's injunction.⁶⁷⁵ By borrowing for the City in his own name, he forestalled an impending crisis of illiquidity and paid municipal workers. After Judge Barnard on October 2 modified his order to allow limited borrowing, a loan was negotiated with the House of Rothschild – with the lender insistent that Connolly's signature not be on the bonds presented to the European debt market.⁶⁷⁶

Tweed readies for the Convention. The State Convention – to be held early in October in Rochester – would be a contest for the support of the New York Democracy waged between two of its great string-pullers: Tilden, the meticulous organizer, and Tweed, the cynical suborner. Both men had spent their public careers mastering tactics – albeit radically different ones – that could achieve advantage in political gatherings. Each knew his political future to be in the balance and predicted victory.⁶⁷⁷

In preparation for the encounter, Tweed confirmed his control of his base: by securing his reelection as Chairman of the Tammany Hall General Committee⁶⁷⁸ and his renomination for Senator. The staying power of the Boss was flaunted in a bumptious meeting of Democrats held on the evening of September 22, 1871 at the recently-named Tweed Plaza. Thousands of Chinese lanterns provided light for a crowd estimated by the *Herald* at 20,000, by a Tammanyite at 50,000. The Boss was enthusiastically acclaimed as he doffed his cap of Scotch tweed, bowed to the crowd, and accepted renomination. He said that, having been “reviled and traduced and maligned as man has seldom been,” he could “safely place myself and my record, all I have performed as a public official, plainly before your gaze.” It was bootless to respond to the innumerable charges of “that mighty engine of popular power—the press.” He would, instead, he said, await legal vindication. Having had a majority in his last election of 22,000, he would be satisfied this time with no less than 30,000.

Ring supporters then stepped forward to lambaste: the Committee of Seventy (which had been created by 3,000 citizens “to go nosing about in

our public departments”); Louis Jennings (who “boasts of beating Tammany Hall,” but who had only ever “beaten his wife,” of which the courts had proof); and George Jones (who had gone to City leaders “begging to be prostituted,” via payment of his advertising bill for \$13,000). One asked defiantly “what portion of the improper charge for plastering has gone into the hands of Mr. Tweed.”⁶⁷⁹ Tilden would, in a month, give the forensically researched answer – 24 percent – that would put the Boss behind bars.

In the days leading up to the State Convention, attempts were made “to bring Tweed to reason and to abdication.” He was having none of it. The present hubbub, he said, would not even be remembered in the campaigns of 1872. Should Tilden’s reformers “demand the scalps of his friends,” he would take his constituency of 140,000 over to the Republicans “and sweep the very shadow of Democracy from the State.”⁶⁸⁰

The Rochester Convention. The Convention seemed, indeed, to many to play out as Tweed had hoped and conspired. Tweed in Rochester – as he had in the contests that had made William Hitchman Speaker and had led to a new Charter – again prevailed over Tilden. With apparently gracious self-denial, the Boss had the Tammany delegates waive their right to participate in the Convention. The step was met with enthusiasm and was followed, as orchestrated by Tweed, with a vote on a motion to bar all delegates from the City – including Tilden’s reform contingent – from the proceedings. The motion was carried by a vote (lopsided, as so often the case when Tweed exerted himself) of 90 to 4. Bribes and physical intimidation were thought likely to have played a role.⁶⁸¹

Tweed had thus kept Tilden’s men from receiving any official endorsement by the Convention and could argue that Tammany’s nominees were those of the Democracy. The Convention formally condemned “the corruption and extravagance recently brought to light in the municipal affairs of the city of New York” and “all who are responsible.” It also, however, rose to its feet to cheer the suggestion that the City frauds were “the mere dreams of Republican imagination.”⁶⁸²

The *Times* headlined the outcome: “A Tammany Triumph. Victory of the Ring Over the Honest Democrats.”⁶⁸³ The *Tribune* concurred: “Tweed Victorious Throughout.”⁶⁸⁴ The *Nation* concluded from the Convention “that nothing in the way of reform is to be expected from the Democratic party in this State.”⁶⁸⁵ An exultant Tweed claimed “a decided victory for Tammany”⁶⁸⁶ and spoke “with good-natured contempt” of his opponents.⁶⁸⁷

He telegraphed Hall to postpone until his return any further concessions to the reformers.⁶⁸⁸

Tilden fights on. There was, however, irksome grit in the celebratory oysters of the Boss: the disparaged Chairman of the State Democracy, beaten as the intra-party opposition to the Ring that he led had been, had not meekly accepted his defeat. Thin and frail, Samuel Tilden came forward to speak to the Convention, an audience liberally sprinkled with the shoulder-hitter roughs of the Ring (brought in free-of-charge from Manhattan on the Erie).⁶⁸⁹ As he began, the tried and true of Tammany attempted to drown him out with concerted hissing and shouted calls to order. Tilden persevered to say that he would work and vote against every one of Tweed's candidates – whom he would not consider to have been endorsed by the Party. One historian judged that “{s}uch courage, displayed at such a critical moment, was sublime... From that hour he became the real leader of the Democracy.”⁶⁹⁰

On returning to the City, Tilden filed papers to run from there for the State Assembly, persuaded others to join with him in constituting a slate of independent reform candidates, spoke on their behalf, and contributed \$10,000 to their campaign coffers. He also engaged accountants to review the financial records of the City and oversaw their work. His pursuit of evidence led him to the bank accounts of Ring members and to proof of the kickback arrangements.

The Committee of Seventy on October 17 sent a delegation of seven to Albany to urge the intervention of Governor Hoffman – to the extent of asking “that the Executive of the State will have in readiness a military force sufficient to quell any unlawful outbreak which may arise and which has already been threatened and excited.” Hoffman agreed to have his Attorney General send a letter to Charles O’Conor to “empower you to institute in my name of office any suit or proceeding which... you shall approve.”⁶⁹¹ O’Conor was esteemed for what the *Nation* termed his “character of absolute purity”⁶⁹² and called by the *Times* “the foremost member of the New-York Bar.”⁶⁹³ He and Tilden would, for the next few years, lead the legal battle against the Ring. Sweeny’s and Tweed’s Governor had, after months of ostrich impersonation, finally taken an effective step to bring the Ring to justice.

Tilden, one week later, released the product of his forensic research, the document “Figures That Could Not Lie,” which detailed kickback payments to Tweed.⁶⁹⁴

Incoming indictments and produce. On October 27, 1871, Tweed was arrested by Sheriff Matthew Brennan pursuant to a court order that had been issued on the basis of Tilden's evidence.⁶⁹⁵ He, Ring paymaster Woodward, and two Ring contractors were the defendants of a civil suit brought by the State, seeking the return of \$6.3 million, plus interest. It was charged that Tweed, Connolly, and Hall had approved claims for payment without having established their validity. As bail could then be set in civil suits, Tweed's was put at \$1 million – ten times that of Jefferson Davis four years earlier, on the charge of treason.⁶⁹⁶ The Boss, forewarned, had ready for the Sheriff his bail amount – with Jay Gould providing half⁶⁹⁷ – and would not serve time for another two years. The other three defendants could not be found.⁶⁹⁸

While awaiting his arrest, Tweed had put on a bold front: “I await the issue confident that I can show a clear record. It is strange that a man cannot have borrowed money repaid to him without being placed in this position.”⁶⁹⁹ It was a defense that he evidently thought had legal merit and that would be heard again from his lawyers in his trials: any suspicious remittances to him were but innocent, irregular, paybacks on undocumented loans.

On the same day as the arrest, the investigating committee of citizens – appointed two months earlier by the Aldermen and Supervisors to put the lie to the charges of the *Times* – issued its report. It contained further evidence, culled from the books of the City, of extensive corruption.⁷⁰⁰

The elections went Tilden's way. He and most of his other candidates for the State Legislature and City Council were elected. Of Tammany's five candidates for the New York Senate from the City, only one was successful: Tweed himself – with 66 percent of the vote, versus 24 percent for his closest challenger. The Boss had campaigned vigorously, denied all allegations against him, and reminded his constituents of past favors.

But the victory was to prove Pyrrhic. William M. Tweed would never return to his seat in Albany and would spend the remaining six and one half years of his life grappling with legal charges. In December, he was criminally indicted. Tammany soon expelled him, Connolly, Hall, and Sweeny. Their political careers were over, although the Mayor would remain in office throughout 1872 to the end of his term.

A reporter, forty years later, described what, in the fall of 1872, may have been Tweed's last political appearance. At East Broadway and Canal Street – where his statue was to have stood – he was introduced as “the captain of us all” and applauded by a small clique. He was, he said, “a

proud man to know you still believe in my integrity.” Hisses were heard and “a burly chap, not ten feet from the platform, shouted: ‘Jail for you, old thief!’” and threw a cabbage, missing the speaker. “Tweed good-humoredly said: ‘Don’t be rude, my friend. If you’re in need of a job, I’ll see that you get one.’” A potato then struck his chest. Tweed “lost his temper and shouted: ‘There are blackguards among you, enemies of the honest and upright administration that now rules this city.’” More projectiles flew. Tweed fled, “{s}wearing like a baffled pirate;” and was saved from further harm by police.⁷⁰¹

9

In the Courts

Oakey Hall. The first of the Ring to face trial was the sitting Mayor. A grand jury, in October 1871, had inquired into his actions. While chiding him for carelessness and negligence in overseeing expenditures, it did not return an indictment.⁷⁰² It was not until early in 1872 that a second grand jury found in a greater body of evidence grounds to indict the Elegant Oakey. Twice that year while still Mayor and once in 1873, Hall was tried. The proceedings were aptly held – as would be Tweed's – in the new courthouse, the thirteen-million-dollar memento of the Ring. The Elegant One affected a flamboyant nonchalance and made quipping puns on the proceedings.

All three trials featured ample evidence that the City had been defrauded, but little that implicated Hall directly. The plasterer Andrew Garvey was given immunity from prosecution and testified against the Ring. He had been thought in Europe and his appearance at the first of Hall's trials was a sensation.⁷⁰³ He said that his claims for payment had been inflated – in part to repay him for the \$50,000 he had provided to Tweed to bribe the Legislature for the new Charter.⁷⁰⁴

Payments totaling \$1.2 million to Garvey had been approved by the interim Board of Audit established in the spring of 1870 to review claims pending against the City when the new Charter went into effect. The Board, consisting of Hall, Connolly, and Tweed, had authorized a total outlay of \$6.3 million, little of which was legitimate. Hall had himself signed many warrants for the improper payments. His indictment charged him with failing to fulfill his statutory responsibility of auditing the claims to establish their validity, before warranting the disbursements. His defense was that he had been too busy running the City to discover the thefts of the others and that Connolly and Tweed had vouched for what he had signed: if any were in the wrong, it was they.

A member of Hall's first trial jury died, which caused a mistrial to be declared; the second jury was hung with seven Republican jurors voting for conviction and five Democrats for acquittal;⁷⁰⁵ the third acquitted. The former Mayor wept at the news.

Hall's career over the 25 years remaining to him would include time in the theater, law, and journalism – with indifferent success. In December

1875, his full-length play, *The Crucible*, opened in a sold-out City theater. It told the story of a man unjustly imprisoned, with the playwright himself in the lead role. It soon failed. In 1898, the year of his death, he converted to Catholicism. He was sponsored for the Church of Rome by Peter Sweeny.

“No jury will ever convict me.” After over a year of legal maneuvering, jury selection for Tweed’s first trial opened on January 8, 1873. Although he had been civilly sued and criminally indicted for both misdemeanors and felonies, this trial was based on a misdemeanor indictment of 220 counts. They were the same accusations that had been leveled at Hall: that, as a member of the interim Board of Audit, Tweed had failed to fulfill his duty to verify claims against the City and had allowed it to be swindled.

Outside lawyers, reaping high fees, had been engaged by the State to present its case.⁷⁰⁶ The main witnesses for the prosecution were reviewers of the financial records and Andrew Garvey and other contractors. Testimony and bank records indicated that the contractors had marked up their claims against the City, that much of the mark-ups had been paid to Woodward, and that he had promptly deposited percentages of his receipts – \$932,858.50 in all – into Tweed’s bank account.⁷⁰⁷ Tilden had discovered this in his review of bank records and had spoken of it in the campaigns of 1871:

Every time Garvey collected a hundred thousand dollars he paid over sixty-six per cent. of it to WOODWARD... and every time that WOODWARD received sixty-six percent., he paid over to Tweed twenty-four per cent. (Laughter and applause)⁷⁰⁸

The prosecutors harped on Tweed’s having pocketed over \$900,000.⁷⁰⁹

The picture painted was one of larceny. Historical defense of the Boss has noted that: “He never was tried for theft.”⁷¹⁰ The prosecutors’ explanation was that the magnitude of the crime and the stature of the perpetrators were unprecedented and unprovided for by either English or American jurisprudence:

Thanks to the honesty and integrity of our ancestors, they never dreamed it possible that men in the highest position in the land... placed as guardians of the Treasury, acting under oath... could be instrumental in robbing the tax-payers; and, therefore, there was no criminal law adequate to meet such a case.⁷¹¹

The prosecutors might have feared that Tweed could escape conviction for theft because Woodward and others had made the monetary transfers or because his receipts were claimed to be repayments of loans. They were therefore trying Tweed only for the misdemeanor of failing to audit.⁷¹² Their problem with this lesser charge was that it might be thought a minor technical violation and, as such, excused. That, indeed, would be the tack taken by Tweed's defense, which would not contest that he had not fulfilled the letter of the law. The prosecutors evidently hoped that, if the jury thought that Tweed had stolen on a grand scale, it would be the more likely to convict him of what might otherwise seem a petty failing.

Tweed, when Garvey was named as a witness against him, "looked like a lion restrained.' His rage was clearly visible." As his accuser spoke, "Tweed, impatient and frowning, glared at the tall, immaculately dressed plasterer. Tweed's arm twitched, he muttered low, inaudible snarls."⁷¹³ Garvey said that he had fled to Europe out of fear of assassination by the Ring. During a break, Tweed approached his former contractor and spoke in low tones. Garvey said that "{h}is language was blasphemous."⁷¹⁴

Presiding over the trial was Noah Davis. Judge Davis had been on the bench of the New York Supreme Court from 1857 until 1868, when, running as a Republican, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. In July 1870, he resigned from the House to accept appointment by President Grant as United States Attorney for the southern district of New York. That fall, he had issued instructions to the U.S. Supervisors of Elections assigned to prevent fraud in the City's balloting.⁷¹⁵ In 1872, he ran as an anti-Ring candidate⁷¹⁶ with the endorsement of the Committee of Seventy for the New York Supreme Court and won his third election to it. He reassumed his seat on the bench days before the opening of the trial. "People" it was said, "liked his nerve, believed in his honesty, confided in his judgment, and reveled in the retorts that leaped to his lips."⁷¹⁷

The defense team of a half-dozen lawyers included the young Elihu Root (who, three decades later, would be Theodore Roosevelt's Secretary of State and, in 1912, would be awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace). The defense advanced exculpatory theories — among them, that the legislative appointment of a board of audit was unconstitutional and that Tweed had never taken an oath to audit — that were dismissed by Judge Davis. Tweed's counsel also inquired at length into the trading of testimony for immunity that Garvey had made with the prosecution. The plasterer was made out to be a thief, forger, perjurer, and informer — "the meanest of reptiles"⁷¹⁸ — whose testimony would be best ignored.

William Fullerton, in his closing argument on behalf of Tweed, said that his client could not reasonably have been expected to verify the claims made against the City. If a ring was indeed active, it comprised the contractors, who had confessed the falsity of their claims, and Watson and Woodward, who had prepared the false warrants and vouchers and had transferred the money. To cover their tracks, they had deposited money into Tweed's account. His client was himself "as innocent as a child."⁷¹⁹

The prosecution closed by noting that the defense had not challenged the charges against Tweed: that he had not audited the fraudulent claims. He should be convicted to establish "the standard that in America is demanded for a man to fill high position as a trusted and honored officer of the public."⁷²⁰

Judge Davis instructed the jury that Tweed and the other members of the interim Board of Audit bore personal responsibility for approving expenditures and could not blame others. The Board was to have met to audit claims against the City. "If they didn't so meet," Davis said, "but signed these certificates, as claimed by the prosecution, separately, severally, without the joint action which the law requires [a claim not disputed by the defense], then it is your duty to convict the defendant."⁷²¹ In reviewing specific exhibits of the prosecution, Davis asked the jury: "Was not this intrinsic evidence that no board of audit ever sat down and examined these bills?"⁷²² On one charge, Davis "submitted that it was not a harsh or unjust conclusion that the defendant was guilty."⁷²³ The jury was instructed that

{y}ou must take into consideration the fact that [Tweed] was a public officer, holding a high and responsible trust, and whether public officers holding such high trusts are to be held accountable for their proper fulfillment. Of what value, you may inquire, is it that we intrust public officers with duties that the people cannot themselves perform, if they are not to be held to a strict responsibility?⁷²⁴

The jury reported on January 31, 1873 that, after forty-five or so ballots, it was unshakably hung.⁷²⁵ A member of the prosecution for Tweed's second trial later reported that the vote had been nine for acquittal and three for conviction. Two of the three holdouts said that they would have changed their votes, if the third had.⁷²⁶ Many thought that Tweed had both stacked and suborned the jury.⁷²⁷ The Boss himself was reported to have said that "no jury will ever convict me."⁷²⁸

It was to prove but a nine-month reprieve for the defendant. The prosecution requested an immediate retrial — which would not, however, take place until November. Tweed, in the last time he would have as a free, unhunted man, traveled to Boston, Chicago, and California.

Guilty. On the morning of November 5, 1873, Tweed and his counsel and supporters were again in court: the self-assured Boss sporting an “immaculate white cravat” and a \$14,000 diamond.⁷²⁹ His second trial would be on the same 220 counts as the first and Noah Davis would again preside. Much of the second trial would reprise the first, but the old tunes would have new riffs.

Tweed’s lawyers opened by asking that Judge Davis disqualify himself. They argued that he had shown bias against Tweed and that he might in the second trial review his rulings in the first, which would violate the spirit of the Constitution. Davis angrily adjourned to confer with colleagues. Upon reconvening in the afternoon, the magistrate, in choler still,⁷³⁰ denied partiality, enjoined further discussion of the issue, and ordered that the trial proceed.

The prosecution felt that “never, in any trial that ever occurred in the City of New York, was it so difficult to obtain an impartial jury.”⁷³¹ It had, in consequence, taken steps to keep men partial to Tweed from being impaneled: it had secured from the Legislature a legal change in the procedures for challenging jurors⁷³² and had sent “a small army of young lawyers” out to research the backgrounds of prospective jurors: their businesses, their integrity, and what neighbors and business associates said about them.⁷³³ The organizer of the effort thought that “probably no more thorough investigations as to the qualifications of jurors were ever made.”⁷³⁴ Judge Davis approved for the final seat on the jury a man who admitted bias against Tweed “on account of his moral character.”⁷³⁵ Once the jurors were selected and sworn, the State assigned twelve officers, one for each juror, to watch over them and to prevent unauthorized contacts. Twelve “watchers,” a prosecutor related, were assigned to keep an eye on the twelve officers and another dozen watchers to check on the first twelve. All 36 officers and watchers were to make daily reports.⁷³⁶

The same basic body of evidence was brought forward as in the first trial, but with the difference that Andrew Garvey was not called to the stand. Both sides felt that the prosecution’s earlier calling of the plasterer had misfired. The defense reminded the jury of Garvey’s appearance in the first trial: he was a “putrid tumor” that “had made one jury sick; [the prosecution] feared it might make another jury sick, and wisely withdrew

him.” The prosecution conceded that it “didn’t want to give the jury the excuse for not finding a verdict of guilty that they would not believe Garvey.”⁷³⁷

Tweed’s lawyers again argued such points as that he was exonerated by not having taken an oath to audit, by the lack of precise agreement on what it meant to “audit,” and by the passage of subsequent legislation that, they said, nullified his auditing responsibility. Judge Davis ruled against these contentions. In response to charges that the defense was focusing on technicalities, Tweed’s counsel said that it was not its fault, but rather that criminal law itself had, since “the Almighty branded Cain,” been technical.⁷³⁸ The defense dwelled on perceived lacunae and inconsistencies in the evidence presented. It reminded the jury of the legal presumption of innocence, particularly with respect to the money Tweed had received — as only prejudice suggested anything other than that “these checks were made in payment of a debt.”

Tweed himself was described as man of good character and no fool: if he had indeed been a thief, he could not possibly have had stolen funds deposited into his own account, “unless Tweed was insane.” When men enter public life, they sacrifice their reputations: it had happened to Washington, to Jackson, and now to Tweed. “Those who were attacking Mr. Tweed... selected out the only large-hearted man for their attack, and stopped at nothing in it.” (The prosecution would respond that this characterization derived from judgment “by the size of his body.”) As to the defalcated millions: “This whining about the taxpayers’ loss was nonsense. The County was secure.”⁷³⁹

Judge Davis again instructed the jurymen that, if they concluded that Tweed and other members of the Board of Audit had met but once and had delegated the verification of claims against the City to others — neither of which was contested by the defense — “then it is your duty to pronounce him guilty.” Tweed’s bank account had received \$1.2 million. Why? Tweed had exercised his right to remain silent on this matter and, Davis said, “{Y}ou are not to infer anything by reason of his own personal silence. But the explanation could have been made by Mr. Tweed.” The jurors should come to their own conclusions. “Our government would be an absolute and utter failure,” Davis said, if “officers who have violated the law, and plundered instead of protecting the public interests, have with the money thus obtained the means of purchasing their own immunity” — an echo of the prosecution’s allusions to the million dollars available to Tweed to hire excellent lawyers. Davis reminded the jurors of the importance of

“protection for the community against the rapacity and avarice and wickedness of public officers.”⁷⁴⁰

The jury deliberated through the night. It asked for ice water, then for brandy — which Tweed provided.⁷⁴¹ At 3 a.m. on November 19, it was announced that court would reconvene in seven hours. The jury then reported its findings of guilt on 204 of the 220 counts.

Judge Davis, three days later, ordered Tweed to stand and spoke for half an hour — a trial for the hefty defendant just to remain erect for the lecture. He characterized the verdict as a triumph of honesty over fraud, of virtue over crime:

Holding a high public office... you... saw fit to pervert the powers with which you were clothed, in a manner more infamous, more outrageous than any instance of a like character which the history of the civilized world contains.

Davis sentenced him to twelve years in prison and fined him \$12,750. Tweed was not to be free pending appeal, but would spend the next seven nights in the City jail known as the Tombs. On November 29, he was transferred to the penitentiary on Blackwell's Island (now Roosevelt Island) — showing on his steamer ride there, in the words of the *Times*, “in a remarkable degree the nerve which his admirers have always claimed that he possessed.”

To the clerk at the penitentiary, Tweed gave his occupation as “statesman” and his religion as “none.” He was found to weigh 263 pounds and was given “a thorough cleansing,... the regulation shaving of the head,” and the convicts' uniform: “a striped flannel jacket and coarse shirt.”⁷⁴² He was assigned to duty as an orderly in the hospital, nursing the sick.⁷⁴³

Release, rejailing, escape, recapture. The rest of Tweed's life would be anticlimax. The man who had scaled the peaks of urban power would henceforth shuffle in the depths of legal desperation.

Early in 1875, Tilden, having become Governor, secured passage of the Public Remedy Law. It empowered the Attorney General of the State to sue for money Tweed had stolen. Judge Noah Davis issued an order of arrest, to take effect if Tweed should be released on appeal of his earlier sentence. Property of Tweed's in the amount of \$6.2 million was to be attached, to satisfy the demands of the State.⁷⁴⁴

The contingent order of arrest would soon be put into effect. The New York State Court of Appeals ruled in June 1875 that Davis had earlier erred

in sentencing Tweed cumulatively to additional terms: the one-year maximum term for each of his misdemeanors was the most he should have been sentenced to. His release was ordered. Tweed was, however, rearrested immediately on the new order of Davis. His bail was set at \$3 million – the most ever in the country⁷⁴⁵ – which he could not raise. The legal sparring went on.

Tweed's conditions of imprisonment did, however, ease. No longer was he confined to the big house on Blackwell's Island but he was, instead, in a City jail. Occasionally, accompanied by guards, he took a carriage to the less settled, northern areas of the City, where he could stroll, before stopping by his home for dinner.

In December 1875, while visiting his home, he slipped away from his loose supervision. He hid out for a time close to the City, then went to Spain via Cuba. There, he was rearrested and returned to Manhattan, nearly a year after his escape.

The circumstances of the recapture further showed Tweed's ill luck. Spain had no extradition treaty with the U. S. Once there, he could reasonably have expected to be as unreachable by the arms of American law as Connolly and Sweeny in France and elsewhere had been. He was, however, to be the victim of the furor accompanying his flight, of President Grant himself, and of Thomas Nast.

Grant, in early summer of 1876, had learned that Tweed was in Cuba. His State Department first sought to nab the fugitive there, then sent cables to forewarn Madrid that the former Boss was on a Spain-bound ship. Grant may have thought that Tweed's recapture could embarrass Presidential candidate Tilden, given the interactions of the two Democrats in the 1860s. He personally pressed Secretary of State Hamilton Fish to secure Tweed's return.⁷⁴⁶ Tilden also wrote Fish to "superadd my earnest request that the government of the United States may employ its efficient and perfectly adequate powers to induce a delivery of this great criminal into the hands of the sheriff at this city."⁷⁴⁷

Upon Tweed's arrival in Vigo, Spain disguised as a common sailor, identification was made using a recent cartoon of Nast in *Harper's Weekly* and he was arrested. The Spaniards, responding to the request of the U.S. State Department as an act of courtesy between governments, handed the captive over to an American warship. He was returned to the City in November 1876, after the Presidential balloting, and to stricter detention in Ludlow Street Jail – which, as a member of the Board of Supervisors, he had in 1859 voted to be constructed.⁷⁴⁸ While on the lam, in March 1876, a jury

had returned a verdict that led to a judgment of \$6.6 million against him. Tweed would die with outstanding legal judgments hanging over him of more than \$10 million.⁷⁴⁹

Tweed's new cell – the bedroom in which he would die – was the parlor of the warden. For his room and board, he paid \$75 per week, plus more for special amenities. To the dismay of reformers hoping for more of a morality lesson, the furnishings were comfortable: including a “handsome Brussels carpet” and a “handsome chandelier.” On many evenings, Tweed played poker with friends.⁷⁵⁰

“His smallish blue eyes, close together, lighting up with a certain kindness his dusky abode.” In 1877, the disconsolate prisoner sought to win his freedom by turning state's evidence. In the belief that it would secure his release, he made a lengthy written confession. State Attorney General Charles Fairchild, however, questioned the truth and worth of the admissions and would not free the confessor. Tweed's lawyer, John D. Townsend, accused Fairchild of renegeing on their agreement that a candid confession would spring his client.⁷⁵¹

Later that year, a committee of City Aldermen held hearings on the Ring. Tweed spoke at length, extending his confession, and the kickback-paying contractors retold their stories. Elbert Woodward, who had settled with the prosecutors, confirmed the basic account of the money trail. He said that Tweed, of all the Ringmen, most had deserved the percentages he had received, since he had had, out of his share, to bribe the lawmakers. (Woodward also said, provoking laughter, that he felt his 2.5-percent cut of the millions of dollars in contractor bills to have been fairly earned.) Upon the release of the committee's report, the Aldermen resolved by a vote of thirteen (eleven Democrats and two Republicans) to seven (one Democrat and six Republicans) that Tweed, compared with other culprits, had been excessively punished and should be freed.⁷⁵²

In the fall of 1877, the former Boss spoke to a reporter of the *New York Herald* of his life and acquaintances.⁷⁵³ Of two Presidents he had known, Tweed judged Fillmore “a poor stick” and “Frank Pierce... very light—almost a nonentity.” He had “never met Lincoln privately, but I thought very well of him.” For this thought of “{t}he sage of the cell,” the *Times* said, “the friends of the great President ought to feel grateful.”⁷⁵⁴ Tilden he criticized for slowness, while Hoffman was “cold.” Asked to identify his “great mistake... as a politician,” Tweed thought it lay in having “press[ed] forward for leadership... I oughtn't to have tried to be the leader.” The

reporter left Tweed “standing in the door, his smallish blue eyes, close together, lighting up with a certain kindness his dusky abode.”

Notwithstanding the various hopes held out to Tweed for release, he remained in his Ludlow Street cell. His health in the first months of 1878 was in decline and his mood, low.⁷⁵⁵ The continuing legal efforts on his behalf became moot on April 12 – nine days after his fifty-fifth birthday – when William M. Tweed died in his cell of pericarditis and other conditions.⁷⁵⁶

The funeral was held, five days later, in the Upper East Side home of his daughter, Josephine Tweed Douglass, as a crowd of 5,000 gathered outside. The *Times* termed them the “general rabble” – “almost exclusively of the poorer classes, persons who had probably received some direct personal benefit from the dead man... They were respectful and decorous in their behavior.” Many friends and associates of Tweed’s years in government attended, but – with the notable exception of Controller John Kelly – not those prominent in the Ring nor the leading politicians of the day. Mary Jane Skaden Tweed, then visiting Paris under the name of “Weed” with two of their sons, had wired that the ceremonies should proceed without them. The two youngest Tweed sons, aged ten and fourteen, were in boarding school, had been kept from their father for the last five years of his life, and were not told of his death. The coffin was taken to Brooklyn, where 1,500 persons – one-third women and “in great part composed of the humbler classes” – preceded the cortege, before gathering on three sides of the burial enclosure.⁷⁵⁷

Accomplices. Peter Sweeny was, compared with William Tweed, treated gently by the law. He had earlier taken the precaution of having his own kickback payments made to his brother James.⁷⁵⁸ The brothers departed the City in the autumn of 1871 for Canada and made their way to France. In 1877, after James’ death, Peter struck a deal with the prosecutors: using money from James’ estate, restitution of \$400,000 was made and Peter would not be tried. With the imputation of any guilt thus borne by his dead brother, Peter could assert his own innocence and live out quietly in the City his final decades – until his death in 1911.

Richard Connolly, on October 3, 1871, offered to William Havemeyer his resignation as Controller – on the condition that Andrew H. Green would be appointed in his stead. A month and a half later, his offer was acted on as, on November 18, Mayor Hall named Green Controller. One week after that, Connolly went, as was his routine, to visit his former office. To his surprise, as he thought that he had no reason to join the Sweenys in flight,

Sheriff (and former Controller) Brennan arrived with a warrant for his arrest. It called for bail of \$1 million. So much for the immunity from prosecution that he thought he had. After a month in jail, his bail was reduced by half. He posted it and soon was across the Atlantic with a purported \$6 million.⁷⁵⁹ He would die in France in 1880.

The estate of James Watson in 1875 was sued, which led to the widow of the deceased Auditor paying \$558,000 to settle the claims⁷⁶⁰ – a fraction of the amount her husband was alleged to have stolen. Arranging a better settlement was the unrepentant Elbert Woodward. The other former paymaster of the Ring, who had prudently transferred his property to his wife, purchased prosecutorial immunity for \$151,779.⁷⁶¹ It was judged that, “{e}xcepting Sweeny only, Woodward seems of all the gang to have best looked out for his own interests.”⁷⁶²

James Ingersoll and his associate, John Farrington, who together had been paid \$5.7 million for the furnishings of the courthouse, initially resisted striking a deal with the State. They were, in November 1873, convicted of forging bills. Ingersoll was sentenced to five years of prison and Farrington, to eighteen months.⁷⁶³ After a year in jail, they turned state’s evidence – confessing to details of the courthouse kickbacks that further implicated Tweed, Connolly, Sweeny, Watson, and Woodward⁷⁶⁴ – and were released.⁷⁶⁵

Lawyers and judges. Noah Davis, after sentencing Tweed to prison in November 1873, attended to his lawyers. By suggesting that he had not, in Tweed’s first trial, been even-handed, they had thereby, Davis said, impugned the court. Their apologies did not suffice. Davis fined the senior lawyers \$250 each and ordered them jailed until they paid.⁷⁶⁶ Davis would become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the State.⁷⁶⁷

With Samuel Tilden spearheading the effort,⁷⁶⁸ Ring-linked Justices George Barnard, Albert Cardozo, and John McCunn were in 1872 investigated by the New York State Assembly. In early May, its bipartisan Judiciary Committee voted unanimously that Cardozo was guilty of “corruption in office.”⁷⁶⁹ Before he could be impeached by the full Assembly, the Justice resigned. He would practice law until his death in 1885. His son Benjamin, two years old in 1872, would become an Associate Justice of distinction of the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Judiciary Committee also recommended in May the impeachment of Barnard, which the Assembly approved by a vote of 93 to 16. All sixteen dissenters were Democrats. Nine members of the Democracy, including Tilden, voted with the majority.⁷⁷⁰ In August 1872, the High Court of

Impeachment, consisting of State Senators and Judges of the Court of Appeals, found Barnard guilty on 26 of 39 articles. Many of the more serious offenses for which he was convicted related to the Erie Railway. A majority voted him guilty of “various indecorous and indecent remarks and conduct.”⁷⁷¹ He was by a unanimous vote removed from his Judgeship and, by a vote of 33 to two, disqualified from ever again holding an office of the State. The proceedings were unprecedented in the State in the century.⁷⁷² Barnard retired and died seven years later.⁷⁷³

A month before Barnard learned his verdicts, Judge John McCunn had met two ends. He had elected to be tried by the full Senate of the State – which early in July found him guilty of malconduct and malfeasance and voted unanimously to remove him from the bench.⁷⁷⁴ Four days later, fatigued and with pneumonia, the former Justice died.⁷⁷⁵

10

Sequels and Presidential Links

Frontrunner Fizzle: John T. Hoffman

Presidentially poised. From 1869 through the middle of 1871, the dignified Governor of the Empire State was the consensus favorite for the 1872 Presidential nomination of the Democracy,⁷⁷⁶ for a likely contest against the incumbent, Grant. In his gubernatorial reelection campaign of 1870, the platform of John T. Hoffman – plainly crafted with the White House in mind – called for lower tariffs and Federal spending, restrictions on monopolistic business practices, and adherence to a gold standard. Peter Sweeny – thought to be the chief manipulator of the Governor⁷⁷⁷ and to have foreseen himself as Secretary of State⁷⁷⁸ – likely was behind it.

After his reelection, the *Times* noted acidly, the Governor's pronouncements had focused more on issues of the nation than of the State. Much of his Message to the Legislature in early January, the paper thought,

seems to have been written under the idea that the last election was an election of President, and that Mr. John T. Hoffman was the successful candidate. His words are those of a man who is rehearsing his inaugural address.⁷⁷⁹

If and as a rehearsal, it was without avail – for any hopes Hoffman had of a national role would, before year end, have flickered out. The man whom Sweeny and Tweed had planned to make President would become a historical footnote – cursorily treated even in accounts of the Ring.

For a time, though, Hoffman had seemed to be succeeding in simultaneously keeping the support of the men who had made him Mayor, then Governor, and establishing a record of independent statesmanship that might appeal to national voters. He spoke out against and vetoed special-interest measures, maintained neutrality in the maneuvering to enact a new Charter for the City, appointed a commission to identify archaic statutes for repeal, and advocated electoral reform.⁷⁸⁰ One historian thought his record in the first seven months of 1871 “as eminent as he intended it to be.”⁷⁸¹ His tightrope walk as a personally clean figurehead placed in power by a dirty-handed machine was not going badly.

Just what Hoffman's relationship was then with the Ring is unclear. He did, to be sure, in the spring sign into law many of Tweed's bills: among them, the Two Per Cent Tax Levy; a revised City Charter; amended electoral statutes; and funding for the County Courthouse construction, water system projects, and the Viaduct Railway. The *Times* saw in these signatures confirmation of Hoffman's "abject submission to the Tammany Ring." For the Governor had both done the Ring's bidding and meekly accepted its snubs. The Democracy, the *Times* said, had "not only ignored or treated with contempt every one of the recommendations... in his annual Message," but had also "refused to pay him the ordinary courtesy—always heretofore extended to the Governor—of making the annual Message a special order for discussion."⁷⁸²

"**{T}he most monstrous infringement on popular liberties.**" There was, however, one Ring bill Hoffman had not signed. To the *Times*, it was the single most threatening piece of legislation: the Amended Code of Legal Procedure. It had been passed without a dissenting vote in either of the two houses.⁷⁸³ As with other bills, most of the legislators who had voted for it had not been divulged its contents.⁷⁸⁴ After passage, it turned out to grant individual judges free rein in invoking punishments for contempt and to give Ring judges jurisdiction in litigation affecting the Erie⁷⁸⁵ and the Black Friday suits against Fisk and Gould.⁷⁸⁶ It had been cleverly drafted (by Oakey Hall, the *Times* said;⁷⁸⁷ by Albert Cardozo, per Tilden⁷⁸⁸), its provisions couched in language of innocuous appearance.

The *Times* thought the Amended Code "designed to gag that portion of the Press which [the Ring] cannot buy"⁷⁸⁹ and "the most monstrous infringement on popular liberties ever attempted during the history of this State."⁷⁹⁰ It foresaw that, were Hoffman to sign the bill into law, it would be shut down and its leaders jailed.⁷⁹¹ The paper was joined in its dismay by members of the Bar Association, who met with Hoffman and petitioned him to veto the measure.⁷⁹² The *Times* apparently deemed itself sufficiently imperiled to interrupt the string of invectives it had been directing at the Governor – to call him "not quite a slave" and, even, "a gentleman" – in appealing for his veto.⁷⁹³

On May 29, 1871, Hoffman did, in fact, veto the Amended Code. Just why is unclear. His accompanying message tersely said only that the Code "contains in my opinion several objectionable provisions to which public attention has been sufficiently called."⁷⁹⁴ The *Times* attributed his deed to its own actions: for having first "raised the cry of alarm, and never ceased the agitation till the Bar Association was stirred to action, and public opinion

compelled the Governor to veto the obnoxious act.”⁷⁹⁵ Whether Sweeny and/or Tweed had counseled Hoffman to veto the bill – maybe out of recognition that, if they wanted their own marionette in the White House, the strings could not be too obvious; maybe because they judged that the Code was, even for the Ring, a step too far – is not known.

Perhaps the veto was part of a conscious policy by Hoffman to position himself for the Presidency. One historian of the New York Democracy had this explanation for many of the Governor’s actions at this time.⁷⁹⁶ Hoffman was then endorsing the New Departure position taken by national Democrats: accepting the three recent Amendments to the U.S. Constitution; deploring the suspension of habeas corpus rights as a measure to protect freedmen; and generally advocating strengthened states’ rights, at the expense of the powers of the national government.⁷⁹⁷

But, in addition to staking out positions on current national issues, Hoffman needed also to show non-subservience to the Ring. His declining to make an “almost obligatory” appearance at Tammany’s Fourth of July festivities and his countermanding of Hall’s prohibition of the Orange Day Parade were seen in this light.⁷⁹⁸ The veto of the Code of Procedure may have been a sibling action.

Riot, revelations, tardy response. The last 24 days of July brought the publication of Connolly’s accounts and the Orange Day Parade Riot. Hoffman initially held his tongue with respect to the disclosures of the *Times*, then left Albany in September 1871 for a tour of county fairs. When questioned by reporters, he said that he knew only what he read in the papers and declined to comment.⁷⁹⁹ Late that month, he exhorted citizens to

understand, more than they do, the trials, the responsibilities, the cares and anxieties, which attend on a man upon whom they have conferred what are called public honors... to judge more calmly, more leniently, more kindly, of the acts of those in authority.⁸⁰⁰

Not until weeks later did Hoffman finally break with the Ring – with the appointment, on October 17, of Charles O’Conor as specially-empowered prosecutor. Although the appointment would prove instrumental in the legal undoing of the Ring, it was, however, with respect to the Governor’s own political viability, months too late. His slowness in acting suggested obtuseness, irresolution, cowardice, and closeness to Tweed. The investigations that followed would uncover no indications that Hoffman personally had profited from the thievery, but the absence of such

evidence would not reinflate his public standing. His Presidential prospects had imploded along with the Ring.

Quiet coda. Hoffman would serve through 1872 to the end of his term – the spotlights of national attention under which it had begun having turned elsewhere, his occasional initiatives seen but as twitches of political rigor mortis.

Throughout the later months of 1871, the *Times* and other reformers, alert to the potential benefits of gubernatorial cooperation, had treated Hoffman gently. Early in December, the paper called his actions in connection with the Orange Day Riot “bold and patriotic.” As to the Governor himself:

Aside from his being a Democrat, and ambitious for office, he had nothing in common with the low-lived crew who were his political backers. He was a man of education and culture, of pure private character, and good social standing. If left to follow his own inclinations, he was also strictly honest. No abler, more conscientious, or more impartial Judge ever sat on the Bench of this City.⁸⁰¹

Over the course of 1872, the commentary of the *Times* turned around. The Governor lacked positive achievements, but occasionally made news via his vetoes. The Committee of Seventy, bell cow for the reformers of Manhattan, particularly regretted his veto of a new City Charter, which the State Assembly failed to override. The Committee accused the Governor and Legislature of giving false pretexts – such as concerns over possible unconstitutionality – for failing to enact a new Charter, when their true reason was opposition to reform.⁸⁰²

By June, the *Times* was printing documentation of payments to corrupt contractors that had been approved by Hoffman, in his years as Mayor.⁸⁰³ The thieves had then, the paper said, made him Governor⁸⁰⁴ and he had now become the leader of “the corrupt combination which has been formed against the liberties and purses of the people:” a reorganized Ring. Connolly, Hall, Sweeny, and Tweed would, but for the Governor, already have been punished.⁸⁰⁵

In August, Hoffman announced that he would not seek a third term. His stated reasons were the wish not to block others from the office, antagonisms arising from his Orange Day actions, and fatigue.⁸⁰⁶ When he made plans to stump in Pennsylvania Dutch country for the Democratic national ticket headed by Horace Greeley, the *Times* predicted:

His German name will not save him, for even the Dutchmen of Berks County, benighted Democrats as they are, have an old-fashioned liking for honest men who will not tolerate public thieves or their tools and apologists.⁸⁰⁷

In returning to private life, Hoffman resumed his career as a lawyer, but rarely practiced. He took no positions on public issues and often traveled.⁸⁰⁸ He died in 1888 in Wiesbaden, Germany.

The historical consensus on John T. Hoffman – when he is recalled at all – was voiced by the *Times*: the Governor was a “little boy” pushed by burglars “through a window to open the door of the house.”⁸⁰⁹

The Oval Office, Almost: Samuel J. Tilden

While the demise of the Ring snuffed out the Presidential chances of the man thought most likely to succeed Grant, it would spark those of another Democrat.

Chairman of the State Democracy. Samuel Jones Tilden had been born and raised in New Lebanon, a small upstate town near the border with Massachusetts. He never wed. Closest to being a spouse for him was the Democracy and, after that, the law. He had, as a boy, written political tracts and been befriended by Martin Van Buren. He had been active in the party since his twenties, while also pursuing a legal career that had made him rich. (Tweed explained Tilden’s wealth as resulting from a career as “a railroad schemer:” having rail lines pay no dividends so that “Tilden’s crowd” could buy up their stock on the cheap.⁸¹⁰) In 1856 he was elected a Sachem of Tammany Hall⁸¹¹ and, after the fall of the Ring, would again be active in it. From 1866 through 1874, he chaired the Democratic State Committee.

As leaders of two wings of the New York Democracy and often at odds in the councils of the party, Tilden and Tweed had long harbored mutual dislike.⁸¹² During the Ring ascendancy, Tilden had, as Chairman, a difficult role. His dual devotions to party and profession were both unsettled by the Ring – which had used the Democracy to achieve power and had wielded that power to undermine the law. Tilden evidently sensed futility in breaking completely with Ring members and pursued a course of limited cooperation. His and Tweed’s files would reveal communications between them about scheduling, arranging for speakers, and financing campaigns.⁸¹³

Occasionally, Tilden contacted Ring leaders to ask for jobs for specific persons.⁸¹⁴ Every Democrat running for City, State, or national office during the first half of his Chairmanship benefited from the electoral frauds of the Ring — which Tilden did little to rein in. During the Grand Sachemship of Tweed, Tilden remained a member of the Hall but did not set foot within it.⁸¹⁵

Tilden also dealt with Jay Gould, Jim Fisk, and the Erie. In 1869, he accepted from them a retainer of \$10,000⁸¹⁶ and subsequently claimed to have declined proffered fees of \$125,000.⁸¹⁷ Tilden said that his engagement by the railroad pertained only to one, relatively non-controversial, matter. His acceptance of the fee would be played up by opponents in his later campaigns.

Through this time, Tilden had waited, watched, and addressed himself to issues other than the Ring. At the Democratic State Convention of September 1869, he spoke against the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which was then pending ratification and which provided that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Tilden noted in abhorrence that, if boatloads of Chinese or African slaves were to arrive in New York, the amendment would prevent the State from denying suffrage to them.⁸¹⁸

(Tilden was in step with Tammany’s opposition to the amendment as a threat to the status of white workingmen. Earlier he had written to State committeemen, “Our policy must be *condemnation and reversal of negro suffrage in the states* (emphasis in original).”⁸¹⁹ Peter Sweeny, in contrast however, in November 1869, thought that Democrats would benefit from the removal of obstacles to Negro voting: “It hurts us more than the negro vote could injure us. It introduces a moral issue—a sentiment of justice—and presents the captivating cry of universal suffrage, which carries away many votes, especially among the Germans, and prevents the legitimate political questions of the country from having their just weight before the people.”⁸²⁰)

Majority winner of the Presidential popular vote. After the elections on November 7, 1871 had signaled the sinking of the Ring, Tilden continued to devote time and money to the proceedings against its leaders. He helped select prosecutorial staff, personally paid accountants to sift through financial records, coordinated research into legal precedents relating to municipal corruption, wrote briefs, drafted legislation that would be enacted into law, and testified in the courts. To counter Republicans

portraying the scandal as overwhelmingly Democratic, Tilden marshaled and disseminated evidence of bipartisan involvement.

The result by 1874 was public perception that the Democrats had been, of the two parties, the more energetic in rooting out the graft. In the elections of that year, the party whose members had led the Ring swept to victory. Tilden, trumpeting his own reform role, won the Governorship, with 53 percent of the major-party vote and a plurality of 50,000. Eighty-five percent of this margin came from the City.⁸²¹ A significant contributor to his success was his endorsement by Tammany Hall – in which he again was a Sachem. State voters also elected Democratic majorities to their Assembly and Congressional Delegation and approved anti-corruption amendments to their Constitution.

As Governor, Tilden continued to stress the combating of corruption. He exposed and broke up the Canal Ring: a bipartisan group of legislators that had coordinated the theft of millions of dollars in overcharges on repairs of the State's canals. He also pushed through laws enabling the State to sue Tweed, and, in early 1876, testified once again against the ex-Boss, then a fugitive. Tweed's lawyers counterattacked the Governor, but were ultimately unsuccessful in their defense of the \$6.6-million civil suit. They adduced an 1866 letter from Tilden inviting Tweed to join him at a rally in Philadelphia and an 1868 political-campaign check for \$5,000 paid by Tweed to Tilden.⁸²² Republicans delighted in portraying the two as long-term collaborators: the *Times* called Tilden, "TWEED'S RIGHT-HAND MAN;"⁸²³ Thomas Nast drew them as "TWEED-LE-DEE AND TILDEN-DUM."⁸²⁴

With the approach of the elections of 1876, the Democrats sought to capitalize on national dismay at the proliferated scandals of Grant's administration. Who better to carry the banner in such a contest than the man given credit for bringing down two rings? Tilden was nominated on the second ballot and would run against Rutherford B. Hayes, Governor of Ohio. (Tweed attributed Tilden's nomination to delegate purchase: as the Southern Democrats, short of money, "could be picked up by Tilden's agents."⁸²⁵) Hayes was considered by many to be a lightweight with the chief selling point of never having been caught stealing⁸²⁶ – chosen to weaken the effects of Democratic harping on the crimes under Grant.

The campaign issues of the Centennial Year were the winding down of Reconstruction, monetary policy (the possible resumption of payments in specie – on which both candidates fudged their positions), and reform. Both Hayes and Tilden called for an end to abuses in the civil service. One such

abuse for which the Republicans were willing to put off eradication was that of requiring federal employees earning over \$1,000 to donate two percent of their pay to the party's campaign funds – which yielded \$200,000 for Hayes.⁸²⁷

The integrity of both men came under fire. The Democrats accused Hayes, a general in the Civil War, of having pocketed the money of a subordinate who had died.⁸²⁸ The Republicans charged that Tilden had understated his earnings to evade taxes. In 1862, for instance, Tilden had claimed income of \$7,118, despite having received an estimated \$108,000.⁸²⁹ Democratic newspapers put out defenses for their candidate: that his income from securities had been taxed at its sources; that he had had business losses; and that he had recognized as large a proportion of his income as was usual for persons of his class. These explanations did not keep the Republicans from repeating the charges throughout the campaign — in the opinion of one biographer, “with telling effect.”⁸³⁰ The Republicans – both in the unsubtle insinuations of their speakers and in the cartoons of Thomas Nast, depicting Tilden in dresses – also suggested that their bachelor opponent was homosexual.⁸³¹

Tilden won 51 percent of the popular votes: his total of 4,287,000 being more than any other Presidential candidate had ever received and 253,000 more than Hayes. The electoral votes in four states were, however, disputed. An Electoral Commission created by the Congress voted along party lines to award just enough electoral votes to Hayes to effect his election — to which Tilden acquiesced. It has been called “the most corrupt presidential election in American history.”⁸³²

For the remaining ten years of his life, Tilden was active behind the Democratic scenes, but did not again run for public office.

Tweed on his deathbed said, “Tilden and [former New York State Attorney General Charles] Fairchild—I guess they’ve killed me at last... They will probably be satisfied when I am carried out of here to-morrow.”⁸³³

Other Presidential Ties

While textbooks⁸³⁴ have played up the Ring's effect of almost springboarding Samuel Tilden into the Oval Office, less well known are other Ring links with Presidential elections. In the same Centennial Year of Tilden's near triumph, erstwhile-Ring-decrier-then-Ring-endorser Peter Cooper also was a candidate. The still-active-at-85 civic pillar had been

nominated by the Greenback Party, which sought to relieve indebted farmers by inflating the currency. He received 84,000 popular votes (to a total of 8.3 million for the two major-party candidates).

The Ring's history intersected also with the national campaigns of 1864, 1868, 1872, and 1880.

1864: George B. McClellan. In the fall of 1863, the supporters of Tweed, newly supreme within Tammany, began working for the Presidential candidacy of George B. McClellan: organizing ward clubs for him and communicating with his backers throughout the North.⁸³⁵ The former commanding general of Abraham Lincoln's main army – "Little Mac" – was, the next August, nominated by the Democracy. Lincoln then despaired of his chances for reelection.

Soon, however, Atlanta fell to General William Sherman, while Ulysses Grant closed tighter his siege of Petersburg and Richmond and Republican prospects brightened. Precautions were, though, still thought due against ballot mischief in the City:

Steam-tugs, armed with United States veterans, patrolled the harbor on either side of the town, prepared, on a given signal to land at any point where their services might be needed.

Suggesting that Sweeny, Tweed, and Tammany may have been involved in electoral legerdemain was the charge by the *Times* that the balloting was

disgraced by the most wholesale frauds and illegal voting that was ever practiced. In the strong Democratic wards, where the Inspectors of Election were composed wholly of Democrats, there was the most shameful disregard of law... It was only necessary for a man to proclaim himself for "Little MAC" to have his vote accepted without regard to his residence or qualifications for suffrage.⁸³⁶

Whatever the extent of any Democratic ballot abuses, they were not enough to deliver the State to McClellan – as Lincoln carried New York by 369,000 to 362,000. Of the City's 110,000 votes, the general had a plurality of 37,000. The President, in his landslide reelection, lost only in Delaware, Kentucky, and New Jersey.

The defeat of McClellan was, however, accompanied for Tammany by successes in the Congressional and County races – which confirmed its status as the preeminent Democratic faction in the City. This result was

attributed to Tweed's having established the Hall as, among the Democrats, the strongest supporter of the war. The *Herald* summarized that "Tammany now triumphs amid the general wreck [of the Democracy]." ⁸³⁷

Seven years later, in September 1871, Mayor Hall invited McClellan to become Controller. The still-prominent Democrat accepted the appointment, contingent on Richard Connolly's resignation. When Connolly instead turned his office over to Andrew Green, McClellan withdrew his conditional acceptance. ⁸³⁸

1868: Horatio Seymour. Fernando Wood and William Tweed had agreed in 1862 that Tammany should have a grander home. ⁸³⁹ An imposing new Wigwam was, in consequence, constructed on East Fourteenth Street – which would, in the decades to come, be headquarters for the bosses of the City. The new building, upon completion, was described by the *Times* as "one of the most splendid halls in the country... finished with the most perfect taste." ⁸⁴⁰ On July 4, 1868, Tammany, led by Mayor John Hoffman – its Grand Sachem, who would in the fall be the Democracy's candidate for Governor – dedicated its new den. The assembled braves sang "America" and Judge Albert Cardozo read the Declaration of Independence. ⁸⁴¹

One hour later, the Democratic National Convention of 1868 opened in the new Hall. The galleries were packed with Tweed's ground troops: Shiny Hatters primed to shout and stomp for upstate New Yorker Horatio Seymour – who had served two two-year terms as Governor. ⁸⁴² Deadlocked in its early voting, the Convention, on its twenty-second ballot, nominated the choice of the Boss. The former Governor, reluctant to run, consulted Tilden – who told him that he must. ⁸⁴³ Seymour's platform appealed to white supremacists: calling for an end to Reconstruction; for amnesty for former Confederates; and for dismantling the Freedmen's Bureau and "all political instrumentalities designed to secure negro supremacy." ⁸⁴⁴

Tilden would contribute \$10,000 to the campaign (with Sweeny and Tweed each donating \$5,000), give speeches on its behalf, and manage its finances and press contacts. Seymour was, however, beaten by the Republicans' war paladin, Ulysses Grant: by 3.0 million to 2.7 million popular votes and by 214 to 80 in the Electoral College. Thirty-three of Seymour's electoral total came from New York, in which he had a plurality of 10,000. Had Tweed and Tammany not undertaken mass naturalizations and other measures thought to have resulted in 50,000 illegal ballots, Grant would likely have carried Seymour's home State.

In October 1870, Seymour spoke at a Democratic rally for the Ring's candidates. Ten months later, however, he was among the first of the

Democracy's magnates to call for the ouster of Connolly, Hall, and Tweed.⁸⁴⁵ As a member of the reform contingent at the Democratic State Convention in October 1871, Seymour was, along with Tilden, written off by the triumphant Boss as "troublesome old fools."⁸⁴⁶ The next April, he became a Sachem of Tammany – enlisted to buff its reform credentials.

1872: Horace Greeley. Dismay at national corruption in the first term of Ulysses Grant split the Republicans. In May of 1872, dissident party members, calling themselves "Liberal Republicans," nominated Horace Greeley for President. Greeley had, in 1841, founded the *New-York Tribune* and, as its editor until his death, had become the best-known newspaperman in the land.

The national Democracy, upon the fadeout of John T. Hoffman, had a dearth of leaders of national renown, and, in July, made the Republican Greeley its nominee as well. The editor's platform resembled that espoused by Hoffman the year before: accepting the three recent Constitutional amendments and urging amnesty for Southerners and reduction of centralized power. More than Hoffman had, Greeley's platform stressed the importance of "a thorough reform of the Civil Service as one of the most pressing necessities of the hour." A biographer wrote that, in running against Grant, Greeley "symbolized virtue over corruption, reform over reaction, reconciliation over revenge, generosity over greed."⁸⁴⁷ Virtue, reform, reconciliation, and generosity were soon to be thrashed.

Greeley's *Tribune* had fought graft. James Parton in 1866 credited it with having "honorably distinguished itself by giving unrelenting publicity to schemes of spoliation."⁸⁴⁸ As recently as in the campaigns of 1870, the *Tribune* had slammed Ring corruption.⁸⁴⁹ The next year, however, the editor had succumbed to its sway. He had signed on as an incorporator of the Viaduct Railway and, notwithstanding his decades of opposition to smoking, had also joined with Tweed and seven others to create a company "for manufacturing tobacco and cigars."⁸⁵⁰ With the Ring soon falling, the company never went beyond its legal formation.

During the campaign of 1872, the *Times* took Greeley to task for his short-lived softness toward the Ring: for the tobacco venture, for the *Tribune*'s "prophesying smooth things in regard to our local Government, while the taxpayers were being plundered," and for treating Tweed's Charter gently. Greeley had been deputized by the Union League Club to testify on the Boss's bill. Rather, the *Times* said, than follow his "instructions to oppose TWEED'S charter," he "came away like Balaam, leaving blessings, instead of the entirely different article he was sent to deliver."⁸⁵¹

Democrats disgruntled with Greeley met in Louisville in September. There, “with the wildest enthusiasm, the whole Convention rising and giving nine cheers and the band playing,”⁸⁵² they nominated for President Charles O’Conor. The Ring prosecutor, however, immediately by telegram declined the honor – thereby dissolving the movement.

Non-candidate O’Conor would in November receive 19,000 popular votes – to 3.6 million for Grant and 2.8 million for Greeley. The general’s 286 electoral votes were 111 more than he needed to win. Greeley attributed his loss to having “been assailed so bitterly, that I hardly knew whether I was running for President or for the Penitentiary.”⁸⁵³ Among his assailants was Thomas Nast, one of whose drawings featured the editor and John Wilkes Booth shaking hands over the grave of Lincoln.⁸⁵⁴ Another factor seen by historians in the electoral result was that the Ring scandal had handicapped Democrats in campaigning against the corruption under Grant.⁸⁵⁵

Six days before the voting, Molly Greeley, Horace’s wife of 36 years, had died. Twenty-four days after the election, Horace joined Molly in death.

1880: Chester A. Arthur. In 1869, Thomas Murphy, Collector of Customs for New York City, and former Civil War General Chester A. Arthur traveled to Albany. There they brokered a deal between the Ring and the Republican-controlled State Senate: Controller Connolly would be granted appointive power over the Tax Commission of the City – on the understanding that his appointments would be evenly split between the two parties.⁸⁵⁶ Arthur himself became the legal counsel to the Commission, at an annual salary of \$10,000. In October of 1870, he resigned, “rather than seem to be the ally of the corrupt Ring.”⁸⁵⁷

In November 1871, two weeks after the Ring-cashiering elections, President Grant responded to charges of malversation in the Customhouse of the Port of New-York. He accepted the resignation of Collector Murphy and appointed Arthur in his stead. The new Collector profited handsomely in the post – largely through his legal pocketing of moieties (percentages of fines collected and of confiscated cargoes) in the nation’s busiest port. Although he tolerated patronage hiring, he was also credited with pruning back the corruption.

In 1880, James A. Garfield of Ohio, with Arthur as his running mate, was elected President. Garfield was, the next year, killed by Charles Guiteau, whose professed motive was to benefit Arthur’s faction, headed by former New York Senator Roscoe Conkling, within the Republican Party. In the White House, Arthur, to the dismay of his long-time political allies,

resisted making spoils-system appointments and signed into law in 1883 the watershed Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act.

The Financiers

Daniel Drew. Following resolution of the Erie War, Daniel Drew, Jim Fisk, Jay Gould and Cornelius Vanderbilt continued to win notice as prototypes of the Gilded Age. The settlement of July 1868 had provided for the discharge of all claims against Drew and also for his own discharge from the board of the Erie. His sugarcoating of the latter was that “there ain’t nothin’ left in Erie.”⁸⁵⁸ But he found it impossible to sever himself completely from the long-time tool of his trickery – even though it was now in the hands of two schemers unhappy about his having dealt, behind their backs, with Vanderbilt.

Drew, in the autumn of 1868, thought that Gould and Fisk were driving down the share price of Erie as part of the type of short-sale play that he had himself engineered. Not content to remain on the sidelines while unsuspecting outside investors were being fleeced, Drew thought to join the game by selling 70,000 shares short at an average price in the high 30s.⁸⁵⁹ His two former friends then began buying and drove the price into the 60s. Drew sought them out and begged them to issue new stock or to lend him theirs. They declined. Drew then sought relief in the courts, but would find none there as Judge Barnard was now issuing his injunctions at the behest of Gould and Fisk. The episode set the erstwhile millionaire treasurer of the Erie down a path that would end in personal bankruptcy. Daniel Drew would, in the years before his death in 1879, depend on the support of his son.

Jim Fisk. In addition to being thought by the *Times* to have joined with Tweed and Sweeny in oppressing the State,⁸⁶⁰ Fisk also figured prominently in the anti-Ring cartoons of Nast. A former circus worker and traveling salesman, Jubilee Jim combined a noisy exuberance with the nerve of a riverboat cardsharp⁸⁶¹ and welcomed the spotlights his behavior attracted. The man also known as Prince Erie brazenly used the railway’s funds to buy Pike’s Opera House on Twenty-Third Street and had it made over with white marble and black walnut, inlaid with gold. The offices of the Erie were moved into the building where so many other opéras bouffes had been staged. Fisk took to riding through the City in a carriage drawn by

six horses, accompanied by young actresses and ballerinas – his wife being stowed in New England.

In the early 1870s, Fisk was at odds with Ned Stokes, a former friend and business associate who had taken up with a one-time mistress of Erie's showman. The friendship of the two men devolved into mutual attempts to harm each other financially and legally – as the mediation of George Barnard and William Tweed failed to heal the breach.⁸⁶² Fisk secured an indictment for blackmail against Stokes – who responded with a suit for libel. Legal moves and counter-moves were being played when, on January 6, 1872, Stokes shot Fisk. Seventeen hours later, with Jay Gould and William Tweed disconsolate in the next room, the final curtain came down for the ringmaster of the rails.

Jay Gould. With the death of the most public face of the Erie, his surviving partner now stood for its abused investors as the lone arch-villain – as Erie business continued to be transacted in the mode of vaudeville farce. While shareholders had somewhat liked the ebullience of Fisk, even as he fleeced them, they cut no slack for Gould.⁸⁶³ Ten weeks after the murder, a loose coalition of unhappy stockholders paid off the Erie's board (from which Tweed had resigned late the previous year) to force its president out.⁸⁶⁴

Gould barricaded himself in his Opera House office, protected by guards, to keep his removal papers from being served. When a force of U.S. marshals crowbarred their way in, Gould scampered away, dodging through and over furniture, to the temporary haven of his law office. There, he negotiated his resignation. Among those elected to the new board were former generals George McClellan and soon-to-be-Governor John Dix. Both the disgruntled shareholders engaged in bribing the Erie board to jettison Gould and Gould himself had known that his exit would send the stock soaring and had invested heavily in it. They were rewarded as its price rose from 35 to 67 over the last few weeks of March, 1872. Gould's own trading profit was said to approach \$1 million.⁸⁶⁵

Later that year, the Erie board learned that Gould had stolen \$3 million in railway funds, had him arrested on charges of embezzlement, and sued him for \$10 million. Not one to stay cornered for long, Gould promptly posted bail of \$1 million, opened negotiations with the board, and persuaded it to drop all charges against him in return for a package of his assets. The assets were thought to be worth \$9 million but that turned out to be a forty-five-fold overvaluation.⁸⁶⁶ Tweed in 1877 said that Gould “has not his equal

in America as a financier” (while summing up Fisk as “a pleasant fellow, full of anecdote... never ashamed”).⁸⁶⁷

With the bulk of his fortune intact, Gould turned to investing in Western railroads. By 1880, he controlled one ninth of the rail mileage in the nation. Twelve years later, the stock prices of his corporations rose at the word of his death.⁸⁶⁸ His estate was valued at \$70 million.

