

Political Tompkins

Presidential Elections
in Tompkins County
Since 1828

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Tompkins County Historical Commission

The Tompkins County Historical Commission was created by Resolution of the Tompkins County Legislature on August 7, 2018 to advise the Legislature on all historical matters relevant to Tompkins County including commemorations, events, monuments, historical publications, and grant opportunities.

The Commission is composed of a diverse group of community members who have an academic, professional, or personal interest in local history. Among its many initiatives, the Commission encourages, sponsors, and publishes manuscripts such as this pamphlet that are intended shed new light on unique aspects of the County's history.

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Preface

When I arrived in Tompkins County in 2008 to take the job of County Administrator, the liberalism of the area was a defining element of its identity. In fact, my going away gag gifts from my previous job in nearby Onondaga County were a pair of Birkenstock sandals and a tie-dyed T-shirt. I soon learned, however, that politics in Tompkins weren't always so Democratic or progressive. There was a time when the City of Ithaca and the County were among the most "rock-ribbed" Republican places in America. Moreover, the change from "red" to "blue" was relatively recent—well within my lifetime.

The essay that follows began as a statistical tabulation intended to occupy a few days of the new cloistered era of the COVID-19 pandemic and satisfy my curiosity about the transformation of political preferences in Tompkins County. The plan was to track the results of presidential elections from 1828—the first time New York State engaged voters in the presidential election decision—through the 2020 election, plot the trend lines to see when major shifts in partisanship occurred, and then move on to other stay-at-home pursuits.

Despite the enormity of data available on the internet, I quickly found that the county-by-county results of presidential elections prior to the late 1990's were not easily available via a keystroke. With navigational help from Tompkins County Historian Carol Kammen and the indispensable assistance of Jim Folts at the New York State Archive who ultimately found tabulations of every presidential election through 2012, the statistical foundation was laid.

I've always believed that if the right numbers are looked at in the right way, a story emerges. With election results compiled and tracked, the story of the evolution of political preferences in the County became clearer and often far different than I would have expected. The fact that Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton won landslide victories over Donald Trump

was not surprising, but Franklin Roosevelt's successive 30-point losses to four different Republican candidates was. Even Richard Nixon did much better against John Kennedy in Tompkins than in the six neighboring, and presumably more conservative, rural counties.

The statistics begged answers to why voters changed their preferences at certain times and not others; when voting patterns in Tompkins diverged from the mainstream; what developments at the local level might presage changes that would later affect the outcome of presidential elections; and how major electoral events, such as women's suffrage and the lowering of the voting age, might have affected election results.

This essay attempts to shed light on those questions. While context for the elections is provided, it is only to give the reader a glimpse of the personalities and factors in the environment that may have contributed to the local response to specific candidates. A scholarly assessment of the myriad factors influencing the politics of a specific time and place is beyond the scope of this work and the talents of this writer. Speculations about factors that have contributed to the partisan leanings of the County are also shared. These should be taken only as the observations of one who has gained some familiarity with the political environment through a long career in local government, and not the disciplined work of a political scientist.

Much of the research is based on articles and editorials in the various iterations of the *Ithaca Journal* that date back to 1828 and, thanks to the Tompkins County Historical Commission and Cornell University, are accessible online. Unfortunately, access to other papers and documents was severely limited by restrictions resulting from the Covid pandemic.

My hope is only to preserve data that might otherwise be difficult to access and provide a bit of insight into the unique political history and character of Tompkins County, including how it evolved from one of the "reddest" areas of the nation to one of the "bluest" of the blue. — **Joe Mareane**

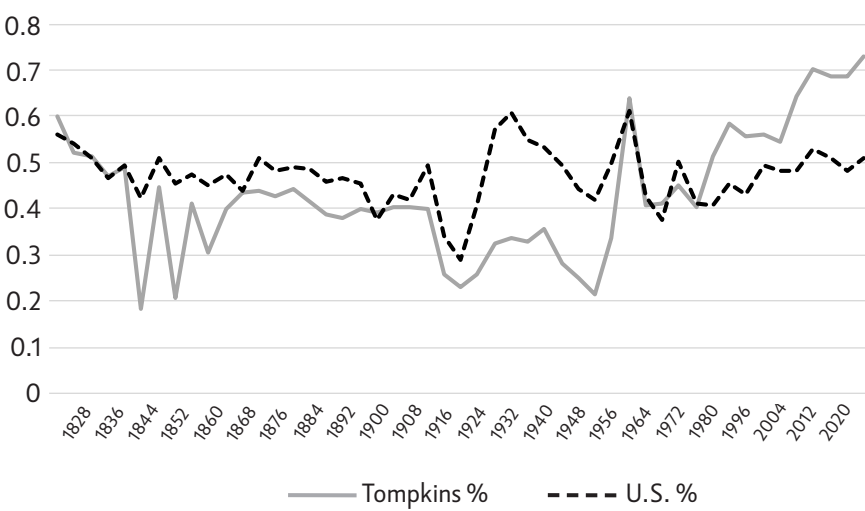
Introduction

In 2020, Democratic presidential candidate Joseph Biden defeated his Republican opponent, incumbent President Donald Trump, with 51% of the national vote. In a relatively close, and historically controversial election that occurred during a raging global pandemic, Trump drew strength from small, relatively homogeneous, rural areas; Biden from heavily populated and diverse urban centers.

Tompkins County—a community of 102,000 residents scattered across some 400 square miles in the rural Finger Lakes region of Upstate New York—was an exception to that rule. In Tompkins, Trump was defeated in a landslide of overwhelming proportions. Almost three quarters of the voters supported former Vice President Biden. Within the City of Ithaca, Donald Trump could muster only 7% of the vote.

Biden’s plurality in Tompkins was the largest of any county in New York State outside the City of New York, and one of the largest in the nation. It

Support for Democratic Presidential Candidate,
Tompkins County and U.S., 1828 - 2020



came a generation after Republicans had virtually ceded Ithaca City Hall to Democrats and, more recently, Democrats had held towering majorities in the rural/suburban-dominated County Legislature and town offices.

By any yardstick, Tompkins County is today a Democratic stronghold and liberal island in a sea of conservative Upstate New York counties.

But that wasn't always so.

Historically, Democratic presidential candidates have fared poorly in Tompkins County. In fact, beginning with Republican John Frémont's run in 1856 and continuing through the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, Democratic candidates lost 29 out of 31 presidential elections in Tompkins, many of them by landslides.¹

And while the Democratic Party platform has not always reflected liberal social and economic policies, the Party's sharp turn toward progressivism in the 1920's and 1930's did nothing to sway voters in Tompkins. Joseph Biden's 2020 margin was huge, but no better than that received by Republican Calvin Coolidge in 1924 and smaller than Eisenhower's victory in 1956. In nine of ten presidential elections between 1920 and 1960, the Republican margin of victory in Tompkins County exceeded thirty percent.

Throughout the early and middle years of the 20th century, when it came to presidential elections, the County was just as far to the conservative end of the spectrum as it is to the liberal end today.

Although Tompkins County generally followed the political path of its Upstate neighbors during its first hundred years, voting trends over the course of its second century reveal a politically contrarian community—voting for conservative candidates when the nation was turning more liberal, and for liberal candidates when the country was becoming more conservative.

The path from Jacksonian democracy, through more than a century of support for an ever-more conservative Republican Party, to today's dominance by the Democratic Party can be traced by following the results of presidential elections, with a few side trips along the way to follow developments at the local level. Over the following pages, the results of every presidential election since the popular vote was instituted in 1828 are laid out along with some concluding thoughts about how the political hue of Tompkins County has gone from one of the reddest of the red to among the bluest of the blue.

The Jacksonian Years

Although passionate about their politics, residents of Tompkins County had no say in choosing their nation's leaders in the first two presidential elections following the County's 1817 founding. Presidents were selected by the Electoral College and, in New York State, representatives to the Electoral College were appointed by the State Legislature.

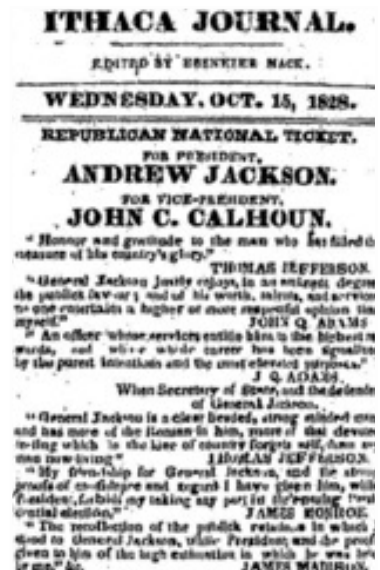
In 1828, local voters had their first opportunity to express support for a presidential candidate—either the incumbent, John Quincy Adams or his 1824 rival General Andrew Jackson—at the ballot box, albeit indirectly by the selection of representatives to the Electoral College who supported their preferred candidate. At a time when the Tompkins County population was approaching 36,000, the election drew nearly 5,400 voters.

Participation and, most likely, candidate preference were influenced by unabashedly partisan *Ithaca Journal and General Advertiser*, the community's primary source of news and connection to the outside world.² For months before the election, the *Journal* devoted many of its news stories, and nearly all its editorial commentary, to support Jackson's candidacy. Adams was tarred as an aristocratic New England "sectarian" who had stolen the 1824 election from Jackson; Jackson was praised for his

military heroism, support of the “American system” of protectionism, and populist bent. (As national politics polarized around Jackson and his opposition, two parties grew out of the old Republican Party—the Democratic Republicans, or Democrats, adhering to Jackson; and the National Republicans, or Whigs, opposing him).³ For weeks prior to the national election—and placed directly beneath its masthead—the *Journal* featured a list of favored Democratic office seekers, beginning with Jackson for President, followed by testimonials from Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and, surely with some delight, his opponent John Q. Adams. Local support for Jackson ran deep. In the presidential election year of 1828, seven of the ten town supervisors (including Hector) who comprised the County’s Board of Supervisors were said to be in Jackson’s camp.⁴

The 1828 election was a rout, both in Tompkins County and across the nation. Jackson and his new Democratic Party took 60% of the County’s votes, even larger than his 56% nationwide support over Adams, the incumbent. Elsewhere in New York, support for Jackson was more tepid. He barely won the State, defeating Adams by just 2%, and could finish in no better than a tie in the Upstate counties outside New York City.

Jackson had served only two years in office when the *Journal* found his performance in the White House so praiseworthy it issued a strong editorial endorsement of a second term—fully two years before the next presidential election.⁵



Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1828 & 1832

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1828	Democratic	Jackson	60%	50%	51%	56%
	National Republican	Adams	40%	50%	49%	44%
1832	Democratic	Jackson	52%	51%	52%	54%
	National Republican	Clay	48%	49%	48%	37%
	Anti-Masonic	Wirt	0%	0%	0%	8%

By 1832, however, local ardor for Jackson had cooled a bit and the small gap between the election results in Tompkins County and the rest of the nation had narrowed even farther. Jackson beat Henry Clay with 52% of the vote in Tompkins County, slightly less than his 54% nationwide. Jackson took majorities in the towns of Caroline, Dryden, Ithaca, Lansing, and Newfield; losing Danby, Groton, Enfield, Hector, and Ulysses.⁶

In the national balloting, an Anti-Masonic Party candidate, former Attorney General William Wirt, won eight percent of the national vote, siphoning a portion of the anti-Jackson vote away from Clay. The Party arose from conspiracy theories regarding the secretive Masonic society and its purported control of the wheels of power, including government. Although the Anti-Masonic movement's roots were in Upstate, the Party was not on the 1832 presidential ballot in New York State. Had it been, Wirt might have fared well in Tompkins, as did his Party's candidates for local office. In 1831, at the peak of their local power and temporary political home for many who opposed Jackson's Democrats, eight of ten town supervisors were elected on the Anti-Masonic ticket. (The Party's presence soon receded in Tompkins and the rest of the country as the Whig Party emerged as the primary source of opposition to Jacksonian Democrats.)

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1836-1844

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1836	Democratic	Van Buren	51%	55%	55%	51%
	Whig	Harrison	49%	45%	45%	37%
	Whig	White	0%	0%	0%	10%
1840	Democratic	Van Buren	47%	48%	48%	47%
	National Republican	Harrison	53%	52%	51%	53%
1844	Democratic	Polk	49%	49%	49%	50%
	Whig	Clay	47%	48%	48%	48%
	Liberty	Birney	4%	4%	3%	2%

The close symmetry between national and local voting patterns seen in 1828 and 1832 continued for the next twenty years. Tompkins voted like the rest of America. Jackson's Democratic successor, Martin Van Buren, took 51% of the vote in both Tompkins and across the country in 1836. When the nation vented its frustration with a bad economy by turning out Van Buren in favor of Whig William Henry Harrison in 1840, Tompkins came along. Harrison won 53% of the vote in Tomkins County and nationwide, breaking the string of Democratic presidential victories. (Harrison died after only 37 days in office, succeeded by his Vice President John Tyler.)

In 1844, four years after losing the White House to the Whigs, voters in Tompkins County and across the country returned to the Democratic fold, electing James Knox Polk—again by nearly identical margins. As a sign of things to come, however, the abolitionist Liberty Party took 4% of the vote in Tompkins County in 1844, double the support it received elsewhere in the nation.

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1848-1852

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1848	Democratic	Cass	18%	23%	25%	43%
	Whig	Taylor	43%	47%	48%	47%
	Free Soil	Van Buren	38%	30%	26%	10%
1852	Democratic	Pierce	45%	49%	50%	51%
	Whig	Scott	44%	46%	45%	44%
	Free Soil	Hale	11%	6%	5%	5%

Pre-Civil War Years: Free Soil and the Beginning of a Republican Century in Tompkins County

By 1848, forces were pulling Tompkins County in a different direction than the nation as a whole and, to a lesser degree, the rest of New York State. In that year, a new Free Soil Party emerged with a platform focused on curtailing the expansion of slavery into the western territories. Former New York Governor and one-term President Martin Van Buren broke away from the Democratic Party to run as the Free Soil candidate, securing a respectable 10% of the national vote in an election won by Whig candidate Zachary Taylor. As well as Van Buren did nationwide, his success in Tompkins was nothing short of spectacular. Aided by the *Journal's* departure from its Democratic tradition by its endorsement of Van Buren (although under the Democratic banner), the Free Soil candidate's 38% showing in Tompkins remains today the strongest third party showing in the County's history.⁷ The Democratic Party, dominant in the County for twenty years, finished a distant third, with Michigan Senator Lewis Cass fetching only 18% of the County's vote. In an election that was largely about slavery and, in turn, the control of Congress, most of the County's Democrats abandoned their long-held party loyalties to register their opposition to its expansion.

The 1848 election signaled the beginning of a sea change in Tompkins County that would shape its political landscape for generations.

The Compromise of 1850, intended to limit the expansion of slavery into new territories, temporarily tamped down the passions that had spawned the Free Soil Party. Voters returned to the Democrats in 1852, giving Franklin Pierce a comfortable win nationwide, but a narrow victory in Tompkins, where the *Journal* came back to the Democrats with a lukewarm endorsement of Pierce. Local results were skewed by continuing support for the Free Soil platform, with candidate John Hale receiving 11% of the vote in Tompkins County—double his support in the rest of the state and nation.

Pierce's narrow victory in 1852 marked an important milestone in Tompkins County. It was the last time a Democratic candidate would win in Tompkins County for sixty years. In fact, until 1984, the only Democratic candidates to take Tompkins County would be Woodrow Wilson in 1912 and Lyndon Johnson in 1964.⁸

**1852 was the last time
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County for sixty years.**

Between the 1852 and 1856 presidential elections, the foreshocks of seismic political change were becoming increasingly frequent in Tompkins County and across the country. Beyond the sectional conflict over slavery, ethnic pol-

itics were influencing party allegiance and elections. Locally, 1,184 Irish immigrants had come to the County by 1855. Catholic and generally opposed to the growing call for temperance laws, the Irish gravitated to the Democratic Party.

Reflecting the political influence of ethnicity, the Whigs catapulted from a minority on the Ithaca Village Board to holding a six-to-one majority in 1852 and 1853, only to be displaced when nativist, anti-Catholic Know Nothing candidates took every seat on the Board in the 1855 election and held control of the Village through 1859. The County Board of Supervisors was not spared this volatility. The Democrats' seven-to-two edge in

1852 was overturned in the 1853 elections when seven Temperance Party candidates were elected to the Board. In one of the most unusual County races on record, the winning Supervisors in 1855 ran under the banners of: Maine (temperance) Law/Anti-Know Nothing; Anti-Maine Law/Democratic; Maine Law/Temperance; Know Nothing; Maine Law/Democratic; and Anti-Maine Law/Know Nothing.⁹ Adding to the chaos, the *Journal* accused some of the Anti-Know Nothing candidates to be Know Nothing candidates in disguise.

Change was in the air at the State level, too. In 1854, the American (Know Nothing) Party candidate for Governor, Daniel Ullmann, barely lost his bid to become Governor, finishing close behind Whig Myron Clark and the incumbent, Democrat Horatio Seymour. Ullmann ran away with the election in Tompkins County, beating runner-up Clark by 16%. The next year, Know Nothings handily took statewide races for Secretary of State and Attorney General, winning in Tompkins County and throughout the State.

However, a new Republican Party was also emerging from this cauldron of ethnic, sectional, economic, and moral tensions. In 1855, Republicans took 14 of 26 seats in the New York State Senate and 41 of 117 in the Assembly. In the Spring of 1856, Lemuel Jennings of Lansing and Charles Chapman of Groton became the first Republicans elected as Town Supervisors, joining a Democrat and six Know Nothings on the Tompkins County Board of Supervisors.¹⁰

By the 1856 presidential election, American politics had taken on a dangerously bellicose air, as divisions within and between the North and South deepened. The Missouri Compromise had unraveled, re-opening the question of the geographical bounds of slavery. The disbanding of the Whig Party created a void filled by the new Republican Party whose platform was unambiguous in its opposition to the expansion of slavery. The Democratic Party had become increasingly aligned with the South and

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1856

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1856	Democratic	Buchanan	21%	29%	33%	45%
	Republican	Frémont	58%	52%	46%	33%
	American (KN)	Fillmore	21%	20%	21%	22%

slavery. Democrats had the clout to dominate Washington and dictate national policy.

On July 16, 1856, less than four months before the election and after weeks of faithful editorial advocacy of the Democratic presidential candidate James Buchanan, the *Journal* suddenly, shockingly, and inexorably severed an allegiance to the Democratic Party that had, with just one exception, extended to the time of Jackson. Devoting most of its front page (which was usually reserved for news of the world) and its Page Three editorial platform to attacking the Democratic slaveholding “oligarchy” that controlled Washington and was driving the expansion of slavery westward, the *Journal* implored its readers to support Republican John Frémont.^{11 12}

And that they did. In a major show of force for the candidate of a new Republican Party, a “great mass meeting” attended by an estimated 10,000-12,000 Frémont supporters—replete with glee clubs, marching bands, and Frémont banners—gathered in front of the Session House of the Presbyterian church on October 21 to hear Henry Ward Beecher speak about “Frémont and Freedom.”¹³ Two weeks later, voters in Tompkins and, to a lesser degree, all of New York State, turned sharply away from their historic loyalty to the Democrats. Frémont gained fully 58% of the vote in Tompkins County—the most of any presidential candidate of any party since Jackson’s first run. With this vote, a commanding majority of County residents left no doubt about their strong opposition

to the expansion of slavery and the shift of political and economic power to slave-holding states.

Yet in the same election and within the same community, over 20% of the County's voters supported favorite son Buffalonian Millard Fillmore, the candidate of the American/Know Nothing Party, matching the level of support elsewhere in the country. On the Friday before the Presidential election, the local American Party faithful burned Frémont in effigy in the public streets of Ithaca.¹⁴ In some respects, this odd partisan dichotomy between the progressives of their time, the Republicans, and the reactionary Know Nothings was predictable given the outcome of local elections that, by 1856, had seen the virtual disappearance of Democrats from local offices, the rapid dominance of the American Party, and the first electoral successes of Republican office seekers.

While Frémont easily took New York State, Democrat James Buchanan won the 1856 presidential election in a landslide, with all his electoral support coming from nineteen states in the south and west.

Lincoln and Grant

Just one week after Buchanan's election, the *Journal* declared:

*"The great contest for **Freedom**, just opened, is to be fought inch by inch from the present time up to the final struggle in 1860; and the Journal will be found on the side of **LIBERTY!**—the advocate of **Free Men and Free Labor!** And opposed to the extension of Slavery over the Free territories of the Great West...Let the watchword still be Free Territory, Free Speech, Free Men, and Frémont."¹⁵*

And so began the battle for 1860.

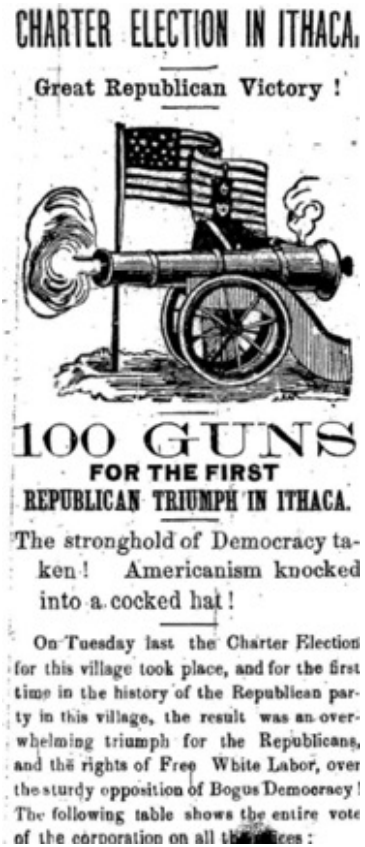
Local sentiment toward Buchanan did not grow warmer after early actions in office revealed the extent of his pro-southern sentiments.¹⁶ Passions regarding the extension of slavery intensified during Buchanan's

single term of office, hardening political loyalties and escalating the partisan rhetoric. The Supreme Court's incendiary Dred Scott decision came in 1857, driving the wedge between north and south even deeper. In early 1858, the once reliable mouthpiece for the Democratic Party, pulled no punches in encouraging its readers to abandon the Democrats, once "the party of enlarged ideas based upon and acting for the good of their country," that had now become "mere tenders and panders to slavery."

