NATIVISM ON THE OHIO:  
THE KNOW NOTHINGS IN CINCINNATI AND LOUISVILLE  
1853-1855  

A Thesis  

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by  
Mary Alice Mairose, B.A.  

* * * * *  

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Master's Examination Committee:  
Randolph A. Roth  
Michael Les Benedict  
Eve Levin  

Approved by  

Department of History
For My Parents
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VITA

June 30, 1968 . . . . . . Born - Covington, Kentucky
1991 . . . . . . . . B. A. Northern Kentucky University

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Introduction

During the years between 1785 and 1854 the Catholic population of Louisville, Kentucky experienced unusual degrees of toleration and acceptance. But by 1855 the anti-Catholic, anti-foreign Know Nothing Party had come into power and Catholics faced violence and discrimination. In Cincinnati, Ohio, where hostility toward Catholicism had always been strong, a temporary coalition of diverse segments of the population joined together in 1854 under the leadership of the Know Nothing Party to oust an unpopular Democratic administration. In 1855, however, the reform coalition disbanded and the Know Nothings ran candidates on an unsuccessful anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant platform. One purpose of this study is to explain these events and the circumstances that gave rise to them.

Recent historians of nativism in the North have emphasized the importance of the slavery issue in the national success of the Know Nothing movement. In The Origins of the Republican Party (1987) William Gienapp argues that Cincinnati's independent party succeeded because of its dual platform of anti-Catholicism and anti-Nebraskaism. ¹ Tyler Anbinder in Nativism and
Slavery describes the Know Nothings as the "junior partner" of the abolitionists in achieving the victories of 1854. Both of these studies ignore the unique local circumstances which, coupled with Cincinnati's longstanding anti-Catholicism, insured a victory for the coalition. This study will examine the local issues which played at least an equal role in the success of the independent coalition, and the rapid downfall of the Know Nothings after 1854.

Historians have largely neglected the American Party in the South. Only one monograph on the subject exists. The Know Nothing Party in the South by W. Darrell Overdyke argues that anti-Catholicism played little role in the nativist movement in the South and that the Know Nothings focused their attacks on immigrants to draw attention away from the sectional issue of slavery. This thesis suggests that the people of Louisville viewed both Catholics and foreigners as possible threats to the peculiar institution, a perception which significantly contributed to the success of the Know Nothings.

This thesis is divided into four chronological chapters. The first provides an overview of Cincinnati and Louisville from the late 1700's to the early 1850's. Chapter Two illustrates Louisville's acceptance of, and Cincinnati's hostility towards
Catholics. The events which contributed to the rise of
nativist parties are discussed in the third chapter.
The thesis concludes with the elections and riots of
1855 which insured the success of the party in
Louisville and brought about its downfall in
Cincinnati.
Notes to Introduction


Chapter I
Louisville and Cincinnati, 1778-1850

American colonists feared and hated Catholics and foreigners long before Louisville and Cincinnati were established. The earliest settlers of the American Colonies had come of age during an era of intense hatred of the Catholic Church. Henry VIII’s departure from the Church, the martyrdom of devout Protestants during the reign of Bloody Mary and wars with Catholic France were part of the collective memory of the English people. Earlier events, such as the Inquisition and the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, illustrated the despotic and blood thirsty nature of the Catholic Church. These old hatreds were brought to the New World. They flourished in that isolated setting.

Dissimilar in many ways, both the Puritans of New England and the Virginia Anglicans shared a fierce abomination of the Roman Catholic Church. Both groups wanted to keep their fledgling colonies untainted by those with different traditions and values. The earliest French Huguenots who settled in the colonies
were regarded with as much suspicion as the French Catholics. Common ethnicity was as important to the colonists as a common religion.¹

During the turbulent years of the eighteenth century conflict between Catholics and Protestants heightened. As the British struggled with the Catholic French for control of North America, old fears of Catholics became stronger. Popular propaganda charged the colonists to save the "Protestant Lamb" from the triple alliance of "the Devil, the Pope and the king of France." Prejudice against Catholics heightened in Maryland and Pennsylvania where most of the Colonial Catholics lived. In Maryland local magistrates were required to keep a close watch on the Catholics in their areas and to report any suspicious activities. Rumors of a Papal takeover ran rampant in Pennsylvania. As a result, Catholics were restricted from joining the local militia, their weapons were confiscated, and they were required to pay extra taxes.

After the French and Indian War ended, Protestant preachers persisted in keeping their congregations on guard against the Catholics. The colonial government was uneasy about the influence that the Catholic clergy had among some groups of native Americans. Aggravating the situation was the Quebec Act of 1773. This legislation expanded Quebec's boundaries into the land
south of the Great Lakes, and granted religious
tolerance and civil rights to the French Catholics.
American Protestants were deeply offended by the Quebec
Act; many colonists viewed it as a hostile attempt to
establish Catholicism on their borders.

Hostility toward Catholics increased following the
passage of the Quebec Act. Settlers in New England and
the middle colonies celebrated Pope's Day, known as Guy
Fawkes' Day in England, a mock celebration
commemorating a failed Catholic plot to blow up
Parliament. 2 Protesters paraded effigies of the pope
through the streets which they later burned, in various
New England towns.

But the desire for American independence largely
overshadowed hostility toward Catholics during the
Revolutionary War. Catholics enjoyed greater
tolerance during the revolutionary period than they
had in colonial days, and the Revolutionaries soundly
rejected Tory propaganda that suggested that the
alliance with Catholic France was setting the stage for
a Papal takeover.

There are two views about whether the war resulted
in greater acceptance of Catholics after its
conclusion. Historians of nativism have traditionally
argued that aid from a Catholic country and the spirit
of toleration espoused by the Founding Fathers were not
enough to end prejudice against Catholics. They point out that most of the new state constitutions offered special protection for Protestants and prevented Catholics from holding office. 3

A recent historian of American Catholicism takes a more optimistic view of Protestant-Catholic relations in light of the Revolution. The struggle with Britain did not wipe out all prejudice against Catholics, but the patriotism of such Catholics as Charles Carroll of Maryland helped many Americans believe that Catholicism and republicanism could co-exist. This new sense of optimism allowed the Catholics of Pennsylvania and Maryland to hold office and further gain the trust of their fellow Americans. 4

Events in Cincinnati follow the pattern suggested by historians of nativism. Anti-Catholic prejudice was strong enough in that city to prevent Catholics from establishing a Church during Cincinnati’s first three decades. In Louisville Catholics established themselves early, in 1785, and in a period of great optimism. Mass migration from Maryland gave them a sense of community which kept the congregation intact. Early Catholic clergymen were sensitive to nativists’ fears and attempted to allay them. In return Louisville’s Catholics enjoyed unusual degrees of acceptance and toleration.
In the spring of 1778, George Rogers Clark selected an island at the Falls of the Ohio to train militia troops and wait for reinforcements before taking offensive action in the Northwest. Along with the soldiers were a number of civilians and one slave eager to settle on the fertile soil of Kentucky. They christened their new settlement Corn Island in honor of the first crop planted there.

By late June, Clark and his men began their mission, leaving the settlers behind on Corn Island. By the end of that year the settlers had moved to the Kentucky shore where they built cabins and a stockade. The settlement was named Louisville in honor of Louis XVI of France. In 1780, the state of Virginia granted Louisville a town charter.  

These early settlers realized that Louisville’s location would make the town an ideal center for warehousing and distribution, but Louisville developed slowly in the early years of American independence. The most serious problems faced by the new town was a curtailed river trade caused by Spanish control of the lower Mississippi River. Until the United States gained full control of the waterway, Louisville had little to offer as a commercial center. Frequent Indian raids and a lingering fear of British attacks also impeded the city’s growth. Mosquitoes rising from
the area's many ponds caused a malaria like illness, and many people avoided Louisville fearing that the area was unhealthy.

During this sluggish period in Louisville's development Roman Catholics established their religion in the city. It is believed that French Catholics settled in Louisville in the 1780's, but the earliest major influx of Catholics came from the eastern United States. Far away in Maryland the soil was no longer fertile due to poor farming practices. Post-Revolutionary depression and the Consolidation act of 1784 which increased taxes and provided for collection of those in arrears caused many to consider a move westward. According to tradition, sixty Catholic families from the Maryland counties of St. Mary, Charles, and Prince George made a compact to move west, establish a church, and protect each other from the dangers of the frontier. Although they were unable to secure a priest for their journey, between twenty and twenty-five of these families from Saint Mary's County left Maryland in 1785. They traveled overland to Pittsburgh and from there made the trip down the Ohio River to modern day Maysville, Kentucky. From there, they traveled overland to the interior of the Kentucky territory. In current day Nelson County these
Catholics established the Pottinger's Creek Settlement, approximately thirty miles outside Louisville.

The Maryland Catholics were able to establish a place for themselves on the Kentucky frontier because their values, behavior, language, and culture were similar to their Protestant neighbors. The rest of the community did not consider them a threat. The ancestors of these Catholics settled the Maryland colony primarily as a commercial venture; its status as a haven for Catholics was secondary. Their descendants repeated the same pattern on the Kentucky frontier. The new settlers were men and women whose religion consisted of quiet piety in the home, rather than ostentatious worship. They were more interested in establishing farms than they were in conquering the West for Catholicism. Moderate in means and education, they were described as honest, kind and obliging. These early Catholics lived lives that were decent, but not austere. They enjoyed dancing and card playing and many were slave owners.

Kentucky's earliest Catholics were quite unlike the stereotypical Protestant conceptions of Catholics. They were British in background and lacked priests. Their devotion to Rome did not appear excessive and many were caught up in the building of a new nation.
Inspired by the Revolution, the American laity dreamed of creating a form of Catholicism that was more compatible with republican values. They had maintained their faith during the colonial period without the presence of a hierarchy and wished to continue in this manner. Both the laity and clergy realized the importance of avoiding the appearance that foreign princes would be encroaching on American government. Rome did not share these concerns, and was eager to bring the new nation under Papal control. The Vatican appointed Rev. John Carroll superior of the mission in the United States. Carroll and other American clergymen protested that the new nation should have a local church headed by a bishop who would answer to the Pope on spiritual affairs only. In 1789 the Vatican relented and the American clergy elected John Carroll as the first Bishop of Baltimore. Even though a hierarchy was established, the American laity did not relinquish its desire to play an active role in the Church. The trustee system allowed the laity to retain temporal control of the churches they had built. This system was another attempt to bring European ecclesiastical traditions in line with American republican values. ¹⁰

The earliest attempts to bring a priest into Kentucky were unsuccessful. The first clergymen
assigned to the area were unable to handle money or were alcoholic and unable to withstand the harsh wilderness conditions. It was almost ten years before the Kentucky Catholics found a priest hearty and devoted enough to join them on a permanently. Father Stephen Badin arrived in Kentucky in 1793. He and another priest walked to Pittsburgh, from there they had taken a flatboat down the Ohio to Maysville and had walked to Lexington. His companion departed for the deep South, but Badin remained in Kentucky. Fr. Badin, a French emigre and the first priest ordained in the United States, was a man of strong convictions and severe moral character; he gained the respect of his parishioners but not their affection. The austere Badin found the worldliness of Kentucky’s three hundred Catholics unacceptable. He was especially distressed by the youth, whom he considered vain, ill-mannered, and lacking in faith and charity. He broke up many of the country dances that his people enjoyed.

The presence of a Catholic priest in the community alarmed the Protestants. Protestants often hid themselves and watched Badin rode past to catch a glimpse of the dreaded Papist. Perhaps Badin’s narrow escape during the French Revolution made him sensitive to the precarious position Catholics occupied in the wilderness of Kentucky. He remained firm in his
beliefs but was careful not to offend his Protestant neighbors. In some ways Badin resembled his Protestant brethren. He rode about the state on horseback to minister to his large flock. As Catholic priests had not yet adopted the Roman collar for everyday wear, he dressed in a dark suit and tie, a costume quite different from the rich robes Protestants expected to see. Kentucky's Protestants came to respect Father Badin; quite often he was on better terms with them than he was with his own Catholics.  

Rev. John Thayer's arrival in Kentucky in 1799 threatened the peaceful coexistence between the Protestant and Catholic communities. Thayer, a Harvard educated convert to Catholicism, assaulted Protestants with tirades against their beliefs. He made enemies among Protestants and Catholics alike by preaching about the evils of slavery and urging that the peculiar institution be abolished. The Catholic church had never denounced slavery, and both Badin and Thayer owned slaves. Badin urged Catholic masters to consider the spiritual needs of their slaves and to have them baptized and taught the catechism. It is likely that Badin and many others were more than a little relieved when Thayer left Kentucky. 

Life was difficult enough for priests on the Kentucky frontier without one of their own generating
animosity. On their journeys through the state they often encountered hostility from non-Catholics. According to tradition one priest making his rounds stopped at a farmhouse for shelter during a driving rainstorm. When the owner learned that his guest was a Catholic clergyman, he sent his children and slaves away and ordered the man to leave. The priest argued that throwing a man out into a storm was hardly a Christian act, and the farmer reluctantly allowed him to stay. The following morning, the farm owner was still uneasy about having a Papist in his home. He urged his guest to leave without paying, afraid that the money was tainted. The Catholic laid the money on the ground and told the farmer: "I think you will find your children all right this morning; but in case you should find on any one of them the mark of the beast.[sic] I want you to understand distinctly that its impress is due to another than myself." According to tradition, the farmer was so impressed by the priest's courage that he dropped his ill will towards Catholics and insisted that the priest stay with his family any time he was in the area. ¹³

Not all early Catholic priests were as fortunate as this one. Another clergyman traveling through Kentucky was thrown from his horse. A young boy in the employ of a farmer found the injured man, but his
employer would not allow the child to go for help. Unaided, the priest died as a result of his injuries.  

The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 finally gave the United States the navigation rights to the lower Mississippi River. A bustling river trade developed, and Louisville blossomed. At the turn of the century only 359 people lived in Louisville but, by 1810 the town was home to 1375. Several Catholic families were among the new arrivals, and before long the Catholic population was large enough to warrant a church of its own. Catholics celebrated their first Mass on Christmas Day in 1811. St. Louis was the second church built in Louisville, the first having been erected two years earlier by a Methodist congregation. 

Some members of the community expressed disgust that the Catholic Church had "set her idolatrous foot on Columbia's soil." They mocked the beliefs and ceremonies of the Church and scoffed at "variegated dresses and monkey shines of the priests before the altar." In spite of such prejudices, these early Catholics paved the way for the relative toleration and acceptance that Protestants offered their religion before the Know Nothing Party came into power. The early Catholic and Protestant settlers were both mostly of English descent. They interacted on a daily basis. Observing conflicts between Catholics and their
clergymen, Protestants concluded that their neighbors rejected the hierarchical elements of their religion. The first Catholics in Louisville convinced their neighbors that there was nothing alien or threatening about their faith. They proved that peaceful coexistence between Catholics and Protestants was possible.

The situation in Cincinnati was quite different. Catholics were almost nonexistent in that city until the 1820’s, and the few that were there made little issue of their religious beliefs. Louisville had been established for ten years when the first settlers reached the area now known as Cincinnati. In 1788, a charter was granted to develop the Miami Purchase on the northern bank of the Ohio River. By winter of that year three colonies inhabited by settlers from New Jersey and Pennsylvania, sprang up in the area. Of the three, Losantiville had the best geographic features and quickly gained prominence. The topography of the settlement resembled an amphitheater, a large basin area with a gently sloping hill rising around it. Losantiville was more suitable for expansion than the other settlements, and its location at the mouth of the Licking River would provide a vital artery into Kentucky which was more developed. In 1789 Fort Washington was constructed at Losantiville as a base
for campaigns against Northwest Indian tribes and the following year the community’s name was changed to Cincinnati. 17

Cincinnati continued to grow, although as late as 1795 the city tended to be little more than a collection of rough cabins and the fort. The beginning of the nineteenth century saw Cincinnati with 750 residents, more than double the population of Louisville. Cincinnati remained a military town until the Treaty of Greenville was signed in 1804. Fighting with the Indians of the Northwest territory had all but ended, and Fort Washington was no longer necessary. The garrison was moved to northern Kentucky; five years later the fort was torn down and Cincinnati became a city of merchants, artisans and farmers. 18

The young city continued to grow at a rapid rate, and by 1810 Cincinnati had 2,540 inhabitants. Permanent houses of worship appeared; by 1815 Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Quakers and Sweedenborgians were represented. There were a few Catholics in the area and only a minority remained steadfast in their faith; they eagerly awaited the rare occasions when a priest, sometimes the indefatigable Fr. Badin, came from Kentucky to celebrate Mass. Several Catholics joined Protestant churches, in part due to the absence of a Catholic religious organization, but also because
anti-Catholic sentiment was strong in Cincinnati. Prejudice was so great that Protestants refused to sell Catholics land for a church within the city limits. Shame or fear may have been the motivating factor in many conversions to Protestantism. 

By 1817, some Catholics were dismayed that many of their fellow Catholics were being buried by protestant churches. Twice, a small cluster of Catholic families had attempted to build a Church and failed. Finally, this handful of Catholics decided to take matters into their own hands and build a church just outside the city limits. Christ Church was completed in time for Easter Sunday services in 1819.

Between the time the Maryland Catholics established the Pottinger’s Creek Settlement and the completion of Christ Church, attempts to create a more American form of Catholicism had failed. More and more, elements of European Catholicism had come into the American Church. For instance, the clergy no longer elected new bishops. These decisions were made by the Congregation for Propagation of the Faith in Rome with little if any input from the American clergy.

Another reason that attempts to create a distinctly American church failed was the importation of European priests. Bishop Carroll urged these clergymen to "Americanize themselves but, most retained
their European viewpoints. They were committed to a European form of Catholicism in which leadership was provided by priests and bishops. Native born Catholics and immigrant priests often clashed. The laity did not want to consult with the clergy on temporal affairs, and expected bishops to confer with them before appointing priests to their parishes. The European clergy was dismayed by the weakening of the church hierarchy in the United States, and the laity’s lack of respect for the clergy. Kentucky’s Stephen Badin was angered that the clergy was viewed "only as the obsequious servants of Their Mighty Highnesses" the laity.\(^{21}\) The European values brought to the American Church by the immigrant priests were in direct opposition to republican values. As the immigrant population of the Church grew, Catholicism was seen as even more of a threat by the Protestant majority.

In 1821, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and Illinois were removed from the Diocese of Bardstown and the Diocese of Cincinnati was created under the leadership of Father Edward Fenwick. The descendant of a wealthy Maryland family, Fenwick was educated in Europe and served there for a time before being sent to the United States and subsequently to Kentucky. Between 1808 and 1816 Fenwick divided his time between Kentucky and Ohio. After 1816 he devoted himself exclusively to the
Catholics of Ohio. His knowledge of the land as well as his piety, practicality and zeal made Fenwick the logical choice for Bishop of Cincinnati.\textsuperscript{22}

In the early 1820’s Fenwick estimated that there were roughly 3,000 Catholics in Ohio, most of whom were German and Irish. He noted that the bulk of his congregations were sober and industrious, but very poor. Many of them were still in debt from their passage to the United States. The end of the Napoleonic era made it easier to emigrate to America and the building of roads and canals attracted many Catholic immigrants to Ohio.