Cornelius Vanderbilt. The Commodore said the Erie War had taught him that “it never pays to kick a skunk.”⁸⁶⁹ To have learned this sooner than he did would have piled his fortune higher. He attempted in June 1870 to exploit the illiquid state of the Gould/Fisk line following his settlement with it by entering into a price war. His New York Central cut the rate for shipping livestock east from \$125 to \$100 per carload. The Erie responded with a drop to \$75, countered by Vanderbilt with a rate of \$50. The tit-for-tattling ended with the Central lowering its price to \$1. Vanderbilt might have deemed himself the victor until learning from the boasting of Gould and Fisk to the press that they had been secretly buying thousands of cattle and shipping them east on the Central.⁸⁷⁰

On May 20, 1869, the day that John T. Hoffman signed into law the Erie Classification Act, the Governor also signed bills enabling Vanderbilt to merge the New York Central and Hudson River Railroads and to construct a Grand Central Depot. The new station, at Fourth Avenue and Forty-Second Street, formally opened on November 1, 1871. It was the largest train station in the country and second largest in the world. For legal work in 1872 on a lease for it, Vanderbilt engaged Samuel Tilden – who seemed then to have been a frequent guest in the Commodore’s home.⁸⁷¹

Having had enough of polecats and considering Gould “the smartest man in America,”⁸⁷² Vanderbilt, like his adversary, turned his attention westward and bought up other railroads to form a network that soon was dominant in the corridor between New York City and Chicago. He died in 1877, the richest man in the country, leaving his heirs \$100 million. Later that year, Tweed ascribed his own involvement with the Erie Railway to Vanderbilt’s having “wanted me to help him in legislative matters,” in return for which he would cut the Boss into stock-speculation profits. The Commodore, however, he said, then “didn’t keep his word and Fisk and Gould came to me and offered to set me right.”⁸⁷³

11

The City after the Ring

Another new Charter. Hoffman's successor as Governor, Republican John Dix, on April 30, 1873, signed into law the third new Charter in 37 months for the City. After its passage by the Legislature, the *Times* had not been happy about "this bastard offspring of partisan trickery and well-meaning Reform." It was chiefly critical that:

{t}he Mayor and Aldermen cannot be held to strict account for the conduct of the City government under its provisions, for the Legislature has tied their hands by placing the character of the most important officers beyond their control.⁸⁷⁴

Two weeks later, however, the paper had become contingently positive: "Whatever of evil there is in the law is more than equaled by the good if the Mayor honestly discharges his duty in making the new appointments."⁸⁷⁵ The Committee of Seventy, while similarly opposing aspects of it, also endorsed it overall.⁸⁷⁶ Mayor Havemeyer thought it "doubtless the best we can get from the present Legislature."⁸⁷⁷

The new Charter sought to remedy factors thought implicated in the rise and rascality of the Ring:

- officers of the City were to have no business dealings with it;
- persons accepting positions in the State or Federal Governments or State Legislature would be deemed to vacate any City offices held;
- expenditures were to require the approval of three fourths of the Aldermen;
- all City advertising was to be published only in a new official journal, the *City Record* (to replace "a paid Press" with "a free and unbiased Press, ready to criticize all official action");

- clerks were not to be removed without cause or opportunity to explain themselves;
- the records of all departments other than the police were to be “at all times open to the inspection of the tax-payers;” and
- a detailed statement of the financial condition of the City was to be published every three months.⁸⁷⁸

The charter also resubordinated the City to the State Legislature.⁸⁷⁹ Upstate Republicans argued that the Ring had proven the City incapable of self-rule.

The Wigwam weathering. George Templeton Strong wrote on November 8, 1871, after the candidates of the Ring-controlled Hall had been whopped by Tilden’s reformers, that “Tammany has received a shattering blow from which it will not soon recover.”⁸⁸⁰ The wishful thought, though, forgot both the transience of citizen indignation and the Hall’s adaptability to it. Its recovery would take but twenty-four months.

At the end of 1871, Tammany expelled Connolly, Hall, Sweeny, and Tweed. They were replaced as Sachems by Seymour, Tilden and other reformers. By the fall of 1872, the Hall was presenting itself as a stalwart foe of corruption and backing for Mayor Abraham Lawrence, a member of the Committee of Seventy. He was, however, but one of three major candidates touting their reform credentials. He finished ahead of James O’Brien, but was beaten by William Havemeyer, who twice in the 1840s had been Mayor and who in 1859 had been Tammany’s unsuccessful nominee. Havemeyer had been endorsed by the Republicans and by the Committee of Seventy, which he had himself named and then served as its Vice President. Further spoiling the year for the Wigwam and the Democracy was the 50,000-vote victory of Republican John Dix – also of the Committee of Seventy – in the race to succeed Hoffman as Governor.

Honest John Kelly. One year later, in November 1873, Tammany signaled its political resurgence with victories in the municipal races. Credit was given to “Honest John” Kelly, who had been gathering into his hands the reins of power that Tweed once had held. (Tweed himself attributed the Democratic successes that year to neglect by Havemeyer’s reform government of “bread and butter” issues: popular discontent had arisen because of its fiscal retrenchment and was exacerbated by the financial panic of the year.⁸⁸¹)

Kelly, one year older than Tweed, had started out on a similar path: being first elected Alderman in 1853 and, the next year, winning a Congressional seat. He resigned from Congress in 1858 to become Sheriff. In the 1860s, he served again as Sheriff and was a Sachem of the Hall. He had been in Europe from 1868 through most of 1871, which minimized his taint in the Ring scandal. Kelly moved deftly into the political vacuum created by the disgrace of Sweeny and Tweed – recasting Tammany as an organization paying elaborate lip service to the cause of reform while indulging in many of the questionable practices from the times of Wood and the Ring.

By 1874, Honest John had in place a system of “requests” from City office holders: an employee with pay of \$1,000 might, for example, be asked to turn over as much as a quarter of it to Tammany.⁸⁸² The Wigwam’s candidates that year included many former sharers in the Ring’s plunder and two under indictments for fraud.⁸⁸³ For Mayor it backed yet another man with reform credentials: diamond merchant William Wickham, who would win and would regain for Tammany the control of City patronage.

In allocating civic jobs and managing Tammany monies, Kelly took further the methods of Tweed. He inaugurated the regular practice of charging candidates for their nominations by the Wigwam. (Fernando Wood, as leader of the Mozart Hall faction of the Democracy, had in the early 1860s occasionally sold its nominations – and had been accused of pocketing the proceeds, while reneging on the deals.⁸⁸⁴) Under him, district leaders bossed their own bailiwicks and served on Tammany’s central committees. They submitted lists of constituents to be appointed to City positions, which then were forwarded by Kelly to the Mayor – an orderly successor system to the former free-for-all squabbling for places.⁸⁸⁵

Five-year checkpoint. Like the *Nation*, the *North American Review*, edited in the early 1870s by historian Henry Adams, was a major reforming voice for the country and the world and ruminated at times on the City. The *Review* in 1876 assessed the condition of the municipal government five years after the fall of the Ring and offered prescriptions for reform.⁸⁸⁶ It saw “the lesson of 1871” as being “barren of fruits... it cannot be said that a single step has been taken which would indicate that the people of New York have learned anything from it.” The *Review* granted that the reform movement had achieved, beyond the overthrow of “Tweed and his associates... a temporary purification of the judiciary and the city executive,” but “absolutely nothing more.”⁸⁸⁷

Points of discouragement were:

- the lack of legislative improvement: “The legislative branches of the city government remained just what they had been, – wholly bad;”
- the continuation of “the power of the city political organizations,” which “was not touched... the whole case may be summed up... by stating... that, at the coming election, all the judges, executive officers, and members of the city government of New York then to be chosen will be designated in advance by two men,.. John Kelley [sic] and John Morrissey;”⁸⁸⁸
- the civic complacency resulting from the thought “that no radical reform at all was necessary, because the success which attended the uprising of 1871 showed that all would be well if citizens would but attend to their political duties.” That thought overlooked the impossibility of repeatedly relying on exertions like those of that year: “To call these bankers, merchants, manufacturers, lawyers, editors, authors, and brokers away from their proper duties for six weeks in each year to attend primaries, ‘fix slates,’ watch ‘the men inside politics,’ go to conventions and actively canvass... is at best an absurd waste of power... A system which calls for such an immense and constant expenditure of political force to keep it working is wrong and absurd, and must and will break down;”⁸⁸⁹ and
- the absence of indications “that the American community has looked upon the New York City municipal experience as anything but a local scandal. They have apparently thought that it carried with it no lesson for them. In this conclusion they will probably find themselves egregiously and bitterly mistaken. Chicago and St. Louis and Brooklyn and Philadelphia may already begin to suspect something of the sort.”⁸⁹⁰

Public integrity in the last years of Kelly. The next major scandal in which Tammany members would figure prominently would not occur until 1884, when \$500,000 was distributed to 23 Aldermen to influence the awarding of a franchise for a surface railway on Broadway. Three Aldermen, of whom one was later acquitted, were sentenced to four and one half to nine years of hard labor; six fled to Canada; and three turned state’s

evidence. Ten others were indicted but never tried – perhaps because the public had tired of the matter, perhaps because strings had been pulled.⁸⁹¹

John Kelly died in 1886. In that year, 28-year-old Theodore Roosevelt considered that, “in the lower wards [of the City],... the condition of politics is often fairly appalling, and the [ward] boss is generally a man of grossly immoral public and private character.”⁸⁹² Among the examples he cited:

The president of a powerful semi-political association was by profession a burglar; the man who received the goods he stole was an alderman. Another alderman was elected while his hair was still short from a term in State prison.⁸⁹³

Notwithstanding widespread dismay with such graft, the City, on the whole, felt that the sobriquet of Tweed’s successor had not been wholly unapt – even though Honest John’s reported estate of \$500,000 was of not-readily-explainable origin. Compared with Tweed’s high-watermark asset position of twenty times more, Kelly had operated humbly. It was judged that: “Profiting by Tweed’s fate, he knew the value of moderation... under his rule the stealing, compared to that of the Tweed régime, was kept at a comparatively respectable minimum.”⁸⁹⁴

Later assessments. Two years after Kelly’s death, a judgment on American city governments was provided by Seth Low – who had served as the reform Mayor of Brooklyn from 1881 to 1885, would assume in 1890 the Presidency of Columbia University, and, in 1902 and 1903, would be Mayor of the consolidated City. Low wrote in 1888 that urban governments generally had improved since the time of the Ring. In part, he felt, this owed to the disappearance of open thefts of public monies: “beginning with the overthrow of Tweed... that was seen to be a method so hazardous as to have fewer and fewer followers.”⁸⁹⁵

James Bryce, four decades after the fall of Tweed, summarized changes in the government of the City since his heyday. His report had elements positive:

- “great progress... in the way of better ballot and election laws;”⁸⁹⁶
- “some progress in the way of civil service reform;”

- “some excellent mayors... for the catastrophe of 1871 has never been forgotten by Tammany, whose chieftains sometimes find it prudent to run reputable candidates;”
- “no more Barnards or Cardozos have disgraced the bench, for the bar association is vigorous and watchful;”
- “apart from the abuse of the minor criminal justice, apart from the blackmailing of innocent men as well as of offenders, apart from the impunity which the payment of blackmail secures to some forms of vice, apart from such lapses from virtue as that of the aldermen who sold the right of laying a railroad in Broadway... the actual administration of the city injured and offended the ordinary citizen less than might have been expected;”
- “the police force, often as they were made the engine of extortion or the accomplice in vice, are an efficient force, though harsh in their methods, and they keep life and property secure;”
- “the fire department is well managed; the water supply is copious; the public schools have been usually, though not invariably, kept out of politics;”
- “if the government has been wasteful in details, it was seldom conspicuously extravagant; and the rulers who grew rich through it have done so by indirect methods, and not out of the city treasury;” and
- “scandals like those of Tweed’s time have not recurred;”

and negative:

- “the Spoils System still throve;”
- “repeaters still voted in large numbers;”
- “election returns could still be manipulated;”

- “Tammany has held its ground; and the august dynasty of bosses goes on;” John Kelly being succeeded by Richard Croker, then by Charles Murphy. “{A} most potent force... is concentrated in one hand—that of the boss of the Hall;”
- “{a} fruitful source of revenue, roughly estimated at \$1,000,000 a year has been derived, when the [Democratic] party was supreme at Albany, from legislative blackmailing;” and
- “{t}he police captain of the precinct, the justice of the police court, and the district leader of the Tammany organization are all leagued together to keep the poor in subjection and prevent the rich from interfering.”

With respect to urban government nationally, Bryce concluded that “{t}here is no denying that [it] is the one conspicuous failure of the United States;”⁸⁹⁷ “{n}o European city has... witnessed scandals approaching those of New York... in 1869-70.”

America’s legislatures he judged to “fall much below the level of purity maintained in England and Germany, and also below that of France and Italy;” while

the body of her higher federal officials is not, in point of integrity... markedly inferior to the administrations of most European countries. This is perhaps less generally true of most of the state officials; and it certainly cannot be said of those who administer the business of the larger cities, for the standard of purity has there sunk to a point lower than that which the municipalities of any European country show.⁸⁹⁸

Bryce thought, in sum, in 1895 that the urban situation had improved:

{t}hings are better than they were twenty-five years ago... Rogues are less audacious. Good citizens are more active. Party spirit is still permitted to dominate and pervert municipal politics, yet the mischief it does is more clearly discerned and the number of those who resist it daily increases.⁸⁹⁹

II

The Ring Recounted and Explained: in Speech, Scholarship, Song, Fiction, and Film

Shedding light on the effects that the Tweed Ring has had on public integrity in concept and practice are the descriptions, depictions, and dissections of it. Early opinions on how the Ring had come to be, what it was thought to have been, what its effects had been and might be, and what should have been done about it and other corruption were aired in the meeting at Cooper Union on September 4, 1871 – as influential burghers voiced the insights and anger of a worked-up City.

Impacts on governments have been brought about by scholarly understanding of the Ring and similar scandals and by popular emotional responses to them. Initial accounts of its history came from the partisan, Democratic pen of Samuel Tilden and, by journalist Charles Wingate, from a leading reform journal. A landmark assessment of American government at the end of the nineteenth century was provided in *The American Commonwealth* by the Scotsman James Bryce, whose work won not only the plaudits of his fellow political scientists, but also broad popularity (selling 212,000 copies over fifty years). Bryce's lead example of the problems in U.S. cities was the Tweed Ring.

The improvement of governments is best achieved when specialist understanding is backed by popular support. How the public regards and reacts to municipal malfeasance depends both on media coverage of current crimes and on senses of history. Five books – all of value for political scientists and with appeal as well to general readers – have described the Tweed Ring. Modern impressions of William Tweed have also been shaped by such other modes as two novels and two movies – one based on a Broadway musical.

William M. Tweed has himself, within the past twenty years, been contrastingly portrayed by novelists both as a homicidal barbarian and as a comrade of Rabelaisian bonhomie. How assiduously one fights graft cannot but be affected by whether sticky-fingered officials are thought of as dead-eyed, savage-souled bullies or as amiable Falstaffs.

The range of treatments received by the Ring in the 138 years since its fall is, in this section, reviewed. Each such rendering – whether addressed to

more narrow, learned circles or to broad publics – both reveals past influences and shapes future attitudes.

12

The Thoughts of Those Who Had Known the Ring

Citizen Theories: The rally of September 4, 1871

Diagnosis, etiology, prognosis. The orators of the impassioned, late-summer evening had theories on the nature and origins of their crisis:

Party politics. “Our City has been the foot-ball and target at which the intrigues of both political parties were aimed.” Subsequently, “{p}arty fealty, too, has repeatedly been called upon to protect and shield these men... and to turn aside the public hue and cry... Honest and honorable men often shrink from the performance of their duties as citizens for fear of injuring their party;”

Apathy of citizens, especially the working class. Former Wisconsin Governor Edward Salomon judged that, “{t}he good people of this City were all so busy with their own private affairs, and had contracted such pleasant habits of indolence, apathy, and horror of all that smacked of politics.” Ex-Mayor Havemeyer concurred and lamented in particular “the listlessness and apathy... of the mechanical and laboring portion of our population, in not giving the subject... earlier attention, when it must have long been patent to everybody who has the ability to think, or who lays claim to the least knowledge of his own interest, that every dollar improperly, not to say fraudulently, expended by the City Government, must be paid by those who labor.” If, for example, a dwelling was taxed an additional \$100, this amount would be paid by the tenants as increased rents;⁹⁰⁰

Tweed's Charter. “The charter of this City... is a mere act of perfidious legislation... Under it, and its attendant legislation, the Government of this City has become an oligarchy;”

State control of the City. “As we were compelled, year after year, to submit our Tax Levy to the Legislature for approval, as we were placed under the necessity to procure legislative consent to every little measure, affecting nobody outside of this municipality, it followed

as a matter of course that the great wealth of New York attracted the vultures from all directions and that this City was finally looked upon as a milk-cow to support in opulence the leeches of corruption;”⁹⁰¹

Perhaps universal suffrage in the urban setting. Speakers asked “whether free republican institutions, based upon universal suffrage, which we admire as the foundations of our happiness and pride, are in truth well adapted for the government of large and populous cities;”⁹⁰² and

Paper money. Impact on corruption was but one of a bewildering array of potential impacts attributed to this issue. The Committee of Seventy would, later in the month, cite “an inflated currency” as one of five factors underlying the corruption. (The other four: the cost of the war; “the magnificent chances offered to private ambitions,... stock and gold gambling, and a universally spread passion for sudden wealth and idle display.”⁹⁰³)

Already, the speakers said, the Ring had imperiled the credit of the City; had caused residents to flee to New Jersey; had led to streets that “reek of filth, while hundreds of thousands of dollars are paid out nominally for cleaning them;” had debased both property values and civic morality; and, if unchecked, would chase capital and commerce away and destroy “our rights and liberties.”

Recommended Rx. To avoid such an end, the citizens would have to move with dispatch toward the goals endorsed by the meeting – removals from office, prosecutions, full accounting, debt creation safeguards, plunder recovery, and a new Charter: Ways to do so and more generally to deal with corrupt influences were advanced:

Put partisan differences aside. Given the consensus that party politics underlay the Ring, virtually all speakers urged that its unseating be undertaken without regard to party. Oswald Ottendorfer, publisher of the *Staats-Zeitung*, went further: urging a Constitutional Convention to craft a new Charter with “the necessary safeguards to free our City entirely from party-yoke;”

Elect reformers. The meeting resolved that “the citizens of this City are earnestly entreated to make the reform of their own

Government the one controlling issue at the next election, to support no man for office... no matter what may be his party name, who is not known to be both honest and incorruptible and determined and distinctly pledged... to reform the City of New York;"

Appeal to responsible officials, including those implicated in the frauds. Oswald Ottendorfer thought that "false conceptions of the duty which they fancied they owed to their party" had led persons "among the accused" to "faults... rather the result of errors of the head than of the heart, and of whom I still entertain the opinion that... they will be found assisting in the correction of the evils." He did not say whom he had in mind. The resolutions appealed to the next State Legislature for a new Charter while Judge Edwards Pierrepont looked to the Legislature, the State Attorney-General, and the Governor for remediation;

Stir from apathy – if only momentarily. Edward Salomon cited "the old adage, that 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.'⁹⁰⁴ But," he continued, "if it be too much to ask of a New-York citizen to be ever vigilant, it certainly is not too much to ask that he should once in a great while show that vigilance, that interest in public matters which alone can save from him and his property certain ruin. And now is that time;" and

If necessary, create or change laws. There was uncertainty as to the legal redress available. Judge James Emott said that "if there is no law to [achieve the goals of the meeting] persist. Agitate, agitate, agitate until you get a law." Similarly, the resolutions adopted urged that "any legal remedy which is now available to citizens... should be resorted to, and... if no such remedies are found to exist, then the law should be altered."

Democratic Defense: *The New York City "Ring:" Its Origin, Maturity and Fall*

The *Times*, a year after the end of the Ring, was hard on one City Democrat, whom it felt had gotten too much credit for ejecting the Ring: Samuel Tilden. The gist of its shots was that he had not lifted a finger

against the Ring until September 1871 – by which time the contest to bring it down was effectively over – and, moreover, had thereafter contributed little.

On January 27, 1873, Tilden parried and counterthrust in a separately published pamphlet: *The New York City "Ring:" Its Origin, Maturity and Fall, Discussed in a Reply to the New York Times*. Several of its 83 pages were devoted to quoting the charges leveled at him by the *Times* and to reproducing the hosannas the paper had sung in the spring of 1870 to the Ring. Tilden's account also:

- asserted that “in the whole of this mass of statement [in recent *Times* articles], so far as it relates to me, there is not a single atom of truth;”⁹⁰⁵

- found the birth of the Ring in the Board of Supervisors, empowered in 1857 by State Republicans. Whereupon, “{i}t soon grew to a ring between the Republican majority in Albany and the half-and-half Supervisors, and a few Democratic officials.” Given that “all real power was in Albany”... “lucrative city offices” and “contracts... were the pabulum of corrupt influence which shaped and controlled all legislation;”⁹⁰⁶

- reprised the theme of many culpable Republicans and but “a few” involved Democrats particularly with respect to the first months of 1871, when “Mr. Tweed was never so supreme over nearly the whole body of the Republican members; and, with their aid, could despise, or suppress and punish, every revolt on the Democratic side.”⁹⁰⁷ The combination of the Boss and the Republicans rendered “dissenting Democrats... powerless;”⁹⁰⁸

- conveniently took “{t}he very definition of a ‘Ring’” to be “that it encircles enough influential men in... each party to control the action of both party machines;”⁹⁰⁹

- claimed, despite no “knowledge or grounds of suspicion”⁹¹⁰ of Ring frauds, nevertheless to have “distrusted” the Ring and to have “never [taken] a favor of any sort from these men;”⁹¹¹ and

- played up his speech against Tweed's Charter,⁹¹² his behind-the-scenes actions against the Ring in August 1871,⁹¹³ and his arranging for Connolly to turn his office over to the reformers.⁹¹⁴

The *Times* responded eight days later by ridiculing the length of Tilden's reply, returning the charge of mendacity, and wondering whether “{t}he public” can recollect anything that Mr. TILDEN did toward the exposure of TWEED and his gang, between September, 1870 and July, 1871, when the hardest part of the fight was being waged” and when there was “scarcely a day in which we did not attempt to make some progress toward convincing the public that their City rulers were dishonest men.”⁹¹⁵

How Self-Acknowledged Better Citizens Understood the Ring: “An Episode in Municipal Government”

Two days after the elections of November 7, 1871, Henry Adams wrote to Tilden inviting him to write for the *North American Review* “an account of the Tammany frauds and their history, given by a person whose authority is decisive.”⁹¹⁶ With Tilden's version of the scandal being separately prepared and published, the *Review* turned to journalist Charles F. Wingate – whose account of the Tweed Ring appeared between October 1874 and October 1876, in four installments totaling 205 pages, as “An Episode in Municipal Government.”

Wingate, like Tilden, criticized the City-fettering legislation of 1857 – calling it “{t}he dry-nurse-and-leading-string's system of government,” which “had made New York no better and Albany a great deal worse.”⁹¹⁷ (While Tilden, though, had stressed the leading role played by the Republicans, Wingate did not here mention the party.) The other leading cause of the Ring for Wingate was “an overwhelming flood of emigration, both vicious and ignorant.”⁹¹⁸ The “new-comers,” largely Irish and Germans, were “ignorant, clannish, and easily controlled. Their moral sense had been blunted by ages of degradation, and they were as clay to the potter in the hands of the skilful and unscrupulous city demagogues.” Wingate distinguished the immigrants from “the better class of people,” which, alas, “more and more withdrew from active participation in public affairs.”⁹¹⁹ These were themes to which he returned: Judge John “McCunn was a typical Irishman,—noisy, bragging, blatant;”⁹²⁰ not to be confused with “the better element in New York City,” which threw out the Ring.⁹²¹

(Wingate's anti-immigrant position – common among the reformers of the day – was echoed by his editor, Henry Adams, in an essay following the last installment of Wingate's history. Adams drew on the same adjectives: large portions of the great cities were composed of “the vicious, the ignorant, the criminal, and the unfortunate...—a population no longer homogeneous or fixed, but largely made up of foreign and floating elements bound by no traditions or inherited education.”⁹²² Other upper-class reformers sharing the view of Adams and Wingate, but, sensing the need for Irish and German support, might have held back from voicing it. The *Times*, however unbridled in denouncing Democrats, went relatively easily on immigrants. The *Nation* may have betrayed its true thoughts on August 24, 1871 in finding “in our city an ever-present bar to absolute good government in the shape of the ignorant Irish voting element.”⁹²³ One week later, however, it softened its tone: “It ought to be said for the Irish that two of the most respected judges... are Irishmen; the two noted judicial rascals are Americans; and the chief scoundrels of the City Hall are drawn almost equally from the Irish and Americans.”⁹²⁴)

Wingate offered details and characterizations of the central Ringmen bolstering his thesis that “very low, coarse, brutal beings” caused corruption.⁹²⁵ He conceded Tweed's “energy which could be daunted neither by political hazard nor financial failure,” but thought his ability “of a gross, sordid nature” and that he was “a monster of licentiousness.”⁹²⁶ As a Congressman, Tweed was said to have engaged in “the somewhat coarse dissipations of Washington.”⁹²⁷ After his return to Manhattan, he and his brother Richard established their own chair-making firm, drew on their aged father for credit, “abused his confidence,” exhausted his savings, forced him to return to working, “broke his heart, and it was not long before he fell dead.”⁹²⁸

The other leaders of the Ring fared no better. “As compared to Tweed, Connolly seems a contemptible sneak-thief beside a resolute burglar”⁹²⁹ and had “left Philadelphia owing to a low intrigue with a market-woman.” Sweeny was a “saturnine, spider-like miser of power... delighting to weave his toils in the dark.” He had “kept as his mistress for years a former attendant in a Turkish bath.”⁹³⁰ Hall “stands out with a smirk and eye-glass, the harlequin trickster of the gang... a most versatile mountebank.”⁹³¹ To sum up, “Tweed indulged in the grandiose and flagrant; Connolly... the sneaking...; while Sweeny was always inclined to what was plausible and specious.”⁹³²

Not all of Wingate's scorn fell on those deemed low in class and morals. The reforming vanguard of his "better element" was the Committee of Seventy. After listing its achievements, he conceded them to be

commendable; and yet, in comparison with what was expected, and in view of the labor and time and money expended, they not only seem, but were disappointing. The "Seventy"... realized too strongly that the eyes of the world were upon it, and, accordingly, indulged too much in posturing and debate and not enough in steady work... Tweed and Sweeny, if they had... expressed their innermost sentiments, would probably have intimated a tolerably complete indifference to the debates and proceedings of the "Seventy," reserving their wrath and fear for the quiet, untiring sluth-like assiduity with which Mr. Tilden was then ferreting out their wrong-doings.⁹³³

Elsewhere as well, a softness toward the "sluth-like" Tilden may be sensed.⁹³⁴ While the actions and inactions of the State Party Chairman in August 1871 have been debated by contemporaries and historians, Wingate credited him that month with organizing

several conferences... to consider the situation. A programme of action was laid down... The great labor of giving effect to the plan was voluntarily assumed by Mr. Tilden, who, from beginning to end, both inspired and engineered this most dangerous of all the attacks on the Ring. He was indefatigable in his exertions.⁹³⁵

In addition to finding decisive indefatigability where others saw timorous waffling, Wingate presented Tilden's letter of September 11, 1871 urging the Democracy to "take a knife" to the corruption as if it had been issued in August⁹³⁶ and, contrafactually, placed the Party Chairman at the protest gathering of September 4, "energetically expressing the views of all respectable Democrats." (Conversely, however, Wingate did mention earlier, Ring-supportive, actions of Tilden: his "alleged" role in persuading the *New York World* to shift its backing from O'Brien's Young Democrats to the Ring;⁹³⁷ his exclusion of Young Democrats from the floor of the 1870 State Convention;⁹³⁸ and his allowing five hundred convention tickets, held in his room "for safe-keeping," to disappear and to end up in the hands of Tammany roughs.⁹³⁹)

Later authors have referenced Wingate in ascribing depraved acts to Connolly, Sweeny, and Tweed. Wingate, himself, however, did not here cite sources – nor have independent corroborations come to light. As a journalist with access to many who had known the men of the Ring, sordid truths may have been divulged to him. It is also possible, though, that he presented as facts unfounded rumors in step with his bad-men-do-bad-things view of the Ring.

The Ring as Prototype of the Urban Machine: *The American Commonwealth*

Volumes of the Viscount. A recounting of the Ring, an explanation of such American urban phenomena generally, and an updated assessment of corruption in New York City were in 1888 provided by James Bryce – a Scotsman who had been a historian of the Holy Roman Empire, professor at Oxford University, Liberal Party Member of the British Parliament, and Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and who would later serve as Chief Secretary for Ireland and as the British Ambassador to the U.S., would chronicle the massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during World War I, and would be made a viscount.⁹⁴⁰ In London that year, in three hefty tomes, Bryce published *The American Commonwealth*, a report on the social institutions and the local, state, and federal governments in the U.S. Over the next 26 years, he updated and extended his work, with further editions appearing after his death in 1922. Acclaimed on both sides of the Atlantic by such leaders as William Gladstone and William Howard Taft,⁹⁴¹ it has shaped how historians, political scientists, and citizens have since thought about Tweed, Sweeny, and Tammany and about bosses and machines – a term for Bryce synonymous with “rings.”

The *Commonwealth* was written with substantial input from Bryce’s many friends among the leading public figures and thinkers of the U.S. Among those whom he was seen to have used “as de facto research assistants” were future Supreme Court Justice “Oliver Wendell Holmes (on legal education),” Missouri Senator (and a national leader of the movement for civil service reform) “Carl Schurz (on the Senate), Theodore Roosevelt (on municipal government and civil service reform), [and] Woodrow Wilson (on Congress).”⁹⁴² Wilson, in 1889 a 33-year-old professor of political science at Wesleyan University, wrote a laudatory review of 6,000 words – praising especially the “careful, dispassionate, scientific description of the

'machine,' an accurately drawn picture of 'bosses,' a clear exposition of the way in which the machine works."⁹⁴³

Bryce and the Ring. Figuring prominently in Bryce's *Commonwealth* were corruption generally and the specific leading example of William Tweed. Corruption he considered in gradations running from "the taking or giving of money bribes" down to "insincerity in professions of political faith." He confessed to weariness on being incessantly asked by Europeans, "Isn't everybody corrupt there?" Such queries he thought due to "the Americans themselves, with their airy way of talking about their own country... their enjoyment of a good story and humourous pleasure in exaggerations generally" and to Europeans, with their "useful knack of forgetting their own shortcomings when contemplating those of their neighbours."⁹⁴⁴

Bryce had personally seen Tweed in Rochester, at the Democratic State Convention of 1870. He likened that gathering to "the swarming of bees in tree boughs, a ceaseless humming and buzzing which betokens immense excitement over proceedings which the bystander does not comprehend" – all decisions of import having been made by prearrangement, out of sight.⁹⁴⁵ Bryce that year in the City "saw the ring flourishing like a green bay tree. Though the frauds... were of course still unknown, nobody had a word of respect for its members." He reported having been

taken to look at Justices Barnard and Cardozo as two of the most remarkable sights of the city; and such indeed they were. I inquired why such things were endured, not merely patiently, but even with a sort of amused enjoyment, as though the citizens were proud of having produced a new phenomenon the like whereof no other community could show. It was explained to me that these things had not come suddenly, but as the crown of a process of degradation prolonged for some fifteen years or more which had made corruption so familiar as to be no longer shocking.⁹⁴⁶

Bryce took Tweed's New York as his lead example of "the perversion and corruption of democratic government in great American cities... because she displayed on the grandest scale phenomena common to American cities, and because the plunder and misgovernment from which she has suffered have become specially notorious over the world."⁹⁴⁷

The Tweed Ring had molded his own views, and those of his contemporaries, on American municipal governance – likely more so than any other linked set of events. He judged that “{t}he commonest mistake of Europeans who talk about America is to assume that the political vices of New York are found everywhere. The next most common is to suppose that they are found nowhere else.”⁹⁴⁸

The machine/ring. Having reviewed the experiences of the leading American cities, Bryce concluded that there were “evils which appear wherever a large population is densely aggregated:” many stemming from machines/rings.⁹⁴⁹ He spelled out the conditions that had made possible the Ring of Tweed:

Elective offices are so numerous that ordinary citizens cannot watch them, and cease to care who gets them. The conventions come so often that busy men cannot serve in them. The minor offices are so unattractive that able men do not stand for them... The mass of the voters are ignorant... Even the better class... are swayed by the inveterate habit of party loyalty... It is less trouble to put up with impure officials, costly city government, a jobbing state legislature, an inferior sort of congressman, than to sacrifice one’s own business in the effort to set things right. Thus the machine works on.⁹⁵⁰

In the machine/ring: “a small knot of persons... pull the wires for the whole city;” and “{t}he source of power and the cohesive force is the desire for office, and for office as a means of gain.”

In a ring there is usually some one person who holds more strings in his hand than do the others... He is a boss...

It must not be supposed that the members of rings, or the great boss himself, are wicked men. They are the offspring of a system. Their morality is that of their surroundings... It is no wonder if he helps himself from the city treasury and allows his minions to do so...

Discipline is very strict in this army... It is not the code of an ordinary unprofessional citizen. It does not forbid falsehood, or malversation, or ballot stuffing, or ‘repeating.’ But it denounces apathy or cowardice, disobedience, and above all, treason to the party.⁹⁵¹

Bryce thought the attempts of reformers to rein in machines the “warfare of volunteers against disciplined troops.”⁹⁵²

The boss. Of the generalized boss, Bryce cautioned his readers “against drawing too dark a picture... He is not a demon... He is not necessarily either corrupt or mendacious, though he grasps at place, power, and wealth.”⁹⁵³ Many of his characterizations of the generic boss fit Tweed:

The aim of a boss is not so much fame as power, and not so much power over the conduct of affairs as over persons. Patronage is what he chiefly seeks, patronage understood in the largest sense in which it covers the disposal of lucrative contracts and other modes of enrichment as well as salaried places... It is as the bestower of riches that he holds his position, like the leader of a band of condottieri in the fifteenth century.

The interest of a boss in political questions is usually quite secondary... there is often not even a profession of zeal for any party doctrine... “There are no politics in politics.”...

The real hostility of the boss is not to the opposite party, but to other factions within his own... Still more bitter, however, is the hatred of boss and ring towards those members of the party who do not desire and are not to be appeased by a share of the spoils, but who agitate for what they call reform.⁹⁵⁴

13

Historical Perspectives

“{A} sad story for the leaders and chieftains:” *The History of Tammany Hall*

Journalist Gustavus Myers, at the opening of the twentieth century, found most accounts of Tammany Hall to be either “extravagant panegyrics” or “partisan attacks.”⁹⁵⁵ His own version, *The History of Tammany Hall*, appeared in 1901 – followed in 1917 by a second, updated, edition – and strove for and, he felt, achieved impartiality. Tweed’s Ring was presented in the context of the City’s history: succeeding decades of scandal that had culminated in the Mayoralty of Fernando Wood and succeeded by “dictatorship” – the reigns of John Kelly and Richard Croker.

Others disputed the objectivity of Myers – judging his history unfriendly to Tammany and Tweed. “{T}he regular publishing houses,” were, indeed, loath to incur the Wigwam’s displeasure and rejected his manuscript. Aided by private donations, the author self-published.⁹⁵⁶ Subsequently, Tammanyites were suspected of effectively suppressing the first edition, by buying up all copies of it.⁹⁵⁷

Myers had researched government documents, court records, and newspaper archives. For the sections on Tammany under Tweed – comprising one seventh of the first edition, one tenth of the second – he had spoken with instrumental Ring opponents John Foley and Matthew O’Rourke. The Boss was portrayed as tyrannical and corrupt – based primarily on Tweed’s own testimony before the Aldermen. Wingate was not cited. Myers, like Tilden, blamed the Republicans for their legislation of 1857: while claiming to combat graft in the City, their actions made Albany a second “stronghold of corruption.”⁹⁵⁸

Although conceding that his book perhaps “furnishes a sad story for the leaders and chieftains of [Tammany],” Myers argued that “the fault is not mine, but that of a multitude of incontestable public records.”⁹⁵⁹

“A sort of Napoleon gone wrong:” “Boss” Tweed: *The Story of a Grim Generation*

Denis Tilden Lynch, in 1927, published *“Boss” Tweed: The Story of a Grim Generation*, dedicated to the memory of George Jones. It was biographical in superstructure, if not in detail: opening with the immigration of two great grandparents of the Boss and closing with the planting of acacia at his grave. Much of the book, however, was background – as thick swatches of pages were devoted not just to Tweed’s main precedent setter in corruption, Fernando Wood, but also to such peripheral figures and events as abortionist Madame Restell, suffragette Victoria Woodhull, and the battling of Manhattan gangs.

Lynch described the crimes of Tweed and the Ring: his active role in the misdeeds of the Forty Thieves; his ramping up of corruption in the New York State Legislature; his “wholesale fraud”⁹⁶⁰ in the naturalizations of 1868; the “extortionate profits”⁹⁶¹ realized by his companies; the millions of dollars in payments on bogus claims – calling the Ringsters “corruptionists” and “thieves.”⁹⁶²

Personally, however, the Boss was treated with sympathy. Although cited for his growing arrogance as his wealth mounted,⁹⁶³ Lynch found him in the wake of his Charter passage “{o}blivious alike to extravagant praise and weasel-words of blame—so far as the record discloses.”⁹⁶⁴ Soon thereafter, though: “The Boss may be pardoned, when, in the early Summer of 1870, he began to assume the grand manner in public. The city fawned upon him and his Ring.”⁹⁶⁵ In his last months, Tweed was pictured as a philosophic, expiring captive, hoping only to be freed before death. He was “very bitter toward the newspapers:” even though he “did not personally mind the attacks,” he regretted the pain they caused his wife and daughters.⁹⁶⁶ Lynch thought it “evident to all with understanding that he was being made the scapegoat.”⁹⁶⁷

As to the seriousness of the crimes of Tweed and the Ring, Lynch had conflicting thoughts in which leniency lurked. He judged: “A more degraded Assembly than the one over which Tweed’s speaker presided is hard to conceive. There have been others more corrupt. But this one was without shame.”⁹⁶⁸ In his last months, though, the ex-Boss was “the scapegoat of the sins of hundreds equally guilty.”⁹⁶⁹

Lynch saw the Ring as the culmination of a trend that had begun in the 1840s: “In the thirty years ending with the dethronement of Tweed, and the overthrow of the Ring, New York was in the hands of corruptionists.”⁹⁷⁰ From this historical perspective, Lynch emerged with an extraordinary statement on the Boss:

Public thieving did not begin with Tweed. Nor did it die with him...

Almost every one of Tweed's associates from the beginning of his public life, played this age-old game [of looting] of the politician. Tweed was an exception.⁹⁷¹

For contemporary *New York Times* reviewer Charles Willis Thompson, Lynch's volume had the main thrust of refuting the "general belief that [the nation] never was so corrupt before or since" the first few post-war years. Thompson concluded from it that the City governments of the 1840s and 1850s were more scandalous than those of Tweed's Gilded Age.

With respect to the person, Thompson thought that Lynch was at some pains to disprove the common belief that Tweed was coarse, vulgar and illiterate. Seen through his eyes, the Boss—he was the first on whom that title was conferred—was a sort of Napoleon gone wrong.⁹⁷²

Tweed as "merely a business man:" *Tammany Hall*.

Like Gustavus Myers 27 years before, M. R. Werner stated his intent to recount with neutral pen the history of Tammany – and was similarly charged with having had it in for the braves. Upon the appearance in early 1928 of his *Tammany Hall*, *Times* reviewer Charles Willis Thompson termed it "a partisan indictment, entirely one-sided, soft-pedaling or wholly ignoring one set of facts and playing up the other." He thought that it would be used in the Presidential campaign then unfolding and suspected that that had been the intention.⁹⁷³ As the year progressed, the Republicans selected Herbert Hoover and the Democrats, Tammany loyalist Alfred E. Smith, for the Presidency. The opposition to Smith would cite Werner's book as having "fully disclosed" "the shocking record of corruption by Tammany."⁹⁷⁴ Hoover would win 58 percent of the popular vote and 84 percent of the Electors.

Tweed's Ring loomed larger in Werner's than in Myers' account of the Hall: filling three tenths of his pages. As with Myers, a primary defense against allegations of bias would be the extensive documentation of the corruption described – with the testimony before the Aldermen, the

Congressional report on the election frauds of 1868, contemporary newspapers, Tilden's letters, and Wingate's history among his most-cited sources. In addition to detailing the crimes of the Ring, Werner repeated the allegations of Wingate against the private behavior of Connolly, Sweeny, and Tweed. He also quoted an avowed enemy of the Boss, accusing him of having kept two mistresses.⁹⁷⁵

In comparing the Ring with other times, Myers and Werner couched their judgments differently. Myers had felt that Fernando Wood had demonstrated "the feasibility of the 'boss' system," but that Tweed had "develop[ed] it to its highest pitch."⁹⁷⁶ Werner, in contrast, thought that "the system of one-man power which prevailed over the next fifty years" had been established by John Kelly.⁹⁷⁷ Kelly's legacy from Tweed was an organization bruised and shaken by the Ring's fall: "He found [Tammany Hall] a horde. He left it a political army."⁹⁷⁸

Werner at times pulled his punches on the Boss: suggesting, for instance, that "his one-syllable name" might have helped to make him "the symbol of corruption which the imagination of the mob required."⁹⁷⁹ To sum up, "Tweed, in spite of the clergymen and moralists, was not a bad man in the popular sense in which that term would be used; he was merely a business man."⁹⁸⁰ In this, he echoed a leading opponent of the Wigwam in the 1890s, the Reverend Charles Parkhurst, who thought the Hall "not a political party but purely a business enterprise."⁹⁸¹

On Samuel Tilden, Werner came down harder than had earlier Ring historians. The reforming Democrat was mainly motivated by personal political considerations, "cold, calculating, and inordinately ambitious."⁹⁸²

Yet harsher were Werner's judgments on Tammany itself, "whose members have always been devoted to turning the manifold resources of the metropolis to their personal use."⁹⁸³ He had found early on that a history of the Hall had to be, above all, a "history of corruption"⁹⁸⁴ and agreed with Lincoln Steffens that the City, under the Hall had a "government of the people, by the rascals, for the rich."⁹⁸⁵

The Wigwam as Expeditious Dismantler of the Ring: "Tammany Upheld and Condemned"

Also timed to enlighten the voting on Hoover and Smith was a short history of Tammany Hall, written by its leader, Judge George W. Olvany. His article, "Tammany As A Patriotic Society," appeared in the November

1928 issue of *Current History* magazine as Part I of “Tammany Upheld and Condemned.”

Of the Ring era, Olvany wrote:

Members of a faction of office-holders identified with the organization were proven faithless of the trust imposed in them. The respected and conservative leaders of the Tammany Society and of the Democratic Committee, however, without delay, exposed these miscreants and led in their prosecution. They were not only dismissed from office and punished but many of them were driven into exile...

The leaders in the Tammany house-cleaning restored Tammany to its old vigor and patriotism, and two of them, Governor Samuel J. Tilden and Charles O’Conor, were nominated for the Presidency.⁹⁸⁶

Following Olvany’s article was Part II – “Tammany’s Policy Of ‘Rule Or Ruin’” by Denis Tilden Lynch. The author of *‘Boss’ Tweed* found the Judge’s account “at variance with the record.”⁹⁸⁷ Olvany had, for instance, failed to mention both the role of the *Times* in bringing down the Ring (the Sachems having “loosed their batteries of billingsgate” at Jones and Jennings) and the Wigwam’s renomination of the Boss to his Senate seat – after the thefts had been exposed.⁹⁸⁸

Lyrics and Lechery: *Up in Central Park*

In January 1945, the musical comedy, *Up in Central Park*, opened on Broadway and ran for over a year. In October 1948, the film version, starring Vincent Price as Tweed and Deanna Durbin as a fictional Irish ingénue, was released by Universal-International. That company, fearing “objections from any descendants who may crop up,” had changed the names of “blackguards” from the musical. “Fisk” became “Fitz;” “Hall,” “Oakley;” and “Hoffman,” “Motley.” One quasi-historical character was Myron Schultz, a bizarre conflation of the grifting blackmailer, James O’Brien, and the iconic incorruptible, Charles O’Conor.⁹⁸⁹

The young lady and her family had, in the movie, recently arrived from Ireland and initially welcomed Tammany’s favors. The father was “patronized” by Tweed “to seal his lips after an election scandal.”⁹⁹⁰ The Boss also hit unsuccessfully on Miss Durbin.⁹⁹¹ The family came to see evil in corruption and the Ring was felled by a melodious scribe of the *Times*.

The paper judged that the story line was “artificially dramatized and the facts don’t fall into place in a manner to warrant serious attention.”⁹⁹²

An Early Safety Net: “Boss Tweed’s Public Welfare Program”

John W. Pratt of the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee argued in 1961 that historians had signally overlooked the Ring’s program of public welfare. That Tweed and other leaders gave food and fuel to the poor, found them jobs, and assisted in their naturalization, was, Pratt conceded, known. Neglected, however, he argued, was Tweed’s “extensive program of public aid to private institutions” – which “was systematic and sustained throughout the years of the Ring’s greatest power.”⁹⁹³

State aid to private charities had averaged \$129,000 annually in the seventeen years before Tweed’s arrival in the Senate. “During the three years in which Tweed superintended the passage of the charity bills,” the annual average was \$742,000.⁹⁹⁴ Within the City in these years, \$1,396,000 went to Catholic schools, orphanages, hospitals, and dispensaries; \$83,000 to Protestant institutions; \$26,000 to Jewish; and \$194,000 to unaffiliated.⁹⁹⁵

This program, Pratt concluded,

while cynically conceived to promote the selfish interests of the Tweed Ring, served a beneficial and much-needed end. It helped to soften some of the rigors of urban life years before the majority of Americans were persuaded that the public had a continuing responsibility for the welfare of society’s unfortunates.⁹⁹⁶

Coordination through Corruption: *Boss Tweed’s New York*

Centralization under the Ring. A fresh perspective on the Ring was in 1965 provided by Seymour Mandelbaum in *Boss Tweed’s New York* – which was, he wrote, “to put it somewhat too simply, a study in the distribution of information.”⁹⁹⁷ Mandelbaum’s analytic model came from theories of organizational behavior based on “a center for making decisions and several points of contact with the external environment which operate both as sources of information and agencies for action.”⁹⁹⁸ When information flows poorly, the outlying points are the more likely to act on

their own. When the actions of dispersed parts significantly affect each other, centralized decisions have advantages.

Mandelbaum examined the tensions vying for and against centralization in the City of the 1860s and 1870s. His critical eye ranged across transportation systems, sewers, space development, postal service, press, schools, churches, business generally, the insurance sector specifically, labor, medicine, law, police, the young and the old, and the evolving roles of women. In government, he judged that “parties supplied the major element of political coordination.” But centralization was a challenge, surmounted via corruption:

There was only one way New York could be “bossed” in the 1860’s. The lines of communication were too narrow, the patterns of deference too weak, to support freely acknowledged and stable leadership. Only a universal payment of benefits—a giant “pay-off”—could pull the city together in a common effort. The only treasury big enough to support coordination was the public till.⁹⁹⁹

Tweed himself was seen by Mandelbaum as acting both against and for centralization. His Charter was, in ways, a “return to decentralization,” terminating coordinative activities of the State and leading to such increased “costs of fragmentation,” as “{c}ompetitive development of the waterfront on both sides of the East River [which] narrowed the channel and seriously restricted the current.”¹⁰⁰⁰ In one summation, “Tweed was a master of the strategy of the leadership which succeeds because it allows men to do as they please.”¹⁰⁰¹

Conversely however, the Boss also “united the elements in a divided society in the only manner in which they could be united: by paying them off.”¹⁰⁰² Among other things, “Tweed was a master communicator... he united the fragmented news media.”¹⁰⁰³ His Charter, although weakening State oversight, promoted centralization in other ways – notably in “the concentration of [his own] authority... as superintendent of public works.”

Mandelbaum thought William Tweed “the symbol of centralization” – especially when contrasted with his opponent, Samuel Tilden. He speculated that the difference may have sprung from Tilden’s rural youth – as “men raised in the country or in small towns expect more of voluntary associations than men who are city-bred.”¹⁰⁰⁴ (Tweed had said much the same of his party Chairman: “He wants to... run the city as if ’twas a damned little country store in New Lebanon... to bring the hayloft and

cheese-press down to the city, and crush out the machine”¹⁰⁰⁵ – as Tilden was, indeed, occasionally depicted and derided as the leader of the “cheese-press and hayloft” Democracy.)

The reign of the Ring Mandelbaum saw as “the moment of opportunity” for such sensible centralization as in the development of northern Manhattan, the docks, tenement housing, public health, and Central Park.¹⁰⁰⁶ Its fall unleashed centrifugal forces. The reformers, in Mandelbaum’s view, stressed economy and clean government to a fault – as Controller “Green wanted to stop the world so that the accountants could check the ledgers.” Tweed, in contrast, had enacted measures sought by many groups “by paying rival interests in their own coin—social welfare in one pocket, roads in another, cash in still a third (including his own).”¹⁰⁰⁷

Havemeyer, on becoming Mayor in 1873, was a decentralizer who supported Green.¹⁰⁰⁸ He wanted infrastructural improvements to be paid for by local beneficiaries, and opposed such projects as the Brooklyn Bridge and the securing of new reservoirs. “He had,” thought Mandelbaum, “neither the corrupt motives nor the honest vision to act effectively.”¹⁰⁰⁹ By the fall of 1873, political support for Havemeyer had become negligible¹⁰¹⁰ – leading another historian to conclude from *Boss Tweed's New York* that “the cost of ‘clean’ government was a marked loss of support.”¹⁰¹¹

Academic reviewers applauded Mandelbaum’s approach and insights but doubted the broad validity of his theory.¹⁰¹² One summed up that:

to intimate that Tweed and the boss system were the result [of inadequate municipal communications] seems to prove too much; for if the generalization were true, every place with poor communications would then—and now—have its boss and machine, and, moreover, with improvements in communication, they would disappear... There must be other causes of bosses and bossism.¹⁰¹³

Change-Bred Graft: *The Tweed Ring*

Alexander B. Callow, Jr., judged in 1966 that

surprisingly, the Tweed Ring has never been the subject of a serious work. When it has received attention in the Sunday supplements and magazine articles, or in a chapter or two from biographers, political

scientists, and historians dealing with other topics, the more sensational aspects of its history have been emphasized.¹⁰¹⁴

This neglect had persisted despite what Callow suspected was a consensus among the “knowledgeable” that the Ring was “the most infamous city political machine in our history... the classic example of municipal fraud.”¹⁰¹⁵ His own book, *The Tweed Ring*, would redress the historical oversight.

The Boss. While Mandelbaum had recounted the rise and fall of the Ring in the context of the swelling and ebbing of centralization; Callow, instead, saw Tweed-linked corruption as the product of the “economic, political, and social change” of the post-mid-century years, which fostered “problems that baffled and overwhelmed New Yorkers and set the stage for machine rule.”¹⁰¹⁶ To exploit this stage required, he thought, the qualities of a unique person: “the final cohesive element to the Ring’s organization, was the character of the Boss himself.” Tweed combined “gifts as a political organizer” and “a personal touch:” “charm, a personal magnetism... a booming hearty personality that befitted his physique.”¹⁰¹⁷

Callow had sympathy for Tweed’s flight, considering it – like those of Connolly and Sweeny – simple sanity.¹⁰¹⁸ Like Lynch (and the later writers Leo Hershkowitz, and Kenneth Ackerman), Callow thought that the State had dealt shabbily with Tweed in first encouraging, then rejecting his confession. The author scoffed at the assertion of Attorney General Fairchild that the Boss’s admissions were too insubstantial to justify his release. Instead, wrote Callow:

It was not that the confession and accompanying checks was insufficient evidence, it was that they were too much evidence. The confession involved men high in office, city, state, and town. If Fairchild had completed his bargain, Tweed’s confession, the testimony he could have offered in any court action, and other papers he had at his disposal would have blown the roofs off Tammany and the State Capitol because the potential scandal would have been even greater than the Ring exposures themselves.¹⁰¹⁹

The culture of corruption. Notwithstanding, however, the attention given to the quattuorvirate, Callow argued that the Ring “also grew out of the thorny political, social, and economic conditions of New York City.”¹⁰²⁰ Chapters described such aspects of the City as the evolving transportation

systems, the diversions, the slums, the brothels, the saloons, the estimated 2,000 gambling dens, the 30,000 professional thieves, the immigrants, the political clubs, the police, and the courts. Traditional modes of government could not cope with these multi-dimensional changes and were superseded by Tammany.

More than other writers, Callow described the ancillary misbehavior of the Ring and of its less prominent members: patronage hiring; insider buying of properties soon to benefit from municipal improvements; the shakedowns of businesses ranging from sidewalk vendors to transportation franchisees; the neglect of unsanitary living conditions in the tenements and of filth in the streets; the winking at vice and crime.

Reformer shortcomings. Relentless as he was in relating the misdeeds of Tammany, Callow also surpassed other writers in criticizing “the middle and upper classes,” who had been “evicted from power” by the combination of entrepreneurs, immigrants, and professional pols.¹⁰²¹ Having lost municipal control, many of the displaced elite became “{w}ell-meaning reformers” who

further compounded the problems of responsible government. Dismayed and distrustful of rapid urbanization, many turned to history and learned the wrong lesson. They tried to mold government to accord with an ideal that typified an older, simpler, and less urban America. Their panacea called for a small, inexpensive, intensely economy-minded government.¹⁰²²

While such characterization accorded with that of Mandelbaum, Callow went further in censuring reformers. He saw them as fundamentally confused and motivated largely by a “sense of lost status,” coupled with “contempt and fear of the masses”¹⁰²³ – especially, the immigrant masses.¹⁰²⁴ Reformers had, he felt, no understanding of or appreciation for the roles played by professional politicians¹⁰²⁵ and often espoused “a simple, and, indeed, naïve moral argument: the cause of corruption is evil men.”¹⁰²⁶ They regretted the disappearance of “the best people” – those of high social class, such as De Witt Clinton – from Manhattan’s leadership.¹⁰²⁷ So “imprisoned by [their] own social philosophy,” the would-be municipal improvers “continued to alienate the immigrant newcomer”¹⁰²⁸ and espoused such elitist nostrums as curtailing suffrage.

Callow closed with reflection on the basic failure of the reformers:

Thus the rascals were routed, but their supreme achievement, the city machine itself, remained essentially intact...

After all was said and done, the crusade against the Tweed Ring won the battle but lost the war. In a real sense, William Marcy Tweed had the last word, when he asked, “Well, what are you going to do about it?”¹⁰²⁹

Critical response. With one notable exception, *The Tweed Ring* was praised: for both the extent of Callow’s research and the artistry of his presentation¹⁰³⁰ – yielding a work that “fill[ed] a major gap in the historical literature of New York City”¹⁰³¹ and “undoubtedly will be the standard account” of the Ring.¹⁰³²

Reviewers took away misgivings about the reformers¹⁰³³ and heightened appreciation of Tweed – lauded for his charm, his “unusual executive and organizational abilities” as a “middleman between the city’s economic organization and its agencies of government,”¹⁰³⁴ and his “masterful” “bipartisan innovations.”¹⁰³⁵ Callow’s praise of Tweed prepared the ground for the yet-more-positive treatments the Boss would receive from Hershkowitz and Ackerman.

The odd reviewer out was Seymour Mandelbaum. The author one year earlier of *Boss Tweed's New York*, had “{s}cribbled disagreements... over almost half the pages” of Callow’s book. His criticisms included:

- that Callow waffled on Mandelbaum’s own main focus of centralization. At times, Callow “contends that Tweed developed a stable and highly centralized political machine;” at others, “he repeatedly describes New York’s political system as ‘feudal’... You cannot have your feudal cake and centralize it too;” and
- that the “prototypical modern political machine to which Callow alludes... has very little substance... Callow’s frame of reference seems, in my scribbles, curiously irrelevant.”¹⁰³⁶ (Another reviewer, Morris Renek in the *New Republic*, had the opposite reaction: that “[Tweed’s] Ring laid the foundation for the modern political machine that roils the hearts of city governments today.”¹⁰³⁷)

The Wrongly Blackened Boss: *Tweed's New York: Another Look*

A variant view. On October 17, 1976, a front-page headline of the *Times* announced: “Book Finds ‘Boss’ Tweed a Much-Maligned Character.” *Tweed’s New York: Another Look*, by Leo Hershkowitz, a professor at Queens College, would appear the next year.

Few, if any, other historians had researched as fully as Hershkowitz the documents of the Ring era. Having paid special attention to the financial and legal records, he concluded that “William M. Tweed, the notorious ‘Boss’ Tweed, is one of the great myths of American history.”¹⁰³⁸ Hershkowitz’s Tweed: had winning personal qualities; “opened schools, hospitals, museums;”¹⁰³⁹ obviously “did not ‘dictate’ to or control, the legislature;”¹⁰⁴⁰ was targeted by Republicans and anti-immigrant, anti-City bigots; and

was convicted after some strange, improper, even illegal judicial proceedings, which were in many ways worse than anything Tweed supposedly committed... The manipulation of the law by those sworn to uphold the law was a real crime... Under these conditions, Snow White would have been hanged for loitering to commit prostitution.”¹⁰⁴¹

Hershkowitz thought the Boss’s confession coerced and false: “Tweed had seized a desperate straw. He would accept the role of the terrible ‘Boss,’ then as a humble penitent hope for the best.”¹⁰⁴² His wealth was explained as having been amassed “by representing groups like the Erie Railroad.”¹⁰⁴³ Far from a powerful Boss (despite the myriad civic achievements the author credited to him), he was a mere “paper tiger, a bench warmer, watching the pros at work.”¹⁰⁴⁴

Middle name. The Boss was known mainly in his lifetime as “William M. Tweed.” In the last few years of his life, the middle initial was occasionally taken to stand for “Marcy,” supposedly after William L. Marcy, a Jacksonian Democrat who had been Governor of New York from 1833 through 1838. To Marcy was attributed the motto of political patronage: “To the victor belong the spoils.” Generations of historians – including Wingate, Bryce, Lynch, Mandelbaum, and Callow¹⁰⁴⁵ – have written of “William Marcy Tweed.”

Hershkowitz argued that Marcy was unknown at the time of Tweed’s birth and that the initial stood for “Magear,” the maiden name of his mother – both the son and grandson of the Boss having been baptized “William Magear Tweed.” Hershkowitz thought that “Marcy was surely tacked on by

newspapermen as a clever thought, a nickname befitting a ‘corrupt’ politician.”¹⁰⁴⁶

Hershkowitz reported uncovering no newspaper use of “Marcy” as the middle name of the Boss before 1873 in the *New York Herald*.¹⁰⁴⁷ Two years earlier, however, the *Times*, on June 1, 1871, had written of “WM. MARCY TWEED.”¹⁰⁴⁸ The *Herald*, in 1878 reported that a gold watch inscribed, “To William Marcy Tweed,” had been given to him by his fire company in 1850.¹⁰⁴⁹ Lynch wrote that Tweed, when arrested, had been wearing it.¹⁰⁵⁰ The watch, if it ever existed, has been lost.¹⁰⁵¹

Although historians after Hershkowitz¹⁰⁵² have favored “Magear,” reference to “William Marcy Tweed” remains common.¹⁰⁵³

Review poles. The book evoked critical extremes. Two academic reviewers issued encomia: lauding Hershkowitz’s unsurpassed mastery of the City archives and his “tenacity for separating evidence from legend” and terming his work a “fascinating revisionist biography” and “a superb contribution to understanding nineteenth-century America” – judging in conclusion that Hershkowitz had “succeed[ed] beyond anyone’s wildest dreams” in “deal[ing] with the ‘Tweed myth’” and had produced what might be “the most important single book on New York City in the immediate post-Civil War decade published in the last thirty years.”¹⁰⁵⁴

Two other professors of history had reservations: thinking that Hershkowitz had not succeeded in explaining away “the mass of evidence” that the Ring existed or why Tweed would have made a false confession or how his wealth might have been honestly acquired; but concluding that, even though the Boss remained a “corruptionist,” the book, nevertheless, rehabilitated “Tweed the man... a person who bore his travails with grace.”¹⁰⁵⁵

Of three reviews¹⁰⁵⁶ wholly rejecting Hershkowitz’s version of Tweed’s story, the most extensive was by Ari Hoogenboom, of the City University of New York, and his wife, Olive. In their essay, “Was Boss Tweed Really Snow White?,” the Hoogenbooms credited Hershkowitz with having “rescued from destruction... over a million documents relating to New York City’s financial history”¹⁰⁵⁷ and for correcting his middle name. They thought, though, that the author had been driven by unbounded vengeance, had forsaken historical objectivity, and had “written a lopsided defense attorney’s brief”¹⁰⁵⁸ in support of Tweed. The author’s tack puzzled the Hoogenbooms the more in that such recent historians as Pratt, Mandelbaum, and Callow had been treating the Boss well: indeed providing

“testimonials that Tweed was a genial, kind thief with the heart of a social worker and the vision of an urban planner.”¹⁰⁵⁹

Hershkowitz had had scorn for earlier historians who “never bother[ed] to look at dust-gathering records, or even those quite dust-free.”¹⁰⁶⁰ The Hoogenbooms felt though that he had done the equivalent: failing to base his arguments on the extensive data he had reviewed; and unsatisfactorily – via flimsy explanations and the unjustified smearing of Tweed’s contemporary antagonists – dismissing all evidence at variance with his own, exculpatory, thesis. They concluded that “like Tweed, Hershkowitz has overreached himself.”¹⁰⁶¹

14

Modern Views of the Ring

Short Takes: the Texts

Lead authors of three high-school textbooks of American history published between 1986 and 1993 were Norman K. Risjord, Daniel J. Boorstin, and David C. King: devoting five, one, and one paragraphs, respectively, to the Ring. In Risjord's *History of the American People*, the Tweed Ring was its most extensive example of corruption in the postbellum U. S. – mentioning also such others as Crédit Mobilier and the Whiskey Ring. Given the state of the City then, “where growth outpaced government, corruption was virtually inevitable.” Tweed himself was “a champion of the poor” for providing jobs and enacting beneficial laws. Although but one of a number of persons in charge of the City's money, his size and profligacy made him the target of such men as Nast and Tilden. The Boss was imprisoned for lapses in the keeping of the City's primitive financial ledgers. The account could have led high schoolers to wonder whether anyone in this episode might have stolen anything.¹⁰⁶²

In Daniel J. Boorstin's *A History of the United States*, Tweed was “a self-made, warmhearted man,” who, with his friends, stole over \$45 million. The Ring was exposed by Tilden, assisted by Nast.¹⁰⁶³

David C. King's *The United States and Its People* presented the Tweed Ring as the best-known urban political machine. After it had robbed the City of at least \$75 million, the newspapers spurred the election of reformers. Tweed and many colleagues were arrested (no mention being made that he was also tried, convicted, and jailed).¹⁰⁶⁴

Lethal Leader: *The Waterworks*

Belaureled novelist E. L. Doctorow in 1994 set *The Waterworks* in the Ring's City of 1871. The narrator, the fictional journalist McIlvaine, summarized “William Marcy Tweed,” as having “[run] the city as no one had before him. He was the messiah of the ward politicians, the fulfillment of everything about democracy they believed in.”¹⁰⁶⁵ Recounting events decades later, McIlvaine cautioned against witless nostalgia:

{Y}ou look back on Boss Tweed with affection, as a wonderful fraud, a legendary scoundrel of old New York. But what he accomplished was murderous in the very modern sense of the term. Manifestly murderous. Can you understand his enormous power, the fear he inspired? Can you imagine what it is like to live in a city of thieves, raucous in its dissembling, a city falling into ruin, a society in name only?¹⁰⁶⁶

Tweed and others of the Ring played but a peripheral role in the story line of *The Waterworks* – his actions but distantly described – even though McIlvaine had known him

personally... I fired more than one reporter whom he'd bribed. Those he couldn't bribe, he bullied... He bought the drinks and paid for the dinners. But in the odd moment when there was no hand to shake or toast to give, the eye went dead and you saw the soul of a savage.¹⁰⁶⁷

The Boss, moreover, set the mood – as “Tweed’s image inhered in the shifting formation of the clouds, or in the light of each season.”¹⁰⁶⁸

A cameo appearance was made by James O'Brien, who “arrived unannounced” in McIlvaine’s office “and sat down in front of me and wiped his bald head and lit his cigar.”¹⁰⁶⁹ He had brought Copeland’s proofs of Ring thefts. McIlvaine’s superiors, however, nixed publication – which packed O'Brien off to Jones and Jennings at the *Times*.

