

The Disappointment(s) of Amos Tuck

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April 26, 2022

Early on an April morning in 1829, Amos Tuck walked away from his father's farm in Parsonsfield, Maine with all his possessions on his shoulder. The eighteen-year-old had no clear goal in mind, other than his determination never again to work with his hands as a farmer or a laborer. If he could not find a teaching job in a district school, he aimed to go all the way to New York City where his cousin owned a bookshop. He walked thirty-five miles that first day, rode in a stage coach from Dover, New Hampshire to Portsmouth, and then walked on to his father's ancestral home in Hampton. His relatives there welcomed him warmly and he decided to stay on and teach.

Tuck had taken his first steps on a journey that led him to become a reforming educator, a pioneering politician in the fight against slavery, and a wealthy businessman. His successes did not depend on the workings of Fortune that were so central to Horatio Alger's rags-to-riches fables, but on hard work, intellectual focus, and moral strength. His horizons expanded to include national politics, the development of the West and the European financial world. During the four decades that bracketed the Civil War he often participated in key historical events and engaged with important figures. In the weeks before Lincoln's inauguration in 1861 he came within an ace of becoming one of the president's "Team of Rivals." At the same time, his psychological horizons contracted in the face of the tragedies of life in the nineteenth century and his absolute determination to protect his family. So, his life's trajectory went in another direction. Although Tuck is best known as an anti-slavery leader, his life followed the disappointing arc of so many white anti-slavery crusaders who declined to fight for civil rights for African Americans and settled, in the end, into the comforts of the Gilded Age.

From barnyard to college

When Tuck's father moved his young family from Hampton to Parsonsfield in 1807, he went from a prosperous seacoast town first settled in 1638 to the raw Maine frontier. His hundred-acre "farm" was forested and had to be cleared. When Amos was born in 1810, John and his wife Betsey had only three small children to help work the farm. Forty years later, Amos mostly remembered the monotonous, unromantic toil required of even the children, toil that hardened his body and toughened his character. But he also recalled with fondness his parents, especially his mother, who encouraged him to get as much education as possible and who instilled in him a permanent belief in a just but merciful God. The Tuck family attended (and hosted) Baptist services when a preacher came through, but John Tuck often ridiculed Calvinist beliefs and the family over time came to prefer the Free-Will Baptists. Despite this nonconformist background, Tuck gained admission to the Congregationalist Church when he

moved to Hampton. He remained a regular church-goer and faithful Bible reader, but rarely bothered with the finer points of theology. Tuck's religiousness lent him a moral certainty that others may have seen as self-righteousness. It certainly provided a foundation for his anti-slavery activism.ⁱ

Strengthened by support from his parents and spurred by his dislike of hard manual labor, Tuck at an early age aimed to get as much education as he could. Until he became seventeen years old, he attended the Parsonsfield district school every winter. His "exciting ambition" was to become a district school teacher. In the fall of 1826, "...I besought my father to allow me to attend a tuition school a few miles away in the fall of 1826, and his refusal, on account of straightened [sic] circumstances, was the first bitter disappointment of my early life." But the next spring, he struck a deal with his father and older brother Jonathan: he would work one more summer on the farm and his father would pay his fees to attend the academy in Effingham, New Hampshire in the fall. After three months, Tuck would have to attain his teacher's certificate or return to farming. He studied hard and at the end of the term, received his certification to teach in a "common school." Although he doubted the true value of the certificate, the town fathers of Parsonsfield hired him for the winter term to teach in the Sanger District school at a wage of \$10 dollars a month plus board. Despite his father's prediction (or was it a hope?) that he would not last two weeks as schoolmaster, Tuck finished the term with "eclat" in his own later estimation. His success renewed his ambition to acquire further education: he used some of his hard-won money to buy a Latin grammar.

When the winter term ended, Tuck told his father he wanted to pursue his studies at an academy to prepare for college. John was blunt: he could not afford to help Amos with any further money. He also made it clear to his son that he thought the idea of going to college was unrealistic. Amos's response was to leave the farm and sign on to be a laborer for a businessman in Dover, New Hampshire. That job ended abruptly when Tuck, exhausted by the hard work and disgusted with his poor treatment, challenged his foreman to a fight and quit without receiving his back pay. In order to put some money in his pocket, he survived four weeks in a bleaching plant at the Cocheco Manufacturing Company in Dover, one of the earliest New England textile mills. By the end of the summer of 1828, Tuck was ready to go back to Maine, where he spent another fall and winter attending Effingham Academy and teaching in common schools. He continued to study Latin on his own.

Tuck's independent and even rebellious nature had clearly emerged by 1829 when he began his new life in Hampton. Although throughout his life he often worked within institutions and with partners, he was always ready to break off business relationships to keep his freedom of action. And he had pledged to himself never again to accept a "subservient position." Apparently, working as a schoolmaster in one of Hampton's district schools, at \$14 per month plus board, met those requirements. With his earnings as teacher, he was able to attend classes at Hampton Academy, one of New Hampshire's better college preparatory schools, for two years (1830-31).

While preparing for college, Tuck also addressed the spiritual side of his transformation from farm boy to professional man. On 9 June 1833, Hampton Congregational Church records report that Amos Tuck was admitted as a full member of the church.ⁱⁱ He reflected fifteen years later that:

“...Until I went to Hampton, I had never been accustomed to attend any one religious meeting with regularity. My parents were Calvinist Baptists by Church membership, but by necessity of hearing much free-will Baptist preaching or attending no meeting at all, had become much inclined to the doctrines of the latter. I had derived no instruction from any pulpit. When I went to Hampton, I became associated with Congregationalists and became a regular attendant at their Church. I was favorably impressed with the superior advantages of their regular and ordinary worship, which partiality I have retained to the present time...I became connected with the Sabbath school as a teacher, and derived great advantages to myself by the necessary study of the Bible which the employment imposed upon me. It also affected me favorably in other respects, morally and intellectually. It served to confirm me in my habit of daily prayer, and in the observance of the Sabbath by devoting it to the study of the Bible and the reading of religious books....”

One can detect here the essence of Tuck’s approach to religion throughout his life, combining useful social connections to the local elite with a conscientious routine of observance, without too much concern over theology.

Accomplishments and Complications

Tuck received his certificate to apply to a college in July 1831, and at first planned to attend Bowdoin College in the fall. He hesitated, however, because he had become engaged to Sarah Nudd, the daughter of one of Hampton’s wealthiest businessmen. Clearly thinking about how he would support a wife and family, Tuck worked as a law clerk for two short periods for different lawyers in York County, Maine. Bored with the slow pace of the work, he returned to a teaching job in Parsonsfield for another winter term. While living with his parents that winter, he finally made up his mind to make the plunge and apply to college. His father opposed the decision, but his mother quietly urged him on.

On 1 March 1832, Tuck left home for the last time, heading for Dartmouth College, armed with his certificate from Hampton Academy. His father gave him a ride in the farm wagon as far as Center Harbor, then he walked the rest of the way to Hanover, New Hampshire. In two days he covered 60 miles of snow-covered mountainous back roads. The day after he arrived in Hanover, he passed an oral examination by the Dartmouth faculty, and was allowed to join the current freshman class. In his later memoirs, Tuck had little to say about his time at the college, perhaps because he earned only mediocre grades at first (although by graduation he was

in the top eight of his class). There is no doubt, however, that he worked hard under difficult conditions:

“I taught school every winter, and also during a portion of two of the Fall Terms of my course. I went to College with a perfect knowledge that I was to lean upon no one but myself for support, and I had already become habituated to the custom of planning the ways and means of meeting all my expenses. I had acquired a habit of forethought and calculation in regard to my humble finances which has been of service to me ever since, and has been the means of bringing me to comfortable circumstances notwithstanding the burden of heavy family expenses.”

In the end, Tuck made little mark as a student in the annals of Dartmouth College, except for his reputation for an ability to cover long distances on foot.ⁱⁱⁱ But when he graduated in August 1835, he had attained the goals he had set years before:

“...I cannot fail to be impressed with the advantage I have derived from pursuing my purpose of obtaining as good an elementary education as a New England College could afford me. It was the only means by which I could hope to escape from the social thralldom incident to the humble position of my parents, and to arrive at the independence in circumstances which is necessary to human comfort and mental improvement...”

Tuck’s manuscript autobiography of 1848 did not point out that the second half of 1835 brought other major changes to his life that presented both opportunities and complications to his career plans. His presentation of the period following his graduation from Dartmouth is quite simple:

“At this time, I and my future wife, to whom I had been engaged for 5 years, concluded that the preliminaries had been long enough settled, and that it was best to marry. So we were married in the year 1835, and I went to Hampton to take charge of the Academy there late in the Fall of that year.”

Tuck’s long engagement to Sarah Nudd, the daughter of one of the wealthiest men in Hampton, began in 1831 or 1832, just as he was headed off to Dartmouth. Afterwards, he clearly regretted his attachment at the early age of twenty because it greatly constrained his career options. That he felt trapped at the time seems fairly obvious from the events after his graduation. He did not return to Hampton in August to marry the long-waiting Sarah, but began a new teaching job in Pembroke, New Hampshire. After that position turned out to be less attractive than he had hoped, he and Sarah were finally married on 5 October 1835, but in Exeter not in Hampton. Less than one month later, on 3 November, the reason for that unusual venue became evident:

Sarah Tuck gave birth in Hampton to a daughter, Abby. While it was still not uncommon in New England at the time for engaged couples to begin sexual relations before marriage,^{iv} the semi-covert wedding away from Sarah's family in Hampton and the almost immediate birth of Abby embarrassed Amos and Sarah just as he started his professional life. That embarrassment was underlined on 11 December when he publicly confessed in writing to the Congregational church in Hampton that he had "by a sin, which I most sincerely hate, which I ever did, and ever will condemn, given cause of offence to this Church. I accordingly ask your forgiveness..."^v

The church accepted his confession and re-admitted him to full church membership, but still: from student to husband to father in three months! Commenting on his marriage thirteen years later, Tuck conceded reluctantly, "I will not judge of its effects. It may have been greatly beneficial. I do not believe it was greatly injurious." On the contrary, while country-born Sarah was not the sophisticated partner that he hoped for in his climb to the top, she bore eight children and supported Amos in his first years of professional attainment by maintaining a household with little help until her early death in 1847. The cause of her death is unknown, but hard physical work surely played a role. So did heart-break: three of her children died before her. Two more died as small children. Only three, Abby, Ellen and Ned, survived past the age of six and reached adulthood..

Sarah's death, together with the early deaths of five of his children, reinforced Tuck's life-long determination to keep the Tuck family safe and prosperous. He succeeded, but his desire to protect his family was often in conflict with his political ambitions and business ventures. That conflict was to lead to recurring disappointment as he tried to balance his public and private lives.

On 21 November 1835, between his daughter's birth and his confession of sin, Tuck signed a five-year contract with the trustees of Hampton Academy to become preceptor of the Academy and to provide all instruction in exchange for keeping all tuition payments and all academy endowment interest. His intelligence and diligence (and connection to the wealthy David Nudd) clearly outweighed any social embarrassment in the eyes of the academy trustees. The trustees increased their reliance on Tuck in April 1836 when they invited him to join the Board of Trustees and immediately appointed him to be the secretary of the Board, a post he held until April 1839. Although his tenure as preceptor ended in 1839, his relationship to the school continued his entire life: he was the Board's treasurer from 1845 until 1864, and remained a trustee as late as 1870, when the Board declined to accept his resignation. In addition to the role he played in the governance of the Academy, Tuck recommended successfully to the trustees the acquisition of modern "scientific and chemical equipment" and the innovation of investing academy funds in interest-bearing notes as a way of strengthening the academy's endowment.^{vi}

His many years as a district school teacher and preceptor at Hampton Academy led to a life-long engagement in educational reform in New Hampshire at the secondary and college levels. He was a trustee of Phillips Exeter Academy for twenty-six years (1853-1879), of Dartmouth College (1857-1866) and was a founder and first chairman of the trustees of Robinson Female Seminary, which became an outstanding academy for young women in Exeter.