The German element was strengthened in 1825 when Friedrich Reese, a native of Germany came to serve in Cincinnati. During Reese’s first year in the Queen City he persuaded thirty three German Catholic families who had joined a Lutheran congregation to return to the Catholic fold. This caused animosity between the Lutherans and Catholics. Attracted by a clergyman who spoke their language, many German Protestants shifted their allegiance to Catholicism.\textsuperscript{23}

Early hostility toward Catholics foreshadowed the problems the city would face as the Catholic population grew. Despite their opposition the Protestant majority was unable to prevent the rise of the religion that they dreaded. The foreign origins of the incoming
Catholics and the mass conversion of Germans caused the Church to be viewed as an alien aggressor that threatened the young republic.

During the 1830's Catholicism came under attack across the nation. One attack was intellectual. Protestant ministers appealed to republican spirit of their congregations and pointed out the inconsistencies of the Roman Catholic doctrines. Another more emotional form of anti-Catholicism also appeared in the 1830's. Nativists portrayed Catholicism as a religion based on evil principles, and targeted convents as hotbeds of immorality. Violence and bloodshed followed these harangues against Catholicism. Cincinnati and Louisville were spared bloodshed, but anti-Catholic incidents occurred in both cities.

In Cincinnati opposition to Catholicism was aimed at the mind rather than the emotions. Protestants attacked Catholicism for making its followers submit to the powers of the priesthood and foreign princes. Catholics were not allowed to worship God according to their own conscience, but lived in constant fear of being condemned to death for heresy. The Catholic priests denied their people education and access to the Bible in order to prevent them from finding the inconsistencies between it and their teachings.
Protestants also took offense that Catholics believed their Church was the only one ordained by God. 24

Debates between Catholic and Protestant clergymen became popular in the 1830's; Cincinnati was the scene of one of these debates in 1837. The participants were Alexander Campbell, a Protestant clergymen from Bethany, Virginia, and Bishop John Baptist Purcell of Cincinnati. Purcell was born in Ireland in 1800. He left his native land at the age of eighteen. After theological studies in Maryland and Paris, Purcell served as President of a Catholic seminary before his appointment to the Diocese of Cincinnati.25 The young Bishop gained a reputation as an eloquent, straightforward speaker, and his skills were requested by Catholics and Protestants throughout the city. During one of these speaking engagements that Campbell arose and attacked the doctrines of the Catholic Church. The two men agreed to discuss the accusations in a series of seven public debates.26

The participants considered these debates a free discussion in keeping with the spirit of the age. For seven weeks the two men debated on the nature of the Roman Catholic Church. The topics included the anti-American nature of the Church, the Catholic Church as "the Babylon of John," the "Man of Sin of Paul," and the "Youngest Horn of Daniel’s Sea Monster." It is not
surprising that the Protestant newspapers declared Campbell the winner of the debates and praised him as a crusader against the evils of the Papacy. The Catholics and their supporters, of course, declared victory for Purcell, and claimed that he had allayed much anti-Catholic sentiment in Cincinnati. The debates elevated the reputation of the young Bishop and he became known as the Catholic leader of the Midwest.  

Unlike critics of Catholicism in Cincinnati, Louisville’s anti-Catholic crusaders appealed to the emotions of the population. They built on rumors and myths imported from England. These tales did little to capture the imagination of the American people. These tales took on an immediate sense of urgency in 1834 when rumors spread through Charleston, Massachusetts that an escaped nun had been dragged back to the convent against her will. Citizens were outraged. A mob formed and burned the convent to the ground. Initially, many people were horrified by this incident, but in time the belief prevailed that convents were immoral and should be abolished.  

By now, the American imagination was ripe for tales of Catholic immorality. Such a tale, Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnary of Montreal quickly captured the attention of the American people.
Its author, Maria Monk, claimed to be an escaped nun. She reported that young nuns were forced to accept the advances of priests or face terrible consequences, including even death in extreme cases. The children of these unholy unions were baptized and strangled minutes after birth. When Maria Monk realized that she was carrying a priest’s child, she fled the convent and came to the United States to wage war against the Catholic Church.

The nativist press failed to inform its readers that Maria Monk had given birth to a second illegitimate child and had later married, a marriage that ended in divorce because of her excessive drinking. A Canadian woman claiming to be Maria Monk’s mother stated that her daughter had never been a nun, but rather an inmate of a Catholic institution for delinquent young women. She claimed that a childhood head injury caused her daughter’s wild stories and instability. Monk died in jail after being arrested for pick pocketing in a house of ill-repute, but she remained a figurehead in the no-Popery campaign. Three hundred thousand copies of Awful Disclosures were sold before the Civil War; this book had such an impact that historians have dubbed it "the Uncle Tom’s Cabin of Know Nothingism."
Detractors of the Catholic Church claimed that a situation similar to the one described in *Awful Disclosures* existed near Louisville, but the confrontation ended peacefully. In 1836 the editor of a Protestant newspaper accused a priest of seducing a middle aged woman who was being assisted by an order of nuns. Officials of the Bardstown diocese took swift action and charged the editor with libel. The editor was found guilty and given a small fine. Fierce debates waged in the local press, but the fire and bloodshed of Charleston were averted.\textsuperscript{30}

Throughout the 1830's the populations of Cincinnati and Louisville continued to grow. In 1830, Cincinnati had 24,831 citizens; by 1840, that number had risen to 46,338. During the same period, Louisville's population rose from 10,341 to 21,210. These new residents came from eastern states as well as foreign countries, especially Ireland and Germany.\textsuperscript{31} The sheer numbers of these immigrants were a cause for alarm, but as the years progressed, many Americans found the types of immigrants coming into the cities less desirable.

The Irish were the largest group of immigrants coming to the United States. During the earliest years of the Irish migration the immigrants were primarily Protestants who came in family groups. Most were
fluent in English and there were significantly higher numbers of farmers, artisans, tradesmen and professionals than laborers and servants. As the years progressed, there were more laborers and servants coming to the United States. Many were single males who were less likely than families to settle into a community. By the 1830's, a large number of Catholics were beginning to migrate to the United States.²²

Few Irish came as far west as Cincinnati and Louisville in the 1830's. The majority preferred the cities of New England and the Mid-Atlantic seaboard to the more rural areas inland, and few could afford to travel west. As late as 1840, the Irish comprised only six percent of Cincinnati's population,³³ and in Louisville there were only 1,000 Irish immigrants in the city.

It should be noted that the Irish who settled in Louisville faced added difficulties in a slave state. Almost one third of Louisville's population was African American. Most were slaves; the free black population was minuscule. Slavery took on a different character in the city than on the plantation. While some slaves served as house servants and coachmen, more were hired out.

Louisville's black population was large enough to virtually eliminate a free labor market. Blacks served
as barbers, waiters, hack drivers, draymen and roustabouts. Any white man who sought this type of work in Louisville was scorned by the rest of the white population. Few native born whites of the laboring classes settled in the city because of this class distinction. The Irish laborer who settled in Louisville was derided both for his immigrant status and his willingness to do the work of slaves.\textsuperscript{34}

The Germans who settled in Cincinnati and Louisville had a much greater impact than the Irish. A few well known German immigrants came to the United States for political reasons, but more came for economic reasons. The bulk of the German immigrants to the United States were members of a lower middle class whose life style was changing rapidly. Farms had become smaller since inheritance laws called for land to be divided among the heirs. Artisans were displaced as mass production became more important, and German shopkeepers lost their clientele as the farmers and artisans became increasingly poor.\textsuperscript{35}

The German population of the two cities grew at a much faster rate than the Irish. In 1825 only three percent of Cincinnati's residents were natives of Germany. Fifteen years later, Germans comprised almost one third of the city's population.\textsuperscript{36} Although Germans made up only seventeen percent of Louisville's
population in 1840, their numbers were rapidly growing. Between 1838 and 1840, the number of German immigrants in the city rose from roughly 2,000 to 3,616.\textsuperscript{37}

Many Americans were alarmed by the growing immigrant population and by the Catholic faith professed by many of these newcomers. One of the most vocal opponents of this influx of immigrants was Lyman Beecher, a New England native who served as President of a Presbyterian seminary in Cincinnati.

European despots had designs on the American West, Beecher claimed. They paid passage for "the contents of the poor house and the sweepings of the streets" to come to the United States and begin the process of gaining control over rich western lands.\textsuperscript{38} Beecher urged his fellow western Protestants to remain steadfast in their faith. He asked native born Protestants to move west and help battle the evils of Popery.\textsuperscript{39} Although Beecher's \textit{Plea For The West} and other nativist propaganda made Catholicism seem like a grave danger in the West, Protestant sects predominated in every state.\textsuperscript{40}

Beginning in 1845, the potato blight in Ireland started one of the heaviest periods of immigration in America's history. The loss of that nation's main food crop created chaos in Ireland and caused many to flee. These men and women were different from their
predecessors in many ways. Earlier immigrants had come to the United States proud of their independence and hoping to improve their lot in life. The famine immigrants merely wanted to survive. Malnutrition caused many immigrants to arrive in the United States in poor health, and the desperate condition in their homeland resulted in many of the new arrivals being alcoholics.

These new arrivals aroused the ire of the native born Americans; as soon as they stepped off the ship, many became candidates for public charity. About ninety percent of the famine immigrants were Catholic, the majority were laborers or servants and almost a third of the new immigrants spoke only Gaelic.41

German immigration also rose in the 1840's and like their Irish counterparts, many of the Germans who arrived in the United States tended to be poorer and less skilled than their predecessors. Famine, unemployment, overpopulation and relaxed immigration laws all contributed to German migration. In some parts of the county, inhabitants of the poor houses were shipped to the United States.

Another kind of German immigrant came to the United States as well. A small portion of the immigrants were intellectuals who had fled Germany in the wake of the failed revolutions of 1848. These men
had risen up unsuccessfully against the censorship and suppression that had plagued Europe since the fall of Napoleon. They were not satisfied with the United States; slavery and nativism were inconsistent with their vision of republicanism, and they found the principles of Puritanism an invasion of their personal liberty. 

Some Germans in the United States took an active interest in the affairs of their homeland. In Louisville Germans formed clubs to support the Revolution and they greeted the few revolutionaries who immigrated to their city with open arms. In 1848, Germans in Cincinnati formed the first Turnverein. Louisville's Germans started their own Turnverein in 1851. The first of these organizations had been founded in Germany during the Napoleonic Era to promote the exercise of the mind and body as a means of preserving democracy and fostering true patriotism.

Besides gymnastic exercises, the Turners raised funds for the revolutionaries in the homeland and frequently spoke out against slavery. The Turners were not a popular organization in Cincinnati; much conflict existed between them and the rest of the community. The Turners were vocal in their opposition to Christianity which they claimed stifled free thought. Protestants responded by condemning the Turners for not observing the Sabbath. Archbishop Purcell expressed
his relief that the German Catholics were not influenced by their more radical countrymen; in fact, many Catholics feared that the Turners' physical activities were actually a preparation for future violent activity. "3

A second organization was founded in Cincinnati in 1852 which was even more radical than the Turner society. Friedrich Hassaurek who had fled Vienna during the Revolution, organized the Freeman's society. The Freemen were comprised of intellectual Germans who came to Cincinnati following the Revolution, and their supporters. These men were disillusioned by the United States. They had expected to find the ideas of the Enlightenment to be the major influence in America and were disappointed to learn that stifling Puritan beliefs were strongly entrenched in American society. "4

In both cities the clannish nature of the German immigrants disturbed the native born population. In Louisville, the Germans lived in Butchertown, the easternmost part of the city in the first and second wards, while Cincinnati's Germans lived north of the main section of the city, separated by a canal in an area known as Over the Rhine. These sections in both cities had a distinctly European atmosphere with German businesses and beer gardens lining the streets. Even
in appearance the heavily-bearded Germans stood out in a city of clean shaven men.

They formed their own militia units, singing societies, and theater companies and refused to assimilate into the native culture. Even in matters of religion, the Germans segregated themselves. During the 1830's separate German parishes were established in both cities. In Cincinnati, the large German population posed a special problem. Archbishop Purcell, although well educated and sympathetic to the Germans, spoke no German. This problem was solved by allowing the Germans laity to have a great deal of influence within the Church.45

The large numbers of Germans coming into the United States caused Cincinnati voting patterns to fluctuate. The Queen City traditionally had been a Whig stronghold, but by 1844 this trend was shifting. Although the Whigs were victorious in that election it was the first time in that city's history that the Whigs garnered fewer than half the votes.46

Hostility toward the German community manifested itself in Cincinnati that same year. As news of the Philadelphia riots reached Cincinnati, nativists held indignation meetings to denounce immigrants. The situation became so tense that many Germans and Irish
did not leave their homes until the tension had subsided.\textsuperscript{47}

As the decade progressed, anti-Catholic sentiment grew. By 1846 Catholics made up one third of the total population. Some tried to start an anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant party but were unsuccessful, causing nativism to remain an important part of the Whig platform. This outburst of nativism gave rise to a number of anti-Catholic journals in Cincinnati including the \textit{Anti-Papist}, which declared itself "devoted to the defense of Protestantism, promotion of evangelical religion and the diffusion of useful knowledge and intelligence generally".\textsuperscript{48}

The year 1844 was also an emotional time in Louisville. Kentuckian Henry Clay was the Whig candidate for President, and many Whigs feared that the German Democrats would give their votes to Polk. Rumors circulated throughout the city that the Whigs had hired bullies to keep foreigners away from the polls. These rumors led a German editor to urge his countrymen to come to the polls armed; this warning was translated and published in the Whig papers, leading to fights in the German first ward.\textsuperscript{49}

A handful of Protestant clergymen were dismayed by the popularity that Martin John Spalding, a priest in Louisville, enjoyed as a speaker. Large numbers of
Protestants as well as Catholics would flock to hear the articulate Spalding, who would later become Bishop of the Diocese. Fearing that these lectures would lead to conversions to Catholicism, six ministers from local Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches joined together in a league to combat the spread of Popery. These men conducted their own series of lectures on the evils of Catholicism. One of the topics was so shocking that women were excluded from the audience.

Catholic leaders attempted to counter the Protestants claims by pointing out the flaws in their logic in articles in the *Catholic Advocate*. From his pulpit Spalding discussed the divisions among Protestant sects and attempted to clarify some of the more confusing Catholic doctrines. The *Advocate* noted that the ladies of Louisville were welcome to attend all of Spalding’s lectures. According to Catholic accounts, the contrast between Protestant attempts at sensationalism and Spalding’s logic and sincerity were so great that many Protestants converted to Catholicism.  

These debates ended in 1845, but bitterness towards Catholics survived among the Protestant ministers. In 1849 Edward P. Humphrey, one of the ministers who participated in the anti-Catholic lectures, addressed the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky
on the spiritual power of the Catholic clergy. When Humphrey declared that Catholicism and republicanism could not co-exist because of the unnatural power that the Catholic clergy held over their people, it caused little reaction. But, six years later the Know Nothings would offer this argument with great success.51

Kentucky's Constitutional debates of 1849 produced the states most significant failed attempt at nativism. Garrett Davis, a respected Whig leader who would later be considered as a Presidential candidate by the Know Nothings, proposed a naturalization period of twenty-one years be for all immigrants. Davis depicted the immigrants as men saturated in a tradition of degradation and despotism; men "without mental or moral culture, with but a vague consciousness of human rights, and no knowledge whatever of the principles of popular constitutional government." 52

Davis declared that the recent immigration had reduced the ratio of native born to immigrant to five to one. He predicted that by 1870, the native born sons of Kentucky would be outnumbered by the combined numbers of slaves and foreigners. He exhorted his colleagues that this fact "must fill every patriotic and sober mind with grave reflection." 53 He urged his listeners to consider the consequences of giving
foreigners access to the ballot box, since it would be in their best interests to abolish slavery and drive the price of immigrant labor to a new high. The growing number of immigrants should not be a concern of the slave holder alone; the honest native born worker was kept in poverty by the immigrants whose abundance kept wages low.  

The fact that most of the immigrants professed the Catholic faith was another mark against them. Aware of the fact that almost all of Kentucky's native born Catholics were Whigs, Davis declared that American Catholicism was quite different from European Catholicism. The latter was "a great all ambitious, all-grasping religious politico institution" that would go to any lengths to destroy other religions. 

This attempt to incorporate nativism into Kentucky's government failed. Several delegates spoke out against Davis's resolution. They denounced his religious intolerance, and condemned him for trying to turn native born citizens against foreigners and Catholics against Protestants by exciting the worst passions in both groups. The Philadelphia riots of 1844 were frequently cited as examples of what would result from this type of agitation.  

Some argued that the best class of immigrant would avoid Kentucky under these conditions. They would take
their education, skills, and capital to other states, leaving Kentucky with only the worst class of immigrants. The proposal was defeated overwhelmingly. Only six members of the convention were in favor of a twenty-one year naturalization period. Sixty-eight were opposed.

Another important issue during the debates dealt with the distribution of state representatives. Louisville, the most populous area in the state, demanded fair representation in the state legislature. Garrett Davis led the opposition to this proposal, arguing that Louisville had the highest percentage of foreign voters who had strong abolitionist leanings. Giving Louisville more representation could lead to the abolition of the peculiar institution. However, most of the delegates ignored the nativists' arguments and adopted Louisville's proposal.

The results of Kentucky's Constitutional Convention illustrate the stability of Protestant-Catholic, and native born-immigrant relations in Louisville. The Catholics were a respected minority; few people in the city believed that they posed a threat to American liberties. Nor was the immigrant population viewed as a menace. The Irish were scorned but few in number. Some harbored strong feelings against the Germans, while others held
this group in high regard. A contemporary observer praised the city's Germans as "a careful, painstaking and industrious people, of quiet, unobtrusive and inoffensive manners." Although Louisville had radical German groups, they rarely came to the attention of the American born population. These circumstances allowed diverse groups to coexist in a peaceful manner.

In Cincinnati, both Catholics and foreign born citizens were viewed as alien aggressors. The city's Catholic Church was largely foreign, and a portion of the German population was unusually vocal about their disappointment in their adopted land. These outspoken Germans with their strong antipathy for Catholicism would help to create a unique political system in Cincinnati.
Notes for Chapter I


5. George H. Yater, Two Hundred Years at the Falls of the Ohio (Louisville: The Filson Club, 1987), 2-10.


15. Crews, 52.


31. DeBow, 192.


33. Ross, 74.


36. Ross, 6,74.

37. Yater, 62.


40. Billington, 129.

41. Miller 280-300.

42. Walker,*Germany and the Emigration*, 71-75; Walker, Mack,*German Home Towns*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 354-404. Carl Wittke,*We Who...
Built America (Cleveland: The Press of Western Reserve University), 186-192.


