

**GUSTAVUS A. HENRY**  
**THE "EAGLE ORATOR" OF TENNESSEE**

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**LINDA SHAFER MYERS**

GUSTAVUS A. HENRY  
THE "EAGLE ORATOR" OF TENNESSEE

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An Abstract  
Presented to  
the Graduate Council of  
Austin Peay State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Linda Shafer Myers

August 1972

## ABSTRACT

Gustavus Adolphus Henry was the son of General William Henry, born in Scott County, Kentucky, October 8, 1804. He grew up in Christian County and attended Transylvania University in Lexington, graduating with honors in 1825. He read law in the office of Judge George Robertson, later Chief Justice of the Kentucky Supreme Court, then returned to Hopkinsville to practice. He was elected to the Kentucky Legislature and served 1831-1833. He married Marion McClure of Clarksville on February 17, 1833, and soon moved to Clarksville.

Major Henry was a leader in the business and civic affairs of Clarksville, serving on the Board of Trustees for the Montgomery Masonic College, promoting the economic development of the town through the creation of a new bank, an insurance company and the Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad, of which he was president. He was a vestryman of Trinity Episcopal Church and active in its leadership until his death.

Gustavus A. Henry was prominent in Tennessee politics and served as a Whig presidential elector in 1840, 1844 and 1852. He was an unsuccessful candidate for Congress in 1843. Major Henry served one term in the Tennessee House of Representatives (1851-1853) but was unsuccessful in the 1853 campaign for governor against Andrew Johnson. He remained active in politics locally and in 1860 spoke widely throughout Tennessee and in the North in support of John Bell and

the Constitutional Union Party. When the Republicans proved unwilling to compromise on the issues dividing the country and attempted to coerce the Southern states, he declared himself for the Confederacy and was one of the commissioners chosen by Governor Isham G. Harris to enter Tennessee into military alliance with the Confederacy. In recognition of his ability and distinguished career, he was elected by the Tennessee Legislature as one of Tennessee's two Confederate Senators. He served in the Confederate Senate throughout the war as one of the chief supporters of the Davis administration.

After the war, Major Henry returned to Clarksville, resumed his law practice, farming and, for a brief time, presidency of the Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad. He was quite active in Democratic politics, serving as Chairman of the Democratic State Convention in 1874 and working to unite all opposition to the Radicals in one party. He died at his home, Emerald Hill, September 10, 1880, and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery.

GUSTAVUS A. HENRY  
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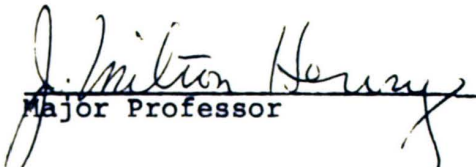
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by  
Linda Shafer Myers


August 1972

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Linda Shafer Myers entitled "Gustavus A. Henry: The 'Eagle Orator' of Tennessee." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

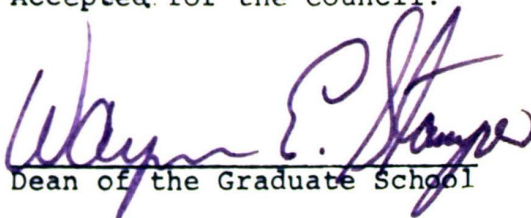
  
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and  
recommend its acceptance:

  
Second Committee Member

  
Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Council:

  
Dean of the Graduate School

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The author is deeply grateful to the members of the Henry family who welcomed her and gave much aid in research: Mrs. Patrick Henry Cross, Mrs. Elmer D. Hamner, and Miss Elizabeth Julia Flourney Henry. Their assistance was invaluable.

Special thanks are extended to the staff members of the Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, without whose knowledge and friendliness the project would have been much more difficult. The staffs of the Clarksville Public Library, the Hopkinsville Public Library, the County Court Clerk's Office of Christian County, Kentucky, and the Tennessee State Library were unfailingly courteous and helpful.

Lastly, special appreciation is due the author's husband and son, without whose patience and understanding this thesis could not have been written.

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## Chapter 1

### THE EARLY YEARS

Gustavus Adolphus Henry was born in Scott County, Kentucky, on October 8, 1804. He was the son of General William and Elizabeth Julia Flourney Henry and was named for Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, Lion of the North and Defender of the Protestant Faith.<sup>1</sup>

General William Henry was the son of the Reverend Robert Henry of Charlotte County, Virginia, born April 12, 1761. His father's death left the family unable to provide William Henry with a classical education, but he learned surveying before enlisting in the American Revolution under "Light Horse Harry" Lee. He served under General Nathaniel Greene at Guilford Courthouse. By 1781 he had accompanied his brother Samuel to the Salt River area of Kentucky where he worked as a surveyor and apparently acquired land.<sup>2</sup> On

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<sup>1</sup> Statement by Mrs. Elmer D. Hamner, personal interview, April 24, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> John Flourney Henry, A History of the Henry Family, supplement by Edward Parker Henry (Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Co., 1946), pp. 21-22. Though family tradition does not mention this, it is possible that William Henry acquired land in Kentucky for his military service. Willard Rouse Jillson, Old Kentucky Entries and Deeds (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing House, 1969), shows

October 12, 1786, William Henry married Elizabeth Julia Flournoy, daughter of Matthews Flournoy, one of the early settlers of the area. They lived between Lexington and Georgetown, Kentucky, and William Henry erected a mill on North Elkhorn Creek which he operated for many years.<sup>3</sup> He, like all able-bodied men on the Kentucky frontier, was an Indian fighter and had to be ordered to remain at home to defend Flournoy's Fort instead of going on the expedition that culminated in the Blue Licks Massacre.<sup>4</sup> He was active in Kentucky politics, serving as a delegate for Scott County at the first Constitutional Convention in Frankfort in August 1797.<sup>5</sup> He was in the Kentucky Legislature for many years but, after being defeated in his first race for Congress by Colonel Robert Johnson, never sought higher office. General Henry aided Henry Clay when Clay first came to Kentucky, and the men were life-long friends.<sup>6</sup> When the

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several entries of a William Henry acquiring land in Lincoln and then Scott County following the war.

<sup>3</sup>Henry, p. 22. For the Flournoy family, see Flournoy [sic] Rivers, "The Flournoy Family," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, III (1895), 67-79.

<sup>4</sup>Henry, pp. 25-26.

<sup>5</sup>William B. Allen, A History of Kentucky (Louisville: Bradley and Gilbert, 1872), p. 154.

<sup>6</sup>Henry, pp. 27-28.

War of 1812 began, General Henry (the title had been honorary up to that time) received an appointment as Major General of the First Kentucky Militia Division, and he received a commendation for his services at the battle of the Thames from the commander, General Harrison.<sup>7</sup>

Mrs. Henry died in 1813 and in 1816 General Henry married Hester L. Clarke of Georgetown.<sup>8</sup> By 1818 he was buying land in Christian County, Kentucky, in preparation to settle there with his brother Daniel and son Robert, and by mid-1819 he had completed the move.<sup>9</sup> He rapidly acquired a large tract of land, his first three purchases totaling 1745 acres; and he made at least five other separate purchases prior to his death.<sup>10</sup> He hoped on his death to be

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<sup>7</sup>Henry, pp. 30-31. For a full account of the battle, see Bennett H. Young, The Battle of the Thames, Filson Club Publication No. 18 (Louisville: John P. Morton & Co., 1903).

<sup>8</sup>Henry, pp. 34-35.

<sup>9</sup>Statement by Miss Elizabeth Julia Flourney Henry, personal interview, May 22, 1972; Christian County, Kentucky, General Index to Deeds (County Court Clerk's Office, County Court House, Hopkinsville, Kentucky), Book 1 (1797-1819), p. 415; Book 2 (1818-1835), p. 296.

<sup>10</sup>Christian County, Kentucky, Deed Books, H (1817-1818), p. 415; K (1818-1820), pp. 296, 791. William Henry Perrin, ed., Counties of Christian and Trigg, Kentucky (Chicago and Louisville: F. A. Battey Publishing Co., 1884), p. 280, says General William Henry eventually acquired some 3,000 acres, settling on the old Cox place, a mile west of Newstead.

able to provide each of his sons with \$3,500 in property and money, with any that they had been advanced prior to his death (including the charges for a college education) to be deducted from that amount.<sup>11</sup> He died November 23, 1824, and his estate was apparently sufficient to make the bequests to his sons. He was buried on his brother Daniel's farm outside Hopkinsville.<sup>12</sup> General William Henry's gravestone reads, "In memory of Gen. Will Henry, a revolu... soldier - who departed this life Nov 23, 1824 age 63 years. 7 mo & 11 days."<sup>13</sup>

The children of General William Henry and Elizabeth Julia Flournoy Henry were thirteen: Elizabeth Julia (died in infancy), Robert Pryor, Matthews Winston, William, John Flournoy, Thomas, Daniel, Benjamin Franklin (died in infancy), Patsy Caroline (died aged sixteen in 1814), Patrick, Gustavus Adolphus, Eliza and Lucretia (both died in infancy). By his marriage to Hester L. Clarke, General Henry had one son, James C. Henry, who died unmarried in 1847.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Christian County, Kentucky, Will Book (County Court Clerk's Office, County Court House, Hopkinsville, Kentucky), D, pp. 221-223, 261.

<sup>12</sup>Henry, p. 35. Miss Julia Henry on May 22, 1972, said that the stone wall built around the graveyard by Gustavus A. and Patrick Henry in the 1850s had been torn down and thrown on the graves, but some of the markers were still legible.

<sup>13</sup>Transcribed by Miss Julia Henry.

<sup>14</sup>Henry, pp. 38-39.

Robert Pryor Henry, oldest son of General William Henry, was born November 24, 1788, in Scott County and received his early education at the school kept by his uncle, John Todd Henry. He attended Transylvania University in Lexington, read law under Henry Clay and was admitted to the Kentucky Bar in 1809. He served as Commonwealth's Attorney that year. On March 19, 1812, he married Gabriella F. Pitts; they ultimately had six children. Robert P. Henry served as his father's aide during the War of 1812, then moved to Christian County where he was prosecuting attorney for the district. He served in Congress from 1823 to 1826 and, as a member of the Committee on Roads and Canals, secured the first appropriation for improving the Mississippi River ever granted by Congress. In the state political battle over the Court of Appeals, he was offered a judgeship but had not made a decision before his untimely death August 26, 1826.<sup>15</sup> His legal and political reputation was quite high.<sup>16</sup> His personal property at his death included an extensive library, about a third of which was law books but also contained classics and history.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Henry, pp. 19, 48; Allen, pp. 269-270; Charles Kerr, ed., History of Kentucky (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1922), II, 646.

<sup>16</sup> Perrin, p. 98.

<sup>17</sup> Christian County, Kentucky, Will Book, E, pp. 237-242, 243-251. The books were inventoried by title and when the estate was sold, each book was listed by title

The second son of General William Henry was Matthews Winston Henry, born January 11, 1790, named for his maternal grandfather, Matthews Flournoy. He, too, served in the War of 1812 and moved to Christian County after marrying Robert's wife's sister, Juliette C. Pitts. He was chiefly a farmer but carried mail between Louisville and Nashville and died July 31, 1838, of a fever contracted while building locks and dams on the Big Barren River. He had twelve<sup>18</sup> children.

General Henry's third son, William, was born July 26, 1791, and also served in the War of 1812. He married Cornelia V. Gano of Georgetown on May 18, 1819, and moved to Christian County in 1820. He was a farmer and served as a colonel in the state militia. He had eight children and died suddenly February 5, 1847.<sup>19</sup>

John Flournoy Henry was the fourth son of General William Henry, born January 17, 1793, and educated at the Georgetown Academy and in medicine at New York University. He served as a surgeon's mate during the War of 1812 and was at the seige of Fort Meigs. He married on May 7, 1818,

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with the purchaser's name and the price. The personal property other than the books was sold for \$1,092.26; the books were sold for \$973.10.

<sup>18</sup>Henry, p. 60.

<sup>19</sup>Henry, p. 69. Miss Julia Henry is the daughter of William Henry, Jr., 's oldest son, Richard Gano Henry.

Mary Wilson Duke who died in 1821; he later married Lucy Stringer Ridgeley and had six children. He succeeded his brother Robert as Christian County's Representative in Congress but served only one term. He was a professor of medicine at Miami University, Cincinnati, Ohio, then moved to Bloomington, Illinois, and finally to Burlington, Iowa, where he died November 12, 1873.<sup>20</sup>

The fifth son of General William Henry, Thomas, was born December 22, 1794, and served throughout the War of 1812. He married Susan Dudley of Christian County, July 15, 1819, with whom he had four children; after her death he married Mary Ford. He was a farmer and left on his death October 11, 1841, an estate valued in excess of \$7,500.<sup>21</sup>

Daniel Henry, named for his father's brother, was born June 8, 1796, and was a merchant and planter in Christian County. He married Eliza Viriles Gano, younger sister of William's wife, on November 21, 1819. She died after the birth of their first child in 1821, and in 1824 Daniel Henry married Lucy W. Green. They had four children. He was preparing to move to Bloomington near his brother

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<sup>20</sup>Perrin, p. 111; Henry, p. 76; G. Glenn Clift, Notes on Kentucky Veterans of the War of 1812 (Anchorage, Ky.: Borderland Books, 1964), p. 24.

<sup>21</sup>Henry, p. 84; Christian County, Kentucky, Will Book, L, pp. 276-280.

John F. Henry when he died July 12, 1837.<sup>22</sup>

The tenth child of General William Henry was Patrick, born January 24, 1801. He was educated for the law and practiced in Clarksville for a time after marrying Elizabeth Duke Taylor of Montgomery County. He later moved to Mississippi where he was a planter and active in state politics, taking a firm Union stand in 1850. Elizabeth Henry died in 1838 and in 1843 Patrick Henry married Betty Claiborne West. He had thirteen children by his two marriages. He died March 14, 1864, at Brandon, Mississippi.<sup>23</sup>

Gustavus Adolphus Henry was the eleventh and youngest surviving child. Very little is known of his childhood and early manhood. He received his basic education at the old Means School in Christian County,<sup>24</sup> then attended Transylvania University in Lexington. The exact date of his

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<sup>22</sup>Henry, pp. 84-85. Apparently his financial affairs were in great disorder when he died since two pieces of land were sold for judgments against them. Gustavus A. Henry bought both, paying \$29.40 for 45 acres to satisfy the Franklin Academy Trustees' judgment and \$2.00 for 200 acres to satisfy John Lindly's claim. Christian County, Kentucky, Deed Book, T, pp. 308, 310. The last sum seems ridiculously low and may represent either a token payment or an error in recording the deed.

<sup>23</sup>Henry, pp. 87-88.

<sup>24</sup>Perrin, p. 278.

matriculation is not known, but he was listed in the 1824 catalogue as being a junior, residing at Mrs. Stout's. His class included Jefferson Davis, George W. Jones (later Senator from Iowa) and David Achison (later Senator from Missouri).<sup>25</sup> He apparently became close friends with Davis while they were at Transylvania. He appeared as representative of the senior class to read "An English Ode" in chapel exercises to honor LaFayette's visit to Lexington in 1825. He was recorded as offering a toast to a General Montgomery at the Washington banquet in Lexington on February 22, 1826, and as receiving one as Orator of the day: "When his country requires his services may he unite the valour of the Swede with the eloquence of the Virginian."<sup>26</sup>

Gustavus A. Henry read law in Lexington at the office of George Robertson, who was later Chief Justice of

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<sup>25</sup>A Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, January, 1824 (Transylvania University Library), p. 13; George W. Jones to G. A. Henry, July 6, 1850, in the Gustavus A. Henry Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library (microfilm copy in the Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee). Hereafter cited as the Henry Papers.

<sup>26</sup>Mrs. Charles F. Norton (Librarian, Transylvania University) to W. M. Drane, February 15, 1917, in the Gustavus A. Henry Collection of Mrs. Patrick Henry Cross, Clarksville, Tennessee. Hereafter cited as the Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross. His appearing as representative of the senior class is the only documentation found for the statement that he was first in the class of 1825. The Washington banquet was probably while he was studying law.

the Kentucky Supreme Court.<sup>27</sup> Judge Robertson was an ardent supporter of Henry Clay, and his influence may have added to the close relationship between Clay and G. A. Henry.<sup>28</sup> Gustavus Henry returned to Hopkinsville to practice law and lived for a time with his brother John. He was admitted to the Kentucky Bar in 1827 by the Trigg Circuit Court.<sup>29</sup> He soon built up a good legal reputation and about 1830 entered partnership with Joseph B. Crockett, who had studied law under Charles S. Morehead. It was "...a brilliant association."<sup>30</sup>

Gustavus A. Henry was interested in politics (as were all the Henry men to a greater or lesser degree) and was elected in 1831 to represent Christian County in the Kentucky Legislature. He was reelected in 1833, and he apparently would have gone on to Congress had he remained

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<sup>27</sup>Statement by Mrs. Elmer D. Hamner, personal interview, April 27, 1972. She said that G. A. Henry's old law books which were donated to the Vanderbilt University Law Library had Lexington written in them. There seems to be some confusion as to G. A. Henry's legal mentor. Henry, p. 94, says that he studied under Chief Justice Boyle. W. P. Titus, Picturesque Clarksville (Clarksville, 1886), p. 37, and John F. House, "Hon. Gustavus A. Henry," Nashville American, November 10, 1895, in the Henry Papers, says he read law under Judge Robertson.

<sup>28</sup>George R. Poage, Henry Clay and the Whig Party (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), p. 168.

<sup>29</sup>Henry, p. 94; Perrin, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup>Perrin, pp. 98, 91.

in the state.<sup>31</sup>

The events leading to his move to Tennessee were well started by October 1832. He wrote to Marion McClure of Clarksville, "...and I believe Heaven made us for each other, and intended that our hearts should mingle."<sup>32</sup>

Marion McClure was the daughter of Hugh and Susanna Gibson McClure, born April 18, 1813. Her father was a Scotch-Irish immigrant who arrived in Clarksville in 1797 and quickly established himself as a merchant. At the time of his death in early 1828 he owned large tracts of land and was one of the wealthiest men in the area. He married Susanna Gibson on February 12, 1805, and they had four children: William G., who died at age 20; Elizabeth Jane, who married Dr. Walter H. Drane; James B., who died unmarried in 1837; and Marion.<sup>33</sup> She was gentle in manner, modest and the belle of Clarksville.<sup>34</sup> Marion McClure and Gustavus A.

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<sup>31</sup>Henry, p. 94.

<sup>32</sup>Gustavus A. Henry to Marion McClure, October 25, 1832, Henry Papers. Emphasis is his. The circumstances of their first meeting have not been recorded, but Patrick Henry had married a Clarksville girl and was living and practicing law in Clarksville, so he or his wife may have been instrumental in their meeting.

<sup>33</sup>Drane Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee, Box 3, Folder 2, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup>James Hamilton to Marion McClure, May 10, 1832, Henry Papers; Titus, p. 36.

Henry were married February 17, 1833,<sup>35</sup> and a few days later he wrote to her aunt, Mrs. Thomas W. Frazier, "I confess to you, as much as I loved her before our marriage, it is increased a thousand fold. If God spares me I will make her a happy woman."<sup>36</sup>

By the time of the marriage Gustavus Henry must have been considering the move to Clarksville since on February 26, 1833, Patrick wrote him a long letter outlining the arguments for and against the move, but urging it for Marion's happiness.<sup>37</sup> By March 16 the decision had been made, because in a letter to Marion he wrote of going to a party in Hopkinsville so cordial that it almost shook his resolve to move to Clarksville.<sup>38</sup> At least so far as his political career was concerned, the decision to move to Clarksville was fateful. Kentucky was becoming a Whig state under the leadership of his old friend, Henry Clay, and he had already begun to make a name for himself in the

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<sup>35</sup>Drane Family Papers, Box 3, Folder 2, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup>Patrick and G. A. Henry to Mrs. Thomas W. Frazier, February 23, 1833, Henry Papers. Marion McClure Henry was unusually close to her aunt and uncle, Sarah and Thomas W. Frazier.