All of these institutions relied on his aptitude for financial and business affairs and benefitted from his determination to modernize. For instance, he succeeded in convincing the Dartmouth trustees to establish a modern language program in 1859 and led the trustees in the 1863 removal of long-time President Nathan Lord for the latter's embarrassing pro-slavery views.

Turning to the Law

Tuck's passion for education would have been fully met in his position as preceptor of Hampton Academy. The academy in essence became his own private school. The number of students increased significantly during under his tenure, allowing him to hire an assistant teacher. But, even though he estimated his annual compensation at around \$600, three times what he had earned as a district teacher, Tuck did not see a secure future for his family as a secondary school teacher, especially with the birth of his second child, Charles, in December 1836. At some point during that year he began studying law part-time in Exeter under James Bell.

Tuck could not have chosen a better mentor: Bell, a graduate of the pioneering Litchfield law school, was one of the most successful and well-connected lawyers in New Hampshire. When Sarah bore a third child, Ellen, in April 1838, Tuck decided to study law full-time, working in Exeter during the week and visiting his family on weekends. Tuck displayed a flash of his recurring combination of luck and opportunism when in July 1838 he traveled 200 miles to Lancaster in northern New Hampshire in order to take the oral bar exam before a judge who was the father-in-law of his mentor Bell. Not surprisingly, Tuck passed the bar and immediately opened his own law office in Hampton.^{vii}

Despite a small flow of legal work for Hampton's businessmen (including his father-in-law David Nudd), Tuck quickly felt the impact of the recession caused by the Panic of 1837. Additionally, his wife felt hemmed in socially by relatives and friends who formed a tight network in the small rural town. He began to look around for greener pastures, even making a trip to Buffalo on the Erie Canal. He considered moving to Portsmouth or Newmarket, but decided to start a new law office in Exeter and moved his family there in a snow-storm in November 1838. He foresaw that the coming of the railroad to Exeter (accomplished in 1840) would bring new "men, money and business" to that old market town. Perhaps he also could foresee that James Bell would prefer to bring Tuck in as a partner, rather than compete against the young man he had trained: Tuck joined Bell's office before the end of the year.

Bell's experience and Tuck's energy soon tripled office business. Tuck estimated that his own income almost immediately doubled what he had earned as a headmaster. By 1842, a competing lawyer estimated the partnership was doing an "immense business" in the "wide awake" town of Exeter, amounting to \$5,000 annually. Bell was renowned in New Hampshire for his skill in litigation, while Tuck concentrated on real estate and commercial law. Bell & Tuck prospered until 1846, when the major textile companies of Lowell and Lawrence on the Merrimac River recruited Bell to purchase and manage upstream water rights on Lake Winnepesaukee. By then, Tuck was a well-established lawyer and businessman in Rockingham

County and could work on his own. But despite his success in New Hampshire's legal world, Tuck never seemed to enjoy practicing law. Law was only a way to guarantee a steady income while he pursued his two passions outside his family: financial speculation and antislavery politics.^{viii}

Real estate speculation beckons

Tuck's career as an investor began as early as October 1837 when he bought three acres of land in Hampton for \$336, a sizable sum for a headmaster making \$600 annually. The following September Tuck sold the land for a profit over 28%: his career as a land speculator was launched. In 1839, six months after becoming Bell's law partner, Tuck paid \$3,000 for a three-story brick dwelling house on a quarter-acre lot near the Great Bridge in Exeter. The next month, Tuck bought seven acres of land in Hampton from his father-in-law for \$500. The source of all this money is unclear. Tuck may have received a sizable dowry from David Nudd when he married Sarah in 1835, which he began to invest once he established a sufficient steady income as a lawyer. Thus, Tuck's career as a businessman probably began with a jump-start from his wife's family.

Tuck was always reticent in writing about his business activities. A surviving ledger book from the 1840s^{ix} and the Rockingham County register of deeds reveal that Tuck bought and sold land frequently in that decade, often transferring property in exchange for relatively short-term mortgages. He also favored buying shares in Boston & Maine Railroad and Eastern Railroad stock just before the companies paid out dividends, then selling the shares immediately afterwards. Tuck may have developed his skill in financial maneuvering through his work with over a dozen banks as New Hampshire state bank examiner in the years 1842-44. In any case, he seems to have been careful to keep a diverse portfolio of investments, with a healthy proportion of liquid holdings as insurance against commercial surprises (like the recession of 1837).

Twice in the 1840s Tuck bet larger sums on the continued growth of Exeter. In 1843 he and partner Augustus W. Seamans bought (on credit) the Swamscot House, the largest hotel in town for \$4,400. A year later Tuck bought out Seaman's share, and ultimately sold his interest in the hotel in August 1846. Tuck received monthly rent from the hotel but, typically, did not operate the establishment himself. At the same time, Tuck and his law partner Bell acquired five acres of undeveloped land between the county court house and the Exeter River. Bell and Tuck laid out a new street and divided the land into house lots. In September 1845 the partners began selling the lots, often on mortgages that provided for their continued ownership if the buyers' mortgage payments were not on time^x.

As busy as Tuck was practicing law in the rapidly growing town and managing his real estate speculations around Rockingham County, he began to expand his business horizons. In April 1846 he borrowed \$2,700 for (unspecified) land purchases in East Boston. Two months later he was in Washington DC, planning a reconnaissance trip to the West. By the end of 1846, Tuck totted up his assets. Including railroad stock, copper stock and debts owed to him, they

totaled \$11,200.^{xi} But, more significantly, Tuck eyed another world, the complex, electrified world of antislavery politics.

The Annexation of Texas and Anti-slavery Activism

Brought up by his father to be a Jeffersonian Democrat, Tuck began his career in politics in early 1842 as a loyal Democrat and won election as state representative for Exeter, even though it was a Whig town. His entry into politics at the age of 32 arose from nothing more than a “foolish” ambition and a general loyalty to a Democratic Party led by Martin Van Buren. Although he saw himself as a radical Democrat, his ambivalence toward party dogma became clear right away. He acted as a radical when he unsuccessfully introduced a resolution that halted consideration of all new railroad charters, and sought a state supreme court opinion on the constitutionality of private railroad companies using eminent domain to acquire land for rights-of-way. But he seemed more Whig-like when he argued (again unsuccessfully) against a Democratic bill to require stockholders to assume unlimited liability for company actions, a sign of his growing identification with business interests. Similarly, he voted with radical Democrats to prohibit banknotes smaller than \$5, and with pro-bank Whigs against a limit on loans to bank insiders.^{xii}

More significantly for the future, his appointment as chairman of an ad hoc committee on the question of the annexation of Texas opened his eyes to its serious negative implications. Prior to his service in the legislature, there is no evidence that Tuck was particularly opposed to slavery: he was certainly never an abolitionist. But after studying the issue in the summer and fall of 1842, Tuck concluded that annexation would not only be a “trespass” against Mexico, but would strengthen the position of slavery in the South and undermine Northern opposition to the institution. However, his position on slavery clearly was not yet fully developed and, becoming aware of his emerging misgivings, the Democratic leadership persuaded him to take no public action on the issue. They argued that an adverse resolution on the matter would “discredit New Hampshire with Southern men, and that if let alone the whole scheme would probably pass over without practical results.” Tuck never convened the Texas committee. He later regretted that he agreed to remain silent on the issue and claimed that his experiences in the 1842 New Hampshire legislature taught him to never allow his personal convictions to be over-ruled by party leaders.

Tuck played a prominent role in the 1842 legislative session as a member of the judiciary committee tasked with drafting basic reforms of the state judicial apparatus. The legislative record shows that his colleagues valued his energy and judgment, overlooking his relative youth and inexperience in legal affairs. Many of his judicial reform ideas became law by the end of the second session in December 1842.

Despite his success as a legislator, Tuck failed to be re-elected by the townspeople of Exeter in 1843 and 1844. Tuck ascribed his defeat in 1843 to his reputation as a “radical Democrat.” But in 1844 he may have lost support from Exeter Democrats because of his growing opposition to slavery in general, and the “gag rule” in the U.S. House of Representatives

in particular. Tuck also backed Martin Van Buren's failed candidacy for president and opposed Democratic efforts to annex Texas, not endearing him to mainstream Democrats in New Hampshire. After Van Buren lost the Democratic nomination over the Texas question, Tuck began to correspond with Congressman John P. Hale, encouraging the latter's anti-slavery inclinations.

Tuck's Finest Hour

The controversy over Texas came to a head in January 1845 when John P. Hale wrote an open letter to his constituents to explain why he opposed the annexation even though it was supported by New Hampshire's congressional delegation, the state legislature and, most importantly, the state's Democratic Party leadership headed by Franklin Pierce. Hale's lengthy letter boiled down to one basic message: incorporating Texas into the Union would extend and strengthen slavery's grip on the United States. Outraged by Hale's apostasy over a key party goal, Democratic chieftains in New Hampshire acted immediately to stop the incipient rebellion. As chairman of the State Central Committee of the party, Pierce moved immediately to rally opposition to Hale and to build momentum to replace him as congressional candidate in the upcoming March election. He visited Dover, Portsmouth, Exeter and Manchester, the main cities in Hale's constituency, to pressure Democratic leaders in Strafford and Rockingham counties.^{xiii}

Pierce's adroit combination of charm and threat convinced almost everybody to abandon Hale, until he reached Exeter. When Pierce met with the town's party leadership on January 18, he sought their agreement to expel Hale from the party and to nominate a replacement candidate at a special convention in February. Amos Tuck had written a strong letter of support to Hale a few days earlier, stating:

"I rejoice to see you depart from the line of conduct prescribed for N. Hamp. by the Southern Chivalry. I am myself confident that no northern intelligent man can well go for the admission of Texas without a dereliction of duty – unless he is conscientiously an advocate of slavery....The state has been cursed with dictation of small men for years, and I am willing for a division, if that becomes inevitable in consequence of your doing your duty. I believe that this question of slavery is to be the dividing point between the parties that will soon divide the country."^{xiv}

Tuck adopted the same principled position in responding to Pierce's partisan arguments and veiled threats. He later recalled:^{xv}

"I saw the power of his magic wand over the minds of some of the men present whose views had accorded with my own, but who could not stand against party dictation, and I was convinced that if I adhered to my convictions I must be almost solitary in my

position. But I was ready for the responsibility and indignant at the moral cowardice and truckling servility of the men about me. When Mr. Pierce had closed and it was my turn to say something, I told him and the company present that if they proposed to cast Mr. Hale from the party for the offence of writing a letter in opposition to Texas annexation, it was my duty to tell them explicitly that they must turn me [out] also, and as I believed others.”

But Tuck’s rebellion went beyond his refusal to acquiesce in Pierce’s proposed replacement of Hale as a candidate for Congress. He preferred not to play a leading role in opposing the party leadership, partly because he was so busy with legal actions at the February session of the county court. But once the state convention nominated John Woodbury, his colleague in the Exeter Democratic Party committee, Tuck plunged into the organization of a meeting in Exeter on 22 February 1845 of “all who would maintain the fundamental principles of the democratic faith.” Although many declined to join the revolt, Tuck and his helpers were able to enlist 261 Rockingham Democrats to adhere to the call for a new “Independent Democratic” party. Their first goal was to elect John P. Hale as congressman on a platform based on opposition to slavery in every way consistent with the U.S. Constitution.