A deus ex machina was Donne – the consummate unlikelihood of an honest captain in the Municipal Police. His constabulary was “an organization of licensed thieves,” in which “{e}very exalted rank, from sergeant up through... commissioner, paid the Tweed Ring for the privilege of public service... Donne being probably the highest-ranking [exception].”¹⁰⁷⁰ Upon his discovery of ongoing crimes, the Ring, if still in full power, would “have dealt with this crisis brutally and summarily.”¹⁰⁷¹ That it was just then succumbing to the irate citizenry, enabled Donne to go forward.

Marble Monument: The Tweed Courthouse

Despite the thirteen million dollars spent on the New York County Courthouse by the early 1870s, it was not then complete. Work on it was suspended between 1872 and 1876 and Tweed was himself tried in one of its unfinished rooms. It was finally completed in 1881. After City Hall, built in 1811, it was Manhattan's second permanent government building.

Described in 1953 as "leaky," with room heights of 28 feet, and a rotunda rising 85 feet over its floor, the structure was thought unsuited to office use and occasional proposals for its razing were put forward.¹⁰⁷² In 1961, however, it became a municipal office building. Alexander Callow called it a few years later "a shabby, squat pile of Massachusetts marble... a sad, forlorn, almost forgotten little building. A small, chunky, three-story structure barely reaching a hundred feet, it is dwarfed by surrounding buildings."¹⁰⁷³ In 1974, it was designated a National Historic Place.

Between 1999 and 2001, the building was renovated, at a cost of \$85 million – 2.3 times the \$37 million first estimated. In 2002, the City's Department of Education moved in. The newly renovated Anglo-Italianate structure has won positive reviews – for the original architectural plan of John Kellum, for the workmanship of Andrew Garvey and others, and for the restorative work.¹⁰⁷⁴

The Tweed Courthouse – so named on the website of the City – stands at 52 Chambers Street, behind City Hall, half a mile from the World Trade Center. On September 11, 2001, it was covered with dust from the collapse of the Twin Towers, but suffered no damage. Over the next days, it was a command and rest center for the emergency workers.

Effective New Yorkers: "Boss Tweed And Giuliani? Follow Closely"

In December 2001, Joyce Purnick of the *New York Times* was moved by her tour of the "spectacularly renovated Tweed Courthouse" to reflect on the Boss and the current, lame-duck Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani. If contemporaries, the latter, she thought, would have prosecuted the former. Nevertheless, she sensed commonalities in that both had "what it takes to run their impossible city;" "neither let anything, be it convention or the law, get in his way;" each was a "fervent advocate for his city." Giuliani "realized that fractious, unruly New York can be led successfully only by someone who refuses to play by the rules, who writes his own" – like Fiorello La Guardia, Robert Moses, Edward Koch, and William

Tweed. All five “were large, loud, irritating figures who matched their large, loud, irritating city.”¹⁰⁷⁵

Smooth-Talking, Men-Hanging Boss: *Gangs of New York*

Martin Scorsese’s *Gangs of New York*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Daniel Day-Lewis, and Cameron Diaz, opened in December 2002. It would be nominated for Academy Awards in ten categories, including best picture, but win none. The central theme was the conflict between native-born Protestant Americans and the immigrant Irish. Jim Broadbent played William Tweed – with about as many lines as Cameron Diaz.

The Boss of *Gangs*:

- welcomed disembarking immigrants with heartening words, bread, soup, and exhortations to vote Tammany;
- as leader of the Americus Fire Brigade (nine years after the historical Tweed had last doused fires), fought off another fire company coming to a burning house, whereupon he ignored the blaze and encouraged the looting of buildings – whether afire or but remotely threatened by the blaze;
- spoke with an articulateness that might have made Henry Ward Beecher seem a mumbler of the many civic needs to be addressed, noting the opportunities they offered to make money;
- reacted to public outcry over crime by ordering four men hanged;
- allied himself and Tammany first with the nativists, but later turned against them, by joining with the Irish and promoting their political rise;¹⁰⁷⁶
- allowed contractors to keep for themselves but ten percent of what he had the City pay them; and
- ordered the miscounting of votes.

Benevolent Buddy: *Forever*

One disregarder of the counsel of Doctorow's narrator, McIlvaine, against romanticizing Tweed was Pete Hamill – another City writer of stature and an eminent journalist. His novel of 2003, *Forever*, told the story of one Cormac O'Connor, “who arrives in New York City in 1740 and remains... forever.”¹⁰⁷⁷ In April 1878, carrying a pail of ice cream to share with the dying Boss, O'Connor came to his Ludlow Street cell. (Ice cream having, indeed, been a favorite dish of the historical Boss. His daughter Josephine had just left his cell, running out for ice cream and beef tea, at the moment of his death.¹⁰⁷⁸) The two reflected on their 34 years of friendship. Hamill's Tweed – even as he wheezed and coughed up blood – had remained a heartily jocular, boon companion. Earlier, he had been a Manhattan outsider, yearning for property and power, which through politics he obtained. The Boss had “presented plans for water, for housing, for schools, for decent wages...” and “tried to make at least parts of them real.”¹⁰⁷⁹ “{H}e'd helped thousands of people in the bad parts of town.”¹⁰⁸⁰

And he had stolen, “presiding over the most corrupt system in New York history” and taking “25 percent of all city contracts.”¹⁰⁸¹

Incandescent Presence: *Boss Tweed: The Rise and Fall of the Corrupt Pol Who Conceived the Soul of Modern New York*

The death cell described by Hamill would also open the best biography of the Boss:

April 12, 1878

Tweed was dying that morning, locked inside New York City's Ludlow Street Jail at Grand Street on the Lower East Side. At about 11:40 A.M., he began to whisper...

So began in 2005 Kenneth Ackerman's *Boss Tweed: The Rise and Fall of the Corrupt Pol Who Conceived the Soul of Modern New York*. Suffering from multiple ailments, depressed, cheated by the State, and “largely abandoned” by his family,¹⁰⁸² the man who “had left enormous footprints on his city”¹⁰⁸³ had but minutes to live.

Take on Tweed. A strength of the book is its empathetic depiction of the main figures: describing – credibly, if with occasional speculation – their situations, challenges, options as they saw them, and actions. This approach must, however, falter when documentation is thin, as it was for Sweeny and Tweed. Although Ackerman mined well the extant records on the Boss – minutes of Supervisors’ meetings, reporter interviews, speeches, and first-hand accounts of his later years; gaps remain. Few were both Tweed’s own writings and the accounts of others of interactions with him before 1870. Significant uncertainty, in consequence, remains with respect to the germination of his stealing and the early growth of his power. Doubts may be entertained about the characterizations of Tweed not just in Ackerman but also in such works as Scorsese’s *Gangs* and Hamill’s *Forever*. All three may, in fact, accurately portray his personality and psychology, but, given the scantiness of the evidence, high confidence that that is the case is inapt.

Notwithstanding Ackerman’s nuanced touching on the virtues and warts of the main figures, his preferences may be sensed: fondness, for instance, for Tweed and hardness toward Tilden. They were presented antithetically: the shoulder-patting, ebullient pol, counterbalanced by the stiff, formal lawyer with “a sallow complexion” and “a bland, colorless voice.”¹⁰⁸⁴ While it was possible that Tweed had a mistress, whom, if she existed, he kept “well-hidden, as a Victorian-era gentleman would;”¹⁰⁸⁵ to the unwed Tilden, “love was merely sexual foolishness.”¹⁰⁸⁶ When both men testified before a Congressional committee: “The contrast could not have been sharper; unlike Tilden’s cold personality, Tweed lit up the room.”¹⁰⁸⁷

Ackerman’s Bossward tilt surfaced in minor details and major judgments:

- Before the Congressional committee, Ackerman detected in his title figure qualities of charm and jocularly that might have escaped other readers of his testimony: “Tweed charmed them: ‘I was born in New York and have lived here all my life, and have as many friends among republicans as among democrats,’ he recounted. He joked about the money he’d personally sunk into the campaign: ‘Perhaps I contributed entirely about \$10,000... [ellipsis in original] I subscribed \$5,000 to the State committee and the rest went out in dribbles after that.’” (One can, to be sure, read Tweed’s words as conveying charisma, humor, and sparkle – inasmuch as Ackerman (with perhaps the best sense in the twenty-first century of the man) did. It is also,

though, possible to review the complete testimony of the Boss before the committee without sensing any of these qualities.);¹⁰⁸⁸

- Ackerman conceded that Tammany's frauds – graft and “ballot-box stuffing” – were “gigantic on any scale,” but thought that “Tweed was personally guilty for only a small fraction of the whole.”¹⁰⁸⁹ This judgment is puzzling in that the main direct perpetrators of the epic electoral shenanigans of 1868 – two judges and the sheriff – were, notoriously, agents of the Boss. Ackerman himself ascribed the operations of that year to him, as “{a}ll that fall, Tweed pressed his organization to get the job done;”¹⁰⁹⁰

- All in all, “{e}xcept for his stealing, Tweed would have been a great man; but then had he been honest, he wouldn't have been Tweed and would not have left nearly so great a mark;”¹⁰⁹¹ and

- The closing words of the book: “His swagger is as much a part of modern New York City as the steel, the concrete, the noise, and the traffic. That's a good enough monument for him.”¹⁰⁹²

Treatment of Tilden. Contrasting with the gentle touch granted Tweed was severity toward Tilden. Despite moments of generosity toward the Governor, Ackerman also occasionally denied him the benefit of documentary doubt and took gratuitous shots:

- remarking that Tilden (who then held no public office) “had been notably absent during the July 1863 draft riots,” claiming “to be sick in bed at the time;”¹⁰⁹³

- suggesting hypocrisy in Tilden's both decrying judicial corruption and writing to Judge “Cardozo a long pleading letter asking special leniency for one of his own clients.”¹⁰⁹⁴ The letter in question did, to be sure, in the legal sense, plead the case of his client – because, Tilden wrote, a schedule conflict prevented him from presenting it in person. It is hard, though, to find in it any pleading in the sense of fawning supplication or, indeed, anything other than fulfillment of a lawyer's professional obligation to represent a client in a case that happened to be before Cardozo;¹⁰⁹⁵ and

- calling Tilden's appearance in April 1870 before Tweed's Senate Committee "timid."¹⁰⁹⁶ Many of Tilden's actions and inactions – such as his failure to come to the defense of a political friend targeted by Tweed,¹⁰⁹⁷ his meekly doing the Ring's bidding in the Democratic State Convention of 1870,¹⁰⁹⁸ and his slowness in acting on the publication of Copeland's accounts – were, indeed, open to the insinuations of cowardice made by Ackerman and others. But here, in the Albany hotel lair of Tammany's alpha tiger, he had persevered through the rude interruption of Tweed to make the day's most forthright denunciation of the Boss's farcical Charter. Ought he not also to be given due credit for his doughtier deeds?

More than other historians, Ackerman blamed Tilden for the State's shady dealing with the Boss. He asserted as fact (citing no sources) that the Democracy's State Chairman, aspiring in late 1870 to be Governor, saw his ambitions blocked by Tweed's preeminence, and resolved that "Tweed had to go. Someone had to take him down."¹⁰⁹⁹ Subsequently, Tilden – a man of "brilliance" acknowledged by Ackerman¹¹⁰⁰ – was seen as bent on the Boss's destruction, even after Tweed had served time:

- In early 1875, with Tweed appealing the cumulative sentence Noah Davis had given him, Tilden, now Governor, "with an eye toward a presidential nomination the next year... had no intention of setting him free. Tilden had made Tweed the centerpiece of his 'reform' résumé, the reason voters had sent him to Albany in the first place." He therefore "quietly pushed through the Albany legislature" the law that would lead to the immediate rejailling of the Boss after his release in June;¹¹⁰¹

- Later that year, Tweed and only Tweed "could expect no mercy" from the Presidential aspirant in the Governor's chair.¹¹⁰² Contractor James Ingersoll had been pardoned by Tilden, basically on the condition that he testify against the Boss;¹¹⁰³

- In the matter of Tweed's confession, Tilden was again attributed political motives. State Attorney General Charles Fairchild was seen to have taken "his cues from... Tilden."¹¹⁰⁴ It was likely that Tilden's advice to Fairchild was "to string out the convict, get from Tweed all the value he could, then cast the old man away."¹¹⁰⁵ When

Fairchild made a deal on the confession, reneged on it, and then lied about it, he was presumed to be doing Tilden's bidding. Tilden was similarly thought implicated in the deal with Sweeny, through which Tweed had "been cheated. His testimony had become worthless, though his draft 'confession' had doubtless been used as a bargaining chip;"¹¹⁰⁶ and

- In sum, "by letting politics and personal malice appear to shade his judgment, [Tilden] ironically turned the Boss into a martyr."¹¹⁰⁷

Reviewer reaction. Reviewers of *Boss Tweed* voiced:

- appreciation and sympathy for the subject;¹¹⁰⁸
- low opinions of Tilden and other reformers;¹¹⁰⁹
- bafflement with respect to the title's claim that Tweed had "conceived the soul of modern New York" – of which they found scant evidence in the book;¹¹¹⁰ and
- frustration that from this, the preeminent biography of Tweed, but an inadequate sense of the man was to be gained.¹¹¹¹ Pete Hamill here mixed his thoughts. While taking little time to prefer the company of the Boss to that of Al Gore, he nevertheless found Ackerman "sketchy on Tweed's formative years" and conceded that "we never learn the causes of Tweed's great hungers, and never will."

III

Questions

In drawing from the Ring and its representations – the subjects of Parts I and II – guidance for governments, questions arise. Among the most basic are those on the confidence due the conventional account. To the extents that we cannot distinguish uncertain happenings, speculative explanations, and fictional embroideries from fact; that we do not know who was guilty of what or how much harm was done to the City by the Ring; our inference of precepts must be impaired. Understanding of how to promote integrity in governments is enhanced by historical integrity in the recounting of corrupt episodes.

Consideration of broader questions follows: what reform was and did; why the corruption came, grew, and was trimmed back from its peak; and how the performances of various persons and systems credited with bringing down the Ring should be judged.

15

How Much Confidence Is Due the Consensual History of the Ring?

The shots of Leo Hershkowitz

A foremost denier of the standard Ring story has been Professor Leo Hershkowitz. While reviewers of his *Tweed's New York: Another Look* may have differed as to whether he had produced a revisionist masterwork or a biased brief, it is undisputed that, by challenging the usual history, he directed attention to important questions:

- What are our bases for crediting the accepted account of the Ring?
- How much confidence should we have in it?
- Where do points of uncertainty lie and how serious are they?

While the historians'-consensus version of the Ring given here has had few dissenters, Professor Hershkowitz was not shy in its rejection:

The myth has become so much a part of history and Tweed such a convenient reference for the after-dinner speaker, pulp writer, or simply something to frighten little children with, that if there wasn't a Tweed, he would have to be invented, and he was.¹¹¹²

The result, he thought, sprang from the methods:

The problem with Tweed and the myth is that it is all so much vapor and so little substance, and what has been written has not dispelled shadows, only deepened them. So little has been done to obtain even basic information about the man, and what is known is generally wrong. Perhaps never has so much nonsense been written about an individual.¹¹¹³

Hershkowitz based his case on:

- the impossibility “for one man or even a group of men to plan such a vast swindle involving hundreds if not thousands of officials, clerks, laborers, contractors, and hope to succeed;”¹¹¹⁴
- the value that the Tweed myth had for “rural conservative interests who find New York a threat to themselves and their entrenched power” and for affirming “the impossibility of the city even [sic?] governing itself.”¹¹¹⁵ “His identification with the interests of the city was enough for the traditional rural-suburban leadership to seek his destruction;”¹¹¹⁶
- the convenience of Tweed as a “stick with which to beat the city over the head;”¹¹¹⁷
- the qualities of Tweed himself; that he was “intensely loyal, warmhearted, outgoing, given to aiding the underdog and the underprivileged; but “also gullible, naïve, and easily fooled;”¹¹¹⁸
- Tweed’s corpulence — as “a ‘slim’ Tweed would not be as inviting a target... his features could be easily exaggerated by someone like Nast;”¹¹¹⁹
- Tweed’s value as a distraction and scapegoat: “a means for Republicans from President U.S. Grant on down to those in the local level to make people forget the corruptions in Republican circles... National Democrats... could point to Tweed and gain cheers and votes for their efforts to ‘delouse’ the party. If ever there was a scapegoat, its name was Tweed;”¹¹²⁰ and
- the bigotry of those “like Nast, George T. Strong and others who saw in Tweed an outsider threatening their position by his supposedly championing the ‘drunken-ignorant Irish,’ the overly ambitious German-Jewish immigrants and those seeking to change the status quo.”¹¹²¹

These points cannot be dismissed out of hand: there were tensions between up- and downstate; Tweed did have winning personal qualities; and bigotry targeted Tammany adherents. But what of the evidence that led

most historians to concur on the guilt of Tweed? Hershkowitz was dismissive: intolerant publications spread lies to feed the symbiotic biases of editor and reader; individual reformers were unscrupulous, dishonest, and self-serving;¹¹²² Tweed and others were pressured by judicial threats to testify to whatever versions of events best suited prosecutorial purposes.

The types of questions raised by Professor Hershkowitz are here addressed, beginning with his challenges to the standard history: whether bribes were dangled before Nast; whether Tweed ever said the words most famously attributed to him; whether his confession was true; and whether he was but a bit player in the graft. Similar issues raised by other writers have included: the culpability of Hall; the possible heroism of Tweed in 1863; the behavior of Tilden at Connolly's arrest; the cost of the Ring; and the total bribes paid to Republican legislators.

Were Bribes Offered to Thomas Nast?

Hershkowitz found

no evidence to substantiate the often repeated story that Tweed tried to bribe Nast with as much as a million dollars to end his cartooning. A million? Nast could have been had for the proverbial mess of pottage.¹¹²³

Other historians have overlooked whatever defects Nast's character might have had and his being the lone source of the story and have reported the proffered bribes as fact. Lending credence to the account were the report of the attempted bribery of George Jones and the confessed and documented bribery of others. Albert Bigelow Paine, Nast's biographer, wrote further of the pressures applied to the cartoonist (for qqwhich Paine's only source may have been Nast): letters threatening violence and death; Tweed's personal threat to horsewhip him on sight; the loitering of "rough characters" about his home, an attack by them likely prevented by a friendly police captain; and the statement by a banker that Nast was risking putting "yourself in a coffin."¹¹²⁴

Did William Tweed Ever Say His Best-Known Words?

Leo Hershkowitz likely had conflicting reactions to the closing sentence of Alexander Callow: “In a real sense, William Marcy Tweed had the last word, when he asked, ‘Well, what are you going to do about it?’” He would have agreed that Tweed had, in ways, found vindication but would have regretted that the mis-middle-named Boss was, once again, ascribed incendiary words that, Hershkowitz held, he never had said.

The Boss was alleged, no later than in June 1871, when confronted with charges of corruption, to have replied, “What are you going to do about it?” The words became a rallying cry of Ring opponents. Speaker after speaker at the Cooper Union meeting of September 4, 1871 reposed the question. The resolutions adopted there were brought forward with the declaration: “This is what we are going to do about it.”¹¹²⁵

In the October 7, 1871 issue of *Harper's Weekly*, Thomas Nast's cartoon featured an obese Tweed, his hat tilted down to obscure his eyes, smoke streaming from his cigar.¹¹²⁶ He stood slouchily, legs crossed, leaning on an elbow, next to a spherical container labeled “THE BALLOT,” above the sign: “IN COUNTING THERE IS STRENGTH.” Below was the title: “THAT'S WHAT'S THE MATTER”; still lower: “Boss Tweed. ‘As long as I count the Votes, what are you going to do about it? Say?’”

Stripped of the final “Say?”; the preceding fifteen words are the Boss's lone entry in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*.¹¹²⁷ It was reported by *Bartlett's* (and the second half of it by Wingate¹¹²⁸ and Bryce¹¹²⁹) to have been made shortly before the City elections of November 1871 – which seems unlikely, but not impossible, and may just reflect the date of the cartoon. In recent years, especially in connection with the Presidential election of 2000 and subsequent concern about the integrity of vote-counting technologies, versions of this statement have been cited. Google in 2010 returned 784 results for a search of these words.¹¹³⁰

Leo Hershkowitz disbelieved the accepted account:

[Tweed] is supposed to have snarled like a tiger to a group of cowering reporters, reformers and the public at large, “What are you going to do about it?” Again, what politician... would make such an asinine statement, no matter how sure he was of his position? It was certainly not Tweed's style.¹¹³¹

To which, it could be responded that Tweed had been reported as saying, in not-dissimilar style in September 1871 that “no justice would dare to order

[his arrest], and no jail was strong enough to hold him”¹¹³² – as well as his later boast that he could never be convicted. Hershkowitz continued, “In truth, the phrase was never used by Tweed, but invented by Nast as a caption for a June 10, 1871, cartoon... It was never Tweed’s question. It was... all Nast and all nonsense.”¹¹³³

Nast did, indeed, draw more than one cartoon in which Tweed was attributed the taunt.¹¹³⁴ Hershkowitz, nevertheless, erred in labeling it an invention of Nast for his cartoon of June 10, 1871. Two months earlier, at an anti-Ring rally on April 6, a speaker, former U.S. Attorney General and future U.S. Secretary of State William Evarts, had asserted:

{T}he present management and administration of that party, now in power in this City, do boast of their corruption, and do despise honest men. (Applause.) They say, “What are you going to do about it? (Laughter.)”¹¹³⁵

Whatever the original source of the words, it was not that given by Hershkowitz.

Writers before the 1977 appearance of Hershkowitz’s book – such as Bryce, Lynch, Werner, Callow, and McCullough – attributed the eight-word question to Tweed.¹¹³⁶ (Lynch ascribed it to “his loss of temper — the only time in his career.”¹¹³⁷ A strange explanation, given the Boss’s many documented boilings over.)

Post-1977 authors Allen and Ackerman questioned whether “What are you going to do about it?” had originated with Tweed. Allen found “no evidence from any newspaper or other contemporary publication that Tweed ever made the remark” and thought it possible that he had not.¹¹³⁸ Ackerman also turned up “no evidence that Tweed ever said these words: Nast apparently made it up.”¹¹³⁹ Elsewhere, Ackerman said flatly that “Thomas Nast had put the words in [Tweed’s] mouth”¹¹⁴⁰ and referred to them as “Tweed’s own mythical boast” and “the fake quote.”¹¹⁴¹ As evidence, Ackerman seemed to have meant direct reports of such a statement and to have discounted the secondary data that hundreds of thousands thought the words those of Tweed.

Ackerman’s conclusion that “Nast apparently made it up” – a softer version of the position of Hershkowitz¹¹⁴² – seems also, though, a stretch. Present understanding of the evidence cannot exclude the possibility that others – maybe enemies, maybe supporters of the Ring, maybe neither –

might have started the story. A *Times* editorial on July 1, 1871 entitled “What Will They Do About it?” ascribed the words not to Tweed himself, but (like Evarts) to “they,” “{t}he Ring”¹¹⁴³ – suggesting that Connolly, Hall, or Sweeny may have been the source.¹¹⁴⁴

With it appearing that contemporaries did not doubt the ascription of “What are you going to do about it?” to Tweed and that the Boss himself did not deny having said the words, it is not impossible that he had.

How True Was Tweed's Confession?

To Leo Hershkowitz, Tweed's admissions were a “very questionable ‘confession.’”¹¹⁴⁵ Most other writers, while noting with Hershkowitz the shortcomings of newspapers, reformers, prosecutors, and others, nevertheless accepted and retold what Hershkowitz termed “the myth.” McCullough pondered whether Tweed's confession could be trusted:

He was in jail, sick, disheartened, deserted by his friends. Furthermore, he had been led to believe that if he made a clean breast of things he would not only be released, but would be granted immunity from any further prosecution. With no one left of the old crowd to protect, with his own name long since synonymous with villainy, there was really very little reason for him to tell anything but the truth. He had nothing to lose and, it appeared to him, quite a lot to gain. So it seems reasonable that his account, except for incidental details, was close to what happened.¹¹⁴⁶

Most other historians, without revealing their thinking, also recounted versions of events in accord with Tweed's and the contractors' confessions. There were, however, strayings from his story. Tweed himself, for instance, described the Black Horse Cavalry as 28 or 30 lawmakers representing both parties in the New York Assembly who, session after session but with varying membership, organized themselves, selected a new leader every year, and sold their votes as a package.¹¹⁴⁷ He implied that he was a mere purchaser, through intermediaries, of the Cavalry's votes.¹¹⁴⁸

Lynch, however, wrote that, until Tweed came to Albany, legislators out for personal profit were a “captainless band. Tweed drilled these mercenaries until they became worthy of the name of The Black Horse Cavalry... No... corporations obtained a favor without paying for it.”¹¹⁴⁹

Callow also saw Tweed as the leader of the Cavalry,¹¹⁵⁰ while Allen judged that Tweed “undoubtedly” met with its members.¹¹⁵¹ If Allen was without doubts, Hershkowitz had them to spare with respect to what he termed the “ill-famed but largely mythical ‘Black Horse Cavalry.’”¹¹⁵² Ackerman thought the Assembly “dominated by the so-called Black Horse Cavalry... but there is no indication that Tweed, a senator, had a direct connection with them.”¹¹⁵³ Why each of these authors took the tack he did – none having cited sources – is unclear.

While McCullough may have seen “very little reason for [Tweed] to tell anything but the truth,” those of his era did: protection of friends and payback of enemies were the reflexive thoughts of many. Each round of Tweed’s confessions brought forth charges that he was settling scores and indignant squawks from those named. One such was William Woodin, a Republican legislator from upstate, fingered as recipient of a bribe of \$40,000 to support Tweed’s Charter.¹¹⁵⁴ The charge was denounced by Woodin and others as founded on spite.¹¹⁵⁵ The State Senate held hearings on the matter and found no basis for the allegations.¹¹⁵⁶ With, however, the release of more details from Tweed, Woodin determined not to seek reelection.¹¹⁵⁷

On the other side of the coin were signs that the punches that Tweed had to throw were pulled: by prosecutors and investigators and by Tweed and his lawyers. Hershkowitz wrote of his testimony before the Aldermen: “His memory was still not clear on many points. He fumbled about for notes, could not remember names. On the other hand, he seemed at times very clear and sure of his answers.”¹¹⁵⁸ As a witness, the man of a once-prodigious recall could not name any present member of Tammany Hall who had acted wrongly during his years in power¹¹⁵⁹ or a single person who had participated in his admitted electoral frauds¹¹⁶⁰ or one member of the Black Horse Cavalry.¹¹⁶¹ Yes, he had ordered changes in the tallying of votes; but, no, he could not remember anyone specifically to whom he had given such directions. He had a list of persons to whom he had loaned money, but declined to make it public — lest innocents be hurt. At points in his testimony, it was the failure of his memory that kept him from naming names; at others, it was his lawyer, interrupting him to advise against it.

Was the Tweed Ring a Misnomer? Who Was Most in Charge?

Yes; Peter Sweeny

Leo Hershkowitz held that Sweeny bossed Tammany. Of, for instance, the decision in 1868 on Hoffman's successor as Mayor, he wrote: "{T}he suspense was lifted by 'chief minister and master spirit of the party' Peter Sweeny. A. Oakey Hall was nominated."¹¹⁶² A year later: "Then came the fall election. Who was to run for what? It was Sweeny who was referred to over and over again as the real chief of Tammany, and who made decisions as to all nominations."¹¹⁶³ After squabbles had, that same year, broken out within the Democracy, historians Hershkowitz and Mushkat both saw the key to their resolution in the return of Sweeny from Europe. Upon his disembarkation: "Directing a retreat, Sweeny ended [Tweed's] attacks [on Tilden and another]"¹¹⁶⁴ and "order returned."¹¹⁶⁵

The press of their time occasionally accorded Sweeny a higher role than Tweed: "The *Herald* in 1868 thought 'General Bismarck Sweeny commander-in-chief of the democratic forces' while Machiavelli Tweed was merely his lieutenant. It was how most contemporaries felt about their relationship."¹¹⁶⁶ Sweeny was, the next year, described by the *Times* as "the acknowledged Chief of the Tammany Democracy."¹¹⁶⁷ In January 1871, the *Times* said that Governor Hoffman "speaks only according to the brief put into his hands by Sweeny."¹¹⁶⁸ Eight months later, it judged that: "Tweed and the other Senators and Representatives from New-York... have been mere instruments and tools to carry out the will of SWEENY, by 'fixing' the legislature."¹¹⁶⁹

No; William Tweed

Numerous too, though, were the articles of the era according Tweed preeminence. Generally, from September 1870 through June 1871, the *Times* mentioned the two as paired shotcallers, sometimes adding Fisk, sometimes Hall, and sometimes Connolly as fellow banditti chieftains. Usually, Tweed's name came first. Occasionally, the paper referred to the Ring as "TWEED & CO."¹¹⁷⁰ or as "Tweed and the Tweedites."¹¹⁷¹ It asked: "What one man is so potent today in the Democracy of the State as Mr. Tweed?"¹¹⁷² and asserted: "[Tweed] is practically Dictator."¹¹⁷³ In an article entitled "Mr. Tweed's City," the transition of Rome from republic to empire was likened to the establishment in New York of "the Tweed Principality."¹¹⁷⁴ Charles Wingate, in 1875, wrote that "William M. Tweed was the master spirit among that little knot of men... Sweeny had no desire to rival so boisterous and pushing an ally."¹¹⁷⁵

Sweeny himself, in 1869, had said that he was not “a leader.” If anyone was, “it is Senator Tweed... I am simply a passenger in the ship.”¹¹⁷⁶

Tweed, in his 1877 confession, distinguished the roles within the foursome:

Mr. Sweeny’s interests in the Ring particularly turned toward the selection of candidates to hold judicial positions. Mr. Hall was a general adviser and counsellor in all legislative and other matters requiring legal skill and ingenuity. Mr. Connolly was the financier and Mr. Tweed had general charge of all other matters.¹¹⁷⁷

In a newspaper interview of the same year, Tweed said: “I was the only man who would go to the front. [His Ring associates] couldn’t rely on each other if anything desperate was at hand.” Sweeny, in particular, “never came to the front much, but wanted to rule from a position of retirement.” Sweeny also could “reach influences which I cannot reach.”¹¹⁷⁸

Subsequently, the *Times* and nearly all chroniclers of the Ring have portrayed Sweeny as the lesser figure. Lynch called Tweed “the final arbiter, vetoing or approving all proposals made by his aides [Connolly, Hall, and Sweeny].”¹¹⁷⁹ Ackerman wrote that, in the late 1860s, most papers “ignored Tweed” or “confused him with Peter Sweeny as Tammany’s real power, but behind the scenes Tweed ran the organization with a firm gavel.”¹¹⁸⁰

Tweed, reflecting in 1877 on their years of successful collaboration, said that, if Sweeny and he were ever to have “fallen out,” it might have occurred because a situation arose in which only one of them could have become a U.S. Senator.¹¹⁸¹ Attesting to the closeness of their working relationship is the uncertainty that, fourteen decades later, still beclouds their relative roles.

Did William Tweed in 1863 Save the City from Further Bloodshed by Arranging for a Program of Conscription Relief?

Yes: *Boss Tweed*

Like Alexander Callow’s *Ring*, Kenneth Ackerman’s *Boss* cogently presented the results of vast research. As Callow has stood for four decades

and counting as the authority on the Ring, so may Ackerman's biography have similar stature on its leader.

Ackerman's second chapter, "Riots", described events in the summer and fall of 1863 – which may have been the finest moment of William Tweed and the best basis he ever had for deeming himself a statesman. On Saturday, July 11, 1863, a lottery to draft recruits for the Union Army began in the City: replacements were needed for the 23,000 Northern casualties suffered at Gettysburg on the first three days of the month. One could, however, for \$300, purchase exemption from service. This provision suggested to the poor young men of Manhattan that they were being unjustly treated and, on Monday, July 13, they took to the streets.

They smashed and burned the building of the lottery, then turned their wrath on the City, burning houses, looting shops, firing on police, and lynching Negroes. On Tuesday, Governor Horatio Seymour came to the City and, with Mayor George Opdyke¹¹⁸² trembling beside him, spoke at City Hall. Seymour said that he was petitioning Lincoln's government for the suspension of the draft in Manhattan and asked for an end to the violence. It would not, however, stop until two days later, when five Union regiments dispatched from General George Meade's Army of the Potomac joined with other forces to reclaim the streets from the mobs. The rioters had killed over one hundred.¹¹⁸³

Tweed had, that week, done well. He had taken personal risks to secure information on the lawlessness, had forwarded it to other authorities,¹¹⁸⁴ and had organized Street Department employees to protect the financial district.¹¹⁸⁵ On Tuesday, he, Oakey Hall, and others had met Governor Seymour's ferryboat at the dock and had stood by him at City Hall as he spoke.¹¹⁸⁶ As Seymour rode in his carriage through the City, passing among the rioters, Tweed sat beside him. Per Lynch: "Hats were raised and cheers given, first for the Governor, then for Tweed, then for the Elegant Oakey."¹¹⁸⁷

Although the killing had stopped after four days, Lincoln subsequently authorized the proclamation of martial law in the City – should it be needed to obtain the Army's recruits. The poor of Manhattan might, however, again resist. To forestall that possibility, the Aldermen passed an ordinance providing that the City would pay the \$300 price of draft exemption on behalf of any draftee judged unable to pay it himself. Mayor Opdyke vetoed the ordinance on the grounds of its illegality (in undermining the purpose of the draft) and its propitiation of "a lawless mob."¹¹⁸⁸ There matters stood for over a month, as the Common Council – comprising the

Boards of Aldermen and Councilmen – and Opdyke could not agree on measures of draft relief and the prospect of renewed rioting remained significant.

To resolve the continuing crisis, Ackerman judged, it “was no time for fancy speeches. It was a job for practical men: politicians.”¹¹⁸⁹ The Boss, he wrote, took the lead: spurring the Board of Supervisors to pass a program that exempted police, fire fighters, and militiamen from the draft and provided case-by-case consideration for such others as poor workingmen with families to support. For those thus exempted from the draft, the City would pay to secure substitute recruits to serve in their places. Tweed and Republican Supervisor Orison Blunt traveled to Washington to meet with Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Provost Marshal General James Fry and secured their approval of the program.¹¹⁹⁰

The crisis had been resolved: “It was a remarkable achievement. Lincoln got his soldiers, the city had order, and the poor had relief from a law blatantly unfair to them.”¹¹⁹¹ In consequence, “{f}or now [referring perhaps to late 1863, perhaps to the last years of the war], the Boss of Tammany was a hero in New York City.”¹¹⁹²

Ackerman, among the Ring’s historians, was alone in so acclaiming Tweed for the program of draft relief.¹¹⁹³ Chroniclers of Manhattan in the Civil War had given limited mention to Tweed’s part in reconciling the City to the draft: crediting him for leading Tammany in its cooperation with the Federal Government;¹¹⁹⁴ for being one of four Tammany officials who, on one day of the August draft endorsed its fairness and observed its process;¹¹⁹⁵ and for serving on the committee that administered the payments for draft exemption and recruited substitutes.¹¹⁹⁶ Review of leading histories of the era has, however, revealed none that accorded Tweed the lead role in devising, enacting, or implementing the draft relief program of the Supervisors. Ackerman’s account stands out as a departure in the histories of both Tweed and his City.

Among the more informed and careful of Ackerman’s readers were his reviewers. Of them, many made special note of his treatment of Tweed in 1863. Two, Sam Munson in *Policy Review* and Michael Tomasky in the *New York Review*,¹¹⁹⁷ echoed Ackerman’s assertion that Tweed had arranged for Tammany Hall to run Manhattan’s draft.¹¹⁹⁸ Munson considered this action “Tweed’s first real grab at the kind of power he would later come to wield with such assurance.” Peter Ekman, in the *Harvard Political Review*, similarly saw Tweed’s “brokering a deal between Civil War draft rioters and the federal government” as a milestone for the Boss: the basis on which he

“built his name.”¹¹⁹⁹ Pete Hamill, in the *Times*, took Tweed’s actions in 1863 as presented by Ackerman to illustrate “one basic principle of the realistic pol: All serious problems might not be solved, but they must be managed.”¹²⁰⁰ Gerald Russello in the *New York Sun*, thought that, after Tweed had persuaded Stanton to agree to the plan for conscription relief, he “returned as the city’s savior.”¹²⁰¹

Such reviewer trumpeting of Tweed’s actions in 1863 could presage significantly different presentations of the Boss in future histories.

Maybe not

But was Ackerman accurate?

He may well have been on critical points. Mushkat attributed paramount power within Tammany by the time of the Supervisors’ August ordinance to Tweed¹²⁰² (even though Elijah Purdy was the Grand Sachem¹²⁰³). It is, thus, possible that the Boss had contributed valuably to conceiving and midwifing it.

Ackerman, though, went further: granting Tweed preeminent billing for the arrangements that reconciled Manhattan to the draft; writing that, after he had first met with Orison Blunt, the two “called together a special public meeting of the county supervisors at City Hall and quickly hammered out a plan.”¹²⁰⁴ “Tweed’s plan.”¹²⁰⁵

Non-comprehensive research into the sources cited by Ackerman, with special attention to the Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors and the *Times*, has, however, not yielded corroboration of his version of the events. The Supervisors’ records and the *Times* instead suggest that at least three others were more instrumental than Tweed in effecting, via the Exemption Ordinance, the program of conscription relief:

- **fellow Supervisor and Tammany Grand Sachem Elijah Purdy.** Shortly after nine in the morning of August 27, 1863, Elijah Purdy was one of three City officials who began counting the 4,603 ballots that would constitute the pool for the draft lottery in the Tenth Ward. From it, 787 names were drawn and Purdy then spoke to the assembled crowd. He said that, having personally examined the lottery ballots, he could vouch for the fairness of the process. Moreover, he had been told by a member of the Common Council that it would pass its ordinance over the Mayor’s veto – which meant that the City would secure substitutes for all draftees who could not do so themselves. He

urged his audience “to observe with order and quiet the progress of the draft, and after it was over, to retire peaceably to their homes. (Great applause, and cries of ‘Good for you, old man!’)”¹²⁰⁶ Later that day, the call for a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors on the morrow was signed by, in order, Board President Thomas Little, Orison Blunt, Elijah Purdy, and four other Supervisors, but not by Tweed.¹²⁰⁷ At that meeting, Purdy presented and made the case for the Exemption Ordinance;¹²⁰⁸

- **Comptroller Matthew Brennan.** The *Times* reported on August 29 that the just-enacted ordinance was “about the same that Comptroller BRENNAN submitted, unsuccessfully, to the Common Council caucus the other day.”¹²⁰⁹ The *Democratic Leader*, the same day, thought the measure “due to the sagacity of Comptroller Brennan;”¹²¹⁰ and

- **Mayor George Opdyke.** Opdyke had issued extended messages explaining his vetoes of two exemption ordinances passed by the Common Council.¹²¹¹ Historians wrote that the Supervisors’ ordinance had been structured “{t}o satisfy the demands of Opdyke”¹²¹² and “was similar to his own suggestions.”¹²¹³ (Changes welcomed by Opdyke in the Supervisors’ bill over those of the Council included: the requirement that poor draftees, to be eligible for conscription relief, be certified to have dependent families; the naming of a six-member, bipartisan committee (instead of one composed of the Mayor, Comptroller, and all 41 members of the Common Council) to administer the program; and greater emphasis on securing substitute soldiers (who (or their agents) would each receive \$300), rather than just remitting to Lincoln’s government the \$300 exemption amounts.¹²¹⁴) It was announced at the end of the Supervisors’ session that Opdyke had already signed the freshly-passed ordinance into law.¹²¹⁵

All of which muddies the assignment of historical credit. Per Purdy on the morning of August 27, the Supervisors need not have acted – since the Common Council would soon have done what the Supervisors and Mayor actually did the next day: enact an exemption ordinance. At some time, probably on the twenty-seventh, someone had the idea that it might be more easily or better done by the Supervisors and Mayor than by the Council.

This possibility arose from the overlapping and ill-distinguished mandates of the two bodies. Just who – whether Purdy, Brennan, Opdyke, Blunt, Tweed, or another – originated the idea of switching the legislative venue is not known. The plaudits due to whoever it was would, however, be limited by the likelihood that, absent the switch, the Common Council would have realized the same essential result.

Other aspects of Ackerman's account on which confirmation was not secured were:

- that, “{s}ometime in mid-August, Tweed pulled aside Orison Blunt” and reached an agreement with him to work together on conscription policy;¹²¹⁶

- that Blunt and Tweed left Manhattan in August to meet with Stanton and Fry. On October 20, the Supervisors passed an ordinance sponsored by Blunt, which specified that the draft-relief committee “shall first ascertain whether the [Federal] Government will allow such volunteers [the substitute recruits] on the quota of the City and County of New York in any future draft.”¹²¹⁷ The trip of Blunt and Tweed to Washington seems to have been the subsequent result. Fry's letter agreeing to let the substitutes count toward the quotas was dated November 7 and the report of the Washington meeting to the Supervisors was made on November 10¹²¹⁸ – both of which suggested that the two Supervisors had traveled to Washington not in August but, instead, in early November;

- that Tweed was the leading member of the Supervisors' special committee that dealt with draftees and recruits – which Ackerman called “Tweed's Committee.”¹²¹⁹ The Boss did serve on it but seems to have been less active than its Chairman, Orison Blunt.¹²²⁰ It was Blunt – called by one historian “{t}he most prominent and hardest working member of the Volunteer Committee”¹²²¹ – who, in late 1864, was “voted a testimonial by the County... consisting of engrossed resolutions, gold medal, and silver plate,” as well as \$50,000,¹²²² for his administration of the program; and

- that Tweed, during the Civil War, became “a hero in New York City.”¹²²³ Journals beholden to Tammany did indeed extol him. Outside, however, of the Democratic press, no contemporary reference

or subsequent historical judgment – other than those of Ackerman and his reviewers – was found attesting to Tweed's heroic status.

Ackerman's chronology could not have been correct. His order of events began with the calling of the special meeting of the Supervisors “{o}n August 28, just as Army offices around town were starting to select names in Lincoln's latest round of draft lotteries;”¹²²⁴ followed by the dispatching of Blunt and Tweed to Washington – the result of which was that Stanton “agreed to the deal. Tammany Hall, through the county supervisors, would run Lincoln's August draft in New York City,”¹²²⁵ as part of which Tweed's own name was picked for conscription.¹²²⁶

Ackerman's timing:

- made Tweed's drafting, which had occurred on August 26,¹²²⁷ the consequence of events two days later;
- overlooked evidence that the trip to Stanton was made over two months later; and
- had the Supervisors' meeting of August 28 lead to a mission to Washington that enabled Tammany Hall to manage the August draft that had, in fact, begun on the nineteenth¹²²⁸ and ended on the twenty-eighth.¹²²⁹

While details of Ackerman are thus open to challenge, he may well have been right on the essential point that Tweed deserved more recognition for the events of 1863 than had been accorded to him. He may, also, however, have overstated the role of the Boss – with the persuasiveness in his prose leading reviewer after reviewer to believe that Tweed's actions were significantly more important than previously thought or than they actually had been.

Did Oakey Hall Get a Split of the Spoils?

Hall's signature had undeniably enabled the looting of millions of dollars – to have remained unaware of which would have required monumental obliviousness. The crux issue, though, for his juries seems to

have been whether he had shared in the takings – which his prosecutors never established. Debate on it continues.

Yes

- **O'Brien's account.** In early September 1871, with Hall claiming not to have received any money, directly or indirectly, through the Ring's thefts, former Sheriff O'Brien disagreed: "Hall made hundreds of thousands of dollars... I have got proof for what I say."¹²³⁰

- **Tweed's testimony.** Tweed stated in 1877 to the Aldermen that "They [Woodward and Watson] were to give ten per cent. to me, ten per cent. to Mr. Connolly, ten per cent. to Mr. James Sweeney, for Mr. Peter B. Sweeney, and ten per cent. to Mr. Sweeney or Mr. Smith, for Mr. Hall."¹²³¹ Soon, however, according to Tweed, Connolly wanted more and the Boss, more still. To enable this, Hall's cut was cut: "I said... '{T}ell [Hall] that expenses are so heavy we can't afford to give him but five [percent].'" [Watson] said he would, and so it was arranged that way."¹²³² Subsequently, Tweed said, Hall complained that "'your folks are slow in settling up; I told him I didn't know anything about it, but I would inquire. I found they weren't squaring up with him as fast as they ought to; I said that would be remedied."¹²³³

- **Garvey's testimony.** Andrew Garvey told the Aldermen that he once went to see the Mayor about an invoice of his that had not been paid: "Hall seemed to be dissatisfied about something... {t}hat he had not got any percentage on it—that was the remark as near as I can recollect it."¹²³⁴

- **Hearsay.** Garvey also told the Aldermen that Elbert Woodward had told him that Hall had received percentage kickbacks.¹²³⁵ Woodward testified that Watson had told him that Hall had received a portion – he thought ten percent – of the fraudulent payments.¹²³⁶

- **Hall's non-reaction.** The former Mayor, at the time of Tweed's testimony, was thought to be in London. Seven weeks after the Boss had fingered him publicly as an impatient sharer in the booty, Hall – to general astonishment, including that of his family – reappeared in the City. A reporter asked if he had returned to refute Tweed. He responded "by

asking the reporter if he recollected what Napoleon said when he was asked if he would fight a certain battle in a certain place:... ‘If my army goes there and we meet the enemy there may be a fight.’”¹²³⁷ What to read into such incoherence is unclear – as Hall’s mental state was then said to reflect depression, nervous exhaustion, and amnesia.¹²³⁸

- **Historians’ accounts.** The first printing of Bryce’s *American Commonwealth*, included a recounting of the Ring. It had been written by Frank J. Goodnow, a professor of history at Columbia and been deemed “excellent” by Woodrow Wilson. Goodnow ascribed to Oakey Hall a major role in the crimes of the Ring – whose hegemony could be dated to his becoming Mayor.¹²³⁹ “Though generally supposed to occupy a somewhat higher moral plane than his associates,” Hall, wrote Goodnow, “was never considered remarkable for the severity of his principles.”¹²⁴⁰ With respect to the contractor’s invoices for the courthouse, he wrote that “the difference between the original and the raised bills was divided between the members of the Ring [one of whom was Hall].”¹²⁴¹ For such statements, Hall sued Bryce for libel.¹²⁴²

Subsequent authors who cut Hall into the corrupt pie – if with disagreement on the size of his slice – included: Paine (“a go-between... divided [the Ring share] ... between Tweed, Sweeny, Connolly, and Hall”);¹²⁴³ Lynch (“Hall... received but ten per cent.”¹²⁴⁴); Callow (“Tweed received from 10 to 25 per cent... Hall 5 to 10 per cent”);¹²⁴⁵ Caro (“the Tweed Ring... took fixed percentages—5 percent for the Mayor...”);¹²⁴⁶ and Allen (“the Boss, Peter Sweeny, Dick Connolly, and Oakey Hall were each taking 20 percent of the kickback from every inflated bill submitted”).¹²⁴⁷

Maybe

Ackerman came down on Hall less hard than others. Citing Tilden’s papers, he focused on the infamous \$6.3 million in payments approved in 1870 by the interim Board of Audit. Some of that money was used by Watson to purchase stock, of which “Tweed transferred 162 shares to Hall.”¹²⁴⁸ But then, despite having traced this gain to Hall, Ackerman retreated from imputing theft. Of the \$6.3 million, he wrote:

over a century later, for Oakey Hall in particular, it’s still not clear whether any of the proceeds... ever reached his pocket. Still, he had

drafted the law, offered the motion, made the appointments, and signed the warrants. Whether he did it for money, for vanity, for Tweed's promise of the New York governorship, for loyalty to his friends, or out of sheer stupidity may never be known.¹²⁴⁹

With respect to the last of Ackerman's possibilities, Wingate had earlier drawn distinctions: "the man was an indisputable ass, but he was no fool."¹²⁵⁰

Maybe not

- **Tweed's possible spite toward Hall.** The ex-Boss, in his confession, exhibited, in the judgment of Hall's biographer, Croswell Bowen, "a certain flavor of vindictiveness"¹²⁵¹ in stating that "A. Oakey Hall came when notified [by the other Ring members], and remained as long as he was required."¹²⁵² Malice might also have underlain Tweed's stating that Hall's percentage had been halved, so that he and Connolly could get more: thus publicizing, per Bowen, "that Hall was not only a swindler but had been swindled by other swindlers."¹²⁵³

To what extent was there truth and to what extent animus, in Tweed's depiction of Hall as a man of limited political acumen, as one to be summoned and dismissed at the whims of other Ringmen, as one who shared in the stealing, and as one stiffed by his co-thieves? Bowen pointed to class differences. The Mayor's wife and children

were all included in The List, the Social Register of the day. Mrs. Hall never received her husband's political friends – or their wives. Descendants of Hall remember that it was said that "Mother Barnes-Hall would not have Tweed or any of those politicians in the house." It is probable that Tweed knew this, which may help to explain his later implicating Hall in the Ring's thefts.¹²⁵⁴

- **Other testimony.** Two witnesses appearing before the Aldermen in 1877 were Henry Taintor and James Ingersoll. Taintor was a forensic accountant engaged by reformers to review the financial records of the City and the accounts of the National Broadway Bank. He reported that kickbacks on contractor invoices were paid to Tweed, Connolly, Sweeny, and Watson – with no mention of Hall.¹²⁵⁵ Furniture supplier Ingersoll

named Tweed, Connolly, Sweeny, Watson, and Woodward as all the recipients of mark-up percentages on his bills.¹²⁵⁶

- **Tilden's money tracking.** Samuel Tilden spoke on November 2, 1871 to a campaign rally, focusing on the interim Board of Audit and its millions of dollars in fraudulent payments. In assigning responsibility for contriving the statutes that had enabled the theft, he said that "Mr. Tweed could not" have done it and suggested the involvement of Sweeny and Hall. The onus of the bogus auditing itself, Tilden laid on Hall: "There was one man there, and that is Mayor Hall" who knew what it was to audit and that their actions were

a fraudulent violation of duty... I say, then, that on that occasion the chief conspirator, the man who is responsible for the action of the Board [whose other members were Connolly and Tweed], and the man whom the public ought to hold as morally accountable for the crime that followed afterward, is Mr. Mayor A. O. Hall.¹²⁵⁷

A few minutes later, though, Tilden reported to his audience what he had found in the bank records: that, after payments had been made to the contractors, they had paid percentages to Woodward, who, in turn, had paid percentages to Tweed. Neither Hall, Connolly, nor Sweeny were mentioned in this connection. Two weeks earlier, Tilden had testified before the grand jury pondering an indictment of Hall. He had traced \$5.7 million of the \$6.3 million approved by the interim Board of Audit to the accounts of three unnamed persons (later revealed to be Garvey, Ingersoll, and Woodward¹²⁵⁸) – none of whom, he said, was Hall.¹²⁵⁹

(Tilden's testimony was mildly confusing. That Hall was not one of the three initial recipients of the \$5.7 million was not particularly significant, since, for example, neither was Tweed. The issue was what Garvey, Ingersoll, and Woodward had done with their portions – Woodward having paid \$932,859 to Tweed.)

Ultimate recipients of this money were later identified as Connolly, Sweeny, Tweed, Watson, and Woodward.¹²⁶⁰ Tilden's evidence that the Boss had pocketed over \$1 million¹²⁶¹ of the \$6.3 million was presented and stressed at Tweed's trials. No such material was brought forth in the courts against Hall.¹²⁶² Tilden concluded that Hall, notwithstanding his lapses of fiscal oversight, had not pocketed kickbacks.¹²⁶³

- **The judgments of other reformers.** Tilden was not the only Ring opponent who thought Hall innocent of theft. Henry Clinton, who had prosecuted the Mayor in his first trial, wrote decades later that

after a fair and impartial trial... Mr. Hall was triumphantly acquitted...

In all the investigations in respect to the proceeds of the Ring frauds, none were ever traced to Mr. Hall... Since... his last trial he has stood before the community *vindicated* [emphasis in original] from the charges made against him.¹²⁶⁴

The *New-York Times* editorialized in November 1875: “We do not now believe—much as appearances at first were against him—that [Hall] ever shared in the profits of the old Ring Government.”¹²⁶⁵ Judge Noah Davis of Tweed’s trials also declared Hall “innocent of the charge under which he had rested for years.” (The *Times* noted that this statement of Davis was met with astonishment. The judge had advised two juries to convict Tweed for his failure to audit – for which, by his own reasoning, Hall was equally guilty (suggesting that Davis had always believed theft the true crime and the failure to audit merely the pretext for jailing the thief).)¹²⁶⁶

- **Strong’s assessment.** George Templeton Strong saw the ex-Mayor’s acquittal as “a verdict (right or wrong) of not guilty on the ground of imbecility,” the jury being “charitable enough” to deem him “an idiot.” The diarist could, however, not

doubt that he knew what he was doing and conspired with Tweed and Company to swindle the city. That he got none of the money is likely enough. His corrupt inducement may well have been merely the implied promise of political promotion.¹²⁶⁷

- **Hall’s finances.** The grand jury of October 1871 inquired into Hall’s bank account and found modest balances and no deposits of suspicious size.¹²⁶⁸ In later years, he would be short of money – selling, for instance, in early 1881 for \$6,800 his “magnificent collection of books.”¹²⁶⁹

- **Bryce’s revisions.** While unsuccessful in securing any award for damages, Hall’s lawsuit for libel against Bryce did lead to the deletion of Goodnow’s chapter on the Ring from the 1889 reprinting of Bryce’s first edition and from the second edition, which appeared four years later. For

the third edition – in 1910 – Bryce reworked Goodnow's piece and published it in his own name with a modified title.¹²⁷⁰ He deleted passages of Goodnow harsh toward Hall and generally softened the treatment of the Mayor, then a dozen years dead. Goodnow's wording that the portions of the bills not paid to the contractors had been divided "between the members of the Ring" was changed by Bryce to "among the boss and his friends." It was conceded that "no share in the booty was ever traced" to Hall, "who may not have received any."¹²⁷¹ (Bryce also, however, referred to the Ring as "the quattuorvirate" and wrote of Hall that "as he never seemed to take himself seriously, he was not taken seriously by others."¹²⁷²)

Did Samuel Tilden, at Connolly's Arrest, Feign Surprise?

Yes: the *Tribune* in 1880

The *New-York Tribune* on June 9, 1880 described Connolly's arrest on November 25, 1871: "Connolly was seated in an inner room [in the Controller's Office] in company with Mr. Havemeyer and Mr. Tilden." On being served the papers of arrest,

"There must be some mistake," [Connolly] said. Then, turning to Mr. Tilden he added, "Mr. Tilden, the Sheriff [Brennan] has arrested me."

"No; has he?" said "Slippery Sam," with a look of surprise at "Slippery Dick." "What is the bail, Mr. Brennan?"

"One million," was the Sheriff's answer.

"Let me see the papers," said Mr. Tilden. He took them to the window, scanned them for a moment or two, and then returning, said:

"I am surprised at this. But it is so, Richard, and the bail—so it is—\$1,000,000."

Tilden's astonishment was the more remarkable because of the fact that the order of arrest was based upon Mr. Tilden's affidavit, signed and sworn to a few hours before!¹²⁷³

This version of events was also related by Townsend,¹²⁷⁴ Lynch,¹²⁷⁵ Callow,¹²⁷⁶ Allen,¹²⁷⁷ and Ackerman.¹²⁷⁸

No: contemporary evidence.

The Republican *Tribune* in 1880 had little affection for “Slippery Sam” Tilden, the Democratic standard bearer of four years before. The source of its account was unclear. Although subtitled, “SOME REMINISCENCES OF CONNOLLY,” the recently deceased Controller seemed not to have recounted much of the article’s contents.

On November 27, 1871, the *Tribune* had reported the arrest, two days earlier, of Connolly. Per that account, he had been with Tilden when both were surprised by Sheriff Brennan and a detective. “It was probable,” said the paper then, “that [Tilden] knew nothing of the order of arrest until it was served” – chief prosecutor Charles O’Conor having not informed him.¹²⁷⁹

In the account of the *Times* on November 26, 1871, Connolly, when arrested, first gave Sheriff Brennan a list of prospective posters of bail. When they could not be found, Havermeyer and Tilden were “sent for, but they, too, were not forthcoming.” The *Herald*’s report of the same date did not mention Tilden. Both the *Times* and the *Herald* published the affidavit motivating the order of arrest. It was signed not by Tilden, but by prosecutor Wheeler H. Peckham (who stated in it his conviction “that the said CONNOLLY would immediate abscond from the United States if he should learn or suspect, before his actual arrest, that any measures of a legal nature were being taken against him”).¹²⁸⁰

What Did the Ring cost?

Hershkowitz, like Hamill,¹²⁸¹ believed any bad done by the Boss to have been swamped by the good: “Tweed moved the city forward in so many ways... his death was a tragedy for the future metropolis.”¹²⁸²

Most others disagreed.

In estimating the net financial harm done by the Ring, definitional and conceptual questions abound:

- When did the Ring begin (Parton thought that, as early as 1866, the figure for a precursor Ring was many millions¹²⁸³)?
- Was the net impact of the Ring the difference between actual events and what would have occurred if voters had made civic honesty a priority? If so, should the latter be taken as a City administration led by the likes of William Havemeyer with a comparably honest

supporting cast or, perhaps, as one led by an early incarnation of the consummately incorruptible and effective Fiorello La Guardia?

- Such authors as Pratt, Mandelbaum, and Hershkowitz have argued that, in comparison with other City administrations, the Ring allocated funds beneficially to infrastructural improvements, social institutions, and charities. Should such positive achievements (and maybe also Tweed's own donations to the needy) be netted out in determining the total burden on the City?

- Should the extortions and thefts of low- and mid-level officials – which were made the more likely by the culture of corruption fostered by the Ring, but which might have occurred in its absence – be included?

- Were all dollars lost by the public treasury equal? Was, for instance, arbitrarily reducing taxes by \$10,000 for a person with whom the Ring wished to curry favor just as bad as having a contractor inflate a bill by \$10,000 and pocketing that amount as a kickback? Should such disparate effects be lumped together into one sum?

Estimates by contemporaries of the Ring's injury to the City included that of the Citizens' Investigating Committee, which reported in October, 1871 total thefts of \$20,748,664.25.¹²⁸⁴ Matthew O'Rourke put the figure at \$75 million from 1869 on¹²⁸⁵ but also estimated that, taking into account the arbitrary reductions of taxes as favors or for bribes and the floating of bond issues at exorbitant rates of interest, the Ring's thefts from "about 1865 to 1871" amounted to \$200 million.¹²⁸⁶ (The *Tribune* in 1871 had reported: "The city is paying seven per cent interest on its bonds when it ought to be paying but five."¹²⁸⁷) Henry Taintor, the reformers' accountant, estimated the total cost of the frauds between January 1, 1868 and July 1, 1871 at a minimum of \$25.5 million.¹²⁸⁸ The investigative committee of Aldermen in 1878 found total thefts from the City between 1860 and mid-1871 to be not less than \$50 million.¹²⁸⁹ Tweed's lawyer, John D. Townsend, put the figure at \$30 million.¹²⁹⁰ The *Times* in 1901 thought it at least \$100 million.¹²⁹¹

Historians have advanced comparable ranges of estimates. Myers noted that the opinions of those best informed were that the total amounts "distributed to the 'ring' and its allies and dependents amounted to over \$100,000,000."¹²⁹² Lynch thought the total thefts at least \$45 million;¹²⁹³

Werner and Allen noted that the estimates of others had ranged from \$30 to \$200 million.¹²⁹⁴ Callow thought that “{w}e shall probably never know exactly how much the Ring stole,” but also judged the highest calculation of \$300 million (source not given) “probably too high.”¹²⁹⁵ In 1971, in his introduction to a new edition of Myers’ book, Callow put the figure at over \$200 million.¹²⁹⁶ Ackerman recounted that, “In later years, estimates of ‘Tweed Ring’ total plunder jumped from the relatively modest \$25 million... to fully \$200 million (\$4 billion in modern dollars).” He thought the last figure “clearly inflated for dramatic impact but never scrutinized.”¹²⁹⁷

Did Republicans Get “Most of the Swag”?

Yes: *Forever*

Pete Hamill wrote in *Forever* that “most of the [Ring’s] swag, about twenty million dollars of it, went to the Republicans in Albany, because Tweed could get nothing done without their approval.”¹²⁹⁸ (Implying in passing that the total stolen by the Ring came to less than \$40 million.)

No: lack of evidence

Of many Ring histories reviewed, none suggested – or referenced evidence indicating – payments of such size to corrupt Republicans.

To What Standards of Historical Accuracy Should Novelists and Filmmakers Be Held?

