SOME CONDITIONS FOR VIOLENCE:
THE CHARLESTOWN CONVENT RIOT OF 1834

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.

WILFRED J. BISSON

1974

This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

SOME CONDITIONS FOR VIOLENCE:

THE CHARLESTOWN CONVENT RIOT OF 1834

presented by

Wilfred Joseph Bisson

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Doctor of Philosophy degree in History

Douglas T. Miller

Major professor

Date 5/16/74

O-7639

ABSTRACT

SOME CONDITIONS FOR VIOLENCE:

THE CHARLESTOWN CONVENT RIOT OF 1834

by

Wilfred Joseph Bisson

This study examines the conditions which produced the riot at the Ursaline Convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, during the night of August 11, 1834. By studying the circumstances leading up to that outbreak of collective violence, my dissertation attempts to discover some of the factors which produced the upsurge in mass violence during the mid-1830's. The dissertation begins its exploration of the conditions which led to the riot by discussing the social disorder which resulted from the weakening of the institutional arrangements in American society during the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. This social disorder produced stress, a necessary background condition for the violence which erupted during the 1830's. The dissertation examines the role in creating a climate conducive to violence played by the complex of religious and ethnic antagonisms among orthodox Congregationalists, dissenting Protestant groups, the liberal Unitarian Establishment and Irish Catholics. The contribution of the Workingmen's movement toward the creation of a climate conducive to mass violence is explored. The economic and social milieu of Charlestown are investigated and the

course of events in the year preceding the Convent riot is traced.

The thesis of this dissertation suggests that, while the stresses resulting from the disorder arising from the decay of social institutions were important in producing the mass violence of the 1830's, stress and tension alone were not sufficient to cause the rioting. What was required in addition was a changed attitude toward the use of mass violence in the community. The community at large, which before the mid-1830's had disapproved of the use of collective violence, began to view riot as a proper mode of social behavior.

Mass violence was legitimated during this period. That legitimation was accomplished by the development of new popular social views which emphasized conflict rather than harmony in society and by the press.

SOME CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE: THE CHARLESTOWN CONVENT RIOT OF 1834

by

Wilfred Joseph Bisson

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to

Michigan State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

1974

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	THE CRUCIAL GENERATION	10
III.	TENSION AMONG PROTESTANTS	28
IV.	THE ANTI-CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTION	43
V.	TENSION AMONG WORKINGMEN	64
VI.	CHARLESTOWN DURING THE 1830's	74
VII.	THE STORM GATHERS	87
VIII.	THE RIOT AND ITS AFTERMATH	108
IX.	CONCLUSION	127
	APPENDIX I	135
	APPENDIX II	137
	BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY	139

INTRODUCTION

A species of modern folk wisdom holds that violence is as American as cherry pie.[1] To Americans who have experienced the turmoil and conflict of the 1960's and early 1970's, that bit of folk wisdom has the ring of unchallengeable truth. Americans were told in those years that they were a peculiarly violent people: that the American past, the American character, indeed the very logic of American historical development made violence endemic and inevitable.[2]

Americans have not always viewed their society in such sanguine terms. To the generation of the 1960's, the vision of America as a land of violence came as a shock. That generation was afflicted with "historical amnesia."[3]

---

[1]H. Rap Brown, civil rights militant during the 1960's commented that violence was as American as cherry pie in response to the Black ghetto riots of the mid-1960's. Henry Bienen, Violence and Social Change (Chicago, 1968), p. 13.

[2]For example, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in "The Dark Heart of American History," in Saturday Review, 51, No. 42 (October, 1968), p. 20. The thesis of Schlesinger's article is that Americans have always been a violent people, even in their most law abiding periods. "Our moralists have applauded much if they thought the cause was good. . . . Emerson and Thoreau applauded John Brown's atrocities at Osawatomie." Ibid.

[3]This phrase was used by Richard Hofstadter in "Reflections on Violence," the introduction to Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace (eds.), American Violence: A Documentary History (New York, 1970), p. 3. Hofstadter credited "members" of the National Commission on the Causes and the Prevention of Violence with originating it.

While violence may be as American as cherry pie and while America has a past in which violence has played an important role, there does not seem to be any empirical basis for the claim that America has had an extraordinarily violent past or that America is one of the world's most violent societies. Indeed, those who make such a claim may be influenced by a kind of reverse ethnocentrism. America as a society is and has been about as violent as the average Western society.[4]

During and since the demonstrations and confrontations of the 1960's, many scholars have attempted to reassess the role of violence in the national experience.[5] They have discovered that violence of one sort or another has been a normal occurrence in American life, but that some periods have experienced more collective violence than others. For example, the years preceding and following the Revolution were punctuated by regulator movements, civil disobedience of unpopular laws, tarring and featherings, and incidents such as Shays's Rebellion and the Whisky Rebellion. The Reconstruction Era was full of violence, as were the last years of the nineteenth century. Other periods seem, by comparison, quite calm. The 1820's and the 1950's were examples of this calm. A question arises: Why was domestic violence more characteristic of some periods than others?

---

[4]Ted Robert Gurr, "A Comparative Study of Civil Strife"; and Ivan K. Feirerabend, Kasilid L. Feierabend, and Betty Nesvold, "Social Change and Political Violence: Cross National Patterns," both in Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr (eds.), The History of Violence in America: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (New York, 1969), pp. 572-687.

[5]One of the better known attempts at reassessing the role of violence in American life during the 1960's was the collaborative effort by twenty-six historians and social scientists in preparing the Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, in the work already cited. Besides this report, a large number of single volume works have been produced, creating the beginning of a respectable bibliography. See the bibliographical essay, supra.

That question is of a scope which is too large for this study. To answer it fully, it would be necessary to examine all violent periods and all non-violent periods in history. However, a beginning might be made if attention were focused on the transition from a relatively non-violent period to a period during which the use of collective violence became very common.

The 1830's were such a time of transition. The mid-1830's, particularly the years 1834, 1835, and 1836, witnessed a dramatic rise in collective violence. Historians discussing that period have noticed this, and people who were living through the second quarter of the nineteenth century were also aware of it.[6] While Alexis de Tocqueville, visiting the United States for nine months in 1831 and 1832, was not sufficiently impressed with mob violence in America to comment on it, his fellow countryman, Michael Chevalier, saw major violence as the norm in 1835.[7] In 1834, a writer in the New England Magazine was expressing his shock and dismay at the mob spirit that was beginning to manifest itself. As the 1830's continued, and as the number of riots and other incidents of collective violence increased, so did the awareness of contemporaries. A common subject of lament among editorialists of the

---

[6]For example see: John B. McMaster, A History of the People of the United States (New York, 1883-1914), Vol. VI, pp. 86-89, 225-233, 268-298; William Graham Sumner, Andrew Jackson (Boston, 1882), pp. 113-118; James Elbert Cutler, Lynch Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in the United States (New York, 1905), Chapter 4; Clement Eaton, "Mob Violence in the Old South," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 29 (December, 1942), pp. 351-371; Russell B. Nye, Fettered Freedom (East Lansing, Michigan, 1949), Ch. 5; David Brion Davis, Homicide In American Fiction (Ithaca, N. Y., 1957), pp. 239-252, 270-277.

[7]J. P. Meyer, Ed., Alexis de Tocqueville: Journey to America (New Haven, 1960); Michael Chevalier, Letters on North America: Society, Manners, and Politics in the United States (edited by John William Ward) Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1967), Ch. 31: "Symptoms of Revolution", pp. 371-380.

period was the increasing lawlessness of society and the increasing violence of mobs. Thus the National Gazette complained in the middle of the decade about mobs gratifying "their lawless appetites with impunity,"[8] the Boston Atlas bewailed "Mob Law" in 1834,[9] while Samuel Gridley Howe lamented to the proper Bostonian readers of the New England Magazine, the same year, "The Times have sadly changed since the days of our boyhood, or else we are only beginning to open our eyes to the existence of things of which we never dreamed."[10]

Twentieth-century historians have demonstrated that the complaints of contemporary observers were not ill founded--that the mid-1830's did, in fact, experience an upsurge in mob violence--or at least that there were more reports of riots during the years 1834, 1835, and 1836 than before. Leonard L. Richards has calculated on the basis of reports in Niles Weekly Register between 1812 and 1849 that the mid-1830's were indeed extraordinarily violent; a very abrupt increase in mob violence began in 1834 and continued in 1835. The level of violence declined in 1836 and 1837 but never again, during the period Richards investigated, reached the low level which prevailed before 1834. In support of this, Richards found that Niles Weekly Register reported only one riot in 1832, and four in 1833; but in 1834 this figure had reached twenty riots and the next year the nation seemed to indulge in a regular orgy of rioting--Niles reported 53 riots during that year but, according to Richards, the Register reported only a small sample of riot reports during that year--hundreds of riots

---

[8] National Gazette (Philadelphia) August, 1835.

[9] Boston Atlas, July 24, 1834.

[10] Samuel Gridley Howe, "Atheism in New England," New England Magazine, VII (July-December, 1834), p. 500.

occurred in 1835 which Niles did not report. Richards, finding that the mid-1830's explosion of violence affected all parts of the country, concluded that riots were becoming a regular feature of American life.[11]

David Grimsted also concludes that during the 30's, the United States experienced a sharp rise in the level of violence, although Grimsted's figures do not show such a spectacular rise in the level of violence as do Richards'.[12]

In the Boston area as in the nation at large there was an abrupt upsurge in violence beginning in 1834. For 1834, 1835, and 1837, the Boston area experienced at least one major riot or other incident of collective violence every summer. Thus, in 1834, the Ursaline Convent was burned; in 1835 occurred the "broad cloth" riot against William Lloyd Garrison, while 1837 witnessed some particularly violent ethnic hostility between rival militia companies.[13]

Why did the use of collective violence reach such proportions after 1834? If one subscribes to the view that collective violence is a natural and inevitable type of behavior when groups are subjected to stress of one form or another, the problem is greatly simplified. In

---

[11]Leonard L. Richards, "Gentlemen of Property and Standing": Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America (New York, 1970), pp. 10-19. According to Richards, Niles asserted that he deliberately suppressed riot news during the summer of 1835 because he did not want to "hold our Country up to contempt and scorn of the old world". (Cited from Niles Register 49 (September 5, 1835), p. 1.) Leonards contends that Niles exaggerated the extent of this suppression. . . . After consulting many local historians, Richards concluded that Niles was remarkably thorough in his coverage--Richards, Gentlemen, p. 13.

[12]David Grimsted, "Rioting in Its Jacksonian Setting," American Historical Review, Vol. 77, No. 2 (April, 1972), p. 362.

[13]For the 1835 riot, see John J. Chapman, William Lloyd Garrison (Boston, 1921). The 1837 ethnic violence is dealt with in Ray S. Billington, The Protestant Crusade (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1963), p. 135.

that case, one need only define the varieties and scope of tensions which provoke mass violence in order to be able to predict the occurrence of riots.

The history of riot seems to support such an argument. When mass violence has occurred in American society, it was in a milieu of social stress. Indeed, in this paper, the existence of a great amount of social stress is documented.

However, domestic collective violence is not the only method by which societies cope with social tensions. Some groups engage in foreign war when suffering social stress. In some societies, a high incidence of drunkenness is a reaction to social tension. Suicide is the reaction of other groups. Mysticism on a large scale may sometimes be a reaction to social problems. Did social stress have anything to do with the construction of the great cathedrals in Medieval times?[14]

Riot is a form of learned behavior.[15] American culture, in common with all cultures, transmits certain behavioral patterns, teaching its members to deal with social strain in various ways. However, even though a tendency to resort to mass violence may be deeply embedded in American culture, the use of mass violence has not received positive social sanctions to an equal degree in all periods of American history. The period

---

[14]For suggestions of other ways by which groups react to social stress, see "Some Alternatives to Violence" which is Part VI of Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr's "Conclusion" in Graham and Gurr (eds.), The History of Violence in America (New York, 1969), pp. 814-818. See also M. F. Gilula and D. N. Daniels, "Violence and Man's Struggle to Adapt," in Science, Vol. 164, No. 3 (April, 1969), pp. 396-405.

[15]Gilula and Daniels, "Violence and Man's Struggle," p. 397.

preceding 1834, marked by a low incidence of collective violence, gave relatively little positive social sanction to the use of riot as an acceptable form of social behavior. In 1834, a new cycle began in which collective violence was much more frequently observed. American society relearned the use of mass violence and became more riot prone.[16]

This essay uses the Ursaline Convent riot in Charlestown in 1834 as a focal point in tracing the growth of a readiness for riot, in showing how collective violence came to be seen as a legitimate form of social behavior during the course of events leading up to the riot, and in suggesting the role of the Convent riot in the further legitimation of social violence. In this essay, the terms legitimate and legitimation are used in the sense that Sandra Ball-Rokeach used them in an article on the problem of the legitimation of violence. Ball-Rokeach defined legitimacy as "a collective judgment that attributes the qualities of 'goodness' or 'morality' or 'righteousness' to behavior."[17]

---

[16]Ted Robert Gurr, one of the leading theoreticians about violence has constructed a model which, in part, supports the above theory. Gurr wrote: The greater the normative and utilitarian justifications for strife in a discontented group, the greater the magnitude of strife. Normative justifications are the basic attitudes men have about the desirability of violence, ranging from culturally implanted dispositions about how to deal with anger, to traditions and ideologies that variously praise order or celebrate violence. Utilitarian justifications are beliefs about the success of strife, beliefs which are as likely to be derived from others' successes as from current calculation.
Ted Robert Gurr, "Sources of Rebellion in Western Societies" in James F. Short and Marvin E. Wolfgang (eds.), Collective Violence (New York, 1972), p. 134.

[17]Sandra Ball-Rokeach, "The Legitimation of Violence," in Collective Violence, pp. 100-111.

The riot at the Ursaline Convent occurred in a milieu in which social tension abounded. The old social order, which had provided a degree of status security, had been weakened as its major institutions lost much of their power to define and enforce social behavior. In the social disorder which resulted from the institutional weakness, a sense of loss and insecurity pervaded much of American society. Chapter Two, "The Crucial Generation," is a brief recapitulation of that process.

Eastern Massachusetts, in which the Convent riot took place, experienced the processes which were weakening institutions in much of the rest of the United States, but the area possessed some unique features. In the first place, the struggle for the disestablishment of the Congregational Church lasted longer in Massachusetts (it wasn't complete until 1833--the year before the Convent riot) and produced a group of socially critical clergymen who elaborated and spread a theory of social conflict which contributed to social tension. In the second place, many of the social, economic, and political leaders of Eastern Massachusetts were a self-conscious group of Unitarians who provoked resentment by a part of the "common people." The rioters who attacked the Convent were indirectly attacking that group. Chapter Three, "Tension Among Protestants," traces these developments.

The principal targets in the Ursaline Convent riot were the Catholic Church and the Irish. The Church, a relatively new institution in America, experienced phenomenal growth during the first part of the nineteenth century. During the early 1830's, when the volume of Irish immigration was growing rapidly, the Catholic Church and the Catholic Irish increasingly became the targets of the tensions plaguing society. Chapter Four, "The Anti-Catholic Contribution," traces that development.

Chapter Five, "Tension Among Workingmen," explores a variety of social tensions which played a large role in the riot at the Convent. In addition, Chapter Five discusses the world view of the workingmen in its relation to the development of collective violence.

In Chapter Six, "Charlestown in the Early 1830's," the economic, political, and social milieu in which the Convent riot took place are examined.

The principal theme of this essay is that the underlying causes for the riot in Charlestown were the social rifts and strains described in Chapters Two through Six, but that before the background tension could eventuate in collective violence, the use of mass violence had to be accepted by important elements in the community as proper and justified--in a word, legitimate. Chapter Seven, "The Storm Gathers," explores the events during the year prior to the Convent fire, tracing the development of legitimacy for social violence in the Boston area.

The intent of Chapter Eight, "The Riot and Its Aftermath," is to focus on the idea of legitimacy; to show that the rioters enjoyed some very powerful positive sanctions in the Charlestown and Boston communities. Chapter Eight also goes beyond the riot, to suggest how that outbreak served to legitimize more violence.

CHAPTER II

THE CRUCIAL GENERATION

Great changes, as well as great events in history, are thought to center on periods of crisis: Wars or threats of wars, depressions or economic disasters. The long, seemingly serene periods between the great events are superficially less exciting than the large occurrences and do not often come to be thought of as watersheds. The period from the War of 1812 to the Mexican War has been viewed as an uneventful period of this type.

Yet, in many respects, this period is the most important watershed in American history because it is the period during which the most significant change took place. In the words of Douglas T. Miller, this was the period in which modern America was born.[1] During this time the nature of American society became radically altered; American values and attitudes were transformed and American views of society and the community were greatly modified. During this, the Jacksonian period, the foundations of the modern American social order were laid and the American national character took shape. Because of these phenomena, the generation which reached maturity after the War of 1812 was a crucial generation in the formation of the American social order.

Miller uses the Rip Van Winkle symbol to dramatize the depth and scope of the radical change. In his view, the America of the generations

---

[1]Douglas T. Miller, The Birth of Modern America 1820-1850 (New York, 1970).

after 1816 experienced a change similar to that witnessed by Washington Irving's famous character after a twenty-year sleep.[2] Rowland Berthoff, in his grand scheme of periodization for the development of American social order uses the year 1815, roughly the end of the War of 1812, to begin what to him seems the long middle period of American social history, i.e., the period of social disorder during which social institutions functioned weakly, if at all.[3] According to this view, the generation after 1815 witnessed dissolution of the old institutional arrangements. This crash of the old order may have been an essential prerequisite for the growth of a new social order, but a new order did not immediately emerge on the ruins of the old social institutions. Rather, a long, unsettled period of social disarray followed. The new social order that was ultimately to appear did so after a long period of social chaos and with much travail. In 1834, when the Ursaline Convent riot occurred, some Americans were figuratively prowling around the relics of the previous institutional arrangements, vainly attempting to breathe life into them.[4]

Before the disorganization of the early nineteenth century, there was, in America, a high degree of social cohesiveness--a social cohesiveness

---

[2] Ibid., pp. 19 ff.

[3] Rowland Berthoff, "The American Social Order: A Conservative Hypothesis," The American Historical Review, LXV (April, 1960), pp. 495-514.

[4] Thus, in 1828, Lyman Beecher, a champion of the still established Congregational Church in Massachusetts, delivered a sermon on the "Rights of the Congregational Church in Massachusetts" in which he argued that the Congregational Church had been legally established in Massachusetts since colonial antiquity, was still legally established, and should insist on its privileges. This sermon was reviewed in the Christian Examiner Volume 5 (Boston, 1828), p. 318.

rooted in an organic concept of the community and enforced by effective social institutions. The local community, the family structure, the churches and an effective system of social classes butressed by class respect guaranteed social stability. By the 1830's these had been swept away, together with the organic concept of the community. In their place, emerged not a new social order, but social disorder, almost anarchy, which, Berthoff says, was not ended until a new social order was fashioned in the early twentieth century.[5]

The destruction of the old social order took place, in part, because of a modification of some beliefs and attitudes. While it is difficult to pinpoint specific attitudes whose modification helped to transform society, a general idea can be gained by listing some. One obvious attitude or belief involves the idea of progress itself. Extensive studies on the belief in progress have been written,[6] and it is not my purpose to review that literature. However, in much of the writing concerning the development of the ideal of earthly progress, there seems to be something missing; the simple secularization of the Christian millennium of which Carl Becker writes[7] would not, by itself, release the vast reservoir of psychic energy which the transformation of American society required. Was not the millennium itself viewed in static terms? In the bundle of attitudes whose modification was required for the social transformation a more personal, a more urgent force, was essential.

---

[5]Berthoff, "The American Social Order," passim; but also see Berthoff, An Unsettled People: Social Order and Disorder in American History (New York, 1971), pp. xi-xvi.

[6]See for example Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., The Idea of Progress in America, 1815-1860 (New York, 1944).

[7]Carl Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven, 1932).

The new urgency in American society is evidenced by the way Americans reacted to technological innovations. Why did the transportation revolution occur in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and not before? Certainly the technology was available earlier; as Miller[8] has shown, the basic inventions were made at the end of the eighteenth century but were rejected. The heart of the question is, why were the technological innovations that made the transportation revolution possible accepted when they were? This new urgency in life which Americans of the crucial generation experienced involved a new conception or a fresh appreciation of time, coupled with a revised understanding of the quality of life. Production, speed, and efficiency were now given the highest priorities, relegating the esteemed values of the older generation--gracefulness, appearance, and propriety--to subordinate positions. Thus any object or personal relation came to be considered primarily in terms of its utilitarian function. In that spirit Willis Hall at Yale rejoiced:

> The age of philosophy has passed, and left few memorials to its existence. That of glory has vanished and nothing but a painful tradition of human suffering remains. That of utility has commenced, and it requires little warmth of imagination to anticipate for it a reign lasting as time, and radiant with the wonders of unveiled nature.[9]

The changes brought about by this crucial generation can, for purposes of convenience, be separated into two categories: In one category are the objective (because quantifiable) changes. These objective changes included the rapid settlement of the West after 1815, the transportation revolution, the beginning of modern cities, and the

---

[8]Miller, The Birth, pp. 25-26.

[9]Willis Hall, An Adress Delivered Before the Society of Phi Beta Kappa in Yale College (New Haven, 1844), p. 18.

tremendously accelerated rate of technological innovation, as well as the growth of the national market and a general economic improvement.

The other category of change is called subjective because the changes are not easily quantified, and they can be shown largely by impressionistic evidence. The subjective changes are, however, of major importance because they concern the basic social order in which the more observable objective changes took place. They include, first, an increased sense of impermanency and transience in the society; a breakdown in the functions of the social institutions as agencies for the definition of social roles and as agencies for social control; a transformation of the conception of the community. The social institutions concerned in the general collapse were the family, the local community, the established churches, and the system of social classes.

The westward surge of the population in the early nineteenth century weakened the institutional role of the older communities in the East because it then became possible to escape the control of the old community, to divorce the original community simply by moving away from it. Concommitant with the decline of the local community as a source of social control, the church and the system of social classes began their decline as agencies of control. In New England, where the Congregational Church had been the established church, rebellion after rebellion of evangelical, sectarian groups in the first years of the nineteenth century, shook, and in the second and third decades of that century, toppled the religious establishment. The rapid growth of these evangelical sects, whose creed was a millennial perfectionism, coincided with the secession from Congregationalism of the Unitarians who, though liberal in theology, were social and political conservatives and who were especially influential

in the economic "aristocracy." The effect of these attacks on the established churches produced a seige mentality within those churches which was to be an important part of the social disorder of the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

As important as (if not more important than) the defensive outlook produced by the religious schisms was the erosion of the legitimacy of the established churches in their role as arbiters of social mores. No longer were they broad churches whose constituency was the community at large; no longer could a church command a community consensus to enforce its sanctions. In short, the disestablishment of the churches had the effect of changing the position of the church to that of a denomination which became increasingly representative of a class constituency.

Paralleling the decline of the old established churches as institutions for social control was the disappearance, after 1815, of respect for social classes. This does not mean that America became a classless society or that the differences between social classes disappeared. The reverse seems to be the case. In fact, the second quarter of the nineteenth century experienced the rise of a great number of men to new wealth who eagerly aspired "after aristocratic distinctions" and who emphasized, rather than effaced, class distinctions.[10] What is meant here is, rather, that while class distinctions were growing greater, and while class antagonisms were being heightened, class harmony was disintegrating as the sense of inter-class obligations, i.e., "noblesse oblige" and patrician deference, was breaking down. The growing hostility

---

[10]Douglass T. Miller, Jacksonian Aristocracy: Class and Aristocracy In New York 1830-1860 (New York, 1967).

between social classes caused such conservatives as Samuel Gridley Howe to complain bitterly about the new hostility between the rich and poor, which he thought the result of envy and malice.[11] The bond, the loyalty between social classes was disappearing, and another institution which had produced a degree of social harmony, cohesion, and order, was being relegated to the past.

Simultaneously, the transportation revolution and growth of the national market, which occurred almost simultaneously with the weakening of old social institutions, had the effect of further disrupting traditional social arrangements. The improved transportation systems inaugurated by the transportation revolution stimulated the national economy to expand by destroying local barriers. But local barriers were also bulwarks which protected a system of working relationships within the local crafts and industries. The existence and smooth functioning of these working arrangements were an essential key in the harmony and cohesiveness of the pre-transportation-revolution community.

The improved methods of transportation and the subsequent breaking down of the system of local markets destroyed or at least modified the craft system, with its apprentices, journeymen, and master craftsmen. This type of industrial system, because there were closer relations between employer and worker, because the employer was usually a worker, and because each worker normally expected to become an employer, was a situation in which a harmony and even an identity of interest prevailed in most craft-industries.

---

[11]Samuel Gridley Howe, "Atheism in New England," New England Magazine, Volume 7 (July-December, 1834), p. 500.

The growth of the national market brought a quickening of the nation's economic pulse, but also a much greater degree of competition and resultant loss of economic security for the master craftsmen. Those master craftsmen who successfully met the new competition were forced to become financiers as well as manufacturers and to treat their journeymen as employees, rather than in the old personal terms.

The social distance between the workers and management widened as the interests of the masters and journeymen began to diverge. A new species of industrial strife began to emerge and the harmony which had prevailed in a sector of American society was replaced by hostility and confrontation. Thus, another institutional strand in the network of usages which made for an organic society was broken.[12]

The new methods of transportation, by opening up greatly enlarged hinterlands, by stimulating and expanding the scale of economic activities, provided a new stimulus for renewed growth of cities. Indeed, the new transportation methods made possible the beginnings of the modern type of city.

The new economic and social arrangements had two principal effects on the community. The community, with weakened institutions, lost much of its organic coherence and became atomistic. The individual was freed from the constraints of the old institutions. In one sense, this represented liberation; in another, it meant a loss of a certain type of security.

The effect of this institutional collapse was to release a great amount of psychic energy. This psychic energy was, in its principal immediate manifestation, expressed as an optimistic outlook on life--a

---

[12]For this aspect of social strife, see: John R. Commons, et. al., History of Labor in the United States (New York, 1918), Volume I, Ch. III, "The Merchant-Capitalist," pp. 88-107.

belief that the free individual, unfettered by class and institutional restrictions, could now achieve what to previous ages seemed miraculous. The self-made man now became the American entrepreneurial ideal. To this society, everything seemed possible. Thus, in 1829, a Harvard professor would write:

> We accomplish what the ancients only dreamt of in their fables; we ascend above the clouds and penetrate into the abysses of the ocean. . . .
>
> But it is not to contrast with antiquity alone, that enables us to appreciate the benefits which modern arts confer. In the present inventive age, even short periods of time bring with them momentous changes.[13]

Americans of the crucial generation came to believe that a new age was beginning, an age liberated from the "dead hand of the past,"[14] with its stultifying institutions. A new reformation, many Americans felt, was taking place, a reformation which would make the world a paradise by releasing the energies of the liberated and perfected individual. Americans, according to this belief, could break the cycle to which all previous civilizations had been bound.

All civilizations, according to the cyclical theory of history which Stow Persons claims was current in the United States in the late eighteenth century, were subject to an organic law: they were strong and virtuous in their youth, acquired power and wealth in their maturity which led to corruption and vice, causing a decline and fall of the civilization during old age. According to Persons, America was seen as the most recent

---

[13] Jacob Bigelow, Elements of Technology (Boston, 1829), pp. 4-5. Bigelow coined the term "technology" in this work.

