

**Malicious Rhetoric, Religious Propaganda, and the  
Development of Nativism in Ohio, 1830-1856**

Charles Lee Davis

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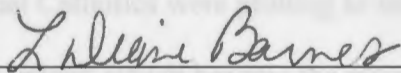
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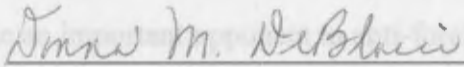
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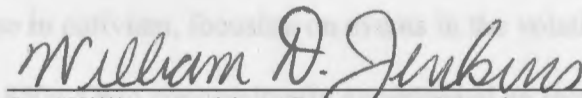
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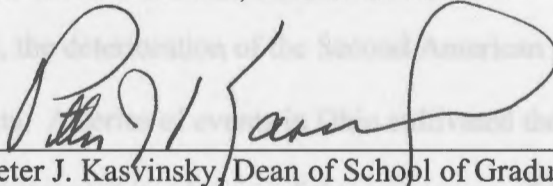
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## Abstract

This thesis chronicles the rise and decline of nativism in Ohio and the development of the state's Know Nothing Party through an examination of the rhetoric and methods of propagandists. It illustrates that nativism in Ohio did not suddenly emerge in 1854 with the appearance of the Know Nothing Party, but rather stemmed from a long tradition of Protestant-Catholic animus. The first chapter traces the origins of nativism in Ohio by examining important events of the 1830s and 1840s. During this period, animosity between Catholics and Protestants intensified, particularly over the controversial issue of public school funding. In Cincinnati, Lyman Beecher established the idea that Catholics were plotting to undermine American republican ideals and Protestant values, which became the main impetus for the rise of the anti-Catholic sentiments. Cincinnati Bishop John Purcell vehemently denounced this notion, and became an important opponent to anti-foreign, anti-Catholic propagandists throughout his diocese. Chapter Two describes the conditions in the early 1850s that contributed to an increase in nativism, focusing on events in the volatile city of Cincinnati. During the early 1850s, Ohio concomitantly experienced an increase in the number of foreign-born residents, the deterioration of the Second American party system, and a rise in nativist sentiments. A series of events in Ohio cultivated the development of an organized nativist movement in advance of the appearance of the Know Nothings. In particular, the reemergence of the public school controversy, the temperance campaign, and the visit of papal nuncio Gaetano Bedini promoted the rise of political nativism in the state. This chapter also examines the important impact of a nativist newspaper, the *Dollar Weekly Times*, to the flowering of anti-Catholicism. The final chapter analyzes nativist

newspapers in Cincinnati and the Western Reserve to demonstrate the importance of extensionism in the collapse of the state's Know Nothing Party.

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## Introduction

The apparently sudden rise of the Know Nothing Party, a nativist political organization and clandestine society, astonished contemporary observers during the 1850s and continues to perplex modern historians. The Know Nothings were a unique phenomenon in American history; both a political and fraternal organization, they rapidly gained adherents with strident support of immigration restriction and staunch opposition to Catholicism in the United States. They spread rapidly from their New York City base in 1853, extending their political power across the United States by electing many of their political candidates at the local, state, and national levels. However, the emergence of the Know Nothings was not as abrupt as many contemporaries perceived, nor was their message substantially different from earlier anti-Catholic groups. The novelty of the Know Nothings was not in their demands for stricter immigration standards or their claims of nefarious Catholic plots, but rather in their appearance during a period of political instability, increased immigration, and fervent anti-Catholic animus. As inexorable as the rise of the Know Nothings appeared by late 1854, their successes and momentum were ephemeral. The clandestine nature of the Know Nothings enabled both members and opponents of the order to interpret the party's non-nativist positions to suit their own agendas. As the party matured and developed a broad, multifaceted political platform, its allure diminished as suddenly as it appeared. The downfall of the Know Nothings, however, did not end nativist sentiments in the United States, but merely marked the conclusion of a brief apex of anti-Catholic animosity.

The development of the Know Nothing Party represented the culmination of decades of anti-Catholic activity in the United States. The Know Nothings did not

introduce nativist notions into the minds of an unsuspecting American populace, nor did anti-Catholic sentiments abruptly dissolve with the fall of the political organization. The roots of Catholic-Protestant conflict in the United States predate the nation itself, the antagonistic relationship already firmly implanted in the minds of the first English colonists. American colonists, most with a heritage of centuries of European religious disputes, accepted and promulgated divisions between Catholics and Protestants. The overwhelming Protestant majority in the United States established their beliefs and activities as normative behavior, while the teachings and ideology of Catholicism remained accepted practice for only a minority of Americans.<sup>1</sup> A massive influx of Catholic immigration in the mid-nineteenth century challenged the American religious equilibrium. Many Protestants viewed these changing conditions as threats to the traditional "American" existence and formed organizations and parties to combat what they perceived as inimical Catholic influence upon political, social, and economic affairs. The Know Nothings, or American Party, became the most powerful of these groups.

The rise of an intolerant, secretive organization to a position of political and social prominence is certainly not an admirable chapter in American history; however, the study of the order is a vital subject because of the dramatic lessons the group demonstrates about intolerance, fear, and the power of distortion. Initiated by a devoted group of nativists, the Know Nothings prospered by avidly perpetuating Catholic stereotypes and inflaming fears of the detrimental influence of unfettered immigration. To the majority of Protestant Americans during the 1850s, however, there was little absurdity in the

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<sup>1</sup> Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 1-25; Ira M. Leonard and Robert D. Parmet, *American Nativism, 1830-1860* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971), 3-6.

rhetoric of the Know Nothings. The idea that Catholics, under the direction of the Pope and European monarchs, intended to subvert American government and culture was a widely accepted viewpoint among many American Protestants. Furthermore, many Americans worried that an upsurge in overall immigration in the late 1840s and early 1850s threatened their economic prosperity and provided a negative influence in their communities. By building upon American Protestants' inherent suspicion of Catholicism and a general aversion to immigration, the Know Nothings developed from a local New York organization into a national political force with a following numbering in the millions. Their rhetoric, coupled with concomitant political, social and economic upheavals, led to the rise of one of the most bizarre, and fleeting, political powers in American history.

Despite the Know Nothings' important influence in the transformation of 1850s political parties and their successes in electing officials to local, state, and national offices, they have received relatively little attention in historical scholarship.<sup>2</sup> There are many possible reasons for avoiding the study of the Know Nothings. The most obvious rationale is the paucity of extant documentation about the membership and organizational composition of the Know Nothing Party. The dearth of evidence concerning the order derives largely from the secretive nature of the organization, which forbade the recording of meetings, membership, and activities of the party. Additionally, archivists did not believe that many of the individuals integral to the development of the order were

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<sup>2</sup> Although several authors include nativism and the Know Nothing Party in comprehensive examinations of antebellum politics, major works that focus extensively on Know Nothings and nineteenth-century nativism are Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1850: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism*; Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Michael F. Holt, "The Politics of Impatience: The Origins of Know Nothingism," *The Journal of American History* 60 (1973).



important enough to preserve their papers. Unfortunately for historians attempting to determine the origins of the order, the Know Nothings' dedication to secrecy was particularly strong during their early, formative years. With so few primary sources to work with, it is hardly surprising that most historians have eschewed examining the order. In addition to the difficulty of scant information, some historians simply ignore the importance of the movement in the welter of 1850s politics. In hindsight, it is clear that the most significant political controversy in the antebellum era involved the extension of slavery into the territories. However, for many Americans, the threat of immigrants eroding traditional "American" values and the fear of a papal plot to despotize the United States were more salient dangers than the theoretical addition of more slaves into distant territories. However irrational and reprehensible these fears may seem to readers in the twenty-first century, they were nonetheless believable to Americans of the nineteenth century. Finally, many historians have undoubtedly avoided studying the movement because of its bigoted and deplorable nature.

The Know Nothings, unlike most political parties, did not have a cohesive national structure or prominent party leaders. This flaw derived in large part because of the order's secrecy, which initially inhibited the recognition of party leaders and hindered the spread of a uniform notion of Know Nothingism throughout the nation, conditions that obfuscated the organization's message. The lack of shared national, or in many cases even statewide, information regarding the order caused great confusion within the party's membership concerning the principles of the Know Nothings. Without a renowned public official to categorically announce the party's stances, Know Nothing members throughout the nation came to very different conclusions about the order. For instance,

Know Nothings in southern states interpreted the party as an anti-Catholic, pro-Union alternative to the Democratic Party, generally eschewing the order's nativist rhetoric in favor of the message of American solidarity. In fact, the Louisiana Know Nothings even allowed Catholics into their organization, a measure unthinkable in the North. In many areas of the North, particularly in New England, the Know Nothings were an anti-Catholic, anti-extensionist alternative to the Democratic Party, opposing the spread of slavery to the western territories.<sup>3</sup> Because the weak national party had yet to take a definitive stance on the issue, many northern Know Nothings assumed their party represented their respective local interests. Lacking a national structure or outspoken leaders, the Know Nothings had only their secret rituals and a general aversion to foreign political influence to unite their party. Because of the incoherent and fragmented nature of the national Know Nothing Party, statewide examinations of the order are particularly effective. Studies of Know Nothingism on the state level provide insight into regional variations within the order, as well as a manageable scope of study for the diverse, national order.

An examination of the Know Nothing Party in Ohio provides an excellent case study of the order, demonstrating divergent interpretations of the group within a single state structure. The Ohio Know Nothing Party attracted a varied group of followers, including anti-extensionists, anti-Catholic activists, former Whigs, anti-Nebraska Democrats, and even recent non-Catholic German immigrants. In many ways, Ohio's

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<sup>3</sup> Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 154-7, 167, Michael Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 845-50; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 389-97. Frederick Blue defines the term "extensionist" in reference to those opposed to the expansion of slavery, but not necessarily anti-slavery advocates or abolitionists. *The Free Soilers: Third Party Politics, 1848-1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 2.

political and cultural composition resembled the nation's aggregate character. Due to the initial dispersion of land in the state, the northern portion of Ohio, developed predominantly by New Englanders, established a cultural tradition derived from its initial settlers. In contrast, the southern portion of the state developed a culture reflective of their original settlers from Kentucky, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The cultural division in Ohio was certainly not an absolute partition; most of the state's early residents shared the same fondness for democracy, republican virtue, and Protestantism. However, there were unmistakably varied regional peculiarities within the state, particularly concerning the contentious issue of the expansion of slavery.<sup>4</sup> The divergence of opinion within the state concerning the extension debate was a particularly significant concern for the Know Nothing Party. Ohio Know Nothings varied in their opinions concerning the extension of slavery to the western territories and the merits of the institution itself. Many Cincinnati Know Nothings avoided debate about slavery, considering the matter a subject best handled by southerners. Northeastern Ohio Know Nothings, in contrast, perceived their party as both anti-extensionist and anti-Catholic. In addition, Ohio provides a demonstrative case study because of the state's extended nativist campaign, the appearance of prominent Catholic spokesperson Archbishop John Baptist Purcell, the varied ethnic composition within the state, and significant immigration during the mid-nineteenth century. In essence, Ohio, as much as any individual state, provides a

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<sup>4</sup> George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997), 168-76; Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, *A History of Ohio* (Columbus: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1953), 43-70; Anthony H. Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell of Cincinnati: Pre-Civil War Years" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1949), 87-88.

representative examination of the diversity of the Know Nothing Order encapsulated in one state.<sup>5</sup>

In hindsight, the nativist movement and the Know Nothing Party achieved little of lasting significance in Ohio and across the nation. Despite the Know Nothings' abundant representation in Congress, election of numerous governors, and overwhelming majorities in many state legislatures, they were surprisingly unable to enact much of their nativist agenda. In addition to scant political accomplishments, the Know Nothing Party endured for a remarkably brief period. When the order nominated their first presidential candidate in 1856, they had already reached their political apex. Despite the obvious failings of the Know Nothing Party, their ability to politically unite millions of Americans to their cause, if only briefly, deserves scrutiny. This study examines the methods utilized by nativists in Ohio to convince a majority of Ohioans that a papal-led, Catholic conspiracy was not only likely, but imminent. In addition, it will examine varied interpretations among nineteenth-century Ohioans of the Know Nothing Party and how conflicting images of the group contributed to the collapse of the order. The most useful sources for revealing the anti-Catholic movement's methods of persuasion are their primary instruments of ideological dissemination – nativist newspapers. In particular, the popular Cincinnati newspaper, the *Dollar Weekly Times*, provides valuable insight into the messages elucidated by the proponents of nativism in the state. With a self-proclaimed peak national circulation of over 40,000, the *Times* represented the

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<sup>5</sup> Although Ohio was decidedly more anti-Catholic than anti-foreign, the term nativist still applies to the movement. The Ohio nativist movement generally eschewed attacks upon non-Catholic foreigners; however, they only tolerated these groups when they accepted traditional "American" culture. Any attempts by outside groups to avoid acculturation, such as Germans retaining their native language, resulted in scorn and ridicule by Ohio nativists.

leading voice of nativist rhetoric west of the Appalachian Mountains.<sup>6</sup> Its continuing dispute with the *Catholic Telegraph*, a newspaper printed by the Cincinnati diocese, demonstrates the pertinent issues in the nativist debate and reveals the combative, vitriolic dialogue utilized in the struggle to convince Ohioans of the plausibility of harmful Catholic actions.

Although influential, the *Times* did not introduce to Ohioans the notion that Catholics intended to subvert American democracy and Protestant culture. Instead, these ideas derived from nativist writings of the 1830s, including those by notorious propagandists Lyman Beecher and Samuel Morse. An examination of the rhetoric utilized by both the 1830s nativists and the calumny perpetuated in the *Times* reveals the continuity and longevity of the nativist campaign in Ohio. The popularity of the Know Nothing Party stimulated the creation of additional Ohio newspapers, each perpetuating the notion that Catholicism was inimical to traditional American beliefs and habits. These newspapers briefly achieved local followings during the peak of Know Nothingism, but faded rapidly following the collapse of the party in the state. Despite their brief duration, they are crucial for demonstrating the diversity of Know Nothing tactics in disparate locations. In addition to partisan Know Nothing newspapers, a study of the Protestant press in Ohio reveals the widespread acceptance of the notion of Catholic conspiracies.

By examining the rhetoric utilized by Ohio Know Nothings, many of the mysteries pertaining to the initial success and abrupt demise of the order in the state are

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<sup>6</sup> "American Reform. Ourselves and the Public Printing," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 9 November 1854, p. 2. The *Daily Times* claimed to have a circulation of 8,000 in Cincinnati, making it the most dispersed paper in the city. The *Weekly Times* reached numerous subscribers in Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania. The editor estimated their circulation at 42,000, twice the number of any newspaper printed west of the Appalachian Mountains. However, the *Times* may have exaggerated these totals.

evident. The order achieved its popularity through the dissemination of the notion that the influx of Catholics into America threatened both the social structure of the nation and the continuation of a democratic form of government. This message was particularly effective because a culmination of political, social, and religious occurrences in the early 1850s provided the proper environment for their message to resonate in the popular imagination. The intolerant, distorted reports emanating from the anti-Catholic press created an irrational public response to an illusionary threat. Of course, the influx of immigration did provide reasons for concern among the native-born population, including lowering the value of labor and disrupting the traditional balance of political power. However, these rational arguments were not the threats articulated by prominent advocates of nativism in Ohio, who instead resorted to the irrational idea of a seditious Catholic scheme. An analysis of the Ohio Know Nothings' propaganda also demonstrates that the demise of the party in the state clearly derived from their ultimate declaration of approval of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Before this occurrence, the order's ambiguous stance enabled both advocates and opponents of the measure to assume that the national party supported their respective positions. Following the party's official declaration, anti-extensionist Ohio Know Nothings rapidly deserted the order in favor of the newly formed Republican Party. Many southern Ohio Know Nothings continued their support of the party; however, the divide permanently weakened the order's influence in state and local affairs in Ohio. That is not to suggest that Ohioans' anti-Catholic, anti-foreign sentiments completely eroded with the fall of the Know Nothings. Nativism and notions of malevolent Catholic intent survived the ephemeral order and continued to provide a divisive element in American society. However, nativism, as a

political issue and subject of national concern, would never reach a higher level of prominence as during the brief apex of the Know Nothing Party.

This thesis chronicles the rise and decline of the Know Nothing Party in Ohio by examining the rhetoric and methods of propaganda that nativists employed. It reveals that Know Nothingism in the state did not dramatically and unexpectedly emerge in 1854, but rather stemmed from a long-standing, deeply-entrenched tradition of Protestant-Catholic animus. The first chapter traces the origins of Know Nothing ideology in Ohio by examining the crucial events of the 1830s and 1840s. During this time, animus between Catholics and Protestants intensified, particularly over the controversial issue of public school funding. This debate facilitated the rise of nativism and the eventual emergence of the Know Nothing Party in the state. Chapter Two describes the conditions in the early 1850s that contributed to an increase in nativism, focusing on events in the volatile city of Cincinnati. This chapter also examines the important impact of a nativist newspaper, the *Dollar Weekly Times*, to the flowering of anti-Catholicism. The final chapter analyzes nativist newspapers in Cincinnati and the Western Reserve to demonstrate the importance of extensionism in the collapse of the state's Know Nothing Party.

This thesis differs from previous examinations of nativism in Ohio in three main facets. Unlike most other examinations of the movement (Billington's work excepted), it stresses the continuity and longevity of the nativist campaign in the nineteenth century. Anti-Catholic and anti-foreign sentiments were common beliefs among Ohioans decades before the rise of the Know Nothing Party, which belies the notion that the emergence of the bigoted Know Nothing Party was simply a sudden nativist frenzy. Through an

examination of the roots of nativism in Ohio, this work portrays the rise of the Know Nothing Party in proper historical context. Furthermore, this work differs from other scholarship by demonstrating that an upsurge in nativist sentiments occurred in Ohio prior to, not concomitant with or after, the rise of the Know Nothing Party. Nativism in Ohio reached its peak in the mid-1850s, prospering largely because of a seemingly unrelated series of events, each inflaming the anti-Catholic and anti-foreign sentiments of many Ohioans. These events increased both the intensity of the nativist campaign and the overall number of adherents in the movement, which supplied a strong base of support for the Know Nothing Party upon its emergence in the state. Most importantly, this thesis illuminates the regional variations in the Know Nothing Party within the state of Ohio, demonstrating that divergent viewpoints among party members concerning the expansion of slavery facilitated the demise of the Know Nothings in Ohio. No previous work addressing the Know Nothing Party in Ohio has attempted such a comparison.<sup>7</sup>

All grammatical and spelling errors appearing in quotes in this thesis remain in order to preserve the intent and composition of the original authors.

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<sup>7</sup> Significant works that examine the Know Nothing Party in Ohio include: William E. Gienapp, "Salmon P. Chase, Nativism, and the Formation of the Republican Party in Ohio," *Ohio History* 93 (1984); Mary Alice Mairose, "Nativism on the Ohio: The Know Nothings in Cincinnati and Louisville, 1853-1855" (M.A. thesis, The Ohio State University, 1993); Eugene H. Roseboom, "Salmon P. Chase and the Know Nothings," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 25 (1938); William E. Van Horne, "Lewis D. Campbell and the Know-Nothing Party in Ohio," *Ohio History* 76 (1967); and John Bennett Weaver, "Nativism and the Birth of the Republican Party in Ohio, 1854-1860" (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1982).



## **Chapter One: The Growth of the Papal Conspiracy Theory in Ohio**

Decades of increased tensions between Catholics and Protestants in Ohio predated the emergence of the Know Nothing Party in the state. Similar to the national party, the Know Nothings in Ohio did not suddenly introduce radical new ideas on an unsuspecting populace in the 1850s. Instead, the roots of anti-Catholicism in Ohio are far more protracted and complicated. A seemingly innocuous dispute concerning public funding for schools fomented the movement. The debate emerged in the Cincinnati area, where Catholics demanded a fairer allocation of school funds and the discontinuation of the King James Bible in public schools. Some Ohio Protestants objected to the mere existence of Catholic schools, arguing that they subjected American youth to seditious, undemocratic principles. Therefore, they opposed any allocation of tax dollars for the funding of these allegedly subversive institutions. The Catholics' demands provoked a strong Protestant reaction, and the dispute became, for brief periods, the main issue of importance in local elections, with partisans on both sides demanding to know if politicians were "sound on the school question." Although public agitation surrounding the issue fluctuated, the controversy nonetheless convinced numerous Ohioans that action was necessary to preserve what they perceived as traditional American values.

The debate over public school funding escalated into a religious feud that caused significant discontent between Protestants and Catholics in the United States. In the 1830s, many Ohio nativists began insinuating that the efforts of Catholics to achieve fairer allocation of school taxes were actually the first actions of an organized Catholic plot intended to subvert American social, religious, and political traditions. The belief

that Catholicism posed a danger to American institutions rapidly became part of popular culture, disseminated through anti-Catholic works from respected men such as Lyman Beecher and Samuel Morse and the widely distributed, scandalous writings of convent life by Maria Monk and Rebecca Theresa Reed. The notion that the Pope intended to undermine American institutions became an essential component of anti-Catholic rhetoric. Although fear of nefarious Catholic actions permeated American culture, the controversy had little long-term influence on Ohio politics. Localized outbreaks of nativism occurred in Ohio during the 1840s, but thrived only briefly during periods of high public disturbance over local nativist issues, such as the reemergence of the school controversy. The development of a cohesive, anti-Catholic political association did not emerge in Ohio until the early 1850s.

Ohio attracted many foreign settlers as it progressed into a populous, flourishing location. The emergence of a vocal, opinionated immigrant minority threatened the prominence of cultural norms established by the area's initial settlers, who arrived largely from eastern and southern states. Immigrant demands for political representation, fair treatment, and impartial common schools aroused reactions from many native inhabitants who felt threatened by these proposed changes. Although Catholics composed a small minority of the population of Ohio, they presented the greatest perceived threat to the established cultural order. Nativists in Ohio abhorred Catholics in part because they resisted amalgamation into the dominant, accepted "American" culture by retaining separate religious practices from their Protestant neighbors. In addition, Catholic immigrants in Ohio largely originated from Ireland and Germany and naturally preserved some of their ethnic behaviors, a factor that only contributed to nativist unrest. Protestant

denominations, which competed vigorously amongst themselves for adherents in Ohio, opposed the spread of Catholicism even more vehemently. As Ohio flourished, the competition to establish cultural norms in the nascent state cultivated animus among denizens with varying religious beliefs and ethnic traditions.

Ohioans dramatically altered their landscape during the early nineteenth century, transforming the state from a sparsely populated, sylvan wilderness into a thriving, agricultural community. In the early 1800s, Ohio was in the forefront of contentious disputes between Native Americans and settlers. The largely uninhabited region served as a buffer separating the two civilizations; however, this partition dissipated as American settlers searched for fertile land. The encroachment of settlers into the disputed territory resulted in numerous armed conflicts in the region, as natives and settlers contested territorial rights. In a familiar historical pattern, the settlers succeeded in removing most of the natives from Ohio through a series of treaties and wars. Ohio's newfound security and fertile lands enticed a remarkable number of eastern settlers and foreign immigrants to the state. The building of improved roadways, a comprehensive system of canals, and numerous railroads greatly expanded the state's potential as a grain provider for the eastern seaboard of the United States. The improved means of transportation connected Ohio's fertile fields to the prosperous markets in New York, and provided a reliable means for Ohio farmers to sell their produce before spoilage. Small villages blossomed along the lines of transportation and, combined with the numerous cities that existed near natural waterways, permanently changed the landscape of Ohio.

The transformation of the state was stunning. In a forty-year period, Ohio's population expanded from 230,760 in 1810 to 1,980,329 in 1850.<sup>8</sup>

As the state's population escalated and the region developed into an agricultural power, several previously small, rural settlements in Ohio became prosperous shipping, manufacturing and trading hubs. Paramount among these cities was Cincinnati, which developed into the most important city in Ohio and the West. In 1787, Congress sold New Jersey's John Cleves Symmes 1,000,000 acres between the Great and Little Miami Rivers in southwest Ohio. Settlers in the area developed a village along the Ohio River, originally named Losantiville, but renamed Cincinnati in 1790 by Governor Arthur St. Clair. The original settlers of the town were largely from neighboring Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, while succeeding generations emigrated from Virginia, New England, Ireland, and Germany. The location of Cincinnati at the confluence of the Ohio and Little Miami Rivers and its position at the head of the Miami and Erie Canal facilitated the city's rise as a center of commerce and trade. The completion of the canal, finished in stages from 1827 through the mid-1830s, transformed the small river town into a burgeoning city. From 1826 to 1832, the yearly export trade of the city quadrupled, from \$1,000,000 to \$4,000,000.<sup>9</sup> An economic depression in Cincinnati, and across the nation, during the late 1830s and early 1840s stultified the city's development;

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<sup>8</sup> George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997), 47-98, 137-68; Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, *A History of Ohio* (Columbus: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1953), 27-64, 88-93; Andrew R. L. Cayton, *Ohio: The History of a People* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002), 13-43; University of Virginia Library, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "1850 Census," n.d., <<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>> (15 October 2004). The historical census browser on the University of Virginia Library website provides an accurate and quick method of accessing census information. Their database includes detailed information of national, state, and county records from each United States census. For the purposes of this study, their records from the 1850 census are particularly useful because they include information relevant to the main years of focus of the thesis and are the first United States census statistics to detail the property holdings and capacity of many denominations.

