

WILLIAM WINDOM

Cartoon Centerfold 1881–91

Roger A. Fischer



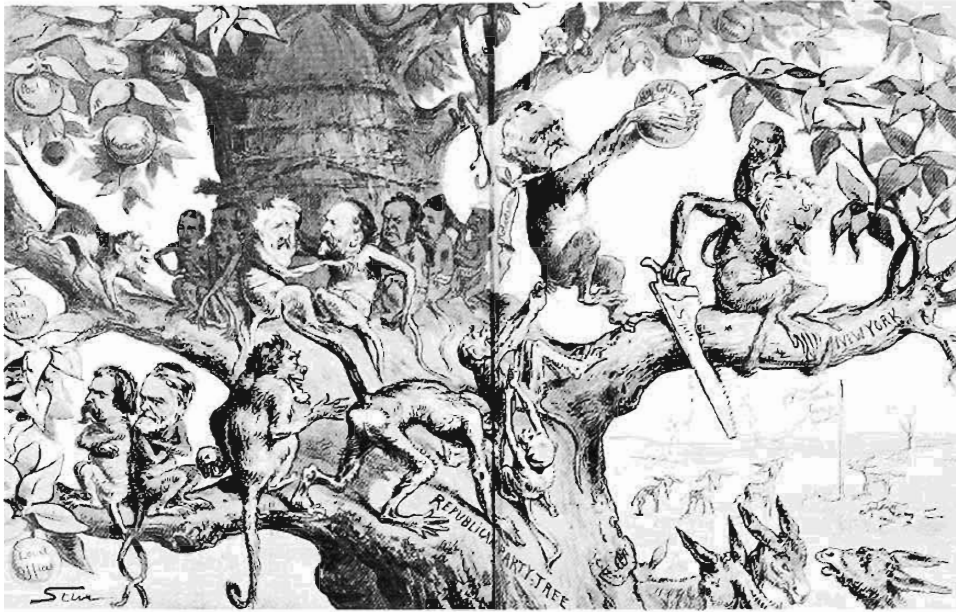
MINNESOTA and Minnesotans were all but invisible in the cartoon art published in the United States during the latter part of the 19th century, the vast bulk of it in New York City half a continent to the east. All things considered, such invisibility was a boon, for editorial cartooning has always been a rather savage medium, and no fledgling state seeking steady infusions of settlers and investment capital coveted the status of national laughingstock. Few Minnesotans mourned when cartoonists drew Kansans or Kentucky mountaineers as rustic hayseeds, made fun of Indian-white donnybrooks on the western plains, and fixed New Jersey in millions of minds as the domain of the killer mosquito. For Minnesota politicians anxious for national recognition, however, such invisibility, even in the negative medium of cartoon satire, may well have posed a problem. Even the eminently cartoonable gadfly Ignatius Donnelly left little legacy in the cartoons of the day.¹

The lone exception to this pattern of benign neglect toward Minnesotans during this period was William Windom, Winona Republican congressman, senator, and on two separate occasions secretary of the treasury. Between his first appointment to that post in 1881 and

his death a decade later, Windom appeared in about two dozen color cartoons in *Puck* and its rival *Judge*, the two most popular and politically influential dime illustrated humor weeklies of the age. Joseph Keppler, an Austrian-born artist and actor, began *Puck* in 1876 as a German-language venture. Its English-language version, introduced the following year, quickly revolutionized American political cartoon art. Keppler spurned the rigid moral dogmatism and stark black-and-white style of Thomas Nast and endowed his cover and centerfold creations with color run riot, droll satire tempered with Viennese levity, and a bent toward elaborate situational scenes featuring notables by the dozens. *Puck's* circulation soon hit 80,000, and many imitators sought to duplicate its success. Most prominent among them was *Judge*, begun by *Puck* turncoat James A. Wales in 1881. *Judge* emerged as *Puck's* Republican nemesis during a brilliant, scurrilous cartoon war in 1884 over the purported sins of presidential candidates Grover Cleveland of New York and James G. Blaine of Maine. It achieved true parity after William

Professor Fischer, head of the department of history and director of American studies at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, is a specialist in 19th-century American political culture. Among his recent books is Tippecanoe and Trinkets Too: Material Culture in American Presidential Campaigns, 1828–1884 (1987).

¹ For a rare exception, see *Judge*, June 16, 1900, p. 8–9, for F. Victor Gillam's "At the Start of the Political Handicap Race of 1900."



"THE MONKEY'S REVENGE" (fig. 1)

J. Arkell became publisher in 1885 and lured artists Bernard Gillam and Eugene Zimmerman away from Keppler.²

Windom had served five terms in the House of Representatives and more than a decade in the Senate, including stints at the helm of such key committees as House Indian Affairs and Senate Finance. In 1880 he had waged a favorite-son candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination, but even so he did not make his debut as a color cartoon caricature until June 1, 1881, after he had become James A. Garfield's secretary of the treasury. Windom took a background position in his first cartoon appearances. Karl Edler von Stur's *Puck* centerfold "The Monkey's Revenge," a wry commentary upon an angry patronage squabble between Garfield and New York Senator Roscoe Conkling, included Windom and several of his cabinet cohorts watching in disdain as Conkling sawed off a limb holding protégé Tom Platt and himself (fig. 1). The patronage plum at issue, collector of the New York Custom House, fell under the aegis of Treasury, making Windom's presence logical, although he was probably included simply by dint of his membership in Garfield's official family. The disgusted expression worn by his simian caricature was altogether appropriate, for he had been taken by surprise by the appointment and then was forced by protocol to voice public support for Garfield's nominee, William H. Robertson, and to give pious assurances to the press that he would ensure that the notoriously corrupt New York Custom House would henceforth be run "on strictly business principles."³