<sup>37</sup>Patrick Henry to Gustavus A. Henry, February 26, 1833, Henry Papers.

<sup>38</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, March 16, 1833, Henry Papers.

State Legislature. Tennessee was firmly Democratic in 1833 and later, at the peak of Whig strength, the parties were evenly matched. The move thus prevented what might have been a great career in Congress, but Marion's happiness came first.

## Chapter 2

### FAMILY LIFE AND BUSINESS INTERESTS

Gustavus A. and Marion Henry had an unusually happy marriage despite frequent separations caused by his legal practice, visits to the plantations and politics. Their letters were tender and loving, and he always expressed great reluctance to be parted from his family for any reason. As the children arrived, his letters were filled with pride and concern for them. As the children grew he took them with him on visits South and seemed to have a very close relationship with them all despite his travels. He was a devoted family man.

The Henrys had seven children: Susan, Thomas Frazier, John Flournoy, Gustavus Adolphus, Marion, Benjamin and Patrick. Marion and Benjamin died in infancy.<sup>1</sup>

Susan was born in 1834 and was in some ways her father's favorite child. She was educated at the Columbia

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<sup>1</sup>Henry, p. 96. I have not been able to locate their graves. The other children (except Gustavus A., Jr.) are buried in the Henry plot at Greenwood Cemetery, including John who was originally buried in Memphis in early 1862. There are no markers for the infants. Miss Julia Henry does not think they are buried in the Henry burial ground outside Hopkinsville. The other possibility seems to be the old Trinity Episcopal Church Cemetery located somewhere on Franklin Street, which had fallen into disrepair before the time of the Civil War.

Female Institute and after she completed school frequently accompanied her father on trips South. She was very attractive and popular, in 1855 marrying George D. Martin, son of Judge Abraham Martin of Clarksville. He was a planter and they lived in Mississippi for some time prior to the war. She was an invalid for much of her life and by the end of the Civil War was living in Clarksville with her parents and eight surviving children. She died November 27, 1880.<sup>2</sup>

The Henrys' second child, Thomas Frazier, was born November 30, 1835, and was educated for the law though he became a farmer after his service in the Confederate Army and marriage in 1867 to Louisa M. Barker. They had two children. He died November 25, 1883.<sup>3</sup>

Their third child, John Flournoy, was born April 7, 1837, and was educated at Cumberland Law School in Lebanon, Tennessee, receiving first honors in the class of 1859. He practiced law in Memphis until the outbreak of the Civil War. He joined the Fourth Tennessee Infantry and died of wounds received at Shiloh.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Henry, pp. 96-97; Henry Papers for letters of Susan Henry while she was in school in Columbia and traveling; Invitation to the funeral of Susan Henry Martin, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>3</sup>Henry, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>Henry, p. 97.

Gustavus A. Henry, Jr., was born September 16, 1838, and received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. He stayed only one year, however, resigning in 1857 and going to manage his father's plantation in Arkansas. He, too, was in the Confederate Army and married in 1866 Ella Walker Winston of Tuscumbia, Alabama. He died December 3, 1883.<sup>5</sup>

Patrick was born August 31, 1846, and was a cadet at Virginia Military Institute during the Civil War. He married Ellen Barker in 1870. He was a planter in Arkansas and a lobbyist for the Mississippi Levy System.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to their rapidly growing family, the Henrys had frequent guests and relatives living with them. James McClure, Marion Henry's brother, lived with them for a year or so prior to his death in 1837. He seems to have been an alcoholic and gambler. When Elizabeth, Patrick's wife, died in 1838, the Henrys took his children for at least a time.<sup>7</sup> At some point, possibly on the death of his

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<sup>5</sup>Henry, pp. 97-98; G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, December 27, 1857, Henry Papers.

<sup>6</sup>Henry, pp. 98-99.

<sup>7</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, letters late 1836-early 1837, Henry Papers, which indicate that James McClure was sick enough that he did not want Marion left alone in the house with her brother; November 30, 1839, Henry Papers, which indicates that Patrick's children were living with them.

wife, they moved into Thomas Frazier's house, subsequently known as "the Eagle's Nest" and "Emerald Hill." Thomas Frazier had purchased the house and land in 1831 and, when he died in 1847, willed it to the Henrys. He apparently lived with them until his death.<sup>8</sup> The Henrys made additions to the house and planted the groves and gardens that made the Hill a showplace.<sup>9</sup>

Both Gustavus A. and Marion Henry were very active in Trinity Episcopal Church. Their family occupied for many years the fourth pew on the left from the front of the old church building, for which they paid an annual rent not to exceed \$15.<sup>10</sup> He had served as a member of the vestry in 1834 and was one of the members who signed a statement defending the church leaders when in 1836-1838 rumors were spreading about mishandling of the building fund. He was a member of the vestry in 1838-1839 and was one of the

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<sup>8</sup>Statement of Mrs. Elmer D. Hamner, personal interview, April 24, 1972. Montgomery County, Tennessee, Record and Will Book (County Court Clerk's Office, County Court House, Clarksville, Tennessee; microfilm copy in the Clarksville Public Library), K (1845-1847), pp. 503-505. The Henrys were to pay \$2,000 to his estate, and Mrs. Henry shared in the equal distribution of the remaining estate between his surviving nephews and neices.

<sup>9</sup>Statement of Mrs. Patrick Henry Cross, personal interview, April 17, 1972. The present front of the house was added by Miss Marion Henry Martin and Mrs. Susan Martin Cross, mother of Patrick Henry Cross.

<sup>10</sup>Arthur E. Whittle, The First Hundred Years: A History of Trinity Church, Clarksville, Tennessee (Nashville: Baird-Ward Publishing Co., 1932), pp. 23-24.

Trustees when the parish was incorporated in 1853.<sup>11</sup> He was the healer of differences and promoter of harmony within the church, beloved for "...the sunshine of his nature, the genial warmth of his presence, and the loving tenderness of his disposition."<sup>12</sup>

G. A. Henry was prominent in the civic affairs of Clarksville, representing the city at least twice at Southern conventions in Memphis.<sup>13</sup> He was a leader in the fund-raising drive for the relief of victims of the Irish famine, and he and Mrs. Henry were very active in raising money for the Mount Vernon Association, to purchase and restore Mount Vernon.<sup>14</sup>

Major Henry was an active supporter of quality education in Clarksville, serving as speaker of the day at the cornerstone laying ceremonies for Montgomery Masonic College. He was active in soliciting funds for the college, visiting Major Montgomery Bell in October 1850 in an effort to obtain a \$20,000 gift to endow a professorship. When

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<sup>11</sup>Whittle, pp. 21, 32-33; Emmie Tyler, A History of Trinity Parish (Clarksville: Daily News Print, 1917), pp. 11-12.

<sup>12</sup>Tyler, pp. 19-20.

<sup>13</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, November 8, 1845, p. 2; April 20, 1853, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, March 6, 1847, p. 2; Clarksville Chronicle, November 27, 1857, p. 2. There is a mass of material in the Henry Papers on the Mount Vernon fund-raising drive.

the college was incorporated by the Legislature in 1851, he was one of the Trustees.<sup>15</sup> The financial burden of the college proved too great for the Masons and in 1856 it was transferred to the Presbyterian Synod of Tennessee and became Stewart College.<sup>16</sup> He also served as one of the commissioners appointed by the state to sell stock for the Clarksville Female Academy.<sup>17</sup>

Major Henry's financial interests were far-ranging. He purchased a plantation at least in part at the urgings of his brother Patrick, who considered planting to guarantee a much surer return on the investment than loaning money. Patrick believed "...in 5 years you can double your property ... with good management."<sup>18</sup> By late 1836 Major Henry had bought the plantation in Hinds County, Mississippi, but he had some grave doubts about the decision:

I am not sure I did right, when I abandoned my life to Mississippi. Things do not go on well there.... My interest there is a heavy one,

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<sup>15</sup>Marion Henry to Susan Henry, February 21, 1849, Henry Papers; G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, October 6, 1850, Henry Papers; Acts of the State of Tennessee Passed at the First Session of the Twenty-Ninth General Assembly for the Years 1851-2 (Nashville: Bang & McKinnie, 1852), pp. 12-14. Hereafter cited as Acts.

<sup>16</sup>Ursula Smith Beach, Along the Warioto (Nashville: McQuiddy Press, 1964), p. 160.

<sup>17</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, September 13, 1854, p.2.

<sup>18</sup>Patrick Henry to Gustavus A. Henry, July 6, 1834, Henry Papers.

\$30,000 at the least - much the largest part of our estate.... Such an interest there demands of me more attention than I have yet given it. ... I feel I am neglecting a business which may by bad management break us & which by attention ought to make us independent.<sup>19</sup>

The normal problems faced by a cotton planter were multiplied when the owner was absent ten months of the year, as Major Henry was. He usually visited the plantation in November and December, during which time he hired an overseer for the coming year. Like many planters, he seems to have had a succession of men, especially since he had to have a man on whom he could rely to run the plantation in his absence. He paid \$1,000 per year, which apparently was a little more than the average salary for an overseer.<sup>20</sup> He was emphatic that he would not have an overseer who mistreated his slaves, refusing to rehire a man named Harris who was an excellent overseer until he agreed by contract to control his temper and never strike a slave when in a passion.<sup>21</sup>

Major Henry was humane with his slaves. When purchasing slave women, he also purchased their children and

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<sup>19</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, November 12, 1836, Henry Papers.

<sup>20</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, December 11, 1839, Henry Papers. The arrangement included living quarters for the overseer and his family and apparently a portion if not all of their food.

<sup>21</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, December 16, 1848; December 17, 1848, Henry Papers.

kept the families together.<sup>22</sup> His letters show generosity in dealing with them, for instance, his determination to buy Myra the calico cat she wanted to be able to show off on Sundays<sup>23</sup> and to leave Marshall in Mississippi with his wife.<sup>24</sup> By 1849 he owned 87 slaves but he himself admitted: "I sometimes think my feelings unfit me for a slave holder but...I ought not to be ashamed that I am capable of feeling sympathy with all colours of men."<sup>25</sup>

He never seemed to do as well in the planting business as he expected. The goal was for the plantation to produce sufficient food for the coming year as well as a good crop of cotton, but neither was always possible. Pork sometimes had to be bought to supplement that raised on the

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<sup>22</sup>Montgomery County, Tennessee, Deed Books, N - 7 (1832-1861), (Register of Deeds Office, County Court House, Clarksville, Tennessee; microfilm copy in the Clarksville Public Library), show this clearly. Any sales of slaves were made elsewhere since none are shown in the Deed Books. Apparently most of the slaves bought during this period were sent to the plantations since there are not references in the Henry Papers to more than a few servants in Clarksville.

<sup>23</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, November 25, 1857 [?], Henry Papers.

<sup>24</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, December 11, 1839, Henry Papers.

<sup>25</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, November 25, 1849; November 25, 1857 [?], Henry Papers. It is probable that, since he made no mention in his letters of selling slaves, by 1861 he owned more than 100 slaves, which would have put him into the planting aristocracy.

plantation, and the cotton crop rarely came up to expectations. Either the crop was small or prices were low.<sup>26</sup> There was also the problem of land wearing out and having to be replaced with new fertile land. In 1846 he bought a second plantation in Mississippi near Lake Henry in the Yazoo area and set a gang of slaves to clearing the land for cultivation. He wanted to sell his Hinds County land but doubted if he could find a purchaser.<sup>27</sup> In 1853 he was threatening to sell his land and all his slaves, but by 1854 he had purchased a plantation near Henrico Landing in Desha County, Arkansas, where in addition to the cotton crop he had a woodyard to sell fuel to steamboats and a cotton gin.<sup>28</sup>

The plantations necessitated a great deal of interesting travel. He wrote of meeting his old friend

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<sup>26</sup>See, for example, G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, January 12, 1846; December 12, 1848, Henry Papers.

<sup>27</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, November 28, 1846, Henry Papers.

<sup>28</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, March 21, 1853; April 17, 1854; John F. Henry to Marion Henry, November 23, 1856, Henry Papers; Clarksville Jeffersonian, November 16, 1860, p. 3. The March 21, 1853, letter gives one of the few estimates of his financial standing found in my research. He estimated that his land in Hinds County would sell for \$12.50 per acre, a total of \$14,000, and that his slaves sold by families would bring \$70,000-\$75,000. I have found no reference to the sale of the plantations and believe that Patrick Henry planted on the one in Arkansas originally purchased by his father.

Henry Clay on one of the trips home from the plantations and of a trick he played on one of Clay's admirers:

I went on shore to look at this grand city [Cairo], some 20 of us in company. A fellow came running up. Where is Mr. Clay, says he. I am the man said I. Without further ado he seized me by the hand, shook it violently & threw his old hat on the ground crying out, I will be d--d, if he is not the greatest man in the world. Our company were [sic] greatly amused.<sup>29</sup>

He encountered General William Walker in Memphis while on his way South in 1853 and described him as "...a little fellow.... Has a good large & stirring voice. But he is unsuccessful & that is a great crime amongst military men."<sup>30</sup> On the same trip to New Orleans with Sue he went to a party where the polka was the dance of the evening. When asked by a lady to polka he backed out, saying he could do the hugging but not the dancing. She replied that they went together and were not taken in separate doses.<sup>31</sup> On an earlier trip to New Orleans with Jack, he went to a wig shop and tried on hairpieces but decided against buying one

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<sup>29</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, January 3, 1845, Henry Papers.

<sup>30</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, February 5, 1853, Henry Papers.

<sup>31</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, March 7, 1853, Henry Papers.

because Jack said that he liked his Pa's bald head.<sup>32</sup>

His legal practice also required a considerable amount of travel since it was the custom for the lawyers to travel from town to town with the Circuit Court while it was in session. Major Henry continued to travel to Hopkinsville at least until 1836 when he was associated with the defense of a Mr. Hunt accused of killing a Negro and a Mr. Cherry also accused of murder. Both were acquitted. Major Henry took his responsibility as an attorney in a criminal case seriously: "You can hardly conceive the extent of the anxiety I take for a man who intrusts to me, in part, his life or his liberty. I would not for the world, fail to do him amply justice."<sup>33</sup> His office in Clarksville, like those of almost all the attorneys in town, was on Strawberry Alley,<sup>34</sup> and he was an active member of the Clarksville Bar.<sup>35</sup> The circumstances of few of his cases are known, but in one suit for damages brought by a young girl who had been seduced by a wealthy young bachelor, he made such an eloquent summation to the jury that the judge, sheriff,

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<sup>32</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, March 11, 1851, Henry Papers.

<sup>33</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, May 5, 1836; August 7, 1836, Henry Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Beach, p. 139. Strawberry Alley is now Legion Street.

<sup>35</sup>See, for example, Clarksville Jeffersonian, September 11, 1849, p. 2.

deputies and Major Henry all were required to prevent the courtroom spectators' lynching the defendant.<sup>36</sup>

His other business interests were varied. He was a member of the resolutions committee of a public meeting to recommend the establishment of a branch of the Bank of Tennessee in Clarksville.<sup>37</sup> In 1856 he was one of the founders of the Bank of America in Clarksville, with branch banks in Dresden and Rogersville, but it quickly collapsed in the panic of 1857.<sup>38</sup> He was also one of the founders of the Clarksville Marine Fire Insurance and Life and Trust Company, incorporated by the General Assembly in 1839-40, and in 1858 was one of the founders of the Clarksville Insurance Company.<sup>39</sup> Major Henry took a very active part in creating a company to build a turnpike from Graysville to Russellville. He was one of the commissioners authorized to accept subscriptions for building the road.<sup>40</sup> He was also involved in the building of a turnpike from Clarksville to Hopkinsville, served as chairman of a Board of Directors'

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<sup>36</sup>"Story of the Eagle Orator," undated clipping from the Jacksonville [Fla.] Times-Union in the Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>37</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, September 26, 1846, p.2.

<sup>38</sup>Beach, pp. 128-129.

<sup>39</sup>Beach, pp. 129-130.

<sup>40</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, June 25, 1850, p. 2; July 9, 1850, p. 2.

meeting and was a member of the committee to let contracts for the road.<sup>41</sup> He addressed a public meeting in April 1851 on the desirability of establishing a cotton factory in Clarksville and was a member of the committee appointed to open books for the sale of stock in the projected factory.<sup>42</sup> He was one of a committee authorized by the Legislature in 1853 to open subscriptions to build a first-class hotel in Clarksville, but nothing apparently came of this company.<sup>43</sup>

Besides his plantations and his law practice, Major Henry's primary financial interest was in the building of a railroad through Clarksville connecting Memphis and Louisville. He addressed public meetings and was unanimously chosen as president of a corresponding committee working on the question.<sup>44</sup> He chaired a "Railroad Convention" held in Clarksville a year later to consider the feasibility of the railroad.<sup>45</sup> When the company was established he was one of the Directors and owned \$5,000 worth of stock.<sup>46</sup> By late

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<sup>41</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, August 7, 1850, p. 2; May 7, 1851, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, April 30, 1851, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup>Weekly Clarksville Chronicle, January 9, 1857, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, April 26, 1851, p. 1; May 14, 1851, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, April 7, 1852, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, August 16, 1854, p. 2.

1854 he was president of the Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad, working to convince the city of Louisville to help fund a route running through Clarksville rather than a more direct route.<sup>47</sup> In April 1855 he was able to announce the consolidation of the Memphis and Ohio Railroad with the Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad and the rapid progress toward actual construction of the road.<sup>48</sup> The route selected by the engineers as the most economical to build ran through the Red River bottom owned by Bryce Stewart and Major Henry, and rumors immediately began that he had manipulated the survey so as to profit from the sale of his land for the right of way. He wrote an angry letter which was published in the Clarksville newspapers in which he stated that not only had he been absent when the Board of Directors had made the decision on the route but that he had specifically ordered the engineer to lay out routes avoiding his property and all in which he had an interest. The last thing he wanted was his farm divided into two small misshapened portions.<sup>49</sup> It was not clear how long he served as president of the railroad, but he took part in the grand banquet on September 18, 1860,

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<sup>47</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, January 3, 1855, p. 1; January 24, 1855, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, April 25, 1855, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, July 4, 1855, p. 1.

celebrating the completion of the railroad from Clarksville to Louisville via Russellville and Bowling Green.<sup>50</sup>

The Henrys were apparently hard hit by the panic of 1857. The Bank of America in which Major Henry had invested heavily was forced to close, and he wrote later in the year that the sum of money Gustavus, Jr., wanted to travel home from West Point was more than he could stand "...in my present distress."<sup>51</sup> In early 1860 he placed the land he owned in the Red River bottom in trust for Marion so that it could not be attached for his debts, so it would seem that they were still in financial difficulty.<sup>52</sup>

As busy as Major Henry was with his various financial enterprises, civic interests and political activities, he had occasions for introspection. On October 8, 1848, he wrote to Susan a candid evaluation of himself:

I am this day 44 years old and in looking back upon my past life, I can see many things to regret, and at the same time many things with which I am well satisfied.

For example, I am not as good or as wise as I ought to be, considering my opportunities to improve in goodness and in wisdom, but then again I am well satisfied with many other things I have done.... I

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<sup>50</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, September 21, 1860, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, December 27, 1857, Henry Papers.

<sup>52</sup>Montgomery County, Tennessee, Deed Book, 7 (1859-1861), p. 100.

have ever looked back with gratification upon my marriage with your mother. She has been to me at all times, a kind & consoling friend, a devoted wife, and a sincere & wise counsellor in all the trials I have ever had to encounter....

