

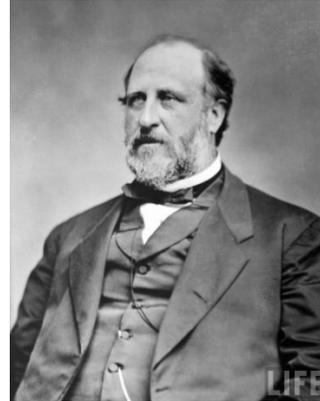
## Pictures and Political cartoons about William Magear “Boss” Tweed

William Magear Tweed, often erroneously referred to as "William Marcy Tweed", and widely known as "Boss" Tweed, was an American politician most notable for being the "boss" of Tammany Hall, the Democratic Party political machine that played a major role in the politics of 19th-century New York City and State.

**Born:** April 3, 1823, New York, NY

**Died:** April 12, 1878, Ludlow Street Jail

**Party:** Democratic Party

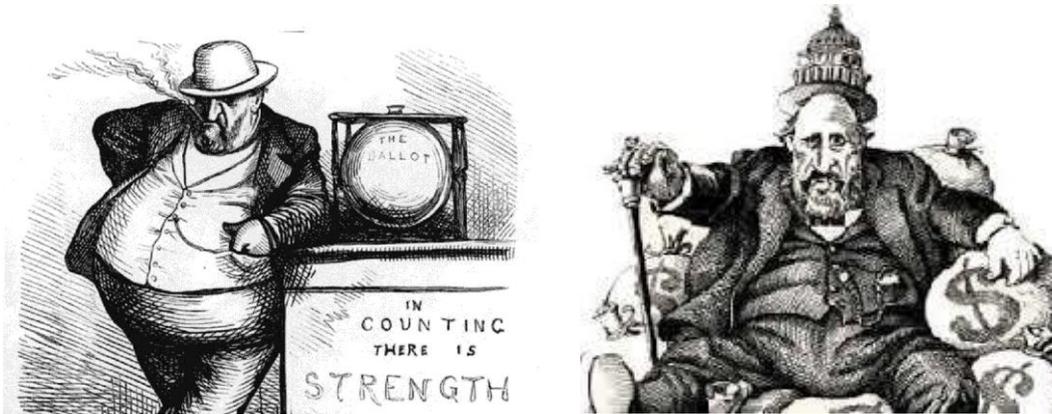


When he was 26 years old, in 1850, he ran for city alderman but lost. On his second try, a year later, he ran again and won, and in 1852 he was elected to one term in Congress (which was unremarkable). His influence in New York politics was growing, and in 1856 he was elected to a new city board of supervisors, the first position he would use for corrupt purposes.

He worked on strengthening his position of power in Tammany Hall (the seat of New York City's Democratic Party), and by 1860 he controlled all Democratic Party nominations to city positions. Soon, Boss Tweed dominated the city and state Democratic Party to such an extent that his candidates were elected mayor of New York City, governor of New York and speaker of the state assembly.



**Tammany Hall, New York City**



## The Years of Corruption: The Tweed Ring

All the while, he had his associates appointed to key city and county posts, thus establishing a network of corruption that became known as the "Tweed ring." In 1860, Tweed opened a law office, despite not being a lawyer, and began receiving large payments from corporations for his "legal services" (which were in fact extortions hidden under the guise of the law). He was reaping vast sums of illegal cash by this time, and he bought up acres of Manhattan real estate. He began wearing a large diamond attached to the front of his shirt, an object that received endless lampooning from his detractors (whose numbers were growing quickly).

In 1868, Tweed became grand sachem (leader) of Tammany Hall and was also elected to the New York State Senate, and in 1870 he and his cronies took control of the city treasury when they passed a new city charter that named them as the board of audit. In full force now, the Tweed ring began to financially drain the city of New York through faked leases, false vouchers, extravagantly padded bills and various other schemes set up and controlled by the ring.

### Tweed's Downfall

With the Tweed ring's activities reaching a fever pitch, and with the losses for the city piling up (to an estimated \$30 to \$200 million in present-day dollars), the public finally began to support the ongoing efforts of *The New York Times* and Thomas Nast (a political satirist for *Harper's Weekly*) to oust Tweed, and he was at last tried and convicted on charges of forgery and larceny in 1873. He was released in 1875, but soon after his release, New York State filed a civil suit against him in an attempt to recover some of the millions he had embezzled, and Tweed was arrested again.

Before long, he escaped from custody and fled, first to Cuba and then to Spain. In November 1876, he was captured and extradited to the United States, where he was confined to a New York City jail. A year and a half later, Boss Tweed died there from severe pneumonia.



*"I don't care who does the electing, so long as I get to do the nominating." -- Boss Tweed*

*"I don't care a straw for your newspaper articles, my constituents don't know how to read, but they can't help seeing them damned pictures." -- Boss Tweed*

Source for text: <https://www.biography.com/political-figure/boss-tweed>

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