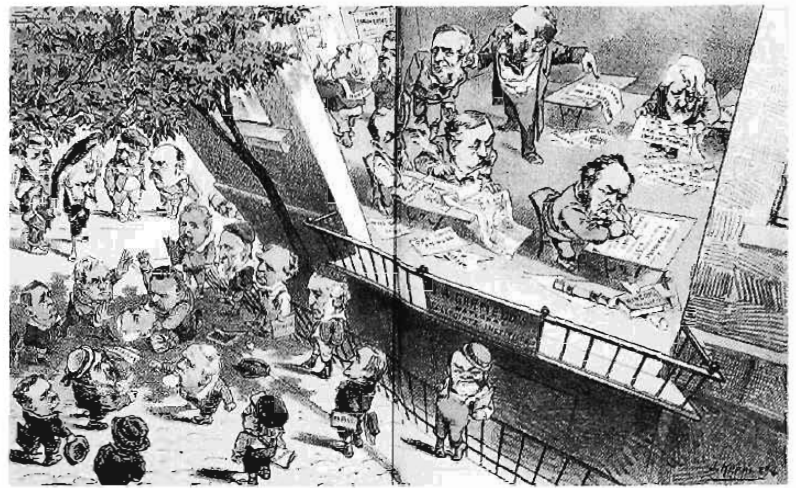
Four weeks later, in Keppler's June 29, 1881, *Puck* centerfold "The Good and the Bad Boys," Windom was cast as a pupil among other cabinet schoolboys, per-

forming treasury arithmetic to reduce the national debt under the tutelage of the president at "J. A. Garfield's National Collegiate School" (fig. 2). A whimsical vignette on political "ins" and "outs," the cartoon depicted as schoolyard idlers such Democrats as Samuel J. Tilden and Tammany Hall's boss, "Honest John" Kelly, and such Republican dissidents as Ulysses S. Grant, Conkling, and Platt.

The first color cartoon to portray Windom as more than a part of the political background was Keppler's "The Civil Service Egg No. 2, Laid 1881—May It Hatch Out Better Than That of 1877" (fig. 3). This August 17, 1881, *Puck* centerfold featured cabinet members as laying hens; Windom and Postmaster General Thomas L. James were roosting while the others watched benignly or menacingly, according to their perceived positions on the reform. The event that inspired the cartoon was almost certainly the national gathering of reform activists in Newport, Rhode Is-

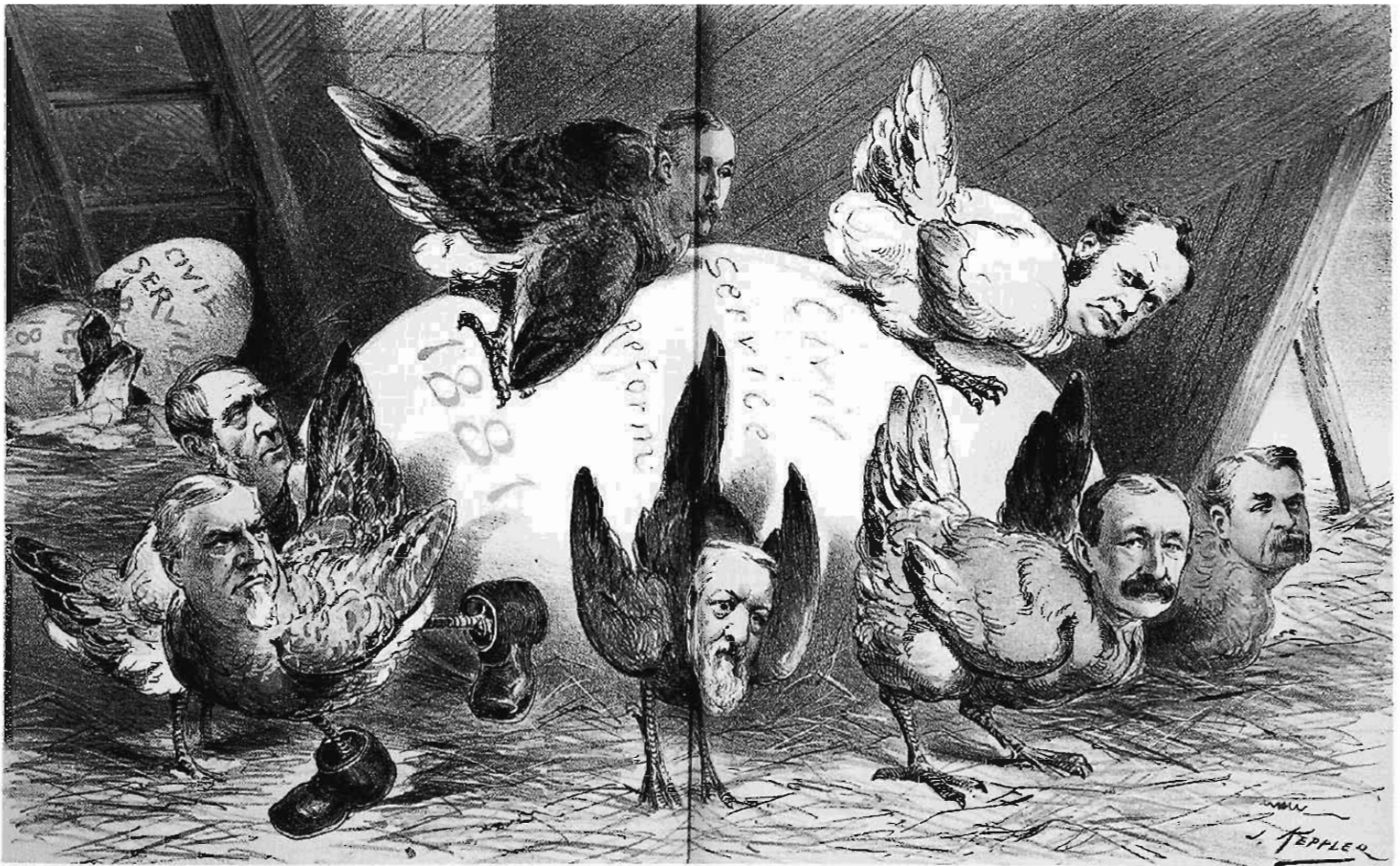
² Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), 102–117; Charles Press, *The Political Cartoon* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981), 254–259; Richard Samuel West, *Satire on Stone: The Political Cartoons of Joseph Keppler* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

³ *Puck*, June 1, 1881; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 5, 1881; *New York Times*, June 5, 1881; Robert S. Salisbury, "William Windom, the Republican Party, and the Gilded Age" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1982), 530–533. For the patronage controversy, see H. Wayne Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877–1896* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 129–137; Justus D. Doenecke, *The Presidencies of James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1981), 30–36, 40–45.



