

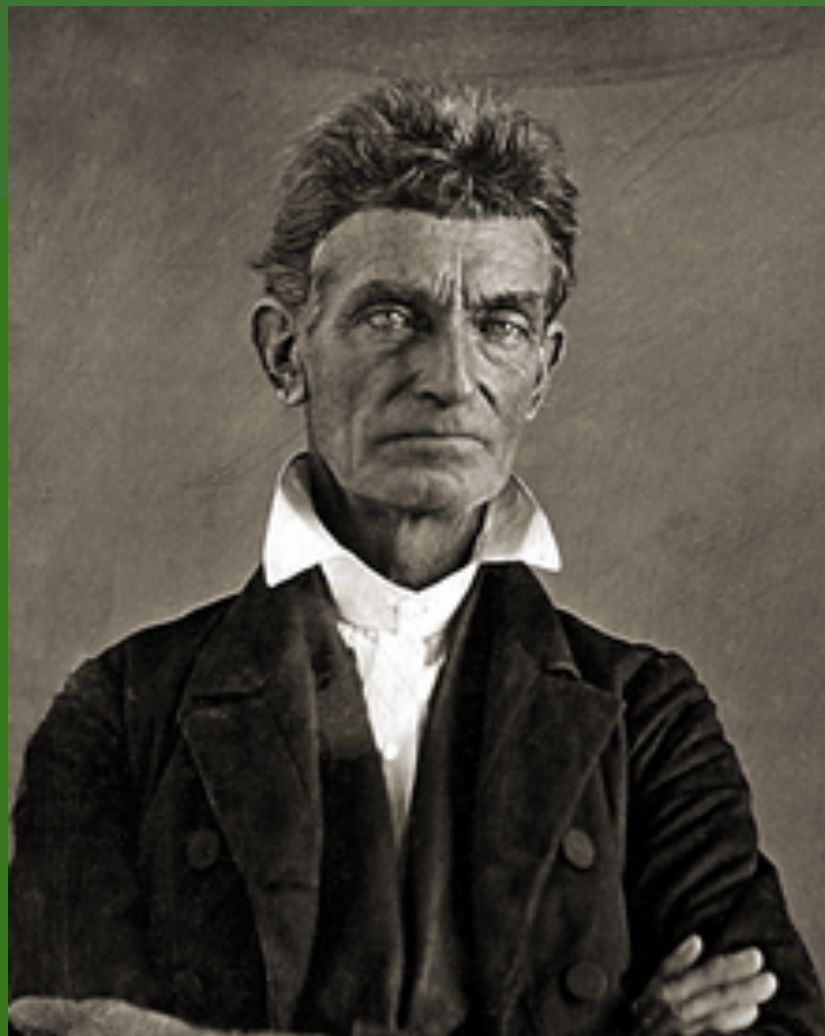
Aurora in the Antebellum

the role of Aurora, Ohio in the antebellum abolition and Union movements

Background

The Western Reserve was heavily involved in the abolition movement in the antebellum period.

One of the most notable abolitionists in the area was Hudson resident John Brown, who would later lead the infamous raid on Harper's Ferry, escalating tensions between the north and south in the year before the Civil War.



John Brown

Aurora was less enthusiastic than the surrounding towns. For example, when an abolitionist from Hudson came to speak at the Church in Aurora, he was driven out by an angry mob.

The following documents give direct evidence of Aurora's political participation immediately before the Civil War.

For the PLAIN DEALER:
Twinsburgh and Aurora Awake!

TWINSBURGH, August 18, 1860.

J. W. GRAY, DEAR SIR:—in pursuance of a call, the Democrats met at their Head Quarters last evening, for the purpose of forming a DOUGLAS and JOHNSON Club. C. HANKS was called to the Chair and JOHN MADDEN, Secretary, the President stated the object of the Meeting, when the following permanent officers were appointed:—

President, Henry Baldwin; Vice-Presidents, M. C. Bishop, and C. Hanks; Secretary John Madden; Treasurer, E. W. Clark; Executive Committee, J. F. Clark, James Roach, A. L. Nelson, and O. Rouiger. The Club of Twinsburg, the object is to secure as many votes as possible for DOUGLAS and JOHNSON at the coming election. A committee of three were appointed to draft a Constitution and By-Laws and report at next meeting. On motion, a copy of the proceedings of this meeting were ordered to be sent to the PLAIN DEALER and *Sunnit Democracy* for publication. On motion, the meeting adjourned to meet again Monday Evening, August 27, 1860.
HENRY BALDWIN, President.

JOHN MADDEN, Sec'y.

P. S. I need hardly say to you, the Democrats of this place are up and dressed, as the large list of your valuable P. D. taken here tells its own story, which now numbers about one hundred and twenty-five. To-day our Club turned out about fifty strong, accompanied by J. W. Fessenden's Band, to help our brother Democrats of Aurora raise a splendid pole, but we found them strong enough to raise it themselves. Addresses were delivered by E. Humphrey, E. Spaulding, Esq., and Gen. Nelson Eggleston.

