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**Ethnic Catholicism and Craft Unionism in Worcester,
Massachusetts, 1887-1920: A Mixed Story**

By

Bruce Cohen

Worcester, Massachusetts has been described time-and-again as a gritty blue-collar industrial city. But that description is more befitting of the late nineteenth and first-half of the twentieth century. Because of limited access, including limited waterways, hilly terrain, and conflicts with Indians, the community was not permanently settled until 1712, almost a century after Plymouth colony was settled. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the town was a pastoral and pre-industrial community of several thousand people. Although it was considered a shire town, other communities in Worcester County rivaled and even dwarfed it. Despite theoretical access to the sea by means of the Blackstone River, the reality was that Worcester lacked waterpower. The Blackstone was narrow, shallow, and dropped almost 500 feet between Worcester and Naragansett Bay. There was no other significant water source although North Pond, now known as Indian Lake, was expanded and other ponds were later constructed, such as Salisbury Pond. There was little growth or development of the community until the 1820's.

In the decade of the twenties, an alternative to the Blackstone River, the Blackstone Canal, was created. But the canal, started by native labor and finished by Irish immigrants, was not the transportation mechanism people sought. While the canal was operative for two decades (1828-1848), it was too narrow, too shallow, and had too many locks to serve rapid transportation needs. The Irish immigrants who built the canal settled in Green Island, a flat area between the canal and the Millbrook.

The canal workers attended the first Roman Catholic church in Worcester, Saint John's on Temple Street, which dates back to 1836.

The community itself seemed to grow despite its water problems. Steam-powered manufactories, such as the Merrifield Building and the Court Mills, began to provide service between Worcester and Boston. However, the real take-off occurred in the 1840's when the Providence and Worcester Railroad, which opened in 1847, superseded the Blackstone Canal, forcing it to close in 1848. Worcester's population more than doubled from 7500 in 1840 to 17,000 in 1850. The community was incorporated as a city in 1848. By then it was becoming better known as an industrial center. Machine shops, boot and shoe manufactories, foundries, and textile mills were all established.

The 1850s was a period of slower growth, marred by the anti-Irish and anti-Catholic nativism of the Know Nothings and the Depression of 1857, both contributing to a decline in immigration, leaving Worcester with a population of twenty-five thousand by 1860. The 1840s had brought the ten-hour movement to Worcester, and the 1850s brought the first trade/craft union, the Moulders' Union, to Worcester in the form of Local #5, which lasted only until 1866. After the Civil War, the city grew as first the boot and shoe industry and later the metal trades flourished. In the 1860s, the predominantly Massachusetts-based boot and shoe trade/craft union, The Knights of St. Crispin, pressed the shoe manufactories for better prices and arbitration of differences. After a successful tailors' strike in 1869, the Worcester shoe workers were locked out for three months over the issue of the length of the period that wages were to be reduced. The lockout was ended in March by an agreement between the Crispins and the manufacturers involving concessions on both sides: the KOSC on the size of the work force and the manufacturers on rates. The 1870 Worcester lockout/strike involved 1200 men and cost the workers \$175,000 in wages.¹ By 1870 the population of the city had grown to over forty thousand.

¹ Bruce Cohen, "Lords of Capital and Knights of Labor: Worcester's Labor History During the Gilded Age" *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 29: 1 (Winter, 2001), 80-83; Don D. Lescohier, *The Knights of St. Crispin, 1867-1874* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1910), 24.

Despite the fact that the Irish and French-Canadians belonged to the Roman Catholic faith, cultural, linguistic and social differences divided them early on in Worcester. In October, 1870, a strike took place at the Quinsigamond Wire Works (Washburn & Moen) over piece work. The strike pitted Irish strikers against French-Canadian replacements. The Irish were accused of violence against the French, although the charges were not proven.² “By 1880 more Irish immigrants worked in the wire mills than in any other factories and over 40 percent of the Irish wireworkers lived in either the North End or South Worcester.”³ State-wide the French-Canadians were perceived as the immigrants who cheapened work.