"J. A. GARFIELD'S National Collegiate School" (fig. 2)

"THE CIVIL Service Egg No. 2, Laid 1881—May It Hatch Out Better Than That of 1877" (fig. 3)



land, on August 11, 1881, while President Garfield lay mortally wounded by a bullet fired by frustrated office seeker Charles Guiteau. (Unsuccessful efforts to curb the flourishing spoils system had been in the works for nearly 15 years. This convention produced the National Civil Service Reform League and eventually the 1883 Pendleton Act.) Keppler's portrayal of cabinet attitudes toward civil service conflicted with reality in one or two cases, but his cartoon accurately presented Windom's sincere if belated advocacy. An avowed opponent of earlier civil service initiatives, he had experienced a rude awakening when his appointment to a cabinet seat had exposed him to siege by hordes of federal job seekers. "In the last hundred days, a few thousand men in search of office have taken nine-tenths of the time of the President and his Cabinet advisers," Windom complained to an audience in New York in June, adding that as a result he had become "a good deal more of a civil service reformer than when I entered the Secretaryship of the Treasury three and a half months ago."⁴

Windom's final appearance as a cartoon character in *Puck* during his first tour at Treasury came in Keppler's September 28, 1881, centerfold "On the Threshold of Office--What Have We to Expect of Him?" It featured President Chester A. Arthur joining the Garfield cabinet in front of portraits of Andrew Johnson, Millard Fillmore, and John Tyler (labeled respectively "third failure," "second failure," and "first failure")—the three vice-presidents before him to reach the White House by the death of the incumbent. Although Keppler used the cabinet to symbolize continuity and stability, the exodus of every Garfield appointee except the colorless but genealogically useful secretary of war, Robert Todd Lincoln, had already begun. Two weeks after publication of the piece, Windom submitted his resignation. An obedient Minnesota legislative caucus returned him to his old Senate seat and the proffered chair of Foreign Relations Committee after his successor and friend, Alonzo J. Edgerton, had obligingly resigned that position.⁵

BY THIS TIME Windom must have become firmly established as an eminence in the minds of Keppler and his staff, for his next appearances were in cartoon commentary on 1882 Senate deliberations in which he played no roles of any consequence: a debate leading eventually to the so-called "Mongrel Tariff" of 1883 and a naval appropriations bill to begin modernization of the fleet. Bernard Gillam's "A Burning Question," the January 4, 1882, *Puck* back cover, cast Windom with President Arthur and Senate colleagues as the attentive audience while tariff activists debated the red-hot steel question. Consistently protectionist throughout his political career, Windom was much more concerned with projects to facilitate expanding midwestern agricul-

tural markets overseas than he was with the tariff. He took no active role in the debate. Gillam's "The Great Congressional Tramp Bullying the Old Women of the National Household," the July 12, 1882, *Puck* centerfold, featured Windom in drag as one of several Senate dowagers being terrorized into a treasury raid for Navy vessels by a menacing vagabond, New Jersey Congressman George M. Robeson, and his pet dog, Speaker of the House Joseph W. Keifer. Windom, who had little interest in military appropriations other than for frontier Indian defense, was not involved in the debate.⁶

The next three cartoons in which he was featured all appeared in *Judge* and were all quite abusive in their treatment of the Minnesotan. Windom, in politics the most orthodox of Republicans and in personal life the embodiment of Victorian Republican probity and cultural values, would seem to have provided an unlikely target for a humor weekly commonly regarded as pure party-line Republican. But in truth neither *Puck* nor *Judge* was predictably partisan before 1884 when Wales discovered a plumed knight in shining armor in James G. Blaine and Keppler a statesman for the ages in Grover Cleveland. If Keppler abhorred the Republican proclivity for big business, high tariffs, and seamy scandal, he despised equally the Tammany and south-

⁴ For Windom's evolving commitment to civil service reform, see Salisbury, "William Windom," 168–169, 235, 527–530. Especially enlightening on civil service endeavors is Ari Hoogenboom, *Outlawing the Spoils: A History of the Civil Service Reform Movement, 1865–1883* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 147–214; see also, David M. Jordan, *Roscoe Conkling of New York: Voice in the Senate* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 267–301; Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 27–39.

⁵ Salisbury, "William Windom," 537–540, 547–548. Until 1913, senators were selected by their state legislatures.

⁶ On the tariff debate, see Tom E. Terrill, *The Tariff, Politics, and American Foreign Policy, 1874–1901* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973), 37–67; Doenecke, *Presidencies of Garfield and Arthur*, 167–171. For Windom's record on tariff policy, see Salisbury, "William Windom," 141, 152–153, 206–207, 233, 301–302, 597–598.

