

Nativist Riots in Manchester: An Episode of Know-Nothingism in New Hampshire

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On July 3 and 4, 1854, mobs consisting of American-born citizens assaulted Irish residents and did considerable damage to Irish homes and the Catholic church in Manchester, New Hampshire. These riots represent the most violent expression of anti-Catholic sentiment to occur in New Hampshire, even though these assaults were not isolated events. For instance, in Nashua a nativist mob attacked an Irish settlement, and three days prior to the Manchester incidents, fighting broke out between American and Irish residents of Lawrence, Massachusetts.¹ These and similar outbursts clearly were manifestations of extreme tensions that ran through the entire society, and they must be viewed in the context of the profound national crisis which was most evident in the slavery debate and the rise of nativism. These forces and the instability present in a rapidly expanding, multi-ethnic industrial community, proved to be an especially volatile combination in New Hampshire's first city.

The early 1850s were turbulent years. The political crisis of 1850 had intensified sectional issues, and the compromise of that year did little to resolve the most explosive issue in American life, the future of slavery. The compromise included passage of the Fugitive Slave Act which gave slave owners a powerful legal tool in their efforts to recapture runaways, but attempts to enforce the law

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1. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 303-314; Tyler, *Freedom's Fremont*, 385-389; Donald B. Cole, *Immigrant City: Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1845-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 35-36.

often met with strong resistance in the North. The protracted debate in 1854 over the Kansas-Nebraska bill led directly to the dissolution of the Whig Party and seriously split the Democrats, further loosening the institutional bonds of the nation.

During the same period, the United States experienced an intensive wave of nativism. In the 1840s, traditional Protestant antipathy toward Catholicism, fed by a large influx of Catholic immigrants, mostly Irish and German, provided the spark for the upsurge of intolerance. The Order of the Star-Spangled Banner was the most prominent of the many nativist organizations of the time. The Order was a secret society dedicated to excluding foreigners, particularly Roman Catholics, from political office, and it employed elaborate rituals, secret passwords and handclaps to attract new members. Its political offshoot, the American Party (more popularly called the Know-Nothing Party), enjoyed brief but spectacular successes, especially in the Northeast during the politically-tumultuous 1854-1856 period.²

In the early 1850s, Manchester was still a new town. Although a small cotton textile mill had been built near the Amoskeag Falls in 1809, the town retained the characteristics of an agricultural community into the 1830s. In 1831, a group of Massachusetts entrepreneurs purchased the existing manufacturing facilities, water rights, and much of the surrounding farmland. The newly created Amoskeag Manufacturing Company proceeded to build a complex which by the end of the century would be one of the world's largest for the production of textile products. For more

2. For a general description of Know-Nothingism and nativism during this period see David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 248-261; Allen Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union*, Vol. II: *A House Dividing, 1852-1857* (New York: Charles Scribner & Son, 1947), 323-346 and 380-411 and Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1938), 262-344 and 380-436. See also Michael F. Holt, "The Politics of Impatience: The Origins of Know Nothingism," *Journal of American History*, LX (September, 1973), 309-311.

than a century, until its closing in 1935, the Amoskeag mills were the dominant economic force in Manchester.³

The transition from an agricultural to an industrial community produced inevitable dislocations and conflicts. The plan for the original work force, including boarding houses for the Yankee farm girls who were to constitute the majority of the early mill operatives, was modeled after that of Lowell, Massachusetts. By the end of the 1840s, the Irish were beginning to replace the farm girls as the most important element in the work force. The first Irish in Manchester had been laborers on the railroads which were fanning out of Boston into southern New Hampshire in the late 1830s and 1840s, but shortly thereafter, Irish families were coming in to find places in the mills. In 1850 there were approximately 1,325 Irish-born residents in Manchester and during the next decade their numbers tripled. By 1860, more than a quarter of the city's population of 20,000 was foreign-born, and the Irish comprised 73 percent of the foreign element.⁴

In the months preceeding the July 1854 riots, Manchester was not isolated from the political and social malaise which was affecting the country. The Kansas-Nebraska debates were the dominant topic in the local newspapers, and articles expounding upon the evils of slavery were a journalistic staple.⁵ In addition,

3. Grace Holbrook Blood, *Manchester on the Merrimack* (Rev. ed; Manchester, NH: Manchester Historic Association, 1975), 81-190; Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, *Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 9-33.

