The Trouble with Thomas Nast

Baird Jarman
Carleton College
Thomas Nast, photograph by Matthew Brady, c. 1858

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution
Undated signed photograph,  
New Ulm Art Collection

Albert Bigelow Paine

American Author and Editor
Undated signed photograph, New Ulm Art Collection

New York: The Macmillan Company (1904), 1st edition

Th: Nast.
His Period and His Pictures
by
Albert Bigelow Paine

Albert Bigelow Paine.
American Author and Editor.
Dr. Nicholas Stone—Pathologist of Recidivism

The August

PEARSON'S

N. S. EDITION. No. 4. Price 10 Cents

Nast and the Tweed Ring by Albert Bigelow Paine

This "beards" that headed the Tweed victory at the Rochester Democratic Convention, October, 1871

STORIES BY

Norman Duncan
A. Sarah Kumar-Ghosh
The Duke of Argyll 
K. & Heseketh Prichard

New York: The Macmillan Company (1904), 1st edition

THY NAST.

His Period and His Pictures

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Pearson's Magazine (August 1904)
"Mark Twain and Mr. Paine at Billiards"
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...it is a mistake to let anyone else write about Mark Twain, as long as we can prevent it. As soon as this is begun... the Mark Twain that we have “preserved” — the Mark Twain that we knew, the traditional Mark Twain —
...it is a mistake to let anyone else write about Mark Twain, as long as we can prevent it.... As soon as this is begun... the Mark Twain that we have “preserved”—the Mark Twain that we knew, the traditional Mark Twain—will begin to fade and change, and with that process the Harper Mark Twain property will depreciate.
Th: Nast. His Period and His Pictures
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The life of Thomas Nast was lived throughout with an unselfishness of purpose and a moral purity seldom equaled.
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The life of Thomas Nast was lived throughout with an unselfishness of purpose and a moral purity seldom equaled. He was in the fullest sense the arch enemy of evil in every form, never letting pass an opportunity to strike it down.... His friends were among the heroes and benefactors of mankind.
Nast cartoons, because of his marked ability at portrait-caricature, were nearly always personal in emphasis. Fortunately for him the presidential elections from 1864 to 1884 centered on personalities rather than on complex issues and thus were tailored to his abilities. When the candidate’s personality was well defined, as was true of Greeley or of Blaine, Nast was at his very best. With colorless figures like Garfield and Hancock, he had more difficulty, but partly overcame it by making these candidates the symbols of their party’s virtues and vices.

Through 1876 he was especially blessed in the continuance of Civil War fervor—loyalty to the Union and hatred of treason. “Scratch a Rebel and you find a Democrat” was a standard Republican slogan. Robert Ingersoll, the most famous orator of his day, caught the popular mood in the North when the Republican convention of 1876 cheered fading out of the public view. He could not make clever comments on everyday manners and morals; oratory rather than small talk was his forte. When the public tired of his martial airs, he was unable to take up chamber music. His art depended on a public incensed over issues; losing that, he fell into comparative obscurity.

Nast was at the zenith of his powers in 1872. His fierce impatience with clearly discernible foes was matched by a direct, uncluttered drawing style of explosive impact. Wholly wrapped up in his work, he turned out drawings at an amazing rate, producing more than 150 for Harper’s during the year. He was always at his best in times of crises; events of national interest elicited his finest efforts. A number of drawings still dealt with the Tweed Ring, but Nast’s major interest in 1872 was Grant’s bid for re-election as President. This campaign was Nast’s greatest in the role of President-maker.

As a political cartoonist, Thomas Nast wielded more influence than any other artist of the nineteenth century.

As a political cartoonist, Thomas Nast wielded more influence than any other artist of the nineteenth century. He not only enthralled a vast audience with boldness and wit, but swayed it time and again to his personal position on the strength of his visual imagination.
Rollin Kirby on the cover of *American Artist* (June 1940)
Too many persons generally read only such papers as exploit their own opinions, so that whatever the cartoonist may say usually fits into and fortifies their own convictions and prejudices.
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Too many persons generally read only such papers as exploit their own opinions, so that whatever the cartoonist may say usually fits into and fortifies their own convictions and prejudices. As such, they can have no great influence, for they simply confirm opinions already formed. It would be an interesting experiment for, say, a right-wing paper to print a left-wing cartoon occasionally, or vice versa, in an unheard-of effort to present both sides of the question.
"I Wish I Was in Dixie!," Southern Illustrated News (27 Feb. 1864)
Joseph Keppler, “The Dead, the Dying and the Crippled in the Credit Mobilier Ward of the Union Pacific Hospital,” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper (15 Feb. 1873)
TH: NAST.