What I regret however is that I suffered many a precious moment to pass by without duly appreciating its importance, and without daily improving my time for study and improvement.<sup>53</sup>

A portrait of Gustavus A. Henry at this age or when he was slightly older now hangs in the Woodward Library of Austin Peay State University. The impression one receives is of strength and dignity, of a man who knew himself and thus could be involved with many business and political activities without losing himself or his family in the process.<sup>54</sup>

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G. A. Henry to Susan Henry, October 8, 1848, Henry Papers. It is interesting that he recognized this trait in himself, since it is one of the few valid criticisms of his personality. However, as Joshua W. Caldwell, Sketches of the Bench and Bar of Tennessee (Knoxville: Ogden Brothers & Co., 1898), p. 233, said of him, "It is not characteristic of men of brilliant minds and extraordinary gifts of speech, to be industrious workers."

<sup>54</sup>The Clarksville Chronicle, July 20, 1860, p. 3, describes a full-length portrait of G. A. Henry painted by W. S. Shackelford and shown in Nashville and Clarksville. Mrs. Cross and Mrs. Hamner know nothing of this portrait, except that it is not the one on display in the State Capitol or at the Woodward Library.

## Chapter 3

### THE WHIG AJAX, 1836-1850

The Whig Party had emerged by 1834 to oppose "King Andrew" and it was for that reason a very heterogeneous party nationally. The Southern Whigs, many of them followers of Henry Clay, tended to be conservative, wealthy slaveholders, the aristocracy of the South.<sup>1</sup> This was true in Tennessee, where practically every county on the Cumberland, Tennessee or Mississippi River with rich soil was steadily Whig, and there were many Whigs in East Tennessee because of the keen desire for roads and a canal around the Muscle Shoals.<sup>2</sup> Party divisions were so extremely deep in Tennessee that shifting party allegiance was almost impossible, so that partisan newspapers published prominent accounts of any change to their party as a tremendous

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Charles Cole, The Whig Party in the South (Washington: American Historical Association, 1913), pp. 30-31, 58, 104. He estimates that two-thirds to three-fourths of the slave property of the South was owned by Whigs.

<sup>2</sup>Ulrich B. Phillips, "The Southern Whigs, 1834-1854," in Essays in American History Dedicated to Frederick Jackson Turner (New York: Peter Smith, 1951), p. 214.

triumph. Sectionalism was also a problem in Tennessee politics as a whole as well as in both parties.<sup>3</sup> The political parties in Tennessee were almost equal in strength from 1836 through 1852, making every election very close.<sup>4</sup>

One of the major problems confronting the Tennessee Whigs was an overabundance of able leaders, none of whom could establish a dominant influence within the party. The two most prominent were John Bell and Ephriam H. Foster, who after 1847 were not inclined to work in close harmony, but there were many only slightly lesser figures: Neill S. Brown, William G. Brownlow, Merideth P. Gentry, Gustavus A. Henry, James C. Jones, to name but a few. Tennessee Whigs never had the unified leadership that characterized Kentucky Whiggery, and competition for positions was always extremely keen.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps partly because of his family's association with Henry Clay, Gustavus A. Henry had always been a

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<sup>3</sup>Mary R. Campbell, The Attitude of Tennesseans Toward the Union 1847-1861 (New York: Vantage Press, 1961), pp. 34-35.

<sup>4</sup>St. George L. Sioussat, "Tennessee and National Political Parties, 1850-1860," American Historical Association Annual Report, 1914, I, 246. He says that between 1840 and 1850 the vote was between 100,000 and 125,000, but in no gubernatorial election did either party win by more than 4,000 votes, and most elections were much closer.

<sup>5</sup>Sioussat, "National Political Parties," p. 249; Cole, pp. 82-83.

supporter of Clay and, as his early career in the Kentucky Legislature indicated, was very interested in politics. In August 1833 he realized the impending defeat of the Clay men and thought that had he run he might have kept the party united against the Jacksonians in November, however, he promised that he was finished with "politicks" forever.<sup>6</sup> He had definite ideas about the 1836 presidential election, opposing Van Buren, who carried Stewart, Dickson and Hickman Counties. The voters there, he thought,

...show how easily the people can be misled by one or two men where there is no person to counteract the effect of bad influence, while the vote in Montgomery & Robertson show the people only want light to do what is right.

Montgomery and Robertson had gone for Harrison. It is quite possible that this observation reflects one of the reasons he worked so tirelessly for the Whig Party. By 1839 he was actively engaged in local politics, making at an October grand rally of the Whigs a much praised speech in which he severely criticized the Van Buren administration.<sup>8</sup> After that, he was involved in every national and most state

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<sup>6</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, August 7, 1833; November 1833, Henry Papers.

<sup>7</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, November 12, 1836, Henry Papers.

<sup>8</sup>History of Tennessee...with an Historical and a Biographical Sketch of Montgomery, Robertson, Humphreys, Stewart, Dickson, Cheatham and Houston Counties.... (Nashville: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1886), p. 765.

elections up through the campaigns of 1860-1861, as well as being prominently mentioned as a candidate for Congress, governor, the state legislature and federal appointments.

The first campaign in which Gustavus A. Henry took a major part was that of 1840, the first in which the Tennessee Whigs clearly identified with the national party. It was marked by parades, log cabins, hard cider and raccoons as well as a well-planned Whig campaign. The state electors-at-large would speak in every county and the district electors would interchange with each other to provide variety in the continuous round of speakings.<sup>9</sup> Major Henry was one of the district electors and campaigned extensively. He spoke at Dover twice, Waverly twice, in Benton County several times, at Camden, Cheap Hill and Charlotte, to name a few places. He was optimistic about the good he was doing but "...out of this scrape...I promise never to be caught in another during life."<sup>10</sup> The great Southwestern Convention in Nashville was preceded by smaller pageants, Clarksville's on May 29 being one of the most noteworthy. The procession

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<sup>9</sup>Powell Moore, "James K. Polk and Tennessee Politics, 1839-1841," East Tennessee Historical Society Publications, No. 9 (1937), 48-49; Thomas B. Alexander, "The Presidential Campaign of 1840 in Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Society Quarterly, I (1942), 27.

<sup>10</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, March 4, 1840; June 7, 1840, Henry Papers.

was more than a mile long and featured floats, bands, military companies, cavalry and marching delegations.<sup>11</sup> Major Henry attended the convention in Nashville and described it:

The whole world was here, every quarter of the country poured out its hundreds and every glen & mountain seemed to send down its tributaries to the wide ocean of human souls which spread out before you as far as you could see. Never did I see the like. The oldest say LaFayette's celebration was nothing to it.<sup>12</sup>

Tennessee went for Harrison.

Major Henry earned a reputation as an orator during the 1840 campaign and was soon pressed to run for office himself, either for Congress or the state Senate. He was quite uncertain of what he should do:

I say to them I cannot make the sacrifice, an old man replied he went to the Creek War & was at the battle of New Orleans, and I refuse to serve the country in a place of perfect security & comparative honour; and this is the way they work me. What can I do? I shall be blamed for it all over the state, and if we should fail to carry the state by the loss of this district, though my withdrawal from the canvass I will be bitterly blamed for it all.<sup>13</sup>

Major Henry did run for Congress in 1843 against the Democratic incumbent, Cave Johnson. They spoke in joint appearances (as was the electioneering custom) at Indian Mound,

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<sup>11</sup>Alexander, pp. 36-37.

<sup>12</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, August [1840], Henry Papers.

<sup>13</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, February 11, 1843, Henry Papers.

Tobacco Port, Standing Rock, Paris, Point Mason, Wilson's Mill and Bryon Forge between May 11 and May 20, 1843.<sup>14</sup>

Major Henry was pleased with his speaking and recognized that, even if he were defeated (which he did not expect), he would "...gain character...."<sup>15</sup> In June and July they spoke in Robertson County, at Charlotte, Maysville, Simpson's, Waverly, Camden, Dover, Paris (on July 4) and Harrisburg.<sup>16</sup> As late as July 20, the Whigs still expected Major Henry to win, but the result was a 230-vote victory for Johnson, who had won by 800 votes in 1841.<sup>17</sup> Major Henry ran better than the Whig gubernatorial candidate, James C. Jones, in the 9th District, receiving 48.8 per cent of the vote to Jones' 48.2 per cent.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, May 6, 1843, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, May 16, 1843, Henry Papers.

<sup>16</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, June 18, 1843; June 20, 1843; July 4, 1843; July 11, 1843, Henry Papers.

<sup>17</sup>E. T. Williams to Saml. Williams, July 20, 1843; August 15, 1843, in "Some Letters from Dover, Tennessee, 1814 to 1855," ed. Chase C. Mooney, Tennessee Historical Quarterly (hereafter cited as Dover Letters), IX (1950), 76. The editor gives the election returns as shown in the Nashville Union, August 8 and 10, 1843, Johnson 4,431 to Henry's 4,199.

<sup>18</sup>Brian G. Walton, "A Triumph of Political Stability: The Elections of 1847 in Tennessee," East Tennessee Historical Society Publications, No. 40 (1968), 11n.

The 1843 race for Johnson's Congressional seat firmly established Gustavus A. Henry as a Whig leader. A Democrat contemplating the upcoming 1844 presidential race said, "Who can compete with Bell and Henry -- the Whigs has [sic] put forth their heaviest metal."<sup>19</sup> The Whigs knew that Henry Clay would be the nominee for President and began working promptly. A mass meeting in Rutherford County ratified the Baltimore convention before the Democratic national convention was held. John Bell was the featured speaker, defending Clay against charges of the "corrupt bargain" in 1825. After a barbeque dinner and singing, Gustavus A. Henry, a candidate for state elector-at-large, spoke and compared the anticipated contest between Clay and Van Buren to a battle between "old leviathan and the circus pony which the monkey rides."<sup>20</sup> On March 6, 1844, at the Whig state convention, Bell and Henry were chosen electors-at-large for the state, to bear the main responsibility for coordinating the state-wide campaign.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Adam Huntsman to James K. Polk, January 15, 1844, in "Letters of Adam Huntsman to James K. Polk," ed. Emma Inman Williams, Tennessee Historical Quarterly, VI (1947), 357.

<sup>20</sup>Clara Bracken Washburn, "Some Aspects of the 1844 Presidential Campaign in Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, IV (1945), 63.

<sup>21</sup>Robert B. Everett, "James K. Polk and the Election of 1844 in Tennessee," West Tennessee Historical Society Papers, XVI (1962), 13.

There was a great deal of mudslinging in the 1844 campaign, including attacks on Andrew Jackson as dictating Polk's nomination and the charge that Polk's grandfather had been a Tory during the Revolution, but there were several clear issues: the Bank, internal improvements, the tariff and the distribution of proceeds from the sale of public lands.<sup>22</sup> In a speech on July 1 in Clarksville Major Henry referred to the refusal of the Democratic House of Representatives to accept the election returns duly certified by the Whig governor of New Jersey, saying that if the Democrats won control of the country, its government would be destroyed.<sup>23</sup> Major Henry spoke extensively: in Fayette County, Somersville, Bolivar, Columbia, Lewisburg, Crossville, Pulaski, Boons Hill [sic], Fayetteville, Manchester, McMinnville, Sparta, White Plains, in Overton County, Carthage, Gainesboro, Nashville, Knoxville, Elizabethton, Abingdon (Virginia), Rutledge, Tazwell, Knoxville again and five other places before returning home.<sup>24</sup> He was confident

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<sup>22</sup>Washburn, p. 74. For some of the charges concerning General Jackson, see the letter of James K. Polk to Andrew Jackson Donelson, July 23, 1844, in "Letters of James K. Polk to Andrew J. Donelson, 1843-1848," ed. St. George L. Sioussat, Tennessee Historical Magazine, III (1917), 58-59.

<sup>23</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, July 13, 1844, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Letters of G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, summer and fall 1844, Henry Papers.

during the summer that he was doing well and that the Whigs would win: "...the Whigs every where seem to be in the highest hopes. I do not doubt we will carry the state."<sup>25</sup> It was during the 1844 campaign that he "...made his speech about the eagle all over the state...." and earned the title of the "Eagle Orator."<sup>26</sup>

By late September the Whigs realized that the election would be extremely close and that the Western District would decide the outcome, so Bell, Henry and other speakers poured into the area. Major Henry travelled even more extensively in the latter days of the campaign. E. T. Williams of Dover summed it up:

...Maj. Henry spoke here on Tuesday before the Election, and had an appointment every day up to the day of the election for on this day week Monday he spoke in Paris, some 30 m west, and rode home to vote on Tuesday in Mont'g County some 30 m east of this.<sup>27</sup>

The effort paid off. Tennessee went for Clay by 113 votes and, though Polk was elected President, he was humiliated

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<sup>25</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, July 24, 1844, Henry Papers.

<sup>26</sup>Nashville Union, quoted in Campbell, Attitude, p. 37. I was not able to find a text, synopsis or contemporary reference to the content of the speech.

<sup>27</sup>Everett, p. 20; E. T. Williams to Saml. Williams, November 11, 1844, Dover Letters, IX (1950), 81.

by being unable to carry his home state.<sup>28</sup>

Major Henry was considered one of the potential Whig gubernatorial candidates and the Whig meeting at Dover recommended to its delegates to the state convention that he be nominated.<sup>29</sup> Ephriam Foster received the nomination in 1845. By November 1846 John Bell was assessing the upcoming contest for the Whig nomination for governor and thought that Henry was one of the leading contenders. When the convention met in Nashville on March 25, Neill S. Brown and Gustavus A. Henry were the chief rivals. When it became apparent that Brown had secured a majority, Major Henry's friends withdrew his name and "...united cordially in the will of the majority."<sup>30</sup> The Democratic newspaper in Clarksville, the Jeffersonian, was almost gleeful at his failure to receive the nomination:

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<sup>28</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, November 30, 1844, p. 2. The official vote was Levin H. Coe 59,902 and Henry 60,003, according to the Jeffersonian.

<sup>29</sup>E. T. Williams to Saml. Williams, December 25, 1845 [1844], Dover Letters, IX (1950), 155.

<sup>30</sup>John Bell to William B. Campbell, November 22, 1846, in "Letters of John Bell to William B. Campbell, 1839-1857," ed. St. George L. Sioussat, Tennessee Historical Magazine, III (1917), 204-205 (hereafter cited as the Bell-Campbell Letters); Campbell, Attitude, p. 37.

...how will the Whigs of Montgomery feel at the defeat of Mr. Henry. They had worked themselves up to believe that their favorite was certain of the nomination, and their disappointment and mortification will no doubt be great....<sup>31</sup>

He was mentioned for election to the United States Senate in 1847 also, but he was violently opposed by Ephriam Foster and he gave up the nomination in favor of Bell, hoping for a Middle Tennessee Senate seat for himself in four years.<sup>32</sup>

The Clarksville district Whig convention was held in early May, 1848, and Major Henry was chosen as its delegate to the national convention. The local party was badly split between Clay and Taylor supporters and, on the request of Major Henry that he might go to the convention uninstructed, a resolution instructing him to work for the nomination of General Taylor was defeated. The Jeffersonian regarded this as giving Major Henry a free hand to open negotiations for the nomination of Clay.<sup>33</sup> By the next issue, however, the Jeffersonian had concluded that he was a "no-party," "no-principle" man, a supporter of Taylor.<sup>34</sup> His actions at

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<sup>31</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, March 27, 1847, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup>John Bell to William B. Campbell, December 23, 1847, Bell-Campbell Letters, p. 208.

<sup>33</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, May 10, 1848, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, May 17, 1848, p. 2. I did not find any preference indicated by Major Henry at this time, but his life-long devotion to Henry Clay should be remembered.

the convention were not reported, but he promptly was appointed district elector for Taylor.<sup>35</sup> He declined to serve, and even the Jeffersonian noted:

If he had accepted he would have furnished an example of political piety -- seldom witnessed -- He has labored for many years for the success of the whig party, and he has never received his reward. Whenever an opportunity has presented itself where he could have been exalted, others have been preferred, and he now stands a monument to the ingratitude of the whig party.<sup>36</sup>

In spite of his declining the appointment, he spoke for the Taylor ticket at Franklin, Mount Pleasant, Columbia, Pulaski, Lewisburg, Murfreesboro and in Clarksville at least twice. Major Henry felt that he was quite effective and that the state would go for Taylor.<sup>37</sup> He met F. P. Stanton in a debate in Clarksville on September 25, 1848, in which he defended General Taylor as the candidate of all the people, who would be President of all the people and

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<sup>35</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, June 20, 1848, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, July 18, 1848, p. 2. I found no reference to his reasons for declining the appointment though, as the Jeffersonian said, he must have resented to some degree the Whigs' failure to reward his efforts for the party. He would have been more than human if he did not.

<sup>37</sup> G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, letters during the summer of 1848, especially August 21 and August 26, 1848, Henry Papers. For a different opinion of his efforts, see the Clarksville Jeffersonian, August 1, 1848, p. 2, which concluded that when an eagle's wings were clipped, he could be mistaken for a goose.

not bound by a narrow, rigid party platform. Major Henry spoke at length on the veto power and General Taylor's pledge not to abuse it, then taunted Democrats that General Cass was a northern man with southern principles whom the South would not support, that he had changed his position on tariffs and the annexation of Texas, and that he favored the Wilmot Proviso. Mr. Stanton answered these charges with Taylor's refusal to commit himself on principles, his misunderstanding of the constitutionality of the veto and his uncertainty about the Wilmot Proviso. Major Henry's rebuttal included an anecdote:

There was an old negro down South, somewhere, who pretended to be very pious, but whose acts did not always agree with his professions. He was, however, very fond of praying, and he would invariably conclude his prayer with the petition that the Lord would make haste and send his angel to take old Isaac home to glory. Now old Isaac's master had a son who was rather sceptical on the subject of his being in such a hurry to get to glory, who to test the matter, one night slipped on a sheet and a dough face, and knocked at the door, just as old Isaac had concluded his prayer. "Who dat?" said Isaac. "The angel of the Lord, come to take old Isaac home to glory," replied a voice. "Bress your soul," said Isaac, "dat old nigger aint been here dis two weeks."

When you tried to find out General Cass' principles, Major Henry said, he hadn't been there in two weeks.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, September 26, 1848, p. 2, which refers to Henry as the Whig Ajax. This is the only synopsis of a stump debate involving G. A. Henry that I found and, at least in part because of its origin, it concludes that he was badly defeated.

Taylor's election set off conflict within the Tennessee Whigs over the matter of patronage, according to William G. Brownlow who thought that Henry would run for the Legislature in 1849 and be elected.<sup>39</sup> Apparently Major Henry was hoping to receive a foreign diplomatic assignment for both John Bell and Balie Petyon wrote in April 1849 to explain why he had not been appointed consul to Liverpool.<sup>40</sup> He did not run for the legislature in 1849 as Brownlow had predicted, but he made speeches at Memphis, Somerville, Perryville, Franklin, Spring Hill, Columbia and Fayetteville apparently as part of the gubernatorial canvass or on the sectional issue.<sup>41</sup>

The years 1849-1850 were crucial, for the slavery issue was tearing the country apart. Talk of secession was extremely common throughout the South, and Tennessee was especially divided. The Democrats in general supported Tennessee's full participation in the convention meeting to consider what the South should do if some settlement were not reached by Congress, while the Whig leaders and

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<sup>39</sup> William G. Brownlow, December 28, 1848, in the Yeatman-Polk Collection (1900-1970), Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>40</sup> John Bell to G. A. Henry, April 13, 1849; Balie Peyton to G. A. Henry, April 14, 1849, Henry Papers.