4. United States, Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census, 1860*, xxxii; For a discussion of the tri-partite conflict which developed between Manchester's agricultural community, the new manufacturing interests and immigrant laborers during this period, see James P. Hanlon, *The Working Population of Manchester, New Hampshire, 1840-1866* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981), 1-84.

5. The two most prominent Manchester newspapers of this period were the *Whig Manchester American and Messenger* and the Democratic *The Union Democrat*. Both were weeklys and nearly complete files are located at the Manchester Public Library.

distinguished orators, including Frederick Douglass and John Parker Hale, personally brought their anti-slavery message to the citizens of Manchester.⁶

In June, the somewhat abstract discussion concerning slavery was charged with a sense of immediacy. Barely two weeks after the Manchester newspapers reported the capture in Boston of the fugitive slave Anthony Burns, a similar incident occurred in Manchester itself. Shortly after midnight on Sunday, June 11, two men arrived in Manchester by horse. They were members of the Vigilance Committee of Boston, a group organized after passage of the Fugitive Slave Act to prevent the capture of runaway slaves. The riders came to New Hampshire to inform George Moore, who had escaped from a Virginia plantation twelve years earlier, that his former owner and a companion were on their way to Manchester to take Moore back to Virginia. Although accounts vary, Moore had spent most of his years after escaping in Lowell, Massachusetts, where he had acquired an education and had taught school. During his stay in that Massachusetts city, Moore became the proprietor of a barber shop, had married a free woman, and had raised a family of three children. Warned earlier by the Vigilance Committee that he was about to be apprehended, Moore sent his family to Vermont and then went to Manchester in search of employment. He was working with a local barber, S. H. Bowman, for four months prior to the arrival of the slave catchers in June.⁷

Word of Moore's plight spread quickly through the predominately Whig, anti-slavery population of Manchester. Moore was the topic of discussion in several Protestant sermons that morning. This was the first incident of its kind in New Hamp-

6. *Manchester Daily Mirror*, January 27 and March 9, 1854.

7. *American and Messenger*, June 3 and 17, 1854; *Union Democrat*, May 31 and June 21, 1854; *Manchester Daily Mirror*, June 12, 1854. For a recent appraisal of the role of the Boston Vigilance Committee see: Gary L. Collison, "The Boston Vigilance Committee: A Reconsideration", *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, XII (June, 1984), 104-116.

shire since the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act four years earlier, and many in Manchester were outraged by the imminent arrival of the slave owner. A group of Manchester citizens quickly collected "a handsome purse" and, by means not elaborated upon, Moore was "put on his way to Canada."⁸

There were factors other than slavery which stirred the emotions of Manchester's citizens. During the first half of 1854, the city was increasingly feeling the effects of the wave of nativism which was growing nationwide. The newspapers described the emerging political strength of the Know-Nothings as well as the increasing number of nativist attacks against Catholics. Anti-Catholic sermons were delivered in local Protestant churches. There was also evidence of growing friction between Yankees and Irish as the *Manchester Daily Mirror* editorialized for the establishment of an institution to "clothe, educate, and save the young among our foreign population" who are so "depraved, so destitute and so filthy." Other citizens complained about the unseemliness of Irish wakes and of the Irish propensity to brawl on Saturday nights. The recent completion of the reconstructed Saint Anne's Catholic church, described by one Manchester newspaper as among "the handsomest in New England," further heightened the visibility of the city's growing Catholic population.⁹ Commenting on the appearance of the Know-Nothing movement in Manchester, local merchant Joseph Kidder remarked in his diary that "if it [Know-Nothingism] establishes the doctrine of Native Americanism it will certainly have accomplished one good thing."¹⁰

Manchester was a regular stop on the itinerary of nativist agitators. On June 24, nine days before the July riots, John S.

8. *American and Messenger*, June 17, 1854; *Union Democrat*, June 12, 1854; *Manchester Daily Mirror*, June 12, 1854.

9. *American and Messenger*, June 24, 1854; *Union Democrat*, May 10 and June 7, 1854; *Granite Farmer and Visitor*, April 22, 1854; *Manchester Daily Mirror*, January 7, April 27, and June 6, 1854.

10. Joseph P. Kidder Diaries, June 8, 1854. The Kidder Diaries and Papers are located at the Manchester Historic Association.