The Democrats swept all state offices in the election on 11 March, with one exception – John Woodbury failed to get the absolute majority necessary. Thanks to a few short weeks of determined activism by Tuck and other anti-slavery men, Hale obtained 7,788 votes which, together with the Whig and abolitionist votes, was enough to deny victory to the Democratic establishment. John P. Hale, who had remained in Washington the whole time of the campaign and declined to promote his own candidacy, had forced another election.

Tuck immediately began working with Hale to develop a political strategy, writing to him on 25 March:^{xvi}

“How shall we organize? Shall we have a paper under our control? Shall we first have a state convention? What shall be the declaration of our sentiments, now that the Texas question has assumed a new phase? Shall we go for repeal? These are questions important to be considered, and I think no time should be lost in beginning right and promptly. We must let our friends know that we are alive and in good spirits.”

Tuck continued to coordinate closely with Hale after the congressman returned to New Hampshire to campaign for the run-off election scheduled for June. Part of their strategy was the creation of a newspaper dedicated to anti-slavery and to Hale. On 1 May 1845 the Independent Democrat began publication weekly in Manchester and later in Concord. Tuck pledged to provide regular editorials to the newspaper, and probably also helped finance its operations. The rebels now had their own paper and a new party, which focused tightly on opposing slavery and its broader extension, without paying much attention to traditional Democratic shibboleths.

Hale's intensive round of stump speeches around the state did not win the run-off election on September 23, but it did prevent once again Woodbury's election. Another election on 29 November had the same result. Tuck's political role in this period seems to have been limited by health problems and the demands of his ever-growing legal and real estate business. But at the start of 1846, Tuck attended the Independent Democratic state convention in Concord. The meeting was held concurrently with a meeting of New Hampshire abolitionists, suggesting that Tuck's party had become closer to those calling for immediate prohibition of slavery throughout the country. A few weeks later Tuck set out a campaign strategy for Hale that included an all-out attack on the "slaveocrats" who had taken over leadership of the Democratic party.^{xvii}

The elections in March led to yet another no-decision in the three-way contest for Congress, and a stalemate in the race for governor. But, Tuck's strategy to create a new anti-slavery coalition paid off. The Whigs decided to join forces with the Independent Democrats and the Liberty men to elect Hale as U.S. Senator when the New Hampshire legislature convened in June. In exchange, the anti-slavery representatives voted for the Whig candidate for governor. The new allies agreed to leave open the long-contested seat in the U.S. House of Representatives until the next regular election in March 1847. They also began a campaign to put Tuck into that seat.^{xviii}

The Democratic Party led by Franklin Pierce was in disarray, confronted by increasing anti-slavery feelings within the New Hampshire party and a national party leadership in Washington following President Polk into his war on Mexico, a war more popular in the slave South than in the North. The Independent Democrats and Liberty men maintained a solid front in opposition to slavery, and were particularly strong in Rockingham and Strafford counties. Tuck took a leading role at a joint convention in Newmarket in September and attracted the attention of a Massachusetts journalist named John Greenleaf Whittier, who wrote:^{xix}

"In the afternoon, resolutions of a decided Liberty stamp, were introduced by the Business Committee. They were drawn up by Amos Tuck, Esq., one of the right hand men of Hale in the late political Revolution. He is a man of great moral worth; and his pertinent and well-chosen remarks on introducing the resolutions, were such as became a Christian politician and a sincere advocate of Liberty.

The combined anti-slavery parties formally nominated Tuck as candidate for the 1st Congressional District in a state-wide convention held in Concord in October 1846. Tuck took his time to respond, carefully laying out his most important political beliefs. First he attacked the authoritarian Democratic party leadership, obviously recalling his confrontation with Pierce's effort to browbeat him and his antislavery colleagues:

"Two causes have contributed more than all others to effect the late change in the political balance of power. The first has been the despotism of party power, by which generous impulses have been repressed and discouraged...by self-

constituted party leaders. The second and chief cause of the late change has been the existence and progressive power of the institution of slavery. The encroachments of the slaveholding interests, and the subserviency of public men to its numerous exactions have been so exorbitant and so notorious as to have become just cause of alarm to every friend of humanity and the country....”

Tuck then laid out the specific policy initiatives he believed would advance the anti-slavery cause in accordance with the U.S. Constitution. His action plan forecasted the program later advocated by the Free Soil Party in 1848: prohibition of slavery and the slave trade within the District of Columbia, denial of statehood of any territory allowing slavery, rejection of any partition of a slave state (such as Texas) to create more slave states, and an end to the domestic slave trade. Tuck called the war with Mexico “a war of conquest,” and demanded its speedy end, with outstanding issues to be settled by arbitration or negotiation.^{xx}

The contest for the 1st District seat ended without a majority for any candidate in two successive elections in March and April 1847. Then, thanks in part to Tuck’s work behind the scenes to build an anti-Democratic coalition, he received the Whig Party’s nomination in June. Amos Tuck won the special 8 July 1847 election by a substantial majority made up of anti-slavery Democrats, Whigs and Liberty men. When the 30th Congress convened on 6 December, Tuck immediately claimed the spotlight along with two other anti-slavery Whig congressmen, John G. Palfrey and Joshua Giddings: the three dissidents held balance of power in an evenly split House. Their votes were courted by both parties in the contest to elect a Speaker, but they steadfastly insisted on pledges of support for the Wilmot Proviso. Their stand deadlocked the House until a southern Whig left the chamber, throwing the vote to a pro-slavery Democrat.^{xxi}

Tuck’s triumphant election after three years of hard party organizational work began to lose its luster almost immediately. He and the other two anti-slavery congressmen wielded some influence as tie-breakers in the finely divided House. However, Tuck had been elected as a renegade Democrat with support from New Hampshire Whigs, while Palfrey and Giddings were dissident Whigs. Consequently, Speaker Robert C. Winthrop, whose parliamentary powers were considerable under House rules, had little reason to allow Tuck and the others much scope for promoting the anti-slavery agenda. By the end of April Tuck was writing a formal complaint to Winthrop, alleging that the Speaker had repeatedly ignored his efforts to speak on the House floor.^{xxii}

Soon, Tuck’s attention turned to the presidential race. He favored a coalition between the Independent Democrats, Liberty men, Barnburner Democrats of New York, and anti-Taylor Whigs, after Taylor received the Whig nomination. He was unable to attend the Free Soil convention in Buffalo in early August because of the intense congressional battle over Oregon’s admission into the Union. Tuck was disappointed when Martin Van Buren’s Barnburners won the nomination for the former president. Tuck clearly preferred the candidacy of Supreme Court Justice (and Whig) John McLean. His old dislike of the autocratic Democratic leadership and his

suspicion of Van Buren's true position on slavery seem to have made his participation in the fall campaign in New Hampshire a bit lacking in energy.

Returning to Washington after the election, Tuck was optimistic about the prospects for advancing the anti-slavery agenda:^{xxiii}

“Slavery in the District must be obliterated. The charm, or rather the incantations of Southern dictation, is broken, and liberty is unbound. I can scarcely believe what my own eyes see, in the different state of feeling manifested now, and the first few days of the last session. The change is truly astonishing; and it is in the main to be all traced back, through New York barnburnerism, Massachusetts conscience Whiggery, to New Hampshire independent democracy.”

The Independent Democrats and Whigs of Rockingham County re-elected Tuck for a second term in early March 1849, and he looked forward to joining a reinforced band of anti-slavery congressmen when the new Congress convened in December. The small anti-slavery coalition maintained discipline and prevented the finely-split House from electing a Speaker for 62 ballots. After 18 days of stalemate, the House amended its rules to allow the Speaker to be chosen by a plurality, and the pro-slavery Democrat from Georgia, Howell Cobb, emerged victorious.

Tuck did not recognize it immediately, but his hopes for the anti-slavery movement in Congress were finished. By the first months of 1850, the Whig and Democratic leaders realized that the slavery issue threatened to overwhelm the government and prevent the organization of the territories conquered from Mexico. Henry Clay's compromise package that evolved into Stephen Douglas's Compromise of 1850 was a major disappointment to Tuck. He wrote to his old collaborator John G. Palfrey in April:^{xxiv}

“I have many fears, that Territorial Bills will be connected with the admission of Oregon, excluding the Proviso. Perhaps, even a separate bill, may pass both Houses, excluding the Proviso. This will be the consummation of the humility of the North, and will make the last act of the Drama, of which the annexation of Texas, was the opening scene, consistent with the whole. I have sometimes believed that slavery could not in any way obtain a footing in New Mexico, but I now entertain a different opinion, and feel that we are determining the servitude of many generations, by the manner of our action in Congress.”

Tuck would be re-elected in 1851, but the balance of defeat in 1850 for the anti-slavery caucus added to his frustrating role as a third-party gadfly in the House. After three terms in the House with very little to show in concrete legislative terms, he lost much of his interest in politics. He dithered publicly in February 1853 over his willingness to run for a fourth term as the candidate of the combined Independent Democrats and Whigs and lost the subsequent election to the

Democratic candidate in a close race. He continued strongly to support the anti-slavery movement, but he never again won an election to public office.^{xxv}

Family Matters

In re-assessing his commitment to politics, Tuck also took a new look at his role as head of his family (and, indeed, of the wider Tuck clan). His tireless pursuit of success as a lawyer, businessman and politician had come at the cost of his relations to his wife and children in the 1840s. Deaths in the family had uncannily paralleled Tuck's political triumphs. Thus, in 1842, his election as state representative leading to frequent spells in Concord came within weeks of the deaths of his first two sons from scarlet fever. His third daughter died just before Tuck plunged into New Hampshire's struggle against slavery, and another died while staying with relatives in Maine because Tuck was pre-occupied with supporting Van Buren's campaign as the 1848 Free Soil candidate. A final son died in December 1849, attended by Tuck's Maine relatives because Tuck was in Washington participating in the prolonged struggle over the House speakership.

But the biggest blow had come in April 1847 when on two successive days Tuck, with little warning, lost his wife Sarah and his father John. Sarah's death clearly affected Tuck, even if he did not allow her passing to interrupt the closing weeks of his year-long campaign for Congress. And, despite his respect for his father, Tuck's papers show little or no reaction to John's sudden death. Tuck carried on building his political coalition until his electoral victory in July. In what some neighbors thought was an excess of stoic pragmatism, Tuck married again less than six months after Sarah's death. His second wife, Catherine P. Townshend Shepherd, was an impoverished widow from Salisbury, New Hampshire, who was paying her bills by giving piano lessons in Exeter. Less than two months after the wedding, the newly-weds traveled to Washington DC for the winter session of Congress.^{xxvi}

Amos and Catherine left the five bereaved children behind, boarding with his relatives. The psychological impact of their mother's death on the children forced Tuck to reassess how he balanced his family responsibilities with his political and business activities. In July 1848 he began writing his first autobiographical memoir, whose intended audience was his surviving children. In concluding the section on his family life, he ruefully noted:

“From the Fall of 1838, I became absorbed in professional labors, exertions and anxieties, and I permitted myself to enjoy little respite for nine years. I was anxious for a long time after I had any occasion to be so, lest I should make a failure, and I withdrew myself from my family and from social habits and enjoyments more than I now think was consistent with my welfare and improvement, and more than was compatible with my duties to my family.... We ought to put a higher value upon the society of our family, friends and neighbors, than upon the accumulation of large incomes, beyond the current expenses of

living. One should labor to make his home happy during the time that he is in it, as to make his business successful and profitable while he is attending to that. He ought to spend his evenings with his family, if at all practicable, and then should plan to take the burden from the mother of his children, to raise her spirits, and cheer the members of his household...The man who does not possess a happy household has made a failure in life, whatever else he may have accomplished.”

