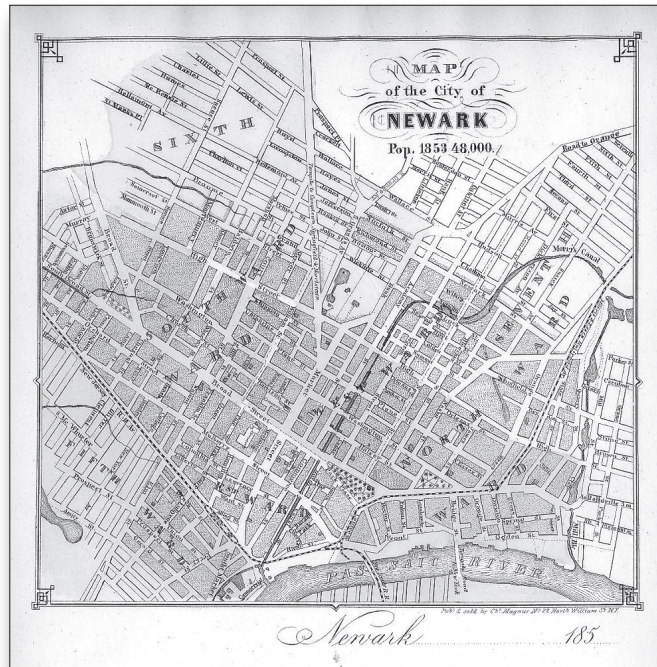


# “Dreadful Scenes In Newark:” The 1854 Nativist Riot & The Press

BY PAUL FERRIS



**Illustration:**  
*Map of Newark in 1853 shows a population of 48,000. Newark was founded in 1666 by Puritan leader Robert Treat and was incorporated as a city in 1836. The nineteenth century was a period of rapid industrial and population growth for Newark. Courtesy of Rutgers University Special Collections.*

Late in the morning of September 5, 1854, a “grand parade” of the American Protestant Association (APA) assembled in Newark, New Jersey, to march in commemoration of the first meeting of the Continental Congress in 1775. Those in attendance included members of more than twenty lodges from New York, invited by the parade’s organizer, Newark APA City Lodge No. 4. They would be marching in a state where nativist hostility had frequently erupted into violence. When the parade had concluded and the more than 2,500 marchers assembled for the 4 p.m. train that would take them back to New York via Jersey City, one of the parade’s onlookers lay dead and one mortally wounded, and a Catholic church had been sacked. In this article, I will examine the social and economic conditions that existed in 1854 Newark, the national newspaper coverage of this incident, and the role that coverage played in the national discussion of the impact of immigration in the United States.

## AN INDUSTRIAL POWERHOUSE

Mid-century Newark’s busy docks and thriving factories were a draw to newly arrived immigrants. Newark had received a charter as a city in 1836 and was designated as an official port of entry by Congress that same year.<sup>1,2</sup> It had a vibrant port doing an international trade, and was home to California-bound schooners as well as the base for whaling ships.<sup>3</sup> The Morris Canal—completed in 1831—connected the farming districts and iron mines of north-west New Jersey with urban centers such as Paterson, Newark, and Jersey City, and offered employment as well.<sup>4</sup>

Newark was an industrial powerhouse, with inventors such as Seth Boyden (patent leather and malleable iron) and magnates including Scottish-born brewing giant Peter Ballantine.<sup>5,6</sup> Stetson hats were made in a sizeable factory complex in neighboring Orange.<sup>7</sup> The city’s factories turned out a wide range of goods, including “zinc, chemicals, rubber, sap, beer, oil, cloth, glue, cutlery, and tobacco.”<sup>8</sup> An 1836 survey of Newark factories showed man-

ufacturers of shoes, hats, carriages, saddles, and clothing as leading the city in numbers of workers employed, and the manufacturing sector as a whole employed more than 5,500 in a city with a population of 18,201.<sup>9,10</sup>

Newark's Irish population, which "had been growing steadily since the 1790s," began arriving in the city in significant numbers in the 1820s.<sup>11</sup> More than one thousand mostly Irish laborers were employed in building the Morris Canal, begun in 1826; many lived along the canal during its construction, eventually making their homes in the city.<sup>12</sup> To serve this influx, the city's first Catholic parish, St. John's, was created in 1826.<sup>13</sup> The new Irish immigrants settled mainly next to the port's busy wharves in the city's Down Neck section, and west of the city center on Lock Street next to the Morris Canal, site of several tanneries.<sup>14</sup> Newark's newspapers took notice of the newcomers, of a sort, adding "(Irish)" after the mention of an Irish immigrant's name.<sup>15</sup>

Newark of the mid-nineteenth century was a largely Protestant city. Indeed, it had been so since its founding in 1666. Robert Treat and his fellow believers in the Puritan settlement of Milford, Connecticut, had been reluctant to sign the Connecticut charter, which proposed a mixture of civil and religious rule. In 1665, Treat and several associates conferred with Governor Philip Carteret of the Province of East Jersey, who promised religious liberty.<sup>16</sup> In May 1666, thirty families accompanied Treat to their new home on the banks of the Passaic River, where they purchased land from the Hackensack tribe. The settlers soon erected a church and chose Reverend Abraham Pierson as their first minister.<sup>17</sup> Reverend Pierson had learned Native American languages while in Connecticut, publishing a booklet in 1658 titled "*Some helps for the Indian: Shewing them how to improve their natural reason, to know the true God, and the Christian religion.*"<sup>18</sup> The new settlement was named for Newark in England, where Reverend Pierson had preached before departing for America.<sup>19</sup> Early on, Newark's town fathers decreed that "to preserve the purity of religion," only those "as are members of some or other of the