46. Baughin "Nativism in Cincinnati" 95.


48. Stritch, "Political Nativism in Cincinnati 1830-1860", 245. Anti-Papist, January 30, 1847. This is the only surviving edition of the Anti-Papist that is known to exist.


Mary Agnes McGann "Nativism in Kentucky to 1860." (Ph.D. diss. Catholic University of America, 1944), 38-42.

60. Casseday, 248.
Chapter II
A Year of Contrasts

The events of 1853 clearly illustrate the
difference in attitudes towards Catholics in the two
cities. In Cincinnati opposition to Catholicism
resulted in confrontation and violence on several
occasions. The Catholics of Louisville enjoyed the
rights of a respected minority, but 1853 would be the
last year for toleration. National events and local
tensions combined to create a nativist movement in
Louisville by the following year.

The American political system was undergoing a
major realignment in the 1850's which would allow a
nativist party to come into power. The Compromise of
1850 had imposed a tremendous sectional strain on the
two party system and these tensions were increased
during the presidential election of 1852. Both the
Whigs and the Democrats endorsed the Compromise and
promised to execute the Fugitive Slave Law, much to the
chagrin of anti-slavery Northerners. The Whigs made an
ill fated attempt to gain the Catholic and immigrant
votes by capitalizing on candidate Winfield Scott's
convent educated daughters and his fondness for foreign accents. Few Catholic votes were gained, while these actions alienated the nativist element of the Whig Party. Democrat Franklin Pierce won the election carrying all but four states.¹

The Mayoral election in Cincinnati reflected the splintering of the Whig Party and continued hostility toward Catholicism. Religion and education, which had a turbulent history in Cincinnati, combined to make the Mayor's race bitter. From the earliest years of Cincinnati's existence, Catholic schools received outside funding from European missionary societies and were able to provide a higher quality of education than the common schools. Many of Cincinnati's leading citizens, wanting their children to have the best education possible, sent them to the Catholic schools, against the advice of nativists who warned them that their children were being pressured to reject their Protestant faith.²

Catholics who could not afford to send their children to the parochial schools objected to their children reading the King James version of the Bible in the public schools. In 1842 Archbishop Purcell induced the school board to exempt Catholic children from reading the Protestant Bible. But problems continued because of the hostility displayed toward Catholics and
their religion in the common schools. Common textbooks ridiculed the Catholic faith as backward and superstitious. The Telegraph ran an article about a Catholic girl who was severely chastised by her teacher for maintaining that Catholics worship God when her textbook gave the correct answer as the Virgin Mary.³

Basing their arguments on such evidence, the Catholics claimed that the state-funded common schools were actually Protestant schools. Since Protestant schools were funded by tax dollars, Catholic schools also had the right to be funded by the state. Many Cincinnati Catholics petitioned the Ohio legislature for the money they believed they deserved, a move which outraged many Protestants.⁴

Saving the common schools from the Catholics was the major issue of the 1853 election for Mayor in Cincinnati. Joseph Ross, the Whig candidate, promised protection of the common schools from Catholic encroachment. The nativist faction in the Whig Party was not satisfied with Ross. They demanded a candidate more strongly opposed to nativists and foreigners. James Taylor, the fiery editor of the Times, had always craved political office, but the more moderate members of the Whig party had prevented him from achieving his goal. Now that the Whigs were faltering, Taylor
announced his candidacy for Mayor, promising to defend his country from foreign Princes if elected.\(^5\)

The Democratic candidate for Mayor that year was David T. Snelbaker, a native of Philadelphia who had come to Cincinnati to establish a cooperage business. He took an active interest in the affairs of his adopted city; during the 1830's and 40's Snelbaker was active in the National Trades Union and the Working Men's Party. Later he served as a magistrate and city councilman.\(^6\)

The Whigs attacked Snelbaker and the Democrats for avoiding the school issue. They accused Snelbaker of signing the Catholic's petition requesting funding for their schools. Snelbaker maintained that he was a staunch supporter of the common schools. He published the following statement:

I desire that all persons interested therein should know:
1st. That I am not a Catholic or a Jesuit; but one who walks in the fear of God and strives to keep his commandments.
2nd. That I never knew there was such a petition in circulation.
3rd. That I never saw the petition.
4th. That I never signed it; and
5th. That I am altogether opposed to the prayer of the petitioner.\(^7\)

A fourth candidate entered the election as well. The previous year it was revealed that the Miami tribe, a secret organization in the Democratic party, was attempting to suppress the growing German influence
within that organization. Embittered by this betrayal and fearing the nativist tendencies of both Ross and Taylor, the free thinking Germans nominated J. J. Chambers on an anti-Catholic platform.

With three anti-Catholic candidates and Snelbaker opposed to state funding for parochial schools, the Catholic population believed that it had little voice in city government. Archbishop Purcell fought allegations that he dictated how his flock should vote; he insisted that he had faith in the intellect and judgment of his people and trusted them to make the right decision. Many young Catholics were frightened by the bigotry they witnessed and began to doubt the existence of the republican virtues in which Cincinnati took so much pride. Among the American Bishops Cincinnati gained the reputation of a city populated by bigots and infidels. Privately, Purcell feared that this hostility would soon "ripen into open violent and prolonged persecution."

Snelbaker won the election by fewer than a thousand votes. If the supporters of the anti-Catholic candidates had been united, it is doubtful that Snelbaker would have won the election. His tenure in office would be turbulent. Citizens who had voted for the anti-Catholic candidates were willing to take the issue beyond the ballot box. They would
accuse Snelbaker of favoritism toward Catholics again and again over the next two years.

The first of many confrontations between Snelbaker and Cincinnati's anti-Catholic faction took place a few weeks after the election. A street preacher named Kirkland appeared in the market place and began a violent harangue against the Catholic religion in the vein of Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures*; he denounced Catholic women as prostitutes and stated that Catholic orphan asylums were homes for illegitimate children fathered by priests. Tensions flared and fights broke out between Catholics and Protestants; many feared a full scale riot.

Kirkland promised to return the following Sunday to continue his mission of exposing the evils of the Catholic Church. In an effort to prevent further violence, Mayor Snelbaker wrote to Kirkland. While he admitted that the preacher had the right to speak in public, he warned that language inflammatory enough to provoke a riot would not be tolerated. To preserve the peace and welfare of the city, Snelbaker requested that Kirkland cancel his planned appearance.

The Mayor's plea was of no avail. The following Sunday Kirkland once again stood in the market place to preach. Mayor Snelbaker and several police officers
interrupted the sermon and asked Kirkland to desist. This time he complied with Snelbaker's proposal.  

Many citizens of Cincinnati were outraged by Snelbaker's actions. Their anger was even greater when they learned that the Mayor had ordered seventeen members of the police force to protect a Catholic procession on the same day. Angry Cincinnatians called a mass meeting to condemn Mayor Snelbaker and defend the rights of Kirkland and his audience. Many people at the meeting freely admitted that they disliked Kirkland; some suspected that his sole purpose was to collect money from his audience while others admitted that they found his sermon offensive. But they pointed out that Catholic newspapers in the East had made equally offensive statements about Protestants.  

Among the speakers at the meeting were Protestant ministers who resurrected the rumors of Snelbaker’s pro-Catholic leanings that had plagued him during the campaign. They mocked Snelbaker for his concern that Kirkland’s preaching would disturb the peace of the Sabbath when the parades and music of the Catholics were allowed to fill the city streets. “Provided you are headed by a Catholic Bishop you have a right to march where you please on Sunday, or any other day; but don’t go declaiming against Catholics in the market
spaces or you will be pulled down by authority," declared one speaker at the meeting.\textsuperscript{14}

Many Cincinnatians believed that problems had arisen because Snelbaker was not qualified for the office he held. Some argued that although he was the best candidate for Mayor that year, he lacked the coolness and tact needed to govern a city like Cincinnati. Others were not so kind; they called the Mayor "a vile thing, civilly, socially and politically" and asserted that he had come into office because most citizens had underestimated the importance of the election that year and had cast their ballots with little thought of the consequences that could follow.\textsuperscript{15}

The crowd argued that Kirkland should be allowed to speak the following Sunday without fear of molestation by the police force. Several people became agitated and threatened to kill any officer who would dare to interfere with the preacher. Cooler heads convinced the throng that there were more peaceful ways to deal with the situation. They promised that there would be no violence but neither "the Mayor, the Bishop, the Pope, nor the Devil" could break up their assembly.\textsuperscript{16}

A Committee of One Hundred called for the Mayor’s resignation. They argued that Snelbaker had come into office as a result of voter fraud and warned honest
citizens that they must never again allow the ballot box to be unprotected. A voice in the crowd called for the Mayor's impeachment, and many argued that the Mayor of Cincinnati was not exempt from laws to which the President and Senate were subject.\textsuperscript{17}

Snelbaker responded in print that he was not the petty tyrant that his opponents claimed. Believing that prevention was better than cure, he did everything he could to insure that hostile groups of Catholics and Protestants would not meet. He noted that it was quite a coincidence that the Catholic procession and Kirkland's appearance were scheduled for the same day, but he refused to indulge in further speculation on the matter. He pointed out that the police did not use violence to remove Kirkland from the market place, and that he had refused to allow the police to respond to the preacher's demand to be placed under arrest.

The Mayor stated that once he was positive there would be no violence in the market place, he proceeded to the residence of Archbishop Purcell, where he explained the situation to the Catholic leader and requested that a procession marking the laying of a new cornerstone be postponed. When Purcell refused, twenty thousand people from southern Ohio and northern Kentucky gathered for the procession. The Mayor ordered the police to accompany the Catholics, not only
to protect them, but also to arrest anyone who might disturb the peace.

Snelbaker lamented that he was condemned as a tyrant when he had actually saved the city from bloodshed and tragedy. He promised that Kirkland would be allowed to speak the following Sunday without any interference from the police. But he warned that if a similar situation occurred again, he would do everything in his power to see that tragedy was averted.18

A portion of the Mayor’s followers blamed the Catholics for his problems. They argued that the followers of such a superstitious religion were too ignorant to understand or respect the republican concept of free speech. The secular papers did little but publish reports submitted by the committee and Snelbaker’s response. Not surprisingly, the Catholic press furnished Snelbaker’s most vigorous defense. According to the Telegraph, Kirkland was well known in his native Pittsburgh as a feeble minded street preacher who was harmless and peaceable until he began to expound on the evils of Catholicism. On at least one occasion Kirkland’s behavior was so disruptive that he was taken to jail. The Catholic paper asserted that the Mayor wisely tried to prevent a crazy man from starting a riot, but the city’s hostility toward
Catholics magnified the incident until it became a colossal attempt to destroy the rights of free speech.¹⁹

Archbishop Purcell condemned the actions of those "nominal Catholics" whose faith was not strong enough to withstand Kirkland's attacks and who resorted to violence in defense of their religion. He also urged his people to avoid events such as Kirkland's. Significantly, the secular press did not carry Purcell's excoriation and warning; nor did the Archbishop offer any explanation or apology for his refusal to cancel the procession. This served to reinforce the public's view of Purcell and his Catholics as unlawful interlopers.²⁰

Before the year was over Mayor Snelbaker would find Cincinnati embroiled in a situation more violent than the Kirkland affair. Once more he would take steps to prevent violence and face the castigation of Cincinnati's citizens. But calm prevailed for the time being. The following Sunday five thousand people gathered peaceably in the market place to hear Kirkland expound on the evils of Catholicism.

The citizens of Louisville reacted differently when Kirkland came to their city three months later. "He may suit the atmosphere of Cincinnati, but we question whether he will receive any sympathy in
Louisville" declared the editor of the Louisville Democrat. 21 Kirkland's visit started inauspiciously as he stood in the market space preaching to an audience consisting of slaves and children. A few passersby paused to see what the attraction was, but after a few minutes they assumed that the speaker was hawking a book and quickly moved on. Later that day Kirkland mounted the steps of the courthouse and spoke to a large crowd. A few Irishmen were enraged at the attacks on their religion and started a disturbance, but they were quickly taken away and there was no further commotion.

The prediction of the Democrat was to be fulfilled; Kirkland received little if any sympathy from the people of Louisville. The newspapers denounced the preacher as a scoundrel and a troublemaker and noted that he was anything but an impressive speaker. "His speech was disjointed and he made awful havoc of the King's English." declared the Journal. 22 The Democrat was even more outspoken; it condemned the preacher as "a coarse erratic humbug, entirely destitute of the essential qualities to fit him for that high office, ... he does not show anything of that Christian charity and meekness which should accompany one of his calling." 23
In response to Kirkland's belligerent behavior, Bishop Martin Spalding adopted a conciliatory manner, hoping to prevent a confrontation between Catholics and the preacher's supporters. He urged his flock to stay peacefully at home and treat Kirkland's haranguing with "merited contempt." He maintained that this was the wisest course of action, since "our holy religion can surely receive no injury from attacks so utterly reckless and unprincipled." 24

Kirkland again climbed the steps of the courthouse and began his discourse the next evening, but the crowd was so opposed to the preacher that the City Marshall ordered him to stop speaking. Kirkland left the courthouse square and a portion of the crowd followed him. Fearing their ill-will he ducked into a store; some members of the crowd made a half hearted attempt to follow him, but the presence of police and local militia units prevented them from pursuing him any farther.

Louisville adopted an air of superiority over Cincinnati following the Kirkland affair. The editors of Louisville's newspapers praised both the Catholics and Protestants of their city for living together in harmony. They scorned the people of Cincinnati for holding the rights of a scoundrel like Kirkland in higher regards than the rights of honest citizens. 25
Peaceful relations between Catholics and Protestants in Louisville resulted in part because Bishop Spalding accepted his role as a leader of an established minority religious group with a quiet dignity that won the respect of the Protestant community. Archbishop Purcell, on the other hand, was more concerned with asserting the Catholic Church’s right to exist in Cincinnati, even if it meant defying the civil authority in minor ways.

Another incident which led to violence in Cincinnati, but caused little incident in Louisville were the cities’ Fourth of July celebrations. In Louisville the holiday was celebrated with parades and picnics. The Board of Aldermen had no fear that violence might mar the celebration, no funding was allotted for extra police protection. In fact the Board’s main concern was how much money should be allotted for the celebration. In Cincinnati sentiment against foreigners caused tensions to rise as plans were made for celebrating the Fourth of July. The editor of the Gazette, a Whig paper, chided native born citizens for growing complacent about their unique and precious heritage as Americans; he expressed his indignation that German organizations were taking too active a part in the celebration.
Many people agreed with these sentiments, and a few acted upon them. A short distance outside the city a group of Germans were holding a ball in honor of American independence. Eight nativists armed with stones and clubs entered the building and drove the party out into the street, injuring two men and one woman. The attackers fled across the river into Kentucky and no effort was made to arrest them.

Another group of Germans disgraced themselves in the eyes of the native born population and reinforced the image of the militaristic foreigner that many Americans hated and feared. Following the parades on the Fourth of July one of the military companies adjourned to a local tavern. Several members of the company became intoxicated, and a fight broke out among them. Shots were fired and spectators fled. Some were hit with stones, but none were seriously injured. Two of the Germans were not expected to recover from their injuries; one man had been badly beaten and the other had received several blows on the shoulders and head from a sword.26

Following these events the situation between the native born citizens of Cincinnati and the German population became more tense. When a German funeral procession stopped at a coffee house, became intoxicated, and started fighting and throwing
furniture, even the Democratic Enquirer called for "[a] rigid system of strict Americanization." 27

The Freemen added to the tension when they gathered to condemn the presence of Dr. Junghaus, a fellow German who had taken up residence in Cincinnati. According to the Freemen, Junghaus had betrayed two German patriots, leading to their imprisonment during the European Revolutions. They believed that he was currently a spy for the Prussian government. Junghaus admitted that he was a monarchist and that he opposed the American system of government, but denied that he was a spy. The Freemen were unmoved by the doctor's denial and after several incendiary speeches burned him in effigy. 28

Shortly after the Junghaus incident, the Freemen of Cincinnati published a new platform of party politics. They called for support of common schools and opposition to ecclesiastical discipline in social and political affairs. Their platform seemed threatening to the non-Catholic population as well. They called for direct election of all public officials and specified fixed salaries for their offices. The Freemen displayed their abolitionist tendencies by calling for the immediate reduction of slavery in the territories and for the eventual suppression of the peculiar institution.
The Freemen were not content to be merely an opposition party composed of foreigners. They formed a committee to recruit sympathetic Americans to their party. The formation of this committee drew the scorn of many, including the editor of the Gazette who declared that "[the] radical doctrines enunciated in their platform and resolutions do not meet with the approbation of their own population, and we are sure will not with those of American birth." 29

The tensions of the past several months combined with deep hatreds resulting from the European revolutions to make the visit of Papal Nuncio Gaetano Bedini a tragic page in the history of the United States.

As the population of Roman Catholics in the United States grew, the Church hierarchy became more and more concerned with how little they knew about the Catholic situation in this country. The American Bishops' correspondence was filled with accounts of hostilities between various nationalities and the lack of funds for building and maintaining institutions. Other issues included legal concerns over the ownership of Church property and the strong anti-Catholic sentiments that swept the country. 30

To gain a better understanding of the problems faced by the church in the young country the Vatican
appointed Gaetano Bedini to visit the United States and report on his findings. Bedini had been ordained a priest in 1828 and held a number of distinguished positions within the Catholic Church. In 1845 he was appointed Apostolic Internuncio to the Imperial Court of Brazil, where he displayed compassion for German immigrants who were being exploited by their employers. He worked to have the corrupt director of the German colony replaced and said masses and heard confessions for the Germans until he was able to secure the services of a priest who could speak their language.  

Bedini assumed the position of Prolegate of Bologna in 1848; this position was roughly equivalent to that of a military Governor. Italian nationalist revolutionaries despised Bedini and the Catholic Church for allying with the Austrian empire, whose armies crushed the revolutionary uprising. Bedini had been decorated by Bologna’s municipal government for promoting business and agriculture and assisting those who had lost their jobs during the uprising. Nevertheless, the bitterness defeated nationalists felt toward him as the representative of the Church was so strong that it spread to the United States.  