As secretary of the navy under Grant, Robeson had squandered large sums on dubious repair projects to create navy-yard jobs for party patronage, leaving the fleet so weakened that it could not challenge the Spanish or Chilean fleets; he then came to Congress and a seat on the House Naval Committee. This cartoon was patently dishonest, for Robeson was no champion of a massive naval buildup and his committee had approved only seven of the 167 vessels recommended by the Naval Advisory Board. He was, however, a party spoilsman of unsavory reputation whom Keppler and his artists caricatured savagely at every opportunity. See Walter R. Herrick, *The American Naval Revolution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), 17–19, 23–27; Thomas C. Reeves, *Gentleman Boss: The Life of Chester Alan Arthur* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), 340–341. For Windom's record, see Salisbury, "William Windom," 146–148, 173–174, 336.

ern Bourbon wings of the Democratic party and yearned during the early 1880s for an independent "New party" made up of the reform elements of the body politic. For a mainstream Republican, Windom had fared rather well in *Puck* cartoons as a champion of civil service, a foe of Conkling and Robeson, and a symbol of national leadership.⁷

Judge cartoons during this period often reflected the more quirky likes and dislikes of its founder, for Wales was much fonder of Chester Arthur than he was of Republicans in general. This preference most likely accounted for Windom's unfavorable portrayal in *Judge* cartoons, for he had collaborated with President Rutherford B. Hayes in purging Arthur from the New York Custom House in 1878, had sided in public with Garfield against Conkling and Arthur in the 1881 patronage wars, and had been quick to exit the cabinet after Garfield's death, although neither Windom nor Arthur violated decorum to claim the initiative for the changing of the guard at Treasury.

Wales's November 4, 1882, *Judge* centerfold, "A Moving Scene Expected to Take Place in 1884," prompted by October returns from Ohio indicating a national Democratic party congressional landslide, depicted a Democratic contingent headed by Tilden and Tammany's John Kelly with a "20 years empty" larder approaching a cleaned-out treasury; Senator Windom, in stiffly formal attire, and a host of fellow Republicans were lugging off into exile a "spoils of 20 years" hamper laden with moneybags. Probably a "pox on both houses" nonpartisan commentary upon the political process, the cartoon nonetheless did Windom no kindness by placing him with Robeson, Grant, and Jay Gould—among the epic Republican spoils men of the Gilded Age. This rendering proved prophetic for Windom and his party alike, although Windom's fall from power occurred much earlier than the November, 1884, presidential election. In February, 1883, Minnesota Republican legislators denied him another Senate term, a

result of rivalries and jealousies accumulated over two decades in the limelight, the bitter enmity of opponent Mark H. Dunnell of Owatonna, and perceptions of hubris. These factors were compounded by his reluctance to remain in St. Paul to campaign personally for reelection and his recent purchase of a Washington mansion. After more than three dozen ballots over two weeks, Windom was deposed by Stillwater entrepreneur, state senator, and Republican national committeeman Dwight M. Sabin. His downfall was lampooned in the unsigned March 17, 1883, *Judge* back cover effort, "The Judge's Own Weather Report," a series of eight political caricatures paired with forecasts that predicted the future for a number of public figures; in the Minnesotan's case a shivering figure foresaw "Very Cold for Windom."⁸

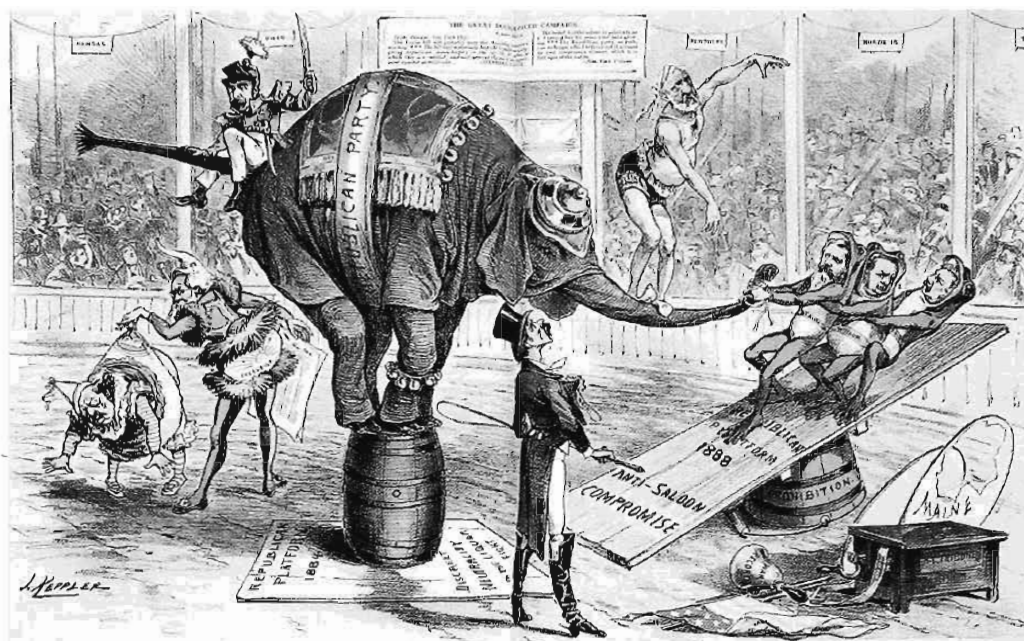
Just three weeks later, Windom starred somewhat improbably in "Garfield's Ghost—The Apparition Invented to keep President Arthur in subjection," Wales's April 7, 1883, *Judge* centerfold depicting Windom, Sherman, Blaine, and *New York Tribune* editor White-law Reid intimidating Arthur with Garfield's specter. Inspired by an 1882 campaign poem by Democrat Lawrence Goulding, in which Garfield's ghost upbraided his successor for his sorry stewardship, the cartoon and a companion editorial denounced the Republican "halfbreeds" for disloyalty and urged Arthur to purge his administration of those "who would glory in his downfall." Although Sherman, Blaine, and Reid had made no secret of their disdain for Arthur during and after the 1882 campaign, it is difficult to make sense of Wales's designation of Windom as a viper in the president's bosom. Although the two men were not fond of each other, Windom had generally supported Arthur's agenda in the Senate and, with the possible exception of a remark that only the death of Garfield had prevented adoption of federal civil service reform, had defended the administration loyally back home in Minnesota during the campaign. Even more puzzling was Wales's plea to Arthur to purge Garfield elements from his administration, for he had already done so.⁹

EMBITTERED by his ouster from the Senate, Windom took his family on a protracted European tour and then settled in New York City to concentrate upon his investments and corporate law. In six years his only appearance as a cartoon character came in Keppler's September 29, 1886, *Puck* centerfold "A Difficult Feat in the Republican Circus," featuring Windom and senators Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire and William P. Frye of Vermont as frogs tugging the GOP elephant away from an 1884 platform of "discreet neutrality in the liquor fight" toward their proposed 1888 "anti-saloon compromise" prohibition plank (fig. 4). Influenced by his Quaker heritage, Windom had been a

