**Civil War Politics in Peninsula**

**Context:**

This is an imagined debate between Merrill Boodey and J.D. Edson that could have taken place on the steps of Merrill Boodey’s store located on Main Street in Peninsula next to the Cuyahoga River side of the Main Street bridge. Edson was a store owner from the village of Boston, just North along the canal. Boodey was a Democrat and Edson was a Republican. Despite their political differences, they were personal friends. Their points of view reflected the divided politics of the folks in Boston Township during the War. Given the discussion about Vallandigham- an anti-war Peace Democrat running for Ohio Governor, the time frame would likely be the summer of 1863. Mention is made of Merrill Boodey’s brother Levi (who writes of Vallandigham and Judge Humphrey in his letters). Hudson is a neighboring town located just east and had a reputation of being staunchly Republican and actively Abolitionist. In the 19th Century, stores such as Merrill Boodey’s served as public meeting places for social and political activities

**Questions:**

1. What seem to be the biggest issues dividing Republicans and Democrats in 1863 according to this story?

2. What personal insults do Boodey and Edson hurl at each other that seem to relate to their politics? What are some adjectives that they attach to “Republican” or “Democrat”?

3. What individuals and groups are named in this passage that accurately set it in time and place?

4. Based on this passage, does it seem that Boodey and Edson (hence Democrats and Republicans) could ever agree or compromise on politics?

5. Which of the images provided in this lesson does this passage most relate to?

6. What are your questions?

**“The proprietor of the recently acquired Haskell Building busied himself behind the counter of his store, bandying an occasional word with a group of loungers in the rear of the room, when he happened to glance through a front window and observed a man approaching from the river bridge towards his place of business. He turned to the idlers and said in an undertone:**

**“Hey, men, here comes our friend J.D. Maybe we can have some fun with him,” And he moved casually to the porch that paralleled the sidewalk in front of the store, being careful to keep his back turned to the pedestrian as though unaware of his approach.**

**As the latter drew near he called out: “U-h, hellow Squire Booby; e-r-r-“ The storekeeper whirled about as if in surprise- “ that is, I-e-r—meant to say Boodey, but no matter. The similarity is quite apparent, both as to name and man.”**

**Hailed the merchant, “Well If it ain’t my misguided black Republican friend, Mr. J.D. Edson himself. What’s the matter? Did you get lonesome down there in your one-man town of Boston and come up to Peninsula to get away from yourself?”**

**“No cause for lonesomeness there, Squire, but I heard tell one of your preachers her said the crust between this town and hell is only a few inches thick and I came up hoping to find that you had broken through and were now with your rightful company.”**

**“Nope, I’m still topside and not even looking in, J.D.; but you better watch your step; there might be something to what the minister is reported to have said and you might fall for it.”**

**“All joking aside, though, and seeing you’re here, and before I forget it, I’m inviting you to come back next Saturday night to attend a meeting with me in the hall upstairs. I have an idear you might hear something of benefit to that jet-tinted mind of yours.”**

**By this time the group within the store had gathered by the door, several onlookers, with expectant grins on their faces because they had witnessed pervious tilts between these two redoubtables, had congregated in the street, and the principals had begun a pacing back and forth, each suiting his gate to the other, Boodey on his porch, and Edson a couple of steps below on the sidewalk.**

**“Huh, I wouldn’t be caught out foraging with you, let alone sitting at a public meeting with ye,” replied the visitor, “I suppose some saffron-paunched copperhead, alias secesh, ALIAS DEMOCRAT, is going to orate on how to stop the war.”**

**“Now, now Edson. Don’t let your forktailed tongue get the best of your bitter judgment, “said the storekeeper mildly, “It’s only Judge Humphrey coming over from Hudson to make a speech on Valadigham, and I thought maybe you might enjoy hearing some sensible talk for a change.”**

**“Judge Humphrey!- ‘sensible’ – Valan- !!GREAT DAY -!!” gasped the outraged man on the walk. Then, more rationally, “ Boodey, you well know what I think of Van Humphrey, which is, first, that he ought to be kicked off the judge’s bench, and, second, that he should be strung up along with the traitor he is supporting for high office.”**

**“Well!” conceded the squire, “they did hang him- in effigy that is, but-“**

**“Yes, and I understand,” interrupted Edson, “that there is a petition out for his disbarment and that a lot of the boys from our own 115th Regiment signed it; including your brother Levi. I’m glad to learn that the young sergeant has developed a mind of his own, now that he’s in the army and out from under your apron sir-.”**

**“Mr. Edson,” cut in Boodey, “allow me to say that I do not know at the moment if Levi signed that paper or not. But if he did,” speaking slowly and impressively, “I am assured in my own mind that when and if the truth becomes know it will be found he did so, not of his own free will, but under pressure from certain of his superiors. The army is still the army you know.**

**“But I disbelieve,” he continued, “that you have all the facts in this hanging case. The fine Italian hand of your friend and one-time citizen of this township, Dr. George Ashmun, seems to appear in the matter. Let me enlighten you a bit.**

**“As you probably know, the good Doctor was attached for a while to the 93rd Ohio as surgeon and was with it down in the Kentucky region. It appears that he was home in Hudson on furlough some time back and met Judge Humphrey on the street. The Judge said: ‘Why hello, Doctor’ and reached out to shake hands. Ashmun stepped back and replied: ‘I won’t shake hands with a d---d butternut’ ‘Oh” said Judge Van, ‘So you’ve had your hand in Uncle Sam’s pocketbook too, have you?’ And one morning shortly after they found an effigy of the Judge hanging from a tree in the Hudson Commons.”**

**“Said Doc Ashmun was robbing Uncle Sam did he?” fumed Edson. “While all the time he was down there on a pittance doctoring our soldiers when he could have been at home comfortable and with a good paying practice. GREAT DAY IN THE MORNING! I think old Humpy deserved to be hung. And you along with him for that matter, Boodey since everybody around here knows that you two are of the same ilk.”**

**“Now maybe that’s an idear Blackie. I’ll give you a pair of my old breeches and a shirt for your to stuff and you can string it up on this corner post. It might be the means of making some extra votes for Vallandigham, because- as I was about to mention when you interrupted me a few moments ago- they do say that there were some nineteen or twenty more Democrats in Hudson AFTER the effigy hanging that there had been BEFORE.”**

**And with that parting shot, and an amused smile on his face, the Squire swung on his heel and re-entered the store.**

Source: **Source**: Early Days in Peninsula Ohio, A Collection of Fifty-Three Articles by Fred Waterman Bishop

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