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Samuel Tilden and Tammany Hall I

Lead: Sam Tilden, who lost the most controversial election in United States history, made his reputation helping destroy the power of Tammany Hall.

Tag: "A Moment In Time" with Dan Roberts.

Content: In 1876 Samuel J. Tilden won the popular vote in the Presidential election but lost the Electoral vote after furious maneuvering in the Congress. He got to that pinnacle by helping to clean up corruption in New York. During the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Empire State politics was

dominated by Tammany Hall. The Society of Tammany was a working class political club in the City of New York and had been a force in that state's politics since the years just after the American Revolution. Tammany helped promote the political ambitions of Aaron Burr who rose to be Vice-president of the United States but fell in disgrace after he shot Alexander Hamilton in a duel. By 1860 Tammany had enormous power over political elections and patronage in New York. The organization was dominated by William Marcy Tweed and his associates who were known as the Tweed Ring.

During the Civil War the Ring used its power to secure lucrative

government contracts for its allies in exchange for cash payments. It was very difficult to obtain a city job without Tammany and therefore immigrants flocked to join the Society. thus swelling its political base. Soon it began to reach beyond the City to influence state elections. In 1868 Tammany sent \$1000 into each of the 327 New York election districts to help with ballot box stuffing and bribes. Some districts reported returns even before the votes were cast. This helped insure that candidates sympathetic to Tammany would be sent to the state house in Albany. Tweed himself was elected to this the best legislature money could buy.

Back in New York the Ring reached out to control the shaping of public opinion. It made a bid to purchase the dominant newspaper in town, the "New York Times," but at the last minute those reformers opposed to the Ring's corruption were able to secure enough money to keep the paper out of its hands. The Times became the voice of reform and Tweed's most formidable opponent. Next time: Samuel Tilden joins the forces of reform and helps destroy the Tammany Ring.

At the University of Richmond this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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