Orr, better known as the "Angel Gabriel," appeared in Manchester. Orr, who delivered emotional and inflammatory rhetorical attacks on Catholicism, typically wore a long white robe and used a brass horn to gather a crowd. During the spring and summer of 1854, Orr traveled throughout New England and New York State bringing with him a message of hate. Within hours of his appearance, at least six anti-Catholic riots ensued in communities including Boston, Massachusetts; Bath, Maine; and Palmyra, New York.¹¹

Orr remained in Manchester for three days, staying with a Pleasant Street resident who also sold Orr's books. Orr, with horn and regalia, gave at least two streetside talks on Sunday. Timing his appearances so as not to conflict with local church services, he attracted a sizable crowd on each occasion. Orr's visit to Manchester was not accompanied by the violence characteristic of so many of his other appearances.¹²

The message expounded by Orr was well received by many in Manchester. Writing in his diary shortly after the riots, Joseph Kidder, a man who deplored the violence associated with the Know-Nothing movement, reiterated one of its central tenets:

The most dangerous system of Religion, if it be not a desecration to call it a Religion, is the Roman Catholic. The subjects are simply so many suppliant tools in the hands of Pope, Bishop, and Priest to carry out just what desires these men may require. They are void of a conscience. Their conscience is [in] the keeping of the priest. It is a dangerous doctrine.¹³

The emotion and tension present in Manchester as a result of

11. *American and Messenger*, July 15, 1854; *Union Democrat*, July 19, 1854; *Granite Farmer and Visitor*, July 15, 1854; John Orr's career is outlined in Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 305-308; Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Frontier: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944), 387; Gustavus Myers, *History of Bigotry in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1943), 194-197.

12. *Manchester Daily Mirror*, June 26 and 27, 1854.

13. Joseph P. Kidder Diaries, July 12, 1854.

the anti-slavery and nativist agitations were further heightened by an incident which occurred on June 11, the same day as George Moore's flight. Following a Sunday afternoon carriage ride, Michael Calin (or Callan), a young, recently married Irishman in his twenties, became involved in an argument with former state representative John Marshall, the owner of the livery stable from which Calin had rented the horse and carriage. When Marshall, who was a Protestant, demanded additional payment because the horse had been ill-treated, a fight ensued in which Marshall killed Calin with a blow from a monkey wrench. Within a week a coroner's jury ruled that Marshall had killed Calin "with malice aforethought," although the *Union Democrat*, expressing the widely-held view of the American community, stated that "the facts [did] not justify such a verdict."¹⁴

Marshall's arraignment was postponed twice due to his illness and the absence of his lawyer. The delay further intensified the strong feelings within the American and Irish communities. An unfounded rumor contended that the Irish pastor, Father William McDonald, had urged Calin's friends to hire an out-of-state attorney to represent their interests and that McDonald offered to bear any expenses involved. Many Irish were outraged that Marshall had been permitted bail and were intent upon seeing that the killer of their countryman was punished.¹⁵

Marshall was finally arraigned on July 3, the morning before the first riot. A "large collection of people", presumably friends

14. *American and Messenger*, June 17, 1854; *Union Democrat*, June 14 and 21, 1854; *Granite Farmer and Visitor*, June 17, 1854.

15. *American and Messenger*, July 8 and August 5, 1854; *Union Democrat*, June 21 and July 5 and 12, 1854; *Manchester Daily Mirror*, June 15, 1854.

Marshall's lawyer was John Sullivan Wells of Exeter. Wells' absence was due to his candidacy for the United States Senate which the New Hampshire General Court was then debating. Although the leader after several ballots, Wells, a former New Hampshire Speaker of the House, Senate President, and Attorney-General, was unable to obtain the majority required for election because of his support of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

A few months later, however, in January 1855, the incumbent Senator, Moses

and supporters of Calin, had assembled across the street from the court house a half hour before the start of the session. The court room was not large enough to accommodate all who wished to attend the hearing. After lengthy and detailed testimony, Marshall was ordered to stand trial for murder. (The trial was subsequently held in October 1854 at which time Marshall was acquitted.)¹⁶

The arraignment was the final spark to an already emotionally charged atmosphere. The fugitive slave incident, vitriolic anti-Catholic rabble-rousing speeches of Orr, the killing of Michael Calin, as well as a week of record-setting temperatures, had combined to produce a volatile situation.