<sup>41</sup> G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, letters during spring 1849, Henry Papers.

newspapers were almost unanimously opposed to the Nashville Convention, denouncing it as treasonable and another Hartford Convention. Democrats denounced Whigs as submissionists. The Whig-controlled Resolutions Committee of the Tennessee Senate reported that it was not part of the legislature's duty to help organize a southern convention and refused officially to appoint delegates to represent the state.<sup>42</sup>

The leading citizens of Clarksville, including Major Henry, made their position clear regarding the compromise measures before Congress:

We the undersigned seriously [deprecate] the sectional struggle now going on between the North and the South, and [believe] that the difficulty in question can be adjusted in a manner satisfactory to the great mass of citizens in both sections, and [are] seriously impressed with the conviction that the compromise offered by the committee of thirteen, in the main, is just and equitable as a compromise....<sup>43</sup>

They called a meeting for May 25, at which a committee of five composed of Major Henry, Major W. Wallace, Mr. N. H. Allen, Mr. Robert Humphreys and Mr. Robert Ferguson drafted

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<sup>42</sup> Cole, pp. 168-169; St. George L. Sioussat, "Tennessee, the Compromise of 1850, and the Nashville Convention," Tennessee Historical Magazine, IV (1918), 220; Sioussat, "National Political Parties," pp. 250-251; Dallas T. Herndon, "The Nashville Convention of 1850," Alabama Historical Society Transactions, V (1904), Reprint No. 35 (Montgomery, 1905), p. 203.

<sup>43</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, May 21, 1850, p. 2.

a preamble and resolutions which the meeting adopted. The resolutions condemned ultra-partisans on both sides, hailed the compromise measures as equally honorable to both sections, and requested Tennesseans in Congress to work and vote for the compromise measures. The conclusion was, "Resolved, that our federal union must and shall be preserved."<sup>44</sup>

The Nashville Convention was in session June 3 through June 12, 1850. The unofficial Tennessee delegation was the largest there, but it contained few if any Whigs. The resolutions merely restated what most Southerners already accepted: equality of the states, state sovereignty, state regulation of slavery within its borders, and the right to equal protection of state property in the federal territories. The convention adjourned until after the end of the Congressional session. Both Whig and a few Democratic newspapers denounced the convention as a failure.<sup>45</sup> The compromise measures were adopted and most Tennesseans hoped they would settle the slavery issue. Mrs. Henry wrote:

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<sup>44</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, My 28, 1850, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup>Herndon, p. 219; Sioussat, "The Compromise of 1850," p. 245.

Webster is a great man & so long as he and Clay live I think our Union is safe -- but, I declare to you I shall fear when they are gone. .... May God in mercy avert the great danger and fill the minds of our rulers with wisdom & our people with submission.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Marion Henry to G. A. Henry, January 4, 1851, Henry Papers.

## Chapter 4

### THE EAGLE ORATOR, 1851-1859

The excitement of the Nashville Convention had hardly passed before it was again time to begin thinking of the upcoming 1851 state elections. In October and November, 1850, the Paris Republic and the Sparta Times ran up Gustavus A. Henry's name for governor,<sup>1</sup> but he declined the honor of running and chose instead to stand for election to the Tennessee House of Representatives. The Jeffersonian concluded that his decision was based on fear he would not obtain the gubernatorial nomination and his inability to defeat the Democratic nominee as well as on the hope that he could make the legislative seat a stepping stone to the United States Senate as had John Bell. Major Henry's note to the Chronicle stated that his business engagements prevented his running for governor.<sup>2</sup>

Major Henry's acceptance of an informal call published in the Chronicle constituted his nomination for the

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<sup>1</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, October 23, 1850, p. 2; November 20, 1850, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, January 29, 1851, p. 2; February 12, 1851, p. 2.

legislature since there was not a Whig county convention in 1851. W. B. Collins ran against Major Henry as the "people's candidate." He was also a Whig running without formal endorsement.<sup>3</sup> Despite the best efforts of the Jeffersonian, there was no Democratic opponent to Major Henry. Despite his lack of real opposition, Major Henry spoke at Blooming Grove, Port Royal, Fredonia, Cheap Hill, New York, Jordan's Spring, Britton's Tan Yard, Palmyra, Nolin's Mill on Yellow Creek, Smith's Shop, Cabin Row and New Providence.<sup>4</sup> The Jeffersonian had to be content with maintaining that he had said the Wilmot Proviso had been constitutional and with asking Democrats not to vote for representative in the upcoming election, though it did concede that Major Henry had said that "...the repeal of the fugitive slave law would be the death-knell of the Union."<sup>5</sup> The official results of the election were Henry 1,326 and Collins 516, an 810-vote majority.<sup>6</sup> The Whigs had won a majority in both houses of the Tennessee Legislature.

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<sup>3</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, March 22, 1851, p. 1; March 26, 1851, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, June 25, 1851, p. 1; July 23, 1851, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, July 19, 1851, p. 1; July 30, 1851, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, August 8, 1851, p. 2.

Major Henry was sworn in and seated as the Representative of Montgomery County in the Tennessee House of Representatives on October 6, 1851.<sup>7</sup> He was appointed to the Judiciary, Federal Relations and Internal Improvements Committees.<sup>8</sup> One of the first items of business confronting the new legislature was the election of a United States Senator, and many Whig leaders had begun campaigning for the seat before the legislature met: Thomas A. R. Nelson, John Netherland and James A. Whiteside of East Tennessee; John Bell, Ephriam H. Foster and Gustavus A. Henry of Middle Tennessee; and James C. Jones, Robertson Topp and Milton Brown of West Tennessee.<sup>9</sup> The Clarksville Jeffersonian came out for Major Henry for the Senate, saying:

In the late canvass we used all our influence to prevent the democrats from voting at all between Maj. Henry and Mr. Collins, but the result showed that only about three or four hundred refused to vote. The Major received a majority of 811 votes. This is the great secret of our present advocacy of Major Henry's election to the Senate. We don't want any whig in our neighborhood who can carry four or five hundred democratic votes.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Tennessee, Twenty-Ninth General Assembly Held at Nashville 1851-2 (Nashville: W. F. Bang & Co., 1852), p. 4. Hereafter cited as House Journal.

<sup>8</sup> House Journal, pp. 55, 61.

<sup>9</sup> Campbell, Attitude, pp. 73-74.

<sup>10</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, September 13, 1851, p. 1. Emphasis mine.

The contest was hard and was not decided until mid-November. Major Henry and John Netherland withdrew after "...a hideous ballot...." and James C. Jones beat Thomas A. R. Nelson by one vote for the Whig nomination. Major Henry's reaction was a philosophical, "I do not care a dime & feel that I am relieved of a heavy burthen -- Let it go as go it must."<sup>11</sup> Jones was elected Senator but not without a struggle in the Whig caucus.<sup>12</sup>

Major Henry was quite active on behalf of his constituents, offering bills for the relief of those with claims against the state and presenting petitions and memorials from Montgomery Countians to the Legislature.<sup>13</sup> He worked hard on measures that would benefit Clarksville, introducing and pushing through House Bill 39, to incorporate Montgomery Masonic College.<sup>14</sup> He introduced and secured

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<sup>11</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, November 14, 1851, Henry Papers. He may not have been quite as philosophical as he sounded since in the same letter he said of Jones, "Confound him I did hope to make him bite the dust." Major Henry was always optimistic while campaigning and philosophical about defeat in his letters, but it is impossible not to wonder how much this was his genuine feeling and how much was an effort to reassure his family.

<sup>12</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, November 21, 1851, Henry Papers.

<sup>13</sup>House Journal, pp. 75, 437, 586, 77, 134, 296, 518, 535-536.

<sup>14</sup>House Journal, pp. 89, 103; Acts, pp. 12-14. He was, of course, one of the Trustees of the college.

passage of a bill to charter the Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad.<sup>15</sup> He backed internal improvements for the entire state, supporting the General Internal Improvement Act which permitted the state to help finance railroad building,<sup>16</sup> as well as introducing measures to charter the Clarksville and Rooks Ferry Road, to reenact the Cumberland Navigation Company, to amend the charter of the Nashville Bridge Company, to incorporate the Edgefield and Kentucky Railroad and the Bowling Green and Tennessee Railroad and to amend the charter of the Duck River Slack Water Navigation Company.<sup>17</sup> He was active in the campaign against tippling houses, presenting several petitions from Montgomery County on the subject, and working for passage of a bill breaking them up. Major Henry's comments on the initial failure of the bill revealed his feeling about his fellow legislators: "[I]...find every day that there is no reliance to be put in legislators on any subject & most especially on tippling houses."<sup>18</sup> A bill was eventually passed in a watered-down

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<sup>15</sup>House Journal, pp. 285-286, 393, 416.

<sup>16</sup>"Gustavus A. Henry and Other Distinguished Tennesseans," newspaper clipping by Col. Baxter Smith, unidentifiable by newspaper or date (hereafter cited as Baxter Smith clipping), Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>17</sup>House Journal, pp. 408, 426, 585, 810.

<sup>18</sup>G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, January 5, 1852, Henry Papers.

version that regulated only the assistants that could be legally employed in the houses.<sup>19</sup>

Other legislation with which he was associated included a bill making seduction a felony punishable by not less than two years in the penitentiary.<sup>20</sup> He introduced bills to amend registry laws, the election of revenue collectors and court procedures, including a measure that would prevent court costs being charged to the defendant when cases were dismissed or if the plaintiff lost.<sup>21</sup> Major Henry offered measures to reduce taxes on merchant's licenses and to allow guardians to hire Negroes belonging to their wards outside the state.<sup>22</sup> He also took part in a major debate with Jo. C. Guild of Sumner County on federal relations.<sup>23</sup>

The most important thing Gustavus A. Henry did while in the Tennessee Legislature was to serve as chairman of the committee on reapportionment. The bill to reapportion the

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<sup>19</sup>Acts, p. 61.

<sup>20</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, January 10, 1852, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup>House Journal, pp. 130, 224, 371, 534-535.

<sup>22</sup>House Journal, pp. 336, 433.

<sup>23</sup>Baxter Smith clipping, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross. I found no newspaper reference to this debate.

General Assembly was reported on December 12, 1851, drawn to insure a Whig majority in both Houses. It passed.<sup>24</sup> The bill to reapportion the Congressional districts was introduced January 21, 1852, and the Democratic reaction to it was even more hostile:

Perhaps there never was a district bill offered for the consideration of any legislative body so utterly violative of the rights of the minority, and the suffrage rights of the whole people as this. The districts are formed with an eye single to the securing of the largest possible number of Congressmen, without any reference to either contiguity, continuity, common sense or political honesty.<sup>25</sup>

One of the objects of the bill seems to have been to remove Andrew Johnson from Congress by placing Greene County in an overwhelmingly Whig district. The bill was fought bitterly by the Democrats, but it passed.<sup>26</sup> The Clarksville Jeffersonian placed the responsibility for the bill squarely on Major Henry, saying that the Democrats who had voted for him in 1851 had elected the one Whig with the talent to kill the Democratic Party in Tennessee.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>House Journal, pp. 370-371; Clarksville Jeffersonian, December 17, 1851, p. 1. The Jeffersonian believed this was done so that Major Henry could insure his election to the United States Senate by the next legislature.

<sup>25</sup>House Journal, pp. 562-563; Clarksville Jeffersonian, January 28, 1852, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup>Acts, pp. 293-294.

<sup>27</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, February 23, 1852, p. 2.

The Legislature had not adjourned before the 1852 presidential campaign had begun. The Whig state convention met on February 9, appointed Gustavus A. Henry and Thomas A. R. Nelson state electors-at-large and recommended Millard Fillmore and James C. Jones for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency. Henry wrote to Nelson that he heartily endorsed Fillmore and did not have much preference as to the Vice-Presidential candidate except that "...if our ticket succeeds Jones' luck will kill Fillmore before his term expires."<sup>28</sup> F. K. Zollicoffer wrote about tremendous problems within the national party, including the Northern Whig preference for General Winfield Scott and the Southern for Fillmore, which Webster's supporters thought would give him the nomination as the compromise candidate. He thought that the South should stand firm and united for Fillmore but advised Major Henry that General Scott had spoken with Clay and Webster at the time of his support for the Compromise of 1850, including the fugitive slave law. General Scott's opinions simply had not been publicized. General Scott did receive the nomination.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Campbell, Attitude, pp. 75-76.

<sup>29</sup> F. K. Zollicoffer to G. A. Henry, May 12, 1852, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross. In this collection there is a Newspaper clipping, "Portrait of Gustavus A. Henry to be Presented State," unidentifiable by newspaper or date, which says that Major Henry was a delegate to the national convention nominating General Scott and that he made a brilliant speech there. I found no reason to believe that he

Scott's nomination split the Tennessee Whigs badly: Merideth P. Gentry, Christopher H. Williams and William G. Brownlow refused to support him, and Parson Brownlow's influence was already very strong in East Tennessee. The other Whig leaders worked all the harder, organizing Scott clubs, holding ratification meetings and trying to make Scott's views known to the voters.<sup>30</sup> Major Henry spoke at Murfreesboro, Lebanon, Waynesboro, Mt. Pleasant, Columbia, Nashville, Dover, Paris, Huntington, Camden, Jackson, Memphis, Brownsville, Harrison, Cleveland, Benton, Athens, Madisonville, Maryville, Knoxville, Charleston and Chattanooga.<sup>31</sup> He emphasized General Scott's views on the Compromise being known before the nomination and talked about Pierce's being unknown.<sup>32</sup>

As always, he received good publicity<sup>33</sup> and even

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went to Baltimore in 1852 but think that this was confused with the 1860 Constitutional Union convention.

<sup>30</sup> Cole, p. 271.

<sup>31</sup> G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, letters during summer and fall, 1852, Henry Papers.

<sup>32</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, July 7, 1852, p. 2; July 17, 1852, p. 2. The latter is a reprinted article from the Nashville Union, which accused Henry of inordinate ambition, of being a wastrel and a coward.

<sup>33</sup> Marion Henry to G. A. Henry, August 4, 1852, Henry Papers. She realized, however, that his making a good impression "...has become an old song, & has never benefited you much."

the Jeffersonian concluded, "It is very clear that he thinks Scott the greatest man the world has seen since Noah."<sup>34</sup>

His efforts received some national attention since there was a Boston Post article about him:

They have a Scott man in Tennessee, according to the Atlas, Col. Henry, who is the most terrific orator, overwhelming, all subduing debater, ever "scared up" in those parts. He frightened a thunder shower so that it begged his permission to cross over, and an earthquake inquired if Col. Henry was in town before he dared to shake.<sup>35</sup>

Scott was overwhelmed in the election of 1852, the national Whig party was shattered hopelessly, but the Tennessee Whigs held their record intact -- Scott carried the state.

While the campaign was going on, Major Henry received an appointment as Land Commissioner in California. The Jeffersonian believed that the appointment was made by President Fillmore at the request of John Bell, who did not want to have to compete with Henry for the Senate seat to be filled in 1853.<sup>36</sup> John Bell had earlier explained to W. B. Campbell that Major Henry had probably received the appointment through the influence of Senator Crittenden, whose son

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<sup>34</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, August 7, 1852, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, September 8, 1852, p.2.

<sup>36</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, September 11, 1852, p. 2.

had received the Liverpool consulship that Henry had wanted in 1849.<sup>37</sup> Regardless of the reasons it was tendered, Major Henry refused the appointment.

By early 1853 Maor Henry was being frequently mentioned as a Whig candidate for governor, and the Jeffersonian was eager to have him nominated against Isham G. Harris because the newspaper was convinced that Harris would beat him easily.<sup>38</sup> Also early in the year Major Henry made it known that he would not accept nomination for governor or for Congress,<sup>39</sup> but in March he accidentally met General Haskell of West Tennessee who was also a potential Whig candidate and was convinced that he should run. General Haskell wrote a letter to the True Whig in which he declined to run himself and urged the support of the Whigs for  
<sup>40</sup>  
 Gustavus A. Henry. Apparently there was little

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<sup>37</sup> John Bell to William B. Campbell, September 3, 1852, Bell-Campbell Letters. Apparently if Major Henry refused the appointment, it would go to Campbell. Crittenden and Bell were close personal friends, and it is possible that Crittenden asked for Henry's appointment to remove him from Bell's path to reelection.

<sup>38</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, January 15, 1853, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, January 19, 1853, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, March 16, 1853, p. 2. It ridiculed the idea that the meeting was accidental and pictured the two men sitting in the main cabin of the steamboat over a glass of toddy, flipping a dime to decide who would run for governor.

competition for the nomination in 1853; Governor Campbell refused to run a second time, and none of the other leaders were interested in running with the party in such sad condition after the 1852 split. Under these circumstances Major Henry, who had done so much unrewarded work for the Whig party in Tennessee, was nominated for governor.<sup>41</sup> The platform endorsed Governor Campbell's administration and stressed devotion to the Union.<sup>42</sup>

The Democratic Party was also split to a certain extent since Andrew Johnson was not personally popular with the politicians of his own party and an attempt to prevent his nomination by the state convention was unsuccessful.<sup>43</sup> Johnson had the reputation of being a devastating stump debater, "...a strong minded man who cuts when he does cut not with a razor but with a case knife."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Sioussat, "National Political Parties," pp. 254-255; Stanley J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew and Enoch L. Mitchell, Tennessee: A Short History (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), p. 232; Clarksville Jeffersonian, April 27, 1853, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup>Campbell, Attitude, p. 79.

<sup>43</sup>W. M. Caskey, "First Administration of Governor Andrew Johnson," East Tennessee Historical Society Publications, No. 1 (1929), 45-48. This article must be used with care since the chronology of Major Henry's career is confused and there are at least two errors of fact -- Major Henry was not descended from Patrick Henry and he was not a native of Clarksville.

<sup>44</sup>Alexander, p. 33.

The candidates agreed on a joint speaking tour between June 1 and July 9 which included Sparta, McMinnville, Winchester, Shelbyville, Lewisburg, Columbia, Pulaski, Lawrenceburg, Waynesboro, Savannah, Lexington, Jackson, Bolivar, Somerville, Memphis, Brownsville, Trenton, Huntingdon, Paris, Waverly, Charlotte, Nashville, Springfield, Gallatin, Lebanon, Carthage, Gainesboro and Livingston.<sup>45</sup> There were personal attacks as well as issues in the campaign. Johnson, of course, emphasized his working class background and pictured Major Henry as an aristocrat who had voted against legislation to benefit the working class when he was a member of the Kentucky Legislature.<sup>46</sup> Major Henry criticized Johnson for having been one of the "Immortal Thirteen" in the Tennessee Legislature who kept Tennessee from being represented in the United States Senate for two years and for having voted in Congress against relief for the sufferers in the Irish famine.<sup>47</sup> During their

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<sup>45</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, May 25, 1853, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, May 18, 1853, p. 2; Folmsbee, Corlew and Mitchell, pp. 232-233.

<sup>47</sup>Folmsbee, Corlew and Mitchell, pp. 232-233; Clarksville Chronicle, June 26, 1869, p. 1 (reminiscences about the 1853 campaign published on ex-President Johnson's visit to Memphis). Apparently Johnson reversed this by being able to prove that he had donated \$500 out of his own pocket while Major Henry who was much wealthier had done much less.

debate in Knoxville, Johnson closed his rejoinder with "They call my competitor the 'Eagle Orator.' The eagle is a bird of prey. Where is his prey? I see no blood on his beak, I do not feel his talons in my flesh." Major Henry replied, "No, the eagle is a royal bird, and never preys on carrion."<sup>48</sup>

The major issues were Johnson's "white basis" bill which he had introduced in the 1842 Legislature to have Congressional apportionment determined by white population only, which Major Henry claimed was unconstitutional and tinged with abolitionism. Johnson called for a tax-supported public school system in Tennessee that Major Henry virtually ignored. Johnson had advocated amendments to the United States Constitution to allow the direct popular election of the President, Vice-President and Senators and to appoint Supreme Court Justices for terms of eight or twelve years instead of during good behavior.<sup>49</sup> Major Henry attacked this,

...taking the position that the Constitution as it is and its compromises have carried us this far safely & that I see no cause for change & that the safety of the South depends upon the

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<sup>48</sup>Oliver P. Temple, Notable Men of Tennessee (New York: Cosmopolitan Press, 1912), p. 380.