Congregational Churches' could dwell in the town. Eventually, 'outsiders' who could provide needed skills were permitted to become townspeople."<sup>20</sup>

Essex County, of which Newark was the county seat, was home to seventy-six Protestant congregations—in contrast, Catholics worshipped at four churches in the county, three of them to be found in Newark.<sup>21</sup> Anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant sentiments were close to the surface: the first St. Patrick's Day parade in 1834 was "jeered from the sidewalks;" landlords barred German tenants from having mass said in their homes; one Newark minister staged a "mock mass;" and Irish domestics were dismissed for attending mass.<sup>22–24</sup> When Asiatic cholera swept through Newark in the summer of 1832, elected officials and many citizens suspected the Irish for spreading the disease. City officials focused on the unsanitary and crowded conditions in Sharkey's Boardinghouse near the Centre Street wharf, and forcibly removed twenty-four people to a barracks more than a mile away, there to "live or die," according to the editor of the *Newark Daily Advertiser*, who branded the action as "inhuman and cruel to the extreme."<sup>25</sup>

**Photo:**

A late nineteenth-century photo shows the Morris Canal between buildings and running below Newark's Broad Street. The canal stretched 107 miles from Phillipsburg to Jersey City and, until displaced by railroads, was important in the state's industrial growth. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

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The anti-Catholicism that immigrants in New Jersey encountered had deep roots, extending back to the Colonial era. In 1702, the first royal governor, Lord Cornbury, was instructed by Queen Anne to “permit a liberty of conscience to all persons (except papists).” Civil and military oaths contained wording condemning Catholic beliefs as “impious, superstitious, and idolatrous.”<sup>26</sup> Many of these anti-Catholic restrictions remained in effect up to and beyond the nation’s independence. In 1844, changes to the New Jersey constitution allowed Catholics to hold elected office.<sup>27</sup>

#### NEW BISHOP FOR A CHANGING CITY

The arrival of Irish and German Catholic immigrants in Newark in rising numbers in the 1840s led to the establishment of two new churches, St. Mary’s and St. Patrick’s. Work on St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church began in 1841, and the first mass was celebrated in January 1842.<sup>28,29</sup> The parish served the needs of Newark’s German Catholic community, and its first pastor was Reverend Nicholas Balleis, an Austrian-born member of the Benedictine order.<sup>30,31</sup> The effort to establish Newark’s St. Patrick’s Church began in 1848 with Galway native Father Patrick Moran secretly purchasing land on Central Avenue and Washington Street, due to the anti-Catholic feeling of the day.<sup>32</sup> It was dedicated on St. Patrick’s Day, 1850, by Bishop John Hughes of New York.<sup>33</sup>

In 1852, in response to the nation’s growing numbers of newly arrived Catholic immigrants, the First Plenary Council of Baltimore created ten new dioceses, including the Diocese of Newark.<sup>34,35</sup> Reverend James Roosevelt Bayley was selected as the new diocese’s first bishop and was consecrated as Bishop of Newark by Papal Nuncio Archbishop Gaetano Bedini at old St. Patrick’s Cathedral on Mott Street in New York on October 31, 1853. On November 1, St. Patrick’s Church in Newark was designated as a cathedral.<sup>36</sup> In Newark, the installation of Bayley as bishop was interrupted by anti-Catholic heckling.<sup>37</sup>



**Illustration:**  
Engraving of Queen Anne published in 1823. In 1702, she instructed Lord Cornbury, royal governor of New Jersey, to “permit a liberty of conscience to all persons (except papists).” Courtesy of James Smith Noel Collection, Louisiana State University.

James Roosevelt Bayley had taken a singular path to his position as Bishop of Newark. Bayley was a member of a prominent New York family—his grandfather, Dr. Richard Bayley, was professor of anatomy at Columbia College, and he was the cousin of two future U.S. presidents.<sup>38,39</sup> Bayley was the nephew of Elizabeth Ann Seton, founder of the Sisters of Charity and future saint.<sup>40,41</sup> Ordained as an Episcopalian priest in 1840, he attended a retreat while on a visit to Rome in 1842 and was confirmed as a Catholic at the retreat’s end. Returning to New York, Bayley attended Fordham College with the support of Bishop John Hughes and was ordained by Bishop Hughes at old St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York. He served as Bishop Hughes’ secretary and as an editor for the Catholic newspaper, the *Freeman’s Journal*.<sup>42,43</sup>