<sup>9</sup> Jed Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder: Temperance Reform in Cincinnati from the Washingtonian Revival to the WCTU* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 26.

however, the rapid growth of Cincinnati continued following this brief abeyance. The population of Cincinnati tripled during the 1840s as Cincinnati developed into the preeminent western metropolis. The city's prosperity attracted numerous immigrants from diverse locales, many relocating from neighboring states and others coming from distant European nations. The burgeoning population of Cincinnati contained residents of many different faiths. By 1850, the denominations with the greatest followings in Cincinnati and surrounding Hamilton County were Roman Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Lutherans.<sup>10</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, a great array of Christian denominations developed strong followings throughout Ohio, largely due to the diverse origins of Ohio's residents. Most of the initial settlements in the state had a particular sectarian origin, ranging from denominations such as Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Methodists to isolated communities of Mennonites, Quakers, and Moravians. Most of these groups actively sought to establish themselves as the dominant sect in the West, and they competed vigorously to win the support of Ohioans. The Presbyterians were among the most successful denominations during the initial settlement of the state. They prospered throughout Ohio, but particularly in Cincinnati, Columbus, and the "Western Reserve," the northeastern portion of the state. By 1850, the denomination contained over 250,000 followers in Ohio.<sup>11</sup> The Congregationalists, who derived mainly from New England,

<sup>10</sup> University of Virginia Library, "1850 Census.," Knepper, *Ohio and its People*, 133-4, 155, 170-176; Roseboom, *A History of Ohio*, 56-7, 122; Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder*, 26; Cayton, *Ohio*, 15, 27-9; Charles Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841: Its Early Annals and Future Prospects* (Cincinnati: E. Morgan and Company Power Press, 1841), 13-29.

<sup>11</sup> The numbers of adherents for each denomination are estimates based upon the 1850 census. The 1850 census does not have specific information concerning individuals' religious preferences; however, the census does contain detailed information concerning churches, including their denominational affiliation and seating capacity. For this study, the estimated number of adherents derived from the number of churches multiplied by their seating capacity. Although this approach is problematic (a particular

achieved their greatest Ohio success in the Western Reserve. Although their overall number of adherents in the state was less than 50,000, Congregationalists possessed greater influence in Ohio politics than their scant numbers indicate. Their adamant support of reform movements helped establish the Western Reserve as the center of Ohio's temperance and anti-extensionalist communities. Likewise, the Episcopalians, who numbered less than 40,000, exerted a substantial influence due largely to the prosperity and prestige of their members. The Methodists were the most successful denomination in Ohio, totaling over 500,000 members by 1850. They actively sought converts in both urban and rural areas and gained many followers among less prosperous Ohioans. Their evangelical, free will approach attracted many adherents during the revivalism frenzy of the 1820s and 1830s. The Baptists also achieved limited success in Ohio, particularly in the southwestern and northeastern portions of the state, gaining nearly 200,000 members through emotional, free will appeals.

The increasing numbers of German and Irish immigrants in the 1840s led to the development of large Lutheran and Roman Catholic followings in the state. By 1850, there were nearly 100,000 Lutherans in Ohio. Lutherans prospered in areas occupied by recent German immigrants, such as certain precincts in Cincinnati. Likewise, Catholicism succeeded in Ohio in predominately Irish Catholic and German Catholic neighborhoods. The overwhelming center of Catholicism in Ohio was Cincinnati and surrounding Hamilton County, which by 1850 accounted for over half of the total value

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denomination could have many large, nearly empty churches), it provides the best estimate for religious affiliation during the 1850s.

of Roman Catholic property in the state and one-fourth of the estimated 76,000 Catholics in Ohio.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1820s, Americans experienced an upsurge in Protestant evangelicalism, which historians later labeled the Second Great Awakening. In Ohio, this increased Protestant religiosity resulted in intensified Protestant-Catholic tensions. The Second Great Awakening developed in Ohio as many enthusiastic Ohio Protestants questioned the accepted Calvinistic notion of Predestination. Influenced by passionate itinerant preachers of the Second Great Awakening, they increasingly turned to Arminianism, the belief that every human had a “free will” to determine their ethereal fate through terrestrial actions and personal salvation. Religious revivals, a central component of the movement, became commonplace throughout the state. In particular, the Methodists and Baptists prospered during the shift to Arminianism by aggressively seeking converts and delivering emotional sermons. The Second Great Awakening affected more than theological doctrine, altering nearly every aspect of society. By evoking the possibility that humans could achieve personal salvation, the movement naturally led its adherents to seek moral improvement in themselves and their communities. Many Arminianists perceived society as immoral, and strove to better their communities based upon their notions of decency. Their efforts facilitated the mid-nineteenth century reform movements, such as temperance, abolition, and, to a certain extent, nativism. The reformers’ conceptions of an idealized society without vice established a moral norm for their communities; many deemed any deviation from this standard as contemptible. The influx of immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly the arrival of millions of Catholics, disrupted the reformers’ attempts to achieve moral and cultural uniformity.

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<sup>12</sup> University of Virginia, “1850 Census;” Knepper, *Ohio and its People*, 168-174.

Much of the American nativist movement derived from the efforts of reformers to address the perceived social threat that these immigrants posed.<sup>13</sup>

Catholics were among the first settlers in the Ohio territory, although they constituted a small minority of the early residents. Led by Father Edward D. Fenwick, Catholics constructed their first churches in Ohio at Somerset, Lancaster, and, in 1819, Cincinnati. By 1820, Fenwick estimated that 3,000 Catholic families resided in Ohio, with the largest population living in Cincinnati.<sup>14</sup> To adequately serve the growing Catholic population of Ohio and the Northwest, Pope Pius VII created the Cincinnati diocese on June 19, 1821, which initially consisted of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. Fenwick, as the diocese's first bishop, worked diligently to improve his district and alleviate any Protestant-Catholic animus in the area. Under Fenwick, Catholics constructed the first Cathedral of Cincinnati in 1825 and the Athenaeum, a seminary, in 1830. In addition, he helped establish the *Catholic Telegraph*, the oldest Catholic newspaper in the United States and an essential component in the battle against nativism. Fenwick also successfully petitioned for the creation of the Leopoldine Association, a European society that specifically raised funds to assist the incipient Catholic Church in the United States. With humble supplications for financial assistance from European Catholic leaders, Fenwick convinced King Leopold of Austria to organize

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<sup>13</sup> Knepper, *Ohio and its People*, 168-74; Donald G. Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly* 21 (1969): 23-43; Ira M. Leonard and Robert D. Parmet, *American Nativism, 1830-1860* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971), 40-2; Barry Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2005); Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

<sup>14</sup> The estimates of Catholic adherents in the state before 1850 most often derive from the bishops' calculations. These estimates fluctuated depending upon which audience the bishops intended to receive the information. For instance, they enhanced the numbers of Catholics in order to garner financial aid from Europe and minimized their population to assuage nativists' fears. Therefore, the numbers listed show general trends of an increased Catholic presence in Ohio, but do not accurately represent definitive totals.



and fund this organization. Through Fenwick's example of piety and industry, he greatly helped to assuage anti-Catholic bigotry in early nineteenth-century Cincinnati. Under the bishop's leadership, the Cincinnati diocese rapidly became one of the most influential centers of Catholicism in the nation. The Catholic population of Ohio grew in conjunction with the state's prosperity. The construction of roads, canals, and railroads required many laborers, which attracted Catholic workers to the state. In particular, the construction of canals during the 1830s enticed many Irish Catholic laborers, desirous of any work, to relocate to Ohio. After the completion of these projects, many of the laborers remained in the state and established permanent communities. The formation of immigrant neighborhoods, often with foreign languages and customs, concerned many of the area's initial settlers.<sup>15</sup>

The anti-Catholic movement in Cincinnati faced a formidable opponent in Fenwick's successor, Archbishop Purcell. Purcell, born February 26, 1800, in Mallow, Ireland, sailed to the United States at the age of eighteen to seek an ecclesiastical education, an opportunity not financially available to him in his homeland. Purcell was of small stature with thin features and fair, light-brown hair, but his assertive personality and thorough, classical education belied his youth and slight appearance. In 1822, he began his long affiliation with Mount Saint Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, initially as a student of philosophical studies, then instructor, and finally, in 1829, as president of the college. The precocious youth became an ordained priest on May 20,

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<sup>15</sup> The Archdiocese of Cincinnati, *The Church of Cincinnati, 1821-1971* (Cincinnati: privately printed, 1971), 7-10; Mary Agnes McCann, "Archbishop Purcell and The Archdiocese of Cincinnati," (Ph.D. diss., Catholic Sisters College of the Catholic University of America, 1918), 11-12, 21; M. Edmund Hussey, *A History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati* (Strasbourg, France: Éditions du Signe, 2000), 4-8; Mary Alice Mairese, "Nativism on the Ohio: The Know Nothings in Cincinnati and Louisville, 1853-1855" (M.A. thesis, The Ohio State University, 1993), 20; "Edward Fenwick, Late Bishop of Cincinnati," *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 12 January 1833.

1826, and ultimately followed Fenwick, who died of cholera on September 27, 1832, as Bishop of Cincinnati. When Purcell arrived in the city on November 14, 1833, there were only sixteen Catholic churches in Ohio and inadequate funds to construct new facilities.<sup>16</sup>

Purcell's tenure as head of the Cincinnati diocese was remarkable. He established himself as the uncontested leader of the Ohio Catholic community through his diligent service and became one of the most influential members of the Catholic Church in the United States. During his nearly fifty years as leader of the diocese, the number of Catholics in the state increased from 7,000 to over 500,000. In Cincinnati, Catholicism proliferated as the number of congregations in the city increased from two in 1833 to twenty-six by 1860.<sup>17</sup> During Purcell's tenure, the Catholic community in his diocese increased so substantially that the Church's hierarchy divided the state into two districts with the creation of the Cleveland diocese on April 23, 1847.<sup>18</sup> Pope Pius IX determined that the dramatic rise in Catholicism in the West warranted the creation of an archdiocese, and formed the province of Cincinnati on July 19, 1850 with Louisville, Detroit, Vincennes, and Cleveland as suffrage sees and Purcell as Archbishop. Purcell was a particularly effective and persuasive speaker, and adamantly defended the rights of Catholic settlers. However, he was not as reserved as Bishop Fenwick, engaging in many notable debates against anti-Catholic adherents, particularly through the *Catholic Telegraph*. Throughout his tenure, Purcell firmly opposed the accusations of nativists,

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<sup>16</sup> Anthony H. Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell of Cincinnati: Pre-Civil War Years," (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1949), 77-90. Deye's thorough examination of Purcell's early career is the eminent study on the important bishop. His work explores Purcell's early career in Cincinnati through his letters, personal writings, and contemporary observations of the bishop. Deye also examines anti-Catholicism in Purcell's diocese, but mainly as it personally affected Purcell. There is little information about the composition of the members of the anti-Catholic crusade or their motivations and goals.

<sup>17</sup> Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 427.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

while advocating the establishment of additional Catholic parochial schools and public funding of the institutions.<sup>19</sup>

During Fenwick's and Purcell's tenures in Ohio, the Catholic community in the state contained two distinct groups: English-speaking and German Catholics. The English-speaking segment included Catholic families from diverse sections of Europe who had resided in the United States for generations as well as many relatively recent Irish immigrants. German Catholics constituted a significant percentage of the Ohio Catholic community in the nineteenth century. Charles Cist, a chronicler of Cincinnati history, calculated the number of Germans in the city at 14,163 in 1841, 30.5 percent of the city's population, and 30,628 in 1851, accounting for 26.5 percent.<sup>20</sup> Of the German population in the city, approximately sixty-five to seventy-five percent were Catholics. A lingual and cultural divide between the German and English-speaking Catholics forced the bishops to work diligently to serve both segments of the Catholic community. The German immigrants tended to congregate in uniform villages, where they could maintain their language, religion, and culture, thus preventing amalgamation with English-speaking Catholics. The Germans preserved their traditions by prioritizing the construction of schools and churches in their nascent communities. During the 1830s, the local bishops struggled to find enough German-speaking priests to serve the growing population of German immigrants in Ohio. To appease the Germans, one of the first

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<sup>19</sup> *The Church of Cincinnati*, 20-1; Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 6-37, 74, 147-8, 320, 326, 427.

<sup>20</sup> Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841*, 35-7; Charles Cist, *Sketches and Statistics of Cincinnati in 1851* (William H. Moore and Co. Publishers, 1851), 44-48. Cincinnati's overall population in 1840 and 1850 were 46,382 and 115,438, respectively.

actions that Purcell took upon his elevation to the see of Cincinnati was to coordinate construction of a church to serve the German community of Cincinnati.<sup>21</sup>

Although Purcell worked to facilitate an endearing relationship with the German community, the divide in the Catholic community, caused by language and cultural differences, fomented many disagreements in the ensuing decades. In particular, a great debate arose between Germans and English-speaking Catholics in Ohio concerning the allocation of charitable donations in the state, especially those deriving from the Leopold Association. Ohio Germans did not approve that the majority of European charitable donations to the Cincinnati diocese went to the construction of a cathedral for English-speaking Catholics in Cincinnati. They argued that because the bulk of these funds derived from Germanic areas, the German Catholic community should receive a fair portion of the donations for construction of their own churches and schools. To protest the allocation of the funds, they petitioned King Leopold for assistance. Pressure from the King and other wealthy European benefactors compelled Purcell to reconsider the proper distribution of the society's grants. The German Catholic population of Ohio also railed against the lack of German priests and bishops among the American Catholic hierarchy, arguing that the Church unfairly discriminated against them when selecting candidates for important positions. Despite these difficulties and the definite separation between German and English-speaking Ohio Catholics, Purcell's diligent work in his diocese did much to alleviate the tensions between the groups, and both segments of the Ohio Catholic community greatly respected his efforts.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cayton, *Ohio*, 143-51.

<sup>22</sup> Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 118, 259-298; Hussey, *History of the Archdiocese*, 23-6.

Although tensions likely existed between Catholics and Protestants from the first settlements in the state, the anti-Catholic movement in Ohio largely developed from a debate concerning the education of the state's youth. During the early nineteenth century, many Ohioans attempted to improve the moral and intellectual nature of their children through the establishment of institutions of public education. These reformers perceived that providing proper instruction for the nation's youth was essential for the overall improvement of society. However, not all Ohioans approved of the curriculum of the state's public institutions. Catholics, particularly those residing in Cincinnati, balked at the notion of paying taxes to support an educational system that utilized the King James Bible and Protestant-biased textbooks. The public school controversy originated in 1821 with the Ohio General Assembly's passage of an act that permitted residents to impose local taxes on their communities in order to fund school construction and maintenance. In 1825, the Ohio legislature further outlined their notions of the proper means to fund public schools by obligating property owners to pay taxes in support of local school districts.<sup>23</sup> That same year, the Cincinnati diocese established a system that mandated the establishment of a Catholic parochial school wherever possible.<sup>24</sup> Catholics complained that Ohio's school funding system forced them to pay for both their parochial schools, and, through taxation, Protestant public schools. Catholic leaders argued that their schools were just as deserving of public funding as the "secular" institutions that utilized the King James Bible. The establishment of Catholic schools, combined with Catholic assertions for public funding for these institutions, created an impassioned nativist reaction.

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<sup>23</sup> Knepper, *Ohio and its People*, 185; Roseboom, *A History of Ohio*, 291-2.

<sup>24</sup> *The Church of Cincinnati*, 11.

In addition to the emergence of the public school controversy, many additional factors contributed to the rise of nativism in the United States during the 1820s. Paramount among these impetuses was a rise in immigration to the United States, particularly of Irish and German Catholics. During the 1810s, the Napoleonic Wars in Europe depressed the number of potential immigrants to the United States, as European leaders required all of their subjects to contribute to the war effort. A relatively peaceful period followed the continental conflict, resulting in increased immigration to the United States. Many native-born residents of the United States opposed this influx of foreigners, particularly because many of them were penniless and possessed different cultural traditions. Some Americans believed that European leaders were intentionally sending their superfluous, unproductive citizens to the United States.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to a growing apprehension about the number of recent Catholic immigrants, developments within the Catholic Church also contributed to American Protestants' trepidation. In the United States, Catholicism underwent a transition in the early nineteenth century, shifting from a period of relative freedom from Roman authority to an ultramontane approach. Many Catholics in the United States, accustomed to their autonomy, opposed the transformation of authority to the church hierarchy. In particular, numerous Catholic congregations in the United States asserted that they, not the clergy, had legal control of church property and possessed the right to nominate priests. Disputes over who had the ultimate authority in controlling church property, which contemporaries labeled "trusteeism" conflicts, proliferated throughout the early and mid-nineteenth century. An exceptionally rancorous trusteeism controversy

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<sup>25</sup> Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 32-40; Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 540-7.

developed in Philadelphia during the 1820s, which attracted national attention to the internecine Catholic conflict. The Catholic Church's ultramontane position alarmed many Protestant Americans, who viewed the new direction of the Church as inimical to American republican principles. Moreover, the American clergy's emphasis upon papal authority reflected an overall transformation in the worldwide Catholic Church. Following the Napoleonic Wars, the Church hierarchy reasserted their preference for strong monarchical rule, the dominance of the clergy over the laity, and opposition to liberalism. These notions conflicted strongly with the beliefs of most Americans, resulting in the perception among many Protestant Americans that the influx of Catholic immigrants threatened the American democratic experiment.<sup>26</sup>

The underlying notion that intensified the school funding controversy and escalated Protestant-Catholic animus was the theory that Catholic immigrants, under the control of foreign leaders, intended to infiltrate the American West and establish communities and educational institutions. According to nativists, thousands of Catholic immigrants would follow the initial wave of settlers until they constituted a majority in the western territories and states. Catholics would then separate the Mississippi Valley and surrounding territory from the United States and establish papal domination over the area. Nativists argued that this presumed Catholic nation would pose an imminent threat to existing American settlements along the Atlantic coast.<sup>27</sup>

The notion of a Catholic conspiracy to overthrow the American government originated in the 1820s, when Protestant denominational newspapers began warning of nefarious Catholic intent. The main impetus for the popularity of the movement,

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<sup>26</sup> Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 36-45, 48, 58; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 32-40.

<sup>27</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 118-22; Leonard and Parmet, *American Nativism*, 54-5.

however, was the writings of Reverend Lyman Beecher and Samuel F. B. Morse. Morse, primarily remembered for his development of an electrical telegraph and the Morse code, outlined the alleged Catholic conspiracy in two collections of his letters: *Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States*, composed in 1834, and *Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions of the United States*, published the following year. In these immensely popular works, Morse connected activities in Europe with Catholic activities in the United States. His main purpose was to illustrate the imperative need to change the nation's naturalization laws in order to combat an alleged Catholic plot. Morse contended that Catholic European despots and the papacy intended to subvert the American government, allegedly because of the danger that a successful democracy might pose to their despotic rule. He believed that this scheme was part of a larger pattern of struggle in Europe between despotic rulers, in nations such as Italy, Austria, and Russia, and popular governments in England and France. According to Morse, this divide resulted from the inherent differences between Protestantism and Catholicism, asserting, "*Protestantism favours Republicanism while Popery as naturally supports Monarchical power.*"<sup>28</sup> In Morse's theory, European leaders created several societies, particularly the Leopold Association, whose express purpose was to fund Catholic colonization of the American West. He portrayed the many Catholic European immigrants settling in the United States as devious Jesuits, sent to destroy the American government and establish papal rule. By implying that all American Catholics were actually Jesuits plotting a Catholic revolt, Morse greatly enhanced Protestant-Catholic animus and fomented distrust between the two groups.

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<sup>28</sup> Samuel F. B. Morse, *Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions of the United States through Foreign Immigration*, (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), 8.



Morse alleged that, in an effort to depose the American government through elections, the Church hierarchy orchestrated the votes of Catholics in the United States, declaring, "It is a fact, that Roman Catholic Priests have interfered to influence our elections."<sup>29</sup> This charge, oft repeated in the nativist movement, particularly resonated with segments of the American public, who interpreted church interference in elections as an attempt to undermine democracy and the nation's republican traditions. The wide acceptance of the idea that Catholics voted on Church orders was so pervasive that Bishop Purcell and the *Catholic Telegraph* maintained complete neutrality in political campaigns in an effort to belie the notion. Morse further avowed, "It is a fact, that politicians on both sides have propitiated these priests, to obtain the votes of their people."<sup>30</sup> With this assertion, Morse introduced another important component into the nativist campaign, the notion that politicians acted as willing accomplices in the papal conspiracy, betraying their nation for Catholic support in elections. Throughout the rise of political nativism in the 1840s and 1850s, nearly every political campaign included the charge by some party that their opposition truckled to Catholics at the expense of their national interest. In order to contest Catholic influence in politics, Morse advocated that politicians disregard their party loyalties and unite in opposition against the purported seditious plot. He repeatedly stressed the need for the political unity of all native-born Americans in order to change the naturalization laws and thwart any possible foreign conspiracy.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Morse, *Imminent Dangers*, 16.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> James Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 121; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 122-5; Leonard and Parmet, *American Nativism*, 54-5.

Although Morse's implications contributed significantly to the creation of a fervent anti-Catholic groundswell, in Cincinnati famed nineteenth-century reformer Lyman Beecher was the most influential early perpetuator of anti-Catholic animus. Beecher, among the most prominent speakers of his era, began warning Americans in the early 1830s that Catholics in the United States, under the direction and control of the Pope, intended to destroy American democracy and institute papal rule over the nation. In particular, he demanded that Protestant Americans combat the spread of Catholic schools because Catholic instructors allegedly taught their pupils to uncritically accept papal authority. Like many eastern religious intellectuals, Beecher had a particular interest in the educational institutions of the West. He perceived the creation of Catholic parochial schools as part of a papal effort to supplant American rule in the West. In an attempt to combat the influence of the Catholic Church, Beecher accepted the presidency of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati in 1830. Beecher's paranoid notions of malevolent Catholic schemes became popular and largely accepted in the 1830s and contributed to nativists burning a convent in Boston in 1834. In 1835, Beecher published the influential work, *A Plea for the West*, in which he outlined the imperative nature of establishing Protestant schools and universities in the West before the alleged Catholic plot to subvert American democracy could reach fruition.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> John Bennett Weaver, "Nativism and the Birth of the Republican Party in Ohio, 1854-1860," (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1982), 21; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 125-7; Leonard and Parmet, *American Nativism*, 55-6. Weaver's excellent examination of the rise of the Republican Party in Ohio is largely a political history of the movement and does not attempt to ascertain the motivations or tactics of the nativist propagandists. He contends that political nativism and cultural nativism are two separate entities, and that most politicians who ran as Know Nothings utilized the nativist fervor among the population to advance their political careers. Furthermore, Weaver asserts that the Republican Party accepted and promulgated some of the nativists' ideas in order to attract former Know Nothings to their incipient party.

In *A Plea for the West*, Beecher formulated what would become the accepted rationale for opposing Catholics in Ohio. Beecher composed his book from a series of lectures that he delivered in eastern cities. In his work, he emphasized the importance of establishing Protestant religious educational institutions in the West. He articulated the need to spread Protestantism to the newly settled territory by arguing, “The religious and political destiny of our nation is to be decided in the West” and that “there is the territory, and there soon will be the population, the wealth, and the political power.”<sup>33</sup> Because of the integral role that Beecher estimated the West would have in the development of the United States, he determined that the education and religious instruction of the area’s denizens was imperative to securing Protestantism in the region. Specifically, he asserted, “the thing required for the civil and religious prosperity of the West, is universal education, and moral culture, by institutions commensurate to that result—the all-pervading influence of schools, and colleges, and seminaries, and pastors, and churches.”<sup>34</sup> In particular, Beecher lamented the creation of Catholic institutes of education and the influx of immigrants with varying definitions of “moral culture.” He warned,

This danger from uneducated mind is augmenting daily by the rapid influx of foreign emigrants, unacquainted with our institutions, unaccustomed to self-government, inaccessible to education, and easily accessible to prepossession, and inveterate credulity, and intrigue, and easily embodied and wielded by sinister design.<sup>35</sup>

Beecher’s remonstrations against immigrants became an essential component of the nativist mantra in Ohio and across the United States, and he repeatedly stressed the importance of timely action to thwart Catholic advances. For instance, in comparing

<sup>33</sup> Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West* (Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1835), 11.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

Catholic immigration into the United States with Viking raiders, he argued that the need to repel Catholicism in the United States was:

A duty also enforced by the unparalleled novelty and urgency of our condition; for since the irruption of the northern barbarians, the world has never witnessed such a rush of dark-minded population from one country to another, as is now leaving Europe and dashing upon our shores.<sup>36</sup>

Beecher emphasized existing stereotypes of Catholics in order to convince his audience of the urgency to construct Protestant educational institutions, repeatedly averring the inherent criminality, ignorance, and moral turpitude of Catholics.