Before returning to Brazil, Bedini was instructed to visit the United States to observe the conduct of the clergy, conflicts between various ethnic groups,
and the progress of missionary work among slaves and Indians. He was also responsible for resolving a Trustee dispute in Buffalo and for delivering Papal greetings to President Pierce.\textsuperscript{23}

The American Bishops received little prior notice of the Nuncio’s visit. Letters informed them to follow Bedini’s advice to help put their own ecclesiastical affairs in order. Many of the Bishops feared that he was conducting an investigation of their behavior on behalf of the Vatican, or paving the way for greater Vatican control over the American Church. They also believed that an ulterior motive of the trip was to improve diplomatic relations between Rome and the United States and to lay the groundwork for the establishment of an Apostolic Nunciature in Washington D.C.\textsuperscript{24}

Bedini was delighted by the opportunity to visit the United States. He was anxious to observe the liberty enjoyed by the American people and to see the zeal of their Bishops and priests. In particular, he looked forward to visiting Cincinnati and seeing his old friend Archbishop John Purcell. The two men had met in 1838 when Purcell was in Europe to collect money to build Catholic schools in Cincinnati. During Bedini’s tenure in Brazil the two men carried on a long correspondence concerning the problems faced by the
Germans in their congregations. The Nuncio had hoped that his visit to Cincinnati would come early in the trip, but there were other duties to be fulfilled first.\textsuperscript{35}

The visit that Gaetano Bedini had joyfully anticipated would be clouded by allegations made by Bologna’s Italian nationalists. During Bedini’s tenure as Prolegate, Bologna was occupied by the Austrian army. Several members of the nationalist movement were captured and executed by the Austrians, including a former Catholic priest named Ugo Bassi. Although Bedini did not learn of Bassi’s capture and death sentence until after his execution, stories began to circulate that Bedini had signed his death warrant and had ordered that the skin on his hands and forehead where he had been anointed as a priest be peeled away before he was shot. Several versions of this gruesome tale reached the United States before Bedini’s arrival. Some equated the Nuncio with a savage who scalped his victim while others suggested that Bedini had ordered that the former priest be flayed alive.\textsuperscript{36}

Bedini’s alleged atrocities captured the American imagination. A fictionalized account of Bedini’s boyhood was published that depicted the young Gaetano as such a corrupt and depraved youth that the Roman Catholic hierarchy handpicked him for a major office.
They found him perfect for "any undertaking that required a sacrifice of honor, principle and conscience." Bedini's career was filled with unspeakably evil deeds such as condemning good Protestant women to death for reading the works of Luther. After the execution of Bassi, he was sent to the United States to organize the Sanfedesti, a Catholic organization whose motives were so evil that the author could not publish them.

The political implications of Bedini's visit alarmed many Americans who feared that the Nuncio was only the first of many European Papists who would come to the United States. Among the nativist element it was believed that Bedini "had plenary powers to take possession of President, government and all, provided that the work had sufficiently progressed to bring the Americans into quiet submission to his Holiness Pius IX."

The main proponent of this propaganda was an Italian named Allessandro Gavazzi who traveled through the United States ahead of the Nuncio to warn the masses about the atrocities committed by Bedini in Bologna and the evils of the Catholic Church. When Gavazzi visited Cincinnati in 1853 the papers were filled with stories about the tall, florid faced man
with long black hair dressed in clergymen's garb and
enveloped in a long black cloak.

According to his lectures, Gavazzi entered the
priesthood at a young age, but before long he learned
about the evils of the Catholic faith and spoke out
about them in spite of the severe punishment he
received. Gavazzi boasted that his spirit was not
broken by the torture and imprisonment inflicted upon
him by his former superiors. He joined with the
nationalists in 1848 and served as a soldier and
preacher until he was captured. When he was released
from prison he departed for England and began his
crusade against the Catholic church.

Besides the stories about Bedini, Gavazzi
discussed the way his native land had been ravaged by
the Church and urged Americans to send money to support
the overthrow of the government. He encouraged the
women of America to abandon their quest for political
rights and to devote themselves to educating their
children instead of placing them in the care of
Catholic nurses and schools."

Not long after Gavazzi's triumphant visit to
Cincinnati he traveled south to Louisville. Brief
notices of his visit appeared in the local papers, but
they were less than complimentary. The Courier noted
that although Gavazzi considered himself to be a
peaceful man, violence inevitably followed him. Hoping to prevent a disturbance, the Journal urged anyone who might be inclined to stir up trouble to avoid Gavazzi's lecture.**1**

The Italian's speech passed without incident. It received mixed reviews. The nativist Courier praised Gavazzi for his eloquence as an orator and the logical and comprehensive nature of his argument. The editors suggested that if Gavazzi spoke in Louisville again it would be difficult to find a hall large enough to accommodate his audience. The Journal briefly noted that Gavazzi spoke for two hours, but his thick accent made much of the speech unintelligible. The paper described his dramatic manner and noted somewhat caustically that Gavazzi "might probably be the greatest actor living."**2**

Neither the Courier nor the Journal gave detailed accounts of Gavazzi's lecture. The event was not even mentioned in the Democrat. There is no evidence that the lecture was published in pamphlet form for mass distribution in Louisville. Only a small portion of the city's population would have had access to Gavazzi's incendiary remarks. This, along with Louisville's toleration of Catholics, helped to prevent violence when Bedini visited that city.
Gaetano Bedini's visit to the United States contained both triumph and tragedy. In a strange twist of fate the Papal Nuncio found himself at one point sharing a railroad car with Gavazzi. Bedini must have felt a tremendous sense of vindication when Gavazzi cowered in the rear of the compartment, afraid to face the man whose name he had dishonored. In Boston where anti-Catholic feeling ran rampant following the alleged abduction of a young Protestant woman by Catholic clergymen, Bedini's quiet dignity won him many admirers.

From the Catholic church's point of view, Bedini's resolution of the Buffalo trustee dispute in favor of the Archbishop was a huge success. This dispute had dragged on since 1829 when the pastor and trustees of St. Louis Church in Buffalo quarreled over property rights to donated land. Bedini ruled that the Bishop had not agreed to incorporation under New York law, which made the contract invalid. While the Catholic clergy rejoiced that Bedini's decision marked the end of the trustee conflict, Protestants were horrified that a foreign official would come into the United States and settle a property dispute in favor of the Catholic Church. The former trustees declared Bedini's visit the start of a religious civil war. Before long New York's fledgling Know Nothing Party used the case
as an example of the aggressive nature of the Catholic Church.^

In several cities Bedini faced severe opposition. Before Bedini arrived in New York an Italian exile approached Archbishop Hughes of New York and informed him that a band of exiled Italian nationalists would be waiting near the Cathedral armed with stilettos to kill the Nuncio. Hughes half believed the man's story and took the precaution of notifying the Chief of Police. Before the week was over the informant was found stabbed to death. A wave of fear and panic swept the Catholic community of New York. Bedini encouraged Catholics to remain steadfast in their faith in a letter published in the Freeman's Journal, the official organ of the Archdiocese of New York. In his letter the Nuncio stated that his life was in the hands of God and he would continue to love those who hated him. He urged them to pity the men who had plotted his death as unhappy beings who could never again set foot in the land of their birth.^

Privately, Bedini confided to Purcell that he was fighting a feeling of desperation for the sake of the American Catholics who eagerly awaited his arrival. Again, Bedini expressed his strong belief that Divine Providence would protect him and asked Purcell for his prayers. In spite of his frightening experience, the
Nuncio's enthusiasm for his visit to Cincinnati was not dampened. This plot against Bedini's life caused the American Bishops to keep the Nuncio's actions as quiet as possible to protect him from his enemies. 47

Before departing for Louisville and Cincinnati, Bedini fell victim once again to an angry mob. In Pittsburgh the carriage he was riding in was attacked by a band of ruffians who blew cigar smoke at the Nuncio through the carriage windows. The day after this demonstration occurred, Bedini wrote to Purcell from Pittsburgh and requested that no fanfare should greet him when he arrived in Cincinnati. To prevent further violence, he asked that Purcell and Spalding refrain from publicizing his schedule for Cincinnati and Louisville. Upon arriving in Cincinnati Bedini was greeted by Archbishop Purcell and Bishop Spalding, and stayed overnight. The next day Spalding accompanied the Nuncio to Louisville.48

Although not everyone in Louisville was happy about the Nuncio's visit, it was peaceful. A group of Germans gathered in Butchertown to condemn Bedini's visit. The angry Germans flagellated and burned an effigy of Bedini. No violence or bloodshed accompanied the demonstration. The Courier remarked that "the thing was done in so quiet and genteel a manner that people generally knew nothing about it."49
Bedini spent two days visiting schools and charitable institutions in spite of a cold, a sore throat, and the strain of his recent experiences. He "had a kind smile and a word of fatherly encouragement and admonition for all." While in Louisville the nuncio tried to allay Protestant fears of a possible Catholic takeover by urging the Catholic population to be good citizens of the republic as a part of their religious duties.²⁰

Bedini returned to Cincinnati on December 21 where he visited Catholic schools, hospitals and orphan asylums and officiated at Christmas services in the Cathedral. Bedini's visit to Cincinnati might have passed without incident had the Freemen's organization not learned of Bedini's activities through the Catholic newspaper. Because of their own involvement in the Revolutions of 1848 they adopted Ugo Bassi as a member of their cause and felt that they could not allow his alleged murderer to pass through their city without notice. The Hochwachter published an article entitled "The Butcher of Bologna" which condemned Bedini for his evil deeds. Bedini's visit to the United States was depicted as a triumphal procession with Catholics unharnessing the horses and pulling the carriage themselves, "[o]xen and asses in place of horses" declared the author.²¹
The *Hochwachter* stated that the Germans alone could avenge the murdered nation of Italy; there were few Italians in the city and no other group could be counted on. The Yankees had no feelings or principles, their whole concern was making money. The Irish were ignorant and "unable to discover under cross and Rosary the heart of stone - the heart of a hyena" possessed by Bedini. The article went on to declare that the Nuncio was in America to destroy the peace of the nation, and anyone who welcomed him was an enemy of liberty."  
Bedini had committed an evil unrivaled on earth and "the opportunity for revenge should be taken hold of and used to the utmost."  

The article in the *Hochwachter* put Mayor Snelbaker in a difficult position. The Kirkland affair had brought the wrath of the city upon him, but others complained that Cincinnati was being run by crime and rowdyism. In some sections of the city organized gangs caused respectable citizens to cross over to the other side of the street out of fear for their safety. The abundance of saloons, houses of prostitution and overly sympathetic jurors were blamed for the condition of the city. Few people agreed on how much of the blame belonged with the police. Some argued that the police were doing their best with only 130 officers in a city with over 100,000 citizens. Others felt that
the police were lazy and flaunted their authority over minor offenders while they avoided dangerous criminals.  

Snelbaker promised to do whatever was necessary to prevent nativist violence in Cincinnati following the Kirkland incident. He feared that the Freeman's society intended to harm or even kill Bedini. He later wrote that the Society was made up mostly of young men who had recently come from Germany and were strongly influenced by Friedrich Hassaurek. They were "liable in a moment of excitement to commit violence upon the persons, not of Catholics alone, but of every other sect or denomination of men or even of individuals whose path runs at right angles to their own."  

On Christmas night Chief of Police Thomas Lukins ordered both the day and evening officers to remain on duty and wait for further orders. They did not know why they were being detained but quietly obeyed their superiors' request. Later that evening Captain Lukins informed Purcell that his home might come under attack, and ordered one hundred officers to the watch house near the Cathedral.  

At ten o'clock the Germans emerged from their hall carrying a mock scaffold, an effigy of Bedini and transparencies bearing the slogans "Down with the Roman Butcher," "Down with Bedini," and "No Priests No
Kings". The Freemen passed the hall where the Turner's held their meetings and unsuccessfully attempted to persuade them to join in the protest. When the procession turned down the street leading to the Cathedral, the police emerged from the watch house.  

It is not known which side fired first, but in the space of a few minutes several more shots were fired. Stones, clubs, and slingshots were all used in the melee. When the riot was over, sixteen protesters were wounded. One, Charles Engelberger, later died from his wounds. Sixty-three members of the German organization were arrested and detained in the watch house. Friedrich Hassaurek was later arrested for aiding and abetting the rioters. A bail of five hundred dollars was posted for each defendant. To help his imprisoned compatriots, the President of the Freemen's Society published the following notice:

The Friends of the murdered and wounded, in the onslaught made by the police on Christmas night have secured the services of able counsel, who will immediately proceed to bring about a thorough investigation of the sad and disgraceful affair. Blood has been shed and justice should be satisfied. The appeal is to all lovers of liberty and law and order for aid. Let the appeal be liberally answered.  

In a gesture of goodwill Archbishop Purcell sent a contribution of ten dollars to the fund established for the Freemen. He stated that the differences of faith and opinion should be forgotten when people are in
need. The Archbishop extended his sympathy to the wounded, both police and protester. The Freeman's society returned the money with the following scathing words:

... the blood of a brother barbarously murdered stands between you and us... Our honor and our conscience forbid us to accept a gift from a hand which, while it pretends to shake that of his brother under the garb of humanity, as a token of friendship, seeks to annihilate him making that noble feeling of humanity subservient to private views. And persuaded as we are by a long train of historical facts and the late occurrences of a Jesuit under the guidance of the despotic King of Rome can never mean good, nor deal with sincerity toward men known to cherish republican opinions and sentiments of justice and brotherly affection."

The Telegraph was outraged that so sincere a gesture would be rejected. The editor, Rev. Edward Purcell, brother of the Archbishop, stated that the donation was intended for the wounded poor who had been duped by the misrepresentation and falsehood of the Freemen."

In an address to the citizens of Cincinnati the Freemen attempted to justify their actions. They asserted that they had a moral obligation to the people of Cincinnati to inform them about the evil deeds of Bedini and the Catholic church, spanning from the Inquisition to the Revolution of 1848, in which brave men died horrible deaths "for having dared to utter the words of Liberty and Freedom." The Freemen demanded to know if Cincinnati was under the control of the
Jesuits, and recalled earlier tensions in the city by asking if they were not afforded "the same rights as the Roman Catholics in this city, who last summer and also on a Sunday made a public demonstration without the least hindrance or molestation."  

Cincinnati was uneasy following the riot. Six hundred members of the Freeman's society gathered to bury their fallen compatriot, whom they deemed a victim of Popery. Tensions were at such a high level that fighting broke out among spectators of Engelberger's funeral procession over a seat on an express wagon to view the proceedings. The authorities asked the Catholic community to cancel the procession scheduled that weekend for the consecration of a new church. The Catholics replied that the procession had already been cancelled before the riot at Bedini's request. The Nuncio believed that out of respect for the solemnity of the occasion the procession should not be held. He also feared that a street celebration on a Sunday might offend church members of other denominations.  

Eighteen fifty four would prove to be a year of transition. In both cities there would be serious repercussions following Bedini's visit. In Louisville the Catholics who had once been tolerated and accepted seemed more and more sinister. The German Freeman and Turner organizations which had once remained quietly in
the background became more vocal, especially on the issue of slavery. These changes in perception, along with national events allowed the anti-Catholic, anti-foreign Know Nothing Party to flourish in Louisville. In Cincinnati, government incompetence and corruption were discovered in the trials that followed the Bedini riots. More revelations of malfeasance led diverse groups of citizens to form a temporary coalition under the leadership of the Know Nothing Party that would remove many members of the unpopular Democratic administration from office.
Endnotes for Chapter II


8. Archbishop John Baptist Purcell to Archbishop Anthony Blanc, 22 March 1853, Archdiocese of New Orleans Collection VI-1-e, UNDA. Archbishop Anthony Blanc to Archbishop John Baptist Purcell, 6 April 1853, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection II-4-1, UNDA. Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, March 26, April 9, 1853.


10. Most newspapers of the period referred to the preacher by his last name only. But, on May 7, 1853 the Columbia and Great West called him Hugh Kirkland and the Louisville Democrat identified him as Patrick Kirkland, a native of Cincinnati. This information does not appear in any of the other papers.

12. *Columbian and Great West*, May 7, 1853.


17. Strangely enough, there were no direct accusations of foreigners or Catholics "stuffing" the ballot boxes to insure Snelbaker's election.


32. Connelly, 289-290. Archbishop Gaetano Bedini to Archbishop John Baptist Purcell, 21 July 1853, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection II-4-1, UNDA.

33. Connelly, 12-14.

34. Connelly, 6-21.

35. Bedini to Purcell, 21 July 1853, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection II-4-1, UNDA. Sr. Mary Agnes Mc Cann, "Archbishop Purcell and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati" (Ph. D diss., Catholic University of America, 1918), 28-31. Connelly, 5.


37. Isaac Kelso, *Light and More Light; or Danger in the Dark* (Cincinnati: Epenetus Hampson, 1855.), 187.


40. *Columbian and Great West*, October 23, 29, 1853.


43. Connelly, 33.

44. Connelly, 42-47.

45. Connelly, 50-74.

47. Bedini to Purcell, 22 October 1853, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection II-4-1, UNDA. Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick to Archbishop John Baptist Purcell, 25 October 1853, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection II-4-1, UNDA.

48. Bedini to Purcell, 12 December 1853, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection II-4-1, UNDA.

49. Louisville Courier, January 21, 1854. The demonstration was apparently so wild that few people in the city knew about it at the time and it was not reported in the newspapers until a month after it happened.

50. Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, December 24, 1853.

51. Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, January 7, 1854. Catholic Enquirer, January 5, 1854. There are no existing editions of the Hochwachter from 1853. Translations of the Bedini article were printed in some of Cincinnati's other papers after the riot.

52. Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, January 7, 1854.

53. Cincinnati Enquirer, January 5, 1854.


55. Cincinnati Enquirer, January 5, 1854.


57. Cincinnati Enquirer, January 5, 1854.

58. Cincinnati Times, January 3, 1854.


60. Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, December 31, 1853.

61. Cincinnati Commercial, December 29, 1853.

Chapter III
The Rise of Nativist Parties

Eighteen fifty four was a year of great turbulence throughout the United States. The nation's faltering party system received a deathblow when the Kansas Nebraska Act passed after months of the fiercest Congressional fighting that the United States had ever witnessed. The Kansas Nebraska Act allowed popular sovereignty to decide if slavery would be allowed in the two new territories, areas that had been declared free soil by the Missouri Compromise. The Democratic Party was badly weakened as free soil and pro-slavery factions developed within the organization. The Whig Party was destroyed by the Nebraska bill; Northern Whigs were among the most dedicated advocates of free soil principles in the nation, and were unable to forgive their southern counterparts who had overwhelmingly supported the bill.

The Know Nothing Party tried to step into the void left by the demise of the Whig Party. The Know Nothings had started in New York in 1849 as the Order
of the Star Spangled Banner. Political discontent helped the organization to grow, and by 1854 Know Nothing lodges had sprung up all over the United States. The motto of the Know Nothings was "Americans only shall govern America," and they promoted a passionate attachment to the institutions of the United States and the history of its purer days. Vigilant opposition toward any attempts to weaken the nation was another Know Nothing principle and the party called for strict new immigration laws to protect the nation from foreigners.

Claiming the perpetuity of the Union as their main goal, the Know Nothings denounced the actions of the Whigs and Democrats regarding the abolition of slavery. They declared that Congress could not legislate on the subject because the Constitution did not recognize slavery, so Congress could not legislate on the subject.¹

The Know Nothing Party did not have an official ticket in the Cincinnati elections of 1854, but its influence was clearly felt in the sweeping victories of the independent People's party. Recent historians of nativism have cited the independent victory in Cincinnati as proof of a temporary fusion of anti-Catholic and anti-Nebraska factions,² or a union of nativists, temperance advocates and abolitionists.³
While opposition to the Nebraska bill did give the independent party many supporters, most notably the city's non-Catholic Germans, revelations of corruption and inefficiency in city government and the Democrats' alienation of the German community also played an important part in the independent party's success.