While accounts of the riots contain slight variations, there is common agreement as to the central events. On the night of July 3, Irish youths started a bonfire near the corner of Elm and Central Streets, an area of the city in which many Irish resided. Police extinguished the fires on several occasions during the evening, but the Irish boys would soon re-form and start new blazes. As the evening proceeded, the Irish were annoying passers-by, hurling insults, as well as stones and brickbats. A number of Americans were reportedly struck by the missiles. By midnight, the youths numbered about one hundred and were described by the *Daily Mirror* as being "the very refuse of the Irish population."¹⁷

Twenty to thirty Americans soon gathered and marched against the Irish, who repulsed them and chased them northward on Elm

Norris, Jr., died. Wells then was appointed by Democratic Governor Nathaniel Baker to finish Norris' term which ended March 3, 1855. Wells was the unsuccessful Democratic gubernatorial candidate in 1856 and 1857.

See Richard H. Sewell, *John P. Hale and the Politics of Abolition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 154-156 and 179.

16. *American and Messenger*, July 8, November 11 and 18, 1854; *Union Democrat*, July 12 and November 15, 1854; *Manchester Daily Mirror*, July 3 and 5, 1854; *Granite Farmer and Visitor*, July 8, 1854; *Stars and Stripes*, November 11, 1854.

17. *Manchester Daily Mirror*, July 5 and 26, 1854.

Street to the Marshall and Cheney Blocks. The Marshall Building was owned by the brother of John Marshall, the alleged murderer of Michael Calin. The singling out of the Marshall Block for attack was indicative of the tensions produced by the killing of Calin. The Irish mob proceeded to smash several windows and, by two a.m., they had assaulted two more Americans, injuring them so severely that false rumors quickly spread that "an Irishman has killed an American."¹⁸

As news of the attacks circulated, cries of vengeance were raised against the Irish. By daybreak a mob of Americans, estimated as large as 500, had gathered. The Americans then proceeded to make "an indiscriminate assault" upon the Irish homes and tenements on Elm Street between Central and Park Streets. Ten to fifteen buildings were reported to have been "pretty thoroughly dismantled."¹⁹

The attacks might not have been as "indiscriminate" as the newspaper implied. Subsequent testimony revealed that some of the attackers knew their victims and were attempting, in their crude fashion, to mete out justice for what they perceived to be the wickedness and immorality of certain of the Irish. Two rioters, for example, attacked the residence of John Mulvey. Kicking in the side door, they rushed into the house hollering for the mentally retarded Mulvey daughter, who apparently had given birth to an illegitimate child. The assailants threw the girl on the floor, one placing his foot on her neck. Later they dragged her outside where she was "viley and grossly" insulted by the mob. Subsequently, stones were placed on the Mulvey bed in some allusion to the alleged sexual misconduct of the daughter and every article of furniture in the house was destroyed.²⁰

18. *Ibid.*, July 5, 1854; *American and Messenger*, July 8, 1854; *Union Democrat*, July 12, 1854; *Granite Farmer and Visitor*, July 15, 1854.

19. *American and Messenger*, July 8, 1854; *Union Democrat*, July 12, 1854; *Manchester Daily Mirror*, July 5, 1854.

20. *American and Messenger*, July 8, 1854; *Union Democrat*, July 12, 1854; *Manchester Daily Mirror*, July 5 and 8, 1854; *Granite Farmer and Visitor*, July 15, 1854.

The police were able to break up the riot but the mob, which consisted largely of male youths, re-grouped and proceeded to march to St. Anne's, Manchester's only Catholic church, on the corner of Union and Merrimack Streets. The church was stoned and all the stained glass windows broken. The attack was precipitated by rumors which circulated through the mob that arms were concealed in the church basement. Further damage was prevented only by the heroic intervention of the next door neighbor, John H. Maynard. Maynard, a prominent Manchester resident, a Protestant, and Chief Engineer of the Fire Department, made a forceful appeal to the crowd. He was able to quiet the mob, which dispersed upon the arrival of the City Marshall.²¹

The next evening, July 4, following a day in which the temperature reached 100 degrees, a nativist mob, again estimated at 500, gathered on Elm Street. One man brandished a wrench (an obvious allusion to the Marshall case) and cried, "Come on boys, and we'll give them the monkey wrench."²² Cheers were also raised by the mob for "Angel Gabriel" and "the monkey wrench." The crowd proceeded north on Elm Street toward another Irish enclave. The police, better prepared than on the previous evening, arrested some of the ringleaders as well as a man carrying a black flag. The rioters then began another attack on the Catholic church, but again the efforts of Maynard and the police