The crux of Beecher's argument was that Catholic schools were not merely didactic institutions, but rather the tools of Catholic leaders who intended to overthrow American republican institutions. He criticized the intent of the Catholic instructors by questioning:

Can Jesuits and nuns, educated in Europe, and sustained by the patronage of Catholic powers in arduous conflict for the destruction of liberty, be safely trusted to form the mind and opinions of the young hopes of this great nation?—Is it not treason to commit the formation of republican children to such influences?<sup>37</sup>

The implication of European influence in American affairs was a popular component of Beecher's work, and became a common aspect of the nativist movement. Because of the uniqueness of American democracy during the early nineteenth century, many citizens worried that despotic European leaders would eagerly work to overthrow the American democratic experiment. The influx of foreigners, particularly Catholics, inflamed these fears, as many Americans, like Beecher, interpreted their presence as a foreign vanguard. Beecher recoiled at the rise of Catholicism in the United States in part because of Catholics' inability to amalgamate into the common culture. Particularly, he cited their

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<sup>36</sup> Beecher, *A Plea for the West*, 68-9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

differing religious practices, separate educational institutions, and tendency to congregate into exclusive communities. Although Beecher's criticisms were not as acerbic as later anti-Catholic diatribes, his strategies against immigrant interference and interpretations of Catholicism became integral aspects of the campaign. Additionally, his notoriety and celebrity as a religious figure brought increased attention to the nativist cause. His role as the president of Lane Seminary made him a particularly important figure in the creation of the anti-Catholic movement in Cincinnati.

The Cincinnati diocese responded to the harangues of Beecher, Morse, and local anti-Catholic activists in their weekly newspaper, the *Catholic Telegraph*. Through their writings, Purcell, Fenwick, and other prominent local Catholics defended their faith against "religious fanatics."<sup>38</sup> From the onset of their paper on October 22, 1831, the editors expressly stated their main rationale for the paper was "the explanation and defence of the Roman Catholic Faith."<sup>39</sup> Although printed in Cincinnati, the *Telegraph* was largely bereft of stories of local interest, instead focusing on ecclesiastical affairs, national and world news, and the anti-Catholic campaign. In large part, the editors' aversion to addressing Cincinnati issues evolved from their effort to achieve circulation of their newspaper outside of the metropolitan area, for which they were greatly successful. Although the newspaper continually encountered financial difficulties, it was nonetheless an important advocate of Catholicism in the West.

Most of the early issues of the *Telegraph* addressed specific concerns among nativists regarding Catholicism, such as whether Catholic doctrine forbade laypeople from reading the Bible or if their religion was inherently incompatible with republican

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<sup>38</sup> "Fanaticism," *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 19 November 1831.

<sup>39</sup> "The Catholic Telegraph," *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 22 October 1831.

principles.<sup>40</sup> In a particularly poignant article entitled “Cincinnati Journal,” the *Telegraph* responded to the anti-Catholic calumny of the *Cincinnati Journal*, a local Presbyterian newspaper. In response to the *Cincinnati Journal*’s assertion that they must “tolerate” a Catholic newspaper in the city solely because of the constitutional right of free speech, the *Telegraph* asserted:

The phrase, “Protestant America,” is a solecism in our language. It is one of those quaint unconstitutional terms, upon which the guardians of our independence have placed their veto. Our political compact excludes all precedence on the score of religious opinion. The question is not, whether you preface your devotions by singing a psalm, or by making the sign of the cross. It is, therefore, not only highly improper for any one denomination to hint at the toleration of another, where claims are equal, but it is manifesting an arrogant and impertinent interference with the wisdom of the laws, as well as an implied invidious regret, that others are not placed under some penal restrictions. If ever the altar of our civil liberty is to be cloven down, it will probably be effected by the destroying falchion, which is ever wielded by religious fanaticism.<sup>41</sup>

The degree of interest among the editors of the *Telegraph* in the anti-Catholic movement vacillated. As the campaign against Catholicism heightened, the editors addressed more of their newspaper to countering the claims of nativists. During slight abeyances of anti-Catholic rhetoric, the *Telegraph* contained more articles about world affairs or complicated theological debates concerning Catholic dogma. During the period of increased anti-Catholic animosity in the mid-1830s, the editors concentrated much of their paper to assuaging Protestant hostility toward the Catholic Church and responding to the vituperative accusations of the *Cincinnati Journal*.

In addition to defending Catholicism through sermons and debates, Bishop Purcell was also a regular contributor to the *Telegraph*. He continually avowed the merits of Catholicism and in particular devoted much attention to the proper means for

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<sup>40</sup> “The Catholic Religion Compatible with Republican Government,” *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 26 November 1831; “To ‘A Lover of Truth’,” *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 17 December 1831.

<sup>41</sup> “Cincinnati Journal,” *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 5 November 1831.

educating his local parishioners. In fact, Purcell was as concerned with the education of Catholic youth as Beecher and Morse were for the instruction of Protestant children. The Bishop lamented the attendance of Catholic children in Protestant schools or “secular” institutions that utilized the King James Bible. He believed that enrollment in these institutions endangered the faith of the children, and thus worked diligently to create new Catholic schools in Cincinnati and throughout the state. These measures only intensified the suspicion of nativists like Beecher and Morse, who viewed the proliferation of Catholic schools, funded partially through the donations of wealthy Europeans, as evidence of a perfidious plot. Therefore, Purcell had the unenviable task of both appeasing nativists and extending the scope of the Catholic Church in Ohio. Purcell responded to the nativists’ assaults by declaring these individuals as aberrant of the typical Ohio Protestant and declaring their accusations ridiculous. By suggesting that their behavior was in contrast to the cultural norm, Purcell endeavored to present the opposition as absurd radicals intent on spoiling the harmonious atmosphere in Ohio. Purcell, observing the minute relative proportion of Catholics to Protestants in Ohio, argued that their meager numbers provided no basis for the allegation that Catholics were massing to overthrow the American government.<sup>42</sup>

As part of his duties as head of the Cincinnati diocese, the Bishop regularly toured rural Ohio to serve the scattered Catholic population of the state. During an expedition in 1835, Purcell wrote a detailed description of the conditions of Catholics throughout the state for publication in the *Telegraph*.<sup>43</sup> He was deeply concerned with the extent of anti-Catholic sentiment in Ohio, and attempted to assuage Protestant-Catholic animosity by

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<sup>42</sup> Deye, “Archbishop John Baptist Purcell,” 114-126, 199.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 142. According to Deye, who was the authority on Purcell, the Bishop wrote the letter himself. However, the Bishop did not sign the communication and refers to himself in the third person.

demonstrating the industriousness, sobriety, and passiveness of the Catholic community. For instance, he described his visit to Stallstown, a small town established by German Catholics. Purcell boasted of the piety, intelligence, and assiduousness of the village residents, and contrasted their accomplishments with the pervasive stereotype of impoverished, stolid Catholic Germans. In addition, the Bishop noted the harmonious relationship between the settlement and a nearby community of Lutherans, proclaiming, "Between their Catholic neighbours and them, the most uninterrupted harmony and reciprocally kind feeling prevail."<sup>44</sup> He compared the amicability of the two villages with the prevalent animus between Catholics and Protestants by asserting:

The bigoted and misguided zealots, whose voice is so often heard, where the Scripture tells us "God is not," viz: in commotion and strife, would not be edified by the spectacle of so much Christian love among brethren whose religious views are so very different. But the charity we describe, if that of the Gospel is not sufficient, should teach them not only 'how good and pleasant,' by how *practicable* a thing it is for brethren thus "to dwell together, in social, if not in religious unity."<sup>45</sup>

Increasing anti-Catholic sentiment among the populace alarmed the Bishop, who sought to assuage these tensions by illustrating the potential for religious harmony.

During his tour of Ohio, Purcell surveyed the prevalence of anti-Catholic bigotry throughout the state. On sojourns to Piqua and Troy, he perceived that "the professors of the Catholic faith are taunted and derided for sentiments which they do not hold but which are *conscientiously* imputed to them by the uninstructed and the prejudiced of the fellow-citizens."<sup>46</sup> In defense of his parishioners, the Bishop ridiculed the veracity of the notion that Catholics were massing to overthrow the American government and install papal rule. He noted the relative insignificance of Catholic communities in comparison

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<sup>44</sup> "Episcopal Visitation," *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 24 April 1835.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



to the plethora of Protestant settlements. In addition, he defused the notion that Catholics slavishly obeyed papal orders in their actions and voting patterns, declaring that Catholics in Ohio “are not remarkable as a body if truth must be told, for their advocacy of any Political party, in the republic, much less for any servile intention of submitting to dictation in the election of public officers!”<sup>47</sup> Desirous of religious toleration, Purcell worked diligently to diffuse notions of papal-led plots and seditious Catholic conspiracies.

Purcell’s logic and protestations did not mollify the nativists’ attacks, and in 1835 the Bishop lamented, “Dr. Beecher is persecuting us fiercely, here [in Cincinnati]. I seriously believe the hour of persecution is not far distant. May He Who gave the Martyr fortitude, not forsake us while we pass through the bloody and fiery ordeal.”<sup>48</sup> Purcell’s dire warnings about the impending religious battle failed to materialize. Undoubtedly, Bishop Fenwick’s contribution of establishing cordial Protestant-Catholic relations helped Purcell in his quest to convince skeptical Protestant Ohioans of the harmless intent of Catholics. Purcell, despite his mollifying writings, was not as conciliatory towards Protestants as his humble predecessor, especially when addressing a Catholic audience. While most of his speeches and letters worked to assuage tensions, his denunciations of Catholics attending Protestant educational institutions and religious services (when no Catholic church was available) unwittingly continued to antagonize the conflict.

Purcell’s rhetoric was not nearly as acerbic as many of his Catholic contemporaries, particularly Bishop Hughes of New York. Hughes incited discord with assertive, contentious demands for changes in New York’s public schools. During the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Purcell to Rosati, 10 March 1835 (Archdiocese of St. Louis Archives), quoted in Deye, “Archbishop John Baptist Purcell,” 142.

1830s and 1840s, Purcell did not excessively antagonize the dominant Protestant population of his diocese because he had a discerning understanding of the precarious position of Catholics in the West. With nativist rhetoric causing fears of Catholic sedition, Purcell understood that he needed to restrict his demands for Catholic rights in order to avoid possible reprisals. Instead of using bombastic speeches to facilitate change, he instead sought to alter the public school system through logical pleas and petitions to state and local agencies. Because of Purcell's actions, the Cincinnati school board agreed in 1842 to allow Catholic children to use their version of the Bible in class and limited Catholic students' access to anti-Catholic texts.<sup>49</sup> Purcell's approach during the 1830s and 1840s for establishing rights for Catholics relied upon the rationality of the surrounding populace to accept his suggestions for change. He did not advocate drastic transformations that might further discord among nativists; however, the subtle alterations in the Cincinnati public school system caused by his petitions nonetheless fostered a hostile reaction from nativists.

Although there was little evidence of Catholic attempts to colonize the West and overthrow American democracy, the rhetoric of the nativists was nonetheless persuasive. Despite the creation of several Catholic societies whose express purpose was to promulgate Catholicism in the United States, their religion remained a small minority in the West.<sup>50</sup> However, nativist propagandists rarely acknowledged the actual relative insignificance of western Catholicism. Instead, they promoted anti-Catholic animosity by emphasizing several "proofs" of Catholic sedition, including the school funding controversy, the creation of Catholic societies, and anti-democratic activities of Catholics

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<sup>49</sup> Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 246-7.

<sup>50</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 130.

in Europe. Although many nativists were no doubt sincere in their fear of Catholicism, the financial success of Beecher's and Morse's works likely inspired many opportunistic imitators. Numerous derivative exposés of alleged Catholic plots followed the writings of Beecher and Morse. In addition, the widespread popularity of alleged "insider" exposés of salacious convent life by Maria Monk and Rebecca Reed facilitated the printing of numerous imitative works. Many Protestant Americans eagerly hungered for more anti-Catholic calumny, and avaricious authors complied with their demands. In the mid-1830s, nativists began publication of newspapers devoted specifically to their cause, such as the *Downfall of Babylon* and the *American Protestant Vindicator*, from Philadelphia and New York, respectively. These newspapers, and their subsequent imitators, proved essential in maintaining and aggrandizing the nativist campaign. The proliferation of anti-Catholic books and the popularity of itinerant nativist speakers provided further proof for many Ohioans of the verisimilitude of harmful Catholic intent, as anti-Catholic literature and nativist teachings permeated American culture.<sup>51</sup> In Ohio, the initiation of numerous nativist newspapers during the 1850s abetted the anti-Catholic movement and disseminated the Know Nothing Party's message throughout the state.

In addition to newspapers and books specifically dedicated to nativism, Protestant missionary societies and denominational newspapers also aided the public's acceptance of the notion of seditious Catholic activities. Many Protestants, fearful of Catholic colonization of the West, organized societies to combat this perceived threat. The American Home Missionary Society, formed in 1826, advocated that Protestants should populate the West before Catholics could dominate the region. Through their society's newspaper, the *Home Missionary*, the group increasingly expressed nativist notions

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<sup>51</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 90-108; Leonard and Parmet, *American Nativism*, 56-9.

during the 1830s. The American Home Missionary Society, and other similar organizations, advantageously utilized the popularity of the anti-Catholic current to garner large contributions to their organizations. By eliciting fear of Catholicism and emphasizing the urgency of immediate action, the societies provoked larger contributions from wealthy eastern Protestants who succumbed to their dire warnings. The societies, like the opportunistic writers who followed Samuel Morse and Maria Monk, cultivated Protestant-Catholic antipathy in part because of possible remuneration. Protestant newspapers, as representatives of their respective denominations, also disseminated anti-Catholic propaganda in an effort to aggrandize their own faction. Through the printing of such calumny, the editors of these newspapers desired to attract large donations to their denominations and affiliated missionary societies. In Ohio, newspapers such as the *Western Christian Advocate* and the *Free Presbyterian* provided legitimacy to the nativist cause by articulating their notions in respected outlets.<sup>52</sup>

The surfeit of anti-Catholic propaganda and the fear that it inspired among the nation's population aided the rise of nativist political parties in the 1830s. These local organizations largely arose in urban areas that attracted great numbers of immigrants, such as New York City and Philadelphia. Although ephemeral, these initial nativist parties were important for organizing the platform that future, like-minded political organizations, such as the Know Nothings, absorbed. The local nativist organizations stressed both the danger of Catholics subverting American culture and political

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<sup>52</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 128-30; Leonard and Parmet, *American Nativism*, 81-2.

institutions as well as the inherent hazards of permitting unfettered immigration into the United States.<sup>53</sup>

In the 1840s, a more substantial, nationwide nativist political movement followed these initial forays. The unprecedented influx of immigrants into Ohio, and the United States in general, during the 1840s, in concert with the economic depression inaugurated by the Panic of 1837, created an atmosphere in which nativism thrived. The majority of immigrants settling in Ohio, and the nation at large, during the 1840s derived from Germany and Ireland. In general, they arrived with little money, possessions, or marketable economic skills, and thus many of the immigrants needed financial assistance and accepted any available job. Nativists argued that immigrants' acceptance of low-wage positions devalued the labor of native-born Americans and their overwhelming need of assistance unfairly burdened other citizens who funded pauper institutions with tax funds. In addition, nativist rhetoric of the 1830s persevered during the ensuing decade, further strengthening the overall cause. Through books and newspapers, nativists continued to express the notion that Catholics intended to subvert American democratic institutions and threatened accepted cultural norms. Unprecedented immigration, continued anti-Catholic calumny, and economic difficulties stimulated the creation of the American Republican, or Native American, Party.<sup>54</sup>

The American Republican Party, organized in New York City in 1843, was the first significant attempt to establish a national political party based upon the principles of

<sup>53</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 131-5; David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 246; Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 9-10.

<sup>54</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 193; Michael Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 846; Cist, *Sketches and Statistics of Cincinnati in 1851*, 47-8; Cist, *Cincinnati in 1841*, 39.

the nativist movement. Increasingly, nativists eschewed electing political representatives from the existing national political parties because they believed neither the Whigs nor the Democrats adequately expressed their agenda. The Democratic Party, which controlled municipal politics in most eastern cities, deliberately appealed to immigrants and Catholics with their economic and social agenda in order to obtain their votes. Therefore, because of the symbiotic relationship between foreign-born residents and the Democratic Party, nativists naturally opposed most Democratic candidates. Nativists' relationship with the Whig Party was more complex than their complete antipathy for the Democratic Party. In general, prior to the formation of the American Republican Party, nativist organizations supported Whig candidates, in part because of a lack of an alternative, but also because Whig candidates occasionally supported immigration restrictions. Politically, limitations on immigration would have likely benefited the Whig Party by impeding the entry of immigrants, who largely aligned with the Democratic Party. The Whigs' inability to attract recent immigrants plagued their party and threatened the relative political balance in the nation. However, the national Whig Party did not openly support such nativist principles as opposition of Catholic political candidates and a twenty-one-year naturalization period. Because neither of the existing political parties adamantly worked to enact their principles, many nativists shifted their allegiances to the nascent American Republican Party.

The majority of Americans who subscribed to the anti-Catholic and anti-foreign rhetoric of the nativists did not flock to the new party. The American Republican Party, even during its brief apex from 1844 to 1845, lacked a cohesive national structure. Their party's membership derived largely from tenuously connected localized nativist

organizations with similar ideologies. The American Republicans, in an effort to achieve success in local elections, formed an informal alliance with the Whig Party in 1844. The nativists agreed to support the national Whig ticket in return for Whig backing of local American Republican candidates. Although the coalition did not result in the election of the national Whig ticket, American Republicans dominated local elections in Philadelphia and New York City. Buoyed by their moderate successes, nativists coordinated a national convention on July 4, 1845, in an effort to achieve cohesion for their movement. The party advocated issues that became staples of the Know Nothing Party, including the twenty-one-year period of naturalization, opposition to all foreign candidates for public office, the continued usage of the King James Bible in public schools, resistance to public funding of Catholic educational institutions, and a general hostility to papal influences in American affairs. Although officially organized as a national party, the American Republicans did not actually garner much support outside of eastern urban areas, where their issues were particularly poignant. Although many Americans, as evidenced by the popularity of nativist newspapers and literature, succumbed to notions of Catholic plots and the harmful effects of immigration, they were not inclined to abandon the existing party structure to enact the nativist agenda. After several failures to institute legislative changes in Congress in 1845 and 1846, the American Republican Party largely disappeared from American politics. As the economic situation in the nation improved, many of the nativists' arguments against the harmful influence of immigrants dissipated.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 193-211; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 10-11; Leonard and Parmet, *American Nativism*, 71-5; "From the Philadelphia Spirit of the Times," *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 29 June 1844; "The American Republican Association," *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 24 August 1844; "Penal Laws," *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 24 August 1844; "Catholics and Politics," *The*

Although the American Republican Party quickly faltered, animosity against foreigners, and Catholics in particular, persisted. Several newspapers emerged throughout the nation to espouse the nativist message, including the *Cincinnati Daily Times* and the *Dollar Weekly Times*, published by Calvin W. Starbuck and edited by nativist leader James “Pap” Taylor. Starbuck began publication of his daily paper, initially entitled *Spirit of the Times*, on April 25, 1840 and started the popular weekly paper in 1844. Taylor and Starbuck entered a crowded and burgeoning newspaper field. In 1840, there were 145 daily and weekly newspapers in Ohio. Not surprisingly, Cincinnati was the hub of newspaper publication in the state, having five daily newspapers before the creation of the *Daily Times*. In this competitive market, Taylor and Starbuck struggled to obtain subscribers for their newspapers. Their publications largely remained minor newspapers in the city until the increase in nativist sentiments during the early 1850s.<sup>56</sup>

Despite an abundance of anti-Catholic propaganda, the nativist political organizations of the 1830s and 1840s failed to attract a broad following. Nativism was certainly a popular cause, as evidenced by the prevalence of calumnious anti-Catholic literature. However, nativists failed to organize an effective political organization in order to enact their legislation. There are numerous probable explanations for the lack of a comprehensive nativist political party in Ohio and across the nation. Foremost, as Michael Holt asserts in *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, the period from

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*Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 9 November 1844; “The Native American Party—Their Principles Adverse to the Interests of America—Injustice to the Proscribed,” *The Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, 27 March 1845.

<sup>56</sup> Stephen Gutgesell, ed., *Guide to Ohio Newspapers, 1793-1973* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1974), 84; Osman Castle Hooper, *History of Ohio Journalism, 1793-1933* (Columbus, OH: The Spahr & Glenn Company, 1933), 88-9; John Hancock Lee, *The Origin and Progress of the American Party in Politics* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1855), 21.



1837 through 1848 was the height of the Jacksonian, or Second American, party system; that is, the Whig and Democratic Parties were both vibrant, pervasive political organizations.<sup>57</sup> Both parties contained loyal followings during this period, leaving little opportunity for the rise of third parties. In addition to political considerations, although there was a significant increase in immigration during the 1830s and early 1840s, their overall numbers paled in comparison to the scale of foreigners arriving in the succeeding decade. The profusion of immigrants, as alleged tangible proof of foreign influence in American affairs, was a significant factor in the rise of the Know Nothing Party. In addition, as Ray Billington argues in *The Protestant Crusade*, his classic examination of early nineteenth-century nativism, political nativism in the 1840s collapsed largely because of the shocking nature of the Philadelphia riots in 1844. This theory implies that the violence and destruction involved in these outbreaks convinced many Americans, initially attracted to the nativist campaign in defense of the public school system, that nativists were belligerent and lawless.<sup>58</sup> Although the veracity of Billington's claims is difficult to verify, it is likely that the onset of violence hampered the nativist movement with many Americans. Finally, as Billington notes, other issues eclipsed nativism in the public's interest. Debate surrounding the Mexican War, the extension of slavery to the Western territories, and territorial disputes with Great Britain absorbed the attention of Americans during the 1840s.<sup>59</sup> In Ohio, issues such as the creation of a new state constitution, the proper role of banking, and the territorial question attracted more attention. In addition to the introduction of new issues into American politics, attempts at broadening and unifying nativist organizations failed in part because they depended upon

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<sup>57</sup> Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, xiii.

<sup>58</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 234.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

select localized issues of contention. After the public addressed the pressing issue or their interest in the matter simply waned, nativist organizations inevitably returned to their original group of devoted members. That is not to suggest that American Protestants' bigotry or intolerance toward Catholics and foreigners experienced capricious fluctuations, but rather the salience of particular nativist issues varied.

Although there are a plethora of reasons for the lack of political development of nativism during the 1830s and 1840s, most of the factors that prevented the development of the American Republican Party dissipated in the succeeding decade, stimulating the rise of the Know Nothing Party.

## Chapter Two: The Rise of the Ohio Know Nothing Party

Although other political issues eclipsed nativism during the late 1840s, the anti-Catholic sentiments of the populace did not wane. Instead, the issues that aroused discord between Protestants and Catholics in Ohio remained as prominent topics of concern for many, particularly those in the Cincinnati area. For the remainder of the state's residents, as other issues usurped anti-Catholicism, the cultural divisions that caused the conflict persevered. Many of the same concerns that facilitated the 1840s nativist surge reemerged in the 1850s as Ohio experienced a new rise in nativism. The latter groundswell, however, greatly surpassed its predecessor in popularity and political influence. The rapid increase in national immigration during the late 1840s and early 1850s, particularly the influx of Irish Catholics, provided Ohio anti-Catholic partisans with ostensible evidence of a Catholic plot and ammunition for their attacks. The increase in immigration, combined with the political, social, and economic upheavals that affected the entire nation, facilitated the development of Ohio's political nativist movement. These factors particularly influenced anti-Catholic sentiments in urban areas where recent immigrants competed for jobs with native-born laborers and disrupted the political status quo. In particular, three events spurred the rise in Ohio nativism prior to the emergence of the Know Nothing Party: the reemergence of the public school controversy, the integration of the temperance campaign with nativism, and the visit of papal nuncio Gaetano Bedini. In the 1850s, Ohio anti-Catholic partisans, already motivated and organized because of these events, aligned with the national nativist movement, resulting in the development of the Ohio Know Nothing Party. In addition,

the concomitant collapse of the Jacksonian two-party political system in Ohio contributed to the success of the enterprise.

There is much debate among historians as to whether the disruption of the two-party system derived from existing parties' hesitancy to address "ethno-cultural" concerns or if sectional animosity, largely in the form of the debate over the extension of slavery, prevented national political parties from maintaining viability across the nation. In the former interpretation, nativism promoted the decline of the Whig Party; in the latter, political nativism prospered largely because the Whigs' ambiguous stance on the expansion of slavery already irrevocably weakened the party. There is probably a degree of truth in both interpretations; that is, an already weakened Whig Party faltered because of their inability to champion nativist or temperance agendas. In Ohio, the causes of the Whigs' downfall varied by locale because of regional variations within the party.