The city that Bishop Bayley arrived in had

undergone a rapid population growth by 1853, much of it fueled by the arrival of new numbers of German immigrants—spurred by crop failures and high unemployment—and Irish immigrants, including many Famine survivors.<sup>44,45</sup> A census of Newark's population in 1836 by Isaac Nicholls reported a "total population of 19,732."<sup>46</sup> The city was hit hard by the Panic of 1837, and the 1840 census recorded that the population had dropped to 17,202.<sup>47</sup> By the time of the U.S. Census of 1850, however, Newark's population had more than doubled. With categories of "Whites" (37,664), "Free Colored" (1,229), and "Slaves" (1), the aggregate population totaled 38,894. The city was by far the most populous in the state, leading Paterson (11,334), New Brunswick (10,019), and Jersey City (6,856).<sup>48</sup> New Jersey as a whole had a population of 465,509; of that total, 59,804 were categorized as "Born in Foreign Countries."<sup>49</sup>

The state's growing immigrant population was confronted with a nativist backlash, both of an organized political nature as well as street-level hostility that often erupted into violence. In neighboring Elizabeth, a mob attempted to set St. Mary's Church on fire, and was thwarted by the church's parishioners. Similar anti-Catholic incidents were reported in Jersey City, Hoboken, and Perth Amboy.<sup>50</sup> Catholics were subject to aggressive proselytizing: the Hudson County Bible Society, founded in 1852 in Jersey City, "had as its goal placing a Protestant Bible in every Catholic home."<sup>51</sup> Its first annual report characterized Catholics as "slaves of Papal intolerance."<sup>52</sup> When the first school board was established in Jersey City in 1852, it was dominated by members of Bible and tract societies.<sup>53</sup>

A similar atmosphere of intolerance and violence was found throughout the United States, in both rural and urban areas. Anti-Catholic riots were so numerous in 1854 that the Baltimore-based Catholic monthly, the *Metropolitan*, ran a regular section titled "Riots" (which followed sections titled "Ordinations" and "Religious Receptions.") The periodical printed reports on disturbances in Boston; St. Louis; Williamsburg,



New York; New Orleans; Palmyra, New York; Cincinnati; and elsewhere.<sup>54</sup>

In the Palmyra incident, the magazine reported that itinerant preacher "Gabriel Orr preached and excited a riotous assemblage, which went the same night to the Catholic Church and attempted to burn it. They only succeeded in tearing out some of the fixtures of the altar, which they threw out of the window; the fire going out, after partially burning one of the seats."<sup>55</sup>

The *Metropolitan* also ran coverage of what they termed "The Ellsworth Outrage," reporting on Father Bapst, a priest in rural Ellsworth, Maine, who was robbed, stripped, tarred and feathered, beaten, and left for dead. He survived the attack.<sup>56</sup> The *Metropolitan's* editor addressed these occurrences head-on, stating that it was "a sad thing that we are compelled to keep a standing head for riots against either Catholics or foreigners, in the model-republic of the United States."<sup>57</sup>

The nativist and avowedly anti-Catholic organization the American Protestant Association (APA) had a strong presence in Newark in the 1850s, with Newark City Lodge

**Photo:**

Reverend James Roosevelt Bayley became the first bishop in the new diocese of Newark created in 1852. Ordained an Episcopal priest in 1840, he became a convert to Catholicism in 1842 and served as secretary to New York Bishop John Hughes. Courtesy of St. Mary's Abbey.

No. 4 marching regularly in the city.<sup>58</sup> Formed on November 8, 1842, in Philadelphia at a meeting of sixty-two ministers from a range of denominations (including Congregationalist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and German Reformed clergymen), the APA had a goal of “the protection and defence of the rights and principles which distinguish the Protestant Churches of this country, from the threatening assaults of Romanism.”<sup>59</sup> Meeting again on November 22 and December 4 to craft a constitution, they adopted the following:

*Whereas, we believe the system of Popery to be, in its principles and tendency, subversive of civil and religious liberty, and destructive to the spiritual welfare of men, we unite for the purpose of defending our Protestant interests against the great exertions now making to propagate that system in the United States; and adopt the following constitution:*

*Article I. This Society shall be called the American Protestant Association.*

*Article II. The objects of its formation, and for the attainment of which its efforts shall be directed, are:*

*1) The union and encouragement of Protestant ministers of the gospel, and to give to their several congregations instruction on the differences between Protestantism and Popery.*

*2) To call attention to the necessity of a more extensive distribution and thorough study of the Holy Scriptures.*

*3) The circulation of books and tracts adapted to give information on the various errors of Popery in their history, tendency, and design.*

*4) To awaken the attention of the community to the dangers which threaten the liberties, and the public and domestic institutions, of these United States from the assaults of Romanism.”<sup>60</sup>*

The APA sought to form bonds with similar organizations in Britain and elsewhere. In a

January 1843 letter, APA corresponding secretary Reverend Henry Boardman wrote to the editor of the London-based Protestant Association’s magazine the *Protestant*, announcing the establishment of the association:

*Dear Sir,—I have the honour to transmit herewith to your address, a copy of the ‘Address of the American Protestant Association.’ I beg leave to refer you to the several documents embraced in the pamphlet for a statement of the reasons which have led to our organization, and an exposition of the principles on which it is to be conducted.*

*The ‘American Protestant Association’ has been formed under very encouraging auspices—the great body of the Protestant clergy of Philadelphia having promptly enrolled themselves among its members...*

*It will give us pleasure to hear from you by letter, and to receive any of your reports, or other publications. You will greatly oblige us, also, by communicating, from time to time, any intelligence that may be of special interest to the Protestants of the United States; for the designs of Popery against this country are sometimes disclosed in Great Britain before they are known here.”<sup>61</sup>*