21. *American and Messenger*, July 8, 1854; *Union Democrat*, July 12, 1854; *Manchester Daily Mirror*, July 5, 1854; *Granite Farmer and Visitor*, July 15, 1854; L. Ashton Thorp, *Manchester of Yesterday: A Human Interest of the Past* (Manchester, NH: Granite State Press, 1939), 138-139. Father McDonald's grand-niece, Sister Camilla, provides a romanticized version of Maynard's confrontation with the mob in *Memoir of Reverend William McDonald: First Pastor of Saint Anne's Parish, Manchester, NH* (Manchester, NH: Sisters of Mercy, Manchester, NH, 1909), 34-36. In the days immediately following the riots, accusations were made that the police had been less than diligent in quelling the initial disturbances. They did make at last four arrests following the riots. Two men were released within days for lack of evidence. There is no record of the disposition of the two remaining cases. *Manchester Daily Mirror*, July 7, 8, 14, and 17, 1854.

22. *Manchester Daily Mirror*, July 5, 1854.

prevented further damage. Still later, about 10 p.m., the mob gathered near a building on Elm Street which had been the focus of nativist attacks on the previous evening. The crowd expressed its determination to raze this structure. At this juncture, Frederick Smyth, the popular Whig mayor of the city (and future Republican governor of New Hampshire, 1865-1867), appeared. Smyth warned the mob of the possible consequences of any illegal action and, playing to their prejudices, said that those responsible for the first disorders, presumably the Irish, would be brought to justice. Three cheers were given for the mayor, and the crowd dissolved.²³

Two days following the riots, Joseph Kidder observed that there was a great deal of feeling in Manchester and "the feeling is against the Irish."²⁴ That evening, July 6, a crowd of several hundred persons congregated in front of the offices of the *Daily Mirror*. The mob was expressing its anger at a passage in the *Daily Mirror's* report of the riot which they believed portrayed the Irish as being of central importance to the city's growth and prosperity. Cheers were again given for Mayor Smyth, "Angel Gabriel", and the "monkey wrench." No violence was reported. However, the newspaper felt compelled in its next edition to declare that "we have never defended the Irish as a class or the Catholics...."²⁵

Adding to the emotion already present within the city, on July 8, another preacher, described by the anti-Know-Nothing *Union Democrat* only as "a half-witted apostle" of Orr, made an appearance at City Hall. This unknown itinerant was followed two days later by perhaps the most prominent nativist of the period, Edward Z. C. Judson, alias "Ned Buntline." Judson, a journalist, gained national prominence as the author of more than two hundred dime novels and as the promoter of "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Judson was also a committed anti-Catholic and in two talks given in Manchester denounced the extent of "foreign", i.e., Catholic,

23. *Ibid.*; *American and Messenger*, July 8, 1854; *Union Democrat*, July 12, 1854; *Granite Farmer and Visitor*, July 15, 1854.

24. Joseph P. Kidder Diaries, July 6, 1854.

25. *Manchester Daily Mirror*, July 7, 1854.

influence upon the government of the United States. Judson proclaimed to the citizens of Manchester that the annexation of Texas, the Fugitive Slave Act, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act were elements of a Jesuit plot which would enable Catholics to gain control of the United States.²⁶

Not all native Americans in Manchester had their views clouded by ethnic prejudice. The *Union Democrat*, perhaps with an eye to the next election and the growing number of naturalized Irish, praised the efforts of the Irish pastor, Father McDonald, and declared that most of Manchester's Irish were good people who were attempting to control the unruly behavior of a few.²⁷ Expressing sympathy for the Irish victims of the riots, the newspaper declared that "on the recent occasion - and it is not the first - hundreds of Irish women and children were driven from their homes to find shelter in the woods..."²⁸ In its annual report following the riots, the attitudes of the Manchester School Committee appeared unaffected by the riots. In discussing several primary schools with predominately Irish student populations, the Committee said that:

It is pleasing to note the interest which they manifest in learning. Could they have equal advantages with our native children, and improve as they do in these schools, they would not be excelled by any.²⁹

26. *American and Messenger*, July 15, 1854 and March 10, 1855; *Union Democrat*, July 19, 1854; *Manchester Daily Mirror*, July 10 and 11, 1854. For a description of Judson's career as a journalist, novelist and promoter, see Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 103-106.