The Whigs formed as a national party in the 1830s as a reaction to the powerful Democratic presidency of Andrew Jackson. In general, Whigs differentiated themselves from their opposition by supporting strong central government, specifically national banking institutions, internal improvements, industrial development, and tariffs. Both political parties were diverse, national organizations that attracted a variety of followers across the United States and competed for national, state, and local offices in all regions of the nation. During the late 1840s and early 1850s, however, the Whigs' support began to erode. There are numerous factors that contributed to the gradual downfall of the Whig Party, including their inability to either attract immigrant voters or directly appeal to nativists, hesitancy to adamantly support or oppose the extension of slavery, and reluctance to declare explicitly a position on temperance legislation. In general, in an

effort to avoid ostracizing any portion of the populace, they instead alienated many Americans with their vague stances.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the historical debate concerning the fall of the Second Party system, there is little question that in Ohio, and across the nation, the Whigs' hesitancy, or inability, to take a firm stance on the expansion of slavery to the western territories permanently damaged their party. In contrast to the Whigs' ambiguity, the national Democratic Party gained significant southern support by advocating an increasingly pro-extensionalist position. The Democratic Party was hardly unified in supporting popular sovereignty or in advocating the expansion of slavery during the 1840s and early 1850s. The party contained members with diverse agendas and beliefs and maintained significant support in northern states until the outbreak of the Civil War. However, the Democratic Party, as a collective group, unmistakably began to subscribe to a pro-extensionist agenda. During the 1850s, this shift intensified until the Democratic Party largely became synonymous with the expansion and continuation of slavery. In contrast, the Whigs, endeavoring to maintain support in both the northern and southern states, avoided definitive declarations on the subject. The Whigs' attempt to appease both their southern and northern members hampered their party in both regions. In the South, many Whigs interpreted their party's reticence as opposition to the expansion of slavery. As an obvious pro-extension alternative, the Democratic Party increasingly dominated most southern elections.

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<sup>60</sup> For analysis on the downfall of the national Whig Party, see David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Michael Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Richard Patrick McCormick, *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966). For a description of their demise in Ohio, see Stephen E. Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1983).

Northern Whigs who adamantly opposed the spread of slavery, or the continuation of the institution itself, detested their party's ambiguous position, particularly their selection of southern slave owner Zachary Taylor as the party's presidential candidate in 1848. Many of the disenchanted northerners shifted their allegiances to a third party, the Free-Soil Party, whose platform corresponded more closely to their beliefs.<sup>61</sup>

Although the major parties' positions concerning the extension of slavery alienated many northerners, nativists, in both the North and the South, rebelled against the existing party structure for different reasons. Nativists revived the idea of creating a separate anti-foreign, anti-Catholic party because they increasingly perceived the Democrats as their enemies and the Whigs as, at best, indifferent to their plight. The Whig Party unmistakably suffered because of its inability to attract recent immigrants. The unprecedented rate of immigration during the late 1840s and early 1850s and the immigrants' overwhelming affinity for the Democratic Party upset the relative political balance of power, in both the nation and Ohio, in favor of the Democrats. Not surprisingly, because of the Democratic Party's courting of foreign-born residents, most nativists favored the Whig Party. However, the Whigs did not support essential nativist issues, such as a twenty-one-year naturalization period or unequivocal support of using the King James Bible in schools, and at times even courted Catholic voters.<sup>62</sup> In addition, the Whigs did not explicitly advocate temperance reform, an issue that many nativists supported. The Whigs' inability to define themselves engendered the growth of

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<sup>61</sup> Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 225-65; Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 15-19, 63-65, 82-101, 184-85; Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 389-97; Frederick Blue, *The Free Soilers: Third Party Politics, 1848-1854* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 16-43.

<sup>62</sup> "Religion and Politics," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 11 August 1852, p. 2.

temperance and nativist political parties that unambiguously and adamantly championed these issues. Thus, incipient temperance and nativist parties developed along with anti-extensionist organizations, all of which disproportionately eroded support from the Whig Party.<sup>63</sup>

The reasons for the downfall of the Whig Party in Ohio, as with the nation at large, varied regionally.<sup>64</sup> In the Western Reserve, a previous Whig stronghold, the party collapsed because of its inability to firmly oppose the spread of slavery. The northeastern portion of Ohio was indisputably the center of abolitionism and anti-extensionism in the state. The vehemence of the area's population compelled them to oppose the Whig nomination of Zachary Taylor for the 1848 presidential election because of his status as a slaveholder and his ambiguous position concerning the extension of the institution to the western territories. The denizens of the Western Reserve clearly expressed their displeasure with the Whig organization by supporting the candidacy of Free-Soil candidate Martin Van Buren, who carried six of the area's counties in the 1848 election. The deterioration of Whig support in the northeastern region of the state significantly altered the relative balance of power between Democrats and Whigs in Ohio. Whigs relied upon the faithful support of their Western Reserve followers to achieve a political equilibrium with Democrats in state elections, and the controversy surrounding the extension of slavery permanently altered that balance.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 225-65; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 97-98, 272-73; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 389-97; "Is There a Whig Party!," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 2 June 1853, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> "Leaving the Camp," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 10 August 1852, p. 2; "The State Election of 1852 Compared with those of 1840, 1844, and 1848," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 23 October 1852, p. 2;

<sup>65</sup> Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, *A History of Ohio* (Columbus: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1953), 160-161, 165-9.

In Cincinnati, the disruption of the two-party system derived not from the debate concerning the extension of slavery, but because of the increasing influence of the city's rising immigrant population. The downfall of the Whig Party in Cincinnati began in the early 1840s, as the Whigs increasingly lost influence in the city due to their inability to attract recent immigrants. From the initial influx of immigration into Cincinnati in the early 1830s through the 1850s, the composition of Cincinnati voters changed drastically. By 1850, German immigrants constituted 26.5 percent of the city's residents and a majority of the population in the northern wards. Irish immigrants, who largely arrived in Cincinnati during the late 1840s and early 1850s, constituted 11.8 percent of the city's population in 1850 and congregated in the southern wards. The recent immigrants generally voted Democratic, following the national pattern, which, as their numbers grew, facilitated a decline in the local Whig Party. In Cincinnati, those voting for Whig candidates in Congressional elections dropped from sixty-five percent in 1838 to fifty percent in 1844. The Cincinnati Whig Party, similar to the national organization, did not abruptly collapse and still claimed a majority of the Cincinnati City Council until the early 1850s. Despite Whig efforts to maintain influence in the city, the Democratic political takeover in Cincinnati gradually continued during the 1840s and early 1850s as recent immigrants flocked to the city. However, a startling revelation in 1852, the discovery of the secretive "Miami Tribe," disrupted the momentum of the Democratic Party.<sup>66</sup>

The Miami Tribe, a secret Cincinnati organization comprised of influential area Democrats, attempted to surreptitiously select the party's candidates for office before the

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<sup>66</sup>Charles Cist, *Sketches and Statistics of Cincinnati in 1851* (William H. Moore and Co. Publishers, 1851), 44-48; Jed Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder: Temperance Reform in Cincinnati from the Washingtonian Revival to the WCTU* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 106-10.



official convention. The society endeavored to fill the Democratic ticket primarily with native-born candidates, with select positions assigned to Irish and German Catholics. The Miami Tribe expressly avoided nominating radical Germans and anti-slavery candidates. Most of the Germans that the Miami Tribe attempted to exclude from office were participants in the failed 1848 revolutions in Europe. The collapse of their uprising compelled many of these "48ers" to flee from the continent to avoid reprisal or oppressive conditions. Some of these revolutionaries settled in Cincinnati, creating communities of outspoken, radical, agnostic Germans that sharply contrasted with earlier settlements. Their enmity to organized religion placed them at odds with German Catholics in Ohio and divided the German community. The radicals' outspoken, boisterous nature created difficulties for all recent immigrants attempting to avoid rebuke or criticism from nativists. The 48ers provided nativists with ample evidence of unruly, seditious foreigners, and the nativist propagandists utilized their example to generalize about the nefarious nature of all foreigners. In addition, the radicals' virulent anti-Catholicism buttressed nativists' notions of Catholic conspiracy theories. The exclusionary tactics of the Miami Tribe fomented the creation of the "anti-Miami" or "Sawbuck" faction of the Democratic Party in Cincinnati, which consisted largely of disenchanted 48ers, other Germans sympathetic to their plight, and anti-slavery Democrats. The Sawbucks held the balance of power in the 1852 election and illustrated the potential divisive influence of nativism, in the form of the Miami Tribe, in Ohio politics.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder*, 110-11; Emmet H. Rothan, "The German Catholic Immigrant in the United States (1830-1860)" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1946), 5-6, 118-20.

Although the disclosure of the Miami Tribe temporarily affected Cincinnati politics, the reemergence of the school funding issue in 1853 permanently altered the political alignment in Cincinnati and eventually transformed Ohio politics. In 1853, the Ohio legislature considered drastic changes for the state's public school system. Some of the alterations under consideration, such as mandatory attendance in public schools for all Ohio children, compelled Archbishop Purcell to adamantly condemn the proposed changes and to reassert his notion that Catholic schools should receive public funding. Although the Ohio legislature did not resort to such drastic measures as compulsory attendance in public schools, they did institute numerous reforms in the school systems, such as establishing township boards of education, initiating a state levy to fund the public schools, and creating the office of state commissioner of common schools to oversee the system.<sup>68</sup>

Purcell's vehemence against the public school system contrasted with his previous conciliatory manner. Instead of attempting to gradually evoke change in the public school system of Ohio through petitions and passive arguments of Catholic rights, Purcell demanded that either Catholic parochial schools receive public funding or parents with children enrolled in a Catholic school receive an exemption from taxation (so as not to pay for both their Catholic schooling and the "secular" public schools). His move to a more assertive stance likely resulted from the stronger position of the Catholic Church in Ohio and across the nation. As the number of Catholics in the United States multiplied, their leaders aggressively protested unfair Protestant criticism or impartial legal codes. Purcell's forceful assertion for fair schooling of Catholic children reflected this demographic shift.

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<sup>68</sup> Roseboom, *A History of Ohio*, 292.

Purcell articulated his mantra in a series of editorials in the *Catholic Telegraph* from January to March 1853. The bishop even contradicted his frequently declared political neutrality by arguing that Catholics should not vote for candidates who did not support a fair allocation of tax revenue. Purcell's denunciations did not have the effect that the Archbishop desired. Instead of ushering a change in the allotment of public funds, his arguments inspired an unprecedented burst of anti-Catholicism in Cincinnati. Purcell's shift to an aggressive stance for Catholic rights was untimely, as similar declarations from Catholic leaders across the nation gave nativists the impression that the movement was a coordinated effort to subvert the revered American public school system. To many nativists and skeptical Americans, the protestations of Purcell proved the veracity of Beecher's and Morse's claims of perfidious Catholic intent. By denouncing the merits of public education and criticizing the use of the King James Bible in schools, Catholic leaders appeared hostile to American Protestant traditions. These fears caused a fervent reaction in Cincinnati as many Protestants responded to this perceived threat by organizing anti-Catholic political campaigns during the 1853 spring elections.<sup>69</sup>

By far, the most prominent issue in the Cincinnati mayoral election of 1853 was the school funding controversy.<sup>70</sup> The crisis brought James Taylor to the forefront of Cincinnati politics and the nativist campaign. Taylor was born in Philadelphia, but moved to the West in his youth. He attempted several professions before establishing himself as an editor, including farming, shipping, and manufacturing. Taylor became the editor of the *Times* shortly after its creation, and brought to the newspaper his alleged

<sup>69</sup> Anthony H. Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell of Cincinnati: Pre-Civil War Years" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1949), 363-366.

<sup>70</sup> "Our Common School System," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 27 March 1853, p. 2.

“independence” of opinion. Taylor and the *Times* reached prominence with adamant defenses of the public school system and caustic accusations against Catholicism.

Taylor’s rants derived from the Beecher and Morse tradition of disseminating notions of complicated Catholic plots and pernicious European influence in American affairs.

Cincinnatians twice elected the controversial editor as a member of city council.<sup>71</sup> Taylor entered the 1853 mayoral race as the candidate of the Independent Free School Ticket, an anti-Catholic party specifically created in response to the school funding controversy.

Partisans in the city formed the ticket because they believed the Whig candidate, Joseph S. Ross, was too ambiguous about his opposition to public funding of Catholic schools.

Both Ross and the Democratic candidate, David T. Snelbaker, attempted to avoid the controversial issue in order to avoid offending any potential voters.<sup>72</sup> Their reluctance to address the most salient issue in the campaign inspired Taylor to enter the race.

However, Taylor’s caustic rhetoric against immigrants disenchanting many voters who opposed public funding of Catholic schools, but did not subscribe to his bigotry. Most importantly, Taylor offended the 48ers, who responded by forming their own party for the mayoral election. They organized the Anti-Convention Free School Party, headed by mayoral candidate F. T. Chambers. The party consisted mainly of Germans who opposed the extreme nativism of Taylor, but also resented the funding of Catholic schools through public taxation. Although Snelbaker, the Democratic candidate, won the election, he did so with less than forty percent of the vote.<sup>73</sup> Taylor, who accounted for over thirty-four percent of the vote, demonstrated the potential appeal of nativism in Ohio politics. If not

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<sup>71</sup> “Pap Taylor,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 12 April 1855, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> “The Democracy of Cincinnati and the April Election,” *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 27 February 1852, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> “The Late City Election,” *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 8 April 1853, pg. 2; “City Election-Official Vote,” *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 9 April 1853, p. 2.

for his intransigence against the German community, the nativist editor would have likely won the election. Chambers, the Anti-Convention Free School Party mayoral candidate, received roughly six percent of the vote, a portion less than the difference between Snelbaker and Taylor. The 1853 mayor's race in Cincinnati was not just important because it marked the onset of political nativism in Ohio, but also because it firmly demonstrated the troubles of the Whig Party in Cincinnati politics, which could muster less than twenty percent of the vote.<sup>74</sup>

The appearance in Cincinnati of "Kirkland," a virulent anti-Catholic speaker, exacerbated the Protestant-Catholic animus in the city. Following the contentious mayoral election, Kirkland began preaching his calumny in the streets of Cincinnati. Mayor Snelbaker perceived that Kirkland's antagonistic rhetoric, combined with the hostile environment in the city, might lead to a violent religious conflict. The mayor, with the assistance of the police, compelled Kirkland to cease his provocations. Snelbaker's actions incited a strong reaction from nativists, who threatened the Catholic community with violent reprisals and sought to impeach the mayor for his alleged favoritism toward Catholics and violation of the speaker's right to free speech. The incident shifted popular opinion in the city against the mayor to such an extent that even the *Daily Enquirer*, the local Democratic organ, responded by arguing, "Mr. Snelbaker is not the man for Mayor of such a city as Cincinnati. He has not the coolness, the tact, nor

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<sup>74</sup> Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder*, 118-119; Mary Alice Mairose, "Nativism on the Ohio: The Know Nothings in Cincinnati and Louisville, 1853-1855" (M.A. thesis, The Ohio State University, 1993), 47-50. Mairose's interesting work explores the rise of the Know Nothing Party in Louisville, whose residents initially accepted and protected Catholic settlers, and Cincinnati, a city with a long tradition of hostility toward Catholics. Mairose argues that Louisville residents eventually viewed Catholics and foreign settlers as threats to the continuation of slavery, causing many of them to ally with the Know Nothing Party. She contrasts the nativist campaigns in the two cities largely through an examination of contemporary newspapers.

the judgment for the position.”<sup>75</sup> This vituperative reaction from a newspaper that had so recently supported the mayor’s candidacy indicates the divisive effect that the Kirkland incident had upon the community. Although Snelbaker’s handling of the situation prevented bloodshed, the controversy surrounding Kirkland further demonstrated the growing strength of nativism in Cincinnati.<sup>76</sup>

For Cincinnati voters, other issues, such as temperance, taxation, and extensionism, surpassed the school funding debate after the spring elections, but the controversy continued to produce animosity between local nativists and Catholics.<sup>77</sup> In large part, the continuing debate between Taylor and Purcell maintained public interest in the controversy. Taylor, who achieved his greatest acclaim as a result of the spring mayoral race, was not likely to ignore the issue that propelled him to the forefront of Cincinnati politics. In the May 12, 1853 edition of the *Times*, Taylor clearly articulated the continued importance of the public school controversy to the anti-Catholic movement by asserting:

The origin of the warm anti-Catholic feeling in this city, was an attempt by an insignificant minority, nearly six months ago, to overthrow and demolish our Common Schools, to degrade and drive out the Bible, the foundation of our faith and our code of morals.<sup>78</sup>

Taylor’s sentiments clearly illustrate the importance of the public school controversy to the anti-Catholic campaign. He continued to emphasize the alleged connection between

<sup>75</sup> “Street Preaching-Riots-Excitements,” *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 29 April 1853, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> “Street Preaching-Riots-Excitements,” *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 29 April 1853, p. 2; “Sunday Affray,” *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 19 April, 1853, p. 3; “Second Indignation Meeting! Impeachment of the Mayor!,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 12 May 1853; Mairose, “Nativism on the Ohio,” 50-5.

<sup>77</sup> For example, see: “The School Question,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 12 May 1853, p. 2.; “The Roman and the American Spirit of Character,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 19 May 1853, p. 2.; “The School Question in Madison, Indiana” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 19 May 1853, p. 2.; “Secular and Religious, Common School Education, Taxes, & c.,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 9 June 1853, p. 2; “City High Schools—Colleges,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 9 June 1853, p. 2

<sup>78</sup> “The School Question,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 12 May 1853, p. 2.

the activities of Cincinnati Catholics with orders from the Holy See. This link proved important in increasing area residents' apprehension about the possible negative effects of Catholicism on traditional Protestant American culture.

As Taylor continued to badger the Catholic position on the public school controversy, he compelled Archbishop Purcell to reaffirm his stance in the *Catholic Telegraph*. Archbishop Purcell elucidated the position of Ohio Catholics on the school funding issue by arguing:

Catholics do not say that the education given in the Common Schools is an *evil*. Reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, &c., as they exercise the mind, tend of course to elevate it. The knowledge of these is a good, *in the natural order*. Where children are educated for the natural order, the Common Schools are, we presume, all that could be desired... But a Catholic parent, believing that his child was born to know, love, and serve God, must of course think it his duty to *teach* the child the knowledge, love, and service of God. Hence, while we are perfectly content that non-Catholics should teach their children only the useful of this world, or what they will, we desire that our children should have schools which they may have perpetually before them the great end for which they were created—where they may learn by the creed to *know* God, and by the commandments to *serve* Him. This, we repeat, Catholics desire for the salvation of *their own* children. Let other persuasions choose what they will with freedom.<sup>79</sup>

Purcell did not, therefore, advocate sending Catholic children to secular learning institutions, but rather desired public funding for Catholic schools. His plea for the creation of schools where children would “know God” and “serve Him” implied that Catholic children needed instruction from Catholic teachers who would instill these traditional American ideals. Purcell wanted the “King James Bible” and the “Catholic children” to learn to “know God” through the study of the King James Bible. Purcell’s rationalized approach only served to further antagonize tensions. Not only was the Archbishop discontented with the usage of the King James Bible and Protestant-

<sup>79</sup> “Catholics and Common Schools,” *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph*, quoted in *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 7 September 1854, p. 2.

biased texts in schools, he now opposed the principle of secular education because it failed to provide for the salvation of children. Furthermore, his contentious position that “other persuasions choose what they will with freedom” implied that Protestants who sought the establishment of secular school systems were somehow less religious or moral than their Catholic neighbors. The shift in strategy by Purcell to a more aggressive stance on the school funding issue only exacerbated the conflict and provided nativists with further material for their attacks.<sup>80</sup>

The anti-Catholic press continued to assert that Catholic efforts to achieve public funding for their schools was evidence of their intent to impose their religion and culture upon the United States. The nativists interpreted Catholic actions as part of a larger conspiracy to compel Americans to embrace their religion. Taylor argued that:

The Telegraph and the Church are very fond of *religious* liberty; but, then, there is no religion but the Catholic religion—all else being *heretics*—*religious* liberty means liberty to Catholics only; liberty to put down *error* and establish *truth*—the plain English of which, is the supremacy of the Church and the persecution of heretics.<sup>81</sup>

Taylor perceived Catholicism as not merely a competitive religion and culture, but also as an aggressive “foreign” element against democracy and personal liberties. The *Telegraph* responded to this criticism by asserting that Catholics in the United States were merely benign adherents to a respectable religion, and not intent on altering traditional American ideals. Purcell asserted that “Many foreigners are indeed Catholic, and so are many natives. Many foreigners are Methodists, Episcopalians, Prebyterians—what then? The saying that the Catholic is a foreign religion, is absurd. No religion can

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> “Spirit of the Roman Catholic Press,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 14 September 1854, p. 2.



be foreign.”<sup>82</sup> The *Telegraph* strove to convince the public, and nativists particularly, that Catholics posed no threat to their culture, but the increasingly antagonistic rhetoric by Purcell concerning the funding of schools belied their ameliorating intent.

One of Taylor’s most successful strategies for attacking the Catholic position in the school funding issue was to include malicious quotations from renowned national and local Catholics. He employed this tactic not only for the school funding debate, but also throughout his anti-Catholic campaign. He compiled a semi-regular weekly column for his newspaper entitled “Spirit of the Roman Catholic Press, Items, &c,” which contained quotations from Catholics, including many writings from Purcell. Taylor printed lengthy excerpts from his opponents, and then argued that these positions represented the opinions of the majority of Catholics. Often, he resorted to adding benign comments from religious leaders and intentionally misinterpreted these excerpts in an antagonistic manner. He regularly included quotations from the *Catholic Telegraph* that provided rational arguments for the discontinuation of the King James Bible in public schools, tax support for Catholic schools, religious toleration, or a general opposition to nativism. However, Taylor provided deliberately provocative interpretations of these excerpts and utilized them as ostensible proof of Catholic conspiracies. For instance, in the December 22 edition of the *Times*, Taylor included a quote from the *Telegraph* asserting:

Every Catholic should persuade himself (what common sense dictates) that it is important to defend Catholic Doctrine, not because he is a Catholic, but because God wishes it defended for the salvation of mankind. Wherefore only in those circumstances in which his defense will tend to the salvation of men, should it be volunteered.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> “Spirit of the Roman Catholic Press,” *Cincinnati Catholic Telegraph* quoted in *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 14 September 1854, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> “Spirit of the Roman Catholic Press,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 22 December 1853, p. 2.

Taylor utilized this apparently innocuous statement as a threat to Protestantism, interpreting the *Telegraph's* "defense" of their religion as a plea for Catholics to "take to the field" if questioned about their religious doctrine. Throughout the 1850s rise of anti-Catholicism, Taylor continually misrepresented the viewpoints of the *Telegraph* to further his assertion of the deleterious nature of the Catholic Church. In spite of their intentions, the writings from the *Telegraph* and other Catholic outlets provided an impetus for the rise of anti-Catholicism in Ohio.

Taylor's tactic of including Catholic writings to illustrate his nativist positions was most persuasive when the excerpts were actually confrontational in nature. Some Catholics, whether attempting to preserve their religion or sincerely endeavoring to supplant Protestantism in the United States, composed material hostile to American Protestants. Taylor utilized these arguments as representative of Catholics in general and demonstrative of their harmful intentions toward the United States. In an article in the September 28, 1854 edition of the *Times*, Taylor included several antagonistic excerpts from prominent Catholics. For instance, he cited the *Boston Pilot*, which asserted, "No good government can exist without religion and there can be no religion without an Inquisition, which is wisely designed for the promotion and protection of the true faith."<sup>84</sup> He also provided a segment of a letter from Pope Pius IX, who stated "The absurd and erroneous doctrines or ravings in defense of liberty of conscience, is a most pestilential error—a pest, of all others, most to be dreaded in a State."<sup>85</sup> Most confrontational of all, Taylor included a rant from the St. Louis Catholic newspaper, *The Shepard of the Valley*, claiming, "Protestantism of every kind Catholicity inserts in her catalogue of mortal sins;

<sup>84</sup> "The Fag-Enders and Fusionists," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 28 September 1854, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

she endures it when and where she must; but she hates it, and directs all her energies to effect its destruction."<sup>86</sup> The inclusion of quotations such as these provided Taylor with alleged proof for his Catholic conspiracy theories and demonstrated that some Catholics prescribed to the notions of Catholic supremacy. Taylor, and the anti-Catholic press in general, cunningly formulated the notion that these subversive ideas represented the beliefs of most American Catholics.