In the *Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics* (1881), opposition to the ten hour system was in part attributed to the “Canadian French” who were called the “Chinese of the Eastern States.”⁴ French-Canadian opposition to these observations and statements led to a legislative hearing on October 25, 1881. The first speaker for the French-Canadian delegation from Worcester was Ferdinand Gagnon, the editor of *Le Travailleur*, a French-Canadian paper published in Worcester. Gagnon argued that the French-Canadians had never opposed a reduction in the hours of labor, sent their children to school, and voted when permitted to.⁵ Together with H.A. Dubuque of Fall River and Father Millet of Nashua, Gagnon also testified that repatriation of French-Canadians had stopped. This testimony was supported by the comments of Charles Lalime of Worcester, immigration agent of the Canadian Governor and Father B. J. B. Bedard of Fall River. Both Lalime and Bedard also pointed out that the French church in America, in opposition to the one in Canada, opposed repatriation. State Senators S.N. Aldrich and Charles Q. Tirrell of Marlborough, as well as some of the shoe manufacturers,

² MA Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *Second Annual Report* (Boston 1871), 125-131.

³ Timothy J. Meagher, *Inventing Irish America* (Notre Dame, 2001), 59-60.

⁴ Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *12th Annual Report* (Boston, 1881), 469-470.

⁵ MA Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *13th Annual Report* (Boston, 1882), 17-21.

testified as to the character of the French-Canadian community there. One manufacturer, Timothy A. Coolidge, thought that there were less strikes in his factory because he employed more French-Canadians than others. Coolidge's views on French-Canadian labor was similar to the earlier testimony of Dubuque, who in fact argued that "labor agitators" disliked the non-striking French-Canadians.⁶

Furthermore, J. H. Guillet of Lowell presented materials showing that the French-Canadians were good textile workers both there and in Fall River although he was sensitive to housing and education problems. Additional testimony was presented at the hearing that the French-Canadians were hard workers, whether in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, Vermont, or New Hampshire. Edward J.L. Herault, constable of Fall River, argued that the only difference he encountered was that the French-Canadians were forced to work twelve hours a day in Connecticut when they only wanted to work ten hours a day.⁷

J.E. Marier of Lawrence further argued that the French-Canadian operatives had sought a ten hour day in 1880 but had not been supported by other workers. Lalime of Worcester spoke again about the stability of the French community in Worcester, including the presence of a convent and a church, a benevolent society, and a naturalization club, as well as two French papers.⁸ Carroll D. Wright, Chief of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, never retracted the *Report of 1880*, even arguing that the words "Chinese of the East" simply denote the kind of labor that is migratory,⁹ and that the report was truthful "if it was made the exception and not the rule, and if the term 'Chinese of the East' be left out."¹⁰ He did concede that "the prosperity of New England demands the rapid progress of all her industrial forces, and of

⁶ Ibid., 26-42.

⁷ Ibid., 42-47, 60, 62.

⁸ Ibid., 77-80.

⁹ Ibid., 77-80.

¹⁰ Ibid., 89.

these the French-Canadian element is certainly one of the most important.”¹¹

Ironically, Worcester’s Irish would be challenged in the Washburn and Moen wire works more by Swedish immigrants than by the French-Canadians. As Meagher points out, there were only 762 Swedish workers in Worcester; by 1889 there were 900 Swedes in the Washburn & Moen wire mills alone and the Swedish wire workers already outnumbered the Irish working in the company’s plants. Washburn & Moen actively recruited Swedish immigrants.¹² As the *Worcester Daily Times* declared in 1886 “... Washburn and Moen have been substituting Swedes for Irishmen on the grounds that they work for less money and would worship at the same church with their employer.”¹³

Workers attempted to organize through the KOSC’s successors, the Knights of Labor and the Lasters’ Protective Union in Worcester and its environs. While the KOL LA 4979 attempted unsuccessfully to organize Washburn & Moen in the 1880s, more significant were efforts of District Assembly 30 KOL to protect its shoe worker members in Worcester County. Both the shoe manufacturers and KOL/DA 30 realized that an acid test for the future of the industry was occurring in the county. DA 30 addressed the issue at its quarterly meeting July, 1886:

The intimate business relations of the manufacturers in these places made it necessary to combine action for raising the scale of prices. After persistent work a scale of prices was established at Worcester, and the Westboro manufacturers subsequently made an advances satisfactory to their employees. The contract (so called) at Spencer was an obstacle to completing arrangements in the town. The matter was finally

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹² Meagher, 218.