[14] The "dead hand of the past" was a favorite theme of the radical group of Massachusetts Congregationalist clergy who sided with the Workingmen's movement. See, for example, Henry Colman, Sermon. . . at the Dedication of the Independent Congregational Church in South Orange (Boston, 1834), p. 29 ff.

civilization to rise. America was still in the beginning of the cycle, but, because of favored circumstances, such as abundant land and providential design, she might ward off the corruption and consequent collapse, thus deferring, if not escaping, the fate of her predecessors.[15] As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, the fundamental pessimism contained within the cyclical theory began to give way to a more optimistic viewpoint. Even the often pessimistic and fundamentally conservative Congregational stalwart Lyman Beecher at times shared in this optimism. Beecher thought that since America was blessed with free institutions and abundant resources, it was in America's "moral power" to regenerate the world.[16] Though decay and decline had been the fate of all previous civilizations, America could escape this destiny. This society, the world's best and last hope, would not allow the torch of civilization to be forever extinguished. Here in this unspoiled continent, a society of liberated individuals would inaugurate the millenium.[17]

In the hands of the radical evangelical sects, whose preachers spread firestorms of religious enthusiasm through the "burned over district,"[18]

---

[15]Stow Persons, "The Cyclical Theory of History in Eighteenth Century America," American Quarterly VI (Summer, 1954), pp. 147-163.

[16]Lyman Beecher, A Plea for the West (Boston, 1834), pp. 9-10. Beecher cautioned that, to escape the cyclic fate, superior virtue would be required. "For mighty causes, like floods from distant mountains, are rushing with accumulated power to their consumation of good or evil, and soon our character and destiny will be stereotyped forever," Ibid, p. 11.

[17]Beecher claimed that even Jonathan Edwards thought "that the millenium would commence in America," Plea for the West, p. 10.

[18]The burned over district was called thus because it was spiritually, not physically, burnt. See Whitney R. Cross, The Burned Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York 1800-1850 (New York, 1944), pp. 68-78.

as well as the rest of the United States, an American mission was elaborated: America could and must create the millennium by immediate perfection of individuals. The urgency of this message can be appreciated if one contrasts it with the gradual, institutionally controlled improvement advocated by some Americans a generation earlier.[19]

For Americans of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, progress and perfectionism often had a spiritual meaning. The pursuit of happiness, the goal surprisingly advocated in the manifesto of the Ameerican faith, was conceived primarily in terms of economic happiness--but there was no thought that this would be at the expense of the larger community. Consistent with the faith of the Enlightenment, it was felt that the quest of individual happiness would promote the public weal.

Many Americans, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, saw boundless opportunities. The nation became a land of hustlers as vast new schemes were concocted and economic expansion became the primary goal. Land speculation took on gigantic proportions as areas, which a generation before had been frontier lands, were filled up in a rush. New cities and towns--metropolises in the fancy of their boosters--were all laid out with an enthusiasm which indicated a restless buoyancy. For some America now indeed seemed to be the promised land, a promised

---

[19]The caution toward reform which characterized the generations before *circa* 1815 was reiterated by conservatives during the crucial generation. Thus Alexander Everett agreed that "The apirit of reform and improvement is emphatically the spirit of the age and it is operating with a vigor which it never, perhaps, exhibited in any other," but he cautioned "the abuse of the spirit of improvement is. . .the great danger to which we are exposed at the present day. In the general effort to arrive at a better state of things to fear that the advantages of existing institutions may, in some cases, be overlooked." Alexander H. Everett, *The Progress and Limits of Social Improvement* (Boston, 1834), pp. v-vi.

land in a sense not conceivable to their ancestors. America promised not only a place for their descendents to build a happy, virtuous civilization, but also promised living Americans an unheard of degree of wealth. The West, which only a generation before had seemed a hostile wilderness, now figured as the "garden of the world" in American imagination.[20]

As the second quarter of the nineteenth century began, the new restlessness of Americans and the urgency with which they approached life began to make them impatient with the gradual road to perfection that previous generations had been content with. The gradual approach gave way to an insistence on immediacy. Many Americans began to demand a short cut to their goals--whether the goal be spiritual perfection, social reform, or wealth. By the second half of the 1820's, the search for methods to speed the course of the progress most Americans thought inevitable was activating more and more people. By 1830, many were engaged in a variety of efforts to bring immediate satisfaction to their dreams of perfection and wealth. The speed with which the West was being settled has been noted, as has the transportation revolution. But these were only some of the most obvious examples of impatience. Other evidences of the new impatience of Americans were the precipitous rush to develop and accept labor-saving machinery, the popularity of searching for buried treasure and gold and the eager acceptance of the message of

---

[20]For the role of the West in the American imagination, see Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (New York, 1959). For the reaction of a contemporary to the Western development, see Timothy Dwight, Travels in New England and New York (New Haven, 1822). Dwight marvelled: "The scene is a novelty to the history of man. . . . [It] is a state of things of which the eastern Continent, and the records of past ages, furnish neither an example nor a resemblance." Volume I, p. 16.

immediate individual salvation spread by the evangelical sects.[21]

Mechanical inventions would speed the way to wealth; the finding of buried treasure was a way to instant wealth, as was the discovery of gold; and similarly, the evangelical message implied instant salvation.[22]

Such then, was a common attitude in the United States during the second quarter of the nineteenth century: a buoyant optimism born out of their liberation from social restraints; an optimism which fed on the tremendous expansion and mobility of America; an optimism in which they sanguinely expected immediate perfection and rapid wealth.

However, this was only one aspect of the psychic tension of the crucial generation, for paralleling this exultant hope was a sense of uneasy insecurity which had as its source the same causes which produced the optimism. The root of both was the collapse of the old institutions--

---

[21]Conservatives such as Alexander Everett lamented this impatience. Everett sneered at the idea that "a complete reform in the institutions of society would bring about the entire abolition of moral and physical evil in all their forms, and convert the earth into a paradise of perfect innocence and happiness, where we should flourish forever in immortal youth. . ." which was gaining ground. "This system has been called the theory of perfectability of man. . . ." Everett, Progress and Limits, p. 1.

[22]The buried treasure craze was closely associated with the religious enthusiasm of the Burned Over District in Western New York. Alice Felt Tyler notes the prevalence of the buried treasure fad in the 1820's and claims that Joseph Smith was looking for treasure when he discovered the golden plates of the Book of Mormon. Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War (New York, 1944), pp. 68-78. The search for gold seems to have been much more popular than it had been prior to this time. I have no quantitative evidence, but some suggestive impressionistic evidence. For example, the local histories of towns in Vermont and New Hampshire speak of gold finds during the 1820's and 30's; and a minor strike occurred in that part of northern New Hampshire which was involved in the Indian Stream Republic dispute. The most publicized gold searches and finds of this period occurred, of course, in the lands of the Cherokee Indians of Georgia--to the misfortune of the Cherokees. For a report of a gold find in Pennsylvania and speculation that a gold vein extended all the way from Georgia to Pennsylvania, see the Boston Transcript, June 25, 1834.

a phenomenon which meant individual liberation and social disorder.[23]

During the crucial generation, America was a land of eager expectations, but it was also the home of an uneasy disquiet. Many, while they expressed a faith that America would be bountiful and free, were prey to the nagging doubt that it was not really so; some felt that something elusive but valuable was disappearing. As the old harmony which had, to a degree, characterized American society was replaced by class hostility, some Americans looked to the future with less confidence. Americans observed the decline of the old order with a certain regret, even as they rejoiced in the dissolution of the institutional restraints of the old order.[24]

One of the more commonly expressed reservations about the direction which "progress" was moving, was a reservation inspired by the very material wealth in which Americans were rejoicing. The old puritan belief that adversity and austerity were schools for virtue caused many Americans to view uneasily the rapid accumulation of wealth.[25] As new commercial and industrial elites emerged and were ostentatious in their display of this wealth and in their claims for social distinction, some Americans began to suspect that the republican simplicity which had characterized the old republic of Jefferson was being lost. For Americans steeped in the tradition of Jeffersonian republicanism and adhering to a cyclical

---

[23]Berthoff, An Unsettled People, pp. 127-300.

[24]See Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief (Stanford, 1957), pp. 11-24.

[25]For example, Lyman Beecher thundered: "If, in our haste to be rich and mighty, we outrun our. . .[virtue] it will never overtake us; or only come up after the battle of liberty is fought and lost." Beecher, Plea for the West, p. 32.

view of history, the new opulence of a certain segment of American society meant the corruption of republican virtue and the possible defeat of America's world mission. All previous civilizations had fallen because they had been corrupt; America would, unless it retained its republican virtue, be condemned to the same historical cycle which inevitably led to collapse.[26]

However, wealth per se, was not necessarily suspect to Americans of the crucial generation. The real problem, I suspect, was a status fear expressed as the fear of wealth. Wealth was emanating from new sources, and a new commercial-financial elite was beginning to assert itself. These new roads to wealth often seemed to be unnatural or artificial to Americans to whom subsistence agriculture had been the ideal to which they gave their outward allegiance, even if they did not feel as strong a personal motivation toward it as they did for commerce.

As Marvin Meyers points out,[27] it was not the new wealth itself, but the new way of getting it which perturbed Americans. The old society was disappearing, as were the old community sanctions, and Americans felt an unease about the alteration in traditional human relations.[28]

---

[26]According to Alexander Everett: "It is natural. . .[for America] in a state of progress. . .to look with. . .brilliant anticipations of the future. Not having yet reached the limit of their own advancement, and not having it of course immediately before their eyes, they are tempted to flatter themselves that none exists, and that they are destined to furnish a splendid exception to the course of universal history." Everett, Progress and Limits, p. 36.

[27]Meyers, Jacksonian Persuasion, pp. 124-41.

[28]According to Meyers, "Americans were boldly liberal in economic affairs, out of conviction and an appetite combined, and moved their world in the direction of modern capitalism. But they were not inwardly prepared for the grinding uncertainties, the shocking changes, the complexity and indirection of the new economic ways. The image of the good life had not altered; somehow, as men and as a society, they hoped to have their brave adventures, their provocative rewards, their open ended progress, and remain essentially the same. Meyers, Jacksonian Persuasion, p. 7.

The shift in social relations and the rise of new elites caused many Americans to condemn this social change and the new elite by excoriating their method of operations--the speculation, the role of credit and paper money, which many Americans felt, were not representative of real wealth, but were artificial and parasitic on the labor of the real producers.[29]

In addition to the fear that wealth and avarice would destroy the virtues of the old republic, American uneasiness was expressed by other disquieting images. America for many was the promised land, in which each individual could pursue his own pot of gold. But what if someone prevented this? Americans feared that plots were afoot to take away the opportunities from the common man, to forestall him in the race for riches and to reduce him to a servile status.

The collapse of institutional restraints was so recent, the scope of individualism so intoxicating, that Americans felt that surely they must be transgressors against some providential design.

Besides the economic nervousness, the other fears that marked the dark side of the Jacksonian coin were legion. The radical changes produced subtle effects which were only dimly perceived. The old organic society was reduced to the ruins of the now meaningless institutions, and

---

[29]Samuel Clesson Allen, Workingmen's candidate for governor of Massachusetts, in 1833 complained: "Our ancestors supposed when they had rescued the country from a foreign yoke. . .that they had secured their posterity from the dependence and toil and penury which were the lot of the laboring class in other countries. They did not expect that the methods of abstracting wealth from other men's labor. . .would gain admittance here. . . . But the event has not answered their anticipation . . ." Bunker Hill Aurora, October 24, 1833.

liberated, but insecure individuals were redefining personality and reordering human relationships. In the process, they limited the scope of human relations to the cash nexus and they depersonalized society.

Some Americans were experiencing a sense of loss, a regret that the old social order was passing; that the human relationships, especially the relationships between the sexes, was changing. Some of this sense of loss, some of the tension and fears produced by social change, were externalized in what David Brion Davis calls counter subversive movements.[30]

In Davis' definition, counter subversion during the Jacksonian period was a reaction against the permissiveness of the voluntary society of Jacksonian America, and that counter subversion was employed as a method "to insure a common loyalty and unity among the people" by erecting a straw man or bogus enemy for them to hate.[31]

The search for domestic enemies, which is the heart of the counter subversion concept, functioned not only to create unity and a sense of identity in a society becoming increasingly transient, but also as a channel through which the unrealized rage caused by the loss of cherished social relationships might flow. In this sense, the counter-subversion or anti-movements were of the same nature as the ante-bellum reform movements in that they were part of a conservative reaction against social disorder.[32] In this definition, the attack on the Ursaline Convent

---

[30]David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter Subversion," in Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVII, No. 2 (September, 1960), pp. 205-224.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Berthoff, Unsettled People, pp. 127-300.

functioned as a counter subversive movement. The rioters assured themselves that they were patriotically defending cherished values.[33]

The rapid and far reaching social changes which took place during the crucial generation produced a degree of social stress unknown to previous American generations. It is tempting to think that the increased incidence of collective violence after 1834 was merely the consequence of increased social tensions. If mass violence were an automatic group reaction to stress, such an interpretation might be valid for the American experience, in spite of Charles Tilly characterization of that formulation as "our principal folk theory of social change."[34] Since, however, one of the principal premises of this paper is that collective violence is learned and not automatic behavior, I do not accept that "folk theory."

Though the increase in social tension did not, by itself, cause the riots of the Jacksonian period, it was a situation which required some form of reaction. The reaction that resulted followed the path of learned and socially legitimate behavior.

---

[33]The rioters thought they were striking a blow for American freedoms. During the trial of some of the rioters, a handbill was posted around Boston, "Sons of Freedom: Can you live in a free country and bear the yoke of a Priesthood. . . ?" Cited in Isaac Frye, The Charlestown Convent: Its Destruction By a Mob. . . .(Boston, 1870), p. 58.

[34]Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective," in Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr (eds.), The History of Violence In America (New York, 1969), p. 10.

CHAPTER III

TENSION AMONG PROTESTANTS

The weakening of the institutional fabric of much of American society, described in the preceding chapter, was reflected in a marked rise in religious and ethnic hostility. These rising antagonisms, further acerberated the social tension which found expression in collective violence in the middle 1830's. During the 1820's and 1830's, in Eastern Massachusetts, there were three principal areas of religious hostility and quarrels. These religious quarrels represented the three main religious divisions at that time. First, the division between the Protestants and the Catholics seemed most fundamental, because so much of New England Protestant demonology was based on that religious difference. Secondly, the feud between the established (until 1833) Congregational church and the dissenting sects, such as the Baptists, Methodists and Universalists, was of long standing. Finally, and most recently, the gulf between the orthodox Trinitarian Congregationalists and the Unitarians was very productive of tension.[1]

The religious hostility of the 1820's and early 1830's presents a complex pattern. The four main religious groups, i.e., Unitarians, Congregationalists, dissenting Protestants and Catholics were not equally and uniformly hostile to each other. From the end of the Revolutionary War until the mid 1820's, Protestant animosity toward and intolerance of

---

[1]This is not to suggest that there were only three religious divisions, but only that these three are of importance for the study.

Catholicism seemed to be waning, while anti-Catholicism in the Boston area was becoming less violent, tension among Protestant groups was mounting. These two developments may have been unrelated. However, one is tempted to link them as part of the same phenomenon.[2]

That there was a marked decline in anti-Catholic sentiment from 1800 to 1825 is a commonplace among students of "nativism."[3] This decline, however, was a temporary phenomenon; anti-Catholicism would take on a new vigor in the late 1820's and increase until about the outbreak of the Civil War. Indeed, some students of American society maintain that anti-Catholicism was endemic in American life until well into the twentieth century. In this view, anti-Catholicism was an institutional part of American Protestantism, and the recession of anti-Catholic sentiment in the early decades of the nineteenth century marked only a suspension of hostility.[4] This hiatus in anti-Catholic sentiment was the result of the concern of the Protestants with their own problems. The anti-Catholic sentiment, according to that argument, was always under

---

[2]For the subsidence of anti-Catholicism during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Reverend Arthur J. Riley, Catholicism In New England (Washington, 1936), pp. 23, 31, 225 and 307; and Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants 1790-1880 (Cambridge, 1941).

[3]Ibid.

[4]For an elaboration of this view, see Humphrey Desmond, The Know Nothing Party (Washington, 1904), passim; and Ray Allen Billington, The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860, pp. 1-25. Others see a cyclical pattern in the current of anti-Catholic sentiment, with peaks in the early 1830's and in the 1850's. While it is true that these times witnessed strong anti-Catholic movements, the cyclical idea does not account for the relative absence of anti-Catholic sentiment in the early nineteenth century. If there is a cycle involved here, it is a very long cycle. The next period in which the level of anti-Catholic sentiment reached the low point it attained in the early nineteenth century probably did not begin until the 1930's.

the surface and recrudesced in the period from the early 1830's to the late 1850's. A question emerges: If anti-Catholicism was held in abeyance during the early decades of the nineteenth century, because American Protestants were occupied by other problems, did this anti-Catholicism resurface in the 1830's because those problems had been solved? This can hardly be the case. Anti-Catholicism flourished again because the internal problems had grown so severe, internal division so deep, that it could not be solved without an appeal to anti-Catholicism. This is to say that the Catholic image represented to Protestant minds the only force against which they could unify--their divisions had grown too deep for any force internal to American Protestantism to heal.[5]

In the seventeenth century, American colonists were intensely anti-Catholic because of a pervasive fear. Americans in the seventeenth century were not secure in the way Americans in the eighteenth century could be. Seventeenth-century Americans feared a hostile universe, they were settled in a hostile wilderness indeed, they could be convinced that a major feature of their lives was the struggle against malevolent forces. of which "the man of sin," the "whore of Babylon," i.e. the Catholic Church, was only one.

The decline of anti-Catholicism in eighteenth-century America was the result of a change in the total world outlook of Americans. Eighteenth-century Americans were more settled than were seventeenth-century Americans--they were more comfortable. For them, the universe

---

[5]The anti-Catholic animus during and immediately after the colonial period is discussed in Ray Billington, The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study in the Origins of American Nativism (New York, 1938), pp. 1-79. Sister Mary Augustine, American Opinion on Roman Catholicism During the Eighteenth Century (New York, 1936), is an excellent treatment of colonial anti-Catholicism.

was benign, the wilderness inviting. The eighteenth-century world was safer; the universe was no longer full of dark shadows behind which threats lurked; in short, eighteenth-century America was not as hospitable to anti-Catholic hysteria as was the seventeenth century. When, in the eighteenth century, the political threat represented by Catholic France changed into an alliance, the animus against Catholics receded, not to be revived again until the 1830's, when new social forces would unleash new fears which demanded a scapegoat. For fifty years, from about 1775 until 1825, hostility toward Catholicism was muted in the United States and particularly in the Boston area.

The toleration of Catholics, during and after the Revolution is often credited to the French alliance and the spirit of the Declaration of Independence. Undoubtedly, these events played a role, but the decline in anti-Catholicism outlasted these events. Tolerance toward Catholicism was more than an astute diplomatic tactic. It is significant that, after the Revolution had been won, and the political urgency of toleration was no longer as pressing, American Protestants did not revert to their previous anti-Catholic stance. Indeed, the opposite process became observable; American Protestants became more tolerant. Pope Day was not revived, instead it was completely abolished, and legal restrictions against Catholics were swept away by the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780.[6] The first American Catholic Bishop, John Carroll, visited Boston in 1791, where he met a cordial reception. According to Bishop Carroll:

---

[6]Thomas O'Gorman, History of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States (New York, 1895), p. 277.

> It is wonderful to tell what great civilities have been done to me in this town, where a few years ago a Popish priest was thought to be the greatest monster in creation. Many here, even of their principle people, have acknowledged to me that they would have crossed to the opposite side of the street rather than meet a Roman Catholic Papist some time ago. The horror which was associated with the idea of a Papist is incredible; and the scandalous misrepresentations by their ministers increased the horror every Sunday.[7]

During the last decade of the eighteenth century, a small Catholic community grew up in the region in and around Boston. The appearance of this group did not alarm the natives because it consisted chiefly of French tradesmen. These were emigres from Revolutionary France, whose world view and life style were, except for their religion, not very different from that of the majority of Boston's population.[8]

The early Catholic clergy of Boston also worked to promote toleration. One of the earliest Catholic pastors in Boston was John Thayer, a native of the area who was a convert. Others in the early Catholic clergy were admired by Boston area Protestants for their learning, their tact, and their aristocractic manners. Such a discription suited Father Matignon and, perhaps even better, the first Catholic Bishop of Boston, Bishop Cheverus. Cheverus was an aristocratic emigre from Revolutionary France. While Bishop of Boston, he impressed Boston Protestants with the force of his character and his sincerity. After leaving Boston he was promoted to the Archbishopric of Bordeaux, France.[9]

---

[7] O'Gorman, History of the Catholic Church, p. 277.

[8] For the early French immigrants to Boston, see J. G. Rosengarten, French Colonists and Exiles in the United States (Philadelphia, 1907), p. 103 ff. For French professionals in the Boston area at the turn of the century, see Christopher Roberts, The Middlesex Canal (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 131, 200, 227.

[9] The material on the early history of the Catholic church in Boston is from O'Gorman, History of the Catholic Church: and John G. Shea, History of the Catholic Church Within. . .the United States (New York, 1886), and William Leahy, "The Catholic Church in New England" (Boston, 1899), Vol. I.

From the Revolution until the mid-1820's, then, Boston seemed to be developing into a tolerant, pluralistic society. However, these were years during which American Protestantism seemed to triumph over everything. In the first place, established American Protestant groups managed to defeat the Deist and even the atheist forces set in motion by the Revolution itself--forces such as those advocated in the writings of Tom Paine and Ethan Allen. The forces of Deism though driven underground in New England, were to resurface again in the late 1820's, in the form of anti-clericalism and "infidelity."

But these threats to New England Protestantism at the outset of the nineteenth century were more apparent than real. They were spectres, lurking shadows against which the religious establishment could mobilize community opinion.

More important, in regard to the growth of toleration and the pluralist society was the process of dis-establishment of the Congregational church in Massachusetts. The process was, in fact, a religious and political struggle of major magnitude--a struggle in which the once powerful and prestigious Congregational church, the organization made powerful by the Puritan saints of colonial memory, lost its cherished position as the favored religious group. Not only was its tax support gone when the struggle ended, but the Congregational church, especially its clergy, felt disinherited. Its position as the source of community values destroyed, the Congregational church found its new position one of equality with the Methodists, Baptists, and Universalists, the dissenting sects which the Congregationalists had, in their heyday, treated with contempt. The Congregationalists witnessed the phenomenon in which the Unitarians, a fragment of what had been Congregationalism,

became the religious group with the most power and prestige in the state.

The defection of the Unitarians from Congregationalism was regarded by Congregationalists as apostasy and treason. Thus, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the religious establishment of Massachusetts, as well as much of the rest of New England, faced two challenges: the challenge from the evangelical sects, and the threat caused by the Unitarian schism.

Of the two, the danger represented by the evangelical sects was the oldest. It was a problem the Congregational establishment had easily controlled during colonial times, and, though the force of sectarian challenge had increased after the Revolution and especially during the early years of Jefferson's administration, the established church had successfully met and overcome that challenge.

The bitterness engendered by the struggle between the dissenting sects and the Congregational establishment can be appreciated in this excerpt from a Jeffersonian Republican newspaper:

> The Congregational Churches of this country were democracies and they were urgently opposed to the attempts made before to establish Episcopalian Churches, because they proceeded from the king. . . . Yet democracy did not sit easy on the Congregational clergy after the Revolution; the danger of Episcopalian churches being established with precedency, was then taken away and the Congregationalists had clear precedency in the state.[10]

The Congregational clergy withstood all the challenges external to the Congregational community. After half a century of sectarian complaints, Congregationalism was still the "standing order" in Massachusetts. The religious establishment had been engaged in a long

---

[10]This polemic appeared in Independent Chronicle and Universal Advertiser (Boston), September 2, 1805.

and, for the most part, defensive cold war with the dissenting sects, and, while Connecticut and New Hampshire had been lost, Massachusetts seemed safe. Their confidence renewed, the Congregational establishment went on the offensive to roll back the wave which had threatened it and to recapture America for the godly. The standing order won its battle with the dissenting sects, but the passions aroused during the conflict did not die. They added fuel to the combustible mixture which would later explode when the course of events legitimated collective violence.

However, the Congregational order, which had been so strong against the attacks of the dissenting sects, proved unable to withstand an attack from its own ranks. The Unitarian schism destroyed from within the hegemony in prestige and politics. The Unitarian faction accomplished this not by directly challenging the Orthodox Congregational position, but by usurping it, stealing their posts of command in Massachusetts society and disinheriting them.

The war between Unitarians and Orthodox (as the Trinitarian Congregationalists styled themselves) began after the close of the War of 1812, when Jedidiah Morse exposed the "Unitarian conspiracy," which, he maintained, was subverting Congregationalism.[11]

That the Unitarians had subverted the religious establishment by stealthily infiltrating themselves into an unsuspecting community was one of the principal charges of the Orthodox. According to the critics of the Unitarians,

> For some reason, the policy of concealment seems to have been common among Unitarians in all ages. They have worked in secret

---

[11]Jedidiah Morse, Congregational minister in Boston, linked Unitarianism with godlessness and Jacobinism in his tract on the Bavarian Illuminati. Vernon Stauffer, New England and The Bavarian Illuminati (New York, 1918), p. 279.

> before they have ventured to appear in public. And not only so, the doctrine has perhaps always been most successfully propagated in secret. It has made the most progress, not when standing openly on its own foundations, but when silently mingling with other sects and secretly diffusing itself among them.[12]

This secrecy argument against the Unitarians is a very common theme. One finds it in the propaganda against the French Revolutionary Jacobins and the Jeffersonian democrats; it reappears in the struggle against the Unitarians; it would later be the central argument against the Masonic lodges in the late 1820's and early 1830's, and, without a pause, the secrecy argument would be used against the Catholic Church.

The struggle between the Orthodox and Unitarians was very bitter because it was a quarrel between members of the same political family. The Orthodox Congregationalists began to draw closer to those Protestant sects which heretofore they had attempted to dominate; while the Unitarians, secure in their wealth, their political leadership and their social prestige, attempted, without success, to adopt a position of aloofness and dissociation from all other Protestant groups. The Unitarians seemed unaffected by such charges against them as this:

> [Unitarianism]. . .was worldly, licentious, devilish. It did all sorts of wicked things. It made light of sin. It offered an opiate to opposing consciences. It mocked the Bible. It ridiculed a change of heart. It argued down a future retribution. It favored promiscuous dancing, and it denied the Lord had bought us.[13]

The threat to the Congregational establishment posed by the Unitarians proved much greater and more dangerous than that which the Evangelical sects had posed. While the numbers of the Unitarians were not

---

[12]Ellis, A Half Century, p. 437. This quotation is one which Ellis cites from an unnamed critic of Unitarianism. Ellis was a Unitarian, but he was trying to be impartial. He was especially nettled with the charge that "Unitarianism came in privily."

[13]Ibid, p. 434.

great, they were strategically located and were in commanding positions. The danger to the Orthodox was, that in separating from the Congregational Community the Unitarians would not only themselves secede, but would take with them the Establishment. In effect, the Unitarians would not be seceding at all, but would be expelling the Orthodox from the position they had always occupied in Massachusetts. Thus, while the Unitarian controversy was a doctrinal quarrel, it also was a naked status struggle, a conflict in which Orthodox Congregationalism was fighting for its very life as the "Standing Order."[14]

The danger that the Congregational Church would be supplanted as the establishment church and be reduced to the status of the dissenting sects which it had hitherto discriminated against was made a reality first in Dedham, in 1818, then in other towns in eastern Massachusetts. In Dedham, the majority of the parishoners were Unitarian, but those who had a vote in the policy of the local church affairs were Orthodox. The Unitarian majority siezed the church, appointed its own ministers and collected the mandatory tithes, after a long and bitter struggle in the state courts, which were accused of being biased in favor of Unitarians. Thus, according to S. H. Cobb,

> . . .the old Puritan Church found itself turned out of house and home by the very powers it had contrived to give it lasting security.[15]

The strife between the Unitarians and the Orthodox Congregationalists resulted in a great outpouring of religious literature. According

---

[14]The tenacity with which the orthodox Congregational clergy clung to the notion of Establishment was exemplified by a tract written by Lyman Beecher and reviewed in the Christian Examiner, Vol. 4 (1827), p. 124. The tract was titled "The Rights of the Congregational Church in Massachusetts." Beecher argued that the Congregational Church was the legally established church and should take its place as the leader of Massachusetts society. The Christian Examiner was the principal Unitarian organ.