27. Naturalization records in the office of the Clerk of the Hillsborough County Superior Court show that an increasing number of Irish were filing naturalization papers. While the exact nature of Irish voting patterns are unclear, some nativists viewed this activity with concern. See, *The Daily American*, October 10, 1854.

28. *Union Democrat*, July 12, 1854.

29. City of Manchester, *Ninth Annual Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the City of Manchester for the Fiscal Year Ending January 31, 1855*, "Report of the School Committee", 118.

In the months following the riots, however, voices of extremism drew the most attention. In mid-July, an Order of the Star-Spangled Banner convention in New York authorized a national political organization, and shortly thereafter Know-Nothing lodges were established in Manchester. During the last half of 1854 and the first months of 1855, the Know-Nothing movement was the main topic of political discussion. Given the rapid growth of Know-Nothingism during this period, it is difficult to ascertain if the July riots contributed in any additional measure to the spread of the movement in Manchester.³⁰

In September, a Know-Nothing newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*, began publishing in Manchester, its masthead adorned with the slogan, "Our own Countrymen first, and the rest of mankind afterwards." *Stars and Stripes* reported the Know-Nothing political gains but primarily printed articles which "exposed the Catholic conspiracy" or held foreigners up to ridicule and scorn. One such article contended that "the foreigner, often the Irishman, usually is ignorant and vicious; unfitted for the duties of a trustworthy friend, or neighbor or citizen, by his previous principles and practices."³¹

By the Autumn of 1854 the Know-Nothings were a potent force in New Hampshire politics. Their spectacular November victory in Massachusetts and political successes elsewhere added to their momentum in New Hampshire.³² The Democrats endeavored

30. *American and Messenger*, July 15 and August 12, 1854; *Union Democrat*, September 20 and 27 and November 1, 1854; Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861*, 248.

31. *Stars and Stripes*, November 11, 1854. Nearly complete runs of *Stars and Stripes* are located at the Manchester Historic Association and at the New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord.

32. See, for example, Nevins, *A House Dividing*, 342-346, Myers, *History of Bigotry*, 195-204 and Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 407-436. For an interpretation of the rise of Know Nothingism in Massachusetts, see Dale Baum, "Know Nothingism in Massachusetts: The Political Realignment of the 1850's", *Journal of American History*, LXIV (March, 1978), 959-986.

to retain their preeminent position in New Hampshire politics which they had held since the late 1820s. In an effort to appease the forces of nativism and still retain the Catholic vote, the *Union Democrat* declared that:

No one can have less sympathy with Catholicism than ourselves: yet no saint in the calendar will labor more earnestly than we, to maintain for that church and its members the same political rights we claim for ourselves.³³

Appeals to principle, however, went unheeded in the emotionally-charged political atmosphere of late 1854 and early 1855. The Know-Nothings appealed to the two great concerns of Manchester citizens: Catholicism and slavery. They charged that Catholic votes were responsible for the election of Democrats both in New Hampshire and in Washington; and further, that the Democratic Party, which had passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, was an advocate of Catholicism and slavery.³⁴

The Know-Nothing campaign also excited the political ambitions of many who saw this movement as an opportunity to advance their own political fortunes. One Manchester newspaper contended that men who were once satisfied to be state representatives now aspired to be governor, a United States senator or congressman. However, Mayor Smyth, a prominent Manchester politician, was reported to have withdrawn from a local Know-Nothing lodge because of unspecified political pressure.³⁵

Manchester's Democratic newspaper attempted to discredit the Know-Nothings, declaring that their victory would result in the rule of a secret society.³⁶ However, on the eve of the 1855 state and city elections, the Whig *American and Messenger* expressed

33. *Union Democrat*, September 27, 1854.

34. *American and Messenger*, February 17, 1855.

35. *Union Democrat*, January 10, 1855; *Dollar Weekly Mirror*, December 23, 1854.