In Philadelphia, the APA grew quickly, with its monthly lectures drawing such crowds that the association decided to institute a weekly series in 1843.<sup>62</sup> That year, branches were formed in Cincinnati, Albany, Baltimore, and Pittsburgh.<sup>63</sup> In 1850, the New York lodge of the association was established, and experienced a rapid surge in membership, expanding to nineteen lodges with 2,800 members by 1854. The New York lodges, based mostly in Manhattan and Brooklyn, were described as “largely Protestant Irish.”<sup>64</sup> Many of the New York lodges had their own brass bands, as did the Newark and Paterson, New Jersey, lodges.<sup>65</sup>

In the political sphere, the nativist Know-Nothing Party was a powerful presence



in New Jersey in the 1850s. The Know-Nothing Party of the 1850s grew out of a network of secret nativist fraternal organizations that had formed a decade earlier. The American Brotherhood was founded in 1844 by prosperous New York real estate broker Simeon Baldwin—by January 1848, the organization had grown, changed its name to the Order of United Americans (OUA), and begun to operate openly. Members of the OUA took control of the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner, a secret organization described as “Know-Nothings” by Horace Greeley’s widely read *New York Tribune*.<sup>66</sup>

As of 1852, these nativist organizations “were beginning to function like a political party,” and OUA chancellor Joseph Morton made an unsuccessful bid for Congress from New York’s Fifth District as an independent.<sup>67</sup> The Know-Nothing order recruited members from among the OUA and secured meeting facilities from them but, unlike the OUA, was political rather than fraternal.<sup>68</sup> The Know-Nothings organized nationally as a political party, and by 1853 had branches in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, and Ohio.<sup>69</sup> Party officials met in New York on June 14, 1854, to establish a national council. The party’s declared aims were:

1) to protect every American citizen in the legal and proper exercise of all his civil and religious rights and privileges;

2) to resist the insidious policy of the Church of Rome, and all other foreign influence against our republican institutions;

3) to place in all offices of honor, trust or profit...none but native-born Protestant citizens;

4) to protect and preserve and uphold the union of these states and the constitution of the same.<sup>70</sup>

The Know-Nothing party thrived in the 1850s, electing governors in Massachusetts and Delaware; by the mid-1850s, “43 of the 234 members of the U.S. House were Know-Nothings.”<sup>71</sup> In New Jersey, the party went from strength to strength: in 1854, the peak of nativist political might in the state, “[s]ix

Nativist state senators and fifteen assemblymen were elected to the state legislature.” The Know-Nothings chose Newark as the site of its 1854 state-wide convention.<sup>72</sup>

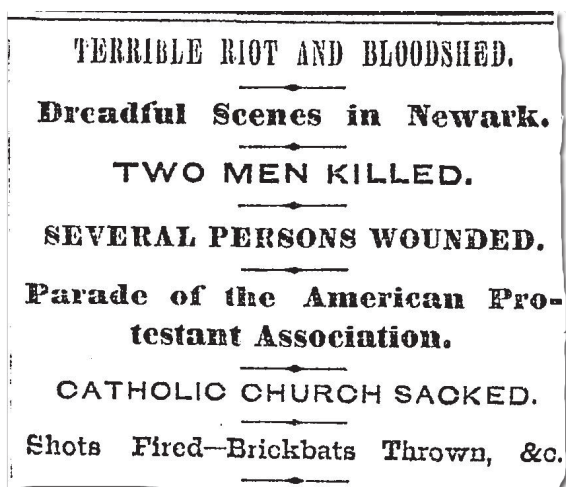
#### ANCIENT GRUDGES OF EUROPE HERE?

The APA march in Newark on September 5, 1854, began with the invitation from Newark City Lodge No. 4 to all of the New York city and state lodges to join them in a “grand parade” to commemorate the first meeting of the Continental Congress, which took place on September 5, 1775. A similar APA march had taken place in Philadelphia the previous year. All of the New York lodges, twenty-one in number, accepted the invitation, as did the Paterson, New Jersey, branch. When the lodges assembled for the trip to Newark via ferry and train on the morning of September, their numbers were estimated to total “between 2,500 and 3,000 persons.”<sup>73</sup> The procession assembled a line of march at 11:30 a.m. after arriving at the Newark Depot, and marched through downtown and up Market Street to Military Hotel, where they stopped for a luncheon.

After reforming the line at 3 p.m., they resumed the parade, up Broad Street and turning on to William Street, passing St. Mary’s Church, which served the city’s German community.<sup>74</sup> At this point, words were exchanged between marchers and onlookers—including workers from the nearby Halsey and Taylor patent leather factory—and stones began to fly. The *New York Times* reported that “the members of the Association were suddenly assailed by shots, stones and brickbats, from the interior of this Church. Up to this time, everything had been perfectly tranquil.”<sup>75</sup> The *Newark Daily Mercury*



**Illustration:** Lithograph published in 1854 shows portrait of an American citizen as idealized by the Know-Nothings. The “citizen” figure appears in other nativist illustrations of the period. This portrait was published by art dealers in Manhattan. Courtesy of Library of Congress.