As the school funding issue dominated Cincinnati politics in the spring 1853 elections, a debate over temperance legislation infatuated other Ohioans. Like nativism, the temperance reform movement derived from the increased evangelical religiosity of the 1820s and 1830s. Initially, efforts of temperance advocates to limit alcohol consumption derived from elites desiring to remove spirits from respectable society. They attempted to invoke change through associations like the American Temperance Society and prospered during the revivalist environment of late 1820s and early 1830s. The goals of temperance reformers shifted during the early 1830s as middle and working class denizens usurped the campaign from elite control and demanded complete abstinence from alcoholic consumption. Many of the elites, who cherished fine wines, balked at the teetotalism shift in the movement. Increasingly, temperance advocates stressed that all societal evils, such as criminality, infidelity, and poverty, derived from abuse of alcohol. The reformers argued that only through the complete removal of alcohol from society could Americans eliminate vice. Total abstinence organizations, such as the Washington Temperance Society and the Sons of Temperance, arose in the early 1840s. These organizations relied upon the concept of moral suasion to enact change; that is, the members desired to alter society through abstinence and the allure of

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

their teetotaling societies. The influx of immigration during the late 1840s and early 1850s altered the temperance advocates' strategies. Dramatic changes in American society during this period, such as increased urbanization, criminality, and poverty, convinced the reformers that alcohol consumption was rising (because they interpreted that alcoholism was the root of all immorality) and that their previous efforts to curb the vice with moral suasion had failed. They instead attempted to prevent alcohol abuse through political means, particularly legislation that would prevent the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. The passage of the Maine Law on June 2, 1852, which strictly banned the sale and manufacture of alcoholic beverages in that state, provided Ohio reformers with a model that they endeavored to enact.<sup>87</sup>

Similar to nativists, temperance advocates in Ohio established political organizations to enact their initiatives. These incipient political parties arose because neither major political party expressly embraced the temperance cause. Many Democrats and Whigs feared offending their constituents who either financially benefited from the manufacture of alcohol or enjoyed drinking alcoholic beverages, while others believed the law unjust or unenforceable. Therefore, support of the Maine Law was a divisive issue for both major political parties. Neither expressly advocated or denounced the policy because they feared antagonizing the growing teetotaling population of the United States or those in favor of the continuation of the manufacturing of alcoholic beverages.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder*, 17-26, 81-83, 98; George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997), 180-2; Thomas R. Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800-1933* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998); Jack S. Blocker, Jr., *American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform. Social Movements Past and Present* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989); Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade; Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1963).

<sup>88</sup> Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder*, 127-8, 139-40, 141-2; "The New York Tribune and the Maine Law," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 15 April 1853, p. 2.

Increasingly, temperance groups viewed recent immigrants as the major obstacle in achieving the proscription of the production and sale of alcoholic beverages. Recent Irish and German immigrants proved recalcitrant to the reformers' efforts at moral suasion. Moreover, the reformers, like nativists, blamed the perceived increasing poverty, criminality, pollution, Sabbath breaking, and drunkenness on the Irish and German segments of the population. Therefore, in the early 1850s, there was commonality between nativists and temperance advocates in expressing a general hostility toward recent immigrants.<sup>89</sup> That is not to suggest that both movements worked in conjunction, or that they shared the same principles. In fact, James Taylor generally avoided addressing the issue in the *Times*. Taylor likely evaded the debate because he did not wish to ostracize any potential native-born residents who advocated the consumption of alcohol or derived their livelihood from the production of alcoholic beverages.

The production and sale of alcoholic beverages was a valuable industry for Ohioans. Potential nativist support of the Maine Law, therefore, threatened to alienate a large percentage of Ohio voters. For instance, the production of whiskey was of vast importance to Ohioans. In 1851, Charles Cist claimed that Cincinnati constituted "the great whisky mart of the world," and cited the yearly value of the product in the city as \$2,857,900.<sup>90</sup> A variety of Cincinnati-area residents prospered from the venture. Ohio farmers profited by distilling their corn into whiskey, which they sold at a much greater profit than unrefined corn. The shipping companies in Cincinnati benefited from the whiskey trade by selling the Ohio-produced spirits across the nation. In addition, the

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<sup>89</sup> Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 43-4.

<sup>90</sup> Cist, *Sketches and Statistics of Cincinnati in 1851*, 252.

local consumption of the beverage in Cincinnati provided the city with much of its revenue through the sale of liquor licenses. The production of wine was also an increasingly profitable venture in Cincinnati. Nicholas Longworth, the wealthiest man in Cincinnati, developed the industry in the city and helped Cincinnati become the leading regional producer and distributor of wine by 1851. The beverage was not only a boon to the influential Longworth, but employed 500 area residents and satisfied the needs of many elites who valued the consumption of wine. Because Maine Law supporters advocated the complete ban of the production and distribution of all alcoholic beverages, many upper class wine drinkers did not support their cause. Therefore, a vocal, public declaration of support for the complete proscription of alcohol threatened to estrange not only the Irish and German communities, but also many Protestant Ohioans.<sup>91</sup>

In addition to economic considerations, Taylor likely avoided the contentious temperance issue because of his reluctance to offend the non-Catholic German population, which did not support the Maine Law. Unlike many of their eastern nativist contemporaries, Ohio nativists pointedly limited their criticisms of non-Catholic German immigrants. Taylor did occasionally print articles encouraging Germans to disassociate themselves from their culture and heritage, advocating they amalgamate into “traditional” American culture.<sup>92</sup> However, these arguments lacked the caustic and abusive nature of the eastern Know Nothings, and paled in comparison to Ohioans’ vituperative assaults on the Catholic population. There are two primary reasons for this avoidance. First, the Ohio nativists did not want to completely alienate the large ethnic German population of

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<sup>91</sup> Cist, *Sketches and Statistics of Cincinnati in 1851*, 226-7, 252, 253-6, 333-8; Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder*, 23-26, 70-83.

<sup>92</sup> “The German Population of the United States,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 21 July 1853, p. 2; *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 10 August 1854, p. 2.

the state. In addition, the Ohio nativist movement gained popularity by evincing the notion of nefarious Catholic intentions and papal manipulations, a theory that had little to do with non-Catholic immigrants. Taylor's discerning approach to the Maine Law likely derived from his intent not to repeat the mistakes of his mayoral campaign of 1853, in which his rants against all foreigners disaffected non-Catholic German voters.

Although Archbishop Purcell personally approved of total abstinence, he did not endorse the Maine Law. For Purcell and the editors of the *Catholic Telegraph*, the Maine Law represented a governmental intrusion into a personal moral and spiritual decision. Instead of legislation, he advocated the traditional temperance approach of moral suasion. Purcell strongly advocated the personal benefits of teetotalism, and in 1840 helped organize the Total Abstinence Society, a Catholic organization that emphasized the social and economic benefits of avoiding the consumption of alcohol. In particular, Purcell despaired of the detrimental influence that alcoholism had upon Catholics in his diocese, and often lamented in the *Telegraph* the poverty and debauchery that alcohol allegedly fomented in society. Despite his personal approval of teetotalism and his many decrees against the detrimental effects of alcohol, Maine Law advocates railed against the Catholic community for its alleged moral turpitude and support of alcoholism. Thus, Catholic opposition to the Maine Law increased the perception among the legislation's advocates that Catholics did, in fact, pose a threat to the moral structure of American society.<sup>93</sup>

Because of Catholics' alleged abuses of alcohol, Taylor argued that they were inherently more likely to engage in criminal activity. He offered ostensible proof of these accusations by printing stories about the malfeasances of recent Catholic immigrants and

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<sup>93</sup> Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 248-254; Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder*, 122-3.

Catholic activities in Europe. Nativist editors conveyed the lawlessness of Catholicism by printing accounts of Catholic transgressions, which usually involved theft or rowdiness. The records of the Hamilton County Jail, in fact, support Taylor's overall accusation that immigrants committed more crimes than native-born Americans. In 1848, fifty-four percent of the inmates at the county jail were foreign-born, a total that supported Taylor's charge.<sup>94</sup> However, the prejudices of the community and the extreme poverty of many of the recent immigrants inflated the relative criminality of the immigrant community. The editor buttressed his reports, which became more numerous and preposterous as the nativist movement grew, with statistics of the frequency of Catholic criminal activities in European nations. For instance, in an August 3, 1854 article in the *Times*, Taylor cited murder rates from various European nations, namely England, Ireland, Belgium, Austria, and Italy. From the information, Taylor noted that the frequency of murders in a nation increased as the preponderance and influence of Catholics rose.<sup>95</sup> However, he neglected numerous other factors that contributed to the diversity in murder rates, most importantly political stability and economic prosperity. Once again, editors of nativist papers were not concerned with the veracity of alleged intrinsic Catholic depravity, but instead only desired further evidence to convince wavering Protestants of the need to prevent Catholics from harming Protestant American morality and culture.

The fall 1853 elections proved that temperance advocates, through their exclusionary measures, estranged a majority of Ohio's voters. The Democratic Party dominated the election, gaining a majority of votes for governor in a three-way contest

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<sup>94</sup> Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder*, 74.

<sup>95</sup> "Crime in Papal and Protestant Countries," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 3 August 1854, p. 2.



with the Whigs and a Free-Soil/Maine Law fusionist ticket. The elections further demonstrated the weakness of the Whig Party in the state, as the party struggled in the metropolitan Cincinnati area and their traditional Western Reserve stronghold. In Cincinnati, the Whigs managed to garner support from less than nine percent of the voters. The struggling party again failed to address the most salient issue in the campaign, as they did with the school funding controversy in the spring. In the Western Reserve, however, the Whigs lost support because of their vague position on the extension of slavery.<sup>96</sup> The growth of political temperance organizations in Ohio demonstrated the increasing dissatisfaction among Ohioans with the existing political parties. Reformers, whether anti-extensionist, nativist, or temperance advocates, believed that they could reform society only through the creation of new political parties that clearly reflected their concerns.

The introduction of the school funding controversy and the Maine Law debate in 1853 eroded Whig support in Ohio and increased animosity toward foreigners. The school funding debate was primarily a nativist issue, arousing hostility for the Catholic community in Cincinnati. Advocates of the Maine Law ran a campaign that largely blamed increased immorality and criminality upon the pernicious influence of immigrants. In addition, reformers attributed their political defeat to the influence of German and Irish voters. In effect, both of these prevalent issues enhanced discord between Protestants and Catholics and fostered the widespread acceptance of the popish conspiracy theory. Although the prominence of the Maine Law and school funding debates attracted many new adherents to the nativist campaign, the concomitant visits to

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<sup>96</sup> "Tremendous Democratic Triumph—From Seven to Ten Thousand Majority in Old Hamilton," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 14 October 1853, p. 2; "Astounding Democratic Triumph in the State," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 14 October 1853, p. 2; Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder*, 144-7.

the United States of papal envoy Monsignor Gaetano Bedini and itinerant anti-Catholic speaker Alessandro Gavazzi fomented the nativist frenzy that led to the development of the Ohio Know Nothing Party.

Bedini came to the United States in order to quell an internecine dispute among American Catholics concerning trusteeism, a controversy predating the school funding issue. The crux of the debate centered on ownership of Catholic property in the United States. Several Catholic congregations, under the direction of lay trustees, argued that they should own church holdings, while the dioceses, under the ultimate authority of Rome, believed themselves the rightful owners. In conjunction with the question of property rights, a conflict arose over who held authority to appoint and control church pastors, the membership or the church hierarchy. Most American Protestants, especially those evoking the papal-led conspiracy theory, sided with the laymen in these disputes. They perceived the control of American property by a foreign leader as inimical to the nation's interests and democratic values. Nativists depicted the internecine dispute in simplistic terms, pitting the tyrannical papacy in conflict with democratically-motivated congregations. Therefore, the nativists found themselves in the unlikely position of supporting Catholic parishioners in their struggles with the church hierarchy.<sup>97</sup>

Although church property disputes in the United States dated from the beginning of the nineteenth century, most of these controversies did not attract widespread public attention. The contentious and apprehensive attitudes of American Protestants in the 1850s, however, elevated the controversy to a matter of national interest. Catholic property disputes erupted in diverse locales across the nation, including Louisiana,

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<sup>97</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 37-41; Patrick W. Carey, "Republicanism within American Catholicism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 3 (1983): 414-21; Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 369; "Bedini, The Envoy of the Pope," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 14 July 1853, p.2.

Massachusetts, Arkansas, Connecticut, and especially New York, where controversial Archbishop John Hughes adamantly struggled for the rights of bishops to own and control their churches. The building animosity between the church hierarchy and lay congregations attracted the attention of Pope Pius IX, who sent Bedini to the United States as an official representative to settle the trusteeism conflict. The Pope intended Bedini's trip to promote goodwill toward Catholicism in the United States and South America; however, the visit only inflamed Protestant-Catholic tensions.<sup>98</sup>

Nativists reacted to Bedini's visit with suspicion and invective. In the *Dollar Weekly Times*, Taylor cynically disputed the stated rationale for the Bedini mission. He charged that the visit was actually a strategically planned expedition to exert unquestioned papal authority on the Catholic community, and a precursor to a larger Catholic plot to overthrow the American government. Taylor did not originate this paranoid assessment of Bedini's intentions, but largely expressed the notions of Alessandro Gavazzi, a former Catholic priest who left the Church because he resented Pope Pius IX's role in the suppression of the 1840s democratic unification movement in Italy.<sup>99</sup>

Gavazzi gained prominence as a nativist speaker in England because of his demonstrative style and his unique position as an alleged insider into papal plots. He utilized invective, antagonistic rhetoric, and insisted upon the urgency of American Protestants to take immediate action in order to preserve their democratic government and traditional culture. The American and Foreign Christian Union, a Protestant missionary society organized in 1849 to combat the spread of Catholicism, invited

<sup>98</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 37-41; Carey, "Republicanism within Catholicism," 414-21; Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 369.

<sup>99</sup> "Bedini, The Envoy of the Pope," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 14 July 1853, p. 2.

Gavazzi to North America to express his anti-Catholic sentiments.<sup>100</sup> In North America, Gavazzi captivated audiences with his demagoguery and appearance. Gavazzi, standing at over six feet tall and appearing in the robes of a monk, incited audiences by proposing not the reform, but the destruction, of the Catholic Church. In particular, the content of his speeches resembled that of other contemporary nativist speakers, emphasizing such popular issues as the school funding controversy as proof of seditious papal intentions. Gavazzi differed from other nativist speakers because of the degree of his rancor and his position as a former member of the Catholic Church, which gave a further semblance of veracity to his statements. His vitriolic speeches against Canadian funding of Catholic schools in Quebec City on June 6, 1853, and in Montreal on June 9 incited rioting by Catholics in both cities. Unsurprisingly, the nativist press in Ohio attributed the riots solely to unruly Catholics and exculpated Gavazzi completely for his role in inspiring the events. The violent riots, resulting in the death of ten people, only increased the popularity of Gavazzi with the anti-Catholic American population. The nativist press, captivated by the energetic speaker, accepted and propagated his attack upon the motivations and character of papal nuncio Bedini with great relish.<sup>101</sup>

Gavazzi did not merely imply that Bedini's visit was a precursor to Catholic tyranny over the United States, but also accused the papal envoy of murdering popular Italian revolutionary Ugo Bassi. Bassi's role as a vocal supporter of democracy and his enthusiastic championing of Italian nationalism made him a favorite among Americans, who sympathized with his positions. Bassi's support for Italian unity never wavered,

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<sup>100</sup> "Fourth Anniversary of the American and Foreign Christian Union," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 19 May 1853, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> "The Gavazzi Riots," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 30 June 1853, p. 2; Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 301-4.

even after Pope Pius IX withdrew his backing of the democratic movement. Bassi's ultimate execution by the Austrians, based upon spurious charges, ensured his elevated status among Italian nationalists and American sympathizers. Gavazzi opportunistically took advantage of Americans' affections for Bassi. In an emotional, contentious speech, Gavazzi charged Bedini as:

The very man who arrested my friend—had him *deseccrated* from his office—the skin stripped from his fore-finger—from his forehead—and then gave him over to the Austrians, who in a few hours condemned him as a rebel and at four o'clock in the morning he was shot!<sup>102</sup>

Regardless of the veracity of Gavazzi's claim, his accusation of Bedini's role in the martyrdom of Bassi resonated with the public and became a great part of the violent reaction that emerged against Bedini. Largely because of his influence, the American public reacted violently to the arrival of the papal envoy.<sup>103</sup>

Cincinnati's *Dollar Weekly Times* contributed to the notion that Bedini was a remorseless murderer who intended to organize a Catholic takeover of American institutions. Taylor uncritically accepted the testimony of Gavazzi that indicted Bedini with the death of Ugo Bassi. Taylor's rhetoric convinced many Ohio Protestants that there was a murderous, plotting subversive touring the United States, under direct papal orders to institute Catholic tyranny over the nation. In particular, the German 48ers, convinced of the veracity of Gavazzi's claims, railed against the nuncio and protested his American visit. The anti-Bedini frenzy in Ohio intensified when Gavazzi announced in September 1853 that he intended to visit Cincinnati. The *Times* heralded Gavazzi's coming with unprecedented pomp and vigor. Throughout September and early October, Taylor printed a multitude of stories detailing the valor and truthfulness of Gavazzi. In

<sup>102</sup> "Bedini, The Envoy of the Pope," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 14 July 1853, p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 301-2.

addition to articles about the itinerant speaker's upcoming visit, Taylor also began a new regular feature of the paper, the reprinting of entire Gavazzi speeches. Taylor's flattery of Gavazzi only increased upon the speaker's visit to Cincinnati. Gavazzi's first speech on October 20 focused largely upon the necessity of preventing the aggrandizement of papal power and keeping the Bible in public schools, subjects that resonated with Taylor and the Cincinnati audience. Taylor praised the manner in which Gavazzi "hurls his scathing invectives with irresistible vehemence and deadly purpose, giving additional affect to his words by his unique but graceful action," and determined that incontestably the speaker was "a learned, earnest and sincere man."<sup>104</sup> By lauding Gavazzi with abundant attention and praise, Taylor and the nativist press helped create one of the movement's most prominent spokespersons.

Bedini, whose tour of the United States had turned increasingly volatile, visited Cincinnati in December 1853. The *Times*, by reporting on Bedini's alleged atrocities, helped create public outrage over the nuncio's visit. In addition to Taylor's diatribes, a local German newspaper, the *Hochwächter*, denounced Bedini with forceful invective. The editor of the paper, Frederick Hassaurek, appealed to the radical portion of Cincinnati's German community and urged retaliation against Bedini for his alleged murder of Bassi and his role in suppressing their liberal revolution in Europe. On December 24, 1853, the envoy's visit inspired nearly 2,000 Cincinnati citizens to march in protest of Bedini's arrival in their city. The protestors, almost entirely German 48ers, intended to confront Bedini at the house in which he was staying, but a group of police officers halted their procession. The police and the protestors clashed in a bloody affair,

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<sup>104</sup> "Father Gavazzi," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 21 October 1853, p. 2; Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 370-2.

resulting in the death of one man and over twenty injuries. Accounts of the contest varied, and both sides accused the other of initiating the violence. Authorities arrested sixty-two protestors involved in the event, as well as Hassaurek for allegedly inciting the riot through his vituperative articles. Naturally, the nativist editors entirely blamed the incident upon unruly Catholics and a police force in their employ. However, the legal outcome of the event favored the nativist interpretation, as the Cincinnati courts dropped all of the charges on the sixty-two protestors and Hassaurek. The alleged complicity of the police and Mayor Snelbaker in the assault exacerbated local tensions, and compelled nativists and Germans to conduct meetings to voice their opposition to the local government. In particular, they lamented the inaction of the Mayor in the affair and compared the event with the Kirkland incident, in which the Mayor authoritatively protected Catholic interests.<sup>105</sup>

Whatever the cause of the riot, the incident only further enhanced Americans' apprehension of Bedini. The riots in Cincinnati received national attention, with the public attributing most of the blame to Bedini and Cincinnati Catholics. Across the nation, nativists' fervor increased until Bedini could no longer safely appear in public, resulting in the papal nuncio's determination to return to Europe early. New York area nativists, learning that Bedini intended to sail from their city, congregated in large numbers to assail him. The vast numbers of protesters and the police's inability to

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<sup>105</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 302-3; Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 369-374; Mairose, "Nativism on the Ohio," 71-7, 85; "A Riot Quelled," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 27 December 1853; "The Court Room," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 27 December 1853, p. 3; "Trail of the Alleged Rioters," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 31 December 1853, p. 3; "The Late Assault on Citizens," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 5 January 1854, p. 2; "Indignation Meeting," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, 6 January 1854, p. 3; "The Bedini Affair," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 12 January 1854, p. 2.

control the crowd forced Bedini's supporters to smuggle the papal nuncio aboard a ship, thus unceremoniously ending his visit.<sup>106</sup>

Bedini's trip to the United States, particularly his stop in Cincinnati, provided Ohio nativists with an issue that seized the public's attention and facilitated the growth of their movement in the state. The interest generated by his sojourn in Cincinnati and the riots that ensued dominated nativist newspapers, fomenting an unprecedented interest in the rhetoric of anti-Catholic proponents. The visit proved of vast importance to the nativists because it ostensibly provided additional evidence of Catholic plotting and established the prominence of Gavazzi, who differed from earlier nativist speakers in his unrestrained, vitriolic assaults on Catholics. The hostilities between Bedini protestors and the police marked the reintroduction of violence into the nativist movement, continuing the abhorrent tradition of the 1840s anti-Catholic aggressions. The momentum created by the nuncio's turbulent trip aided the growth of nativism into a powerful, statewide campaign.

The Bedini affair also created interest among Ohio nativists in the trusteeism conflict. Taylor initially avoided the controversy, most likely because the debate was an internecine Catholic issue that did not directly affect the Cincinnati diocese. Archbishop Purcell largely assuaged any potential property disputes in his diocese through his diligent work and his popularity throughout his district, and therefore the trusteeism conflict did not initially concern Ohio nativists as much as more tangible local concerns. German Catholic parishes incited many of these disagreements across the nation in an effort to preserve their autonomy. In a predominantly German district, Purcell managed to limit trusteeism disputes through his recognition of the independence of his German

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<sup>106</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 302-3; Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 369-374.



parishioners.<sup>107</sup> Inspired by Gavazzi's rhetoric and Bedini's tour, the editors began utilizing trusteeism as further proof that Pope Pius IX intended absolute control of American land. Unlike most of the anti-Catholic writers' accusations, these accounts were generally based in fact, that is, the papacy desired to subvert American laymen's efforts to control church property or name their own priests. Catholic republicanism threatened the organizational authority of the church hierarchy and, in their estimation, posed a legitimate threat to the papacy's power.<sup>108</sup> Taylor adeptly incorporated the trusteeism controversy into his Catholic conspiracy theory, implying that the church's attempt to exert unquestioned authority was typical of their tyrannical methods of rule. Taylor buttressed these arguments with examples from Europe of centralized, unquestioned Catholic control of property, speech, and rights of worship. In condemning European Catholicism, Taylor argued that:

In the United States we perceive also a difference in the church... one party preferring to hold its church property by trustees, for the people, instead of placing the title in the Bishop and his successors; and also, rejecting the political interference of the church as a means of ecclesiastical aggrandizement.<sup>109</sup>

Taylor thus implied that Catholic attempts to control church land at the expense of the congregation were inimical to traditional American values and indicative of the Catholic Church's actions in Europe. He further asserted that the only means to combat such action was through "the intelligence of the masses," which he hoped would "drive away the fogs of intrigue and mystery" of Catholicism.<sup>110</sup> Of course, Taylor believed that only

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<sup>107</sup> Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell," 95; M. Edmund Hussey, *A History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati* (Strasbourg, France: Éditions du Signe, 2000), 24.

<sup>108</sup> Catholic republicanism defined in Patrick W. Carey, "Republicanism within American Catholicism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 3 (1983): 414-37.

<sup>109</sup> "The Greek and Latin Churches," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 16 February 1854, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Carey, "Republicanism within American Catholicism," 413-21; "More Roman Catholic Rebellion," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 2 February 1854, p. 2; "The American and European Systems

through his wisdom, delivered weekly in the *Times*, could the masses become enlightened.

Nativists, compelled by the reluctance of national parties to address their concerns, again sought to create their own political organizations. Similar to the rise of political nativism in the 1840s, localized nativist groups in the early 1850s thrived in eastern urban areas. The success of these organizations depended on a variety of factors, such as the size and pugnacity of the local immigrant community, the emergence of a particularly controversial nativist political issue, or the local dominance of the Democratic Party. One of these groups, the Order of the Star Spangled Banner, a minor New York City nativist organization, developed into the powerful, national Know Nothing Party. The Order of the Star Spangled Banner, formed by New York nativist Charles Allen, did not significantly differ in ideology from previous groups. They stressed the same issues that a generation of nativist organizations and propagandists espoused: establishing lengthy naturalization periods, teaching the King James Bible in public schools, refusing to allocate public money to support Catholic schools, and supporting only native-born Protestants for elected offices. The group initially sought to affect its agenda by supporting only political candidates who approved of their ideas, regardless of party loyalties. Because of its strict bloc voting, the order engendered influence in tightly contested elections far in advance of their numbers. The leaders enlarged the group by actively seeking amalgamation with other eastern nativist societies, a strategy that resulted in rapid growth of the order. They insisted upon strict secrecy from their members concerning all aspects of the organization, and were so successful in

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Contrasted," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 9 February 1854, p. 2; "The Greek and Latin Churches," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 16 February 1854, p. 2.

their demands that scant records exist concerning the Order of the Star Spangled Banner. According to contemporary authors, the group's devotion to secrecy and its insistence on answering all queries about the organization with ambiguous responses led the order's opponents to dub them the "Know Nothings."<sup>111</sup> As the Know Nothings proliferated, their political ambitions increased beyond merely supporting candidates from existing parties. By 1854, the Know Nothings began nominating their own candidates for public office, electing many of their members to important municipal positions in eastern cities. As the Know Nothing Party matured as an organization, its members largely ceased utilizing the Know Nothing moniker, instead referring to themselves as the "American Party." Their usage of the designation American Party represented a desire among the party's membership to position their organization as the defender of "American" values, in contrast with the alleged immorality of foreigners and Catholics. The order's innovative strategies and the public's increased attention to nativist issues led to the Know Nothing Party's growth from a local organization with merely forty-three members in 1852 to a national party with over one million members in less than two years.<sup>112</sup>

The reasons for the party's success varied by locale, as did the beliefs and composition of its members. Regional discrepancies in the Know Nothing Party derived in large part from its secrecy, which impeded the dispersion of accurate information concerning the order. The difficulty of remaining clandestine while attempting to perpetuate a uniform message plagued the Know Nothings throughout their existence, and contributed significantly to their ultimate demise. Because of the encumbrance of secrecy, and the subsequent lack of vocal representatives that this policy engendered, the

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<sup>111</sup> Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 21-2.