If Tuck had identified the ways in which he had failed his emotional duties as a husband and father, his efforts to reform were insufficient, especially because his two daughters were old enough (Abby was twelve years old and Ellen ten) to resent his speedy remarriage. For more than twenty years, Abby sought ways to avoid her step-mother’s house, most notable of which was her own marriage when still only seventeen. Ellen was less antagonistic toward Catherine, but never fully accepted the latter’s sustained efforts to act as the mother of the family. Only Ned, five years old at the time of the marriage, seemed to be comfortable in calling Catherine “Mother.”

For the 28 years of his marriage to Catherine, Tuck worked hard to keep the family happy and united. He and Catherine were always extremely close. But his political and business activities kept him away from home constantly, and his drive to become rich always seemed to over-ride his awareness that he owed more time and attention to his family. Until the end, he remained disappointed that his children were not closer to his wife.

A Turn to Business – and the West

Congress ended its historic “Compromise” session on 30 September 1850. Two weeks later, Tuck drew up a summary of his assets, showing a total of \$15,100. The largest part of his investments were real estate holdings in Exeter, Biddeford and East Boston. A year later, a similar inventory showed his assets had increased 50 per cent to \$23,500. All of that increase represented new investments in Chicago and Detroit, primarily in the new Chicago & Galena Rail Road. What happened in the intervening 12 months to cause Tuck to make such major changes in his investment portfolio?^{xxvii}

He had contemplated moving West as early as his reconnaissance trip to Buffalo in 1838, and he was once again thinking of moving when his congressional career ended in 1853. Always one to scout investment opportunities personally, Tuck organized a month-long trip to New York City, Buffalo, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Galena and St. Paul. His wife Catherine accompanied him on every step of the long, often tedious venture. Tuck’s combined vision and hard-headed business sense emerge in the description of an infant St. Paul he sent back to his daughters:^{xxviii}

From the village, we look westward over the River upon a high prairie of surpassing beauty and fertility, where is not yet any civilized inhabitants, excepting three or four small houses, by special permission of the government. It is land reserved by the

government from occupation, but which will soon be settled extensively by a farming population. All the land westward is now the property of the Indians, but will be bought in large portions, very soon, by the U. States, and offered for sale at \$1.25 per acre. It will be rapidly filled up by settlers from other states.

With the rapid progress of railroad construction in the 1850s, the availability of seemingly endless undeveloped land fascinated Tuck as a real estate investor. Perhaps even more attractive was the difference in interest rates between the East and the West, i.e. 6% in Boston against 10% or higher in Chicago. Tuck saw that he could make a great deal of money by raising capital at home and lending it in the West, especially if the loans were secured with clear titles to fertile farm land or housing lots in newly platted towns. The hunger for capital in the raw territories beyond Chicago also meant that investors like Tuck could inflate their returns with various semi-legal techniques, e.g. quietly pocketing “commissions” that masked a higher real interest rate.^{xxix}

Tuck decreased the risk of his real estate investments in the West by tapping into a network of New Hampshire-born businessmen, lawyers and officials who had sought their own fortunes in the West. Tuck knew many of them (or their fathers) through his well-regarded law practice in New Hampshire, or through his leadership of the anti-slavery party there. He relied on these men to provide reliable business intelligence and to act on his behalf when he could not be present in the West to attend to his widespread affairs. In return, Tuck served the westerners as an informal agent in Boston.

The year 1857 brought Tuck’s western investments to a new intensity and a new focus: the town of Madison, the new capital of Wisconsin. He was attracted by its lovely location and its growth potential resulting from planned railroad connections and the inevitable expansion of the capital city as the new frontier state grew. The confidence of a group of Madison boosters led by former governor L.J. Farwell encouraged Tuck to invest large amounts of money in town lots in Madison as well as over 1,000 acres of undeveloped farmland stretching westward to the Mississippi. Farwell’s group convinced him to invest enough money in a new bank to become its vice-president. In a new departure, Tuck bought \$50,000 worth of municipal bonds issued by the fledgling cities of Madison and Watertown, intending to sell them at a 33% profit to friends and neighbors back in New England. Tuck financed a large portion of these investments by borrowing money and selling well-paying railroad stock.

It was a bad time for Tuck to forgo his usual cautious investment strategy. By the end of April, Tuck was already noting that money in the Boston area was becoming tight: cash was at a premium. There are some indications that Tuck reacted to this money tightness by reducing his exposure over the next six months, primarily by selling his Madison and Watertown bonds to friends and business contacts in New England. But when the banking panic of 1857 struck at the end of August, Tuck faced a stark reality: his Wisconsin land was worthless if no one had money to buy it, and his debtors could not meet the repayment schedules on the personal notes Tuck held. At the same time, Tuck had to find cash to pay off his own debts. To protect his interests

in the West, Tuck undertook a hurried three-week trip to Chicago and Madison. On returning to Exeter, he advised his brothers that, "I have been buffeted of the Devil, for a few weeks past." His main partner in Chicago had declared bankruptcy, and Tuck now had to manage \$17,000 in debts. However, he reassured them, "I can control and pay the debts I am liable for, and have already arranged them all, till I can collect my securities." A week later, he was back in the West, moving rapidly between Chicago, Milwaukee and Madison, limiting his exposure enough to avoid his own bankruptcy. On 21 November he wrote to his brother John that, "At length I have returned from the west. I have been made a loser by 8 to \$10,000, by these times, and the rascality of mankind."

Tuck scrambled not only to avoid bankruptcy, but to try to limit losses by his friends and business contacts in New England who had invested in western land and bonds based on his advice. His future as a lawyer and financial broker in Exeter depended on maintaining their confidence in him. So, he reacted immediately on 2 January 1858 when he heard that the town was gossiping about his financial difficulties, and wrote an open letter to reassure his creditors and those who had trusted his financial advice:^{xxx}

"I heard an item of news to-day, which I will communicate to you: -- that I have failed in business, -- gone all to smash. This news was told by Mrs. Abbott, yesterday, to Mrs. Currier, at the house of Mr. James Locke, in Seabrook. Mrs. Abbott said she had the news direct from Mrs. Stacey L. Nudd. Under these circumstances, I want my friends to notify all persons whom I owe...that I have \$15000 worth of real estate unencumbered, in Exeter, on which they have a first rate chance to secure their debts; also \$12000 worth in Boston, \$1000 worth in Biddeford, Maine, \$7000 worth in Chicago, \$8000 worth in Wisconsin, and \$2500 worth in Iowa, and besides have good notes and stocks enough in my pocket to pay all my debts. I shall be happy to see my creditors at a moment's warning and introduce them to the money, or to means of immediate payment."

Tuck managed to weather the Panic of 1857, but his reputation in New Hampshire as a financial advisor promoting sound western investments in the West suffered for a long time. Henry Flagg French, a long-time political and legal colleague, complained to his brother Benjamin later in 1858 that, "...Mr. Tuck brings me the pleasing intelligence that there is an adverse tax title to two of the three lots mortgaged to me in Madison....He made the loan for me, and I took his opinion of the security without examination....I think it is time I should look to my own interests." Such erosion in his business reputation did nothing to strengthen his political position in the intensifying maneuvering within the Free Soil movement.^{xxxi}

The Rise of the Republican Party

Ask any historically inclined Exeter resident for what Amos Tuck was famous and the response will likely be that he founded the Republican Party in Exeter on 12 October 1853. This

much-cherished myth was created in 1887 by a Dr. Batchelder in a letter to the Exeter News-Letter that claimed that Tuck had called the meeting to harmonize the various anti-slavery parties under the banner of the “Republican Party.” No contemporary account of this meeting exists and none of the other thirteen New Hampshire politicians who purportedly attended (including Tuck) ever mentioned the meeting in later correspondence. Amos Tuck himself was in Illinois attending to his real estate business on the day in question.^{xxxii}

But if it is wrong to consider Tuck the “Founder” of the Republican Party, he was indeed one of the New Hampshire leaders active in uniting the different strands of the anti-slavery movement that led to the creation of the party. Although Senator John P. Hale served as the figurehead of the anti-slavery movement, Tuck and his editor friend George G. Fogg rallied the organized opposition to the Democratic party energized during the administration of President Franklin Pierce. In August 1853, Tuck presided over a mass state-wide anti-slavery rally at Wolfeboro, and in December he led a public meeting of Free Soilers in Exeter.^{xxxiii} When news arrived in February 1854 that Stephen Douglas had introduced legislation that became the infamous Kansas-Nebraska Act, Tuck quickly organized a large public meeting in Exeter to condemn the draft legislation. Tuck secured passage of resolutions that declared the Missouri Compromise “an *inviolable contract*” that Douglas was seeking to abrogate and that called upon New Hampshire’s congressional delegation to oppose the proposed legislation. Tuck’s fiery free-soil language insisted that Douglas “calculated and apparently designed to rekindle in the country the flames of civil discord, and that it betrays an utter disregard not only of plighted faith but of the rights of humanity.”^{xxxiv}

Tuck continued to be active in New Hampshire’s anti-slavery movement through the next two years. He maintained quiet relations with the Know-Nothing party’s anti-slavery wing led by Governor Ralph Metcalf without being tarred by the party’s anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic policies. Tuck formally entered the new Republican Party at the New Hampshire state convention held in Concord in April 1856. The convention chose him as one of eight delegates to the first national convention convened in Philadelphia on 17 June. The party recognized Tuck’s role as a leader of the national party by naming him one of the convention vice-presidents and giving him a major role in the drafting of the party’s first national platform.^{xxxv} It is not clear whom Tuck supported for the presidential nomination, but that fall he worked energetically for Frémont, making at least a dozen speeches all over New Hampshire. The rally he organized in Exeter on 1 September featured such well-known anti-slavery figures as John Greenleaf Whittier, Charles Francis Adams and John P. Hale; the Exeter News-Letter estimated the rally attracted 8,000 or more people. Tuck chose to be philosophical about Frémont’s loss to Buchanan:^{xxxvi}

“I am in better spirits than most of my Fremont brothers in regard to the election. I feel that I have done my part towards victory, and so have the men of the North, generally, except those of Penn. N. Jersey and, possibly, Indiana. Our principles as embodied in our platform are true, vital, and therefore foreordained to be predominant in the end. If that

good end comes in my day, well; if not, I will work none the less faithfully for it.... I was banteringly enquired of by a Border ruffian-democrat, a day or two since at the P. Office, in hope to annoy me, being surrounded by his democratic friends, what was the result of the election. I answered, that the whole civilized part of the country had gone for Fremont, and all the Pirates for Buchanan.”