36. *Union Democrat*, February 14, 1855.

the predominant sentiment in Manchester, declaring that the great issues of the election were:

On one side . . . liberty, Republicanism, Protestantism and the rights of Americans; and on the [other] side . . . Catholicism, intolerance, bigotry and anti-Republicanism.³⁷

The forces of anti-slavery, nativism and anti-Catholicism combined their efforts to end the long Democratic domination of New Hampshire and set the stage for the ascendancy of the Republican Party. The powerful New Hampshire Democratic machine, which had been assembled a generation earlier by Isaac Hill, had controlled the state government for all but one year since 1829. The party which had been weakened by a protracted dispute over economic policy in the 1830s and 1840s was further divided on the slavery issue. State party leaders found it increasingly difficult to maintain party unity as the growing anti-slavery sentiment among New Hampshire Democrats conflicted with the pro-slavery stance of the national party. Capitalizing on the strong nativist feeling in New Hampshire, former Whigs and Free Soilers were, by late 1854, successful in capturing the leadership of the Know-Nothing Party for the purpose of furthering the anti-slavery cause and destroying the Democratic Party, a coalition which would, by 1857, evolve into the Republican Party. Although the Whigs and anti-slavery extension Free Soil Party each nominated separate gubernatorial candidates, there was close cooperation between them and the Know-Nothings, including their common endorsement of three candidates for Congress and many state offices. By attracting new voters and winning the majority of Whig and Free Soil votes, the Know-Nothings swept the state races while Manchester elected a Know-Nothing mayor and Board of Aldermen.³⁸

37. *American and Messenger*, March 3, 1855.

38. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1855; *Union Democrat*, January 3, 10 and 31, and March 21, 1855; *Dollar Weekly Mirror*, March 17, 1855; Sewell, *John P. Hale*, 154-162.

The results of the 1855 election show that the victory of the American Party was largely attributable to the votes of former Whig and Free Soil voters. The vote for Governor in Manchester reveals that the combined votes of the Whig

The prevailing nativist sentiment also affected worker-employer relations in Manchester. There had been friction between the corporation and factory operatives dating back to 1840 over wage cuts and, more importantly, the hours of labor. During the 1840s the Ten Hour Movement gathered increasing support from labor groups as well as the general public, including endorsements by many newspapers and religious and government leaders. In 1847 the New Hampshire General Court passed a ten-hour day law, although it was so weak that it had little practical application. Amoskeag and the other Manchester textile mills stood firm in opposing the ten hour day, and in early 1855 the standard work day in the mills was eleven hours. The mills chose the week after the election to add forty-five minutes to the work day. There is no evidence to indicate a direct relationship between the election results and the timing of this announcement. However, given the nativist sentiment prevalent in Manchester, the lengthening of the work day of a growing immigrant workforce appears more than coincidental. This action by the mill owners resulted in the first labor strike in Manchester as men and women, many of whom were Irish, left their places in the mills. The corporations solicited

and Free Soil candidates declined by 1391 votes (90.7%) from the previous election.

In addition, 360 new voters, an increase of 15.2% from the 1854 election, were brought to the polls in 1855 most likely attracted by the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant stance of the Know-Nothings. (State-wide the voter turnout increased by 10.5%, the largest gain in nine years.) The Democratic Party retained 80.3% of its vote in Manchester in 1855, 90.8% state-wide.

Presuming that the new voters and the Whig and Free Soil defectors voted for the American Party candidate, Ralph Metcalf, in 1855, their combined vote of 1751 constituted 91.5% of Metcalf's vote in Manchester. (The state-wide voting pattern reveals similar results. Potentially, 91.5% of Metcalf's votes came from Free Soilers, Whigs and new voters.)

State of New Hampshire, *Manual for the General Court*, 1891 (Manchester, NH: John B. Clarke, Public Printer, 1891), 155.

For a discussion of the political influence of Know-Nothingism in New Hampshire, see Thomas R. Bright, "The Anti-Nebraska Coalition and the Emergence of the Republican Party in New Hampshire: 1833-1857", *Historical New Hampshire*, XXVII (Summer, 1972), 57-88.

the assistance of the newly-elected Know-Nothing mayor, Theodore Abbott, to force an end to the strike. Abbott's attempt, however, to disperse a gathering of strikers was met with catcalls and one dinner pail thrown in his direction. After seven weeks, mill officials, realizing that they had lost middle class community support, were forced to compromise and the old work schedule was restored.³⁹

The 1854 riots and the subsequent success of the Know-Nothing Party were manifestations of the divisions which were affecting the nation during this period. More important, these events also illustrate the tensions in Manchester, as New Hampshire's largest industrial complex experienced difficulties in finding amicable solutions to the problems of growth and acculturation of a foreign-born population.

39. Hanlon, *Working Population of Manchester*, 55-85; *American and Messenger*, March 24 and 31, 1855; *Union Democrat*, March 28 and April 5, 1855.

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