The rapid realignment of party loyalties ran deep, as evident in state and local elections. In 1856, on the heels of their initial statewide successes in the 1855 Attorney General and Secretary of State races, the Republican Party elected a Governor and 81 of the 120 members of the Assembly.¹⁷ The Party's success was replayed in 1858, retaining the Governor's Office and overwhelming majorities in the State Legislature.

In the 1858 mid-term congressional elections, a referendum on Buchanan's administration, Republicans gained five seats in the Senate and 26 seats in the House of Representatives; enough to gain a majority in the House.

The Republican momentum was also evident at the local level. In 1859, Republicans didn't hold a single office in the Village of Ithaca. In the Charter (Village) elections in the spring of 1860, Republican candidates nearly swept Village elections, winning two of the three open Ward Trustee seats, the Board Presidency, the Assessor's Office, and two of three Fire Marshall posts.¹⁸ Seven of the nine towns elected Republican



Supervisors, with only the Town of Ithaca supporting an American Party candidate and Enfield a Democrat.¹⁹

The 1860 presidential election mirrored the fragmentation and political breakdown of the nation. The Republicans united behind Abraham Lincoln, who ran on a platform opposing the expansion of slavery. The inability of the Democrats to find a consensus candidate led to Stephen Douglas running as a “popular sovereignty” Northern Democrat and John Breckenridge running as a pro-slavery Southern Democrat. However, in an effort to defeat Lincoln in electoral delegate rich New York State, the Democrats united behind a “Fusion Ticket” led by Douglas. A new Constitutional Union Party, led by John Bell, arose out of the ashes of the Whig and Know Nothing parties with a platform that tried to avoid the slavery issue altogether.

Although Lincoln lost in the Village of Ithaca, the County’s voters again turned out in force for the Republican candidate, giving Lincoln 59% of their votes. Lincoln did equally well across all of Upstate and won New York State despite a dismal showing in New York City. Nationwide, Lincoln was elected with just 40% of the vote—the lowest percentage of any victorious presidential candidate in the country’s history, but enough to beat his two major opponents who split the Democratic vote.

The strong local support for Lincoln and his policies did not translate into sustained Republican domination in local races. In fact, during the war years, local offices in Tompkins County went back-and-forth between Republican (Unionist) and Democratic (Opposition) control, perhaps a reaction to the ups and downs of the war or just the vagaries of local politics. In 1862, Republicans held every seat on the Ithaca Village Board and the County Board of Supervisors. The following year, the Democrats swept Village elections and took three of the nine seats on the County Board. In the spring of 1864 Republicans regained control of the Village Board, then promptly lost their majority in the March elections a year later.

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1860-1872

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1860	Democratic	Douglas (Fusion)	41%	42%	46%	30%
	Democratic (Southern)	Breckinridge	(Fusion)	(Fusion)	(Fusion)	18%
	Republican	Lincoln	59%	58%	45%	40%
	Constitutional Union	Bell	(Fusion)	(Fusion)	(Fusion)	13%
1864	Democratic	McClellan	31%	45%	50%	45%
	Republican	Lincoln	69%	55%	51%	55%
1868	Democratic	Seymour	40%	45%	51%	47%
	Republican	Grant	60%	55%	49%	53%
1872	Democratic	Greeley	44%	43%	47%	44%
	Republican	Grant	56%	57%	53%	56%

By the 1864 presidential election, the war was nearly won and Lincoln's popularity in Tompkins County was never higher. Lincoln received 69% of the Tompkins County vote.²⁰ No presidential candidate had ever done better. In all of New York, only Alleghany and St. Lawrence counties gave Lincoln larger majorities than Tompkins. However, the election also showed a continued sharp division between political sentiments in Upstate and New York City, where Democratic candidate George McClellan crushed Lincoln. Lincoln ultimately won New York State by just 6,749 votes out of 730,721 cast. In the nation's most populous state, tiny Tompkins County accounted for nearly a quarter of Lincoln's total margin of victory. Nationally, Lincoln won the popular vote by 10%, taking 22 of the 25 states then in the Union.

The three tumultuous years following Lincoln's 1865 inauguration, assassination, and end of the war were marked by fierce debates over reconstruction and civil rights. Republicans in Tompkins County who so strongly supported Lincoln's two presidential runs had little use for Andrew Johnson; offended by his conservative policies regarding the

rights of freed slaves and the restoration of the southern governing class to power. Johnson's open opposition to Republican candidates in the 1866 mid-term elections and coziness with Congressional Democrats infuriated local voters.²¹

Perhaps the dissonance between entrenched local loyalty to the Republican Party and the disdain for Johnson can explain the failure of Tompkins' Republicans to consolidate their hold on local offices. In the year after Lincoln's death—an event that might have been expected to galvanize the partisanship of local voters—Democrats made a clean sweep in the village of Ithaca 1866 election, defeating even village trustee candidate Alonzo Cornell.²² Cornell's loss came just a year after his father, Ezra, along with A.D. White, founded Cornell University under the recently-enacted Morrill Land Grant Act.²³ In the same year, the Republican's grip on the County Board of Supervisors slipped to a slim 5-4 majority.

By the time of the 1868 presidential election, President Johnson had been impeached by the House of Representatives and abandoned by Republicans who rallied behind Ulysses Grant. All but three states of the former Confederacy had been restored to the union and were eligible to participate in the federal election.²⁴ Grant won a close national election with 53% of the popular vote over former New York Governor Horatio Seymour. Tompkins County, by now a reliable Republican stronghold, gave Grant 60% of its vote. This time, however, Upstate support for the Republican was not enough to offset the Democrats' downstate domination. New York joined eight other states, including former members of the confederacy Louisiana and Georgia, in supporting Seymour. On the same ballot, Democrats regained control of the New York Governor's Office when John Hoffman defeated incumbent Republican John Griswold and his running mate Alonzo Cornell.

Despite a steady drumbeat of concern about corruption within his administration, Grant was easily elected to a second term by a fully

reunified nation in 1872, soundly defeating newspaper publisher Horace Greeley. For the first time in over a generation, the vote in Tompkins County returned to near perfect alignment with the rest of the nation, with Grant receiving 56% of the vote locally and nationally. Once again, the election revealed the extent of the Upstate/downstate political schism in New York. New York City bucked the national tide and its Upstate neighbors by throwing its support solidly behind Democrat Greeley.

By 1872, the Republicans had also strengthened their hold on local offices, controlling all but one seat on both the Village of Ithaca Board and Tompkins County Board of Supervisors.²⁵ In an unusual blurring of the lines between the press and the governments it covered, *Journal* editor J.H. Selkreg was elected in 1872 to serve a single term as the President of the Ithaca Village Board.

1876-1900: Tompkins Resists the Democrats' Return to National Power

As the Democrats reasserted their dominance in the South—largely by Jim Crow laws that negated black political participation—and held onto their traditional support in the major cities of the North, they became increasingly competitive in presidential elections.

Tompkins County, along with most of Upstate New York, remained steadfastly Republican.

Between 1876 and 1900, presidential races at the national level were nearly always tight and, in 1884, Democrats would regain the White House for the first time since Buchanan's election in 1856. In Tompkins, however, Republican presidential candidates were almost guaranteed a double-digit margin of victory. When local Republicans were not enthusiastic about their Party's candidate, they didn't switch sides to vote for a Democrat, but tended to simply stay home. Upstate New York would remain a Republican stronghold through the balance of the 19th Century.

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1876-1884

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1876	Democratic	Tilden	44%	47%	51%	51%
	Republican	Hayes	55%	53%	48%	48%
1880	Democratic	Hancock	43%	44%	48%	48%
	Republican	Garfield	53%	54%	50%	48%
	Greenback	Weaver	4%	2%	1%	3%
1884	Democratic	Cleveland	44%	44%	48%	49%
	Republican	Blaine	49%	52%	48%	48%
	Greenback	Butler	4%	0%	2%	1%
	Prohibition	St. John	3%	4%	2%	2%

The 1876 presidential election rode a wave of Democratic momentum that had been building since the end of the War. In the mid-term election two years before, the Democrats picked up 93-seats in the House of Representatives, giving them a 69-seat House majority, and nearly won the Senate. With a base of support that included southern whites and the large urban centers of the northeast, the Democrats nominated a northerner, New York Governor Samuel Tilden, as their 1876 presidential candidate to run against the Republicans' compromise candidate, Ohio Governor Rutherford Hayes.

Tilden lost badly in Tompkins County, where Hayes received 55% of the vote—about the same as Grant had received four years before. Still, the Democrat Tilden prevailed in New York State, in the national popular vote, and initially in the electoral college.

In one of the most curious and controversial episodes in American history, Tilden's 19-vote lead in the electoral college was not enough to secure the election. The legitimacy of twenty electoral college votes, all but one from the former confederacy, were called into question. After months of wrangling, an ad hoc commission created by Congress awarded Hayes all twenty of the contested votes and the keys to the White House. It is popularly believed that bargains made during this process (the "Compromise

of 1877”) led to Hayes agreeing to the withdrawal of federal troops from the south and essentially ending reconstruction.

The 1880 election was another barnburner. The Republican convention again ended with a compromise candidate, James Garfield, winning on the 37th ballot after both Ulysses Grant—the Tompkins County favorite for an unprecedented third term—and James Blaine failed to muster enough delegates to win the nomination. In the general election, Tompkins County’s voters came out in force, giving Garfield a comfortable 940-vote victory over Democrat Winfred Hancock—the equivalent of half of Garfield’s razor-thin 1,898 plurality (out of nine million votes cast) in the national popular vote. Although barely winning the popular vote, the concentration of Garfield’s popularity in the populous northern states led to a comfortable electoral college win.

Garfield’s death by an assassin’s bullet just six months after his inauguration brought Chester Arthur into office. Although Arthur turned out to be a pleasant surprise to reformers,²⁶ poor health limited his ability to compete for the Republican nomination and opened the door to a divisive Republican convention in 1884.

Early in the 1884 campaign season, Cornell University President Andrew White’s name was circulated as a potential dark horse Republican presidential candidate, mostly, it seems, by the *Ithaca Daily Journal*. The *Journal* supported White’s advocacy of good-government reforms—espe-

In the 1880 general election, Tompkins County’s voters came out in force, giving Garfield a comfortable 940-vote victory over Democrat Winfred Hancock – the equivalent of half of Garfield’s razor-thin 1,898 plurality (out of nine million votes cast) in the national popular vote.

Votes Cast for President, Tompkins County, 1880-96

Year	Democrat	Republican	Other	Total
1880	3,956	4,896	380	9,232
1884	3,992	4,420	267	8,679
1880-84	36	(476)	(113)	(553)
1888	3,909	5,073	379	9,361
1884-88	(83)	653	112	682
1892	3,404	4,717	692	8,813
1888-92	(505)	(356)	313	(548)
1896	3,506	5,342	352	9,200
1892-96	102	625	(340)	387

cially expanding coverage of the nascent merit-based federal civil service system — and was quick to come to White’s defense when the nearby (Democratic) *Elmira Gazette’s* accused him of the unpardonable sin of opposing tariffs. White was a presence at the convention and was among the Party’s opinion-leaders, but the effort to propel him onto the national ticket did not go far, and the Republicans ultimately nominated Maine Senator James Blaine. The Democrats put up New York Governor Grover Cleveland.

Local support for Blaine was lukewarm. In the 1884 election, Tompkins County remained in the Republican fold but, for the first time since the advent of the Party, failed to deliver a majority for the Republican candidate. Blaine won Tompkins with just 49% of the vote, suggesting a lack of enthusiasm for scandal-prone Blaine coupled with a siphoning of 3% of the County’s votes to Prohibition Party candidate John St. John. Still, voter turnout numbers show the loyalty of local Republicans, even in an election that featured an unpopular candidate. Republicans did not switch their votes to a Democrat, they simply stayed home or registered a protest vote by supporting a third-party candidate. Turnout in the County dropped by almost 6%, or 553 voters, from four years before; nearly all of which came from the Republican column.

Grover Cleveland defeated Blaine to win the 1884 national election, marking the first time since the Civil War that a Democrat occupied the White House. Cleveland, who had served as Mayor of Buffalo and Governor of New York, prevailed in every southern state and much of the eastern seaboard including, barely, New York, where he took the delegate-rich state by only 1,149 votes. Blaine's loss of New York was pivotal. If he'd won the State and its 36 delegates, the Republicans would have retained control of the White House. Once again, Tompkins County had an electoral impact disproportionate to its small size. The 553 local Republicans who sat out the election represented nearly half of Blaine's margin of defeat in New York State.

Local Republicans came back to the polls in the 1888 race between the incumbent Democrat Cleveland and Republican Nominee Benjamin Harrison, giving Harrison a comfortable 12% victory in Tompkins. The local margin was solely a function of turn-out. Harrison attracted 653 more voters than Blaine had four years before, without any apparent cross-over voting by Democrats or increases in the underlying population.²⁷ The combination of a less controversial candidate in Harrison and the unpopularity of Cleveland's advocacy of reduced tariffs helped bring County Republicans back to the voting booth.

Although Cleveland went on to win the national popular vote, he lost to Harrison in the electoral college. Upstate again proved pivotal. Harrison won New York, and with it the presidency, as the result of enough Up-state support to offset losses in the Democratic wards of New York City.²⁸

The 1892 re-match between Cleveland and Harrison failed to excite local voters. The major parties saw local turnout fall by nearly 10%, this time mostly from the Democratic ranks. Some of those voters shifted their support to minor party candidates, while others sat out the election entirely. Still, changes in turnout levels and shifts to minor party candidates didn't threaten the Republican's dominance in Tompkins County.

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1888-1896

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1888	Democratic	Cleveland	42%	44%	48%	49%
	Republican	Harrison	54%	53%	49%	48%
	Prohibition	Fisk	3%	3%	2%	2%
1892	Democratic	Cleveland	39%	43%	49%	46%
	Republican	Harrison	54%	51%	46%	43%
	Prohibition	Bidwell	6%	7%	3%	2%
1896	Democratic	Bryan	38%	34%	39%	47%
	Republican	McKinley	58%	62%	58%	51%
	Prohibition	Leverling	3%	3%	1%	1%

Harrison won with the same 54% he received in the last election, helped by an improved performance in the Town of Ithaca that, in the eyes of the *Ithaca Daily Journal*, was the result of “The anti-Irish element; the McKinley (protectionist tariff) bill; and the veteran soldier vote.”²⁹ The see-saw battle between Upstate and New York City continued in 1892, this time with Cleveland securing an insurmountable downstate majority that produced a victory in New York State and a landslide win in the electoral college.³⁰

As noted, the 1892 election brought out a number of minor party candidates, including the Prohibition Party’s Joseph Bidwell. Although gaining only 2% of the national vote, Bidwell found a respectable level of support throughout Upstate. His 6% in Tompkins County was the best finish for a third-party candidate since Fillmore and the Know Nothings in 1856. In addition to banning liquor, the Party favored a mostly progressive agenda of universal suffrage, the nationalization of railroads, and six-day work week, but also harsh immigration restrictions. Interestingly, rather than drawing voters away from the temperance-minded Republican Party, Bidwell’s gains in Tompkins County seem to have come at the expense of the Democrats who were generally considered more accepting of both immigrants and alcohol.

The 1896 campaign bore an intensity that not been seen since the Civil War. William Jennings Bryan, a charismatic 36-year old ex-congressman, was swept from relative obscurity to the top of the Democratic ticket on the strength of a rousing convention speech. Bryan's "free silver" platform, which promised to increase the money supply constrained by the nation's rigid gold standard, appealed to cash-starved farmers and workers suffering through a prolonged and deep recession. Republicans saw the plan as a prescription for runaway inflation and economic chaos.

Even as the Democrats returned to national power, every Republican presidential candidate since Frémont in 1856 won in Tompkins County, usually by a comfortable margin.

While Free Silver was the rallying cry of the Democrats, underneath that slogan was a more profound difference of world views memorialized in a resolution passed at a gathering of New York City Democrats that framed the election and the grievances that galvanized Bryan's base: "We believe the present contest to be much

more than a struggle between the Democrats and so-called Republican parties, more than silver against gold, and is not a fight of the poor against the rich, nor of labor against capital, nor the farmers against the debtor class; but when sifted and analyzed and stripped from all sophistry, is a battle of the people against the oligarchy of wealth, founded on special privileges."³¹

In response to Bryan's populist message and escalating rhetoric, Republican opinion leaders, including the editors of the *Ithaca Daily Journal*, charged Bryan and his supporters with "... daily uttering doctrines which end in anarchy. They are arousing the lawless passions of men who await only an opportunity to demonstrate the doctrines. The intelligent workmen and farmers are content, whatever their political views, with

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1900-1908

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1900	Democratic	Bryan	40%	39%	44%	46%
	Republican	McKinley	56%	58%	53%	52%
	Prohibition	Wooley	4%	2%	1%	2%
1904	Democratic	Parker	39%	37%	42%	38%
	Republican	Roosevelt	56%	59%	53%	56%
	Prohibition	Swallow	3%	2%	1%	2%
1908	Democratic	Bryan	40%	38%	41%	43%
	Republican	Taft	55%	57%	53%	52%
	Prohibition	Chafin	4%	2%	0%	2%

the orderly remedies of the law. But the ignorant agitator and the fanatic theorist will use the swifter processes of dagger and dynamite.”³²

The campaign style of the two candidates could not have been more different. McKinley chose to follow tradition by not campaigning, letting others speak as his surrogates. Bryan was just the opposite, eager to apply his rhetorical gifts by speaking whenever the train slowed down, and often in front of tens of thousands of ecstatic supporters in venues across the country.

Bryan’s message apparently did not ignite the passions of voters in Upstate, including Tompkins County where he lost by twenty points. McKinley even won New York City—the first time a Republican presidential candidate had ever taken that city.

While class was a major factor, the 1896 national election was ultimately fought along sectional lines. The delegate-rich former Union states of the north and far west secured the election for McKinley. Bryan swept the south and west.

Republican presidential candidates finished the 19th Century undefeated in Tompkins County. Even as the Democrats returned to national power,

every Republican presidential candidate since Frémont in 1856 won in Tompkins County, usually by a comfortable margin.

The new century didn't end that streak. The 1900 election was a re-match between McKinley and Bryan. By then, an improved economy had cooled the nation's political temperature along with Bryan's firebrand appeal. McKinley's popularity remained high in Tompkins County and Upstate, where he took 56% and 58% of the vote, respectively. The traditional political fault line between Upstate and downstate reemerged with the Democrat Bryan winning New York City, but not with enough votes to offset McKinley's Upstate advantage. McKinley was handily re-elected, with several western states that had supported Bryan in 1896 now shifting to the Republican.

His running mate, popular New York Governor Theodore Roosevelt, had been a reluctant candidate for the number two job. The *Ithaca Journal* was fond of "TR" and preferred that he remain in Albany rather than serving in obscurity as McKinley's vice president. As it became clear that Roosevelt was about to be nominated, the *Journal* lamented "Second Place Timber; Vice President Will Probably Be Chosen Today; Roosevelt May Be Doomed."

Less than a year later, McKinley, the last president to have served in the Civil War, was assassinated at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo and Roosevelt was sworn in as the nation's 26th President.

Roosevelt's popularity as President propelled him to a landslide election victory in the 1904 election, defeating Democrat Alton Parker, the Chief Judge of New York State's top court, by an 18% margin in the national popular vote. With strong backing from the *Journal*, Roosevelt won by the same margin in Tompkins. Roosevelt took every state in the north and west (though losing New York City). The election made crystal clear the entrenched political loyalties in Tompkins County,

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1912-1916

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1912	Democratic	Wilson	40%	37%	41%	42%
	Republican	Taft	28%	36%	29%	23%
	Progressive	Roosevelt	26%	22%	25%	27%
	Prohibition	Chafin	5%	4%	1%	1%
1916	Democratic	Wilson	40%	41%	45%	49%
	Republican	Hughes	55%	56%	52%	46%
	Prohibition	Hanley	4%	2%	1%	1%

Comparing the 1900 and 1904 elections reveals much about the level of Republican loyalty in Tompkins at the beginning of the new century. The back-to-back presidential contests featured vastly different candidates, world conditions, national priorities, and even a generational shift in leadership. Yet the results of the elections in Tompkins County were nearly identical. Roosevelt received just five more votes, and Parker 72 less, than their parties' candidates four years earlier. When it came to presidential elections, the Republican grip on Tompkins County, and nearly all of Upstate, was lock tight. The Republicans could count on wide margin of victory in Tompkins and all of Upstate that was often enough to overcome Democratic majorities in New York City.

That political "given" held true in 1908, when the Democrats again put up William Jennings Bryan, this time to run against Roosevelt's hand-picked successor, William Howard Taft. Taft polled 55% of the voters in Tompkins, won every Upstate county save Schoharie, and even escaped New York City with a narrow victory. He went on to a convincing win in the national election.

But the long Republican winning streak in Tompkins County ended with a bang just four years later, in 1912, as the result of Theodore Roosevelt's desire to return to the White House. For the first time since 1852, and the last time until 1964, the Democratic candidate for president won in Tompkins.

Woodrow Wilson's victory came at the end of a tumultuous election year and within a turbulent time. Over the course of the 1912 political season, Democrats took 46 ballots to nominate Wilson; the Republican Party was brought to its knees by a deep schism between conservatives supporting Taft and liberals drawn to Theodore Roosevelt; Roosevelt divorced himself from the Republicans and formed a new Progressive, or Bull Moose, Party—all punctuated by a nearly-successful assassination attempt on Roosevelt in the final weeks of the election. It was a fascinating campaign, with Roosevelt laying out a radical platform that ultimately served as a blueprint for the liberal, and mostly Democratic, political agenda for the rest of the 20th Century.³³ The traditional Republican “base,” including the *Ithaca Daily Journal* that had sung his praises eight years earlier, now railed against Roosevelt as a demagogic, narcissistic socialist with the audacity to run for a third term.³⁴

The election vitriol seemed to put off local voters. Total turnout fell by 12% from four years before, the largest drop in local participation since before the Civil War. Wilson won Tompkins with 40% of the vote, about the same as his 42% nationwide margin, but not because local Republicans crossed party lines to vote for him, or Democrats came out of their houses to join the Wilson bandwagon. In fact, Wilson received fewer votes than Bryan in his lackluster run four years earlier. Rather, Wilson won in Republican Tompkins because Taft and Roosevelt split the Republican vote down the middle, and 15% of the Republican voters simply stayed home.