But his unfazed reaction to the election loss did not reflect a lack of commitment to the anti-slavery cause. He cooperated with radical activists like Salmon P. Chase and John Greenleaf Whittier, always insisting that Congress could abolish slavery in the District of Columbia and the territories under the existing Constitution. He put his money behind that belief: in early 1858 he informed a friend, “With one other man I was instrumental in sending a company of 33 immigrants to Kansas, in the hour of their greatest need, and raised money to support them and others in their darkest distress.” He also helped to grubstake the settlement of his brother-in-law in an anti-slavery Kansas town.^{xxxvii}

In addition to supporting the Republican Party and its free-soil ideology, Tuck revived his own political ambitions. He made it clear to the party leadership in New Hampshire that he would very much like to be elected to the United States Senate when the state legislature convened in June 1858. He hesitated to throw his hat into the ring publicly. In part, he did not want to seem to be too hungry for the position. But, as he explained to anti-slavery editor George G. Fogg, “...I doubt if I could defeat [incumbent Senator] Hale if I would. If I should try and fail, I should be unjust to myself as well as to our cause, by taking the position I should then be in. If Hale were defeated, again, I don’t know what we should do with him. He is too good a man to be out of employment.” In the end, his lack of resolve helped to frustrate his ambition and the legislature easily re-elected Hale.^{xxxviii}

Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War

February 1860 found Tuck back in the Middle West, tending to his business interests, and exchanging political views with his many contacts in the region. His business trip meant that he was in St. Louis while Abraham Lincoln gave the series of series of speeches in New York and New Hampshire that jump-started his run for the presidency. Curiously, even after he returned to Exeter in mid-March Tuck paid little or no attention to Lincoln’s highly successful appearances, including in Exeter itself. Rather, he wrote two letters to Salmon P. Chase cautiously supporting Chase’s candidacy and assessing the political chances of rivals New York Senator William Seward and New Hampshire Senator John P. Hale. He did not mention Lincoln.^{xxxix}

Tuck was one of ten members of the New Hampshire delegation to the Republican convention held in Chicago 16-18 May. All were unpledged at the start of the convention, but hectic lobbying and floor proceedings resulted in seven of New Hampshire’s votes going to Lincoln on the first ballot. Seward, Fremont and Chase each received one Granite State vote on

the first ballot; Tuck was the Chase supporter. But he switched to Lincoln on the second ballot, and later adroitly convinced the convention to send a delegation to formally inform Lincoln of his nomination: not surprisingly, he was the New Hampshire representative on that delegation. Tuck found an opportunity while in Springfield for a tete-a-tete with Lincoln in order to hand him a letter of support from Joshua Giddings, their old anti-slavery colleague in Congress. Tuck reminded his daughters a few days later that he had been acquainted with Lincoln from his time as a congressman and that he had been received “cordially” by the “tall, lean, lanky fellow” with a “captivating” countenance. After his return to Exeter, the Exeter News-Letter reported his more political description of the candidate to a large Republican rally:^{x1}

“He spoke of the candidate as fully competent to carry out the [Republican] principles, should he be elected President. He was well acquainted with him when he first entered Congress, had ever regarded him as a sound, honest and able statesman, and his reputation as such had been substantiated in the remarkable contest which he had in Illinois with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858.”

Tuck may have been a trifle late in jumping onto the Lincoln bandwagon, but then gave full support to Lincoln’s candidacy. In a 24 August letter to David Davis, Lincoln’s campaign manager, Tuck not only praised (a bit fulsomely) Lincoln, Davis and Robert Lincoln, but claimed that, “It was but a trifle that I did, in attempting early to carry our entire delegation for Lincoln, but that trifle is enough to give me sincere satisfaction in the belief that the nomination was the only fit and proper nomination....” In early September Tuck organized a large rally in Exeter that included hosting for dinner such radical Republican stars as Senators Henry Wilson and Salmon Chase, and John Greenleaf Whittier.^{xli} Unsurprisingly, New Hampshire went strongly for Lincoln in the November election and Tuck, like so many other Republicans, set out to claim a job in the new administration as a reward. On 19 December, nine Dartmouth professors signed a joint letter to Lincoln, capturing the strengths Tuck could contribute to the new Cabinet.^{xlii}

“Mr. Tuck is a man of broad and liberal views, and a generous patron of learning. He possesses eminent abilities as a man of business, and unusual tact in the conduct of affairs. He is a man of great firmness, and yet frank and conciliatory in [several words unclear]. His intelligence is comprehensive and his executive talents universally acknowledged. His integrity is unquestioned and he possesses the confidence of all parties.”

“In our judgment, Mr. Tuck’s ability, intelligence and habits of industry, admirably qualifies him to take an active and honorable part in an Administration which will come into power under peculiar difficulties, and in the success of which we feel a professional interest.”

Five days later, after lengthy consultations with senior Republicans like Thurlow Weed, Lincoln asked Hannibal Hamlin which former Democrat would best represent New England in the new Cabinet, Nathaniel Banks, Amos Tuck or Gideon Welles. In the end, Lincoln decided to confirm his original preference for Welles, although Tuck continued into the new year to believe he still had an outside chance for a Cabinet position. In one more indication of Tuck's ties to Salmon Chase, the two men travelled to Springfield and together met with Lincoln on 5 January 1861 to seek jobs and to discuss the increasingly dangerous political situation created by the secessionists. After Chase left town, Tuck met again with Lincoln, spending the night with the Lincoln family. Tuck wrote to his long-time political ally George Fogg, "My interview with Mr. Lincoln was perfectly satisfactory. He is true to our principles, as the needle to the pole. He knows he encounters dangers in the path he will tread, but he cheerfully takes the risk, with heroic spirit, shirking no hazards, if duty calls him on. He does not know what he shall do, in his Cabinet appointments yet, excepting Bates, but I have reason to hope Chase will go to at the head." In a letter to his son Ned a week later, Tuck was more revealing (and optimistic): "'I staid [sic] at the Lincoln's house last Tuesday night [8 January], and came as far as Albany in company with Mrs. Lincoln and her brother-in-law. I had private talks with Mr. L, and he is under promise to give me an appointment worthy my acceptances, in case I do not go into the Cabinet, which is possible, not probable. I guess I shall get just what I want—the Boston Collector shop—but cannot tell certainly.'"^{xliii}

He got even less – Lincoln appointed him Naval Officer at the Boston Custom House, a job that (contrary to its name) had nothing to do with the Navy. Rather, he acted as a kind of inspector general that answered directly to the Secretary of the Treasury...Salmon P. Chase. The pay was good -- \$5,000 a year. The work was light -- Tuck could spend 2-3 working days a week in Exeter tending to his law practice. And he had the "right" to pick four or five men to get appointments in the custom house – his deputy was his new son-in-law, Frank O. French. Finally, he received a percentage of all forfeitures that importers had to pay for violating custom laws and procedures, often a substantial amount of money. Tuck professed to be satisfied with his appointment, but he must have been disappointed that Lincoln had not fulfilled his early hopes for a cabinet position.^{xliv}

What was the relationship between him and Abraham Lincoln? The first aspect to note are their similarities. Both were nearly exact contemporaries, and both grew up working hard on subsistence farms on the frontier. Both hated the drudgery of farm life and both worked hard to become lawyers, and very successful (and rich) lawyers at that. Tuck obtained an excellent college education, via a preparatory academy and years of teaching younger boys. Lincoln taught himself, more or less. Both men were religious in their own way, Lincoln focusing on bible reading, Tuck on weekly observance of the sabbath. Nevertheless, both believed in the powerful reach of a righteous but merciful God. Both disagreed with the abolitionists, because they firmly believed in the Constitution's protection of states' rights, but they staked their political careers on blocking the spread of slavery to new territories and curtailing it where the Constitution allowed, for example in the District of Columbia.

The differences were just as marked. Tuck was the child of the northern New England frontier where African Americans were few, while Lincoln came from the borderland between the North and the South. Tuck grew up as a loyal Jacksonian Democrat, who became disillusioned with the party leadership in the 1840s. For the rest of his life, however, he harkened back to his (Independent) Democratic roots. Lincoln was a loyal Whig whose hero was Henry Clay. As the Civil War unrolled, the somewhat subtle political difference between them was reflected in their choice of ally: Tuck worked frequently with radical (and former Democrat) Salmon P. Chase, while Lincoln consulted closely with the moderate former Whig William H. Seward.

In the immediate wake of Lincoln's nomination, Tuck characterized him as an "acquaintance,"^{xlv} but Tuck worked hard to build closer ties to the new President. He visited Washington at least eight times in the next four years always to meet with Lincoln as well as to consult with Secretary Chase, his immediate boss. He usually spent at least several hours with the President, at least once ending the day with tea at the White House with the Lincoln family.^{xlvi} Tuck never disclosed the substance of those meetings, but Lincoln almost certainly cross-examined Tuck in detail about politics in New Hampshire and Boston. Here is the heart of the relationship: the two men were political colleagues, not personal friends as Tuck sometimes claimed, most notably in his 1875 autobiography. Beyond appointing Tuck to the Boston Custom House in 1861 (and extending the appointment in March 1865), Lincoln never met Tuck's occasional requests for patronage in favor of his son Edward. In fact, only once did Lincoln write a letter to Tuck, asking for his support in a proposed appointment to the Custom House. The requested appointment did not occur for some reason.^{xlvii}

As early as March 1862 Tuck was eyeing the U.S. Senate seat held by his old Free Soil ally John P. Hale. Tuck suspected that Hale would not be re-elected by the N.H. legislature in 1864, and began to maneuver to replace him. He had not run for elected office since losing his seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1853. When the Republican legislative caucus met 9 June 1864 in Concord to nominate (and in effect to elect) the Republican candidate for Senator, Tuck came in third in the first ballot, and quickly faded. His campaign had been handicapped by the same ambivalence which had contributed to his defeat in 1852 and to his failure to contest the seat in 1858. In addition, he was reluctant to give up his lucrative position at the Boston Custom House and his law practice in Exeter. More importantly, however, he had run afoul of the "Drugstore Clique," the emergent Republican power center in Concord, led by the young William E. Chandler.^{xlviii}

The trouble started at the Republican state convention in January 1864 when Chandler had sought Tuck's support for a convention resolution calling unreservedly for a second term for Lincoln. Chandler believed that Tuck agreed, but the latter left the convention early the next morning, after sending a short note:

"I have concluded it is not expedient for me to delay my going to Boston till 10 ½ o'clock but to leave by the early train. So I shall not see you."

“After reflection I am of the opinion that it is not best to introduce the resolution you were kind enough to submit to my consideration. It is better as I think not to grieve another aspirant to the Presidency by having N. Hamp. propose Mr. Lincoln; though I believe Mr. L’s nomination a foregone conclusion. Mr. Chase thinks a great deal of the support of his native State and is not [it] better to let other states or the progress of the cause indicate to his mind the inevitable result. Yours truly (signed) A Tuck”

Chandler felt that Tuck had betrayed him as well as the President, and still recalled the incident in (inaccurate) detail fifty-seven years later. On his part, Tuck claimed he had always backed a second term for Lincoln and that he only wished to spare his friend Salmon Chase the personal embarrassment of being ignored by the Republicans of his native state.^{xlix} Whatever the merits of the two positions, only two weeks later President Lincoln gave tacit approval of Tuck’s candidacy for the Senate seat and reappointed him to the Custom House a year later. But, given the dominance of the Drugstore Clique in the state, Tuck was dead in New Hampshire politics from that point on.

More Family Concerns

Against the background of the war, family matters continued to demand Tuck’s attention. His wife Catherine continued to suffer from chronic illness (although her stepdaughters suspected that hypochondria was in fact the problem). Abby’s marriage to William Nelson of Peekskill, New York was a happy one, and Tuck was pleased to work closely with Nelson on their respective business interests in the West. Their three young daughters were bright and seemed healthy enough, even if Tuck was always concerned that common colds may be hiding the onset of tuberculosis. Tragically, after a brief if devastating illness, Nelson died of “consumption of the bowels” at the end of February 1864. Tuck was by his bedside, and wrote to his son Ned, “...Abby has done well for him during his sickness, and has suffered all the affliction of a woman who has lost or rather who loses a loving, worthy, faithful husband.”¹ Tuck was to witness for many years how the terrible blow affected Abby. In the meantime, he had to help her cope, especially in the caring of her three girls. In addition, Nelson’s death came in the middle of Tuck’s campaign for a seat in the U.S. Senate as well as of his blossoming dispute with William Chandler.

His second daughter Ellen enjoyed more sustained happiness: her marriage in Washington D.C. on 5 March 1861 to Francis O. French proved to be a full success. Frank, the eldest son of the long-time Washington political operative and diarist Benjamin B. French (and cousin of sculptor Daniel Chester French), worked as Tuck’s law partner in Exeter before Tuck arranged for him to become his deputy as Naval Officer in the Boston Custom House. His hard work and intelligence soon led to his promotion to Deputy Collector of Customs, despite the potential conflict of interest with his father-in-law. After the war he became a very successful

banker in Wall Street. Ellen's family had their share of ups and downs, but always provided emotional support for Tuck.