His Period
And
His Pictures

by

ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

New York: The Macmillan Company
(1904), first edition
They did not follow public events, but preceded them.
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They did not follow public events, but preceded them. They did not echo public sentiment, but led it. They did not strive to please the readers, but to convince them.

Livingston Hopkins, Caricature of Edward Jump, *Wild Oats* (1876)
Edward Jump, *Saturday Afternoon at Frank Leslie’s*, lithograph, 1868, New York Public Library
Edward Jump, *Saturday Afternoon at Frank Leslie's*, lithograph, 1868, New York Public Library
Alfred Waud, Sketch of Thomas Nast as Sol Eytinge’s dog, 1861, Thomas Butler Gunn Diaries (Volume 16, page 127), Missouri Historical Society
Frank Bellew, “Behind the Scene’s at Niblo’s,” Comic Monthly (April 1860), front cover

Thomas Nast, “The Impresario—Ullman,” Comic Monthly (April 1860), back cover
Thomas Nast at his Desk, c. 1880, photograph, Museum of the City of New York
It is impossible to look at this work of his in the light of what had preceded it, and of what has come after it, and not say that Nast stands by himself, the creator of a school which not only began but ended with him.
The Origin of American Cartoon Symbols
By Albert Bigelow Paine

When the Elephant was first used to symbolize the Republican Party, in 1874, the Democratic Donkey came into prominence. When the Republican party was first in power, it was the custom to place the symbols of the two parties in a procession, in order to show the difference between them. The Republican party was represented by the elephant, and the Democratic party by the donkey. In the procession, the elephant was always placed in front, and the donkey was always placed in the rear. The symbols were used by the cartoonists to express their opinions of the parties. When the Republican party was in power, the donkey was always represented as being oppressed by the elephant. When the Democratic party was in power, the elephant was always represented as being oppressed by the donkey. The symbols were used by the cartoonists to express their opinions of the parties.

The Motley Tribe's Domestic Extremes as a Political Symbol
From a cartoon by Thomas Nast: Published in Harper's Weekly, June 21, 1873.

Motoring Through Crown Lands
By Sydney Brooks

The Birth of the Roosevelt Teddy Bear
From a cartoon by Thomas Nast: Published in Harper's Weekly, January 12, 1883.
There can be no national cartoon until some pictorial Cadmus invents those symbols which are its alphabet.
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There can be no national cartoon until some pictorial Cadmus invents those symbols which are its alphabet. The American cartoon alphabet is particularly rich in its character emblems, and Thomas Nast was its chief creator.... The work of creating a national art, even to inventing its fundamentals, was in his hands.
John Hill, *Interior of the Carpenter’s Shop at Forty Hill, Enfield*, c. 1800, Tate Gallery, oil painting, probably exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1813
Getty Research Institute
1864 campaign broadside, *Platforms Illustrated*, probably published in Boston by L. Prang
1864 campaign broadside published in New York by M. W. Siebert

UNION AND LIBERTY! AND UNION AND SLAVERY!

Published by M. W. Siebert, Printer, 33 Centre Street, Corner Halsey, N.Y.
Union and Liberty! AND Union and Slavery!

Published by M. W. Siebert, Printer, 23 Centre Street, Corner Brooks, N.Y.
Joseph Keppler, “Triumph of the Young Elephants,” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper (7 Nov. 1874)

Thomas Nast, “The Third-Term Panic,” Harper’s Weekly (7 Nov. 1874)

GENERAL GRANT.—I've rented this house from the Thursday, and if you don't evacuate the premises by 12 o'clock, I'll take possession by main force, for during the last three years you've been most tardy.
THE CONCRETE IRON-PLATED STEAMER MERRIMAC (OR VIRGINIA) RUNNING CUMBERLAND, FROM A SKETCH BY T. SAST.
HUNTERS OF KENTUCKY.