When the sixty-three Germans charged with attempting to commit violence against Bedini were indicted, Cincinnatians initially perceived them as lawless radicals; after the evidence was presented, however, they were viewed as innocent men whose rights had been violated by a brutal police force and an inefficient and corrupt city government. Throughout the proceedings the Freemen maintained that they only wanted to express their contempt for the clergyman and "would not stain [their] fingers with his accursed blood."

They pointed out that there were many women and children in their procession who, if violence had been intended, would have been left behind. A number of them also insisted that they were not members of the Freeman's Society, but had seen the procession passing and had joined it out of curiosity, or were innocent bystanders who had the misfortune of attracting the attention of the police force. They said that although they went along to the watch house peacefully, many
were beaten by police officers as they were taken away or after they were placed in the cell.

The charges against the sixty-three were dropped when the Prosecutor declared that there was not enough evidence to prove that the defendants intended to harm Bedini, or that they had even been part of the procession."

The dismissal of charges against the defendants did not mark the end of the Bedini affair. The citizens of Cincinnati were outraged by the conduct of the police force and demanded an investigation. Once again, a committee of one hundred was formed. The committee called on the Mayor to explain why he had left the situation in the hands of the police chief when he clearly expected violence, and why he defended the rights of Bedini when he had been so anxious to suppress Kirkland's freedom of speech months earlier. It tried to determine why Judge Spooner had not been on hand to read the riot act, and demanded to know if their rights as citizens and taxpayers were to be protected or if they were "to be beaten down in the streets of [their] own cities by [their] own police officers."" Friedrich Hassaurek was also enraged by the events of Christmas night. Although he was not present for the demonstration, he had been arrested anyway on
charges of inciting a riot because of the article that appeared in his paper. The editor claimed that the article had not even been written by him but rather by a young friend who was in a state of "justifiable excitement" after witnessing Bedini's atrocities first hand. Hassaurek also declared that the translation of the article Snelbaker cited was a gross exaggeration and an attempt by the Jesuits to undermine the Freeman's organization. The charges against Hassaurek were dropped since there was no evidence to prove that he had participated in the riot."

That same day, Hassaurek swore out a warrant against Judge Spooner, Chief Lukins, and over one hundred members of the police force. The men were arrested and charged with assembling for an unlawful act and doing violence to the persons of Hassaurek and others. Most of the men were released with orders to be present for the hearing scheduled for the following Monday. Two officers were brought before Mayor Snelbaker on charges that they had beaten prisoners in the watch house. One of the officers was convicted and dismissed from the police force, and the second officer was arrested and turned over to the criminal courts."

In accordance with the demands of the committee of one hundred, a court of enquiry was held to determine what had happened on the night of the twenty fifth.
The hearing went on for two weeks; hundreds of witnesses were called and the actions of police force and city officials were scrutinized. The witness who did the most damage to the reputations of Mayor Snelbaker, Judge Spooner and Chief Lukins was William Dickson, the Whig who served as Prosecuting Attorney of the Police Court. During his testimony Dickson revealed that the Mayor held him responsible for not obtaining a conviction in the Freemen’s trial. Snelbaker had maintained that he could produce witnesses who would swear that the organization planned to kill the nuncio, as well as the names of prominent Cincinnatians who had mingled among the crowd and beat the Germans. None of these witnesses were ever produced. Dickson also stated that Snelbaker had requested that charges against the Freemen be reduced to disorderly conduct. The Prosecutor denied the Mayor’s request, knowing that the charge of rioting did not justify the brutality of the arrests, and fearing that a lesser charge would cause more scandal if the public learned of the beatings that the prisoners suffered at the hands of the police.

Snelbaker was asked why he left his office when he clearly anticipated trouble from the Freemen. He insisted that he remained in his office until nightfall and left only after he believed it was too late for any
violence to erupt. He maintained that it was customary to hire extra officers during the holiday season, and while he condemned the kicking, he felt that the situation had been otherwise well handled.  

Further testimony showed that the Mayor had not taken an active part in preventing a physical confrontation between the Germans and Bedini. The Mayor had not discussed the possibility of violence against the nuncio with Archbishop Purcell; instead he offered Chief Lukins the opportunity to confer with the Catholic leader if he desired to do so. Lukins declined to warn Purcell of the impending danger, and after consultation with Police Court Judge William Spooner, the two men decided against placing a contingent of police officers around the Cathedral to protect Purcell and Bedini, believing that it would be better to take the Germans by surprise.  

Judge Spooner was also censured for not reading the riot act and ordering the crowd to disperse before the confrontation with the police. Several witnesses claimed that Spooner had urged Lukins to proceed with the arrests without giving the protesters proper warning. The Gazette stated that this was cowardly behavior, and noted that in "ancient times when hostilities were designed, gallant men sent heralds in
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advance to announce their approach, but Lukins and his men lay in worse than an Indian ambush.\textsuperscript{12}

Police Chief Thomas Lukins drew the most fire for his role in the Bedini incident. Two men came forward claiming that they had been brutalized by Lukins on the night in question. One stated that he was merely watching the procession when the Chief grabbed him. When the man protested that he was not involved in the protest, Lukins threatened to "mash [his] head" and threw him to the ground and kicked and beat him. Finally, Lukins dragged the man to the watch house where his pocketbook was taken from him and never returned. The second man claimed that Lukins grabbed him and dragged him through the crowd, cursing violently and ordering his men to kill the protesters.\textsuperscript{13}

One of the most disturbing pieces of information to come from the testimony was the evidence of the physician who examined the body of Charles Engelberger. Judging by the position of the bullet wounds, it was determined that the shots had been fired by someone standing erect, while the victim who had been knocked to the ground was struggling to get up.\textsuperscript{14}

Women and the elderly were not exempt from brutality at the hands of the police force on the night of December 25, 1853. Witnesses stated that there were
at least one hundred women in the procession, and a number of them had been knocked down by police officers during the melee. John Stolz, a former city councilman, said that he had followed the procession out of curiosity and suddenly found himself in the middle of the riot. After being accosted by an officer, Stolz promised to go along willingly and pleaded with the officer not to strike an old man. Heedless of the prisoner’s pleas and promises, the officer beat Stolz as he was taken to the watch house.\(^15\)

Even the prisoners who were treated humanely at the time of their arrest were likely to meet with violence in the watch house. There were numerous accounts of prisoners being beaten by the police in the watch house, and many claimed that their injuries were not attended to for several hours after their arrests. Prosecutor Dickson was horrified at the conditions in the watch house when he viewed the situation the morning after the riot. He said that six men were crowded into cells that were only made to hold two men, and he called for the windows to be opened so the prisoners could breathe.\(^16\)

After weeks of dramatic testimony, the trial of the police force ended in an anticlimactic manner. The court allowed Judge Spooner to retain his position, but
called upon Captain Lukins to resign. Lukins and two
other officers were bound over to the criminal courts,
and a handful of other officers were dismissed from the
force. Satisfaction was not to be gained in a court of
law. The criminal courts dismissed the cases on the
grounds of insufficient evidence.  

The citizens of Cincinnati were horrified by the
actions of their police force. One way of expressing
disgust for the actions of Lukins and his men was to
make them the butt of derisive jokes. One local wit
declared that "it is probable that the present chief of
our Cincinnati police will be known in our annals and
by posterity as the celebrated 'Little Kickapoo Chief':"
because of his fondness for kicking men smaller than
himself."  A Cincinnati poet expressed his disdain for
the police in "Pitch-In" which concluded with the
following lines,

"The Kickapoo police force
    This wondrous precept know,
That 'tis the best of policy
    To let big culprits go;
But kick the little fellows
    And pound their heads like sin
Aye! let 'em feel the mighty power
    Of our war-cry "Pitch-In"!

Black humor was not the only means of expressing
anger about the present state of affairs. Some
citizens of the Queen City still believed that the
Freemen's rights had been violated. In a symbolic
attempt to rectify the wrong, four thousand Americans
gathered in the vicinity of the Cathedral to set an effigy of Bedini ablaze. When the figure was almost completely burned, a member of the crowd tore it down and hurled it under the steps of the watch house. A scuffle followed as police officers retrieved the burning effigy. Two officers were slightly injured and three arrests were made. Most of the crowd dispersed peacefully, but a few proceeded to the home of Judge Spooner where they filled the air with groans and discordant music.\textsuperscript{20}

This incident set off a frenzy of effigy burning in the Cincinnati area during January, 1854. Bedini, Spooner, and one of the witnesses for the defense were burned in effigy in various parts of the city. Across the river in Covington, Kentucky a group of citizens sent a sardonic invitation to Thomas Lukins requesting that he send Snelbaker, Spooner, and the police force, because they were planning to burn the nuncio in effigy and needed the Cincinnatians to protect them in case of a riot. A few days after the invitation was sent, a seven foot tall effigy of Bedini was peacefully burned in Covington.\textsuperscript{21}

The threat of another riot seemed imminent when a man on horseback galloped through the streets, ringing a bell and warning the Irish laborers that the Cathedral was to be attacked. Almost four thousand
Catholics gathered to protect the building. The combined efforts of Mayor Snelbaker, Archbishop Purcell and Chief Lukins, who had declined to tender his resignation until this crisis had passed, finally induced the Irish to return to their homes. These events caused Bishop Purcell to recall the fate of the martyrs of old. He noted "with the hue and cry against us heard in the streets, and together with the burning of effigies making night hideous and preparing our souls for martyrdom - for which it seems after all God did not see us well enough prepared, for which he did not deem us worthy."\(^{22}\)

In the midst of the terror that surrounded them, Cincinnati's Catholic clergy found comfort in the conduct of their people. The Archbishop was amazed at the "[m]oderation, wisdom and firmness" that his flock had displayed during their time of trial. Tensions among the various Catholic ethnic groups were forgotten for a time as all the Catholics in the city united in defense of their faith. In addition, clergymen noted that many young people who had abandoned their religion had come back into the fold.\(^{23}\)

The last contact that the Catholics of Cincinnati had with the nuncio was a letter that was written to Purcell, and subsequently published in the Telegraph. Bedini thanked the Archbishop for his hospitality and
forgave the citizens who had acted upon the false
accusations made against him. He wrote:

All that malice and hatred against our Holy
Religion had accumulated on my head to make me
odious to this amiable American nation and thus
paralyze [sic] the effect of the Benedictions of
an envoy of the Holy Father. [It] could neither
diminish or destroy the consolations which my
soul enjoyed at each moment in the midst of
Catholics so pious and full of zeal.

I deplore the evil consequences of the
atrocious calumnies propagated with the most
hideous effrontery, remonstrances of common
sense; as if a puerile credulity could have
existed in a nation so enlightened and full of
noble sentiments; but the consequences of evil
are for him who harbors it in his heart or seeks
to propagate it.\textsuperscript{24}

The Nuncio would have preferred that this letter
never be published. He did not want to seem too harsh
toward the people of Cincinnati, nor did he want to
indulge in idle flattery. In his official report,
Bedini placed the blame for the riot squarely on the
shoulders of the Freemen, who he condemned as
hypocrites who demanded freedom for themselves but
refused to acknowledge the rights of others. They
called on the laws of the United States to protect
them, he stated, but they refused to obey the laws if
they were not in their favor.\textsuperscript{25}

In 1854 the Know Nothing Party gained a majority
of seats on the city's board of Aldermen, Common
Council and school board. Traditionally, historians
have attributed the success of the Know Nothings in
Kentucky to the breakdown of the Whigs; no self
respecting Kentuckian would give their allegiance to the party that had deprived their favorite son, Henry Clay, of the Presidency four times.\textsuperscript{26} There is much validity in this theory. There was so much hostility against the Democratic party in the state that a young Kentuckian declared that he would appear in Harvard’s catalog as a resident of Baltimore if Kentucky went for a Democratic candidate.\textsuperscript{27}

Belonging to the Whig Party was so deeply ingrained in the Kentucky character that many Know Nothings continued to view themselves as Whigs of the "Henry Clay School". As one member of the Kentucky Grand Council declared, "I have been a Whig ever since I was a man and am yet one in principle under the title of 'American.'" Others simply considered membership in the Know Nothing Party as a means of biding their time until the Know Nothings would die out and the spirit and principles of the Whig party would rise from the ashes.\textsuperscript{28}

But longstanding devotion to the Whig party does not explain why the citizens of Louisville, who had long accepted Catholics and only months earlier had driven one anti-Catholic street preacher out of town and virtually ignored another, suddenly embraced a political party that held proscription of Catholics as one of its most cherished goals.
While it is possible that many Louisville voters viewed the American party as the successor of the Whigs and scoffed at the secret rituals, there was a shift in attitudes towards Catholics and foreigners that would enable a nativist party to flourish in Louisville. Bedini's visit to Louisville marked the beginning of tension among both the Catholic and foreign populations. Always sensitive to the mood of the community, Bishop Spalding blamed much of the tension on the ambiguous nature of Bedini's visit. The Catholic Church had not issued a statement about the nuncio's background or mission, and the accounts in the Catholic papers often contradicted each other. Also, Bedini's status in the United States placed him in limbo, since he was neither an ambassador nor a private citizen. But Spalding doubted that the visit would have gone more smoothly had Bedini been accredited directly to the United States, since neither political party would have been anxious to recognize him.29

Following the Bedini visit, there was a growing sentiment in Louisville that the Catholic church had violated the trust of the community by bringing in a member of a foreign hierarchy to settle legal disputes. Some Protestants began to believe that Catholics were not sufficiently grateful for the toleration afforded them in their city. They pointed out that Bedini, a
foreigner, had been able to lead his followers in the manner of worship practiced in his native land, even when angry Americans had tried to prevent him from speaking. They questioned whether an influential American Protestant leader would receive similar privileges in the Papal States. Catholics, once a respected minority, suddenly seemed sinister. The ethnicity of the church had also changed. No longer were most of Louisville's Catholics native-born Americans. In addition to the German church which had been erected in 1838, St. Patrick's, an Irish parish, was consecrated in 1854. The American Catholics who settled in Louisville had an independent spirit that enabled them to defy ecclesiastical authority, but nativists feared that European Catholics would not be able to withstand the pressure of the hierarchy.  

Louisville's German community had never enjoyed the levels of toleration that the city's Catholics had. The liberal German's political views and social activities had seldom attracted the attention of the native born population, but the Germans became more and more vocal following Bedini's visit and began to be seen as a threat to many in Louisville. The liberal Germans condemned the United States government for submitting to the power of Rome and prided themselves
for burning the nuncio in effigy before their brethren in Cincinnati did so.\textsuperscript{31}

Louisville's free thinking Germans formed their own Freeman's society early in 1854. A member of the Cincinnati organization who had been a witness in the police trial addressed the meeting with an account of Bedini's visit to Cincinnati and the riot that followed. The organization announced its support of the Cincinnati Freemen and condemned the actions of the police and Bedini.\textsuperscript{32} Once they had gained the public's attention, the Germans advertised their desire to create a true reform party. These Germans believed that a new party was the only solution for the nation's problems, since the Whigs contained a large nativist element and the Democrats supported slavery. They praised the Constitution of the United States and the values espoused in the Declaration of Independence, but argued that slavery, privileges of race and station, and the party system prevented all Americans from claiming their full share of democracy's bounty.

To remedy these defects, the Union of Free Germans issued a document which would later be known as the Louisville Platform. The content of the Louisville Platform was similar to the platform that the Freemen of Cincinnati had issued several months earlier. But the Union of Free Germans was not content to leave
their platform a local document and sent copies to President Pierce, his cabinet, members of Congress, and State Legislatures. Newspaper editors also received copies of the Platform, and twenty-three Western editors and four Eastern editors included the document in their publications.\textsuperscript{33}

Opposition to the Catholic Church was an important plank in the Louisville Platform. Its creators called for Washington to denounce the Roman Catholic Church as a despotic organization whose aims were in direct opposition to republican values. While the Germans' belief that every priest was an agent of the Pope and every Catholic his subject echoed the views of nativists, they also attacked America’s Protestant tradition. The Germans argued that true freedom of religion would not exist in the United States until Sunday closing laws, Thanksgiving Day, prayer in Congress and oaths on the Bible were outlawed.

In the field of foreign affairs and immigration, the United States was called upon to end its policy of neutrality and intervene when a fledgling republic was threatened by a despotic monarchy. To ease the way for new immigrants, the government was expected to introduce a special bureau of colonization and immigration. In turn, any immigrant who refused to
swear allegiance to the Constitution of the United States would face deportation.

In order to achieve true equality, the drafters of the Louisville platform demanded a revision of inheritance laws that would make a non-working aristocracy obsolete. The government would be responsible for preventing corrupt unions from exploiting labor's power for their own ends. For the workers' benefit a national credit bank, a ten hour work day, and a fair minimum wage would be established. Property would be made available to any American who wanted it and national resources would be used to support indigent colonists.

The Union of Free Germans also called for a major overhaul of the penal, legal, and electoral systems of the United States. They condemned the existing legal system as too complicated and called for simplified legal handbooks that would make the law accessible to a larger portion of the population. Claiming that correction, not retribution was the goal of the penal system, the liberal Germans called for the abolition of capital punishment. In the political realm, an end to the party system was demanded. All public officials were to be directly elected by the people and sectional differences would be resolved by allowing every American citizen to elect Congressmen from every state.
Finally, the Louisville Platform called for true equality of all citizens, namely women and blacks. Based on the statement that all people are created equal with certain inalienable rights, the Union of Free Germans demanded suffrage rights for women. Since blacks were denied equality by the peculiar institution, the Germans urged that slavery be abolished and former slaves be given full rights as citizens.34

The Union of Free Germans invited any American who truly was opposed to the pro-slavery policies of the Democrats and the nativist policies of the Whigs to join with them to form a true reform party. In reality, the Louisville Platform only deepened tensions between natives and immigrants. Many natives scorned the Germans for their desire to reform the United States government, even though they had only been in the country for a short time. The newspapers emphasized the Germans’ intention to vote as a block, and since one third of Louisville’s population was German, this was not an idle threat. Garret Davis’s warning that the foreign born and slave populations would outnumber the native born citizens by 1870 became increasingly urgent.35

German societies in several states adopted their own set of resolutions based on the Louisville
Platform. Although the Freemen of Cincinnati had
published their intention to form a similar party six
months before, they published a more formal version in
the spring of 1854. The Platform was no more popular
in Cincinnati than it had been in Louisville. Even the
pro-immigrant Enquirer condemned the document, stating
that it opposed the idea of any party being formed on
the basis of its members’ nativity. The paper also
disliked the Germans’ demand for full citizenship
rights for blacks, stating that if abolition was
inevitable, colonization would be preferable to blacks
being given voting rights. 38

Cincinnati’s Spring elections of 1854 reflected
the nations’ political disorder, but concerns about
malfeasance in local government were equally important.
Cincinnati had traditionally been a Whig city. The
Democrats only came into power in the 1840’s as the
immigrant population grew. The current Democratic
Mayor had only come into office because three
anti-Catholic candidates had divided the vote. The
revelations of corruption and mismanagement caused many
to seek new city leaders.