Tuck clearly cared deeply for his daughters, and took extra measures over the years to ensure they received good education and were well provided for. But he always kept his attention focused on his son Ned, no matter what political or business crises might be roiling about. His long, at least weekly letters to Ned were full of worry and advice long after his son had achieved his majority and was living in distant St. Louis, New York or Paris. His fussing over how Ned cut his fingernails, or which newspapers to read, or church to attend became a source of gentle family humor.

Tuck made sure Ned was well-educated, entering him into Phillips Exeter Academy at an early age, and then Dartmouth, Tuck's alma mater. Tuck maneuvered to become a trustee of both schools, certainly because of his long professional interest in education reform, but just as certainly to provide as much backing to Ned as possible. For example, in 1859 Tuck successfully advocated to the Board of Trustees an elective program of modern languages at Dartmouth. This dovetailed neatly with the immersion French program Ned had attended in Montreal the previous year and led to Ned's post-graduate language studies in France in 1864.^{li}

The outbreak of the Civil War posed an exciting opportunity for Ned and a troubling conundrum for Tuck. Ned and many of his college mates discussed the news of the rebel attack on Fort Sumter and told each other of their plans to enlist. Although Ned expressed some skepticism about the sincerity of such posturing, he too was attracted to the idea of fighting for the Union. Tuck was anxious to convince Ned to stay out of the war and finish his college work.^{liii}

“Most young men talk more or less of enlisting, but few in Exeter will carry out their talk by actually enlisting. About 40 have agreed to go to Hampton. Ellen and Abby have some fear, without grounds for it, that you will want to enlist. But I tell them no. If it were necessary that you go as a common soldier into the war, to defend our institutions, I would say go, if you wish, and I would go myself. But the hardships of the common soldier are such, and the amount of mind so moderate, which is necessary in that vocation, that it is positively extravagant and unjustifiable to put one like you in that place, hazarding so much of mental force, when only physical endurance and common bravery are required. So, my dear son, feel patriotic, talk patriotic and continue a brave, good young man; but do not put your foot in, for an enlistment. It is not necessary, or at all events, not now.

Tuck's problem was his long history of vehement anti-slavery and pro-Northern rhetoric and his still-strong desire for a seat in the U.S. Senate. How would it look to New Hampshire voters if his son avoided fighting in the war? Tuck chose not to oppose Ned's enlistment frontally, but to repeatedly point out good, practical reasons for Ned to delay acting on his patriotic feelings. Once Ned graduated in 1862, Tuck began to seek ways for his son to participate in the war effort

without actually risking combat. For instance, he wrote to Secretary of the Navy Welles seeking Ned's appointment as an assistant paymaster in the U.S. Navy. He and Ned also considered asking President Lincoln to give Ned an appointment to West Point. Neither approach resulted in anything other than serving to delay Ned's decision about joining the army.^{liii}

The issue came to a head on 11 August 1863 when Ned's name was one of 67 eligible men drawn in the Rockingham County draft lottery held in Portsmouth. Although Tuck had thought in March that he might be able to get Ned a commission in a newly formed New Hampshire regiment, he strongly advised Ned to "...stand the draft, and if you are drawn, pay the \$300...." On 29 August, Ned paid to arrange for a substitute, thus avoiding any further exposure to the draft in future years.^{liv} Almost immediately thereafter, Ned, with his father's approval, began to plan to sail for Great Britain in December, with the idea of onward travel to France to study French. Ned followed the draft law in buying a substitute, and there was no public criticism of Tuck for his son's avoidance of military service. Nevertheless, Exeter citizens who had sent sons to the war would have noted the decision of the Tuck family.

The Meaning of Emancipation for Amos Tuck

The year 1865 brought many important changes to the United States: the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery, the Union won the war, Lincoln was assassinated, and Andrew Johnson became President. For Tuck, the year was a turning point. After getting the President's approval to be absent from his job in the Boston Custom House, he spent the summer visiting Ned in Paris. While he was abroad, his nemesis William Chandler, newly promoted to be assistant secretary of the Treasury, convinced Secretary of the Treasury McCulloch to fire Tuck without giving notice or grounds for the dismissal. Tuck pretended that it was of little importance to him, but he was hurt and angry at his shoddy treatment.^{lv} He turned away from active participation in national and local politics for many years. But beyond his hurt feelings, Tuck's absence from the struggle for freedom and civil rights of African Americans reflected an ambivalence that had been emerging for years.

Early in his political career he remarked on the moral and ethical problems created by slavery. In his January 1848 maiden speech on the floor of the House of Representatives, Tuck insisted slavery was morally wrong. Tuck asserted that "all men are born free and equal" and that the "right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is "inalienable." A few months later, Tuck wrote to a political friend, "Let the agitation continue and increase, till the slave power of this country know, that we will tolerate no connection, actual or implied, with the cruel despotism that upholds a traffic in our brethren, crushed to the earth 3,000,000 of our fellow creatures, and blots out hope from the human heart."^{lvi}

But in the twelve years leading to Lincoln's election, Tuck only sporadically showed concern in the human plight of enslaved African-Americans, e.g. he and his family liked Uncle Tom's Cabin "very much" and Tuck thought the Dred Scott decision "despicable." In support of an 1856 Frémont rally event asking for contributions to pay for the freedom of a young slave girl

displayed on the stage, Tuck hosted her in this house that evening. The record does not report if she had a guest room or a servant's room under the eaves.^{lvii}

Tuck's anti-slavery passion had roots in his old rebellion against the Democratic political powerbrokers in Concord, led by Franklin Pierce. That anger grew to include southerners, the "slavocracy," who sought domination of the country. By July 1861, his hatred of the slavocracy came to dominate his thinking about slavery:^{lviii}

"...Still it is well for the country to go through its present baptism willingly, in the hope of ridding the nation of supercilious arrogance effrontery and pretensions of Southern demagogues and proslavery agitators. Slavery has heretofore dictated the legislation and the elections of the country, has put up and put down whom it would; and now it is trying its strength to destroy the Govt. because the free people have at length got the power of numbers and the will to govern the Country, according to right and not according to slavery. Welcome the day that tries their grit, their power and their fate, and may God protect the right. I accept all sacrifices which the war can throw on me, and joy in the hope of living to see the beginning, at least, of the nation's emancipation from the dishonor, the disasters and the sin of being controlled by ignorant, cruel, envious, hateful tyrants. I would rather have a decent monarchy than such democratic rule as we have had for 20 years and we can better support a war all the time, than such administrations as Pierce's and Buchanan's."

As late as October 1861, Tuck remained ambivalent about immediate emancipation as advocated by more and more people, seeing danger ahead for the country: "To destroy slavery will make a fearful (to the whites and blacks both of the South) change, but one for the great good of the world in the long run. Perhaps it is time to advocate abolition." But, he believed that abolition was inevitable.^{lix} When Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862, Tuck's correspondence was silent on the event, being taken up with his efforts to find a safe appointment for Ned and with his business at the Boston Custom House. His animus toward the South emerged again in early 1863 when Ned began exploring business opportunities in Kentucky. One of Tuck's weekly letters of advice culminated, "Go to Church regularly, even if you are the only man in town to set an example....I see you are faithful to the Yankee Girls, despite the corn-fed specimens you meet with. I should myself rather have one Yankee wife, than a half-dozen 'Suckers', 'Badgers', or 'BuckEyes.'"^{lx}

Tuck's attitudes changed after spending three months in early 1867 visiting Beaufort South Carolina. Tuck was, as usual, looking for investment possibilities, but was also curious about the results of the "Port Royal Experiment," the federal government effort to resettle freed slaves on confiscated plantation land. He no longer hated the South because.^{lxi}

“The South is in ruins, and Congress cannot do much for her, as to make her of much account, politically, and therefore I feel it is unwise and wrong to make quite so much fuss in Congress about what the South will do if she is not guarded against. The truth is, her legs and her ribs are already broken and cannot be mended, and the most she can ever achieve, will be what she can do on crutches, and with an aching back, supported by the roughest spirits. You see, I pity the South. No one can fail to do it, who sees the people, and has a heart.”

But his sympathy did not extend to the African Americans he met in the Port Royal area. Two days later, he explained to his so why he would not be investing in the region.^{lxii}

“It is a sandy, barren country, unhealthy often, repulsive on account of negros, always, and fit only renovation by the lapse of centuries, during which much of the country must be idle, and get heart, which has been taken out of it, by slave culture....Were it not for the abundance of lazy, lying negros, full also of theft and deception, who afflict this village of Beaufort, (not the interior, so much), and the many relations I sustain at the north, I feel at times, I might think seriously of a southern home.”

There is no evidence that Tuck ever changed his opinion of African Americans. Certainly his near-total abstention from the political battles that raged within the Republican Party over Reconstruction policy suggests that he felt little sympathy for the civil rights of the freedmen, even as he felt sorry for the South in its ruin. In any case, the last decade of his life witnessed his immersion in new and different ventures.^{lxiii}

Women’s Education

Modern observers, disappointed with Tuck’s latent racism and apathy toward the civil rights struggle, may be heartened by his decades-long support for equal education opportunities for girls and women. From 1853-1857 he was trustee of the Exeter Female Academy at its peak when it employed six teachers and enrolled up to 166 female students. Apparently not satisfied with that school’s standards, he sent his daughters to a series of elite boarding schools in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. In later years he would show confidence in the ability of both Abby and Ellen to help him in business operations and decisions when he was called away from home.^{lxiv}

Tuck’s dedication to women’s education was proved when the town of Exeter decided to accept a large bequest from a former resident, William Robinson, to establish a secondary school for girls. Robinson stipulated that the school should “make female scholars equal to all the practical duties of life; such a course of education as would enable them to compete, and successfully, too, with their brothers throughout the world...” Tuck was involved with the project from the beginning, but his most concrete connection came between 1867 and 1870 when

he served on the board of trustees of the seminary, most of the time as president. The trustees often met weekly, and Tuck also chaired three sub-committees. For months at a time Tuck was chairing multiple meetings each week to buy land, build an imposing four-story edifice, recruit a headmaster, hire teachers and advertise for students. It is clear from the meeting minutes that Tuck was the driving force among the trustees.^{lxv}

The school provided a quality secondary to generations of girls from Exeter and the surrounding area, and proved a worthy companion to its male counterpart, the Phillips Exeter Academy. Since 1955, when the seminary was merged with the Tuck High School to create a coeducational high school, the Robinson Fund has continued to offer scholarships to girls and boys headed to further education after graduation. Thus, Tuck's dream lives on.

Return to the West

When the new school building became available to the girls of the Robinson Female Seminary in early 1870, Tuck began to shift his attention to making money in large amounts. Tuck had always had investments in local real estate and in a variety of government, railroad, and bank bonds, and occasionally accepted well-paying legal cases. But he was turning sixty in August, and his six grandchildren were on the verge of adulthood. He felt the need to build his fortune to take advantage of the post-war boom economy.

So, in June 1870 he journeyed once more to St. Louis in the West, to investigate a position as land commissioner for the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad. The Congress had granted 1.5 million acres of land to the railroad in 1866 to subsidize the construction of an intercontinental railroad running southwest from St. Louis and westward along the 35th parallel to California.^{lxvi} The land commissioner's job was to sell to farmers (and land speculators) that land. The position paid a tidy \$6,000 a year, and provided the incumbent opportunities to invest on his own account, helped by inside knowledge of the railroad's plans. In addition to selling retail parcels of land, Tuck had to monitor the mortgages pledged by over 3300 buyers who had already bought land. To manage such a massive portfolio, Tuck relied on a competent staff to handle individual mortgage performance, a first for someone who usually worked as a lone wolf investor. From November 1870 until the summer of 1873 Missouri was to be a second home for him and Catherine.^{lxvii}

The railroad also used Tuck as a lobbyist in Washington, hoping to benefit from his strong Republican credentials and knowledge of Congress and the federal government to obtain even more concessions for the faltering enterprise. In the spring of 1872, The Atlantic & Pacific even dispatched Tuck to Strasburg and Frankfurt to assess the German bond markets and the possibility of bringing German peasants to Missouri to expand the economic basis for the road. His meetings with German bankers, particularly the Frankfurt branch of the Seligman brothers, convinced him that the railroad could expect little from Europe. Tuck found that his journeyman French language ability gave small benefit to him in Frankfurt.^{lxviii}

Tuck's work with the board of the Atlantic & Pacific gave him access to renowned railroad entrepreneurs and financiers, such as Uriel Crocker, Oliver Ames, Jr., Frederick Billings, and Joseph Seligman. These contacts, combined with the increasing stature in Wall Street, London and Paris of his son Ned and son-in-law Frank French, meant he could benefit from information at the highest level.

