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Douglas V. Shaw



CHARLES SMITH OLDEN (February 19, 1799-April 7, 1876) was born of Quaker ancestry in Stony Brook, near Princeton. He was the son of Hart and Temperance (Smith) Olden. He went to Lawrenceville School. Upon graduation he worked for a while in his father's store, and then for the mercantile firm of Matthew Newkirk and Company, first in Philadelphia and later, from 1826 to 1832, in New Orleans. He returned to Princeton after inheriting a large estate from his uncle, and built the house now called Drumthwacket. Olden lived the life of a gentleman farmer and became a director of the Trenton Banking Company in 1842. He married Phoebe Ann Smith of Trenton; though they had no children of their own, they adopted a daughter.

Olden was elected to the state senate as a Whig in 1844 and reelected in 1847; he served in the senate until 1851. Little is known about his senatorial career, except that he took an interest in the State Lunatic Asylum and was chairman of the Committee on Education. In 1856 Olden supported Millard Fillmore, the American party candidate for the presidency of the United States. In 1859 the "Opposition" party nominated him as their gubernatorial candidate to oppose the Democrat, Edwin R. V. Wright. The Opposition party, which had been created in 1856 to oppose the Democratic party, was

made up of former Whigs, Know-Nothings and incipient Republicans. They maintained this name through the election of 1860 and later became the Union party; they took the name Republican during Reconstruction. He was also nominated by the American party. Olden had not taken part in the heated political debate over the extension of slavery during the 1850s. A conservative, he opposed the extension of slavery and supported the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. His views reflected those of the citizens of the state of New Jersey, who would never have supported an abolitionist. Olden defeated Wright by a mere 1,601 votes but the Democrats won slim majorities in the general assembly and the senate.

In his inaugural address on January 17, 1860, Governor Olden said that each state had the "exclusive independent control of its domestic policy" and that slavery was "exclusively and eminently a matter of domestic policy, to be . . . controlled by each State for itself." In the presidential election of 1860, the Opposition party supported Abraham Lincoln and opposed both Stephen A. Douglas and the fusion ticket. Olden's views were more conservative than the Republicans', but he nevertheless supported Lincoln. New Jersey cast three electoral votes for Douglas and four for Lincoln.

With the election of Lincoln, South Carolina seceded from the Union, and other southern states soon followed. During this period of crisis, Olden attempted to seek a compromise between the North and the South. In his annual message in January 1861, he reaffirmed his support for the Fugitive Slave Act and called for its enforcement by all of the states. However, he did not support the right of secession, which he considered anarchy. He viewed the crisis as having been caused "by a few persons of extreme views both North and South." At this time he felt that the people of New Jersey would "stand as a unit in favor of the Union." But he also said that they would "make all reasonable and proper concessions to

insure its perpetuity." At first he placed his hopes for a compromise in the United States Congress; however, fearing that the Congress would find no means to alleviate the crisis, he urged the legislature of New Jersey to adopt a resolution appointing delegates to a convention of state delegates, which would "meet and endeavor to agree upon terms by which our Union may be saved."

When Congress failed to arrive at a compromise, Virginia called on the state to send delegates to Washington, to the Washington Peace Conference, which was attended by most of the states that had not seceded. The New Jersey legislature adopted a series of resolutions known as the "Joint Resolution in Relation to the State of the Union." They supported efforts at compromise, including the so-called Crittenden Compromise and the repeal of the personal liberty laws, and they appointed delegates to attend the Washington Peace Conference. Olden signed this resolution on January 29, 1861.

Olden, elected as a delegate to the conference, was the only governor to attend. While he did not speak at the conference, he supported the resolutions for compromise, including one favoring the extension of slavery into the territories, similar to the Crittenden Compromise; one providing compensation for runaway slaves; and one prohibiting Congress from abolishing slavery in the states. At this time most Republicans were opposing any attempt at a compromise that would extend slavery into the territories.

While Governor Olden was considered conciliatory by most Republicans, his principal fear was that an armed conflict would split the citizens of New Jersey, for there was a growing sentiment for some form of secession, or at least for the view that the southern states should be permitted to secede in peace. These fears disappeared when South Carolina and the southern Confederacy attacked Fort Sumter. This act of war by the South brought forth in New Jersey an overwhelming response in favor of the Union,

and many who had earlier supported compromise now favored war on the southern states. Olden was one such person; though a month after the firing on Sumter he still feared for the fate of New Jersey, he wrote to President Lincoln that "New Jersey is a border state, & it is of great importance that she stand steadfast in the great conflict."

Olden's first major problem as the war governor was to secure places in the army for the New Jersey regiments, since many more were being offered than the federal government could accommodate. Never again would there be such enthusiasm for the war in New Jersey or elsewhere in the North; before the war was over the state would have to resort to a draft to fill the military quotas.

As soon as the war began, Olden called a special session of the legislature. In his opening remarks, he expressed his fear of invasion and called for the creation of four regiments to be armed, trained, and stationed in southern New Jersey "to make provision for the defense of the State, and especially to provide for the protection of our sea coast, the coast of the Delaware, and our frontier." He later abandoned this idea in favor of federal defense of the coast. This special session, which was marked by a lack of political partisanship, borrowed two million dollars from New Jersey banks, raised more troops than Washington could accept, passed appropriations for ten thousand stands of arms, and secured a tax to raise monies for soldier's families.