<sup>49</sup>Thomas Perkins Abernethy, From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932), pp. 316-317; Campbell, Attitude, p. 80.

preservation of the Constitution as it is,  
that when time and experience prove it should  
be amended I am ready to amend it and not  
before.<sup>50</sup>

Johnson in turn claimed that Major Henry was so opposed to slavery that he had voted in the Kentucky Legislature to prohibit the introduction of slaves into the state, and he pointed out Henry's inconsistency in opposing his amendments to the Constitution while supporting the end of the Presidential veto power, which could be done only by amendment. Democrats criticized Henry's failure to protect adequately Clarksville's interests while a member of the Tennessee Legislature since railroads by-passed the town.<sup>51</sup> The major weapon used against Major Henry was the 1852 gerrymander, and Democrats used it vigorously. They charged that population and geographic unity of the districts had been ignored completely as the Whigs led by Major Henry reshuffled the state to gain maximum advantage for their party.<sup>52</sup> Apparently this was one of the major factors in determining the outcome of the race.

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<sup>50</sup> G. A. Henry to Shackleford, June 3, 1853, Henry Papers.

<sup>51</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, August 3, 1853, p. 3; July 20, 1853, p. 2; July 13, 1853, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, June 1, 1853, p. 2.

Another factor was the difference in the candidates' style. Major Henry was much the better orator, but in debate, give and take, Johnson was superior. One observer concluded:

...both of them are good speakers. Henry flighty -- dealing in beautiful figures metaphors etc -- Johnson the Democratic candidate, a man of fine sense, an able man....<sup>53</sup>

Major Henry had been optimistic throughout the campaign that he would carry the state, and there was a record turnout with the outcome in doubt for several days. The official vote was Henry 50,678 votes and Johnson 52,894, a majority of 2,216 votes. Major Henry had carried both East and West Tennessee but Johnson's vote in heavily-Democratic Middle Tennessee gave him the election. The Whigs elected five of ten Congressmen and a majority in the Legislature.<sup>54</sup>

Their majority in the Legislature meant that the Whigs would elect a United States Senator when the session began. Bell wanted to be reelected and apparently worked through F. K. Zollicoffer to discourage Major Henry's

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<sup>53</sup> Robert H. Cartmell Papers, Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee, I (September 30, 1849-September 30, 1858), June 15, 1853. This is the same conclusion reached by Temple, Notable Men, p. 458.

<sup>54</sup> Clarksville Jeffersonian, August 17, 1853, p. 2 (the Johnson vote is misprinted 62,894); Folmsbee, Corlew and Mitchell, p. 233. These figures differ slightly from those in Caskey, pp. 50-51.

seeking the seat.<sup>55</sup> He said that Henry maintained the Whigs owed him the Senate seat because of his humiliating defeat for governor.<sup>56</sup> The Democrats contemplated with glee the impending struggle between Bell, Henry, Nelson and Gentry, and expected to decide the outcome in the election.<sup>57</sup> Most of the Whig newspapers came out for Major Henry, and Brownlow assured him that the East Tennessee members of the Legislature would go for him, but he was fearful of the outcome since Bell had campaigned actively for reelection during the summer.<sup>58</sup> As the Legislature met, Bell was "...proclaiming it again that he is the daddy of the Whig party, that he has spent his fortune to sustain it & that it would be hard to turn him out...."<sup>59</sup> When the election was held, the Western District members swung to Bell and

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<sup>55</sup>John Bell to W. B. Campbell, August 14, 1853, Bell-Campbell Letters.

<sup>56</sup>Joseph Howard Parks, John Bell of Tennessee (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), p. 278.

<sup>57</sup>S. R. Anderson to A. O. P. Nicholson, August 16, 1853, in "Some Tennessee Letters, 1849 to 1864," ed. Joseph Howard Parks, Tennessee Historical Quarterly, IV (1945), 245-246.

<sup>58</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, August 31, 1853, p. 2; G. A. Henry to Mark R. Cockrill, September 7, 1853, Cockrill Collection (1782-1860), Small Collections, Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>59</sup>Jo. C. Stark to G. A. Henry, September 24, 1853, Henry Papers.

reelected him. Henry went home "...mortified; disappointed, and mad at the whole world."<sup>60</sup> His old Democratic rival Cave Johnson rejoiced that, as a compliment, he had received the Democratic votes for Senator over Henry who "...for the last 20 years was an avowed candidate...."<sup>61</sup>

The effect of the 1852 presidential campaign, the 1853 gubernatorial canvass and the splintering produced by the Senatorial contest was the demise of the Whig Party in Tennessee. To a great degree it was not replaced even though the American or Know-Nothing Party was quite strong during the mid-1850's. The Know-Nothing Party, as the Constitutional Union Party was later, was based largely on the old Whig organization and leadership.<sup>62</sup> Major Henry supported the American Party but did not become active in its leadership. He addressed a meeting during the 1855 gubernatorial campaign in which Andrew Johnson soundly defeated Merideth P. Gentry, but apparently he took no other

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<sup>60</sup>W. G. Brownlow to Oliver P. Temple, October 26, 1853, quoted in Parks, pp. 280-281.

<sup>61</sup>Cave Johnson to James Buchanan, November 20, 1853, Cave Johnson Correspondence 1824-1858, Pennsylvania Historical Society (microfilm copy in the Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee). There is no reference in the Henry Papers to Major Henry's defeats in 1853.

<sup>62</sup>For the Know-Nothings in Tennessee, see Sister Mary de Lourdes Gohmann, Political Nativism in Tennessee to 1860 (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1938).

part in the canvass.<sup>63</sup> He supported Fillmore and Donelson, the Know-Nothing candidates in 1856, and spoke at a mass meeting for them in Nashville during the campaign.<sup>64</sup> Major Henry was nominated for Congress by the district convention of the American Party in April 1857, but he declined to run because of business engagements and the conviction that able younger men should be advanced.<sup>65</sup> He served as a delegate to the state convention of the American Party in 1859 and addressed a large enthusiastic audience in the last days of the gubernatorial canvass but did not take further part in the campaign.<sup>66</sup>

After his defeats in 1853, Major Henry seemed to abandon politics almost completely until the sectional controversy made the reemergence of a national conservative party necessary.

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<sup>63</sup>Clarksville Weekly Chronicle, July 6, 1855, p. 3; Cole, p. 318.

<sup>64</sup>Letters of John F. Henry to parents, fall 1856, especially October 26, 1856, Henry Papers.

<sup>65</sup>Weekly Clarksville Chronicle, April 17, 1857, p. 2; April 24, 1857, p. 2.

<sup>66</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, February 11, 1859, p. 2; August 5, 1859, p. 2.

## Chapter 5

### THE CRISIS, 1860-1861

As the 1860 presidential conventions approached, many men in political life were extremely worried at the complexion of the national parties. The Whig and the American Parties were defunct. The Republican Party, while it had absorbed many of the northern Whigs, was completely unacceptable to the southern Whigs because of its anti-slavery identification. The Democratic Party was badly divided, with the state rights men obviously preparing to force endorsement of slavery on the party or to bolt it. Sam Houston, John Bell, John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, Andrew Jackson Donelson and many others were alarmed at the sectional basis of the upcoming 1860 election and, out of the conservative elements of both the Democratic and the old Whig Parties, emerged the short-lived Constitutional Union Party.

Despite the fact that Tennessee had been relatively free of the extremism of the deeper South, the old Whigs (called the Opposition after the break-up of the Know-Nothing Party) led the movement both for a national conservative convention to meet in Baltimore and the "Bell for

president" sentiment.<sup>1</sup>

Gustavus A. Henry was chosen February 6, 1860, by a convention of the Montgomery County Opposition to represent its 12th District in a state convention, and he spoke at least once prior to the convention, in Stewart County, urging Tennesseans to oppose sectionalism by backing a Union party.<sup>2</sup> At the state convention which met February 22 in Nashville, he made a long emotional speech on the Union and the dangers attendant upon its disruption, and he was named one of the Tennessee delegates-at-large to the national Union convention in Baltimore. The state convention also officially named John Bell as its choice for the presidential nomination.<sup>3</sup>

By the time the Union convention was ready to assemble in Baltimore, the Democratic debacle at Charleston had greatly increased the need for a truly national

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<sup>1</sup>Parks, pp. 342-353; James Welch Patton, Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, 1860-1869 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, February 10, 1860, p. 2; Nashville Patriot, February 16, 1860, reported in Marguerite Bartlett Hamer, "The Presidential Campaign of 1860 in Tennessee," East Tennessee Historical Society Publications, No. 3 (1931), 8.

<sup>3</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, March 2, 1860, p. 1; Hamer, pp. 8-9. The Tennessee delegation was a large and distinguished one, including W. G. Brownlow, Balie Peyton, N. S. Brown, A. J. Donelson, O. P. Temple, A. S. Colyar, L. J. Polk, Thomas A. R. Nelson, Horace Maynard and Robert Hatton as well as G. A. Henry. For a complete listing see Republican Banner and Nashville Whig, May 15, 1860, p. 2.

candidate and improved considerably his chance for election. Major Henry met some of Tennessee's Democratic delegates returning home as he journeyed to Baltimore and described them as looking "...just like the broken columns of Napoleon's army on their return from the conflict before the walls of Moscow."<sup>4</sup> Had the Democratic party been able to unite upon a candidate and platform it is almost certain that the movement toward the Constitutional Union Party would have been considerably weaker and that the Democrats would have won the 1860 election.

The first concern of the Union convention was the establishment of a permanent organization. Washington Hunt of New York was named President, with a Vice-President from each state. G. A. Henry was the Vice-President to represent Tennessee.<sup>5</sup> The second item of business was, of course, the nomination of candidates for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency. The candidates as the convention began were John Bell, John J. Crittenden and Sam Houston, but Crittenden indicated that he was definitely not interested in the nomination. Sam Houston had supporters but old Whigs could not be relied upon to support him, and Bell was nominated on the second day of balloting. Edward Everett of

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<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Hamer, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>Republican Banner and Nashville Whig, May 15, 1860, p. 2.

Massachusetts was nominated for the Vice-Presidency as was expected. The platform, in a deliberate attempt to exclude no person from support of the Constitutional Union Party, was "...the Constitution of the Country, the Union of the States and the Enforcement of the Laws."<sup>6</sup>

Speech-making followed the nominations, and Gustavus A. Henry spoke for Tennessee to thank the convention for the honor bestowed on her son. Another of the Tennessee delegates, Oliver P. Temple, described the speech and the speaker:<sup>7</sup>

He was a handsome, magnificent man physically. His voice was musical and sonorous; his manner that of a finished orator. He was eloquent, fascinating, charming. For such an occasion, no man in all the land was his superior. From the beginning, he electrified the convention. Finally, in a grand climax of dramatic oratory, he declared his willingness to die for the Union. He said, with marvelous effect, that for this purpose he would ascend the scaffold with as joyous a heart and as light a step as a bridegroom ascending to his bridal chamber. The convention became wild with enthusiasm.

The response to the speech was so great that the New York Times and other newspapers compared him with his

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<sup>6</sup>Parks, pp. 349-355.

<sup>7</sup>Oliver P. Temple, East Tennessee and the Civil War (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Co., 1899), p. 123. For the text of the speech, see Republican Banner and Nashville Whig, May 16, 1860, p. 2.

illustrious ancestor, Patrick Henry.<sup>8</sup>

The speech at Baltimore led directly to invitations to speak at ratification meetings in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, New Haven, and Lowell, Massachusetts. He was tremendously well received wherever he spoke.<sup>9</sup> In Lowell, he commented on the Republican nomination, saying that William H. Seward had been dropped because he was an extremist. Abraham Lincoln he considered to be an even more sectional candidate but without Seward's statesmanlike qualities. Lincoln's nomination, he contended, emanated from politicians and cliques and not the people, and Lincoln had no public record. At the end of the speech he shook hands with some of the members of the audience. A fruit seller who had listened attentively selected a large orange and presented it to Major Henry saying, "It's not much, but it is the best I have."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>New York Times, June 14, 1860, p. 4; Republican Banner and Nashville Whig, May 12, 1860, p. 2. While General William Henry had been related to Patrick Henry collaterally, there was not a lineal descent from the Revolutionary orator.

<sup>9</sup>Prestin Brooks to G. A. Henry, May 17, 1860, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross; Republican Banner and Nashville Whig, May 23, 1860, p. 2; June 6, 1860, p. 2; Clarksville Chronicle, June 8, 1860, p. 2; June 15, 1860, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, June 22, 1860, p. 1.

By June 23, 1860, Major Henry was back in Nashville and ready to "...throttle disunion whenever and wherever it may show its hydra head." He was welcomed home by a large turnout of the people of Clarksville and gave a gratifying account of the growing Union sentiment in the North. He took part in a county electoral convention on June 28 that chose John F. House as the district elector, speaking for an hour or more "...in behalf of that country for whose safety he has never seen the hour that he would not pour out his life like water...."<sup>11</sup>

The general tactics of the orators who stumped the state for Bell were to denounce sectionalism North and South, to emphasize the love of the Union so strong in Tennessee, and to avoid the issue of slavery. The Union Party emphasized parades and pageantry, serenading Bell, fireworks displays, "Bell segars" and "Bell pipes," pole-raisings and picnic dinners. Both branches of the Democratic party were well represented in Tennessee though there was no Republican organization in the state and most of the Douglas support was concentrated in the Memphis Appeal area. The Union men "...were determined to crush the secessionists who had nominated Breckinridge in the same manner as Andrew Jackson had crushed the nullifiers." The Union

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<sup>11</sup> Republican Banner, June 24, 1860, p. 2; Clarksville Chronicle, July 6, 1860, pp. 1, 3.

Party through its old Whig background with strong numbers, newspaper support and leadership: such as, Oliver P. Temple, William G. Brownlow, Neill S. Brown, Balie Peyton, Thomas A. R. Nelson, and G. A. Henry. They covered the state for Bell and the Union.<sup>12</sup>

Major Henry spoke in Nashville August 10, 1860, while on his way to northern Alabama to speak for the Union Party. There was a "glorious" barbeque on August 15 in Huntsville where large crowds listened attentively to him, Neill S. Brown and Jo. Pickett. He apparently had a series of speaking engagements in Alabama, but he was soon back in Tennessee and spoke at Lebanon on September 6 for three hours, discussing the campaign issues.<sup>13</sup>

By mid-September Major Henry was on his way North again after receiving an invitation from the Constitutional Union Party in Philadelphia to speak there.<sup>14</sup> He passed through Nashville and was honored by a rally of Union men

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<sup>12</sup>Hamer, pp. 7, 18, 19-20; Folmsbee, Corlew and Mitchell, pp. 315-316; James W. Bellamy, "The Political Career of Landon Carter Haynes," East Tennessee Historical Society Publications, No. 28 (1956), 116.

<sup>13</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, August 17, 1860, p. 2; Republican Banner, August 16, 1860, p. 2; G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, August 14, [1860], Henry Papers; Republican Banner, September 9, 1860, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>John S. Warren, et al., to G. A. Henry, September 17, 1860, Henry Papers.

on September 21, where he spoke nearly two hours with "...burning eloquence...."<sup>15</sup> After speaking in Philadelphia to a crowd estimated at thirty to fifty thousand, he left on a round of appointments that had him speaking every night from September 29 through October 8. The Union and Democratic Parties in Pennsylvania had worked out a fusion plan as the only means to defeat Lincoln, and Major Henry was optimistic about its chances for success.<sup>16</sup> After the Pennsylvania canvass he spoke in New York and New Jersey, returning home October 23. He was convinced that New York would not go for Lincoln and would thus insure his defeat.<sup>17</sup>

Bell ran strong in the old Whig strongholds in Tennessee with a particularly heavy vote in East Tennessee. He carried the state with 69,710 votes to Breckinridge's 65,053 and Douglas' 11,384.<sup>18</sup> The other two states that Bell won were Kentucky and Virginia. Lincoln, of course, carried all the northern states and won the election.

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<sup>15</sup>Republican Banner, September 22, 1860, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, October 5, 1860, p. 2; G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, September 29, [1860], Henry Papers.

<sup>17</sup>Jov. H. Nandal [?] to G. A. Henry, October 6, 1860, Henry Papers; Clarksville Chronicle, October 26, 1860, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup>Hamer, p. 21.

The election of Lincoln and the subsequent secession of the states of the deep South left Tennesseans in a quandary. Most did not accept the election of Lincoln as sufficient grounds for secession, and most deplored the precipitate action of the southern states. Most of the leaders of the Constitutional Union Party had denied the right of secession and maintained that Tennessee's unique geographical position would give her the opportunity to mediate the quarrel between North and South. There was, however, a strong secessionist sentiment, particularly in West Tennessee, that agitated for Tennessee to join her southern sisters.<sup>19</sup>

Major Henry was out of the state during much of the crucial period between the election and the inauguration, though it is clear that he was deeply concerned with the political situation. He visited Mississippi and Louisiana on his usual winter trip to supervise the plantations and spent most of the period from November 29, 1860, until after January 11, 1861, at Henrico Plantation, Arkansas.<sup>20</sup> On

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<sup>19</sup>Mary R. Campbell, "The Significance of the Unionist Victory in the Election of February 9, 1861, in Tennessee," East Tennessee Historical Society Publications, No. 14 (1942), 24; John F. Henry to Marion Henry, December 18, 1860, Henry Papers.

<sup>20</sup>Henry Papers. These are the dates of the preserved letters from G. A. Henry to Marion Henry for this period.

December 4, 1860, he wrote to John Bell that the people of the deep South had decided on secession and the only question was "...ought we to stand by & suffer the small fry politicians & Demagogues to run away with every thing & have everything their own way?"<sup>21</sup>

Major Henry returned to Tennessee as the campaign began for the referendum on a convention to consider what Tennessee should do. The state rights men tended to favor a convention and hoped to use it to bring about Tennessee's immediate secession. Conservatives opposed it for fear the convention would get out of control. Actually, two issues were to be voted on: whether to hold the convention at all and the election of delegates so that, in case of a favorable vote, it could be held immediately. Hence the Union men emphasized voting against the convention and at the same time voting for Union delegates to it.<sup>22</sup>

Major Henry was talked of as a candidate for the convention and was nominated, but he refused to run though he and other Union leaders throughout the state held meetings opposing the convention.<sup>23</sup> He spelled out his own

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<sup>21</sup>Quoted in Parks, p. 392.

<sup>22</sup>Campbell, "Unionist Victory," pp. 20-21.