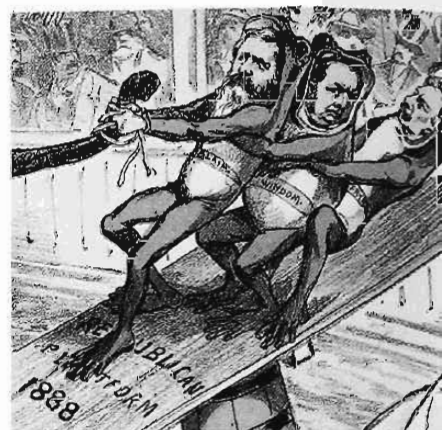
⁷ Here and below, see Salisbury, "William Windom," 410, 530–533.

⁸ Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 159–161; Salisbury, "William Windom," 587–593. Among the other seven forecasts were "Waiting weather for Blaine," "Very bleak for the Jerseyman," for Robeson, defeated in his bid for a third term the previous October, and "Always pleasant" for 1884 Democratic heir-apparent Samuel Tilden. As with the weather, not all predictions proved accurate.

⁹ Lawrence G. Goulding, *Arthur and the Ghost, with a Synopsis of the Great Battle of November 7, 1882* (New York, 1883); Reeves, *Gentleman Boss*, 314–321; Salisbury, "William Windom," 587. "Halfbreeds" referred to those liberal Republicans who supported the policies of presidents Hayes and Garfield. Their Republican opponents were called "Stalwarts," a conservative faction allied with the administration and legacy of Ulysses S. Grant.



A DIFFICULT FEAT IN THE REPUBLICAN CIRCUS.
J. P. Pomeroy. Sent 1889. Shows that prohibition will hold out.



"A DIFFICULT FEAT in the
Republican Circus" (fig. 4)

temperance activist as a young man in his native Ohio and later in Winona. He had been hostile to the liquor interests throughout his career in Congress and became an enthusiastic leader in the Republican Anti-Saloon Movement that reached its apogee at a September 16, 1886, national convention in Chicago, which Windom chaired. (A few days earlier, he had performed the same function at a statewide antisaloon convention in Minnesota.) Although these endeavors drew the satire of the libertarian Keppler, they probably worked to Windom's benefit, for when Blair recommended him for his old cabinet post to president-elect Benjamin Harrison in 1889, the New Hampshire senator was able to note that "one or two cold water fellows will do well sandwiched in with us wine dippers."¹⁰

Windom's second stint at Treasury inspired several cartoons, the first few merely acknowledging his place in Harrison's official family. The March 9, 1889, *Judge* centerfold "President Harrison and His Cabinet" was not caricature but a formal inaugural print. On March 20 *Puck* featured a Keppler centerfold with an identical title but decidedly different tenor, a droll satire on a *Chicago Tribune* claim that "Blaine will be the premier of the Harrison administration" and Harrison's demurral that all of his friends would enjoy "equal access and their fair influence" (fig. 5). Three weeks later Windom again appeared in a *Puck* centerfold as window dressing, this time as one of several cabinet members drawn as circus clowns in Louis Dalrymple's "Trouble in the Republican Circus—The Little Elephant Won't Do All the Tricks on the Ringmaster's Programme." It

featured Harrison as an elephant balking at Blaine's command to jump through a hoop representing editor Whitelaw Reid's nomination as ambassador to the Court of St. James in London.¹¹

On May 8, 1889, however, *Puck* took direct aim at Windom's policies in the C. Jay Taylor back-cover cartoon, "The Republican Plan of Finance—Paying a Premium on U. S. Bonds out of the Taxpayer's Pocket." Windom himself was not depicted. The cartoon featured a workingman paying taxes at one treasury window and a bloated capitalist reaping a bond premium at another. Between the two was Windom's March 4, 1889, decree of a 29 percent premium on federal bonds "owing to the success of the high tariff system of taxation by which the people pay taxes on necessities." Blatant Republican-bashing demagoguery on Keppler's part, the cartoon protested a policy initiated a year before by the Cleveland administration and inherited by Windom. Confronted with an embarrassingly large and

¹⁰ Salisbury, "William Windom," 4–8, 340–341, 393, 554–559, 634–638, 646–651, 666.

¹¹ The *Judge* centerfold lithograph, printed on heavy stock with blank backing pages, was apparently intended for removal and independent display; *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 30, 1889; Benjamin Harrison to Stephen B. Elkins, Jan. 23, 1889, quoted in Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 330; *Puck*, April 10, 1889. Harrison instead sent Reid to Paris, recalling him in 1892 to become his running mate. See Harry J. Sievers, *Benjamin Harrison: Hoosier President* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 39–40, 44; Royal Cortissoz, *The Life of Whitelaw Reid* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 2:119–125.

growing treasury surplus, Cleveland had tried to remedy it through tariff reduction, but after this failed he moved instead to trim the surplus by purchasing in open financial markets some \$83,000,000 in federal bonds at premiums ranging from 6 to 29 percent. Opposed to such alternatives as tariff reduction or extravagant spending, Harrison and Windom had apparently decided to continue the Cleveland policy, thus drawing down the opportunistic wrath of Keppler.¹²