¹³ Quoted in Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will* (Cambridge, England, 1983), 88.

submitted to arbitration, and the obnoxious contract was broken.¹⁴

The manufacturers, facing a KOL of over ten thousand members as well as LPU allies in Worcester County, chose to go on the offensive over the issue of winter pay in December, 1886 by undercutting the union price list and by establishing individual contracts rather than bargaining with union committees. By late January, 1887, nineteen firms had endorsed and posted this policy. The Massachusetts *Bureau of Labor Statistics* stated that the “Great” Worcester County Shoe Strike of 1887 occurred because there was “disagreement regarding new scale of prices.” The lockout/strike encompassed four thousand workers in the nineteen firms in Worcester, Spencer, and North Brookfield and lasted over two hundred days between December, 1886, and June 21, 1887.¹⁵

While DA 30 supported the strike the General Executive Board of the KOL did not. Eventually pressure mounted for a settlement of this costly lockout/strike, but the State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration did not step in until mid-June. The labor representative to the SBCA, Richard Barry, pressured the strikers to sign a petition for immediate board action DA 30 conceded on June 17, 1887 that it could no longer financially aid the strikers. The strike settlement arranged by the SBCA left the manufacturers’ “free shop” individual contracts in place. Two Worcester newspapers, the *Evening Gazette* and the *Daily Times* blamed the KOL for the failure of the strike, particularly the General Executive Board.¹⁶

The Lasters’ Protective Union (LPU), which joined the KOL in the strike, stayed out until July 1, 1887. The LPU, embittered by the lack of financial support from the KOL, led the battle to form shoe worker trade unions along with National Trade Assembly 216. By 1887, the Massachusetts State Federation of Labor (AFL) was formed to counter

¹⁴ MA Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *30th Annual Report*, (Boston, 1900), 125, 131, 142-144, 208.

¹⁵ *Quarterly Report, DA 30 KOL Worcester*, July, 1886, 59.

¹⁶ Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor *19th Annual Report* (Boston, 1888), 34-47.

the KOL. The largest union represented in the organization with four of the forty-three delegates and claiming thirteen thousand members was the Lasters' Union.¹⁷

Thus the year 1887 marks the end of an era dominated by the boot and shoe industry and the Knights of Labor in Worcester. The period 1887-1920 is similar to that chosen by Roy Rosenzweig and Timothy Meagher for discussion of Worcester's changing identity as an industrial city. This identity was also portrayed by local contemporary religious and secular newspapers. The *Worcester Daily Times* was still edited and published by the Massachusetts KOL's Grand Workman James H. Mellen as it had been since 1879. Mellen ran it as a Labor-Democratic newspaper.¹⁸ Worcester County's "Catholic Journal," *The Messenger*, which was also connected to the Ancient Order of Hibernians, began publication in 1887. The early years of *The Messenger* rarely reflected interest in labor issues, beyond items of general interest. However, after ownership changed from Joshua O'Leary to Thomas J. Kiely in response to a closure from 1896 to 1898, a reawakening of interest in labor matters occurred.¹⁹ In contrast, Mellen's interest in Worcester labor never waned, although he earlier declared "Worcester has no labor organization worthy of that name....in every city in New England this order (of the KOL) is far in advance in the organization in this city."²⁰

Mellen was editorially concerned during the 1887 Shoe Strike that "the manufacturers appeared unified because of the weakness of organized labor."²¹ The *Worcester Daily Times* editorial of June 23, 1887 "Who Is To Blame?" stated that the "collapse of the strike is largely due to the executive board of the KOL not contributing

¹⁷ *Worcester Evening Gazette* June 22, 1887 and *Worcester Daily Times*, June 23, 1887.

¹⁸ *History of Massachusetts State Federation of Labor 1887-1935* (Worcester, 1935), 18. Prepared by Albert M. Heintz and John R. Whitney.

¹⁹ Rosenzweig, 109.

²⁰ Meagher, 153, 201, 241.

²¹ *Worcester Daily Times*, June 30, 1885.

financial aid as they were in duty bound.”²² Increasingly James Mellen realized that the powerfully-led KOL and even District 30 had failed to provide adequate support for the lengthy strike. Thus Mellen was a prime mover in the organization of Worcester’s Central Labor Union in 1888 and served as its first president. He served in the Massachusetts legislature as a labor representative and he ended his decade long service as editor of the *Worcester Daily Times* in 1889. Increasingly interested in state politics, he sold the paper to two young newspapermen, Daniel A. Holmes and J. Shields Stewart, with the stipulation that it would remain a Democratic paper. But within a year the *Worcester Daily Times* was sold again, this time to Prohibitionists. The paper, which had jostled with *The Messenger* over school issues, although both had supported temperance, by 1890 became not only Prohibitionist but anti-Catholic as well. By the end of 1890, the *Worcester Daily Times* was gone, although a *Weekly Daily Times* was continued by the Prohibitionists.²³