<sup>112</sup> Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 9-15, 20-22, 50; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 844-7.

party's message and mission differed throughout the United States. Americans of diverse backgrounds and sentiments flocked to the order; the only principle unifying them was their abhorrence of foreigners, and Catholics particularly. The disparity of beliefs among the order's members was exceptionally acute regionally, with southern, northern, and western Know Nothings interpreting their party in drastically different manners. The Know Nothings did not initially construe this diversity as a hindrance. James Taylor boasted about the federative characteristics of the order, arguing:

The American movement, or "Know Nothing Organization" cannot be, and will not be, a consolidated, centralizing political influence on the United States. It will always partake of a *federative* character like our political union, for the reason that our country is large, its people heterogeneous in origin, habits, religion and always subject more or less to imperative local considerations.<sup>113</sup>

Unlike previous nativist political organizations, the reach of the Know Nothing Party was not isolated to urban areas that experienced significant immigration. The order achieved popularity in areas with few recent immigrants, such as the Upper South and rural areas across the nation. In Ohio, the order spread rapidly throughout the state from its base in Cincinnati. Unlike previous outbreaks of political nativism in the state, the Know Nothing Party permeated areas with few immigrants and little tradition of nativist activities. Similar to the national organization, there was an extreme degree of diversity in the state. The Know Nothing Party, as a whole, was never a unified national organization on parallel to the Whig or Democratic Parties of the 1840s. At best, on a national level, the Know Nothings were a collection of relatively likeminded voters alarmed about the influx of immigrants and displeased with the existing parties. The order in Ohio typifies this assessment.

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<sup>113</sup> "The American Movement," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 7 December 1854, p. 2.

The popularity of the Know Nothing Party in Ohio developed from a widespread fear of Catholic interference in American affairs, originating largely from the tradition of anti-Catholic propaganda. The swift ascent of the Know Nothing Order in Ohio, which likely arrived in the state in late 1853, was truly remarkable.<sup>114</sup> By August 1854, Ohio already contained 138 Know Nothing lodges and an estimated 50,000 members.<sup>115</sup> Recognizing the rapid growth of the Ohio order and the fervent anti-Catholic tradition of Cincinnati, the Know Nothing Party selected the city as the site for its first national convention, held on November 15, 1854.<sup>116</sup> Ohioans' eager support of Know Nothingism indicates the pervasiveness of nativist beliefs throughout Ohio. Anti-Catholic newspapers and propagandists created widespread hostility toward Catholics well in advance of the Know Nothings' arrival in the state. Decades of anti-Catholic calumny, in addition to inherent Protestant-Catholic animus, created a degree of certainty among Ohioans that Catholics were, in fact, hostile to American Protestant culture. A seemingly unrelated series of events during 1853, the reemergence of the school funding issue, the Maine Law agitation, and the visit of Gaetano Bedini, all acted to convince an already receptive public that Catholics were conspiring against American laws and institutions. The nativist frenzy was already flourishing in Ohio before the appearance of the Know Nothing Party; the nativists only lacked an organizational body, which the Know Nothing Party supplied.

There are numerous reasons why the Know Nothings succeeded in organizing a national and statewide nativist political party, whereas the American Republicans of the

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<sup>114</sup> "Spirit of the Catholic Press in the United States," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 15 December 1853, p. 2, Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 68.

<sup>115</sup> Editorial, *Cleveland Daily Express*, 5 August 1854, 2.

<sup>116</sup> William E. Van Horne, "Lewis D. Campbell and the Know-Nothing Party in Ohio," *Ohio History* (76): 205.

1840s failed. The unprecedented increase in immigration presented the nativists with purported proof of the harmful effects of foreigners on American society. They blamed immigrants for most of the societal changes of the period, including increased urbanization, criminality, perceived moral decay, and economic constraints. In Ohio, the effect of increased immigration on the nativist movement was most obvious in Cincinnati, which experienced rapid increases in both foreign-born residents and nativism. In addition, the stable two-party political system of the early 1840s deteriorated in the early 1850s. Party loyalty declined in Ohio and the nation as voters increasingly turned to third parties to address their particular causes. The decline in the Second American political system provided an opportunity for the Know Nothing Party to prosper. The failed revolutions in Europe also contributed to the success of the Know Nothings by providing evidence of Catholic opposition to democratic movements, and facilitated the emigration to the United States of many vocal, discontented German 48ers. The 48ers provided a particularly virulent anti-Catholic segment of the population in Cincinnati. The novelty of the order, as a secretive, exclusive organization, also likely attracted curious men to the Know Nothing Party. Their secret rituals, clandestine meetings, and fraternal comradery likely provided a lure for some who would not otherwise join a bigoted organization. The secretive nature of the order also contributed to its initial success by allowing members in diverse locales to interpret the party in vastly different ways. The particular influence of each of these factors in the success of the Know Nothing Party varied regionally. In Ohio, all of these factors, combined with a series of events that aggravated Protestant-Catholic tensions, convinced many of the state's residents of the need to join the order to preserve their traditional culture.

### Chapter Three: Slavery and the Ohio Know Nothing Party

Although the popularity of Know Nothingism eventually compelled many Ohio newspaper editors and publishers to begin circulating anti-Catholic newspapers, the most influential and widely dispersed continued to be James Taylor's *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*. In addition to publishing the most successful nativist newspaper in the state and providing a template for other papers, Taylor and Starbuck organized the creation of hundreds of nativist "clubs" in Ohio and throughout the surrounding states, which aided the development of a statewide nativist political party.<sup>117</sup> The editors of Ohio's nascent anti-Catholic newspapers largely followed Taylor's notions of a papal-led, Catholic conspiracy that threatened the continued existence of accepted Protestant values. They printed articles with the same themes as those appearing in the *Times*, including numerous descriptions of the school funding controversy, examples of Catholic criminality, and details of Catholic atrocities throughout history. The editor's rhetoric, supported by additional anti-Catholic outlets, convinced many Ohioans of the veracity of harmful Catholic plots. The nativist press, aggrandized by their own rhetoric, published panic-inducing articles designed to convince the public of the need to take immediate action to prevent seditious Catholic plots. The more preposterous and terrifying the rhetoric, the more Ohioans became convinced of the necessity of action against immigrants and Catholicism. The *Times* achieved unprecedented popularity as the most outlandish perpetuator of anti-Catholic material in the state. With the arrival of the Know Nothing Order in 1854, however, many additional newspapers opportunistically emerged that challenged the *Times*' dubious distinction.

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<sup>117</sup> Taylor listed "clubs" of subscribers in a weekly column in his newspaper, varyingly titled "Thanks," "More Thanks," or "More Clubs." Each club listed the city and state of origin, as well as the leader of the club, presumably the individual who persuaded enough local denizens to subscribe to the *Times*.

The appearance of the Know Nothing Party in Ohio prompted the creation of numerous anti-Catholic newspapers in the state, with incipient Know Nothing organs emerging in Cleveland, Steubenville, St. Clairsville, Youngstown, and other burgeoning Ohio towns.<sup>118</sup> The editors of these papers generally followed the overall format of the *Times*, which had already demonstrated its profitability throughout the state. The burgeoning Know Nothing organs did not achieve the popularity or longevity of the *Times*. In general, as the Know Nothing Party faltered in the state, so did their newspapers. Although lacking originality, the state's Know Nothing newspapers are nonetheless important in demonstrating the importance of the extensionist controversy in the downfall of the Ohio Know Nothing Party. In particular, rhetoric from the editors of two Western Reserve newspapers, the *True American* from Youngstown and *The Express* from Cleveland, in contrast with the dialogue utilized in the *Times*, demonstrates that the controversy surrounding the expansion of slavery facilitated the demise of the order in Ohio and impaired the viability of the party throughout the nation.

In the midst of the emergence of the Know Nothing Party, the issue concerning the extension of slavery again assumed national importance. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, passed on May 30, 1854, addressed the question of whether Congress should permit the remaining unsettled portions of the Louisiana Purchase to allow slavery. Instead of issuing a clear statement about the debate, Congress equivocated and supported the notion of popular sovereignty in the territory. Popular sovereignty, a concept championed by Senators Lewis Cass and Stephen Douglas, allowed the residents of the

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<sup>118</sup> Among the Know Nothing newspapers that emerged at this time were *The Express* from Cleveland, the Youngstown *True American*, the Steubenville *True American*, the *American Citizen* from Hillsboro, the St. Clairsville *Independent Republican*, and Upper Sandusky's *Wyandot Pioneer* (this paper was a Democratic organ from 1845-1854, then briefly a Know Nothing paper from 1854-1855, and finally as a Republican organ from 1855-1868).



territories to decide for themselves whether to allow slavery in their region. The bill, designed to quell sectional animosity, only exacerbated the rancor between North and South. Many northerners perceived the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act as a betrayal of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which prohibited slavery in the territories north of the 36° 30' latitudinal line. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act reignited the extension controversy, ending the relatively benign era following the Compromise of 1850. The reemergence of the extension controversy captured the attention of many northerners, appalled at what they viewed as a destruction of the “sacred” Missouri Compromise.

The concomitant development of the Know Nothing Party and increasing anti-extensionist sentiments in Ohio facilitated a convoluted relationship between the two reform campaigns. In the West, the two groups often worked in conjunction politically to defeat their like enemy, the Democratic Party. In their own manner, both anti-extensionists and nativists endeavored to preserve the republican principles of the nation. The anti-Nebraska advocates warned about the “Slave Power” conspiracy, whereas Know Nothings feared a papal plot. The creation of anti-Catholic, anti-Nebraska “fusion” parties, however, belied inherent philosophical differences between many of the members of each movement. Many prominent anti-extension advocates in Ohio, including Salmon Chase, Joshua Giddings, and Benjamin Wade, opposed the exclusionary, bigoted message of the Know Nothing Party. Additionally, many of the Know Nothings were ambivalent about the extension of slavery. These men had little desire to disrupt trade to the southern states or distract from the nativist cause.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Cayton, *Ohio*, 118-126.

Although some influential anti-Nebraska leaders strongly opposed nativism and certain prominent Know Nothings did not adamantly oppose the spread of slavery, there was much commonality in membership between the movements. In fact, some historians believe the success of the Know Nothings in Ohio derived from their perceived anti-extensionism; that is, their popularity in the state resulted not from their anti-Catholic sentiments, but because of their perceived anti-extensionism.<sup>120</sup> However, contrasting views among Ohio Know Nothing members concerning their party's stance on extensionism belies the veracity of this assertion. In Ohio, the Know Nothings certainly did not uniformly express support of anti-extensionism. Although Know Nothings in certain areas of the state, such as the Western Reserve, primarily sympathized with the anti-extension cause, Know Nothings in other sections of Ohio did not profess such beliefs. Moreover, the party's organs did not concentrate on anti-slavery concerns, instead overwhelmingly addressing nativist issues. Because of the obvious primacy of nativism in Know Nothing propaganda and the lack of a uniform stance on the expansion of slavery, it is absurd to believe the party's success in the state derived from their perceived anti-extensionism.<sup>121</sup>

Editors of Ohio Know Nothing newspapers differed greatly in their opinions concerning the spread of slavery to the western territories. Initially, they largely ignored the national controversy, focusing instead almost exclusively upon anti-Catholic concerns. Their ambivalence concerning the extension issue reflected the national party's

<sup>120</sup> See Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>121</sup> Michael Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 844; Eugene H. Roseboom, "Salmon P. Chase and the Know Nothings," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 25 (1938): 335; Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 251-3.

stance. Until 1855, Know Nothings nationwide avoided definite statements pertaining to the politically disruptive issue. This evasion was not an ingenious tactic designed to facilitate the spread of the order throughout the politically divided nation, although their aversion did initially aid the acceptance of Know Nothings in diverse regions. Instead, it merely marked the single-mindedness and inexperience of the party. The tenets of the order only articulated the Know Nothings' stances on issues related to nativism, such as immigration, opposition to foreign influence, and the continued usage of the King James Bible in schools.<sup>122</sup> On other pertinent issues, specifically federal banking, territorial disputes, and internal improvements, the national party remained mute. Ohio Know Nothing editors repeatedly asserted that nativism was the paramount concern for the entire nation, and therefore deserved the public's devoted attention.

However ambiguous the national and state Know Nothing Party remained concerning the spread of slavery, the editors of Know Nothing organs subtly expressed their own opinions on the matter. Although the editors rarely mentioned slavery in their nativist press, they could not completely avoid the divisive issue. In disperse articles throughout the early 1850s, Taylor argued that slavery was a southern concern, and northerners had little reason to interfere in their "peculiar institution." In a review of abolitionist Lucy Stone's speech in Cincinnati, Taylor critically questioned:

Is there not enough of employment for the Christian philanthropists of the North among the ignorant, criminal, superstitious, poverty stricken, and consequently slavish population at home, that they must get up crusades amongst their neighbors, intermeddling in what does not concern them personally, and with domestic institutions and social regulation, of which they are profoundly ignorant?<sup>123</sup>

<sup>122</sup> "The Know Nothings," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 5 July 1854, p. 2.

<sup>123</sup> "Miss Lucy Stone's Lecture on American Slavery," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 3 November 1853, p. 4.

Furthermore, Taylor also expressed no inherent opposition to the enslavement of Africans, asserting instead that slavery was “an instrument of redemption of a race from profound degradation.”<sup>124</sup> Taylor, a firm believer in the superiority of American Protestant culture, assumed that enslavement was beneficial for Africans because it introduced them to American culture and civilization. As for the extension of slavery and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Taylor thought the dispute largely irrelevant, arguing that the institution could not exist in the Western wilderness. According to the controversial editor, ambitious politicians exacerbated the conflict in order to please their constituents.

Although Taylor’s views concerning slavery were not extreme for the 1850s, they did not necessarily correspond to the beliefs of other Ohio Know Nothings. Unlike most issues, Ohio Know Nothing editors did not necessarily duplicate Taylor’s conclusions in regards to slavery. Their opinions, subtly interspersed within anti-Catholic editorials or expressed inconspicuously amongst world and national news articles, varied throughout the state. However diverse the beliefs of the Know Nothing editors were concerning the extension of slavery, they united over their prevailing dedication to preventing the spread of immigration and Catholicism. Clearly, until the summer of 1855, nativism was the most important concern of the Know Nothings. Eventually, however, the uniting force of nativism waned, and increasing public interest in the territorial debate forced the editors to express a clear opinion on the issue. Their incongruent conclusions permanently divided the party in Ohio.

The contrast between the Know Nothing newspapers of the Western Reserve, the *Cleveland Express* and the *Youngstown True American*, and the *Dollar Weekly Times* demonstrates the divisiveness of the extension debate for the Ohio Know Nothing Party.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

The Western Reserve, previously a Whig stronghold, demonstrated its opposition to the expansion of slavery with their support for the Free Soil Party and their repeated election of anti-extensionist politicians. Denizens of the Reserve deviated from other Ohioans in their overwhelming enthusiasm for reform movements and their predominantly New England culture. The unique heritage of the region derived from its initial development. In 1786, the United States Congress granted the state of Connecticut 3,000,000 acres of land in northeast Ohio for settlement, which they sold to the Connecticut Land Company in 1795. This land, referred to as the "Western Reserve," encompassed the present-day Ohio counties of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Erie, Geauga, Huron, Lake, Lorain, northern Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Summit, and Trumbull. The Connecticut settlers developed the Western Reserve according to their New England traditions and ideals. For instance, many of the emigrants brought with them a strong devotion to education, the Congregational Church, and the democratic practices of town hall meetings. In addition, most of the settlers possessed a general aversion to slavery, deriving from religious beliefs that accepted intrinsic human rights and democratic ideals.<sup>125</sup>

From the first issuance of the *Cleveland Daily Express* on June 21, 1854, the newspaper's editors clearly illustrated their opposition to Catholic influences in American politics. The editors, W. W. and Eli Bruce, began publication of their work in order to disseminate their nativist beliefs to the residents of Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and attract new followers to the nativist cause.<sup>126</sup> They incorporated much of the same rhetoric as the *Times* in order to garner a large following, evoking the common themes of papal

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<sup>125</sup> John S. Millis, *Western Reserve at Cleveland: One Hundred and Thirty-Two Years of a Venture in Faith* (New York: The Newcomen Society in North America, 1957), 8-9.

<sup>126</sup> On January 22, 1855, the editors of the *Cleveland Daily Express* changed their newspaper from evening to morning delivery, and renamed it the *Cleveland Morning Express*. Despite these alterations, the paper maintained the same format and support for the Know Nothing Party.

conspiracies and Catholic transgressions. The language and tone utilized by the Bruces, however, exceeded the rancor employed by James "Pap" Taylor at the *Times*. The Bruces employed little restraint in their attempt to convey the urgency that Protestant Americans required to thwart the alleged Catholic threat.

Although the Bruces provided the first American Party newspaper in the Cleveland area, it is unimaginable that area residents were unfamiliar with the nativist rhetoric that the Know Nothings employed. In fact, the *Times* listed several "clubs" of subscribers in the area, indicating the Cincinnati nativist newspaper's accessibility. The Bruces, however, provided a local outlet for anti-Catholic sentiments and an organ for the Know Nothing Party in a growing Ohio city. The editors did not initially address their beliefs concerning the expansion of slavery. Instead, articles warning of an ongoing Catholic conspiracy dominated the early editions of the *Daily Express*. Their rhetoric, as with earlier nativist works, emphasized the threats that Catholicism posed to the dominant Protestant culture in the United States. The Bruces included dozens of articles in the first month of publication intended to instill fear in their readers of Catholic influence in American affairs. The editors printed numerous articles describing familiar stories of libertine priests, Catholic political conspiracies, and abundant accusations of Irish transgressions in Cleveland and across the nation. In fact, the Bruces' nativist writings were mostly banal and derivative. The importance of the paper, other than providing a Know Nothing organ for the growing city of Cleveland, was its subtle opposition to the spread of slavery.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> "Attempted Murder by Rowdies," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 5 July 1854, p. 2; "Trial of Kraeger, the Catholic Priest," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 12 July 1854, p. 2; "The La Salle Murderers Not to be Hung – the Triumph of the Jesuitical and Irish Electioneering Power," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 17 July 1854, p. 2.

Initially, the editors of the *Daily Express* were extremely coy about whether or not they were, in fact, Know Nothings, or merely non-affiliated nativists. The Bruces were not unique in their ambiguity concerning their knowledge of the order. The surreptitious nature of the Know Nothings engendered secrecy from their members concerning all aspects of their party. Therefore, editors across the nation, including those in Ohio, were initially unable to articulate their affiliation with the order. However, their reticence did not confuse their contemporaries as to whether they belonged to the Know Nothing Order. The obviously nativist editorials, stories, and articles certainly provided enough information about their positions. Furthermore, the editors also included hints within their articles concerning their involvement with the order, repeatedly stating that they “Know Nothing” about the inner workings of the party.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, without openly claiming support for the Know Nothings, the editors nonetheless indicated their affiliation with the order.

A large degree of the mystery and ambiguity of the Ohio Know Nothings dissolved during the summer of 1854. Leaders of the clandestine society met in New York City in June to devise a governing structure for their party and enumerate the tenets of the order. Nativists from thirteen states convened in the city and established a hierarchy, series of rituals, and a party prospectus. Taylor openly declared his partiality to the Know Nothing Party, by publishing the list of the order’s principles.<sup>129</sup> The Bruces soon followed the *Times* in publicly declaring their support of the order by printing the national party’s prospectus, with their first listing on July 5, 1854. In publishing the

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<sup>128</sup> “The Know Nothings—Their Doings,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 13 July 1854, p. 2.

<sup>129</sup> “Supplement to the Dollar Weekly Times. American Platform,” *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 6 July 1854; Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 282-6.

Know Nothings' mantra, the Ohio editors clearly indicated their political stances without explicitly stating their support of the Know Nothing Party. Not surprisingly, the organizational leaders who created the sixteen tenets of the American Party prospectus devoted most of their policy to their perceived battle against Catholicism. The Know Nothings enumerated such principles as a "repeal of all Naturalization laws;" "none but native Americans for office;" "war to the hilt, on Romanism;" "Hostility to all Papal influence, in whatever form and under what ever name;" and "eternal enmity to all who attempt to carry out the principles of a foreign Church or state."<sup>130</sup> Noticeably absent from the tenets of Know Nothingism was any indication of the order's stance concerning the expansion of slavery. Their party prospectus demonstrated the singularity of purpose for the order. Unlike the Whig or Democratic Parties, they did not consider other pressing issues of the era, but instead focused upon nativist concerns.

The first inclination of the Bruces' anti-extension sentiments appeared in a story from the July 24 issue, in which the writer lamented the living conditions of southern slaves. Following this initial foray into the controversy, the Bruces included several articles that further demonstrated their opposition to slavery and their anti-extensionism. The disparate articles included such topics as the exploits of runaway slaves, the atrocities provoked by pro-extension advocates in Kansas, and Democratic politicians extending southern political power. The editors interspersed these writings with the paper's traditional stories availing the horrors of nunneries, priests, and foreign ruffians. However, the Bruces left little doubt that their main priority was nativism.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> "The Know Nothings," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 5 July 1854, p. 2.

<sup>131</sup> "A Sad Story," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 24 July 1854, p. 2; "How Has it Been in National and State Conventions?," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 31 July 1854, p. 2.



In addition to attracting Ohioans to the order with traditional nativist rhetoric, Know Nothing newspapers attempted to connect their nascent political party with the United States' cherished founding fathers. This tactic was not novel to nativists, with earlier writers seeking linkages to admired historical figures. However, these earlier efforts paled in comparison to the Know Nothings' desire to formulate a respected heritage for their party. The editors sought any historical connection to the United States' revolutionary heritage in order to present their nativist rhetoric as a normal aspect of American culture. The Bruces contributed to the order's efforts at legitimacy by including articles that averred most of the nation's founding fathers, including Washington, Hamilton, Lafayette, and Jefferson, shared the order's nativist sentiments. In fact, the fifth tenet of the Know Nothing Party prospectus asserted support of "the doctrines of the revered Washington and his compatriots."<sup>132</sup> The Know Nothing editors did not, of course, mean to imply that these men belonged in some manner to the political Know Nothing Party, only that they shared their fear of Catholic influence in American affairs. They "proved" their assertions by including quotations from the founders, usually cunningly taken out of context. Additionally, as the editors attempted to establish the American heritage of the Know Nothings, they also attacked the patriotism of the Catholic population by including stories of Catholic attempts to destroy traditional symbols of America, including bald eagles and American flags. Inclusion of these dubious incidents of Catholic outrages, combined with an alleged popish assault on the Constitution, helped persuade Ohioans to ally with the Know Nothing Party. The nativists furthered their efforts to obtain legitimacy by distancing themselves from the Know Nothing label, instead mainly utilizing the "American Party" moniker. These

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<sup>132</sup> "The Know Nothings," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 5 July 1854, p. 2.

patriotic gestures derived from the editors' intent to classify Catholicism as a pernicious influence on "American" culture.<sup>133</sup>

By presenting their party as representative of American values, the Know Nothings desired to position themselves as a respectable organization acceptable to all American Protestants. Their tactic of promoting patriotism and warning of the alleged widespread reach of the Catholic threat likely contributed to the party's success in rural areas with few immigrants. As with most forms of bigotry, the actual presence of Catholics was not necessary for anti-Catholic beliefs to arise. Relatively few foreigners resided in the former Western Reserve, yet the Know Nothings built a large following among Protestants in the area. According to the 1850 census, thirty percent of the Cuyahoga County population was foreign-born, as opposed to the national average of 9.6 percent. However, the population in the remainder of the Western Reserve, which contained the majority of the area's residents, was well below the national average. For instance, rural Geauga County contained a mere 3 percent foreign-born population.<sup>134</sup> An article in the *Express* reprinted from *The Democrat*, a newspaper from the Geauga County town of Chardon, asserted that the town did not contain a foreign population significant enough to inspire a secret organization in the area. The Bruces responded to this logic by contending:

It is a poor reason why there should be no organization of the Know Nothings in a town or a county, merely because there are not enough Catholics to make any great resistance in such locality. There are enough Catholics in America to control the choice of President, without there are organizations to counteract them. Every

<sup>133</sup> *Cleveland Daily Express*, 19 August 1854, p. 1; "Outrageous Conduct of a Gang of Lawless Irishmen," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 14 August 1854, p. 2; "The American Party," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 7 December 1854, p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> University of Virginia Library, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, "1850 Census," n.d., <<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>> (15 October 2004).

true American in the country should unite with the Know Nothings, or similar organizations to destroy this influence.<sup>135</sup>

This declaration of the necessity of all “true” Americans to engage in activities to counter Catholic plots demonstrates how prominent Know Nothings envisioned their party.