Windom next appeared in a *Puck* cartoon that tarred him, by association at least, for the corruption of a campaign in which he had played almost no part. Louis Dalrymple's July 31, 1889, centerfold "Puck Contributes an Eiffel Tower and a Few Other Exhibits to the Proposed World's Fair," included Windom and his cabinet colleagues with some particularly unsavory Republican politicians in an "awful tower" topped by a tiny Harrison and anchored by a huge representation of rival *Judge* wearing a "boodle campaign of 1888" sash. Windom had spent the summer and early autumn in Europe far away from this controversial campaign and

had returned barely in time for a few speeches for the Harrison-Levi P. Morton ticket in Indiana, New Jersey, and Connecticut, labors so minimal that critics subsequently tried to dissuade Harrison from rewarding him with the treasury. Dalrymple probably included him only by virtue of his cabinet post, also the likely motive for Taylor's portrayal of Windom in his October 9, 1889, *Puck* centerfold "A Barmecide Feast." This parody referred to the *Arabian Nights* tale of the torture of a starving man who was presented with empty plates passed off as succulent delights until the victim assaulted his sadistic host, claiming that the rich food had gone to his head. Taylor cast Uncle Sam as the victim, Harrison as host, and his cabinet members as servants plying empty plates with unkept campaign promises. Windom's read "economical gov't stew."¹³

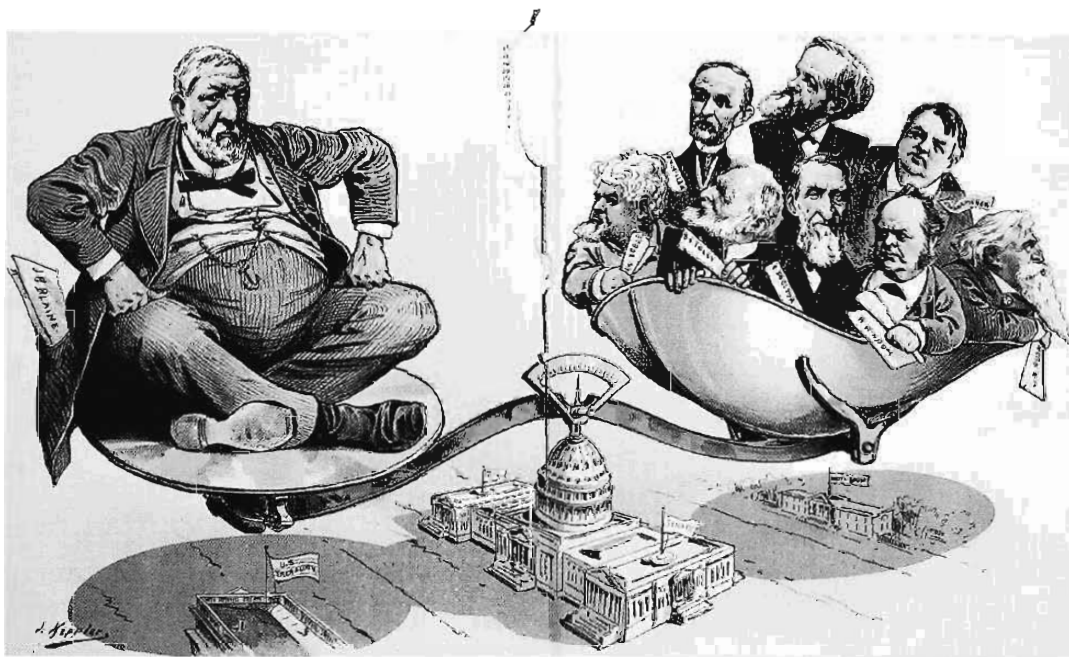
THESE PUCK CARTOONS were all logical manifestations of the ebullient, no-holds-barred political partisanship for which the Gilded Age was noted, but the frequent indignities Windom suffered at the hands of the artists of the devoutly Republican *Judge* defy such simplistic dismissal. Although *Judge* had become much less quirky and more predictably party-line Republican after William Arkell assumed control in 1885, a few of its 1889 and 1890 cartoons that pilloried Windom are difficult to reconcile with either prevailing party dogma or simple common sense.

An excellent case in point is Bernard Gillam's October 5, 1889, centerfold, "The Serious Problem of Today," depicting Harrison, Windom, Blaine, and two

¹² Lewis H. Kimmel, *Federal Budget and Fiscal Policy, 1789-1958* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1959), 70-75; Alexander D. Noyes, *Forty Years of American Finance* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 125.

¹³ Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 310-312, 331; Salisbury, "William Windom," 651-652, 667. Since Taylor's cartoon was created ten weeks before the fabled "billion dollar Congress" began its labors, its purpose was a blanket criticism of the Harrison administration in its first six months and not an attack upon any specific Harrison or Windom initiatives.

"PRESIDENT HARRISON and His Cabinet"—the version that appeared in *Puck* (fig. 5)



other cabinet members dozing, a dignified black man looking on, and Uncle Sam pleading, "Wake up, gentlemen! Here is a vital issue which must be settled, or the Republican party will be held responsible!" Ostensibly the cartoon represented an appeal for federal legislation guaranteeing blacks voting rights in the South, a mandate consistent with Republican tradition and 1888 Harrison campaign pledges. As a companion Arkell editorial made clear, however, the cartoon was drawn for precisely the opposite purpose, to urge the party to forsake its commitment to black political participation as unrealistic, "like the gift of a jewel to a barbarian unaware of the difference between a bead and a diamond," and work instead to "ransom the continent" by weeding out most black and immigrant voters with literacy tests and residency requirements. Had such an apologia—racist, elitist, and alien to a generation of Republican idealism—been put to Windom in person, it is unlikely that he would have dozed through it. He had been a committed Radical during Reconstruction, an avid champion of the 1879 Kansas exodus (the movement north and west of thousands of blacks from the hostile South), and as secretary of the treasury a noted advocate of hiring and promoting blacks.¹⁴

The next three *Judge* cartoons in which Windom appeared, by far the most inherently vicious and fundamentally dishonest cartoon attacks upon him during a long career, cast him as their primary villain, an evil threat to American economic and ethnic integrity. On