Charles Perrin Smith, the clerk of the New Jersey Supreme Court, wrote in his "Reminiscences" that "had he [Olden] failed to be elected, there can be but very little doubt that New Jersey would have been forced to cast her lot with the South in the Great Rebellion which so soon followed." While this is an obvious exaggeration, Olden assumed a primary role in mobilizing the state during the first two years of the Civil War. According to John Y. Foster, "for a period of twenty-one months, he was only absent from the State capital two days and nights, and

during much of this time he worked at his desk not only during the day but far into the nights, making it a rule to complete each day the duties which that day brought." Some nights he even slept in his office at the state house.

He did leave the state to attend the conference of governors in Altoona, Pennsylvania, in September 1862. Governor Andrew G. Curtin of Pennsylvania called this conference originally to urge the Lincoln administration to follow a more aggressive campaign in the war and to replace General George B. McClellan. Two events subverted its purpose: Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation the day before the conference convened, and at the battle of Antietam the union army stopped the Confederate army's advance into the North. The governors adopted a set of resolutions that Olden, with the governors of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, refused to sign because they dissented from the section that approved the Emancipation Proclamation.

Olden was a diligent worker who wrote all "letters of importance" himself and "kept everything at all times under his personal supervision." The result was that New Jersey's regiments serving outside the state were relatively well equipped and, unlike many regiments from other states, were not officered by political appointees.

Little is known about the man, for he published only the messages that he delivered to the legislature, and very few of his personal letters exist. His messages to the legislature say little of a personal nature, dealing almost exclusively with routine governmental concerns. His last message, in January 1863, urged the legislature not to abandon the men fighting the war "by lending our influence in favor of vain and fruitless efforts to interpose ill-timed pacific offices between the majestic arm of a nation's law and a wicked rebellion that will be satisfied with nothing but the accomplishment of its object." This was his only reference to the

growing peace movement that would reach its zenith in 1863.

John Y. Foster, in one of the only accounts describing Governor Olden, wrote that he was a man of "incorruptible integrity, of inflexible loyalty and of indomitable will; one of those rare men who conceal under a complacent demeanor, vast inherent strength and self-reliance, which, upon emergency, produce in them prodigies of performance."

Charles Perrin Smith, who worked with Governor Olden, recorded his impressions. Smith wrote in his "Reminiscences" that "Governor Olden's financial experience and business training, united with [an] unusual degree of sagacity and untiring industry, alone enabled him to command success; while his strict probity, and unostentatious manners gained for him the entire confidence of the people. . . . Personally cognizant of his zeal and labor, and aware of the vast responsibility with which he was burdened, I could not regard his evidently failing health with[out] great solicitude, but he steadily declined to seek relaxation."

Prevented by the New Jersey constitution from serving a second consecutive term, Olden left the governorship in January 1863. He was succeeded by Joel Parker, a Democrat. After leaving office he continued to support the war. At a mass meeting in Trenton on April 16, 1863, Olden was elected president of the Loyal National League of New Jersey, which, like similar organizations in other states, attempted to unite those supporting the war regardless of political party, forming a new organization that avoided the existing political nomenclature. Its purpose was to establish a league in each county and town. This had the effect of reviving the Union-Republican party in the election campaigns of 1863 and 1864.

Following the war, Olden served as a judge of the court of errors and appeals from 1868 to 1873. He was also a member of the Riparian Commission from 1869 to 1875, and a commissioner of the State Sinking Fund. In 1872 he headed the

presidential electors from New Jersey for Ulysses S. Grant. He also continued his interest in the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University); having served as its treasurer from 1845 to 1869, he was elected to the board of trustees in 1863, where he served until 1875. Olden died on April 7, 1876, in his house at Princeton.

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William C. Wright



JOEL PARKER (November 24, 1816–January 2, 1888) was born near Freehold, Monmouth County, the son of Charles and Sarah (Coward) Parker. After his father's appointment as state treasurer, the family moved to Trenton. In 1833, his father became the cashier of the Mechanics' and Manufacturers' Bank of Trenton and sent him to Monmouth for two or three years to work his recently purchased farm. Parker then attended the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University), where he was graduated in 1839. After graduation he entered the law office of Henry W. Green, who later became chief justice and chancellor. Parker was ad-

mitted to the bar in 1842, and he began to practice law in Freehold.

Active in Democratic politics, Parker campaigned for Martin Van Buren in 1840 and James K. Polk in 1844 in their bids for the presidency. In 1847 he was elected as a Democrat to the assembly, where he took an active interest in tax reform, offering a bill that equalized taxation by taxing personal as well as real property. Although the Whigs held a majority in the legislature, Parker secured the passage of this bill in 1850.

In 1851, Parker declined to run for reelection and in the same year he was appointed prosecutor of the pleas for Monmouth County, and he served in this office for five years. He was also elected brigadier general, commanding the Monmouth and Ocean Brigade of the New Jersey militia in 1857, which he proceeded to reorganize. In 1860, he served as a Democratic elector and voted for Stephen A. Douglas. When the Civil War began, Governor Charles S. Olden appointed him a major general.

At its convention on September 4, 1862, the Democratic party nominated Parker for governor. He defeated Moses Bigelow, the mayor of Newark, for the nomination. Parker was considered a "war Democrat" (as opposed to a "Copperhead," a Democrat who opposed the war and sought peace with the South). In the election Parker defeated the Republican candidate, Marcus L. Ward, by 14,394, the largest majority in a gubernatorial election to that time. The Democrats also won majorities in both houses of the legislature.

In his inaugural address on January 20, 1863, Parker outlined his attitude toward the war. Affirming his opposition to secession as a "political heresy," he upheld the principle of states' rights, stating that the states have "sovereignty over all subjects not expressly delegated to the General Government." To Parker it was "the duty of the States, as well as the duty of the United States, to assert and maintain, in a legal and constitutional manner, their several and appropriate