<sup>23</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, January 23, 1861, p. 2; January 30, 1861, p. 2; Folmsbee, Corlew and Mitchell, p. 318.

position on the Union in a widely-published letter dated January 29, 1861, in which he supported the Crittenden Compromise and hoped that a convention of the border states could reunite the sections. If the North refused to accept adjustment of the slavery issue or attempted coercion, it would be necessary for the whole South to resist. He personally did not believe in the right of secession but did recognize the right of revolution to protect constitutional rights violated by the North. He explicitly defined his own position:

If the Union must be dissolved, all my sympathies are with the South. I could not look with indifference upon the struggle of brethren, bound to me by all the ties of a common interest, and a common fate growing out of homogeneous institutions, nor could I find it in my heart to stigmatize them as traitors to their country. On the contrary, if that sad calamity must come which may Heaven avert, I will espouse their cause in peace or in war....<sup>24</sup>

This letter seems to have summed up the feelings of many Tennesseans as they crushed the convention. Total

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<sup>24</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, February 13, 1861, p. 1. This was printed much earlier in other newspapers because on February 6, 1861, from Memphis, John F. Henry wrote one of his brothers, "I saw Pa's letter...in one of the Nashville papers. The letter was published this evening in the Bulletin." He goes on to say "The position Pa takes is about the same as the Union Party here -- there is a very little difference anyhow." Henry Papers.

delegate votes for Union delegates was 91,803 to 24,749 for disunion delegates. The Union vote was particularly strong in East Tennessee where the influence of Andrew Johnson and William G. Brownlow was extremely strong. In large measure the vote depended on the old Whig-Opposition party organization.<sup>25</sup> The feeling of hope for a compromise lasted in Tennessee up to the fall of Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for troops, despite the fact that many had not been reassured by Lincoln's ambiguous inaugural address and the appointment of a completely Republican Cabinet that would be dominated by Chase and Seward. Once the fighting actually started, most Tennesseans quickly realized that neutrality was impossible, and popular sympathy was with the South. By April 23, most of the Middle and West Tennessee Unionists had followed John Bell into active support of the Confederacy.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Campbell, Attitude, p. 173; Campbell, "Unionist Victory," p. 27; J. Milton Henry, "The Revolution in Tennessee, February, 1861, to June, 1861," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XVIII (1959), 99-100.

<sup>26</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, March 8, 1861, quoted in Campbell, Attitude, p. 185; Campbell, Attitude, pp. 190-191, 193-194. Contemporaries who remained with the Union condemned Bell and the other leaders for going over to the South, maintaining that had they remained firm, Tennessee would not have seceded. This was the position taken by Temple. Their reversal is in large measure explained in Henry, "Revolution," pp. 105-106, 109-110, which shows that the Lincoln administration had given federal patronage in Tennessee to Andrew Johnson rather than to the old Constitutional Union men who had expected it and were indeed the

Even earlier, by April 16, Major Henry was speaking at a Southern Rights Association meeting in Clarksville and was appointed a delegate by the meeting to take a petition for immediate secession to the Legislature in Nashville. On April 30 he spoke in Russellville, Kentucky, on "...the usurpation of Lincoln, and the 'old granny' idea of neutrality...."<sup>27</sup>

On April 30, Henry W. Hilliard, special commissioner to Tennessee from the provisional government of the Confederacy, addressed a special session of the Tennessee Legislature, and on May 1 the Legislature voted to have Governor Isham G. Harris appoint state commissioners to meet with Hilliard. Governor Harris appointed A. W. O. Totten, Washington Barrow and Gustavus A. Henry to negotiate with Hilliard. They drew up a convention that agreed Tennessee would become a member of the Confederacy and that her military forces were under the control of the President of

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logical recipients. In defense of Bell, Joshua R. Caldwell, "John Bell of Tennessee: A Chapter of Political History," American Historical Review, IV (1899), 663-664, maintains that nothing Bell or any other one man could do would have stopped the secession of Tennessee, and Bell merely bowed to the inevitable. This is essentially Park's interpretation of Bell's decision.

<sup>27</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, April 19, 1861, p. 3; May 3, 1861, p. 1.

the Confederacy.<sup>28</sup> The Legislature ratified the convention on May 7 by a vote of 14 to 6 in the Senate and 42 to 15 in the House. On the same day a declaration of independence was passed along with an ordinance ratifying the Confederate Constitution, both of which were to be presented to the people in a June 8 referendum.<sup>29</sup>

The campaign was immediately begun to have the voters approve the action of the Legislature. On May 8 Henry W. Hilliard, Gustavus A. Henry, General Pillow and others addressed an assembly on the public square in Nashville.<sup>30</sup> East Tennessee was the stronghold of Union

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<sup>28</sup> Patton, pp. 18-19. For the text of the convention see Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904-1905), I, 223-224. Hereafter cited as Journal.

<sup>29</sup> Edward McPherson, The Political History of the United States of America during the Great Rebellion... (Washington: Philip and Solomons, 1864), p. 5. There were six members absent and not voting in the Senate, 18 in the House. It is interesting that an ordinance of secession was not adopted but a declaration of independence. Daniel M. Robison, "The Whigs in the Politics of the Confederacy," East Tennessee Historical Society Publications, No. 11 (1939), 4, sees this as reflecting the strength of the old Whigs who tended to believe in the right of revolution but not of secession. For an account of the actions of the Legislature as well as Tennessee's general reaction to the beginning of the war, see Journal Kept by Judge William M. Bradford during the Extra Session of the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee in 1861 and Other Miscellaneous Material, Typescript in the Tennessee State Library, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>30</sup> Republican Banner, May 9, 1861, p. 3.

sentiment in the state, and the pro-Southern men recognized the necessity of winning the area. To this end they sent in the best orators and most popular political figures they could, including John Bell. They were opposed by Thomas A. R. Nelson, William G. Brownlow, Andrew Johnson and Oliver P. Temple, among others.<sup>31</sup>

Major Henry was one of the orators sent to the area, and he received a warm welcome from Parson Brownlow who roundly condemned all the men speaking for secession:

As for Major Henry, he owns a cotton farm and a gang of Negroes down South. His interests are all in the Cotton Kingdom and it is a matter of personal interest with him to secede.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Patton, pp. 23, 75; Temple, East Tennessee, p. 188.

<sup>32</sup>Quoted in V. M. Queener, "East Tennessee Sentiment and the Secession Movement, November, 1860 - June, 1861," East Tennessee Historical Society Publications, No. 20 (1948), 76. I was unable to find the original reference in the very fragmentary files of Brownlow's newspapers of this period in the Tennessee State Library. The exact date of Henry's speeches in East Tennessee is not clear. The Republican Banner, May 22, 1861, p. 2, says that Major Henry returned yesterday from East Tennessee, on his way to speaking engagements in West Tennessee. The Republican Banner, May 29, 1861, p. 3, lists a schedule of speaking engagements in East Tennessee May 29 - June 4, 1861, while the Clarksville Jeffersonian, May 29, 1861, p. 1, lists a group of Clarksville men including Major Henry who would speak locally May 25 - June 6. These accounts are not mutually exclusive, and it is possible that he made two separate trips to East Tennessee, one to West Tennessee and spoke around Montgomery County all in this period. If so, he was extremely busy.

The results of the election were gratifying for those who wanted to take the state into the Confederacy: 99,296 for secession, 44,206 opposed, with most of the opposition coming from East Tennessee.<sup>33</sup>

Tennessee had state elections coming up in the summer of 1861, and Major Henry was very quickly recommended for governor.<sup>34</sup> This came to nothing as Governor Harris was reelected. A much more fruitful movement was begun by the Clarksville newspapers, calling for his election to the Confederate Senate in reward for his early Southern stand.<sup>35</sup> By mid-October as the Legislature gathered, sentiment was for a non-partisan representation in the Confederate Senate. Major Henry's supporters were active from the beginning of the session.<sup>36</sup> The Legislature nominated only Democrats for the first Senate seat, and Landon C. Haynes was elected. The Opposition Party men nominated for the second seat were

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<sup>33</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, June 12, 1861, p. 1; Patton, pp. 21-22. McPherson, p. 5, gives the vote as 104,019 to 47,238.

<sup>34</sup>Republican Banner, June 15, 1861, p. 2; Clarksville Chronicle, June 21, 1861, p. 2; Republican Banner, July 4, 1861, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup>Clarksville Jeffersonian, August 6, 1861, p. 1; September 17, 1861, p. 2; Clarksville Chronicle, September 27, 1861, p. 2; Clarksville Jeffersonian, September 27, 1861, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup>D. N. Kennedy to G. A. Henry, October 14, 1861, Henry Papers.

Major Henry, Edwin H. Ewing, and Robert L. Caruthers. Balloting on the first day was inconclusive: Henry, 34; Ewing, 33; Caruthers, 25. The Legislature voted again on October 25, but the ballots were substantially unchanged. On October 26 Major Henry was elected to the Confederate Senate. Of his election the Republican Banner said, "...his venerable presence in the Confederate Senate will lend dignity and power to the first Senatorial body of the Young Republic."<sup>37</sup>

Major Henry had been active for the South during the movement toward his election. In September he had written to President Davis of the feeling of Tennesseans about General Polk, advising him that neutrality in Kentucky was a cloak for the actions of the Lincoln party and recommending action in Kentucky immediately.<sup>38</sup>

He was very much concerned with the defense of the Cumberland River, writing to General A. S. Johnston and to General Leonidas Polk that it was imperative that Fort Donelson be reinforced. He had obtained four guns for the

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<sup>37</sup> Republican Banner, October 25, 1861, p. 3; October 26, 1861, p. 2; October 27, 1861, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> G. A. Henry to Jefferson Davis, September 15, 1861, in The War of the Rebellion; A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), Ser. 1, IV, 192-193. Hereafter cited as O.R.

fort from Memphis but they were not in place and there were no artillery men at the fort. He urged the work on the fort to be pushed since it defended the Cumberland Iron Works so vital to the Confederacy, the Clarksville railroad bridge which was a vital link with Kentucky, and Nashville.<sup>39</sup> By the first of November he was optimistic that Forts Henry and Donelson were being put into good condition condition.<sup>40</sup> Fort Henry may have been named in his honor.<sup>41</sup> Within a week, however, he was again concerned with the lack of progress since Federal gunboats had already passed over obstructions placed in the river below the forts. He was so concerned that he had Governor Harris add his influence to the appeals about the forts.<sup>42</sup> As late as

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<sup>39</sup>G. A. Henry to A. S. Johnston, October 16, 1861; G. A. Henry to Leonidas Polk, October 17, 1861, O.R., Ser. 1, IV, 453-454, 458.

<sup>40</sup>G. A. Henry to A. S. Johnston, November 1, 1861, O.R., Ser. 1, IV, 496-497.

<sup>41</sup>B. Franklin Cooling, "Fort Donelson National Military Park," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XXIII (1964), 204. However, E. C. Bearss, "The Construction of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson," West Tennessee Historical Society Papers, XXI (1967), 27, says it is uncertain for whom the fort was named though Stanley F. Horn maintains it was named for Senator Henry. I was unable to find a contemporary reference.

<sup>42</sup>G. A. Henry to A. S. Johnston, November 7, 1861; Isham G. Harris to A. S. Johnston, November 16, 1861, O.R., Ser. 1, IV, 526, 557-558.

January 21, 1862, Senator Henry was pleading for the forts to be completed because the enemy was within striking distance of them, at Murray.<sup>43</sup> His warnings were not heeded and within a month the forts had fallen.

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<sup>43</sup>G. A. Henry to W. J. Hardee, January 21, 1862, quoted in Beach, p. 191.

## Chapter 6

### MR. HENRY OF TENNESSEE

The First Congress of the Confederate States of America convened for its first session in Richmond, Virginia, on February 18, 1862. Forts Henry and Donelson had just fallen to General Grant's army, effectively opening all of Tennessee to the Federals. It was not an auspicious start for the permanent government of the Confederacy.

Assessment of the effectiveness of the Confederate Congress is extremely difficult. A state of war, gradually pressing closer and closer to Richmond, existed throughout its brief life, and war by necessity created a strong executive whose decisions Congress had little choice but to enact. Many of the men in the Congress were local politicians little experienced in business techniques and unused to the responsibilities of government. A significant number of them were fervent state rights men, suspicious of and extremely vocal on the growing power of President Davis. President Davis, in return, was jealous of his executive and military prerogatives. Congressional relations with the President almost inevitably became strained as the war drew nearer and nearer to Richmond. Assessment is made

more difficult by Congress' going into secret session to consider most financial and military matters, hence leaving no record of debate; this tendency, too, increased as the war continued. Withal, the majority of the members of the Confederate Congress recognized the necessities of the military situation, and the various expedients devised throughout the war to raise and maintain the army and to finance the government testify to the Congress' legislative creativity.<sup>1</sup>

The First Congress of the Confederate States of America met in Richmond four times: First Session, February 18, 1862 - April 21, 1862; Second Session, August 18, 1862 - October 13, 1862; Third Session, January 12, 1863 - May 1, 1863; and Fourth Session, December 7, 1863 -

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<sup>1</sup>For an overall assessment of the Confederate Congress, see Wilfred Buck Yearns, The Confederate Congress (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1960); Curtis Arthur Amlund, Federalism in the Southern Confederacy (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1966); and Frank E. Vandiver, Introduction to the Southern Historical Society Papers, L (1959). A contemporary but very critical view of the Confederate Congress may be found in Edward A. Pollard, Southern History of the War: The Second Year of the War (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1864); his Life of Jefferson Davis with a Secret History of the Southern Confederacy... (Philadelphia: National Publishing Co., 1869), pp. 309-310, says, "The appearance of the Congress was singularly plain and unimposing. It was mostly composed of men who were as ordinary in appearance as they were dull in mind."

February 17, 1864. The Second Congress met only twice: First Session, May 2, 1864 - June 14, 1864; and Second Session, November 7, 1864 - March 18, 1865. Richmond was evacuated April 2.

G. A. Henry was a friend of President Davis from their college days at Transylvania University, and he was one of the few Congressmen with whom the President maintained social relations.<sup>2</sup> Senator Henry was a consistent supporter of President Davis' policy. For example, in October 1862, when Senator Hill introduced a bill demanding an explanation of the seizure of produce and the prohibition of shipment of provisions and produce from one state to another, Senator Henry defended the decision, saying that it had been a preventive measure to insure the wheat in Virginia for use by the army.<sup>3</sup>

He was in favor of a strong Confederate government and did not hesitate to condemn the extreme state rights men in the Confederate Congress as undermining both the war effort and the fundamental rights of the people. This was

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<sup>2</sup>See, for example, the Jefferson Davis letter in the Gustavus A. Henry Collection in the possession of his great-granddaughter, Mrs. Elmer D. Hamner, Clarksville, Tennessee, and the letter of G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, November 11, 1863, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>3</sup>"Proceedings of the Confederate Congress," Southern Historical Society Papers (hereafter cited as Proceedings), XLVII (1930), 73.

nowhere more evident than in the debate over the Supreme Court and whether it should have appellate jurisdiction over the state courts. He pointed out the inevitable confusion and discord which would result from different interpretations of Confederate laws by state courts and maintained that the opponents of a strong Supreme Court, in citing the example of the federalizing decisions of the U. S. Supreme Court, were ignoring all that the Federal court had done to stop abolitionism.<sup>4</sup> His attitude seemed to be that there would be ample time after independence was won to sort out the proper relationship between state and Confederate government. The necessity now was for united action to win independence.

As might be expected, Major Henry worked diligently throughout his career in the Confederate Senate. Because of his friendship with President Davis he was chosen to serve on the inaugural committee and on special committees to notify the President of the convening and the adjournments of the Senate.<sup>5</sup> He did a large amount of the routine work necessary for legislative bodies to function: resolutions on committee assignments;<sup>6</sup> service on the committee

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<sup>4</sup>Proceedings, XLVIII (1941), 25-27.

<sup>5</sup>Journal, II, 12, 484; III, 6, 420, 434, 793; IV, 245, 741.

<sup>6</sup>Journal, II, 21.

on pay and mileage allowances;<sup>7</sup> requests for leaves of absence for other Senators and resolutions on the death of a Congressman;<sup>8</sup> resolutions of thanks for gallant military efforts;<sup>9</sup> resolutions concerning the convening and adjournment of Congress;<sup>10</sup> and numerous conference committees.<sup>11</sup> He served on several special committees, including the Committee of Thirteen appointed by the Senate to take depositions of Confederate citizens outraged by the U. S. Army. He served on the special committee to organize and report on standing committees to the Third Session of the First Congress and on the special committee which was appointed January 28, 1863, to consider the condemning of all Southern cotton for government use. Senator Henry was on the special

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<sup>7</sup>Journal, II, 27, 122-123. On December 19, 1864, he spoke in favor of a bill to raise the pay and travel allowances for members of Congress and salaries of Congressional officers, since the salary for members no longer was enough to pay their board and many, being cut off from home and solely dependent on their pay, would be forced to resign their offices if the salaries were not raised. The bill passed. Proceedings, LII (1959), 24. Senator Henry did not say so, but he was probably one of that group.

<sup>8</sup>Journal, II, 57, 243, 248; IV, 72, 601.

<sup>9</sup>Journal, II, 264; III, 619; IV, 15, 534.

<sup>10</sup>Journal, II, 182, 203, 269; IV, 209, 580.

<sup>11</sup>Journal, II, 219; III, 700; IV, 508, 542.

committee to investigate the violation of the dignity of the Senate caused by the fist-fight between Senators B. H. Hill and W. L. Yancey.<sup>12</sup>

Most, however, of Senator Henry's work in the Confederate Senate was done on the standing committees to which he was appointed. He was a member of the Finance and the Public Lands Committees for two sessions each and of the Military Affairs Committee for the duration of the war.<sup>13</sup>

The work of the Finance Committee was second in importance only to that of Military Affairs. The basic problem of the committee was, of course, how to finance the government and the war effort, and the problem was greatly complicated by the unwillingness of Congress to impose heavy taxes. On October 8, 1862, Senator Yancey moved that arrangements be made immediately for a census so that the Confederate government could levy direct taxes on the people. This was opposed by many Senators, including Senator Henry, who said that the time for making the enumeration had not yet come. He hoped that the war would be over before the end of the coming year, and the Constitution

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<sup>12</sup>Journal, II, 404; III, 19, 37, 48. Both were censured.

<sup>13</sup>Journal, II, 19-20; III, 20; IV, 10. He served on the Finance Committee during the First and Second Sessions of the First Congress, and on the Public Lands Committee during the Second Congress, though he seems not to have introduced any legislation dealing with Public Lands.

required a census only within three years of the establishment of the permanent government.<sup>14</sup> The census was never taken, and the taxes were never imposed. The funds necessary for the war would be raised through borrowing, which became increasingly difficult as the war continued, and issuing paper money, which rapidly became almost worthless.<sup>15</sup> Senator Henry introduced in February and March 1862, bills to regulate and provide compensation for cotton and other goods destroyed to prevent their capture by the Federals. In August 1862 he introduced a measure defining goods to be exempted from duties, and in September he reported the bill out of committee. He was concerned with the sequestration of the property of Southerners not sympathetic to the Confederate cause, introducing a stringent measure in September 1862. This bill failed, but in January 1864 he was successful in passing the Sequestration Act to produce more revenue for the war effort.<sup>16</sup>

Other finance-related measures with which he was associated after leaving the committee included a call in March 1863 for an investigation by the committee of the

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<sup>14</sup>Proceedings, XLVII (1930), 71.

<sup>15</sup>Amlund, pp. 53-54; John C. Schwab, The Confederate States of America, 1861-1865 (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1901), pp. 44, 80.

<sup>16</sup>Journal, II, 24, 27, 248, 273; Yearn's, p. 196; Journal, II, 258; III, 520, 616.

rampant speculation in Confederate money that was going on in Richmond; amendments to tighten tax loopholes; resolutions on currency and taxation in December 1863 and January 1864; and resolutions on meetings between Congress and state bank officials in an attempt to raise money to supply the army.<sup>17</sup>

Senator Henry's most productive work for the Confederacy was that done as a member of the Military Affairs Committee. In April 1862, recognizing the imperative need for iron works, he introduced a bill for the government to build a national foundry, and in September 1862 he amended the Enrollment Act to exempt from military service all workers involved in the production of iron.<sup>18</sup> He strongly supported measures introduced by Senator Clay of Alabama to reduce drunkenness in the army.<sup>19</sup> He was concerned with the establishment of military control over the army hospitals and with the policy of furloughing or discharging convalescent soldiers, which he believed to be a major cause of absenteeism in the army.<sup>20</sup> Senator Henry was

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<sup>17</sup>Journal, III, 180, 261, 458, 631, 635; IV, 713.