Perhaps because he was close to the ground in Springfield, Missouri, Tuck began to back away from involvement in the Atlantic & Pacific in the spring and summer of 1873. When Thomas Scott, owner of the Pennsylvania Railroad, took over the Atlantic & Pacific in August, Tuck's future position in the business came into question. Then, the onset of the Panic of 1873 in September threw almost everyone's plans out the window. Tuck, in contrast, went ahead calmly with his planned six-month trip to Europe with Catherine. His various financial arrangements were well in hand and his ties to the railroad ended.^{lxi}

One last political fling

Tuck abstained from politics for twelve years after his dismissal as naval officer in the Boston Custom House, angry at his party's treatment of him and furious at William E. Chandler for having conspired against him. He remained a keen if cynical observer of developments at the local, state and federal levels, however. He avoided comment on the battle against President Andrew Johnson and at first gave the benefit of the doubt to the Grant administration. But by 1870, Tuck began to express in private his continuing disdain for the Southern political system and his disgust with the Republican Party's corrupt behavior at all levels.^{lxx}

His return to Missouri reinforced his conviction that, "Slavery cursed [the South] till the war, and the tobacco chewing women and the pale faced, cadaverous men, all prove that the blight of Heaven rested upon the shirking lazy population whom negroes took care of till 1863." In 1872, Tuck was glad to tell his brother John in Biddeford, Maine, "Thank Heaven, the race of slave-owners from the U. States, who formerly flaunted their gains from selling their own progeny, is blotted out forever." However, Tuck's contempt for the South did not extend to sympathy for African Americans trying to obtain political and social equality, either in the South or the North: his silence on reconstruction issues seems deafening today.^{lxxi}

Instead, Tuck gave vent to his bitter assessment of contemporary GOP politics. He wrote to his son-in-law in 1874 that he "had a lasting disgust against politics, because the laurels for all political foresight and political revolution, in N. Hampshire, were always put on brows that were undeserving – to a great extent – from John P. Hale, down, down, down to E.H. Rollins, Bill Chandler and [Nehemiah] Ordway. However, I have lived long enough to see the worthlessness of political position to any man's honor or happiness." His political disgust extended to his political enemies at the local level, such as two ambitious fellow Exeter lawyers Gilman Marston and Charles H. Bell.^{lxxii}

Finally, his family's growing wealth grounded in the banking sector led him to strongly support a full return to the gold standard and the rejection of a currency based on greenbacks or

silver. Opponents of gold were thieves, devils and rascals who would cause the “destruction of values.”^{lxxiii} Tuck was a firm supporter of conservative policies in other areas. He wrote to his son Ned in July 1877 after the nation-wide railway strike that, “It is a pity that by one discharge of musketry the boys who constitute a majority of the mob element, could not be exterminated, from one end of this continent to the other; and that by another discharge, the gang of orators, who stir up and lead the idlers of all classes, could not be hurled to ‘their own place.’ The real workers could then be pacified by reasonable concessions, and men would be free to enjoy the fruits of their industry and capacity.” Two days later he returned to his desire for an iron-fisted response to the strike: “...I suppose the worst is over in regard to the strike. Still, what a plague has already been inflicted upon this country, a plague which more or less affects us all! It seems a pity that a cannon shot or two, from a U.S. Battery could not have been sent through the streets of Chicago. Still it may be, that the lives already sacrificed may be sufficient, though I doubt it, to let the rabble know there is a government in this country. I hear from St. Louis that Bk. stocks don’t sell in these times.” His surprisingly callous attitude toward the working class had emerged as early as 1871 in the wake of the repression of the Paris Commune: “I see the Mob in Paris are about exterminated. I shall be content to hear that the leaders have been shot or hung. Never have men with less cause, it seems to me, for their rebellion.”^{lxxiv}

In sum, Tuck was a “Liberal” Republican, who planned to vote (reluctantly) for Horace Greeley, the Democratic candidate facing President Grant in the 1872 election. He expressed satisfaction at losses experienced by Republican “demagogues” in the 1874 midterm elections. He did welcome the victory of the moderate Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876 and told his son Ned that the defeat of Republican radicals such as Benjamin F. Butler, James G. Blaine and Oliver P. Morton meant that the country would have “peace” (i.e. between North and South).^{lxxv}

Tuck moved back into public politics at the end of December 1877 after reading William E. Chandler’s public letter attacking President Hayes. In it, Chandler charged that Hayes had made a secret bargain with southern leaders to withdraw federal troops from the South in exchange for their support to ensure Hayes’s victory in the disputed election of 1876. The Chandler letter cause a furor within the New Hampshire Republican Party, pitting Chandler and his followers against the majority which was reluctant to criticize a sitting Republican president. The controversy was sharper because it broke out just before the planned Republican party convention in Concord on 9 January 1878.^{lxxvi}

Sensing that Chandler had over-stepped his influence in the party, Tuck decided to emerge from his self-imposed political exile and engaged Chandler in a bitter exchange of accusations at a special meeting of the party central committee the evening before the convention. Tuck felt he succeeded in badly wounding Chandler, referring to him in his speech to the caucus as “this villain, this political tramp, this lobbyist and blackmailer...” He wrote to his son Ned, “I manifestly did more than any other man to kill Bill Chandler, and to procure the passage of Resolutions approving President Hayes’ administration. There is nothing left of his power of mischief in the Granite State.” Newspaper accounts indicate he and others had indeed hurt (but not destroyed) Chandler’s position in the state GOP.^{lxxvii}

Buoyed by his success in Concord, Tuck placed his name into the competition to win the Republican nomination for one of Exeter's two seats in the New Hampshire legislature. He was fairly confident he was still the favorite son of the town. "The 'Boys' say I can, and shall be elected. I shall be obliged to become a candidate, am sure of being supported by all good men, yet cannot allow, (to myself), that I am sure of an election" he told his old political colleague George Fogg. On the eve of the early March caucus he was still upbeat. "I am deep in the fight, and can only say most of the decent people are out for me, - almost everyone. [Gilman] Marston and his liars are aroused and another demagogue is running for himself, and will unite with Marston to capture the two vacancies, if possible. I hope strongly to beat the combination." Tuck won a clear plurality of votes, but his two opponents did combine to nominate each other and freeze out Tuck. The latter was convinced that money provided by Chandler had been a key factor in buying votes to defeat him. After this disappointment, Tuck never again showed interest in politics.^{lxxviii}

A Search for Home

Throughout the postwar period Tuck continued his business activity, with significant investments in bank and railroad bonds in the West, and real estate development in the Exeter area. Tuck continued to be active partner in a manufacturing concern based in Boston and Newfields, New Hampshire that specialized in making gas pipes. By the beginning of 1877, Tuck was also assisting his old New Hampshire-born business acquaintance Austin Corbin in the latter's project to build a railroad connecting Manhattan to the seashore at Manhattan Beach. However, Tuck did not join Corbin in his later take-over of the Long Island Railroad.^{lxxix}

Sometimes, Tuck mixed business with pleasure. Between 1865 and 1878 he travelled to Europe four times, sightseeing with various members of his family and scouting out potential investment partners in France and Germany. He undertook or considered other reconnaissance trips to Florida, Nevada, Colorado and Nova Scotia. Considering his frequent visits to family members in New York, Boston and Maine, it is clear he was unable to sit quietly in once place very long.

Why all this frenetic activity? Although he was interested in politics for a great deal of his adult life, one senses that after his defeat for re-election to Congress in 1853 he pursued elective office half-heartedly. He was always proud of his key role in creating the anti-slavery movement in New Hampshire (and in his mind at least, the nation), but lost interest in the fight for equality for African Americans after passage of the 13th Amendment. His long and rewarding efforts to modernize education especially for women were well-regarded by his peers at institutions such as Dartmouth College, Phillips Exeter Academy and the Robinson Female Seminary, but he made no effort to broaden the scope of his reforms. He recognized at an early date the opportunities offered by the development of the West, but was careful to limit the range of his business concerns so he could manage them personally.

He amassed a small fortune and despite some severe setbacks dealt him by the panics of 1857 and 1873, always remained solvent and financially well-off. He and his wife Catherine lived comfortably, but did not flaunt their wealth. For Tuck, his money was meant to support his family, including his numerous siblings, nieces, and nephews whom he always helped in time of need. But it was his three children that occupied his thoughts the most. He made sure that Abby and Ellen received the best education available to New England women of their generation, and he pushed Ned to excel at Phillips Exeter and Dartmouth. All were launched successfully with talented, active spouses. He delighted in the intelligence and liveliness of his grandchildren. Here was the reason he worked so long and hard to make a fortune.

But here was his final disappointment. He saw small-town Exeter as his home, even if he spent many long periods in Washington, Boston, New York and Europe. Perhaps inevitably his children left that home as soon as they reached adulthood: their ambitions and pleasures were national and international in scope, and Exeter in the 1870s was too small and sleepy for them. After Catherine suffered a terrible death from cancer in October 1876, Tuck was often alone in the house on Front Street. Although he visited the three children frequently, they rarely accepted Tuck's repeated invitations to come to New Hampshire, even for a short time. Indeed, it was a rare occasion when all of his children and grandchildren gathered together in one place. For his part, Tuck was reluctant to move to Boston or New York, even though his business often called him there. On 10 December 1879, Tuck had just returned to his home in Exeter from a business trip in Boston when he was found by his housekeeper lying unconscious on the parlor couch, struck down by apoplexy. He died the next day, unaware that his children Ned and Ellen had rushed up from New York to be with him. Amos Tuck, beloved by his family, and so solicitous of them, died without knowing of their presence.^{lxxx}

ⁱ"Amos Tuck, Washington July 1848," Box 2, Folder 12, Tuck Family Papers (MS-442), Rauner Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover N.H. [Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library]. Tuck probably wrote this autobiographical sketch while he was serving in in Washington D.C. as U.S. Congressman. In 1875 he wrote another autobiography that provided more details of his early life, but again ended his account around 1850. His son Ned published this manuscript privately in 1902 as [Autobiographical Memoir of Amos Tuck [Autobiographical Memoir]. These two memoirs provide most of the available information on Tuck's antecedents and early life.

ⁱⁱHampton (NH) Historical Society, "Hampton Congregational Church Records," Vol. 3, P. 112.

ⁱⁱⁱDartmouth College Merit Rolls, 1832 and 1834, Rauner Library; Leon Burr Richardson, History of Dartmouth College, (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Publications, 1932), p. 494.

^{iv}Christine Stansell, City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 257-258; Richard Godbeer, Sexual Revolution in Early America, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) makes similar observations.

^vRecords of the Church in the New Parish, Exeter, [1813 -], Records of the Congregational Church in Exeter, N.H., First and Second Parishes, The Congregational Church in Exeter – United Church of Christ; “Hampton Congregational Church Records,” Vol. 3, pp. 91-92.