[15]S. H. Cobb, The Rise of Religious Liberty in America (New York, 1902), p. 515.

to George Ellis, a Unitarian clergyman writing in 1857,

> Our first religious newspapers and some other journals were established to aid in this controversy, and farmers and mechanics in the interior of the state were solicited to work themselves up in a theological rancour. Those who were the least informed about the real issue that was opened, often became the most excited about it.[16]

This great outpouring of religious literature was an attempt by the Orthodox clergy to appeal to the people to receive a problem which had become insoluble for the regular ministerial consociations. The Unitarians had, by 1820, already established their own American Unitarian Association, while the orthodox ministers in eastern Massachusetts found refuge in the Bay Association. With the advance of time the two groups became distinct, representing for the most part separate strata of society. The Unitarians inherited much of the prestige and institutions of the old "Standing Order," while orthodox Congregationalism, no longer enjoying political favor, elaborated its own sectarian organization and established its own institutions. The Unitarians had captured that ancient citadel of Congregationalism, Harvard; the Orthodox Congregationalists erected for the education of their youth in godly ways the theological seminaries of Andover and Amherst. Most of the intellectual resources in the Boston area acceded to the Unitarian cause; the orthodox were forced to import graduates from Yale, such as "that Philistine giant from Connecticut,"[17] Lyman Beecher, to lead them.

The struggle with the Unitarians, which occupied the 1820's, had disillusioned the orthodox Congregationals as to the ideal of an establihsed

---

[16]Ellis, A Half Century, p. 9. Frank Luther Mott in History of American Magazine, Volume I, 1741-1850 shows that there was an upsurge in the number of religious periodicals in the early 1820's. Mott's work does not support Ellis' claim that "our first religious newspapers were founded at this time."

[17]Ellis, A Half Century, p. 15.

church, so that in 1833, when an amendment to the state constitution disestablishing all religions was submitted to them, the voters of Massachusetts easily ratified it. It is ironic that the chief opposition to disestablishment should have come from some of those who prided themselves on their theological liberalism, the Unitarians. The Boston Daily Advertiser, a National Republican newspaper edited by a Unitarian, predicted that if the church were disestablished, "A moral desolation will ensue over which the friends of the republic will mourne with unutterable grief."[18]

The Unitarians, who were by now well entrenched in many positions of social prestige and leadership, did not need it because their members were among the more affluent and powerful groups; the orthodox Congregationalists had by this time turned against the idea of a standing order; and the dissenting sects regarded disestablishment as the culmination of their ancient struggle for religious liberty.[19]

In the struggle with the Unitarians, the position of the Congregational clergy changed remarkably. At the outset of that conflict, the Congregational clergy were conservative, theologically, socially and politically. They were allied with the ruling Federalist party, they dominated the courts, and, by a consensus of the community, acted as the definers of social duties and roles. In that position, the Congregational clergy were upholders of the status quo who inculcated the community virtues of law and order and an acceptance by the common people of their place in the social hierarchy.

---

[18]Quoted in the Boston Post (January 10, 1832).

[19]Paul E. Lauer, "Church and State in New England" in H. B. Adams (ed.) Church and State, Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Volume X (Baltimore, 1892), p. 99 ff.

After they had been dispossessed of some of their prestige, their power and indeed, some of the wealth, the Congregational clergy kept most of their theological conservatism. Indeed, because of the exodus of the liberals from their ranks, and the backlash against theological liberalism, the orthodox Congregational clergy became almost fundamentalist in theology, but they moved slightly to the left socially. By the mid 1820's they no longer were as staunch in support of the political and economic establishment as they had been. After all, that establishment had deserted them.

The class constituency of the orthodox Congregational clergy changed. During the 1820's the Congregational strength came to be centered in the rural villages and among the socially less advantaged urban population such as that in Charlestown. The Congregational clergy began to identify with the agrarian and lower-class urban groups. Some of them became overtly socially critical, leading protest groups, such as Samuel Clesson Allen, a leader of the Workingmen's Party, or anti-clerical, such as Theophilius Fiske, who published Priesthood Unmasked, and who was also active in Workingmen's groups.[20] However, most of the Congregational clergy did not move that far left.

The most influential Congregational clergy, such as Lyman Beecher, remained politically conservative even though they often attacked, in the press, the Unitarians. The majority of Congregational clergymen became something of a "radical right," to use a modern analogy, dissatisfied with their times, bitter at the "liberal Unitarians" who held political and social leadership, but remaining too conservative to offer a viable alternative. The Congregational clergy in the 1820's eagerly pointed out in their publications that many leading figures in Massachusetts, including

---

[20]Chapter 5, Supra.

the governor and the judges in state courts were Unitarian. Lyman Beecher suggested that, since the Unitarians were a small minority of Massachusetts population, some sort of cabal or conspiracy must exist to keep Unitarians in office.[21]

The Unitarians were a minority; indeed, they were a very self-conscious minority. They were also, I suspect, intellectual and social snobs. They held aloof from the common people, they did not credit the mass of mankind with much intelligence. The Unitarian minister-historian made this sentiment clear when he gratuitiously sneered at the idea of the farmers working "themselves up in a theological rancor." The important theological issues were beyond the grasp of the uninformed masses.[22] The Unitarians did little to make themselves popular with the lower classes. They rejected orthodox Congregational institutions, including the Female Seminary in Charlestown, in favor of more aristocratic institutions, such as the Ursaline Convent in Charlestown.[23]

---

[21]Emerson Davis, The Half Century; or A History of Changes (Boston, 1851), p. 353. Davis cites a sermon preached in 1828 by Parsons Cook, of Lynn, in which he presented facts and statements to prove that Unitarianism was an exclusive system; that the chief offices of trust and profit in Massachusetts were held by that denomination; that it could not be entirely accidental that governors, councillors, judges, etc., etc., should belong to a sect which was a small minority of the population of the state. He avowed his belief that the thing was brought about "by the political manoeuvering of liberal men."

[22]Ellis, A Half Century, p. 9.

[23]This was the opinion of Boston's Catholic Bishop Fenwick. United States Catholic Historical Society, Records and Studies, Vol. 9 (New York, 1916), pp. 187-188. See also Ray Billington, The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860 (New York, 1832), p. 69. Billington is mistaken when he says that the Unitarian upper class were rebelling against the "rigid Congregationalism of the public school system." Apparently Billington did not realize that the political leaders of Boston were Unitarians. Billington is also mistaken when he says that the Unitarians "felt a particular antipathy to the existing order within the Commonwealth." Ibid., p. 69. More likely, the Unitarians derived profound satisfaction from the existing order.

The Congregational clergy attacked Unitarianism for being liberal --saying that Unitarianism led to blasphemy, infidelity, and atheism. Increasingly, Unitarianism was being linked with infidelity and Catholicism as enemies of religion.[24]

By 1834, wide divisions had developed among the Protestant groups. The dissenting sects had developed a habit of opposition to the Congregational standing order, which they could transfer to the Unitarian elite. The orthodox Congregationalists were by 1834 a dispossessed group, nursing a resentment against the Unitarian establishment and those who came to be regarded as their allies, the Roman Catholics. The animosities produced by those religious quarrels added to the social tensions being produced by other causes. From these social and religious strains emerged a social disharmony which was a factor in creating a mood conducive to social violence.

---

[24]For example, see the Massachusetts Yeoman, January 15, 1831.

CHAPTER IV

THE ANTI-CATHOLIC CONTRIBUTION

While the disputes among the Protestants were producing tension, that tension was being compounded by the development of a new wave of intolerance on the part of the Protestant community toward the Catholics. During the early 1830's, hostility toward Catholicism mounted, ending the broad degree of tolerance which had existed until then. The new wave of intolerance did not end until after the Civil War. That rise in intolerance toward Catholicism was, most students of the period agree, one of the central causes for the increasing number of riots in American cities in the decade which began in 1834.

The tolerance toward Catholicism during the early decades of the nineteenth century has been attributed, by some commentators, to the fact that, during this period, there were few Catholics in the Boston area.[1] But Catholics were even more rare in the colonial period, when toleration was not common. Tolerance has also been attributed to the fact that Catholics in the Boston area during that period were native Americans or members of easily assimilated immigrant groups, such as the French, whose life styles and world views were similar to that of other

---

[1]One such commentator was Oscar Handlin. Handlin insisted that the hostility toward Catholics was only directed against Irish Catholics. Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants 1790-1880 (Cambridge, 1941), p. 180 ff.

Bostonians.[2] That the growth of an anti-Catholic attitude among residents of the Boston area coincided with the arrival of a relatively large influx of "unassimilable" Catholic Irish in the late 1820's is evident. This influx was by no means great when compared with the floods of people who were later to come in the 1840's or 1850's, but, compared to previous Irish immigration, it was significant.

There are no very reliable statistics on Irish immigration during the late 1820's and early 1830's, so it is not easy to estimate the magnitude of the Irish movement into the Boston area during this time. The record shows that 1376 people arrived in Boston by sea from Ireland from 1821 to 1831.[3] This figure, although of some help, may represent only a fraction of the Irish migration to the Boston area at that time because many Irish immigrants did not come directly from Ireland, but sailed instead from England, Scotland, or British North America. In addition, many came overland after landing at Quebec or other British North American ports.[4]

One can gain a more accurate impression of the growth of the Catholic Irish population in the Boston area by studying the progress of Catholicism during the early decades of the nineteenth century. According to John D. G. Shea, there were 2120 Catholics in Boston and about 4000 in all New England

---

[2]Catholic historians, especially John D. G. Shea in A History of the Catholic Church in the United States (New York, 1886), are fond of listing the more eminent converts of this period. Though probably not as numerous as Shea implies, there were enough to have an impact.

[3]"Table V: Passengers Entering Boston by Sea," in Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, p. 242.

[4]For the process by which Irish immigrants filtered into the United States from Canadian ports, see Marcus L. Hansen, "The Second Colonization of New England," New England Quarterly, II (October, 1929), pp. 539-560.

in 1820; by 1830, these had increased to 7,000 in Boston and 14,000 in New England. The first half of the 1830's saw a great increase, by 1835 there may have been 10,000 Catholics in Boston. Charlestown also shows a marked increase in the number of Catholics, but for most of this period, it was included in the Boston Parish.[5]

In 1820, Charlestown built its own Catholic church, with a capacity of a thousand persons. The building of such a large Catholic church would indicate a large Catholic population in Charlestown. Normal Catholic practice is to hold multiple services so that it is not necessary to have a church with a capacity large enough to hold all the parishoners at one sitting. In that vein, a church with a 1,000-person capacity could indicate a Catholic population ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 and possibly 3,000. If the higher number is accepted, it would indicate that a very large fraction of the population of Charlestown was Catholic in 1834, up to a third of the population. However, a perusal of the Charlestown Directory for 1834 makes the higher figure unlikely. A study of the Directory suggests a more likely figure of 1,000 to 1,500 Irish Catholics.[6]

---

[5]These figures are from J. D. G. Shea, A History of the Catholic Church in the United States, Volume 3, p. 127 ff. Shea's figures may be high because he was relying on parish estimates and hopes.

[6]Charlestown Directory, 1834, passim. The technique used was to count all the names which are usually considered Irish and names which are often Irish but as often English or Scots. To the total of names which were probably Irish (73) was added half the total of names which are often Irish but could also be Scots or English (174 divided by 2 = 87): 73+87=160. The population of Charlestown in 1834, as reported by the Directory was about 10,000 people; the number of entries in the Directory was 1325; the ratio of entries to the total population was 1325 to 10,000 or 1:7.5. There were 7.5 times as many people in Charlestown as there were entires. Multiplying 160 by 7.5, one arrives at a figure of 1200 Irish in Charlestown in 1834.

In deciding on whether a particular name was Irish or not, I relied on more than the surname. The Christian name was also important. For example, if a surname were often Irish, and the Christian name were that of a popular Catholic saint, such as Patrick or Michael the entry was usually credited with being Irish; if the surname were similar but the Christian name was biblical, such as Asa, Abidjiah or Caleb, the entry was not credited with being Irish.

In 1830, the total population of Boston was about 62,000 while Charlestown had about 9,000.[7] Thus, from 1820 to 1830, Boston's Catholic percentage grew from 5 per cent to about 10 per cent. In 1830, Catholics amounted to between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of Charlestown's population. An examination of the Charlestown Directory of 1834 does not indicate that the Irish population of Charlestown approaches anywhere near 2,000, but I suspect the Directory was not complete, i.e., that it did not include many of the lower classes who did not have a fixed residence.

The arrival of Catholic Irish in numbers large enough for them to form a separate community produced a degree of ethnic tension heretofore unknown in the Boston area, and especially in Charlestown. The ethnic tensions developed partly because the immigrant Irish Catholics did not share the life-style and world view of the natives. In this the Catholic Irish differed from other immigrant groups, including other Catholic immigrants.

The world view of the Irish Catholics was especially antagonistic to that of the rest of the population of the Boston area, regardless of their ethnic background. The prevailing world view of the natives of the Boston area was, in one of its aspects, optimistic. The world view of the natives was oriented toward rationalism, a faith in progress, the possibility of reform, and some sort of millennial expectation. In many respects, the outlook of the Catholic Irish diametrically opposed that world view.[8]

---

[7] "Population of Boston and Environs," in Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, p. 239.

[8] To discover the "world view" of any inarticulate group is always very difficult. One must rely on spokesmen, but often one cannot find spokesmen. In the case of the Charlestown Yankees, the literature of the Workingmen's movement is important, because the Workingmen's movement was particularly strong in Charlestown. See Chapter V, supra. In addition, the Bunker Hill Aurora sheds some light on the outlook of the Charlestown Yankees.

The Charlestown Irish, during the 1830's, had no local spokesmen who left a record from which the world view of that group can be recon-

The outlook of the Catholic Irish immigrants was largely shaped by the milieu and social circumstances which the Irish Catholic had left in the old country and that which developed around him in America; that world view was largely articulated by the Catholic Church.[9]

Although the Catholic Church was and is a universal rather than a national organization, and though it is catholic in its teachings, it nevertheless assumes the outlook and attitude of the various communities and ethnic groups of which it consists. Thus, the Catholicism of Boston's early Catholic community, predeminantly consisting of French and native American converts, was very different in values and attitudes from the Catholicism of the Boston area in the 1830's, when the adherents of that faith in that region came to be predominantly Irish. The communal memories, the historical experiences and the Boston situation of the Irish Catholics were responsible for this.

In contrast to the dominant theme of optimism in the American world view, the Irish outlook was basically pessimistic. The Irish heritage of persecution and grinding poverty developed an ethnic attitude of immense sadness, an acceptance of the inability of puny men to cope with the evil forces in the universe. For the Irish, the universe was hostile; life was dark and without much hope. The Irish temperament was not exuberant about the possibilities of the individual; even "on occasions of great joy and merriment" it manifested itself "in grief and melancholy."[10]

---

structed. The discussion on the Irish world view which follows is thus based on a reading of the Boston Jesuit for the years 1829-1834 as well as scattered readings in that paper through the 40's, 50's, and 60's. The Jesuit was variously named at different times. Sometimes it was the United States Catholic Intelligencer and at other times the Boston Pilot. It began as the diocesan organ, but became the organ of the Boston Irish.

[9]The importance of the Catholic Church as an exponent of the Irish world view becomes evident in the fact that the first Irish newspaper in Boston was the Boston Jesuit, a religious paper.

[10]Robert Bell, Description of the Conditions and Manners of the Peasantry of Ireland (London, 1804), p. 17.

When the Irish migrated to Boston, they did so not so much because they were lured by promises of great wealth or freedom--their elemental pessimism would incline them to disbelieve such promises in any case--but because of desperate necessity. There was literally no way for them to live in Ireland. They came not to build a golden future, but to escape a wretched present. When the Irish Catholics arrived in Boston, the situation that they met reinforced their original gloomy attitude, America for them was no promised land. Boston's early Irish congregated in vile slums; they existed on the fringes of society without regular employment. Hunger was a constant companion. Premature death from accidents, disease or starvation was a normal, expected part of life, accepted without complaint.[11]

In such circumstances, the Catholic Church remained the only institution with a rationale that could explain and, to some extent, justify the malevolent universe. The rational, optimistic outlook of the native Americans could not explain nor even comprehend that universe. Instead of justifying the universe to the Catholic Irish, the optimism of the native American seemed, at best, mockery, and usually, hypocrisy. But the Irish Catholic Church did have the explanation, the justification, and most important, the consolation to make the malevolent world of the Irish endurable.

For the poverty stricken and tragedy haunted Irish, life was often a trial, a veritable vale of tears. It was brutal. Death was a release,

---

[11]For Irish fatalism, see Bell, Peasantry, p. 17 ff, and the following poem from the United States Catholic Intelligencer, March 4, 1832:

I am tired, fatigued, weary,
Of this never ending strife--
Of the journey, lone and dreary,
On the darksome path of life.

For the poverty and slums, disease and death which were familiar parts of the immigrant Irish milieu, see "The Physical Adjustment," in Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, pp. 88-124.

a source of rejoicing rather than mourning. Earthly life itself was unimportant except as a preparation for redemption--the redemption in the next world, the splendor of which would make all mundane suffering fade into insignificance.[12]

To the Yankee, the Irish Catholic outlook would have seemed a bad dream (while for the Irish Catholic it explained a cruel reality) because it had no reference to the reality perceived by the Yankees. If the Yankee could have been aware of the Catholic Irish world view, and there is scant indication that he was, he would have thought it not only strange, but fantasy; to use a more recent colloquism, the Yankee would have thought the Irishmen were mad, out of contact with reality. Indeed, some of the ethnic jokes the Yankees began to circulate about the Irish in the late 1820's indicate this.[13]

The Irish Catholics, then, looked to the next world to redress the evil of this world. The important thing for the Irish was their faith in the promise of the future life. For this reason, they clung to the church; for this reason, they revered their priests. The church was the essential guardian of the faith necessary for salvation. For the poverty-ridden Irish immigrants, the salvation which alone gave them the fortitude to endure, was weekly, and for some, oftener, dramatized by the mystery of the mass. This mystery, this drama, and the promise which it explicitly contained, was for the Irish Catholics the most significant living reality. Beside the drama of this mass, and the dogmas flowing therefrom, the cold

---

[12]This sentiment was expressed in the poem "Birth Song--Dirge of Death," in United States Catholic Intelligencer, April 20, 1832.

[13]For examples of such ethnic jokes, see Appendix One.

rationalism of the Yankee view seemed mockery.[14]

Because of this factor--the Irish experience which caused them to minimize the significance of earthly affairs, and to exalt the importance of the future paradise--the Catholic Church became for the Irish their most important institution. Indeed, it was the only institution, before the rise of political machines dominated by the Irish in the second half of the nineteenth century, that the American Irish had.

The Church had affirmed its role as protector of Irish ethnicity during several centuries of persecution and oppression in Ireland; a period in which the Church emerged as the solace for the Irish burdened also with the economic oppression of an alien landholding group. In addition, when the Irish started to arrive in Boston in the late 1820's and early 1830's, the Church was often the only institution on the scene with which they were familiar--often, indeed, the Irish Catholics did not even have their families with them.

The Church hierarchy, although it had originally been staffed by refugees from revolutionary France and by native Americans, rapidly became, with the Irish influx, predominantly Irish. Thus, the first Catholic Bishop of Boston was the French aristocrat emigre Jean de Cheverus; Boston's second Bishop was the Maryland aristocrat Benedict Fenwick, and the third bishop was the Boston Irishman, John B. Fitzpatrick.[15]

---

[14]Boston Jesuit, July 19, 1834; United States Catholic Intelligencer, February 24, 1832.

[15]Shea, A History of the Catholic Church, Volume III, pp. 235-525. Cheverus was Bishop from the earliest years of the nineteenth century until 1825, Fenwick from 1825 to 1845. In 1845, Fitzpatrick began a dynasty of Boston-born Irish bishops.

The Church early became concerned with more than the spiritual welfare of the Irish in the Boston area. With paternal solicitude it attempted to help the Catholic Irish poor. The Church organized schools and orphanages; it aided the poor as much as it could. Cheverus and Fenwick, for example, made a practice of personal benevolence to the poor--something they could do because of their independent wealth. Cheverus' aid was unpublicized and secret, while Fenwick's benevolence was more open since he used it to stimulate self-help programs among the Irish. Fenwick also attempted, more ambitiously, but without success, to establish the Irish in agricultural colonies.[16]

Native Americans, in their attacks on the Irish, often complained that the Irish gave their first allegiance to the Church, that they were not really qualified for citizenship because they were not loyal Americans.[17] While the Irish denied that charge, it has a degree of plausibility. In Irish experience the state had been an oppressive thing, the instrument of an alien ruling class. In America, the state was seen as the property of the dominant Protestants. In any case, there can have been little reason for the Catholic Irish immigrants in the early part of the nineteenth century to have developed a great attachment for America, a society which was as alien to them as they were to it.

For the Catholic Irish, the state was at best neutral, but in any case it was not their state, it was not their institution. They were confident that the state, any state, was an ephemeral, temporal thing, while the Church was eternal. For these reasons and others, the Irish considered the Church superior to the state.

---

[16]Shea, A History of the Catholic Church, Volume III, p. 472; Boston Pilot, June 22, 1852.

[17]Boston Catholic Observer, August 28, June 19, July 24, 1847.

The attitude that the Church was more important than the state, held by the Irish immigrants was re-inforced by Church doctrine. Thus a letter writer in a Catholic newspaper could write,

> It is impossible to form any permanent System of Government unless it is based on the Catholic Religion. The Church is eternal, all other systems must be evanescent.[18]

The Catholic Church prospered in the salubrious atmosphere of tolerance in the United States, but neither the Catholic Irish laity nor the hierarchy believed in or preached religious toleration. A Catholic spokesman proclaimed that there was no

> . . .liberty for each man to be of what doctrine he pleases or of none. . . . [Religious freedom is] merely a political [right]. . .not a religious right at all; for no religion that has any self respect can acknowledge that one has the right to be of a religion he chooses. No man has or can have a religious or moral right to be of any religion but the true religion. . . . Every religion by its very nature is intolerant of every other, and condemns itself, if it is not.[19]

Between the natives and the Catholic Irish immigrants, then, there was a wide gulf; a disparity in world outlook, lifestyle, and conception of the relative role of the church and state.

Small as the percentage of the Irish Catholic population was in the early 1830's, it was very visible, as were the equally small and struggling institutions of the Catholic Church. First, there was the recency of it all. Before 1825, the Irish Catholic immigration to the Boston area was only a trickle amounting at most, to only a few hundred over a typical five-year period, not enough to constitute permanent communities, easily assimilated and scattered among the rest of the

---

[18] *Jesuit*, November 28, 1829.

[19] Orestes Brownson to Father J. W. Cummings, September 5, 1849, cited in Henry F. Brownson, *Orestes A. Brownson's Middle Life: from 1845 to 1855* (Detroit, 1899).

population. However, beginning with the five-year period which started in 1825, the pace of Irish Catholic immigration quickened, swelling from a few hundred to several thousands, though Irish immigrants to the Boston area were still outnumbered by those of other nativities migrating to the Boston area, perhaps even by the rural American in-migrants.[20] When the Irish did begin to arrive, however, they clustered in certain neighborhoods, such as Boston's Broad Street and Lechemere Point (Craigiesville) in Charlestown.[21] They converted these areas into Irish neighborhoods, because, as the Irish moved in the natives moved out. Indeed, the Irish invasion of these neighborhoods converted these areas into slums. Because they were poor, living on the periphery of the economy, the Irish were forced to rent substandard dwellings. The Yankee slum-lords crowded many more people into dwellings than they were originally built for. The Irish lived in very crowded and unhealthful conditions, overtaxing the sanitary conditions, and polluting the water supply. The Irish neighborhoods became the breeding grounds for epidemic diseases, such as small pox and cholera, which had heretofore been rare in the Boston area. The natives believed the Irish were the particular carriers of epidemic diseases, and

---

[20]"Distribution of Irish in Boston," in Handlin Boston's Immigrants, p. 90.

[21]For example, in the five-year period beginning in 1826, approximately 5,700 foreigners, of which not more than 1,000 were Irish, disembarked at Boston. During the five-year period beginning in 1831, about 9,600 foreigners, of whom perhaps 4,000 were Irish, arrived at Boston by sea. See "Passengers Entering Boston by Sea, 1821-1865," in Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, p. 242. Handlin's figures are precise, but since I am estimating the Irish totals by taking the number arriving from Ireland and adding half the number arriving from British North America as an estimate, I cannot be precise. The number of Irish arriving by sea may have been about 25 percent higher or lower than my figures.

expressed their fear in the Boston press.[22]

There is no indication that the Irish Catholics at this time posed a direct economic threat to most of the workmen of the Boston area, except in the field of unskilled labor. Irish labor competition mildly threatened those Yankees who came from the rural hinterland without any skills, but most of the work force in the Boston area at this time had a skill or a craft, and these were usually closed to the Irish.[23] The claim that the hostility which developed between the Irish Catholics and the native Americans in the early 1830's was due to job competition would thus seem to be without foundation.[24] While it is true that the Irish did compete on the lower fringes of the economic ladder, their competition was not felt enough to be noticed by the press at the time.[25]

---

[22]For example, see the letter in the Boston Daily Advertiser, January 7, 1828, in which the writer expresses fear of the spread of cholera being brought from Halifax by the Irish. It is interesting that one of the causes of the political unrest in lower Canada (Quebec) during the 1830's was the feeling by French Canadians that British authorities were trying to exterminate them by dumping on their "shores swarms of disease ridden Irishmen." See Mason Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1967, Volume I 1760-1911 (New York, 1968), p. 142. Wade quotes Edouard Rodier, French Canadian political extremist against the British: ". . .they [the British] must also rid themselves of their beggars and cast them by the thousands on our shores; they must send us miserable beings, who, after having partaken of the bread of our children, will subject them to horrors following on hunger and misery; they must do still more, they must send in their train pestilence and death."

[23]This paragraph is the result of a series of generalizations formed as a result of a study of the Charlestown Directory, 1834. Also see Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, p. 54 ff.

[24]This claim is made in Michael Walzer and Richard Hoffstadter (eds.), American Violence: A Documentary History (New York, 1871), p. 298.

[25]In searching the Bunker Hill Aurora (1827-1834), the Boston Post (1831-1834), the Boston Atlas (1832-1834), the Boston Courier (1830-1834), the Boston Advertiser (1833-1834), I found no indication that the Irish were considered an economic threat to American labor.

The lifestyle of the Irish Catholics was very different from that of the Yankees.[26] In the first place, the Irish were accused of being clannish. They did not, apparently, move freely out of their neighborhoods, except for work, and did not mix freely with non-Irish. They patronized their own small merchants, if the Charlestown Directory is any indication, sent their children to their own schools or not to school at all, and demanded their own churches.[27] They also insisted on marrying into their own ethnic group more than most of the other ethnic groups in the Boston area.[28]

One of the most striking differences in the lifestyle of the Irish had to do with the way they amused themselves and spent their leisure. The Irish demanded conviviality. They maintained many saloons. However, it was the weekend entertainment which made the Irish most conspicuous and probably was most responsible for causing ethnic hostility. This weekend entertainment took place in what appears to have been combinations of dance halls, drinking places and gambling places.

McGorman's in Charlestown was such a place. McGorman apparently made his house available as an entertainment center for Charlestown's and Boston's Irish of both sexes. There is no indication that McGorman

---

[26]Lifestyle, as used here, refers to more than the economic arrangements of living. It includes all the patterns of life: the social patterns, the emotive patterns, the recreational, etc., in other words, those things having to do with social relations and the human bond. The groups of Irish and Yankees I am contrasting are poor Irish and poor Yankees.

[27]The Irish built their own Catholic Churches rather than accept the ministrations of early French priests. E. Percieval Merritt, "Sketches of the Three Earliest Catholic Priests in Boston," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXV (1883), p. 173 ff.