HALF ALLIGATOR.

By & retailed by J. G. & H. Hunt, at their Book & Variety Store, 2 Monroe St. Wharf & Head Cos. Wharf.

Ye gentlemen and ladies fair, Who grace this famous city, Just listen, if you're true to me, While I entreat a story; For the opportunity Convey yourselves quite busy, For 'tis not often that you see A hunter from Kentucky. 0 Kentucky, the hunters of Kentucky! We are a handy, free-born race, Each man to keep a stranger; Whatever the foe we put in chase, Deception time and danger; And it's daring we answer, Whatever his strength and force, We'll show them that Kentucky boys Are alligator hunters. 0 Kentucky, 0 Kentucky.

I suppose you've read it in the prints How Judah was attempted To make old Hickory Jackson wise, But soon his scheme repaid; For we, with rifles ready could, Thought such occasions lucky And soon around the general fickle The hunters of Kentucky. 0 Kentucky, 0 Kentucky.

You've heard, I suppose, how New Orleans Is famed for wealth and beauty, There's girls of every hue, it seems, From snowy white to nutty, But Judah he made his girls, If in fight was lucky, He'd have their girls and cotton too, In spite of old Kentucky. 0 Kentucky, 0 Kentucky.

But Jackson he was wide awake, And was not routed at all; For he knew what aim we took With our Kentucky rifles. So he led us down to Cypress swamp, The ground was now and then swampy; Threw down John Bull in martialump, And here was old Kentucky. 0 Kentucky, 0 Kentucky.

A bank was raised to hide our breasts, Not that we thought of dying But that we always like to rest. Unless the game is flying. Behind it stood our little force, None wished it to be greater. For every man was half a hunter And half an alligator. 0 Kentucky, 0 Kentucky.

They did not let our patience fire Before they showed their faces; We did not choose to waste our fire So simply kept our places. But when in sight we saw them wind, We thought it time to stop you, And I would have done you good, I think, Toone Kentuckyan dropped in, 0 Kentucky, 0 Kentucky.

They found, at last, it was vain to fight Where land was all the beauty, And so they wisely took to flight, And left us all our beauty, And now, if danger she annoys, Kentucky what our trade is, Just send for us Kentucky boys, And we'll protect ye, ladies.

P. 4
CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

An understanding of civic ideals and practices is critical to full participation in society and is an essential component of education for citizenship, which is the central purpose of social studies. All people have a stake in examining civic ideals and practices across time and in different societies. Through an understanding of both ideals and practices, it becomes possible to identify gaps between them, and study efforts to close the gaps in our democratic republic and worldwide.
John Tenniel, “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” printed 1872, V&A
John Tenniel, “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” printed 1872, V&A
Alfred Waud, c. 1865, cvd, Matthew Brady

Thomas Nast, c. 1862, cdv, Matthew Brady

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution
The Republican elephant made its first appearance in this 1874 cartoon by Thomas Nast. A fox in the bottom right corner represents the Democratic party. Credit: Kean Collection/Archive Photos/Getty Images
How the parties got their animal symbols

*The Third-term Panic* by Thomas Nast, published in 1874 by Harper's Weekly, on a possible third term by President Ulysses S. Grant. (CBS News) Did you ever wonder about just what was behind two famous party animals?
The Birth of the Dinner-pail Symbol
FROM A CARTOON BY THOMAS NAST, ENTITLED "WOMEN WILL NEVER BE STATEMEN," PUBLISHED IN HARPER'S WEEKLY FOR OCTOBER 16, 1890

The First Appearance of the Labor Cap
FROM A CARTOON BY THOMAS NAST, ENTITLED "THE AMERICAN TWINS," PUBLISHED IN HARPER'S WEEKLY FOR FEBRUARY 7, 1874

With the inauguration of the Greeley Presidential boom the Donkey came into use again, this time as Democracy rebelliously yoked with an ox, the latter representing Mr. Greeley's Republican supporter. This ox did not satisfy Nast and was not used again. The Tiger continued to stalk through the Harper pages, and here and there the Donkey appeared, but no device emblematic of the Republican party as a whole appealed to Nast sufficiently for him to give it expression. Other cartoonists—there were now several—apparently did not attempt to originate. Though still young in years, Nast was considered the dean of his art—the fountain-head—and his inventions were adopted as a matter of course. The Donkey and the Tiger and others as they came along were regarded as common property, quite as much so as Columbia and Uncle Sam.