^{vi}Contract between Trustees of the Hampton Academy and Amos Tuck, Hampton Historical Society, Acquisition 2009.39; “Hampton Academy History;” Arthur J. Moody, “Hampton Academy and Its Board of Trustees.” Hampton, NH, 1972] passim; Carolyn Shea, Hampton Union & Rockingham County Gazette, 30 Jan 1930).

^{vii} Charles H. Bell, The Bench and Bar of New Hampshire, (Cambridge: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1894), pp. 91-93, 190-192; Autobiographical Memoir, p. 44.

^{viii} Henry Flagg French to Benjamin Brown French, 29 September 1842 and 25 December 1842, Benjamin B. French Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. [French Family Papers, LC].

^{ix} Account books, Box 9, Folders 1-6, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

^x Register of deeds, Rockingham County, New Hampshire.

^{xi} Ledger book, 1838-1849, Box 9, Folder 1, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

^{xii} For the background on the radical Democrats, see Donald B. Cole, Jacksonian Democracy in New Hampshire, 1800-1851, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 185-215. Tuck’s quite active participation in the N.H. legislature is clear throughout the Journals of the Senate and House June Session, 1842, (Concord: Carroll & Baker, State Printers, 1842), and Journals of the Senate and House November Session, 1842, (Concord: Carroll & Baker, State Printers, 1843). Tuck’s two autobiographies give his account of his unofficial actions.

^{xiii} For background on John P. Hale’s growing discomfort with the Democratic Party’s position on slavery and his subsequent rebellion against the annexation of Texas see Richard H. Sewell, John P. Hale and the Politics of Abolition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 36-67.

^{xiv} Amos Tuck to John P. Hale, 15 January 1845, John Parker Hale Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society [Hale Papers, NHHS].

^{xv} For another eyewitness account of Tuck’s confrontation with Franklin Pierce, see Henry Flagg French to Benjamin Brown French 19 January 1845, French Family Papers, LC.

^{xvi} Amos Tuck to John P. Hale, 25 March 1845, Hale Papers, NHHS.

^{xvii} Amos Tuck to John P. Hale, 2 February 1846, Hale Papers, NHHS.

^{xviii} Amos Tuck to George G. Fogg, 3 May 1846, George G. Fogg Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society [Fogg Papers, NHHS].

^{xix} John Greenleaf Whittier to Editor, Essex Transcript, 17 September, 1846, in John B. Pickard, The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 34-6.

^{xx} Amos Tuck to Reverend James Boswell and Samuel A. Haley, 20 November, 1846 in Exeter News-Letter, 30 November 1846.

^{xxi} Charles R. Corning, Amos Tuck, (Exeter, NH: The News-Letter Press, 1902), pp.27-74.

^{xxii} Amos Tuck to Robert G. Winthrop, 27 April 1848, Franklin Brooks Research Collection [ML-96], Rauner Library [Brooks Collection, Rauner Library].

^{xxiii} Amos Tuck to Moses A. Cartland, 21 December 1848, Brooks Collection, Rauner Library.

^{xxiv} Amos Tuck to John G. Palfrey, 13 April 1850, Brooks Collection, Rauner Library.

^{xxv} Amos Tuck to Editor, Exeter News-Letter, 14 February 1853; Exeter News-Letter, 21 February 1853.

^{xxvi} Exeter News-Letter, 26 April 1847; H.F. French to B.B. French, 6 September 1847, French Family Papers, LC.

^{xxvii} Ledger book, 1838-1849, Box 9, Folder 1, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

^{xxviii} Amos Tuck to -Abby and Ellen Tuck, 30 May 1851, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

^{xxix} Allan G. Bogue, Money at Interest: The Farm Mortgage on the Middle Border, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955).

xxx Amos Tuck to ?, 2 January 1858, Correspondence Book, 1857-1858, Box 9, Folder 10, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library. This letter book surviving from a key business year for Tuck gives many details of how he conducted his business and political activities.

xxxix H.F. French to B.B. French, 13 October 1858, French Family Papers, LC.

xxxix D. Homer Batchelder to Editor, 19 August 1887, Exeter News-Letter; Tuck wrote two letters to his children from Chicago on 10 October 1853, relating his plans to conduct further business there before heading further west to Galena, Illinois: Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 10 October 1853, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library, and Amos Tuck to Ellen Tuck, 10 October 1853, Amos Tuck and family, Box 2:19, French Family Papers, LC.

xxxix Exeter News-Letter, 29 August 1853; Exeter News-Letter, 12 December 1853.

xxxix Exeter News-Letter, 20 February 1854.

xxxix Corning, Amos Tuck, pp. 78-79; Exeter News-Letter, 23 June 1856, Joseph Dow, Robert Tuck, of Hampton, N.H. and his Descendants, 1638-1877, (Boston: privately published, 1877), p. 104.

xxxix Exeter News-Letter, 8 September 1856; Amos Tuck to Abby Tuck Nelson and Ellen Tuck, 9 November 1856, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.

xxxix Amos Tuck to ?, 13 January 1858, Correspondence Book, 1857-1858, Box 9, Folder 10, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library. In the same letter book find Tuck's letters to his wife's brother, P.H. Townsend (in Kansas), 30 August 1857 and 2 July 1857.

xxxix Amos Tuck to George G. Fogg, 26 April 1858 and 17 May 1858, Fogg Papers, NHHS.

xxxix Amos Tuck to Salmon P. Chase, 14 March 1860 and 7 April 1860, Papers of Salmon P. Chase, Library of Congress.

xl Amos Tuck to Abby Tuck Nelson and Ellen Tuck, 20 May 1860, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC; Exeter News-Letter, 30 April 1860, 21 May 1860 and 4 June 1860; Corning, Amos Tuck, pp. 83-5.

xli Amos Tuck to David Davis, 24 August 1860, Amos Tuck Alumni File, Rauner Library; Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 7 September 1860, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

xlii Dartmouth College Faculty to Abraham Lincoln, 19 December 1860, Amos Tuck alumni file, Rauner Library.

xlii New York Times, 7 January 1861; Amos Tuck to George G. Fogg, 7 January 1861, George G. Fogg Papers, NHHS; Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 13 January 1861, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library; Amos Tuck to Salmon P. Chase, 14 January 1861, Salmon P. Chase Papers, LC.

xliii Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck letter, 24 March 1861, Brooks Collection, Rauner Library; Exeter News-Letter 6 May 1861, Advertisement for Tuck & French, counselors-at-law, Exeter, N.H.

xliii Amos Tuck to Abby Tuck Nelson and Ellen Tuck, 20 May 1860, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.

xliii Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 6 October 1861, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

xliii Franklin Brooks, "The Lincoln Years in the Papers of Amos and Edward Tuck," Dartmouth College Library Bulletin, XXI (April 1981):69-70. Brooks notes that Woodhouse did not become Tuck's deputy.)

xliii Leon Burr Richardson, William E. Chandler, Republican, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1940), pp. 30-31.

xliii Most of the documentation relating to what became an increasingly vituperative exchange of letters can be found in Box 3, Folder 6, William E. Chandler Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

l Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 1 March 1864, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

li "Minutes of the Board of Trustees", 12 September 1859, DA-1, Rauner Library; Amos Tuck to Abby Tuck Nelson and Ellen Tuck, 21 November 1858, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC; Edward Tuck to Amos Tuck, 17 February 1864, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

lii Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 22 April 1861, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

lii Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 9 October and 13 October 1861, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library; President Lincoln to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, 26 August 1862, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Vol. 5; Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles to Amos Tuck, 19 September 1862, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library. Franklin Brooks quoted a 2 August 1861 letter from Tuck to Lincoln requesting a West Point appointment for Ned, which he located in the archives of the Adjutant General's Office (National Archives, Records Group 94). It's not

clear if Lincoln ever saw this letter (see P. 63 of Brooks' manuscript biography of Edward Tuck, held by the Rauner Library).

^{liv} Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 8 March 1863, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library; Provost Marshal to Edward Tuck, 15 August 1863, Brooks Collection, Rauner Library; Foolsap receipt from Daniel H. Johnson to Edward Tuck, 29 August 1863, Box 5, Folder 15, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

^{lv} Amos Tuck to Frank French, 8 August and 29 August 1865, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC; Amos Tuck to George G. Fogg, 16 November 1865, George F. Fogg Papers, NHHS.

^{lvi} "The Slave Question," Speech of Mr. Amos Tuck, 19 January 1848, Appendix to the Congressional Globe, pp. 209-213; Amos Tuck to "My Friend", 28 July 1848, Brooks Collection, Box 8, Folder 31, Rauner Library.

^{lvii} Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 25 April 1852, Brooks Collection, Box 7 Folder 68, Rauner Library; Amos Tuck to Rev. J.C. Webster, 6 April 1857, Correspondence Book, 1857-1858, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library; Diary of Charles Gill, Entry of 2 September 1856, Exeter Historical Society; Exeter News-Letter, 8 September 1856.

^{lviii} Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 8 July 1861, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

^{lix} Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 13 October 1861, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

^{lx} Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 13 February 1863, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

^{lxi} Amos Tuck to Frank French, 19 January 1867, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.

^{lxii} Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 21 January 1867, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.

^{lxiii} Amos Tuck to George G. Fogg, 15 February 1870, George G. Fogg Papers, NHHS.

^{lxiv} Charles H. Bell, History of the Town of Exeter, New Hampshire, (Bowie, MD, Heritage Books, 1979, reprint ed. [1888]), p. 300.

^{lxv} Bell, History of Exeter, p. 291-3; Trustees' Minutes, 1866-1899, MSS-23, Exeter Historical Society.

^{lxvi} New York Times, 29 April 1871; H. Craig Minor, The St. Louis – San Francisco Transcontinental Railroad: The Thirty-fifth Parallel Project, 1853-1890, (Lawrence, KS, University Press of Kansas, 1971) provides extensive background for Tuck's activities on behalf of the railroad.

^{lxvii} Exeter News-Letter, 4 November 1870; Amos Tuck to Ellen and Frank French, 17 September 1871 and 25 March 1873, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.

^{lxviii} Amos Tuck to Ellen French, 3 March 1872 and 10 May 1872, Amos Tuck to Catherine P. Tuck, 12 May 1872, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.

^{lxix} The Daily Democrat (Sedalia, MO), 11 August 1873; Amos Tuck (Paris) to Frank French, 19 October 1873.

^{lxx} Amos Tuck to George G. Fogg, George G. Fogg Papers, NHHS; Frank French to Amos Tuck, 10 January 1878, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.

^{lxxi} Amos Tuck to Abby Tuck Frye, 9 June 1870, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.

^{lxxii} Amos Tuck to Frank French, 7 January 1874, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC

^{lxxiii} Amos Tuck to Frank French, 30 October 1873, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC; Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 11 December 1877, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library.

^{lxxiv} Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 25 and 27 July 1877, Brooks Collection, Rauner Library; Amos Tuck to Ellen Tuck, 24 May 1871, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.

^{lxxv} Amos Tuck to Catherine P. Tuck, 19 May 1872, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC; Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 9 November 1876, Amos Tuck and Family, French Family Papers, LC.

^{lxxvi} Exeter News-Letter, 4 January 1878.

^{lxxvii} The New York Times, 8 January 1878; Frank French to Amos Tuck, 10 January 1878, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC; Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 11 January 1878, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.

^{lxxviii} Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 25 February 1878, Tuck Family Papers, Rauner Library; Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 12 March 1878, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC; Amos Tuck to George G. Fogg, George G. Fogg Papers, NHHS.

^{lxxix} Amos Tuck to Edward Tuck, 8 January 1875, Brooks Collection, Rauner Library; Amos Tuck to Frank French, 17 July 1878, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC; Exeter News-Letter, 12 January 1877; Amos Tuck to George G. Fogg, Fogg Papers, NHHS.

^{lxxx} [Dec. 1879?] Ellen Tuck French manuscript, Undated, Amos Tuck and family, French Family Papers, LC.