The fracturing of the Republican Party handed Wilson victories in 40 states and a 1912 electoral landslide.

The divisions within the traditional GOP played out even in local political races. In the 1913 City of Ithaca elections, the Republicans and Progressives split the vote, handing the Democrats their last Common-Council majority for 64 years.³⁵

In the 1916 federal election, Wilson again headed the Democratic ticket. The re-united Republican Party was led by Supreme Court Justice and former New York Governor Charles Evans Hughes. With internal peace restored, local Republicans came back to the polls in 1916 and, returning to form, gave Hughes 55% of the County's vote. Similar victories across Republican Upstate were enough to offset Wilson's margin in New York City, securing New York State's 38 electoral votes for Hughes. Even without New York, Wilson was re-elected in a race that ultimately pivoted on his narrow win in California.

In 1917, a landmark in America politics occurred with the extension of suffrage to women in New York State. Reflecting the influx of new voters, statewide turnout rose by 38%, or 590,000 voters, in the 1918 gubernatorial race between Democrat Al Smith and Republican incumbent Charles Whitman.

Wilson's second term, mostly remembered for the nation's entry into World War I and widespread labor and civil unrest, did not endear local voters to the Democrats. In 1920, two Ohioans, Republican Warren Harding and Democrat James Cox,³⁶ ran a relatively low-key campaign that was largely a referendum on Wilson's performance over the prior eight years and his call for participation in a League of Nations. Voters both locally and nationally seemed to have tired of Wilson. By 1920, the Republicans had shed much of the Roosevelt-era progressive elements of their platform in favor of a conservative pro-business agenda that included protective tariffs, restrictive immigration, and lower taxes. Harding won Tompkins County with 70% of the vote—the highest plurality for a presidential candidate to that point in the County's history. For the first time since Jackson, the *Journal* refrained from making a presidential endorsement. The paper, which had become a part of a chain owned by Cornell graduate Frank Gannett, took the high road of non-partisanship in advising its readers that the paper has “sought to be fair and impartial, clean and

sportsmanlike, in its presentation of the political news and in its editorial interpretation of the parties and candidates’ position on the issues.”³⁷

The Golden Age of Republicanism in Tompkins County

Harding did nearly as well nationwide as he did in Tompkins, winning the 1920 election with 60% of the popular vote and ceding only the deep south (excluding Tennessee) to Cox.

Harding’s 1920 contest with Cox was the first presidential election to occur after the 19th Amendment to the Constitution gave women the right to vote. Not surprisingly, voter turnout in Tompkins rose substantially—an unprecedented 57% increase—although far less than the doubling that would have occurred had women voted in the same proportion as men. It is impossible to parse out the way women in Tompkins County voted in 1920, but as shown below, nearly every vote added in 1920 went to the Republican candidate. Out of the 4,804 additional votes cast—most of them presumably first-time women voters—4,772, or 99%, went to Harding. Women in Tompkins County were educated about the issues and particularly supportive of pro-temperance candidates. They were far more inclined toward Harding and their participation seems to have only increased the Republican juggernaut over presidential politics in Tompkins.³⁸

Gauging the Effect of Women's Suffrage: Voter Turnout in the Presidential Elections of 1916-1924, Tompkins County

				1916-1920		1916-1924 (8 Years)	
Party	1916	1920	1924	Change	% Change	Change	% Change
Democratic	3,455	3,487	3,701	32	1%	246	7%
Republican	4,736	9,508	11,766	4,772	101%	7,030	148%
Other	447	559	656	112	25%	209	47%
Total	8,638	13,554	16,123	4,916	57%	7,485	87%

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1920-1928

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1920	Democratic	Cox	26%	27%	27%	34%
	Republican	Harding	70%	67%	65%	60%
	Prohibition	Watkins	2%	1%	1%	1%
1924	Democratic	Davis	23%	25%	29%	29%
	Republican	Coolidge	73%	64%	56%	54%
	Progressive	LaFollette	4%	10%	15%	17%
1928	Democratic	Smith	26%	38%	47%	41%
	Republican	Hoover	73%	60%	50%	58%

The Republican surge only grew stronger in 1924. Republican Calvin Coolidge, who had assumed the presidency after Harding died the year before, won Tompkins County by the largest plurality in its history, defeating West Virginia Democrat John Davis by fifty percentage points and securing a remarkable 73% of the County's vote. His popularity seemed to pull voters out of their homes and into the polls. The County's vote count rose by almost 20%, bringing the total number of local voters to 16,123, nearly double the pre-suffrage turnout in 1916. Judging by turnout, it appears that by 1924 the electoral participation of women in Tompkins County was approaching the same rate as men. The factors of culture and trust that had restrained registration and voting four years earlier were diminishing, and voting by women was no longer something odd or radical. Participation at the ballot box had become commonplace—a practiced rite of citizenship. And as in the election before, women voters still showed a strong preference for the Republican candidate. Of the 2,472 new voters in 1924, 2,258 voted for Coolidge. In the eight years since women won the right to vote, turnout in the County had jumped by 7,276 voters; only 246 accrued to the Democrat.

Coolidge's popularity extended across Upstate; nowhere more than neighboring Cortland County and nearby Yates County which gave him an astonishing 77% and 78% of their vote, respectively.

In other parts of the country, the 1924 election was affected by the presence of a third-party candidate, Progressive Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin. LaFollette backed a number of liberal reforms ranging from public control of the railroads, to highly progressive taxes, to child labor laws and the elimination of discrimination against women, *and* to granting state legislatures the ability to nullify judicial decisions. The break-away Republican received 15% of the vote in New York State, mostly from New York City, and 17% of the nationwide vote. Only three other third party candidates—Fillmore, Roosevelt, and Ross Perot—ever fared better in the national vote. However popular he was elsewhere, LaFollette's liberal platform did not resonate in Tompkins County, a place later known for its progressive politics, where he attracted just 619 votes, or 4% of the total.

With the nation prosperous and at peace, Coolidge won the 1924 election convincingly, winning 54% of the national popular vote and every northern and western state other than Wisconsin.

Coolidge remained popular into his second term, leading to a serious effort by prominent business and political leaders to coax him into running for a third term. When Coolidge demurred, Republicans turned to Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover, who had gained fame and respect for his leadership in the U.S. effort to assist the post-war recovery of Europe. To run against Hoover in 1928, the Democrats nominated charismatic New York Governor Al Smith, the first Catholic to head a national ticket. Hoover promised continuity: protective tariffs, restrictive immigration, and strict enforcement of prohibition. Smith offered a moderate and mostly pro-business agenda—and the relaxation of prohibition. In addition to a strong undercurrent of anti-Catholicism and increasing protectionist sentiment, a contented electorate ultimately decided not to rock the boat. As one business and prosperity-themed slogan put it: "I don't like prohibition, but I'm going to vote for Hoover because I'd rather eat than drink."³⁹

Voter turnout in Tompkins again increased significantly in 1928, this time by 23%. Local participation had now more than doubled since women began to vote, suggesting that by 1928, women were voting in at least the same proportion as men. Although more of the new voters supported the Democrat than in the past two elections, 73% of the total vote in Tompkins County again went for the Republican candidate—the same astounding plurality Coolidge had received four years before. The results in Tompkins were beginning to depart from the rest of Upstate. Hoover received 60% of the Upstate vote—a landslide by most yardsticks, but still far less than in Tompkins County. More generally, the electoral disparity between Upstate and downstate continued, with Smith beating Hoover by over 450,000 votes in New York City, but losing by nearly 560,000 in Upstate.

The Republican preferences of Upstate voters may have been reinforced by the Gannett chain of papers. After sitting out the 1924 election, trusting the wisdom of its readers, the *Ithaca Journal* left no doubt about its support for the Republican in 1928. Under the large-font headline “Why I Am For Hoover,” Frank Gannett praised Hoover as “the best fitted, the best trained, and the best qualified man ever nominated for this high office.”⁴⁰

Hoover defeated Smith in a national landslide, winning 58% of the popular vote and all but eight states. It was beginning to look like the Democrats were destined to permanently remain a minority party supported mainly by southern states with low electoral college clout with big city voters in industrial states usually out-voted by their rural neighbors.

But then things changed. In October 1929, less than a year into Hoover’s administration, the stock market crashed, sending the economy into a staggering depression. By the 1930 mid-term elections, voters were registering their discontent. Democrats picked up 52 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, bringing them to within two votes of a majority. The Democrats also gained eight Senate seats and seven governorships.

In New York, the popular progressive incumbent governor Franklin Roosevelt won a second term by a landslide. In a rarity for Democrats, gubernatorial candidate Roosevelt even won in “rock-ribbed” Tompkins, albeit with the help of a split between “wet” and “dry” Republicans that siphoned off almost a quarter of the local vote to Robert Carroll, a single-issue prohibitionist candidate.⁴¹

By 1932, with the economy still in depression and national unemployment running at almost 24%, the Democratic surge became a tidal wave.

The Nation Moves Left – Without Tompkins

Republicans nominated Hoover to run for a second term on a “steady as you go” platform.⁴² The Democrats selected New York Governor Franklin Roosevelt, adopting a platform that saw a larger federal role in addressing the economic plight of individuals, although still through incremental means such as making loans to state and local “relief” agencies, sponsoring large-scale public works projects, and funding their initiatives through progressive taxes that fell most heavily on the wealthy.

After three years of economic hard times, voters across the country had lost patience with Hoover and grown fatigued with the pro-business agenda in place since Harding’s election in 1920. They were energized by Roosevelt’s charisma and promise of a “new deal.”

The 1932 election culminated in one of the greatest landslides in American history. Roosevelt defeated Hoover by 17 percent in the national popular vote and won 42 out of the 48 states. His coattails were long. Democrats gained majorities in Congress by picking up 97 seats in the House of Representatives and eleven in the Senate, while also adding eleven governorships. The election represented one of the most significant sea changes in American political history.

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1932

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1932	Democratic	Roosevelt	33%	43%	54%	57%
	Republican	Hoover	64%	54%	41%	40%

However, the Democratic momentum nationwide didn’t pierce the Republican firewall in Tompkins County. On the same day that Roosevelt received 57% of the national popular vote, he mustered only a third of Tompkins’ voters. In a historically pivotal election that would profoundly shape the role of the federal government in American life and determine whether the country would follow a conservative or progressive path into an uncertain future, voters in Tompkins emphatically chose the conservative course. Hoover’s plurality in Tompkins was exceptional even among the faithfully Republican Upstate counties, where Hoover’s support was fully ten points less than in Tompkins.

Somewhat surprisingly, the presence of nearly 6,000 Cornell students during this time doesn’t seem to have had a liberalizing effect on local voting behavior. In fact, students were as solidly supportive of Hoover as their County neighbors. Two weeks before the election, 2,333 Cornell students participated in a straw vote for president.⁴³ Although the Socialist candidate fared reasonably well, particularly among Arts and

Cornell University Student Straw Presidential Vote, October 1932

Candidate	School			Total
	Agriculture	Arts & Sciences	Engineering	
Hoover (Rep)	64%	57%	67%	61%
Roosevelt (Dem)	23%	22%	25%	23%
Thomas (Soc)	12%	19%	7%	14%
Foster (Com)	2%	2%	0%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Sciences students, sixty-one percent favored Hoover—about the same as the final County vote. Had Cornell’s students all been eligible to vote in 1932, their presence would have only reinforced Roosevelt’s trouncing in Tompkins. Similar results occurred at other Ivy League campuses. As a *Journal* writer noted in somewhat disparaging tone: “This should surprise no one. Many of the students in these institutions are the scions of families of wealth and position, representatives of the group that profited most from Republican prosperity and is suffering least from the Republican depression. Moreover, American college students are with few exceptions notoriously conservative.”⁴⁴

The campus poll may offer some insight into the extraordinary support for Republican candidates in Tompkins County. A powerful, if coincidental, political alignment of disparate interests seems to have emerged between the County’s traditionally conservative rural voter and the “eastern establishment” Republicans within the County’s growing knowledge-based economy. That one-two punch produced Republican presidential majorities in Tompkins that, by the 1930’s, consistently exceeded the rest of the reliably-Republican counties of Upstate.

Roosevelt’s ambitious national agenda was shaped by programs and policies he had incubated while Governor of New York. His Labor Secretary, Frances Perkins, had been the Governor’s first Industrial Commissioner and champion of a minimum wage, shorter work weeks, and child labor laws. When offered the Secretary of Labor position by then-President Roosevelt, Perkins accepted on the condition that she be allowed to work on a federal minimum wage, a 40-hour work week, workers compensation insurance, unemployment compensation, social security, a ban on child labor, health insurance, and other progressive initiatives.⁴⁵ (After serving in FDR’s cabinet, Perkins lectured for many years at Cornell University’s Industrial Labor Relations School).

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1936-1948

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1936	Democratic	Roosevelt	34%	44%	59%	61%
	Republican	Landon	64%	54%	39%	37%
1940	Democratic	Roosevelt	33%	42%	52%	55%
	Republican	Willkie	67%	58%	48%	45%
1944	Democratic	Roosevelt	36%	42%	52%	53%
	Republican	Dewey	64%	58%	47%	46%
1948	Democratic	Truman	28%	39%	45%	50%
	Republican	Dewey	67%	57%	46%	45%
	Amer. Labor	Wallace	3%	3%	8%	2%

Roosevelt passed his first major political test with flying colors. The 1934 mid-term Congressional elections, an early indication of support for his efforts to reinvigorate the economy, gave the Democrats another 9 seats, and commanding majorities, in both the House and Senate. In contrast, Tompkins' voters gave Republican Congressional candidate W. Sterling Cole the same 64% support they had provided to Hoover two years before.

The 1936 presidential election was clearly a referendum on Roosevelt's interventionist approach to the role of the federal government. The Republicans nominated Kansas governor Alf Landon, an affable, middle-of-the-road conservative who favored the federal government returning to its traditional limited role as the economic crises passed. The response from the American people was unmistakable. FDR won with 61% of the popular vote and the largest electoral college margin since 1820, ceding only two small states and eight electoral votes to Landon. Roosevelt's coattails were again long, helping Democrats add to their already-swollen majorities in both houses of Congress. The entire country was moving to the left, willing to accept a larger role for the federal government in return for greater economic security.

But not in Tompkins. Criticized by the *Ithaca Journal* as “The Great White Father in the White House who at the same time is Santa Claus to all Uncle Sam’s little children,”⁴⁶ Roosevelt attracted only 34% of the County’s vote. Landon won Tompkins by the same 64% plurality Herbert Hoover had received four years earlier and took every town in the County and every ward of the City.⁴⁷ At the peak of his national popularity, and in one of the most lopsided victories in American history, in 1936 FDR lost Tompkins County by a full 30 percentage points to the Republican Governor of Kansas.

By 1940, disillusionment with the New Deal programs had crept into the nation’s political consciousness, the economic recovery was still bumpy and incomplete, and the country seemed to be inching toward war. Roosevelt’s decision to accept the Democratic nomination for a third term was not universally embraced and would emerge as a major issue in the campaign. In the same week that France fell to the Nazis, the Republicans nominated dark horse candidate Wendell Willkie; a charismatic utility executive and recent convert to the GOP. Willkie’s selection ended the presidential hopes of *Ithaca Journal* publisher Frank Gannett, who finished eighth on the first ballot of the convention and went on to editorially attack Roosevelt and the New Deal throughout the fall campaign.

In a 1940 race many believed would be close, Roosevelt was easily reelected to a third term with 55% of the national popular vote and electoral victories in 38 states. In Tompkins County, however, Roosevelt lost to Willkie by a 2:1 margin. Once again, the County stood out even among the Republican Upstate counties. In current parlance, Tompkins was among the reddest of the red communities in the country.

A year later, the nation was drawn into a war many wanted to avoid. By the 1942 mid-term elections, political momentum had begun to shift. Democrats maintained their majorities in Congress, but the Republicans picked up 47 seats in the House and 9 Senate seats.

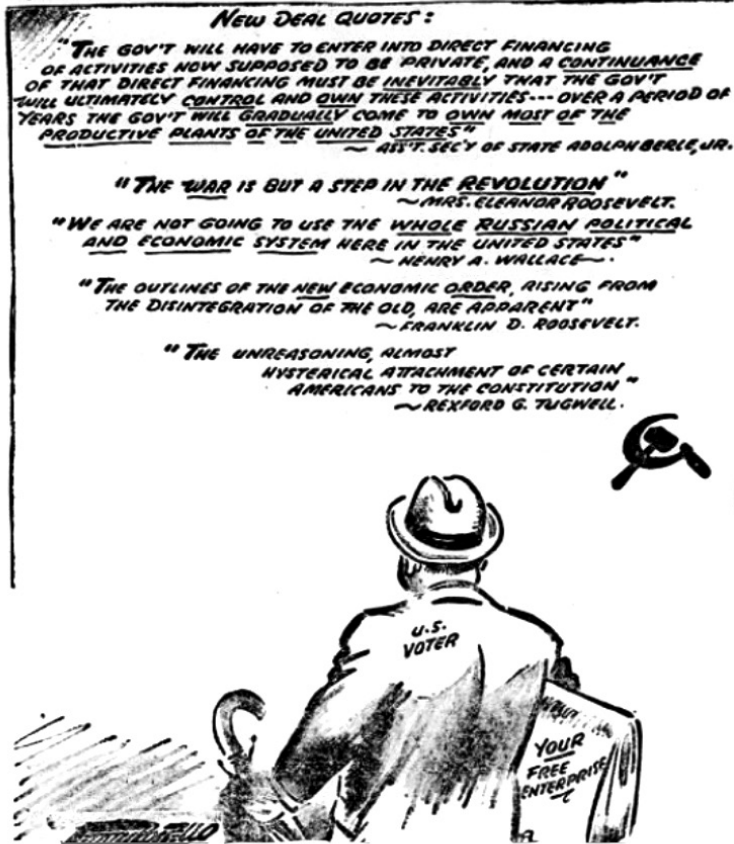
When 1944 arrived, Roosevelt easily secured the Democratic nomination for a fourth term, although not without exposing fissures within the New Deal coalition and a general sense of fatigue with FDR. Conservative Democrats, especially those from the south, were wary of the Party's leftward drift. However, the overriding sentiment among Democrats was for the continuity provided by wartime president Roosevelt. The Republican's nominated New York Governor Thomas Dewey who ran on a platform that promised continuity in pursuing the war, but a substantial reduction in the federal government's involvement in the economy.

Roosevelt again won the election with relative ease, although by the lowest margin of his four races. His 53% of the national popular vote was enough to win 36 states.

The swell of patriotism and apprehension about changing the nation's commander-in-chief in the middle of a war did not sway the voters of Tompkins. Although Roosevelt had his best year ever in the County, he could still attract only 36% of the vote.

In Roosevelt's final run, local voters may have been rallied, or perhaps just reinforced, by the editorial page of the *Ithaca Journal* that, after twelve years of New Dealism, had come to have a deep and undisguised disdain for Roosevelt. In a series of pre-election editorials, the *Journal* questioned Roosevelt's physical ability to survive another term;⁴⁸ warned that his election would turn the nation's business interests over to "the tender mercies of Hillman⁴⁹ and his Communists, Harry the Hop (the tax and tax and spend and spend and spend), and to the Reds in the CIO."⁵⁰ They labelled New Deal policies "closely akin to the state socialism of a communist regime,"⁵¹ and characterized Congress's feeling toward the President as "distrust, dislike, even hatred."⁵² Editorial cartoons, such as the October 1944 example shown here,⁵³ appeared almost daily in the *Journal*, driving home its criticisms of the administration. The *Journal's* editorials had returned to a level of vitriol reminiscent of its 19th Century partisanship.

Stop, Look and Listen!



Roosevelt's unpopularity in Tompkins County throughout his long tenure effected even Democrats seeking local offices. During the Roosevelt years, Republicans never lost a mayoral election in Ithaca and held at least nine of ten seats on the Common Council. And the fourteen-person County Board never dropped below ten Republicans. It was not a good time to be a Democrat in Tompkins County.

Within months of his fourth inauguration, Roosevelt died. Harry Truman, who had been nominated for the vice presidency by the Democrats as means to pacify the Party conservatives, assumed power in April 1945.

In the 1946 mid-term elections, the first nationwide election since the end of World War II, voters made clear their desire for change. Both houses of Congress shifted to Republican control, with a gain of 12 seats in the Senate and 55 in the House. The *New York Times* characterized the election as a “Republican sweep” that “meant the official end of the New Deal and a probably reorientation of the nation’s policies in the field of social and labor legislation.”⁵⁴

Although he had successfully prosecuted the end of the War, Truman entered the 1948 presidential race facing strong headwinds. He won the Democratic nomination despite southern delegates loudly objecting to his “anti-lynching, anti-poll taxes, anti-Jim Crow, and anti-job discrimination laws.”⁵⁵ The Democratic split would lead to the creation of a “Dixiecrat” party with segregationist South Carolina senator Strom Thurman as its presidential candidate. The old Roosevelt coalition showed further fraying when former Vice President Henry Wallace formed a third party to advance the progressive cause. To run against the splintered Democrats, the Republicans again nominated New Yorker Thomas Dewey. From the outset, pundits viewed Dewey’s election as inevitable and that, after 16 years in the White House, the Democrats had run out of gas. The *Ithaca Journal*’s editorial writer characterized the situation bluntly: “The country is turning right...This is a tough year, politically for “progressives,” so-called “liberals,” and all the other leftists, red and pink, plus the labor bosses who made so much hay while Franklin D. Roosevelt was in the White House.”⁵⁶

Truman’s victory is an often-told part of the country’s political lore and an inspiration for every political underdog. Not only did he beat Dewey by over two million votes and a 303-189 electoral college margin (Strom Thurman won four states and 39 electoral college votes); his coattails also brought the Democrats back into control of both houses of Congress.