For a while it appeared doubtful that the
Democratic party would even offer an official ticket
for the Spring elections. The proposed Kansas Nebraska
bill caused much dissent among Cincinnati Democrats.
The *Enquirer*, the city’s Democratic organ, strongly supported the Kansas Nebraska act and declared that the abolition movement was made up of "negroes, strong minded women, and fanatical white men." Only a small portion of Cincinnati Democrats agreed with this sentiment. Among the most vocal opponents of the Nebraska bill were Cincinnati’s Germans. During the spring of 1854 they held several meetings denouncing the despised legislation. They called for all Americans to put aside prejudice resulting from birth, religion or party affiliation and stand against the party of slavery. Cincinnati’s former Whig papers took a lively interest in the division and noted that the German population was almost all opposed to the bill, and since they had made up the Democratic majorities, politicians should be mindful of their opinions. 3a

A small contingent of Cincinnati’s Democrats met to voice their support for the Nebraska bill. The turnout was disappointingly low. Party regulars blamed the German leaders who had arranged a meeting in the Turners Hall the same evening and accused them of wanting to keep the truth about slavery from the rest of their people.3b

After much debate, a Democratic ticket was assembled for the upcoming election. Party leaders feared that without an official ticket the Democratic
vote would be divided among several unofficial candidates. Declaring that "to be defeated after a gallant struggle, would be better than an unconditional surrender beforehand," the Democratic ticket went forward to almost certain defeat.  

There was no official Whig ticket in the Spring of 1854 and the Know Nothings had not yet organized. A few candidates for city council ran under the name "Independent Whig," but there was no party unity. Instead an independent party was formed to prevent undesirable Democrats from gaining office. One of the Independent party's special targets was Joseph Steel, a shoemaker, who was running for wharf master. It was alleged that Steele was a close friend of Mayor Snelbaker and had a great deal of influence in the current administration. Steele was soundly defeated. He ran third in a field of four candidates.  

The new Independent ticket contained a strong nativist element; two of the most closely watched elections dealt with opposition to the Catholics and Irish. James McCord, the Democratic candidate for director of the city infirmary was an Irish born Catholic. Nativists claimed that the Catholic hierarchy desired control of the city infirmary, because it was one of the few charitable institutions in Cincinnati that the Catholics did not run. The
nativist press avowed that McCords's Catholic education in Ireland and his continuing profession of that faith would make him a puppet of the Roman hierarchy, and put the infirmary under their control. In spite of Democratic assurances of McCord's compassion and commitment to American principles, he was overwhelmingly defeated."

The most hotly contested race during the 1854 election took place in the heavily Irish thirteenth ward. The Democratic candidates for city council and school trustee had previously supported public funding for Catholic schools. The supporters of the independent ticket feared that the Democrats could win these seats with the help of unnaturalized voters. Conditions looked grim the morning of the election, hundreds of Irishmen from the thirteenth ward poured into the courthouse for their naturalization papers, and observers noted a large number of strange faces at the polls. Supporters of both the Democratic and Independent parties surrounded the polling place to insure that no illegal voting took place, and in some cases to intimidate members of the opposition. Tensions ran high and fights broke out, but no one was seriously injured. Mayor Snelbaker and several police officers were on hand to insure that the polls would be closed peacefully at the end of the day. The nativist
platform triumphed, but the vote was close with the independent candidate for city council winning by only eighteen votes.\(^{43}\)

Overall, the spring elections were a great triumph for the independent ticket. The Democrats captured only a few positions, including council seats in the first, third, and fourth wards where most of the Irish population lived. Rather than reflecting a real fusion of conflicting elements concerned with national issues, the independent party addressed more immediate local issues and longstanding prejudices against Catholicism.

Following the spring election Cincinnati’s nativists tried to keep the evils of Catholicism constantly before the eyes of the public. Rumors flew around the southern part of the state that a priest had received a shipment of weapons and was plotting a Catholic takeover.\(^{44}\) More substantial than rumors was the trial of a priest accused of attempting to rape a student in a Catholic school. The defendant, Peter Kroeger, was a respected member of the clergy. He served as superintendent of the school and as editor of Cincinnati’s German Catholic paper.

The only facts that the testimony of both sides agreed upon was that Kroeger asked to hear the girl following her confession, became angry with her and struck her. The alleged victim, Catherine Meyers was
described as a well developed girl with "a sluggish temperament which gives her an appearance of stupidity." According to Meyers, Kroeger called her into the sacristy, pulled up her skirts and whipped her with a stick. Then he asked her if she had ever sinned with a man and tried to pull up her skirts once again to see if this denial was true.

Meyers said that she managed to escape from the priest and ran home and told her parents about the whipping. There was no mention of rape at that time. Her parents investigated legal action against the priest, but upon learning that a charge of assault and battery would bring only a small fine, Meyers turned to Stephen Molitar for redress. Molitar was the editor of the Volksblatt, an anti-Catholic publication, and he and Kroeger had carried on a long feud in the pages of their respective papers. After a long private discussion with Molitar and her mother, Catherine Meyer introduced the charge of attempted rape.

Kroeger denied these accusations, but admitted that he called the girl into the hallway after her confession and "tried to persuade her to go call her mother, and tell her in his presence something of importance to the girl's welfare." When the girl refused he became angry and slapped her across the face
but denied that he pulled up her skirts or made any improper advances.47

Doubts were raised regarding Meyers' testimony when a couple of her classmates came forward and reported that Catherine had bragged that all of her accusations were lies. Another witness who damaged the prosecution's case was the Protestant architect who designed the new church where the alleged incident took place. After his dealings with Kroeger, the architect believed that he was an honorable man. He suspected that since the girl's family was poor, the accusations might be a simple attempt to extort money from the Church. The architect approached the Meyers family and told them that if money was the motive for the accusations he would be willing to pay them himself in order to save a good man's reputation. He was told that "there was a time when money would have settled the matter, but that time was past."48

No verdict was reached in the Kroeger case. Nine members of the jury voted for acquittal, and the three jurors who had called for a conviction had voiced strong anti-Catholic sentiments throughout the case. Kroeger was released on $2,000 bond until September when another trial was slated to begin, but it seemed doubtful to many that the case would ever be retried. Even the assistant prosecuting attorney declared that
the evidence offered by the state would not warrant a second trial. The Kroeger case was dropped from the papers; there are no reports of a trial taking place in September.49

The Catholic Church believed that the accusations against Kroeger was part of a plot by "native bigots and foreign infidels" to arouse hatred against the Catholic Church. Considering the strong nativist sentiments in the city, this is a distinct possibility. Stephen Molitar was involved with the nativist independent ticket, and may have viewed the situation as still another opportunity to portray Catholics in an unfavorable light to gain support for the nativist ticket. The nativist papers published only the seamiest portions of the testimony, and the Times declared before the trial ever began that the conviction of Kroeger would sully the reputations of all Catholics in the United States.50

While the nativists used stories of priests stockpiling weapons and attempting to rape young girls to appeal to the voters' emotions, they used the writings of Catholic editor Orestes A. Brownson to appeal to their logic. Many of the articles written that portrayed Catholicism as the antithesis of republicanism were based on statements in Brownson’s Review. At first the Telegraph sided with Brownson,
stating that Protestants read the Review to misconstrue the articles. But, as the campaign against the catholics heightened, it became less tolerant of Brownson, and declared that the Bishop of Boston should censor Brownson's writing more closely. His writing caused such a furor, that many accused Brownson of sympathizing with the Know Nothings, a charge he denied.51

Although the independent party was sometimes referred to as the Know Nothing-Anti-Nebraska ticket, nativism was more important than slavery in their party platform. After spending the summer presenting Catholics in a bad light, the nativists continued to present Catholicism in direct opposition to republicanism, and dredged up old accusations that Purcell would produce large numbers of voters for the Democratic ticket. The independent ticket abandoned some of its earlier hostility toward the immigrant population during the fall campaign. Cincinnati's many Germans would be a valuable asset for either party and the independent candidates declared that the industrious Germans were quite different from the lazy Irishmen. The Times even paid the German Catholics a rather backhanded compliment, declaring them much more receptive to republican values since contacts with Protestants in their homeland helped them cast off the
superstitions normally associated with their religion."

A large portion of Germans did support the independent ticket, because the Democrats continued to endorse the Nebraska bill. The Germans stated that they would give their support only to candidates who opposed slavery. The Democrats tried to convince the Germans that they were supporting a party which would eventually proscribe them and put them on a level below the slave. But the actions of Cincinnati’s Democrats were as important in driving Germans into the arms of the independent party as the slavery issue.

Before the election, Jesse Timanus, a Democrat and an alleged member of the Miami tribe who was currently supervising construction of the new courthouse, took out an advertisement for three hundred native born Protestant laborers to work on that building. Timanus later resigned, and the Democrats tried to gloss over the incident saying that poor health had clouded his judgment in the matter and that neither Timanus or the party leadership harbored any ill feeling toward Catholics or immigrants. The Democrats’ efforts to minimize the incident were of no use. The independents used the event to demonstrate that the nativist Miami tribe was still alive in the Democratic party and better organized than ever."
Another incident that damaged the Democrats’ relationship with the German community took place at the Hamilton County Democratic Convention. Before the convention, the *Enquirer* clearly stated that the party would re-endorse the Baltimore Platform which forbade the agitation of the slavery issue. German leader Charles Reemlin had been threatened with physical violence if he spoke out on the slavery issue and disrupted the convention. Reemlin ignored the warning and declared that the Democratic party faced serious obstacles in the fall election. Re-endorse the Baltimore Platform would not solve them.

Instead, he suggested that they condemn the Nebraska Bill and turn their attention to local issues. He spoke of the corruption that plagued the construction of the new courthouse and other city buildings. He called on the Democrats to take concrete measures to preserve naturalized citizens’ rights rather than vaguely denouncing the Know Nothings. As he was speaking, another delegate came up behind him and hit him over the head, then several other members of the convention set upon Reemlin and beat him. After he recovered the Democrats offered Reemlin a chance to finish his speech, but he refused, causing the *Enquirer* to accuse the German of being fond of creating
disturbances, but running away once trouble had been stirred up.  

Through a series of unwise actions the Democrats lost a number of their German supporters. Endorsement of the Nebraska bill, discriminating against the Germans in hiring for public works, and assaulting one of their leaders, both verbally and physically, all helped to insure an independent victory in the fall. While the Germans had ample reason to turn away from the Democratic ticket, not all of them trusted the independent party. They could not believe that the independents suddenly abandoned their nativist sentiments. They suspected that if the People's Party was successful in proscribing the Irish, it would only be a short time before the Germans also faced proscription. They warned the independents that they supported them because of their opposition to the Nebraska bill, but "negro slavery loses much of its interest the moment that slavery of the white man is sought to be introduced. When our Constitutional rights are called into question, then Know Nothingism becomes our anti-Nebraskaism."  

Besides the loss of their German support, the Democrats faced a general lack of trust from the electorate. The construction of a new courthouse was a great scandal for the party. The Democrats had
promised that the building would be completed at the cost of $200,000, but the bill for the still uncompleted building had risen to over $400,000. A large portion of the extra expense was explained when it was revealed that padded contracts had been granted to Democratic favorites. Accusations were also made that public money had been embezzled or used on party schemes.\textsuperscript{56}

In short, the people of Cincinnati were ready for a change. They were tired of corruption and malfeasance in office and political bargaining, so it was no surprise that the independent ticket enjoyed an overwhelming victory in October. As the fall elections approached, tensions ran high on both sides. Rumors of illegal voting and fraudulent ballots ran rampant in Cincinnati and both the Democrats and independents organized forces of men in each ward to guard the polls. The elections were surprisingly peaceful. While some men were arrested for attempting to vote illegally, there were few reports of violence, and the \textit{Times} grudgingly admitted that Mayor Snelbaker should be commended for his excellent management of the police force during the election.\textsuperscript{57}

Every single candidate on the People’s ticket won the seat to which he aspired, in some cases by a majority of several thousand votes. Among other
offices gained by the nativist ticket were two Congressmen, a Superior Court Judge, a probate and two common pleas judges, as well as a sheriff and other county offices. The "Treasury Eaters" as the Democrats had been dubbed, were soundly defeated, but the success of the independents was to be short lived. By the April elections the Democrats would be back in power. The people of Cincinnati quickly learned that the Know Nothings were more corrupt than the hated Treasury Eaters."

Louisville was the scene of political changes as well. With the disintegration of the Whig Party and the shift in attitudes toward Catholics and foreigners, the Know Nothings easily filled several seats on the Board of Aldermen, the Common Council, and the School Board during the Spring election. The only controversy in the April election concerned whether or not the citizens should be voting for a Mayor. Louisville's Mayor was elected for a term of two years, but the man who won the office in 1851 resigned after only one year. An election was held in 1852 and the victor was James Speed. Speed was a Whig and a member of one of Louisville's most prominent families as well as a convert to Catholicism. During the 1852 election it was not specified whether Speed was elected for one
year to fill his predecessor's post, or if he had gained a two year term in his own right.

In 1853 a Democrat announced his candidacy for Mayor. Speed argued that he had been elected to a two year term and refused to run again, but his supporters put his name on the ballot and he was easily re-elected. This did not end the controversy, and yet another election was held in 1854. The situation would come to a climax the following year, but until then Louisville experienced a unique set of circumstances, a city governed by a Catholic Mayor and a Know Nothing Council."

Conflicts between natives and foreigners continued following the spring election. One of the most publicized disputes involved the liberal Germans and the Louisville Democrat. In keeping with their opposition to organized religion, the Germans refused to keep a Protestant Sabbath and spent Sundays visiting taverns or indulging in picnics or gymnastic exercises. The Democrat objected to these activities, saying that the German loafers prevented orderly citizens from enjoying their Sunday. The paper asserted that its opposition to the Germans was not the result of nativist sentiment, but it believed that neither native or foreign born citizens should be allowed to disturb the peace."
This growing nativist sentiment led to physical violence. Throughout 1854 the Louisville papers were peppered with accounts of violence between native and foreign born citizens. Americans attacked Irishmen on 11th Street a section of town that would become a hotbed of nativist violence over the next several months. Americans entered an Irish coffee house and killed a patron and injured the proprietor. Reports of random nativist violence appear throughout the Louisville papers. Whether this reflects an increase in nativist violence or not is uncertain. Possibly, editors found it to their advantage to focus on the violence committed by the nativists or the immigrants, depending on their own political views. In any event the increased attention to the nationality of the victim and the perpetrator reflects a greater awareness of immigrant issues in the city.\textsuperscript{61}

The Know Nothing Party continued to grow, so it was no surprise when they were successful in the fall elections. The Americans added a temperance plank to their platform and called for the passage of a Maine Law, an act that the foreign population considered abhorrent. The \textit{Courier} commented that the Know Nothings were "thirsty for office" while their opponents were thirsty for whiskey. The Know Nothings gained several offices including City Judge and City
Marshall. For the most part, the elections were peaceful although a few called for "an old-fashioned Kentucky fight." Long lines at the polls caused the most problems, and a number of men were turned away without getting to cast their ballots.\textsuperscript{62}

Now that the Know Nothings were firmly entrenched in Louisville, they took steps to curtail the liquor trade. The nativist \textit{Courier} carried many news items about immigrants and intemperance. The Know Nothings proposed legislation to remedy the problem. According to their new liquor law, an applicant for a tavern license in Louisville would be required to file an application to sell liquor as well as one to open the tavern. Other provisions of this plan would include forfeiture of the liquor license of any proprietor who sold alcohol any time on a Sunday, or after 10 P. M. any other night of the week.

Mayor Speed vetoed these laws after they were passed by the city council. He argued that these proposals were in opposition to the Kentucky statutes, and therefore that the City of Louisville did not have the power to enact them.\textsuperscript{63}

James Speed's actions brought him the antipathy of the Know Nothing Party. His marriage to a Catholic and conversion to that religion already made him suspect,
but his veto of the American's pet piece of legislation contributed to the popular Mayor's downfall.

Considering the rapid rise of the Know Nothings in Louisville, it is surprising that none of the city's newspapers became an official Know Nothing publication. When the Courier was founded in 1844, it published a strong nativist platform and continued these sentiments over the next decade. In spite of his American sentiments, Walter Halderman, the editor of the Courier, did not join a Know Nothing lodge and seemed more than a little ambivalent about the Know Nothings. His main fear was that the young party would be taken over by washed-up political hacks who would subvert American ideals for their own ends."

George Prentice, editor of the Journal, was even more suspicious of the new party. A die hard Whig, Prentice remained uncommitted all summer hoping that the Whigs would make a comeback. He did not trust the Know Nothings, they were an untried organization, there was no telling what they might do. He disliked their policy of putting men unschooled in politics in office and feared that the party was evasive on the slavery issue. Moreover, Prentice had been on excellent terms with the Catholics of Louisville throughout his career and believed that a general exclusion of Catholics and foreigners was wrong. "Our views have been well known
for many years, and they have undergone no recent change," he declared. 65

The following year, Louisville would experience a summer of terror and bloodshed resulting from the Know Nothing movement. While a few abandoned the movement as a result of violence, other remained faithful. To them, the Know Nothings offered a solution to the newly perceived problems of Catholics and foreigners, as well as a means of preserving the Union, Southern rights, and slavery.
Endnotes for Chapter III


7. *Cincinnati Times*, January 5, 1854.


15. Cincinnati Enquirer, January 12, 1854.


17. Cincinnati Gazette, February 21, 22, 1854. Cincinnati Times, February 21, 22, 1854. The loss of Cincinnati’s court records in an 1884 fire make it all but impossible to determine why these men were acquitted. The partial court dockets provide little or no information about the evidence presented by either side. City council meeting minutes published in the March 2, 1854 issue of the Gazette noted that some officers had been dismissed cruelty to prisoners. But, a few weeks later, Lt. William Phillips, one of the officers who had been tried for his role in the Bedini riot was reported to have arrested a woman on March 15 and given evidence at her trial. See Enquirer, March 19, 1854.


23. Purcell to Blanc, 21 January 1854, Edward Purcell to Blanc, 19 January 1854, VI-1-g, UNDA.

24. Bedini to Purcell, 2 January 1854, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, VI-1-g, UNDA. Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, January 7, 1854.


27. Charles Jacob to Thomas Jacob, 6 November 1856, Jacob-Johnson Family Papers. Property of the Filson Club, Louisville, Ky.