February 8, 1890, the weekly ran a Gillam centerfold (fig. 6) featuring a venomous "English monopoly" viper, an obliging Windom, and a defiant Uncle Sam who admonished, "Hold on, Secretary Windom; I don't propose to run Alaska for the benefit of English syndicates and English workingmen!" Subtext indicted Windom for endorsing renewal of an 1870 law granting to an English firm a sealing monopoly worth more than \$100 million over 20 years, and Arkell's editorial railed against exploitation of Alaska by "English Hebrews." Although this prose and cartoon art were classic examples of the economic xenophobia so common during the era, the *Judge* alarm was pure invention, both in its anti-Semitic portrayal of the sealing monopoly and in its denigration of Windom's patriotism. The Alaska Commercial Company, which held the monopoly from 1870 on, was California based and American owned, as was the North American Commercial Company that succeeded it in 1890 after Congress followed Windom's plea to renew the 1870 enabling legislation. Windom's only other involvement was as a strict enforcer of the law and American interests, for U.S. revenue cutters

¹⁴ *Judge*, Oct. 5, 1889, p. 410; Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 339–343; Salisbury, "William Windom," 466–468, 695–697. In its 1891 obituary tribute, the black newspaper *Washington Bee* wrote of Windom, "with the colored people of this country, their honored dead is in the gallery with that number and class of great leaders whom they truly honor and revere."

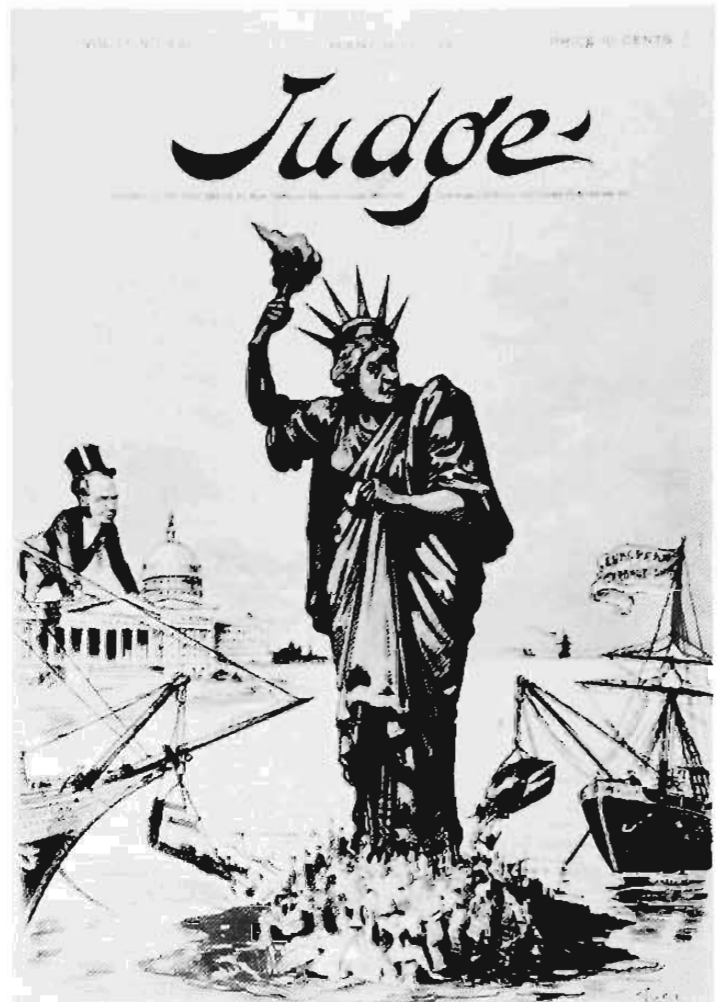


FIG. 6. "English Monopoly," *Judge*, Feb. 8, 1890. The cartoon depicts Secretary of the Treasury William Windom being pulled back by Uncle Sam, who is shouting "Hold on, Secretary Windom; I don't propose to run Alaska for the benefit of English syndicates and English workingmen!" The cartoon is signed "Gillam" in the bottom right corner.

under Treasury aegis patrolled the Pribilof Islands to prevent Canadian sealers from the harmful practice of open-sea slaughter.¹³

Equally dishonest in their portrayal of policy and in their treatment of Windom were the cartoons drawn in response to his March 13, 1890, announcement that beginning on April 18 the immigrant processing station in New York would move from Castle Garden on the mainland to Bedloe's Island in New York harbor, better known by then as Liberty Island, home to Auguste Bartholdi's massive *Liberty Enlightening the World*. For daring to sully such sacred soil with immigrant riff-raff, Windom became the butt of two venomous *Judge* cartoons. On the March 22, 1890, front cover, F. Victor Gillam's "The Proposed Emigrant Dumping Site" (fig. 7) portrayed Windom watching approvingly as a "European garbage ship" deposited immigrants and Miss Liberty admonished, "Mr. Windom, if you are going to make this island a garbage heap, I am going back to France!" On the April 12, 1890, back cover, the unsigned "The Future Emigrant Lodging House: A Suggestion to Secretary Windom," transformed the Statue of Liberty into an immigrant tenement complex for anarchists, "Polaks," Germans, Irish, and others. Suspended from it were such artifacts as a lager beer saloon, laundry, and an Irish shanty complete with a grazing goat.¹⁴

Ironically, Windom's proposal emanated both from official responsibilities and from a personal desire to impose stricter controls on immigration. Treasury was required to contract with the states for screening of idiots, lunatics, nonpolitical criminals, possible public charges, and those entering in violation of the 1885 Contract Labor Law. Vague statutes and poor local



"THE PROPOSED Emigrant Dumping Site" (fig. 7)

¹³ *Judge*, Feb. 8, 1890, p. 284–285, 290–291. Edward P. Crapol, *America for Americans; Economic Nationalism and Anglophobia in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973), the definitive volume on the subject, makes no mention of the *Judge* allegations. The only reference to British economic interests in contemporary accounts was Blaine's observation in a Jan. 22, 1890, note to Lord Salisbury of Great Britain that before the onset of open-sea sealing prosperity had blessed "a large body of English laborers who had constant employment and good wages" from the American enterprise. See Charles S. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations, 1865–1900* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 122–126, 132–139, and "The Anglo-American Crisis in the Bering Sea, 1890–1891," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (June, 1961–Mar., 1962): 393–414; David S. Muzzey, *James G. Blaine: A Political Idol of Other Days* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1934), 402–409.