**Illustration:**  
Headline and some  
of the details in the  
New York Times  
for September 6,  
1854. Courtesy of  
New York Times.

recorded a similar start to the disturbance: "At the same time, one or two shots were fired from the Catholic Church occupying the space between Shipman and High-streets."<sup>76</sup> The marchers "rushed pell-mell upon the church, forced the doors, beat in the windows, tore up the seats, demolished the altar and the emblems, and put the organ very much out of tune, so that it can scarcely be an organ again. The whole interior of the Church speedily became a mass of ruins. The outer shell of the building is all that remains of it. A building on Shipman-street was also attacked, and the windows broken in."<sup>77</sup> The extent of destruction to the interior and exterior of the church from the marchers was extensive:

*The fences are torn down, the windows and doors shattered, the shrubs about the door crushed and broken; and in the interior, the altar overturned, the sacred utensils and sacerdotal robes strewed around and trampled upon—the organ broke to pieces. The images, consisting of a costly Munich figure of the Madonna, and crucifix corresponding, together with the pictures, altar piece, and a splendid holy water font were also destroyed.*<sup>78</sup>

After the melee, the APA marshals succeeded in reassembling the line of march, and the procession made its way back to the depot, where they departed on the 4:30 train.<sup>79</sup> In the riot's

aftermath, one onlooker, Thomas McCarthy, lay dead of gunshot wounds; another onlooker was seriously wounded, shot and stabbed; and numerous people were injured.

#### DREADFUL SCENES IN NEWARK

The riot in Newark was national news, with extensive coverage in area newspapers—the *Newark Daily Advertiser*, *Newark Daily Mercury*, *Trenton* (New Jersey) *State Gazette*, *New York Times*, *New York Tribune*—as well as across the nation—the *Boston Evening Transcript*, *Boston Daily News*, *Boston Daily Atlas*, *Albany Evening Journal*, *Baltimore Sun*, *Dubuque* (Iowa) *Weekly*, and *Daily Missouri Republican*. The two influential Newark newspapers—the *Newark Daily Mercury* and the *Newark Daily Advertiser*—both had solid nativist sympathies. The *Daily Mercury* displayed stronger sentiments of the two, printing lengthy and favorable reports on the strength and influence of the 500-strong Newark chapter of the Organization of United Americans. These were in turn published in the OUA magazine, the *Republic*.<sup>80</sup> The *Daily Mercury* laid the fault for the parade's descent into violence on the Irish immigrant onlookers ("those who witnessed the affair impute the blame entirely on the Catholics gathered at the corner of William and Shipman-streets."<sup>81</sup> The *Daily Advertiser* blamed the immigrant influx for the nation's ongoing spate of riots: "There were no riotous disturbances of the public peace in this country, till within a few years, and since the recent vast emigrant importation." However, it also urged no rush to judgment, and offered another viewpoint on the day's events:

*In reference to the commencement of the riot, no opinion can be justly formed from the present floating rumors, as to where the culpability of originating the disturbance belongs. It has been currently reported that there were persons stationed inside the church, but the offi-*

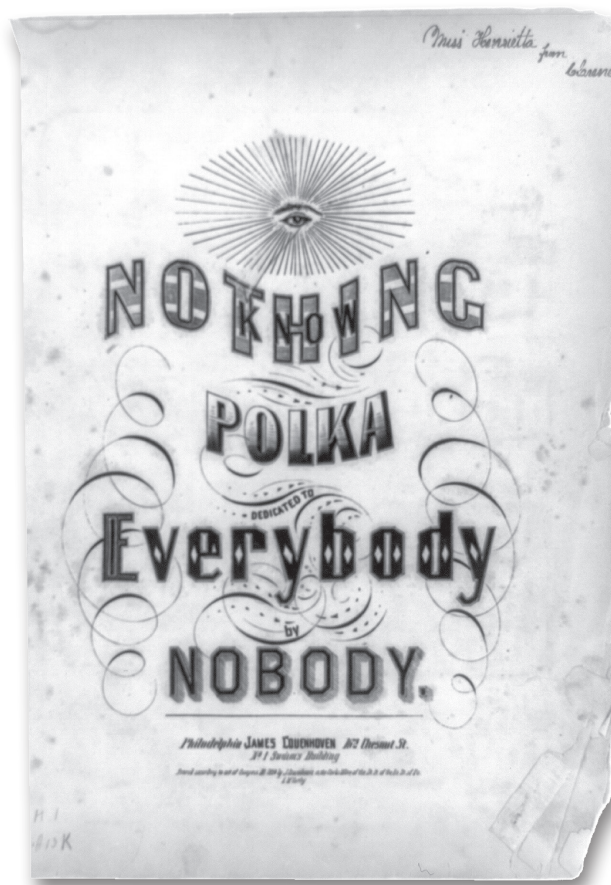
*ciating clergyman earnestly protests that this is wholly untrue....*<sup>82</sup>

In Boston, the *Evening Transcript* asserted that the attack on the procession had been led from inside the church by “some twenty Irish Catholics,” a charge not found in the initial reports from the Newark papers or in the *New York Times*.<sup>83</sup> The *Boston Daily Express* repeated this accusation.<sup>84</sup> The *Albany Journal* added that “Those who made the attack at Newark are responsible for the evil that ensued...in Newark, the Irish struck the first blow, and the whole blame is thrown upon them.”<sup>85</sup>