[28]According to the "Annual Report by the City Registrar. . .1865," Boston City Documents, 1866, no. 88, p. 15, Irish intermarriage with other groups was lower than even Negro intermarriage with other groups in the Boston area.

furnished any drink or anything else, the patrons apparently brought their own. Evidently, every weekend, Irish of both sexes from Boston streamed across the bridge over the Charles River to attend the fun at McGormans. Perhaps this was because the police in Boston were more strict than in Charlestown. In any case, McGorman's stayed open most of the weekend nights, and, according to complaints in the Bunker Hill Aurora, it was noisy.[29]

Such places of entertainment were an innovation in the Boston area. While it is true that the area had long boasted places of entertainment, they were principally for masculine entertainment. Also, the Yankees were not so noisy in their entertainment as were the Irish. Music and dancing were much more prominent among the Irish than among the Yankees.[30] In any event, the Yankees of Charlestown did not approve of all those Irish people so boisterously enjoying themselves. A custom developed in which young native men of the lower class formed gangs to harrass the Irish places of entertainment. These gangs would stone the houses, such as O'Gorman's, in which the entertainments were held, and often fights between the natives and Irish erupted.[31]

It is evident that the native Americans were disturbed by these Irish entertainments. Perhaps one of the reasons the Yankees were so

---

[29]Bunker Hill Aurora, December 28, 1833.

[30]That dancing was not approved of by Yankees can be seen in the Report of the Arguments of the Attorney of the Commonwealth at the Trials of Abner Kneeland for Blasphemy. . .(Boston, 1834), pp. 88-89. The attorney, S. D. Parker, said "If the young and the warm-blooded, and the lascivious and the profligate, among all classes and sexes, are attracted by MUSIC AND DANCING. . .who will not say that it is the bounden duty of every Father, Husband and Citizen to use all lawful means for the preservation of public morals, decency and happiness?"

[31]Bunker Hill Aurora, December 28, 1833.

highly irritated by these Irish entertainments is that they were for both sexes. The Yankees, for whom dancing was still not commonly accepted, were stimulated. Their imaginations became both righteous and lewd. The special hostility toward the Irish felt by the native lower classes in the Charlestown area may have been caused as much by these entertainments as it was by economic, political, or religious forces.

These differences in lifestyle did, indeed, produce a great degree of animosity between the native Yankees and the Irish Catholics. The hostility probably did not need any outside stimulus to develop, but it did have such stimulus. The Protestant Scotch-Irish had an established community in Boston when the Catholic Irish arrived. The Protestant Irish already had established communal organizations such as the Boston Protestant Irish Association. This group and the latent anti-Catholicism within the American Protestant milieu would have made for some ill feeling toward the Irish Catholic group in any case.[32]

The native opinion of the Irish Catholics was not in this period (to 1834) as clearly delineated by the press as it would be after the Convent fire. During the late 1830's and after, the Irish would be accused of many evils including the perversion of the political process, crowding the country with paupers, spreading ignorance and disease, and constituting the major criminal element. But these were future charges. Before the Convent fire in 1834, the Irish in the Boston area were scornfully tolerated with a mixture of indulgence and contempt. Nearly the only references to the Irish in the Boston area press prior to the fire in 1834 was in the form of ethnic jokes or in the police courts reports,

---

[32]For the activities of the Boston Protestant Irish Association, see The Protestant, August 14, 1830.

which were written as comedy. Usually, these references to the Irish were written in a crude approximation of brogue, and gave the impression that the Irish were ignorant, shiftless, dirty, and superstitious. The press treatment of the Irish Catholics implied that they were possessed with a low degree of cunning, but that they were happy-go-lucky and did not feel the hurts of life as much as did natives. Overall, the press indicated that the Irish Catholics were not serious people, and that there was no requirement to take them seriously.[33]

Ethnic jokes were standard fare in most of the Boston area press, with the understandable exception of the Boston Jesuit. Even the Boston Post, the organ of the Democratic organization centering around the Customs House, which made an effort to win the Irish vote, could not refrain from occasionally treating the Irishman as a comic figure.[34]

As the Irish population in Greater Boston expanded, their central institution, the Catholic Church, also waxed. The period of the late 1820's and early 1830's, witnessed a very ambitious development and expansion of the Catholic Church, the Catholic hierarchy, and Catholic institutions in America, and particularly in the Boston area.[35] This Catholic expansion in the United States was stimulated by the surge of Catholic immigration, but it was also part of a reassertion of Catholicism throughout the Western world. In Ireland, a political

---

[33]See, for examples of these references, ethnic jokes in Appendix I of this paper.

[34]Bunker Hill Aurora, June 16, 1831, September 18, 1827; Boston Post, June 14, 1832 are samples of this treatment.

[35]For the Catholic expansion during this period, John G. Shea, History of the Catholic Church and Thomas O'Gorman, History of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States (New York, 1895).

struggle to enfranchise Catholics raged and triumphed during this period. In England the Catholic Emancipation bill passed. On the Continent, especially in France and Austria, Catholic missionary societies exhibited particular concern for the growth of Catholicism in the United States.[36]

The American Catholic hierarchy grew mightily from 1790 when John Carroll became the first Catholic bishop in the United States, to 1829, when the First Provincial Council of Baltimore was held. By that time the Church had grown so that it included an archbishop, ten bishops, several hundred priests, six seminaries, nine Catholic colleges, and twenty-three monasteries and convents.[37]

The growth of the Catholic Church and its claims for power alarmed American Protestants. They pointed out that the Church referred to the United States as a province, which proved to them that the Church had political designs on America. The Catholic Church showed an insensitivity to American opinion in this case as it did in the trusteeism controversy. The trusteeism controversy, a struggle between the bishops and groups of laymen for the control of Church property, seemed to many American Protestants to be a struggle between republicanism and alien autocracy. But there were other, more immediate signs of Catholic growth which

---

[36]These missionary societies were: The Association for the Propagation of the Faith (French) and The Leopold Association (Austrian). Joseph Freri, The Society for the Propagation of the Faith and Catholic Missions (Baltimore, 1902), p. 58.

[37]O'Gorman, History of the Roman Catholic Church, p. 340. O'Gorman liked to find parallels between United States national history and American Catholic history. Thus, he pointed out that the American Catholic Church became independent (i.e., from the Bishop of London) when the nation did, that the naming of the first Catholic bishop coincided with the election of Washington as president, and that the Council of Baltimore occurred when Jackson was beginning as president.

alarmed Bostonians. These were the growth of Catholic schools and convents.[38]

The Irish would rather keep their children ignorant than send them to the public schools. Not enjoying widespread literacy themselves, the Irish did not place the high value on education, and besides, poverty-stricken Irish families often found it necessary to keep children out of school so that their earnings could supplement those of their parents.[39] The Irish Catholics regarded the public schools as Protestant schools, or worse. The Catholic press referred to "the sectarian system of kidnapping Catholic children" and said that system provided "a flimsy and defective education."[40]

In these circumstances, the Catholic Irish, or at least the Church, felt it imperative to build Catholic schools. Shea reports that by 1830, there were three Catholic elementary schools in Boston and two in Charlestown. The Charlestown Directory for 1834 lists only one Catholic school

---

[38] Massachusetts Yeoman, November 17, 1827 and August 8, 1829; O'Gorman, History, pp. 278 ff, 301 ff; Peter Guilday, A History of The Councils of Baltimore (New York, 1937), pp. 89-95.

[39] Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, p. 61. Handlin cites the reports of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor, 1872.

[40] United States Catholic Intelligencer, May 18, 1832. A similar expression is found in the Boston Pilot, April 24, 1852:

> The general principle upon which these. . .[schools] are based is radically unsound, untrue, atheistical. . . . It is that the education of the children is not the work of the Church or the Family, but that it is the work of the state. . . . Hence, the State is supreme over the Church and the Family. Hence, the State can and does exclude from the schools religious instruction. . . . The inevitable consequence is that. . .the greater number of scholars must turn out to be atheists, and accordingly the majority of non-Catholics are people of no religion. . .the other consequence leads the State to adopt the child to weaken the ties which bind it to its parent.

in Charlestown, perhaps the other was more than the congregation could afford. By 1832, the Sisters of Mercy, an order of teaching nuns could organize a school procession of 500 children in Boston, a spectable which must have irritated, at least, the Yankees who witnessed it.[41]

A very objectionable aspect of the Catholic expansion from the natives' viewpoint was the establishment of the Ursaline Convent in Charlestown. It was objectionable to the Yankee Protestants from its beginning. It had originally been established with the fortune of one of the first Catholic priests in Boston--a native Yankee convert to Catholicism, John Thayer. Thayer assumed direction of the Boston parish in the 1790's, but he "was not a leader of men" and soon was replaced. After serving a stint as missionary in the West, he withdrew from active affairs, retiring in seclusion to Ireland, where he died, leaving his wealth (a few thousand dollars) in trust for the establishment of an Ursaline Convent in Boston.[42] This money was eventually used for this purpose, but there remains the large question of the purpose of the institution. The stated purpose of the Ursaline Convent was to train female youth in arts and accomplishments which were possibly appropriate for upper-class society, because this training was aimed at giving the girls aristocratic tone,[43] but it appears not to have been very relevant

---

[41]Shea, History of the Catholic Church, p. 486 ff; Charlestown Directory, 1834, p. 16. Interestingly, the Irish Catholics were not unique in rejecting public schools. The Directory lists a Methodist primary school and a Baptist primary school.

[42]The origin of the Ursaline Convent is discussed in E. V. Vogel, "The Ursaline Nuns in America," Records of the American Catholic Historical Society, I (1887), pp. 214-243; Benjamin DeCosta, The Story of Mount Benedict (Somerville, Massachusetts, 1893); and Ephriam Tucker, "The Burning of the Ursaline Convent," Worcester Society of Antiquity Collections, (Worcester, Massachusetts, 1911), pp. 40-41.

[43]See the prospectus of the Ursaline Convent in An Account of the Conflagration of the Ursaline Convent, by A Friend of Religious Toleration (Boston, 1834), pp. 13-15.

to the needs of the poverty-stricken Catholic community in the Boston area at the time. Nor was the tuition fee within the reach of many of the Catholic community of the Boston area; at $150 a year, it was out of the question for most of the laboring population. In fact, the majority of the students at the Ursaline Convent were Protestants. The Convent apparently made little attempt to proseletize or to convert its pupils to the Catholic faith, and seems, actually, to have discouraged conversions.[44]

The Ursaline Convent, then, was not established to serve the Catholic community, even though the Catholics could not provide enough schools for the Catholic population. Its mission was clearly directed at the dominant Protestant community--the upper strata of the Protestant community at that. In modern terms, the Ursaline Convent had a public relations function. Its mission was to improve the image of the Catholic Church in the minds of the native Americans--or at least in the minds of the upper or ruling class. When one considers that Bishop Fenwick was a Maryland aristocrat and the general proclivity for aristocracy the Church had at that time, it was natural that he should have established such an institution. Bishop Fenwick, like other Catholic bishops of this time, was determined to "naturalize" the Catholic Church in America--to make it a regular part of the American scene.

At the same time, the leaders of the Catholic Church in America were aware of the long tradition of anti-Catholicism. They used every means they had to dispel this bias. For the most part, their effort was

---

[44]Letter from Samuel K. Williams in the Boston Daily Advertiser, August 15, 1834; also "The Ursaline Convent" from Mrs. Hales' Magazine in The Conflagration of the Convent, pp. 27-33.

limited to polemics--or to debates with anti-Catholic spokesmen, a procedure that was not very profitable.

However, the establishment of a girls' school--in the usage of the day--a female seminary--was a much more ambitious, and in some ways, more effective means of disarming Protestant hostility. To take the daughters of the leading families in the Boston area, to show them that Catholic institutions were not evil as had been claimed--this was a method of gaining the sympathy and respect of the Protestant community. This would serve to reduce hostility toward Catholicism, make it appear to be a normal part of the American scene, in other words, to legitimize Catholicism in America. However, by concentrating the efforts on the Unitarian elite, the Convent made itself a target for the resentment with which the non-elite part of the Protestant community regarded that elite. To be thus allied with aristocracy proved too great a burden for a church already viewed with suspicion by much of the Protestant community.[45]

---

[45]See the letter written by Bishop Fenwick, a prime mover in the establishment of the Convent, in Records and Studies, United States Historical Society, Volume 9 (New York, 1916), pp. 187-188.

CHAPTER V

TENSION AMONG WORKINGMEN

In the development of the emotional climate which facilitated the mid-1830's eruption of collective violence, the tension which resulted from the changing work relationships played a key role. The relationship between employers and employees had, up to the second quarter of the nineteenth century, been characterized by harmony, but, during that quarter century, became increasingly rent by antagonisms as the social distance between employers and employees grew greater. The increased stress accompanying the changed relations between employers and employees contributed to the legitimation of collective violence principally by fostering the notion that community division and social hostility were an inherent feature of the human condition.

The labor strife during this period was qualitatively different from the labor conflicts during the preceding era.[1] Labor problems of the previous era usually did not involve authentic strikes of wage earners against employers, but were either struggles between master craftsmen and local governments or between producers and consumers. They were not

---

[1]For a study of American labor strife before the Jacksonian period, see David Saposs, "Colonial and Federal Beginnings (to 1827)" in John R. Commons and Associates, History of Labor in the United States, Volume I, pp. 25 ff. For a treatment of labor problems during the Jacksonian period see (also in Commons) Helen L. Sumner, "Citizenship (1827-1833)" and Edward B. Mittleman, "Trade Unionism," pp. 335-472.

struggles within an industry, but, rather, contests between a given industry and the public. The working relationships and identity of interests within the crafts prevented intra-craft struggles. When, in the early nineteenth century, economic forces destroyed the identity of interests between the masters and journeymen, changing their relationship from that of fellow workers to an employer-employee connection, strikes become increasingly numerous and took on the characteristics that employer-employee confrontations have today. The emergence of the new type of industrial disputes reflected class division which indirectly resulted in mass violence.

The principal strikes in the Boston area were, in themselves, non-violent at least in the physical sense. The reports of the two major industrial disputes in that area during the seven years preceding 1832 impressively testify to the lack of physical violence. Though non-violent in themselves, those strikes contributed to the potential for mass violence by polarizing society into hostile camps. Thus, they added to an atmosphere in which people would be more prone to resort to collective violence.

The two major community-wide strikes which occurred in the Boston area and indirectly contributed to the upsurge in mass violence were the house carpenters' strike of 1825 and the ships carpenters' strike of 1832.[2] Both strikes began as disputes between journeymen and masters in the building industry. In the summer of 1825, the journeymen house carpenters and "housewrights" struck for a ten hour day, and in 1832, the ships

---

[2]Both strikes were reported in the Boston press. For the announcement of the 1825 strike, see Columbian Sentinel, April 20, 1825. Reports of the 1832 strike were carried in the Boston Transcript, May 19, 1832; the Boston Patriot, May 19, 23, and 26, 1832; and the Boston Courier, May 25, 1832.

carpenters and caulkers went on strike for the same reason. These strikes involved not only Boston journeymen, but also house and ships carpenters in Charlestown, and possibly in some of the other towns surrounding Boston. For the particular situation in Charlestown, these strikes must have been very important since a large part of the work force in that Boston suburb were carpenters. The Charlestown Directory listed over one hundred carpenters and fourteen ships carpenters--but many more caulkers--in 1834.[3]

In 1825 house carpenters strike illustrated that the old craft unity which had to a large degree characterized working relationships were breaking down. It was a strike against the master carpenters and their financial backers who jointly defeated the efforts of the journeymen to gain shorter hours. The striking journeymen attempted to go into business for themselves, maintaining that they could construct houses without the direction of master carpenters, but the masters, aided by a group who called themselves "gentlemen engaged in building the present season"[4] were successful in keeping all business to themselves. Though unsuccessful, the strike was but a portent for events to come.

The strike of shipscarpenters, caulkers and joiners in 1832 lasted longer and revealed a much greater degree of division within the industry than the house carpenters strike of 1825. The development of labor organization had by 1832 advanced remarkably. The New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workingmen had been organized, and had formed a branch in Boston in March of 1832,[5] which stimulated the organization of the several crafts and created a new sense of militancy

---

[3] Charlestown Directory, 1834.

[4] Columbian Centinel, April 27, 1825.

[5] Boston Courier, March 13, 1832.

among the journeymen. Not only did the journeymen organize against the master craftsmen, but also the master craftsmen organized against the journeymen.[6] The lines of division within the crafts were drawn.

The 1832 ships carpenters strike was no more successful than was the house carpenters strike in 1825. However, a very significant incident occurred in connection with the master ships carpenters' efforts to combat the strike. The master ships carpenters advertised for strike breakers at "from $2 or $3 a day".[7] This advertisement was evidently directed at the numerous Irish immigrants in the Boston area. The workingmen at least thought that the advertisement was directed toward immigrants, because a spokesman for the workingmen, Seth Luther, complained that, "[the ship owners]. . .send agents to Europe to induce foreigners to come here, to underwork American citizens. . .".[8] It does not appear that any strike-breaking Irish were actually hired, but the threat seems to have been sufficient to bring the workingmen back to work on the old terms.

In this strike, the merchants and shipowners of Boston and Charlestown were crucial in stiffening the resolve of the master carpenters in resisting the demands of the journeymen. These merchants and shipowners formed an organization to crush the strike and to guide

---

[6]Boston Patriot, May 25, 1832.

[7]Boston Patriot, May 30, 1832.

[8]Seth Luther, Address to the Workingmen of New England, p. 12. This was a speech Luther originally delivered before the second Convention of the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workingmen at Boston in September, 1832. The bitterness over the lost ship carpenters strike is obvious in the Address. Subsequently, Luther gave the speech many times at meetings of workingmen throughout New England and New York.

the master carpenters in their resistance to it.[9] According to Seth Luther, one hundred and six merchants and shipowners subscribed a fund of $20,000 to combat the strike.[10] It is interesting that the merchants were willing to go to such an expense to crush the strike. It might have cost less, at least in the short run, for the merchants to have met the journeymen's terms.[11] One suspects that short term economic considerations were not the most important considerations for the merchants in this instance.

After the strike had failed, the shipowners and merchants relented, meeting the terms in part of the journeymen. The merchants did this in the spirit of noblesse oblige rather than because they were forced to. On July 20, the associated merchants and shipowners, in a letter to the master ships carpenters, authorized them to allow the journeymen two hours for lunch during July and August, but the merchants stipulated that the work day would still begin at sunrise and end at sunset. The merchants allowed this not because they felt the hours of work were excessive, but because of "the extreme heat and the cholera epidemic". According to Seth Luther, who called the merchants' letter the "Cholera Ukase", the carpenters were already accustomed to taking two hours for the noon meal.

---

[9]Boston Patriot, May 19, 1832.

[10]Luther, Address, p. 7.

[11]The masters had advertised for forty journeymen. If this were the number of the total work force of ships carpenters, and if their wage averaged $2.50 per day (the masters' advertisement promised $2.00-$3.00 per day) it would have cost the merchants $82.00 per man per year, or $3,280.00 per year to have met the strikers' demands. Even if the cost were double this estimate, it would still have required three years of operations at the new hours to have equalled, in cost, the $20,000.00 that the merchants are reputed to have spent to crush the strike.

Luther was especially wrathful over the development of a situation in which the power to determine working conditions was being lost by the workingmen, even by the master workmen, and being concentrated in the hands of the merchant and financier.[12]

Seth Luther, organizer for the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workingmen, was one of the leading exponents in the Boston area of the new view of society. This new view differed from that which preceded it in that it did not picture the social organism as essentially harmonious. Rather, the social process which Luther and other leaders of the workingmen saw as one of the fundamental features of the American social order was conflict and struggle. For students of the Jacksonian era, the vision of society as an arena for class conflict is comfortably familiar. What has not been appreciated, however, is that this social vision, although it had roots in previous periods, intruded into the awareness of Americans rather suddenly during the late 1820's and early 1830's. The image of society as a cockpit of class struggle was not simply an extension of Jeffersonian agrarian philosophy, as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. maintained,[13] but rather a radically different social analysis.

Not only was the new social analysis different from the Jeffersonian view of the social process, the awareness of it came as something of a

---

[12]Luther, Address, pp. 33, 34.

[13]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston, 1945). See especially chapter 24, "Jacksonian Democracy as an Intellectual Movement," pp. 306-322. An example of Schlesinger's argument: "From the Jeffersonian analysis, fortified by the insights of Adam Smith and Cobbett, they [the radical democrats] sketched out an interpretation of modern times which gave meaning and status to the Jacksonian struggles." (Age of Jackson, p. 318.)

shock to many Americans. Samuel Gridley Howe, who only called for safe reforms, expressed that sense of shock in the New England Magazine:

> Ten years ago, and who would have foretold of such an early division among the people and the existance of a feeling of hostility between the rich and the poor? But is not that dreadful state at hand? Is it not beginning to show itself? And will not the spirit of envy and malice which the poor begin to manifest toward the rich, beget a returning spirit which will create a real aristocracy, and as sure as fate, must fall by violence before the levelling principles?"[14]

As the new awareness that the several social classes had different and often opposing interests spread among the lower groups, a number of workingmen's parties were formed in the early 1830's.[15] A Workingmen's group formed in Boston in 1830, and a Workingmen's newspaper, the Workingmen's Advocate, began publication.[16] The formation of a Workingmen's party in Boston was greeted with anger by the conservative press.

The literature of the workingmen's organizations in the Boston area illustrates the extent to which they subscribed to the view of an inherent class antagonism within American society. For example, the Boston Workingmen's organization stated that in the recent past, attempts had been made by men of wealth to degrade them, but declared that they would resist them, because these attempts "were so many blows aimed at the existence of our free institutions".[17] Workingmen's groups in the Boston area were informed by a circular issued by the Dorchester Working Men's party that,

> . . .in some particulars the spirit of our republican government has been perverted and its equalizing tendency thwarted by those. . .

---

[14]Samuel Gridley Howe, "Atheism In New England," New England Magazine, Vol. 7 (July-December, 1834), p. 501.

[15]For a discussion of the formation of Workingmen's parties, see Commons, History of Labor, Vol. I, pp. 169-326.

[16]Ibid., p. 291.

[17]Boston Courier, August 28, 1830.

> who, without merit, claim to belong to the upperclasses of society . . . . And believing that it has been by a similar fraud on those who are insolently designated "the common people" and "the lower classes" that the liberties of other countries have been overthrown, and aristocracy and despotism erected on their ruins; we deem it our duty. . .to arouse our fellow citizens to the peril of these departures from the purity and simplicity of our republican system.[18]

An examination of the literature written by the leaders of the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workingmen shows the emphasis they placed on the vision of society as an arena of class hostility. The leadership of this New England Workingmen's Party differed from that of New York, and perhaps, from that of the nation at large in several important respects.[19] The principal differences were in the number of New England Workingmen's leaders who were either ministers or had been trained in the ministry and the absence among them of a spirit of religious skepticism, or infidelity, as it was then known.

In the literature of the New England workingmen's movement, four themes recurred constantly:

1. America, in the recent past, had enjoyed a golden age in which society was harmonious because the interests of all men were in useful production. America had been a land of abundance in which every man could enjoy the fruit of his own labors.

---

[18]Boston Advocate and Politican, February 9, 1831.

[19]For a discussion of some of the leaders in the Workingmen's party in New York, Philadelphia and to a lesser extent, Boston, see Edward Pessen, Most Uncommon Jacksonians: The Radical Leaders of the Early Labor Movement (Albany, 1967) passim, but especially "Part Two: The Leaders", pp. 55-102. Pessen discusses only three New England leaders, and those somewhat cursorily.

2. The present age was less happy, although by no means without hope. Artificiality and immorality had produced a situation in which non-producers could take the fruit of honest men's effort and reduce the common people to poverty.

3. A remedy existed which could put America on the road to the millennium. That remedy was for the people to exert their will and crush the monsters--monopolies, banks, paper money, aristocratic conspiracies--which threatened to collect a toll from the labor of honest men.

4. New dangers threatening American liberties with the dead hand of Popish superstition were deluging America, making alliances with native corporations and aristocrats. This made the exertion of the people's will more urgent.[20]

The Workingmen's leader who was probably closest to the Charlestown situation, in interest and background, was Seth Luther. Luther was especially incensed at the immorality of employers, particularly corporations, which he likened to the Catholic Church.[21]

In addition to his anti-Catholic rhetoric, Luther also warned the Workingmen of the dangers of Irish immigration. Luther attempted to use the threat of job competition by Irish immigrants as a club with which to beat the aristocracy and implied that the influx of foreigners into

---

[20]These themes can be found in Samuel Clesson Allen, An Address Delivered Before the Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden Society (Boston, 1830); Henry Colman, Address to the Essex Agricultural Society (Boston, 1832); _____, The Times, A Discourse for the Hollis Street Church (Boston, 1833); _____, Sermon. . .At the Dedication of the Independent Congregational Church in South Orange (Boston, 1834); Seth Luther, An Address To The Workingmen of New England (Boston, 1832); and _____, An Address on The Origin and Progress (Boston, 1834).

[21]Luther, Address on the Origin and Progress of Avarice, p. 34.

America was part of a scheme on the part of the financial elite to reduce native labor. He sneered at the hypocrisy of the elite, claiming that

> The cry. . .[that American labor is happy] is kept by men who are endeavoring at all means in their power to cut down the wages of our own people, and who send agents to Europe to induce foreigners to come here, to underwork American citizens to support American industry and the American system.[22]

The Workingmen's movement in greater Boston was a symptom and a cause of the increasing social tension which provided a climate in which mass violence was an accepted mode of social behavior. The New England movement, primarily economic in inception, was conservative in religion, and shared the anti-Catholic tendency that was a latent feature of American Protestantism. The leaders of the movement, by using this latent hostility as a club against the financial elite, increased religious and ethnic tensions. This contributed to the mood which made possible the destruction of the Ursaline Convent. It is important that Charlestown was a stronghold of the Workingmen's movement; that ethnic tensions were rising in Charlestown when the Workingmen's movement reached its greatest strength there, and that Seth Luther delivered his diatribe against the Catholic Church to the Union Association of Workingmen in the Charlestown town hall in January, 1834.[23]

---

[22]Luther, Address To The Workingmen, p. 17.

[23]Luther, Address on. . .Avarice, frontispiece.

CHAPTER VI

CHARLESTOWN DURING THE 1830's

Charlestown provided a social environment favorable to the development of social tension and collective violence. Prior to the great social and economic changes which transformed Eastern Massachusetts in the early nineteenth century, Charlestown was a harmonious, socially integrated community, but by the 1830's, Charlestown was becoming fragmented, riven by ethnic and class hostility and bereft of the leadership of a local social elite. That situation developed because of Charlestown's role in the growth of the urban cluster in the metropolitan area during the early nineteenth century.

The expansion of Boston and the six surrounding towns which could be considered within the metropolitan area of Boston centered around Boston's role as a growing port, shipbuilding and distribution center, and as the financial capital of the rapidly developing New England hinterland. The phenomenal fortunes amassed by the Boston merchants during the first years of the nineteenth century, and the subsequent plowing of these fortunes into a mechanized textile industry, made Boston the center of a region containing much factory industry. However, few mechanized factories were operating at this time in Boston or its metropolitan area. These few factories were usually located at some distance from the metropolitan area in order to take advantage of water power.[1]

---

[1]For a discussion of the area constituting metropolitan Boston in the first half of the nineteenth century, see E. H. Derby, "Commercial Cities and Towns of the United States--no. XXII--. . .Boston," Hunts Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review (November, 1850), XXIII, p. 490.

While the Boston area and its hinterland were becoming industrialized, a differentiation in function took place. Industry in the new mill towns employed a mechanized technology and used factory organization, but industry in the towns surrounding Boston was still in the handicraft stage. During the 1830's, the increasing demands of Boston's hinterland for consumer goods such as shoes, pottery, glassware, leather items, hand tools and even certain types of machinery were being supplied by the traditional, non-mechanized methods.[2]

The process of Boston's growth--the slow and steady growth which is based on a wide diversity of economic pursuits--would seem to indicate a high degree of continuity in ethnic composition, given the absence of significant immigration from abroad. One visualizes a situation in which the population of the Boston area grew by natural increase, with the addition, perhaps, of numbers of migrants from the interior of New England.