¹⁴ For an account of Liberty's apotheosis from novel curiosity into a hallowed patriotic icon in American cartoon art, see Roger A. Fischer, "Oddity, Icon, Challenge: The Statue of Liberty in American Cartoon Art, 1879–1986," *Journal of American Culture* 9 (Winter, 1986): 63–81.

administration led to widespread abuses, especially at Castle Garden, destination of two-thirds of all immigrants entering the country. An investigation made at Windom's behest convinced him to impose direct federal control and move the operation offshore to enable more rigorous screening and to isolate immigrants from pimps, confidence men, contract-labor "padrones," and boardinghouse runners. Such reforms were prompted not solely by humanitarian compassion. In his 1889 annual report, Windom had urged exclusion of victims of leprosy and "similar destructive and contagious diseases" and troublemakers "inimical to our social and political institutions." He wanted to require of all immigrants "certificates of character and fitness" from American consular officials. Reiterating this plea in 1890, he warned of a change "in the character of many of the immigrants, who do not readily assimilate with our people, and are not in sympathy with our institutions" and pointed to overcrowded asylums,

jails, and almshouses and threats to native blue-collar jobs as the fruits of unrestrained immigration. In short, Windom was abused by *Judge* artists for a policy prompted by prejudices essentially similar to Arkell's.¹⁷

BY CONTRAST, the next few cartoons in which Windom appeared were relatively innocuous. Keppler's November 19, 1890, *Puck* centerfold, "Napoleon's Retreat," was inspired by a massive loss of Republican seats in the 1890 congressional elections attributed widely to the unpopularity of the McKinley Tariff. In the cartoon Representative William McKinley as Napoleon led Windom and the rest of his rag-tag Republican army in retreat through the snows. A victim of failing health, Windom had played virtually no role in the campaign. Bernard Gillam's December 27, 1890, *Judge* centerfold, "Judge's Christmas Gift to Little Sam and Miss Columbia," a typically lavish, nonthematic holiday tribute, cast some three dozen notables as Christmas toys, Windom as a "roly-poly" by virtue of his rotundity (fig. 8). Frederick B. Oppen's January 14, 1891, *Puck* back cover cartoon "The Fad of the Day—Hypnotism" included a vignette of the cabinet attempting to hypnotize Harrison into obeying its will, wry satire on the "human iceberg's" prickly independence and notoriously brusque, unfeeling treatment of subordinates.¹⁸

Windom's final appearance in cartoon art came posthumously, although no reference to his death appeared in the cartoon, odd in light of the events inspiring it. On January 29, 1891, Windom addressed the annual banquet of the New York Board of Trade and Transportation at Delmonico's, advocating tariff protection, merchant marine appropriations, an international bank to facilitate Latin American trade, and bimetallic standards of coinage through international accords, flatly rejecting the free and unlimited coinage of silver. During the introduction for the next speaker, Windom suffered a heart attack and slumped over dead in his seat. F. Victor Gillam's February 14 *Judge* back cover cartoon, "Windom's Warning Words: Look before You Leap!" featured the secretary restraining Miss Columbia from being pulled into a chasm by Colorado silver Republican Senator Edward Wolcott (fig. 9): the paper also printed a long excerpt on the evils of debased

¹⁷ Salisbury, "William Windom," 224–225, 688–694; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925*, rev. ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 35–105.

¹⁸ Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley*, 320–329, 352–355; Salisbury, "William Windom," 697–698.

"JUDGE'S Christmas Gift to Little Sam and Miss Columbia" (fig. 8)



currency from Windom's address at Delmonico's. Despite the drama added by his death, Gillam made no effort to exploit or even acknowledge it in the cartoon.¹⁹

MINNESOTA'S only late 19th-century color cartoon celebrity provided in many respects an improbable target for the cartoon artists of the day. His Republican politics were essentially orthodox and unimaginative, his personal and public life free from even a hint of scandal, his physical features barren soil for truly creative caricature (he was aptly characterized by a *Minneapolis Tribune* reporter as having "impassive and chubby features"), and his personality reserved and rigid. A Senate page said of him in 1879, "He is polite but not familiar. We look upon him as a very correct man." Unlike his contemporaries such as Blaine or Richard Nixon in recent times, neither nature nor circumstance endowed Windom with attributes to inspire good cartoonists to greatness and mediocre ones to adequacy. Given such limitations, it is remarkable that he starred as a cartoon character as often as he did.²⁰

Even more remarkable about Windom's cartoon legacy is the pervasive strain of irrationality and caprice that characterized his career as a subject for caricature. In an era epitomized by rigid partisan polarization, this thoroughly conventional Republican was repeatedly vilified much more viciously by the devoutly Republican *Judge* than by the opposition *Puck*; such treatment was accorded no other political figure of his time. In addition, Windom was plagued on a number of occasions by *Judge* cartoons that completely misrepresented or even fabricated his actions or motives, a singularly unusual occurrence in a medium so dependent upon instant, widespread recognition of commonly



"WINDOM'S Warning Words: Look before You Leap!" (fig. 9)

accepted historical phenomena. Moreover, in defiance of all canons of logic, Windom was ignored altogether by the cartoon artists of *Puck* and *Judge* when engaged in those activities most likely to have inspired commentary: his favorite-son presidential quest in 1880, his shameless Mormon-baiting, his vendettas against the Dakota and genuine compassion on behalf of other Indian tribes. On the whole, art provided a fundamentally flawed imitation of life in the case of William Windom, cartoon centerfold.

¹⁹ Salisbury, "William Windom," 698–702. For his changes of position on the currency issue, see especially 140–141, 153, 288–289, 402–404, 671–681.

²⁰ *Minneapolis Tribune*, Sept. 23, 1886; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Aug. 21, 1879.

THE PICTURES of cartoons on p. 106, 107, 108, and 109 are from the author's collection; all other illustrations are from volumes in the MHS.



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, or email articles, however, for individual use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#).