The Carpenters’ Strike of 1890 was fairly covered by the *Daily Times*, although there was little treatment of the controversial building of a French-Canadian Catholic orphanage by a non-union contractor, McDermott Brothers, during the strike.²⁴ In contrast, *The Messenger* basically avoided discussing the strike. As Timothy Meagher has pointed out, there were problems for carpenters because of strong ties to their employers. In addition, Meagher states that “French-Canadian workers also balked at walking off a job that was critical to their ethnic & religious community.”²⁵ He also points out that the Irish and French were upset at the “PEI (Prince Edward Island) men and Nova Scotians who are coming into the city to take the places vacated by the strikers.”²⁶ *The Messenger*’s labor coverage in the early 1890s perhaps reflected the slow growth of trade unionism in Worcester. The CLU’s founding in 1888 was followed by that of the Building & Trades Council in 1890.

²² Ibid., January 29, 1887.

²³ Editorial, *Worcester Daily Times*, June 23, 1887.

²⁴ Rosenzweig, 109-110.

²⁵ *Worcester Daily Times*, June - August, 1890.

²⁶ Meagher, 211.

Samuel Gompers came to Worcester in March, 1892 to urge the organization of the city's labor force. Despite his words, few organizational strikes, including one at Washburn & Moen in 1892, were successful. The BTC was reorganized during *The Messenger's* closure in 1897, and there were some labor successes that same year, including gaining the closed shop at Bowler Brewery and getting local men hired at Worcester Consolidated Street Railway Company.²⁷ However, *The Messenger's* lack of coverage of the Molders' strike/lockout of 1899 is worth noting. Indeed the *BLS* commented that while the strike led to union recognition, organization of shop committees and abolition of piece work, the minimum wage remained at \$2.75, "some of the best workmen crossed the line at Rice, Barton, & Fales and the IMU had to set up a strike fund."²⁸

The Messenger ceased publishing between 1896 and 1898, when it was resumed by Thomas J. Kiely in 1898. According to Meagher, both the "new" *Messenger* and *The Worcester Post*, the vehicle of Irish Democrat Eugene Moriarty, as of 1897 "consistently advocated labor's cause."²⁹ He states, "During the 1915 (Machinists') strike the *Post* pushed hard for arbitration and sharply condemned the employers and the mayor for avoiding a peaceful and equitable resolution of the walkout."³⁰ Meagher finds that these Irish-Catholic papers would support Democrats and craft unionism, but by the 1900s they attacked both socialism and the IWW as unfit vehicles for change for the working class.³¹

The Irish-Catholic critique of socialism could be found in Mellen's *Worcester Daily Times* in the 1880's, but seems enhanced by the *Catholic Messenger* and the *Post* in the early twentieth century. Meagher attributes this fact to increased political, economic and

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 212.

²⁸ Charles F. Johnson, *The Organized Labor Movement as a Social Force in Worcester 1888-1913* (Unpublished Masters Thesis, Clark University, 1935), 10-19.

²⁹ Meagher, 324.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 324-325.

social status of Irish-Catholics, but he also attributes the anti-socialist position to the Worcester Irish's attempts to harmonize and unify Catholicism and Americanism.³² Catholicism was often defined in terms of the Irish, who although a majority of the Catholics, were still a minority competing with other minorities such as the Swedes (10% in 1900) and French-Canadians (10% in 1910) in a city dominated by a Protestant elite.³³ According to James Connolly, Meagher sees the Worcester Irish's position in terms of "three distinct visions, an (earlier) accomodationist mentality, (next) an aggressively ethnocentric stance, and finally a pan-Catholic identity....as senior partners in a multi-ethnic coalition."³⁴ While the Irish were more than one-third of the city's total population in 1885, their percentage dropped to under 17% by 1920.³⁵

By 1900, 40% of Worcester's industry was concentrated in the metal trades. The metal trades continued to be the object of craft union organization in the early twentieth century. Although the molders did not go out on strike in 1901 over issues with local foundry-men, they did go out in 1904 when the National Founders' Association abrogated the New York Agreement of 1899 and management attempted to cut wages by 25 cents, after a compromise offer of reduced wages for shorter hours had been rejected. James H. Mellen, in a short-lived journal *Mellen's Magazine* fully covered the gallant but ill-fated strike of two hundred fifty molders.³⁶

The Central Labor Union attempted to organize the Norton Emery Wheel company in 1901, but the company held firm, refusing to meet with the CLU grievance committee and firing the union leaders. The local members refused to strike over the issue of reinstatement of the fired men, and the CLU dissolved the local union for refusing to support it. The "Protestant Partnership" of Yankees and Swedes

³² Ibid., 325-326.

