

was no open primary election process and candidates for office were "endorsed" on the county and state levels by party conventions. These county and state conventions generally consisted of the political activists in the area whose party fortunes depended on their personal relationships and their ability to create political debts. Patronage, meaning appointments, jobs and contracts, was vital to the party system and with solid Democratic control of the statehouse, king-making and patronage dispensing went hand-in-hand. An individual could file for election without party backing but exclusion from the "official ticket" made a run for office useless, expensive and foolish.

The development of the political boss in Maryland was not unlike that phenomena elsewhere in the late nineteenth century United States on both sides of the political aisle.⁹ In Maryland, the acknowledged political bosses in the Democratic party were Arthur Pue Gorman of Howard County¹⁰ and I. Freeman Rasin of Baltimore City.¹¹ Gorman was the architect of alliances in the state legislature and rural counties and Rasin the "ticket-maker" and "vote puller" in Baltimore City. Political offices and state policies were traded like pawns as these men shrewdly and carefully played their roles. As inevitably occurs there were disputes and fights within the Democratic party by those on the outside of "the ring." The abuses of concentrated power naturally brought demands for reform. A group of professionals and businessmen formed various associations aimed at promoting electoral reform and eliminating government corruption but, except for isolated incidents, the 1872-1892 era in Maryland was dominated by the Democratic party and its party bosses.¹²

1872

The presidential election in 1872 has been characterized in disparaging terms by political historians having been labeled as a contest between "a man of no ideas" (Grant) and "a man of too many" (Horace Greeley, the editor of the New York Tribune).¹³ Reconstruction politics remained significant in the national re-election effort of President Grant but in Maryland the Republican administration policies were a rallying cry for the Democrats who had assumed control of the state. The second in a line of nine successive Democratic governors was elected on November 7, 1871.¹⁴ All of Maryland's five Congressmen who were elected in 1868 and 1870 were Democrats. The state legislature was similarly in firm control of the Democrats although some Republican candidates won races in Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles and Prince George's Counties in 1871.¹⁵

In this favorable Maryland climate, the Democratic National Convention returned to Baltimore on July 9, 1872 and endorsed the candidacy of Horace Greeley.¹⁶ Campaigning vigorously with the help of liberal Republicans who had nominated him in May, 1872, as well as Democrats, Greeley had high hopes of defeating the incumbent whose administration was beset by corruption.¹⁷ However, this new coalition was unable to break the Republican hold on electoral votes and the Greeley campaign ended tragically. His wife died just six days before the November 5th election and the candidate died only 24 days after the election which was the first and only time in presidential election history a