None

Fiction being fiction.

High bars

Forever is accurate in so much that its readers may presume an evidential basis for the statement that \$20 million bribed Tweed’s

Republicans. Similarly, viewers of *Gangs of New York* may sense or have learned of the meticulous research underpinning it. They might therefore suppose that the cinematic Tweed's execution of four unfortunates as a sop to public concerns about crime – unmentioned by his biographers¹²⁹⁹ – had documentary foundation. If such details are but fiction, misconceptions will ensue. (That fiction significantly shapes public impressions is indicated by the judgment of Annette Gordon-Reed that “Barbara Chase-Riboud's novel *Sally Hemings*... probably has been the single greatest influence shaping the public's attitude about the Jefferson-Hemings story.”¹³⁰⁰)

Intermediate, judgmental norms

That Tweed was seen in *Gangs* directing a fire brigade years after he had ceased fighting fires would be deemed problematic by few: such minor inaccuracies being accepted for cinematic convenience.

Based on the research he had done for *Forever*, Pete Hamill might have had confidence in his grasp of William Tweed and his times. He might have felt that his readers would get best senses of both, if he made the undocumentable assertion that Republicans got “most of the swag.”

The historical novelist or filmmaker should, perhaps, only refrain from including dubious details, if the harm likely caused by resultant misperceptions is judged greater than any benefits.

Were Histories Slanted against the Ring?

Yes: “Boss Tweed's Public Welfare Program”

John W. Pratt in 1961 advanced arguments that Leo Hershkowitz would later echo and expand: holding that Tweed and his Ring had been unfairly dealt with by historians, especially textbook authors. Among the examples he disparaged were Richard Hofstadter and co-authors calling the Ring “the classic example of municipal fraud”¹³⁰¹ and Dumas Malone and Basil Rauch dubbing it “the synonym of civic corruption.”¹³⁰² That the Boss had “long personified the corruption of America's cities in the decades following the Civil War”¹³⁰³ Pratt ascribed to his mistreatment at the hands of Gustavus Myers, Denis Tilden Lynch, and M. R. Werner. The three influential authors were, he said, “often uncritical and overly dependent on sources fanatically hostile to Tweed” and “guilty of selecting the sensational

or entertaining anecdote... while bypassing the more prosaic facts indispensable to any serious understanding of the Tweed years.”¹³⁰⁴ Subsequent books – by such authors as Charles Beard, Henry Steele Commager, and Samuel Eliot Morison cited by Pratt – drew heavily on Myers, Lynch, and Werner and unjustifiably tarred Tweed.¹³⁰⁵

No: the bigger picture

Myers, Lynch, and Werner all included details that reflected badly on the Ring – some of which were inessential to their histories and but flimsily referenced. Myers and Werner did, however, also document extensively its civic crimes. Lynch and Werner advanced judgments partial to Tweed.

Had subsequent historians used versions of Myers, Lynch, and Werner shorn of unfounded and salacious items, they might well have arrived at their same severe judgments of the Ring. Pratt had lamented that Tweed’s instrumentality in raising State contributions to charities to \$2,225,000 – given over three years – had been overlooked.¹³⁰⁶ The writers he cited might, however, not unreasonably have concluded that the tens of millions stolen by the Ring outweighed such benevolence and have justified their deeming it iconically corrupt.

How much does such incertitude matter?

Most historians concur on the culpability and main actions of Connolly, Sweeny, and Tweed and also consider electoral, legislative, judicial, and financial frauds evidentially confirmed. The followers of Hershkowitz can, nevertheless, point to such issues as those above on which the total elimination of considered doubt may never happen. With respect to the economic impact of the Ring, the range of disagreement – even among those who have deemed it a net cost and have attempted to gauge its size – stretches to an order of magnitude.

To understand and to cope better with future corruption it may be of value to distinguish the roles of Sweeny and Tweed and to know the rough total of the bribes paid to Republicans. To gauge the worth of promoting honesty in government, sensing the scale of past harm is key. Other areas of uncertainty have less significance. Whether the Ring sought to bribe Nast, or Tweed ever taunted reformers with a specific question, or Tilden was disingenuous are not, in themselves, of high import. Collectively, however,

such items help us to judge just how much historical mist may have enveloped, obscured, and distorted the essential story.

16

Reform

What Was Reform?

A broad topic touched on by Professor Hershkowitz and also lacking consensus was the nature of reform. Hershkowitz himself had misgivings about it. It was to him an “alarm bell,” which, in the 1850s, Henry Raymond of the *Times* “constantly and hysterically sounded... as he focused his spotlight on wrong and sold papers.”¹³⁰⁷ Years later, in October 1871 when the investigating committee of citizens detailed Ring frauds, Hershkowitz noted that it had paid one expert \$1,400 for financial analysis and the *Evening Post* \$1,377 for publishing its report: “Obviously there was money to be made from reform, and it was only the beginning.”¹³⁰⁸ When “Wheeler H. Peckham, ambitious and anxious,” took over the investigation of Tweed, “{l}ike so many others, he found a chance to expand his career in the cause of political reform.”¹³⁰⁹

Historians have discerned many reforming currents and eddies in the decades leading up to the Civil War. They included: heightened religious feeling; organized religious benevolence (occasionally used for social control); temperance movements; measures to suppress gambling (in part, to make young men better workers and less likely to steal); utopian experiments; support for Western homesteading to alleviate urban squalor; initial housing codes; promotion of universal education and curricular revisions; public health initiatives; upgrading of the care for the insane; labor organization; Abolitionism; and advocacy of female suffrage. After the war, through the end of the century, the reforming spark was also seen in work to educate and advance freed Negroes; Settlement Houses ministering to the urban poor; and in Populist railing against railroads, banks, and monetary policy.

When, however, William Tweed and his City contemporaries spoke of, applauded, or hissed reform, they generally had a narrower concept in mind: attempts to better government. Headlines of the *New-York Times* between 1851 and 1878 mentioning “Reform” or “Reformers” typically referred to proposed or effected changes at the City or Federal (rarely the State) levels of government or in foreign regimes. Less frequently, headlined reforms

pertained to the military or postal service or to such features of the City as its docks, ferries, and public produce markets.

The connotations of reform in Manhattan varied from group to group and over time:

- for the *Times* and the Republicans for whom it spoke, reform consisted of eliminating ballot fraud, civic extortion, high levels of municipal spending generally, and especially patronage sinecures; amending the City Charter to increase accountability and decrease theft; ousting corrupt officials, particularly judges; and electing candidates of probity;

- for municipalities that had elected candidates on platforms stressing reform, it became their deeds. William Havemeyer in 1872 won the Mayoralty as a reformer. Soon, however, he had antagonized the Germans, the Irish, Tammany, the uptown, and the many more who thought his economizing overdone.¹³¹⁰ The *Times* had backed his candidacy but, as his term wound down, “admitted that Mayor HAVEMEYER’S stupendous follies have disgusted the people, and made every sensible man half ashamed to use the very word ‘reform.’ We owe the utter and ruinous collapse of the reform movement very largely to HAVEMEYER;”¹³¹¹

- for Tilden and other Reform Democrats, the emphasis in the early 1870s was on stopping the stealing and punishing the thieves of both parties. In 1876, the word became the unifying theme of the national Democratic Party Platform, with each of its nine planks being introduced with the words: “Reform is necessary.” It signified there opposition to waste, fraud, misrule, inequitable tariffs, Chinese immigration, and the enumerated misdeeds of prominent Republicans and support for a sound currency, frugality in government, shifting the disposition of public lands away from railroads and toward farmers and civil-service measures that would substitute for the spoils system one of “posts of honor assigned for proved competency.”¹³¹² The man chosen to run on this platform, Samuel Tilden, spoke of himself as the concept personified: “The nomination was not made by the leaders of the party. It was the people who made it. They want reform. They have wanted it a long while, and, in looking about, they became convinced that it is to be found here (pointing to himself).”¹³¹³

- for Tammany Hall, reform was an occasional leading concern of voters, momentarily upset by revelations of misbehavior. It might, the Sachems many times proved, be dealt with by supporting the legislation of reformers and by choosing nominees whom they could plausibly promote as warriors against wrongdoing. The Hall knew that statutes inconvenient to it would often prove ignorable. Both Fernando Wood and James O'Brien – even after the exposure of their participation in various civic frauds – campaigned as self-anointed reformers. Tweed also, at times, if not to the extent of Wood and O'Brien, put himself forward as a reformer. The resistance to Wood, of which he was a part from 1857 through the early 1860s cast itself as reform.¹³¹⁴ In 1862, per Mushkat, Tweed was “{p}osing as a reformer” in pushing for ward representation within Tammany by “‘live men’ with real ‘constituencies at their back,’” instead of by professional pols – so that the Wigwam would be more responsive to public sentiment and thereby “save the General Committee from mass corruption.”¹³¹⁵ Mushkat summarized that the Boss had “grasped control [of Tammany] as a reformer.”¹³¹⁶ In March 1870, Tweed proclaimed himself “in favor of municipal reform,” as his charter would “save the city millions of dollars.”¹³¹⁷ The *Times*, among others, was persuaded: he was, indeed, it said, “distinguish[ing] himself as a reformer;”¹³¹⁸

- in the minds of those who, reflecting on the recent history of the Tweed Ring, sought better City government, reform ought to have consisted of specific measures. The *North American Review* in October 1876 identified the three “cardinal principles on which any successful municipal government, republican in form, must rest:” a strong, responsible executive (“the cornerstone of all reform”); a bicameral legislature in which one chamber is elected by “persons paying taxes of perhaps \$50 a year, more or less;” and a judiciary selected not by “a caucus of city politicians,” but “appointed by a responsible executive and holding office during good behavior.”¹³¹⁹ Five months later, the Commission to Devise a Plan for the Government of Cities in the State of New York – known as the Tilden Commission, although the former Governor did not sign its report – made similar recommendations. It urged that a Board of Finance have authority for revenues and expenditures. The Board was to be elected by taxpayers on properties worth at least \$5,000 and by tenants paying annual rents of at least

\$250. The amendments embodying these proposals were embraced by the business community, but rejected by the voters;¹³²⁰

- for “working-men,” wrote Horatio Seymour to Samuel Tilden in 1876, “{t}he word ‘reform’... means less money spent and less work.”¹³²¹ In 1873, under the reform Mayoralty of William Havemeyer, City spending on charitable organizations and civic development was retrenched and regret voiced that Tweed, instead, “would have stolen the city rich.”¹³²² Owing to the actions and inactions of men like Andrew Green and Havemeyer (who for decades had questioned the desirability of the Brooklyn Bridge), opposition to investments in public facilities came to be seen as linked with reform. By the end of the century, though, this had changed – as reformers no longer opposed and occasionally advocated infrastructural spending;¹³²³

- for the urban poor, reform often entailed obstacles to naturalization, restrictions on their drinking, proposals to limit their voting rights and powers, and the electoral defeats or jailings of the ward bosses who championed their causes and gave to their families;

- a quarter century after the fall of the Ring, the word would have negative associations for many. In 1897, Tammany’s nominee for District Attorney said at a rally that, “when any of these people [“Republicans with so-called reformers”] talk to you about reform... tell them as I do, ‘To hell with reform!’” and was huzzaed.¹³²⁴ The phrase became the slogan of the Hall for that year’s elections and was triumphantly chanted at the post-election rally for the Wigwam’s Mayor-elect, Robert Van Wyck. In 1955, in similar festivities following Richard J. Daley’s first election as Mayor of Chicago, a saloon-owning Alderman danced a jig and chortled that “Chicago ain’t ready for reform;”¹³²⁵ and

- by 1870, leading bruited reforms were measures proposed to depoliticize and otherwise improve the civil service.

What Attention Was Paid to Reform in the Civil Service in the Years of the Ring?

Initial measures to reform the civil service of the U.S. were put forward in the mid-1860s. They sought to combat the spoils system that had come in with the Presidency of Andrew Jackson and had reached a peak in that of Abraham Lincoln – under whom 89 percent of the 1,600 incumbents in Presidential offices were removed.¹³²⁶ From the late 1860s through the early 1880s, civil service reform was a frequent topic of public discussion. In 1883, the Federal Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act, a landmark step in curbing patronage hiring, was enacted.

This campaign for bureaucratic betterment: overlapped in time with the Ring; focused nationally on the practice of patronage hiring that, at the municipal level, was fundamental to Tammany; involved the same reform publications as those fighting the Ring; was favorably mentioned by John Hoffman and William Tweed; and was statutorily reflected in the 1873 City Charter that replaced Tweed's.

Thomas Allen Jenckes, a Republican Congressman from Rhode Island, in December 1865 introduced a bill modeled on the British Civil Service Commission – which had been created ten years earlier.¹³²⁷ Jenckes' legislation would have applied to all civil servants whose appointments were not subject to Senate confirmation. Their initial hiring was to be based on open-competitive examinations and their seniority and promotions also determined by tests. The system was to be administered by a board of three Civil Service Commissioners, responsible for formulating such rules as those determining when civil servants might be fired for underperformance.

The Jenckes Bill would take new forms and names and would stimulate public debate over the next decade and three quarters – until a descendant of it would be enacted as the Pendleton Act. Discussion of civil service reform during this period flickered and blazed intermittently as a public issue:

- Representative Jenckes addressed Congress in early 1867 in defense of his bill and argued that its practicality was confirmed by the recent successful implementation of similar systems in England, France, and Prussia;¹³²⁸
- examination-based hiring tended to be favored by those out of power and opposed by those in or expecting soon to be;¹³²⁹
- the proposals of civil service reformers fluctuated – at times incorporating and stressing and at others excluding such diverse aspects

as restrictions on Congressional influence over appointments, requirements of geographical diversity, mandated rotation in office, and prohibition of monetary assessments on appointees;

- in 1867, the National Manufacturers' Association unanimously endorsed the Jenckes proposal¹³³⁰ – while farmers and laborers were indifferent to it;¹³³¹

- during the Presidency of Ulysses Grant from 1869 to 1877, the former general mixed his messages on reform in his bureaucracy: often backing it in statements of principle, but undercutting it in his appointments;

- the first Civil Service Commission was formed in 1871, but would be handicapped by stunted appropriations for it;

- calls for reform in the civil service were made in the platforms of both major parties in both 1872 and 1876; and

- in the Presidential election of 1872, civil service reform was occasionally headlined as a central issue.¹³³² The victory of Grant was subsequently seen as both an endorsement and a rejection of it.¹³³³

What Did Reform in the Civil Service and the Ring Have to Do with Each Other?

The movement to reform the civil service and the history of the Ring intersected:

- the citizens most opposed to the Ring – Republicans of the middle and upper classes – were leading supporters of civil service reform. National spearheads of the movement included the same publications – the *Times*, *Harper's Weekly*, the *Nation*, and the *North American Review* – that lambasted the Ring;

- the *Nation*, in September 1870 in one of its first issues attacking the Ring, also defended Grant. It conceded that many national officeholders were “unworthy,” but thought that the

Democracy would do no better, inasmuch as “{t}he Democrat is not alive... who favors a Civil Service bill;”¹³³⁴

- Governor John Hoffman, his Presidential chances still blazing brightly but soon to be doused, backed in his publicized letter of July 4, 1871 to Tammany “much-needed civil service reform” – by which he meant measures to simplify the tax laws applying to “the tariff and... the internal revenue, and thereby to reduce the officers engaged in their enforcement to a number that can be well watched;”

- Andrew H. Green, on taking over Richard Connolly’s office a few months later, informed the clerks that their continued employment would depend only on their professional performance and cautioned them not to act politically or to pay patronage assessments on their positions – a pronouncement called by the *Nation* “the most valuable piece of assistance [Civil Service Reform] has yet got from any official quarter;”¹³³⁵

- Ring predecessor Fernando Wood, become a fixture in the Congress, initially voted there against reforming the civil service but in 1872, as a political expedient, backed it;¹³³⁶

- the provision in the City Charter of 1873 that clerks could not be dismissed without notice of cause or the opportunity to explain themselves was applauded by the *Times* as “a small measure of that civil service reform, which all good citizens desire, and all jobbers in the great trade of patronage detest;”¹³³⁷ and

- William Tweed, in his jail-house interview of 1877, advanced the thought that “civil service reform is needed to straighten out the City Government... if he were to undertake the task of reorganizing Municipal affairs as the price of his liberation, he would compel men to give adequate service for official salaries.”¹³³⁸

Was Reform, on Balance, Good?

With such spread of thought on what reform generally – and even civil service reform more narrowly – was, there could be no consensus on its merits.

Yes

The use of the word in the *Times* throughout Tweed's political years was overwhelmingly positive – as seen in such headlines as that of June 8, 1853 announcing the adoption of a new Charter to curb the abuses of the Forty Thieves: “The Verdict—Reform Triumphant.” Two decades later, the newspaper deemed the first criterion in making appointments under the new Charter of 1873 to be: “Has he been faithful to the cause of Reform?”¹³³⁹

No

Seymour's 1876 warning to Tilden of reform's unpopularity among workingmen, Tammany's “To Hell with Reform” campaign of 1897, and Hershkowitz's attributions of low motives bespoke the misgivings aroused by the self-proclaimed cleansers of government.

In 1868, Street Commissioner George W. McLean had responded to criticism by the Citizens' Association. He alluded to an unnamed manager of the Association (probably Nathaniel Sands), “who makes the business of reformer pay him at the rate of ten thousand dollars per annum... In such hands ‘reform’ is very much like what Dr. JOHNSON described patriotism to be.”¹³⁴⁰

Roscoe Conkling, Republican U.S. Senator from New York, expanded, nine years later, on the point:

Some of these worthies [critics of Republicans] masquerade as reformers... They are wolves in sheep's clothing. Their real object is office and plunder. When Dr. Johnson defined patriotism as the last resource [sic] of a scoundrel, he was unconscious of the then undeveloped capabilities and uses of the word “reform.”... Grant and all who stood by that upright, fearless magistrate, have been the objects of the bitter, truthless aspersions of these men.¹³⁴¹

That four of the five main books on the Ring (Lynch's the exception) elaborated on shortcomings of those who had brought it down has reinforced

the thoughts of Seymour, McLean, and Conkling. Whether reform was cheered or jeered has depended on the priorities prized and the features in focus.

17

Explaining the Ring

Why the Ring Rise?

The same lens turned by Hershkowitz to reform – consideration of motive – was also applied to what he termed “the so-called ‘Ring.’” To him, it did not exist – except as the fortuitous, simultaneous arrival of four men with divergent personal aims to high positions:

At no time did such a “Ring” dominate New York City politics, let alone the state or national scene. Supposed “Ring” members rarely had much to do with one another, socially or otherwise. Sweeny was a friend of Victor Hugo’s, Hall aspired to make a mark in the theater, Tweed aspired to office, Connolly had Connolly... Except by an accident of history that they served in various city posts at the same time, there is little to relate one with the other.¹³⁴²

Others saw more than accident in their collaboration. To the early set of theories for their civic hegemony given by the speakers on September 4, 1871 – including party politics, citizen apathy, State control of the City, Tweed’s Charter, universal suffrage, and paper money – writers have added explanations for the explanations (seeking, for instance, to explain citizen apathy) and new hypotheses.

Greater attention to personal matters with the receding of public perils. Tilden ascribed “the gradual decay of public spirit” to the disappearance of national danger, upon which the people “paid less attention to the consideration of the public interest.”¹³⁴³

Effects of the Civil War: moral fatigue, avarice, and erosion of ethics. The main resolution of public danger in the 1860s was Appomattox. Callow and Allen were among the historians who felt that the nation was “tired of crusades and emotionally spent” after the war and wanted to focus on making money.¹³⁴⁴ The Committee of Seventy in September 1871 similarly blamed, in the aftermath of the war, “a universally spread passion for sudden wealth and idle display.”¹³⁴⁵ (It also thought the struggle to unseat the Ring “more important than the war.”¹³⁴⁶) Illinois Senator Paul Douglas thought that similar moral “backsliding” occurred after the Civil

War and both World Wars: “Perhaps war uses up such a large part of the idealism of many men that they tire of living on so unselfish a plane.”¹³⁴⁷ The *Times* in 1867 had described a different way in which the recent conflict might have contributed to “{p}ublic {o}fficial {c}orruption:” “war is apt to blunt fine notions of right and wrong” – as the result of such actions as thefts from deserted properties by soldiers and sales by merchants of shoddy goods to the armies. The hypothesized effects were that municipal officers became more apt to steal and were less likely to be caught or sanctioned.¹³⁴⁸

Municipal wealth. The Committee of Seventy blamed civic prosperity: the City was doing so well that “millions could be stolen from the tax-payers without imposing extra burdens that were felt as onerous by so wealthy a constituency.”¹³⁴⁹

Citizen depravity. Strong thought graft inevitable in a society as degenerate as his: “We may succeed in breaking this Ring, but another will soon be riveted round our necks. A sordid and depraved community cannot govern itself without corruption.”¹³⁵⁰

Immigrants. Bryce, like Strong and Wingate earlier, expressed the thoughts of many reformers in ascribing the decline of the citizenry to new arrivals. He had once observed “the process of citizen-making in New York” – in which voting rights were conferred on “{d}roves of squalid men, who looked as if they had just emerged from an immigrant ship.”¹³⁵¹ His research indicated that “the newcomers were as a rule poor and ignorant. They knew little of the institutions of the country, and had not acquired any patriotic interest in it.”¹³⁵² They were, he judged, “{i}ncompetent to give an intelligent vote.”¹³⁵³

Democratic dominance. While one speaker at the mass meeting had lamented that the City government had become the prize of an inter-party contest, the Committee of Seventy, three weeks later, thought the problem, instead, to be that there was no longer any such contest: that “one political party has had unchecked rule for so many years.”¹³⁵⁴

Unrestrained debt financing. Seymour Mandelbaum noted that the Ring’s money flows were predicated on borrowing: through bonds sold to banks and other financial institutions, which, unregulated by governments, proliferated in the late 1860s.¹³⁵⁵ Debt funding of fiscal deficits enabled the Ring leaders to keep taxes low (but would also, in 1871, in Mandelbaum’s judgment, make “{t}he bond market” their “Achilles Heel”¹³⁵⁶).

The professionalization of politics. Tilden judged that: “Everybody was in such haste to compete for the good things of life that... the concerns

of civil government were turned over to a professional class who made politics a business for their own personal advantage and profit.”¹³⁵⁷

Unique evil brilliance. Callow wrote that:

William Marcy Tweed had many of the attributes celebrated in post-Civil War America – energy, enterprise, enthusiasm for his work. If we forget for a moment his powers for mischief, we could liken him to a successful businessman of the era. The august *Journal of Commerce* admitted that his executive capacity was extraordinary... Of all his attributes, however, it was his talent for political organization that was the most outstanding.¹³⁵⁸

Tweed greed. That Tweed stole on an unprecedented scale may have owed, in part, to the cupidity described by Wingate:

[Tweed] loved money not only for what it would bring, – for he spent lavishly enough, – but he loved it for its own sake. His greed was simply insatiable... he boasted that he was already worth twenty millions, and would soon be as rich as Vanderbilt.¹³⁵⁹

An unchecked opportunity to steal. Godkin’s *Nation* deemed neither unbridled covetousness nor any special talent for graft to have been key to the Ring. Crucial instead was civic permissiveness:

There is no city in the civilized world which does not contain plenty of men capable of doing all that Tweed did and more, if they got a chance. London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Boston, and Philadelphia, all have them in abundance; men, we venture to say, with full as much ability and audacity, with as huge a greed for money and as capacious stomachs... If we never hear of them the reason will be, not that *he* was a man of matchless powers of mischief, but that the community they live in will not give them a chance of imitating him.¹³⁶⁰

Tweed’s original achievement: discerning and catering to the wishes of the poor. The *Nation* in 1878 also felt that the population that had swelled American cities

during the past twenty-five years has had many of the characteristics of a plebs, and rapidly began to ask for leaders which should put it in the

way of living off the rich without violating the law. Tweed succeeded because he was the first to perceive the work which this class wished to have done, and the first to discover the way of doing it... The bulk of the poorer voters of this city to-day revere his memory, and look on him as... a friend of the needy who applied the public funds, with as little waste as was possible under the circumstances [!?!], to the purposes to which they ought to be applied—and that is to the making of work for the workingman.¹³⁶¹

Tweed's system of power-point control. Ackerman fessed up to respect for the fraudsters:

It's hard not to admire the skill behind Tweed's system, though. The Tweed Ring at its height was an engineering marvel, strong and solid, strategically deployed to control key power points: the courts, the legislature, the treasury, and the ballot box.¹³⁶²

Broad buyoffs. A grand strategy of the Ring, once in control of the public purse, was to direct money toward all groups whose support might help or whose disaffection might hinder. The approach extended to churches and charities. The *Times* in 1923 sensed adherence to

the formula of Imperial Rome.

“Keep the people quiet and do a lot for the churches,” was [Tweed's] rule. At Albany he gave standing orders that his men never were to vote against a bill benefiting a church or charity.¹³⁶³

Tweed's promotion of hospitals, libraries, museums, asylums, and religious education helped to cement his power. Indications of the importance he placed on such largess were his securing of Ring control over the charitable distribution of excise revenues¹³⁶⁴ and his own eleemosynary gifts – which amounted in 1870 to at least \$163,000.¹³⁶⁵

Need fulfillment. Jane Addams in the 1890s struggled against hands-out aldermen in Chicago and concluded that, in the eyes of many poor, the benefits of corruption exceeded its costs. Such aldermen, in awarding transportation franchises, might take bribes that ultimately came from higher fares. Many of the poor recognized this but “it almost seems as if they would rather pay two cents more each time they ride than give up the consciousness that they have a big, warm-hearted friend at court who will

stand by them in an emergency.”¹³⁶⁶ The benefits the bribe-taking – or “boodler” – bosses bestowed in her Chicago included paying the rents of hard-pressed tenants; arranging for jobs; posting bail; giving presents at weddings and christenings; buying tickets for benefit entertainments; arranging for funerals; and distributing turkeys, ducks and geese for Christmas.¹³⁶⁷ Theodore Roosevelt, the previous decade in New York City, had made similar observations: finding that members of the

laboring class... are often curiously and cynically indifferent to charges of corruption against favorite heroes or demagogues... Thus, if a man is open-handed and warm-hearted, they consider it as a fair offset to his being a little bit shaky when it comes to applying the eighth commandment to affairs of state.¹³⁶⁸

Chance. Virtually no other authors have joined with Hershkowitz in seeing the Ring as a happenstance event.¹³⁶⁹ Most listed factors that contributed to its coming – factors that, being largely ineradicable, made the Ring itself inevitable. One judgment on the general inescapability of rings came soon after the death of Tweed. Even with the admonitory lessons in his personal tragedy, the *Nation* forecast just after his death, “that he will have successors there is no doubt”¹³⁷⁰ – not so prescient a prophecy as it might appear, since such footstep followers as Kelly were, by that time, already in place.

Why the Ring Fall?

Is it essential in combating corruption that individuals bear risks and costs to act with integrity?

Yes

Had Jennings, Jones, Nast, or the Harper brothers, when encountering bribe offers and threats, backed off, their combined campaign against the Ring might have faltered. A prosecutor of Tweed reported that one lone juror, at hazard to himself, held out in January 1873 against the majority of his eleven fellows, nine of whom wanted to acquit the former Boss and two of whom were willing to, if he did. Had this man – whose name has been

lost – gone along, the bell cow of the corruption might have escaped further prosecution.¹³⁷¹

Maybe

Acting against the Ring in early 1871 risked retaliatory tax increases, regulatory and legal harassment, and physical harm. As the second half of the year progressed – with growing numbers of citizens opposing the Ring – the downside of standing against the corruption declined and politicians increasingly saw advantages in it. Tilden's progression from August silence to September activity was not unique. That self-interest may have been among the motives behind his pinnacle moment of defiance in Rochester cannot, however, take wholly away its integrity and courage.

Maybe not: the roles of James O'Brien

William Havemeyer in October 1871 wrote to Samuel Tilden that “{r}espectable men... were only a nuisance in politics. O'Brien was worth forty of them.”¹³⁷² Notwithstanding the efforts of Nast, Jennings, and Jones, Tweed and his sidekicks still rode high on the hot July night when James O'Brien brought William Copeland's copied accounts to the *Times*. They set in motion the events that, within four months, would show the door to the Ring. To Ackerman, O'Brien's package was “the scoop of the century.”¹³⁷³ Who and what was the person judged to be worth forty respectable men?

The quondam Sheriff had multiple parts:

- **Politician.** O'Brien was born in Ireland in 1841 and came to the City as a child.¹³⁷⁴ Charles Wingate called him “wholly illiterate,” but with great “personal magnetism.”¹³⁷⁵ In 1864, when but 23, he won the first of two terms as Alderman and, three years later, as a protégé of the Boss, was elected Sheriff. It was after his fall into disfavor with Tweed and his defeat at the head of the Young Democracy, that O'Brien brought his package to the *Times*. The deed earned him the 1871 nomination of the reformers for the Senate of the State. Elected along with most of the others on Tilden's slate that year, he served in Albany for two years. In the three-way race in 1872 to succeed Oakey Hall as Mayor, O'Brien finished third, with 26 percent of the vote. Eight years later, he would be elected to a single term in the U.S. House of Representatives.

- **Election tough.** O'Brien had, as a young man, headed one of Tammany's repeater bands.¹³⁷⁶ For his part in one political scuffle, Judge George Barnard sentenced him to two weeks in the prison on Blackwell's Island.¹³⁷⁷ In 1872, State Senator O'Brien would vote to remove the judge from the bench.¹³⁷⁸

- **Abettor of election frauds.** In the fall of 1868, as the elections drew near, challenges to Tammany were brewing. A U.S. grand jury and a U.S. Marshal were finding that not all of the tens of thousands of recent naturalizations were legitimate.¹³⁷⁹ Proceedings within the Police Board, composed of two Democrats and two Republicans, became acrimonious. The Superintendent of Police was instructing his force of 2,200 how to curtail vote fraud.¹³⁸⁰ Sheriff O'Brien responded by creating between 1,500 and 2,000 Special Deputy Sheriffs.¹³⁸¹ He would later testify that he had feared trouble and was merely taking precautions¹³⁸² and that he had acted without consulting with or being advised by any of the other leading Democrats.¹³⁸³ The precautions taken by his Special Deputies – termed by Ackerman an “instant platoon of bullies”¹³⁸⁴ – consisted largely of escorting and protecting gangs of repeaters in their rounds of the polling places and intimidating, harassing, and arresting poll watchers and inspectors of elections – mostly Republicans – who sought to interfere.¹³⁸⁵

- **Grafter.** From the pervasive corruption in City government under the Ring, O'Brien did not abstain. As Sheriff, Tweed said, he had bribed a County Supervisor to pass fraudulent appropriations bills.¹³⁸⁶ Charles Wingate described one corrupt combination, known as the “Market Ring,” which was thought to have shaken down \$500,000 from the owners of stands in the public markets. One of the two Superintendents heading this operation – under the overall aegis of Controller Connolly – said that he had had repeatedly to pay off O'Brien and others.¹³⁸⁷ Wingate made a statement on the standards of the times in judging O'Brien, as “a ward politician... probably neither more nor less corrupt than the majority of his associates.”¹³⁸⁸

- **Blackmailer.** Late in 1870, O'Brien submitted to Connolly two claims totaling over \$350,000 for “supplies to county jail, carrying

prisoners to State Prison and other duties devolving on the sheriff.”¹³⁸⁹ The Controller thought them fraudulent – as did Tweed¹³⁹⁰ – and declined payment. At about the same time, O’Brien obtained from Copeland the copied ledgers and began to use them to pressure Connolly, Sweeny, and Tweed.¹³⁹¹ The Boss wrote him a check for \$6,000 in November 1870 and another in the same amount six months later. In May 1871, Tweed paid his former friend \$12,000 in return for a thirty-day promissory note. When the note became due, O’Brien refused to pay.¹³⁹² With Connolly, Sweeny, and Tweed still failing to remit his claims, O’Brien went in July to the *Times*. Three months later, a representative of the former Sheriff told Tweed that, if the Boss were to purchase half of O’Brien’s claim against the City, O’Brien would have Tilden go easy on him. Tweed paid O’Brien \$150,000 and understood that Connolly would buy the other half.¹³⁹³ O’Brien subsequently had no discernible effect on Tilden.¹³⁹⁴ In 1877, O’Brien denied having made such a deal,¹³⁹⁵ whereupon Tweed submitted to the Aldermen a copy, signed by the ex-Sheriff, of the assignment of half the claim.¹³⁹⁶

- **Reformer.** The *Times* did not at first identify O’Brien as the purveyor of Connolly’s accounts. By the time of the mass meeting of September 4, 1871, however, his role had become known and he appeared on the platform that evening, accepting the plaudits of the crowd.¹³⁹⁷ As the elections neared, the Ring was thought likely to dip once again into its bag of ballot tricks. O’Brien, however, with his own background in vote mischief, counseled the reformers, enabling them “to frustrate many nicely matured plans”¹³⁹⁸ and prompting Havemeyer to value him highly.

Historians ascribe to O’Brien a momentous role in ousting the Ring. None found among his motives the wish to purify government.

Why did electoral fraud not carry the Ring to victory in 1871?

The success of Tweed at the State Democratic Convention in early October of 1871 dismayed reformers. They feared that the Ring’s proficiency in electoral fraud would lead it to triumph in the November elections. Tilden sensed that “the belief was general in the City and State,

and among all parties, even to the election, that we should fail, and that the 'Ring' would hold a majority."¹³⁹⁹ In August, the Ring-cozy *New York World* had boasted that, with the Tammany-tailored Election Registry Law and with the absence of Congressional races precluding Federal intervention, the Democracy would sweep.¹⁴⁰⁰ George Templeton Strong wrote on November 4 that "the roughs and repeaters and Oakey Hall's fraudulent counters will doubtless prevail."¹⁴⁰¹ The victory instead of the reform slate clinched the expulsion of the Ring.

Why did the reformers win? What happened in 1871 that had not one year earlier? Why did the Ring not succeed in stealing one more election: the most important one it ever faced?

One partial answer was that popular ire was greater in 1871 and that that put more bite into the measures taken to prevent fraud. Those measures were not, however, altogether successful. In Tweed's district, for instance, opposing voters were said to have been, with the assistance of the police, beaten up and barred from the polls.¹⁴⁰² Such episodes notwithstanding, it is likely that the public furor in other districts did in fact effect more honest voting and counting.

Most authors attributed the electoral results of 1871 to changes in voting behavior: with some emphasizing the ballots of the rich and others, those of the poor. Bryce cited, in particular, "the respectable citizens, who had for once been roused from their lethargy, and who added their votes to those of the better sort of Democrats and of the Republican party," and who thereby "overwhelmed the machine" (raising the puzzler, though, of, if the respectables were neither better Democrats nor Republicans, who they might have been).¹⁴⁰³ Myers thought the outcome showed "that the people had really awakened."¹⁴⁰⁴ Both Lynch¹⁴⁰⁵ and Callow¹⁴⁰⁶ considered the key to have been that the poor — especially the immigrant poor — voted in substantial numbers for the reformers.

These explanations do not, though, address the worry voiced pre-election by Strong and by the *Times* on October 15, 1871: "The Ring has the control of the ballot-box, and it can cheat the people out of their votes, let the strength of their opposition be what it may."¹⁴⁰⁷ The problem had been exacerbated by the recent passage of the Ring's Election Laws, which Tilden considered "the means by which Mayor Hall acquired such immense power over the inspectors and canvassers, and all the machinery of the elections, that the 'Ring' began to think they could get along without the voters."¹⁴⁰⁸ Politicians — thinking along with Tweed that his control of the

counting made the voting itself immaterial – held back from joining the reformers.

Tilden was one of the few to offer an explanation of why this widespread worry was not borne out. He had himself had confidence, he said,

because I counted on the intensity of the popular ferment as likely to permeate and weaken all the agencies of the 'Ring,' and to swell the wave of opposition until it should sweep over all artificial obstructions.¹⁴⁰⁹

He did not elaborate – which invites speculation as to the effects he had in mind. Perhaps with the populace as aroused as it was, with Connolly cooperating with the Committee of Seventy, with O'Brien teaching it the tricks and countertricks of the political trade, with the courts beginning to bite the hands that had held them on leash, the tabulators of the votes had second thoughts. Perhaps they saw personal hazards in contributing this one time more to miscounting the ballots to the extent necessary to elect the Tammany slate. Whatever their motivations, their relatively honest tallying showed the door to the Ring.

How significant was Oswald Ottendorfer in bringing down the Ring?

Key

E.L. Godkin's *Nation*, on August 31, 1871, thought

“{t}he most cheering sign of the times by far, and, indeed, the one incident which has yet occurred which leads us to hope for reform... is the revolt of the German Democrats against Tammany... The leading German paper, the *Staats-Zeitung*,... which has an enormous circulation and great influence, and has been a firm supporter of Tammany, has declared war against Hall and Connolly & Co.

Published by Oswald Ottendorfer, the paper had the largest readership of any German journal anywhere.¹⁴¹⁰ Godkin thought, “the Republicans ought long ago to have bought” it, even if the price were as high as \$3 million.¹⁴¹¹

Twelve weeks later, after the electoral demise of the Ring, distribution of kudos was debated. The *Nation* agreed with the public, which, “with a near approach to unanimity, awarded to the *Times* the principal share.” It also was in step with the *Tribune* in giving next-greatest credit to Oswald Ottendorfer and *Harper's Weekly*. “Mr. Ottendorfer's declaration of war on Tammany was,” said the *Nation*, “the most important incident in [the struggle], after the publication of the accounts, and indeed may be called the turning-point.”¹⁴¹² Others according high significance to Ottendorfer included Samuel Tilden,¹⁴¹³ Charles Wingate,¹⁴¹⁴ and Seymour Mandelbaum.¹⁴¹⁵

More a nail than a hammer

Two issues in determining the significance of Ottendorfer's reform stance were the importance of the German vote and Ottendorfer's responsibility for it.

George Templeton Strong joined Charles Wingate and the *Nation* in citing the importance of the German ballots: he thought the electoral results “mainly the success of the Reformers in securing nearly the whole German vote, hitherto blindly given, as a general rule, to the so-called Democracy.”¹⁴¹⁶ Later historians, as noted above, did not especially credit the Germans in the voting out of the Ring.

To the extent that the German balloting did matter, how important was Ottendorfer's role in it? The *Tribune* thought, in late August 1871, that the *Staats Zeitung* had recently announced the end of its siding with the Ring because it “became convinced—probably by a large decrease in its circulation—that it would be suicidal to continue its support of HALL and CONNOLLY against the manifest disapproval of its readers.”¹⁴¹⁷ Even the *Nation*, which ascribed much to the publisher, had, on August 31, 1871, detected

sufficient reluctance of tone in the resolutions [of the German Democratic Committee against the Ring] to prove that this action... has been forced on the managers by the rank and file. The Germans will not stand stealing... We believe they have not contributed a single great thief to the City Hall.¹⁴¹⁸

Perhaps the followers had led and the leaders, Ottendorfer among them, had been swept along. (The *Staats Zeitung*, in the first few days after the

revelations of the *Times* starting on July 20, had run only one article on them: Hall's rebuttal.¹⁴¹⁹)

Ottendorfer was ignored by Lynch and Hershkowitz and was but fleetingly mentioned by Callow¹⁴²⁰ and Ackerman.¹⁴²¹

Oswald Ottendorfer would in 1874 run unsuccessfully for Mayor (finishing third in a field of three, with nineteen percent of the vote). Had his actions three years earlier been taken with an eye to his political prospects? When the Ring had been in power, Ottendorfer's positions had had similarities to those of Greeley: moments of opposition, followed by, in its last year, tame support. In April 1870, the German had denounced Tweed as "the very *soul* [emphasis in source] of the corruption of Tammany Hall."¹⁴²² Less than a year later, however, the publisher had stepped forward as an ally of the Ring. He not only backed the Viaduct Railroad¹⁴²³ but was also among those who signed the circular soliciting funds for a statue of the Boss.¹⁴²⁴

Was Oswald Ottendorfer, in opposing the Ring, led by his fellow-German New Yorkers, or did he lead them, or did a combination of the two occur?

What role did chance play in the fall of the Ring?

One of insignificance. Both seeing and dismissing chance as a factor was historian Gustavus Myers. He argued on the one hand that, "The downfall of the 'ring' was inevitable. No such stupendous series of frauds could reasonably be expected to continue, once the proper machinery for their exposure and for the awakening of the dormant public conscience was put in motion."¹⁴²⁵

One of import. Notwithstanding his general judgment of inevitability, Myers also fingered "fortuitous and accidental" "immediate causes" of the Ring's crashing and burning.¹⁴²⁶ Other historians have also written of significant happenstance factors. They include not just the integrity shown by many, but also their competence: the deft pen of Nast; the prudence of Jones in safeguarding the ownership shares of the *Times*; and the vituperative excellence of Jennings. In speculations, however, on the role of chance in toppling Tweed, most stress has been placed by Myers and others on an interrelated series of events:

- **The Ring's making James O'Brien Sheriff.** Wingate: "an ominous foreshadowing of disaster."¹⁴²⁷

- **Connolly's appointment of O'Brien's man, William Copeland, to an accountancy position.** McCullough, referring to the appointments of both Copeland and O'Rourke: "Why Connolly had been so careless about whom he let see Watson's books is hard to fathom."¹⁴²⁸

- **Copeland's giving O'Brien copies of Connolly's records.** Ackerman: "one day in mid-1870, Jimmy O'Brien got a break:.. Bill Copeland came to see him."¹⁴²⁹ Copeland himself made it sound haphazard: "I told Mr. O'Brien about them, because he was the only friend I had in public life; I would have come to the mayor had I known him."¹⁴³⁰ Ackerman gave the title of "Fate" to his chapter on Copeland's copying, O'Brien's extortion, and Watson's death.¹⁴³¹

- **The death of *Times* part-owner James B. Taylor.** Lynch: "within a few days of Taylor's passing... *The Times* let loose its first editorial attack."¹⁴³² O'Brien thought that the *Times* would never have printed Copeland's accounts, had Taylor been alive.¹⁴³³

- **The Ring's decision, when blackmailed, not to pay O'Brien off.** Connolly, Sweeny, and Tweed apparently wavered on whether to meet O'Brien's demands: first opting not to, then reversing themselves and asking Watson to deal with the matter.¹⁴³⁴

- **Watson's death.** George Templeton Strong in 1872 thought that "Watson's [death] led to the destruction of... the Tammany Ring."¹⁴³⁵ Among the historians since echoing him have been Myers,¹⁴³⁶ Werner,¹⁴³⁷ Callow, ("the first real step in the Ring's fall"¹⁴³⁸), McCullough ("so began the fall of the house of Tweed"¹⁴³⁹), and Allen ("the event that triggered the swift downfall of the Tweed Ring"¹⁴⁴⁰).

- **The possibility that Watson's accident occurred on the day that he was to have met with O'Brien and might have succeeded in buying him off.** Wingate: "Had Watson lived, it is

extremely probable that some temporary truce would have been patched up between O'Brien and the Ring."¹⁴⁴¹ Ackerman: "Whether James Watson had been en route to see Jimmy O'Brien that January afternoon... is unclear... After Watson died, the former sheriff's talks with Tweed broke down."¹⁴⁴²

- **Connolly's hiring of Matthew O'Rourke.** Callow: "a fatal appointment."¹⁴⁴³ Allen: "far more destructive to the Ring in the long run than immediate concern over Watson."¹⁴⁴⁴

- **O'Brien's decision to take Copeland's copyings to the *Times*.** The *Nation* "greatly fear[ed]" that "if James O'Brien had not peached on the Ring,.. the gallant and public-spirited conductors of [the *Times*] would have found... that all they had got for their pains was the reputation of querulous, growling, ill-conditioned 'slangwhangers.'"¹⁴⁴⁵

Why, unlike other corrupt combinations, did the Ring of Tweed come down?

Ackerman was among those who thought that, but for a series of avoidable happenings, "it [is] easy to envision [the Ring's] weathering the storm and walking away."¹⁴⁴⁶ Support for this view is lent by the experience of other corrupt machines: some of which never fell, while others landed softly. The two City rings, indeed, that bracketed Tweed's – those of Fernando Wood and John Kelly – were cases in point. The plundering of Wood was largely ended in the 1860s and gave way not to reform, but to Tweed. Kelly's bossdom of 1872-86 was succeeded in relatively orderly fashion by those of later Tammany leaders Richard Croker (1886-1902) and Charles Murphy (1902-24). Both Wood and Kelly died, if not at the heights of their powers, in circumstances and with civic honors that contrasted starkly with Tweed's room in the Ludlow Street Jail.

The *Nation* in 1878 saw lessons in the Ring that may have been heeded by later bosses: that its fall owed largely to the scale of its thefts – the hundreds of thousands pocketed by men like Wood being negligible next to the tens of millions taken by Tweed – and the flaunting of its wealth:

Had [Tweed] gone more slowly and carried on his operations on a smaller scale, and been simpler in his habits and less ostentatious in his

pleasures, he could have retained his power until now... A villain of more brains would have had a modest dwelling and would have guzzled in secret.¹⁴⁴⁷

18

How Well Did the Law Work?

Well Enough

While the Ring rode high, doubt abounded that the courts – with both judges and juries in its pocket – ever would act effectively against its leaders. Tilden said that “for a long time there was no grand jury... which had not been packed.”¹⁴⁴⁸

Two years after the Ring had been voted out of power, it was still not clear if any significant verdicts would be reached. The *Times* sensed in November of 1873, near the end of Tweed’s second trial, public disappointment at the “repeated failures of justice” in achieving convictions. His first trial had had an “unfortunate result... pernicious in its effects upon the public moral feeling.” In consequence, “the intelligent portion of the spectators [at the second trial] did not so much appear to think that an individual was on trial as the jury system itself.”¹⁴⁴⁹

Tweed’s conviction and the attachment of his possessions were noteworthy achievements of Tilden, O’Conor, other prosecutors, and the judges. Politicians who considered following in the Boss’s footsteps would be given pause by his legal fate. Cynics suspecting that judicial fixes can ever be arranged to get the powerful off could take heart at what Tweed was meted out.

Not So Well

- **Implicated lawyers.** Barnard, Cardozo, McCunn, Hall, Hoffman, Sweeny, and Tweed were members of the bar (as were also, countervailingly, O’Conor and Tilden).

- **Legal injustice in the fat years of the Ring.** Healthy judicial review should not have taken years to remove from their benches judges who wielded their gavels to reward friends, punish foes, reap payoffs, and skew the fields of business and politics.

- **The ineffectiveness of the law in preventing thefts and recovering plunder.** The City lost tens of millions before the stealing stopped. The Aldermanic investigative committee noted in 1878 that, seven years earlier when the frauds were exposed, most Ring members “held large amounts of real estate in and near the City, which could neither be sold nor taken away, and it seemed sure not only that the villains would be sent to the State Prison, but that the City would regain at least a respectable portion of the vast sums of which it had been robbed.” Unfortunately, “the results have been unsatisfactory and meager in the extreme.”¹⁴⁵⁰ The total civic recovery of funds was determined by the committee to be \$1,119,525.26 – six sevenths of which came from the estates of Watson and James Sweeny. Net of legal expenses borne by the City and State, the recovery was \$876,241.84¹⁴⁵¹ – a pitifully small amount for a City “robbed to the extent of 50 millions of dollars at least.”¹⁴⁵² There had been timely raising of the issue. As early as July 27, 1871, the *Tribune* had urged: “{t}he presumption that [Ring contractors Ingersoll and Garvey] have robbed the City of vast amounts, is so strong that they also should be proceeded against forthwith, and the right means employed to prevent a transfer of their property.”¹⁴⁵³

- **Ineptitude/system failure: Connolly's bail.** The reader of accounts of Richard Connolly's flight – upon posting bail of \$500,000, after it had been reduced from \$1 million¹⁴⁵⁴ – might suppose that the City had at least realized the lower figure. Not so, however, as two as-yet-unresolved puzzlements ensued: why did the City receive nothing and why has so little subsequently been made of this fumbling of the legal ball? In the Aldermen's investigation of 1877, a prosecutor, Wheeler Peckham, was asked about Connolly's \$500,000 bail bond. He responded that “I don't know what became of it, but speaking from my knowledge of the routine in such things, I suppose it was filed.”¹⁴⁵⁵ There it rested: no explanation was given as to what such a filing meant; no surprise was expressed at the ignorance of Peckham (who was pleased to have recovered \$400,000 from the Sweenys); the issue was pursued no further by the Aldermen (who, in their to-the-penny totting up of recovered monies, listed not a cent from Connolly). The *New-York Tribune* in 1880 and John D. Townsend, Tweed's lawyer in his last months, in 1901 provided more details. On November 29, 1871, Connolly was asked at his house by lead prosecutor Charles O'Conor for \$1 million as a settlement to secure his release. Bonds in that amount were so soon produced that

Mr. O'Connor demanded that a further payment of \$500,000 should be made, he evidently believing that more could be forced from a man who could thus readily produce \$1,000,000 without going to a bank for it.

Connolly and his lawyer went upstairs to fetch another armful of bonds. Mrs. Connolly asked what was up, learned, took the bonds from the lawyer, "and said in her determined way, 'Richard, go to jail.'" ¹⁴⁵⁶

Richard did sleep that night in jail. He remained a prisoner in the Ludlow Street Jail until January 1st, 1872... On December 31st, 1871, Sheriff Brennan adopted a bail bond, and on January 1st Connolly was released and at once left the State and never returned...

Unfortunately for the city, when the demurrer to the complaints in the actions brought by Mr. O'Connor against Tweed, Connolly and the others had been sustained in the Court of Appeals, and all of Mr. O'Connor's labors were thus brought to naught, the bond which Brennan accepted for Connolly also became worthless. The result was that Connolly escaped, the city lost the \$1,000,000 he had offered, and nothing could be secured from his bondsmen. ¹⁴⁵⁷

The bottom line behind the legal mumbo jumbo (what did it mean to "adopt a bail bond" or for the demurrer to be sustained? ¹⁴⁵⁸) was that the legal system had bungled; that Connolly and his bail bondsmen didn't forfeit \$1 million, or \$500,000, or, indeed, anything at all; and that hardly anyone subsequently – including most chroniclers of the Ring – has even raised a questioning eyebrow at this fiasco. ¹⁴⁵⁹ Either the legal-systemic provisions for bail were flawed or the prosecutors fumbled the ball.

- **The inadequate punishment of most Ring participants.** Even in 1878, the Aldermanic committee judged that "there are no insuperable legal obstacles in the way even now of a vigorous prosecution of such of the Ring thieves as are still living in our midst in the enjoyment of their stolen goods." ¹⁴⁶⁰ But the public and the prosecutors had lost interest and the legal pursuit of Ring profiteers would go no further.

- **The uneven apportionment of justice.** Whether Tweed's punishment was too little or too much, given his crimes, may be debated. That he suffered disproportionately more than his fellow felons is beyond

dispute. That Sweeny, who had stolen millions, was let off for \$400,000, an exonerating statement by the court, and no incarceration was a farcical settlement in light of what Tweed underwent.

- **The manipulations of court procedures undertaken to convict Tweed.** Critics have argued that Judge Davis was a motivated reformer bent on jailing Tweed; that his cumulative sentencing of the Boss was an obvious injustice, as was indeed ruled on appeal; that the rarely used procedure invoked in 1876 to select his jury made it effectively “hand-picked.”¹⁴⁶¹

Not Perfectly, but with Self-Betterment: The Bar Association of New-York Is Born.

Charles F. Wingate judged: “The formation of the Bar Association [in February, 1870] was one of the good results which flowed from the Ring supremacy.”¹⁴⁶² He saw two motives:

(1) **conscience:** “a protest on the part of the decency and respectability of the legal profession against the loathsome degradation into which... the bench of New York City had gradually and steadily fallen.” He agreed with the *Times* that the Ring had “‘cowed the legal profession.’ Indeed, at that time, the attitude of the bar seemed to be one of abject submission at the feet of the thieves, blackguards, debauchees, and ruffians who controlled the municipal and Erie treasuries, and of their associates on the city bench;”¹⁴⁶³ and

(2) **cash:** “the bar became alarmed at the effect which the condition of the courts began to have upon their clients, who were afraid to bring their cases there, and preferred rather to submit to pecuniary loss than to enter upon litigation...

[Lawyers] began to question whether the perpetuation of the Ring judiciary was wholly compatible with a suitable future increase of their own future emoluments.”¹⁴⁶⁴

Tilden had, in 1869 and 1870, been prominent in calling for the forming of the Association.¹⁴⁶⁵ George Templeton Strong soon had joined and in December 1871 thought:

The Bar Association is pusillanimous; its members are afraid to get up a case against Barnard, Cardozo, and Company, though abundant proof of corruption is within their reach. If they should fail, Barnard and the others would be hostile to them, and they would lose clients... I feel inclined to resign.¹⁴⁶⁶

These thoughts, however, were to prove too pessimistic. The Bar Association of New-York played a major role in the 1872 proceedings against Barnard, Cardozo, and McCunn. The charges against the judges were originally brought by the Association and presented to the Judiciary Committee of the State Assembly. The Association then assumed charge of the cases in the investigation of the Committee – as 224 witnesses were examined and a report of 2,400 pages produced. Standard procedure was to have each judge accompanied by two counsel, counterbalanced by three representatives of the Association¹⁴⁶⁷ – which could take substantial credit for the removal of these judges from their benches.

Issues of judgment

Should Tweed in 1873 have been jailed?

No

Leo Hershkowitz argued that the Boss could not possibly have done what the State and history charged him with, was scapegoated by factions with varying agenda, and was convicted in an illegal and unfair trial in which prosecutors bribed and coerced witnesses¹⁴⁶⁸ and the contractors who testified against him were essentially paid informers.

Yes

The *Times* and its Republican readers would readily have convicted Tweed on their presumption that a public official on a limited salary could not, without filching, have had his fortune. Others required more of a case.

Tilden saw in the published accounts of the Controller's Office proof that the public till had been rifled, but no direct implication of Tweed. To

nail the King of the Ring, he needed more,¹⁴⁶⁹ which he soon had: evidence of Tweed's receipt of \$932,000 in contractor kickbacks. Tilden described these payments in the two criminal trials of the Boss and Judge Davis stressed them in both of his charges to the juries.¹⁴⁷⁰ The bank records of these remittances convicted Tweed.

Decoction

It boiled down to whether the deposit records – Tweed's recurring percentage receipts and his total banking of \$932,000 – proved pilferage and justified jail. One jury and most historians have judged that it did. (Tweed himself admitted that this particular evidence “does look bad, very bad.”¹⁴⁷¹) In the absence of statutes applying to such cases, he was packed off to Blackwell's Island on the pretext of deficient auditing.

Should Tweed in 1878 have been freed?

Ought Tweed to have been pardoned because he had been, compared with others, disproportionately punished; or out of humanitarian consideration for a sick old man; or for having fulfilled his part in a confession-for-freedom deal in which, his lawyers said, the State reneged on its word to him, while also using his confession against Sweeny?

No

The *Times*, on the day after Tweed's death, was unsoftened: feeling that it would

transcend the limitations of an imperative duty were we to bespeak indulgence for the crimes of the dead man or sympathy for his misfortunes... his fall has neither been so sudden nor so complete as to lend an impressive moral to the deceitfulness of ill-gotten wealth. The millions that he stole enabled him to escape the penalty of the common thief; the law that he defied in his prosperity was to the last powerless to hold him to a strict account. Instead of dying in a felon's cell, he ended his days surrounded by every comfort that could be introduced into a debtor's prison... The men who can be attracted by the career of

TWEED will not be repelled by the circumstances amid which it closed.¹⁴⁷²

Yes

In disagreement, Jerome Mushkat, in 1977, thought that “few recent historians... suggest his jail sentence was fair.”¹⁴⁷³

Should the State have settled with Peter Sweeney?

No

The Aldermanic Committee judged that:

The case of the People *vs.* Peter B. Sweeney was settled in a very curious and somewhat incomprehensible way. It was discontinued upon the defendant agreeing to pay the sum of \$400,000 ‘from the estate of his deceased brother, James M. Sweeney.’ The motive of the defendant in desiring his settlement to take this form is clear. He undertook to save some shred of his own reputation at the expense of his dead brother. The reason why the [State] was willing to discontinue the prosecution on this extraordinary ground is not so clear. It was based upon technical grounds... But in the opinion of your Committee the result of it was to deprive the prosecution of Peter B. Sweeney of every particle of moral effect, which it was at least as desirable to preserve as it was for the City to recover the paltry and inadequate modicum of the stolen millions. At the time... there was no doubt in the minds of the community, nor in the minds of [the prosecutors] that Peter B. Sweeney was guilty... and the testimony of Tweed and of Woodward has made it entirely apparent, to your Committee at least... that Peter B. Sweeney had not only been a member of the Ring and a participator in all the Ring frauds, but that he had been perhaps the most despicable and dangerous, because the best educated and most cunning, of the entire gang.¹⁴⁷⁴

Early in 1872, reformers – unnamed, but then led by O’Conor and Tilden – had apparently been in agreement with these thoughts of the Aldermen. They were reported to have rejected an offer by Connolly,

Sweeny, and Tweed to have paid \$4.5 million for stays of all suits against themselves.¹⁴⁷⁵

In 1889, Sweeney would present himself as not unlike a classical paragon of probity:

After seven years of the closest investigation I was publicly exonerated in open court from any imputation in connection with the 'ring frauds,' and I think that is pretty firm ground to stand on... If the palest shadow of guilt rested on my conscience, I would not be in this city to-day... About the only feeling that I am conscious of when I see these attacks, is that of solid satisfaction that I am not as my enemy would have me. You remember the remark of Diogenes? Some one said: 'O Diogenes, they are reviling thee.' To which he made the answer: 'But I am not reviled.'¹⁴⁷⁶

Yes

With Charles O'Connor having resigned as special prosecutor at the end of 1876, Wheeler H. Peckham had been preparing the case against Peter Sweeny when the settlement was made. Peckham argued for it on the grounds that, since the Sweenys had limited money, \$400,000 was about the most the State could have hoped for and that the State's case was weak. Peter had not been a member of the interim Board of Audit – the basis of Hall's and Tweed's trials – and had had many of his own payoffs made to James. Rather than undertake an expensive trial of uncertain outcome, the State took \$400,000 to let Peter Sweeny off.¹⁴⁷⁷

Should the State have made any grants of prosecutorial immunity?

Yes

Standard prosecutorial practice is to immunize pawns to nail kings. The State judged that the testimonies of four contractors – Davidson, Garvey, Ingersoll, and Keyser – and the accountant Woodward would help to convict others who had stolen more.

No

The investigating Aldermen came to “the unanimous judgment” that every one of these Ring thieves... should have been as severely punished as the law would permit, and... the prosecuting officers have made a very serious mistake in granting immunity from punishment to a single one of these criminals, either for a moneyed consideration or on any other pretext. The precedent is a bad one.¹⁴⁷⁸

Whether immunity should have been granted for money – sold not wholly unlike religious indulgences – entailed a value decision: would the money gained be worth what the Alderman termed the “moral effect” lost? Whether immunity should have been granted for such reasons as furthering the legal pursuit of others invoked practical considerations. It may have sounded compelling to the Aldermen to call for punishing all to the fullest. Prosecutors have, however, often judged the maximal punishment of all to be an impossible goal and have made tradeoff choices: to enhance the prospects of jailing main culprits, going easier on others.

How should conflicts between the goals of punishment and of financial recovery have been resolved?

Among the resolutions of September 4, 1871 were that “any legal remedy... to recover money wrongfully taken... should be resorted to” and “citizens and tax-payers” should “call officers intrusted by them... to legal account.”¹⁴⁷⁹ But what if the goals of salvaging the plunder and jailing the felons conflicted? The Aldermanic Committee saw shifting positions, beginning with:

The theory upon which the prosecutions against the Ring were commenced seems to have been that the matter of prime importance was to punish the thieves and to render their crimes odious to the public, and that the question of the recovery of the money was of altogether secondary importance.¹⁴⁸⁰

Perhaps the rationale was that publicized prosecution would, over time, gain the City more by dissuading future thefts than would maximizing monetary recovery. In any case, the Aldermen observed, the thieves had exploited this judicial focus:

they immediately devoted themselves carefully to the task of putting their effects beyond reach of the law...

But when this property had all been spirited away, a change of policy... was determined upon by the representatives of the people. The prime object now seems to have been the recovery of the stolen money, and compromises were freely entered into with any members of the Ring who were willing to purchase freedom and immunity from prosecution with a portion of their ill-gotten gains. Of course, as the bulk of their property was by this time far beyond the jurisdiction of our courts, the people were obliged to be content with just what sums of money the persons desiring immunity were willing to pay for it, so that now, in order to recover a part of the stolen money, the prosecutions against the thieves were abandoned. The combined result of the two policies has been, therefore, to release almost every member of this gang, and to leave them to the quiet enjoyment of a very considerable portion of the money of which they had robbed the treasury...

Mr. O'Connor's theory that the prime object of the prosecutions should have been to punish the ring thieves criminally and not to permit the prosecutions to degenerate into mere collection suits, was undoubtedly the correct one.¹⁴⁸¹

How were decisions on granting judicial immunity made and with what results?

It was the respected Charles O'Connor, approvingly cited above by the Aldermen, who had granted immunity to Andrew Garvey. The plasterer recounted that "Mr. O'Connor told me that if I told the truth, of which they were to be judges, nothing would happen to me."¹⁴⁸² The two men may never have discussed whether Garvey would repay any ill-gotten gains and he never did.

Whether the testimony of the immunized witnesses increased the likelihoods of convictions is unclear. In Tweed's first trial, three complicit-but-never-prosecuted witnesses were Garvey; safe manufacturer John Davidson; and plumber John Keyser. The latter two also testified in the Boss's second trial and apparently received assurances of immunity similar to that given to Garvey.¹⁴⁸³

Davidson's testimony in both trials focused on one bill for \$16,940, which, he said, was honest. To have it paid, Watson had had him sign the back of a warrant, while not permitting him to see the front. It was for \$49,172. Davidson claimed to have received only money properly due him. In securing payment, he said he had never dealt with Tweed, only with Watson and Woodward.¹⁴⁸⁴

Keyser twice offered similar testimony: Watson had had him increase his bills by one third; he had never seen Tweed about them.¹⁴⁸⁵

Whether these men helped to convict the Boss is unclear. The defense did not impugn Davidson and Keyser as it did Garvey. Their testimonies were fleetingly referred to in the summations by each side. Judge Davis, in charging the jury, made much of the forced and criminal tripling of Davidson's bill and of Keyser's non-receipt of monies paid on his warrants. He used their testimonies and Tilden's presentation of the forensic accounting as the basis for two main points: that no responsible auditing of the claims against the City had been made and that \$1.2 million out of the \$6.3 million approved by the interim Board of Audit seemed to have gone to Tweed.¹⁴⁸⁶ The impacts of these and other considerations on jurors' judgments are not known.