True to form though, two-thirds of Tompkins County voters supported Dewey. Truman's abysmal 28% local showing fell behind even the worst of Roosevelt's results and lagged fully ten percent behind the rest of Upstate.⁵⁷

The County's voting patterns seemed immune even from the major demographic changes that occurred in the County during Truman's initial term in office. In the single academic year between 1945 and 1946, the combined enrollment of Cornell University and Ithaca College jumped by nearly 80%, or 4,635 students, to a record combined enrollment of 10,441. Enrollment soared as veterans took advantage of the G.I. Bill, driving up employment at area colleges. Fueled, at least in part, by job growth in the educational sector, the County's population was also rising. The County's non-student population grew by 13%, or 5,684, during the 1940's. Although most of the students were too young to vote, they and the staff and faculty at Cornell and Ithaca College, and the widely-read *Cornell Sun*, influenced the County's political culture, if only by social osmosis. And based on election outcomes, it appears this influence leaned sharply conservative and Republican.

Republicanism Peaks with Eisenhower's Landslides

In 1952, celebrated World War II hero Dwight Eisenhower was selected by the Republicans to run against Illinois governor Adlai Stevenson, a moderate Democrat who entered the fray only as the party began its nominating convention. Beyond the challenge of running against an iconic general, Stevenson bore the baggage of 30 years of Democratic administrations that now included a bloody war in Korea, a "red scare" led by Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, and allegations of corruption within Truman's administration. The *Ithaca Journal* weighed in fully for Eisenhower, describing Stevenson as "only a Truman man with table manners, and he is fast losing the manners," predicting "a Steven-

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1952-1956

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1952	Democratic	Stevenson	25%	34%	44%	44%
	Republican	Eisenhower	75%	66%	56%	55%
1956	Democratic	Stevenson	22%	29%	39%	42%
	Republican	Eisenhower	78%	71%	61%	57%

son administration would be an extension of the Truman administration inclusive of its corruption and not exclusive of its treason.”⁵⁸ (Oddly for a college town newspaper, the *Journal* also ran a pre-election editorial sternly warning readers not to be cowed by the political preferences of intellectuals and praising the fact that Eisenhower was “not smart and, fortunately, not an intellectual.”)⁵⁹

Eisenhower won handily with 55% of the national vote and 39 states.

In Tompkins County, Eisenhower’s landslide reached historic proportions. Three out of every four votes cast in the County went to the Republican. The effects of local population growth were also beginning to show up in the election turnout, which jumped by 22% between the 1948 and 1952 elections. Democrats fielded just 564 more voters than in the prior election; Republicans picked up 4,954—for every new Democratic voter, Republicans gained nearly nine. It appears that the post-war growth in Tompkins’ population was further strengthening the hold of the Republicans, at least when it came to presidential elections.

After living through a generation of economic, social, and international turmoil, and despite a high-stakes cold war with Russia, the American public welcomed the peace and prosperity that characterized Eisenhower’s first term. His approval rating averaged nearly 70% during his first four years, presaging the high odds of securing a second term in 1956.⁶⁰

The 1956 presidential campaign was a re-match between Eisenhower and Stevenson. The high-intensity issues of four years earlier had largely been resolved—the Korean War hostilities had ended, McCarthyism had faded, and most agreed the government was being run with competence and integrity. Not surprisingly, the election results were similar to 1952. This time, Eisenhower received 57% of the national vote; two points higher than his previous victory.

Eisenhower’s results improved in Tompkins County, too, where he received a stratospheric 78% of the vote. It strains the imagination to believe that a free and fair election for any office in any place could end with one candidate receiving nearly eight of every ten votes cast. But that’s what happened in the presidential election of 1956 in Tompkins County. Never before had a presidential candidate received such a large majority in Tompkins. And even as the County’s population of about 65,000 would ultimately grow to over 100,000, a Republican presidential candidate would never receive more than the 19,749 votes cast for Dwight Eisenhower in 1956.

Few would expect the Republican’s dominance of Tompkins to stay at the level achieved in 1956, but only the most prescient would have predicted that in a little over a generation, Republican presidential candidates would write-off Tomkins County as a lost cause, or that a Democratic candidate would one day approach Eisenhower’s unprecedented margin of victory.

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1960-1964

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1960	Democratic	Kennedy	34%	45%	53%	50%
	Republican	Nixon	66%	55%	47%	50%
1964	Democratic	Johnson	64%	65%	69%	61%
	Republican	Goldwater	36%	35%	31%	38%

1960 Presidential Results,
Tompkins and
Six Adjacent Counties

County	Kennedy	Nixon
Tompkins	34%	66%
Adjacent counties		
Cayuga	46%	54%
Chemung	40%	60%
Cortland	32%	68%
Schuyler	31%	69%
Seneca	39%	61%
Tioga	28%	72%
Adjacent total	39%	61%

The 1960 election represented a generational shift in American politics, featuring two candidates in their 40’s competing in a campaign with unprecedented exposure provided by network television. The Republicans opted for continuity, selecting Vice President Richard Nixon as their nominee. The Democrats picked charismatic Massachusetts Senator John Kennedy. Although Kennedy’s Catholicism nagged him throughout the campaign, the core issues revolved around the Cold War and a sluggish economy. The election was one of the closest in history, with

Kennedy winning the popular vote by just 112,000 out of more than 68 million cast. Nixon actually won six more states than Kennedy, but lost the electoral college by a 303-219 margin.

Nixon fared much better in Tompkins. While falling short of Eisenhower’s historic numbers, Nixon took 66% of the County’s vote, beating Kennedy by a nearly 2:1 margin. Perhaps surprising to contemporary readers, Nixon fared better in Tompkins County than in the surrounding six, and presumably more conservative, counties where Kennedy secured 39% of their vote compared to his 34% showing in Tompkins.

Although all of Upstate remained solidly Republican, a noticeable partisan gap had opened between Tompkins and the rest of Upstate where Nixon was able to muster a relatively anemic 55% of the vote—not nearly enough to offset the predictably strong Democratic turnout in New York City. Kennedy won New York State and its 45 electoral college votes.

Johnson Shocks the System; Wins in Tompkins County

Traumatized by Kennedy's 1963 assassination, the nation rallied around his successor, Vice President Lyndon Johnson, who committed himself to completing the Kennedy agenda and made civil rights and a war on poverty his signature issues. Johnson received the 1964 nomination without opposition. The Republicans nominated Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, a rightwing firebrand. Goldwater—who attacked the programs of the New Deal, voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act, proposed making Social Security voluntary, and seemed comfortable with using nuclear weapons—said in 1961 “Sometimes I think this country would be better off if we could just saw off the Eastern Seaboard and let it float out to sea.”⁶¹ A small, regional conflict in Vietnam received little attention from either candidate.

Antipathy toward Goldwater among old school, establishment Republicans was so great that the *Ithaca Journal* (along with the entire Gannett chain) gave its editorial endorsement to Johnson. It was the first time since the creation of the Republican Party in 1856 that a Democratic presidential candidate had received the *Journal's* endorsement.

Not surprisingly, Johnson won the 1964 national election in a landslide. Much more shocking was that Johnson broke the Republican stranglehold in Tompkins County, taking 64% of the local vote—three points *higher* than the rest of the nation. Johnson received 7,444 more votes than Kennedy captured in 1960. It appears that nearly all resulted from voters crossing over from the Republicans.⁶² For the first time since 1856, the Democratic candidate won in every City district and all nine towns.

The Democrats' victory in Tompkins in 1964 was a milestone. Although it would be another 20 years before a Democratic presidential candidate would again take the County, the Party showed it could win a two-person presidential race in Tompkins County. The 1964 election also re-

vealed that the local brand of Republicanism leaned toward the center and away from the far right. A similar gauge of the County's place on the conservative spectrum occurred twenty years later, when a Democratic presidential candidate next took Tompkins.

Johnson's overwhelming victory in the City of Ithaca in 1964 signaled the beginning of a stunning upheaval in the political control of the City. In the 1965 local election cycle, Democrats pulled even with the Republicans on City Council, marking the end of a fifty-two year run of Republican majorities.⁶³ (Just four years before, 12 of 14 members of the Council, and the Mayor, were Republican.) While the parties battled for control of the Council for another dozen years, the era of Republican political dominance in Ithaca ended in 1965.

Although the ripples of Johnson's 1964 landslide did not immediately reach the County Board of Supervisors, the GOP's longstanding control of the County began to erode just four years later.

Johnson's presidency included some of the most far-reaching social initiatives in the nation's history: Medicaid, Medicare, Head Start, Fair Housing, Model Cities, the Food Stamp Act, the Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights Act, the Higher Education Act, vast increases in funding for public education, and many more progressive measures were enacted during the early years of his administration. However, by the 1968 presidential election, the wheels had fallen off Johnson's bus. The war in Vietnam along with escalating racial tensions fueled massive social unrest. Facing the prospect of defeat, the President announced his decision not to run for re-election in March.

During the 1968 election year, the rage against the war and racial oppression grew more intense with the assassinations of Martin Luther King in April and surging presidential candidate Robert Kennedy in June. The searing events happening in this social and political environment shaped

both the election of 1968 and the enduring political orientation of an entire generation.

At the epicenter of the tumult were America's college campuses. Acts of civil disobedience that jarred the established order happened even at elite and traditionally conservative institutions such as Cornell University. Although it was nearly impossible for anyone to emerge from the 1960's and 1970's with his or her political perspectives and preferences unscathed, it's unlikely that any cohort was as indelibly affected as the college students of that time. For many of them, politics was not a polite discussion about marginal policy differences, but a righteous, gritty struggle for social justice and against the war. Passions ultimately cooled, but the political imprint was indelible. Voting patterns were forever shaped, particularly in places like college towns, where the graduates of the '60s and '70s later came to live and work and pass along their socially conscious political perspectives to subsequent generations.

Donald Downs describes the dynamics of the time at Cornell:

"Cornell University was always considered a radial institution. At this point, 1968, the faculty was divided politically. As were the students. 1969 and (the student takeover of) Willard Straight happened a year later. The divisions were stark and President James Perkins had a "cabinet" of older, more conservative (but still mostly Democratic) faculty, but many faculty stopped talking to each other—and didn't for years. The divides were certainly partially generational. But, those older faculty had late-teen children who were rebelling and the parents were very conflicted. It was a heady and nasty and difficult time."⁶⁴

This largely generational politicization may explain at least some of the conservative-to-liberal shift that occurred in Tompkins County as the "Baby Boomer" generation came of age.

Presidential Votes, Tompkins County, 1960 and 1968

Year	Republican	Democratic	Other	Total
1960	17,061	8,659	17	25,737
1968	13,446	10,343	1,448	25,237
Change	-3,615	+1,684	+1,431	-500

A rancorous 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago that drew massive protests and heavy-handed police responses nominated the sitting Vice President Hubert Humphrey. The Republicans selected another former Vice President, Richard Nixon. Both promised to end the War, although Humphrey was tagged with Johnson's war policies and the unrest playing out on many American streets.

After supporting Johnson in 1964, the *Ithaca Journal* came out strongly in favor of Nixon as the candidate who represented “a moderate conservatism that this country desperately needs in the face of creeping inflation, an ever-mounting national debt, disrespect for law, riots in the streets, urban blight, and—worst of all—a loss of faith in government. This was really a loss of faith in liberalism—the era of liberalism ushered in by the election of John F. Kennedy and continued by Lindon B. Johnson.”⁶⁵

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1968-1976

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1968	Democratic	Humphrey	41%	43%	50%	43%
	Republican	Nixon	53%	51%	44%	43%
	American Indep.	Wallace	5%	6%	5%	14%
1972	Democratic	McGovern	41%	35%	41%	38%
	Republican	Nixon	59%	64%	59%	61%
1976	Democratic	Carter	45%	45%	52%	50%
	Republican	Ford	54%	55%	48%	48%

Most voters in Tompkins County agreed. Nixon defeated Humphrey with a comfortable 53% of the local vote despite losing by a small margin to Humphrey in the City of Ithaca. Indicative of a shifting tide, Nixon's local support had slipped substantially from the 66% he received in his defeat of Kennedy just eight years before. Between those two elections, local support for the Republican candidate fell by 3,615 votes, with about half shifting to the Democratic candidate and the rest going to minor party candidates, primarily segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace. The rote support for Republican presidential candidates was breaking down.

The erosion of party loyalty was beginning to show in local elections, too. Matthew McHugh, a young attorney whose 1968 campaign team included a number of veterans of Eugene McCarthy's presidential primary campaign, defeated the longstanding Republican District Attorney to become the first Democrat to win a countywide race in Tompkins since the Sheriff's election of 1923.

Judging by shifting voting patterns, more liberal "Rockefeller" Republicans in Tompkins were moving to the Democrats and those on the right wing of the party were finding their way to third party candidates or, perhaps, just staying home. Although his numbers had slipped from his prior run, Nixon still fared much better in Tompkins than in the balance of the country, where he narrowly defeated Humphrey with just 43% of the popular vote and 301 electoral delegates. Wallace took nearly 14% of the national vote and five southern states.

As Nixon began his first term, the Democrat surge in local elections started to impact the traditionally Republican County Board. The 1969 local elections were the first to occur after the adoption of a first-ever Tompkins County Charter and a redistricting plan aimed at complying with the recent Supreme Court "one man-one vote" ruling. No longer was the County's governing body a conclave of town supervisors and City representatives. Instead, individuals were elected specifically to

serve as County representatives, serving populations of roughly the same size in Districts that generally conformed with municipal boundaries. Whether the result of the redistricting or, more likely, the shifting political winds, the Democrats gained five seats in the 1969 election, drawing even with the Republicans on the County Board. It was the first time since 1911 that Democrats were not the minority party on the Board.

By 1972, the political temperature of the nation had cooled. The War in Vietnam was winding down. Nixon had opened the door to China and made headway in thawing the Cold War relationship with the Soviet Union. Domestic unrest had faded. Nixon had even won praise from liberals by signing sweeping new environmental laws and regulations. With this momentum propelling him, Nixon received the enthusiastic endorsement of the Republicans to run for a second term. After sentimental favorite Edward Kennedy declined to run and the campaign of the early frontrunner, Edmund Muskie, collapsing almost before it could get started, the Democrats nominated anti-war South Dakota Senator George McGovern to take-on Nixon.

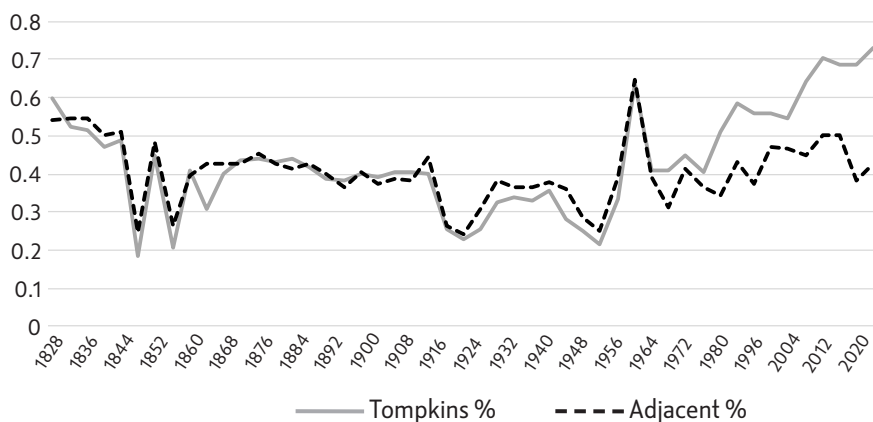
Nixon won the 1972 national election in a historically large landslide, taking 61% of the popular vote and losing to McGovern only in Massachusetts and the District of Columbia.

Tompkins stayed solidly in the Republican camp in 1972. Nixon took the County by a 59%-41% margin—a rout by any measure.

But change was clearly in the air.

Voters in the City of Ithaca bucked the Republican tidal wave, giving McGovern a 52% win. The towns handed Nixon a victory on par with the rest of the nation, but he won by less than 100 votes in the populous Town of Ithaca. Democratic strength was increasing in the most densely populated parts of the County. Beyond the emerging urban/rural divide within the County, Tompkins was becoming more politically distinct

Support for Democratic Presidential Candidate, Tompkins County and Six Adjacent Counties, 1828 - 2020



from the rest of the region. For most of its history, and despite its much different economy, presidential voting patterns in Tompkins had been similar to the six adjacent counties: Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Seneca, Schuyler, and Tioga. While detectable in 1968, signs of regional separation became unmistakable in 1972. Recall that McGovern received 41% of the 1972 vote in Tompkins. That was a full ten percent higher than his support in the adjacent counties.

Similarly, its still-modest move to the left was pulling the County away from the rest of Upstate, where Nixon finished five percent better than in Tompkins.

It is possible that the separation between Tompkins and other parts of the State was influenced by the 26th Amendment, which lowered the minimum voting age to eighteen beginning in 1972. At the time, Cornell and Ithaca College had a combined enrollment of 20,138, over sixty percent higher than a decade before and comprising nearly a quarter of the County's entire population. Not coincidentally, the number of registered voters in Tompkins increased by over 4,800 (18%) in 1972 and turnout for the 1972 election jumped by 30%.⁶⁶ Beyond the effect on turnout,

however, it is unclear how the youth vote effected the outcome of the election. While the additional votes recorded in 1972 split along traditional 60-40 (R/D) party lines, this could indicate that the partisanship of new voters was similar to that of existing voters. More likely, though, the entry of new Democratic voters contributed to McGovern's success in the City and mitigated the extent of his defeat in the rest of the County.

Nixon's 1972 election victory was soon followed by the Watergate scandal that consumed the Nixon White House and led to Nixon's historic resignation in 1974. Vice President Gerald Ford, who had been appointed to that post after Spiro Agnew was brought down by another corruption scandal, assumed the presidency. Ford soon pre-emptively pardoned Nixon, a move that did little to endear him to those who were already put-off by Watergate. In a contentious Republican convention that saw a split between conservatives led by Ronald Reagan and centrists supporting the Vice President, Ford ultimately gained the 1976 GOP presidential nomination. A little-known Georgia Governor, Jimmy Carter, emerged from a crowded Democratic field to secure the party's nomination, promising to restore honesty, trust, and integrity to the federal government.

The 1976 election reflected the nation's fatigue with Nixonian scandals and an economy suffering high unemployment and high inflation. Both parties were becoming more conservative, with Ford needing the support of the ascendant Reagan wing of the party and Carter promoting a restrained domestic agenda. Given the forces working against Ford, it was a surprisingly close race. Carter won with barely 50% of the vote and just 23 states.

Tompkins County gave Ford a comfortable win in 1976, but the Democrats were continuing to show signs of picking up steam. Putting aside the outlier of Johnson's 1964 landslide victory, Carter's 45% support in Tompkins was the best local showing for a Democratic presidential candidate since Franklin Pierce in 1852. The Democratic victory margin

within the City continued to grow larger, with Carter taking 54% of the votes cast by Ithacans. There were signs of change outside the City, too. Ford took a respectable 56% of the towns' vote and won all nine, but Republican support fell below the 60% threshold that had long been a sure thing in Tompkins. Carter's performance may have been helped by a rare and full-throated endorsement of a Democrat by the *Ithaca Journal* which found Carter to be "...a man of unusual talents, with an uncommon ability to lead and even inspire his countrymen."⁶⁷

In the 1977 local elections, the first since Carter's win, Democrats won a 6-4 majority on the Ithaca City Council and also held the Mayor's Office. This was the first time since 1913 the Democrats controlled City Hall. To date, they have not relinquished their majority on the Council.

Carter's presidency produced little momentum to carry him into the 1980 election. Generally viewed as a decent man, but ineffective president, Carter's bid for re-election coincided with the taking of 52 American Embassy hostages in Iran and back-to-back years in which inflation exceeded 12%. His nomination for a second term by the Democrats was initially challenged by Senator Edward Kennedy, who faded rapidly during the primary season and provided little help to Carter by a half-hearted endorsement at the Democrat's August convention.

The Republicans nominated Ronald Reagan, a conservative former actor and governor of California whose star had continued to rise following his efforts to unseat Gerald Ford four years earlier. The Republicans' shift to the right triggered moderate Illinois Congressman John Anderson's launch of a third-party run for president.

Disappointed by Carter and alarmed by Reagan, the *Ithaca Journal* endorsed Anderson—its first endorsement of a third-party candidate since Martin Van Buren's 1844 run as the Free Soil Party candidate.

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1980-1988

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1980	Democratic	Carter	40%	39%	44%	41%
	Republican	Reagan	42%	51%	47%	51%
	Independence	Anderson	14%	8%	8%	7%
1984	Democratic	Mondale	51%	39%	46%	41%
	Republican	Reagan	48%	61%	54%	59%
1988	Democratic	Dukakis	59%	45%	52%	46%
	Republican	Bush	41%	54%	48%	53%

Reagan ran away with the 1980 election, beating Carter by 8.4 million votes and winning 44 states, including traditionally Democratic New York State. Anderson attracted nearly seven percent of the national vote. The political tide was turning rightward in the country and Reagan's coattails were long. Republicans gained 12 seats in the U.S. Senate to gain the majority for the first time in 28 years and picked up 34 seats in the House of Representatives, putting a sizable dent in the Democratic majority.

But as the nation was moving to the right, Tompkins was moving steadily to the left. Reagan squeezed out a narrow 42%-40%-14% local victory over Carter and Anderson.⁶⁸ The City of Ithaca was now firmly in Democratic hands, with Carter winning in all five City wards. Carter also broke the Republican juggernaut in the towns by winning in the Town of Ithaca and losing to Reagan in the areas outside the City by just three points. Clearly, John Anderson was a difference-maker in Tompkins, where his 14% showing was the highest of any county in New York State. By all appearances, Anderson attracted a significant number of moderate local Republicans who could not support a candidate at the far end of the conservative spectrum—an echo of 1964 when moderate local Republicans also broke ranks with the party in reaction to Barry Goldwater's candidacy⁶⁹.

The County and its voting population had changed much in the twenty years since 1960, when Nixon routed Kennedy in Tompkins. By 1980,

the County's population had grown to 87,085, a 25% increase over 1960. Almost half of that increase was attributable to an 80% rise in students enrolled at Cornell and Ithaca College, bringing their combined enrollment to slightly over 22,000. In 1960, most of those students couldn't vote. In 1980, most could.

In the end, Reagan's 1980 victory in Tompkins masked growing seismic activity that would shape partisan politics in Tompkins County for at least the next 40 years. As a sign of things to come, Democrats took all but one seat on the ten-member City Council in the 1981 local election and held on to that lopsided majority again in 1983. Republicans would never again hold more than one seat on the Council. Republican William Shaw overcame the odds to be elected Ithaca's Mayor in 1981 but, to date, is the last of his Party to hold that office.