This picture is partly true. There was, apparently, a great degree of ethnic continuity, since, until the mid-1820's, the great majority of inhabitants of the Boston area were Yankees. This does not mean that there was continuity in the sense of community consciousness, however, because there was a high degree of population change. Evidently, the elite and perhaps a large proportion of the middle class stayed in the Boston area and prospered. For many of the other natives of this urban complex, the Boston area did not offer the great opportunities that the new cities in the West and South did. A regular stream of the Hub's natives migrated from Boston. One estimate is that by 1840, only

---

[2]There is much to indicate this. In the listing of occupations in the Charlestown Directory of 1834 (Charlestown, 1834), cordwainers (who made shoes by hand methods), Morrocco dressers, white and black smiths, potters, glass blowers, etc. Also the article "Craigiesville" in the Bunker Hill Aurora (November 3, 1827) indicates that the pottery and glass works there employed a large number of skilled craftsmen. Also see Harriet Martineau, Society in America (New York, 1837), II, p. 59.

half of the descendents of the people who lived in the Boston area in 1820 remained there.[3]

While this exodus was occurring, however, many people from the hinterland--i.e., Western Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine--were flocking to the New England metropolis, often without the skills that would enable them to climb above the lowest rungs of the occupational ladder. The majority of the increase in population in the Boston region was, then, from rural New England. The picture that now emerges is one of great population change--many more new settlers from rural New England were moving in, while the area's natives moved out.[4]

That implies a very high degree of mobility. Metropolitan Boston might almost be regarded, not as the settled, socially integrated community that commentators have traditionally assumed,[5] but rather, as a series of fragmented communities and individuals whose roots in the larger community of Boston did not extend very far back in time. It had an ethnically homogeneous population, in the sense that most of the people were native Americans, but this population did not form an organic whole. In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the traditional organic community had suffered severe assaults--this before immigration from

---

[3]Jesse Chickering, "Report of the Committee. . .of 1850," Boston City Documents, 1851, no. 60, p. 24 ff. Peter R. Knights' findings tend to support Chickering although Knights' figures are for a later period. Peter R. Knights, The Plain People of Boston 1830-1860 (New York, 1870), p. 40.

[4]See Percy Wells Bidwell, "Rural Economy in New England at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century," Transaction of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences (April, 1916), XX, pp. 383-91.

[5]This is metropolitan Boston before the great influx of foreign immigration, i.e., circa 1820. See Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 1-24.

Ireland had even become noticeable.[6]

When one narrows the focus from the Boston area in general, to Charlestown in particular, the picture becomes clearer. Charlestown had long been very closely affiliated with Boston, since it was just north of the Charles River. However, until adequate, cheap bridges were built across the tidal flats which separated Boston from Charlestown in the late 1820's, Charlestown was able to maintain a degree of separateness, both economically and culturally. Charlestown was, in the early nineteenth century, at the beginning of the transportation route from the Boston area leading to the Merrimack region of New Hampshire and other northern New England sites.

Like Boston, Charlestown was situated on a peninsula, but it included within its political limits an area of the "mainland" to which the peninsula was connected by a narrow isthmus called "the neck." On the east, the Mystic River, which was over a mile wide before the tidal flats were filled, separated the peninsula from Chelsea; and a bay of the Charles River separated it from Boston on the south. During the early 1830's, long bridges connected the Charlestown peninsula with Chelsea and with Boston. The bridges to Boston were especially vital to the inhabitants of Charlestown, and were the subject of a bitter political battle and, eventually, of a landmark Supreme Court case in which Chief Justice Taney

---

[6]For a picture of Boston before the tidal wave of foreign immigration swept it, see Josiah Quincy, Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals (Boston, 1883), p. 112.

added to the Jacksonian animus against chartered monopolies.[7]

In the early 1830's, the principal settlement of Charlestown was in the central part of the peninsula, at the foot of and on Bunker Hill. This was the settlement which was meant when people spoke of Charlestown. In addition to this main (built up) area, three other regions of Charlestown were considered to have their special identities. On the extremity of the peninsula, at Lechmere Point, a knot of settlement called Cragiesville had grown, while on the neck connecting the peninsula with the mainland, Neck Village had been established. The remaining region was the part of the mainland included within the political limits of Charlestown. This area was more rural than the other areas of Charlestown. The Charlestown Directory (1834) referred to the mainland part of Charlestown simply as "without the peninsula."[8]

In 1834, Charlestown had a thriving and very diversified economy. Charlestown's economy in that year was, in fact, so varied that it is difficult to select any single economic endeavor as the key sector. The town was not only a transportation center, a port, the home of a great variety of hand-worked manufactoring, but also a fishing port

---

[7]During the early 1830's, the topic of free bridges occupied considerable space in Charlestown's chief newspaper, The Bunker Hill Aurora. See, for example, the Aurora, October 18, 1827 and February 10, 1834. Also see the New England Artisan, February 8, 1834. In a "Message to the Citizens of Charlestown," the Artisan warned that the "Nationals" were attempting to bury the Workingmen's Party of Charlestown by getting Charlestown annexed to Boston. The lure that the "Nationals" used was the promise of a free bridge.

[8]Charlestown Directory, 1834 (Charlestown, 1834). Much of the information about Charlestown's geographical situation and pattern of settlement is from the Directory, pp. 4-7. See also Bunker Hill Aurora, January 5, 1828.

and the center of a market gardening region. In addition, Charlestown was the site of several state and federal government enterprises.

An indication of the flourishing nature of Charlestown's economy in 1834 was the existence of its three banks, each capitalized at one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The Charlestown Directory indicates that two of these banks were creations of Charlestown merchants. The source of the capital for the third is more obscure. The directors of the Phoenix Bank were, with one exception, all Charlestown West India goods merchants. The Bunker Hill Bank had a board of directors consisting of Charlestown merchants and one owner of a wharf. The directors of the Charlestown Bank were more varied; three could be classified as workingmen and two held political positions under the Jackson administration. Director Arthur Austin was an attorney and the town postmaster, while Director Benjamin Whipple served as customs inspector. The Charlestown Bank may have been a Jacksonian bank, perhaps even a "pet" bank.[9]

Charlestown was a land port. Through and into Charlestown passed much of the overland trade between Boston and northern New England. Before the bridges which connected Boston with Charlestown were built, Charlestown was the terminus of much of that traffic. Even after the bridges were in operation, while they still charged tolls, Charlestown maintained its position as the terminus of much of the trade with Northern New England. The canal to the textile mills on the Merrimac passed through Charlestown as did the Lowell Railroad, which would not bridge the Charles River

---

[9]See the Charlestown Directory, 1834, pp. 67-68, for the lists of members of Boards of Directors for each bank as well as information on capitalization of these banks.

to Boston until later. Thus, Charlestown had Northern Massachusetts and much of New Hampshire as its hinterland. Because of that circumstance, much of Charlestown's labor force was engaged in transportation as truckmen, canalmen, teamsters, stablers, stevedores, and wharfingers. A number of merchants also was involved in this trade.[10]

Construction loomed very large in Charlestown's economic picture. Carpenters were by far the most numerous of the skilled workers in Charlestown. They were so numerous, in fact, that it is difficult to escape the conclusion that many of Charlestown's carpenters did not work in that town, but must have found employment in Boston. In addition, Charlestown had a number of masons and stone cutters. Perhaps the largest construction-related industry, aside from carpentry in Charlestown was that of brick making. Charlestown had a number of brickyards, most located "without the peninsula," and generally employing unskilled, casual labor.[11]

Thus, in the early 1830's, Charlestown's economy was very diversified. Its economy was closely tied to the northern hinterland of Boston, but Charlestown enjoyed equal advantages from its proximity with Boston itself. Many of the construction workers, such as carpenters, must have found employment in Boston, and the numerous brick manufactories in Charlestown must have sold their production in Boston. There were two bridges connecting Charlestown and Boston in 1834. Both were toll bridges, although Warren Bridge would soon become a free bridge. The evidence

---

[10]The Charlestown Directory lists over fifty merchants. For the Lowell Railroad, see Bunker Hill Aurora, April 28, May 7, 1831. For the birdges, see Bunker Hill Aurora, November 9, 1833.

[11]The Charlestown Directory lists over 110 carpenters, and lists several brickyards. The importance of brickmaking is emphasized in Trial of John R. Buzzell, the Leader of the Convent Rioters. . .(Boston, 1834), pp. 4-6. Many of the principal rioters who burned the Convent were brickmakers.

indicates, however, that tolls were charged only for vehicles; those who crossed the bridges on foot were apparently unhindered by tolls. Not only did laborers commute from Charlestown to Boston, but also crowds in search of amusement regularly flowed across the bridges at night, as they did the night the Ursaline Convent was burned.[12]

The social structure of Charlestown was rather different from that of other long settled towns in Eastern Massachusetts. During the early 1830's, there was little evidence that Charlestown possessed a cohesive, self-conscious elite, such as did Boston. Few of the professional class of physicians and lawyers were active in town political affairs. In 1834, Charlestown had only seven or eight lawyers and the evidence indicates that they were not deeply rooted in the community, since some of them did not have permanent residences, but lived in hotels.[13] The fifty-five merchants in Charlestown were involved as little in town politics as were the lawyers. Of 25 chief officers listed by the Directory (all

---

[12]An article headed "Charlestown Police" in the Bunker Hill Aurora, June 20, 1829, complained that Charlestown had no police and that "it has been the practice within the last few years for certain of the rabble of the city to visit this town, for the purposes of gambling, drinking, fighting, disturbing and disgracing the town, with their riotous proceedings. They profane the soil they tread on. They are driven from Boston by the rigid police of that city, and presume to do all manner of deeds on the precincts of their neighbors; and they do do them with impunity. Knowing these things, we suggest to the authorities of the town, the propriety of appointing some additional peace officers, a fortnight ago. But even this could not be done,--or was not done; and the result was a repetition of the disgraceful scenes of last year. The displays of drunkeness, profanity and fighting, were the chief exhibitions--excepting the military --in honor of the day--and, (here it ye freemen) these exhibitions were on Bunker Hill itself! 'Shade of Warren. We invoke thy aid!' We invoke any aid, save that of our impotent police, to prevent repetitions of such scenes--to protect us and our property from the desolation of a Boston rabble."

[13]This description of Charlestown's social and political structure is based on an examination of the lists in the Charlestown Directory, 1834.

Selectmen, Assessors, Overseers of Poor, Board of Health, Constables, Surveyors of Highways and Cullers of Hoops and Staves, but not Surveyors of Lumber, Measurers of Wood, Fence Viewers, Field Drivers, Hog Reeves, Fish Committee, Inspector of Lime, Tythingmen and other minor officers) only four were listed as businessmen. Most of the remaining twenty-one were listed as carpenters, smiths (white, black or gun) or laborers. The occupations of three were not listed. If these three had been businessmen, their occupations and places of business probably would have been listed.[14]

The Charlestown Directory of 1834 lists several educational and benevolent societies. One would expect that a self-conscious elite would arrogate to itself the leadership of these institutions, even though they could not furnish political leadership, yet an examination of the lists of officers and trustees of these organizations indicates that the merchants and professionals did not lead even in the benevolent societies. The oldest such society listed, the Female Benevolent Society of Charlestown (instituted November, 1819), had for trustees the wives of skilled workers, grocers, and one bank cashier. The Charlestown Female Seminary, an establishment organized to provide Protestant competition for the school at the Ursaline Convent, had a Charlestown physician as the Secretary of the Board of Trustees, but most of the trustees were not residents of Charlestown. The Charlestown Union Library, the sort of "literary" institution with which people with social pretensions in the Boston area endeavored to be affiliated, did have merchants and professionals predominating among its list of officers and directors. The impression that Charlestown was essentially a working-class suburb becomes very strong.

---

[14]Charlestown Directory, 1834, pp. 65-67 and passim.

The financial and economic elite either abdicated or were supplanted in their leadership function, particularly in politics. In 1834, the workingmen conspicuously and vehemently controlled Charlestown's politics. Just as a tradition of radicalism has characterized some of the working-class suburbs of Paris, so also did early-nineteenth-century Boston have at least one suburb where the current type of radicalism was endemic. Charlestown was known as "the capital of the Workingmen's Party" in Massachusetts.[15]

The evidence indirectly points to a strong anti-Masonic movement in Charlestown before the rise of the Workingmen's movement. The Bunker Hill Aurora, Charlestown's only secular newspaper, strongly supported the Whigs and was not representative of the common opinion in Charlestown. During the late 1820's, the Aurora ran apologies for Masonry and did its utmost to curb anti-Masonry in Charlestown. Although the available evidence does not directly indicate the presence of anti-Masonry in Charlestown, its existence can be inferred because of the Aurora's efforts against it.[16]

Anti-Masonry in Charlestown would be expected in a community such as this. Charlestown experienced the full gamut of lower-class discontent from the mid-1820's to the mid-1830's. During the late 1820's, the discontent found expression in Charlestown as anti-Masonry. For a short period in the early 1830's, the unease in Charlestown briefly focused on

---

[15]Boston Atlas, November 14, 1833.

[16]Bunker Hill Aurora, August 30, September 6, and November 1, 1834. These issues are a fair sample.

a meaningful issue, the plight of the workingman. However, toward the mid-1830's, the Workingmen's movement dissipated itself in ethnic and religious bigotry, the seeds of which had been present in the Workingmen's movement from the outset. That the first major ethnic outrage at the beginning of a period of ethnic hostility should occur in Charlestown, the "capital" of the Workingmen's movement, was more than coincidence.

The principal reason that Charlestown was known as the capital of the Workingmen's movement is because the Workingmen's Party controlled the town government. Many of the town officers were also leaders in the Charlestown Mechanic Union Association. The Charlestown Mechanic Union Association was evidently a central labor council for the town, with many crafts represented on its board. Of ten officers of the Association, four were also town officers, two were selectmen, one was an assessor, and one an overseer of the poor. One leader of the Workingmen's movement, A. P. Pritchard, though not a town officer or an officer of the Charlestown Mechanics Union Association, commanded the town militia.[17]

Of the seven selectmen, the chief officers in the town government, two were morrocco dressers (leather workers), one worked in a stable, one was a house painter, one ran a distillery, one was a bank officer of a non-Charlestown bank, while no occupation was listed for the remaining selectman.[18]

Besides the seven selectmen, there were sixty-six other elected town officers, of these four or five could be described as businessmen--a merchant, two operators of brickyards, a chaise-maker, and an undertaker.

---

[17] Charlestown Directory, 1834, pp. 65-67, 71 and passim. On A. P. Prichard, see Bunker Hill Aurora, October 19, 1831.

[18] Charlestown Directory, 1834, pp. 65-67 and passim.

The list of town officers contained no names of lawyers or physicians. The occupations of three town officers were not listed. Fourteen town officers were carpenters, five were masons, three were coopers, three were cordwainers, one was a gunsmith, one a whitesmith and another a laborer. (Since some men held two or more offices, the total number of men is not sixty-six.)[19]

In 1834, Charlestown furnished a fertile field for collective violence. It was a community (or perhaps the negation of a community) in which the upper class was missing--there was no group which could legitimately define social roles or limit communal behavior. It was a town in which social cleavage was endemic. Much animosity existed in Charlestown--toward Masons, the "aristocracy," Boston, and eventually, the Catholics and the Irish. Charlestown,in 1834, had a population which consisted partly of transients and largely of mutually hostile groups of newcomers from interior New England and Ireland. For some of the rural in-migrants, Charlestown was only a stage en route to the adjustment to urban living. For others, Charlestown inevitably represented a frustration of aspirations.

Such was Charlestown. As the setting for a riot, it had many advantages. Because Charlestown witnessed so much tension and harbored such antagonisms, it was the ideal locale for violence. In an intensely anti-Catholic area, where the population was subscribing to ideas about inevitable clashes in society; in a relatively unpoliced working-class non-community, Bishop Fenwick established the Ursaline Convent to show members of the Unitarian elite in the Boston area that Catholicism was not

---

[19]Charlestown Directory, 1834, pp. 65-67 and passim.

un-American. The Convent acted as a magnet, attracting to itself many of the social tensions and hostilities in the area. However, the people of Charlestown did not attack the Convent immediately after it was founded. They were too law abiding, they respected propriety too much to indulge in riot. For several years after the Convent's establishment, the good people of Charlestown may have cursed it, but they left it in peace. Only when the people began to view collective violence as right and proper, did they attack the Convent.

CHAPTER VII

THE STORM GATHERS

The social climate in which the use of collective violence was legitimated came into existence during the year preceding the destruction of the Ursaline Convent. It had been slowly building, reflecting the bitterness of class hostility, religious bigotry and ethnic hatred. The use of social violence was legitimated as social behavior as more and more elements in the population began to accept the notion that mob violence could be commendable.

The process of legitimation occurred in several phases. The first phase saw the development of a conviction on the part of the people of Charlestown that the community had suffered moral injury or was in danger of the same.

The second phase was marked by an increased discussion of violence by the press. In this phase, the "other side" was normally accused of contemplating the use of, or actually using violence. In this phase, the press escalated its usage of the rhetoric of violence.

The third phase involved the commission of violent acts on symbols, or of symbolic acts of violence. Such symbolic acts included defacing of public notices, circulation of hand bills threatening violence and the mutilation of symbols.

The fourth and last phase witnessed the outbreak of the Ursaline Convent riot. During all of these phases, except the last, there was an increased incidence of deliberate, but casual and individual violence.

The news of the wave of riots which was sweeping New York and Philadelphia served to intensify a readiness for riot in the Hub City, and its vacinity.

Even before the winter of 1833-34 had really set in, a mood of general hostility was beginning to manifest itself in Charlestown. The spirit of ethnic division and ethnic hostility was already greater in Charlestown than in Boston because of the greater percentage of Irish immigrants in Charlestown. Also, in view of Charlestown's relatively permissive reputation[1] in regard to law and order, one suspects that the ugly nature of ethnic animosity became apparent earlier in Charlestown than in Boston because one could more easily practice violence in Charlestown without worrying about interference from the law.

The following incident is the most noticeable example of this. On Thanksgiving night, in the fall of 1833, a man was beaten to death with staves behind a huge woodpile in Charlestown. This was an early incident in what was to become a long reign of ethnic hostility between "Yankee" natives and Irish immigrants. This murder was not an isolated incident--not a casual encounter nor the result of an individual fight. Rather it was a part of a communal war which was commencing.[2]

Perhaps because of its unpoliced state, Charlestown was the site of a number of drinking and gambling places, some of which catered to native Americans while others were for the Irish. Establishments such as "Ellen's," "Puffer's Cellar," the "Bunker Hill Hotel," and "Seavey's Cellar" sold drinks to a clientele predominantly Yankee, while the Irish

---

[1] "Charlestown in the Early 1830's," Chapter VI, supra.

[2] The information about this incident comes from "Report of Evidence Taken by Selectmen," Bunker Hill Aurora, December 27 and 28, 1833.

gathered at places such as "McGowan's."[3] McGowan's was a drinking establishment which catered to both men and women and was a dancing as well as a drinking establishment. On Thanksgiving night in 1833, McGowan's held a ball for the Irish in Charlestown and Boston, charging a dollar admission per couple.[4] McGowan's was apparently a very popular resort for the Boston Irish, because that night it was crowded. The Irish were noisily enjoying themselves.

Meanwhile, at the "native American" establishments, a group of young men were going from bar to bar, looking for excitement. Men such as Cornelius Harding, Ira Greene, William Frost, and others spent Thanksgiving night (until about ten o'clock) moving from one establishment to another, resenting the noise which was emanating from McGowan's.

By this time, the celebrants in McGowan's were apparently very exuberant because one of Charlestown's constables called in Father Byrne, the Catholic priest in Charlestown, to calm the noise. Father Byrne was unsuccessful.

The native American young men who had spent the evening circulating around McGowan's formed a group of twenty to twenty-five men to attack the house with snowballs, ice, and stones. McGowan asked the town constable to put a stop to the attack on his house, which the constable did. Shortly after this, a party of Irishmen left McGowan's to go to Boston, being followed by the taunting group of snowball-throwing native Americans. To reach the Charlestown Bridge into Boston the group had to go near a

---

[3] Bunker Hill Aurora, December 27, 1833.

[4] Bunker Hill Aurora, December 28, 1833. That the admission charge should be so high is a puzzle. Making allowance for inflationary visisitudes during one hundred and forty years an 1833 dollar would be worth many times that in today's money. When one recalls the marginal economic status of the Irish immigrants, one is impressed by their ability to pay such a relatively high admission fee.

wharf on which was a huge pile of wood. At the wood pile, men from both groups seized staves, fighting with them until someone was knocked senseless, killed, as it later emerged. All participants, except the dead man, whose name was Benjamin Daniels, fled, but two women discovered the corpse and raised the alarm.[5]

The next day the native American residents of Charlestown were enraged when they learned of the "murder of Daniels" and that evening a mob formed "to pull down [McGowan's] house"--a task which they evidently accomplished.[6] The town militia were called out to protect other property. Rumor had it that some of the participants in the riot later served in the militia, whose purpose was to prevent rioting.

The ethnic bitterness engendered by the "Daniels murder" was heightened in the first weeks of January when the Boston press reported the robbery and murder of a whole family by a "maniacal Irish demon."[7] That crime, which occurred in Exeter, Rhode Island, was first reported in the Boston press without a great deal of comment, editorial or otherwise. In the first report, the Reynolds family was said to have been attacked "by an Irishman whose name we have not learned." The youngest son, aged fourteen, "whose skull was dreadfully fractured by an axe," was killed, as were the rest of the family who were "perforated with a dull knife."[8]

---

[5] Bunker Hill Aurora, December 27 and 28, 1834.

[6] New England Artisan, December 11, 1833. I did not find any report of McGowan's house being actually destroyed--only references to the mob which met to pull down the house and, in the "Report of Evidence taken by the Selectmen" in the Bunker Hill Aurora (December 27 and 28, 1833), references to McGowan's house in the past tense, i.e., McGowan's late house. See also Boston Republican, December 6, 1833.

[7] See Column headed "The Exeter Massacre" in the Boston Transcript, January 13, 1834.

[8] Boston Transcript, January 10, 1833.

In subsequent reports, the incident was spoken of as "diabolical outrage."[9] The Reynolds family, a report implied, were a composite of American virtues; hard working, thrifty, and generous. The family had given the "maniacal Irish demon" shelter, thinking him destitute. The Irishman, William Burke, had been employed by the Canton Railroad--Burke committed his "foul deed" when he discovered that Reynolds kept "a quantity of money in the house."[10] Such an incident could not but exacerbate ethnic hostility.

Other kinds of hostility were also heightened during this year. As pointed out elsewhere,[11] animosity between laborers and capitalists was mounting. For example, during the last half of 1833 and the first months of 1834, at least fourteen labor organizations were founded in Boston and vicinity.[12]

Throughout the winter of 1833-34, and the spring and summer of 1834, the Boston area press increasingly used the terms riot, mob, mob law, usurpation, and violence.[13] For example, the Boston Atlas, the chief National Republican paper in the Boston area, printed a series of long and bitter tirades in the early part of 1834, against the Jacksonians especially against "King Andrew I"[14] and the "magician Van Buren[15]

---

[9]Boston Transcript, January 13, 1834.

[10]Ibid.

[11]"The Labor Dimension," supra.

[12]The Man (New York), March 12, 1834; New England Artisan, December 28, 1833.

[13]Atlas, January 27-29, February 1, 4-6, 12, 14, 17, 1834.

[14]Atlas, July 12, 1834.

[15]Atlas, January 27, 1834.

especially after the removal of federal deposits in the Second Bank of the United States.

In January, the Boston Atlas was complaining of the public distress because of the removal of the deposits and accusing the Jacksonians of being engaged in a ruthless conspiracy to "erect on the ruins of the republic a reckless aristocracy" of Jacksonian office holders.[16] Throughout the early part of 1834, the Atlas protested about the course of the Jackson administration. In January and February, the Atlas limited itself to exposing what it described as the venal motives of Jackson's supporters and the unscrupulous lust for power exhibited by the Jacksonian leaders.[17] In the early summer, however, the tone of the Atlas grew less sorrowful and more angry, even pugnacious. In June, the Atlas printed an editorial entitled "The Revolt Against a Tory President."[18] The paper was rather ambiguous as to whether this was to be an armed revolt or merely an electoral defeat, but a letter prominently printed in the Atlas in March was more explicit. The letter was headed: "TO ARMS! TO ARMS!" The substance of the letter is that the people would be justified in expelling Jackson from office by violent means, despite the electoral process:

> It is perhaps already time that the sovereign people should rise in their might and seize on the Departments of the Government, which are now in the hands of one who has rendered himself an outlawed

---

[16] Atlas, January 27, 1834.

[17] Atlas, January 27, 28, 29; February 1, 4, 5, 6, 12, 14, 17, 1834.

[18] Atlas, June 9, 1834. The Atlas and other anti-Jackson papers often referred to Democrats as Tories--perhaps because the anti-Jacksonians had claimed the name Whig for themselves. In response, the Boston Morning Post, the Jacksonian organ in Massachusetts, rarely called its opponents Whigs; the Post preferred to label them "Hartford Convention Federalists." Boston Post, July 18, 1834.

> usurper. . . . It, however, could not be pretended, that anything of this kind could be done under the form of law; it could be considered nothing short of a revolutionary movement. It would be resorting to the natural rights of men, to bind that power by which the code of conventional rights has been annulled and abrogated. The Departments of Government have reverted to the people, by a violation by which they were granted, and it remains for them to say, whether they will now resume their original right over them or leave them in the hands by which the trust has already been broken and forfeited. Should a movement of this kind be made in good earnest, there could not be much doubt of the result. The Senate would never consent to aid in putting the military sword, to massacre their own constituents, into the hands of one whom they have already acknowledged to be a usurper, and his single voice could command, in such an enterprise, only the assistance of his more devoted Partisans, who are not likely to become very famous for courage, except in trying political experiments.[19]

Thus, the Atlas, the organ of the Boston industrial and mercantile establishment, began to sanction mass violence as a legitimate means of accomplishing change. The Atlas affected to be very surprised later in the year when the people did use violence to enforce virtue, but it had not been hesitant about advocating violence for its particular ends.

The Boston Post, the principal Jacksonian organ in eastern Massachusetts, was no less willing to sanction the use of extra-legal violence for its own ends. The Jacksonian reply to the threat of revolution by the Atlas was belligerent. Accusing the Whig leadership of being "rife for treasons, strategems, and spoils," the Post continued: "If they are in earnest, let them come on. The friends of the administration are ready to meet them, and give them war to the knife and the knife to the hilt." But the author of this item in the Post, who signed himself "Ready," made light of the Atlas' talk of revolution: "But it is evident . . .that this is but another emanation of the same spirit of vaporing and bullying which was so during the late war and is only calculated to frighten old women and young children.[20]

---

[19] Atlas, March 1834, reprinted in the Boston Morning Post, March 12, 1834.

[20] Boston Post, March 12, 1834.

The outraged feelings of the Boston Whigs and Democrats did not only find vent in threats of violence. Violence itself was used. A number of political meetings were held during March, 1834 in Faneuil Hall. Some of these gatherings were Whig affairs, called to protest the removal of the government deposits from the Bank of the United States, while others were called in support of the Jackson administration. These assemblies became tumultuous as each side attempted to break up the conclaves of its opponents.