There is not a Bolter in this place, nor is there one in any of the adjoining towns that we can hear of. They had to import one from Akron to take the census. There is not one copy of old Funk's paper taken here, nor never was, and that is not all, we don't want them.

Yours,
JOHN MADDEN.

Newspaper article documenting Aurorans' political participation in the 1860 election

**" There is not a Bolter in
this place, nor is there
one in any of the
adjoining towns we can
hear of. "**

This illustrates Aurora's defiant attitude toward critics; Aurorans had become proud to say that they were affiliated with the Union.

Letter from Aurora.

AURORA, O., April 27, 1861.—H. Hurd & Sons are now doing business under the aegis of the American Flag. Union men, call and see.

The Democratic Postmaster also suspended the Stars and Stripes from the Post office this morning.

Great change! "The weak in faith, receive ye." Three party leaders, who last Saturday were praying for the vengeance of the Almighty and Jeff. Davis to visit Washington and the Cabinet, are now commending the Administration, and expressing their ardent love for the Union.

ANCHORA.

—Review.

AURORA, May 1st, 1861.

H. Hurd & Sons were not aware but what they were American citizens, or that the Stars and Stripes belonged to the weak in faith exclusively, until an article in the daily *Review*, of April 29th, from "Anchora" called their attention to the fact, or that the American flag belonged to that part of the party to which he claimed to belong.

We also consider it further evidence of the poor taste, which we *know* he possesses, to refer to political differences in times like these when all true men set party feelings aside and are ready and willing to march with a firm step and unflinching eye even up to the cannons mouth to defend that flag. And that we have the courage to do so, if necessity requires, an ingredient which we think but slightly mixed in the making up of "Anchora's" long propositions.

To all Union men we extend a cordial invitation to call and see us as well as our flag, for to that party, thank God, we belong.

We say let the glorious Stars and Stripes float to the breeze from every house top, letter box and village green, as emblematical of fidelity and devotion, until *traitors* are no more.

The Stars and Stripes forever,

H. HURD & SONS.

Newspaper article detailing Aurorans' contradictory stance on the war

" Three party leaders, who last Saturday were praying for the vengeance of the Almighty and Jeff. Davis to visit Washington and the Cabinet, are now commending the Administration, and expressing their ardent love for the Union. "

Rowdyism in Aurora.

AURORA, Portage County, May 4, 1861.

EDITOR PLAIN DEALER:—About the only town on the Reserve, where rowdyism is rampant and patriotism defunct, is the little town of Aurora. There is evidently something wrong in the body of the corporation and a weak, as well as a soft place, in many of the leading spirits who control the action of the people. In times like these when the Government is in imminent peril—all MEN, who ARE men are forgetting party, and all past associations and rushing to defend the Flag, it is very humiliating to learn that there should be on the enlightened Reserve, a community like that at Aurora. Nothing thus far has been done in that town, either in raising fighting men, or money to aid the cause. An effort, however, has been made to organize a home guard, and even that failed. Two meetings have already been called for that purpose and only fourteen men found ready to defend their own homes. Out of these fourteen men there are twelve candidates for the captaincy. At the last meeting which was on Friday last, a series of Resolutions were adopted, casting certain reflections upon certain individuals, but no resolution was adopted to assist one iota in the cause, or to raise a dollar. The whole thing was a perfect "jangle."

It is to be hoped that the women of Aurora will now take this matter in hand, and raise a company of nurses to take proper care of these fourteen gallant volunteers, as it is greatly to be feared that they will need the protection of all the "guardian angels," should some chivalrous son of the South make an inroad upon the Cheseocracy of that vicinity,

NORTH-WEST.

Article denouncing Aurorans' meager participation in the beginning of the Civil War

In this article, we can see that Aurora was seen as unenthusiastic by neighboring towns. This article was intended to be a rally or call to arms for the people of Aurora.

Reasons for Lack of Participation

At this point in time, Aurora's cheese business was booming, and much of this trade was done with Southerners. Economically, Aurorans had a lot to lose if the north and south were to come into conflict.

There were also tensions due to the fact that Aurora, as a rural community, tended to be more Democratic, and, at that point in time, the Democratic Party tended to favor the Confederacy.

This may have influenced Aurorans to take a more neutral stance on abolition and be less enthusiastic supporters of the Union during the early years of the Civil War.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Aurora was seen as less enthusiastic in the abolition and pro-Union movements. Initially, Aurorans were resistant to the movements, but later supported them, however reluctantly at first. This was motivated by economic and political reasons.

Sources

The Cleveland Plain Dealer (newspaper)

Aurora: From the Founding to the Flood (book)

Aurora (book)

More Than a Landmark: A History of the Church in Aurora (book)