Reagan's 1980 victory was the last time a Republican presidential candidate won in Tompkins County.

Nationally, Reagan proved to be a popular president among broad swaths of the electorate. During his first term the economy improved, taxes were reduced (particularly for higher income brackets), and foreign policy became more assertive. Reagan's "Morning in America" theme seemed to brighten the national spirit that Carter had once characterized as suffering "malaise." The Republicans enthusiastically nominated him to run for a second term in 1984. Middle-of-the-road Democratic Senator Walter Mondale—Hubert Humphrey's 1968 running mate—emerged from the primaries as the Democratic candidate.

Reagan's momentum carried him to a 1984 landslide even larger than he'd enjoyed four years before. He won 59% of the national popular vote and took every state other than Mondale's native Minnesota. Once again, Reagan captured traditionally Democratic New York State, gaining 54%

of the statewide vote. The election was seen as an endorsement of Reagan's leadership and the increasingly conservative Republican governing principles that promised to strengthen national defense and shrink federal domestic programs.

This time, though, Tompkins County refused to jump on the Republican bandwagon.

Tompkins Becomes a Democratic County

The ground for a Democratic win over Reagan in Tompkins had been laid in the months preceding the 1984 election, when voter registration efforts brought over 11,000 new voters to the rolls—a remarkable 35% increase.⁷⁰ For the first time, registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans in Tompkins. And on election day, over two-thirds of the newly-registered voters showed up to vote.

Whether it was leading or following the shifting political winds in the County, the *Ithaca Journal* came out strongly for Walter Mondale.

On election day 1984, Tompkins County gave Democrat Mondale a 51%-48% victory over Ronald Reagan. Mondale won fully two-thirds of the City vote. Once again, the Town of Ithaca went Democratic, but this time the result wasn't close—Mondale won the Town with 56% of the vote. The area's urban center—the City and surrounding Town of Ithaca—was

In 1984, local voters rejected the increasingly conservative politics of the Republican Party and cast their lot for the Democrat – a change of allegiance that has only grown stronger over the past 37 years.

now solidly and safely Democratic. The overall County race was relatively tight only because Reagan did well in rural parts of the County.

The rest of Upstate did not follow Tompkins County's lead. In fact, the gap between Tompkins and its Upstate neighbors had rarely been so large. Among the Upstate counties, only Erie was more supportive of Mondale than Tompkins; the other 55 were solidly in the Republican camp.

Unlike 1980, this time there was not a strong third-party candidate who diverted votes or invited speculation about voters' intents. 1984 was a contest between a Republican and a Democrat, and voters in Tompkins cast their lot for the Democrat. The same county that had given Richard Nixon nearly 60% of its vote twelve years earlier now veered away from a Republican party that was at the peak of its national popularity.

1984 was one of two transformational pivots that have occurred during Tompkins County's political history. The first was in 1856, when the solidly Democratic County abruptly shifted its loyalty to John Frémont and the Republican Party and didn't look back for over a century. The second was 1984, when local voters rejected the increasingly conservative politics of the Republican Party and cast their lot for the Democrat—a change of allegiance that has only grown stronger over the past 37 years.

In 1988, Reagan's Vice President, George Bush, easily secured the Republican presidential nomination with a platform promising continuity of Reagan's policies, but applied with a "kinder and gentler" hand. Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis emerged from the primary process to win the Democratic nomination. Although he trailed badly in the polls early in the campaign, Bush won the election handily, gaining 53% of the national popular vote and a commanding 426 (out of 527) electoral votes.

Once again, Tompkins followed its own path. Dukakis thrashed Bush with 59% of the County's vote. Among the Upstate counties, only Albany was more supportive of the Democratic nominee. Upstate generally favored Bush by a 54-45 margin.

A year later, the leftward movement of politics in Tompkins was highlighted by the widely-publicized 1989 election of Democratic mayoral candidate Ben Nichols, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America. Nichols was re-elected three times by Ithaca's voters and solidified the City's image as a liberal outpost in conservative Upstate.

On the national level, the Bush presidency found its strength in foreign policy, particularly in a successful multi-national military response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and in his oversight of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War. However, by the end of his term, the country was languishing in the economic doldrums and Bush had angered the Republican conservative base by breaking his promise not to raise taxes. While he secured the Republican 1992 nomination for a second term, it was clear that whatever political magic Reagan had passed on to Bush had faded with time.

Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton battled through the Democratic primaries, overcoming allegations of marital infidelity and capturing the support of party centrists to emerge as the Democratic candidate. The *Ithaca Journal*, now a reliable advocate of center-left Democratic candidates, gave its endorsement to Clinton,⁷¹ assuring readers that "Clinton has energy, grace, and confidence, and a belief that government can justifiably and effectively tackle the problems that beset us on every side."

The race was joined by a gadfly populist billionaire businessman, Ross Perot, who launched a self-financed third-party campaign focused on his opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement and the rising national debt.

Perot's campaign was extraordinarily successful. Five months before the election, he led the two major party candidates in national polls. While his electability faded when he oddly, but temporarily, withdrew from the race, Perot's presence on the ballot probably cost Bush the election.

Although he didn't win a single state, Perot received nearly 20 million votes—19% of all votes cast. Bush, who had won with 53% of the vote in 1988 could only muster 37% in 1992. Bill Clinton was elected the nation's 42nd President with just 43% of the popular vote.

Bush's results were even more dismal in Tompkins, where Clinton won in a 56%-28%-16% drubbing of the incumbent Bush and upstart Perot. Clinton won every ward and district in the City of Ithaca and captured majorities in every town but Groton, winning by a heretofore unheard of 18% margin over Bush *outside* the City. Somewhat surprisingly in a County increasingly comfortable with Democratic candidates, Ross Perot proved to be nearly as popular in Tompkins County as in the rest of the country. His 16% local showing was the best third-party performance in Tompkins since Theodore Roosevelt's 1912 bid as a Progressive Party candidate.⁷² No minor party candidate has since done as well in Tompkins.

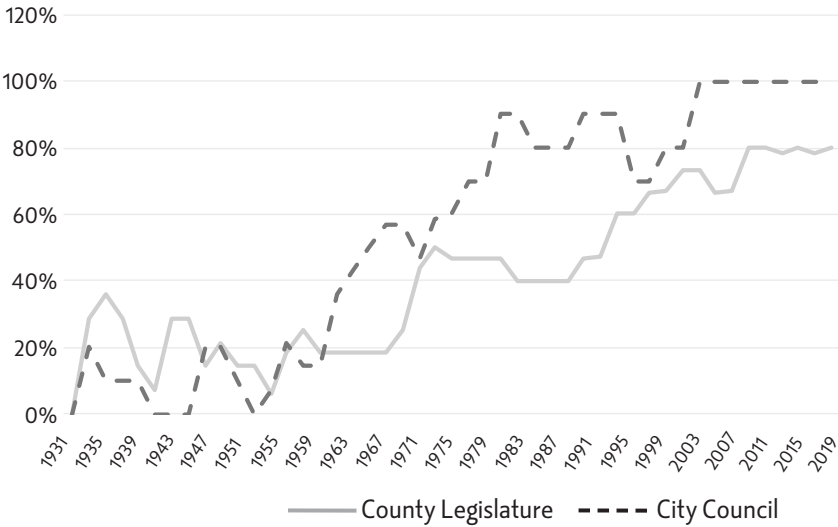
Even with Clinton's strong showing in areas outside the City of Ithaca in 1992, the Democrats' success in local elections one year later is notable. The 1993 local elections ended 82 years of seemingly unbreakable Republican control of the County, as Democrats gained a majority on the County Board of Representatives—a status they have not since relinquished.

A Democratic era had begun in Tompkins County. By the early 1990's, Democratic candidates had started to consistently win elections at every level and in most jurisdictions in Tompkins.

In 1993, over eighty years of Republican control of County government ended when Democrats won nine of fifteen seats on the County Board. After serving four years as the sole Republican member of the City Council, Jana Taylor left office at the end of 2001. To this day, no other Republican has again held a seat on that body.

In nature, a lake responds to seasonal climate changes by "turning over," bringing bottom water to the top. So too did political power rapidly turn

Democratic Representation on City Council and County Legislature, 1931-2019



over in Tompkins County, lifting long-suffering Democrats into a position of almost unchallenged dominance.

Clinton entered his 1996 race for re-election somewhat chastened by his failure to deliver a national health care plan and hamstrung by a special prosecutor's meandering investigation of alleged misconduct. As a sign of discontent with his administration, the Democrats lost control of both the House and Senate in the 1994 midterm election, propelling firebrand Georgia Congressman Newt Gingrich to the position of Speaker of the House, ushering in an era of fierce, zero-sum partisanship. During his first term, Clinton had, however, "triangulated" a centrist course on divisive issues such as welfare reform and enjoyed a relatively strong economy that ultimately produced surpluses in the federal budget. The Democrats nominated Clinton for a second term with little dissent.

To take on Clinton, the Republicans selected long-time Kansas Senator and Senate Majority Leader, Bob Dole. Although respected, Dole lacked

campaign charisma—particularly in contrast to Clinton, who had a gift for connecting with voters. Ross Perot again entered the race as a third-party candidate, but without the kind of passionate support he enjoyed in 1992. Consumer advocate Ralph Nader also mounted a campaign.

Clinton won re-election with relative ease, taking 31 states and beating Dole 49%-41%, with Perot pulling in 8% of the national vote.

The 1996 results in Tompkins were nearly identical to the prior election. Clinton again finished with 56% of the local vote, and Dole’s 29% was little better than Bush’s terrible showing four years before. The minor party candidates attracted 12% of the County’s voters—also about the same as in 1992—but this time the minor party vote was split almost evenly between Nader and Perot.

Clinton made a clean sweep of Tompkins County, winning in every City ward and district and in all nine towns⁷³. For only the second time since

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 1992-2004

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1992	Democratic	Clinton	56%	41%	50%	43%
	Republican	Bush	28%	38%	34%	37%
	Independent	Perot	16%	20%	16%	19%
1996	Democratic	Clinton	56%	52%	60%	49%
	Republican	Dole	29%	37%	31%	41%
	Independent	Perot	7%	10%	8%	8%
	Green	Nader	5%	1%	1%	1%
2000	Democratic	Gore	54%	52%	60%	48%
	Republican	Bush	33%	43%	35%	48%
	Green	Nader	11%	4%	4%	3%
2004	Democratic	Kerry	64%	50%	58%	48%
	Republican	Bush	33%	48%	40%	51%
	Independent	Nader	2%	2%	1%	0%

the advent of the Republican Party—the only other time being Johnson’s race against Goldwater—Tompkins County went all in for a Democratic presidential candidate.

During his second term, Clinton was impeached by the House and acquitted by the Senate on charges relating to an affair with a White House intern. By the end of his term, however, and living up to his reputation as “the Comeback Kid,” Clinton’s popularity had risen into the mid-’60s and the nation was enjoying peace, economic prosperity, and fiscal stability.

His Vice President, former Tennessee Senator Al Gore, carried this momentum into the 2000 primary campaigns and rode his frontrunner status to the Democratic presidential nomination.

The Republican primary was more competitive, ultimately pitting George W. Bush, the former Texas Governor and son of the 41st President, against Arizona Senator John McCain. Bush emerged as the clear winner from the primary process and was nominated by the Republicans to take-on Al Gore. As in 1996, Ralph Nader entered the race on the Green Party ticket.

The 2000 Bush-Gore contest will always be remembered for the closeness of the result and contentiousness of its resolution. Gore won the popular election by 500,000 votes but lost the electoral college 271-266. The entire election came down to the results of a razor-thin outcome in Florida, complicated by a number of contested ballots and oddities, and a recount cut short by the Supreme Court to the benefit of Bush. A winner was not declared until December 13, five weeks after election day.

Although the national election was among the closest in American history, the Democrats again won decisively in Tompkins County, where Gore beat Bush with 54% of the vote. Nader did well in the County, taking 11%—nearly three times higher than in the rest of the State. Bush could do no better than gaining a third of the local vote.

Soon after Bush's inauguration, the country was shaken by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent "war on terror" that began in Afghanistan and, in 2003, expanded to Iraq. By the 2004 presidential election, the nation was mired in war.

Although his popularity had diminished as the wars dragged on, Bush coasted to an uncontested Republican nomination for re-election. On the Democratic side, Massachusetts Senator John Kerry defeated a number of primary candidates to secure the 2004 Democratic nod.

The 2004 election was again competitive, although Bush carried 31 states and took 51% of the national popular vote, beating Kerry by three million votes.

It was a much different story in Tompkins, where Kerry beat the sitting president by nearly 30 points. Without a viable third-party candidate in the race, Kerry captured 64% of the local vote. Bush won in Groton but lost in every other town. He was defeated by a nearly five-to-one margin in the City of Ithaca.

(Throughout the time Tompkins County was moving toward the Democrats, Groton remained reliably in the Republican fold. In Groton, political preferences—and many other historical, social, and economic connections—aligned more closely with neighboring Cortland County than most of Tompkins County. In 2004, for example, Groton gave Bush 54% of the vote, about the same as the Bush's 51% victory in Cortland, but a world apart from the 33% drubbing Bush took in Tompkins County overall.)

By 2004, the partisan distance between Tompkins County and the rest of Upstate had become pronounced and would grow larger with time. Kerry's 64% support in Tompkins was by far the highest of any New York State county outside of New York City.

Bush's uninspired second term and the growing unpopularity of wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East failed to propel a Republican successor into a strong position entering the 2008 presidential campaign. Long-standing Arizona Senator and Vietnam War hero John McCain prevailed in the Republican primaries and secured the GOP nomination. On the Democratic side, no matter the outcome, history was going to be made: the party would either select former Senator Hillary Clinton as the first woman, or Illinois Senator Barack Obama as the first African American, to represent a major party as its presidential candidate. Obama survived a bruising primary process to earn the Democratic nomination.⁷⁴

Obama brought a charismatic energy to the campaign, offering generational change in national leadership and a powerful symbol of racial progress. Toward the end of the campaign, the aspirational goals of the candidates were put in a somber context by a nearly catastrophic collapse of the economy. The federal response, mostly aimed at propping up the nation's teetering financial institutions, proved highly controversial and the "Wall Street vs. Main Street" debate would carry long into the next presidential administration.

Despite McCain's pitch to voters for an experienced leader to navigate through the "Great Recession," Obama won decisively, taking 53% of the 2008 national popular vote and 28 states.

In Tompkins, the contest was a rout. Obama's 70% plurality was the highest of any presidential candidate since Eisenhower's 1956 local landslide. Obama won every town and every ward and district in the City of Ithaca. Once again, Tompkins was an outlier among the Upstate counties, giving Obama his largest victory in the Empire State outside of New York City. The 16% gap between the County and the rest of Upstate had never been greater. In fact, Tompkins was beginning to trend closer to New York City, which gave Obama 79% of its vote, than to its Upstate neighbors.

Once in office, Obama's administration struggled to repair the economy it had inherited, an unpopular stimulus program, lingering wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the galvanizing partisan divide over landmark legislation that extended affordable health care to millions of uninsured Americans. Although nominated without challenge by the Democrats, he entered the 2012 election politically vulnerable.

Former Massachusetts Governor and businessman Mitt Romney beat back a number of primary contenders to emerge as the Republican nominee.

Obama defeated Romney in a close race, taking 51% of the national popular vote and 26 states, slightly less than his totals from four years before.

Across New York State, Obama's re-election results were nearly identical to 2008. In Tompkins, his share of the vote dropped by only one percent, to 69%, probably as the result of Green Party candidate Jill Stein taking a handful of local Democratic votes. Democratic dominance in the City of Ithaca was starkly illustrated by Romney's ability to attract just 879 votes out of 8,074 cast (11%) within the City of Ithaca. But given the County's political history, it may be just as remarkable that Obama took 64% of the County's suburban and rural vote. Tompkins was once again the most Democratic county in Upstate New York.

With the end of Obama's presidency approaching, the 2016 campaign emerged as one of the most peculiar in the nation's history. Hillary Clinton, who had served as a U.S. Senator and, most recently, as Obama's Secretary of State, held on to her frontrunner status throughout the Democratic primary campaign, resisting an energetic challenge from the Democratic-Socialist Senator from Vermont, Bernie Sanders. Her nomination by the Democrats represented the first time a woman had stood as a major party's candidate for president.

Presidential Election Results, Major Parties, 2008-2020

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
2008	Democratic	Obama	70%	54%	63%	53%
	Republican	McCain	28%	44%	36%	46%
2012	Democratic	Obama	69%	54%	63%	51%
	Republican	Romney	28%	45%	35%	47%
2016	Democratic	Clinton	69%	48%	59%	48%
	Republican	Trump	25%	47%	37%	46%
2020	Democratic	Biden	73%	52%	61%	51%
	Republican	Trump	24%	45%	38%	47%

On the Republican side, an unwieldy field of candidates was overshadowed and ultimately overwhelmed by Donald Trump, a well-known real estate developer and reality television personality. By the Republican convention in August, the Party had put aside its misgivings about Trump’s character and unpreparedness for the presidency, and enthusiastically anointed Trump as its candidate. The purported billionaire ran as a populist, nativist outsider, and “disrupter” with a promise to “make America great again.”

The November election results shocked the pundits and, it has been said, Trump himself. While losing the national popular vote to Clinton by a 46%-48% margin, Trump won 30 states and 304 electoral votes to capture the White House.

Whatever Trump was selling, Tompkins wasn’t buying. Trump took only 25% of the County’s vote, one of the worst showings of any major party candidate in the County’s history. The anti-intellectualism of Trump’s message, including his denial of climate change, didn’t resonate in a highly educated community where a third of those employed work in education.⁷⁵ And, as had been twice revealed in the County’s rejection of Goldwater and Reagan, candidates on the rightward extreme of the political spectrum do not fare well in Tompkins.

While dominant, Clinton didn't sweep the County. Trump won a narrow victory within in the Town of Groton. However, in the City of Ithaca, Clinton secured a nearly unheard of 83% of the vote and no Upstate county was more supportive of the Democratic presidential candidate than Tompkins. In fact, in the rest of Upstate, the Trump-Clinton contest was essentially a draw.⁷⁶

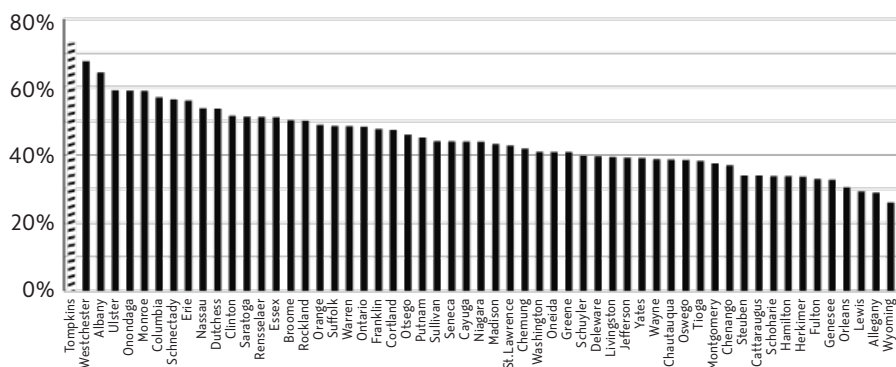
Trump's four years in office did little to soften his image, broaden his base, or otherwise win-over voters in Tompkins. He had shaken traditional military alliances, cut taxes on the wealthy, denied climate change, worked to overturn the remaining elements of the Obama-era Affordable Care Act, imposed stringent restrictions on immigration, fanned the flames of racial division, survived an impeachment and, in the eyes of many, mismanaged a deadly pandemic.

Despite, or perhaps because of, his disruptive record in office, his core following remained large and intensely loyal.

As the 2020 election approached, Republicans united around Donald Trump, nominating him without opposition for a second term. Party fealty to Trump was nearly absolute, extending even to forgoing the traditional party platform to avoid encumbering him with policy goals or guidance. Former Vice President Joseph Biden emerged from a crowded Democratic primary process as the Party's nominee. Biden stood as a middle-of-the-road, institutionalist Democrat with 32 years of experience in the Senate and eight years as Vice President under Barack Obama.

The low-key, steady presence of the 78-year-old Biden, who spent much of the campaign away from mass gatherings and behind a mask because of Covid-19, was a clear antithesis to the bombastic, provocative, disruptive Trump whose angry rhetoric whipped his defiantly mask-less followers who packed into arenas and stadia into a frenzy.⁷⁷

Biden Support, 2020 Presidential Election, NYS Counties Outside NYC



Biden won the national popular vote comfortably, taking 51% of the total and a seven million vote margin. However, razor-thin outcomes in several key swing states left the electoral college vote in some doubt for days after the election. In many cases, the once-simple process of tabulating ballots was delayed by an unprecedented number of mail-in and absentee ballots, many from voters who chose to follow stay-at-home guidance during the Covid pandemic. Conspiracy theories about vote tampering exploded as election day results were overturned by late-arriving ballots—many from heavily Democratic precincts—adding fuel to unprecedented attacks on the validity of the election by the sitting President.

In the end—but not before a mob of Trump supporters overran the United States Capitol and disrupted the certification of electoral college results in an effort to “Stop the Steal”—Biden’s electoral college victory was confirmed by Congress on January 6th 2021.

While the national map glowed Republican red, with Trump winning 2,496 out of the nation’s nearly 3,000 counties, voters in more heavily populated metropolitan areas favored Biden. Trump’s support came from counties that tended to be smaller, whiter, and less affluent than those won by Biden. The same pattern held true in New York State. Biden lost

two-thirds of the State's 62 counties but won most of downstate along with the "Big 5" metropolitan counties in Upstate—Erie, Monroe, Onondaga, Albany, and Westchester.

All of the counties adjacent to Tompkins favored Trump. In those six neighboring counties, Trump beat Biden by an average of nine percent, including double-digit victories in half of them.

Tompkins again went in its own direction. More than ever, the County was an outlier in 2020.

Biden took 73% of the vote in Tompkins; better than Clinton's drubbing of Trump four years earlier, Obama's historic 2008 victory, or any other Democrat in the County's history. Only Republican Dwight Eisenhower had ever done better in Tompkins.

Within the City of Ithaca, Biden won with a nearly unthinkable 91% of the vote. It is not hyperbolic to say that in the City, almost no one voted for Republican Trump. There, he received just 640 out of nearly 8,900 votes cast. Biden did nearly as well in the Town of Ithaca, receiving 86% of the vote. Groton stayed true to its Republican tradition, handing Biden his only loss in Tompkins.