For example, the Whigs organized a mob to break up a pro-Jackson convocation in Faneuil Hall on March 14, 1834. According to the Post:

> . . .the citizens, to whom the Hall was granted for their meeting, were broken in upon by those who had no right to be there and who were not invited and an attempt was made to break up the meeting by VIOLENCE! The friends of the bank have recently held two meetings at the same place--no attempt was made to disturb them . . . . As much as the opponents of the bank regretted the necessity of using violence against violence, they were obliged to resort to it. . .the rioters were ejected sans ceremonie. . . . This must convince the friends of the bank that they can gain nothing by using mob force [or]. . .threats of violence. . . .[21]

The so-called "Bank War" of the Jacksonian administration, it seems, was more than a symbolic phrase used to designate only a political struggle. It generated emotions which caused people to take positions that were often irrational. When the spokesmen for the Boston industrial and financial establishment were defending the United States Bank against the onslaughts of a demogogic Jackson and his reckless supporters[22] they were defending something which was much dearer to them than a bank that they did not own. Evidence suggests that the Boston economic establish-

---

[21]Boston Post, March 17, 1834.

[22]See, for example, the column headed "Our Liberties in Danger," Atlas, February 6, 1834.

ment poured more passion into the Bank War than the defense of something as cold and abstract as a stable currency would evoke.

A reading of the Boston Atlas gives one an indication of the rage experienced by the financial elite of Boston. The editor of the Atlas accused the Jackson administration of being an audacious despotism, of instituting a reign of terror, of tyranny, of insanity, of conducting "profligate experiments" on the public, of attempting to establish "an absolute military despotism"[23] and, as shown above, the Atlas called for armed revolt.[24]

The Jacksonian organs, especially the Boston Post, retorted to these charges not by attempting to conduct a reasoned dialogue, but rather by impugning the patriotism, the courage, and the manhood of Boston's financial elite. The Post was fond of referring to the opponents of Jackson in Boston as "Old Federalists under the Wig [sic] mask" and accused the Whigs of being the same party as that which not only stood by during the War of 1812 when the British invaded this country, but "sang Te Deums at King's Chapel, in honor of the English victories."[25] Often, however, the Post would deprecate the violence and malignancy of the anti-Jacksonian's rhetoric. Thus, in March, the editor of the Post prayed that political calm would return soon. He wrote "we hope it [the political situation] will lose its present dark and lowering appearance . . . . For the past three months, we have heard of nothing but bank and anti-bank; panic and anti-panic meetings. The politicians have been hurling thunder bolts at each other. . . ." The editor implied that

---

[23] Atlas, January 28, 29; February 5, 12, and 14, 1834.

[24] Boston Post, March 12, 1834.

[25] Post, July 18, 1834.

unless calm did return, "rival mobs will be marching, looting, and burning."[26]

In spite of the editorialist's pious hope, political calm did not return until the next winter. Violence, riot, and the rumor of riot engulfed Boston and much of the rest of the United States that year. During the spring and summer of 1834, the Boston press reported many of the riots which swept New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Rochester, Portsmouth, and other places. In addition, more incidents occurred which increased the level of public hostility or which reflected the rising level of hostility. One of these incidents was a student strike at Harvard and another involved the mutilation of the figurehead of the U.S.S. Constitution, a naval vessel which was a shrine and a symbol of the American nationalist mystique.

Of these two incidents, the Harvard strike attracted less public controversy and perhaps contributed less to the development of the mood in which the public at large was prepared to use violence. The Harvard incident, however, was an indication of the temper of the times because it was highly probable that the Harvard students who were involved in confrontation felt the same currents of social emotion as those which were sweeping the rest of the population.

During the events at Harvard, much property damage occurred, almost all of the sophomore class and many of the freshman class were expelled, and several students faced criminal prosecutions for malicious destruction of property.[27] The trouble began when a freshman refused to recite in

---

[26] Post, March 22, 1834.

[27] Boston Transcript, June 4, 1834.

Greek class. The instructor, a young, first-year appointee, decided to make an issue of this incident because, according to the students, "he has never been able to command the respect of his classes."[28] Mr. Dunkin, the instructor, reported the incident to the President of Harvard, Josiah Quincy, a man of very high prestige among the financial and political leadership of the Boston area; a man who had been Boston's mayor. When President Quincy demanded that the rebellious student apologize and amend his behavior, the student refused and was advised to "take up his connection with the Seminary."[29] When students learned that the offending student was "taking up his connections," they ransacked the room occupied by Mr. Dunkin, destroying all furniture and breaking all the windows. From Mr. Dunkin's room, the rampaging students went to break windows in the residences of other unpopular college officials and faculty.[30]

That evening, watchmen patrolled Harvard Yard. The watchmen were attacked by students throwing stones. One of the students involved in the attack was recognized and reported to the President. The students continued to disrupt the morning and evening prayers every day for the next two weeks, except interestingly, for Sunday, when the students committed no uproar or destruction. In addition to interrupting prayer sessions and committing other outrages, such as tolling the bell, shooting firecrackers and breaking windows, they destroyed the furniture in the dwellings of other unpopular faculty.[31]

---

[28] Transcript, June 18, 1834. The quote is from a "Circular" written by the Senior Class and published in the Transcript.

[29] The quote is from President Quincy's statement printed in the Boston Press Transcript, June 4, 1834.

[30] Transcript, June 4, 1834.

[31] Transcript, June 4, 1834.

President Quincy and the faculty in attempting to control and quiet the situation followed a policy which only made the situation worse--although it is difficult to imagine what they might have done differently, given the traditions and circumstances of the times. First, the President warned the students that they would get in trouble if they continued in their behavior. Next, the student who had been recognized in the attack on the watch was expelled, stimulating a majority of the students to petition for his reinstatement. According to the petition, the expelled student was guilty, but "that others were equally or even more guilty, and it was unjust to select him."[32]

When the petition had no effect on the action of the President, the situation hardened. Although most of the violence involving property destruction was over because the President had stationed guards around all college property, the students--especially the sophomores--became more and more enraged. The sophomores began to absent themselves as a class from daily worship, many of the freshmen also stayed away, while the juniors began to be affected with the spirit of revolt.

The situation did not become calm that school year. On May 29, 1834, the sophomore class, with six or seven exceptions, was expelled from Harvard. When the sophomores were informed of this, "a series of disgraceful and riotous proceedings was had in the college yard for several hours."[33]

For several days after the expulsion of the sophomores, the freshmen and some juniors continued to disrupt daily prayers. More windows

---

[32] Transcript, June 4, 1834.

[33] Ibid.

and furniture were broken. President Quincy, however, did not resort to mass punishment again. There were more expulsions, but these were expulsions of carefully selected individuals, not of classes.[34]

The Harvard authorities brought charges of criminal trespass against several students during the summer. For example, in the middle of June, a grand jury indicted three Harvard students for "riot and demolition" and one for "assault & C" on the watch for the battle on May 21.[35] Through all these events the senior class was quiet. When the freshmen were attacking the watch, the seniors remained aloof; when the sophomores were expelled, the seniors were not moved. But, in the middle of June, when the administration seemed to have regained control over a decimated student body, the seniors, or some of them, decided to act. President Quincy had issued to the press a long statement giving his account of the events leading to the expulsion of the students, which was published in part or completely by several Boston papers on June 4, 1834.[36] On June 18, 1834, in a "Circular" which was generally respectful, the seniors accused the President of the College of responsibility for much of the disturbances because of his threatening and harsh manner.[37] This criticism apparently hurt the administration because the President instituted "an inquisition of seniors" to find out who among the seniors approved of the circular.[38] The Boston press reported that there were to be

---

[34] Transcript, June 4, 1834.

[35] Atlas, June 14, 1834. The Atlas did not explain the term "assault & C."

[36] See for example the Atlas, June 4, 1834; the Courier, June 4, 1834, and the Transcript, June 4, 1834.

[37] Transcript, June 18, 1834.

[38] Ibid.

massive suspensions of seniors because of that circular.[39]

The troubles at Harvard are important because they contributed to an intensification of a mood which would sanction violence. Harvard was not just another college; it was the pride of the Boston elite. The violence at Harvard provoked that elite into taking repressive stands in many areas of social relations. This intransigence was part of a mood sweeping the Boston area in 1834 which was preventing accommodation among social groups; making confrontation more likely.

The events at Harvard were widely discussed in the Boston press[40] and became a minor political issue. In general, the Whig press, especially the Atlas, supported President Quincy, while the Democrat papers, such as the Post, sided with the students. The Post, which had earlier referred to Harvard as "the Cambridge Nursery" because Harvard had conferred an honorary degree on President Jackson and later attempted to withdraw the degree[41] pretended to fear that Harvard would go out of business:

> The present government of Harvard College appears determined if it is in their power, to ruin that ancient institution. . . by every measure which is likely to render it as unpopular in other states as it is daily becoming at home.[42]

The Post accused President Quincy of attempting to institute a type of thought control.

---

[39] Transcript, July 5, 1834.

[40] See, for example, the Atlas, June 4, 5, 14, 15, July 5, 6, 1834; Post, June 4, 5, 18, 19, July 4, 1834; Transcript, June 4, 18, July 5, 11, 1834.

[41] Post, February 22, 1834. The Post said, "The extremely puerile proceedings of the Corporation of Harvard College relative to the degree LLD conferred on General Jackson puts us in mind of our nursery days. Children make presents, repent, and cry to get them back again."

[42] Post, July 4, 1834.

While the students at Harvard were conducting their confrontation, another drama was unfolding which was to add to the tension and readiness of the population of the Boston area to use violence. The President of the United States was symbolically slain.

Throughout the first half of 1834, a bitter battle of invective between the Whig and Democratic papers had been in progress over the refurbishing of the U.S.S. Constitution, or "Old Ironsides" as it was usually known. That ship was to have been scuttled because it had succumbed to shiprot and other hazards common to wooden ships. However, because of the place in American affections the ship occupied, President Jackson and the Secretary of the Navy decided to repair it--a repair amounting in this case, to a virtual reconstruction. This project was one which not even the most bitter opponents of Jackson could fault, until it was learned about the manner of ornamentation planned for the rehabilitated ship. Commodore Jesse Elliott, the commander of Boston Navy Yard (in Charlestown) "being aware of the high honor conferred on him [the President] during late tour of New England, by the State of Massachusetts and her Literary Institutions and more particularly by the inhabitants of Boston"[43] ordered a "colassal [sic] figure of Andrew Jackson"[44] to be mounted on the U.S.S. Constitution as the figure-head. The figure-head of Jackson was to have been bearing a scroll which read "The Constitution must be preserved," a motto very similar to a remark made by Jackson at a famous dinner during the nullification controversy: "Our Federal Union: It must be preserved."[45] With Jackson on the bow, the stern was

---

[43]Letter from Commodore Elliott to the editor of the Post, February 22, 1834.

[44]Mercantile Journal (Boston), reprinted in the Post, February 24, 1834.

[45]Post, February 24, 1834.

decorated with the busts of the former commanders of the famous ship: Hull, Bainbridge, and Stewart.[46]

When the news of these plans was released in Boston, a howl of rage went up. The press of the Boston area referred to the figure-head as "a graven image" and a "wooden idol."[47] In February, inflammatory placards were posted in Boston.[48] Many citizens of the Boston area regarded the use of the U.S.S. Constitution, a ship which symbolized the national faith, for partisan advantage as sacreligious. The Bunker Hill Aurora, the only regular paper in Charlestown, was outraged that Elliott "desecrated the noble and venerated ship" and characterized this act as "a contemptible outrage," the result of "the very worst impulses of party sycophancy--man worship!"[49]

The figure-head was carved by Laban Beecher at his shop in Boston and then moved to the docks at the navy yard in Charlestown. As the carving progressed and the uproar over it mounted Commodore Elliott found it necessary to post an armed guard around Beecher's workshop.[50] The Transcript protested that detailing a guard for the figure-head added insult to injury, that New Englanders were an orderly group who did not indulge in vandalism, the violence of the frontier.[51] Elliott evidently worried greatly about the safety of the carving because as soon as possible he had it moved from Beecher's shop to the navy yard and had

---

[46] Post, March 3, 1834.

[47] Worchester Spy, reprinted in the Transcript, March 27, 1834.

[48] Post, April 24, 1834.

[49] Reprint from the Bunker Hill Aurora in the Transcript, May 5, 1834.

[50] Transcript, March 27, 1834.

[51] Ibid.

Beecher finish it there. Beecher had a difficulty in even moving the figure-head. His workmen apparently refused to touch the "graven image" and Elliott had to hire Irish labor to accomplish it.[52] Even some of Elliott's officers refused to cooperate. Elliott placed a Captain Percieval under arrest for refusing to arm the laborers, although he later released him.[53]

After the initial shock caused by the announcement that Jackson's image was to be the figure-head for the U.S.S. Constitution, the Whigs, and the Boston area in general, seemed to settle down into a sullen acceptance of the situation. Criticism moved slightly away from "the wooden image of the man who has distressed and disgraced and abused the whole American people"[54] to Commodore Elliott, who was responsible for having it carved in the first place. Elliott was accused by the press of being a "sycophant, intriguer and a courtier."[55] Elliott's record in the Battle of Lake Erie was scrutinized, and Elliott's courage was questioned. The editor of the Transcript implied that Elliott had hesitated in closing with the enemy during that battle.[56] The pro-Jackson Post replied by commenting on the relationship between the Whigs and the Hartford Convention Federalists.[57]

In spite of the uproar and the strikes, the U.S.S. Constitution was repaired with the carving of Andrew Jackson at its bow. It was

---

[52]Worchester Spy, reprinted in the Transcript, March 27, 1834.

[53]Transcript, March 27, 1834.

[54]Atlas, June 23, 1834.

[55]Transcript, March 29, 1834.

[56]Post, April 4, 1834.

relaunched in the middle of June, with a striking absence of fanfare. The relaunching of "Old Ironsides" was, in fact, notable for its funereal atmosphere.[57]

By this time, there could be no mistaking the shrill disapproval in the Boston area with which the figure-head met. Putting the figure of Jackson on the bow of "Old Ironsides" found even the anti-Whig and pro-Jackson Workingmen's Party opposed.[58]

If the presence of Jackson's figure on the bow of a beloved national symbol produced gloom in Boston, someone found a way to relieve that gloom. Two nights preceding July 4th, 1834 someone decapitated

---

[57]The Atlas, June 23, 1834, mourned:

> The frigate Constitution was taken from the Dock on Saturday in presence of a large collection of citizens.--But the scene was one of melancholy interest. Not a solitary voice of encouragement or satisfaction was heard in the tranquil stillness of the place. While everything that nature or art could accomplish to exhilerate and delight the mind was present on the occasion--while the splendid panorama of land and water--the green hills--the broad sea--the moving vessels--the magnificent war ships--the grand anc curious basin erected at immense expense for public use and completely successful in the experiment--the joyous strains of martial music swelling from a band stationed in the center of the great part of artillery--. . .and above all, the gallant and beautiful Constitution renewing its youth and floating again another and the same into the element of its glory--the bulwark of country and the pride of the citizens, not one solitary voice of approbation was raised in honor of the scene--not a single whisper of gladness escaped from human lips. It was, indeed a melancholy and a painful event. The crowd looked on the profanation to which they saw this favorite vessel had been subjected and they lost, in profound grief, all the enchantment of the scene. . . .
>
> The ship is disgraced forever. She is no longer a favorite. If there is any truth in augury, in the first storm she will sink, or in the first battle will be captured. She carries worse than a living Jonah of misfortune.

[58]New England Artisan, June 4, 1834. For the pro-Jackson nature of the Boston area workingmen's party, see the New England Artisan, February 8, 1834. The Artisan was the organ of the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Working Men. According to the Artisan, "It is a well known fact that nine tenths of the workingmen's party are Jackson men" but "that some of the leading Jackson men are opposed to the workingmen's party."

the figure-head. This was, according to the editor of the pro-Jackson Post, part of a pre-concerted plan engineered by the Whig leaders who wished to be able to celebrate a victory over Jackson. According to the Post, "the more violent part of the opposition people in this city, yesterday seemed to be in as much ecstasy at the victory as they were in the last war"--when the British were winning victories.[59]

The Post was right. The Whig press, including the organs for most of the wealth and prestige of the Boston area were exultant, while the few Jackson papers went into paroxisms of rage. The Post breathed anger and fire; the Atlas was mirthful. In mid-July, the Atlas printed the "Proclamation of Andrew I," lampooning the President.[60]

While the Atlas and other Whig papers were more amused than shocked by that destruction of public property, the Post threatened violence--mass, destructive violence. The Post complained that the opposition papers, in exulting over the mutilated ship were giving encouragement to those who would wreak more destruction--some of it not favorable to the opposition. The Post maintained that, by approving such violence, the Whigs were encouraging the same type of violence that had wrecked New York City that spring and summer.[61] New York City was experiencing the anti-abolition riots which were directed against Lewis Tappan and the Catham Street Chapel, and had experienced election riots during the spring, as had Philadelphia.[62]

---

[59] Post, July 4, 1834.

[60] Atlas, July 12, 1834. The text of the "Proclamation is in Appendix II of this essay.

[61] Post, July 9, 1834.

[62] See an editorial in the Post (July 18, 1834) headed: "The Figurehead and the Riots."

Maintaining that the decapitation of the figure-head had insulted the whole nation and that

> . . .not merely the miscreant who crept upon the bows of the ship, and mutilated her under the darkness and secrecy of the night, but. . .those yet more infamous, who move in the first walks of life, and openly justify, if they did not plan and pay for the crime. . . .

are guilty, the Post warned that, although no one knew what the future would bring, "When the law is broken down, and violence succeeds to its reign, one act of violence begets another."[63]

The Post warned that the men of property would not be immune from destruction if they continued to use violent methods. The Post speculated that some Democrats, "possessing an abundance of feeling might take the law into their own hands and fire the bank, or the large factories in revenge? Or perhaps, may burn the ships of the large India merchant, who is said to have offered such a price for the figure-head?"[64]

The Whig editors were less than gleeful when they read the Post's covert threat of retaliation. The Atlas accused the Democrats of attempting to incite the Irish immigrants against the Americans, but predicted that the "fiend like spirit" would not be so easy to arouse.[65]

The press, through its rhetorical excesses and its reportage of the riots in other cities, was instrumental in making the use of collective violence socially legitimate. However, the press alone did not make violence an acceptable form of social behavior. The events in the Boston area during the time immediately preceding the riot interacted with the news that riot was occurring in other cities to produce a public

---

[63] Post, July 9, 1834.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Atlas, July 18, 1834.

frame of mind which desired violence. A combination of factors had sanctioned the use of mass violence as an acceptable mode of social behavior. The way was now cleared for riot. When the Convent riot occurred, a public mood existed which was prepared to applaud the rioters.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RIOT AND ITS AFTERMATH

In the year preceding August, 1834, many people in the Boston region became habituated to thinking in terms of violent confrontation, yet many residents of the area clearly did not anticipate that this would lead to actual riot. The conservative Unitarian establishment in particular failed to discern the coming storm. Violence might disrupt the civil life of other parts of the country, but New England, it was felt, would be immune to the passions which produced violence. Thus in July, 1834, when New York was experiencing the anti-abolition Chatham Street riots, the Atlas complacently boasted of New England exceptionalism:

> They [the instigators of riots] may labor as diligently as they please, they cannot make Mob Law triumphant in the good city of Boston. Our population is too orderly, well educated and intelligent.[1]

The Ursaline Convent riot came as a surprising shock to such people. For example, a writer in the New England Magazine mourned, after the riot occurred:

> It is with unmingled pain, that we have felt ourselves authorized to take up this subject in a New England Magazine . . .[there is] an ungovernable spirit among certain portions of the people, which, if it be not checked, will work certain destruction to our Constitution and our liberties.[2]

---

[1]Boston Atlas, July 24, 1834.

[2]"Mobs," in the New England Magazine, Volume VII (July - December, 1834), pp. 471-477.

While conservatives did not foresee the oncoming wave of violence, others, who had become accustomed to thinking in terms of violent action, plotted the destruction of the Convent. Much has been written about the causes of the Ursaline Convent riot. Although there exists disagreement on the underlying causes, all sources are agreed generally on the immediate train of events which precipitated the riot.[3]

During the weeks preceding the riot, a rumor swept the Charlestown area that one of the nuns of the Convent had "escaped." The "nun," Rebecca Teresa Reed, had, according to her story, been a sister of the Ursaline Community until she became aware of "dread occurrences" there. She said she escaped when she learned of a plot to carry her off to Canada to prevent her publicizing the truth. In reply to Miss Reed's story, the Mother Superior of the Convent retorted that Rebecca Reed had never been a nun, but had been a servant doing menial tasks at the Convent. Miss Read, the Mother Superior maintained, had not escaped, but

---

[3]The events surrounding the incident were widely reported by the press at the time and have been periodically related since. Among the more important accounts written by contemporaries are Benedict J. Fenwick, "The Destruction of the Ursaline Convent at Charlestown, Massachusetts," United States Catholic Historical Society, Records and Studies, IX (New York, 1916), pp. 187-188; An Account of the Conflagration of the Ursaline Convent. . .by a Friend of Religious Toleration (Boston, 1834); Louisa Whitney, The Burning of the Convent; a Narrative of the Destruction, by a Mob of the Ursaline School on Mount Benedict, Charlestown, as Remembered by One of the Pupils (Boston, 1877); Lucy Thaxter, An Account of Life in the Convent at Mount Benedict, Charlestown (Manuscript, Weidener Library, Harvard University); James T. Austin, Argument of the Attorney General. . .in the Case of John R. Buzzell (Boston, 1834); Trial of John R. Buzzell, the Leader of the Convent Rioters, for Arson and Burglary. . .By the Destruction of the Convent. . . (Boston, 1834); Report of the Committee Relating to the Destruction of the Ursaline Convent (Boston, 1834); Trial of William Mason, Marvin Marcy, Jr., and Sargent Blaisdell. . .In Burning the Ursaline Convent. . .(Boston, 1834). Also useful is the secondary account by Isaac Frye, The Charlestown Convent; Its Destruction By a Mob. . . also The Trials of the Rioters (Boston, 1870). For treatments of the convent riot by present historians, see Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants: A Study in Acculturation (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 187-189, and Ray Billington, The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860 (New York, 1938), pp. 53-85.

rather had been dismissed from employment because of dishonesty. In spite of the Mother Superior's assertions, and in spite of the low repute with which the Reed family was held in Charlestown, Rebecca Reed's stories were generally believed.

People in Boston and Charlestown were thus ready to believe the worst when an actual nun, Elizabeth Harrison, did "escape." Miss Harrison was a music teacher at Mount Benedict, who allegedly because of overwork, suffered a nervous breakdown. On the evening of July 28, 1834, she ran to the house of the owner of a nearby brickyard and begged the brick manufacturer, Edward Cutter, to take her to visit her brother, who lived in Boston. After Cutter had taken Miss Harrison to her brother's house, she, changing her mind, asked that Bishop Fenwick be sent for. The next day the bishop visited her and either persuaded her to return to the Convent or granted her request that she be allowed to go back.

The night after Miss Harrison's return, garbled and distorted accounts of her "escape" and "recapture" swept Charlestown and Boston. The common suspicion was that the Bishop had forcibly taken the unfortunate nun back to the Convent, where she was cast into a deep dungeon as punishment. The Boston newspapers picked up the rumors and broadcast them all over Boston and the surrounding area. The newspapers hinted that the "escaped nun" had disappeared under mysterious circumstances.

The publicity given to this incident aroused a storm of excitement in Boston and Charlestown. Groups met to discuss action, and mysterious placards were posted in both communities exhorting the selectmen of Charlestown to do something and threatening that "the people" would take the law into their own hands unless the "escaped nun" were found. The placards called on the "brave and the free" to "leave not one stone

upon another of that curst Nunnery that prostitutes female virtue and liberty under the garb of holy religion."[4]

While the excitement was mounting Lyman Beecher lent his prestige to the anti-Convent movement. The Reverend Lyman Beecher had been the pastor of a Congregational church in Boston, a leader in the Congregational struggle against the Unitarians and a principal spokesman against the evils of "popery," until he moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he assumed the presidency of Lane Theological Seminary. Beecher returned to Boston August 3, 1834, on a fund raising expedition. On Sunday night, August 10, he contributed to the excitement by delivering an anti-Catholic sermon, "The Devil and the Pope of Rome," while many of the other Congregational ministers in the area also denounced Catholicism and particularly the Ursaline Convent.[5]

These sermons had the effect of giving a clerical stamp of approval to a plot that had already been formed among elements of the Charlestown and Boston native American workmen for the destruction of the Convent. A conspiracy of brickyard workers and other laborers had been organized for this purpose. They had held at least two meetings to plan the attack on the Convent, but had been reluctant to act for lack of public support. There are indications that the leaders of this conspiracy were prominent men in Charlestown, but the evidence for this is by no means conclusive.[6]

---

[4]Quoted in Isaac Frye, The Charlestown Convent, p. 70.

[5]Lyman Beecher, Autobiography and Correspondence, Volume II (New York, 1865), pp. 243, 333.

[6]This is according to testimony given at the trials of the rioters by Henry Buck, a rioter who turned state's evidence. Trial of John Buzzell, pp. 11-12. Further evidence was the remark of the defense counsel for some of the rioters, who said that the rioters "were ignorant men acting under the instigation of individuals better educated and moving in a higher sphere than themselves." Trial of William Mason, Marvin Marcy, Jr., and Sargent Blaisdell, p. 19.

The plan to destroy the Convent was, for at least three days before the riot, fairly well known in the Boston area. The Mother Superior of the Convent was warned of the impending riot, the Unitarian parents of many of the Mount Benedict students were warned, and the authorities in Charlestown were warned. It is likely that the Congregational ministers who preached against the Convent the day before it was burned were informed of the plan to destroy the Convent.[7]

The selectmen of Charlestown were, however, reluctant to take preventive measure because at the time they were in an acrimonious personal debate with Bishop Fenwick regarding the establishment of a Catholic cemetery on Bunker Hill, which was within Charlestown. The selectmen refused the Bishop's petition that he be allowed to use a tract of land he had secured on Bunker Hill as a burying ground because they said health regulations forbade the burial of Catholics (although the regulations permitted the interrement of Protestants!). The Catholic Bishop began burying Catholics on Bunker Hill regardless of the lack of a permit. The selectmen took their case to court;[8] the Convent was burned while litigation was pending.

By August 9, even the Charlestown selectmen reluctantly concluded that something had to be done to avoid violence. On that day, a Saturday, they determined to inspect the Convent and interview Miss Harrison, who, they believed, was being held a prisoner. When the selectmen reached the Convent, the Mother Superior refused them admittance because, whe said, they had been responsible for the ugly rumors about the Convent and

---

[7] Trial of William Mason, pp. 4-7.

[8] The Jesuit (Boston), November 1, 1834. The courts declared against the selectmen October 18, 1834.

would probably invent more rumors. Finally, the selectmen prevailed on her to allow Edward Cutter, the brick manufacturer who had given refuge to Miss Harrison,to interview the reputed prisoner.[9]

After Mr. Cutter had satisfied himself that Miss Harrison was not, in fact, being held against her will, the selectmen left. They returned two days later, on Monday, August 11, and were then allowed to inspect the premises. Then the selectmen prepared a report, absolving the Convent of the crimes with which rumor had charged it, and sent it to Boston press for publication. The report appeared in the Boston newspapers Tuesday, August 12,[10] but it was too late. The Convent had been burned the night before.

On Monday night, at about nine o'clock, the mob that burned the Convent began to assemble on Mount Benedict carrying banners and shouting "No Popery" and "Down with the Cross." Charlestown's lone policeman, an officer of the watch, was not present, but one of Charlestown's selectmen was.[11]

The active part of the mob, a well-organized group of forty or fifty disguised and masked men formed a solid phalanx in front of the Convent, where they demanded the release of the "imprisoned nun." The Mother Superior haughtily informed them that they were disturbing the sleep of the children, but promised that, if the men chose a small delegration, it would be allowed to inspect the Convent the next day. In

---

[9]Louisa Whitney, The Burning of the Convent, pp. 72-75. Boston Post, August 12, 1834.

[10]Ibid.