Davidson, Garvey, and Keyser testified similarly in the trial in which Hall was acquitted. A prosecutor later judged that Davidson "was the king-bolt in the trial of [New York State Senator and lesser Ring figure Henry] Genet, who could not have been convicted without his testimony."¹⁴⁸⁷

Should prosecutors have had as much discretion as they did in determining judicial outcomes or should there have been more systematization of procedure and provisions for guidance, review, and appeal of their actions?

Random results undermine justice. Ideal courts would mete out condign rulings uniformly: equal, appropriate sanctions for equal misdeeds; harsher for worse. Elements of randomness inevitably, however, intrude: in the evidence secured, in the effectiveness of state and defense counsel, in the attitudes and actions of judges, and in the backgrounds, whims, and decisions of jurors – among other factors.

Prosecutorial discretion compounds judicial unpredictability. District attorneys mulling whether to seek or to act on indictments weigh: the likelihoods of conviction; expected court costs; opportunity costs (when

lacking sufficient resources to pursue all promising cases); and the prospects for monetary recovery. In granting immunity from prosecution, considerations include:

- the seriousness of the offenses;
- monetary restitution;
- the expected impacts of immunities granted on the likelihoods of securing financial recoveries from or the convictions of others;
- the fairness, real and perceived, in immunizing some but not all who have committed similar acts; and
- the “moral effect” cited by the Aldermen of forgoing the prosecution of crimes.

Such decisions challenge and matter. Judicial outcomes of leading Ring figures were that: Sweeny and Woodward paid intermediate sums and walked; Tweed was stalked and jailed; Hall was thrice tried and finally acquitted; Connolly fled upon the reduction of his bail; Watson’s estate paid \$558,000; Davidson, Garvey, and Keyser sang and sauntered off; Ingersoll – whose crime was basically that of the other three contractors, if on a larger scale – was convicted and jailed until he talked, then released and not sued.

Factors more determinative of these outcomes than all the courtroom performances of lawyers, rulings of judges, and verdicts of juries combined may have been the discretionary acts of prosecutors. State’s attorneys decided who would be tried and who not, what the trial charges would be, who freed, and who kept in jail, and negotiated bails and settlements. In Tweed’s case, they also arranged for unprecedented levels of juror vetting and surveillance. The courts played no role except in the subset of situations discretionarily brought to them by the State Attorney General. In those cases, they indicted Connolly, Hall, Ingersoll, Sweeny, and Tweed; acquitted Hall and convicted Ingersoll and Tweed.

The indictments – excepting the failure to indict Hall in October 1871 – seem to have been easily obtained and casually handled. The *Times* reported on those of Sweeny that:

- “{s}everal criminal indictments were had against him in 1872,” but not prosecuted;
- “{i}n 1875, the District Attorney was aroused [by the Statute of Limitations] as to the necessity of obtaining new indictments;”
- the indictment obtained on June 16, 1875 “has in some way been mislaid;” but
- twelve days later, three more indictments were found.¹⁴⁸⁸

Court processes have evolved over centuries to limit the role of randomness by providing for procedural sequencing and for competent advocacy, challenge, and review. In contrast, prosecutorial decisions that may exonerate or otherwise substantially affect the likelihoods and magnitudes of ultimate punishment may be made with relative caprice by small numbers of persons, with limited possibility of systemic self-correction.

Did Samuel Tilden deal ethically with Richard Connolly?

The Controller thought that Tilden had promised him gentle legal treatment. Tilden’s own account of their understandings in September 1871 was:

I began by telling him that I could not be his counsel or assume any fiduciary relations toward him...

I pressed Mr. Connolly to surrender the office... that he had less to fear from the public than from his confederates; that if he threw himself upon the mercy of the public, and evinced a disposition to aid the right, the storm would pass him and beat upon the others.¹⁴⁸⁹

Tilden later masterminded the arrest and legal pursuit of the Controller.

Is a benefit-cost calculus for ethicality appropriate (under which, for example, the questionably ethical aspects of an action might be

deemed outweighed by its ethically positive aspects and to be, on net, ethical)?

Would Tilden's dealings with Connolly be justifiable on these grounds?

Tilden, at Tweed's first trial, was alleged to have said that, whether or not the bill he introduced to strengthen the hand of the prosecution against Tweed was unconstitutional did not matter. His purported reasoning was that "before it would be declared unconstitutional by the Court of Appeals Tweed would be convicted and imprisoned."¹⁴⁹⁰ Tilden denied having said this. If, however, he had, with such thoughts, in fact sponsored legislation he knew to be unconstitutional, could it be excused for having plusses exceeding its minuses?

How close did citizens come, out of exasperation with the courts, to taking the law into their own hands?

While dinner companions of George Templeton Strong had been talking about vigilance committees since 1868, such mutterings peaked three years later. The *Times* on July 27, 1871, in bemoaning that reputable men – as "decoy ducks" – lent their names to the Ring's Viaduct Railway, opined that

{w}hat New-York now wants is, not merely a vigilance committee to watch a Ring of thieves, but a vigilance committee to take care of the thieves's sponsors and to hold them personally and individually responsible for the five millions of the public money which is to be squandered.¹⁴⁹¹

When Judge Emott asked the assembled citizens on September 4, 1871, "But now, gentlemen, what are you going to do with them?;" a voice shouted out, "Hang them," – which brought "{i}mmense applause." The other judge speaking that night, Edwards Pierrepont, also stirred the blood:

I have pointed out to you the peaceful ways to right these wrongs. But if these ways will not do, and, if... yet new men come into the field of fraud to plunder you still more, as they surely will, then I need not tell

you the other way. You will hear it in the yells of an infuriated mob, in the fire and rapine and slaughter, in the noise of musketry and of cannon. Order will be restored, but some despot will put his iron heel upon a people too sordid, too corrupt, too craven for liberty!

The audience, at these words, “arose and cheered, and waved handkerchiefs.”¹⁴⁹²

E.L. Godkin’s *Nation*, dated three days later, put out that

Hall, Connolly, Tweed, Barnard, and all the class to which they belong... fear no penalty for their misdeeds except a violent death... such a death, we repeat, a large and growing body of respectable citizens think they ought to die.¹⁴⁹³

One historian speculated that Judge Barnard might have been motivated to grant his injunction of September 7 against the Ring by his fears of a vigilante justice.¹⁴⁹⁴ George Templeton Strong thought on the eleventh that his City was “not far from” such a “fearful and perilous experiment.”¹⁴⁹⁵

A handful of prominent businessmen and lawyers had, in fact, met in secret on September 5, 1871 to consider extralegal action. They had had in mind the precedent of a vigilance committee formed in San Francisco in 1849, which had freed it from civic criminals. They concluded that they should “first have recourse to the law.”¹⁴⁹⁶

Later in the month, the *New York Star*, a Tammany organ, countereditorialized. It urged the men thrown out of work by Barnard’s injunction and other reform steps to act. Foley, Jennings, and Jones were fingered as chief culprits and their addresses published – which was understood as exhortation to sack their homes.¹⁴⁹⁷ Later, the paper defended itself against charges of vigilantism: it was not the *Star* but the *Times* “whose main endeavor for a month past has been to put the affairs of this metropolis into the hands of a vigilance committee,” although the *Star* did have a readership with “much more inflammable minds” than that of the *Times*; the *Star*, it said, “wants no riot, but it does want justice done to the poor and suffering laborers, whose families are brought to the verge of starvation by the wicked conduct of scheming politicians and hireling press men;” with “30,000 people on the verge of starvation,” were “these men and women and children to be kept out of their daily bread while the chess game of the ins and outs is played by the rich and lazy of New York?;” it

applauded plans for a “Workingmen’s Mass Meeting” and “its enthusiastic determination to effect a change in the infamous work of Jones, Foley, Jennings, and their pals.”¹⁴⁹⁸

It has been argued that vigilance committees were indeed formed: that the Committee of Seventy, being unprovided for by statute, was indeed one¹⁴⁹⁹ and that newly-created reform associations of young men might well have resorted to force,¹⁵⁰⁰ had Tammany prevailed in the elections. With, however, the collapse of the Ring, none of these groups ever felt compelled to flout the laws. The citizens instead relied on the courts — not without defects, but strengthened by after-the-fact legislation — and seemed, in the end, content with the spankings the legal system eventually meted out.

19

How Well Did Other Professions, Institutions, Systems, and People Do?

How Well Did the Press Perform?

Not content with the records of either the law or the press with respect to the Ring was Leo Hershkowitz. In one instance, that of coverage of the Maginnis-Tweed wedding, he gave conflicting evidence and judgment. He took sixteen lines to list the gifts, but thought their estimated value of \$700,000 “surely concocted by imaginative reporters.”¹⁵⁰¹ The event, he said, had been

seized upon by a hungry press that literally drooled over the details, undoubtedly inflated by headline-conscious reporters... Those with sharp noses for these types of things smelled reeking corruption.¹⁵⁰²

His own olfactory nerves sensed “newspapers to sell” – a recurring theme in his assessment of the journals. With sustained attention to motives, Hershkowitz also offered comparably bleak appraisals of the financial sector, political system, and anti-corruption citizens.

Well

The roles in the toppling of the Ring played by *Harper's Weekly* and the *New-York Times* were prominent and proactive. Unlike most of the reform community, which would not begin acting effectively until September 1871, Thomas Nast, Louis Jennings, and George Jones attacked Tweed at the height of his power.

The two publications shrugged off financial hits and legal annoyances, took prudent self-protective measures, treated with contempt efforts to buy them off, and persevered to bring down the Ring. The campaign of the *Times* cost it advertising revenue from the City and subjected it to such petty harassments as the threatened confiscation of its premises. Jones had foreseen that the Ring might retaliate against the paper by acquiring its stock and, to safeguard its independence, arranged for a friend to buy up enough shares to ensure continued control.¹⁵⁰³ The City, because of Nast's cartoons,

suddenly refused to purchase for its classrooms any more texts published by the Harper brothers – when their company had a \$50,000 inventory of schoolbooks.¹⁵⁰⁴ Both publications took such counterpunches and kept up their attacks. The backbone of George Jones was credited with having “ushered in a new dawn in American journalism.”¹⁵⁰⁵

Less well

- **Approbation and silence.** Nast’s biographer, Albert Paine, judged that “the great majority of the metropolitan daily press was frankly for the municipal government, while the remainder... praised it with faint condemnation, or remained silent, when silence was itself akin to crime.”¹⁵⁰⁶

- **Class prejudice and partisanship.** Lynch observed that “{n}ewspapers, the principal food of the mind of the mass, were in the hands of rank partisans, many of whom were corrupt... These journals were almost wholly organs of political parties or of groups with some special interest to serve.”¹⁵⁰⁷ By mid-1871, the two sustained campaigns against Tweed in the press were having scant effect. In part this was because *Harper’s* and the *Times* were regarded as mouthpieces for upper-class Republicans.

The *Times* did not enhance its own credibility with its glossing over of the scandals in Grant’s Republican regime – stating, for instance, in September, 1871 that: “The great strength of Gen. Grant’s Administration... lies in the fact that he is believed to be honest himself, and disposed to enforce honesty and fidelity in all departments of the Government under his control.”¹⁵⁰⁸ Two months later, the *Times* supposed that “President Grant has committed many mistakes,” but “we must rely upon the good common sense of the bulk of the people, who can discriminate between the venial errors of an honest man and the infamous misdeeds of organized banditti.”¹⁵⁰⁹

The *Times* referred to its rival party as “the unwashed Democracy”¹⁵¹⁰ and thought that: “although every Democrat is not a horse-thief, it is quite certain that every horse-thief is a Democrat;”¹⁵¹¹ and “{w}e know that there are corrupt Republicans... {b}ut the whole foundation of the Democratic Party rests upon corruption and bribery.”¹⁵¹² The Ring found in alluding to the known partisanship of its accusers an effective defense.

Earlier, in April 1870, the *Times* had sought to promote its party. It feared that Democrats might secure the lion’s share of the accolades and offices after the passage of Tweed’s Charter. In addition to extolling the

Boss, it stated that passage “could not have been secured without the help of the Republicans in the Legislature, and hence the credit is as much theirs as it is that of the Tweed Democracy.”¹⁵¹³

- **Profit.** Paine attributed the tripling of the circulation of *Harper's Weekly* “almost entirely to the Ring cartoons of Nast.”¹⁵¹⁴ Between the late 1860s and 1872, the circulation of the *Times* rose by 40 percent to just under 50,000 copies per day.¹⁵¹⁵ Could the anti-Tweed editorial policies have been influenced by scratch as well as by scruples?¹⁵¹⁶

- **Failure to develop proof.** Until July, 1871, press criticisms of the Ring were predicated on the personal wealth of Tweed and others and on the burgeoning debt of the City. The *Times* did not itself actively secure the conclusive documentation of the ongoing graft, but merely printed it when delivered by O'Brien. (Shortly thereafter, the paper revealed that it had, the previous fall, been shown the copied accounts but could not, for nine months, secure publication rights.¹⁵¹⁷)

- **Failure to forward evidence to the courts.** The grand jury investigating Mayor Hall in October, 1871 called George Jones as a witness. Jones said that he could provide no evidence as to the culpability of the Mayor. An astounded juror said that he had been reading for months in the *Times* that Hall was a thief and asked Jones the basis of it.¹⁵¹⁸ Jones again declined to substantiate the charges made: drawing a distinction between himself as an individual and the paper and refusing to reveal the authorship of articles or other aspects of *Times* operations.¹⁵¹⁹ Rather than furnish specifics, Jones would say only that “it is known to the whole city that public moneys have been drawn from the city treasury by the signature of Mayor Hall, for which no equivalent has been returned. There is a flood of evidence which is open to you and to every gentleman here as well as to me.”¹⁵²⁰ Six years later, before the New York Senate, Jones testified in similar vein: the editorials alleging bribery in the passage of the Charter were based on circumstantial suspicions, not on the knowledge of specific payments.¹⁵²¹

- **Prostitution.** The behavioral premise of the Ring was that money buys men. The actions of much of the fourth estate sustained the proposition. As word got out that Sweeny and Tweed were paying for favorable press, upstate Republican papers let them know that the slanting of

their coverage could be had. When one such paper later denied that it ever had been paid by Tweed, he produced State printing contracts that had yielded it \$750,000 over six years.¹⁵²²

Issues of judgment

- Most publications were frank mouthpieces of factions. They took in money — via newsstand and subscription revenue and advertising and printing business — that would vary in amount, depending on the effectiveness with which they put forward partisan viewpoints. Was journalistic acceptance of payments from the Ring not fundamentally in accord with such common practice? Or, should all newspapermen — reporters, editors, and owners — who took money in return for more favorable coverage of the Ring be harshly judged?

- Just as juries decide after having heard the best arguments of opposing sides, so do citizens form opinions by evaluating the conflicting accounts of partisan publications. Was the worst aspect of the Ring's press bribery that it bought off not just Democratic organs, but Republican as well? Was it worse for Republican than for Democratic newspapers to take Ring money to contort their coverage?

- Were journals less reprehensible if they refrained from printing known untruths and misled their readers merely by quashing articles unfavorable to the Ring?

- To comprehend and to explain the events of Tweed's era requires grasping the prevailing perceptions of appropriate integrity. To what extent should ethically questionable actions be excused because they were, when taken, common or widely condoned? Is it unfair, in an age when the partisanship of the press is less blatant than in the time of Tweed, to criticize his contemporaries for actions that were then more standard? Should ethical criticism seek to be timeless — rather than era-specific — and, if so, how?

- To what extent should criticism be comparative? If, for example, we are unwilling to assert that the *World* acted poorly in an absolute sense, we might nevertheless judge that it performed less laudably than the *Times*. If so, however, how should differences in circumstances be

taken into account? Should the *Times* be compared only with other Republican papers?

- To what extent should consequences be considered? Was a Ring-slanted piece less to be blamed, if fewer persons were likely to read it, or if its readers were less likely to be swayed by it, or to take actions based on it?

How Well Did the Accountants and Banks Perform?

Well

Not until the City's accounts were published by the *Times*, were its charges taken seriously. These data had been obtained by subordinate bookkeepers taking personal risks. When Tilden became active, his first actions included securing access to the financial records. The most important bank to the Ring, the National Broadway, granted Tilden's people, as a courtesy, access to the records of its customers.¹⁵²³ The materials obtained thereby figured prominently in the campaigns of 1871 and in the courts. Seymour Mandelbaum judged that “{t}he reformers utilized their financial power with great skill.”¹⁵²⁴

Poorly

- **Corrupt professionals.** Connolly, Tweed, Watson, and Woodward were trained accountants. (But so too, in the credit column, were Copeland and O'Rourke.)

- **Vanished evidence.** Critical pieces of legal evidence were the deposit slips of the National Broadway Bank. Normally, the bank kept them for six years in a vault.¹⁵²⁵ By the time of Tweed's second trial, they had disappeared – after less than four years. Perhaps, defense counsel charged, “the guilty bank had suppressed these tickets because it would establish a connivance between that institution and Woodward, which would go far to exonerate Mr. Tweed.”¹⁵²⁶

- **Incomplete evidence: the missing \$2.65 million.** Tilden tracked payments from the City to contractors, from them to Woodward, and

thence to Tweed. Of the \$3.58 million that Woodward's account in the National Broadway Bank received between May 6 and September 1, 1870, \$933,000 went to Tweed.¹⁵²⁷ But what of the other \$2.65 million? Tilden's affidavit of October 24, 1871 listed that total as "Woodward's checks to parties not traced."¹⁵²⁸ Later testimony suggested that most of that money went to Connolly, Sweeny, Watson, Woodward himself and, maybe, Hall. Why did Tilden's document, "Figures That Could Not Lie," and his court testimony not address these issues? Was access to such further evidence – which could have led to the conviction of Hall and to the confirmation of Sweeny's guilt – denied to the reformers by the National Broadway and other banks?

- **Sham reassurance.** One month into its concerted anti-Ring campaign, the *Times* headlined on October 21, 1870, "Where is the Controller's Report?" It reproduced Section 24 of the *Laws Relative to the City of New-York*, which mandated publication by the Controller, two months before the annual elections, of "a full and detailed statement, setting forth" receipts and expenditures, appropriations, and borrowings. Moreover:

As the integrity of Messrs. TWEED, SWEENEY, HALL & Co.... has been impugned, we trust that they will unite with us in urging the Controller to make this report in all respects as required by law.

With many citizens unhappy with Connolly's failure to provide the legally mandated statements, Sweeny¹⁵²⁹ had an inspiration: a blue-ribbon committee of six leading businessmen, led by John Jacob Astor III, would be granted a limited¹⁵³⁰ glimpse into the City's books. The Astor Committee reported three days before the election that it could assure the citizens that "the account books are faithfully kept" and that "the financial affairs of the city under the charge of the Controller are administered in a correct and faithful manner." The debts of the City, the Committee thought, could well be paid off in twelve years.¹⁵³¹

The results, notwithstanding the predictable carping of critics, were what the Ring had hoped for:

for the tax-payers of New York could not believe that men so astute and clear-headed in the management of their private affairs... would hold themselves forth as vouching for the public financial condition without

at least having some acquaintance with that of which they professed to speak.¹⁵³²

The *Times*, on election eve, opined that “Mr. ASTOR and his friends went like sheep to Mr. CONNOLLY, and were shorn” and would, for months to come, heap further scorn on the sixsome. Thomas Nast drew three leading members of the Astor Committee as blind mice, their tails – labeled “prestige” – severed by the carving-knife editorials of the *Times*.

Later in that month of November 1870 – after the reelections of Hall and Hoffman – the *Times* reported its further thoughts on the special committee’s report. Despite ambiguities and gaps in it, the paper concluded that “the aggregate of the local public debt,” as of October 5, 1870, was “not less than about *eighty-four millions dollars!* [emphasis in original]”¹⁵³³ Connolly and Hall interpreted the Committee’s findings as showing City debt of \$26 million.¹⁵³⁴ (On August 1, 1871, the Controller would release confusing figures suggesting that it exceeded \$100 million.¹⁵³⁵)

Explanations offered for this whitewashing include:

- **incompetence.** A member of the Committee admitted in July 1871 that it had not examined documentation of purchases and expenditures and that, even if it had, it could not have detected the frauds. The *Times* deemed the statement “additional proof of the uselessness of these amateur auditing committees.”¹⁵³⁶ It thought – with Denis Tilden Lynch later concurring – that even cursory examination of Connolly’s books should have revealed obvious theft;¹⁵³⁷

- **premeditated complexity.** As just a sampling of Connolly’s stock and bond issues mysterious to most citizens, the *Times* listed 21.¹⁵³⁸ The Controller sluiced funds into and out of plausibly named accounts and took obfuscatory advantage of the overlapping finances of the City and the County; and

- **sticks and carrots.** It has been suggested that committee members were forewarned that their own tax assessments and applications for property improvements would depend on their report.¹⁵³⁹ They may also have been receiving such favors as tax reductions and have been returning them.

It does not, in any case, speak well for the profession of accountancy in 1870 that the scam was so easily put over.

How Well Did the Political System Perform?

Well

Crucial to the toppling of the Ring were its defeats in the elections of 1871. Few saw this better than Peter Sweeny, who, six days before the balloting, resigned his offices – in a letter not made public until just after the election – and soon was abroad.¹⁵⁴⁰ While Tweed's convention triumph in early October had disheartened reformers, the November results showed the self-corrective strength of the system.

Poorly

- **Slowness.** As with the law and all other factors given credit for bringing down the Ring, such credit is counterbalanced by blame for having allowed the frauds to flourish for as long as they did.
- **Republican debility.** The political theory of two-party systems holds that shortcomings of the party in power should lead to the election of the other: a dynamic impelling better performance. In the City of Tweed and Kelly – owing to the limited appeal of Republicans to much of the electorate – the theory came a cropper. In the elections of 1870, notwithstanding abundant evidence of graft, the Democracy swept. In the balloting four years later, three fifths of Tammany's nominees for Alderman had thrived under the Ring and three fourths of its overall slate had liquor connections.¹⁵⁴¹ Such, however, was Republican feebleness that most of the Wigwammen were elected. The State-wide triumph of Tilden that year further showed that the political boost that came from dismantling the Ring had gone to its own party.
- **Republican subornation.** The failure of Republicans to capitalize on the exposure of the Ring derived in part from their own complicity. Tweed's meta-strategy had been one of paying off anyone who might blow a whistle: including the political opposition. The *Times* in August 1871 listed seventy prominent Republican "stipendiaries" of the

Ring.¹⁵⁴² Two months later, it wrote of “Mr. Tweed’s chains clanking upon their wrists.”¹⁵⁴³ (The Democracy, at the height of the Ring, did not content itself merely with placing Republicans in office to provide cover and to do its bidding. In October 1870, the *Times* accused Tammany of attempting to control Republican primaries: as policemen barred known Republicans from voting, while “permitt[ing] the ballot-box stuffers of Tammany Hall to deposit votes... The counting of the ballots was conducted in such a manner as to prevent the members from seeing whether it was done fairly or not.” In the Eighteenth Assembly District, future U.S. President Chester A. Arthur was among “the honest Republicans” who “endeavored to stop the frauds, but were thrust aside by the policemen... amid the derisive shouts of the Tammany men.” (Arthur would, within days, resign in protest his position as counsel to the City’s Tax Commissioners.) Such events were, however, apparently extreme.¹⁵⁴⁴)

How Well Did Citizens Opposed to Corruption Perform?

Well

Even before Nast and the *Times* began their anti-Ring campaigns, the Citizens’ Association had called attention to questionable expenditures on the new courthouse and had brought suits and secured injunctions to curb them. To its voice was added that of the Union League Club: reform-minded Republicans who, in 1868, persuaded the U.S. Congress to investigate the naturalization abuses of that year.¹⁵⁴⁵ In 1871, established political organizations made reform their priority and new entities – most notably the Committee of Seventy – were formed to combat the Ring. Significant anti-Tammany forces that year included the New York Council of Political Reform, the German Reform Organization, and the Young Men’s Municipal Reform Association.¹⁵⁴⁶ Organized reformers masterminded the lawsuit that led Judge Barnard to enjoin the City from further borrowing and spending, mobilized public opinion to vote the Ring out, and exerted their influence in the courts to secure convictions.

Individual citizens in the late summer and fall of 1871 thronged meeting halls and staffed the committees investigating and restraining the Ring. They volunteered their services to support reform candidates, to observe the voting, and to monitor the ballot counting.¹⁵⁴⁷ On November 4, 106 firms announced in the *Times* that “being convinced that the election to

be held on the 7th November inst. is of momentous import,” they would “close their places of business on that day, so that all honest voters may, without hindrance, devote the whole day to the patriotic duty of saving this noble City and State from the rule of bad men.” For George Templeton Strong this was “unprecedented in my time.”¹⁵⁴⁸ Voters on the seventh showed the door to the Ring. Jurymen two years later ran risks in packing Tweed off to Blackwell’s Island.

Poorly

Pervasive apathy toward corruption let the Ring steal as much as it did. New Yorkers knew that graft occurred in cities – as inevitable perhaps as their February slush – and that their own in this respect was not a laggard. They had, moreover, their own lives to lead. They may have thought that civic matters — even if malodorous — were being well-enough managed. It was hard for them to discover what was going on in their government and harder still to do anything about it, other than periodically to vote.

Aspects of their shortcomings were:

- **Emotions and words unbacked by action.** Many New Yorkers behaved like George Templeton Strong – who was neither ignorant of nor indifferent to the ongoing civic crimes. He thought about forming a Vigilance Committee and discussed it with friends. He and they applauded when speakers denounced graft and dutifully voted against the Ring even when they sensed that sharp balloting practices would prevent their having an effect. Until the second half of 1871, their deeds did little to slow the stealing. John T. Noonan, Jr., in his review of historical corruption, noted Strong’s revulsion and that he took such actions as helping to keep a Ring judge from becoming a vestryman in his church. But, in terms of significant effect against the graft, Noonan asked: “Whom or what does the concerned Citizen [Strong] bite? The answer must be, No one, nothing, except with very soft teeth.”¹⁵⁴⁹

- **Long-standing ineffectuality.** Throughout the heyday of the Ring, reform groups met, lamented corruption, documented misdeeds, held hearings, listened to speeches, published papers, hustled to Albany to oppose bloated appropriations bills,¹⁵⁵⁰ occasionally achieved the removal of officials, and had little ultimate effect. This owed in part to

the Ring's adroitness in the traditional Tammany practice of going through the superficial motions of apparent reform – such as replacing incriminated officials with others of like quality.¹⁵⁵¹

- **Blindness/naïveté/folly.** The difficulties the reform community had in distinguishing between true and sham improvements were displayed in their credulous responses in 1870 to Tweed's proposed Charter. The Ring had in this document coupled self-serving provisions with others with broad support. Most Manhattanites welcomed the lessening of State control, while reformers lauded the inclusion of managerial changes designed to strengthen the Mayoralty and to enhance accountability. The Charter was, in consequence, endorsed by the Citizens' Association, the Union Republican Committee, and a substantial segment of the Union League Club.¹⁵⁵² After its passage, the Association commended Tweed's slate of candidates for the new Board of Aldermen: "The Democratic leaders are pledged to good government and progress, and the Association has full confidence that these pledges will be kept."¹⁵⁵³

- **Patrician disdain.** The ineffectuality of reformers had roots in their social attitudes. Those who abhorred civic theft and judicial sleaze had other dislikes as well – including charitable help for the poor, whether public or private; drinking, gambling, and other vices; and universal suffrage. Charles Wingate, in deploring the ignorance and depravity of immigrants, spoke for many reformers. In the difficult winter of 1870-1, Tweed donated \$50,000 to assist the poor of his district. His gift was lambasted by reformers both because he must have stolen the money before giving it¹⁵⁵⁴ and because such misguided largess would keep the indigent from ever learning to fend for themselves.¹⁵⁵⁵ Many reformers felt that enfranchising the poor had made the Ring inevitable and that, until suffrage was pared back, corruption must thrive. Such attitudes of unhelpfulness, superiority, and scorn among many opponents of corruption had contributed to the rise of the Ring.

- **Lack of staying power.** Had the activity level of the citizen groups in 1871 been sustained, subsequent graft would have been lessened. But the half life of reforming fervor is not long. In 1873, the Committee of Seventy disbanded, with but 29 members attending its

final meeting. By the time of that year's elections, the Young Men's Municipal Reform Organization had seen its original membership of 1500 fall to 200.¹⁵⁵⁶

Worse than poorly: cooption

While the *Times* had, in September 1868, lambasted the Citizens' Association for achieving little at high cost, its later commentary on the outfit – calling it, for instance, early in 1871, “a source of incalculable harm”¹⁵⁵⁷ – would make that assessment seem a paean.

Operationally, Tweed said: “there were only three members [of the Association] who appeared to do the work.”¹⁵⁵⁸ Of these, the most prominent was Nathaniel Sands. He was described by Charles Wingate as a “gentlemanly member of the American branch of the family of the late lamented Uriah Heep,” who had come to the organization founded by Peter Cooper “in consequence of an unfortunate bankruptcy which befell him while pursuing a mercantile calling.”¹⁵⁵⁹ “His solemn deportment and his patriarchal appearance,” said the *Times*, “gave him a reputation for tremendous sagacity and unparalleled honesty” among those who did not know him well. “So much white hair and such an expansive forehead could not fail to attract attention and respect.”¹⁵⁶⁰ As the voice of the Association, at a salary of \$10,000, “the emphatic way in which he denounced the members of the ring as thieves elicited great praise.”¹⁵⁶¹ Sands became “quite a thorn in the ring's side... particularly in obstructing its legislative schemes in Albany.”¹⁵⁶²

Such actions made Sands a man of value to Tweed and Sweeny – who, reflexively perhaps, put him to a test: might his staunch stance against them be swayed by prospects of position? Sands, with Ring support, became a School Commissioner – in which role he persuaded the Board of Education to stop purchasing the textbooks of Harper and Brothers.¹⁵⁶³ He also was appointed by Richard Connolly to a Tax Commissionership, with an annual salary of \$10,000.¹⁵⁶⁴ He cast that appointment as a concession made to the Citizens' Association to ensure the square dealing of the Tax Office.¹⁵⁶⁵ The Office soon hired two of his sons as well, at salaries of \$7,500 and \$5,000.¹⁵⁶⁶

By the spring of 1870, Sands had delivered Peter Cooper – still, for much and by many, revered in the City – and the Association over to the Ring. The two endorsed the Tweed Charter, as Sands made the rounds of reformers, arguing to them that the now-rich Ring wanted no more wealth

and was more worthy of trust than alternative “leaner and hungrier thieves:”¹⁵⁶⁷ the Young Democrats. Cooper invited Tweed to be on the platform at Cooper Union’s commencement.¹⁵⁶⁸

The foremost non-partisan watchdog group on behalf of public integrity had become a limb of the Ring. Tweed later testified that the Ring “took care of” all three of its working members: the two colleagues of Sands being given positions as Dock Commissioner and Judge – the latter for fourteen years at an annual salary of \$15,000.¹⁵⁶⁹ It has also been suggested that members of the Association held their tongues out of concern for their personal property taxes.¹⁵⁷⁰

Sands was credited with conceiving the Ring’s Two Per Cent Tax Levy of 1871. He argued to reformers that the Association had long been pressing for such a measure.¹⁵⁷¹ Peter Cooper, having become in the eyes of the *Times* “the ready tool of Sands and his Tammany masters,” backed the Tax Levy and also appeared before the Chamber of Commerce, urging it to support the Ring. He said that the Association had labored for years for “much needed reforms, and now TWEED, SWEENY, CONNOLLY and HALL are leading the people up out of their great tribulation.” The Chamber heard him out – but only from personal respect and made clear that the distinguished man was not voicing its views.¹⁵⁷²

The *Times* – perhaps exasperated that, after months of its editorial flailing, the Ring thrived on – became scathing in its treatment of the man honored for decades as a reform stalwart. (Peter Cooper had in the early 1850s been President of the City Reform League, whose membership had included business magnates and *Times* co-founder Henry Raymond. The League had been instrumental in securing the reforms of 1853. The next year, however, Cooper and William Havemeyer had dismayed fellow reformers by supporting Fernando Wood for Mayor.¹⁵⁷³) In January 1871, the *Times* called Cooper “that most respectable but most weak-minded old [then 79] gentleman,... who seems to be fast getting into his dotage.”¹⁵⁷⁴ To blame, in addition to senescence, was his trusted man at the helm of the Association, as the paper hoped that “{t}hrough some little chink of [Cooper’s] mind, not yet stopped up by that adroit plumber and glazier, SANDS, a ray of light may penetrate.”¹⁵⁷⁵ Whatever the methods, the result, to the *Times*, was tragic: it thought that Cooper’s actions gave the Ring a “veneering of respectability” and thereby made him worse than Tweed and Sweeny.¹⁵⁷⁶

On August 30, 1871 – with the Ring reeling from the body blows of the *Times* – Nathaniel Sands took the step that finally cost him the

confidence of Peter Cooper: receiving from the City \$75,000. Connolly had secretly agreed that Sands, for negotiating the placement of \$15 million in municipal bonds, would receive a commission of 0.5 percent – which, given Sands' status as a salaried employee of the City, was illegal. Soon, the municipal finances came under the control of the reformers and Cooper learned on October 23 of the payment. He pronounced himself “dumbfounded:” “chagrined and mortified” at his friend's “duplicity.”¹⁵⁷⁷ The Citizens' Association was unmoved by Sands' essay of explanation and insisted on his immediate resignation.¹⁵⁷⁸

The former reformer continued on as Tax Commissioner until removed by the new City Charter in the spring of 1873. Sands had, in February 1872, been indicted for pocketing the \$75,000 bond commission and the City had stopped payment of his salary. Proceedings against him were “allowed to slumber” for over ten years – during which he disappeared. In 1885, four years after it had been stated in court that he had died, Sands was arrested in Norwalk, Connecticut. A verdict of \$147,000 (the \$75,000, plus interest) was returned against him. Unable to pay, he went to jail – where, he said, he “enjoyed himself immensely.”¹⁵⁷⁹ After two years behind bars, he was released on appeal and would live for seven more years.

The judgment of the *Times* on Nathaniel Sands' “life of smooth hypocrisy” was that he had been “the meanest and most treacherous of the gang of which TWEED was the boldest, SWEENEY the ablest, CONNOLLY the weakest, and HALL the most shameless.”¹⁵⁸⁰

Appendix to Part III: Estimates of Historical Probabilities

Uncertainty unsettles. Both historians and their readers prefer to think in definite terms, not in probabilities arrived at through research and reflection. Rather than to advance their best estimates of the likelihoods of uncertain propositions, a tendency among historians has been to arrive at best judgments, then to argue vigorously for them. Hence such phenomena as

- historians adamantly denying the possibility that Alexander the Great was complicit in the murder of his father, while others, with comparable certitude, assert his guilt;¹ and

¹ Plutarch (*Plutarch's Lives, Dryden Edition Revised*. London: Dent, 1910, 1971, 2:471) had said that “some sort of suspicion attached even to Alexander himself.” Twentieth-century indictors of Alexander

- different biographers of Thomas Jefferson, before DNA testing, declaring their strong beliefs that he both had and had not fathered the children of Sally Hemings.²

Conversely, other writers – such as Bruce Watson, in *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Men, the Murders, and the Judgment of Mankind*³ – have resolutely refrained from stating their positions on disputed issues. This tack has the advantages of enhancing perceived objectivity and of compelling readers themselves to weigh evidence and to form their own opinions. Watson may also have thought that announcing a position on the guilt or innocence of his subjects would have diverted attention from such important broader issues as immigrant alienation, nativist unkindness, and warped law. Readers, however, have not reviewed the thousands of pages that Watson had studied, nor have they considered as thoroughly as he the many aspects of the case. In their quest for historical understanding, many would

included R. D. Milns (*Alexander the Great*. London: Robert Hale, 1968) and Peter Green (*Alexander of Macedon, 356-323 B.C.: A Historical Biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970, 1974, 1991, 1992). Milns (p. 31) asserted: “There can be little doubt that Alexander became King by becoming a parricide” – with Green (p. 109), in agreement, quoting this judgment. Ulrich Wilcken (*Alexander the Great*. Translated by G. C. Richards. London: Chatto & Windus, 1932, 60) thought, however, that “the idea that Alexander was implicated... is a mere calumny of his enemies;” while Robin Lane Fox (*Alexander the Great*. London: Futura, 1973, 1975, 1982, 23, 24) and Mary Renault (*The Nature of Alexander*. London: Allen Lane, 1975, 62) declared an utter lack of evidence against him. One regrets that none of these historians gave best quantified personal estimates of the probability that Alexander was, in fact, a parricide. Just what numbers should, for instance, be associated with Milns’ “little doubt” or with his assertion (pp. 30, 31) that it was “highly likely” that Alexander and his mother, Olympias, had jointly plotted the murder. Rigorous consideration of personally estimated probabilities and guidance on how to determine and to use them has been provided by decision sciences pioneer Howard Raiffa (*Decision Analysis: Introductory Lectures on Choices under Uncertainty*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1968).

² Gordon-Reed, *Jefferson*, throughout; Bernstein, *Jefferson*, 194-7. A standard bearer for the disbelievers was Dumas Malone, author of the Pulitzer-prize-winning six-volume biography, *Thomas Jefferson & His Time* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1948-1981). Malone held (*Volume 4: Jefferson the President: First Term, 1801-1805*, 214) “that this fastidious gentleman whose devotion to his dead wife’s memory and to the happiness of his daughters and grandchildren bordered on the excessive could have carried on through a period of years a vulgar liaison which his family could not have failed to detect... would be as absurd as to charge this consistently temperate man with being, through a long period, a secret drunkard.” Fawn M. Brodie (*Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History*; NY: Norton, 1974, 32) disagreed: “If the story of the Sally Hemings liaison be true, as I believe it is, it represents... a serious passion that brought Jefferson and the slave woman much private happiness over a period lasting thirty-eight years.” In 1998, DNA evidence indicated (Eugene A. Foster, M. A. Jobling, P. G. Taylor, et al. “Jefferson fathered slave’s last child.” *Nature*, 396 (11/5/1998): 27-28) that “{t}he simplest and most probable explanations for our molecular findings are that Thomas Jefferson... was the father of Eston Hemings Jefferson [the youngest son of Sally].” The analysis of Gordon-Reed, the DNA results, and documentation that Hemings and Jefferson were both at Monticello at the likely conception times of her children led (Bernstein, 196) to “{t}he new consensus that the Jefferson-Hemings relationship did exist.”

³ NY: Viking, 2007.

welcome knowing Watson's own thoughts on such matters as whether Sacco and Vanzetti were indeed guilty of the armed robbery for which they went to the electric chair.

In contrast to Watson, Vincent Bugliosi, at the end of *Reclaiming History: The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy*, did not veil his judgment:

By now it has to be more than obvious to the reader of this book that Oswald acted alone in killing the president... the various conspiracy theories are utterly vapid and bankrupt. Does what you have read prove beyond *all* doubt that there was no conspiracy in Kennedy's assassination? Probably not, if only because such a degree of truth will perhaps always be unattainable... However, there is sufficient evidence to satisfy, beyond a *reasonable* doubt, the world's leading skeptic that Oswald acted alone. [Emphases in original.]⁴

While appreciating both the author's considered opinion and his admission of limited certitude, the reader might also wish quantification. What does it mean to peg the likelihood of no conspiracy at "beyond a *reasonable* doubt," but not "beyond *all* doubt?" The human race invented numbers to communicate such messages as how many animals were in a group better than "a lot" and how far it was to a spring better than "a long way." One reader might think that Bugliosi ended up estimating a fifteen-percent probability that there had been a conspiracy, while another might think that he ascribed but a one-percent chance to it. Both might desire, for the benefit of their own understanding, that Bugliosi had taken advantage of the invention of numbers to quantify his own confidence in his conclusion.

⁴ NY: Norton, 2007, 1437. Bugliosi had toiled in an area of major uncertainty (composed in part of conflicting certainties) in the popular press and mind. He estimated (xiv) that nearly 1,000 books had been written on the assassination: "more words... about [it] than any other single, one-day event in world history" – with "over 95 percent... pro-conspiracy and anti-Warren Commission." When the report of the Warren Commission was released in September 1964, 32 percent of Americans disbelieved its "conclusion... that Oswald had acted alone." Over the years, the proportion of Americans believing that Kennedy had died at the hands of a conspiracy "usually fluctuates from 70 to 80 percent," with the poll of November 2003 putting the figure at 75 percent (xv). In 1979, the House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations, with three of its twelve members dissenting, had concluded (376-7), "with nearly a total reliance on the [bogus] acoustical evidence, that President Kennedy was 'probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy.'" What, one might wonder, were the probability estimates of the hundreds of authors that there had been a conspiracy and what percentage chance did the House Committee members have in mind with their adverb, "probably"? Bugliosi's use of the legal term, "beyond a reasonable doubt," raises the difficult further question of whether it should be numerically specified in jury charges.

It would, indeed, often seem valuably informative for readers if historians were to report their best personal estimates of the chances that uncertain propositions were true.⁵ Whether this benefit of probabilistic revelation exceeds the drawbacks is for each author to decide.

Subjective probability estimates with respect to disagreements about the Ring are given below. The author judges the likelihoods:

that Thomas Nast was offered at least \$100,000 to stop drawing anti-Ring cartoons at 70 percent;

that William Tweed ever taunted opponents by asking, “What are you going to do about it?” at 45 percent;

that Tweed’s actions in 1863 were more instrumental than those of either Orison Blunt, Matthew Brennan, George Opdyke, or Elijah Purdy in achieving the enactment of the Supervisors’ Exemption Ordinance of August 28, 1863 at fifteen percent;

that Tweed and Blunt traveled in August 1863 (rather than in late October or early November) to meet with Fry and Stanton at five percent;

that Oakey Hall at any time routinely received five percent or more of contractors’ bills at thirty percent;

that Samuel Tilden pretended to be surprised at the arrest of Richard Connolly at 40 percent; and

that the Ring, during Tweed’s years in the New York Senate, paid more than \$10 million in bribes to Republican legislators at fifteen percent.

⁵ Annette Gordon-Reed (*Jefferson*, 58), a professor specializing in the law of evidence, argued as much in the Jefferson-Hemings controversy: “rather than discussing the issue of a Jefferson-Hemings liaison in terms of its possibility, one should, instead, consider its relative degree of probability.” Gordon-Reed also, though, described a situation in which it might have been psychologically and strategically difficult for historians to admit to any doubt. She felt that many of the leading historical experts on the third President felt a compulsion (p. 226) “to prove Jefferson’s innocence of the charge of miscegenation.” To that end, they attacked and suppressed evidence at variance with their goal and uncritically accepted and played up evidence supporting it. Bent as they were on demonstrating the impossibility of a sexual relationship between Hemings and Jefferson, it would have undercut their stances of staunch advocacy to estimate any positive probability, however small, that it had occurred. After her meticulous weighing of the evidence, Gordon-Reed’s own estimated probability of the sexual relationship would have been welcome, but was not provided.

IV

The Ring and Later Municipal Corruption

Among the questions on the Tweed Ring, an overriding one is whether its history retains pertinence for modern governments.

Knockoffs of the Ring, in the City and elsewhere, followed its fall. The heyday of political machines – for which the combination led by Sweeny and Tweed was the preeminent model – was between 1880 and 1930.¹⁵⁸¹ By 1950, however, Progressivist reforms – which the Ring has been thought key in motivating¹⁵⁸² – had done much to end the era of shiny hatters and bosses: through such measures as strengthening mayors, shrinking councils, empowering civil service commissions, and professionalizing management.

The *New York Times* in 1947 judged that, throughout the country, the machines are crumbling... the old-fashioned boss can no longer proclaim and get away with an “I am the law” [the words of Frank Hague, boss of Jersey City, New Jersey and its Mayor from 1917 to 1947] attitude... Just as the pot-bellied Alderman has been replaced by the paunchless Councilman, so is the boss being replaced by the “leader” and the machine by the “organization.”...

The organization does not control the vote, it *influences* [emphasis in original] the vote.¹⁵⁸³

Nine years later, the *Times* repeated the point. Many, misled by such images as the “magnificent portrait of the breed” in Edwin O’Connor’s *The Last Hurrah* (based on Mayor James Michael Curley of Boston), still thought cities ruled by bosses. Not so, said the paper:

{T}he political Boss today... is a mirage, a gaudy memory out of a gaudy past, a species which time has rendered almost extinct.

The vestigial Boss of today bears little resemblance to his ruthless, hard-nosed prototype

– personified by Tweed.¹⁵⁸⁴

Part IV looks into these issues: have bosses and Rings indeed persisted and, if so, with what mutations? Phenomena of the past sixty years, with features similar to those of the Ring and with implications for the

promotion of integrity in government, are reviewed – beginning with the best-known boss of the twentieth century, Richard J. Daley. In its essay of 1956 on the near extinction of “the breed,” the *Times* cited him, “Chicago’s new Mayor,” as one leading example of its point: although

brought up in the old Kelley [sic] - Nash machine, and Cook County remains a safe Democratic stronghold under his dominion. But he is a reformer at heart rather than a Boss.¹⁵⁸⁵

Whether Daley was, in fact, more Tilden than Tweed has no simple answer.

Further senses of the relevance of Ring experiences to modern governments are given by:

- the career of Illinois Senator Paul H. Douglas, an ally of Daley, considered by many the archetype of honesty;
- a multi-national perspective on urban corruption; and
- the vicissitudes of Vincent A. “Buddy” Cianci, Jr., recent six-term Mayor of Providence.

20

Chicago

The sobriquet first applied to Tweed became Mike Royko's title for *Boss*: a biography of Richard J. Daley – which appeared in 1971, the year in which his fifth term as Mayor of Chicago began. Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor in 2000, retold a fuller version of Daley's political life in *American Pharaoh*. The latter work spoke of the Mayor in terms once applied to Tweed: “the most powerful local politician America has ever produced.”¹⁵⁸⁶

Daley lived modestly; may have had more control over his city than Tweed had had over his; allowed corruption to thrive, although sporadically moving against it; and was, via methods that appalled reformers, six times elected Mayor. In that office, he was credited with promoting construction in the city center (in and near the Loop), forestalling the decay of that center (although crime-ridden housing towers loomed nearby), and maintaining civic solvency. His Chicago benefited from comparisons with the contemporary declines of Cleveland and Detroit.

Richard J. Daley worked his way up through the ranks of the Democratic Party Machine (formally, the Cook County Democratic Central Committee) of America's second city, finally becoming Mayor in 1955 at 52 – by which age Tweed had worn stripes on Blackwell's Island. Daley would remain in the office until his death 21 years later. In 1989, his fourth child and oldest son, Richard M. Daley, won his father's former office and in 2007 was reelected for his sixth consecutive term, with 72 percent of the vote. *Time* magazine on April 25, 2005 had ranked him as one of the five best metropolitan mayors.¹⁵⁸⁷

For his own Presidential election in 1960, John Kennedy gave credit to his fellow Irish-American.¹⁵⁸⁸ This was political hyperbole for, even without the 27 electoral votes of Illinois (the fourth largest state block that year, after New York, California, and Pennsylvania), Kennedy would have had an Electoral College majority. The lopsided Cook County vote margins Daley delivered for Democratic candidates won him deferential treatment by the administrations of both Kennedy and Johnson. He was granted extraordinary control over Federal programs in his city¹⁵⁸⁹ and frequently mentioned as a possible cabinet member. He preferred, though, to stay

where he had more power. Daley's national influence made Chicago the site of the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

That gathering was to have triumphantly capped his Mayoralty. It did not, however, work out that way. Protesters against the Vietnam War during the Convention were treated roughly by Daley's police – the blueclads indeed often initiating the violence with minimal provocation.¹⁵⁹⁰ The bloodied heads led national Democratic speakers to censure Chicago's finest, which brought Daley to his feet to shout apparent obscenities. The night before, the debate over a possible peace plank in the Party Platform had grown bitter. Daley had then signaled to the chair by drawing a finger across his throat and the session was promptly adjourned. Those two images would be among the most enduring memories the nation would have of His Honor. The violence may have made Richard Nixon President.

Differences across 800 Miles, 80-Plus Years

The urban settings of Tweed and Daley differed: limitedly in terms of the tacit, informal understandings between the cities and their leaders; substantially with respect to race, organized crime, labor, campaign financing, and personal aspects.

Implicit understandings. The mandate that Tweed may have been inferred to have had was something like: “take sufficient care of the infrastructure that the City may flourish and don't steal too much.” The unspoken contract worked out by Daley with his white supporters was roughly: “promote the economic health of the city; don't let too much be stolen; and keep blacks from intruding on our lives and we'll keep voting you in.” Chicago's blacks predicated the overwhelming vote majorities they rendered Daley and other Machine candidates on the presumptions: that their economic benefits – jobs, welfare, subsidized housing, and election-day and other gifts – would be continued; and that such illegal slum-centered activities as policy-wheel betting and the use of unofficial, jitney taxicabs (as the legal, white-driven cabs avoided minority areas) would be winked at.¹⁵⁹¹

Race. Blacks in 1865 were but 1.4 percent of Manhattan's population – as thousands had fled from the murderous racism revealed in the draft riot two years earlier. Many Tammany supporters in the time of the Ring opposed Negro rights, which prompted one historian to write of “{t}he Tweed regime's idiosyncratic brand of white supremacist popular rule.”¹⁵⁹²

The small proportion of blacks, however, kept race from becoming as central an issue then as it would be for Chicago a century later. Daley's city in 1970 was 18 percent black: 1.2 million of its 7.0 million. Its 5.7 million whites generally wanted him to keep Negroes out of their neighborhoods and to keep them from rioting. Many welcomed his orders in 1968 "to shoot to kill any arsonist" and "to shoot to maim or cripple anyone looting." At the time of Daley's death, his city was considered "the most segregated large city in the world aside from Johannesburg."¹⁵⁹³

Organized crime. Gangs in Tweed's New York stole, warred, and murdered. They were, however, outstripped in the scope and impacts of their operations by twentieth-century Chicago thugs. Their power had crested under Big Bill Thompson, a three-term Republican Mayor, who finally lost office for good in 1931. In Thompson's reign, Al Capone – whose picture hung on the Mayor's wall – had had the run of the city, until being jailed by the Federal Government in 1931 for income-tax evasion.

During the early years of Daley's Mayoralty, the First Ward, which includes the Loop, remained Mafia-run. The Mob was there treated like other constituent groups: receiving governmental favors in return for the vote majorities and campaign funding it provided¹⁵⁹⁴ – even though, in the 1950s, it "was still putting bodies in sewers and in car trunks, bombing its way into control of the restaurant industry's supply and union needs, and had murdered its way into a take-over of the black policy wheels."¹⁵⁹⁵

Manifestations of underworld influence included: plush no-show jobs; Daley's dismantling in June 1956 of the anti-Mafia police unit established by the previous Mayor;¹⁵⁹⁶ his designation of an assistant for liaison with the Syndicate and, on occasion, for intervention on its behalf with the Police Department;¹⁵⁹⁷ the replacement of honest officers with those preferred by the Mob; the cashiering of a corrupt First Ward Alderman by gangster Sam Giancana, at whose sufferance he had been serving;¹⁵⁹⁸ the use of city building inspectors to find code violations in businesses not insuring themselves with a Mafia company.¹⁵⁹⁹

In the mid-1960s, Daley broke partially with the First Ward Mob, via such actions as clamping down on bookmaking and disregarding its advice on appointments.¹⁶⁰⁰

Labor. Unions in Tweed's Manhattan called 249 trade-wide strikes between 1863 and 1873 and sought to reduce the working day to eight hours.¹⁶⁰¹ Such events notwithstanding, organized labor did not play a major role in the history of the Ring. Daley's Machine, however, forged key alliances with Chicago's unions. They provided his campaigns with

financing, sound trucks, and precinct workers;¹⁶⁰² while, in return, he employed their members by the thousands in comfortably-paying jobs and appointed their leaders to his policy boards.¹⁶⁰³ One indication that Daley was fulfilling his side of the deal was that, by 1958, the costs of construction in Chicago substantially exceeded those in the rest of the nation.¹⁶⁰⁴

Campaign finance. The expenses of political campaigns in the third quarter of the 1800s – such as paying for votes, muscle, and the printing of ballots – were of smaller concern than they would be a century later. By 1955, with the advent of television, defraying the costs of campaigns needed more of the attention of Daley than of Tweed. Machine fund-raising included: having patronage employees kick back up to five percent of their salaries; requiring those employees also to attend and to sell tickets for fund-raising events;¹⁶⁰⁵ using regulatory leverage to bring out the checkbooks of legitimate businesses; extorting protection payments from taverns, brothels, and gambling houses; granting favorable tax assessments to donors;¹⁶⁰⁶ and awarding construction contracts only to contributor firms.¹⁶⁰⁷

Personal aspects. The Mayor, owning no mansions like those of the earlier Boss, lived instead in a modest pink bungalow in a working-class neighborhood, near where he had grown up. Rather than in restaurants rivaling the Delmonico's of Tweed, Daley dined in middle-class eateries.¹⁶⁰⁸ While Tweed had combined with Connolly, Hall, and Sweeny to rule and steal; His Honor was alone atop his pyramid of power and was never caught with his hand in the till.

Old Wine, New Bottles – Many Bestowed on Ballot Days

Notwithstanding such differences, the story of Daley largely retold Tweed's. Commonality lay in: their personal histories and traits; their civic settings; their toleration of corruption in others; the dressing up of bribery in the clothes of legitimate transactions; civic extortion; judicial manipulation; and the uses that respectable politicians and the corrupt machines made of each other. In the securing of electoral advantage and the strategic use of patronage – central to the operations of both bosses – Daley may have acted as Tweed would have in his place.

Backgrounds and characteristics. Both men moved from positions of prominence as young men in social/fraternal organizations – in Daley's case, the Hamburg Athletic Club – into politics. Both had expertise as

accountants and membership in the bar. Neither was particularly articulate, as Daley occasionally came up with such puzzlers as, in reference to disagreements over Vietnam: "I don't see any more serious division in our country than we had in the Civil War and at other times."¹⁶⁰⁹ Thick-tonguedness did not keep either from chairing political meetings. Daley, like Tweed, was a master of parliamentary gambitry and once called *Robert's Rules of Order* "the greatest book ever written."¹⁶¹⁰

Contexts of city and state. Both men came of political age in cities that had known cycles of corruption and reform. (One analysis of fifteen large American cities rated New York over the years 1850-1880 the most-corrupt and Chicago, the second-most. From 1881-1980, Chicago was most-corrupt; with New York fourth-most from 1881-1930 and sixth-most from 1931-1980.¹⁶¹¹) Chicago's Mayoralty, in the four decades before Daley's election, had gone from Capone-pal Thompson to reformer William Dever, back to Thompson, followed soon by the Machine-tooled Edward Kelly, whose excesses brought in the respectable-if-uninspiring Martin Kennelly. As in Tweed's New York, the Republicans of Chicago were so weak as to constitute but a minimal corrective threat to the Democrats. During Daley's adult years, Chicago's only Republican Mayor was Thompson.

But, if Republicans were scarce in the two cities, they proliferated in their states and acted as higher authorities over the urban governments. Daley's downstate Illinoisan legislators were a second coming of Tweed's upstate New Yorkers: small-town Republicans happily wielding powers over the sinful cities. When Daley became Mayor, the tax increases he wanted could most easily be secured with downstate Republican acquiescence. Tweed, in a similar situation, had had recourse to hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes. What Daley did is not fully known. It has, however, been suggested that at least part of his strategy was a deal struck with Republican Governor William Stratton: Stratton signed off on the taxes and Daley did not in 1956 run a serious opponent against him.¹⁶¹²

Toleration of graft. In contrast to Tweed's immense personal thefts, Mike Royko wrote that "nobody could even say that [Daley] ever took a nickel. Nobody would ever know."¹⁶¹³ Daley did, however, as a young man hold his tongue when fellow state legislators took envelopes of cash from lobbyists and, later, tolerated graft in his subordinates. Royko saw his moral code as: "Thou shalt not steal, but thou shalt not blow the whistle on anybody who does."¹⁶¹⁴ In response to charges of corruption in his administration, Daley philosophized: "Look at the Lord's Disciples. One

denied Him, one doubted Him, one betrayed Him. If our Lord couldn't have perfection, how are you going to have it in city government?"¹⁶¹⁵

Daley's second-in-command, Alderman Thomas Keane, was convicted of using his position to purchase tax-delinquent properties, which he resold profitably to the city. Another close ally of Daley's, Alderman Matt Danaher, was indicted for taking payoffs from builders, but died while awaiting trial. As in Tweed's Manhattan, bars in Chicago bribed to extend their hours and prostitution and gambling operations slipped douceurs to the vice police.

The Chicago gendarmerie, in Daley's first years as Mayor, was notoriously crooked. For violators of traffic laws to pay off patrolmen was routine. The traffic-court system was found to do little other than fix parking tickets.¹⁶¹⁶ The posting of criminal bail was an organized corrupt enterprise, in which bail bondsmen paid kickbacks to desk sergeants for referrals. When the bailed-out suspects fled: "{t}he money was being ordered returned by the chief justice of the municipal court to bondsmen who included his social friends, people who gave him gifts, and Mafia types."¹⁶¹⁷ In January 1960, police participation in a burglary ring over two years was exposed. Officers had been breaking into stores, transporting stolen goods in their squad cars, and warehousing it in their homes.

Payments for favors. Though Daley was never known to have taken bribes or kickbacks like those of Tweed, others apparently had. Previous Mayors Anton Cermak (1931 to 1933) and Edward Kelly (1933 to 1947) were both found after their deaths to have had over \$1 million in cash in safe deposit boxes.

But politicians in Daley's era did not need to hazard taking cash-plump envelopes. More subtle and indirect methods of selling governmental favors – in the tradition of Tweed's legal fees and ownership of companies doing City work – could, at minimal risk, be lucrative enough. The Mayor's own advice to a young legislator was: "Don't take a nickel; just hand them your business card."¹⁶¹⁸ Legislators or officials often had insurance businesses or, like Daley, law partnerships, which could be legally paid – as long as the relationship between quid and quo was smudged. Royko wrote:

To be a success in the insurance field, a ward boss needs only two things: an office with his name on it and somebody in the office who knows how to write policies. All stores and businesses need insurance. Why not force the premium on the friendly ward boss?¹⁶¹⁹

Civic extortion. Companies that did not insure with the ward honcho,¹⁶²⁰ or that persisted in posting election signs for Machine opponents,¹⁶²¹ or politicians who broke with Daley¹⁶²² could count on visits from sharp-eyed building inspectors.

Judges. The Illinois judiciary never went to the extents of Barnard, Cardozo, and McCunn in thumbing their noses at the law. Daley – by his slating decisions and appointive recommendations – did, though, like Tweed, make lawyers into judges and lower justices into higher. One beneficiary was Abraham Marovitz, whom the Mayor boosted onto the Federal bench. Marovitz had been a long-time friend of Daley and a lawyer for Syndicate hoods. As a Federal Judge, Marovitz hobnobbed with bookies and – notwithstanding the illegality of any politicking on his part – with the Mayor in his headquarters on election nights.¹⁶²³ Daley asked judges for specific rulings and unslated those who bucked him.¹⁶²⁴

Reputable allies. As the Ring had had its John T. Hoffman, the Chicago Machine sought out the unsullied and eminent to head its tickets – and thereby to provide cover and coattails for its uninspiring pols lower on the ballots. Hence, its marriages of convenience with Paul Douglas and Adlai Stevenson.

Douglas, a professor of economics at the University of Chicago, was in 1948, with Machine backing, elected to the U.S. Senate. There, he would serve three terms and win praise for his integrity. How Douglas reconciled the eyebrow-raising actions of Kelly's and Daley's operatives with his own, famously-high, principles is discussed in the next chapter.

Stevenson rode Machine support to the Illinois Governorship in 1948 and to the Democratic nomination for the Presidency in 1952. As Governor, he made Richard Daley his Director of Revenue.

In 1955, with Daley having taken over leadership of the Machine, it switched its support from the reforming Mayor Martin Kennelly to its own head. Vying against Kennelly in the primary, Daley sought the backing of leading reformers to counter the incumbent's anti-boss campaign theme. For Stevenson's continuing Presidential aspirations and for Douglas in future Senatorial campaigns, Machine backing was essential. Daley received and played up their endorsements.

His Honor's control over the Illinois delegation would, in 1956, be crucial in landing for Stevenson a second Presidential nomination and, four years later, in denying him a third. In 1970, Stevenson's son, Adlai III, after speaking and acting for years against the Machine, accepted its support to win election to the U.S. Senate.

Electoral practices. The ballot clout that Richard Daley provided both to nationally prominent figures and to precinct hacks was based on techniques that would have impressed James O'Brien and William Tweed:

- **Repeat voting.** Vans carried Chicago's repeaters to balloting sites in multi-precinct tours. Election officials themselves entered voting booths to pull, time after time, the lever for the straight Democratic ticket.¹⁶²⁵ One, confronted after having been seen making seventy such pulls, said it was a test;¹⁶²⁶

- **Questionable voting credentials.** The registered addresses of Chicago voters were for vacant lots, barber shops, and deserted buildings.¹⁶²⁷ Few deemed miraculous the continued exercise of suffrage by the deceased;¹⁶²⁸

- **Surrogate registration and voting.** Precinct captains copied the names of residents at skid-row hotels into the voting registries.¹⁶²⁹ Physicians signed certificates attesting to the illnesses of persons they never saw, to enable their absentee balloting;¹⁶³⁰

- **Vote purchase and barter.** In the poorer wards, participation in the democratic process was promoted via gifts of money, chickens, turkeys, bags of groceries, nylons, alcohol, and Christmas trees;¹⁶³¹

- **Extortion.** Beneficiaries of such governmental favors as welfare, housing, and employment were led to understand that their continuation was not unrelated to their balloting;

- **"Four-legged voters."** To prevent the possible errors of voters, precinct captains went with them into the booths;¹⁶³²

- **Vote correction.** In Daley's first primary campaign for Mayor, an official known as Short Pencil Louie was photographed changing votes in his favor. Those who had taken the pictures were censured by the Election Board;¹⁶³³

- **Control of election oversight.** Like Tweed, Daley stacked the electoral bodies. In 1960, 176 of the 180 positions at the Board of

Election Commissioners were filled by Democrats.¹⁶³⁴ Election judges representing both major parties were legally required to oversee each polling site. Many of the Republican judges were, however, in fact, Democrats – or were paid by the Machine to avert their eyes.¹⁶³⁵ (It had been suggested that Tweed had similarly had bogus Republicans serving Democratic purposes as inspectors, judges, and canvassers of elections – which he denied.¹⁶³⁶) Republican or independent poll watchers who took seriously their roles were barred from voting places, arrested, threatened with death, and beaten up – as policemen often looked on;¹⁶³⁷ and

- **Fraudulent counting.** In line with Tweed's thoughts on the relative importance of voting and counting, Chicago's election judges routinely shifted votes to Machine nominees.¹⁶³⁸ (Raising the question of why, as in Tweed's City, the trouble was taken – other than as diversionary tactics – to engage in other forms of electoral fraud.)