Support for Biden in Tompkins was the highest of any New York State county outside the City of New York. It was one of the highest in the nation. Tompkins had become one of the bluest of the blue areas in all of America.

Biden's strong showing in 2020 occurred at a time of unquestioned local dominance by Democrats. The Mayor of Ithaca, all ten members of the City Council, seven of nine town supervisors, eleven of fourteen members of the County Legislature, the District Attorney, the County Clerk, all three County Court judges, and the State Assemblyperson were all Democrats. Most Democratic officeholders in the City, and many outside it, now run for election without opposition. The most spirited competition generally occurs within the Democratic primaries, rather than between the major parties.

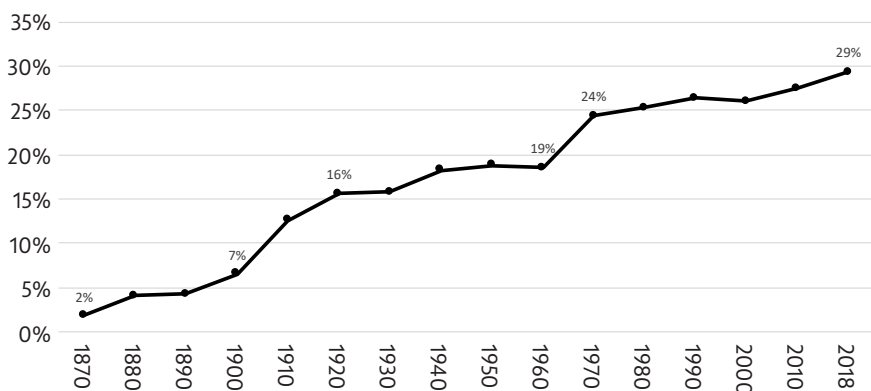
By 2020, there were three times more registered Democrats than Republicans in Tompkins County. In fact, more voters registered as “not enrolled” in any party than as Republican.

Whether judged by party registration or presidential election results, the County that loved “Silent Cal” Calvin Coolidge, that had handed humiliating losses to FDR in four consecutive elections, and that rallied behind Richard Nixon against his liberal opponents is now the most Democratic county in all of Upstate New York. The rest of Upstate has moved slightly to the left, particularly in the larger and more urban counties, but is still considered safe ground for Republican candidates. In contrast, Tompkins is so reliably Democratic that the lines of political districts are jerryman-dered to dilute its impact, as is the case with the State Senate, or maximize its impact, as with the New York State Assembly.

So how did the relatively rapid transition from red to blue happen in Tompkins? A few things jump out of the historical account that allow some speculation.

First, as noted earlier, the era of Republican dominance in Tompkins occurred at a time when party loyalties of two very different constituencies were in coincidental alignment. Farmers in the rural parts of the County tended to vote Republican. In the formative days of the Republican Party, they supported the Party’s opposition to slavery (which gave the South an unfair advantage through free labor and Congressional clout). They retained their reservations about southern Democrats after the war and favored the non-intrusive, pro-business style of government championed by Republicans in the 20th Century. After 1865, the farm support for local Republicans was augmented by the influence of the County’s higher education sector. Well into the 20th Century, Ivy League institutions such as Cornell were pillars of the eastern monied establishment, with faculty drawn from the elite, although not necessarily wealthy, class. As the end of the 19th century approached, the Republican platform became increas-

Cornell University and Ithaca College Enrollment as Percent of Tompkins County Population, 1870-2018



ingly defined by its pro-business, protectionist, small non-interventionalist government philosophy; very much in harmony with those who attended, funded, and took positions at Ivy League universities such as Cornell. Thus, the fastest growing sector in Tompkins also tended to be Republican.

As also noted, the late 1960's and early 1970's changed everything. The fight *against* the Vietnam War and *for* civil rights and social justice shaped the political perspectives of an entire generation, particularly those on college campuses at the time. The primary campaigns of Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy in 1968 and McGovern's progressive, anti-war platform in his 1972 run against Nixon channeled the political energy on American campuses toward the Democratic Party, and shaped enduring allegiances. Perhaps as the generation of college educated individuals, politicized by the events of the '60s and '70s, came to fill the thousands of faculty, research, administration, and staff jobs at Cornell and Ithaca College—often bringing their equally well-educated life partners with them—their presence and participation in the community quickly began to influence the County's political culture and the outcome of local elections. By 1984, when Democrats began to dominate in

Tompkins, this cohort was becoming a significant presence and emerging as local opinion-leaders. As the area's political culture bent toward progressive Democratic policies, others beyond this core group adapted to it and many others were drawn to it, locating to Tompkins expressly because of its progressive politics and culture.

And finally, basic demographics can help explain at least some of the political bent of the County.

Age is a clear determinant of partisan preferences. In the current era, the younger the voter, the more likely it is that he or she favors Democrats. Because of the large number of college students, the median age of Tompkins residents (31) is lower than the national average (38). The Pew Research Center recently found a growing generational gap in partisanship, with fully 59% of Millennials (those born between 1981 and 1996) voting for or favoring Democrats—a 27-point advantage over Republicans.⁷⁸ Although it should not be assumed that students actually turn out to vote in proportion to their numbers, their presence in the electorate—nearly three out of every ten Tompkins residents are now students of Cornell or Ithaca College—and the relative youth of the community, helps explain why Democrats do so well in Tompkins.

A voter's religious affiliation also influences political preferences. While different faiths and denominations tend to vote differently, those *without* a religious affiliation are increasingly likely to favor Democrats. In 2017, nearly 70% of religiously unaffiliated voters leaned toward or identified with the Democratic Party.⁷⁹ In the most recent (2010) *U.S. Religion Census*, Tompkins placed in the bottom three percent of religious affiliation levels among 3,143 counties surveyed, with a 22.8% affiliation rate.⁸⁰ The large percentage of local residents not affiliated with a religion may also shed light on voting behavior in Tompkins.

Not surprisingly, the major demographic feature that distinguishes Tompkins is the level of educational attainment of its residents. Educa-

tion level has become an increasingly strong predictor of voting behavior. Generally, the higher the level of educational attainment, the more likely it is that the individual will vote Democratic.

According to Pew Research, 54% of those with a four-year degree identified with or leaned toward the Democratic Party in 2017, up from 39% in 1994.⁸¹ And among those who pursue a post-graduate or professional education, Democrats enjoy a roughly 2:1 advantage in leaned partisan identification.⁸² Twenty years ago, there was no distinction between the political leanings of this group.

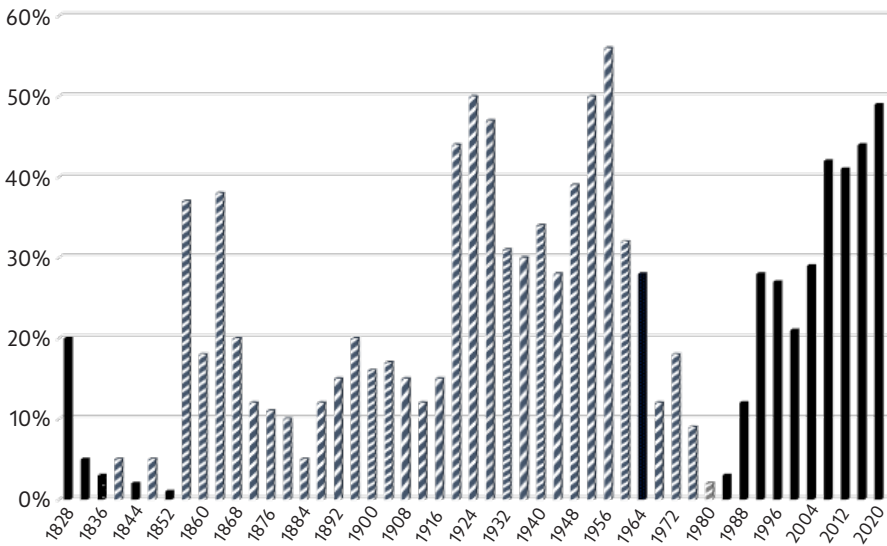
In Tompkins, 22% of the residents over 25 hold a bachelors degree—about the same as the state and national averages.⁸³ The difference in educational attainment in Tompkins versus the rest of the country lies in the high level of residents who have graduate or professional degrees. The 17,000 County residents with post-graduate degrees represents fully 29% of the over-25 population. Nationwide, the average is 13%. If the partisan leanings of this group in Tompkins are the same as Pew found nationwide, this large cohort of highly educated individuals gives a strong lift to Democratic candidates running in Tompkins County.⁸⁴

Some General Observations and Conclusion

Whatever the cause, changes in political preferences in Tompkins County have been infrequent, but profound. And when change has come, it hasn't followed a slow and gentle evolutionary curve, but instead occurred rapidly and without ambiguity. In observing voting trends, a few consistent and often overlapping features emerge about the County's electorate.

A Collective Decisiveness: Voting patterns in Tompkins County suggest an electorate that knows what it wants and quickly coalesces around it. Close elections can invite interpretation about voter intent. Little interpretation has been needed in Tompkins, where the average margin of victory in presiden-

Margin of Victory, Presidential Elections in Tompkins County, 1828-2020 (Dark Shaded = Democratic Candidate)



tial elections has been 22 points, including nine elections that have been won by both Republicans and Democrats by 40% or more. Party aside, most presidential elections in Tompkins County have almost always been landslides.

Party Loyalty: Party loyalty has been important in Tompkins County, but not unbreakable. The Free Soilers and their cause in 1848 loosened the firm hold of Jacksonian Democrats and set the stage for a rapid shift of allegiance to a new Republican Party. That loyalty, steeled by a bloody War and relentlessly reinforced by the partisan *Ithaca Journal*, sustained Republican electoral clout in Tompkins County for over a century—through the Civil War, Reconstruction, two World Wars, the Great Depression, the New Deal, the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements, the Great Society, Watergate, and even the first election of Ronald Reagan. Only Woodrow Wilson (thanks to Theodore Roosevelt’s spoiler role) and Barry Goldwater would interrupt the 128-year streak of Republican presidential victories in Tompkins County.

In 1984, everything changed. The seemingly unbreakable loyalty to the Republican Party began to rapidly unravel. First, Mondale beat Reagan in the County by 3%, then Dukakis defeated Bush by 18%, and then Clinton trounced Bush by 28 points. Within just three election cycles, partisan loyalties had made a major and enduring shift to the Democrats and their more progressive agenda. Today, at 55% of all registered voters, Democratic registration in Tompkins is by far the highest among all Upstate counties.⁸⁵ In addition to registering with a party, loyalty means showing up on election day. In the 2020 presidential election, only six counties in New York State had a higher turnout rate than the 79% achieved in Tompkins. Loyalty to the Democrats in Tompkins County today rivals that of the Republicans during their century of dominance and extends to elections to office at every level.

Willingness to be Different: Throughout its history, Tompkins has shown a willingness to go its own way; to be something of a political contrarian. The County became an outlier in 1848 when it gave Free Soiler Martin Van Buren 38% of its vote—far more than the State or nation—and again in 1856 when it gave its overwhelming support to John Frémont and the new Republican Party.

Even as wartime memories and northern antipathy toward the Democrats were fading, Tompkins County voters stood apart in showing little interest in rapprochement with national Democratic candidates.

Later, as the Democratic Party moved left, the nation's political sentiment moved with it, embracing the progressive social policies ushered in by FDR. Not so in Tompkins. There, voters bucked the trend and stayed reliably and overwhelmingly in the Republican camp. Recall that in 1936, at the peak of his popularity, Roosevelt could do no better than 34% of the County's votes.

And when the political leanings of the nation again turned to the *right* in the 1980's, the County moved to the *left*, giving ever-larger majorities to Democratic candidates.

Beyond standing apart from the nation as a whole, Tompkins has become an outlier even within its own neighborhood. That's not unexpected given the very different economies and demographic composition of Tompkins and the more rural adjacent counties of Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Seneca, Schuyler, and Tioga. Stark differences exist in voting patterns between these counties. Hillary Clinton received 42% of the 2016 vote in the six surrounding counties, and 70% in Tompkins. The partisan divide between Tompkins and its neighbors is now so great that pejoratively branding an opponent "The Ithaca Candidate" in negative ads is often an effective tactic for candidates running for offices that straddle the region.

Surprisingly, perhaps, this great intra-regional divide is relatively recent. Despite economic and demographic differences that had become obvious by the early 20th Century, Tompkins and its neighbors voted almost identically for 140 years. The County was as "rock-ribbed" Republican as any rural Upstate New York county. In the Kennedy-Nixon race, for example, Nixon received 60% of the vote in the surrounding six counties—appreciably *less* than his 66% landslide in Tompkins.

Although Republican candidates began winning by smaller margins in Tompkins than elsewhere in the region, the gap between the neighboring counties did not become clearly discernable until 1972 and nor unbridgeable until the 1984 race between Reagan and Mondale. Tompkins gave its support to Mondale who lost in the six adjoining counties by an average of 32-points. By the polarizing election of 2020, the Democrat Biden won Tompkins by nearly 50-points; he lost the adjacent counties to Trump by twelve. Elections after 1972 have seen the intra-regional separation between Tompkins and its neighbors widen and narrow, but Tompkins is now clearly in its own electoral orbit.

Wariness of Those on the Extreme: Throughout most of its history, Tompkins County's voters have had little tolerance for candidates at the extreme ends of the political spectrum. The exceptions occurred in

the County's earliest years, when the conspiracy-minded Anti-Masonics gained a toehold in local government and, as the nation's political climate was changing prior to the Civil War, the nativist anti-Catholic Know Nothings briefly took control of City Hall and took 21% of the County's presidential vote. However, the County has consistently given a cold shoulder to presidential candidates who strayed too far toward the extreme. Populist Democrat William Jennings Bryan, Progressive Robert LaFollette, segregationist George Wallace, right wing extremist Barry Goldwater, gadfly disrupter Ross Perot, and "America First" champion Donald Trump all suffered ignominious losses in Tompkins. In their time, both Roosevelts—Theodore (in his Bull Moose phase) and Franklin—were too extreme in their progressivism for the tastes of Tompkins voters, and failed dismally at the polls. Although partisan campaign "... rhetoric can drift toward the fringes and exceptions exist, such as the 1989 election of a socialist mayor of Ithaca, Tompkins voters have generally settled on candidates within a political standard deviation or two from the center.

Power of the Press: Among all the features of the County's political environment, the role of the print media as an opinion leader has changed the most. For decades, local papers were the window through which the community viewed the world and, for most people, their primary source for political information and cues. As were many newspapers of that time, *The Ithaca Journal* was unabashedly partisan. Most of its news stories, and nearly all of its editorial page, were given over to items favorable to its preferred candidate. The *Journal* held enormous sway over the outcome of presidential elections in Tompkins. When the *Journal* encouraged voters to support Andrew Jackson, they did. When it embraced the Free Soilers and shifted its full support to the Republicans, so did the voters. When Goldwater ran, the *Journal* committed near heresy by endorsing Democrat Lyndon Johnson, giving voters its blessing to break with old party loyalties. In Reagan's first run for President,

the *Journal* couldn't bring itself to support either Reagan or Carter, so it backed the moderate third-party candidate John Anderson who proceeded to gain more support in Tompkins than any county in New York State. And when the *Journal* tacked a new course by endorsing Mondale against Reagan, it began what now seems like an unbreakable streak of Democratic presidential victories in the County. There can be little doubt about the power of the press, and especially the *Journal*, for much of the County's history.

Those days have ended. The partisanship of mainstream local papers subsided, first with a line between the editorial and news pages that grew brighter over time, and ultimately with the abandonment of political endorsements altogether. The political cues that used to come from the local paper now arrive from countless sources, many aimed at specific, rather than community-wide audiences, and some of which are as vitriolic and blatantly partisan as the newspapers of two hundred years ago. Even if the *Journal* did endorse a presidential candidate today, its impact would likely be inconsequential.

Higher Education: The final observation is the most obvious: the dominating presence of a world class higher education industry in the center of a small Upstate County inevitably influences the area's political culture and voting patterns. Education now represents 32% of the County's employment and students at Cornell and Ithaca College comprise nearly 30% of the County's population.⁸⁶ As discussed in earlier sections, the growing presence of Cornell only strengthened the Republican hold over Tompkins during most of the County's history. The political leanings of farmers and professors were coincidentally aligned. Political sentiments began to evolve following the surge of new students and, especially, faculty and their spouses after WWII who tended to be more urban, liberal, and engaged in the community than their old-style, gentlemanly predecessors.⁸⁷ Later, as a generation singed by Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movement came of age and as younger, more secular, and highly edu-

cated voters turned increasingly toward the Democrats, overall voting patterns in the County turned sharply toward Democratic candidates. Even though the academic community may not hold a majority among County voters, it is fair to speculate that its influence as an opinion leader exceeds its votes on election days.

Conclusion: It's always tempting to paint the past in the same colors as the present. As we imagine the County's political past, it is easy to assume that the County has been a bastion of liberalism throughout its history, or at least since Cornell University became a dominant part of the local economy and culture. But a look at the way residents of Tompkins have voted for presidential candidates shows a past that is much different than the present. In fact, if measured by voting patterns, it's nearly the opposite. In today's parlance, one of America's bluest states was once one of its reddest.

Yes, the County opposed the expansion of slavery and stayed true to the cause over the course of a bloody war. But even as Republicanism evolved into the party of business and limited government, and the Democrats seized the banner of progressivism, it would be hard to find a County more faithful to the GOP than Tompkins. Among those who follow local politics today, who would think that the most popular presidential candidate in the County's history wasn't Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton, but Dwight Eisenhower, followed closely by Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover? Only now are Democratic candidates beginning to achieve the levels of popularity enjoyed by Republicans less than a century ago.

If nearly two hundred years of presidential elections in Tompkins have shown anything, it is that the political pendulum in Tompkins doesn't swing often, but when it does, it moves with speed and often in a bold new direction. As others look to the future rather than the past, they will be well served to keep that lesson in mind. //

Appendices

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1828	Democratic	Jackson	60%	50%	51%	56%
	Nat'l Repub.	Adams	40%	50%	49%	44%
1832	Democratic	Jackson	52%	51%	52%	54%
	Nat'l Repub.	Clay	48%	49%	48%	37%
	Anti-Masonic	Wirt	0%	0%	0%	8%
1836	Democratic	Van Buren	51%	55%	55%	51%
	Whig	Harrison	49%	45%	45%	37%
	Whig	White	0%	0%	0%	10%
1840	Democratic	Van Buren	47%	48%	48%	47%
	Nat'l Repub.	Harrison	53%	52%	51%	53%
1844	Democratic	Polk	49%	49%	49%	50%
	Whig	Clay	47%	48%	48%	48%
	Liberty	Birney	4%	4%	3%	2%
1848	Democratic	Cass	18%	23%	25%	43%
	Whig	Taylor	43%	47%	48%	47%
	Free Soil	Van Buren	38%	30%	26%	10%
1852	Democratic	Pierce	45%	49%	50%	51%
	Whig	Scott	44%	46%	45%	44%
	Free Soil	Hale	11%	6%	5%	5%
1856	Democratic	Buchanan	21%	29%	33%	45%
	Republican	Fremont	58%	52%	46%	33%
	American (K.N.)	Fillmore	21%	20%	21%	22%
1860	Democratic	Douglas (F)	41%	42%	46%	30%
	Democratic (S.)	Breckinridge	(F)	(F)	(F)	18%
	Republican	Lincoln	59%	58%	54%	40%
	Constit. Union	Bell	(F)	(F)	(F)	13%
1864	Democratic	McClellan	31%	45%	50%	45%
	Republican	Lincoln	69%	55%	51%	55%
1868	Democratic	Seymour	40%	45%	51%	47%
	Republican	Grant	60%	55%	49%	53%
1872	Democratic	Greeley	44%	43%	47%	44%
	Republican	Grant	56%	57%	53%	56%

Nat'l Repub. = National Republican • Democratic (S) = Democratic Southern • (F) = Fusion
(K.N.) = Know Nothings

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1876	Democratic	Tilden	44%	47%	51%	51%
	Republican	Hayes	55%	53%	48%	48%
1880	Democratic	Hancock	43%	44%	48%	48%
	Republican	Garfield	53%	54%	50%	48%
	Greenback	Weaver	4%	2%	1%	3%
1884	Democratic	Cleveland	44%	44%	48%	49%
	Republican	Blaine	49%	52%	48%	48%
	Greenback	Butler	4%	0%	2%	1%
	Prohibition	St. John	3%	4%	2%	2%
1888	Democratic	Cleveland	42%	44%	48%	49%
	Republican	Harrison	54%	53%	49%	48%
	Prohibition	Fisk	3%	3%	2%	2%
1892	Democratic	Cleveland	39%	43%	49%	46%
	Republican	Harrison	54%	51%	46%	43%
	Prohibition	Bidwell	6%	7%	3%	2%
1896	Democratic	Bryan	38%	34%	39%	47%
	Republican	McKinley	58%	62%	58%	51%
	Prohibition	Leverling	3%	3%	1%	1%
1900	Democratic	Bryan	40%	39%	44%	46%
	Republican	McKinley	56%	58%	53%	52%
	Prohibition	Wooley	4%	2%	1%	2%
1904	Democratic	Parker	39%	37%	42%	38%
	Republican	Roosevelt	56%	59%	53%	56%
	Prohibition	Swallow	3%	2%	1%	2%
1908	Democratic	Bryan	40%	38%	41%	43%
	Republican	Taft	55%	57%	53%	52%
	Prohibition	Chafin	4%	2%	0%	2%
1912	Democratic	Wilson	40%	37%	41%	42%
	Republican	Taft	28%	36%	29%	23%
	Progressive	Roosevelt	26%	22%	25%	27%
	Prohibition	Chafin	5%	4%	1%	1%
1916	Democratic	Wilson	40%	41%	45%	49%
	Republican	Hughes	55%	56%	52%	46%
	Prohibition	Hanley	4%	2%	1%	1%