The city was quick to convene a coroner’s inquest, which met on September 6, the day after the disturbances, and focused on the circumstances of Thomas McCarthy’s death rather than the cause of the riot. Witnesses included eyewitnesses to the melee, as well as Reverend Nicholas Balleis, the pastor of St. Mary’s Church. Reverend Balleis “stated that he did not see the origin of the riot and knew nothing about it; he was in the dining room; his dwelling is attached to the church; and there was no person in the church; he did not know McCarthy before he was shot.” At the conclusion of the two-day inquest, the verdict was murky: per the *Newark Daily Advertiser*, the “testimony as to the death of McCarthy is exceedingly vague and unsatisfactory, and it still remains a provoking mystery both as to whence came the fatal shot, and who threw the first stone.”<sup>86</sup>

The underlying cause of the bloodshed in Newark was reflected upon in editorials in both local and national newspapers, many of which called for moderation. An editorial in the *Philadelphia Ledger* advised those planning to march to consider whether the march may be legal but injudicious:

*Whatever the rights of man to have sectarian processions or political parades, it is exceedingly injudicious, in the present excited state of feeling, to get up some such affairs. Why carry fire through a street sprinkled with gunpowder merely to vindicate the right of the highway?*<sup>87</sup>



The editor of the *Newark Daily Advertiser* asked: “Shall the ancient grudges of Europe be fed fat here on this our late peaceful American soil?... We call for order, sure, stable, unthreatened, permanent.”<sup>88</sup>

Both Newark Bishop James Bayley and St. Mary’s Church pastor Rev. Nicholas Balleis made a point to answer the assertion that the attack on the procession originated with guns fired from the church, and in the case of the *New York Courier & Enquirer’s* reporting, that Bishop Bayley and other clergymen incited or assented to the riot. Bishop Bayley’s letter to the *Courier & Enquirer’s* was lengthy, more than an entire column’s worth of text. His letter was reprinted in its entirety in the *New York Times*, the *Newark Daily Advertiser*, and other newspapers, and commented on widely. In it, Bayley stated that:

*...upon the hasty and one-sided statement of a newspaper of this city, which now frankly admits that it was misled, you not only assume that the*

**Illustration:**  
Cover from sheet music for the “Know-Nothing Polka” published in Philadelphia during 1854. Courtesy of Library of Congress.



*whole blame of the disturbance is to be laid upon the Irish Catholics of Newark, but you take occasion from it to arraign their ecclesiastical superiors at the bar of justice and public opinion, and to hold them accountable for all the violence committed.*

He continued:

*But besides all this, and I say it without fear of contradiction, the Catholic Bishops and Clergy have done and are doing their utmost, and no man can do more, from the pulpit and in their confessional, in public and in private, as far as their voice can be heard and their influence reach, to inculcate principles of peace and charity.*

In a pointed reply to Bishop Bayley's letter, which ran directly under the letter itself, the editor of the *Courier & Enquirer* wrote:

*We have no disposition to inculcate the Catholic Bishops and Clergy for not exerting a pacific influence over their flocks, and certainly find pleasure in Bishop Bayley's assurances that the Roman Catholic Bishops and clergy 'have done and are doing their utmost' in this regard. Not being in a position to witness the influence, we, like the public generally, could only judge of its extent by its results.<sup>89</sup>*

The *Courier & Enquirer* had long had a reputation in the New York Irish community for being vehemently anti-Irish, with some blaming the paper for stirring up sentiments prior to two riots in the city in 1834.<sup>90</sup>

Reverend Balleis' statement to the Newark press responded point by point to charges printed in the *Newark Daily Mercury* and widely reproduced elsewhere that church members were complicit in the attack on the procession and that the interior of St. Mary's Church was the staging point of the attack. He also detailed his escape from the church:

*Mr. Balleis states, that in the early*

*part of the day he read in the paper the announcement of the procession, and the route that it would take. He thought no more about it, nor made any mention of it till the music was heard, indicating that the party were nearing the church at which time he and three other clergymen—two from Thirty-first Street, New York, and the other from Brooklyn—were at dinner. He affirms that no person was in the church before dinner time, and no person could effect an entrance without it being known to himself or either of the two female attendants who were then in the house, in consequence of the Priest's apartments being attached to, and communicating with the church. He further states, that the first intimation he had of any disturbance was the actual attack upon the church, and the opposition made in the church was by an old German woman, who was employed in washing, and who rushed in for the purpose of preventing them from demolishing the pews; one of the assailants of the Orange party presented a pistol at her breast, when she exclaimed, "Shoot, I am only a woman," whereupon he took one of the altar coverings and threw it over her head, and then assisted in the work of destruction; he further adds, that so far from having any fire-arms in his possession, there was not even a single grain of powder in the building, and that all who first entered did so through the windows; and having done so, forced the upper door, the lower one having withstood all their efforts to break it; he says that he envisaged that the riot either originated in the party forming the procession, or by persons hired for the purpose.*

*He says that there are but few Irishmen connected with the congregation, and that those he saw assembled around the church after the occurrences were of such a class and character as would lead to the belief that they did not*

*meet there for the purpose of creating any disturbance—most of them being women and children; and the men who were present came from the tanneries and factories adjoining, in shirt sleeves, and without any possible means of concealing deadly weapons. He also said that such was the fear of himself and friends that they took off their cassocks and endeavored to conceal themselves.<sup>91</sup>*