A special prosecutor looking into the voting in 1960 brought criminal charges against 650 election officials. A Democratic judge dismissed them.¹⁶³⁹

Twelve years later, an investigation by U.S. Attorney James Thompson, a Republican who would become Governor, found half of the ballots in some Chicago precincts to be fraudulent. The indictments he brought led to the guilty pleas or convictions of 66.¹⁶⁴⁰

Patronage. Linked with votes as twin foci for Daley's Machine – as for Tweed's Ring – were jobs. The spoils approach to municipal hiring in Chicago preceded Daley – as the Democratic Machine had been in power, albeit with attenuation under Martin Kennelly, since the early 1930s – and was taken further by him.

Tweed could not but have admired the patronage system of Daley, an updated, refined, and larger version of that that he had himself run. During the Daley Mayoralty, the Democratic Cook County Central Committee – the Machine – comprised representatives from each of the fifty wards of Chicago and thirty from the suburbs. The vote each member had was weighted by the Democratic vote in his territory in the most recent election. The Committee member for a solidly Democratic ward might thus have twice the voting power of one from a Republican suburb of comparable population.

The apportionment of jobs was similarly weighted – as the plums of electoral victory were strewn to recognize those who had watered the tree. Daley personally reviewed each year the voting records of each of over 3,000 precincts, before deciding on their job allotments.¹⁶⁴¹ While such jobs were thus the rewards for votes, the reverse was true as well: each job assigned was estimated to produce ten Democratic votes – taking families, friends, and campaign work into account.¹⁶⁴² The roughly 40,000 positions filled by Daley's appointees¹⁶⁴³ thus provided an electoral advantage of 400,000 votes. In aldermanic races, patronage-linked ballots might constitute a quarter to half of the total.¹⁶⁴⁴

Ideal-motivated campaign workers for reformers were considered dilettantes by the Machine, whose own rank and file were instead materially spurred by such prospects as becoming bailiffs, if they turned out enough votes.¹⁶⁴⁵ Patronage jobs were the cellulose fibers underlying the view of George Washington Plunkitt that reformers, as “mornin’ glories – looked lovely in the mornin’ and withered up in a short time, while the regular machines went on flourishin’ forever like fine oaks.”¹⁶⁴⁶

The only qualifications required for the over-paying civic jobs in Chicago were precinct-captain recommendations. The work was often so limited that other full-time positions were simultaneously held. Many employees were given paid time off to perform political work on election days.¹⁶⁴⁷ One indication of the relationship between pay and productivity for Daley's employees was provided by a study in the early 1960s: cleaning and maintenance, per square foot, cost six times more for city properties than for private-sector offices in the Loop.¹⁶⁴⁸

Steps taken to increase the pool of patronage positions included:

- **weakening civil service.** Martin Kennelly had extended the reliance on competitive examinations in municipal hiring – bringing 12,000 previously-political hires within their scope.¹⁶⁴⁹ In running against Daley in the 1955 Democratic primary, he stressed his own honesty and warned of the damage that the Machine-rooted Daley would do to Chicago's civil service. “{P}recinct captains,” Royko wrote, “believed him, and the prospect inspired them.”¹⁶⁵⁰ Soon after his election, Daley named William Lee, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, to head the Civil Service Commission. Lee represented 36,000 workers subject to civil service and was seen as a champion of “favoritism and featherbedding;”¹⁶⁵¹

- **temporary workers.** When civil service tests were held infrequently, or made so difficult that few passed, or when new positions were created, temporary workers were hired. With their renewable, short-term contracts, they were not hard to release, should their election-day performances fall short. The number of Chicago's temporary workers rose from 3,500 at the time of Daley's first election to 15,700 fifteen years later – during which period, the city's population declined;¹⁶⁵²

- **extra-governmental patronage.** In addition to 20,000 to 25,000 governmental jobs doled out by the Machine, thousands more at racetracks, in public utilities, the Chicago Transit Authority, the Chicago Housing Authority, and the private sector came under its control.¹⁶⁵³ To be considered, for instance, as a walk-in applicant for employment in the mail-order department of Sears, Roebuck, a letter from the local Alderman was required;¹⁶⁵⁴ and

- **slating to maximize controlled patronage.** If reformers like Paul Douglas and Adlai Stevenson III were to be used to attract voters, it was better for the Machine to send them off to the U.S. Senate, where they would have say over relatively few hires, than to run them for, say, the Presidency of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, with its 1,500 patronage jobs.¹⁶⁵⁵

The methods worked. Within two years of becoming Mayor, Daley was estimated to have increased the number of patronage posts by nearly three quarters.¹⁶⁵⁶

Both Tweed's Ring and the Cook County organizations of Daley and his predecessors were for political scientist James C. Scott, in his 1969 discussion of political machines, prominent models. Scott, like Bryce, saw patronage as “{t}he source of power and the cohesive force” of the machine:¹⁶⁵⁷ the doling out of publicly-funded positions as rewards for partisan actions and the withholding of them as sanctions.¹⁶⁵⁸ Bryce had, a half-century before Daley came into power, drawn historical parallels applicable to both Tweed and the Mayor:

What the client was to his patron at Rome, what the vassal was to his lord in the Middle Ages, that the ‘heelers’ and ‘workers’ are to their boss in these great transatlantic cities. They render a personal feudal

service, which their suzerain repays with the gift of a livelihood;... the vassal feels that he can keep his post only by the favour of the lord.¹⁶⁵⁹

Were There Not Signs that Daley's Chicago Represented Significant Advances, in Terms of Public Integrity, over Tweed's New York?

Maybe: The police

Police corruption in Chicago in Daley's second term was largely uncovered by a State's Attorney (an elective office of Cook County): Benjamin Adamowski. The evidence was so shocking – particularly that of police burglary – that Daley had to act. A main step was to appoint Orlando Wilson, a reformer of national stature, as his new Police Commissioner. Wilson insisted on a mandate that precluded fettering interference by Mayor or Machine. His department, which had been called in 1957 by *Life* magazine “probably the worst police department of any sizable city,”¹⁶⁶⁰ became a showpiece of what a capable reformer could achieve.

Maybe not: The police reconsidered

Daley's advocacy of reform upon the discovery of abundant abuse was a Tammany tactic predating Tweed. Taking as few chances as possible, the Mayor first had his Commissioner of Investigation, Irwin Cohen, look into the mounting evidence of police misbehavior. Cohen filled a post created by Daley to consolidate his control over potentially damaging revelations. As Commissioner, he served at Daley's pleasure and could disclose his findings to no one else.¹⁶⁶¹ Predictably enough, Cohen's actions soon led State's Attorney Adamowski to allege obstruction of justice on the parts of both Cohen and Daley.¹⁶⁶²

Orlando Wilson replaced as Police Commissioner a Daley appointee over whom the Mayor had ridden roughshod: dictating departmental promotions and protecting politically connected officers from discipline.¹⁶⁶³ During Wilson's seven years in charge, Daley chafed at the independence he had been forced to grant.¹⁶⁶⁴ When Wilson turned sixty-seven and retired, a Daley yes-sir-man took his place and the ways of yore returned. Over three years in the early 1970s, 86 policemen were convicted of crimes and 407 fired or forced to resign for improprieties or illegalities. Organized strong-

arming of bars by police reaped hundreds of thousands of shakedown dollars.¹⁶⁶⁵

Adamowski's investigations had had the effects of at least temporarily improving the Police Department and of making him a Machine target of priority when he ran in 1960 for reelection. He lost by an announced margin of 25,000 votes. Inasmuch as Presidential Candidate Richard Nixon also lost narrowly in Illinois that day, Republicans had incentive to challenge the results. They could have a recount only if they footed its bill, which, initially, they agreed to do.

Daley's election officials, at tortoise tempo, began the process. Their rechecking of a quarter of the precincts reduced Adamowski's losing margin by 6,000 votes, they said (by 13,000, according to Republicans). Nixon, however, had gained little. The GOP was unwilling to fund further recounting. A lawsuit was filed by a Republican National Committeewoman, but was summarily dismissed by a Machine-linked judge (who was promoted the next year to the Federal District Court).¹⁶⁶⁶ The State's Attorneyship moved into Machine-acceptable hands.

Subsequently, by publicizing the improvements in the Police Department, Daley won praise. Royko commented: "Ignored was the fact that he instituted reforms only after his people got caught."¹⁶⁶⁷

Maybe: The convincing margins with which Daley won his elections argued that he was giving Chicago the government it wanted.

Daley never had the Ring's experience of 1871: a vote of emphatic disapproval. In his six general elections for Mayor, he received 55, 71, 56, 73, 70, and 78 percent of the vote. The voters seemed to be saying that whatever negative aspects of Machine rule they may have sensed were eclipsed by the plusses.

Maybe not: 1963

The second-smallest of Daley's electoral margins occurred in 1963 – as he won his third Mayoral term, with 56 percent of the vote in his race against former State's Attorney Benjamin Adamowski. Breakdown of the result showed, however, that 51 percent of the white voters had preferred Adamowski. Royko wrote:

The enormous black vote had given Daley his victory. The people who were trapped in the ghetto slums and the nightmarish public housing projects, the people who had the worst school system and were most often degraded by the Police Department, the people who received the fewest campaign promises and who were ignored as part of the campaign trail, had given him his third term.¹⁶⁶⁸

Why?

Blacks in Chicago may have been poorly served by Daley's government because their votes were the most securely under Machine control. Such control was achieved via gifts – the pullets and muscatel of election days – and threats: “Negroes were warned that they would lose their welfare check, their public housing apartment, their menial job, if they didn't vote Democratic.”¹⁶⁶⁹ The political leaders of black areas under the Machine included white men (derided as “plantation-ward” heads, many of whom lived elsewhere) and the “Silent Six.” The Silent Six black Aldermen of the 1960s owed their positions to the Machine and spoke and voted with Daley – including, not infrequently, in opposition to civil rights measures. (Knowing the Machine's chokehold on black balloting, Adamowski had courted segregationist whites by taking such stances as an opposition to open housing.¹⁶⁷⁰)

The electoral result of 1963 could, thus, be seen as an inversion of Chicago's popular will; Daley's larger margins in other years, as similar to those in Tweed's New York: the results of Republicans recognizing the futility of exertions to derail the inevitable.

Maybe: Judgments on Daley's overall performance.

In 1993, Melvin G. Holli reported the polled opinions of 69 experts on the American mayoralty. They had been asked to identify and to rank the best and worst mayors between 1820 and 1993. Daley was judged the sixth-best; a predecessor, Big Bill Thompson, was rated the worst; Frank Hague of Jersey City, second-worst; Jimmy Walker of New York, third-worst; James Michael Curley of Boston, fourth-worst; Oakey Hall, sixth-worst; and Fernando Wood, eighth-worst.¹⁶⁷¹ Those ranked above Daley served mainly before him. For most of his time in office, the polled experts rated him the best big-city mayor in the country. They judged that Daley's credits more than canceled his debits: that the Machine's electoral corruption, the ballooning of patronage employment, the toleration of graft, the

accommodations made to organized crime, the extortive use of civic powers, and the resistance to integration in housing were more than justified by Daley's "heading off downtown blight, encouraging an unprecedented building boom in the Chicago Loop while keeping the city solvent and the books balanced, and guiding his city through a turbulent decade, the 1960s."¹⁶⁷²

21

Paul H. Douglas

Front men for the Ring had been John T. Hoffman and A. Oakey Hall: relatively respectable figures placed high on the ballots to signal a spurious sense of uprightness. Paul H. Douglas could have been seen, along with Adlai Stevenson, as their counterparts for the Machine. Douglas might, however, be better likened to Samuel Tilden than to either the earlier Governor or Mayor.

Was Paul Douglas, indeed, the Samuel Tilden of his Era?

Maybe not

Differences included:

- that, in appearance, Tilden – thin and delicate –was not to have been mistaken for the hefty and imposing Douglas;¹⁶⁷³
- that Douglas championed civil rights for blacks, which Tilden had opposed;
- that Tilden was a rich attorney; Douglas, a modestly comfortable academic; and
- that, while Tilden had underreported his income to save on taxes, Douglas voluntarily made public his own finances and strove to keep the Marine Corps from paying him a 75-percent-disability pension based on his combat wounds, since he could still earn a living.¹⁶⁷⁴

Then again, perhaps

- The speeches and public reports of both Tilden and Douglas, if not particularly inspiring by the standards of their days, were notable for the extensive research and careful reasoning that underlay them;

- The electoral victories of each were made possible by the support of corrupt machines;
- Both thought Republicans a sadly inferior species;¹⁶⁷⁵ and
- The national Democracy in 1876, strategically stressing the theme of public integrity, nominated as its most respected incarnation of the quality Samuel Tilden. Had the party, in 1952, 1956, 1960, or 1964, taken the same tack, Paul Douglas might well have been its pick.

Career of Many Virtues

Professor, Alderman, marine. Upon the death of Douglas in 1976, the *New York Times* remembered him as “A Man of Integrity:” “The essential facts of his life were his overwhelming decency and integrity. He was an adornment to democracy.”¹⁶⁷⁶

He also adorned the Machine.

Douglas was born in 1892 in Massachusetts, lived as a boy in a log cabin in the woods of Maine,¹⁶⁷⁷ was educated at Bowdoin, Columbia, and Harvard, and became a professor of economics at the University of Chicago. In 1929, he joined a group of Chicagoans resisting the corrupt undertakings of Samuel Insull, “the uncrowned king of both Chicago and Illinois,” who controlled the major electric companies, the gas company, and the elevated transportation lines of Chicago.¹⁶⁷⁸ Five years later, having been appointed to the Consumers’ Advisory Board of the National Recovery Administration, Douglas urged that consumers be given accurate information on the loans they incurred – anathema then to lenders. His sustained advocacy of that position over a third of a century would help to enact the Consumer Credit Protection Act of 1968.

In 1939, Douglas was elected Alderman of Chicago’s Fifth Ward. As a member of the City Council, he pushed to eliminate patronage sinecures and often opposed the Democratic Machine of Mayor Edward Kelly and Cook County Chairman Pat Nash. Douglas first ran for the U.S. Senate in 1942, against the Machine, and lost by two to one in the Democratic primary. He then, as a fifty-year-old private, joined the U.S. Marine Corps. Although rising ultimately to lieutenant colonel, Douglas removed his officer’s insignia to serve as a private on the front line in Okinawa, where he

was wounded and lost the use of his left hand – except, he said, as a paperweight.¹⁶⁷⁹

Douglas returned from the war to thirteen months of treatment for his injuries at the Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, then to his professorship and was elected President of the American Economic Association. In 1947, he took pride in having “helped break the long hold of Ed Kelly over the Democratic Party in Illinois by threatening to run as an independent candidate for mayor, unless the Democrats nominated either Martin Kennelly, an honest businessman, or my old friend John Boyle.”¹⁶⁸⁰ With the backing in 1948 of the Chicago Machine, Paul Douglas was elected to the U.S. Senate.

“Bomb thrower.” On Capitol Hill for eighteen years, he was a passionate advocate of such liberal causes as public housing, minimum-wage increases, and civil rights and an opponent of such special interests as the oil and gas industry. From his earliest years in the Senate, his energy and intellect attracted national attention. A national poll of party leaders indicated in early 1951 that Douglas was their second choice for the Presidential nomination the following year, trailing only the incumbent, Truman.¹⁶⁸¹ The Senator, however, declined to be considered for the White House and quashed the initiatives of others in support of his candidacy.¹⁶⁸²

Fellow Senator Lyndon Johnson – also new to the Senate in 1949 – thought Paul Douglas one of “those crazies, those bomb-thrower types:”¹⁶⁸³ principled men who gave courageous speeches in support of positions that had little chance of legislative enactment. Rising within a few years to become the leader of the Senate Democrats, Johnson deliberately snubbed, ignored, and humiliated his party colleague from Illinois. Douglas sought assignment to the tax-law-writing Finance Committee, for which he was professionally more qualified than any other Senator. For years, he was denied the seat, as Johnson – perhaps bowing to pressure from the gas and oil lobby – passed over him in favor of men not only weaker in training and experience, but also with less seniority. In 1955, Douglas finally secured the assignment – which Johnson subsequently admitted ruing.¹⁶⁸⁴

A major rue of Douglas was the treatment of Negroes. He traced the denial of their civil rights to the Presidential election of 1876: “one of the most cynical political bargains in our nation’s history.” Rutherford Hayes, Douglas thought, had deprived Samuel Tilden of his ballot victory by pledging to withdraw Federal troops from the South, thereby ushering in the era of Jim Crow.¹⁶⁸⁵ Year after year, Douglas led efforts to amend Senate

rules so that Southerners could no longer filibuster to keep integrationist measures from being voted on.

In 1957, the Congress passed its first civil rights legislation since Reconstruction. Douglas, who had fought for stronger measures, characterized it in Lincoln's words as "a soup made from the shadow of a crow which had starved to death."¹⁶⁸⁶ The major civil rights bills of the 1960s were, however, he felt, made possible by the stands that he and a few others had been taking since the 1940s:

The Congressional civil-rights group had laid the basis for victory. By keeping the issue before Congress year after year despite political defeats, we had finally helped to arouse the conscience of the country... We had been the whipping boys at every stage of the conflict and had been shunted aside at the conclusion. But we did not care. That was the law of life. The cause had won.¹⁶⁸⁷

Senatorial saint. As Senator, Douglas, characterizing his assets as "scanty" and often having "heavy campaign debts,"¹⁶⁸⁸ felt multiply tempted. He suspected that most of the gifts he received "were attempted investments in good will." Those worth no more than \$2.50 he accepted; those of greater value he returned to the donors, postage due.¹⁶⁸⁹ He accepted fees for speeches given outside of Illinois only from "bodies [such as colleges] that took no stand on public issues" and none for speeches in his state.¹⁶⁹⁰

In 1950, the Machine nominated for Sheriff of Cook County Captain Daniel "Tubbo" Gilbert of the Chicago Police. An investigating committee of the U.S. Senate discovered that Gilbert had greater affluence than his pay could have produced. The man dubbed the "million-dollar cop" explained his asset position as the result of fortunate investments and wagers. But, the committee asked, was the betting he referred to legal? "Well, no," Gilbert said.¹⁶⁹¹ Douglas campaigned downstate that year for Democratic candidates. Given, however, Gilbert's presence on the ticket, he made it a point not to speak in Cook County.¹⁶⁹² Gilbert lost.

During his first term, Douglas headed a Senate committee on ethics in government. The role led in 1952 to his delivery at Harvard University of that year's "Godkin Lectures on the Essentials of Free Government and the Duties of the Citizen."¹⁶⁹³ (The lecture series had been established to honor the anti-Ring editor of the *Nation*, Edwin Lawrence Godkin. The first Godkin lecturer, in 1904, had been James Bryce.) His lectures were soon published by the university as *Ethics in Government*. In this book, Douglas:

- criticized Daniel Webster for extorting retainers from the Second Bank of the United States, before he would defend it in the Senate and for accepting bribes from the British to back their position on a disputed boundary between Maine and Canada¹⁶⁹⁴ (Douglas later lamented John F. Kennedy's "putting the corrupt Daniel Webster upon so high a pedestal" by including him in his *Profiles in Courage*.¹⁶⁹⁵);
- took Abraham Lincoln to task for using "dishonest men to corrupt others in order to obtain what we would consider beneficent ends" – such as ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery;¹⁶⁹⁶
- recommended "delousing" periods of two years both before government officials could participate in any decisions affecting their former firms and before former government officials could deal with the agencies they had left;¹⁶⁹⁷
- proposed a "Code of Ethical Proprieties" for public officials;¹⁶⁹⁸
- with respect to campaign financing, advocated spending limits,¹⁶⁹⁹ public funding,¹⁷⁰⁰ and requiring the media to provide free air time to parties and candidates;¹⁷⁰¹ and
- urged public disclosure of the private incomes of all Members of Congress and of administrators earning more than \$10,800 annually.¹⁷⁰²

In 1966, in his bid for a fourth Senate term, Douglas lost to Charles Percy. In the ten remaining years of his life, he spoke often to advocate financial disclosures by members of Congress and the public funding of national elections.¹⁷⁰³

Douglas and the Machine

Douglas began his first race for Alderman as an independent opposed to the Machine, but was then offered its endorsement. A Chicago friend and

political ally of Douglas was Harold Ickes, then serving in Washington as Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior. Ickes judged that the Kelly-Nash organization had "brought Chicago to the lowest ebb in its history. There probably isn't any community in the whole United States that is so abjectly rotten, so dominated by a corrupt and stinking political machine."¹⁷⁰⁴

Douglas at first "protested vigorously that since I had always fought the Kelly-Nash organization, I could not now take its support."¹⁷⁰⁵ Mayor Kelly overcame his resistance by assuring him that he could, as Alderman, maintain his independence. About \$20,000, two-thirds of the professor's campaign funding that year, was provided by the Machine.¹⁷⁰⁶ Douglas called its members "good allies" in the campaign and described his value to them:

Since they were being attacked as corruptionists, it was an asset to have their candidate a 'reformer.' We developed a mutual understanding, as well as a comradeship, which has lasted for thirty years.¹⁷⁰⁷

Kelly's Machine may that year have liked having Douglas on its ticket so much as to have "held back pluralities [for Douglas in the primary election] in a few precincts to force me into [a] runoff" – so that the Mayor, other Machine candidates, and the professor would be on the same slate in the general election.¹⁷⁰⁸

The basic alliance would last for decades: in exchange for the support that made Douglas's elections possible, the Machine could point to him as suggestive of its own virtue. In times of need – such as Daley's campaigns in 1950 for County Clerk and in 1955, 1959, and 1963 for Mayor – Douglas was trotted out to endorse the Machine's main man. In 1959, he called Daley "the best mayor Chicago ever had."¹⁷⁰⁹

Douglas, the Machine, and Public Appointments

Douglas thought the Chicago City Council "the cunningest body of legislative bastards to be found in all of the western world."¹⁷¹⁰ During his first year on it, "I stood alone... and the votes were usually 49 to 1."¹⁷¹¹ In those years, Douglas wrote that

Kelly, who had cut some sharp corners in the Sanitary District... continued to have entangling alliances when he was chosen mayor...

Gambling was prevalent all over the city, and it was commonly known that City Hall, the ward organizations, and the police all shared in the payoffs... each captain had a man who picked up the tribute. The public schools were run by friends of the Mayor, with gross irregularities in the purchase of supplies. Appointments and promotions in many city departments were dependent on a price...

But Kelly was shaking himself loose from some of his early associates and was becoming concerned with his final place in local history. He closed down most commercialized prostitution and tried to clean up some abuses in the collection of garbage... There was no reforming zeal on the council. Even Kelly worried over the shakedown practices of many aldermen in granting driveway permits and zoning variations.¹⁷¹²

Douglas thought it possible that vote fraud, chiefly in “about 200 precincts scattered over the city whose committeemen held especially well-paid jobs in the offices of the clerk and bailiff of the courts” might have determined the outcomes of such elections as that in 1940 to the U.S. Senate.¹⁷¹³

Douglas, however, disparaged Republican allegations of electoral cheating in 1960, noting that his opponents “were silent about their own irregularities downstate.”¹⁷¹⁴ Investigations of GOP complaints proved them to be, he said, “ill-founded.”¹⁷¹⁵

As Senator, Douglas reported that “neither Jack Arvey [a predecessor to Daley as Machine head] nor Dick Daley ever asked for an improper appointment or favor. They seemed as anxious as I that we recruit good men.”¹⁷¹⁶

With respect to judicial appointments:

In some degree I helped to raise the former low level of the federal bench in Illinois. There were no bad appointments made on my recommendation, and there were some very good ones. On the whole, I did not do as well as I had hoped, but I consoled myself with the thought that I had probably done as well as I could in the world that surrounded me.¹⁷¹⁷

Abraham Marovitz – pilloried by Mike Royko as one whom Daley made a federal judge,¹⁷¹⁸ socializer with bookmakers, and unmentioned by Douglas in his memoirs – was appointed to the U.S. District bench in 1963.

Inasmuch as the other Senator from Illinois was then the Republican Everett Dirksen, Douglas likely eased the elevation of His Honor's chum.

When Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy proposed to "appoint two Republicans to the federal bench in Chicago," Douglas responded that that was

intolerable... we [Democrats in Illinois] could furnish him with judges as good as, if not better than, the Republicans, who already were overrepresented on the federal bench in our area. If he wanted to court favor with the Republican-oriented American Bar Association, I said, he should do so in some state like Kansas or Nebraska, where we had little or no organization... Being a college professor did not make me a softy.¹⁷¹⁹

Nor was Douglas overly soft with respect to the appointments of postmasters, "having only Democrats appointed to those offices over which I had some control."¹⁷²⁰ This he justified by arguing:

- that "the men recommended" were required to "be of good character and ability." The Machine "never asked me to endorse a man who did not conform to these standards;"
- that both parties did it;
- that he would not allow the purchase of appointments and denied future patronage influence to county chairmen or precinct captains caught shaking down aspirants for positions; and
- that "Democrats generally were superior in both energy and ability. This is due, I believe, to the fact that most Democrats, because of family, race, politics, and religion, had a much harder job in rising in the business and financial worlds."¹⁷²¹

Douglas and the Civil Service

The former Senator conceded that

purists who believe that all appointments should be completely divorced from politics and made under a supposedly impartial civil service will undoubtedly criticize these arrangements [for postal positions]. I believe that the vast majority of appointments in federal employment should be made under civil service, but not all.

Shortcomings with civil service were:

- that “civil-service politics can be as bad or worse than political politics;”
- that job security is so high “that it is almost impossible to discharge anyone for inefficiency except in the grossest of cases;”¹⁷²² and
- that patronage appointments help “to keep the two-party system alive in towns and counties that otherwise would become completely monolithic.”

His elaboration of the last point was that the nation’s newspapers and local power structures were overwhelmingly Republican. Democrats had to counter with “voluntary workers who will canvass homes and apartments.” Alas, however, “not many will at present come forward to carry out this necessary drudgery if all hope of material advantage is removed.”¹⁷²³

The solution for Douglas lay in spurring Democratic political workers with employment prospects. Unfortunately, he found, civil-service hires tended, “once appointed to hide behind the Hatch Act [which barred Federal employees from political participation] and refuse to contribute to the party. This I wanted to correct.” Douglas explained to his appointees that the Hatch Act did allow them to attend political meetings, to contribute money, and to have their family members become party workers:

Had it not been for the party, we told them, they could never have been appointed. The opposing party had the advantages of being financed by the big corporations and by most men of wealth. It was therefore right for them to help the party that had done so much for them.¹⁷²⁴

He was resigned, however, to the likelihood that they would work hardest for the party prior to their appointments – before becoming “politically inert.”¹⁷²⁵

These thoughts of the Senator were a milder version of what George Washington Plunkitt, decades earlier, had said. Plunkitt, a dispenser of jobs under Tweed, had opined on civil service:

It is the curse of the nation. There can't be no real patriotism while it lasts. How are you goin' to interest our young men in their country if you have no offices to give them when they work for their party?... I know more than one young man in past years who worked for the ticket and was just overflowin' with patriotism, but when he was knocked out by the civil service humbug he got to hate his country and became an Anarchist.

How Should Douglas and Such Senatorial Opponents as Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kerr Be Rated in Terms of Public Integrity?

At opposite ends of the scale

Douglas stood up for American consumers when Senators beholden to hydrocarbon interests sought to weaken regulatory controls over their prices. The long-time head of the Federal Power Commission, Leland Olds, had, in the opinions of Douglas¹⁷²⁶ and Robert Caro,¹⁷²⁷ been an effective defender of the public interest against energy-company greed. In 1949, President Truman renominated Olds as Commission Chairman. Lyndon Johnson of oil-endowed Texas, in one of his first major actions as a Senator, orchestrated a smear campaign – painting Olds as a Marxist fellow traveler – and legislative power play that denied Olds his reconfirmation. Douglas, although knowing the futility of his actions, led the defense of Olds and was one of the few Senators who spoke out for him. Only fourteen others voted for his reappointment. Caro presented the episode as illustrative both of the cynical politics of Johnson and of the ineffectiveness of men such as Douglas – to the disadvantage of the American consumer.¹⁷²⁸

Douglas had a different perspective. The removal of Olds he saw as but the first move in an effort to lessen Federal regulation of gas prices – an action projected to net the companies “at a minimum, \$600 million a year.”¹⁷²⁹ The next step was the submission of a deregulation bill. Douglas

spoke for three days in the Senate against it and thought the debate instrumental in reducing its winning margin to six votes: 44 to 38. He also took his case to the radio waves and mustered enough public outcry to lead Truman to veto the measure. The fight put up by Douglas and his allies, he judged, “saved consumers many billions of dollars.”¹⁷³⁰

His main opponents in the battle were Johnson and Senator Robert Kerr of Oklahoma. Johnson had mastered the procedural rules of the Senate, which he wielded with devastating effect. Among the least subtle of his ploys noted by Douglas was to spring a sudden vote on the oil depletion allowance when fifteen opponents of it attended a conference in Canada.¹⁷³¹ Douglas wrote of Kerr that “{t}his son of a Baptist minister early fused piety with great wealth, which came from the oil business” – wealth that burgeoned during his time in the Senate. Kerr was neither “a gentleman”¹⁷³² nor “one to worry about ethical implications and conflicts of interest.”¹⁷³³

As possibly sharing one common element

It is the less difficult to act with or without integrity, the better such actions accord with one’s personal interests.

The political prospects of Johnson and Kerr (and the finances of Kerr) were enhanced by their furthering, in ways alleged to be unethical, the agenda of the petroleum companies. Those of Douglas were improved by his opposition to them. A key constituency of the Illinoisan was the Chicago Machine, which, in his later career, he held back from criticizing and whose patronage system he aided and defended.

Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kerr were charged with having been less than models of probity on issues affecting their bases. Was it also true of Paul Douglas?

More Recent Experience: “Robo mas faço obras”

Hong Kong, La Paz, and New York

Robert Klitgaard and two co-authors described corrupt activities in many cities in the late twentieth century, with emphases on Hong Kong, La Paz, and New York. From these they distilled guidelines for detecting, measuring, understanding, preventing, and combating urban graft.

Klitgaard paid substantial attention to low-level corruption: building inspectors shaking down permit seekers; procurement officers extorting kickbacks from suppliers; engagers in vices paying off policemen; assessors selling lower numbers; bureaucrats dragging their feet until quickened by bribes; and the like. Tweed’s Manhattan knew such problems. The attention, however, of angry citizens in 1871 and of later Ring historians was mainly at a higher governmental level: the direct thefts of the Boss and other magnates.

Differences between City reformers of the 1870s and Klitgaard also reflect advances in public administration and the intervening century-plus of experiences attesting to the staying power of corruption. Klitgaard took issue with earlier champions of good government who focused at times too narrowly on battling graft: “Fighting corruption should not be considered an end in itself but an orienting principle for reforming urban administration.”¹⁷³⁴ “Preventing corruption,” he saw as but part of a more comprehensive approach within which it “can be the point of leverage for reinventing city government.”¹⁷³⁵ The Committee of Seventy did not think in such terms.

Notwithstanding these differences, many of Klitgaard’s points have pertinence for the City of Tweed:

- **that corruption (C) arises when monopoly power (M) is combined with discretion in decision (D), in the absence of accountability (A) (“C = M + D – A”).**¹⁷³⁶ The Ring had civic control; discretionarily determined who was nominated, elected, contracted with, hired, and paid; and, in response to reformers’ striving for accountability, had farcical investigations, incompetent citizens pretending to audit, and Charter provisions blocking its ouster;

- **that unbridled corruption may result in “a culture of impunity, where citizens become jaded and defeatist:”**¹⁷³⁷ Klitgaard’s example from a Guatemalan newspaper, “When... the shameless triumph; when the abuser is admired;... when the insolent rule and the people tolerate it; when everything becomes corrupt but the majority is silent;...”¹⁷³⁸ might have been lifted from the *New-York Times* of 1870-1;

- **that corruption thrives on complexity.**¹⁷³⁹ Controller Connolly’s intermingling of City and County monies in a spate of accounts that no one, with the possible exception of himself, understood showed the way;

- **that to “break through this culture of corruption... *frying big fish* [emphasis in original] is essential:”**¹⁷⁴⁰ Klitgaard cited the extradition from England and conviction of a former police chief of Hong Kong¹⁷⁴¹ and the impeachment of the President of Venezuela.¹⁷⁴² He could have added the legal pursuit of Tweed;

- **that an example of an innovative, corruption-reducing law is making “possessing wealth beyond what can be explained as the result of lawful activities” a prosecutable offense.**¹⁷⁴³ Motivations for such a statute were to be found in the railings of speakers on September 4, 1871 against the conspicuous riches of the Ring; and

- **that “concern [with corruption] proves difficult to sustain and institutionalize. As a result, there are cycles of reform.”**¹⁷⁴⁴ La Paz¹⁷⁴⁵ and Hong Kong¹⁷⁴⁶ in the 1990s relived New York’s experience of twelve decades before, when the zeal of reformers wore out and corruption flowed back in.

Are concern for public integrity and corruption inevitably linked in a cyclic dance: alternately receding and advancing?

Denis Tilden Lynch had seen the cyclicity described by Klitgaard in the time of Tweed and had concluded that the timelessness of apathy precluded permanently minimizing corruption:

Public thieving... exists because of the apathy of the mass. Sometimes the mass is roused to a sense of the wrongs inflicted upon it... On rare occasions the mass struggles until it has effected a reform. But eventually the politician triumphs and the mass is divided and one side wars upon the other and then succumbs to inertia. The looting is resumed.¹⁷⁴⁷

The case studies and precepts of Klitgaard, suggest, however, a brighter prognosis than that of Lynch. We might provisionally accept Lynch's argument that concern for public integrity (CfPI) and corruption (C) are cyclically related: that high CfPI reduces C, while low CfPI allows it to grow and that high C increases CfPI, while low C leads to its erosion. Such a supposition does not, however, mean that cities must suffer through an endless series of Tweed-size scandals. Experience, concern, exertion, and managerial, legal, and political skills may lower and shorten future wavecrests of graft. Significant improvements may be achieved even without the full disappearance of cyclicity.

Caveat

Klitgaard warned against optimistic casting about for simple corruption cure-alls – which do not exist.¹⁷⁴⁸ Of a common reflexive reaction, he wrote:

To some, the automatic answer is 'new laws.' In fact, systematic corruption often coexists with highly developed legal codes. Sometimes more rules and regulations not only strangle efficiency but actually create more opportunities for corruption.¹⁷⁴⁹

Toward possible statutory revisions, Klitgaard took a nuanced position: he did not reject out-of-hand the "new-laws" approach and, indeed, approvingly listed types of statutes with potential for reducing graft.¹⁷⁵⁰ He warned, though, against over-optimism that the desired effects

would be achieved and urged the pursuit of such complementary and occasionally superior strategies as improving public management.

Many New Yorkers in the 1870s showed subtle understandings of corruption not unlike Klitgaard's. Orators did, to be sure, propose such pie-in-the-sky measures as amending the Charter to eliminate partisanship. Most of Tweed's Manhattan contemporaries, however, were pessimistic about finding any such silver bullets. They hoped less grandly that moderate changes could be made that would reduce their corruption to more tolerable levels.

The Tilden Commission in 1877 rejected such proposed legal solutions as limits on borrowing on the grounds that they would likely be flouted, just as past laws had not been enforced.¹⁷⁵¹ The City had tried new laws in 1853 and 1857 and had seen them not just fail to sanitize their government, but also – in line with Klitgaard's later findings – spawn new forms of graft: through complication and by empowering the notorious County Board of Supervisors. Given these experiences, Manhattanites of the 1870s were, like Klitgaard, leery of proffered legal panaceas.

Providence

Six terms

Mike Stanton, in *The Prince of Providence*, recounted, per its subtitle, “The Rise and Fall of Buddy Cianci, America's Most Notorious Mayor.” Stanton described how Vincent A. “Buddy” Cianci (pronounced “see-ANN-see”), Jr., after working as a prosecutor for the State of Rhode Island, first ran for Mayor in 1974. The thirty-three-year-old political newcomer, presenting himself as an anti-corruption Republican against a ten-year-incumbent Democrat, won by 709 votes. He became the first Italian-American Mayor of the city of 170,000.

Cianci would be reelected in 1978 and 1982 and, in 1980, would lose a race for Governor. In 1979, he flew to Southern California to meet with Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan, in hopes of securing the Republican Vice Presidential nomination.

Four years after that flirtation with a national role, the air came out of Cianci's political dreams and civic career. Early in 1983, he physically attacked and attempted to extort \$500,000 from a businessman whom he believed (erroneously, the man said) to be the lover of his wife. The Ciancis

had signed a separation agreement over a year earlier and had filed for divorce. In March 1984, the Mayor pled guilty to a felony charge for assault, was given a five-year suspended prison sentence, and resigned his office. The period that would be known as Buddy I had ended.

Cianci was, in the second half of the 1980s, a popular Providence-radio talk-show host. In 1990, he again ran for Mayor – this time as an Independent, won by 317 votes, and was reelected in 1994 and 1998. These three terms made up Buddy II. In them, the capital of Rhode Island underwent what was seen as a renaissance: it was revamped with innovative and artistic urban planning; rivers were stripped of their concrete covers and moved; acclaimed restaurants flourished. The city was seen to have shed “its image as a grimy haunt of wiseguys and grifters.”¹⁷⁵² Cianci got much of the credit. No one in the nation had served nearly as long as mayor of a city of at least 100,000.¹⁷⁵³

Public integrity in Buddys I and II

As early as in Cianci’s first campaign as the former mob prosecutor entering politics to combat corruption, public probity was at risk. He allied himself with Democratic bosses who had become disaffected with their party’s incumbent. In exchange for the votes of their machine, he would preserve the jobs of their people:¹⁷⁵⁴ a Daleyesque bargain – and, indeed, within Cianci’s Buddy I administration, there was boasting of having read Mike Royko’s *Boss*.¹⁷⁵⁵

During Buddy I:

- one mode of contract rigging was to specify requirements hyper-precisely, to pare the ranks of prospective bidders to favored parties;¹⁷⁵⁶
- others were to achieve exemption from competitive bidding requirements by splitting up purchases so that each part was under the \$1,500 threshold for mandated bidding¹⁷⁵⁷ and by declaring bogus emergencies;¹⁷⁵⁸
- campaign contributors to the Mayor were “reaping lucrative city contracts for trash hauling, sewage-plant repairs, snow-plowing,

street paving, street sweeping, school repairs, construction projects, school-bus contracts, city leases;”¹⁷⁵⁹

- no-show jobs were common;¹⁷⁶⁰
- so too was the fencing of stolen municipal assets: a janitor selling the leather chairs of the Aldermen;¹⁷⁶¹ sewage-plant workers, their equipment;¹⁷⁶² city officials, manhole covers and thousands of tons of asphalt;¹⁷⁶³
- city workers risked being fired if they did not contribute to the Mayor’s campaign funds;¹⁷⁶⁴
- building inspectors and tax assessors were politically pressured;¹⁷⁶⁵
- a chief of police, leaned on to admit unqualified candidates to the police academy, took his own life;¹⁷⁶⁶
- one administrative director was hired while on parole from a prison sentence for kidnapping and rape and, while in office, extorted program clients and ran a ring of prostitutes;¹⁷⁶⁷
- twenty-two members of the city administration committed acts of corruption resulting in their convictions;¹⁷⁶⁸ and
- Cianci was, according to his chief aide, Ronnie Glantz, in statements made to and judged credible by the Rhode Island State Police, involved in the extortion and bid rigging and was personally paid hundreds of thousands of dollars by winners of wired contracts;¹⁷⁶⁹ but
- owing, however, to concerns about Glantz’s conviction for perjury, to the lack of corroboration by other alleged participants, and to the five-year statute of limitations, Mayor Cianci was not formally charged with corruption.¹⁷⁷⁰

On April 2, 2001, in the eleventh year of Buddy II, Cianci and four associates were indicted on thirty counts alleging “bribery, extortion, and

other criminal conduct.”¹⁷⁷¹ They were accused of shaking down \$2 million for jobs, contracts, tax breaks, and other favors. On June 24, 2002, Cianci was convicted in the Federal District Court of Rhode Island on one count of racketeering conspiracy under The Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act of 1970: RICO. On all specific acts of corruption with which he was charged, the Mayor was acquitted – while co-conspirator co-defendants were convicted. The jury had concluded, without tying him to a single, specific, criminal act, that Cianci had knowingly participated in corrupt activities.

On September 6, 2002, Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., was sentenced to five years and four months in prison – of which he would serve four and one half years. For the second time, he gave up the office of Mayor.

From the first boss to the latter-day prince.

- **The technology of law enforcement.** Instead of accountants hand-copying financial records and analyzing deposit tickets, telephone taps and hidden microphones and cameras implicated Cianci.
- **Organized crime.** As in Daley's Chicago, hoodlums in Cianci's Providence made the criminality of Tweed's lower-class supporters seem tame. The city on Narragansett Bay was considered “the capital of the New England Mafia.”¹⁷⁷² Cianci had himself assisted in prosecuting the Cosa Nostra boss of Providence. As Mayor, he made peace with the Mob – as gangsters: were on the city payroll,¹⁷⁷³ often in no-show jobs;¹⁷⁷⁴ were prominent in public-employee unions;¹⁷⁷⁵ and landed city contracts.¹⁷⁷⁶
- **Electoral fraud.** Ballot trickery was not a major charge against Cianci.
- **Felling factors: press and people.** While Tweed was brought down by campaigning publications and enraged citizens, Cianci was not. Much light was shined on the shady doings in his administrations by Stanton's employer, the *Providence Journal*, but only a limited number of its readers held it against the Mayor. In the wake of his indictment in 2001, Cianci's approval rating rose from 60 to 64 percent – at a time when 80 percent judged the level of corruption in Providence to be problematic.¹⁷⁷⁷

- **The role of the Federal Government.** It was, instead, the feds who nailed Cianci. In Tweed's time, the Republican-controlled National Government did reduce electoral fraud in the elections of 1870 – although failing to prevent Democratic victories. Washington did not, however, play a role in the reforming actions of 1871 or – other than in retrieving the fugitive ex-Boss from Spain – in the subsequent legal proceedings. In Cianci's Providence, as in Daley's Chicago, local abilities to combat corruption were limited. In Illinois – where much of the state and local judiciary was Machine-beholden – it took the Federal Government to jail Al Capone and many of Daley's precinct captains. Cianci was prosecuted under a Federal statute, in Federal Court, by a United States Attorney, based on evidence secured by the FBI.

Cribbings from Wood, Tweed, and Sweeny

Despite such differences, the essential operations of both Tweed and Cianci were that machines: allocated public jobs politically; provided their constituencies with much that they wanted; and perverted government to funnel money to leaders.

Both machines operated in settings that long had been infamous for corruption. Fernando Wood had set the stage for Tweed and also prefigured Cianci's sale of Providence government positions and pressuring of employees for campaign money. Both men originally became Mayor by running against corruption and both also, when first elected, took steps against graft. One such action in Buddy I was to open board meetings to the public.¹⁷⁷⁸ Part of Cianci's spiel in his Buddy II return was a pledge to crack down personally on corruption – as if appalled to learn of the shakedowns in Buddy I. Accordingly, he would appear at a meeting of the Board of Contract and Supply and question city employees for hours about expenditures, large and small.¹⁷⁷⁹

In 1904, Lincoln Steffens had written: “The political condition of Rhode Island is notorious, acknowledged and it is shameful... Rhode Island is a state for sale and it is cheap.”¹⁷⁸⁰ In 1964, the City Council President and a Ward Committeeman of Providence were convicted of corruption. One no-show job in that era was held by a man who managed to cash his paychecks for three years, despite never existing.¹⁷⁸¹ During the interregnum between Buddys I and II, a Governor of Rhode Island, Edward DiPrete, extorted contractors and would plead guilty on eighteen felony counts.¹⁷⁸²

One result of their cities' long familiarity with corruption was that Tweed, Hall, Hoffman, and Cianci all won elections even when voters sensed abundant graft. In both cities, the electorates evidently liked the good enough to stomach the bad. Klitgaard noted an extreme case of appealing to such attitudes when "a mayor in Brazil said during his reelection campaign: 'Robo mas faço obras' (loosely rendered: 'Yes, I rob, but public works get done')." ¹⁷⁸³ Cianci's lawyer, in his closing argument, took a similar line, citing specific civic improvements as centerpieces for the defense. He concluded that "this, in fact, is a Renaissance City," the credit for which went to the Mayor as "the leader, the backbone, the visionary." ¹⁷⁸⁴

In other ways, too, the story of Cianci was that of Tweed: in their treatment of rivals; their lavish living; and their fiscal imprudence. Cianci, like Tweed, bought off political opponents and potential challengers, often by appointing them to city positions. ¹⁷⁸⁵ In 1994, with Cianci having hired the heads of Providence's Democratic and Republican organizations, neither party endorsed a candidate to oppose him. ¹⁷⁸⁶ Both men had life styles that their official incomes could not have supported: with such features for Cianci as an expensive home and a yacht. ¹⁷⁸⁷ (A difference, though, was that, in contrast to the flaunted fortune of Tweed, Cianci often was in debt. ¹⁷⁸⁸) Like Tweed's New York, Providence was plunged into unprecedented debts of unknown size: one method of Cianci being the underfunding by hundreds of millions of dollars of pension obligations. ¹⁷⁸⁹

In minor ways, too parallels appeared. Contractors in both cities worked for free on the homes of public officials. ¹⁷⁹⁰ Tweed's unsuitable and overpriced premises for National Guard armories had their own successors. Early in Buddy II, Providence leased for \$750,000 the garage of an auto-body shop to be used as a registration center for schoolchildren,

despite complaints about the unsatisfactory conditions and high rent. Parents and children were forced to stand in line in stifling auto bays that had once borne witness to various crimes, in a dilapidated neighborhood down the street from a strip club. The floors were concrete. The bathrooms were hard to reach. There weren't enough seats. ¹⁷⁹¹

The owner of the garage admitted having bribed a Cianci crony. ¹⁷⁹² Like the Boss, The Mayor was convicted in a courthouse that itself symbolized the issues at stake: the contractor who had recently refurbished it had confessed to bribing Governor DiPrete. ¹⁷⁹³

But Cianci was more than just a resurrected Tweed on a smaller stage: he was at once the Boss and the Oakey Hall of his ring. He had both the precinct-by-precinct mastery of Tweed and the personal qualities to be his own vote-attractor, his own Hall. Both Mayors stood out for their speaking abilities – if in strikingly different ways. Whereas Hall won notice with his overdone punning and erudition, Cianci was earthy, direct, quick-witted, emotional, engaging, and profane.

Like Peter Sweeny, the former Rhode Island prosecutor acted effectively to cloak his own culpability – being prudent in what he said and in whom he allowed to witness his actions. Many of the bribes paid in Cianci's Providence were thought to have been taken in by bagmen, his own versions of James Sweeny, James Watson, and Elbert Woodward. Whereas Peter Sweeny had, years after purchasing legal immunity for \$400,000, claimed vindication; Cianci's spin on his verdict was that he had been found guilty only of being Mayor.¹⁷⁹⁴

Had RICO been in effect in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Wood and Hall might, like Cianci, have gone to jail. The experiences of New York, Chicago, and Providence indeed all suggest that reform might often be most effectively undertaken at levels of government higher than those controlled by corrupt cliques¹⁷⁹⁵ – including, perhaps, supranational interventions, when entire countries have been criminally captured.

Closing Thoughts

Legislators, judges, and elected and appointed officials have many concerns. They will heighten their heed for any one of them, such as public integrity, only if voters make clear the importance they attach to it. As has been illustrated by the Tweed Ring and other, similarly worrisome, historical episodes, general interest in civic straight-shooting has waxed with increased awareness of corruption and has ebbed when other issues have displaced it in the popular mind. This may always, at least in part, be the case.

If, however, the average level over time of citizen attentiveness to both honorable and deplorable behavior in our governments were to rise, multiple benefits would follow. Officials would be spurred to enact rules and statutes suited to changing circumstances, to enforce them, and to act with general uprightness, even in situations not explicitly addressed by legal guidelines. Governments would fulfill better their many missions and confidence in them would grow.

Roles in raising popular concern about governmental integrity may be played by special organizations, media, and schools. Such outfits as Common Cause, the Center for Public Integrity, and Transparency International – worthy successors all to the citizen groups of Tweed's time – have for decades addressed key aspects of public department. News publications, broadcast companies, and Internet bloggers have valuably and bravely exposed misdeeds.

Relatively neglected, however, has been the subject of public ethics in our universities – both in understanding it and in teaching about it. Many disciplines – business, economics, education, ethics, history, journalism, law, philosophy, psychology, and public administration, among them – could insightfully inquire into corruption and its dissuasion in public life. With the exception of the efforts of a few authors (such as Bryce, Klitgaard, Noonan, and Rose-Ackerman¹⁷⁹⁶), this has not happened.

Our students of government learn about constitutions, electoral provisions, legislative histories, theories of how governments should, ideally, function, and the like. Few, however, at present are the courses taught at the world's universities on the explicit subjects of graft and public probity. Medical schools, were they to cover in detail the physiology of the body, but scant the diseases that attack it, would be remiss – yet that is, analogously, what most educational programs in government effectively do.

In contrast to the thousands of case studies prepared for classroom use on other topics, there are but few on state rottenness. This book was written

in part to enlarge by one the limited set of teaching pieces now available to help our schools to address issues of civic honesty.

To facilitate fact checking, pre-publication pruning of endnotes has been deferred.

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- 1 Noonan, *Bribes*, 4-12.
 - 2 Callow, *Ring*, vii.
 - 3 Freidel, "Ring."
 - 4 Hale, "Introduction," vii.
 - 5 Alexander, *Political*, 176.
 - 6 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 364; *NYT*, 5/24/1908, "Politics Not Much Changed in Forty Years, Says Ex-Mayor."
 - 7 Doctorow, *Waterworks*, 11.
 - 8 Doctorow, *Waterworks*, 151.
 - 9 Hamill, *Forever*.
 - 10 Hamill, "Fellowship."
 - 11 Lynch, *Tweed*, 287; Callow, *Ring*, 216.
 - 12 Callow, *Ring*, 216. Per the *Tribune* (12/31/1867, "The Albany Legislature"): "Flagg is a respectable lawyer... about 35 years of age, wears spectacles, is a courteous gentleman, with more than average legal and legislative ability, would make a dignified Speaker, and, we think, has the 'inside track' for the election."
 - 13 Lynch, *Tweed*, 287. Callow (*Ring*, 216) repeated verbatim, without attribution, these words.
 - 14 Lynch, *Tweed*, 287; Callow, *Ring*, 217. The *Tribune*, on 1/6/1868 ("Albany: The New-York Legislature"), split the credit between Tweed and Sweeny.
 - 15 Breen, *Thirty*, 120 – embroidering the words of the *New-York Tribune* (1/7/1868, "Albany").
 - 16 *NYT*, 1/26/1871, "The Spider's Parlor," quoting a reporter of the *New York World*. Within the Ring, Peter Sweeny was also called "the Squire." Aldermen, *Testimony*, 573.
 - 17 *NYT*, 1/26/1871, "The Spider's Parlor."
 - 18 *NYH*, 4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever."
 - 19 *NYT*, 1/26/1871, "The Spider's Parlor."
 - 20 Lynch, *Tweed*, 288.
 - 21 Breen, *Thirty*, 120.
 - 22 Breen, *Thirty*, 227.
 - 23 *NYT*, 1/26/1871, "The Spider's Parlor."
 - 24 *NYT*, 9/20/1870, "The Democratic Millenium."
 - 25 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 129; Flick, *Tilden*, 210. In 1877, Tweed (Aldermen, *Testimony*, 306) testified that his net worth had never exceeded \$3 million.
 - 26 *Nation*, 7/27/1871, 49; Lynch, *Tweed*, 323; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 199-200 (quoting Roscoe Conkling).
 - 27 Census, *Historical*, 165.
 - 28 Census, *Historical*, 165.
 - 29 *NYT*, 7/10/ 1871, "New Views of the Tammany Ring."
 - 30 Bowen, *Oakey*, 57. Per Ackerman (*Boss*, 179), \$7,000. The Mayor's salary rose to \$12,500 with the enactment of Tweed's Charter in 1870, then fell back to \$12,000 with the Charter of 1873 (*NYT*, 4/20/1873, "Salaries Under the New Charter").
 - 31 This figure is based on comparative purchasing power as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) – see www.measuringworth.com. Ackerman (*Boss*, 3) multiplied by twenty to translate into the terms of 2005, which, although slightly less conservative than the CPI multiplier, is not a significantly different conversion factor. Other conversion factors, for which cases can be made, dwarf that of Ackerman (www.measuringworth.com).
 - 32 Tilden, *Ring*, 12.
 - 33 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 326. The *Times* (11/2/1870, "Political") predicted nearly 18,000 fewer repeat voters and thought (11/6/1870, "Registry Frauds") that "{t}he fraudulent registry of 1868 has been reduced by nearly 30,000."
 - 34 Hall, with 70,000 to his opponent's 46,000 (*NYT*, 11/10/1870, "The Elections") and Hoffman by 399,000 to 366,000 (*NYT*, 12/3/1870, "The State Election").

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- 35 Townsend, *Bondage*, 30; Lynch, *Tweed*, 315.
36 Townsend, *Bondage*, 32.
37 *NYT*, 11/3/1871, "The Work of the Seventy."
38 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 128; Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88.
39 *NYT*, 4/13/1878, "Death of Wm. M. Tweed."
40 Hale, "Introduction," ix.
41 Burns, *New York*, 159.
42 Hamill, *NYT*, 3/27/2005, "'Boss Tweed' ..."
43 Those mistakenly labeling Tweed Irish have included the *Times* (12/2/1858, "Our Public Schools") and Cohen (*Pharaoh*, 38).
44 *NYH*, 4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever;" Lynch, *Tweed*, 15.
45 McCullough, *Bridge*, 125; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 4. Wingate (1874, "Episode," 361) and the *Herald* (4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever") gave the address as 24 Cherry Street; the *Sun* (4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed") and *Times* (4/13/1878, "Death of Wm. M. Tweed"), as 9 Cherry Street; Callow (*Ring*, 12), as 1 Cherry Hill.
46 McCullough, *Bridge*, 125; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 4. McCullough also stated that "the houses would have to be demolished to make way for the anchorage of the new bridge." Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 4) said that numbers 1 and 3 were torn down earlier: in 1862 and 1856, respectively.
47 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 361.
48 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 361.
49 *NYS*, 4/18/1878, "William M. Tweed's Burial."
50 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 362.
51 Per Wingate (1874, "Episode," 362), as a salesman; per Lynch (*Tweed*, 37), as a bookkeeper; perhaps as both.
52 Anbinder, "Nativist," 112; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 7-8.
53 Anbinder, "Nativist," 111.
54 Lynch, *Tweed*, 51-3.
55 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 13.
56 According to Allen (*Tiger*, 84), Tweed "prevailed upon an old friend... to do him the favor of coming into the race." Lynch (*Tweed*, 65-6) gave details of Tweed's meeting with the friend. Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 17), however, judged "there is nothing to show that Tweed had anything to do with the Blackmer candidacy."
57 Lynch, *Tweed*, 66. The *Times* (11/6/1851, "Elections") made it 1,381 for Tweed and 1,334 for Webb, with no total given for Blackmer.
58 Myers, *Tammany*, 167-8.
59 Werner, *Tammany*, 108.
60 Lynch, *Tweed*, 68-69, 76, 82-6.
61 *NYT*, 7/30/1853, "Alleged Illegal Contract—Charges against the Street Commissioner."
62 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 365-6.
63 *NYT*, 12/11/1852, "New-York City."
64 *NYT*, 5/12/1852, "Evenings with the Aldermen."
65 Lynch, *Tweed*, 70.
66 *NYT*, 9/16/1852, "New-York City."
67 *NYT*, 9/20/1852, "Williamsburg City."
68 *NYT*, 11/11/1852, "Williamsburg City."
69 *NYT*, 12/30/1852, "Board of Aldermen."
70 *NYTr*, 12/31/1852, "Aldermanic Robbery."
71 *NYT*, 12/30/1852, "Board of Aldermen."
72 *NYT*, 6/8/1853, "The Verdict—Reform Triumphant!"
73 *NYT*, 5/11/1853, "City Reform;" *NYT*, 11/1/1853, "Municipal Reform;" Myers, *Tammany*, 172.
74 *NYT*, 7/20/1853, "New-York City."
75 *NYT*, 1/2/1854, "New-York City."
76 *NYS*, 4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed;" Werner, *Tammany*, 109.

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- 77 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 366.
 - 78 Zink, *Bosses*, 100.
 - 79 *NYT*, 10/13/1854, "City Politics."
 - 80 *NYT*, 4/13/1878, "Death of Wm. M. Tweed."
 - 81 Lynch, *Tweed*, 109; Callow, *Ring*, 16.
 - 82 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 367.
 - 83 *NYT*, 4/13/1878, "Tweed."
 - 84 McCullough, *Bridge*, 127.
 - 85 Bryce, *American*, Epilogue to Chs. 88-90.
 - 86 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 64.
 - 87 *Tammany*, 347.
 - 88 Roosevelt, Theodore, *Sketch*, 253.
 - 89 *NYH*, 4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever."
 - 90 *The World*, 8/16/1891, "Jas. O'Brien's Story."
 - 91 Callow, *Ring*, 11.
 - 92 Werner (*Tammany*, 255) quoting former Congressman (and former heavyweight boxing champion of the world) and current New York State Senator John Morrissey in an interview reported in the *New York Sun*, September 17, 1877.
 - 93 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 364.
 - 94 Lynch, *Tweed*, 279.
 - 95 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
 - 96 *NYT*, 4/18/1878, "Wm. M. Tweed's Funeral."
 - 97 *NYT*, 11/29/1870, "Tweed and Sweeny."
 - 98 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
 - 99 Hudson, *Random*, 34.
 - 100 Hudson, *Random*, 37.
 - 101 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
 - 102 *NYH*, 4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever."
 - 103 *NYT*, 8/3/1859, "City Intelligence."
 - 104 Per the *Herald* (7/28/1871, "Widening the Circle—Fixing the Responsibility," 4), Tweed also "gave him the strongest Democratic district in the City and elected him thence to the present Congress."
 - 105 *NYH*, 4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever."
 - 106 *NYT*, 5/24/1908, "Politics Not Much Changed in Forty Years, Says Ex-Mayor."
 - 107 Callow, *Ring*, 11.
 - 108 *NYH*, 4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever."
 - 109 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
 - 110 *NYH*, 4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever."
 - 111 *NYS*, 4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed." Tweed, late in life, seemed not to esteem articulateness: having little but scorn for Hall, who, he conceded (*NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks, 3), could "make a ready speech;" and referring (Aldermen, *Testimony*, 209) to electoral speechmaking, which he hired men to do, as "spouting."
 - 112 U.S. House, *Frauds*, 266.
 - 113 *NYT*, 11/23/1860, "City and County Affairs."
 - 114 *NYH*, 4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever."
 - 115 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 129.
 - 116 U.S. House, *Frauds*, 266.
 - 117 *NYS*, 4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed."
 - 118 Mushkat, *Tammany*, 346-9.
 - 119 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 127.
 - 120 Callow, *Ring*, 12.
 - 121 *NYS*, 4/28/1870, "The Struggle To-Night."
 - 122 *NYH*, 4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever."
 - 123 Mushkat, *Wood*, 112.

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- 124 *NYTr*, 10/6/1871, "The Rochester Convention," 1.
125 *NYH*, 8/3/1871, "The Times and Our City Administration – The Disease and the Remedy," 6.
126 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 348.
127 Burns, *New York*, 138.
128 Burrows, *Gotham*, 909.
129 Burrows, *Gotham*, 909, 939-40; Burns, *New York*, 106.
130 Burrows, *Gotham*, 737, 746.
131 Burns, *New York*, 90.
132 Burns, *New York*, 90.
133 Burns, *New York*, 88; Burrows, *Gotham*, 745.
134 Callow, *Ring*, 49.
135 E.g., *NYT*, 4/27/1871, "Jobs of the Ring."
136 Burns, *New York*, 109.
137 Burns, *New York*, 145.
138 Burrows, *Gotham*, 940-1.
139 Burrows, *Gotham*, 942-3.
140 Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 8.
141 Callow, *Ring*, 55.
142 Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 15; Burrows, *Gotham*, 921.
143 Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 66; Burrows, *Gotham*, 921-2.
144 Lynch, *Tweed*, 165.
145 *NYT*, 9/3/1870, "Local News in Brief." The previous year, he had hosted in Greenwich children of the Randall's Island nursery (Wingate, *Ja* 1875, "Episode," 120).
146 Citizens', *Appeal*, 5-6.
147 Mushkat, *Wood*, 69.
148 Citizens', *Appeal*, 9-14. See also: Goodnow, "Ring," 381; Callow, *Ring*, 80; Mushkat, *Wood*, 68-9.
149 Burrows, *Gotham*, 836.
150 Riordon, *Plunkitt*, 59-60.
151 Wingate, *Ja* 1875, "Episode," 164.
152 Myers, *Tammany*, 201-2.
153 *The Times* (5/15/1860) described him as "a man whose frank and generous nature had so won upon all with whom he was brought into contact that his bitterest political opponents will hear of his fall with deep and unmixed sorrow."
154 Myers, *Tammany*, 195.
155 Lynch, *Tweed*, 217; Mushkat, *Wood*, 105.
156 Lynch, *Tweed*, 217; Callow, *Ring*, 26. Anbinder ("Nativist," 115) cites contrary evidence that Wood's Tammany did more for the Irish than did Tweed's.
157 Myers, *Tammany*, 128.
158 Myers, *Tammany*, 128.
159 Myers, *Tammany*, 191; Anbinder, "Nativist," 114.
160 This estimate is intermediate among many given: of 3,000 by Myers (*Tammany*, 225) for 1871, of 5,500 by Burrows (*Gotham*, 741) and of 5,540 by Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 47) for 1855, of 7,000 by Peter Sweeny in 1869 (*NYH*, 11/26/1869, "The Democratic Policy," 5), and of "at least 10,000" by the Citizens' Association (*Appeal*, 13) in 1866 and by Callow (*Ring*, 192) for the "Tweed Ring reign."
161 Myers, *Tammany*, 192.
162 Roosevelt, Theodore, "Machine," 79; Bryce, *American*, Ch. 63.
163 Myers, *Tammany*, 193.
164 *NYT*, 8/27/1852, "The Democratic Primary Meetings."
165 *NYT*, 9/2/1856, "Nominees for Mayor."
166 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 367; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 63.
167 *NYS*, 4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed."
168 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 368.
169 *NYT*, 12/2/1858, "Our Public Schools."
170 *NYT*, 10/14/1858, City Politics."

171 Ackerman, *Boss*, 114. In 1866, it was thought to be worth about \$40,000 per year – Myers, *Tammany*, 221.

172 *NYT*, 11/7/1861, “Vote for Canal Commissioner.”

173 *NYT*, 9/5/1869, “Opposition to Tammany.”