<sup>18</sup>Proceedings, XLV (1945), 48-49; Journal, II, 311.

<sup>19</sup>Proceedings, XLV (1945), 73-74; Journal, II, 161-162.

<sup>20</sup>Proceedings, XLIX (1943), 50; L (1953), 138-139.

interested in the problems of military justice, introducing legislation to modify court procedures and to establish military courts for the reserves.<sup>21</sup> He opposed commanding generals having the power to discharge unneeded or incompetent officers because it would give them the power to discharge men on caprice or displeasure.<sup>22</sup>

The two most important functions of the Military Affairs Committee were the raising and the supporting of the Confederate Army, and it was in these areas that Senator Henry worked hardest. Perhaps because of his long friendship with President Davis, he often introduced administration measures in the Senate, and on only two issues does he appear to have opposed President Davis. One was in April 1862 when he amended the bill organizing the Confederate Army to allow election of company, battalion and regimental officers.<sup>23</sup> The other was in the closing days of the war when Congress attempted to pass a bill ordering Davis to appoint Lee commander-in-chief of the armies; it was debated vigorously and finally tabled. Senator Henry then introduced much the same bill advising rather than ordering command appointments, and a compromise was reached between

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<sup>21</sup>Journal, II, 371; III, 85; IV, 582.

<sup>22</sup>Proceedings, L (1953), 419.

<sup>23</sup>Journal, II, 141.

president Davis and the Congress.<sup>24</sup>

Conscription rapidly became the only feasible way the army could be supplied with men, and the debate on conscription versus requisitioning troops from the states that began in April 1862 only became more acrimonious as the war continued. Many Congressmen doubted that the Confederate government had the constitutional power to coerce men into military service since it violated both individual rights and state sovereignty. Senator Henry's position was made clear in early September 1862 when he

...argued that Congress had the indisputable right to require of every citizen, State Officer, Judge, Justice of the Peace, or what not, military service. He thought it might be unwise in Congress to force Judges into the service, as they would make very poor soldiers, but did not doubt its right to coerce them.<sup>25</sup>

This broad construction of the war-making powers of Congress was accepted by a majority of the Congress. The original exemptions were for men in obviously necessary occupations:

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<sup>24</sup>Journal, IV, 353-354; Yearn's, p. 227; Amlund, pp. 41-42.

<sup>25</sup>Proceedings, XLVI (1928), 104-105. For the whole question of conscription, see Albert Burton Moore, Conscription and Conflict in the Confederacy (New York: Hillary House Publishers, Ltd., 1963). This issue, along with the related problem of impressment of supplies for the army, caused more dissent than any other and was the basis for most of the feeling that President Davis was setting up a military dictatorship in Richmond.

physicians, ministers, schoolteachers, tanners, iron workers, state officials and others.

On January 18, 1863, Senator Henry introduced a new exemption bill and the Senate immediately went into secret session to consider it. It did not include the so-called "twenty slave" exemption when introduced. The debate continued intermittently until February 19, 1863, when Senator Henry's amendment to his original measure was passed, exempting from military service the owner or white overseer of a plantation where there were more than twenty slaves. Curiously, he voted against an amendment to prevent abuses in this exemption by shifting slaves from one plantation to another, though he later said that he had never been completely satisfied with the exemption since it could produce dissatisfaction among the poor.<sup>26</sup>

The exemption problem plagued Congress down to the close of the war since many soldiers did regard exemptions as class legislation producing a "rich man's war and a poor man's fight." Governors Brown of Georgia and Vance of North Carolina apparently gave blanket appointments as state or militia officers to protect their citizens. Senator Henry introduced a bill in December 1864 to "respectfully request" the governors and state legislatures to examine their

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<sup>26</sup>Journal, III, 19, 81, 93; Proceedings, LI (1958), 281.

exemption rolls and release to military service all able-bodied men between 18 and 45 years of age consistent with the maintenance of the state governments. The resolution failed.<sup>27</sup> Another reason that the exemption system continued to be a problem was President Davis' opposition to the system itself. He would have preferred the calling up of all able-bodied men for military service, with men in essential occupations being detailed by the War Department for that specific function. They would be under military authority and the War Department would have complete control over priorities and production. Congress absolutely refused to enact such a system. The measure was debated in the last days of the war, but it was never passed.<sup>28</sup>

The most explosive issue involved with raising the army was the use of Negroes. President Davis and General Lee seemed by late 1864 to consider it necessary. On November 9, 1864, Senator Henry introduced a bill to allow the impressment of slaves for use in all functions of the army except soldiers. The resolution was dropped from

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<sup>27</sup>Proceedings, LI (1958), 425; Journal, IV, 315-316. President Davis never obtained complete control over the state militias. In mid-March 1865, Senator Henry introduced the necessary resolution, but it failed by a tie vote. Yearns, p. 92.

<sup>28</sup>Moore, pp. 105-106; Proceedings, LII (1959), 359-362.

consideration on December 7, 1864.<sup>29</sup> On February 8, 1865, he cast one of the three yes votes on a defeated resolution calling for the Military Affairs Committee to report a bill to take Negro soldiers into the army.<sup>30</sup> The Second Congress did finally approve the arming of slaves, but it did not come until the very last days of the war, when it was too late.

The second major function of the Military Affairs Committee was to supply the army, an increasingly difficult task as the war continued. As Confederate money declined in value, farmers often refused to accept warrants on the Confederate government for their produce. The only feasible solution was the impressment of the necessary supplies, but this precipitated endless debate on its constitutionality and on the price that should be paid. Farmers and those who opposed impressment insisted that the only just price would be the market value of the goods. Senator Henry thought this would be most unjust because when Richard III at Bosworth Field offered "my kingdom for a horse," that was the market price of a horse at that particular time and place.<sup>31</sup> A related problem was whether the warrants on the

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<sup>29</sup>Proceedings, LI (1958), 282; Journal, IV, 262, 282, 322.

<sup>30</sup>Proceedings, LII (1959), 317.

<sup>31</sup>Proceedings, XLVIII (1941), 255.

Confederate government issued in payment for impressed goods should be payable immediately or at the end of the war. Senator Henry favored the warrants being payable after independence, but Congress decided that payment should be immediate.<sup>32</sup> There was clamor against impressment throughout the war, but Senator Henry believed it "...more frequently heard in the Halls of Congress than out of it."<sup>33</sup>

In addition to his work in Congress, Senator Henry was active in other aspects of the Confederate government and war effort. He was mentioned several times as a possible Cabinet member, in 1862 for Post-Master General and in 1863 for Attorney General.<sup>34</sup> He and the Tennessee Congressional delegation advised the President on disposition of Tennessee prisoners.<sup>35</sup> He was commended in August 1863 by Secretary of War James A. Seddon for organizing local

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<sup>32</sup>Journal, III, 586.

<sup>33</sup>Proceedings, LI (1958), 164.

<sup>34</sup>O.R., Ser. 1, V, 1082-1083; Edward Younger (ed.), Inside the Confederate Government: The Diary of Robert Garlick Hill Kean, Head of the Bureau of War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 106, 123.

<sup>35</sup>O.R., Ser. 1, I, 879-880; Gustavus A. Henry, et al., to Jefferson Davis, January 19, 1865, in the Confederate Collection, Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter cited as Confederate Collection).

defense forces around Lexington, Virginia.<sup>36</sup> Senator Henry went on a tour of the Army of Tennessee in mid-November 1863 that appeared to be a fact-finding tour for President Davis since he wrote a detailed letter on its strategic position, the reinforcements needed, and the reported dissatisfaction among the men. He would keep the President informed as he traveled through Georgia and saw conditions there.<sup>37</sup>

As did practically every other member of the Confederate Congress, Senator Henry advised President Davis on both command appointments and military strategy. He and the Tennessee Congressional delegation, after the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson, advised the President that Tennesseans had lost all confidence in General A. S. Johnston and requested that the President take command in the state in person. The endorsement by President Davis on this letter was politely noncommittal.<sup>38</sup> He and Senator Haynes

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<sup>36</sup>O.R., Ser. 1, LI, Pt. 2, 756.

<sup>37</sup>Gustavus A. Henry to Jefferson Davis, November 17, 1863, Confederate Collection.

<sup>38</sup>Gustavus A. Henry, et al., to Jefferson Davis, March 8, 1862, Confederate Collection. In regard to this President Davis said that if Sydney Johnston is not a general, the Confederacy has no generals. This is quoted in a long letter on the military situation, dated March 15, 1862, from Senator Henry in the Robertson Topp Papers, Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

protested in June 1864 General A. E. Jackson's being removed from his command in western Virginia and transferred to General Johnston's army, but without effect.<sup>39</sup> He corresponded during the summer of 1863 with General P. G. T. Beauregard on the subject of commanding the Army of Tennessee and in December 1863 when General Joe Johnston was appointed to its command, he wrote, "...you possess the entire confidence of this whole country as you do mine."<sup>40</sup> This correspondence revealed that Senator Henry had less than great confidence in General Braxton Bragg, but in May 1864, he defended General Bragg as a "man of valour and wisdom" in the Congressional debates after the failure to act upon the victory at Chickamauga.<sup>41</sup>

Senator Henry was tremendously concerned with the fall of Tennessee to the Federals, and he repeatedly submitted plans to the War Department for the recapture of the state, which he deemed essential to winning the war. In August 1863 he advised a union of Bragg and Johnston's armies to hold East Tennessee against General Burnside's army; by October he was requesting that Ewell be detached

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<sup>39</sup>O.R., Ser. 1, XXXVII, Pt. 1, 753.

<sup>40</sup>O.R., Ser. 1, XXXVII, Pt. 2, 291; XXXI, Pt. 3, 878-879.

<sup>41</sup>Proceedings, LI (1958), 138.

from Lee's command, sent to recapture Knoxville and form a junction with Johnston to attack Rosecrans's army in the rear. He believed "...the real defense of Virginia is to be made in Tennessee." General Lee was politely noncommittal.<sup>42</sup> In February 1864 he and Senator Haynes endorsed a plan for invading Tennessee drawn up by Colonel G. G. Dibrell and sent it to the War Department, but nothing came of it.<sup>43</sup>

Quite possibly the greatest contribution Senator Henry made to the Confederate cause was his oratorical skill, used to arouse and maintain the will to continue the war until independence was won. His greatest effort was the speech made November 29, 1864, in the Senate in support of a resolution he had introduced at the request of President Davis, declaring the determination of the people to fight until independence was won.<sup>44</sup> In this speech he compared the Confederate cause with that of the colonies in the American Revolution, maintaining that both fought for

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<sup>42</sup>O.R., Ser. 1, LI, Pt. 2, 760-761; XXXI, Pt. 3, 586, 684.

<sup>43</sup>O.R., Ser. 1, XXXII, Pt. 2, 746.

<sup>44</sup>Proceedings, LI (1958), 319-321, 389. Several of the brief sketches of Gustavus A. Henry's life refer to a tremendously effective speech made at the request of President Davis after the fall of Vicksburg, to rally the Southern people. I have been unable to find a copy or synopsis of this speech (which supposedly was printed and distributed widely) and have concluded that the November 29, 1864, speech is the one referred to.

the same principle - self government - and both resorted to war only as the last means to this end. He referred to the great military effort the Confederacy had made and scorned the idea that the Confederate States would negotiate a peace based on reunion or reconstruction. Independence was the goal, and it would be better to die than to submit to the inevitable tyranny that would be imposed upon the South. Reunion was impossible. This was the time to reassert the determination to fight on until independence was won, to fill the army and cease the discord and criticism of the President so gravely wounding the country. He compared the Confederacy to a vessel riding out a storm and coming to rest in a safe harbor, and in concluding his speech summarized his own career in the Confederate Senate:

...it shall be some consolation to me then, if I have not upheld the arms of the commander and stimulated the hearts of the crew in a manner commensurate with my great ambition to serve the country honestly and to serve it well, that I have at least done nothing to paralyze the one or the other; but, according to the best of my poor ability, done all I could to sustain the cause, to advance our standard, to brace and strengthen, in the field or in the cabinet, all who honestly try to serve the country and to establish its independence forever.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Speech of Hon. Gustavus A. Henry, of Tennessee, in the Senate of the Confederate States, November 29, 1864 (Richmond, 1864), p. 13.

## Chapter 7

### "OUR DISTINGUISHED TOWNSMAN"

The war years for the Henry family were especially trying. The three older sons joined the Confederate Army as soon as hostilities began and the youngest, Patrick, saw action as a cadet at Virginia Military Institute before the war was over. Major Henry wrote to President Davis in May 1861, presenting his son, Gustavus, Jr., who was expected to be useful because of his experience at West Point. Gus, Jr., served under Generals Pillow, McCown, Bragg, Johnston and Hood and was, at the end of the war, Assistant Inspector General of the Army of Tennessee.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Frazier Henry served in General Cheatham's Division and was Inspector of Ordnance with the rank of Major when the war ended. He was wounded several times but apparently not seriously.<sup>2</sup> John Flourney Henry was a Major in the Fourth Tennessee

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<sup>1</sup>G. A. Henry to Jefferson Davis, May 17, 1861, Henry Papers; Henry, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>Henry, p. 97. One of the times he was wounded was in May 1864. There is a whole group of letters in the Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross, from May 22 to June 1, 1864, discussing his recuperation and saying that Tom did not want his mother to come to Georgia to nurse him.

Infantry and died in Memphis of wounds received at the battle of Shiloh. His body could not be taken home for burial since Clarksville had already fallen to the Federals, so he was buried temporarily in Memphis and his remains moved to Clarksville in 1870.<sup>3</sup> Patrick took part in the battle of Newmarket and the defense of Richmond, for which he received the honorary rank of Captain.<sup>4</sup>

It is not exactly clear where Mrs. Henry lived during the war. At least until Major Henry left for Richmond she was in Clarksville since she was president of the Soldiers' Relief Society and there were frequent references in the local newspapers to her activities in the Society throughout 1861. Susan Henry Martin wrote from Clarksville to Patrick some time during the war that her mother had been away almost two years, and by November 1863 Mrs. Henry was definitely in Lexington, Virginia.<sup>5</sup> She apparently

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<sup>3</sup>Henry, p. 97. He died between April 28, 1862, and May 2, 1862. On April 28 Gus, Jr., telegraphed his uncle Patrick Henry that Jack did not seem to be sinking and that he expected his father to pass through Brandon that night on his way to Memphis. Henry Papers. On May 2, 1862, R. A. Parker wrote to Major Henry that he would select a plain marble headstone for John's grave. Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>4</sup>Henry, p. 98; T. F. Smith to G. A. Henry, March 3, 1866, Henry Papers.

<sup>5</sup>Beach, p. 185; Susan Martin to Patrick Henry, March 14 [1862-1865, exact year unknown]; G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, November 11, 1863, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross. He sent a message to Patrick, who was at VMI, "if you are still in Lexington."

joined Senator Henry in Richmond in December 1863, but by May 1864 she had again left the city.<sup>6</sup> Senator Henry wrote frequently to her and was unfailingly optimistic about the outcome of the war - "...if we are true to ourselves and trustful in God we will triumph in the end." His letters contained mostly family news (for instance, his division of calico and flannel shirts between Tom, Gus, Jr., and Patrick when they came into Richmond without clean clothes) and some yearning for small pleasures - "I am afraid you cannot eat as many strawberries for me as I desire."<sup>7</sup>

The Henrys, as did most of the families forced to stay in or near Richmond, experienced the drastic inflation and the scarcity that grew worse as the war continued. By the spring of 1864, board at a boarding house for a month cost from \$200 to \$300, and prices continued to rise.<sup>8</sup> The Henrys were cut off from Clarksville and apparently from any revenues from the plantations. Cotton being landed at Henrico Landing, Arkansas, by George D. Martin in late

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<sup>6</sup> G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, December 8, 1863; Thomas F. Henry to Marion Henry, May 5, 1864, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>7</sup> G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, May 25, 1864; June 1, 1864, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>8</sup> Varina Howell Davis, Jefferson Davis; Ex-President of the Confederate States of America (New York: Belford Co., 1890), II, 526-533. For a systematic study of the inflation, see Schwab, Appendix I.

November 1864 was seized by the Federals as belonging to Senator Henry.<sup>9</sup> Even before that Tom had written:

The old debts that are fast accumulating by interest will be the heaviest load to carry. We'll have to repudiate them I think - It is hard that while we are out toiling & suffering for our country, our creditors are safely staying at home & treasuring up debts with which they will take what little property we save from the wreck.<sup>10</sup>

It would be nearly impossible to determine accurately the financial losses the Henrys sustained as the result of the war. The capital invested in slaves must have been many thousands of dollars. There was some theft from their property in Clarksville - Marion Martin (daughter of Susan Martin, born in 1859) saw a Federal soldier ride off on her grandfather's horse, but the engraved coin silverware was safely buried and survived the war. The house and groves had been slated for occupation by Federal troops but were spared on the orders of a Colonel Bruce, who remembered that Gustavus A. Henry had made the greatest speech that he had ever heard.<sup>11</sup> Following the war, Major Henry was sued for

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<sup>9</sup>O.R., Ser. 1, XLI, Pt. 4, 676.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas F. Henry to Marion Henry, May 5, 1864, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>11</sup>Statement by Mrs. Patrick Henry Cross, personal interview, April 7, 1972; clipping from the Nashville Banner magazine, April 5, 1936, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross. As late as January 4, 1865, G. A. Henry was hiring out his slaves for the coming year. He was to receive \$200 for the hire of the Negro girl Maryann, and she was to be provided with two suits of summer clothes, one suit of winter clothes, two pairs of shoes and stockings and a blanket or

a debt that he had paid during the war in Confederate money, the question being whether this constituted legal payment. Later on he was sued by a creditor in an attempt to overthrow his deeding of the Red River property to Mrs. Henry in 1860 to prevent its being attached for his debts.<sup>12</sup> At least twice following the war he sold pieces of property - part of the Red River land in 1872 and several building lots north of the College in 1877.<sup>13</sup> Beyond question, Major Henry suffered substantial financial reverses from the war.

As the war ended and Lincoln was assassinated, Major Henry's primary emotion seems to have been apprehension. In a memoir written years later, M. P. Jarnagin told of meeting Senator Henry, whom he apparently knew, at Charlotte:

He hailed me and said, "What shall I do? Jeff Davis and his cabinet ran away last night. Lincoln is dead, and Andy Johnson is President. Damn him, I know he will want my blood." This

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good comfort. See the contracts with A. L. Watson, A. H. Scott and L. M. Quarles, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>12</sup>Clarksville Weekly Chronicle, September 29, 1865, p. 3; Clarksville Chronicle, December 2, 1876, p. 4. I was unable to find any mention of the settlement of these cases but, since the property in the second case seems to be that disposed of by Mrs. Henry in her will of 1879, the deed must have been held valid. Montgomery County, Tennessee, Record and Will Book, S (1876-1906), pp. 246-248.

<sup>13</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, February 10, 1872, p. 3; May 12, 1877, p. 3.

was the first bad word I had ever heard from the Senator.

Jarnagin advised him to return to Lexington where Mrs. Henry was staying, tell President Johnson where he was and wait for orders. He recounted that both Tennessee Senators promptly received safe conducts from the President.<sup>14</sup> He received permission on July 21, 1865, to return home to Tennessee on condition that he take the oath of allegiance to the United States, remain at home and exert his influence to sustain the civil authority of the state.<sup>15</sup> He reached Clarksville by mid-August.<sup>16</sup> When the U. S. District and Circuit Court met in Nashville in October, there was a substantial number of indictments for treason and conspiracy pending, including the indictment of ex-Senator Henry. His case was apparently continued.<sup>17</sup> In November his parole was extended to allow him to travel to his plantations on

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<sup>14</sup>M. P. Jarnagin, *Reminiscences of the War*, Confederate Collection, Diaries and Memoirs, Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>15</sup>Parole of G. A. Henry, Andrew Johnson Papers, Library of Congress (microfilm copy in the Manuscript Division, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee), Ser. 3A, I, Reel 42, 161. Hereafter cited as Johnson Papers.