The riot and its coverage inspired a lively spate of letters to New York newspapers, which printed a good number of them, many of them lengthy and impassioned. These included both eyewitness accounts and writers who wished to refute the details which had been reported, and in some cases, the assertions found in other letters to the editor:

***To the Editor of the N.Y. Tribune:***

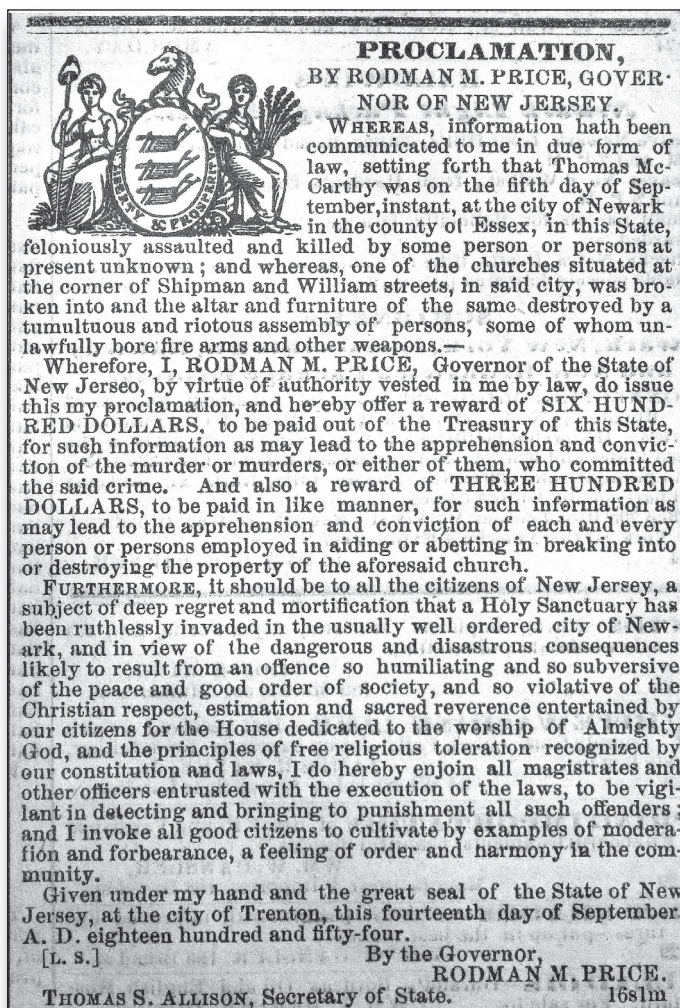
*Sir: I find in your paper of to-day a statement by a Catholic regarding the Newark riot. I beg leave to state that as an eye-witness I consider him greatly in mistake.*

*He says shots were fired first from the procession. There he is wrong: the first shot fired came from the first window of the church on Shipman-st. A priest and a large number of men did come from the church when the Protestants entered. And as to say any of the members being drunk, it can be proved that no liquor was used during the day by any member of the procession...*

*The above is a true statement of things as they occurred.*

*Yours,  
Veritas<sup>92</sup>*

The *Tribune* printed another letter on September 8, with the heading "Statement of a Catholic." The writer, who signed the letter as "A.", asserted that "It is not true that shots and stones were first fired from the church, or at any time, unless by members of the procession.... It is true these church-burnings and sackings are becoming much too common to be borne with



patiently; more especially as the authorities either will not or cannot protect us."<sup>93</sup>

Responding to the destruction of St. Mary's Church and the murder of Thomas McCarthy, on September 14, Governor Rodman M. Price issued a proclamation which read, in part:

*Wherefore, I, Rodman M. Price, Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of authority vested in me by law, do issue this my proclamation, and hereby offer a reward of SIX HUNDRED DOLLARS, to be paid out of the Treasury of this State, for such information as may lead to the apprehension and conviction of the murderer or murderers, or either of them, who committed said crime. And also a reward of THREE HUNDRED*

***Illustration:***

*This 1854 proclamation by Governor Rodman Price was printed in the Newark Daily Advertiser on Sept. 15 and in the Newark Daily Mercury on September 26. Publication of the proclamation continued in the Advertiser until October 9. News in other local and national papers regarding the riot had begun to wane much earlier. Courtesy of Newark Daily Mercury.*

*DOLLARS, to be paid in like manner, for such information as may lead to the apprehension and conviction of each and every person or persons employed or abetting in breaking into or destroying the property of the aforesaid church.*

The *Newark Daily Advertiser* printed Governor Rodman's proclamation on an interior page on September 15, and, subsequently, on its front page directly below the masthead for more than three weeks. On September 15, adjacent to Governor Price's proclamation, was a story headlined "Terrible Riot in New Orleans." The article began: "New Orleans. Sept. 13—Our city has been the scene of terrible riots between the Americans and Irish, and several lives have been lost in consequences."<sup>94</sup>

Although the governor's proclamation ran on the front page of the *Newark Daily Advertiser* until October 9, the coverage of the September 5 riot in local and national papers began to wane after a week or two. When a man named McDermot, injured in the riot, died of his wounds on September 17, a coroner's inquest was convened. When the coroner ruled that McDermot had died of cholera, not from his wounds, his friends demanded that he be exhumed and another inquest convened.<sup>95</sup> The coroner's second inquest determined that indeed McDermot had been stabbed and shot, and Captain Costello of the Newark Police testified that he saw "a stone thrown at McDermot and several shots fired from a revolver, one of which appeared to hit him, as he saw blood trickling down. Another man stabbed him with a sword."<sup>96</sup> After the conclusion of the second McDermot inquest, the coverage of the September riot ceased being headline material for the *Newark Daily Advertiser*.