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1920	Democratic	Cox	26%	27%	27%	34%
	Republican	Harding	70%	67%	65%	60%
	Prohibition	Watkins	2%	1%	1%	1%
1924	Democratic	Davis	23%	25%	29%	29%
	Republican	Coolidge	73%	64%	56%	54%
	Progressive	LaFollette	4%	10%	15%	17%
1928	Democratic	Smith	26%	38%	47%	41%
	Republican	Hoover	73%	60%	50%	58%
1932	Democratic	Roosevelt	33%	43%	54%	57%
	Republican	Hoover	64%	54%	41%	40%
1936	Democratic	Roosevelt	34%	44%	59%	61%
	Republican	Landon	64%	54%	39%	37%
1940	Democratic	Roosevelt	33%	42%	52%	55%
	Republican	Willkie	67%	58%	48%	45%
1944	Democratic	Roosevelt	36%	42%	52%	53%
	Republican	Dewey	64%	58%	47%	46%
1948	Democratic	Truman	28%	39%	45%	50%
	Republican	Dewey	67%	57%	46%	45%
	Amer. Labor	Wallace	3%	3%	8%	2%
1952	Democratic	Stevenson	25%	34%	44%	44%
	Republican	Eisenhower	75%	66%	56%	55%
1956	Democratic	Stevenson	22%	29%	39%	42%
	Republican	Eisenhower	78%	71%	61%	57%
1960	Democratic	Kennedy	34%	45%	53%	50%
	Republican	Nixon	66%	55%	47%	50%
1964	Democratic	Johnson	64%	65%	69%	61%
	Republican	Goldwater	36%	35%	31%	38%
1968	Democratic	Humphrey	41%	43%	50%	43%
	Republican	Nixon	53%	51%	44%	43%
	Amer. Indep.	Wallace	5%	6%	5%	14%
	Democratic	McGovern	41%	35%	41%	38%
	Republican	Nixon	59%	64%	59%	61%
1976	Democratic	Carter	45%	45%	52%	50%
	Republican	Ford	54%	55%	48%	48%

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins	Upstate	N.Y.	U.S.
1980	Democratic	Carter	40%	39%	44%	41%
	Republican	Reagan	42%	51%	47%	51%
	Independence	Anderson	14%	8%	8%	7%
1984	Democratic	Mondale	51%	39%	46%	41%
	Republican	Reagan	48%	61%	54%	59%
1988	Democratic	Dukakis	59%	45%	52%	46%
	Republican	Bush	41%	54%	48%	53%
1992	Democratic	Clinton	56%	41%	50%	43%
	Republican	Bush	28%	38%	34%	37%
	Independent	Perot	16%	20%	16%	19%
1996	Democratic	Clinton	56%	52%	60%	49%
	Republican	Dole	29%	37%	31%	41%
	Independent	Perot	7%	10%	8%	8%
	Green	Nader	5%	1%	1%	1%
2000	Democratic	Gore	54%	52%	60%	48%
	Republican	Bush	33%	43%	35%	48%
	Green	Nader	11%	4%	4%	3%
2004	Democratic	Kerry	64%	50%	58%	48%
	Republican	Bush	33%	48%	40%	51%
	Independent	Nader	2%	2%	1%	0%
2008	Democratic	Obama	70%	54%	63%	53%
	Republican	McCain	28%	44%	36%	46%
2012	Democratic	Obama	69%	54%	63%	51%
	Republican	Romney	28%	45%	35%	47%
	Green	Stein	2%	1%	1%	0%
2016	Democratic	Clinton	69%	48%	59%	48%
	Republican	Trump	25%	47%	37%	46%
	Green	Stein	3%	1%	1%	1%
	Libertarian	Johnson	3%	2%	2%	3%
2020	Democratic	Biden	73%	52%	61%	51%
	Republican	Trump	24%	45%	38%	47%
	Libertarian	Jorgenson	1%	1%	1%	1%

Votes by Party, Presidential Elections, Tompkins County, 1828-2020

Year	Republican	Democratic	Nat Republican	Whig	Free Soil	American (K.N.)	Prohibition	Progressive	Independent	Independence	Libertarian	Am.Indep.	Greenback	Grand Total
1828		3,236	2,154											5,390
1832		3,338	3,045											6,383
1836		2,935		2,786										5,721
1840		3,558		3,969										7,527
1844		4,013		3,845										7,858
1848		1,270		3,003	2,648									6,921
1852		3,472		3,410	862									7,744
1856	4,019	1,430				1,470								6,919
1860	4,348	3,027												7,375
1864	4,518	2,996												7,514
1868	4,646	3,100												7,746
1872	4,318	3,369												7,687
1876	5,032	4,028					114						17	9,191
1880	4,896	3,956					17						363	9,232
1884	4,420	3,992					267						373	9,052
1888	5,073	3,909					317							9,299
1892	4,717	3,404					483							8,604
1896	5,342	3,506					240							9,088
1900	5,409	3,852					372							9,633
1904	5,414	3,780					295							9,489
1908	5,090	3,734					324			25				9,173
1912	2,237	3,272					377	2,068						7,954
1916	4,736	3,455					316							8,507
1920	9,508	3,487					250							13,245
1924	11,766	3,701						619						16,086
1928	14,471	5,114												19,585
1932	12,185	6,180												18,365
1936	13,332	7,007												20,339
1940	14,235	7,118					30							21,383
1944	12,805	7,174												19,979
1948	13,719	5,721												19,440
1952	18,673	6,285												24,958
1956	19,749	5,475												25,224
1960	17,061	8,659												25,720
1964	9,070	16,103												25,173
1968	13,446	10,343										1,236		25,025
1972	17,605	12,344												29,949
1976	15,463	12,808									58			28,329
1980	12,448	11,970								4,081	305			28,804
1984	18,255	19,357									110			37,722
1988	14,932	21,455									136			36,523
1992	11,520	23,197							6,704		114			41,535
1996	11,532	20,772							2,623					34,927
2000	13,351	21,807							90					35,248
2004	13,994	27,229							940		214			42,377
2008	11,927	29,826									188			41,941
2012	11,107	27,244									395			38,746
2016	10,371	28,890									1,393			40,654
2020	11,096	33,619									474			45,189
Total	427,836	459,517	5,199	17,013	3,510	1,470	3,402	2,687	10,357	4,106	3,387	1,236	753	940,473

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins Votes
1828	Democratic	Jackson	3,236
	National Republican	Adams	2,154
	Total		5,390
1832	Democratic	Jackson	3,338
	National Republican	Clay	3,045
	Total		6,383
1836	Democratic	Van Buren	2,935
	Whig	Harrison	2,786
	Total		5,721
1840	Whig	Harrison	3,969
	Democratic	Van Buren	3,558
	Total		7,527
1844	Democratic	Polk	4,013
	Whig	Clay	3,845
	Total		7,858
1848	Whig	Taylor	3,003
	Free Soil	Van Buren	2,648
	Democratic	Cass	1,270
	Total		6,921
1852	Democratic	Pierce	3,472
	Whig	Scott	3,410
	Free Soil	Hale	862
	Total		7,744
1856	Republican	Fremont	4,019
	Democratic	Buchanan	1,430
	American (K.N.)	Filmore	1,470
	Total		6,919

Votes for Major Party Candidates, Tompkins County, 1828-2020 / page 2

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins Votes
1860	Republican	Lincoln	4,348
	Democratic	Douglas (Fusion)	3,027
	Total		7,375
1864	Republican	Lincoln	4,518
	Democratic	McClennan	2,996
	Total		7,514
1868	Democratic	Seymour	3,100
	Republican	Grant	4,646
	Total		7,746
1872	Republican	Grant	4,318
	Democratic	Greely	3,369
	Total		7,687
1876	Democratic	Tilden	4,028
	Republican	Hayes	5,032
	Prohibition	Smith	114
	Total		9,174
1880	Republican	Garfield	4,896
	Democratic	Hancock	3,956
	Prohibition	Dow	17
	Total		8,869
1884	Democratic	Cleveland	3,992
	Republican	Blaine	4,420
	Prohibition	St. John	267
	Total		8,679
1888	Republican	Harrison	5,073
	Democratic	Cleveland	3,909
	Prohibition	Fisk	317
	Total		9,299

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins Votes
1892	Democratic	Cleveland	3,404
	Republican	Harrison	4,717
	Prohibition	Bidwell	483
	Total		8,604
1896	Republican	McKinley	5,342
	Democratic	Bryan	3,506
	National Democratic	Palmer	103
	Prohibition	Leverling	240
	Total		9,191
1900	Republican	McKinley	5,409
	Democratic	Bryan	3,852
	Prohibition	Woolley	372
	Total		9,633
1904	Republican	Roosevelt	5,414
	Democratic	Parker	3,780
	Prohibition	Swallow	295
	Total		9,489
1908	Republican	Taft	5,090
	Democratic	Bryan	3,734
	Independence	Hisgen	25
	Prohibition	Chafin	324
	Total		9,173
1912	Democratic	Wilson	3,272
	Republican	Taft	2,237
	Progressive	Roosevelt	2,068
	Prohibition	Chafin	377
	Total		7,954

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins Votes
1916	Republican	Hughes	4,736
	Democratic	Wilson	3,455
	Prohibition	Hanley	316
	Total		8,507
1920	Republican	Harding	9,508
	Democratic	Cox	3,487
	Prohibition	Watkins	250
	Total		13,245
1924	Republican	Coolidge	11,766
	Democratic	Davis	3,701
	Progressive	LaFollette	619
	Total		16,086
1928	Republican	Hoover	14,471
	Democratic	Smith	5,114
	Total		19,585
1932	Democratic	Roosevelt	6,180
	Republican	Hoover	12,185
	Total		18,365
1936	Democratic	Roosevelt	7,007
	Republican	Landon	13,332
	Total		20,339
1940	Democratic	Roosevelt	7,118
	Republican	Wilkie	14,235
	Prohibition	Babson	30
	Total		21,383
1944	Democratic	Roosevelt	7,174
	Republican	Dewey	12,805
	Total		19,979

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins Votes
1948	Republican	Dewey	13,719
	Democratic	Truman	5,721
	Total		19,440
1952	Republican	Eisenhower	18,673
	Democratic	Stevenson	6,285
	Total		24,958
1956	Republican	Eisenhower	19,749
	Democratic	Stevenson	5,475
	Total		25,224
1960	Democratic	Kennedy	8,659
	Republican	Nixon	17,061
	Total		25,720
1964	Democratic	Johnson	16,103
	Republican	Goldwater	9,070
	Total		25,173
1968	Democratic	Humphrey	10,343
	Republican	Nixon	13,446
	Total		23,789
1972	Republican	Nixon	17,605
	Democratic	McGovern	12,344
	Total		29,949
1976	Democratic	Carter	12,808
	Republican	Ford	15,463
	Total		28,271
1980	Republican	Reagan	12,448
	Democratic	Carter	11,970
	Independence	Anderson	4,081
	Total		28,499

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins Votes
1984	Republican	Reagan	18,255
	Democratic	Mondale	19,357
	Total		37,612
1988	Democratic	Dukakis	21,455
	Republican	Bush	14,932
	Total		36,387
1992	Democratic	Clinton	23,197
	Republican	Bush	11,520
	Independent	Perot	6,704
	Total		41,421
1996	Democratic	Clinton	20,772
	Republican	Dole	11,532
	Independent	Perot	2,623
	Total		34,927
2000	Democratic	Gore	21,807
	Republican	Bush	13,351
	Green	Nader	4,548
	Total		39,706
2004	Democratic	Kerry	27,229
	Republican	Bush	13,994
	Independent	Nader	940
	Total		42,163
2008	Democratic	Obama	29,826
	Republican	McCain	11,927
	Independent	Nader	319
	Libertarian	Barr	188
	Green	McKinney	186
	Total		42,446

Year	Party	Candidate	Tompkins Votes
2012	Democratic	Obama	27,244
	Republican	Romney	11,107
	Green	Stein	835
	Libertarian	Johnson	395
	Total		39,581
2016	Democratic	Clinton	28,890
	Republican	Trump	10,371
	Total		39,261
2020	Democratic	Biden	33,619
	Republican	Trump	11,096
	Green	Hawkins	365
	Libertarian	Jorgensen	474
	Total		45,554

County	Democratic	Republican	Not Enrolled	Other
Tompkins	55%	19%	21%	5%
Albany	51%	18%	24%	7%
Westchester	50%	20%	24%	5%
Erie	47%	25%	20%	8%
Rockland	47%	23%	24%	7%
Monroe	42%	26%	25%	7%
Ulster	41%	23%	28%	8%
Schenectady	40%	24%	26%	10%
Nassau	40%	31%	25%	5%
Columbia	39%	26%	25%	9%
Onondaga	38%	28%	27%	8%
Orange	38%	30%	24%	8%
Franklin	38%	33%	21%	8%
Niagara	37%	34%	20%	9%
Broome	37%	35%	21%	7%
Dutchess	37%	28%	27%	8%
Clinton	36%	31%	24%	9%
Sullivan	36%	31%	25%	8%
St. Lawrence	35%	35%	22%	8%
Suffolk	35%	31%	27%	7%
Oneida	33%	38%	21%	8%
Rensselaer	32%	25%	30%	13%
Cortland	32%	36%	24%	8%
Cayuga	32%	36%	23%	9%
Montgomery	32%	35%	24%	9%
Otsego	32%	38%	22%	8%
Chautauqua	31%	35%	25%	9%
Putnam	31%	34%	26%	9%
Seneca	31%	39%	22%	9%
Ontario	30%	37%	25%	8%
Essex	30%	42%	20%	9%
Chemung	30%	40%	22%	8%
Cattaraugus	30%	40%	22%	8%

County	Democratic	Republican	Not Enrolled	Other
Saratoga	29%	37%	26%	8%
Delaware	29%	42%	21%	8%
Schuyler	28%	40%	23%	9%
Madison	28%	39%	24%	9%
Warren	27%	42%	22%	9%
Jefferson	27%	41%	24%	8%
Greene	27%	38%	26%	9%
Livingston	26%	44%	22%	8%
Tioga	26%	45%	22%	8%
Schoharie	25%	40%	25%	10%
Washington	25%	42%	24%	9%
Herkimer	25%	48%	18%	9%
Wayne	24%	40%	26%	9%
Chenango	24%	44%	23%	8%
Yates	24%	47%	21%	8%
Steuben	24%	49%	19%	8%
Oswego	24%	45%	22%	8%
Genesee	24%	44%	23%	9%
Fulton	23%	49%	20%	8%
Lewis	23%	52%	18%	7%
Orleans	22%	48%	22%	8%
Allegany	22%	51%	20%	8%
Hamilton	21%	58%	14%	7%
Wyoming	21%	48%	23%	8%
Outside NYC	38%	30%	24%	7%
Bronx	75%	6%	16%	3%
Kings	71%	9%	18%	3%
New York	70%	8%	19%	3%
Queens	64%	11%	22%	3%
Richmond	41%	31%	22%	5%
NYC	68%	10%	19%	3%
Total State	50%	22%	22%	5%

Year	Pres/Mayor	Democrats	Republicans	Whig	K.N./Amer.	Other	Total
1852	Whig	1		5			6
1853	Whig	1		5			6
1854	NA						6
1855	NA				6		6
1856	K.N.				6		6
1857	K.N.				6		6
1858	K.N.				6		6
1859	K.N.	1			5		6
1860	Rep	1	2		3		6
1861	Dem	3	2		1		6
1862	Dem	5			1		6
1863	Dem	5			1		6
1864	Rep	4	2				6
1865	Rep	4	2				6
1866	Dem	4	2				6
1867	Rep	4	2				6
1868	Rep	2	4				6
1869	Dem	2	4				6
1870	Dem	3	3				6
1871	Rep	2	4				6
1872	Rep	1	5				6
1873	Dem	5	3				8
1874	Dem	5	3				8
1875	Dem	5	3				8
1876	Rep	6	2				8
1877	Dem	6	2				8
1878	Dem	5	3				8
1879	Dem	6	2				8
1880	Dem	5	3				8
1881	Rep	1	7				8
1882	Rep	2	6				8
1883	Dem	5	3				8
1884	Dem	5	3				8
1885	Dem	4	4				8

Year	Pres/Mayor	Democrats	Republicans	Whig	K.N./Amer.	Other	Total
1886	Dem	5	3				8
1887	Rep	2	6				8
1888	Rep	2	6				8
1889	Dem	2	6				8
1890	Dem	4	4				8
1891	Rep	3	5				8
1892	Rep	3	5				8
1893	Citizen	6	2				8
1894	Citizen	4	4				8
1895	Ind	3	5				8
1896	Ind	3	5				8
1897	Rep	4	4				8
1898	Rep	6	2				8
1899	Dem	6	2				8
1900	Dem	6	2				8
1901	Rep	4	4				8
1902	Rep	3	5				8
1903	Dem	3	5				8
1904	Dem	3	5				8
1905	Rep	2	6				8
1906	Rep	4	4				8
1907	Rep	3	5				8
1908	Rep	2	8				10
1909	Dem	4	6				10
1910	Dem	6	4				10
1911	Dem	6	4				10
1912	Dem	8	2				10
1913	Fusion	6	2		2		10
1914	Fusion	2	7		1		10
1915	Rep	1	9				10
1916	Rep	3	7				10
1917	Rep	2	8				10
1918	Rep	2	8				10
1919	Rep	3	7				10

Year	Pres/Mayor	Democrats	Republicans	Whig	K.N./Amer.	Other	Total
1920	Rep	4	6				10
1921	Rep	4	6				10
1922	Rep	3	7				10
1923	Rep	4	6				10
1924	Rep	4	6				10
1925	Rep	2	8				10
1926	Rep	2	8				10
1927	Rep	2	8				10
1928	Rep	2	8				10
1929	Dem	2	8				10
1930	Dem	2	8				10
1931	Dem	2	8				10
1932	Dem	2	8				10
1933	Rep	1	9				10
1934	Rep	1	9				10
1935	Rep	1	9				10
1936	Rep	1	9				10
1937	Rep	1	9				10
1938	Rep	1	9				10
1939	Rep	0	10				10
1940	Rep	0	10				10
1941	Rep	0	10				10
1942	Rep	0	10				10
1943	Rep	0	10				10
1944	Rep	0	10				10
1945	Dem	2	8				10
1946	Dem	2	8				10
1947	Rep	1	9				10
1948	Rep	1	9				10
1949	Dem	1	9				10
1950	Dem	1	9				10
1951	Rep	0	10				10
1952	Rep	0	10				10
1953	Rep	1	13				14

Year	Pres/Mayor	Democrats	Republicans	Whig	K.N./Amer.	Other	Total
1954	Rep	1	13				14
1955	Dem	3	11				14
1956	Dem	3	11				14
1957	Dem	2	12				14
1958	Dem	2	12				14
1959	Rep	2	12				14
1960	Rep	2	12				14
1961	Dem	5	9				14
1962	Dem	5	9				14
1963	Rep	6	8				14
1964	Rep	6	8				14
1965	Rep	7	7				14
1966	Rep	7	7				14
1967	Dem	8	6				14
1968	Dem	8	6				14
1969	Rep	8	6				14
1970	Rep	8	6				14
1971	Dem	7	7				14
1972	Dem	7	7				14
1973	Dem	7	5				12
1974	Dem	7	5				12
1975	Dem	7	3				10
1976	Dem	7	3				10
1977	Dem	7	3				10
1978	Dem	7	3				10
1979	Dem	7	3				10
1980	Dem	7	3				10
1981	Rep	9	1				10
1982	Rep	9	1				10
1983	Dem	9	1				10
1984	Dem	9	1				10
1985	Dem	9	1				10
1986	Dem	9	1				10
1987	Dem	9	1				10

Year	Pres/Mayor	Democrats	Republicans	Whig	K.N./Amer.	Other	Total
1988	Dem	9	1				10
1989	Dem	9	1				10
1990	Dem	9	1				10
1991	Dem	9	1				10
1992	Dem	9	1				10
1993	Dem	10	0				10
1994	Dem	10	0				10
1995	Ind	9	0			1	10
1996	Ind	9	0			1	10
1997	Ind	7	1			2	10
1998	Ind	7	1			2	10
1999	Ind	8	1			1	10
2000	Ind	8	1			1	10
2001	Ind	8	0			2	10
2002	Ind	8	0			2	10
2003	Dem	10	0			0	10
2004	Dem	10	0			0	10
2005	Dem	10	0				10
2006	Dem	10	0				10
2007	Dem	10	0				10
2008	Dem	10	0				10
2009	Dem	10	0				10
2010	Dem	10	0				10
2011	Dem	10	0				10
2012	Dem	10	0				10
2013	Dem	10	0				10
2014	Dem	10	0				10
2015	Dem	10	0				10
2016	Dem	10	0				10
2017	Dem	10	0				10
2018	Dem	10	0				10
2019	Dem	10	0				10
2020	Dem	10	0				10

Year	Democratic	Republican	Cross End.	Total
1919	2	10	2	14
1920	2	10	2	14
1921	3	10	1	14
1922	3	10	1	14
1923	3	11	0	14
1924	3	11	0	14
1925	3	11	0	14
1926	3	11	0	14
1927	3	11	0	14
1928	3	11	0	14
1929	4	10		14
1930	4	10	0	14
1931	5	9		14
1932	5	9	0	14
1933	4	10		14
1934	4	10		14
1935	2	12		14
1936	2	12		14
1937	1	13		14
1938	1	13		14
1939	4	10		14
1940	4	10		14
1941	4	10		14
1942	4	10		14
1943	2	12		14
1944	2	12		14
1945	3	11		14
1946	3	11		14
1947	2	12		14
1948	2	12		14
1949	2	12		14
1950	2	12		14
1951	1	15		16
1952	1	15		16

Year	Democratic	Republican	Cross End.	Total
1953	3	13		16
1954	3	13		16
1955	4	12		16
1956	4	12		16
1957	3	13		16
1958	3	13		16
1959	3	13		16
1960	3	13		16
1961	3	13		16
1962	3	13		16
1963	3	13		16
1964	3	13		16
1965	3	13		16
1966	3	13		16
1967	4	12		16
1968	4	12		16
1969	8	8		16
1970	8	8		16
1971	8	8		16
1972	8	8		16
1973	7	8		15
1974	7	8		15
1975	7	8		15
1976	7	8		15
1977	7	8		15
1978	7	8		15
1979	7	8		15
1980	7	8		15
1981	6	9		15
1982	6	9		15
1983	6	9		15
1984	6	9		15
1985	6	9		15
1986	6	9		15