[11]This selectman was John Runey. Frye, The Burning of the Ursaline Convent, p. 32. Runey tried to make the crowd disperse. However, he was widely suspected of being an instigator of the mob. Trial of John Buzzell, p. 24.

the face of the Mother Superior's rebuke and because they were not sure if the Convent had any defenders, the mob withdrew temporarily.

They returned at eleven o'clock, when some tar barrels were set ablaze in a nearby field, possibly as a prearranged signal. When the tar barrels were fired, masses of people from Charlestown and Boston began to converge on Mount Benedict. Fire bells began ringing and fire companies appeared on the scene. The fire companies did not attempt to put out the fire, either because the mob prevented them or because the firefighters sympathized with the rioters.[12]

The throng continued to press closer to the Convent. When someone in the crowd demanded to know the number of men hiding in the Convent to defend the nuns, one distraught nun shouted from a window that there were no armed men in the Convent. On hearing this the rioters became bolder and started to smash in the gates. When the Mother Superior shouted that the twenty thousand Irishmen under the Bishop's command would retaliate, the mob redoubled its efforts. Just as the rioters erupted through the front door of the Convent, the Mother Superior managed to shepherd her charges--about sixty children, from eight to fourteen in age and ten nuns, one dying of consumption (she died that night), and one hysterical (the unfortunate Miss Harrison, who blamed herself for the whole incident), and all very frightened, out the back door. The Convent residents hid along hedgerows, from which they watched the mob surge through and loot the Convent, until the Mother Superior found a neighboring householder to hide them.[13]

---

[12] Conflagration of the Convent, pp. 22-24.

[13] The Trial of the Persons Charged with Burning the Convent. . . (Boston, 1834), p. 20.

The crowd applied the torch to the Convent after looting the building. According to some accounts, the crowd used a torch taken from a fire engine. The rioters particularly took religious items: nun's habits, crosses and chalices. In addition, they took two thousand dollars in cash.[14]

The rest of the night took on a carnival atmosphere for the rioters as they dressed themselves in the looted habits of the nuns, desecrated the nuns' burying place (they disenterred a body and took it out of its coffin), drank the whiskey which seemed to be mysteriously provided and roamed the nearby streets in search of the fleeing nuns.[15]

The nuns and their students, who had initially been given refuge in the home of Edward Cutter, had, later in the night, surreptitiously left this asylum for one which was thought safer. About 2 o'clock in the morning they walked to another private home about two miles away. While they were hiding in the second refuge, groups of the mob kept the house in an uproar, demanding that the householder tell them where the nuns had gone.[16]

At about six o'clock in the morning, a group of the parents of the Convent students managed to find them. These parents escorted the girls, on foot, to Boston. While the girls were walking to Boston, the rioters were climaxing their revel by parading, dressed in the nun's habits, across the Charles River Bridge and into Boston. At the Bridge, the parading rioters and the fleeing girls met and became

---

[14] Bunker Hill Aurora, August 16, 1834.

[15] Louisa Whitney, The Burning of the Convent, pp. 17-18.

[16] Ibid.

mixed. It seemed to some observers that the rioters had liberated the children and were now taking them to safety.[17]

The Convent burning threw Charlestown and Boston into a frenzy of fear. Some Bostonians, members of the propertied classes who had no special love for Catholics and Irishmen, feared the spirit of anarchy loosed by the mob violence. The question uppermost in many minds was: When and where would the expected retaliation strike? The story spread that gangs of Irishmen were converging on Boston from nearby railroad construction camps. Bishop Fenwick hurriedly sent priests to the construction camps to prevent any march on Boston. The Bishop also called Catholics together and urged them to remain quiet. These measures were effective in preventing the Irish from rising but they did not quiet public fear. Harvard students regularly patrolled the yard to protect it from violence by either the Irish or the native Americans during this period.[18]

The violence continued for most of a week. On Tuesday night, a mob again ascended Mount Benedict, burning the fences and trees on the Convent grounds. They were only prevented from storming a nearby Catholic Church because the militia had been called out to protect it. On Wednesday night, more than a thousand men roamed the streets of Boston, ready to meet the expected Irish onslaught. On Friday night, a row of Irish houses in Charlestown was burned and only hurried raising of the drawbridge across the Charles River prevented the Boston mob wrecking

---

[17] Ibid.

[18] Arthur B. Darling, Political Changes in Massachusetts 1824-1848 (New Haven, 1925), p. 105.

more destruction on the Charlestown Irish.[19]

Twelve men and boys were arrested and tried for participation in the riot. All except a seventeen-year-old boy were acquitted, though the community at large was convinced of their guilt. The counsel for the defendents played on the anti-Irish bias of the jury.[20] Prosecution witnesses were threatened with "assassination"[21] and the attorney general who prosecuted the case became so unpopular that some groups demanded his dismissal.[22] John Buzzell, one of the ringleaders, admitted on his death-bed that those tried were actually guilty.[23] The twelve men and boys arrested were mainly from the lower rungs of the social ladder, although there is some evidence to show that the original impulse to burn the Convent was supplied by men of more prestige and standing in the community.[24]

---

[19]Boston Transcript, August 13, 1834.

[20]Trial of John Buzzell, p. 26. Buzzell's counsel told the jury that his client could not be found guilty without the testimony of an Irish witness, "and it is this imported foreign testimony that is to cut my clients throat."

[21]Boston Observer, January 15, 1835.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Frye, The Charlestown Convent, pp. 43, 80.

[24]The social status of the Ursaline Convent rioters was determined by checking the names of the twelve men and boys who were arrested for participation in the Convent riot in the Charlestown Directory, 1834, the Cambridge Directory, 1834 or the Boston Directory, 1834 for occupations. Only three were listed in any of the directories, one as a cordwainer, one as a dealer in shoes and the third as a laborer. The records of the trials are more informative. They identify one as a brickmaker (Alvah Kelley, whom the Charlestown Directory lists as a cordwainer), three as laborers at the brickyards, one as a shoe dealer, and the rest as boys without fixed occupations. See the Trial of John Buzzell, pp. 7, 11, 12, and passim; also the Trial of William Mason, Marvin Marcy, Jr., and Sargent Blaisdell, Charged with Being Concerned in Burning the Ursaline Convent in Charlestown, (Mass.) on the Night of the 11th of August, 1834 (Boston, 1834), pp. 8, 9, 19 and passim. The evidence that the original impulse was from men of standing in the community will be developed later in this chapter.

The men who physically participated in the riot were casual laborers, unskilled brickmakers, some skilled mechanics and many adolescent boys. These were the people who were apprehended and put on trial for the conflagration of the Convent. However, these men did not, alone, plan and organize the riot. The Ursaline Convent riot was not a spontaneous act of violence by an uncontrollable mob. It was a carefully planned action by a group of men who were operating under a type of social discipline.[25]

One of those who was tried for rioting, John Buzzell, was, by most accounts, a ringleader during the riot itself. However, most sources agree that the men who were physically engaged in the riot were not the actual instigators of the disturbance. Most accounts assume that the real organizers of the Convent's destruction were not apprehended because they stayed in the background; that the organizers of the riot did not, themselves, engage in violence. The defense counsel for some of the men who were later indicted and tried for burning the Convent expressed this when he said that: ". . .these [the men on trial] are simple men who were but following out the ideas of men of weight and substance."[26] On the question of who provided the first impetus for the riot, the accounts are ambiguous and shadowy, so there is little hard evidence pointing to the participation of any one individual. However, there is a degree of consensus in

---

[25]According to the testimony of Henry Buck, a rioter who turned state's evidence. Trial of John Buzzell, pp. 11-12. The actions of the group while some of its members were on trial lend credence to Buck's testimony. The group intimidated witnesses, printed handbills and generally tried to swing public opinion against the trial. Austin, Argument, p. 32.

[26]Trial of William Mason, p. 19. The defense counsel was G. F. Farley, originally from New Ipswich, New Hampshire.

this matter. The witnesses at the trials of the rioters were in substantial agreement and those who were accused of instigating the destruction of the Convent did not trouble themselves enough to publically deny the accusations.[27]

A reconstruction of the events of which, according to the records of the trials, the legal apparatus in Massachusetts was ignorant, indicates that the destruction of the Convent was planned, organized, and instigated by a small group of men who occupied positions of leadership in Charlestown. These men were not the social or economic leaders. They were not merchants or bankers, nor were they clergymen, although the Protestant clergy were probably not ignorant of the plot since they gave anti-Popery sermons while the excitement was at its height.[28]

Some of the reputed instigators of the riot were men active in local politics or the local workingmen's organization. For example, John Runey was a selectman, while Alvah Kelley held two minor town offices, and a position in the Charlestown Mechanic Union Association.[29] These men

---

[27]See for example, Trial of John Buzzell, passim; Trial of William Mason, passim; James T. Austin, Argument of James T. Austin, Attorney General of the Commonwealth before the Supreme Judicial Court in Middlesex on the Case of John Buzzell (Boston, 1834), pp. 34-35; Louisa Whitney, The Burning of the Convent; A Narrative of the Destruction by a Mob, of the Ursaline School on Mount Benedict, Charlestown, as Remembered by One of the Pupils (Boston, 1877), p. 9.

[28]Trial of John Buzzell, pp. 11-12, 24; Isaac Frye, The Charlestown Convent; Its Destruction by a Mob. . .also, The Trials of the Rioters, the Testimony and Speeches of Counsel. . . (Boston, 1870), pp. 33. 44. For evidence of anti-Catholic sermons in Boston during the excitement, see the Boston Jesuit, August 16, 1834. The Jesuit accused the Protestant clergy with rousing the mob. "Even Dr. Beecher could not forbear assailing [the Convent] last Sunday, in three sermons, which he delivered in three different churches."

[29]"Town Officers for 1834," Charlestown Directory, 1834 (Charlestown, 1834), pp. 65-71; "Charlestown Mechanic Union Association," Ibid., p. 71.

had evidently conducted the original meetings in a Charlestown schoolhouse for the organization of the mob several weeks before the destruction of the Convent. At these meetings, they had inspired men of lesser stature to riot, had established the guidelines under which they were to operate, and had given the projected riot quasi-official sanction.[30] Those who had evidently called the meetings started a train of events of which they lost control. After having organized the brickmakers and casual laborers for violence, the instigators tried to call off or postpone the Convent's destruction, but were unable to do so. The group who were detailed to do the actual destruction could not be stopped. They took the bit in their teeth, dragging the now reluctant original instigators along with them.[31]

The destruction of the Convent, according to the testimony of one of the rioters, was planned by Alvah Kelley and Edward Cutter. Other evidence indicates that John Runey was also among the instigators.[32]

Kelley was a well known man in Charlestown. He had been a shoemaker, but had recently gone into the business of making bricks.[33] His brickyard and homestead bordered the property of the Ursaline Convent.

Although Kelley admitted he could find no fault with the Convent as a neighbor, he was very much opposed to any Catholic institution. The

---

[30] Trial of John Buzzell, pp. 11-12.

[31] Frye, The Charlestown Convent, p. 38. Buck testified that at the second schoolhouse meeting, Alvah Kelley, one of the gray eminences in the background, attempted to disuade the group from burning the Convent "for three more weeks."

[32] Trial of John Buzzell, pp. 10-12; Frye, The Charlestown Convent, pp. 38, 44.

[33] Charlestown Directory, 1834, p. 42.

brickyard was a hotbed of anti-Catholic sentiment.[34]

In his brickyard, Kelley employed several men who had recently arrived from rural New Hampshire, particularly the man who was credited with leading the rioters during the disturbance, John Buzzell and his brothers. John Buzzell, a few weeks before the riot occurred, had beaten up an Irishman who was employed on the Convent farm.[35]

Kelley was arrested and put on trial for his participation in the riot, but was acquitted. Kelley had invited the rioters to build a bonfire on his property as a signal for a crowd to gather on the night of the riot.[36]

The other two men who were reputed to have been behind-the-scenes instigators of the riot were not put on trial. Edward Cutter was, like Alvah Kelley, the owner of a brickyard. John Runey may have been a farmer.[37] Runey was one of the Charlestown officials elected on the Workingmen's ticket. In connection with Runey, it is essential to remember that the Workingmen's movement in Massachusetts was a coalition containing farm elements as well as mechanics.

Prescott Pond, the brother-in-law of Rebecca Reed, was also arraigned as one of the original conspirators. Pond was a shoe dealer in Boston, and a man of some substance, because he had more than one employee. Pond was noted for the intensity of his anti-Catholic sentiments. Although the prosecution established that Pond knew about the projected

---

[34]Frye, The Charlestown Convent, p. 69.

[35]Ibid., p. 35.

[36]Trial of John Buzzell, p. 14.

[37]Charlestown Directory, pp. 28, 42, 52, and 65.

riot at least a week before it occurred and that Pond had witnessed the violence, the jury determined that he was innocent.[38]

Alvah Kelley and Prescott Pond witnessed, but did not physically participate in the riot. Two others, John Buzzell and Sargeant Blaisdell, were clearly among the group who had been originally organized to fire the Convent. Both were brickmakers and both were very conspicuous as "captains" of the small group who physically initiated the riot.

The remainder of those who were arrested were young men and adolescent boys who were not privy to the original plan for the Convent destruction. These youthful rioters knew that the Convent was to be burned, as did much of Charlestown and Boston and they participated in the distrubance. Yet one gains the impression from reading the records of the trials that these youths were at the riot for the fun of it, and not because they had any particular reason or drive to destroy the Convent. They were not among the initiators of the riot. An examination of the trial records indicates that most of those who initiated the riot were not indicted, arrested or tried.[39]

The initiators are those who were originally organized to commit the deed. They are a shadowy group because they were very careful not to allow their specific identities to become known. The cabal of initiators wore disguises at the riot. They intimidated witnesses to inhibit their

---

[38]Frye, The Charlestown Convent, pp. 65, 71, 74, 78, and 79.

[39]See Trial of William Mason, p. 24, for an account by the Attorney General of the threats issued by the suspected rioters who were not indicted. One handbill posted on Old Charlestown Bridge read: "All persons giving any information in any shape, or testifying in Court against anyone concerned in the late affair at Charlestown, may expect assassination according to the oath which bound the party to each other."

testifying adversely. Members of the cabal had the use of printing presses, and kept issuing placards and handbills, before the riot and during the trial. They reputedly bound themselves to an oath of secrecy and mutual protection. After the trials of the rioters were over, an informal organization which called itself the Convent Boys, which may or may not have consisted of the men who initiated the destruction of the Mount Benedict community, surfaced.[40]

The events which led up to the riot appear to fit the following scenario:[41]

First, some one or some group began a secret campaign of rumors to defame the Convent. This group may have included Prescott Pond, but if it did, he probably was a minor figure. This group published placards and anti-Catholic broadsides.

Second, a group of landowners, neighbors of the Convent such as Alvah Kelley, Edward Cutter and John Runey, aroused some of their employees and others to plan to burn the Convent. These neighbors of the Convent were not to be physically involved in the riot, but rather arranged for other men to riot.

Third, in two secret meetings, the group of brickmakers and others who were to initiate the riot, organized themselves into a team. Contemporary reports said that this group went into a consultation which resembled a huddle in a modern football game in front of the Convent prior to attacking it.[42]

---

[40] Ibid. For a reference to the "Convent Boys" see "Anti-Catholic Movements in the United States," Catholic World, XXII (March, 1876), p. 814.

[41] This scenario is based on the material in the accounts of the Convent riot already cited.

[42] Trial of John Buzzell, p. 8.

Fourth, the secret group of serious rioters spread the news that a riot was planned. This they did to attract a crowd, but also so that the youthful revelers who would participate would assembly there.

The secret group who physically initiated the riot had no fear of apprehension, because Charlestown lacked a police force and, in any case, the selectmen had been informed of the impending riot and had given it their tacit approval.

Fifth, Alvah Kelley and his group, after the selectmen had inspected the Convent, tried to postpone or call off the riot, but once mobilized, the rioters could not easily demobilize.

The burning of the Convent seemed to release a pent-up rage in the population of the area. According to the "Committee of Vigilance" appointed by the citizens of Boston at Faneuil Hall, "[The violence] has come on us like the shock of an earthquake and has disclosed a state of society and public sentiment of which we believe no man was before aware."[43]

The Convent burning was viewed with a feeling of injury by the Unitarian establishment. Caleb Stetson, Unitarian clergyman in Medford, lamented,

> It cannot be disguised that we have fallen upon evil tongues and evil times. Who can predict what tomorrow may bring forth? There is a stern and angry questioning of principles which have been held sacred for centuries. Old establishments are breaking loose from their strong foundations in public affection. The common respect for what is permanent and venerable is giving away to an alarming extent. The influence of great and good men is despised and

---

[43]Charles G. Loring, Report of the Boston Committee of Vigilance, Appointed by the Citizens. . . (Boston, 1834), p. 3.

> rejected. The whole bosom of the community is heaving with profound and unwanted agitation. The incoming tides and currents are rushing with restless violence from their time worn channels; and who can calculate their direction or their force?[44]

The Unitarians were alarmed because they disliked, aesthetically, disorder and shows of deep emotion, but also because they perceived that the destruction of the Convent was a blow, not only against Irish and Catholics, but against property and "aristocracy." Thus Stetson said in connection with the Convent rioters,

> You are told, my friends, again and again, until you almost believe it that there is some foundation for what is so confidently and vehemently asserted--that the laws are made for the benefit of the rich, and the oppression of the laboring classes.[45]

Unitarians such as Stetson were clearly worried that the movement against the Convent, as a popular movement, would next attack their property.

Another indication that the destruction of the Convent was viewed as a democratic thrust against aristocracy was the report that, in the volunteer military companies who patrolled Boston and Charlestown during the week which followed the violence on Mount Benedict, the aristocratic companies "generally sympathized with the Catholic sufferers; the affinities of the companies more democratic in their opinion and conversation, were more with the rioters than against them."[46]

A majority of the population in the Charlestown and Boston area warmly applauded the Convent rioters and believed a great blow had been struck for liberty. Many people regarded John Buzzell, the "tall man" who had directed the men who burned the Convent, as a hero. After his

---

[44]Caleb Stetson, Discourse on the Duty of Sustaining the Laws. . . August 24, 1834 (Boston, 1834), pp. 8-9.

[45]Ibid., p. 9.

[46]Frye, The Charlestown Convent, p. 24.

acquital he was inundated with gifts and perhaps received fifty dollars for his part in the riot from his employer, Alvah Kelley.[47]

The destruction of the Ursaline Convent was only the opening round of violence directed against Irish Catholics before the Civil War. Some of the community in the greater Boston area viewed the Convent violence with horror, but for most, this violent incident only served to legitimate violence as an acceptable mode of community behavior. In succeeding years, the incidence of collective violence became almost commonplace. The violent spiral was now launched; it would be many years before it would wind down.

---

[47]Frye, The Charlestown Convent, p. 65.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The Ursaline Convent riot occurred at a pivotal point, at least as far as the use of mob actions are concerned, in America. The decades prior to the 1830's were relatively free of riots; the 1830's witnessed a dramatic escalation in the use of social violence.

The rise of social violence was intimately related to the social change which was occurring then. A principal feature of that social change, which had been in progress since the late years of the second decade of the nineteenth century, was the weakening of social institutions in their functions of defining and enforcing social behavior. As the church, community and system of social class lost their power to impose social sanctions, the individual was simultaneously liberated and deprived of status security.

Liberated individuals were animated by unprecedented optimism, while individuals shorn of status security felt the fear of status loss and pessimism. The social transformation was caused by, or produced, a change in human relationships and an abandonment of cherished social arrangements.

Increasingly, the fears and insecurities generated by a social milieu in which the primary social institutions were weak, found vent in counter subversive movements. The counter subversive movements served to provide a sense of identity for rootless Americans, but also to crystalize

the inarticulated status insecurity and the vague feeling of social malaise around an identifiable enemy. In addition, the counter subversive movements provided explanations of, and justifications for, some of the fears and hostility resulting from the new social tensions, as well as a program of action.

The mounting social tension, and the resulting fears of subversion led to an increased use of apocalyptic imagery, and the rhetoric of violence.

The targets for the increasingly violent rhetoric were varied: Masons, aristocrats, employers, abolitionists, infidels, Catholics and Irish. The increasingly violent rhetoric, together with increasingly shrill newspaper reports of violence, contributed to a climate of opinion in which riot and mob violence began to be viewed as legitimate forms of social behavior.

Latent anti-Catholic sentiment, together with the recent influx of Irish Catholics, provided a target around which the inchoate hostilities plaguing society crystalized. The anti-Catholic sentiment, having roots deep in the colonial period, took on a new life because of the strains to which a society undergoing mutation subjected its members. The rejection of the dominant Yankee value system by the Irish, coupled with their bizarre lifestyle, served to make them a particularly suspect group.

The newly revived anti-Catholicism, together with the newly developed anti-Irish sentiment, collided with an ambitious program of the American Catholic hierarchy to "naturalize" Catholic institutions in the American milieu, and thus make Catholicism less alien and less suspect to Protestant Americans. The Ursaline Convent was a part of that Catholic effort.

The Ursaline Convent in Charlestown became a target for hostilities of many kinds: hostility against Catholics; against Irish; against Unitarians; and against "infidels."

The mob action which destroyed the Ursaline Convent was not that of irrational mass lacking organization, planning and structure. Indeed, it had, unlike the perhaps mythical crowd described by Gustav LeBon, a tight-knit organization at its core and was carefully planned.[1]

The crowd that burned the Ursaline Convent was not a faceless collective; it was not a mob in the popular sense.[2] The key participants (not the spectators) constituted a "face to face" or "direct contact" group, and thus fit George Rude's definition of a crowd.

The group which burned the Ursaline Convent fits Rude's description of the type of crowds who rioted in England and France in the pre-industrial era. According to Rude, such "pre-industrial crowds" directed their violence against property, rather than persons, but it was not "fickle" or irrational. The verbalized motives of Rude's pre-industrial crowd usually looked back to some virtuous golden age in the past, and the participants in pre-industrial riots were essentially trying to enforce a morality which the law could not or would not enforce.[3]

It is true that the Charlestown riot of 1834 shared many characteristics with Rude's pre-industrial riots. In the Charlestown riot, there

---

[1]See Guftav LeBon, The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind (London, 1896).

[2]George Rude, in The Crowd in History, 1730-1848 (New York, 1964), pp. 7-8, pointed out that those who disapprove of the objects of a riot call the participants a mob, while those who sympathize with the objects of a riot refer to the participants as the people. Most of the contemporary accounts of the Ursaline Convent riot were unsympathetic and did refer to the participants as a mob.

[3]Ibid., p. 3.

was no loss of life or even injury to any persons. The participants were attempting to enforce a morality, to return Charlestown to a better age that existed before a convent was established, and they set about their self-appointed task deliberately and methodically.

However, for several reasons, neither Rude's pre-industrial nor his industrial model fits the Charlestown distrubance. The participants in this particular riot were respectors of persons, but this riot was one in a series of riots which occurred over a period of several years. Some of these riots fit Rude's model for pre-industrial riots and some did not. In some of the riots of the 1830's nobody was physically injured; in others people were killed.

I prefer to classify the Charlestown riot as neither pre-industrial nor industrial. If it must be characterized in any such terms, it would be better to classify the riot as transitional in nature.[4]

The rioters of Charlestown were a genuine "primitive city mob" in E. J. Hobsbawm's definition. In Hobsbawm's view, the characteristics of a primitive city mob were that it was "pre-political," and conservative. The city mob did not riot for an innovation, but rather to prevent one. Interestingly, one of the vital characteristics of Hobsbawm's city mob was its hostility to foreigners.[5]

---

[4]Or a riot of passage. For Rude's description of the pre-industrial crowd, see Rude, The Crowd, pp. 195-270. Charles Tilly's categories of primitive and modern collective violence are less relevant to the Ursaline Convent riot than Rude's pre-industrial and industrial riots. Nor were the Charlestown rioters the primitive rebels. Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence In European Perspective," in The History of Violence In America: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, edited by Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr (New York, 1969), pp. 4-45.

[5]E. J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries (New York, 1959), pp. 108-126.

The riot at the Convent, in many ways seems to fall under Charles Tilly's category of "primitive collective violence." Tilly's requirements for that category almost describe the riot: "small scale, local scope, participation by members of communal groups as such, inexplicit and unpolitical objectives."[6] But some of those requirements need to be qualified considerably to make them fit the Convent riot.

While the riot was on a small scale, it affected a whole city and more; and though it was local in scope, it was part of an almost nationwide wave of riots. Although the objectives in the riots in this nationwide wave were diverse, the riots were related by the press. The rioters, because the press communicated the spirit of violence from city to city, could have felt that they were part of a larger movement.

The immediate objective, i.e., to pull down the Convent, was very explicit, although the deep-seated motives were undeclared, perhaps unrealized.

The important difference between the violence Tilly describes is that Tilly's violence was a normal feature of the political and social process, while collective violence in the United States, until it was legitimated in the 1830's, was not.

There is some evidence that collective violence in the United States stems from sources other than those Tilly describes for Europe. According to Tilly, urbanization, in its initial stages, "probably acted as a damper to violent protest"[7] rather than promoted riot because urbanization took people out of the rural communities where they had the social apparatus for protest and put them in a situation where they

---

[6]Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective," pp. 13-14.

[7]Ibid., p. 11.

were alone, and without the power even to rebel. In Charlestown that was not the case. The trial records show that some of the leading rioters at the Convent riot were recent immigrants from New Hampshire.[8] Even the recently uprooted Irish could organize for violence, as the newspaper accounts of their violence on the canals and railroads during the 1830's suggests.[9] In Boston, during the 1830's, the Irish were forming their own militia units as instruments of self defence.[10]

David Grimsted maintained that the rioting which wracked the 1830's grew out of the tension caused by Jacksonians' reverence for a "higher law" and their disrespect for the actual mechanisms of the law. Grimsted pointed out, as did Michael Wallace, that violence in Jacksonian America was not directed at the state or at the political establishment. In Grimsted's view, Jacksonian rioting was the American equivalent of the violence perpetrated by primitive city mobs, as classified by Hobsbawn, or the pre-industrial crowds, described by Rude.[11] Grimsted's analysis lacks an appreciation for the other tensions produced by the social transformation of the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

While Grimsted and Wallace may be correct in stating that American violence was usually not directed against the state, their generalizations are not entirely applicable to the Ursaline Convent riot. While the rioters did not view the state as a target, the political leadership of Massachusetts, i.e., the Unitarian establishment, was an object of the hostility that the rioters vented on the inoffensive nuns.

---

[8] "The Riot and Its Aftermath," Chapter VIII, supra.

[9] For a sample, see Bunker Hill Aurora, September 3, 1829.

[10] Handlin, Boston's Immigrants, p. 157.

[11] David Grimsted, "Rioting in Its Jacksonian Setting," American Historical Review, Volume 77, No. 2 (April, 1972), pp. 361-397, but especially pp. 364-374; David Wallace, "The Uses of Violence in American History, The American Scholar, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Winter, 1970-71), pp. 81-102, especially p. 82.

In Wallace's terms, the Convent riot was an example of repressive violence. It was repressive with a difference. The difference was that the repression of the weak Irish was a symbolic way of threatening an economically and politically superior group. The Unitarian elite were threatened by the outbreak of violence among the lower classes.[12]

Ted Robert Gurr rightly points to the necessity of social tension in the gensis of violence. Social tension, according to Gurr, leads to a sense of relative deprivation. The Convent rioters felt deprivation because the aspirations of the rioters (as well as most of the rest of the community) were frustrated. Gurr's concept, however, does not explain the origin of violence. Since the social transformation which occurred in the early decades of the nineteenth century, expectations and aspirations constantly outstripped satisfaction. Deprivation, of one sort or another, has been a constant of modern civilization. But rioting has not been constant. The incidence of violence fluctuated, it was always sporadic. Although riots and mob actions were, at times, condoned by large segments of the general population, the normal condition of society was not riotous.[13]

The 1830's witnessed a great increase in the frequency of riots in part because of the relative deprivation which certain segments of society perceived they were suffering. But this relative deprivation, and the social stress of which it was a part did not directly cause the violence which began in the 1830's.