174 Myers, *Tammany*, 167-8.

175 Mushkat, *Wood*, 63.

176 On when Tweed joined Tammany – effectively and/or formally – the evidence conflicts. Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 70), having consulted the *Membership List, Society of Tammany of Columbian Order, 1834-1880*, stated that he was admitted, along with 21 others, on September 5, 1859. Mushkat (*Tammany*, 320) wrote that Tweed's 1859 initiation into the Tammany Society was “with Purdy's blessing.” *The Herald* (4/13/1878, “Escaped Forever”), dated Tweed's admission ten years earlier. Tweed had, in any case, by 1859, already for years been active within Tammany – serving, for instance, in 1855, as an officer in one of its meetings (*NYT*, 6/1/1855, “Tammany All of a Crawl”).

177 Lynch, *Tweed*, 235; Callow, *Ring*, 27-8.

178 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88; Callow, *Ring*, 29; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 90; Allen, *Tiger*, 92. *The Sun* (4/13/1878, “William Marcy Tweed”) and Myers (*Tammany*, 213) gave 1861 as the date.

179 *NYT*, 8/4/1863, “Tammany Society.”

180 Mushkat, *Tammany*, 319-20; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 111-2.

181 *NYTr*, 1/10/1866, “Decease of Elijah F. Purdy.” Mayor Hoffman (ibid.) also praised Purdy for his “never-failing integrity.” Even the Republican *Times* (1/9/1866, “Death of Elijah F. Purdy”) thought Purdy to have been “trusted in every way as a public officer.”

182 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, “Tweed Talks.” Tweed also spoke of the incident to the Aldermen (*Testimony*, 146): “I nominated [Barnard], and stood by him and he owned his position to me. I risked my life to get it for him.” Callow (*Ring*, 137) set this episode in 1860, at the time of Barnard's nomination for the Supreme Court – even though Tweed, in a passage quoted by Callow (who dropped the words “for Recorder” from it) specified that it was for the Recordership. Ackerman (*Boss*, 198-9) presented it as a questionable account of an 1857 happening – having found in contemporary records evidence at variance with Tweed's account (*Boss*, 199, footnote). He thought that Tweed might have confused Barnard's nomination with that of Hoffman, but concluded that “even if wrong on details, Tweed's story probably had seeds of truth from Barnard's early career.”

183 Wingate, 1974, “Episode,” 392-3; Callow, *Ring*, 136-7.

184 *The Times* (12/31/1860, “Judicial Salaries”) charged that, before Barnard was sworn into that Judgeship, Tweed had engineered a deal to raise his prospective salary to \$6,000 – versus \$5,000 for his senior fellow Judges. Tweed, in the Board of Supervisors the same day, (*NYT*, 1/1/1861, “Board of Supervisors”) “denied emphatically, and in toto, every statement in said article so far as it related to himself.” Purdy responded that the press had the right to offer such commentary and declined to say more. Tweed said that he too would not object to such a piece, “so long as [the public Press] confined themselves to the truth.”

185 Cornell would, after Tweed's death, serve on his coroner's jury and as a pallbearer (*NYS*, 4/13/1878, “William Marcy Tweed;” *NYS*, 4/18/1878, “William M. Tweed's Burial”).

186 *NYT*, 1/7/1863, “General City News;” Mushkat, *Tammany*, 348.

187 Wingate, 1974, “Episode,” 387.

188 Burrows, *Gotham*, 742.

189 Lynch, *Tweed*, 216.

190 Lynch, *Tweed*, 276.

191 Breen, *Thirty*, 39-40; Myers, *Tammany*, 228.

192 *NYT*, 4/13/1878, “Death of Wm. M. Tweed.” To the question of his religion, he answered, “None.” In his last months, however, he was said to have read his Bible and prayer book thrice daily (*NYS*, 4/13/1878, “William Marcy Tweed”).

193 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 154.

194 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 68.

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- 195 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 154.
196 As seen in, e.g., Werner, *Tammany*, 213.
197 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
198 For instance, throughout Tilden's *Ring* of 1873 and the Aldermanic Report of 1878. Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 82) suggested that the dropping of the third "e" was an Anglicization.
199 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 369.
200 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 369.
201 *NYT*, 6/12/1856, "Democratic Mass Meeting in the Park."
202 Mushkat, *Wood*, 63.
203 Mushkat, *Tammany*, 330.
204 Mushkat, *Wood*, 126, 130-1.
205 Callow, *Ring*, 29.
206 Callow, *Ring*, 40.
207 Callow, *Ring*, 40.
208 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 370.
209 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
210 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 370.
211 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 146.
212 Wingate (1874, "Episode," 376) reported that his annual salary as a banker had been \$10,000; the *Times* (6/1/1880, "At Three Score and Ten"), that it had started at \$2,000 and rose to \$3,600.
213 Callow, *Ring*, 46. Contemporary spelling of the office was more often "Controller" than "Comptroller."
214 Callow, *Ring*, 46.
215 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 375.
216 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 376.
217 Bowen, *Oakey*, 40.
218 Callow, *Ring*, 45.
219 *NYS*, 4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed."
220 *NYS*, 4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed."
221 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
222 Callow, *Ring*, 38, 37.
223 Callow, *Ring*, 37.
224 Bowen, *Oakey*, 103.
225 Bowen, *Oakey*, 45.
226 *NYT*, 11/7/1861, "The State Elections."
227 Lynch, *Tweed's*, 219-21. Lynch attributed Hall's renunciation of the Republicans to their nomination of Lincoln and his own nomination and election as DA in 1860 to Tweed's support. Hall's election was, in fact, a year later – as the candidate not of Tammany but of the Republicans and Fernando Wood's Mozart Hall branch of the Democrats (*NYT*, 11/2/1861, "The Election Next Week—The Issues and the Candidates;" *NYT*, 11/7/1861, "The State Elections.").
228 Werner, *Tammany*, 122.
229 E.g., in *NYT*, 12/6/1871, "Gov. Hoffman on the Political Situation."
230 Bowen, *Oakey*, 4.
231 Bowen, *Oakey*, 76. Lynch (*Tweed*, 26) wrote that the outfit was worn at Tweed's insistence, overriding Hall's reluctance.
232 *NYT*, 3/25/1888, "Death of Ex-Gov. Hoffman."
233 Alexander, *Political*, 164.
234 *NYT*, 12/6/1871, "Gov. Hoffman on the Political Situation." This was done while, the *Times* said, "OAKEY HALL, with his characteristic demagogism, skulked his duty as public prosecutor."
235 *NYT*, 11/7/1869, "Political;" *NYT*, 11/8/1869, "Governor Hoffman's Promises;" Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 148.
236 *NYH*, 10/10/1877, "Confession," 11.
237 *NYT*, 9/14/1871, "The Hoffmans."

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- 238 Callow, *Ring*, 121.
239 *NYH*, 10/10/1877, "Confession," 11.
240 Callow, *Ring*, 121. Controller Andrew Green in 1873 accused Starkweather of having illegally received \$129,000 in fees between 1869 and 1871 (*NYT*, 10/24/1873, "Suit against Nathaniel Sands").
241 *NYH*, 10/10/1877, "Confession," 11.
242 Lynch, *Tweed*, 289.
243 Hudson, *Random*, 32.
244 *NYT*, 1/4/1871, "Gov. Hoffman's Message."
245 *NYT*, 4/24/1871, "The Defunct Legislature."
246 *NYT*, 1/20/1871, "Peter B. Sweeny."
247 Roosevelt, Robert, "Democracy," 3.
248 Myers, *Tammany*, 220.
249 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 401. Per Callow (*Ring*, 211), 6,000.
250 This figure is intermediate among those given by historians. Lynch (*Tweed*, 292) and Mushkat (*Democracy*, 146) put the number at 60,000; Myers (*Tammany*, 217), at 25,000 to 30,000; Flick (*Tilden*, 194), at 35,000; and Wingate (1874, "Episode," 401), Callow (*Ring*, 211), and Allen (*Tiger*, 103-4), at 41,112.
251 U.S. House, *Frauds*, 266.
252 Lynch, *Tweed's*, 292.
253 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 400.
254 Breen, *Thirty*, 318; Allen, *Tiger*, 104.
255 Lynch, *Tweed*, 292.
256 Ackerman, *Boss*, 38.
257 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 403-4.
258 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 133-4.
259 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 226. Tweed said that "one of us proposed to telegraph the whole Bible over [the telegraph wires], if it was necessary." The *Times* (9/30/1877) rendered the same (also purportedly verbatim) utterance as "it was determined to have the Bible telegraphed from beginning to end over the wires." Which, if either, of the quotes, is accurate? Did the *Times* purposely, or sloppily, misreport what Tweed had said or did Tweed or his lawyer or another edit the transcript of his testimony, prior to its publication?
260 Roosevelt, Theodore, *Sketch*, 252; Allen, *Tiger*, 103.
261 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 388.
262 *NYT*, 3/20/1868, "New-York."
263 Tilden, *Ring*, 47.
264 Parton, "Government," 417.
265 Parton, "Government," 439; Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 387.
266 U.S. House, *Frauds*, 268.
267 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 88.
268 Werner, *Tammany*, 167-8; Callow, *Ring*, 119-20.
269 Wingate, 1875, "Episode," 122; Callow, *Ring*, 127.
270 Lynch, *Tweed*, 300.
271 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 393.
272 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 394.
273 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 395.
274 *NYT*, 2/25/1872, "Our Corrupt Judges;" Callow, *Ring*, 151. 225 prisoners were ordered released by Cardozo, 26 by Barnard, and six by McCunn.
275 Callow, *Ring*, 221.
276 Callow, *Ring*, 244.
277 *NYT*, 4/27/1871, "Who Owns the Governor?:" Callow, *Ring*, 148.
278 *NYT*, 9/1/1871, "A Glance at the Pay-Roll—Enormous Increase of Court Expenses."
279 *NYT*, 5/8/1871, "The Pretense of Economy." See also Callow, *Ring*, 134-5.
280 Callow, *Ring*, 147.
281 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88; Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 53.

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- 282 Hudson, *Random*, 34.
283 Per the *Herald* (10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks"), the half brother of Judge Noah Davis.
284 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 73.
285 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 86-7.
286 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 88-9.
287 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 89.
288 The margins also provided historical cover. Leo Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 153) would later argue: "It was not bribery that carried the charter, but political maneuvering and expediency. With a vote of 116 to 5 and 30 to 2, was bribery necessary?"
289 Myers, Flick, and Lynch (all quoting Tilden) (*Tammany*, 227; *Tilden*, 208; and *Tweed*, 331, respectively). Garvey (Aldermen, *Testimony*, 565) said that Connolly had told him that \$1 million had been paid for the passage of the Charter and associated Tax Levy. Per Wingate (Ja 1875, "Episode," 167), an unnamed "good authority" put the figure at between \$1.2 and \$1.3 million.
290 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 217.
291 *NYT*, 10/28/1871, "The City Frauds," publishing the Report of the Citizens' Investigating (Booth) Committee.
292 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 123.
293 Lynch, *Tweed*, 402.
294 Hudson, *Random*, 25.
295 Riordon, *Plunkitt*, 51.
296 Callow, *Ring*, 184.
297 Lynch, *Tweed*, 241.
298 *NYH*, 10/10/1877, "Confession," 6.
299 Ackerman, *Boss*, 68.
300 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 160.
301 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 129, 138; Callow, *Ring*, 120, 203.
302 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 20-45.
303 Tweed's testimony (Aldermen, *Testimony*, 76-7) suggested that the contractors might have received but 30 percent, with five percent going to a "sinking-fund" held by Watson for miscellaneous expenses.
304 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 76-7. The percentages changed over time and were reported by Callow (*Ring*, 167) as being 10 to 25 to Tweed, 10 to 20 to Connolly, 10 to Sweeny, 5 to 10 to Hall, and 5 to be shared by Watson and Woodward.
305 *NYT*, 7/29/1871, "What We Have Proved."
306 *NYT*, 10/28/1871, "More Evidence."
307 Werner, *Tammany*, 167; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 182-3; Callow, *Ring*, 164, 199-200.
308 Werner, *Tammany*, 166.
309 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 147.
310 Callow, *Ring*, 170.
311 Wingate, JI 1875, "Episode," 136; Callow, *Ring*, 142.
312 Callow, *Ring*, 142-3.
313 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 135.
314 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 131-2.
315 *NYT*, 3/4/1871, "Another Street Job;" *NYT*, 3/21/1871, "The Broadway Swindle."
316 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 133.
317 *NYT*, 2/27/1871, "The Broadway Widening Job."
318 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 130.
319 Riordon, *Plunkitt*, 49-50.
320 Citizens', *Appeal*, 29-30.
321 *NYT*, 3/10/1871, "How the Ring Collects Water Rents;" Callow, *Ring*, 193. In the 1980s in Equatorial Guinea, Robert Klitgaard (*Tropical Gangsters*, NY: Basic Books, 1990, 69) reported that charges for electricity were introduced. When one entity thought that its non-use of public electricity – it had its own generator – might be a basis for exemption, the response was, "Okay, pay a charge to us for your generator."
322 Callow, *Ring*, 190.

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- 323 Callow, *Ring*, 195.
324 Callow, *Ring*, 191-2.
325 Callow, *Ring*, 237.
326 Breen, *Thirty*, 256.
327 *NYT*, 2/10/1871, "The Real Masters of New-York;" Breed, *Thirty*, 255.
328 Breen, *Thirty*, 256, 355; Callow, *Ring*, 8.
329 Callow, *Ring*, 117.
330 Breen, *Thirty*, 256.
331 Tweed (Aldermen, *Testimony*, 126-7) remembered that it was \$55,000, \$60,000, or \$65,000.
332 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 128-9.
333 *NYT*, 12/31/1872, "The Tax Commissioners' Office."
334 Lynch, *Tweed*, 371.
335 *NYS*, 4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed."
336 *NYT*, 7/21/1869, "The Erie Massacre at Mast Hope, and its Lessons;" Townsend, *Bondage*, 8.
337 *NYT*, 10/26/1870, "The Tammany and Erie Partnership."
338 *NYT*, 10/26/1870, "Who Wants Gov. Hoffman Re-elected?"
339 Townsend, *Bondage*, 9.
340 Wingate, *Jl* 1875, "Episode," 145-6; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 232.
341 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 63.
342 Townsend, *Bondage*, 9.
343 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 382.
344 Adams, *Erie*, 8.
345 This is generally accepted to have been Vanderbilt's main motivation. Stiles (*Tycoon*, 450), however, thought that Vanderbilt primarily wanted put an end to Drew's underhanded securities practices, which "destroyed credit and market values" throughout "the American financial system." Stiles (455) credited Vanderbilt's later statements: "I never had any intention of taking possession of... the Erie road;" "I never had the slightest desire; damn it! Never had time to. It is too big a thing!" Stiles (456) concluded that "Vanderbilt fought one of the greatest business conflicts in American history purely out of a desire for revenge" against Drew – who had for decades been a friend and business ally before, in 1864, backstabbing him and others in a securities operation.
346 Adams, *Erie*, 22.
347 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 464.
348 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 456.
349 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 67.
350 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 70.
351 Adams, *Erie*, 43.
352 Adams, *Erie*, 54.
353 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 461.
354 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 75; McCullough, *Bridge*, 130. Stiles (*Tycoon*, 469), disagreeing, felt that many historians – he might have meant also the Adams brothers, Breen, Lynch, and Callow – "carelessly lumped Vanderbilt together with Gould, Fisk, and the Erie board in their accusations of bribery. In fact, the state senate's investigation found little evidence of corruption by Vanderbilt and his agents, by contrast with the abundant proof that the Erie had poured out cash to judges and legislators. Indeed, Vanderbilt's lobbyists in Albany testified that he forbade them from buying votes (at least, not explicitly)." Barnard may have been undeniably corrupt and may have ruled in ways that aided Vanderbilt, Stiles (*Tycoon*, 469-70) conceded, but there was no evidence, he said, that the Commodore bribed the judge. Barnard speculated in Erie stock and his personal interests may have "simply coincided with Vanderbilt's."
355 Adams, *Erie*, 53.
356 Klein, *Gould*, 85; Stiles, *Tycoon*, 462. Adams (*Erie*, 55) made the vote 101 to 6.
357 Fenton (*NYT*, 3/30/1869, "Official Corruption—The Crusade Against Senator Fenton") was said to have taken \$20,000 in two checks of \$10,000.
358 Adams, *Erie*, 34.
359 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 464-5. For 50,000 shares he was paid \$4 million: \$3.5 million by the Erie and \$500,000 by Drew. The railroad also paid \$1 million for a 60-day call on Vanderbilt's remaining holding.

Stiles put the personal loss in “the most serious defeat of Vanderbilt’s railroad career” at “perhaps as much as \$1 million.”

360 Wingate, Ja 1875, “Episode,” 155; O’Connor, *Gould’s*, 79; Klein, *Gould*, 86.

361 Adams, *Erie*, 59.

362 O’Connor, *Gould’s*, 112; Klein, *Gould*, 129.

363 Myers, *Tammany*, 223; Flick, *Tilden*, 198.

364 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 148-9. The account books of Erie would later reveal that \$54,750 was paid in May and June, 1869 for “{legal services” to A. D. Barber, the lobbyist whom Tweed later testified that he used to bribe the Assemblymen (*NYT*, 4/2/1873, “The Affairs of Erie”).

365 *NYT*, 9/22/1877, “Tweed’s ‘Revelations.’”

366 *NYT*, 5/25/1869, “Governor Hoffman’s Fall—His Surrender to the Erie Ring.”

367 *NYT*, 7/21/1869, “The Erie Massacre at Mast Hope, and its Lessons.”

368 O’Connor, *Gould’s*, 125.

369 *NYT*, 2/6/1869, “Albany.”

370 Hirsch, “Light,” 276.

371 Mushkat, *Wood*, 25; Allen, *Tiger*, 63.

372 Myers, *Tammany*, 179; Mushkat, *Wood*, 58-9.

373 Myers, *Tammany*, 176.

374 Myers, *Tammany*, 188.

375 Myers, *Tammany*, 199.

376 Myers, *Tammany*, 220; Mushkat, *Wood*, 157.

377 Mushkat, *Wood*, 120-1, 133.

378 Parton, “Government,” 436.

379 Parton, “Government,” 436-7.

380 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 105.

381 Myers, *Tammany*, 198; Mushkat, *Wood*, 58.

382 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 48.

383 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 171. The *Times* (12/3/1867, “The Election for Mayor”) reasoned similarly: favoring Darling but doubting his electability; considering Wood to be “without principle or scruple;” and therefore endorsing Hoffman, despite his ties to the Ring.

384 Mushkat, *Wood*, 166-7.

385 *NYT*, 12/4/1867, “The Charter Election.”

386 Mushkat, *Wood*, 111, 162, 173-4. Barnard did have a falling out with Wood, during which he adjudicated with spite against his former friend. The two, however, in 1867 patched things up – with Wood agreeing to back Barnard for a higher judgeship and Barnard ruling for Wood in a commercial case.

387 Mushkat, *Wood*, 168. An inference based on “indirect evidence,” since “no records exist of what occurred between them.”

388 Parton, “Government,” 445.

389 Parton, “Government,” 449.

390 See, for instance, *NYTr* (9/17/1861, “Local Politics;” 10/11/1861, “Our Judiciary;” 10/19/1861, “Our City Politics;” 11/30/1861, “Ride and Tie”).

391 E.g., *NYT*, 12/1/1862, “Local Intelligence;” *NYTr*, 12/2/1863, “Machine-Smashing;” *NYT*, 12/2/1864, “Municipal Reform.”

392 *NYTr*: 11/23/1865, “Has He Not Acted with the Ring?;” 11/27/1865, “The Mayoralty;” 12/2/1865, “Citizens’ Association.”

393 Hershkowitz, *Tweed’s*, 119.

394 *NYTr*, 11/30/1867, “Political.”

395 E.g., *NYTr*, 12/5/1865, Editorial Article 4 – No Title.

396 A search of ProQuest Historical Newspapers found the first mention of the “Tweed Ring” in the *Times* in 1870 (10/5/1870, “Public Opinion on the Tweed and Erie ‘Rings’”) and in the *Tribune* two years later. In 1875, the *Times* had 23 mentions and the *Tribune*, eighteen.

397 Parton, “Government,” 448-9.

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- 398 Parton, "Government," 445-6.
399 Parton, "Government," 447.
400 Parton, "Government," 448.
401 Parton, "Government," 415.
402 Parton, "Government," 416.
403 Parton, "Government," 419.
404 Parton, "Government," 420.
405 Parton, "Government," 429.
406 Parton, "Government," 449.
407 Parton, "Government," 449.
408 Parton, "Government," 456.
409 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 373.
410 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 374.
411 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 375-6.
412 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 376-7.
413 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 486.
414 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 469.
415 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 107.
416 *NYT*, 11/19/1867, "The Corporation Counsel."
417 *NYT*, 11/7/1868, "Illegal Voting—The Proposed Investigation."
418 *NYT*, 12/2/1868, "The Charter Election."
419 *NYT*, 12/2/1868, "The Election Yesterday and the City Government."
420 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 407.
421 *NYTr*, 6/9/1880.
422 *NYT*, 9/5/1869, "Opposition to Tammany."
423 Breen, *Thirty*, 141.
424 Lynch, *Tweed*, 291.
425 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
426 *NYH*, 10/10/1877, "Confession," 5.
427 E.g., Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 148.
428 *NYT*, 1/11/1869; "Illegal Voting;" Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 373.
429 *NYT*, 1/11/1869; "Illegal Voting;" Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 373; Bowen, *Oakey*, 49; Ackerman, *Boss*, 61-2.
430 Burrows, *Gotham*, 807.
431 Burrows, *Gotham*, 803.
432 Ackerman, *Boss*, 70.
433 Myers, *Tammany*, 224; Lynch, *Tweed*, 321.
434 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 89; Callow, *Ring*, 10.
435 Tilden, *Ring*, 11; Callow, *Ring*, 79-80.
436 *NYT*, 9/29/70, "Gov. Hoffman and the Erie Bill."
437 Per the figures given by O'Connor (*Gould's*, 104-5), 19 percent; per those of Klein (*Gould*, 112), 17 percent.
438 This is the interpretation of O'Connor (*Gould's*, 102). Klein (*Gould*, 110) held that Grant had left the decision on governmental sales of gold to his Secretary of the Treasury, George Boutwell.
439 O'Connor (*Gould's*, 106) put his profit at \$11 million. Klein (*Gould*, 115) judged that whether Gould realized a net profit is, most likely, unknowable.
440 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 107.
441 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 107.
442 Noonan, *Bribes*, 460-500.
443 McFeely, *Grant*, 405-16.
444 McFeely, *Grant*, 427-36.
445 McFeely, *Grant*, 432.
446 McFeely, *Grant*, 430-1.

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- 447 McFeely, *Grant*, 430, 435.
448 McFeely, *Grant*, 435.
449 McFeely, *Grant*, 431-6.
450 McFeely, *Grant*, 434.
451 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 232.
452 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 233.
453 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 245.
454 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 283.
455 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 286.
456 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 317.
457 *NYT*, 4/7/1871, "The People Aroused."
458 *NYT*, 9/5/1871, "The People's Voice;" 11/3/1871, "Another Grand Rally."
459 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 80.
460 Lynch, *Tweed*, 324.
461 Parton, "Government," 459.
462 *NYT*, 1/27/1865, "Investigation of the City Departments."
463 Robert B. Roosevelt, speaking as Chairman of the mass meeting of the Citizens' Association on 12/1/1864 (*NYT*, 12/2/1864, "Municipal Reform").
464 *NYT*, 12/7/1864, "The Charter Election;" *NYT*, 12/4/1865, "The Charter Election;" *NYT*, 12/7/1865, "The City Election."
465 *NYT*, 12/6/1865, "The Mayoralty—Yesterday's Election."
466 Parton, "Government," 413-4.
467 *NYT*, 12/2/1864, "Municipal Reform;" Burrows, *Gotham*, 919. The Association, in a letter soliciting contributions, dated February 1, 1866, and signed by Robert B. Roosevelt, Secretary, said that its first priority was to pass the Metropolitan Health Bill.
468 Citizens', *Appeal*, 15-6.
469 Citizens', *Appeal*, 15.
470 *NYT*, 12/10/1866, "Our Supervisors."
471 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 117-8.
472 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 121-2. The *Herald* was at this time blaming the courthouse-related corruption on a Supervisors' Ring and on Mayor Hoffman (Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 128).
473 *NYT*, 9/1/1867, "How the Money Goes."
474 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 104-5, 130.
475 See, for instance, *NYT*, 11/1/1853, "Municipal Reform."
476 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 116.
477 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 125.
478 *NYT*, 6/3/1875, "An Accomplice's Story." Myers, *Tammany*, 221-2; Allen, *Tiger*, 109.
479 *NYT*, 9/11/1867, "Our Streets."
480 *NYT*, 11/22/1867, "The Law Department of the Corporation."
481 *NYT*, 9/25/1868, "Our Streets."
482 *NYT*, 9/26/1867, "Our Markets."
483 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 121.
484 *NYT*, 9/28/1868, "The Citizen's Association."
485 Breen, *Thirty*, 199; Lynch, *Tweed*, 329. The *Times* occasionally – e.g., 3/24/1870, "Albany" – labeled the dissidents "the O'Brien Democracy."
486 Callow, *Ring*, 223-4.
487 Reformers themselves had sensed that earlier reforms might have gone too far in weakening the Mayoralty. The Citizens' Association in 1866 (*Appeal*, 7) thought that: "So great in times past has been the apprehension that the office might be abused in the hands of a rogue that it has, from time to time, been so shorn of its power that it is valueless for good, even in the hands of an honest man. The Mayor of the city has, at this moment, less power—for good or ill—than the head of any other department."
488 Bowen, *Oakey*, 61; Callow, *Ring*, 225-6.
489 *NYT*, 4/5/1870, "Albany."

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- 490 *NYT*, 4/5/1870, "Albany." The *New York Sun* (Ackerman, *Boss*, 383) rendered the words as "I am out of discussion of this question."
491 *NYT*, 4/5/1870, "Albany."
492 Flick, *Tilden*, 207.
493 The *Herald* in early November 1868 (11/1/1868, "The Close of the Campaign," 6) had expressed satisfaction at the likelihood of Grant's election: "It is good for the country in reference to both our domestic and foreign affairs." It also, despite the courtroom circus of the Erie Railway earlier that year, supported the candidacy of George Barnard for the State Supreme Court, considering him "a firm, upright and capable judicial officer" (11/2/1868, "To-Morrow's—Parties and Candidates in the Metropolis," 6).
494 4/6/1870, "The New Charter," 6.
495 4/6/1870, Untitled editorial, 4.
496 *NYT*, 4/8/1870, Article 3 – No Title.
497 *NYT*, 4/13/1870, "Our New City Government."
498 *NYT*, 5/1/1870, "An Excellent Appointment."
499 *NYT*, 10/20/1870, "Political."
500 *NYH*, 10/28/1870, "The Democratic Host," 4.
501 *NYT*, 10/28/1870, "Political."
502 *NYT*, 11/9/1870, "The Elections."
503 Breen (*Thirty*, 220-1) made it the initially fanciful concoction of an unsober gathering; Callow (*Ring*, 251), Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 162), and Ackerman (*Boss*, 118), considered it a joke of the *New York Sun*. Lynch (*Tweed*, 348) thought that a supporter of the Boss with serious intent had originated it.
504 Myers (*Tammany*, 233) put the figure at "nearly \$8,000;" Werner (*Tammany*, 200) and Callow (*Ring*, 252), at \$7,973; the *Times* (3/17/1871, "The 'Philanthropic' Tweed.") and Ackerman (*Boss*, 118), at \$10,000.
505 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 177.
506 Breen, *Thirty*, 222; Ackerman, *Boss*, 118.
507 *NYT*, 2/2/1871, "Legislatures."
508 Ackerman, *Boss*, 118.
509 Breen, *Thirty*, 226; Lynch, *Tweed*, 349.
510 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 162-3.
511 Breen, *Thirty*, 227.
512 Lynch, *Tweed*, 354.
513 Lynch, *Tweed*, 357.
514 Breen, *Thirty*, 283.
515 Breen, *Thirty*, 285.
516 *NYT*, 4/19/1871, "Albany;" Myers, *Tammany*, 231.
517 Breen, *Thirty*, 289.
518 *NYT*, 4/19/1871, "Albany."
519 *NYT*, 5/1/1871, "The Rule of Four." After legislative passage, bills were taken by a clerk of Tweed, who would pass them on to the Governor. It was charged that the Boss used this moment of custody to make changes. The *Times* (5/1/1871, "Fraudulent Legislation") was philosophical about this possibility, noting that "the people are not allowed" anyway "to know what the laws really are, until after they are signed by the Governor."
520 *NYT*, 4/19/1871, "Albany."
521 *NYT*, 5/1/1871, "The Rule of Four."
522 *NYT*, 8/10/1871, "Arithmetic for the Million."
523 *NYT*, 3/16/1871, "The Trick in the Tax Levy."
524 *NYT*, 5/1/1871, "The Rule of Four."
525 *NYT*, 5/1/1871, "The Rule of Four."
526 *NYT*, 5/10/1871, "Was This an Improvement?"
527 *NYT*, 5/1/1871, "The Rule of Four."
528 *NYT*, 4/18/1871, "The Viaduct Job;" Callow, *Ring*, 186.
529 *NYT*, 7/9/1871, "The Viaduct Railway."
530 *NYT*, 10/4/1871, "What of the Viaduct?"

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- 531 *Nation*, 7/27/1871, 50.
532 *NYT*, 3/10/1871, "The Viaduct Railway;" Myers, *Tammany*, 231.
533 *NYT*, 10/4/1871, "What of the Viaduct?"
534 *NYT*, 4/1/1871, "Albany."
535 *NYT*, 4/20/1871, "The State Capital."
536 The report made by Dexter A. Hawkins, Esq., to the New York Council of Political Reform, as published in *NYT*, 4/18/1871, "The Viaduct Job."
537 Breen, *Thirty*, 326.
538 *NYT*, 3/10/1871, "The Viaduct Railway."
539 *NYT*, 5/26/1871, "The Viaduct Railway."
540 *NYT*, 7/27/1871, "The Viaduct Railroad Scheme."
541 *NYT*, 7/9/1871, "The Viaduct Railway."
542 *NYT*, 5/26/1871, "The Viaduct Railway."
543 *NYT*, 6/8/1871, "Viaduct Railroad."
544 *NYT*, 6/15/1871, "The Viaduct Railway."
545 *NYT*, 7/9/1871, "The Viaduct Railway."
546 *NYT*, 11/16/1871, "A Railway Catastrophe."
547 Ackerman, *Boss*, 145.
548 *NYT*, 6/1/1871, "A Costly Wedding."
549 *NYH*, 6/1/1871, "Maginnis—Tweed."
550 *NYT*, 6/1/1871, "A Costly Wedding."
551 *NYH*, 6/1/1871, "Maginnis—Tweed."
552 *NYT*, 6/1/1871, "A Costly Wedding."
553 *NYH*, 6/1/1871, "Maginnis—Tweed;" Lynch, *Tweed*, 359.
554 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 362.
555 Paine, *Nast*, 113-4, 130.
556 Lynch, *Tweed*, 335-6.
557 *NYT*, 9/20/1870, "The Democratic Millenium."
558 *NYT*, 12/5/1870, "The Corruption of the Press."
559 Ackerman, *Boss*, 97.
560 *NYT*, 9/23/1870, "Mr. Tilden as the Slave of the 'Ring.'"
561 Tilden, *Ring*, 9.
562 Tilden, *Ring*, 16.
563 Tilden, *Ring*, 38.
564 *NYT*, 9/22/1870, "Democratic State Convention;" Wingate, *Jl* 1875, "Episode," 131-2.
565 Breen, *Thirty*, 329; Werner, *Tammany*, 208; Callow, *Ring*, 243; Ackerman, *Boss*, 110. The *Herald* (10/28/1871, "The Democratic Host," 4), the *Tribune* (10/28/1871, "Democratic Mass Meeting"), and the *Times* (10/28/1870, "Political") the next day and Wingate five years later (*Jl* 1875, "Episode," 134-5) did not mention the presence of Tilden. The *World* (10/28/1871, "The Great Rally") did not mention Tilden among the "distinguished guests and officers" on the reviewing stand, but did list him among the vice presidents of the meeting. Neither Callow nor Ackerman, both extensive citers of sources, provided references supporting their placing of Tilden at the rally. Callow apparently confused and conflated two political gatherings: those of October 19 and October 27. In consecutive sentences, he reported the words of Tweed on the former date (*NYT*, 10/20/1870, "Political") and of Fisk on the latter (*NYT*, 10/28/1870, "Political"). Ackerman wrote that Tilden on the twenty-seventh was "keeping to himself in a corner." It seems not unreasonable to estimate an eighty-five percent chance that Tilden actually was on the platform that night.
566 *Nation*, 9/29/1871, 199.
567 *Nation*, 10/20/1871, 251.
568 *NYT*, 11/7/1870, "The Spider and the Fly."
569 *NYT*, 12/5/1870, "The Corruption of the Press;" 12/10/1870, "Tweed's Latest."
570 *NYT*, 5/1/1871, "City Bonds as an Investment."
571 *NYT*, 6/16/1871, "What Have They Done With the Money?"
572 *NYT*, 5/11/1871, "The Controller's Books."

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- 573 *NYT*, 5/23/1871, "Connolly as an Advertiser."
574 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 352.
575 Wingate, *Jl* 1875, "Episode," 141.
576 *NYT*, 9/26/1871, "The Agent of the Ring."
577 *NYT*, 6/3/1875, "An Accomplice's Story."
578 Townsend, *Bondage*, 77.
579 Wingate, *Jl* 1875, "Episode," 154.
580 Ackerman, *Boss*, 154. Per Superintendent Kelso's order (*NYT*, 7/11/1871, "The City Authorities Overawed by the Roman Catholics"), the number was four; per Burrows (*Gotham*, 1003), eight.
581 *NYT*, 7/15/1871, "The Riot." Bowen (*Oakey*, 95) put the number at 33; Lynch (*Tweed*, 367-8), at 49; Burrows (*Gotham*, 1008), at 64 or more.
582 Lynch, *Tweed*, 368. Bowen's (*Oakey*, 95) two figures were 67 and 24.
583 Burrows, *Gotham*, 1009.
584 "Two Thieves."
585 *NYT*, 7/20/1871, "Proofs of Theft."
586 *NYT*, 7/22/1871, "The Secret Accounts."
587 *NYT*, 7/24/1871, "The Tammany Frauds."
588 *NYT*, 7/24/1871, "Our Proofs of Fraud Against the City Government."
589 *NYT*, 7/21/1871, "Will it 'Blow Over?'"
590 This charge had been made against the *Times* in its anti-Ring campaign of the previous fall – *NYT*, 10/5/1870, "Public Opinion on the Tweed and Erie 'Rings.'"
591 *Nation*, 7/27/1871, "The Week," 49.
592 *Nation*, 7/27/1871, "The Week," 49.
593 Hall's card (basically, a press release) issued on 7/22/1871, excerpted in the *Tribune* (8/21/1871, "New Light on a Dark Subject," 4). Days later (*NYTr*, 8/2/1871, "Tammany's Explanation," 8), the Ring tried the tack that "the accounts of [the Controller's Office], represented by *The Times* to cover only one year, extend over a period of nearly five years; and that the money paid was for work on buildings other than the New Court-House and the armories." This was immediately rebutted and ridiculed by the *Times* (8/3/1871, "Tammany's Explanation").
594 *NYT*, 7/30/1871, "Mayor Hall Speaks."
595 *Nation*, 8/3/1871, "The Week," 65.
596 *NYT*, 7/30/1871, "Mayor Hall Speaks."
597 *NYT*, 8/5/1871, "Mr. Connolly as Secretary of the Treasury;" Mushkat, *Democracy*, 179.
598 *NYT*, 7/30/1871, "The 'Old Board of Supervisors' as a Scape-Goat."
599 *NYTr*, 7/31/1871, "Mayor Hall Speaks Again," 2.
600 *NYTr*, 7/31/1871, "That Silly Ostrich," 4.
601 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 179. During the campaigns of 1870 (e.g., 10/20/1870, "The Tammany Nominations," "Hoffman's Modesty," 6; 11/8/1870, "The Election Today," 2), the *Herald* had: extolled Hoffman and Hall; excoriated initiatives of the Congress to clamp down on electoral frauds, labeling the deputy U.S. Marshals, "the worst ruffians, black and white, which the community can supply;" and endorsed the farcical investigation of the Astor Committee as having "established the fact that the finances of the city are correctly and faithfully managed." The paper was paid \$2,000 in 1869, \$6,000 in 1870, and \$26,000 in the first eight and one half months of 1871 to print the announcements of the City (*NYT*, 10/28/1871, "The City Frauds").
602 *Post-War Diary*, 376.
603 *NYT*, 7/30/1871, "The 'Old Board of Supervisors' as a Scape-Goat."
604 *NYH*, 8/3/1871, "The Times and Our City Administration – The Disease and the Remedy," 6.
605 Lynch, *Tweed*, 363-4.
606 Paine, *Nast*, 182.
607 Morphet, *Jennings*, 112.
608 *NYT*, 7/23/1871, "Our Proofs of Fraud Against the City Government."
609 *Nation*, 7/27/1871, "The Week," 49-50.
610 *Nation*, 8/3/1871, "The Week," 65.

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- 611 Both contemporaries and later historians (e.g., Lynch, *Tweed*, 365; Ackerman, *Boss*, 173) have assumed that the paper voiced his thoughts and emotions.
- 612 *NYT*, 8/31/1871, “The State Committee and the State Convention.”
- 613 *NYTr*, 7/21/1871, “Is It Press or City Infamy?” 4.
- 614 *NYTr*, 7/24/1871, “Our City’s Finances,” 4.
- 615 It would though – perhaps because of the tardiness of its conversion – still be attacked by the *Times* (8/3/1871, “Tammany’s Explanation”) and drawn by Nast as a Ring apologist.
- 616 *NYTr*, 8/21/1871, “The Accounts—The Times,” 4.
- 617 *NYTr*, 7/29/1871, “The City’s Accounts,” 4. Tilden (*Ring*, 37) would later write that he had become convinced of the truth of the *Times*’ charges “by the futility of the answers on behalf of the city officers and by cross-examining a financial gentleman.”
- 618 “The Secret Accounts,” 2. The *Nation* (7/27/1871, “The Week”) corroborated.
- 619 *NYT*, 7/26/1871, “Is Public Spirit Alive or Dead?”
- 620 *NYTr*, 8/4/1871, “The Anti-Tammany Meeting,” 1.
- 621 “The End Approaching.” The thousand-odd, the *Tribune* (7/29/1871, “Resistance to Tammany,” 1) said, signed an agreement circulated on Wall Street on the twenty-eighth.
- 622 *NYT*, 7/27/1871, “Minor Topics.”
- 623 *NYT*, 8/31/1871, untitled article, 4.
- 624 Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 80.
- 625 *NYH*, 8/3/1871, “The Times and Our City Administration—The Disease and the Remedy,” 6.
- 626 Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 80.
- 627 *NYT*, 8/8/1871, “Tammany Tactics.”
- 628 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 320, 335, 348, 349.
- 629 *NYT*, 8/8/1871, “The Sham Accounts.”
- 630 *NYH*, 8/6/1871, “The Finance Fuss,” 3.
- 631 *NYT*, 8/10/1871, “Arithmetic for the Million.”
- 632 “The Week,” 97.
- 633 *NYTr*, 8/21/1871, “New Light on a Dark Subject,” 4.
- 634 *NYT*, 8/17/1871, “Some More Respectable Citizens.”
- 635 *NYT*, 8/24/1871, “Another Damaging Defense.”
- 636 *NYT*, 8/28/1871, “The Suit Against the Times.”
- 637 *NYT*, 8/29/1871, “Connolly’s Figures.”
- 638 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 377.
- 639 *NYT*, 8/24/1871, untitled editorial, 4.
- 640 *NYT*, 8/25/1871, “Freedom of the Press.”
- 641 *NYT*, 8/25/1871, “Freedom of the Press;” *NYT*, 8/28/1871, “The Suit Against the Times.”
- 642 Werner, *Tammany*, 214.
- 643 *NYT*, 8/28/1871, “The Story of the Accounts.”
- 644 *Nation*, 8/31/1871, “The Week.”
- 645 *NYT*, 8/29/1871, “The Germans and the Tammany Ring.”
- 646 *NYT*, 9/7/1871, “The Great Citizens’ Meeting.”
- 647 Holzer, *Lincoln*.
- 648 On the evening of Lincoln’s speech, there had been 1,800 seats – about a quarter empty (Holzer, *Lincoln*, 105).
- 649 *NYT*, 9/5/1871, “The People’s Voice” – except where otherwise noted, the source of all quotations in this section.
- 650 *NYTr* (9/5/1871, “The People’s Voice”).
- 651 *NYT*, 9/5/1871, “The People’s Voice.” The *Tribune* (9/5/1871, “The People’s Voice”) praised the police for preventing disruptions and commended Tammany, which controlled the force, for its newfound wisdom in allowing the meeting to proceed in orderly fashion. Tweed had been thought to have used the police effectively against the Young Democrats in the spring of 1870 (Callow, *Ring*, 231-2). Whether he had personally directed the officers to behave as they did on September 4, 1871 is not known.
- 652 *NYH*, 9/5/1871, “Weather Report,” 10.
- 653 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 381-2.

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- 654 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 382.
- 655 Furer, *Havemeyer*, 131.
- 656 The newspaper accounts had differences. The *Times* and *Tribune* reported that the proceedings were opened at 8:00 by James B. M. Brown, who read the notice that had called the meeting and nominated Havemeyer to chair it; the *Sun* (9/5/1871, "Saints Lashing Sinners") had Henry G. Stebbins opening the meeting; the *Herald* (9/5/1871, "Anti-Tammany") reported that Havemeyer had called it to order at 7:45. Whereas the *Times* discerned "{s}o much enthusiasm, such unanimity of sentiment," the *Herald* sensed "beyond a crowded hall and occasional spurts of applause... there was very little enthusiasm manifested."
- 657 The *Sun* (9/5/1871, "Saints Lashing Sinners") confirmed the calls for a speech by Jones – which Havemeyer, sticking to the program, would not let him make.
- 658 Roosevelt, Robert, "Democracy."
- 659 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 81.
- 660 *Nation*, 9/7/1871, "The Week," 153.
- 661 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 373.
- 662 *NYT*, 11/3/1871, "The Work of the Seventy."
- 663 Lynch, *Tweed*, 374.
- 664 *NYT*, 9/8/1871, "Action at Last."
- 665 *NYS*, 9/9/1871, "Talk with the Magnates;" *NYT*, 9/10/1871, "Will Connolly and Tweed Resign?"
- 666 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
- 667 Lynch (*Tweed*, 374-5) and Allen (*Tiger*, 127-8) suggested that Tilden held out to Barnard the Democratic gubernatorial nomination as a reward for the ruling. Wingate (1876, "Episode," 374) thought that Barnard was acting at Sweeny's behest in a move directed at Connolly.
- 668 Flick, *Tilden*, 217; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 188.
- 669 Tilden, *Ring*, 38-41.
- 670 *NYTr*, 8/28/1871, "Repudiating Tammany," 5.
- 671 Flick, *Tilden*, 214. Tilden did join the Committee one year later.
- 672 *NYTr*, 9/22/1871, "Political," 5. Tilden devoted much of the communication to blaming Republicans for the corruption. The only persons criticized by name were the Republicans William Seward and Thurlow Weed.
- 673 It remains unclear what coalitions, if any, were formed among the beleaguered Ringsters. The *Times* on 9/16/1871 ("The Innocent Peter B. Sweeny") thought that Hall and Sweeny were seeking "to save themselves by sacrificing CONNOLLY and TWEED." O'Brien (*NYS*, 9/13/1871, "The Doom of the Ring"), The *Nation* (9/14/1871, 169) and Wingate (1876, "Episode," 373) concurred. The *Times* was informed that Hoffman wanted to keep Sweeny in good standing, "although he has no objections to kick HALL, TWEED, and CONNOLLY overboard."
- 674 Foord, *Green*, 97.
- 675 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 83.
- 676 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 84.
- 677 *NYTr*, 9/23/1871, "The Democratic War on Tammany," 1, 4; 10/4/1871, "Political," 4.
- 678 Callow, *Ring*, 274.
- 679 *NYH*, 9/23/1871, "'The Boss'" on the Stump," 3.
- 680 *NYTr*, 10/6/1871, "The Rochester Convention," 1.
- 681 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 384; Werner, *Tammany*, 230; Mushkat, *Democracy*, 184; Allen, *Tiger*, 132; McCullough, *Bridge*, 256.
- 682 Alexander, *Political*, 271.
- 683 *NYT*, 10/5/1871.
- 684 10/6/1871, "The Rochester Convention," 1.
- 685 *Nation*, 10/12/1871, 236. The journalistic extremes concurred in seeing Tweed as the victor: those under his thumb and the Republican press cited here (perhaps reflecting incentive to paint the Democracy as still beholden to the Ring). The intermediate *Herald* presented a mixed picture: calling Tweed's initial gambit a "MASTER STROKE" (10/5/1871, "The Democracy," 4); a day later, quoting both Tilden and Tweed as claiming victory (10/6/1871, "The Democracy," 4); and editorializing in the same issue (10/6/1871, "The New York Democracy on Their 'New Departure,'" 6) that Tweed was "{p}olitically... dead as Julius Caesar" and Tammany Hall "destroyed and superseded."

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- 686 *NYH*, 10/6/1871, "The Democracy," 4.
687 Alexander, *Political*, 271-2.
688 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 385.
689 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 384; Mushkat, *Democracy*, 184.
690 Alexander, *Political*, 273-4.
691 *NYT*, 10/18/1871, "Gov. Hoffman Speaks."
692 *Nation*, 11/9/1871, 297.
693 *NYT*, 10/18/1871, "Gov. Hoffman on the Side of Reform;" Lynch, *Tweed*, 376.
694 Tilden, "Figures," in Bigelow, *Writings*, 505-14; Flick, *Tilden*, 221; Allen, *Tiger*, 131.
695 *NYT*, 10/26/1871, "Tweed's Guilt;" *NYT*, 10/28/1871, "Tweed's Arrest;" Lynch, *Tweed*, 381.
696 Ackerman, *Boss*, 247.
697 Lynch, *Tweed*, 382.
698 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 198.
699 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 197.
700 *NYT*, 10/28/1871, "The City Frauds."
701 Chambers, *New York*, 36-7.
702 Wingate (1876, "Episode," 382) thought this occurred in part because "District Attorney Garvin, a professional and personal ally of the Mayor, conducted the examination, and was successful in so far as he compelled most of the witnesses to admit that they had no actual 'knowledge' of Hall's culpability."
703 *NYT*, 3/8/1872, "Face to Face."
704 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 216.
705 Bowen, *Oakey*, 181; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 222.
706 Ackerman, *Boss*, 262.
707 Tilden, "Figures," in Bigelow, *Writings*, 514.
708 *NYT*, 11/3/1871, "Another Grand Rally."
709 *NYT*, 1/31/1873, "Given to the Jury."
710 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 347.
711 *NYT*, 1/31/1873, "Given to the Jury."
712 *NYT*, 1/31/1873, "Given to the Jury."
713 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 237.
714 Lynch, *Tweed*, 393.
715 *NYT*, 11/6/1870, "Registry Frauds."
716 Lynch, *Tweed*, 393. Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 234) asserted evidence that "Davis had been hand-picked by [prosecutor Wheeler H.] Peckham and Tilden."
717 Alexander, *Political*, 166.
718 *NYT*, 1/30/1873, "Tweed's Trial Ended."
719 *NYT*, 1/30/1873, "Tweed's Trial Ended."
720 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 247.
721 *NYT*, 1/31/1873, "Given to the Jury."
722 *NYT*, 1/31/1873, "Given to the Jury."
723 *NYT*, 1/31/1873, "Given to the Jury."
724 *NYT*, 1/31/1873, "Given to the Jury."
725 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 249.
726 Clinton, *Trials*, 442.
727 Callow, *Ring*, 288.
728 Breen, *Thirty*, 442; Lynch, *Tweed*, 394.
729 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 412.
730 Clinton, *Trials*, 447.
731 Clinton, *Trials*, 451.
732 Clinton, *Trials*, 450.
733 Clinton, *Trials*, 444.
734 Clinton, *Trials*, 444.
735 Ackerman, *Boss*, 273.
736 Clinton, *Trials*, 452.

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- 737 *NYT*, 11/19/1873, "Tweed Trial Closed." Why, in the prosecution of Hall the next month, Garvey again testified (*NYT*, 12/24/1873, "Trial of Ex-Mayor Hall") is not known.
- 738 *NYT*, 11/18/1873, "The Ring Frauds."
- 739 *NYT*, 11/19/1873, "Tweed Trial Closed."
- 740 *NYT*, 11/19/1873, "Tweed Trial Closed."
- 741 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 256.
- 742 *NYT*, 11/30/1873, "William M. Tweed."
- 743 *NYT*, 12/3/1873, "Tweed at the Penitentiary."
- 744 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 271-2.
- 745 Ackerman, *Boss*, 288.
- 746 Ackerman, *Boss*, 306-7.
- 747 Bigelow, *Letters*, 2:464-5.
- 748 Callow, *Ring*, 297.
- 749 *NYT*, 2/14/1878, "New Judgments Against Tweed;" *NYT*, 2/21/1878, "Tweed's Plans Fail."
- 750 *NYS*, 4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed."
- 751 Townsend, *Bondage*, 122-51.
- 752 *NYT*, 1/5/1878, "Report on Ring Frauds."
- 753 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks" – the source of this paragraph. The nearly-full-page article struck dissonant chords in its sub-headlines: "The Sage of Ludlow Shakes Out the Reefs of His Inwardness: SERENE SELF-ACCUSATIONS: Quaint and Shrewd Estimates of the Men of His Time."
- 754 *The Times* (10/27/1877, "A Retired Statesman") synopsised the *Herald's* article, characterizing it as the "ante-mortem reflections" of the: "retired statesman," "aged scamp," "moldy old man in Ludlow-street," "sage of the cell," and "aged rat."
- 755 Conflicting reports were made of Tweed's weight: Callow (*Ring*, 297) stated that, as the Aldermanic investigation closed, it had dropped to 160 pounds; the *Times* (4/13/1878, "Death of Wm. M. Tweed") quoted the family undertaker that the corpse weighed over 300.
- 756 The coroner's jury ascribed the death to pericarditis, complicated by pneumonia and kidney disease (*NYS*, 4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed").
- 757 *NYT*, 4/18/1878, "Wm. M. Tweed's Funeral" – mainly; and *NYH*, 4/18/1878, "William M. Tweed's Funeral" – which, unlike the *Times*, placed Kelly at the funeral and reported that "{n}ot very many spectators were in waiting at the grave."
- 758 Wingate, *Jl* 1875, "Episode," 119.
- 759 Myers, *Tammany*, 248.
- 760 Aldermen, *Report*, 27.
- 761 Aldermen, *Report*, 27.
- 762 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 384.
- 763 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 260-1.
- 764 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 272-3.
- 765 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 271.
- 766 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 261.
- 767 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 234; Ackerman, *Boss*, 286-7.
- 768 John Bigelow, "Some Recollections of Charles O'Connor," *The Century*, 29:5 (Mr, 1885), 734, quoting O'Connor. Barnard, citing the central role played by Tilden, petitioned unsuccessfully for his exclusion from the legislative committee considering his impeachment (*NYT*, 2/25/1872, "Our Corrupt Judges").
- 769 *NYT*, 5/2/1872, "Our Corrupt Judges."
- 770 *NYT*, 5/3/1872, "Albany. The Impeachment of Judge George G. Barnard."
- 771 *NYT*, 8/20/1872, "Exit Barnard."
- 772 *NYT*, 8/20/1872, "Exit Barnard."
- 773 Per http://mssa.library.yale.edu/obituary_record/1859_1924/1878-79.pdf, aged 50; per *NYT*, 4/28/1879, "Ex-Judge Barnard Dead," "about 55."
- 774 *NYT*, 7/3/1872, "Exit McCunn."
- 775 *NYT*, 7/7/1872, "Obituary. Judge John H. McCunn."

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- 776 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 154.
777 *NYT*, 1/6/1871, "The 'Favorite Son' of New-York."
778 Hudson, *Random*, 33.
779 *NYT*, 1/6/1871, "The 'Favorite Son' of New-York."
780 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 150, 158.
781 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 175.
782 *NYT*, 4/24/1871, "The Defunct Legislature."
783 *NYT*, 5/30/1871, "Albany."
784 *NYT*, 5/2/1871, "Will Gov. Hoffman Do It?"; *NYT*, 5/13/1871, "The Bill for Gagging the Press..."
785 *NYT*, 5/26/1871, "The Code of Procedure..."
786 *NYT*, 5/2/1871, "Will Gov. Hoffman Do It?"
787 *NYT*, 12/12/1871, "The Organization of Swindling."
788 Tilden, *Ring*, 30.
789 *NYT*, 5/10/1871, "Was This an Improvement?"
790 *NYT*, 5/13/1871, "The Bill for Gagging the Press..."
791 *NYT*, 12/12/1871, "The Organization of Swindling."
792 *NYT*, 5/11/1871, "The Code of Procedure;" *NYT*, 5/13/1871, "The Bill for Gagging the Press..."
793 *NYT*, 5/13/1871, "The Bill for Gagging the Press..."
794 *NYT*, 5/30/1871, "Albany."
795 *NYT*, 12/12/1871, "The Organization of Swindling."
796 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 172-4.
797 *NYT*, 7/5/1871, "The Tammany Society;" Mushkat, *Democracy*, 172-4.
798 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 175-8.
799 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 182.
800 *NYT*, 9/30/1871, "Official Responsibility—Remarks of Gov. Hoffman."
801 *NYT*, 12/6/1871, "Gov. Hoffman on the Political Situation."
802 *NYT*, 5/29/1872, "City Reform."
803 *NYT*, 6/4/1872, "Hoffman's Guilt;" 6/26/1872, "Hoffman and the City Frauds."
804 *NYT*, 6/27/1872, "The Proofs Against Hoffman."
805 *NYT*, 6/25/1872, "The Reorganization of the Ring."
806 *NYT*, 8/23/1872, "Gov. Hoffman Declines."
807 *NYT*, 9/24/1872, "The Position of Gov. Curtin."
808 *NYT*, 3/25/1888, "Death of Ex-Gov. Hoffman."
809 *NYT*, 10/26/1870, "Who Wants Gov. Hoffman Re-Elected?"
810 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
811 Flick, *Tilden*, 112.
812 Lynch, *Tweed*, 283.
813 Flick, *Tilden*, 195; Hirsch, "Light," 275.
814 *NYT*, 7/7/1876, "Tilden and Tweed;" Hirsch, "Light," 275. Tilden, in 1873 (*Ring* Appendix, 17), denied ever having "asked or accepted any appointment for a friend."
815 Flick, *Tilden*, 195.
816 Flick, *Tilden*, 203. Callow (*Ring*, 219) put the figure at \$20,000. Tilden swore under oath in 1873 before an investigating committee of the Legislature that he had received no more than \$10,000 from Erie. The records of Erie were inconsistent: one account book indicating that Tilden had received \$10,000; another \$20,000 (*NYT*, 4/2/1873, "The Affairs of Erie;" *NYT*, 4/3/1873, "The Erie Inquiry").
817 Flick, *Tilden*, 203.
818 *NYT*, 9/23/1869, "The Conventions;" Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 146-7.
819 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 130.
820 *NYH*, 11/26/1869, "The Democratic Policy," 5. Sweeny also thought then that the newly elected Democratic legislature would repeal New York's approval of the Fifteenth Amendment (which he opposed for giving Congress a pretext to intervene in local balloting (*NYT*, 11/30/1869, "The Fifteenth Amendment as Expounded by Mr. Sweeny")).
821 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 244.
822 *NYT*, 7/7/1876, "Tilden and Tweed;" Ackerman, *Boss*, 302.

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- 823 *NYT*, 8/23/1876, "The Democratic Ticket."
824 Paine, *Nast*, 333-5.
825 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
826 Morris, *Fraud*, 83.
827 Morris, *Fraud*, 120-1.
828 Flick, *Tilden*, 314; Morris, *Fraud*, 144-5.
829 Flick, *Tilden*, 310-1.
830 Flick, *Tilden*, 311. Hayes did not personally press the issue – perhaps, it has been speculated, because of his own discovery that he had neglected to file returns in 1868 and 1869 (Morris, *Fraud*, 139).
831 Morris, *Fraud*, 141-2.
832 Morris, *Fraud*, 5.
833 *NYT*, 4/13/1878, "Death of Wm. M. Tweed." The *Sun* (4/13/1878, "William Marcy Tweed") rendered this as: "Well, Tilden and Fairchild have killed me. I hope they are satisfied now."
834 E.g., Boorstin, *History*; Risjord, *History*.
835 Mushkat, *Tammany*, 359.
836 *NYT*, 11/9/1864, "The Election in the City."
837 Mushkat, *Tammany*, 363.
838 Ackerman, *Boss*, 211, 220.
839 Mushkat, *Tammany*, 347.
840 *NYT*, 7/1/1868, "The Democratic Convention."
841 Flick, *Tilden*, 175.
842 Myers, *Tammany*, 216.
843 *NYT*, 7/10/1868, "The Democratic Convention," 8 ; Flick, *Tilden*, 177.
844 "Democratic Party Platform of 1868," available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29579> .
845 *NYTr*, 8/28/1871, "Repudiating Tammany," 5.
846 Alexander, *Political*, 271-2.
847 Williams, *Greeley*, 303.
848 Parton, "Government," 462-3.
849 E.g., writing on 10/28/1870 ("Democratic Mass Meeting") of the purses of the "Ring," "which are plethoric with the people's money."
850 *NYT*, 6/2/1872, "Our 'Honest Uncle's' Tammany Partnership."
851 *NYT*, 9/20/1872, "The Tribune and the Ring Suits."
852 *NYT*, 9/5/1872, "The Louisville Convention."
853 Williams, *Greeley*, 305-6.
854 Williams, *Greeley*, 304.
855 Mushkat, *Wood*, 192.
856 *NYTr*, 8/22/1871, "An Appeal to the Republicans of Our State," 4.
857 *NYT*, 10/21/1870, untitled article, 4.
858 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 79.
859 Adams, *Erie*, 69.
860 *NYT*, 10/26/1870, "Who Wants Gov. Hoffman Re-Elected?"
861 Fisk's nerve in the arenas of business and justice (where he could not but be bucked up in having Gould at his side) did not extend to matters military. A fancier of gaudy uniforms and heroic poses, Fisk in 1870 was elected Colonel of the Ninth Regiment of the National Guard. Splendid on horseback, he led it on July 12, 1871 in escorting the parading Orangemen. When the first shots were fired, Colonel Fisk dismounted and fled into a saloon, leaving his regiment to continue on without him. After exiting by a back door, he clambered over fences to reach a house where he could change out of his uniform. From there, he headed to the docks, then crossed the Hudson to New Jersey on a tugboat of the Erie (Lynch, *Tweed*, 367-8).
862 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 116.
863 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 122.

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- 864 Klein, *Gould*, 122-4.
865 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 123.
866 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 125; Klein, *Gould*, 132-3.
867 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
868 Minnigerode, *Rich Men*, 187.
869 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 77.
870 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 82; Stiles, *Tycoon*, 508-9. The account given is consistent with both sources – between which, however, there were discrepancies. Per O'Connor: Vanderbilt initiated the rate war; the numbers pertained to transport between Buffalo and New York City; and Vanderbilt's reduction of the rate to \$1 was out of "exasperation" after both lines had cut to \$25. Stiles: had Gould and Fisk starting the squabble; said that the same numbers that O'Connor gave for Buffalo-NYC were instead for Chicago-NYC; and related that the Erie had first announced, as a trap, its dropping of its rate to \$1, which "forced the Central to follow suit."
871 Stiles, *Tycoon*, 525.
872 O'Connor, *Gould's*, 83.
873 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."
874 *NYT*, 4/17/1873, "Who is Responsible for the Charter?"
875 *NYT*, 5/1/1873, "The First Duty Under the Charter."
876 *NYT*, 4/20/1873, "The Committee of Seventy and the Charter."
877 *NYT*, 4/18/1873, "The Charter."
878 *NYT*, 4/19/1873, "The Charter;" *NYT*, 5/6/1873, "Charter Amending by Fraud."
879 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 217.
880 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 397.
881 *NYT*, 11/13/1873, "Mr. Tweed on the Democratic Victory."
882 Myers, *Tammany*, 258.
883 Myers, *Tammany*, 257.
884 Mushkat, *Wood*, 122, 134.
885 Werner, *Tammany*, 291-3.
886 *North American Review*, O, 1876, untitled editorial, 418-425 – the source of all quotations in this section.
887 P. 419.
888 P. 420.
889 P. 420-1.
890 P. 418-9.
891 Werner (*Tammany*, 300-1) thought that this incident had not tarnished Tammany, in that no evidence had surfaced implicating Kelly or his lieutenants or otherwise suggesting the direct involvement of the Hall. Myers (*Tammany*, 264) had noted that all but one of Tammany's Aldermen were suspected of participation and that Kelly (p. 265) had denied renomination to Wigwam Aldermen who had voted for the briber's franchise.
892 Roosevelt, Theodore, "Machine," 81.
893 Roosevelt, Theodore, "Machine," 82.
894 Myers, *Tammany*, 266.
895 Low, "American."
896 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88 – the source of all quotations in this paragraph.
897 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 51.
898 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 67.
899 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 51. This passage was identical in the editions of 1895 and 1910. In the first edition of 1888: "twenty-five years" was "twenty years" – implying a comparison with 1868, versus 1870 in 1895 and 1885 in 1910; "still permitted" had been "less and less permitted;" and the final clause ("yet the mischief... increases") was not included.
900 Bryce (*American*, Ch. 88) would later agree: "Three fourths or more of ["the mass of citizens"] paid little or nothing in the way of direct taxes and did not realize that the increase of civil burdens would ultimately fall upon them as well as upon the rich."

901 The bi-partisan investigating Aldermen of 1877 and 1878 would similarly conclude (*NYT*, 1/5/ 1878, "Report on Ring Frauds.") that "none of these frauds could have been perpetrated without the corrupt procurement of special legislation at Albany relating to our city affairs" – with historian Leo Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 335) concurring. The *Times* in 1868 (12/2/1868, "The Election Yesterday and the City Government") had had the opposite view: "the only authority in this City which gives us anything like decent government... is that which emanates from the several Commissions created by the State to administer certain branches of the City Government."

902 The *Times* had, in March 1867 (3/9/1867, "City Government"), argued that "{u}niversal suffrage is good in theory... but in city governments it has proved an utter failure... In all the great cities where the population is mixed... experience shows that good government by universal suffrage is impracticable... The history of New-York City proves this. All of its government that rests upon suffrage is worse than a failure, it is a nuisance. It is corrupt, inefficient, wasteful and scandalous." George Templeton Strong (*Post-War Diary*, 396) was of like mind: "at least in crowded cities, universal suffrage leads straight to fraud and anarchy;" and the popular election of judges (*Post-War Diary*, 245) to judicial corruption.