Whether or not a particular location possessed enough Catholics to affect local elections or directly threaten a community’s traditional culture mattered little; instead, the order stressed the need for national unity to combat their perceived threat.

As the editors of Ohio Know Nothing newspapers continued their assault on Catholicism, the American Party in the state organized for the upcoming 1854 fall elections. Across the nation, the order eschewed their traditional policy of merely supporting candidates for political office from existing parties. Instead, many state organizations began fielding their own tickets composed entirely of lodge members. In Ohio, the party was not yet prepared for this step in the fall of 1854. Instead, the Ohio order partook of the traditional Know Nothing approach of supporting candidates from existing parties that advocated their nativist ideology. In an editorial in the September 27 edition of the *Express*, the editors argued that their support of candidates rested solely upon the politicians’ stance on nativism. For instance, they opposed Eli Wilder, a Democratic candidate for Congress, for his refusal to enact stricter naturalization laws, not because of his affiliation with the Democratic Party, his pro-Nebraska stance, or his connection with the state’s financial difficulties.<sup>136</sup> Despite the Ohio Know Nothings’ declaration that they would support whichever candidate opposed the spread of Romanism, in reality they supported a field of candidates overwhelmingly from the newly formed Fusion Party. The Fusion Party was a diverse collection of political groups

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<sup>135</sup> Editorial, *Cleveland Daily Express*, 25 August 1854, p. 2.

<sup>136</sup> “Congressional Candidate,” *Cleveland Evening Express*, 27 September 1854, p. 2.

united in their opposition to the Democratic Party, including anti-extensionists, former Whigs, disenchanted Democrats, temperance advocates, and Know Nothings. Separately, they posed little danger to the powerful Ohio Democratic Party; however, as a collective party they challenged the Democrats' supremacy in the state.<sup>137</sup>

The Fusion Party achieved resounding success in the fall elections in Ohio, winning all twenty-one Congressional races in Ohio. Of the victorious congressmen, at least twelve were members of the Know Nothing Order.<sup>138</sup> The relative contribution of nativism to the success of the Fusionist ticket, though, is a matter of dispute. Because most of the Fusionist candidates were both Know Nothings and anti-Nebraska, it is difficult to distinguish the importance of each issue in the election successes.

Furthermore, there were more than two concerns for the electorate, and it is reasonable to believe that many Ohioans voted for the Fusionist candidates simply because they were not Democrats. There was a great deal of discontent among voters with the existing parties across the nation, and in Ohio particularly. As the party in power in the state, the Democrats naturally received the preponderance of criticism for the state's difficulties, particularly for their introduction of a burdensome increase in business taxation.<sup>139</sup>

Whatever the rationale for the Fusionist victories, most contemporaries perceived anti-Nebraska sentiments were the main impetus for the Fusion Party success. Even the editors of the *Express* conceded in their October 14 newspaper, all of the successful

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<sup>137</sup> David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 248-9; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 68-71.

<sup>138</sup> "Ohio Election," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 19 October 1854, p. 2. John Bennett Weaver, by analyzing Congressional records, estimated that Know Nothings won 15 of 21 seats. See John Bennett Weaver, "Nativism and the Birth of the Republican Party in Ohio, 1854-1860" (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1982).

<sup>139</sup> Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, *A History of Ohio* (Columbus: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1953), 169-171.

Fusion Party candidates running for Congress were anti-Nebraska.<sup>140</sup> The election results from Geauga County give a possible indication of the importance for nativism in the election. As noted in the October 13 edition of the *Express*, Geauga County Democrats defeated the Free-Soilers in the county who refused to embrace nativism. According to the editors of the *Express*, the defeat of the Geauga County Free-Soilers occurred because they “refused to carry out Fusion in county matters and the consequence is they are defeated.”<sup>141</sup> This, of course, could merely be the biased, self-congratulatory rhetoric of the nativist editors who wanted to boast about their personal contribution to the election and the strength of the nativist campaign. Regardless of the relative contributions to the success of the Fusion ticket, the party’s victories resulted in the election of an unprecedented number of nativists to local, state, and national offices. Although temporarily successful, the drastic diversity of purpose among Fusion Party voters undermined the long-term viability of the anti-Nebraska, Know Nothing, anti-Democratic Party coalition.<sup>142</sup>

Following the election, many renowned anti-Nebraska supporters, including Joshua Giddings and Salmon Chase, sought to distance themselves from the order. They opposed the bigotry and secrecy of the Know Nothings, as well as the distraction that nativism posed to their anti-extension cause. The anti-Catholic, anti-foreign sentiments of the Know Nothings contrasted with the moral philosophies of many of Ohio’s leading anti-Nebraska advocates. For Ohioans who sought to ensure liberty for men in distant territories, the Know Nothings’ exclusionary methods and clandestine activities seemed

<sup>140</sup> “The Result for Congress in Ohio,” *Cleveland Daily Express*, 14 October 1854, p. 2.

<sup>141</sup> “Gauga County,” *Cleveland Daily Express*, 13 October 1854, p. 2.

<sup>142</sup> Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 68-71; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 847-850, 860-2.

contradictory. In addition, although the union of anti-Catholic and anti-Nebraska forces resulted in an overwhelming victory, the affiliation between the two movements alienated most potential foreign-born voters from advancing the anti-extension cause.<sup>143</sup>

The Know Nothings' political adversaries continually berated the party because of its recalcitrance in addressing the extension of slavery controversy. In Cleveland, the *Leader*, the former Whig organ in the city, rebuked the American Party as a supporter of slavery, despite the protestations to the contrary by the editors of the *Express*. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, a newspaper supporting the Democratic Party, criticized the order for their inability to take a stance on America's most salient concern. The Know Nothing Party, by not openly declaring a stance on the divisive issue, became an easy subject of ridicule for its opponents. Astoundingly, the editors maintained complete ignorance of the potential divisiveness of extensionism despite the role of the conflict in the recent demise of the Whig Party. To respond to their critics, the editors of the *Express* argued in their September 28, 1854 newspaper that:

Some of the old party papers object to the Know Nothings because they are a one-idea party. We have more than one idea, and our ideas correspond in all parts of the Union. But the old parties feel the necessity of a multiplicity of ideas—for in one State they are held together by advocating one doctrine and in another State by advocating quite a different doctrine. The Know Nothings never “blow hot and cold in the same breath.”<sup>144</sup>

The editors of the *Express* perceived the ideological inconsistencies among the existing “old parties,” but failed to realize the same affliction affected the Know Nothing Party.

The ideological divide between the national and Western Reserve Ohio Know Nothing organizations became evident in late 1854. In the October 10 edition of the *Cleveland Daily Express*, the editors printed the prospectus of the Cleveland Know

<sup>143</sup> Roseboom, “Salmon P. Chase and the Know Nothings,” 337.

<sup>144</sup> “One Ideaism,” *Cleveland Daily Express*, 28 September 1854, p. 2.

Nothings. The tenets listed by the American Party in Cleveland mostly echoed the principles previously stated by the national organization. The Clevelanders stressed the need to limit immigration, strengthen naturalization laws, and elect only native, honest, and competent men to public office. Additionally, they included a principle in their prospectus that the national organization ignored. The Cleveland Know Nothings desired “a faithful observance of the Constitution, as the best means of preserving the Union and perpetuating our Free institutions.”<sup>145</sup> Unmistakably, the Cleveland Know Nothings accepted that their party was in opposition to the expansion of slavery. The editors of the *Express* continued printing this prospectus, instead of the national ideology, in each paper. The *Times*, however, continued to avoid a discussion of slavery and persisted in advocating the ambiguous position of the national party.

By the end of 1854, the editors of the *Express* addressed questions concerning the Know Nothings’ stance on the expansion of slavery in nearly every edition of their newspaper. Through the months of October and November, an increasing number of stories appeared in the *Express* that chronicled an alleged conspiracy among southerners and Democrats to increase the rights of slave owners. In their editorials, the Bruces shifted from avoiding the extension debate, to weakly opposing the spread of slavery, and then finally openly combating a perceived southern slave power conspiracy. For instance, the editors had originally taken an unfavorable attitude toward the renowned anti-extensionist Horace Greeley. In several articles throughout the first six months of the *Express*, the editors took umbrage at Greeley’s attacks on nativism. However, by

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<sup>145</sup> “Prospectus of the Cleveland Know Nothing,” *Cleveland Daily Express*, 10 October 1854, p. 3.

December 14, they had altered their viewpoints enough to encourage their readers to attend a local lecture given by Greeley.<sup>146</sup>

The continuing criticism of the party in response to their equivocal stance on the expansion of slavery eventually compelled Taylor to summarize his position. He continued to assert that expansion of slavery, and the institution itself, were not problems that northerners should concern themselves with, but instead they should focus entirely upon battling the alleged Catholic menace. He argued that:

The great central political idea of this epoch is yet to be determined, or rather, discovered:—whether the pure American nationality has been too much diluted by Irish ignorance and Romish superstition and intrigue, or not;—or whether the U. States have or have not civilized, Christianized and educated enough of Afric's sons and daughters to redeem the ancestral land, and sufficiently elevated those now in bondage to prevent their retrogression into barbarism if left to their own impulses and guidance. These two great questions ought to be determined, and must be, by the party which is most deeply concerned—the Slavery question by the South, and the Naturalization question by the North. It is a common piece of human oddity, however, for men to attempt the settlement or solution of what they know least about, or have had no experience of, whatever; so if the South attempt to decide the Irish question, and the North the 'nigger' question, we should not be surprised.<sup>147</sup>

The great disparity between the Cleveland Prospectus of the Know Nothings and the rhetoric of Taylor illustrates the disunity of the Ohio order. This drastic diversity of opinion would eventually contribute to the demise of the Know Nothings as an effective political entity on both the state and national levels.

Although divided in their sentiments concerning slavery, Ohio Know Nothing editors united against the pervasive criticism of their party's stance on the expansion of slavery. To combat their critics, the editors accused their political opposition of contributing to the Catholic conspiracy to subvert American ideals. This retaliatory

<sup>146</sup> Editorial, *Cleveland Daily Express*, 14 December 1854, p. 3.

<sup>147</sup> "Who—What—Where!," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 9 November 1854, p. 2.



approach resembled Taylor's strategy in the early 1850s of categorizing all newspapers not adamantly opposed to public funding of Catholic schools as seditious representatives of the Pope intent on subjugating the American populace. By broadly labeling all who did not agree with the nativist position as subversives, Taylor could summarily dismiss any opposition as part of the alleged conspiracy. Therefore, according to Taylor, the readers of the *Times* only had one reliable media outlet in Cincinnati. In Cleveland, the editors of the *Express* utilized this strategy to dismiss criticisms of the order's stance on slavery as merely a tactic of the Catholic conspirators. These persistent assaults, coming primarily from the *Leader*, resulted in the Bruces responding in a familiar manner. They accused their opponents of having "Jesuitical purposes," charging them with involvement in a conspiracy with Catholics to destroy the Know Nothing Party.<sup>148</sup> These implausible accusations reveal the increasingly desperate measures that Ohio Know Nothings undertook in order to distract their local followers from the order's problematic stance on the controversy concerning the expansion of slavery.

The Bruces attempted another, more rational, defense of the order against the increased virulence of their opposition's attacks. They responded to the indictment that the Know Nothings were a pro-slavery party by proclaiming that the actions of the order clearly indicated their opposition to slavery's expansion, arguing, "We are pro-slavery are we? Who carried Ohio? Who elected Wade, Giddings, Galloway, Campbell, Watson, Sherman, &c? Who stormed Indiana? Who swept Pennsylvania? Who *took* Massachusetts?"<sup>149</sup> The editors of the *Express* argued correctly that the Ohio Know Nothings had only supported anti-extensionist men for Congress in the fall elections. In

<sup>148</sup> "The Slavery Question," *Cleveland Daily Express*, 26 December 1854, p. 2.

<sup>149</sup> "The American Party, Its Enemies—Slavery, &c," *The Cleveland Morning Express*, 31 January 1855, p. 2.

addition, the election of Thomas Spooner, a former Liberty Party member, to the presidency of the Ohio Order in November 1854 provided more evidence that the Know Nothings embraced the anti-Nebraska cause.<sup>150</sup> However, these anti-Nebraska linkages only applied to the northern Know Nothings and did not address the continuing national disparity. Furthermore, their contention that the order in Ohio was uniformly critical of the Kansas-Nebraska Act was also problematic. The complexity of political fusion in Ohio dictated the Know Nothings' support of anti-Nebraska candidates more so than unvarying personal ideology amongst the members. Without forming a coalition with the anti-Nebraska men, the Know Nothings would not have achieved such widespread success in the fall elections. Additionally, although some of the Know Nothing political hierarchy, such as Spooner, adamantly opposed the spread of slavery, there were still a considerable number of Ohio Know Nothings who were ambivalent concerning the issue.

By early 1855, the Ohio Know Nothing editors began to comprehend that diverse attitudes existed in their national party concerning the expansion of slavery. The continual assaults on the order finally evoked a detailed explanation of the party's stance on the issue from the Bruces. To respond to these assertions, the editors of the *Express* argued in their January 29, 1855 newspaper that:

It is not expected that men living at the South, who are in favor of the "peculiar institution," will turn to be Abolitionists by joining the Know Nothings. Nor, on the other hand, is it expected that Abolitionists at the North will be converted into favoring Slavery by becoming Know Nothings. Nor will they surrender one "jot or tittle" to the slave power in any way, shape or manner. It is not required. It could not be expected if it were required. It is a conceded point that the proper position for the North to occupy, is to allow the South the enjoyment of Slavery where it now exists under the Constitution, but that it never shall be extended over another inch of free territory. This is truly and purely American ground. It has been falsely reported that the Know Nothings have adopted a pro-slavery

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<sup>150</sup> Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 174-5.

platform. There is not one word of truth in the report. Let people beware how they are misled by designing men of the old parties.<sup>151</sup>

This statement elucidated the complete lack of understanding of southern concerns that the Bruces and most northern Know Nothings possessed. Their explanation indicates that they had little appreciation for the viewpoints of the southern members of the order, whom the editors believed would be content with keeping slavery in the states where it already existed. Moreover, the Bruces' statement revealed their miscomprehension of the political situation in the South. The Know Nothing Party in the southern states attracted followers with their hostility to foreign influence in American affairs and opposition to the Democratic Party. Many southern Know Nothings viewed their party simply as a successor to the Whig organization.<sup>152</sup> If, as the editors asserted, the entire Know Nothing Order opposed the spread of slavery, the party never would have achieved such a prominent position in the South. To suppose that southern members of their party would be content with maintaining slavery only where it currently existed, as the Bruces did, demonstrates the overwhelming ignorance that many of the order's members had about their national party. Moreover, it illustrates the crippling handicap that the Know Nothings' secrecy imposed on the order. Lacking a formal declaration of the party's stances on non-nativist issues, the diverse membership constructed regional interpretations concerning the ideology of the American Party.

Despite the Bruces' formal declaration opposing the expansion of slavery, the *Leader and Plain Dealer* continued to criticize the national Know Nothing Party for equivocating on the issue. Buttressing their assault were reports from southern Know

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<sup>151</sup> "K.N.'s and Slavery," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 29 January 1855, p. 2.

<sup>152</sup> Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 386-7, 392-3; Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party*, 844-5, 911-2, 914-6.

Nothing newspapers that repeatedly averred the American Party supported the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, a direct contradiction to the Bruces' argument. The editors addressed this inconsistency, as well as the continuing harassment from their contemporaries by printing another editorial in the January 31 edition of the *Express*. In this editorial, issued a mere two days after the first, the Bruces attempted to further clarify their party's position on the issue, asserting, "on this subject of slavery, we speak only what we understand to be the sentiments of our own people, and are in no respect responsible for the views of our Southern brethren."<sup>153</sup> With this admission, the editors of the *Express* finally indicated to their readers that divergent viewpoints might exist within their party.

As the Western Reserve Know Nothing editors struggled to convince their readers that they were anti-Nebraska, the *Times* criticized the effort to connect nativism with anti-extensionism. In an article entitled "The American Party a National Party, by Confederation, not Consolidation—Naturalization Laws—States Rights—Slavery, &c, &c," Taylor evinced that any attempt by the national party to address the debate concerning the extension of slavery would inevitably result in the destruction of the Know Nothing Party and hamper the campaign against popish influence in American affairs. Instead, the editor continued to believe that the proper course of action for the party was to continue in its federative manner, united solely on its opposition to foreigners while tolerating regional diversity on issues such as "Slavery, a National Bank, a Tariff, &c, &c."<sup>154</sup> Taylor attempted to elude the extension question by portraying the American Party as a resolute defender of the Union, a tactic the national party would

<sup>153</sup> "The American Party, Its Enemies—Slavery &c," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 31 January 1855, p. 2.

<sup>154</sup> "The American Party a National Party, by Confederation, not Consolidation—Naturalization Laws—States Rights—Slavery, &c, &c," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 4 January 1855, p. 2.

eventually incorporate. Understanding the potentially disruptive influence of extensionism on the Know Nothing Party, he asserted, "it is already proclaimed that slavery as a political question is to be ignored by the American party, under the name of a question threatening the Union, and by pledges to the stability and perpetuity of the union are meant silence of the subject of slavery."<sup>155</sup> Clearly, Taylor did not perceive his party as an anti-extensionist organization, nor did he desire to have his nativist agenda usurped by the slavery controversy.

A new weekly Know Nothing newspaper, the *True American*, began publication in the Western Reserve on February 14, 1855. D. S. Elliott edited the Youngstown, Ohio-based newspaper, which greatly resembled the *Express* in both format and ideology. Unlike the Cincinnati and Cleveland areas, Youngstown and surrounding Mahoning County contained a representative number of foreign-born denizens in comparison to the national average. According to the 1850 census, Mahoning County contained 2,033 people born outside the United States, placing the county within one percent of the national average.<sup>156</sup> From its inception, the *True American* clearly indicated its opposition to Catholic immigration and the expansion of slavery. In his editorials, Elliott argued that the Know Nothings, because of their growth and diversity, were the best hope among the nascent political parties for anti-Nebraska supporters. In a February 21 article entitled "Freesoilism vs. Americanism," Elliott argued that the Free Soil Party was merely a "one idea" organization, and that the Know Nothings were a more logical political alternative because they followed a multifaceted platform.<sup>157</sup> He conveyed his anti-extensionist convictions by asserting, "Now we will not yield one iota

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> University of Virginia Library, "1850 Census."

<sup>157</sup> "Freesoilism vs. Americanism," *Youngstown True American*, 21 February 1855, p. 2.

in our love for freedom, and our hatred to slavery, to any man in the community.”<sup>158</sup>

Unmistakably, the *True American* represented both the traditional nativist sentiments of Know Nothingism and the anti-Nebraska beliefs pervasive across the Western Reserve.

Throughout the spring months of 1855, the Western Reserve Ohio Know Nothing newspapers struggled to convince their readers that the party represented a legitimate anti-slavery alternative to the Democratic Party, while the *Times* continued to avoid the divisive issue. The tenuous relationship between Ohio Know Nothings and anti-extensionists deteriorated as some politicians opposed to the spread of slavery searched for alternatives to their alliance with the nativists. The Know Nothings editors were greatly concerned with a rumored alliance between Free Soilers opposed to nativism and the Democratic Party. This purported coalition, reputedly led by Western Reserve Congressman Joshua Giddings, threatened the dominance of the anti-Nebraska, anti-Catholic, anti-Democratic Party coalition.<sup>159</sup> The Know Nothings correctly assumed that without significant anti-Nebraska support, the likelihood of electing their fall ticket was minimal. The editors of the Know Nothing newspapers included a multitude of articles designed to weaken the potential Democratic-Free Soil alliance. For instance, the *Express* contained stories on May 7, 9, 11, and 15 that averred, “No ticket can be elected in Ohio next fall which is not thoroughly American, Anti-Slavery, and Reform.”<sup>160</sup> The editors intended this rhetoric to weaken the resolve of any groups contemplating running a campaign opposed to the nativist principles of the Know Nothings. In concerning themselves more with electing officials who concurred with their anti-Catholic sentiments, the Know Nothings demonstrated that this issue still had priority over

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> “Fusion and Confusion,” *Cleveland Morning Express*, 9 May 1855, p. 2.

<sup>160</sup> “A Word of Warning,” *Cleveland Morning Express*, 7 May 1855, p. 2.

preventing the spread of slavery. However, the growing focus of articles and editorials on the evils of slavery in both the *True American* and the *Express* indicate a shifting ideological emphasis for the Western Reserve editors.

The growing concern among anti-Catholic partisans of the Know Nothings' ambiguous stance on the expansion of slavery facilitated the creation of the Independent Order of the Friends of Equal Rights, or the Know Something Party. The Know Somethings, formed by Cleveland *Leader* editor Joseph Medill, maintained the fraternal character and anti-Catholicism of the Know Nothings, but avoided criticism of German immigrants and openly declared their opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act. According to the Bruces, Medill was not a member of the order; however, he subscribed to the notion of a nefarious Catholic plot. The Bruces opposed the inclusive nature of Medill's organization, claiming it "lets a fellow do just what he has a mind to and if he don't want to do that, he may do what he 'd—m pleases'."<sup>161</sup> The Know Somethings rapidly gained followers in early 1855, and by April claimed several thousand members. Their anti-extension message appealed to northern anti-Catholic activists who resented the Know Nothings' ambiguous stance on the issue. The Know Somethings' national convention in Cleveland, which contained representatives from every free state but California, indicated Medill's success in spreading his organization throughout the northern United States. Despite the editor's achievement in dispersing his message, the Know Somethings never rivaled the Know Nothings in popularity. Medill's organization never numbered more than 20,000 adherents, a paltry total compared to the over one million Know Nothings. To anti-Nebraska members of the Know Nothings, who perceived the order as opposed to the expansion of slavery, Medill's group seemed superfluous. Although the Know

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<sup>161</sup> "Know Somethings," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 29 January 1855, p. 3.

Some things never rivaled the Know Nothings in popularity, their modest successes hinted at the potential divisiveness of the extension issue for the Know Nothing Party.<sup>162</sup>

In Cincinnati, the spring 1855 elections revealed the potential for violence in the Ohio Know Nothing movement. In the fall 1854 elections, nativists in the city created a coalition of voters to defeat the powerful local Democratic Party. This alliance, labeled the People's Party, consisted of anti-Nebraska supporters, nativists, and voters displeased with the corruption of the Democratic Party. In essence, the coalition greatly resembled the statewide Fusion Party, which combined like elements to defeat the Democrats. In Cincinnati politics, the most compelling reason for the People's Party victory was likely their campaign against the Democratic "Treasury Eaters" and the venality of the governing party. During the spring 1855 elections, the fragile People's Party alliance dissolved as Taylor once again ran for the mayor's office. His adamant nativism alienated Germans who supported the People's Party in the fall. Additionally, the Democratic Party was no longer solely in charge of state and local politics, and therefore the public did not hold them entirely responsible for governmental problems. Despite these losses, it was a fiercely contested campaign that pitted the editor of the *Times* against the Democratic nominee, James Farran. During the election, nativists, fueled by Taylor's antagonistic rhetoric, believed that Germans were tampering with the ballot boxes and preventing Taylor supporters from voting in the northern wards. The situation escalated into street violence, culminating in nativist gangs invading German neighborhoods to destroy ballot boxes and assault foreigners. A mob of Taylor

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<sup>162</sup> "Medill's New Order," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 23 January 1855; "Know Somethings," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 29 January 1855, p. 3; "Know-Somethings," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 10 February 1855; Roseboom, "Salmon P. Chase and the Know Nothings," 342; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 163-4.



supporters confronted a German militia in the city's eleventh ward. The nativists prevailed in this encounter, seizing a cannon and the militia leader's sword. As violence persisted, Mayor Snelbaker attempted to stop the melee, but nativists responded by assaulting the mayor. Eventually, the nativist mob destroyed a ballot box that allegedly contained fraudulent ballots. A unified collection of Irish and German militiamen eventually stopped the nativist rampage the following day in a bloody conflict that resulted in the death of two nativists. Although nativists opposed the final election results, Taylor officially lost the contentious election. However, the greatest loss for the nativist movement was that the violence perpetrated by the Know Nothings and their attempts to disenfranchise legal voters tainted the organization as anti-American.<sup>163</sup>

Know Nothing editors did not perceive the riots as entirely detrimental to the order. The Bruces concluded that, although the immigrant Catholic population in Cincinnati provoked the nativists by preventing them from voting earlier in the day, they could not tolerate the transgressions of the retaliatory Know Nothings. They argued that, "Whilst the ballot box shall be kept pure, its abuse, by whatever fraudulent means, must not be redressed by violence—but rather by peaceable resort to the courts and to the laws."<sup>164</sup> Despite this remonstrance, the Bruces did not perceive the riots as indicative of the order as a whole and continued championing their agenda. In the *True American*,

<sup>163</sup> Weaver, "Nativism and the Birth of the Republican Party," 52-3; Mary Alice Mairose, "Nativism on the Ohio: The Know Nothings in Cincinnati and Louisville, 1853-1855" (M.A. thesis, The Ohio State University, 1993), 114-116, 127-137; "Blundering Tax Gatherers—Protest of Cincinnati Merchants—The October Election will Decide the Case!," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 28 September 1854, p. 2; "Our Taxes! How the People's Money is Expended!," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 5 October 1854, p. 2; "The People, the True Democracy Victorious! Over the Combined Forces of the Pope and the Treasury Eaters," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 19 October 1854, p. 2; "The Cincinnati Riots," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 6 April 1855, p. 2; "The Cincinnati Riots," *Youngstown True American*, 11 April 1855, p. 2; "Review of the Late Political Campaign—Its Elements, Results and Consequences," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 19 April 1855, p. 2.