The American Protestant Association march, and its deadly conclusion—a ruined church and the loss of two lives—was merely one incident in an era characterized by anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant violence and hostility. The nationwide newspaper coverage of the Newark riot, although often filled with

statements, claims, and exaggerations which inflamed tensions, also provided a rare opportunity for debate, dialogue, and calls for moderation in a volatile era.

## Notes

1. Cunningham and Cummings 1995, 41.
2. Cunningham 1988, 104.
3. Cunningham and Cummings 1995, 41.
4. Lee 1983, 4.
5. Turner 1997, 19.
6. Cunningham 1988, 101.
7. Cunningham and Cummings 1995, 36.
8. Cunningham 1988, 117.
9. Urquhart 1913, 897.
10. Pierson 1917, 269.
11. Quinn 2004, 82.
12. Cunningham 1988, 100–101.
13. Quinn 2004, 82.
14. Cunningham and Cummings 1995, 97.
15. Cunningham 1988, 101.
16. *ibid.*, 16.
17. *Historic Newark* 1916, 1, 2.
18. Cunningham 1988, 15.
19. *Historic Newark*, 1916, 2, 5.
20. Cunningham and Cummings 1995, 16.
21. U.S. Census, 1850 Census, 151.
22. Quinn 2004, 82.
23. Cunningham 1988, 136.
24. Ciccarino 2003, 26.
25. Cunningham 1988, 101–102.
26. Ciccarino 2003, 11.
27. *ibid.*, 15.
28. Old Newark 2010.
29. Ciccarino 2003, 33.
30. Herbermann 1900, 232.



31. Ciccarino 2003, 33.
32. Cunningham 1988, 132.
33. Urquhart 1913, 1003.
34. Shea 1892, 367.
35. Ciccarino 2003, 21.
36. *ibid.*, 21.
37. Quinn 2004, 82.
38. Ciccarino 2003, 18.
39. Turner 1997, 34.
40. Sisters of Charity—New York 2010.
41. Flinn and Melton 2007, 569.
42. Shea 1892, 497–498.
43. Ciccarino 2003, 18–21.
44. Anbinder 1994, 7–8.
45. Quinn 2004, 66, 78.
46. Pierson 1917, 268–269.
47. Cunningham 1988, 113.
48. U.S. Census, 1850 Census, 138.
49. *ibid.*, 142.
50. Ciccarino 2003, 26–27.
51. Shaw 1976, 59.
52. *ibid.*, 61.
53. *ibid.*, 68.
54. *Metropolitan* 1854, 63; 324; 511; 575–576; 642; 708.
55. *ibid.*, 575.
56. *ibid.*, 673–674.
57. *ibid.*, 642.
58. Ciccarino 2003, 26.
59. *Address of the Board of the Managers of the APA*, 1843, 5.
60. *ibid.*, 7.
61. *Protestant Magazine* 1843, 94.
62. Lannie and Diethorn 1968, 62.
63. Leonard 1971, 69.
64. Scisco 1901, 68.
65. *New York Times*, September 6, 1854.
66. Curran 1975, 44.
67. Knobel 1996, 90.
68. Schrag 2010, 33.
69. Curran 1975, 58.
70. *ibid.*, 59.
71. Schrag 2010, 33.
72. Ciccarino 2003, 26.
73. *New York Times*, September 6, 1854.
74. *Newark Daily Mercury* extra, reprinted in *New York Times*, September 6, 1854.
75. *New York Times*, September 6, 1854.
76. *Newark Daily Mercury* extra, reprinted in *New York Times*, September 6, 1854.
77. *New York Times*, September 6, 1854.
78. *New York Times*, reprinted in *Baltimore Sun*, September 8, 1854.
79. *Newark Daily Mercury*, reprinted in *New York Times*, September 6, 1854.
80. *Republic*, 1851, 106.
81. *Newark Daily Mercury* extra, reprinted in *New York Times*, September 6, 1854.
82. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, September 6, 1854.
83. *Boston Evening Transcript*, September 6, 1854.
84. *Boston Daily Express*, September 9, 1854.
85. *Albany Journal*, September 6, 1854.
86. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, September 7, 1854.
87. *Philadelphia Ledger*, reprinted in the *Newark Daily Advertiser*, September 9, 1854.
88. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, September 6, 1854.
89. *New York Courier & Enquirer*, reprinted in *Newark Daily Advertiser*, September 12, 1854.
90. Anbinder 2001, 30–31.
91. *Daily Missouri Republican*, September 10, 1854.
92. *New York Tribune*, September 8, 1854.
93. *New York Tribune*, reprinted in the *Boston Daily News*, September 9, 1854.
94. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, September 15, 1854.

95. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, September 19, 1854.

96. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, September 26, 1854.

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