29. Spalding to Purcell, February 9, 1854 and February 19, 1854, II-4-m, ACC, UNDA.


32. Louisville Courier, January 27, 1854.


34. Stierlin, 248-255.


37. Cincinnati Enquirer, April 13, 1854.


40. Cincinnati Enquirer, March 15, 1854.


42. Cincinnati Times, April 1, 1854. Cincinnati Enquirer, April 1, 1854.

43. Cincinnati Times, April 4, 1854.

44. Cincinnati Gazette, July 29, 1854.

45. Cincinnati Commercial, July 11, 1854.


47. Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, July 8, 1854.


50. Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, July 1, 1854. Cincinnati Times, July 10, 1854. The newspapers were unusually quiet about the Kroeger case. Part of this may be the result of a murder trial in Louisville a few months before that received heavy newspaper coverage. The accused had been convicted in the local media before the trial, and the public was outraged when the man was acquitted, in fact the jurors in the case were burned in effigy. Following this event, many called for information about felony cases to be kept out of the newspapers. The Cincinnati Commercial contained an article on this subject on July 10, 1854. While morality may have been a factor it hardly seems likely since lurid tales of life in convents occasionally appeared in the Cincinnati papers.

51. Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, February 4, September 2, 1854. Orestes A. Brownson to My dear Hilton, 26 July 1854, Brownson Collection, UNDA.

52. Cincinnati Times, September 4, October 3, 1854.
53. Cincinnati Commercial, August 28, 1854.

54. Cincinnati Commercial, August 15, 1854.
Cincinnati Enquirer, August 10, 12, 14, 1854.

55. Cincinnati Commercial, August 15, 1854. See also Cincinnati Enquirer, August 15, 1854.


57. Cincinnati Times, October 10, 1854.

58. Cincinnati Times, October 12, 1854.


60. Louisville Democrat, May 20, 22, 1854.

61. For accounts of native-immigrant conflict see Louisville Courier, June 14, July 3, 24, August 5, October 3, 9, 18, 24, 1854. Louisville Journal, July 24, 28, August 5, 7, 1854.

62. Louisville Courier, August 8, 9, 1854.
Louisville Journal, August 8, 1854.

63. Louisville Courier, September 30, October 30, 1854.

64. Louisville Courier, November 24, 1854.

65. Louisville Journal, August 23, December 19, 30, 1854.
Chapter IV
The Politics of Fear: The Election Day Riots of 1855

The Cincinnati and Louisville elections of 1855 both erupted into violence. But the nature of the conflicts were quite different. Cincinnati's Germans defended themselves against native born citizens, while the more brutal Louisville riots included attacks on Catholic property as well as foreign born citizens. The violence reflected the political situation of each city. Although Cincinnati's nativists still used anti-Catholic rhetoric, it was the united German population that they feared the most. In Louisville both Catholics and foreigners were perceived as a threat to republican institutions.

In 1854 Cincinnati voters had formed a temporary coalition led by the Know Nothings to remove corrupt officials from office. In April, 1855 voters found themselves confronted with a candidate that they trusted less than the Democrats who had been replaced a year earlier. The Know Nothing Party signed its own death warrant by nominating James Taylor, the editor of the Times whose rabid hatred of foreigners as well as
Catholics was well known, as their candidate for Mayor. Taylor was unpopular with many voters. He was not a wise choice for the new party. It had long been suspected that his nativism was merely a tool to help him win political office, especially since he had broken away from the regular Whig party two years earlier during the Mayoral election and split the vote, giving the victory to Snelbaker.

Several months before, some of Cincinnati's Protestant Germans warned that they would maintain an alliance with the Know Nothings only as long as their rights as citizens were protected. Under Taylor's leadership the American ticket lost the support of non-Catholic foreigners. He frequently made statements defending the secrecy of the party's organization, declaring that it was necessary since foreigners controlled the old Whig and Democratic parties. Taylor's candidacy caused the Know Nothings to lose much of their credibility as a reform movement. The Commercial, whose editors were not affiliated with either party, had supported the independent party the previous year. But Taylor's nomination caused them to declare that "[a] reform party so far gone that it has lost the power to present its safe sound judicious men to the people as candidates had better disband."
The rhetoric that had drawn thousands into the American ranks six months earlier seemed tired by the spring of 1855. There were no revelations of corruption or incompetence in office, only vague warnings of the danger the city would be in if the "Treasury Eaters" won the election. Cincinnati had been one of the worst governed cities in the United States for the last decade, declared the Know Nothings; criminals of all kinds had settled in the city because the police were unable to do anything about them. Government officials expended energy only if they could line their own pockets. The Times maintained that the lunatic asylum which was under construction for an estimated $400,000 would end up costing $800,000 if the Democrats came back into power.

While the American reform ticket still stressed the dangers of Catholicism, this issue proved to be less important in this election than it had in previous years. The Times predicted that Protestants would lose all religious freedom if the Democrats were elected. Taylor cited the brutality that befell the Bedini rioters as an example of what Protestants had to look forward to if Papal power and the American political system were once again allowed to unite. ^

The Democrats waged a strong offensive battle against the Know Nothings in 1855. They warned
naturalized citizens that Pap Taylor would gladly accept their votes, but he would repay them by taking away their voting rights. The Democrats also exploited the fact that Taylor was the child of Irish parents, and suggested that he may have been raised in the Catholic faith. The Enquirer reported that other members of the nativist ticket had boasted of their Irish heritage in previous years, but abandoned their heritage to win the votes of nativists. ³

A large portion of the population expressed serious doubts about both parties. The Democrats' reputation was still tarnished from the revelations about corruption in their ranks the year before, but the disreputable Taylor was not regarded as an acceptable candidate for Mayor. Several groups who had supported the independent ticket the previous year, including many former Whigs, non-Catholic Germans and Irishmen, as well as Cincinnati’s small Jewish community, decided to avoid any party entanglements. Instead, they would examine the candidates carefully and vote for the ones they considered best qualified, regardless of party. All of these groups heartily endorsed James Farran, the Democratic candidate for Mayor. In their opinion, the lawyer and former state legislator was better qualified for the office than Taylor. ⁴
In past years the German population had been divided over religious and social issues. But Pap Taylor's long history of prejudice against foreigners made issues like the extension of slavery, or the common schools seem trivial in comparison to their rights as citizens in their new land. With more than thirty thousand Germans living in Cincinnati in 1855, large numbers of native born Americans who voted the Democratic ticket and more than thirteen thousand Irish immigrants who were predominantly Catholic Democrats, defeat for the American reform ticket seemed almost inevitable. Desperate actions were necessary for nativists to retain power.

Their usual plea for Americans to guard the polls went out, and for extra protection hundreds of Know Nothings from Northern Kentucky lodges were brought across the Ohio. Mayor Snelbaker feared that the emotional climate of the city would result in violence and appointed a strong additional police force to prevent bloodshed. Before dawn natives and foreigners clashed in several wards over control of the polls. But every man who was qualified to vote was able to cast his ballot without difficulty that morning.

The quiet of the morning did not last. Rumors that young German boys had been allowed to stuff the ballot boxes in various wards spread throughout the
city. Random acts of violence were reported; a man who expressed his support for Farran was severely beaten, a well dressed, elderly man was chased down the street by German boys who were throwing stones at him. In Over the Rhine a young German was flogged without mercy as he stumbled blindly through the streets, blood from a head wound streaming down his face.

The first mob violence broke out in the eleventh ward, an area with a large foreign population. Stories circulated that the Germans who had gained possession of the polls were not allowing American voters to cast their ballots, and Know Nothings from every part of the city made their way to the scene. A German militia unit was firing a cannon on a hill overlooking the city until a group of Know Nothings made their way up the hill and, after fierce fighting, obtained both the cannon and the militia commander’s sword. The nativists dragged the cannon back to the eleventh ward and positioned it across from the polls. Mayor Sibelbaker and several police officers went to the eleventh ward in hopes of restoring order. Their efforts were unsuccessful. One portion of the mob turned their attention to the Mayor, who was knocked to the ground, his coat torn from his back. This created the diversion needed for the mob to snatch the ballot box and poll book from the ward and destroy them.
The next target of the mob was the heavily Irish thirteenth ward. The polls were closed and the ballots safely removed, but the attack on the Mayor had only whetted the Know Nothings' appetite for violence. The mob dragged the cannon to the ward, filled it with stones and fired several times, injuring several bystanders. That night the Germans and Americans fought for the cannon; the former group was victorious and dragged their prize back to Over the Rhine.

The following day excitement broke out in the German twelfth ward. The American judges declared the election invalid, claiming that there were more votes cast than registered voters in the ward. Before any official action could be taken, a Know Nothing mob stormed the polling place, seized the ballots and poll books and stuffed them into the fire, before hoisting the American flag above the building. Many believed that the Know Nothings assertions of election fraud were false, for otherwise they would have been anxious to preserve the proof.  

The cannon that the Germans had recaptured during the night became the focal point of the struggle. Several nativists proceeded to Over the Rhine in an attempt to win back the weapon, but they were greeted by a volley of German fire and forced to turn back. Fearing another attack the Germans erected barricades
across the bridges that led into their part of the city. The well organized German troops joined by members of an Irish militia unit, patrolled the barricades. On the other side of the barricades, street corners were littered with red triangular scraps of paper, the Know Nothings' signal for an emergency meeting.

Thousands of nativists gathered in the streets near the barricades. Party leaders tried to convince the men to allow the authorities to retrieve the cannon, but their efforts were useless. At ten o'clock that night four hundred nativists attempted to march across the bridge into German territory. The disorderly and possibly inebriated procession was led by fife and drum players and included small boys throwing stones at the German troops. The Germans were waiting for the procession; militia units were armed and ready at the barricades, while other men stood on thehousetops or watched at windows armed with firearms, bricks and boulders, prepared to attack any nativist who threatened their homes. The small band of Know Nothings were no match for the Germans. They were fired on from every side and forced to flee. One of the Americans was killed during the failed raid, and another later died of his wounds.
The rest of that night and into the next morning, a number of leading citizens, including James Farran and Timothy Day, a former Democrat who had been elected on the independent ticket to Congress the previous year, attempted to negotiate a peaceful settlement with the Germans regarding the cannon. Finally, the Germans agreed to return the cannon to the armory, but insisted on retaining the carriage to insure that the weapon would not be used against them again. Believing that tensions would ease when the cannon was returned, the Germans removed the barricades but kept one militia unit on patrol near the bridges.

Upon hearing that the cannon had been returned the nativist mob rushed to the armory to view the weapon, but were outraged to learn that the Germans still retained the carriage. A mob gathered near the bridge and called for the wheels. There were rumors that another raid across the canal was being planned and Freeman’s Hall would be burned to the ground.

Negotiations with the Germans continued through the afternoon when they finally agreed to surrender the carriage of the cannon. Their decision may have been prompted by the news that the Democrats had won the election.

In spite of the Know Nothings support for temperance, at least two of the attacks on Germans were
committed by drunken nativists. A group of nativists entered a German tavern and demanded liquor; when the proprietor refused to serve them, they vowed revenge. They returned later and fired shots through the window, injuring a German inside. Another German tavern keeper tried to avoid trouble with nativists by giving them beer and making no protest when they refused to pay him. Instead of leaving quietly, the Americans beat the tavern keeper and destroyed furniture and glasses before going into the living quarters, assaulting his wife, whipping his young children and stabbing a man who boarded with the family.

A downpour of rain on Thursday prevented any more mobs from gathering and although tensions still ran high, peace began to return to the strife ridden city. Henry Munroe who was killed in the rioting was given a hero's funeral by the Know Nothings of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, who declared Munroe a martyr, a statement which enraged the Germans and Democrats. Some disturbing information was uncovered about the second victim of the ill-fated procession. Patrick Drury of Covington wore the Know Nothing badge on his breast despite being an Irish immigrant and a Catholic; apparently, he had joined with the nativist mob for the sheer excitement of the conflict.
It is not surprising that the nativists attempted to avoid the blame for the riots. They claimed that the Democrats had incited the naturally violent Germans to acts of bloodshed. Mayor Snelbaker was censured for not being in better control of the city. Feeble attempts were made to justify the behavior of the mob. The Gazette asserted that the mob's behavior would have been justified if the reports of foreigners keeping Americans from voting would have been true. 

Some members of the party admitted that the best men were not on the ticket. Others pointed out that the Americans were defeated by the foreign vote. They claimed that all of Taylor's supporters were native born citizens but only two twelfths of the Democratic vote had been cast by native born citizens. The foreign born population had a great deal of power in Cincinnati. Especially strong was the current union of the Catholic Protestant and free thinking Germans. Taylor had alienated these groups and lost the election. 

Many Cincinnatians were disgusted by the April election, as a result some former Whigs even considered joining the Democratic Party. Taylor's nomination and the riots destroyed the American's credibility as a reform party. 

The rapid growth of the Know Nothings in Louisville was a cause of great concern for many Democrats and former Whigs alike. Men who had prided themselves on their Whig principles complained that the Know Nothings lacked principles on any subjects other than foreigners and Catholics. The party's views on slavery were of special concerns to many Kentuckians. Some believed that the party consisted of abolition Whigs, disappointed Democrats, and religious fanatics. Democratic newspapers printed stories about the abolitionist sentiments and activities of the Know Nothings in the North. ¹³

Race became an issue because Kentuckians were anxious to keep slavery alive in their state and to bring more slave states in the Union. They condemned the Know Nothings for proposing a twenty-one year naturalization period, declaring it a means of enslaving white men in the North. Denying intelligent immigrants voting rights for a period of twenty-one years would create a large class of white men who lived without hope, ambition, or patriotism. Feeling no sense of ownership or belonging in their new land, these men would not hesitate to overthrow republican institutions. ¹⁴

The Courier was concerned about the rapid growth of the party, fearing that opportunistic men were
joining the order because of its popularity, rather than a firm belief in its principles. Among the "old broken down politicians" that the paper believed were the gravest danger within the party were Humphrey Marshall, a former military leader and minister to China, who had frequently denounced the Know Nothings in the past and General William Pilcher who loved foreigners and their votes and was active briefly with the Freeman's Society. 15

Early in 1855 Bishop Spalding was hopeful that this anti-Catholic party would have little effect on the acceptance that Catholics had enjoyed in Louisville. When a speaker hostile to Catholicism received favorable notices in the papers, the Bishop declared that in spite of "flourishing trumpets" only about two hundred people actually attended the lecture. He responded with a speech of his own attended by four thousand people, many of whom were Protestants who had been warned by their ministers to avoid any defense of Romanism. "This anti-Catholic crusade is destined to do us much good" he noted, never dreaming of the bloodshed and violence that would rock the city over the next several months. 16

Louisville's April elections were the beginning of four months of violence and terror. The main issue, as it had been since 1851 was the election of a mayor.
Even though Speed had been re-elected in 1853 and 1854, the Know Nothings called for a new election. They argued that Speed had been elected in 1852 for a period of one year to fill a vacancy, and re-elected in 1853 for a period of two years ending in April. The matter was turned over to City Chancellor, Henry Pirtle, who ruled that the elections of 1852 and 1854 were regular elections for two year terms, making Speed mayor until 1856. The election of 1853 was declared invalid since the office was not vacant at the time. 17

The Know Nothings on the Board of Aldermen argued that Pirtle had offered no legal precedents for his decision and resolved that an election for Mayor would be held the first Saturday in April. Speed vetoed this resolution. While he realized that this action could appear to be prompted by self-interest, he pointed out that he had agreed to abide by the decision of Chancellor Pirtle and expected the city Council to do the same since all parties had more important business to attend to than electing a mayor every year. As easily as the Board of Aldermen disregarded Pirtle’s decision, they ignored Speed’s veto, and nominated John Barbee, a merchant, as their candidate for mayor. The mayor refused to recognize this as a legal election and did not file as a candidate or engage in any campaigning. 18
It is surprising that James Speed's profession of the Catholic faith did not become an issue in the spring election. Since Speed was a popular man and a member of an important Louisville family, the Know Nothings may have feared that personal attacks would once again bring out supporters who would keep Speed in office without any effort on his part. In any case, Speed's Catholicism must have been unpopular in a city where the Know Nothings were gaining more and more power. Undoubtedly the party desired a Mayor who would be more amenable to their agenda; Speed had already opposed the Know Nothings regarding temperance legislation and would not hesitate to oppose them in the future.

Speed's removal from office was made a strictly legal issue. The morning of the election the Courier contained the following statement:

According to Mr. Speed's interpretation of the charter, he is Mayor of Louisville for all time to come. His term of office can never expire. Louisville is under the rule, not of a Mayor, but of a dictator. . . . Now is the time, and voting for Barbee the only means left us to set this matter at rest. 19

With no competition, John Barbee easily won the Mayor's election. The Know Nothings swept the city election; in addition to the Mayor's office, the party defeated the Democrats for the positions of City Attorney and Treasurer. All of the aldermen elected
were Know Nothings, and all but two new members of the common council were members of the order. Speed refused to accept the results of the illegal election and continued to perform his duties as Mayor. Barbee also claimed to be Mayor and vowed to support such Know Nothing projects as protection of the common schools and temperance, complaining that he was unable to perform his duties until Speed surrendered various documents to him.

In an effort of end this deadlock Speed filed suit in the county courts to determine whether he or Barbee was the rightful mayor of Louisville. The decision was in Speed's favor, but Barbee appealed and the appellate court declared him the winner of the election. A month after Barbee was confirmed Speed moved his family to Chicago. 20

A minor election for city magistrates induced violence that foreshadowed the full scale riots that would plague the city a few months later. In the heavily German first and second wards, foreigners and natives attempted to prevent each other from casting their ballots. Scattered violence throughout the city was reported. One man fired at anyone who made unfavorable comments about the Know Nothings, but no one was seriously injured. A nativist mob was pursuing some Germans and throwing stones at them until another
German saw his countrymen being abused. He fired several shots at the mob and they turned and chased him into his coffee house where they severely beat him. There were rumors that a German funeral procession was fired upon, but the nativist papers denied this accusation. At least two German businesses were attacked, and several people including one elderly German who was dragged from his home were beaten by the mob. 31

Democrats bitterly complained that members of the police force were nowhere to be seen during the riot and a deputy sheriff allegedly told victims that they would have to take care of themselves. The Democrat noted that no one had been arrested for the outrages and suggested that the high number of Know Nothings on the police force was the reason. But even if arrests were made it would be useless since all of the judges were members of that order. The paper challenged the people of Louisville to confront the lawlessness that surrounded them and argued that Know Nothingism was nothing more than a Northern effort to subjugate the South and destroy the personal freedom of members of the order. 32

Later that month, another incident of American aggression towards foreigners took place. The German Hook and Ladder Company was called out to answer an
alarm. When they got to their destination, there was no fire and two American fire companies lay in wait. The Americans outnumbered and overpowered the Hook and Ladder Company; they took the Germans wagon and dragged it through the city streets before pushing it into the Ohio. The wagon was fished out of the river the following day, but all of the equipment save one ladder was lost. There was a great deal of public outcry since the wagon was city property, but no arrests were made and the Know Nothings popularity did not fade after this incident.  