<sup>164</sup> "The Cincinnati Riots," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 6 April 1855, p. 2.

Elliot asserted that the actions of the Cincinnati nativists were justified because of sufficient provocation. He concluded that, "The riots were begun and continued by foreigners, and were only ended by the determination and dignified forbearance of the American."<sup>165</sup> In addition, the Know Nothing editors incorporated the riot into their conspiracy theory as further evidence that foreigners intended to subvert American elections through ballot fraud and preventing native-born Americans from voting. Although the editors witnessed the actual, physical effects their rousing articles could have on the population, they nonetheless continued printing stories designed to instill fear of an impending Catholic immigrant crisis. Although the riots likely alienated some capricious followers of the order, the violence did not deter more loyal supporters of the Know Nothings, who believed that a seditious Catholic plot was underway in the United States.<sup>166</sup>

By June 1855, the editors of both Western Reserve Know Nothing newspapers devoted most of their articles to addressing the extension controversy and detailing the conditions of slavery. Although the editors continued to express nativist sentiments, stories about Bleeding Kansas, fugitive slaves, and defenses of the Know Nothing Party's stance on the expansion of slavery dominated the pages of their papers. Numerically, the Know Nothing Order in Ohio had reached its apex, claiming an estimated 130,000 adherents.<sup>167</sup> The Know Nothings were unquestionably a powerful force in Ohio politics; their membership eagerly anticipated the 1855 state contest, in which they foresaw the election of a solidly nativist ticket. The Western Reserve newspaper editors continued to view themselves and their party as indisputably anti-Nebraska. As late as June 6, the

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<sup>165</sup> "The Cincinnati Riots," *Youngstown True American*, 11 April 1855, p. 2.

<sup>166</sup> "The Election Riots of Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 26 April 1855, p. 2.

<sup>167</sup> Roseboom, "Salmon P. Chase and the Know Nothings," 339.

editors of the *Express* argued, "The voice of the great American party of Ohio will be for freedom, free territory, and no more Slave States, and no more mob-rule in Kansas or elsewhere."<sup>168</sup>

Following Taylor's defeat in the mayoral election, he moderated his assaults on foreigners and stressed the importance of national unity. Like the Western Reserve editors, the growing prominence of the extension controversy and increasing public doubt about the Know Nothing position on the issue compelled Taylor to devote more articles and editorials to addressing the extension controversy. He continued to aver that the Know Nothing Party should not alienate any region of the United States by taking a definitive position on the issue. In addition, he qualified his vituperative assaults on immigrants. The editor, whose inability to attract German immigrants in the mayoral race contributed greatly to his defeat, altered his nativist rhetoric to oppose only future immigration, not foreign-born denizens currently residing in the United States. Taylor summarized his position by avowing,

His [the Know Nothing Party] grand object is the re-vivification of American Nationality by means which the current of events and daily developing circumstances may render advisable. He [the Know Nothing Party] expects to unite, and will, doubtless, bind together for this purpose, the North and the South, the East and the West, for American nationality has but *one* heart! "Sam" [the Know Nothing Party] hopes to unite all Americans in heart and principle into one great National Society, men of foreign birth as well as natives, who, forgetting their political nationality they have foresworn, and true to that allegiance they have assumed without coercion, come forward voluntarily, with their hearts and understandings, to prove their declaration of faith by their works with Americans, who cannot, as a class, be anything else if they would.<sup>169</sup>

Taylor's shifting position illustrated his growing concern over the divisiveness of the extension controversy. Instead of preaching his traditional exclusionist message, he

<sup>168</sup> "The Plain Dealer and the American Party," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 5 June 1855, p. 2.

<sup>169</sup> "The American Democratic Party and Freesoilism," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 19 April 1855, p. 2.

desired to bring all Americans into a coalition that advocated changing the naturalization laws and preserving the Union above all national concerns. Taylor's alteration signified a more general transformation of the Know Nothing Party. Gradually, the organization abandoned its nativist origins and embraced the notion of American unity.

The national Know Nothing Party finally resolved their party's ambiguous position concerning the spread of slavery at the Philadelphia Convention, a national gathering of Know Nothings that met on Friday, June 8, 1855. From the onset of the convention, there was a contentious atmosphere between northern and southern members of the party, particularly concerning the issue of slavery. On June 11, in an effort to achieve a degree of national cohesion for their party, the delegates began considering planks for the official Know Nothing platform. Contentious arguments over the twelfth plank, or "Section Twelve," dominated the proceedings. The purpose of this plank was to detail the party's position on the extension of slavery. The delegates, largely divided regionally, submitted two versions of Section Twelve for approval. The majority's proposal argued for a continuance of existing laws on slavery, decreed that Congress should not be able to deny a territory's admission to the Union based upon its stance on slavery, and asserted that Congress did not possess the right to ban slavery from a territory. The minority version, supported by most northern Know Nothings, condemned the Kansas-Nebraska Act and called for the reinstatement of the Missouri Compromise. Both groups within the American Party interpreted their respective positions as moderate and designed to preserve the Union, whereas they determined their opposition's stance would certainly lead to the destruction of the order and threaten the solidarity of the nation. The convention accepted the majority version of Section Twelve through

unanimous southern support for the measure. The passage of the plank caused most of the northern delegates to boycott the remainder of the convention and, in a separate gathering, reaffirm their opposition to the repeal of the Missouri compromise. In the absence of the northern bloc, the remainder of the convention declared the American Party in favor of stern enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, thus supporting the popular perception in the North that the Know Nothings were a pro-slavery party.<sup>170</sup>

The editors of the *Express* responded to their party's division by asserting that dissolution of the Union was now inevitable. They believed if the American Party could not withstand the national ideological divide, then it was unlikely that any national party could prosper. Without the unifying influence of national political parties, the editors determined that the Union could not endure, and that soon the states would amicably divide.<sup>171</sup> In fact, the editors welcomed this impending separation. They argued that, concerning the dissolution of their national party, "We rejoice to hear it. Now the issue will be met. Well and nobly have the Delegates from the North sustained themselves in the emergency—and the result has been just what we predicted, and what we hoped for."<sup>172</sup> Despite their boast, the editors, in fact, did not actually foresee the collapse of their party, asserting up until the Philadelphia convention that the Know Nothings opposed the spread of slavery as a whole. Following the passage of Section Twelve, the focus of the *Express* unmistakably shifted to containing the expansion of slavery. The Bruces did not need to clarify to their readers which issue would "be met." To the editors

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<sup>170</sup> William E. Van Horne, "Lewis D. Campbell and the Know-Nothing Party in Ohio," *Ohio History* (76): 207-10; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 167-171; "National American Convention at Philadelphia," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 21 June 1855, p. 2; "Great Know-Nothing Demonstration in Philadelphia," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 28 June 1855, p. 2; "To the American People!," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 19 July 1855, p. 3.

<sup>171</sup> "Dissolution of the Union," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 15 June 1855, p. 2.

<sup>172</sup> "There is a North," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 15 June 1855, p. 2.

of the *Cleveland Morning Express*, slavery, the issue that destroyed their party, superseded nativism. Their newspaper lasted less than a month after the Philadelphia convention, ending publication on June 30, 1855.

Elliott, the editor of the *True American*, responded in a similar manner to the destruction of his party. Elliott composed his response to the events in Philadelphia with an editorial entitled "Is there a North," in which he asserted, "The noble and patriotic stand taken in favor of freedom in the National American Convention is the dawning of a New Era in the political history of this Republic."<sup>173</sup> The editor's relieved, almost jubilant attitude matched that of the Bruces. Elliott did not perceive the division of his party as detrimental. Instead, he utilized the division as an opportunity to explicitly express his anti-slavery convictions. Unlike the *Express*, the *True American* continued publication until the end of 1855. However, Elliott removed almost all mention of nativism from his paper and transformed the *True American* into a Republican Party organ designed to curb the spread of slavery. In the August 1 edition of his paper, Elliott announced his support of the entire Republican Party ticket, and on August 22, he began printing the Republican Party platform in every issue.<sup>174</sup> This platform differed greatly from the Know Nothing policy, stressing the Republicans' opposition to the spread of slavery into any new American territory.

Elliott succinctly illustrated his ideological transformation in a November 14 article entitled "The Great American Question," in which he argued:

Slavery is the great American question to be met and decided by the American people. It is not to be disguised or put aside. He who denies this is no friend to

<sup>173</sup> "Is there a North," *Youngstown True American*, 20 June 1855, p. 2.

<sup>174</sup> "Republican State Ticket," *Youngstown True American*, 1 August 1855, p. 2; "Declaration, Platform, and Constitution of the Republican Association of Washington, District of Columbia," *Youngstown True American*, 22 August 1855, p. 2.

his country, or to human rights. The idea that slavery can be kept from public discussion, in Congress or elsewhere, is an obsolete one.<sup>175</sup>

For Elliott and his readers, the Know Nothing Party and nativism had become irrelevant. The Republican Party provided the only legitimate antislavery alternative for the former Know Nothings in the region. Elliott ceased publication of the *True American* on December 5, 1855.

The national Know Nothing Party's open declaration of support for the Kansas-Nebraska Act shattered the fragile fusion alliance in Ohio. During the state's fall 1855 campaign, the Ohio Know Nothings divided over their support of anti-extensionism. The internecine dispute arose over the party's prospective gubernatorial nominee. Anti-Nebraska supporters advocated the candidacy of noted anti-extensionist Salmon Chase, who firmly demonstrated his opposition to the spread of slavery as a United States Senator. However, many Know Nothings opposed his candidacy because of his vocal opposition to nativism, courting of foreign voters, and connections with the Democratic Party. Instead, these Know Nothings advocated Jacob Brinkerhoff for governor, a man with obvious anti-extensionist and nativist sentiments.<sup>176</sup> Until the divisive Philadelphia Convention, the Know Nothings believed that they could control the nominating process of any fusionist convention and arrange for the nomination of their favored candidates. The Bruces captured the early confidence of the order, boasting, "You can't select enough prominent 'Republicans,' in Ohio to act as Delegates in the Convention, without having in it a majority of Know Nothings."<sup>177</sup> However, their confidence and position of power in the alliance eroded following the convention. The Ohio Fusion convention on

<sup>175</sup> "The Great American Question," *Youngstown True American*, 14 November 1855, p. 2.

<sup>176</sup> Roseboom, "Salmon P. Chase and the Know Nothings," 340-1.

<sup>177</sup> "What of It?," *Cleveland Morning Express*, 11 May 1855, p. 2.

July 13, 1855 was largely a victory for anti-Nebraska forces, as the organization nominated Salmon Chase for governor. Although Know Nothings composed the remainder of the Fusion ticket, the party platform remained mute on nativist matters. By nominating a blatant opponent of the Know Nothing Party and avoiding nativism in the party platform, the convention indicated the supremacy of anti-extensionism in the fusionist movement.<sup>178</sup>

Not all Know Nothings were content to support Chase, including fervent anti-Catholic activist James Taylor. The *Times* editor organized a separate Know Nothing convention on August 9 in Columbus to oppose the Chase candidacy and the usurpation of the fusionist coalition by anti-extensionists. The convention attracted many southern Ohio Know Nothings, former Whigs, and pro-Union forces. The dissenting Know Nothings supported the entire Fusion ticket except Chase, nominating former governor Allen Trimble for the office. Although Trimble was not a member of the order, the breakaway Know Nothings favored the respected, elderly Trimble to Chase.<sup>179</sup>

The campaign that followed was a brutally contentious affair. Taylor attacked Chase for his purported abolitionism, declaring that if Chase won the governorship he would forcibly amalgamate African Americans and Caucasians in society. The editor particularly stressed that Chase would integrate the public school system. In addition, Taylor argued that Chase, as an abolitionist, was also a threat to the preservation of the

<sup>178</sup> "The Ohio State Convention at Columbus, July 19th," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 19 July 1855, p. 2; "The Campaign of 1855—The American Party in Ohio and Elsewhere—What will it do?," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 26 July 1855, p. 2; "The Anti-Chase Movement of the American Democratic Party," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 26 July 1855, p. 2; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 176-7.

<sup>179</sup> "American Democratic Convention at Columbus August 9th 1855," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 2 August 1855, p. 2; "Bolters—The Cincinnati Times—Sam, &c, &c," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 2 August 1855, p. 2; "Why We Oppose Salmon P. Chase," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 16 August 1855, p. 2; Roseboom, "Salmon P. Chase and the Know Nothings," 344-9; Van Horne, "Lewis D. Campbell," 208-211; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 178-9.



national Union. Thomas Spooner, who allied with Chase, responded to these allegations by portraying the elderly Trimble as an adamant supporter of slavery and alleged that his entire campaign was a devious tactic of the Democratic Party to divide the Fusionist vote. A majority of the Know Nothing leaders in the state, such as Lewis Campbell and Thomas Ford, also opposed the Trimble candidacy. For his part, Chase had the seemingly contradictory task of trying to attract Know Nothings and recent immigrants. Therefore, he could not adamantly condemn nativism for fear of alienating the Know Nothings, and could not espouse their bigotry for both personal reasons and for fear of estranging German voters. The Democratic Party, running Governor William Medill for reelection, attempted to avoid the prevalent Nebraska debate. They largely abstained from criticizing the troubled Trimble campaign and instead focused their assaults on Chase, who they accused of being a radical abolitionist and a threat to the unity of the nation. Chase's strategy of running as an openly anti-Nebraska candidate while attempting to avoid offending nativists or foreigners prevailed over the calumny of Taylor or the reticence of the Democratic Party. Chase polled forty-nine percent of the gubernatorial vote compared to Medill's forty-three percent. Most revealing for the Know Nothings, Trimble only managed to attract eight percent of the state's voters. His poor showing indicated Taylor's overwhelming failure to assert the primacy of nativism in Ohio. The 1855 election marked the demise of the Ohio Know Nothing Party as a political force in the state. Despite running on a ticket composed of Know Nothings, Chase soon distanced himself from the anti-Nebraska Know Nothings that supported his candidacy. When he ran for reelection in 1857 as the Republican candidate, there were no former Know Nothings on his ticket.<sup>180</sup> As the order lost influence in the North and

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<sup>180</sup> Roseboom, "Salmon P. Chase and the Know Nothings," 344-9; Van Horne, "Lewis D. Campbell," 208-

the nation became infatuated with sectional animosity, Chase and the Republican Party in Ohio no longer needed to placate the nativists.<sup>181</sup>

The Ohio election of 1855 presaged the 1856 presidential contest, as the national Know Nothing Party divided in their support for the anti-Nebraska, Republican candidate John Fremont and the pro-Union American Party nominee and former president Millard Fillmore. The American Party campaign had little resemblance to previous Know Nothing efforts. Instead of warning about a seditious papal conspiracy, they instead focused upon preserving the Union from sectional division. During the campaign, Fillmore made sporadic, placating comments to nativists, but largely ignored the potentially divisive issue during the campaign.<sup>182</sup>

As a political organization, the Ohio Know Nothing Party underwent unprecedented fluctuations in power. In two years of existence, the organization transformed from a small, secretive society into a formidable political force, yet quickly collapsed into an irrelevant party. Although scholars disagree about the initial reason for the popularity of the order, there is little question concerning their early appeal in Ohio. The Know Nothings attracted Ohioans to their order by propagating an image of a malevolent Catholic conspiracy designed to undermine American values. Although virulent and alarming, their rhetoric did not greatly differ from preceding decades of anti-

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211; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 178-9; "The Dissolution of the Union—How it is to be Effected," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 6 September 1855, p. 2; "Fusion Misrepresentation," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 27 September 1855, p. 2; "The Abolition Press on the Ohio Election," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 25 October 1855, p. 2; "State Election," *Cincinnati Dollar Weekly Times*, 25 October 1855, p. 2.

<sup>181</sup> There is much debate concerning the relative influence of nativism in the early Republican Party; that is, the degree to which Republicans usurped the Know Nothings' principles to attract nativist voters. For an argument supporting the notion that Republicans solicited Know Nothing support, see William E. Gienapp "Nativism and the Creation of a Republican Majority in the North before the Civil War," *The Journal of American History* (72): 529-559. For the opposing viewpoint, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971; reprint, 1995).

<sup>182</sup> Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 220-6.

Catholic calumny. The Know Nothing newspapers in Ohio were of crucial importance in disseminating the party's ideology. The Know Nothings' control over municipal, county, and statewide politics and their election of twelve Congressmen in 1854 provide ample evidence of the persuasive nature of their message.<sup>183</sup> Although nativism initially dominated the ideology of the Know Nothings, concern over the spread of slavery eventually became the paramount concern for the party. Leaders of the organization desired to broaden the order into a legitimate political party, not merely a one-idea organization opposing Catholicism. Despite this aim, the national order avoided taking a definitive stance concerning the controversial repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Because of their ambiguous stance, the editors of the Know Nothing Party newspapers continuously faced accusations that the Know Nothing party was a pro-slavery organization. The editors differed in their responses to this criticism. James "Pap" Taylor, the editor of the Cincinnati *Dollar Weekly Times*, attempted to avoid the issue whenever possible. When pressed, Taylor argued the matter was a southern concern, and that northerners should concentrate on combating the Catholic threat. The Western Reserve editors, however, opposed the accusation that the order was in favor of the extension of slavery. Initially, their responses were subtle, reserved arguments against the expansion of the institution. However, building criticism of the Know Nothings' ambiguous stance compelled the editors to include assertive declarations of their anti-extensionist sentiments. By June 1855, anti-extensionism superseded anti-Catholic sentiments as the prominent issue of concern for these editors.

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<sup>183</sup> Despite their election of Know Nothing candidates, the dedication of the bulk of Ohio's citizens to nativism is questionable. Because the Know Nothings in the state relied upon political coalitions and did not run as a separate entity as in other states, it is difficult to assess the degree to which Ohioans sincerely embraced the nativist rhetoric. Unquestionably, there were Ohioans who accepted the notions of the nativist propagandists; however, the percentage of Ohioans who did so is difficult to accurately assess.

The extension debate facilitated the downfall of the Know Nothings as a political force nationally and in Ohio. The downfall of the national party began at the Philadelphia Convention in June 1855. To northern members, the delegates' decision to support the repeal of the Missouri Compromise clearly indicated the pro-slavery nature of the order of the party. For months preceding the convention, the editors of the *True American* and the *Express* had proclaimed the American Party's opposition to the expansion of slavery. However, they did not fully comprehend the diverse nature of their party throughout the United States. After the passage of Section Twelve, the Western Reserve editors realized they could not continue to support the organization and maintain their anti-Nebraska readership. The editors of both newspapers recognized this dilemma and ceased championing the American Party following the convention. Taylor persevered in his support of the Know Nothing Party following the Philadelphia Convention, largely because of his conviction to nativist principles and his ambivalent position on the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The diverse reactions of the Ohio's Know Nothing editors indicate the permanent divide in the Know Nothing Party created by the passage of Section Twelve. As extensionism became the nation's prevailing concern, Americans increasingly identified themselves as either for or against the expansion of slavery, leaving little opportunity for compromise positions. The Know Nothings did not instantly collapse after the convention in any region of the nation, but the national downfall of the party had unmistakably begun. As concern over extensionism dominated American discourse, the Know Nothings and anti-Catholicism faded from American politics.

## Conclusion

The demise of the Know Nothing Party did not signify the end of anti-Catholicism in Ohio, only the downfall of an ephemeral political organization. The Ohio nativist movement, which culminated in the development of the Ohio Know Nothing Party, did not suddenly collapse after decades of growth. The popularity, abundance, and general acceptance of nativist propaganda ensured the continuation of anti-Catholic sentiments after the demise of political nativism. Throughout the United States, nativists' bigotry dominated public discourse concerning Catholics and thus formulated a popular misconception about the character and purpose of Catholic immigrants for generations of Americans. Evidence that anti-Catholicism survived the Know Nothing Party is abundant. On a national level, the anti-Catholic activities of the American Protective Association in the late nineteenth century and the Ku Klux Klan during the early twentieth century provide ample verification of the continuation of intolerance against Catholics.<sup>184</sup> In Ohio, anti-Catholic bigotry also persisted, as evidenced by the Cincinnati common school controversy in 1869. The conflict, pertaining to the usage of the King James Bible in public schools, strikingly paralleled the debate earlier in the century, as Cincinnati again demanded to know whether a candidate was "sound on the school question."<sup>185</sup> The perseverance of Protestant-Catholic animosity acutely demonstrated the difficulty that Catholics encountered in attempting to amalgamate into the dominant Protestant American culture.

<sup>184</sup> Donald L. Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964).

<sup>185</sup> Robert Michaelson, "Common School, Common Religion? A Case Study in Church-State Relations, Cincinnati, 1869-1870," *Church History* 38 (1969), 201-17.

As the failure of the Ohio Know Nothing Party did not mark the end of Protestant antipathy for Catholics in the state, neither did the enmity originate with the rise of the order. Decades of anti-Catholic hostility preceded the appearance of the Know Nothings in the state. The calumny of Samuel Morse and Lyman Beecher inspired the notion of a Catholic plot to undermine American republican ideals, which became the main impetus for the rise of the anti-Catholic sentiments. The idea of a papal-led, seditious conspiracy permeated popular discourse and greatly exacerbated Protestant-Catholic hostility and distrust. In addition to the dissemination of this theory, the nativist movement also developed through Protestant reformers' misguided efforts to better American society based upon their conceptions of morality and propriety. Increased animosity against Catholics and a desire to protect Protestant traditions fomented the rise of a fervent anti-Catholic campaign in Cincinnati. A debate concerning the use of the King James Bible in public schools initially stimulated the rancor in the city, as Protestants strove to protect the continued usage of their sacred text. The controversy facilitated a prolonged contest between nativists and the Cincinnati diocese and led to the development of a devout anti-Catholic movement in the city.

Despite the prevalence of anti-Catholic sentiments in the 1830s and 1840s, the nativist movement did not develop into an independent political force until the rise of the Know Nothing Party. In Ohio, altering conditions in the 1850s facilitated the rise of political nativism. During the early 1850s, the state concomitantly experienced an increase in the number of foreign-born residents, the deterioration of the Second American party system, and a rise in nativist sentiments. A series of events in Ohio cultivated the development of an organized nativist movement in advance of the

appearance of the Know Nothings. In particular, the reemergence of the public school controversy, the temperance campaign, and the visit of papal nuncio Gaetano Bedini promoted the rise of political nativism in the state.

The Know Nothing Party experienced a remarkably brief tenure as an influential participant in Ohio politics. The prevalence of nativist sentiments in Ohio and widespread apprehension concerning the alleged nefarious Catholic plot fostered a rapid acceptance of the Know Nothing Party in the state. The sudden political success of the clandestine order belied inherent faults within the party's structure. The Know Nothings' adherence to secrecy and their singular devotion to nativism fomented regional variations within the order concerning non-nativist issues. In particular, the party's ambiguous position concerning the expansion of slavery caused their demise in Ohio. Initially, the Know Nothings' equivocal stance on the issue allowed both supporters and opponents of the Kansas-Nebraska Act to embrace the order. However, as the controversy over the expansion of slavery gradually eclipsed all other concerns for the American public, the Know Nothings could no longer avoid the debate. The party's ultimate acceptance of the Kansas-Nebraska Act at the Philadelphia convention in 1855 alienated most of their anti-extensionist supporters in Ohio. The American Party that survived in the state discarded its nativist agenda and embraced the cause of preserving the union. In Ohio and across the nation, ostensible Catholic schemes and purported dangers of unfettered immigration became ancillary concerns to the debate over the extension of slavery.

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