Year	Democratic	Republican	Cross End.	Total
1987	6	9		15
1988	6	9		15
1989	7	8		15
1990	7	8		15
1991	7	8		15
1992	7	8		15
1993	9	6		15
1994	9	6		15
1995	9	6		15
1996	9	6		15
1997	10	5		15
1998	10	5		15
1999	10	5		15
2000	10	5		15
2001	11	4		15
2002	11	4		15
2003	11	4		15
2004	11	4		15
2005	10	5		15
2006	10	5		15
2007	10	5		15
2008	10	5		15
2009	12	3		15
2010	12	3		15
2011	12	3		15
2012	12	3		15
2013	11	3		14
2014	11	3		14
2015	11	3		14
2016	11	3		14
2017	11	3		14
2018	11	3		14
2019	11	3		14
2020	11	3		14

Year	Cornell University	Ithaca College	Total Enrollment	County Population	% of Tompkins
1868	412		412		
1869	563		563		
1870	610		610	33,178	2%
1871	597		597		
1872	539		539		
1873	518		518		
1874	428		428		
1875	543		543		
1876	561		561		
1877	529		529		
1878	505		505		
1879	459		459		
1880	399		399	34,445	1%
1881	384		384		
1882	405		405		
1883	461		461		
1884	573		573		
1885	649		649		
1886	829		829		
1887	1,017		1,017		
1888	1,220		1,220		
1889	1,323		1,323		
1890	1,390		1,390	32,923	4%
1891	1,538		1,538		
1892	1,700		1,700		
1893	1,810		1,810		
1894	1,689		1,689		
1895	1,702		1,702		
1896	1,808		1,808		
1897	1,835		1,835		

Year	Cornell University	Ithaca College	Total Enrollment	County Population	% of Tompkins
1898	1,834		1,834		
1899	1,987		1,987		
1900	2,202		2,202	33,830	7%
1901	2,461		2,461		
1902	2,664		2,664		
1903	2,754		2,754		
1904	2,932		2,932		
1905	3,068		3,068		
1906	3,180		3,180		
1907	3,421		3,421		
1908	3,770		3,770		
1909	4,067		4,067		
1910	4,241		4,241	33,647	13%
1911	4,487		4,487		
1912	4,777		4,777		
1913	4,979		4,979		
1914	4,296		4,296		
1915	5,570		5,570		
1916	5,460		5,460		
1917	3,950		3,950		
1918	4,497		4,497		
1919	5,526		5,526		
1920	5,492		5,492	35,285	16%
1921	5,544		5,544		
1922	5,342		5,342		
1923	5,420		5,420		
1924	5,499		5,499		
1925	5,628		5,628		
1926	5,563		5,563		
1927	5,479		5,479		

Year	Cornell University	Ithaca College	Total Enrollment	County Population	% of Tompkins
1928	5,483		5,483		
1929	5,678		5,678		
1930	5,998	559	6,557	41,490	16%
1931	6,117	559	6,676		
1932	5,984	448	6,432		
1933	5,727	352	6,079		
1934	5,685	361	6,046		
1935	5,804	380	6,184		
1936	6,227	365	6,592		
1937	6,625	490	7,115		
1938	6,952	552	7,504		
1939	7,063	629	7,692		
1940	7,116	629	7,745	42,340	18%
1941	6,946	551	7,497		
1942	6,479	504	6,983		
1943	4,876	225	5,101		
1944	4,834	287	5,121		
1945	5,343	463	5,806		
1946	9,249	1,192	10,441		
1947	9,801	1,444	11,245		
1948	9,753	1,471	11,224		
1949	9,844	1,401	11,245		
1950	9,828	1,270	11,098	59,122	19%
1951	9,438	1,071	10,509		
1952	9,313	874	10,187		
1953	9,438	969	10,407		
1954	9,538	1,182	10,720		
1955	9,691	1,380	11,071	62,643	18%
1956	10,163	1,528	11,691		
1957	10,559	1,552	12,111		

Year	Cornell University	Ithaca College	Total Enrollment	County Population	% of Tompkins
1958	10,636	1,685	12,321		
1959	10,622	1,737	12,359		
1960	10,815	1,442	12,257	66,164	19%
1961	11,187	1,916	13,103		
1962	11,742	1,730	13,472		
1963	12,175	1,910	14,085		
1964	12,511	2,330	14,841		
1965	13,309	2,715	16,024	71,614	22%
1966	13,373	3,086	16,459		
1967	13,637	3,396	17,033		
1968	13,954	3,535	17,489		
1969	14,140	3,695	17,835		
1970	14,926	3,831	18,757	77,064	24%
1971	15,488	4,189	19,677		
1972	15,836	4,302	20,138		
1973	16,128	4,408	20,536		
1974	16,208	4,592	20,800		
1975	16,653	4,606	21,259		
1976	17,080	4,681	21,761		
1977	16,340	4,720	21,060		
1978	16,433	4,867	21,300		
1979	16,711	4,829	21,540		
1980	17,066	4,975	22,041	87,085	25%
1981	17,081	5,052	22,133		
1982	17,158	5,102	22,260		
1983	17,336	5,252	22,588		
1984	17,540	5,493	23,033		
1985	17,795	5,532	23,327		
1986	17,902	5,768	23,670		
1987	18,276	5,799	24,075		

Student Enrollment as Percentage of Tompkins County // page 5

Year	Cornell University	Ithaca College	Total Enrollment	County Population	% of Tompkins
1988	18,425	6,105	24,530		
1989	18,581	6,389	24,970		
1990	18,389	6,432	24,821	94,097	26%
1991	18,627	6,443	25,070		
1992	18,521	6,259	24,780		
1993	18,781	5,964	24,745		
1994	18,890	5,688	24,578		
1995	18,914	5,798	24,712		
1996	18,849	5,800	24,649		
1997	18,428	5,897	24,325		
1998	18,649	5,895	24,544		
1999	19,021	5,960	24,981		
2000	18,995	6,170	25,165	96,601	26%
2001	19,420	6,483	25,903		
2002	19,575	6,431	26,006		
2003	19,620	6,496	26,116		
2004	19,518	6,337	25,855		
2005	19,447	6,412	25,859		
2006	19,639	6,409	26,048		
2007	19,800	6,660	26,460		
2008	20,273	6,448	26,721		
2009	20,633	6,894	27,527		
2010	20,939	6,949	27,888	101,564	27%
2011	21,131	6,760	27,891		
2012	21,124	6,759	27,883		
2013	21,593	6,723	28,316		
2014	21,850	6,587	28,437		
2015	21,904	6,769	28,673		
2016	22,319	6,678	28,997		
2017	23,016	6,516	29,532		
2018	23,600	6,517	30,117	102,793	29%

Endnotes

- 1 Suffrage in New York State in 1828 was limited to white men over 21, with non-white men able to vote only if they were 28 or older and owned property valued at \$250 or more—a provision added to the 1821 State Constitution that severely limited the participation of non-white men in elections. See <https://www.albanylaw.edu/centers/government-law-center/Documents/The-Quest-for-Black-Voting-Rights-Liebman.pdf>, p.401. See also Phyllis Field on New York voting in *The Politics of Race in New York: The Struggle for Black Suffrage in the Civil War Era*, Cornell Press, Ithaca, 1982.
- 2 There were other newspapers that served the area, some short-lived, others not. Most notably, the *Ithaca Chronicle* was published during the first half of the 19th Century and the *Ithaca Democrat* in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.
- 3 “Andrew Jackson”, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/andrew-jackson/>
- 4 “Supervisors,” *Ithaca Journal and General Advertiser*, April 9, 1828, p.3.
- 5 “For President, Andrew Jackson,” *Ithaca Journal and Daily Advertiser*, November 17, 1830, p.2. The editorial noted Jackson’s governing principles including “...a literal construction of the Constitution, with the exercise of express, not implied powers—Neither consolidation nor nullification—A firm adherence to Democratik (sic) principles—to individual and municipal rights, to the sovereignty of the states, and to the SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PEOPLE.”
- 6 *Ithaca Journal and General Advertiser*, November 6, 1844, p. 1.
- 7 The Free Soil Party was particularly popular in Upstate New York, with Van Buren finishing with 30% of the vote in counties outside New York City, including outright victories in five Upstate counties, and 26% statewide.
- 8 Wilson’s victory was something of a fluke, produced by Progressive Party candidate Theodore Roosevelt taking over a quarter of the local vote, mostly at the expense of Republican incumbent William Howard Taft.
- 9 “Home Matters,” *Ithaca Journal and Advertiser*, April 11, 1855, p.3.
- 10 “Town Elections,” *Ibid.*, April 9, 1856, p.3.
- 11 *Ibid.*, July 16, 1856, pp. 1 and 3.
- 12 *The Journal* was heavily criticized by other Democratic papers such as the *Binghamton Democrat* that wrote “The Ithaca Journal has come out for Frémont. The change is only one of name. It was bit by a n-----r long ago.”

Ithaca Journal, July 22, 1855, p.3. *Journal* editor and publisher J.H. Selkreg provided a lengthy response to attacks on the paper's change of partisanship on July 22nd, summarizing his position as follows: "We have followed the democratic party in its downward course until we could follow it no longer—we have supported its candidates until those candidates have become the representatives of the principles of slavery instead of freedom—and when they reached this point, no patriot, no lover of his country, no well wisher of her institutions and her destiny can proceed further without doing violence to the most earnest convictions of his conscience. Fellow Democrats! By all the struggles of the past in which we have been engaged—by all the sympathy we have felt together for the success of principle, we ask you to go with us in the advocacy of Freedom in the Territories of our country, and in the support of Frémont for President."

- 13 "The Great Mass Meeting," *Ibid.*, October 22, 1856, pp.1-2.
- 14 "All the Decency!," *Ibid.*, November 12, 1856, p.3.
- 15 "Prospectus for 1856-57," *Ibid.*, November 12, 1856, p 3.
- 16 Buchanan supported the Dred Scott Decision and the so-called Lecompton Constitution in the Kansas territory that would have allowed slavery in the new State of Kansas.
- 17 In the same statewide election, voters overwhelmingly rejected extending the right to vote to black men.
- 18 "Charter Election in Ithaca. Great Republican Victory," *Ibid.*, March 14, 1860
- 19 "Let the Eagle Scream; 7 Republican Supervisors and Only 2 Others," *Ibid.*, April 11, 1860, p.3.
- 20 Lincoln took every town in the County. His support was the weakest in the Town of Ithaca, where he lost two of three Districts and won with only 51% of the vote. His majorities were also small in the Towns of Lansing and Newfield.
- 21 See, for example, "The (Illegible) and Humiliation," *Ithaca Journal*, September 12, 1866. "The most mortifying and humiliating spectacle ever seen in this country is the political stumping tour of President Johnson...He degrades his great office by his vituperative language and gives evidence of his own want of patriotism and loyalty when he charges the tried Unionists of the North with being "traitors" at the other end of the line. The whole civilized and Christian world looks on with sorrow and humiliation."

- 22 Cornell soon emerged as a power within the Republican Party, serving as State Party Chairman, Speaker of the Assembly (one of the few ever to serve as Speaker in his first term), and Governor from 1880-1882.
- 23 Ezra Cornell was also politically active, having represented Tompkins County in the New York State Assembly from 1862-1863 and in the State Senate from 1864-1867.
- 24 As a condition of restoration, former Confederate states were required to pass new constitutions, approved by Congress that included universal male suffrage and also agreeing to ratify the 14th Amendment granting citizenship and equal rights to equal rights to blacks. By the 1868 election, only Texas, Mississippi, and Virginia had failed to complete these actions and thus were ineligible to participate in the federal election.
- 25 "Charter Election," *Ithaca Daily Journal*, March 12, 1872; "Tompkins Co. Town Meetings." *Ithaca Journal*, April 9, 1872
- 26 Among many other accomplishments, Arthur supported and signed the Pendleton Act which greatly expanded and strengthened the federal service system, a high priority of reformists within the Republican Party.
- 27 Cleveland received 83 more votes in Tompkins County than he had four years before.
- 28 Harrison defeated Cleveland by 82,791 votes in Upstate and lost New York City by 71,598 votes.
- 29 "Tompkins County," *Ithaca Daily Journal*, p.2, November 9, 1892.
- 30 Harrison defeated Cleveland by 65,959 votes in Upstate but lost New York City by 111,477 votes.
- 31 "Bryan Visits Brooklyn," *Ithaca Daily Journal*, September 24, 1896, p.9.
- 32 "Bryanism and Anarchy," *Ibid.*, October 27, 1896, p.6.
- 33 Roosevelt's agenda included: Preferential primaries in Presidential years; Election of United States Senators by popular vote; The short ballot, limiting the number of officials to be voted for; A stringent and efficient Corrupt Practices act, applying to primaries as well as elections; Publicity of campaign contributions; Initiative, referendum, and recall; Recall of judicial decisions; Simplifying the process for amendment of the Constitution; Strengthening of the pure food law; Establishment of a National Health Department; Social and industrial justice to wage workers, including a minimum wage; Insurance and old-age pensions for employees; Regulation

of conditions of labor, hours of work for women, prohibition of child labor; Federal control of trusts; A National Industrial Commission, controlling all inter-State industry; Revision of the tariff in the interest of employee and consumer; A permanent tariff commission, non-partisan; Land monopoly tax; Suffrage for women; Regulation of hearing in contempt cases; Internal waterway improvements; Reform of the currency to give greater elasticity; Conservation of forests, mines, water power; Development and control of the Mississippi River; Government ownership of Alaska railroads; Leasing system for Alaska coal fields; A larger navy; Fortification of the Panama Canal and strict observance of the canal treaty. From "What Roosevelt Stands For," *New York Times*, p.8, August 7, 1912.

- 34 See, for example—"The greatest question before the American voters tomorrow is the defeat of Theodore Roosevelt, the most dangerous man in American Politics since the days of Aaron Burr and his prototypes—able, cunning, ambitious, demagogic, a natural leader—all of this was Burr and all of this is Roosevelt." "The Spirit of Arron Burr," Editorial, *Ithaca Daily Journal*, November 4, 1912, p.4.
- 35 "New Common Council," *Ithaca Daily Journal*, November 5, 1913, p.3. The *Journal* showed the full Council at 5 Democrats, 3 Progressives, and 2 Republicans. Interestingly, though, Republican candidates for City offices ran on a "Fusion" ticket in 1913, in an alliance with the Progressives.
- 36 Cox's running mate was the 38-year old Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- 37 "The Close of the Campaign" (Editorial), *Ithaca Journal*, October 30, 1920.
- 38 Although the 18th Amendment prohibiting the manufacture, sale, or transportation of liquor was approved with strong bipartisan support, and neither political party included its repeal in its 1920 party platform, the generally more Protestant and affluent constituency of the Republican Party tended to be more aligned with the temperance movement than the more Catholic, working class, immigrant base of the Democrats. As discussed by Carol Kammen and Elaine D. Engst in their book *Achieving Beulah Land*, (Ithaca 2019) the temperance issue engaged women politically before suffrage, and shaped their political preferences after. The overwhelming support by Tompkins County women for the Republican presidential candidates in the 1920's was likely influenced by this issue.
- 39 "West Believes Prosperity is Leading Issue," *Ithaca Journal*, August 20, 1928, p.2.
- 40 "Why I Am For Hoover" (Editorial), Frank E. Gannett, *Ibid.*, November 5, 1928, p.14.

- 41 "County Votes for Governor", *Ibid.*, November 5, 1930, p.2.
- 42 See, for example, the declaration within the preamble of the 1932 Republican Platform that "The people themselves, by their own courage, their own patient and resolute effort in the readjustments of their own affairs, can and will work out a cure. It is our task as a party, by leadership and a wise determination of policy, to assist that recovery." When addressing unemployment, the Platform notes that "True to American traditions and principles of government, the administration has regarded the relief problem as one of State and local responsibility." "Text of the Platform Adopted by Republican National Convention This Morning," *New York Times*, p.15, June 16, 1932.
- 43 "Tabulation of Votes in Presidential Straw Vote," *Cornell Sun*, October 27, 1932.
- 44 "Cornell Straw Vote" (Editorial), *Ithaca Journal*, November 4, 1932, p.8.
- 45 See Kirsten Downey, *The Woman Behind the New Deal: The Life and Legacy of Frances Perkins—Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, and the Minimum Wage*. NY Anchor Books 2010, p.1.
- 46 "Let's Stick to Fundamentals" (Editorial), *Ithaca Journal*, October 27, 1936
- 47 Landon won 71% of the vote in the towns and 58% in the City.
- 48 "The Candidate in New York," *Ithaca Journal*, October 23, 1944, p.6.
- 49 Sidney Hillman was an American labor leader, head of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and one of the founders of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).
- 50 "Hokum at Chicago," *Ithaca Journal*, October 30, 1944, p.6.
- 51 "More Control and More Chaos," *Ibid.*, October 4, 1944, p.6.
- 52 "Shall We Risk Wrecking the Peace," *Ibid.*, October 27, 1944, p.6.
- 53 Editorial Cartoon, *Ithaca Journal*, October 21, 1944, p.6.
- 54 "Upheaval, A Republican Sweep," *New York Times*, November 10, 1946, p.39.
- 55 "Dixie Rebels May Choose Own Candidate for President," *Ithaca Journal*, June 7, 1948, p.2.
- 56 "Swing to the Middle" (Editorial), *Ithaca Journal*, October 5, 1948, p.6,
- 57 The Progressive and Socialist candidates shared 5% of the County's vote.
- 58 "Stevenson Truman's Man" (Editorial), *Ibid.*, October 9, 1952, p.6.

- 59 "Vote and Vote Right" (Editorial), *Ibid.*, October 31, 1952, p.6.
- 60 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/116677/presidential-approval-ratings-gallup-historical-statistics-trends.aspx>
- 61 <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/07/14/republicans-nominate-goldwater-for-president-july-15-1964-240466>
- 62 Turnout in 1964 was nearly identical to that in 1960.
- 63 In 1913, Democrats controlled five seats on the City Council, Progressives 3, and Republicans 2. In the following election, Republicans gained a majority of the Council.
- 64 See Donald Alexander Downs, *Cornell '69*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 2014
- 65 "For Richard Nixon," *Ithaca Journal*, October 22, 1968, p.6.
- 66 Tompkins County Board of Elections, https://tompkinscountyny.gov/boe/Additional_Information/Past_Results_files/Past_Results
- 67 "Carter for President", (Editorial Endorsement), *Ithaca Journal*, October 25, 1976, p. 16.
- 68 The remaining 4% was made up of votes for other minor party candidates.
- 69 Carter's 40% support in Tompkins was not substantially different than the 39% he received elsewhere in Upstate. The reason Reagan did worse in Tompkins than in the rest of Upstate is that John Anderson did better, taking 14% of Tompkins votes and just 8 percent in the rest of Upstate. That six-point swing explains most of the difference between Reagan's 42% versus his 51% support in Upstate.
- 70 "Voter Registration: Democrats Lead in County for First Time," *Ithaca Journal*, November 3, 1984, p.1.
- 71 "Clinton for President, The Leader We Need," Editorial Endorsement, *Ibid.*, October 29, 1992, p. 8.
- 72 Perot's worst showing was in the City of Ithaca, where he received 10% of the vote; his best was in Groton where he took 28% of the vote.
- 73 "Tompkins Presidential Votes," *Ithaca Journal*, p.6. Note also that Clinton won by just four votes in traditionally Republican Groton.
- 74 No thanks to Tompkins County, Clinton enjoyed a decisive "Super Tuesday"

- victory over Obama in the New York State primary. In Tompkins, Obama took 57% of the vote, including a greater than 2:1 margin in the City of Ithaca.
- 75 The Economy, Housing, and Transportation, Tompkins County Area Development, <https://tompkinscountyny.gov/files2/planning/Comprehensive-Plan/The%20Economy.pdf>, p.3.
 - 76 Clinton took 48% of the vote in counties outside NYC; Trump took 47%.
 - 77 Masks worn as a protection against the spread of COVID-19 had become a political symbol, with many of Trump's supporters demonstrating their defiance of governmental and scientific advice by refusing to wear protective masks or otherwise acknowledging the seriousness of the disease.
 - 78 "Wide Gender Gap, Growing Educational Divide in Voters' Party Identification," Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/03/20/wide-gender-gap-growing-educational-divide-in-voters-party-identification/>
 - 79 Ibid.
 - 80 US Religious Census: Religious Congregations and Membership Study, 2010 (County File), https://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Downloads/RCMS-CY10_DL2.asp
 - 81 "Wide Gender Gap, Growing Educational Divide in Voters' Party Identification," Pew Research Center.
 - 82 Ibid.
 - 83 Tompkins County Profile, 2017, Compiled by Jan Vink, Cornell Program on Applied Demographics and <https://www.census.gov/content/census/en/data/tables/2019/demo/educational-attainment/cps-detailed-tables.html>
 - 84 Ibid.
 - 85 Democratic enrollment (active status) in 2020 was 55% of total enrollment in Tompkins County, fully 4% higher than the next highest ranked Upstate county, Albany. Turnout in Tompkins was 79% in the 2020 presidential election, among the highest levels in the State (Hamilton County's 81% was the State's highest.) Source: NYS Board of Elections, [https:// www.elections.ny.gov/EnrollmentCounty.html](https://www.elections.ny.gov/EnrollmentCounty.html)
 - 86 The Economy, Housing, and Transportation, Tompkins County Area Development, <https://tompkinscountyny.gov/files2/planning/Comprehensive-Plan/The%20Economy.pdf>
 - 87 Notes from Carol Kammen, Tompkins County Historian, June 20, 2021.

About the Author

Joe Mareane enjoyed a long career in local government in Upstate New York before retiring in 2017 after nearly ten years as the County Administrator of Tompkins County. Before coming to Tompkins, he served as Onondaga County's Chief Fiscal Officer for twelve years after holding several department head positions with the City of Syracuse including Assessment Commissioner, Director of Management and Budget, and Director of Development. Between his time with the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County, he was involved in the development of one of the nation's largest shopping malls, the Palisades Center, as an executive with the Pyramid Companies and served as the Vice-President of the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce.

Joe recently co-authored *Explaining Tompkins* with Tompkins County Historian Carol Kammen—a brief history of the growth and development of County government in Tompkins.

He holds a Masters degree in Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne.

Joe and his wife Amy have been married since 1975 and have three grown children.