But while the Republican party still remained without a symbol, there was no lack of other inventions. A plan for expansion of the currency in 1873 brought out the Inflation Baby, a figure that zooms up on its own body until it bursts. It was a striking conception, but Nast did not continue its use, perhaps because the Inflation Baby was quite as expressive and seemed to have lost much of its superiority, entailing it to a certain extent a certain extent.

HARPER'S WEEKLY
and so put to shame and ignore the parsimonious legislators who had been responsible for the conditions. The army and navy were duly grateful for that invention and his continued crusade in their behalf, and five years later, under improved conditions, expressed their obligation in a memorial silver vase, "The gift of 5000 widgets and enlister men."

But it was not until the latter part of 1871 (November 7) that Nast's third great party symbol, the Republican Elephant, became a property of the American cartoon. For a year or more the New York "Herald" had been keeping up an outcry against Grant and the possibility of a "third term" under the general head of "Cesarianide." Nast had ridiculed this scare in several ways, and had in turn been ridiculed by the "Herald." It seems unlikely, now, that Mr. Bennett really took any stock in the idea of imperialism, and with his characteristic fondness of a box was waving the bugle, merely to see how many people would take fright at the absurd notion.

Nevertheless, the cry of Cesarianide did find an echo here and there, even among the Republican press, and this fact Nast made the subject of a cartoon. He depicted the "Herald" as an ape in a lion's skin frightening a group of other animals with its noisy braying. In the center, the "Republican Vote" grows a big, unwieldly, and rather timid, is depicted as a huge clumsy elephant on the brink of a pitfall. Democracy, for the moment represented as a fox, slightly suggesting that of Samuel J. Tilden, is eagerly waiting the catastrophe, which, as told by the pictures, occurred presently, for the Elephant had now disappeared into the pitfall, then slowly climbing out again; hanging on at last by the very tip of his trunk, finally to become victorious once more, and happy. That was the first story told by the Elephant in the political cartoon. The symbol continued to be labelled "The Republican Vote, the "Republican Party," and finally the "Grand Old Party," shortened to "G. O. P." Like the others of Nast's symbols, it was adopted by his brother illustrators, and scarcely a day has gone by in the thirty-four years that have elapsed since then that these pictures have not been found lurking in some humble forming in some attitude suggestive of conditions or possibilities.

There was not the need of many symbols after that. In 1880 (October 15) Nast drew the "Workman's Dinner Pail" full and empty, as indicative of conditions present and possible in the days to-day, and then, for him at least, the cartoon alphabet was complete. In later years, C. G. Rush added the "Father Knickerbocker" to personify New York city, and both Mr. Oppen and Mr. Davenport have given us figures of the trusts, though these are usually reserved for individuals rather than common properties, and have not been much appropriated by other men. Mr. Oppen's "Common People" is also of his making. Nast's "Republican Vote" was commissioned to illustrate Dr. Clement C. Moore's already famous "Night Before Christmas," and remember that one "Pelez-Nickei" (Pur-Nicholas) of his German childhood, adapted him to Dr. Moore's lines, and so gave us the merrily old fellow clad in fur, with his cap and boots and short pipe and his bag of toys. This figure at once became a favorite, and the illustrated publications of Harper & Brothers, and the McLoughlin toy-books, which Nast also illustrated, gave it circulation throughout America, while English and German publications reproduced the picture abroad. Nast located the home of Santa Claus at the North Pole, and gave him a spy-glass through which he could pick out the good and bad children during the year, and provided him with a huge hook in which to record their names. The Nast Santa Claus with these attributes became the true Santa Claus, and is likely to remain so.

That the party symbols will survive has been demonstrated. They are the body, bones, and blood of the American cartoon. It is impossible to visualize the Republican party without thinking of the Elephant, the Democratic party without the Donkey, the Labor party without the Labor Cap, etc.