903 *NYT*, 9/25/1871, "The Committee of Seventy." Tilden also (*Ring*, 13) alluded to "the fearful decay of civic morals incident to the fluctuating values of paper money and civil war."

904 Earlier in the evening, former Mayor Havemeyer had invoked the same saying, which likely originated with John Philpot Curran in 1790 (Bartlett, *Quotations*, 366b) and has also been attributed to Jefferson and Jackson. It had been a rallying cry in the reform movement of 1853 (*NYT*, 11/1/1853, "Municipal Reform"). Bryce (*American*, Ch. 101) would later say of it that "{n}o maxim was more popular."

905 Tilden, *Ring*, 5.

906 Tilden, *Ring*, 11.

907 Tilden, *Ring*, 28.

908 Tilden, *Ring*, 29.

909 Tilden, *Ring*, 11.

910 Tilden, *Ring*, 14.

911 Tilden, *Ring*, 13.

912 Tilden, *Ring*, 18-9.

913 Tilden, *Ring*, 38-41.

914 Tilden, *Ring*, 42-4.

915 *NYT*, 2/4/1873, "History According to Mr. Tilden."

916 Bigelow, *Letters*, 1:288.

917 Wingate, JI, 1874, "Episode," 114.

918 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 378.

919 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 379.

920 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 396.

921 Wingate, JI 1875, "Episode," 114.

922 *North American Review*, O, 1876, untitled editorial, 419.

923 "What Are You Going to Do about It?," 125.

924 8/31/1871, "The Week," 137.

925 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 360.

926 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 377.

927 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 367.

928 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 362.

929 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 376.

930 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 377-8.

931 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 377.

932 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 152.

933 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 371.

934 This partiality may have been due in part to that of Wingate's editor, Henry Adams – a long-standing admirer and supporter of Tilden. Adams, in 1876, violated the *Review's* policy of nonpartisanship by endorsing Tilden for President, which contributed to the ending of his editorship (Wills, *Adams*, 80-1).

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- 935 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 368.
936 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 368; *NYTr*, 9/22/1871, "Political," 5.
937 Wingate, JI 1875, "Episode," 127.
938 Wingate, JI 1875, "Episode," 130-1.
939 Wingate, JI 1875, "Episode," 131.
940 Bryce, *American*, Publisher's Note. The edition primarily referenced here is that of 123 chapters published in Indianapolis in 1995 by the Liberty Fund and currently Internet-accessible.
941 McDowell, "Introduction."
942 McDowell, "Introduction."
943 Wilson, "Review."
944 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 67.
945 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 62.
946 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88.
947 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88.
948 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 51.
949 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 51.
950 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 62.
951 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 63.
952 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 68.
953 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 63.
954 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 63.
955 Myers, *Tammany*, v.
956 Myers, *Tammany*, x-xi.
957 Myers, *Tammany*, xiii; *NYT*, 10/28/1917, "Tammany's Evil Ways Are Told in a New History."
958 Myers, *Tammany*, 211.
959 Myers, *Tammany*, vi.
960 Lynch, *Tweed*, 292.
961 Lynch, *Tweed*, 339.
962 Lynch, *Tweed*, 340.
963 Lynch, *Tweed*, 340.
964 Lynch, *Tweed*, 332.
965 Lynch, *Tweed*, 341.
966 Lynch, *Tweed*, 401-2.
967 Lynch, *Tweed*, 413.
968 Lynch, *Tweed*, 290.
969 Lynch, *Tweed*, 405.
970 Lynch, *Tweed*, 21.
971 Lynch, *Tweed*, 25. Lynch (25-6) followed this assertion not with any argument for Tweed's exceptionality, but only with: "He humored the prejudices of the mob when forced to recognize them," giving immigrants, especially Germans, public offices.
972 Thompson, *NYT*, 10/2/1927, "In the Golden Age of Graft."
973 Thompson, *NYT*, 4/22/1928, "The History of Tammany Hall."
974 E.g., *NYT*, 8/20/1828, "Owen Again Assails Smith and Tammany."
975 Werner, *Tammany*, 255.
976 Myers, *Tammany*, 209.
977 Werner, *Tammany*, 282.
978 Werner, *Tammany*, 276. Werner was here quoting and concurring with Dr. Talcott Williams.
979 Werner, *Tammany*, 218.
980 Werner, *Tammany*, 263.
981 Werner, *Tammany*, xiii.
982 Werner, *Tammany*, 228.
983 Werner, *Tammany*, viii.
984 Werner, *Tammany*, xi.

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- 985 Werner, *Tammany*, xv. Werner's severity toward the Hall fluctuated. He considered (70) the corruption of the early 1850s the "direct result of the disreputable character of the men nominated to public office by the leaders of Tammany" but (301) did not blame the Hall or Kelly for the Broadway Railway bribery of many Tammany Aldermen in the 1880s.
- 986 Olvany, "Tammany," 256.
- 987 Lynch, "Tammany's," 259.
- 988 Lynch, "Tammany," 261.
- 989 *NYT*, 10/12/1947, "Up in Central Park' Reshaped for the Camera."
- 990 *NYT*, 5/27/1948, "At Loew's Criterion."
- 991 *NYT*, 10/12/1947, "Up in Central Park' Reshaped for the Camera."
- 992 *NYT*, 5/27/1948, "At Loew's Criterion."
- 993 Pratt, "Boss," 399.
- 994 Pratt, "Boss," 409.
- 995 Pratt, "Boss," 410. Werner (*Tammany*, 194), as Pratt acknowledged, had reported these figures.
- 996 Pratt, "Boss," 411.
- 997 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, xiv.
- 998 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 4.
- 999 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 58.
- 1000 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 11.
- 1001 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 69.
- 1002 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 67.
- 1003 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 70.
- 1004 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 130.
- 1005 Flick, *Tilden*, 200.
- 1006 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 59-75.
- 1007 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 87.
- 1008 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 97.
- 1009 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 102.
- 1010 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 108.
- 1011 Scott, "Corruption," 1155.
- 1012 Brown, "Tweed's," 376; Still, "Tweed's," 708.
- 1013 McKean, "Tweed's," 199.
- 1014 Callow, *Ring*, vii. This passage is from the preface, date-lined Santa Barbara; May, 1966. The book is copyrighted 1965, 1966. Ackerman (*Boss*, 366) thus had a basis for citing it as a 1965 work. Six of the reviewers referenced here gave its date as 1966; the other two gave no date.
- 1015 Callow, *Ring*, 3.
- 1016 Callow, *Ring*, 4.
- 1017 Callow, *Ring*, 10.
- 1018 Callow, *Ring*, 283, 290.
- 1019 Callow, *Ring*, 293.
- 1020 Callow, *Ring*, 47.
- 1021 Callow, *Ring*, 5.
- 1022 Callow, *Ring*, 4.
- 1023 Callow, *Ring*, 264.
- 1024 Callow, *Ring*, 69.
- 1025 Callow, *Ring*, 264.
- 1026 Callow, *Ring*, 47.
- 1027 Callow, *Ring*, 267.
- 1028 Callow, *Ring*, 299.
- 1029 Callow, *Ring*, 299-300.
- 1030 Downey, "Ring," 160; Freidel, "Ring;" Heffner, *NYT*, 1/1/1967, "Orgy of Dishonesty;" Hoogenboom, "Ring," 99-100; Neary, "Ring," 767-8; Peel, "Ring," 1140-1.
- 1031 Downey, "Ring," 159, 160.
- 1032 Freidel, "Ring."

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- 1033 *NYT*, 1/1/1867, "Orgy of Dishonesty;" Hoogenboom, "Ring."
1034 Downey, "Ring," 160.
1035 Renek, "Dynasty," 36.
1036 Mandelbaum, "Ring."
1037 "Dynasty," 35.
1038 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, xiii.
1039 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, xviii.
1040 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 171.
1041 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, xix.
1042 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 320.
1043 Schumach, *NYT*, 10/17/1976, "Book Finds 'Boss' Tweed a Much-Maligned Character."
1044 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 336.
1045 For instance, Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 361; Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88; Lynch, *Tweed*, 13; Flick, *Tilden*, 192; Bowen, *Oakey*, 38; Callow, *Ring*, 3; and Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 66.
1046 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 5. Tilden (*NYTr*, 9/22/1871, "Political," 5), for one, did not buy into the connotation of corruption for the name. To him, Marcy ranked with Martin Van Buren and two others as pillars over a quarter century (1821 to 1846) of Democratic State rule, during which "corruption, always condemned and punished by them, was almost unknown."
1047 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 354.
1048 "A Costly Wedding."
1049 *NYH*, 4/13/1878, "Escaped Forever."
1050 Lynch, *Tweed*, 58.
1051 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 354.
1052 For instance, Allen (*Tiger*, 83), Burrows (*Gotham*, 823), and Ackerman (*Boss*, 2).
1053 E.g., *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition*. 2000; *The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition*. 2001; Morphet, *Jennings* (2001), 107; Thomas Keneally, *American Scoundrel* (NY: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2002), 336; Morris, *Fraud*, 99.
1054 Katz, Irving, *Journal of American History*, 65:2 (S, 1978): 493-4; Cohen, Ira, *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 62(Aut., 1978): 71-2.
1055 Mushkat, Jerome, *American Historical Review*, 82:4 (O, 1977): 1085; Shefter, Martin, *American Political Science Review*, 72:3 (S, 1978): 1062-3.
1056 Ebner, Michael H., "Urban Government in America: 1776-1876," *Journal of Urban History*, 5 (Au, 1979): 511-20; Hoogenboom, "White;" Richardson, James F., *Civil War History*, 23 (Je, 1977): 185-7.
1057 Hoogenboom, "White," 361-2.
1058 Hoogenboom, "White," 360.
1059 Hoogenboom, "White," 361.
1060 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, xv.
1061 Hoogenboom, "White," 366.
1062 Risjord, *History*, 337-8.
1063 Boorstin, *History*, 376-7.
1064 King, *People*, 402.
1065 Doctorow, *Waterworks*, 10.
1066 Doctorow, *Waterworks*, 10-1.
1067 Doctorow, *Waterworks*, 11.
1068 Doctorow, *Waterworks*, 146.
1069 Doctorow, *Waterworks*, 147.
1070 Doctorow, *Waterworks*, 85.
1071 Doctorow, *Waterworks*, 174.
1072 Bennett, *NYT*, 11/20/1953, "City Asked to Raze Tweed Landmark;" *NYT*, 10/9/1974, "Tweed Courthouse Put On National Register."
1073 Callow, *Ring*, 198.
1074 Dunlap, *NYT*, 3/9/2001, "The Grandeur That Graft Built;" Purnick, *NYT*, 12/24/2001, "Boss Tweed And Giuliani? Follow Closely."
1075 Purnick, *NYT*, 12/24/2001, "Boss Tweed And Giuliani? Follow Closely."

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- 1076 The dalliance with the nativists was set four years after Callow (*Ring*, 16) judged that the historical Tweed had irrevocably cast his political lot with the immigrants, although others (e.g., Anbinder, “Nativist,” 115-6) have found evidence of later nativist inclinations).
- 1077 Hamill, *Forever*, book jacket.
- 1078 *NYS*, 4/13/1878, “William Marcy Tweed.”
- 1079 Hamill, *Forever*, 374.
- 1080 Hamill, *Forever*, 378.
- 1081 Hamill, *Forever*, 378.
- 1082 Ackerman, *Boss*, 5. Tweed had indeed, in the sense that his wife and two sons were then traveling pseudonymously in Europe and would not return for his funeral, been “abandoned.” The abandonment, however, was far from total. Tweed’s daughter Josephine – who, alone of his children, still lived in the City – visited him during his final illness and she and her sisters grieved movingly at his funeral. Tweed himself, six months earlier (*NYH*, 10/26/1877, “Tweed Talks”), had said that he had felt “abandoned” by all “except my family and a very few friends.”
- 1083 Ackerman, *Boss*, 7.
- 1084 Ackerman, *Boss*, 41.
- 1085 Ackerman, *Boss*, 53.
- 1086 Ackerman, *Boss*, 45; quoting Flick, *Tilden*, 108.
- 1087 Ackerman, *Boss*, 47.
- 1088 Ackerman, *Boss*, 56-7.
- 1089 Ackerman, *Boss*, 356.
- 1090 Ackerman, *Boss*, 53. Ackerman also (p. 41) credited “local judges like Barnard,” Tweed’s leading judicial tool, with having “processed 41,112 new citizenships in the weeks before that year’s election... almost a third of all the votes cast in New York City that year.”
- 1091 Ackerman, *Boss*, 8.
- 1092 Ackerman, *Boss*, 362.
- 1093 Ackerman, *Boss*, 45.
- 1094 Ackerman, *Boss*, 78.
- 1095 Bigelow, *Letters*, 1:255.
- 1096 Ackerman, *Boss*, 79. Ackerman cited Lynch in support of this characterization and also noted that, “Within a few hours [of completing his statement], Tilden had disappeared from Albany, not staying to lobby privately on the issue.”
- 1097 Ackerman, *Boss*, 78.
- 1098 Ackerman, *Boss*, 101.
- 1099 Ackerman, *Boss*, 104.
- 1100 Ackerman, *Boss*, 193. Hershkowitz would not grant this, referring (*Tweed's*, xix) to “the inept ‘Sammy’ Tilden,” who, in one of his court appearances (*Tweed's*, 303), was “muddled as usual.”
- 1101 Ackerman, *Boss*, 287-8.
- 1102 Ackerman, *Boss*, 291.
- 1103 Ackerman, *Boss*, 287.
- 1104 Ackerman, *Boss*, 323.
- 1105 Ackerman, *Boss*, 326.
- 1106 Ackerman, *Boss*, 331.
- 1107 Ackerman, *Boss*, 353.
- 1108 Grimes, “When;” Hamill, “Fellowship;” Jackson, “Operator;” Munson, “Tammany’s;” Tomskey, “Boss.”
- 1109 Hamill, “Fellowship;” Russello, “Rise;” Tomskey, “Boss.”
- 1110 Grimes, “When;” Munson, “Tammany’s;” Russello, “Rise;” Tomskey, “Boss.”
- 1111 Hamill, “Fellowship;” Munson, “Tammany’s;” Russello, “Rise.”
- 1112 *Tweed's*, xiii.
- 1113 *Tweed's*, xvi.
- 1114 *Tweed's*, xvi.
- 1115 *Tweed's*, xvii.
- 1116 *Tweed's*, xviii.

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- 1117 *Tweed's*, xvii.
1118 *Tweed's*, xviii.
1119 Ibid.
1120 *Tweed's*, xviii-xix.
1121 *Tweed's*, xix.
1122 Tilden, the lead reforming documenter of Tweed's crimes, was considered (*Tweed's*, 182) to have had "motivation... purely political and personal."
1123 *Tweed's*, 175.
1124 Paine, *Nast*, 179-84.
1125 Lynch, *Tweed*, 371.
1126 Tweed claimed in 1877 (*NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks") to "have never smoked a cigar nor chewed a piece of tobacco."
1127 Bartlett, *Quotations*, 535b.
1128 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 386.
1129 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88.
1130 A line related to the first part of the quotation and spoken by the Tweed in *Gangs of New York* was: "Remember the first rule of politics: the ballots don't make the results, the counters make the results." The words of the historical ex-Boss in 1877 to the Aldermen (*Testimony*, 134) had been: "The ballots made no result; the counters made the result."
1131 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, xviii.
1132 *Nation*, 9/28/1871, "The Week," 201.
1133 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, xviii.
1134 *Harper's Weekly*, 6/10/1871, 536; 10/7/1871, 944. Another *Nast* cartoon (11/11/1871, 1056-7) included the question, without attribution.
1135 *NYT*, 4/7/1871, "The People Aroused."
1136 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88; Lynch, *Tweed*, 370; Werner, *Tammany*, 214; Callow, *Ring*, 253; McCullough, *Bridge*, 130. Morris (*Fraud*, 99) in 2003 ascribed not only these words to the Boss but also (100) "vote early and vote often" – which usually is attributed to a Chicagoan: either Big Bill Thompson, Al Capone, or Richard J. Daley.
1137 Lynch, *Tweed*, 370.
1138 Allen, *Tiger*, 125.
1139 Ackerman, *Boss*, 139. Hershkowitz had annotated Ackerman's manuscript and "shared with me his well-researched thoughts on the Boss." (Ackerman, *Boss*, 423.) His blurb on Ackerman's dust jacket deemed his book "well researched, carefully crafted, and a remarkably balanced view of Tweed and his New York."
1140 Ackerman, *Boss*, 8.
1141 Ackerman, *Boss*, 205.
1142 Hershkowitz's finding the origin of the statement in *Nast's* cartoon of 6/10/1871 might have been accurate in a limited sense. The tying of the words to Tweed might have been gradual, beginning with someone's saying something like, "Those scoundrels have an attitude of 'What are you going to do about it?'" Then, Evarts and maybe others put the words into the mouths of an unspecified "they." *Nast's* subsequent attribution to Tweed might have been a significant step in the development of a broadly-accepted-but-not-literally-true story.
1143 Ackerman (*Boss*, 139) noted the failure there to specify Tweed as the speaker. Supporting this point is that William Evarts on April 6, 1871 also was quoting a nebulous "they." The *Times* on July 26, 1871 ("Is Public Spirit Alive or Dead?") again alluded to "they" as the source. The speakers of September 4, 1871 spoke the quote as a refrain to rally the crowd but did not identify the source. One orator that night noted that, in a pre-Civil-War debate in the U.S. Senate, a Southern Senator, upon being told by a Massachusetts colleague that slavery was "a great wrong," had responded, "with great arrogance," "Well, what are you going to do about it? I will call the roll of my slaves on Bunker Hill." Of the sources noted here, the earliest attributing the statement specifically to Tweed was *Nast's* cartoon of June 10, 1871. Subsequent contemporary ascriptions of it to Tweed alone included those of the *Nation* (8/24/1871, "What

Are You Going To Do About It?"), 125), Wingate (1876, "Episode," 386), and the *Times* (6/1/1880, "At Threescore and Ten").

1144 A statement similarly suggesting an attitude of impunity was, in the summer of 1871, reportedly made by Hall. Andrew Garvey in 1872 testified that "in 1871, shortly after the amount of the frauds was made public," he had expressed to Hall his concern that his property might be tied up by a lawsuit. Hall, he said, had responded, "Who is going to do it?" (*NYT*, 10/26/1872, "The Hall Trial.")

1145 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 347.

1146 McCullough, *Bridge*, 135. Myers (*Tammany*, 213fn) had reached the same conclusion.

1147 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 212-3.

1148 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 221.

1149 Lynch, *Tweed*, 290.

1150 Callow, *Ring*, 8, 215.

1151 Allen, *Tiger*, 101.

1152 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 152.

1153 Ackerman, *Boss*, 52.

1154 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 84-92.

1155 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 311.

1156 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 313.

1157 *NYT*, 10/24/1877, "Senator William B. Woodin," Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 319.

1158 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 324.

1159 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 363.

1160 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 137.

1161 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 221.

1162 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 135. Wingate (1874, "Episode," 406) wrote that Sweeny considered becoming Mayor himself, that the office was offered to Oswald Ottendorfer, and that Ottendorfer, in declining, suggested Hall, which "decided the matter."

1163 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 144.

1164 Mushkat, *Democracy*, 153.

1165 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 146.

1166 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 135.

1167 *NYT*, 11/30/1869, "The Fifteenth Amendment as Expounded by Mr. Sweeny."

1168 *NYT*, 1/6/1871, "The 'Favorite Son' of New-York."

1169 *NYT*, 9/16/1871, "The Innocent Peter B. Sweeny."

1170 *NYT*, 9/20/1870, "The Democratic Millenium," and 11/21/1870, "Hoffman as President."

1171 *NYT*, 10/13/1870, "Mr. Tweed and his Defender."

1172 *NYT*, 9/21/1870, "Mr. Tweed and His Friends."

1173 *NYT*, 10/4/1870, "Gov. Hoffman's Real Claims upon the Public."

1174 *NYT*, 1/23/1871.

1175 Wingate, *Ja* 1875, "Episode," 127.

1176 *NYH*, 11/26/1869, "The Democratic Policy," 5.

1177 *NYH*, 10/10/1877, "Confession," 5.

1178 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."

1179 Lynch, *Tweed*, 297.

1180 Ackerman, *Boss*, 50.

1181 *NYH*, 10/26/1877, "Tweed Talks."

1182 Opdyke had sensed that the riots might occur and had asked Governor Seymour for troops. Seymour provided none and instead, on July 4 in the City, spoke inflammatorily: "the bloody and treasonable and revolutionary doctrine of public necessity [invoked by the Lincoln Administration] can be proclaimed by a mob as well as by Government." Spann, *Gotham*, 97.

1183 Ackerman (*Boss*, 23) put the number at 105; Burrows (*Gotham*, 895), at 119. Lynch (*Tweed*, 244), based on a message of Seymour to the Legislature, wrote that "{t}he minimum number [killed] may well have been 2,000."

1184 *NYH*, 7/16/1863, "What the Governor Is Doing," 5; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 92; Ackerman, *Boss*, 17.

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- 1185 Spann, *Gotham*, 100; Ackerman, *Boss*, 22.
1186 Lynch, *Tweed*, 258-9; Bernstein, *Riots*, 50-1; Burrows, *Gotham*, 894; Ackerman, *Boss*, 16.
1187 Lynch, *Tweed*, 258.
1188 *NYT*, 7/28/1863, "Local Intelligence."
1189 Ackerman, *Boss*, 24.
1190 Ackerman, *Boss*, 25-7.
1191 Ackerman, *Boss*, 28.
1192 Ackerman, *Boss*, 29.
1193 Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 93) had fleetingly described the visit of Tweed and Blunt to Washington and had noted Tweed's service on the Supervisors' committee administering their program.
1194 Burrows, *Gotham*, 896.
1195 Bernstein, *Riots*, 64.
1196 McKay, *War*, 214; Burrows, *Gotham*, 896; and Spann, *Gotham*, 178-9.
1197 Munson, "Tammany's;" Tomasky, "Boss."
1198 Neither reviewer reported that Ackerman (p. 27) had characterized Tammany's control over the draft as "through the county supervisors." Even Ackerman, though, overstated Tammany's role: that it had "run Lincoln's August draft." Federal provost-marshals administered the draft-lottery drawings, whereupon those chosen could apply for relief to the Supervisors' special committee – three (Tweed, Matthew Brennan, and Elijah Purdy) of whose six members belonged to Tammany.
1199 Ekman, "Theatrics."
1200 Hamill, "Fellowship."
1201 Russello, "Rise."
1202 Mushkat, *Tammany*, 347, 349.
1203 *NYT*, 8/4/1863, "Tammany Society."
1204 Ackerman, *Boss*, 26.
1205 Ackerman, *Boss*, 27.
1206 *NYT*, 8/28/1863, "The Draft."
1207 Supervisors, *Proceedings*, 212.
1208 Supervisors, *Proceedings*, 213; *NYH*, 8/29/1863, "The Two Million Ordinance Signed by the Mayor," 8.
1209 "Exemption Ordinance."
1210 *NYS*, 8/29/1863, "The Municipal Muddle," 4.
1211 *NYT*, 7/28/1863, "Local Intelligence," and 8/26/1863, "The Exemption Ordinance."
1212 Spann, *Gotham*, 103.
1213 McKay, *War*, 214.
1214 *NYT*, 8/26/1863, "The Exemption Ordinance;" *NYT*, 8/29/1863, "Exemption Ordinance." The Supervisor's ordinance did allow the purchase of exemption for any draftee in "a case of particular hardship" who could not find a substitute within the allotted time. Of 1,034 men applying to the Committee in its first month, substitutes were provided for 983 (*NYT*, 9/29/1863, "County Substitute and Relief Committee").
1215 *NYH*, 8/29/1863, "The Exemption of Conscripts," 8.
1216 Ackerman, *Boss*, 25-6.
1217 Supervisors, *Proceedings*, 541.
1218 *NYH*, 11/11/1863, "The Call for Troops."
1219 Ackerman, *Boss*, 28, 29.
1220 The Committee was first chaired by Opdyke, who soon found that it took too much of his time, whereupon Blunt was appointed – *NYT*, 12/2/1866, "Local Intelligence."
1221 Spann, *Gotham*, 178.
1222 *NYT*, 12/26/1864, "Local Intelligence." The *Times* and the Citizens' Association questioned the monetary bonus – equivalent to \$875,000 in 2010 dollars. Blunt first denied receiving any such payment, while noting that his achievements as Committee Chairman had saved the County over \$2 million. Later (*NYT*, 12/2/1866, "Local Intelligence"), he admitted having accepted \$50,000, whereupon, he said, he had

“paid it out to the soldiers.” Democratic Controller Matthew Brennan had earlier testified to a Senatorial Investigating Committee (*NYT*, 2/20/1865, “Local Intelligence”) that the Republican “Mr. Blunt was presented with \$50,000” and “thought Mr. Blunt deserved all he got” – without mentioning that Blunt was to have paid the sum out to recruits.

1223 Ackerman, *Boss*, 29.

1224 Ackerman, *Boss*, 26.

1225 Ackerman, *Boss*, 27.

1226 Ackerman, *Boss*, 28.

1227 *NYH*, 8/27/1863, “The Draft Yesterday.”

1228 *NYT*, 8/20/1863, “The Draft.”

1229 The *Times* (8/29/1863, “The Draft Over”) attributed the peacefulness of the proceedings largely to “the presence of twenty or thirty thousand troops.” Ackerman (*Boss*, 28), presumably because of the Supervisors’ program, called the soldiers unnecessary.

1230 *NYS*, 9/13/1871, “The Doom of the Ring.”

1231 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 76.

1232 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 77.

1233 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 78.

1234 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 553-4.

1235 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 549.

1236 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 692.

1237 Bowen, *Oakey*, 224.

1238 Bowen, *Oakey*, 225-6.

1239 Goodnow, “Ring,” 385 – here quoting and concurring with Tilden.

1240 Goodnow, “Ring,” 382.

1241 Goodnow, “Ring,” 390.

1242 Bowen, *Oakey*, 251-3.

1243 Paine, *Nast*, 144.

1244 Lynch, *Tweed*, 340.

1245 Callow, *Ring*, 167.

1246 Caro, *Broker*, 713.

1247 Allen, *Tiger*, 106.

1248 Ackerman, *Boss*, 86.

1249 Ackerman, *Boss*, 86.

1250 Wingate, 1876, “Episode,” 408.

1251 Bowen, *Oakey*, 221. Tweed might also have been retaliating against an attempt (reported by the *Times* (9/16/1871, “The Innocent Peter B. Sweeny”), the *Nation* (9/14/1871, 169) and Wingate (1876, “Episode,” 373)) by Hall and Sweeny in September 1871 to save themselves while sacrificing Connolly and himself.

1252 *NYH*, 10/10/1877, “Confession,” 5.

1253 *NYH*, 10/10/1877, “Confession,” 5; Bowen, *Oakey*, 222.

1254 Bowen, *Oakey*, 137.

1255 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 398-400.

1256 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 571, 576-7.

1257 *NYT*, 11/3/1871, “Another Grand Rally.”

1258 Tilden, “Figures,” in Bigelow, *Writings*, 505-14; Ackerman, *Boss*, 85.

1259 Bowen, *Oakey*, 124.

1260 Wingate, 1876, “Episode,” 381.

1261 Inclusive of his share of payments made to the New York Printing Company.

1262 *NYT*, 12/24/1873, “Trial of Ex-Mayor Hall,” Wingate, 1876, “Episode,” 407-8; Ackerman, *Boss*, 267.

1263 Bowen, *Oakey*, 197.

1264 Clinton, *Trials*, 439.

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- 1265 *NYT*, 11/26/1875, Editorial Article 4, untitled.
1266 Bowen, *Oakey*, 278.
1267 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 507.
1268 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 382; Bowen, *Oakey*, 130.
1269 Bowen, *Oakey*, 234-5.
1270 "The Tammany Ring in New York City" instead of "The Tweed Ring in New York City."
1271 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88.
1272 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88.
1273 *NYTr*, 6/9/1880, "Secret Ring History."
1274 *Bondage*, 96.
1275 Tweed, 386.
1276 *Ring*, 283.
1277 *Tiger*, 134-5.
1278 *Boss*, 255.
1279 *NYTr*, 11/27/1871, "Connolly's Arrest."
1280 *NYT*, "Connolly Arrested;" *NYH*, "Connolly Captured."
1281 Hamill ("Fellowship") thought that "{b}ecause of Tweed, New York got better, even for the poor."
1282 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 348.
1283 Parton, "Government," 456.
1284 *NYT*, 10/28/1871, "The City Frauds."
1285 McCullough, *Bridge*, 253.
1286 Myers, *Tammany*, 249. Per Lynch (*Tweed*, 371), this figure applied to the Ring's peak 30 months.
1287 *NYTr*, 7/29/1871, "Resistance to Tammany," 1.
1288 Aldermen, *Report*, 403-4.
1289 Aldermen, *Report*, 24-5.
1290 Townsend, *Bondage*, 102.
1291 *NYT*, 9/18/1901, "The Tweed Ring—Its Beginnings and Its Methods."
1292 Myers, *Tammany*, 248.
1293 Lynch, *Tweed*, 16. The figure of \$200 million advanced by O'Rourke Lynch (*Tweed*, 406) deemed to have "no support."
1294 Werner, *Tammany*, 160; Allen, *Tiger*, 81.
1295 Callow, *Ring*, 164.
1296 Callow, "Introduction to the Dover Edition," vii, in Myers, Gustavus; *The History of Tammany Hall; Second Edition Revised and Enlarged*. NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1917, 1971.
1297 Ackerman, *Boss*, 356-7.
1298 P. 379.
1299 Myers (*Tammany*, 225) did say (without citation) that Tweed once had "yielded to the public indignation over the leniency shown to an influential murderer, and had given orders to the Judges to deal more severely with flagrant criminal cases."
1300 Gordon-Reed, *Jefferson*, 4.
1301 Pratt, "Boss," 396, quoting Richard Hofstadter et al., *The American Republic* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959), 2, 265.
1302 Pratt, "Boss," 396, quoting *Empire for Liberty: The Genesis and Growth of the United States of America* (NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960), 2, 64.
1303 Pratt, "Boss," 396.
1304 Pratt, "Boss," 398.
1305 Pratt, "Boss," 396-8.
1306 M. R. Werner (*Tammany*, 194) (as Pratt (p. 410) acknowledged) had given this same figure, with the same basic breakdown of it across religious denominations.
1307 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 24.
1308 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 182.
1309 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 235.
1310 Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 107-8.
1311 *NYT*, 11/5/1874, "The Republican Defeat."

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- 1312 Democratic Party Platform of 1876.
1313 Flick, *Tilden*, 295.
1314 See, e.g., *NYT*, 11/10/1861, "City Politics."
1315 *Tammany*, 336-7.
1316 *Tammany*, 379.
1317 *NYS*, 3/28/1870, "The Struggle To-Night."
1318 4/8/1870, untitled editorial, 4.
1319 *North American Review*, Oc 1876, 422-4.
1320 Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 169-74.
1321 Bigelow, *Letters*, 2:470.
1322 Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 98.
1323 Menes, "Limiting," 75.
1324 *NYT*, 10/14/1897, "Col. A. B. Gardiner Speaks;" Allen, *Tiger*, 191.
1325 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 141.
1326 Hoogenboom, *Spoils*, 6.
1327 Hoogenboom, *Spoils*, 16-7.
1328 Hoogenboom, *Spoils*, 29.
1329 Hoogenboom, *Spoils*, ix.
1330 Hoogenboom, *Spoils*, 42.
1331 Hoogenboom, *Spoils*, 50.
1332 *NYT*, 11/1/1872, "The Two Candidates."
1333 Hoogenboom, *Spoils*, 120.
1334 *Nation*, 9/29/1871, 199.
1335 *Nation*, 11/16/1871, 314.
1336 Mushkat, *Wood*, 193.
1337 *NYT*, 5/6/1873, "Charter Amending by Fraud."
1338 *NYT*, 10/27/1877, "A Retired Statesman."
1339 *NYT*, 5/1/1873, "The First Duty Under the Charter."
1340 *NYT*, 9/25/1868, "Our Streets."
1341 *NYT*, 9/27/1877, "The State Republicans."
1342 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, xvi.
1343 *NYT*, 11/18/1871, "Municipal Reform."
1344 Allen, *Tiger*, 82; Callow (*Ring*, 6) used similar words: "tired of great causes." Mandelbaum ("Ring") dissented, objecting to Callow's "explain[ing] events without independently establishing the existence and significance of his variables and without concern for the criteria of scientific elegance. Is it necessary, for example, to posit a peculiar 'moral twilight' in post-Civil War America in order to explain Tweed's success?"
1345 *NYT*, 9/25/1871, "The Committee of Seventy."
1346 *NYT*, 11/3/1871, "The Work of the Seventy."
1347 Douglas, *Ethics*, 18.
1348 *NYT*, 12/1/1867, "Public Official Corruption."
1349 *NYT*, 9/25/1871, "The Committee of Seventy."
1350 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 386.
1351 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 62.
1352 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88.
1353 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 62.
1354 *NYT*, 9/25/1871, "The Committee of Seventy."
1355 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 77.
1356 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 78.
1357 *NYT*, 11/18/1871, "Municipal Reform."
1358 Callow, *Ring*, 7.
1359 Wingate, *Ja* 1875, "Episode," 129-30.
1360 *Nation*, 4/18/1878, 257.
1361 *Nation*, 4/18/1878, 257.

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- 1362 Ackerman, *Boss*, 357.
1363 *NYT*, 8/26/1923, "City Thrilled..."
1364 *NYT*, 5/1/1871, "The Rule of Four."
1365 Hirsch, "Light," 273.
1366 Addams, "Why," 121.
1367 Addams, "Why," 118-20.
1368 Roosevelt, Theodore, "Machine," 75.
1369 Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 112) himself also saw bad luck for Tweed in Elijah Purdy's death in 1866: "If Purdy had lived, would Tweed have become caught up in the kind of events which caused his downfall? Would Purdy have been a steadying, stabilizing influence? Certainly the large gap in Tammany leadership would not have been there for Tweed and others to step into." (Hershkowitz did not mention the alleged key role of Purdy in 1852 in bribing Aldermen.) Another descrier of chance in the history was Peter Sweeny (*Frauds*, 57): "If Mr. Ottendorfer had accepted my offer [in 1868 to become Mayor instead of Hall], with the conditions he would have brought to the public service, what a difference it would have made to the city of New York, and in the fate of many men!"
1370 *Nation*, 4/18/1878, 257.
1371 Clinton, *Trials*, 443. Wingate (1876, "Episode," 412) reported "only two of the twelve being in favor of a conviction."
1372 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 82-3.
1373 Ackerman, *Boss*, 162.
1374 Ackerman, *Boss*, 113. Wingate (Ja 1875, "Episode," 156) also set his childhood in the City. The *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* dated his immigration in 1861.
1375 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 156.
1376 Wingate, 1974, "Episode," 399.
1377 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 156; Ackerman, *Boss*, 113-4.
1378 *NYT*, 8/20/1872, "Exit Barnard."
1379 *NYT*, 11/2/1868, "Remarkable Proclamation..."
1380 *NYT*, 11/3/1868, "The Elections."
1381 O'Brien's testimony in U.S. House, *Frauds*, 379. The *Times* (11/3/1868, "The Elections") put the number at 10,000.
1382 U.S. House, *Frauds*, 379.
1383 U.S. House, *Frauds*, 381.
1384 Ackerman, *Boss*, 54.
1385 *NYT*, 11/3/1868, "The Elections;" Ackerman, *Boss*, 55.
1386 *NYH*, 10/10/1877, "Confession," 5; Ackerman, *Boss*, 117.
1387 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 148.
1388 Wingate, Ja 1875, "Episode," 156.
1389 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 50. Wingate (Jl 1875, "Episode," 140) wrote that the claim was for \$100,000.
1390 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 50.
1391 Wingate, Jl 1875, "Episode," 142.
1392 Hirsch, "Light," 272; Ackerman, *Boss*, 147.
1393 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 52-5.
1394 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 56.
1395 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 60; Ackerman, *Boss*, 337.
1396 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 58-9.
1397 *NYH*, 9/5/1871, "Anti-Tammany."
1398 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 388-9.
1399 Tilden, *Ring*, 48.
1400 *NYT*, 8/31/1871, "Must Fraud Carry the City Election?"
1401 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 396.
1402 Myers, *Tammany*, 244.
1403 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 88.
1404 Myers, *Tammany*, 244.
1405 Lynch, *Tweed*, 383-4.

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- 1406 Callow, *Ring*, 278.
1407 *NYT*, 10/15/1871, "No False Security!"
1408 Tilden, *Ring*, 27. Tilden criticized the Election Law of 1870, but not the more-fraud-friendly Law of 1871.
1409 Tilden, *Ring*, 27.
1410 Burrows, *Gotham*, 739.
1411 *Nation*, 8/31/1871, 137.
1412 *Nation*, 11/23/1871, 334.
1413 *Ring*, 39.
1414 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 373.
1415 Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 82.
1416 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 397.
1417 *NYT*, 8/29/1871, "The Germans and the Tammany Ring," quoting the *Tribune*.
1418 *Nation*, 8/31/1871, 137.
1419 *NYT*, 7/27/1871, "A Convinced German;" *NYT*, 7/27/1871, "Another Reader of the Staats Zeitung."
1420 As an acquaintance of Tweed (*Ring*, 11) and as one who signed on as an incorporator of the Viaduct Railroad (*Ring*, 187).
1421 For participating in the meeting of September 4, 1871 (*Boss*, 196) and for being one of Tilden's reform Democrats in the Convention the next month (*Boss*, 230).
1422 Tilden, *Ring*, Appendix, 22.
1423 *NYT*, 3/10/1871, "The Viaduct Railway;" 5/26/1871, "The Viaduct Railway."
1424 *NYT*, 3/17/1871, "The 'Philanthropic' Tweed."
1425 Myers, *Tammany*, 237.
1426 Myers, *Tammany*, 237.
1427 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 407.
1428 McCullough, *Bridge*, 253.
1429 Ackerman, *Boss*, 114.
1430 *NYT*, 10/26/1872, "The Hall Trial."
1431 Ackerman, *Boss*, 123-8.
1432 Lynch, *Tweed*, 341.
1433 *The World*, 8/16/1891, "Jas. O'Brien's Story."
1434 Wingate, JI 1875, "Episode," 142; Ackerman, *Boss*, 124-5.
1435 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 417.
1436 Myers, *Tammany*, 237.
1437 Werner, *Tammany*, 161.
1438 Callow, *Ring*, 259.
1439 McCullough, *Bridge*, 250.
1440 Allen, *Tiger*, 118.
1441 Wingate, JI 1875, "Episode," 143-4.
1442 Ackerman, *Boss*, 128. O'Brien's recollection, twenty years later (*The World*, 8/16/1891, "Jas. O'Brien's Story"), was: that he had declined Watson's invitation to a dinner with Connolly, Tweed, and Watson; that Watson had persisted in seeking an interview; that they had met on January 24, 1871, when both were out in sleighs; that Watson had then asked him to luncheon (although, per Ackerman (p. 126), Watson had earlier dined with his family) and had turned to follow O'Brien's sleigh; and that O'Brien had gone on to the end of the road before learning of the accident behind him. Wingate (JI 1875, "Episode," 142) had given a different version: the two had agreed to confer at Bertholf's Hotel; O'Brien was late for their appointment; Watson went out in his sleigh to meet him en route and was killed.
1443 Callow, *Ring*, 259.
1444 Allen, *Tiger*, 119.
1445 *Nation*, 10/12/1871, 236.
1446 Ackerman, *Boss*, 357.
1447 *Nation*, 4/18/1878, 257.
1448 Tilden, *Ring*, 40.
1449 *NYT*, 11/19/1873, "Tweed Trial Closed."

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- 1450 *NYT*, 1/5/1878, "Report on Ring Frauds."
1451 Aldermen, *Report*, 27.
1452 Aldermen, *Report*, 25.
1453 "The City Expenditures—Plumbing and Gas-Fitting," 4.
1454 E.g., Lynch, *Tweed*, 387; Allen, *Tiger*, 135; Ackerman, *Boss*, 256.
1455 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 805-6.
1456 *NYTr*, 6/9/1880, "Secret Ring History," 7.
1457 Townsend, *Bondage*, 97-8.
1458 The explanation of the *Tribune* (6/9/1880, "Secret Ring History," 7) was that "the Court of Appeals [had] decid[ed] that the civil suit by Mr. O'Conor... was improperly begun, and the bond, therefore, illegally enforced."
1459 Connolly's obituary in the *Times* (6/1/1880, "At Three Score and Ten") offered a mildly different account: on December 16, 1871, the day that Connolly's civil-suit bail was reduced to \$500,000, a grand jury returned fifteen criminal misdemeanor indictments against him; "{h}is [presumably civil-suit] bail was completed Dec. 22;" Judge Barnard on January 1 set the criminal-suit bail at \$15,000; "{t}he bail was promptly furnished, and Connolly walked forth to give his friends a New Year's greeting, a free man."
1460 *NYT*, 1/5/1878, "Report on Ring Frauds."
1461 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 300.
1462 Wingate, 1874, "Episode," 390.
1463 Wingate, JI 1875, "Episode," 145.
1464 Wingate, JI 1875, "Episode," 146.
1465 Flick, Tilden, 202.
1466 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 404.
1467 *NYT*, 5/2/1872, "Our Corrupt Judges."
1468 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 300.
1469 Tilden, *Ring*, 38.
1470 Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 243, 247, 253, 255) did report this aspect of Tilden's testimony in the first trial and alluded to it in his summaries of the second and of the two charges of Davis.
1471 Ackerman, *Boss*, 249; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 196.
1472 *NYT*, 4/13/1878, "Tweed."
1473 Mushkat, *American Historical Review*, 82:4 (Oct., 1977): 1085.
1474 Aldermen, *Report*, 29-30.
1475 *NYT*, 2/7/1872, "The Indictments."
1476 Sweeny, *Frauds*, 43.
1477 *NYT*, 6/8/1877, "Why Did Sweeny Settle?;" and 6/29/1877, "The New-York Ring Suits;" and Aldermen, *Testimony*, 806, 821. The *Times* (6/8/1877) argued that the settlement indicated that the State's case could not have been too flimsy. Peckham contradicted himself on two points. First, notwithstanding his other statements as to the insufficiency of the evidence against Sweeny, he had said that he had expected to prevail in court (*NYT*, 6/8/1877). Second, after initially claiming ignorance as to whether the \$400,000 would be paid from James' estate (*NYT*, 6/8/1877), he later said that he had insisted that it be so paid, so as not to compromise other lawsuits (Aldermen, *Testimony*, 821).
1478 Aldermen, *Report*, 35.
1479 *NYT*, 9/5/1871, "The People's Voice."
1480 Aldermen, *Report*, 33.
1481 Aldermen, *Report*, 34-5.
1482 *NYT*, 1/21/1873, "The Tweed Case."
1483 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 814-8.
1484 *NYT*, 1/18/1873, "William M. Tweed;" *NYT*, 11/16/1873, "The Tweed Trial."
1485 *NYT*, 1/26/1873, "The Tweed Trial;" *NYT*, 11/18/1873, "The Ring Frauds." Keyser also said that his purported signatures on various endorsements and receipts were forged. Prosecutor Wheeler H. Peckham (Aldermen, *Testimony*, 815) later testified that "Keyser was mistaken about a great many things. In regard to his warrants which he said were forged, it now appears that he either indorsed them himself or allowed Woodward to do so for him."
1486 *NYT*, 11/19/1873, "Tweed Trial Closed."

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- 1487 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 816.
1488 *NYT*, 3/17/1877, "Peter B. Sweeny at Home."
1489 Tilden, *Ring*, 42-3.
1490 *NYT*, 1/28/1873, "The Tweed Trial."
1491 "The Viaduct Railroad Scheme."
1492 This passage was identical in the *Times* and *Tribune*, but rendered by the *Herald* (9/5/1871, "Anti-Tammany") as: "I have pointed out to you peaceful ways to right these wrongs, but if newer men enter this government only for the purpose of perpetrating new frauds, then there are other ways, and I need not name them. You will hear it in the wail, in the roar of musketry, in the fire of cannon, for the iron heel of the despot will have planted his foot on a people so sunk in corruption that they will be made to help themselves. (Cheers.)"
1493 P. 153.
1494 Breen, *Thirty*, 393-4.
1495 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 383-4.
1496 Breen, *Thirty*, 353-6; Callow, *Ring*, 261.
1497 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 388; *NYT*, 9/18/1901, "The Times's Fight against the Ring."
1498 *NYT*, 9/18/1901, "The Times's Fight against the Ring."
1499 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 370.
1500 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 388.
1501 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 157.
1502 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 158.
1503 Callow, *Ring*, 260; Ackerman, *Boss*, 165.
1504 Paine, *Nast*, 158; Ackerman, *Boss*, 135.
1505 Lynch, *Tweed*, 410.
1506 Paine, *Nast*, 141.
1507 Lynch, *Tweed*, 169.
1508 *NYT*, 9/21/1871, "Honest Men For Office."
1509 *NYT*, 11/21/1870, "Hoffman as President."
1510 *NYT*, 10/28/1870, "Political."
1511 *NYT*, 10/3/1870, "The City Democracy."
1512 *NYT*, 2/21/1871, "Political Corruption."
1513 *NYT*, 4/13/1870, "Our New City Government."
1514 Paine, *Nast*, 204.
1515 Morphet, *Jennings*, 124.
1516 Donald L. Shaw (Review of *Tweed's New York: Another Look. Journalism Quarterly* 54 (Sum., 1977): 394) of the University of North Carolina judged that "the New York press of the day... seems to have been motivated by selfish economic or political motives as often as altruistic ones."
1517 *NYT*, 7/27/1871, "Our Case Plainly Stated."
1518 Bowen, *Oakey*, 126; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 195-6.
1519 Bowen, *Oakey*, 126-7.
1520 Bowen, *Oakey*, 128.
1521 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 311.
1522 Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 328.
1523 *NYT*, 1/31/1873, "Given to the Jury."
1524 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 84.
1525 *NYT*, 11/16/1873, "The Tweed Trial."
1526 *NYT*, 11/19/1873, "Tweed Trial Closed." Hershkowitz (*Tweed's*, 253) suggested that the bank feared liability for not having challenged forgeries.
1527 Tilden, "Figures," 514.
1528 Tilden, "Figures," 514. Ackerman (*Boss*, 86) stated, without referencing a source, that of Woodward's "cool \$3.6 million—a full 24 percent ultimately would be traced to Tweed, 7 percent each to Woodward and Watson, and 10 percent to Peter Sweeny. Their actual spoils were likely even more." Even with a total of 48 percent of the \$3.58 million (\$1.72 million) traced to Sweeny, Tweed, Watson, and

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- Woodward, that still leaves \$1.86 million untraced. Wingate (1876, "Episode," 381) said that Tweed received 24 percent; Connolly, 20; Sweeny, 10; and Watson and Woodward, 5 each.
- 1529 Wingate, *Jl* 1875, "Episode," 138.
- 1530 The Committee did certify (Foord, *Green*, 165) "that the entire office was thrown open to us, and all the account books, securities and records of the said [Finance] department and Sinking Fund were submitted to our inspection and examination." That was subsequently revealed (*NYT*, 8/5/1871, "No More Whitewashing Committees") to have been far from the case.
- 1531 *NYT*, 11/6/1870, "Registry Frauds;" Wingate, *Jl* 1875, "Episode," 138.
- 1532 Wingate, *Jl* 1875, "Episode," 139.
- 1533 *NYT*, 11/26/1870, "To J. J. Astor..."
- 1534 *NYT*, 11/6/1870, "Registry Frauds;" 5/23/1871, "Connolly as an Advertiser."
- 1535 *NYT*, 8/7/1871, "More Financial Confessions."
- 1536 *NYT*, 8/5/1871, "No More Whitewashing Committees."
- 1537 *NYT*, 8/5/1871, "No More Whitewashing Committees;" Lynch, *Tweed*, 347.
- 1538 *NYT*, 7/20/1871, "Proofs of Theft."
- 1539 Wingate, *Jl* 1875, "Episode," 139; Myers, *Tammany*, 232; Werner, *Tammany*, 208.
- 1540 Lynch, *Tweed*, 385; Callow, *Ring*, 283.
- 1541 Myers, *Tammany*, 257.
- 1542 *NYT*, 8/19/1871, "The Tammany Republicans." Republican Thomas Platt (*The Autobiography of Thomas Collier Platt*, compiled and edited by Louis J. Lang, NY: B. W. Dodge & Co., 1910), later thrice elected to the U.S. Senate from New York, lent credence to the account of the *Times*: "seventy-five per cent. of the officers of the Republican County Committee, and district leaders, [in 1870] were drawing pay from sinecures under Tweed and Tammany."
- 1543 *NYT*, 10/16/1870, "The Republican Traitors."
- 1544 The *Times* (10/18/1870, "Political") termed them "remarkable."
- 1545 Lynch, *Tweed*, 292.
- 1546 *NYT*, 11/18/1871, "Municipal Reform;" Callow, *Ring*, 261.
- 1547 *NYT*, 11/3/1871, "Committee on Elections of the Committee of Seventy."
- 1548 Strong, *Post-War Diary*, 396.
- 1549 Noonan, *Bribes*, 525.
- 1550 Wingate, *Ja* 1875, "Episode," 162.
- 1551 Flick, *Tilden*, 199.
- 1552 *NYT*, 4/5/1870, "Albany;" Callow, *Ring*, 227; Hershkowitz, *Tweed's*, 153.
- 1553 Lynch, *Tweed*, 341.
- 1554 *NYT*, 12/29/1870, "Some Stolen Property Returned."
- 1555 Callow, *Ring*, 157-8.
- 1556 Mandelbaum, *Tweed's*, 109.
- 1557 *NYT*, 1/22/1871, "Minor Topics."
- 1558 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 222.
- 1559 Wingate, *Ja* 1875, "Episode," 169.
- 1560 *NYT*, 4/20/1873, "The Decline and Fall of Nathaniel Sands."
- 1561 *NYT*, 12/25/1894, "Death of Nathaniel Sands."
- 1562 *NYT*, 10/25/1888, "Nathaniel Sands's Part."
- 1563 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 390.
- 1564 Wingate, *Ja* 1875, "Episode," 170.
- 1565 *NYT*, 10/25/1888, "Nathaniel Sands's Part."
- 1566 *NYT*, 9/14/1871, "The Tweeds." Earlier, the paper (3/12/1871, "The Tax Office and Nathaniel Sands.") had put the numbers at \$6,500 and \$3,000.
- 1567 Wingate, *Ja* 1875, "Episode," 170.
- 1568 Hirsch, "Light," 275.
- 1569 Aldermen, *Testimony*, 222-3.
- 1570 Downey, "Ring," 160.
- 1571 *NYT*, 3/22/1871, "Albany."
- 1572 *NYT*, 2/9/1871, "Peter Cooper and the New Tax-Levy Scheme."

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- 1573 Burrows, *Gotham*, 831.
1574 *NYT*, 1/22/1871, "Minor Topics."
1575 *NYT*, 1/27/1871, "The Herald Reads Peter Cooper a Lesson."
1576 *NYT*, 3/4/1871, "An Impartial Verdict on the Citizens Association."
1577 *NYT*, 10/28/1871, "Sands."
1578 Wingate, 1876, "Episode," 390.
1579 *NYT*, 4/20/1887, "The Tweed Ring Recalled."
1580 *NYT*, 2/14/1872, "Sands' Appeal."
1581 Menes, "Limiting," 86.
1582 Hale, "Introduction," vii.
1583 *NYT*, 6/22/1947, "Exit the Boss, Enter the 'Leader,'" 128 (16).
1584 *NYT*, 4/15/1956, "Exit the Boss, Enter the Leader," 236 (26).
1585 *NYT*, 4/15/1956, "Exit the Boss, Enter the Leader," 254 (44).
1586 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 7.
1587 *Time*, 4/25/2005, 16-8.
1588 Royko, *Boss*,
1589 Royko, *Boss*, 125.
1590 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 6.
1591 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 125-6.
1592 Bernstein, *Riots*, 196.
1593 Terkel, *NYT*, 12/22/1976, "For 21 Years, He Was the Boss, the Ultimate Clout."
1594 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 191-2.
1595 Royko, *Boss*, 104.
1596 *Time*, 7/16/1956, 21.
1597 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 192.
1598 Royko, *Boss*, 72; Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 295.
1599 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 192.
1600 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 324-5.
1601 Burrows, *Gotham*, 986-7.
1602 Royko, *Boss*, 90.
1603 Royko, *Boss*, 73-4.
1604 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 171.
1605 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 159.
1606 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 505.
1607 Royko, *Boss*, 75.
1608 Royko, *Boss*, 13-4.
1609 Royko, *Boss*, 169.
1610 Royko, *Boss*, 20.
1611 Menes, "Limiting," 67. The rankings were based on percentages of time with corrupt administrations. From 1850-1880, Baltimore was ranked third-most-corrupt, with New Orleans and San Francisco tied for fourth-most. From 1881-1930, Philadelphia was ranked second-most-corrupt; New Orleans, third-most; and Boston, fifth-most. From 1931-1980, the second- through fifth-most-corrupt were New Orleans, Philadelphia, Buffalo, and Cleveland.
1612 Royko, *Boss*, 98; Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 166 .
1613 *Boss*, 209.
1614 Royko, *Boss*, 53.
1615 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 25.
1616 Royko, *Boss*, 114.
1617 Royko, *Boss*, 114.
1618 Royko, *Boss*, 57.
1619 Royko, *Boss*, 71. See also, Douglas, *Ethics*, 52-3.
1620 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 192.
1621 Royko, *Boss*, 131.
1622 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 520.

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- 1623 Royko, *Boss*, 48-50.
1624 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 413.
1625 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 129.
1626 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 276.
1627 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 263, 275.
1628 Royko, *Boss*, 93; Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 275.
1629 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 272-3.
1630 Royko, *Boss*, 77; Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 535.
1631 Royko, *Boss*, 74; Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 45, 129.
1632 Royko, *Boss*, 77; Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 275, 512.
1633 Royko, *Boss*, 93.
1634 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 263.
1635 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 273-4.
1636 U.S. House, *Frauds*, 266-7.
1637 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 274-5; 512.
1638 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 272, 276.
1639 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 277.
1640 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 523.
1641 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 156.
1642 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 160.
1643 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 7.
1644 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 160.
1645 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 155-6.
1646 Riordon, *Plunkitt*, 59.
1647 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 159.
1648 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 298.
1649 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 161.
1650 Royko, *Boss*, 90.
1651 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 162.
1652 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 503.
1653 Royko, *Boss*, 70; Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 311-2.
1654 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 157.
1655 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 156-7.
1656 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 202.
1657 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 63.
1658 Scott, "Corruption," 1151.
1659 Bryce, *American*, Ch. 63.
1660 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 203.
1661 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 245.
1662 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 254.
1663 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 253.
1664 Royko, *Boss*, 148-9.
1665 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 535.
1666 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 269.
1667 Royko, *Boss*, 130.
1668 Royko, *Boss*, 132.
1669 Royko, *Boss*, 138.
1670 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 299-300.
1671 Holli, *Mayor*, 5, 12. Others ranked were, in order, among the ten best, (1) Fiorello La Guardia (New York, 1934-45), (2) Tom L. Johnson (Cleveland, 1901-9), (3) David Lawrence (Pittsburgh, 1946-59), (4) Hazen S. Pingree (Detroit, 1890-7), (5) Samuel M. Jones (Toledo, 1897-1904), (7) Frank Murphy (Detroit, 1930-3), (8) Daniel Hoan (Milwaukee, 1916-40), (9) Tom Bradley (Los Angeles, 1973-93), and (10) Josiah Quincy (Boston, 1823-28); among the ten worst, (5) Frank Rizzo (Philadelphia, 1972-80), (7) Dennis Kucinich (Cleveland, 1977-9), (9) Samuel W. Yorty (Los Angeles, 1961-73), and (10) Jane Byrne

(Chicago, 1979-83). Holli had sent questionnaires to 160 writers for the *Biographical Dictionary of American Mayors*. Usable responses were received from 69, of whom 51 were experts on American urban and political history and eighteen represented the political and social sciences.

1672 Holli, *Mayor*, 10.

1673 Biles, *Crusading*, 50.

1674 Douglas, *Time*, 182.

1675 Tilden in 1871 (*NYTr*, 10/5/1871, "The Rochester Convention," 1) said that his party "has never elected to the Presidency any man of as low a standard of official life as either of the three Republican Presidents." Later in the same speech he eased up on Grant: an "illustrious soldier," who "may not have been conscious of the evil in the fatal example which he has set." He did not similarly soften his judgments of Lincoln and Johnson. Eight years earlier (Lynch, *Tweed*, 243), he had spoken dismissively of Lincoln as one who had had "a career at *nisi prius* [basically, law as practiced in the backwoods] in the interior of Illinois."

1676 *NYT*, 9/25/1976, "A Man of Integrity."

1677 Douglas, *Time*, 3.

1678 Douglas, *Time*, 55.

1679 Douglas, *Time*, 126.

1680 Douglas, *Time*, 128.

1681 Phillips, *NYT*, 6/24/1951, "Paul Douglas—'Instinctive Liberal.'"

1682 Biles, *Crusading*, 86.

1683 Caro, *Master*, 460.

1684 Douglas, *Time*, 427.

1685 Douglas, *Time*, 274-5.

1686 Caro, *Master*, 1007.

1687 Douglas, *Time*, 299.

1688 Douglas, *Time*, 180.

1689 Douglas, *Time*, 140, 181.

1690 Douglas, *Time*, 183.

1691 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 88-9.

1692 Phillips, *NYT*, 6/24/51, "Paul Douglas—'Instinctive Liberal.'"

1693 Douglas, *Ethics*, vii.

1694 Douglas, *Ethics*, 15-7.

1695 Douglas, *Time*, 254.

1696 Douglas, *Ethics*, 17.

1697 Douglas, *Ethics*, 51, 56-7.

1698 Douglas, *Ethics*, 61-3.

1699 Douglas, *Ethics*, 73.

1700 Douglas, *Ethics*, 77.

1701 Douglas, *Ethics*, 82.

1702 Douglas, *Ethics*, 97.

1703 Biles, *Crusading*, 201.

1704 Biles, *Crusading*, 30.

1705 Douglas, *Time*, 86.

1706 Biles, *Crusading*, 33.

1707 Douglas, *Time*, 88.

1708 Douglas, *Time*, 89.

1709 Cohen, *Pharaoh*, 242.

1710 Biles, *Crusading*, 34.

1711 Douglas, *Time*, 99.

1712 Douglas, *Time*, 90-1.

1713 Douglas, *Time*, 99-100.

1714 Douglas, *Time*, 259.

1715 Douglas, *Time*, 572.

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- 1716 Douglas, *Time*, 185. The one time Arvey contacted Douglas to ask a favor, the Senator reported fearing an imminent impropriety. Arvey, however, requested only increased appropriations for disease research.
- 1717 Douglas, *Time*, 185.
- 1718 Royko, *Boss*, 49.
- 1719 Douglas, *Time*, 261-2.
- 1720 Douglas, *Time*, 173.
- 1721 Douglas, *Time*, 171-3.
- 1722 Douglas, *Time*, 171.
- 1723 Douglas, *Time*, 173.
- 1724 Douglas, *Time*, 172.
- 1725 Douglas, *Time*, 173.
- 1726 Douglas, *Time*, 463.
- 1727 Caro, *Master*, 244-7.
- 1728 Caro, *Master*, 248-303.
- 1729 Douglas, *Time*, 463.
- 1730 Douglas, *Time*, 467.
- 1731 Douglas, *Time*, 210.
- 1732 Douglas, *Time*, 468.
- 1733 Douglas, *Time*, 235.
- 1734 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 17.
- 1735 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 24.
- 1736 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 26-7.
- 1737 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 78.
- 1738 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 78-9.
- 1739 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 26.
- 1740 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 79.
- 1741 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 79.
- 1742 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 73.
- 1743 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 83.
- 1744 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 12.
- 1745 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 95.
- 1746 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 110.
- 1747 Lynch, *Tweed*, 25.
- 1748 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 115.
- 1749 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 86-7.
- 1750 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 83-4. The “{b}etter laws” he cited included ones: regulating campaign financing; criminalizing the possession of inexplicable wealth by public officials; mandating the disclosure of bribery; and establishing anti-corruption units.
- 1751 Mandelbaum, *Boss*, 170.
- 1752 Barry, Dan, *NYT*, 4/19/2001, “Colorful Mayor of Providence Finds Comedy in Indictment.”
- 1753 Stanton, *Prince*, xiv.
- 1754 Stanton, *Prince*, 54.
- 1755 Stanton, *Prince*, 162.
- 1756 Stanton, *Prince*, 142, 259-60.
- 1757 Stanton, *Prince*, 139.
- 1758 Stanton, *Prince*, 143.
- 1759 Stanton, *Prince*, 140.
- 1760 Stanton, *Prince*, 74-5, 148.
- 1761 Stanton, *Prince*, 70.
- 1762 Stanton, *Prince*, 144.
- 1763 Stanton, *Prince*, 134, 162.
- 1764 Stanton, *Prince*, 141, 183.
- 1765 Stanton, *Prince*, 85.

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- 1766 Stanton, *Prince*, 95-7.
1767 Stanton, *Prince*, 76.
1768 *NYT*, 12/21/1990, "Court Says Felony No Bar to Seating of Mayor;" Stanton, *Prince*, xiv.
1769 Stanton, *Prince*, 142.
1770 Stanton, *Prince*, 199.
1771 Barry, Dan, *NYT*, 4/3/2001, "Providence Mayor Indicted on Racketeering Charges."
1772 Stanton, *Prince*, xi.
1773 Stanton, *Prince*, 87-88, 148, 187.
1774 Stanton, *Prince*, 148.
1775 Stanton, *Prince*, 163-4.
1776 Stanton, *Prince*, 157.
1777 Stanton, *Prince*, 325.
1778 Stanton, *Prince*, 138.
1779 Stanton, *Prince*, 210.
1780 Stanton, *Prince*, xii.
1781 Stanton, *Prince*, 37.
1782 Stanton, *Prince*, 314-5.
1783 Klitgaard, *Cities*, 8.
1784 Stanton, *Prince*, 373.
1785 Barry, Dan, *NYT*, 4/19/2001, "Colorful Mayor of Providence Finds Comedy in Indictment."
1786 Stanton, *Prince*, 209.
1787 Stanton, *Prince*, 223-4.
1788 Stanton, *Prince*, 222-3.
1789 Stanton, *Prince*, 220-1.
1790 Stanton, *Prince*, 138,155.
1791 Stanton, *Prince*, 258.
1792 Stanton, *Prince*, 260.
1793 Stanton, *Prince*, 341, 370-1.
1794 Stanton, *Prince*, 383-4
1795 Glaeser and Goldin ("Corruption and Reform: Introduction," 11-2, in Glaeser, *Corruption*), in making this point, observed that "{t}oday, perhaps 80 percent of public corruption prosecutions are brought by federal officials."
1796 Rose-Ackerman, *Corruption*.