³³ Ibid., 217-220; Rosenzweig, 27-29.

³⁴ James Connolly, "Bringing the City Back", *Journal of Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1:3 (July, 2002), 277.

³⁵ Rosenzweig, 29.

³⁶ Cohen, 95-96.

probably weakened the attempt to organize Norton as well as an earlier 1901 decision not to join a National Machinists' Strike over abrogation of the Murray Hill Agreement of 1900. Approximately three-quarters of the company were Swedes, who were ethnic, local and receptive to management's paternalism.³⁷

The ethnocentric stance could be seen in a variety of ways. Support of both Irish Home Rule and local Irish politicians, particularly for the position of mayor which was gained for the first time in 1900 by an Irish-Catholic, Peter O'Connell. Also, Irish Catholic institutions, such as churches, parochial schools, orphanages, and hospitals, were increasing in number and size in a city whose population approximated one hundred thousand by 1900.

By 1910 the city's population not only had reached one hundred forty-six thousand, but had also increased in diversity. New immigrants, such as Russian Jews, Italians, Poles, and Lithuanians as well as smaller numbers of Albanians, Armenians, Syrians, Greeks and Finns could be found in Worcester. While many of these groups lived on the East Side near the Irish and the French-Canadians and many of them were Roman Catholics, Roy Rosenzweig finds that the Swedes, who had arrived in large numbers in the late nineteenth century, were the most provincial group, living mainly in two areas, Quinsigamond Village and Greendale, that were "...relatively isolated from both other immigrant groups and the city itself."³⁸ Religious differences were also crucial as Rosenzweig points out: "whereas the Catholic church provided at least a tenuous link between the Irish and the French-Canadians, the Protestantism of the Swedes created an almost unbridgeable gap between them and their immigrant predecessors."³⁹ It is not surprising that Irish ethnocentricity could be found in the early twentieth century.

Yet in 1911 this assertive Irish-Catholicism was challenged by organized labor over the construction of the Ascension Church. Father James J. Farrell, despite the protests of organized labor and entreaties to Bishop Beaven in Springfield, continued to employ the non-union

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Rosenzweig, 28-29.

³⁹ Ibid.

McDermott Brothers firm that earlier in 1890 had built a French--Canadian Catholic orphanage with scab labor during the Carpenters' Strike. While the BTC threatened a boycott of the parish coffers even the Carpenters' District Council seemed to realize the futility of asking the Irish-Catholic workers to strip themselves of part of their identity. Interestingly, the *Labor News* also pointed out that a Swedish church was going to be built non-union until union pressure was mounted by the Swedish carpenters. Bishop Beaven also proclaimed that the priests sympathized with the workers, "their antecedents have brought them in touch with the life and living conditions of the laborer," but he decided not to intervene since "the work in this case is too far along."⁴⁰ Of course the union carpenters felt they were caught between a rock and a hard place: if they abstained from the church building fund to force annulment of the contract with a non-union firm, they were also sinfully weakening the parish's financial position. Thus they decided to make the abstention optional. Not only was the church built non-union, but five additional churches were built accordingly. As Charles Johnson points out, "The Ascension Church was erected by a non-union company and the CLU was unable to act because of the religious issue involved."⁴¹ Meagher seems to feel a pattern of minimizing one's labor identity had been established by the Irish-Catholic workers by then.⁴² The same reluctance to challenge one's religion and ethnicity was seen in the French-Canadian response in 1890 to the Carpenters' strike.

In 1914 Worcester was home to two metal trade conventions, the National Metal Trade Association and the National Machine Tool Builders Association and boasted a population of one hundred sixty-six thousand. Yet the largest strike in the city's history occurred in 1915. The IAM led strike involved over three thousand workers and a half dozen firms. By the time of the Machinists' Strike, the workers knew that their support for better wages, hours, and working conditions would come from Irish-Catholic Labor Democrats, such as John Reardon, a past leader of the Street Railway Union, who was running

⁴⁰ Meagher, 278; *Labor News*, Sept. 9, Oct. 21., Nov. 18, Dec. 16, and Dec. 23, 1911.

⁴¹ Johnson, 42.