---

[12]Wallace, "The Uses of Violence," p. 82.

[13]Ted Robert Gurr, Why Men Rebel (Princeton, 1970), pp. 13-15.

The normal attitude of the opinion-making elements of American society is that extra-legal mass violence is wrong. Usually, collective violence is not justified in public opinion. During the 1830's, especially 1834, mass violence was justified, was legitimated. When riot was viewed by public opinion as justified, rioting occurred with a much greater frequency than previously. The Charlestown riot was part of that process.

APPENDIX I

Some ethnic jokes from the Bunker Hill Aurora illustrating the incomprehensible mental processes of the Irish:

> An Irish peasant seeing a partridge that was shot fall from a considerable height, picked it up, and running with it to the gentleman who shot it, cried out, "Arrah, your honor need not have shot, the fall would have killed it."--June 16, 1831

Showing the laziness and unrealistic philosophy of the Irish:

> An Irish drayman asked his companion a few days since, after they had lounged idly the whole morning at a corner of a street uptown, "And, Pat, dear, can you tell us why there's so little doing in our line this month back?" "Och, bother, and don't you know, child," answered the other, "Why the merchants, God bless 'em are all tarrified, and can't employ us for fear of ruination."--June 16, 1831

Exposing the cunning and dishonesty of the Irish:

> A penniless Hibernian stopped at a tavern in Massachusetts, and after much haggling with the landlord, agreed to give a shilling for a dozen of eggs. After receiving them, he apparently changed his mind, and told the landlord that he would give him the eggs for half a pint of whiskey. This was agreed to. Paddy drank his blue ruin and was marching off. Baniface (!) objected to this, and demanded pay for the whiskey.
>
> "Och, you spalpeen," said Pat, "and didn't I give ye the aigs for the stuff you call whiskey--which is no more like whiskey than you are like a gentleman."
>
> "True," said the landlord, "but you shall pay for the eggs."
>
> "By St. Patrick," returned the Irishman with well defined astonishments--"That's what I call Yankee impudence--I laive you the aigs and them you can't ask pay for; and as for the whiskey, I swapt the aigs for it--no tricks upon travelers, if you plaze."
>
> And bidding the astonished landlord adieu, he left him to speculate on the profits of his bargain.--June 16, 1831

Showing the unworthiness of the Irish and the Jacksonians:

"The Irish Petition for Office"

And, whereas we your undersigned petitioners, will both by night and all day, and all night and all day, and we will come and go, and walk and ride, and take and bring, and send and fetch, and carry, and we will see all, and more than all, and be, and cannot be, and pay duty. And we your aforesaid petitioners present and absent, and be backwards and forwards, and behind and before, be everywhere and nowhere, and here and there and nowhere at all. And we the aforesaid petitioners will come and inform, and give information and notice duly and truly, and honestly and by the knowledge of ourselves and everyone and no one at all, we will not cheat your honor any more than what is now and at at all times lawfully practiced.

And whereas we your aforesaid petitioners are gentlemen of reputation, and we are Irish Protestants, by S.t. Patrick, so we are and do love the General and we will value him, and we will fight for him and against them, and run for him from him, and after him, and behind him, and before him, and at one side of him and t'other side of him, to serve him or any of his relations or acquaintances as far and as much farther than lies in our power, dead or alive, as long as we live, and longer too. Witness our several and separate seals in conjunction one after another all together, one and all, three of us both together.

Signed,
Barney O'Blaney
Patrick O'Flanegan
Carney O'Connor
Teague O'Regan

--September 18, 1827

APPENDIX II

PROCLAMATION OF ANDREW I from the Boston Atlas, July 12, 1834:

Whereas, information has been to me conveyed, by a special messenger from me liege and loyal subject the commodore in command of the Navy Yard at Charlestown, setting forth the following grievances--to wit:

Whereas, some months ago, said commodore, in consideration of his eminent services on the Lakes, and his recent efforts in destroying that Hydra of Nullification--was appointed to the Command of the Navy Yard in the very head quarters of disaffection towards my Royal Government--to wit, at Charlestown, in the vicinity of Boston, a town that has been long famous for its insubordination, and contempt of regal authority.

And whereas, it is perfectly obvious that such a mark of worship to myself was highly creditable to the commodore, the ship and the country--and redounded to the honor and glory of each and all of us--more especially to the country and the ship.

And whereas, when this my image was carved and ready to be placed on the bows of the Constitution, some disaffected citizens of Boston,--in imitation of that dissolute and profligate spirit which led their ancestors to throw overboard the tea, to the great scandal of my predecessor his Majesty George III--threatened to mutilate or deface the same--thereby exposing themselves, as I have instructed my attorney general to instruct me--to the pains and penalties of treason to my royal Majesty.

In consequence whereof, at the imminent peril of his limb and life, said commodore, at the head of only 30 men--with that miraculous valour which forms the chief feature of his character--penetrated into the very part of the rebellious city, in which my said image or idol was deposited--and notwithstanding fifteen thousand of their militia turned out under arms to intercept him--he succeeded in rescuing, and bearing it off in safety--thus confirming the well known invincibility of the Hero of New Orleans, which I need not explain to myself.

And whereas, after the commodore had succeeded thus wonderfully, and had mounted my Image on the bows of the gallant frigate which it was very properly intended to honor--some person or persons --false, malicious, and ill-disposed--not having the fear of me or of a Halter before their eyes--at midnight--notwithstanding

a most terrible tempest sent to publish their profanity--ascended the bows of said frigate--and willfully severed the head of my Image from its body--to the infinite scandal of the royal character in my own person--and in the persons of all other "Kings, Princes, and Potentates" in the known world.

Now, whereas, if this sacriligious assault on Majesty were to remain unnoticed and unpunished--it is obvious that my Royal Authorities will be liable to be subverted at any moment by such rebellious subjects; evidently, therefore, the most exemplary vengeance must be inflicted on those atrocious offenders.

In consequence whereof, I have further instructed my attorney-general to instruct Me, by a statute that is or ought to be of this Kingdom, that these offenders if discovered must be hung, drawn and quartered without benefit of clergy, or any mode or form of trial; and that, moreover, if they are not discovered within ten days from the issuing of this my Proclamation, then from every ten of the citizens of my province of Massachusetts Bay one shall be selected as the object of my summary vengeance, and executed without color of law.

Therefore, I proclaim and order that the provisions of said statute shall be put into immediate execution--and further, that every morning at sun-rise, till the expiration of the ten days above mentioned--one of the principal citizens of Boston--selected at random from those my deadly enemies the Merchants and Manufacturers--shall be hung in chains at the mast-head of the frigate that has been thus criminally defaced.

All this to the honor of Royal Authority throughout the world, and the especial maintenance of my Own Throne and Glory.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto put my head and seal, at my palace in the city of Jackson, on the eighth day of July, in the first year of my reign.

X
his mark

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The study of the conditions which made the Ursaline Convent riot possible or likely requires information and ideas from a broad variety of sources, and from several lines of enquiry in history and the social sciences. The materials which are relevant to the violence at the Convent are vast. In this study, I have only been able to sample some of those I considered most relevant. The works discussed below in no wise constitute an exhaustive bibliography. The works discussed here are those which were most important in furnishing information, ideas and inspiration for this study.

The type of primary material most often used in this study was that furnished by contemporary newspapers and journals. Of national importance was Niles Register, otherwise Niles Weekly Register and Niles National Register, usually published in Baltimore. Niles Register was one of the most inclusive and comprehensive news organs of its time. I consulted it for the five years preceding 1834. Also of national significance and value was Hunts Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review, for its discussions of the commercial life of the cities. Another national paper, The Protestant, was one of the chief organs of the anti-Catholic crusade.

For the period 1827-1834, ten newspapers from Boston and Charlestown were consulted. The Bunker Hill Aurora, Charlestown's only secular newspaper, was Whig in politics, but was often forced to modify its editorial opinions. Of those papers from Boston proper, the Atlas led the field for Whig orthodoxy, while the Boston Post or Morning Post was the leading

supporter of the Democrats. The Boston Advertiser was an anti-Masonic sheet. while the Courier, Boston Patriot, Columbian Centinel, the Transcript and the Boston Observer were less dogmatic, though generally conservative.

The New England Artisan, the organ of the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics, and Other Workingmen, is a mine of information, but, unfortunately, very rare.

The Boston Investigator was the sheet of the Abner Kneeland infidels. It was irreverent but ponderous.

The Boston Jesuit, later known as The United States Catholic Intelligencer, then renamed the Boston Pilot after an outstanding paper in Dublin, was, during the 30's, simultaneously the organ of the Boston Diocese and the spokesman for the Boston Irish.

Of Boston magazines, two Unitarian journals were important in reflecting the attitude of the Boston elite, The Christian Examiner, an avowedly religious journal, was devoted to expounding Unitarian theology; while the New England Magazine was a secular journal whose editor, and probably readers also, happened to be Unitarian.

Other than newspapers and magazines, material of a primary nature or written by contemporaries was used. For information concerning the actual events of the Convent riot itself, there is no dearth of material. The riot was reported by contemporaries and has been recounted several times since. The earliest account, written from reports of the contemporary press, was An Account of The Conflagration of The Ursaline Convent--By a Friend of Religious Toleration (Boston, 1834). The Report of the Committee Relating to the Destruction of the Ursaline Convent (Boston, 1834) expresses the outrage experienced by "proper Bostonians" relative to the riot. Eye-witness accounts of the Convent fire are rare. Two exist, but they were

written years later by former students at the Convent. The Burning of the Convent; A Narrative of the Destruction by a Mob of the Ursaline School on Mount Benedict, Charlestown, As Remembered by One of the Pupils (Boston, 1877) by Louisa Whitney is the most accessible. The other, Lucy W. Thaxter's An Account of Life In the Convent at Mount Benedict, Charlestown (no place, no date) exists only in manuscript at Weidener Library, Harvard University.

Other contemporary accounts of the riot are in the records of the trials of the rioters and the arguments of counsel at the trials. These were reported in The Trial of the Convent Rioters (Cambridge, 1834); Trial of John R. Buzzell before the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts for Arson and Burglary in the Ursaline Convent at Charlestown (Boston, 1834); Trial of John R. Buzzell, the Leader of the Convent Rioters for Arson and Burglary Committed on the Night of the 11th of August, 1834, by the Destruction of the Convent on Mount Benedict, in Charlestown, Massachusetts (Boston, 1834); The Trial of Persons Charged with Burning the Convent in the Town of Charlestown (Mass.) before the Supreme Judicial Court Holden at East Cambridge on Tuesday, Dec. 2, 1834 (Boston, 1834); Trial of William Mason, Marvin Marcy, Jr., and Sargent Blaisdell, charged with Being Concerned in Burning the Ursaline Convent in Charlestown (Mass.) on the Night of the 11th of August, 1834 (Boston, 1834); and James T. Austin, Argument of James T. Austin, Attorney General of the Commonwealth before the Supreme Judicial Court in Middlesex on the Case of John R. Buzzell (Boston, 1834). Benedict Fenwick, Catholic bishop of Boston when the Convent was burned, wrote a very brief account in 1837, which was published in the United States Catholic Historical Society's Historical Records and Studies, IX (New York, 1916), pp. 187-190, with the title "The Destruction of the Ursaline Convent at Charlestown, Mass."

Material relative to the effects of and the community reaction to the Convent fire was in The Chronicles of Mount Benedict, A Tale of the Ursaline Convent. . . (Boston, 1837), a short novel deploring the convent burning; Caleb Stetson, A Discourse On the Duty of Sustaining the Laws, Occasioned by the Burning of the Ursaline Convent (Boston, 1834); George Ticknor Curtis, The Rights of Conscience and of Property; or, the True Issue of the Convent Question (Boston, 1842), and Documents Relating to the Ursaline Convent in Charlestown (Boston, 1842).

Primary material relating to the quarrels among Protestants in the Boston area is in Henry S. Burrage, A History of the Baptists in New England (Philadelphia, 1844). Burrage was a participant in the fight for disestablishment of the Congregational Church in Massachusetts. Also valuable in the study of intra-Protestant quarrels are Lyman Beecher's Autobiography and Correspondence, 3 volumes (New York, 1865) and Works (New York, 1865); and Daniel Barber's History of My Own Times (Washington, 1877).

Valuable in studying the Congregational-Unitarian schism is Thomas Belsham's Memoirs of the Late Reverend Theophilius Lindsey, M.A. . . . also a general view of the progress in England and America (London, 1812); and Emerson Davis' The Half Century; or A History of Changes (Boston, 1851).

Some literature written by leaders of the Workingmen's Party in Massachusetts, refelcting the fears and tensions plaguing farmers and workers, is Seth Luther's Address to the Workingman of New England (Boston, 1835) and Address on the Origins and Progress of Avarice (Boston, 1834); Samuel Clesson Allen's Address Delivered Before the Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden Agricultural Societies. . . (Boston, 1830); and Henry Colman's Discourse on the Character Proper to a Christian Society (Cambridge, 1823);

The Sentiments Which Should Accompany Baptism of Children (Boston, 1824); Discourse on the Proper Test of Christian Character (Cambridge, 1823); Discourse on the Proper Character of Christian Institutions (Salem, 1825); Mr. Colmans Oration, July 4, 1826 (Boston, 1826); Sermons on Various Subjects (Boston, 1833); Address to the Essex Agricultural Society (Boston, 1832); The Times, A Discourse for the Hollis Street Church (Boston, 1837); Address To the Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden Agricultural Society (Greenfield, 1833); and Sermon. . .At the Dedication of the Independent Congregational Church in South Orange (Boston, 1834).

The Sources for information about infidelity were Abner Kneeland's Review of the Trial, Conviction and Final Imprisonment of Abner Kneeland for the Alleged Crime of Blasphemy (Boston, 1838); Report of the Arguments of the Attorney of the Commonwealth at the Trials of Abner Kneeland. . . (Boston, 1834); and Samuel Gridley Howe's "Atheism in New England," New England Magazine, Volume 7 (July-December, 1834), pp. 500-509.

Material of a primary nature revealing attitudes about the Irish was in the contemporary newspapers (as was information about most other topics mentioned here) but also in Robert Bell, Description of the Conditions and Manners of the Peasantry in Ireland (London, 1834); "Foreign Pauperism in the United States," an article in the New England Magazine, Volume VII (July-December, 1834), pp. 530-533, signed E.S.; and J. B. Derby, Political Reminiscences, Including a Sketch. . .of the "Statesman Party" of Boston (Boston, 1835), a pamphlet which attempts to lump Jacksonians, Catholics, Atheists, "Agrarians," Aristocrats and Irish into one group.

The Charlestown Directory of 1834 was indispensable in studying Charlestown in the 1830's. The Boston Directory of 1834 and The Cambridge

Directory of 1834 were less valuable, but still very helpful. Jesse Chickering's Report of the Committee. . .of 1850 (Boston City Documents, 1851, No. 60), provided estimates of the turnover of the Boston area's population. E. H. Derby, "Commercial Cities and Towns of the United States. . .No. XXIII. . .Boston" in Hunts Merchants' Magazine, XXIII (November, 1850), pp. 490-514 is excellent for a description of Boston and its metropolitan area. Figures of the Past From the Leaves of Old Journals (Boston, 1883) by Josiah Quincy, gives a picture of Boston in the first half of the nineteenth century from the memory of one of the early mayors and leading citizens. Society in America (New York, 1837) by Harriet Martineau, is an account of an American journey by a famous visitor but is not as valuable for insights into the Boston situation as Martineau's Retrospect of Western Travel, Volume III (London, 1838). Both of Martineau's works are superior, in relation to the situation in eastern Massachusetts, to Alexis de Tocqueville's Journey to America edited by J. P. Meyer (New Haven, 1960).

For an understanding of the thoughts and attitudes of key groups in the Boston area toward the contemporary social change, I consulted Willis Hall, An Address Delivered Before the Society of Phi Betta Kappa in Yale College (New Haven, 1844); Jacob Bigelow, Elements of Technology (Boston, 1829); Lyman Beecher, Plea for the West (Boston, 1834); Alexander H. Everett, "The Progress and Limits of Social Improvement" (Boston, 1834); Samuel Gridley Howe, "Atheism in New England" and Emerson Davis, The Half Century or A History of Changes (Boston, 1851). The deep apprehension for the future felt by some of the elite of the Boston area was voiced by Samuel Gridley Howe in "Mobs," New England Magazine, VIII (July-December, 1834), pp. 471-477.

The secondary material relative to this study is many faceted. Frist, are works in the social sciences providing conceptual models for mass violence. An excellent, interdisciplinary (in the social sciences) study of collective violence is Elton B. McNeil, The Nature of Human Conflict (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965).

Two works on violence by sociologists are that by Ralph H. Turner and Lewis M. Killian, Collective Behavior (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1957), which points out that violence is no more abnormal than social peace, and that by Neil J. Smelser, Theory of Collective Behavior (New York, 1963) which does not see collective violence as a normal occurance, but as characteristic of those periods in social development identified with most stress.

A very suggestive conceptual article by two social psychologists is that by M. F. Gilula and D. N. Daniels, "Violence and Man's Struggle to Adapt" in Science, Volume 164, No. 3 (April, 1969), pp. 396-405. In that article, the authors pointed out that the use of violence is a form of learned behavior.

H. L. Nieburg in Political Violence, The Behavioral Process (New York, 1969) studies mass violence as a social scientist, as does Henry Bienen in his review of political science literature in violence, Violence and Social Change (Chicago, 1968).

Two entire issues of Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science were devoted to an examination of violence by scholars from several fields of the social sciences and from history: Volume 364 (March, 1966) and Volume 365 (September, 1970). Many of the articles in the September, 1970 issue of the Annals were published in Collective Violence, edited by James F. Short and Marvin E. Wolfgang (New York, 1972). This

book also included some new articles, among which "The Legitimation of Violence" by Sandra Ball-Rokeach was useful for its discussion of legitimation, as was Ted Robert Gurr's "Sources of Rebellion in Western Societies," an article that had originally appeared in the Annals.

Several studies of violence by historians and historically oriented scholars are relevant to this study. A pioneer work in the field, which fostered the now discredited idea that crowds are fickle and irrational, was that by Gustav LeBon, The Crowd; a Study of the Popular Mind (London, 1896). E. J. Hobsbawn in Primitive Rebels studied pre-industrial social movements, mostly in Spain and Italy, as a function of an oppressed class. George Rudé, in The Crowd in History, pointed out that a certain degree of mass violence was a normal aspect of the western European social scene before industrialization and that riots, far from being spontaneous and irrational, were well planned affairs often tolerated by the authorities.

In American history, perhaps the most comprehensive study of violence was the Report of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, entitled The History of Violence in America, edited by Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr (New York, 1969). In this work, Charles Tilly's article, "Collective Violence in European Perspective," was especially useful. A documentary history of violence is American Violence (New York, 1970), edited by Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace, in which many violent incidents in the American past are briefly described.

Michael Wallace, in "The Uses of Violence in American History," in The American Scholar, Volume 40, No. 1 (Winter, 1970-71), pointed out that American violence has usually been repressive violence, not directed at the state; but Richard E. Rubenstein in Rebels in Eden (Boston, 1970)

claims that violence is the result of "internal colonization." Ted Robert Gurr, in Why Men Rebel (Princeton, 1969), has constructed a social model for violence in which the key element is relative deprivation, which produces social tension, which in turn produces violence.

For a study of violence during the Jacksonian period, I relied heavily on Leonard L. Richards, "Gentlemen of Property and Standing," Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America (New York, 1970) and David Grimsted, "Rioting In Its Jacksonian Setting," American Historical Review, 77, No. 2 (April, 1972), pp. 361-398. Also consulted were Clement Eaton, "Mob Violence In the Old South," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 79 (December, 1942), pp. 351-371; James Elbert Cutler, Lynch Law (New York, 1905); David Brion Davis, Homicide in American Fiction (Ithaca, N.Y., 1957); and John J. Chapman, William Lloyd Garrison (Boston, 1971).

Secondary accounts which deal with the Ursaline Convent riot are Benjamin DeCosta's two treatments, In Memoriam, Sister Sainte Claire, Order of St. Ursula (Charlestown, 1886) and The Story of Mount Benedict (Somerville, 1893); the work of George H. Evans, librarian at Somerville, Massachusetts Public Library, The Burning of the Mount Benedict Ursaline Convent (Somerville, 1835) and Ray Billington's article "The Burning of the Charlestown Convent," New England Quarterly, X (June, 1937), pp. 4-24. Most works which discuss nativism or anti-Catholicism in the United States also have a brief mention or description of the Convent riot, such as Ray A. Billington's The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism (New York, 1939).

Some general histories of the Jacksonian era which were important in shaping the thinking which went into this study are Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Cambridge, 1944); Glyndon Van Duesen,

The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848 (New York, 1959); Carl Russell Fish, The Rise of the Common Man 1830-1850 (New York, 1927); Edward Pessen, Jacksonian America Society, Personality and Politics (Homeward, Illinois, 1969); and Russell B. Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830 (New York, 1960).

Daniel Boorstin in The Americans: The National Experience (New York, 1965) presents a very seductive yet fundamentally incorrect concensus theory about the Jacksonian period, as does Lee Benson in The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy; New York as a Test Case (Princeton, 1961). Algie Simons, in Social Forces In American History (New York, 1911), presents a Marxist view, but his ideas are suggestive.

A concept central to this study is that this was a period of unprecedented social change. Douglas T. Miller, in The Birth of Modern America, 1820-1850 (New York, 1970), was a major force in shaping my thinking on the concept. Other works important in that respect are Rowland Berthoff, "The American Social Order: A Conservative Hypothesis," American Historical Review, LXV (April, 1960), pp. 495-514; and An Unsettled People: Social Order and Disorder in American History (New York, 1971).

The principal reasons for the massive social change which occurred was a weakening of the key social institutions and a transformation of the economy. Important works dealing with the economic transformation are: George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution 1815-1860 (New York, 1951); "American Economic Growth Before 1840: An Exploratory Essay," Journal of Economic History, XXIV (December, 1964), pp. 427-444, and "American Urban Growth Preceding the Railway Age," Journal of Economic History, XXVII (September, 1967), pp. 309-319; Stuart Bruchey, The Roots of American Economic Growth 1607-1861 (New York, 1968); Douglass C. North,

"Early National Income Estimates of the U.S.," Cultural Change, IX (April, 1961), pp. 387-396, and The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860 (New York, 1966); Albert Fishlow, American Railroads and the Transformation of the Ante Bellum Economy (Cambridge, 1965); and Robert W. Fogel, Railroads and American Economic Growth (Baltimore, 1964).

Works dealing with institutional change which were important for the background of this thesis are: William E. Bridges "Family Patterns and Social Values in America, 1825-1875," American Quarterly XVII (Spring, 1965); Paul Goodman, "Ethics and Enterprise; The Values of a Boston Elite 1800-1860," American Quarterly, XVIII (Fall, 1966); Alice Felt Tyler, Freedoms Ferment: Phases of American Social History From the Colonial Period To the Outbreak of the Civil War (New York, 1944); Whitney R. Cross, The Burned Over District; The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion In Western New York (New York, 1944); Arthur E. Be Utopia (Philadelphia, 1960); Douglas T. Miller, Jacksonian Aristocracy: Class and Aristocracy in New York 1830-1860 (New York, 1967).

The disintegration of the key social institutions resulted in a double mood of hope and anxiety. The tension produced by social and economic change during the Jacksonian period is the subject of the following works: Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion (Stanford, 1957); Fred Somkin, Unquiet Eagle (Ithaca, 1967); and Leo Marx, The Machine In the Garden (New York, 1967).

The social tension resulted in a search for symbols, positive or negative, which Americans could identify around or against. Some works which deal with this are John William Ward, Andrew Jackson: Symbol for An Age (New York, 1962); David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter Subversion," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVII, No. 2 (September,

1960), pp. 205-224; and Bernard Bowron, Leo Marx and Arnold Rose, "Literature and Covert Culture," American Quarterly, IX (Winter, 1957), pp. 377-386.

The social tension of the Jacksonian period produced many anti-movements. Among the most virulent of these was the nativist, or anti-Catholic movement. The principal secondary sources of material on nativism for the paper were Ray Allen Billington, The Protestant Crusade (Gloucester, 1939); Sister Mary Augustine, American Opinion on Roman Catholicism During the Eighteenth Century (New York, 1936); and John Gilmary Shea "Pope Day in America," United States Catholic Historical Magazine, IV (January, 1888).

Of importance for information on Jedidiah Morse, a dedicated anti-Catholic and the father of another anti-Catholic is Vernon Stauffer, New England and the Bavarian Illuminati (New York, 1918).

Secondary sources for the history of the Catholic Church in the United States are John Gilmary Shea, History of the Catholic Church in the United States (New York, 1895). Other secondary sources relevant to the growth of the Catholic Church in the Boston area are: E. Percival Merritt, "Sketches of the Three Earliest Roman Catholic Priests in Boston," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXV, pp. 173-184. William Leahy, The Catholic Church In New England (Boston, 1899); Joseph Freri, The Society for Propagating the Faith and Catholic Missions (New York, 1876); and Henry F. Brownson, Orestes Brownson's Middle Life: From 1845 to 1855 (Detroit, 1899).

Secondary material dealing with the other religious questions in Eastern Massachusetts which was important for this paper is: Sanford H. Cobb, The Rise of Religious Freedom in America (New York, 1902); Andrew Peabody, "Early New England Unitarians," in Unitarianism, Its Course and History (Boston, 1895); Paul E. Lauer, "Church and State in New England,"

in Church and State, ed., by H. B. Adams (Baltimore, 1892); and Charles C. Cole, The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelist, 1826-1860 (New York, 1954).

The Workingmen's Party plays a large role in this thesis. Much of the material used here on the Workingmen is from primary sources, but secondary sources which influenced this study are: John B. Commons and Associates, History of Labor in the United States, 3 volumes (New York, 1918); Norman Ware, The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860 (Boston, 1924); Arthur B. Darling, "The Workingmen's Party in Massachusetts, 1833-1834," American Historical Review, XXIX (October, 1923), pp. 85-86; Walter Hugins, Jacksonian Democracy and the Working Class (Stanford, 1960); Edward Pessen, Most Uncommon Jacksonians (Albany, 1967); William A. Sullivan, "Did Labor Support Andrew Jackson," Political Science Quarterly, LXII (December, 1947), pp. 569-580; Edward Pessen, "Did Labor Support Andrew Jackson? The Boston Story," Political Science Quarterly, LXIV (June, 1949), pp. 262-274; Robert Bower, "Note on Did Labor Support Andrew Jackson? The Boston Story," Political Science Quarterly, LXV, No. 3.

Secondary material on immigration helpful in the preparation of this study is: Marcus Lee Hansen, The Atlantic Migration (New York, 1961) and "The Second Colonization of New England," New England Quarterly, II (October, 1929), pp. 539-560; Oscar Handlin, Boston's Immigrants (Cambridge, 1941); William Forbes Adams, Ireland and Irish Immigration to the New World From 1815 to the Famine (New Haven, 1932); J. G. Rosengarten, French Colonists and Exiles in the United States (Philadelphia, 1908) and Christopher Roberts, The Middlesex Canal (Cambridge, 1938).

A valuable secondary source for the political history of Massachusetts during the Jacksonian period is Arthur Burns Darling, Political Changes in Massachusetts (New Haven, 1925). The best source for the early city

history is still Josiah Quincy's Municipal History of Boston (Boston, 1852). The only, but inadequate, histories of Charlestown are those by Nathaniel Frothingham, The History of Charlestown (Middlesex County) and A Century of Town Life (both Boston, 1878).

Secondary sources on the economic development of the Boston Metropolitan Area are: Nathan Appleton, Introduction of the Power Loom and Origin of Lowell (Lowell, 1858); Kenneth F. Mailloux, "The Boston Manufacturing Company of Waltham, Massachusetts, 1813-1848," Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University; and Percy Wells Bidwell, "Rural Economy in New England at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century," Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Science (April, 1916) XX, pp. 383-391.