Louisville was in the grip of the Know Nothings; even their questionable acts - the illegal removal of a respected man from public office; dragging elderly men from their homes and beating them; attacking funeral processions and other senseless acts of violence - did not deter the party's growth. No one in Kentucky could ever remember a time when there had been so much excitement regarding a political party. A few thoughtful men feared that turning religious groups against one another would bring out the worst side of human nature, but the masses did not waver in their support for the American party.  

There was at least one important nativist whose support for the Know Nothings began to cool during the early summer. Walter Halderman, the editor of the
Courier, had expressed doubts about the Know Nothings from their inception even though he supported many of their principles. A number of factors contributed to Halderman’s loss of faith in the party. The recent violence in Louisville and the riots in Cincinnati were unnerving to him. Halderman had frequently warned that the nomination of political hacks would destroy the party as they subverted it to their own ends.

Throughout the summer Halderman urged the party to take steps to save itself. He believed that the Know Nothings could redeem themselves at their national convention in Pittsburgh by placing wise and discreet men on the ticket who would turn their attention to solving sectional differences, instead of trying to find temporary answers for serious problems. These hopes were dashed when the National Council took no firm stand on the slavery issue,

... it is impossible to reconcile opinions so extreme as those which separate the disputants... the National Council has deemed it the best guarantee of common justice and of future peace to, abide by and maintain the existing laws on the subject of slavery, as a final and conclusive settlement of that subject in spirit and in substance.

Halderman declared that this lack of decision on an issue that threatened to divide the nation condemned the Know Nothings as a national movement. While it would appeal to the Southern states, the party would
have no strength or influence in the North where abolition sentiments were strong. 27

The National Council's refusal to make a firm commitment on the slavery issue brought forth a fresh round of accusations from the Democrats that Know Nothingism and abolitionism were synonymous. There were rumors throughout the state that prominent members of the party had strong anti-slavery sentiments and that Know Nothing lodges in various parts of the state had adopted abolitionist views to bring their party closer to the organization in the North. 28

The party tried to minimize the damage of these accusations. It stated that abolitionists were welcome in the party, but their devotion to the Union had to be stronger than their desire to end slavery. But the party tried to allay voters' concern over the slavery issue by pointing out that several leading Know Nothings in the state were slave holders. When gubernatorial candidate Charles Morehead was accused of being a freesoiler, the Americans countered with accounts of his plantation in Mississippi where he kept a hundred slaves. Likewise when Edward Bartlett, the Kentuckian who served as President of the National Council, was accused of being a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church North and an abolitionist, the party maintained that he was a Baptist and a slave holder. 29
Not everyone in Louisville believed that the Know Nothings should take some definite stand on the slavery issue. The Union was too precious to be torn apart by any fanaticism. The American party would tolerate neither Northern abolitionists nor Southern secessionists. This would be the grounds of a successful national party, protecting the republic from both foreign enemies and domestic malcontents. One of the most enthusiastic supporters of this principle was George Prentice, the editor of the Louisville Journal. Prentice had clung to the hope that the Whig Party would be resurrected for more than a year, but by late spring the Journal's editorials reflected a growing admiration for the American party.

According to the Journal, political power in the hands of foreigners would only serve to destroy American institutions and slavery was the institution that was in the most danger. Since foreigners coming to the United States were already prejudiced against slavery and viewed slave labor as economic competition, immigrants were more likely to settle in the North. Once an immigrant established himself as a citizen and gained the right to vote, he associated himself with an abolitionist movement, giving these organizations greater numbers and more political power. With more abolitionist power in the North, the South would be the
weaker section of the nation and slavery would eventually be abolished. But if immigrants were proscribed the balance of power between the North and the South would be more equal and slavery would have a greater chance of survival. 31

In a little more than a year the Know Nothings evolved from a replacement party for the Whigs into a major force in Louisville politics, the only party to which "the South can now look for justice and undisturbed enjoyment of her peculiar institutions." 32 The American party would allow native born Protestants to continue to enjoy the rights to which they had grown accustomed. This new party would not force them to share their political system with the drunken criminal Irish who willingly sought work that no white man would do in Louisville. The Germans with their strange mix of ultra-liberal principles and socialism, who not only called for slaves to be freed from bondage but given full rights as citizens would also be proscribed. Finally, no agitation of the slavery issue would be allowed. Americans could preserve their economic and social systems. In short, the Know Nothing Party would allow the native born population to preserve both their established social hierarchy and the Union.

The violence and turmoil of 1855 would come to a climax during the gubernatorial election in August.
Ironically, the American party’s candidate, Charles Morehead, had strong Catholic ties. Morehead had married Amanda Leavy, a Lexington native of Irish Catholic descent. After Amanda died, Morehead married her sister Margaret. Ignoring their own candidate’s ties to Catholicism, the Know Nothings declared that Beverly Clark, the Democratic candidate, was not affiliated with any religion, but that his sentiment came closer to the Catholic faith than any other. Rumors were also spread about Clark’s wife converting to Catholicism after her marriage and the couple having their daughters educated in a convent. ³³

In the weeks before the election there were fears of violence on both sides. The Know Nothings circulated reports that the Germans and Irish were arming themselves to prevent Americans from voting. The Democrats argued that Prentice’s incendiary editorials in the Journal were meant to enrage Americans so much that they would try to prevent foreigners from voting. Prentice denied these accusations claiming that his only goal was to impress upon Americans how important their vote was. The German population was not reassured by Prentice’s words, and many of them feared going to the polls on election day. As a result of the German’s fears the Journal printed the following statement:
We sincerely regret that the Germans feel any such apprehension, and we are sure they have no good ground for entertaining it. . . no class of citizens shall with our consent or connivance have reason to apprehend bodily injury or any other kind of molestation in the exercise of their legal rights. 34

There were more than mere threats of violence in the weeks leading up to the election. The most severe and prophetic incident took place in the heavily Irish eighth ward two weeks before the election. Know Nothings who tried to speak in that ward were heckled by Irish immigrants, adding to the already hostile atmosphere of that section of the city. It was also believed that the Irish had stashed a large cache of arms and munitions at various places in the ward which they planned to use on election day.

Stirred by these incidents and rumors, a group of nativists stoned and fired upon several Irish homes and businesses. At least two people were shot, but no one was critically injured. Frank Quinn, an Irish immigrant and owner of five or six of the damaged buildings had been threatened by Americans the day before. During the attack members of the mob called out that Quinn’s property would soon be burned. That same night the mob went to St. Patrick’s, the Irish Catholic Church in the eighth ward and demanded the keys. They searched the building and after finding no weapons or ammunition, they returned the keys and there
was no further disturbance that night. There were no arrests in these attacks which emboldened the mob for further acts of violence. 35

In light of threats of violence and the bloody acts of recent weeks it is almost unbelievable that Louisville's government did not take measures to prevent violence on election day. Mayor Barbee called for fifty extra police officers to be placed in the first, second, and eighth wards during the election. This proposal was introduced to the Board of Alderman but overwhelmingly rejected. Since earlier election day disputes were caused by overcrowded conditions at the polls, some thought that providing additional judges to speed the voting process in the first, second, and eighth wards would help prevent further difficulties, but this resolution was also rejected. 36

The written record provides no insight into the motives of these men. Because of their affiliation with the Know Nothings it can be assumed that those in control of the city government were willing to subvert the laws to carry out their own agenda and insure victory for their own party. Attacks on immigrants went unpunished. Not only was the Catholic Mayor removed from office, but all Catholic teachers were removed from the public schools. Steps that might have alleviated the carnage of August 6, 1855 were not
taken. It cannot be proven that government officials were involved in the actual rioting, but their actions, or lack of action, sent a clear signal that the city would not act to prevent mob violence.

In the days before the election two candlelight rallies were held by the Know Nothings drawing great crowds. Reports circulated that the Democrats planned to stone the processions but there was no violence. The Democrats had planned a mass meeting of their own, but cancelled it fearing that bloodshed might result.  

Both sides continued to accuse their opponents of plotting violence on election day. Perhaps the most ironic statement was to be found in the Louisville Courier. Although that publication continued to print the American ticket under its masthead it declared that Americanism was based on reform and protection of American institutions, but Know Nothingism was composed of political hacks who would go to any measure to gain power.

Bloody Monday, one of the most violent elections in the history of the United States started before dawn when the Know Nothings took control of the polls in every ward. According to some accounts the nativists were protected by city watchmen, most of whom were members of the Know Nothing organization. Few foreigners were allowed to vote; the mobs made sure
that every citizen carrying the yellow Know Nothing ticket was allowed into the polls to cast his ballot. Eye witnesses declared that the aggression was solely on the side of the Know Nothings, naturalized voters were coming to the polls alone rather than in mobs, and the well behaved foreigners provided a contrast to the nativists who shouted and waved clubs. 38

The violence of Bloody Monday was not limited to the polls. The partisan nature of the newspapers makes it impossible to determine which side started the fighting. The first incident of violence away from the polls seems to have taken place in the first ward. The Journal claimed that the Germans were firing randomly at Americans passing in the street, while the anti-Know Nothing papers claimed that there was fighting going on in the streets which justified the use of fire arms. 40 Stories spread throughout the city that six Americans had been killed by foreigners, causing nativists to gather from all parts of the city. They proceeded to the home of a German, John Vogt, on Clay Street near Madison from where shots had reportedly been fired. Vogt was beaten and shot and another German in the house was injured. Vogt's wife was stabbed and the child in her arms injured.

The mob attacked several German businesses in the area including two groceries and a beer house. Several
Germans were stabbed or beaten. Volleys of gun fire were exchanged and several men were injured. The mob proceeded to St. Martin's Catholic Church on Shelby Street claiming that munitions had been stored there. Mayor Barbee appeared before the mob could sack or destroy the church. He searched the building and assured the crowd that there were no weapons inside.

After leaving the church, the mob joined with a unit of the state militia who had possession of a cannon. Traveling through the central portion of the city, the mob fired upon two German breweries. The Cathedral also appeared to be in great danger. Bishop Spalding turned the keys of the Cathedral over to Mayor Barbee who searched the building and issued a statement that there were no weapons inside. As an added precaution vestments, vessels and communion wafers were removed from the Cathedral and taken to a private home for safe keeping. **1**

The mob proceeded through Louisville beating or shooting several more immigrants and firing on at least one more building, a confectionery shop that employed several women who poured out into the streets trying to gain entrance into surrounding buildings where no one who would let them in. At least one more home was invaded. A man named Smith of unknown nationality came into the disfavor of the mob and was spared certain
death when his "fainting wife threw herself and her children between him and his assailants." 

Mayor Barbee pleaded with the mob to desist; their party had easily won the election. But the Know Nothings were not satisfied. After the polls were closed, the most horrible violence of the day broke out in the Irish section of the city. The most brutal and dramatic incident of the night took place in the eighth ward at the corner of Main and Eleventh. Several buildings were surrounded by the armed mob who had the cannon in their possession. An Irish grocery was fired upon and the flames spread to the surrounding buildings. Several homes and businesses were destroyed. Occupants of these buildings tried to escape, but the mob shot at them as they ran out of the burning buildings. The people who did not die from their gunshot wounds were either seized by the mob and murdered or crawled back into the burning buildings to die. 

Why did such incidents take place after the Know Nothings were assured victory? The Know Nothings claimed that weapons had been stored in the buildings that were attacked, but this accusation had been made many times on Bloody Monday without any corroboration. Perhaps a clue can be found in the property's ownership. All of the buildings belonged to Frank
Quinn whose property had been attacked by a mob on July 18, the day after Quinn had been threatened. After that attack, the mob had threatened to return and burn the buildings.

The attacks may have arisen more from personal animosity toward Quinn than by a continuation of the mob mentality. Possibly the nativists resented the fact that Quinn, an Irish immigrant, had been successful as a merchant and was able to gain property. Another possible explanation is that Frank Quinn had a brother, John, who was a priest. John worked among the other immigrants in the city and had gained their trust. Not having much faith in banks, many immigrants entrusted their savings to Rev. Quinn who invested them and kept a small portion of the profits as a fee. Many Catholics were concerned that Quinn was becoming more concerned with financial matters than with his priestly duties. When Rev. Quinn died in 1852, he left the bulk of his estate to his brother Frank, who invested his inheritance in property on Main Street that soon was known as Quinn’s Row. \(^44\) It is possible that the mob was aware of Rev. Quinn’s activities and viewed Quinn’s Row as a symbol of the result of the control that the Catholic clergy exercised over their people.

By Tuesday morning an uneasy calm had settled over the city. The courthouse yard was littered with the
bodies of victims. The exact number of dead has never been determined, but most place the number at about twenty. Some citizens were dismayed by the violence and expressed their shame at holding a "birthright in common with men who could commit acts against unoffending humanity". Others blamed both the politicians and the editors who induced the "naturally slavish and bloodthirsty foreigners" to acts of violence. "

Much debate has taken place over George Prentice's responsibility for Bloody Monday. The anti-Know Nothing papers place the blame for the riots on Prentice, whom they alleged stirred up the Americans to a point of violence. Historians have also blamed Prentice, most notably Benedict Webb who was outspoken in his condemnation of Prentice. Even one hundred years after the riots, many Catholics still placed the blame on Prentice." Prentice's most vigorous defender claimed that Prentice published similar articles on election day for twenty five years and his actions on Bloody Monday were not out of the ordinary." 

While George Prentice's inflammatory statements such as his definition of Catholics as the mindless drones of "that miserable old despot in red stockings who holds out his toes in Rome to the longing lips of his devotees", " shows a lack of judgment on the
editor's part, all of the blame cannot be placed at his door. The Common Council and Board of Aldermen refused to take steps that might have alleviated or prevented the violence by rejecting proposals to have extra police or more judges in the wards where violence could have been easily anticipated. The criminal justice system did little more in the case of Bloody Monday than it had in the months leading up to the riot. Several foreigners were fined for minor acts of violence and bonds were posted for a few Americans. Between 1855 and 1879 five people were tried for crimes relating to the riots but there were no convictions.  

The riots caused much damage in Louisville. Many Germans and Irish left the city. Homes and businesses were left standing vacant and real estate values plummeted. Bishop Spalding noted that "in a short time grass will grow in our streets." Even a year later observers commented on the blackened shells of buildings left in the city.  

The Know Nothings remained a viable force in Kentucky politics through the 1850's. The bloodshed and visible corruption within the party did little to tarnish its reputation. The party's devotion to Southern rights, slavery, and the Union made voters willing to ignore these flaws in order to preserve their way of life.
Endnotes for Chapter IV


6. There is no real explanation of why the cannon was being fired. The April 3, 1855 edition of the *Enquirer* said that the Germans were celebrating Jefferson's birthday, but they would have been over a week early. Possibly the unit was having a drill that day.

7. See, for instance, *Commercial*, April 4, 1855.


10. *Cincinnati Gazette*, April 4, 1855


15. Louisville Courier, January 30, 1855. For accounts of Pilcher's involvement with the Freemasons see Courier, January 30, 1854 and Louisville Democrat, April 3, 1855.

16. Spalding to Purcell, 6 January 1855 and 13 February 1855, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, II-4-m, UNDA.

17. Louisville Board of Aldermen, "Minutes", February 1, 1855. Louisville Common Council "Minutes", January 11, February 1, 1855. Louisville City Archives. An interesting side note to this ruling is that by 1856, Pirtle declared himself to have "the cause of the American Party as much at heart as any man" Henry Pirtle, Louisville, to Know Nothing Party of Louisville, 22 April 1856, Henry Pirtle Papers. Property of the Filson Club, Louisville, Ky.

18. Louisville Board of Aldermen, "Minutes", February 23, March 8, 1855. Louisville City Archives.

19. Louisville Courier, April 7, 1855.


22. Louisville Weekly Democrat, May 9, 15, 1855.


25. *Louisville Courier*, May 19, August 2, 1855.


33. *Louisville Courier*, March 26, April 30, 1855.


40. Louisville Courier, August 8, 1855. Louisville Journal, August 8, 1855.

41. Laurence Bax "Memoir," 56. Louisville Chancery Archives, p. 56

42. Louisville Courier, August 8, 1855.

43. The main sources for this account of Bloody Monday were the Louisville Courier, August 8, 1855, and the Louisville Journal, August 8, 1955. More detailed accounts of the riot can be found in Sr. Mary Agnes McGann, "Nativism in Kentucky to 1860", (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1944), 86-113. or Charles Deusner, "The Know Nothing Riots Louisville", Register of the Kentucky Historical Society (March 1963): 122-147 and Ludwig Sterlin, The State of Kentucky and the City of Louisville With Special Consideration of the German Element. trans. John J. Weisert. (In the Collection of the University of Louisville Archives.) 264-275.

44. Webb, pp. 309-311


46. Lemuel Porter Diary, Sept. 25, 1855.

47. Benedict J. Webb, Sham Patriotism in 1896: Know Nothingism as it was and A.P.A.ism as it is. (Louisville: Charles A. Rogers, 1896), 1. The Record, August 5, 1855.


49. Louisville Journal, July 31, 1855.


Conclusion

In the late summer of 1854, a portion of Cincinnati's German population warned the independent coalition that although opposition to slavery was one reason they supported the coalition, they considered their own rights more important than the position of slaves. "When our Constitutional Rights are called into question, then Know Nothingism becomes our anti-Nebraskaism." The nomination of a nativist candidate for Mayor drove the Germans back to the Democrats, and insured success for that party.

The people of Louisville chased an anti-Catholic preacher out of their city in 1853, declaring that the Catholics of their city should not have to face such abuse. But as Catholics and foreigners came to be viewed as a threat to their way of life, they called for their exclusion from the political arena. Some resorted to violence.

The Know Nothing Party answered a set of needs unique to each of the two cities. In Cincinnati it provided leadership to remove a corrupt, incompetent administration from office. A year later it battled the united German population, a group whose size could easily decide city elections. In Louisville the party
responded to the growing population of Catholic immigrants and radical Germans, groups who were viewed as possible threats to slavery and Southern rights. Many saw proscription and violence as the only way to preserve their way of life.

This study does not pretend to be an exhaustive comparison of the American party in the North and South, rather it points out the need for more work in this area. Opposition to slavery was one of the reasons that Cincinnati's Germans were willing to join a coalition led by nativists, but it does not appear to have been an important factor for American voters who were more concerned with Catholics and corrupt politicians. Louisville's Germans had called for the abolition of slavery and full citizenship for African Americans. In a city that equated white laborers to slaves this was a horrifying proposition. Catholics' alleged blind obedience to the Pope made them possible abolitionists as well. Closer attention needs to be paid to the relationship between the American party and slavery in other parts of the country, the South in particular.

Nativism and the Know Nothing Party help to put the American experience into clearer perspective. It illustrates the difficulties faced by a nation of immigrants, and provides further examination of the
strain of anti-Catholicism that has pervaded the politics and culture of the United States well into this century. Future study in this field can lead to greater understanding of the American character as well as antebellum politics.
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