<sup>16</sup>*Clarksville Chronicle*, August 18, 1865, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup>*Republican Banner*, October 18, 1865, p. 3.

business,<sup>18</sup> but he was not pardoned by President Johnson until November 27, 1866.<sup>19</sup> On April 26, 1867, he paid court costs of \$46.45 when his indictment for treason was dismissed on the strength of the pardon.<sup>20</sup>

Major Henry resumed his law practice upon his return to Clarksville, appearing as trustee in a sale notice of September 22, 1865.<sup>21</sup> He appeared in the case of the Lynch will in which the will of Dr. John B. Lynch leaving his fortune of some \$300,000 to a religious group was contested by his relatives. Major Henry appeared with John F. House and General J. G. Hornberger for the will, but the jury ruled for the relatives.<sup>22</sup> He took H. H. Lurton into partnership in late 1868, with their offices still on Strawberry Alley.<sup>23</sup> He travelled with the Circuit Court as he had

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<sup>18</sup>Parole of G. A. Henry, November 5, 1865, Johnson Papers, Ser. 3A, III, Reel 42, 29.

<sup>19</sup>Pardon of G. A. Henry, issued November 27, 1866, signed by Andrew Johnson and William H. Seward, certified copy dated January 9, 1867, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross. The original was lost in a steamboat accident in early January 1867. Henry Stanbery to G. A. Henry, January 9, 1867, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>20</sup>Receipt for court costs, U. S. v. G. A. Henry, April 26, 1867, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>21</sup>Clarksville Weekly Chronicle, September 22, 1865, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, June 12, 1868, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, November 13, 1868, p. 3.

before the war, the Dover Record saying, "His voice, though not as ringing as in days of yore, is just as pathetic, when pleading for mercy at the bar of justice."<sup>24</sup> He and H. M. Doak played a trick on J. M. Quarles, who was known for wanting to be an authority on everything, while on one of the steamboat trips to Dover with the Court. Doak had been on the bridge with the captain, discussing some of the changes in nautical usage the Confederate Navy had adopted during its brief existence, when he noticed General Quarles standing nearby and listening intently. A while later Doak went below decks and met Major Henry with General Quarles. Major Henry began to ask him about the changes made by the Confederate Navy, which General Quarles had just been telling him about. Doak caught on and denied everything he had previously said, leaving Quarles looking ridiculous.<sup>25</sup> Major Henry was one of the lawyers representing Miss Mattie Fort in her suit for damages against the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in 1877. She had been permanently injured in a railroad accident, for which she eventually won \$13,000 damages.<sup>26</sup> The last case in which he took part was

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<sup>24</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, January 8, 1876, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>Memphis Commercial Appeal, April 11, 1926, p. 21, in the Henry Melvil Doak Papers, Manuscript Divison, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>26</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, January 27, 1877, p. 3; January 12, 1878, p. 3.

the trial for murder of Dr. P. F. Bellamy in early 1879. He appeared for the defense, which was able to show that not only was Dr. Bellamy well-alibied for the period of the murder but that the star witness for the prosecution, Mr. Keats, had both motive and opportunity to commit the murder. Major Henry's summation was powerful, and the jury acquitted Bellamy without leaving the box.<sup>27</sup> While most of his legal business was probably not of a nature to appear in the local newspapers, it appears that he took only cases which interested him and usually confined himself to summations.

He was active as a farmer also, addressing the Clarksville Grange District on the need for railroads in the South and serving as Lecturer for the Clarksville Tobacco District Council in 1875.<sup>28</sup> Of his farming the Clarksville Chronicle said:

He says he has raised more hay, this year, on the same number of acres, than almost any man in the country. He also has an excellent prospect for corn. We are aware, too, that he can hide well-barbequed pig and lamb, equal to any other man his age and size.... But a man capable of raising such vast amounts of corn, hay, etc., should be entitled to as much as he can eat.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, February 1, 1879, p. 2; February 8, 1879, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, January 16, 1875, pp. 2-3.

<sup>29</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, September 18, 1875, p. 3.

Major Henry's primary financial interest seems to have been the Memphis, Clarksville and Louisville Railroad Company.<sup>30</sup> He was elected to the Board of Directors for 1867-1868 and in late 1869 posted a \$100,000 bond and became president of the railroad.<sup>31</sup> It, like many others in the South, was in financial trouble and within three years had gone into receivership. Major Henry was apparently president until that time.<sup>32</sup> In 1874 he was one of the subscribers for a survey for a narrow-gauge railroad connecting Clarksville and Edgefield.<sup>33</sup>

A great deal of Major Henry's time was taken up with various civic affairs. He was requested by the Literary Societies of the University of North Carolina to address them in June 1866, but he declined because of previous business engagements.<sup>34</sup> He was frequently called

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<sup>30</sup>The original minute book of the First National Bank does not show Gustavus A. Henry as one of the founders or original stockholders. Statement of Roger Halliday, Vice President and Cashier, First National Bank, personal interview, June 15, 1972.

<sup>31</sup>Clarksville Weekly Chronicle, July 5, 1867, p. 3; Clarksville Chronicle, December 4, 1869, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup>He had been reelected to the Board of Directors and as President in May 1871. Clarksville Chronicle, May 27, 1871, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, April 4, 1874, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup>Clarksville Weekly Chronicle, May 4, 1866, p. 3.

to chair public meetings, the most notable of which was the one following the fire that destroyed much of downtown Clarksville in 1878.<sup>35</sup> He was one of the sponsors for a County Immigration Society that apparently never materialized.<sup>36</sup> He was one of the speakers at the dedication of Greenwood Cemetery, honoring the Confederate dead to be buried there,<sup>37</sup> and at the laying of the cornerstone for the new Tobacco Exchange Building.<sup>38</sup> He was one of the representatives of Clarksville at a meeting in Memphis in May 1874 that resulted in the moving of Southwestern University to the city.<sup>39</sup> He took a prominent part in the ceremonies accompanying the laying of the cornerstone for a new courthouse in 1879, following the fire that destroyed the old building. He was on the committee that planned the ceremonies, rode in the lead carriage in the parade to the site with Governor Porter, W. A. Quarles and other dignitaries, and was one of the platform guests during the speeches.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, April 15, 1878, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, February 21, 1868, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, June 7, 1873, p. 2; Beach, p. 232.

<sup>38</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, December 7, 1878, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, May 16, 1874, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup>Clarksville Semi-Weekly Tobacco Leaf, April 29, 1879, p. 2; Clarksville Chronicle, May 3, 1879, p. 3;

Major Henry continued to be active in the Clarksville Bar Association, addressing the January 17, 1867, meeting to honor the passing of Cave Johnson, serving on the committee to draft resolutions commemorating his life, and presenting them to the Chancery Court in Clarksville to be entered in the court minutes.<sup>41</sup> He addressed the Association's annual Fourth of July picnics in 1877 and 1878.<sup>42</sup>

Especially in his last years, Major Henry was active in Trinity Episcopal Church. When the cornerstone for the new church building was laid in mid-1875, he read its inscription, a list of the articles deposited within, and a brief history of the church.<sup>43</sup> He was elected vestryman to serve during 1876-1877 and presided at a meeting of the church members in August 1876 to consider the financial condition of the church. His appeal led to pledges totaling \$10,750 to complete the building.<sup>44</sup> He served as chairman of the arrangements committee for the 46th annual diocese

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May 17, 1879, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup>Clarksville Weekly Chronicle, January 26, 1867, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, July 21, 1877, p. 1; July 13, 1878, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, July 3, 1875, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, April 22, 1876, p. 3; August 26, 1876, p. 2. He and his family were subscribers to the new church, of course. Whittle, pp. 50-51.

convention that met in Clarksville May 23, 1878.<sup>45</sup>

As he had been all his adult life, Gustavus A. Henry was active in politics. At an October 1865 public meeting presided over by Cave Johnson, he spoke in favor of resolutions that accepted the end of the war, swore allegiance to the United States, promised to promote sectional harmony and the well-being of the freedmen, and formally commended President Johnson's stand against the Radicals.<sup>46</sup> He spoke at a great meeting in Memphis in August 1866 to ratify the Philadelphia Convention. He recalled how in North Carolina in 1865 "...keeping, as well as I could, out of the way of the federal forces....," he saw Andrew Johnson's birthplace, a small log cabin, and recounted Johnson's hard work in improving himself and in state and national politics. He called Johnson a "...child of destiny, but it is a destiny of his own creation." He promised to work for Johnson's reelection in 1868 and said that the South owed Johnson a debt of gratitude for the stand he had taken.<sup>47</sup> He was active in 1867 in organizing conservative opposition to the Radicals controlling the state government, addressing a

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<sup>45</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, May 8, 1878, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup>Clarksville Weekly Chronicle, October 6, 1865, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup>Clarksville Weekly Chronicle, August 31, 1866, p. 2.

county meeting whose resolutions for the state convention called for equal civil rights for all citizens regardless of race or color; free speech, free religion, free schools, free labor, free ballot for all; and friendly relations with blacks.<sup>48</sup>

Major Henry began the 1868 campaign by speaking with W. A. Quarles for Judge Barry, the Conservative candidate for Chancellor.<sup>49</sup> When the Democratic county convention met to choose delegates to the state convention, he appealed to the need to unify all conservatives and the necessity of reestablishing white man's government. He was on the committee to name the county's delegates and was one of the 12th District (Clarksville) delegates.<sup>50</sup> He had favored Pendleton for the 1868 Democratic presidential nomination but was well pleased with Seymour whom he considered a good man and great statesman. Frank Blair he thought bold and brave in his defense of the South and he said that Blair's letters reminded him of Andrew Jackson or Thomas Hart Benton.<sup>51</sup> He served as an alternate elector for the

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<sup>48</sup>Clarksville Weekly Chronicle, April 5, 1867, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, March 13, 1868, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, June 5, 1868, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup>G. A. Henry to Dr. John F. Henry, August 4, 1868, in the Henry Family Papers, Miss Elizabeth Julia Flournoy Henry, Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

He addressed the 1869 convention of Montgomery, Cheatham, Robertson, Dickson and Stewart Counties which met to nominate Circuit Court officials.<sup>53</sup> He was in charge of arranging the visit by ex-President Johnson to Clarksville on June 1, 1869.<sup>54</sup> Major Henry was a delegate to the 1870 Democratic state convention that met in Nashville September 13, after writing a widely publicized letter in which he condemned efforts to establish a conservative party based on the old Whigs, separate from the Democrats. Division of conservative strength would only insure the victory of the Radicals. He said,

I would, therefore, advise the Old-line Whigs, if they will permit me to do so, to make common cause with Conservatives and Democrats, till we rescue our abused and suffering country from the plunder and despotism of the Radical party. Don't let us think for a moment as to what party the fruits of such a victory shall accrue. To participate in such a triumph, however humbly, would be glory enough for me.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, September 25, 1868, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, May 8, 1869, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup>G. A. Henry to Andrew Johnson, May 21, 1869, Johnson Papers, Ser. 1, Reel 36; Clarksville Chronicle, June 5, 1869, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, August 27, 1870, p. 2; September 3, 1870, p. 2. The letter was dated August 13, 1870, and originally published in the Memphis Appeal.

Major Henry was called upon by "Many Citizens of All parties" to run for Congress in 1872 but he declined, saying the only inducement for him to run would be the hope that he could help restore harmony to the state. General Frank Cheatham who was already in the race had a clear head and unerring judgment which were more important than oratorical skill (Major Henry commented that oratory was a dangerous gift), and the state owed Cheatham a debt of gratitude that should be repaid, so the Major saw no need to run.<sup>56</sup>

Major Henry and other prominent political figures in Clarksville called a mass meeting in May 1874 to unify opposition to the Radicals in the upcoming elections, and in August he was chosen a delegate to the state convention in Nashville.<sup>57</sup> When the convention met the Committee on Permanent Organization headed by ex-Governor Isham G. Harris recommended Gustavus A. Henry for permanent chairman, and his name was greeted with loud applause. He was escorted to the speakers' stand by Governor Harris and John A. McKinney and introduced by Governor Cardwell. His speech implored the spirits of Jackson, White, Grundy, Bell, Foster and Cave Johnson to hover over the convention and inspire its

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<sup>56</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, June 15, 1872, p. 2;  
June 22, 1872, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, April 4, 1874, p. 2;  
August 8, 1874, p. 2.

members with wisdom and patriotism. He called for unity between the old Whigs and the Democrats and blamed the Civil War on the Republicans who refused to obey the Constitution of the United States. In considering state problems he called for the lowest possible taxes consistent with paying the state debt and a drastic reduction in the cost of state government; he opposed the repudiation of the state debt and pointed out that the burden of taxation was imposed not by the state but by the federal tariff. While he had favored protection of American industry when it needed protection from European competitors in order to grow, American manufactures could now compete in the world and needed no protection. He considered Grant a small man at the head of a government "...rushing madly into a centralized despotism," one so politically immoral that an honorable man hesitated to run for office lest he be corrupted. He called the Southern states conquered provinces of an empire, comparing their condition with that of Ireland. He thought the Civil Rights Act pending before Congress a Pandora's box. He believed it unconstitutional despite the Fourteenth Amendment, which merely stated that fundamental rights of no citizen could be abridged by the states, not that Congress had the power to enforce these rights. He thanked the convention for the honor bestowed upon him and called for patriotism, unity and party harmony, closing with:

No matter how many jarring elements there may be in your anxiety to promote the fortunes of any aspirant to Gubernatorial honors, let them all be united in one common sentiment of fraternal love, as the thousand little streams which rise on the top of the mountain, and after flowing each in its different course, meet at last in the valley and flow on to the sea, and mingle their waters forever.<sup>58</sup>

Response to the speech was gratifying.<sup>59</sup> The convention went on to nominate James D. Porter of Henry County for Governor.

Major Henry took an active part in the 1874 canvass, serving as a delegate to the county convention to nominate James E. Bailey for the Legislature and as a county elector in the gubernatorial race.<sup>60</sup> He spoke with James E. Bailey on October 10 in Clarksville, condemning the Republican government as producing hatred, malice, greed and devastation. The Civil Rights Act could only produce racial hatred and the destruction of the public school system. He pointed to the reduction by half of the state debt under the Democrats, appealing to the voters to consider these things before voting. He also spoke in Montgomery County at

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<sup>58</sup> Republican Banner, August 20, 1874, pp. 2, 4.

<sup>59</sup> See, for instance, the article from the Franklin Review, reprinted in the Clarksville Chronicle, September 5, 1874, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Clarksville Chronicle, August 22, 1874, p. 2; September 5, 1874, p. 2.

Herring's Store on October 17, Cherry's Station on October 24, and Union School on October 31.<sup>61</sup> He accepted a request by the State Executive Committee to speak in Memphis where his "unusual and enviable popularity" was expected to produce a good crowd.<sup>62</sup>

In early 1875 Major Henry was mentioned as the logical compromise candidate for the Senate seat to be filled by the Legislature. "Montgomery" wrote to the Chronicle that his wisdom and decisiveness qualified him for the position and made it unlikely that he would be provoked into rudeness or vehemence.<sup>63</sup> Nothing came of it, however.

Major Henry presided at the ratification meeting for the Democratic platform and candidates in 1876 and at the meeting nominated John F. House to return to Congress.<sup>64</sup> He was chairman of the 3rd District's barbeque to open the campaign and took a prominent part in the fourteen-mile cavalcade from Clarksville to Willie's Chapel in early

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<sup>61</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, October 17, 1874, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, October 24, 1874, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, January 9, 1875, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, July 8, 1876, p. 2; July 15, 1876, p. 2.

October, riding at the head of the procession in a handsome barouche with the principal speakers.<sup>65</sup> He was the featured speaker at the "grandest rally of the season" on October 21, and he spoke at a barbeque at Daly's Shop later in the month.<sup>66</sup>

The campaign of 1876 marked the end of Gustavus A. Henry's long political career. As the 1880 election approached he wrote a letter protesting the Clarksville Chronicle's publishing defamatory charges against Tilden and calling for Democratic unity.<sup>67</sup> When the Democrats met in May to choose their delegates to the state convention, Major Henry was chosen as a delegate, but he was apparently unable to attend.<sup>68</sup>

Major Henry had a very serious illness in the spring of 1870 but had recovered from it by late summer.<sup>69</sup> By late September he was able to spend several days with Mrs. Henry at the Maxwell House in Nashville.<sup>70</sup> Whether from the 1870

<sup>65</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, September 2, 1876, p. 2; October 14, 1876, p. 2.

<sup>66</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, October 28, 1876, p. 3; November 4, 1876, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup>Clarksville Semi-Weekly Tobacco Leaf, March 19, 1880, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, May 8, 1880, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, May 7, 1870, p. 3; May 14, 1870, p. 3; August 27, 1870, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup>Nashville Union and American, September 28, 1870,

illness or from another, he lost the sight in one eye by November 1871 though he was still able to be active.<sup>71</sup> He visited Allegehany Springs, Virginia, for his health during the summer of 1872,<sup>72</sup> and for several years afterward his health seemed to be good. Mrs. Henry was quite ill in early 1876 and spent some time during the summer travelling for her health, but she was sufficiently recovered to entertain with Major Henry at a moonlight picnic with dancing given by her grandson, Abe Martin, in August.<sup>73</sup> Both were in good health in August 1879 when they gave a party which seemed to be a major social event. The grove was hung with Chinese lanterns, the music of Eichorn's band was exquisite, as many as sixty-four couples danced at once, and the buffet made the editor of the Chronicle greatly regret his dyspepsia.<sup>74</sup> This was apparently the last party given by the Henrys,

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reprinted in the Clarksville Chronicle, October 1, 1870, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, November 11, 1871, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, July 27, 1872, p. 3; September 14, 1872, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, March 26, 1876, p. 3; G. A. Henry to Marion Henry, July 19, 1876; July 20, 1876, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross; Clarksville Chronicle, August 19, 1876, p. 3. The letters do not indicate which health resort she visited.

<sup>74</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, August 16, 1879, p. 3.

since by early June 1880 Major Henry had left for Sebree Springs, Kentucky, a well-known health resort. He returned to Clarksville by mid-July, but his health was not much improved.<sup>75</sup> He died at eight o'clock on Friday morning, September 10, 1880, at his residence in Clarksville.<sup>76</sup>

When the Circuit Court received word on Friday morning of his death, it was immediately adjourned until after the funeral. The funeral was held September 12 with Bishop Quintard officiating. Pall-bearers were Bryce Stewart, James E. Rice, J. J. Crusman, Charles G. Smith, D. N. Kennedy, Jo. C. Stark, John F. House and James E. Bailey. Burial was in Greenwood Cemetery, and the funeral cortege numbered one hundred vehicles.<sup>77</sup> The Clarksville Bar Association met on September 14 and eulogized Gustavus A. Henry, deciding unanimously to wear a mourning band for thirty days to honor his passing, but perhaps the most fitting tribute came at his burial. Two Irish laborers whom he had helped requested that the cemetery attendants stand aside, and they covered "...his loved form; as if the hand

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<sup>75</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, June 12, 1880, p. 3; July 3, 1880, p. 3; July 24, 1880, p. 3.

<sup>76</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, September 11, 1880, p. 3; Invitation to the funeral of Gustavus A. Henry, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

<sup>77</sup>Whittle, p. 54; Clarksville Semi-Weekly Tobacco Leaf, September 14, 1880, Henry Collection - Mrs. Cross.

of love could soften the sound of clods as they fall into  
the hollow grave...."78

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<sup>78</sup>Clarksville Chronicle, September 18, 1880, p. 2.

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