⁴² Meagher, 278.

for mayor, and from French-Canadian Labor Democrats, such as Freeman M. Saltus, the publisher of the *Labor News*.⁴³ Saltus had been active in the Knights of Labor from 1888 to 1894 in Burlington, Vermont and became a member of the Typographical Union when the assembly disbanded. He began to publish the *Labor News* in 1906 as a vehicle for the trade union movement, but Saltus honestly editorialized in 1910 that “Worcester Machinists have been made to realize that they are twenty years behind the times.”⁴⁴ Probably the fullest coverage of the Machinists’ Strike of 1915, as well as the Molders’ Strike of 1919-1920 was done by the *Labor News*.

But media support was not matched with ethnic nor religious support. The IAM’ S Irish-American leaders did not talk to ethnic strikers in their native languages and this may have contributed to the strike’s defeat. As Roy Rosenzweig points out, “The overwhelmingly ethnic basis of working-class social life could foster as well as foil labor organizing in the late 19th century and (early 20th century) Worcester.”⁴⁵ While the Central Labor Union had been founded in 1888 at the AOH Hall and in contrast to the pro-labor AOH of the 1890s, the twentieth century Knights of Columbus, a predominantly middle-class organization, remained aloof from the labor movement.⁴⁶

In this same period, labor received little support from the Diocese of Springfield or from local parish priests. Instead, Father Farrell of Ascension Church became a leading advocate of Irish Home Rule by 1919.⁴⁷ Ironically, that same year unable to gain the wage and hour benefits promised by the NWLB and now rejected by the local metal trades manufacturers and their supporters, including the NMTA and most of the local press, the molders went out on strike. The Worcester

⁴³ Ibid., 30-31.

⁴⁴ Rosenzweig, 21.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 30-31.

⁴⁶ Meagher, 265, 349-355.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 363-367.

Molders' Strike was not as large as the Machinists' Strike of 1919, but it lasted longer and was more violent.⁴⁸

Both craft unions met defeat but so did the metal trade manufacturers who saw skilled workers leave the area for better opportunities in Hartford, Bridgeport, and Springfield. By the 1920s Worcester's machine shops and foundries encountered recessions and depressions that substantially downsized local operations. Organized labor returned in the mid-1930s and gained support from the Catholic Church, perhaps because Irish-Catholicism had reached its third stage. While Irish-Catholic Democrats eventually dominated the political landscape, the labor landscape would be dominated by industrial unionism, (CIO), particularly SWOC/USWA'S organization of the metal trades and also led by Irish-Catholic leaders, such as Roy Stevens.⁴⁹ Worcester's Catholicism would still be defined by the Irish, whose political presence remains a key factor for the Democratic Party in the twenty-first century. In addition with the creation of the Diocese of Worcester in 1950, Worcester's Catholics finally gained autonomy from the Springfield Diocese that it had been a part of since 1870.⁵⁰ The Worcester Diocese has been led by Irish-Catholic bishops since its inception.

In conclusion, between 1887 and 1920 ethnic Catholicism and craft unionism were participants in a mixed story; at times working together but more often against a common enemy than for common goals. In the mind of the "Protestant Partnership," the Yankees and the Swedes saw the threat of a "United Catholic vote" leading to successive electoral defeats of Republican Swedish and Yankee mayors in 1919

⁴⁸ See Bruce Cohen, "Worcester Open Shop City: The National Metal Trades Association and the Molders' Strike of 1919-1920" in K. Fones Wolf & M. Kaufman, editors *Labor in Massachusetts: Selected Essays* (Westfield, MA, 1990), 169-198.

⁴⁹ See Bruce Cohen, "Labor and the State in Worcester Organization of the Metal Trades 1937-1971" *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 20: 2 (Summer, 1992), 160-177.

⁵⁰ Owen J. Murphy Jr., *There Were Giants in Those Days* (Diocese of Worcester, 2000), 105-106. See Appendix A, 153-158.

and 1920.⁵¹ But the Protestant Partnership had its weapons as well, including the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan in Worcester in the 1920s with its emphasis on the “Nordic” race, especially the Swedes, being included in its ranks. Some blamed the election of an Irish-Catholic Republican mayor for bringing out the worst in the Swedish community, including ugly confrontations between Catholics and Protestants in the 1920s. It is also important to remember that the Protestant Partnership previously showed an intense dislike for both ethnic Catholicism and craft unionism.

⁵¹ George N. Jeppson to Rep. Samuel Winslow, December 11 and 15, 1919 in *Jeppson Papers*, Worcester Historical Museum. In his December 11, 1919 letter, Jeppson blamed “The defection of the Republican Catholic vote among the Poles, Lithuanians, Greeks, etc. due to K. of C. (Knights of Columbus) activities among these classes.”